APPENDIX A

Resident Involvement Strategy

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1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The purpose of the Council’s Resident Involvement Strategy is to set out the Council’s determination to provide opportunities for those residents living in Council homes to fully participate in the development improvement of the housing service. The aim is to deliver a high quality, responsive, accessible, value for money service and this strategy will set out how we will work together with residents to achieve our joint objectives. The strategy will compliment the objectives set out in the Council’s Community Engagement Strategy and Action Plan. (Appendix 3)

Following the decision by the residents to retain the Council as their landlord, it is imperative that the Council works co-operatively and collaboratively with residents to move the housing service forward by adopting innovative service improvements within a framework of financial constraint.

The strategy provides a position statement of where the Council is now in relation to resident involvement and sets out the journey of improvement taking into account external factors and mapping out how it will get there by way of the action plan in appendix 1. This document will provide a strategic overview that will inform the housing service plan and other housing strategies, documents and procedures and also wider corporate strategies. Residents are currently involved in the housing service by membership of the Tenant Participation Group, a district wide forum, the Sheltered Forum for sheltered housing, and Village Voices for specific villages.

From the 1 April 2010 the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) is the regulatory authority for affordable housing. The aim of the TSA is to raise the standard of services for tenants and this strategy will be mindful of the standards set down by the TSA in relation to resident involvement together with the Audit Commission’s Key Line of Enquiry (KLOE) for resident involvement. In preparing this strategy we have taken into account the expectations of the Tenant Services Authority, the Audit Commission and identified good practice from other organisations.

Resident involvement is intrinsically linked to excellent customer service and will be an integral outcome for the Council in its drive towards the government’s Customer Service Excellence standard.

The strategy will also be driven by the Council’s Visions, Aims and Values (appendix 2).

The wide geographical spread of Council homes in South Cambridgeshire presents special challenges that will need to be addressed. These challenges include reaching residents in remote rural locations, choosing appropriate meeting locations, very few concentrations of Council houses in a district without a major centre and engaging with groups across almost a 100 locations. As a result a range of opportunities need to be offered for residents to express their different views and needs.

1.1 Housing Futures
The Housing Futures project embraced resident involvement and residents were actively involved in preparing the offer document, they also sat on TAGs (tenant advisory groups) assisting in the production of new policies, and residents were represented on the shadow board. In June 2009, the tenants voted overwhelming in support of the Council continuing to be their landlord. The result provided an exciting and challenging time ahead for both the Council and the tenants; exciting in terms of service developments and service improvements, and challenging in that the improvements are against a backdrop of financial constraints. It is imperative to strike the right balance between managing rising customer expectations and improving customer service with limited resources by way of meaningful involvement.

1.2 TPAS report

The Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) were commissioned to undertake a health check into the Council’s tenant participation/resident involvement service in November 2009. TPAS concluded that whilst there is a commitment to resident involvement within the Council a dedicated team and adequate resources were required to move the service forward. Specifically to meet the TSA requirements in terms of tenant led self-regulation, and using mystery shoppers and tenant inspectors and more informal approaches.

TPAS also recommended that monitoring and evaluation should be carried out for all involvement activities and that resident involvement impact assessments needed to be carried out regularly.

1.3 Tenants Survey November 2009

A survey was carried in November 2009. The survey was intended to provide the Council with information regarding how tenants communicate with the Council, what their preferences are for repairs and improvements and how do they want to be involved with us in shaping and improving services in the future. The final part of the survey asked how tenants wanted to be involved with the Council in the future in shaping our services and planning for improvements. The results included:

- 80% of residents preferred to complete surveys and questionnaires.
- 54% chose informal neighbourhood resident groups or focus groups as a way to be involved.
- 38% chose to attend formal meetings with Council staff, being mystery shopper or tenant inspector.

45% of the respondents felt that residents should have a say about issues affecting their neighbourhoods and to prioritise what needs to be done. We will explore these findings when developing the local offers.

Many residents expressed a preference of how they wanted to be involved, this has been noted and we will be getting in touch with those people in the near future.

1.4 Existing groups
The Council has successfully supported and worked with the Tenant Participation Group (TPG) for a number of years. The TPG meets monthly and remains the main consultative forum. It feeds into the Council’s wider democratic processes by ensuring that all reports on housing services issues to the Housing Portfolio Holder and Cabinet will include the outcome of consultation with TPG and their recommendations.

Membership of the TPG is made up of democratically elected members from the following:

**Sheltered Housing Forums:** three sheltered tenant representatives from each sheltered housing forum east, west and south, reflecting the three sheltered housing management areas are elected by the members of that forum annually and can include leaseholders.

**Resident groups:** one or two tenant representatives from each tenant and resident’s group, elected annually by the members of that tenant and resident group, who do not have to be committee members.

**Village voices:** from villages with less than 30 properties or where there is not yet an established tenant and resident’s group but there are individual tenants/leaseholders who want to be involved at a formal level. It is expected that ‘village voices’ will inform other tenants of their intention to be on the TPG, obtain their support and establish a mechanism of sharing information.

**2.0 TSA AND AUDIT COMMISSION**

**2.1 Tenant Services Authority (TSA)**

Building on the findings of the first phase of its National Conversation with tenants and landlords the TSA has set out its approach to regulation of the sector and outlined the issues that were important to tenants.

The National Conversation clearly indicated that many tenants want to be involved in decisions about their homes, and they want good communication from their landlord and genuine involvement and not just a ‘tick box’ approach. They also want tenant involvement to be broad, not narrow, and empowering, not controlled.

As a result the TSA has set national standards of how tenants should be involved in influencing and monitoring the scope and range of services received from their landlord. In addition they will require landlords to engage meaningfully with tenants to empower them, specifically in the management and maintenance of their homes.

Consequently a landlord should:

- Establish a clear approach, agreed with tenants as to how they will involve them in influencing and monitoring service delivery at a local level
- Agree how and when local offers will be agreed and monitored
- Develop and implement arrangements for seeking the views of tenants which would operate both for seeking the views of individual tenants on their experience and wider scrutiny or tenant inspection arrangements and demonstrate how they have modified and improved services to respond to those views.
- Provide meaningful performance information

The National Conversation also revealed that:

- Tenants want to be consulted, involved in decisions, and have high quality communications from their landlord.
- Involvement should be broad, genuine and empowering
- Tenants want choice, especially in relation to repairs and maintenance and design of their homes.
- There is a relationship between desire for choice and dissatisfaction with landlords
- Black and minority ethnic tenants are more dissatisfied with choice, especially in allocations.
- Tenants want appropriate processes for dealing with service failure, an excellent complaint handling process, and an opportunity to hold landlords to account-and to ensure they deliver on their promises.

The TSA six national standards are:

**Tenant involvement and empowerment standard**

This standard covers all social landlords and calls for all tenants to be offered opportunities to be involved in the management of their housing. It also covers customer service and choice, complaints, equality and diversity and support needs.

**Home standard**

Again, this standard applies to all landlords. They will be required to ensure that all homes are warm, weatherproof and have modern facilities and to provide an efficient and cost-effective repairs and maintenance service.

**Tenancy standard**

This standard covers allocations, rents and tenure and will apply to all providers, except for the requirements on rents, which will not apply to local authorities.

**Neighbourhood and community standard**

All landlords will be required to work, with their partners, to tackle anti-social
behaviour effectively. The standard also requires them to keep communal areas clean and safe.

**Value for money standard**

This standard requires all landlords to manage their resources to provide ‘cost effective, efficient, quality services’. They will need to report to their tenants how they are managing and prioritising their spending and ensure that there is meaningful tenant led self regulation.

**Governance and viability standard**

This standard does not apply to local authorities.

### 2.2 Audit Commission Inspection and Key Lines of Enquiries (KLOE)

Key Lines of Enquiries (KLOEs) form part of the Audit Commission’s current methodology for inspecting English local authorities, ALMOs and housing associations. These provide criteria for assessing the effectiveness and efficiency of services. They are used throughout the Commission’s inspection regime, including for short notice inspections.

The Resident Involvement KLOE contains a series of descriptors that are provided to help organisations understand how the quality of services provided are assessed and give an indication of what would be expected of services delivered to specific standards.

The KLOEs consider service standards in terms of access, customer care and user focus, diversity, resources, impact and value for money.

The Audit Commission and the TSA will work together to streamline the KLOEs.

### 3.0 OBJECTIVES AND COMMITMENTS

#### 3.1 Objectives

The overarching objectives of this strategy are to:

- Reach a wider resident profile
- Ensure that resident involvement activities have clear service improvements objectives
- Measure the impact of resident involvement
- Evaluate and improve value for money of all resident involvement activities.
- Improve satisfaction rates specifically those measuring where tenants views are taken into account, and also the opportunities to be involved

The objectives are underpinned by key resident involvement commitments:
To offer a wider range of opportunities for residents to get involved, and identify ways for these activities to take place at a local/village level.

To ensure that all teams in Affordable Homes providing core landlord services will develop plans for involving residents in developing and improving their services e.g. housing and income management, maintenance and asset management.

That teams will demonstrate how resident feedback has been used to improve their services.

To ensure that there is an open and transparent process for accessing opportunities for getting involved.

To provide support and training to improve access and take-up of opportunities.

To develop flexibility across areas and services, as a ‘one size fits all’ approach will not meet the needs of all our residents. The approach will vary for different residents e.g. general needs, supported housing, and leaseholders.

3.2 Evaluating the impact of resident involvement

To ensure that resident involvement activities are making a difference and the Council responds in terms of service development and enhancements, it will be necessary to evaluate the impact; therefore we will review all involvement activities for:

- Effectiveness: has the activity achieved the objectives set by residents and the Council?
- Popularity: were residents attracted by the activity? Were there specific groups of residents that engaged or did not engage in the opportunity?
- Access and Diversity: was it easy to get to? Did it reach the people it needed to reach? Did we get a good cross-section of people getting involved?
- Value for money: was the output, such as suggested improvements, savings or reprioritised spending, worth the input, including funding, residents’ time, staffing and other resources?

To assist in measuring the impact we will:

- Engage residents in collecting information about the impact of their involvement.
- Survey residents on satisfaction with their involvement and also on their satisfaction with the services we provide.
- Benchmark our performance against other landlords.
- The Tenant Participation Group (TPG) to act as a scrutiny body to help us evaluate what works well and identify weaknesses.
- The TPG will also monitor the progress of this strategy and the associated action plan.
- Use the resident feedback to continuously improve services and to attain consistently high levels of customer satisfaction.
• Use resident feedback to help us shape and tailor services so that are efficient and effective and help us achieve upper quartile in all service areas.
• Aim to continuously improve service standards so that residents receive an excellent service and involve residents in setting challenging targets for improvement

3.3 Promotion of opportunities

The opportunities for involvement must innovate and target specific groups in specific areas, especially those underrepresented areas.

Therefore we will:

• Offer a menu of opportunities, based on a ladder of involvement
• Develop a database of residents interested in involvement.

Menu of involvement:

The list below offers a sample menu of involvement for residents:

• Satisfaction surveys
• Advisory focus groups to review policies and procedures
• Residents' groups/associations
• Workshops
• Mystery shopping
• Complaints, suggestions, compliments
• Estate inspections/walkabouts
• Housing surgeries
• Fun days
• Planning for Real exercises
• Newsletter design and editing
• Tenant Participation Group
• Village voices
• Street representatives
• E/say
• Sounding boards

Ladder of involvement:

As well as offering a variety of ways in which customers can get involved, we will offer a variety of levels of involvement because we understand that different customers can commit different amounts of time. So by referring to the menu residents can chose an option or a combination of options according to what best suits their needs.

3.4 Update the Compact to deliver the outcomes
A Tenants Compact (Appendix 4) has been produced and is an agreement between tenants and residents and the Council to deliver the resident involvement outcomes and outputs via formal mechanisms and procedures.

4.0 WHERE DOES THE COUNCIL WANT TO BE?

4.1 Successful delivery of the Resident Involvement Strategy

SCDC will deliver the strategy by carrying out the actions and activities set out in the action plan at appendix 1 which will be monitored by the Tenant Participation Group. An annual impact assessment will also be carried out to demonstrate successful delivery and identify future actions.

4.2 A ‘cutting edge’ and tailored approach to involving residents

Our approach to involving residents is informed by feedback, research, best practice in the sector and government policy. We will continuously review our action plan ensuring that we provide an excellent service that is focused on making a difference and adding value for our customers.

4.3 Compliance with the TSA standard

The TSA has set clear expectations regarding resident involvement in tenant involvement and empowerment standard. There are three elements of the standard:

1. Customer service and choice.
2. Involvement and empowerment.
3. Responding to complaints.

All three will be subjected to robust value for money guidelines.

Each has ‘required outcomes’ related to these some ‘specific requirements’ and we aim to be compliant by having a robust action plan and robust monitoring arrangements.

4.4 Compliance with Resident Involvement Service Standards

We will develop our own resident involvement service standards and monitor our performance, seek feedback and report how well we comply with our service standards every three months to the Tenant Participation Group.

4.5 Meeting targets including resident satisfaction with opportunities to get involved

We will monitor performance against targets and report our achievements to staff and residents every three months. Resident satisfaction with opportunities to participate in management and decision-making is a key performance indicator.

5.0 HOW WILL THE COUNCIL GET THERE?
5.1 **Resident centred range of activities**  
The Council will get there by ensuring that residents are at the centre of everything we do and by providing a wide range of opportunities for meaningful engagement.

5.2 **Clear aims and objectives**  
All involvement activities will have clear aims, objectives and outcomes to ensure that residents feel empowered in an honest and open environment.

5.3 **Influence decision making**  
To ensure that residents’ views, expectations and outcomes of engagement influence decision making and improve services.

5.4 **Action plan**  
Ensure that action plan is robust and challenging and evolving to take into account new initiatives’ and good practice.

5.5 **Feedback**  
Provide feedback to residents informing them how their influence has changed and improved services.

6.0 **MONITORING AND REVIEWING THE STRATEGY**  
This strategy will be monitored in conjunction with the Compact by the TPG and the Portfolio Holder and reviewed annually to address the new regulatory arrangements with the TSA.