

Residents' Working Group: Workshop Five
6th August 2019, 6-8pm

Following discussions at BRF, it was agreed that a fifth workshop of the RWG would be held to recap on what had been discussed over the period of the workshops and to consider the draft Resident Participation and Consultation Strategy. The fifth workshop was also an opportunity to discuss complaints data as there was not time to cover this in the fourth workshop. Whilst efforts were made to arrange the fifth workshop at a suitable time for all RWG participants, only a small number of residents were able to attend.

The group was informed of the sad news that Mr Robin Bishop, co-chair of the RWG, had passed away and it was decided that the HROSC report would pay tribute to his contribution to the RWG process and more widely to resident involvement.

Complaints Data

It was noted that the Council's corporate complaints process is changing, with changes expected to come into effect in October 2019. This will involve moving to a two stage process where stage one is a full investigation by the section and stage two is dealt with by a senior manager. The new process will also include increased focus and feedback on lessons learnt from complaints with a specific paragraph in each response.

Council officers summarised that the Council currently reports housing complaints data in the following ways

- Annual Report to Residents (complaints dealt with, complaints responded to within target, complaints dealt with at stage one of the complaints procedure.)
- Annual Area Housing Panel report (complaints by section over the past three years and number of complaints dealt with at each stage of the complaints procedure.)

It was explained that whilst the overall complaints process and reporting, including Government data submissions, is led centrally by the Council, the Housing and Regeneration Department have control over information provided on housing performance reports (including the annual report and AHP reports.)

The RWG were asked what information they would like to see increased reporting on. Residents noted that a breakdown of complaints by subject should be a priority for reporting and complaints data should be provided quarterly. It was agreed that the Council will look at ways to increase reporting through the AHP reports, including reporting on subject matter. This will allow the Council to report on trends in complaints data.

Online Consultation

From March to July, an online survey was open to seek the wider views of residents on matters of participation. The Council received 100 responses to this questionnaire (35 tenants, 65 leaseholders and 1 household member of a leaseholder.) 75 respondents lived in an area covered by an RA, 14 did not know if their area has an RA and 11 did not have an RA covering their property. Trends arising from the online survey are in line with recommendations from the RWG, including the need to raise awareness of Housing Community Champions, the Sheltered Housing Focus Group and the Annual Report Focus Group. As set out in the draft Resident Participation and Consultation Strategy, the Council will proactively publicise these participation activities.

The survey identified that there is an appetite for engagement with 85% of respondents stating an interest in being involved to some degree. Furthermore, 67% of those living in areas not covered by an RA or who do not know, said they would be interested in joining an RA. The majority of respondents identified that they would like to take part in involvement opportunities no more than once per quarter. The draft Strategy aims to enhance the participation opportunities available, with a particular focus on allowing residents to get involved at the level of their choosing.

The survey asked what would make it easier for respondents to get involved - 48 people said better online information about how to get involved and 47 people said more opportunities to participate from home (e.g. readers' panels) and 38 said more online satisfaction surveys. There is clearly a demand for online opportunities, however several respondents also raised the importance of providing opportunities for those who do not have digital access.

Draft Participation and Consultation Strategy

It was noted that whilst the Housing Service Standards have not been fully reviewed as part of the RWG, it has been necessary to update the Service Standard in relation to Resident Involvement to reflect the recommendations from this review and ensure they are aligned to the draft Strategy. The group were given a handout showing the changes to this service standard and advised that this will be an appendix to the HROSC report.

It was advised that the draft Strategy is divided into four main sections, each covering a different element of participation and consultation in the Borough. The draft Strategy is all encompassing and sets out the Department's approach to resident participation and consultation, including topics covered as part of the RWG process, as well as information on consultation arrangements outside of this review (e.g. consultation on council-led development and regeneration.)

- Formal structures (covering RMOs, RAs, AHP, BRF)
- Informal structures (covering housing community champions, focus groups, readers' panels, satisfaction surveys)
- Engaging the wider population (covering rewarding and promoting participation)
- Consultation arrangements (includes online consultation processes and arrangements that are separate to the main structures – e.g. regeneration, council-led development)

Communication is a thread throughout the draft Strategy, and this is reflected through the actions set out in each section.

The Strategy sets out the Council's approach to the topic and the routes available for residents to participate. Each section contains a set of priorities that the Council will work towards over the course of the Strategy (2019-2022), including key commitments and actions agreed as part of the RWG process (which will be monitored through the action plan).

The RWG were asked for their views on the priorities set out in the draft Strategy and the target times for completion as set out in the boxes below. The RWG looked at the priorities for the first three sections of the Strategy (formal structures, informal structures and engaging the wider community) as these are the ones impacted by the work of the RWG process. The fourth section on consultation arrangements focuses on arrangements that are specialist and sit outside the main participation routes (e.g. council-led development and regeneration) and therefore was not covered by the work of the RWG.

Formal Structures

Formal Structures

We will:

- Continue to support existing RAs and encourage the formation of new ones through RPOs and SIBs - **ongoing**
- Monitor and support the Borough's Resident Management Organisations/Co-ops - **ongoing**
- Set up an annual poll to allow members of the BRF to vote on a set of topics which will trigger a performance report, presentation and/or a service review - **September 2020**
- Implement changes to constitutions and membership of formal structures underpinned by the principle of focusing on Council residents, providing additional support to affected RAs to meet accreditation criteria for 2020/21 - **November 2019**
- Establish a programme of training for accredited RAs, including considering options for e-learning - **March 2020**
- Organise an RA conference in 2020 to launch this Strategy - **March 2020**
- Update performance reports in line with recommendations from the RWG to ensure these are clear and informative - **September 2019 for AHP reports, September 2020 for Annual Report**

Annual poll to allow members of the BRF to vote on a set of topics - The RWG asked for this point to be clarified in the draft Strategy as it wasn't clear what this meant in practice and how this would feed into the rest of the formal structure. It was confirmed that the set of topics will be proposed by the Council based on emerging trends from satisfaction surveys, complaints data and strategic priorities and that as the highest formal structure, BRF members should be representative of the views of their electing body, therefore can choose the topic for the year. It was agreed that this would be confirmed in the draft Strategy. It was also confirmed that satisfaction surveys will be the route for residents who are not involved in the formal structures to feed into this.

Changes to constitutions and membership - Two residents expressed their opposition to the proposed changes to membership of the formal structures (as set out in the summary of workshop two). The two residents highlighted that they did not realise the full implication of their votes in workshop two and would like to revisit this issue. One noted that the limitations on non-resident leaseholders would have a negative impact on their own RA as they will struggle to find residents willing to take on responsibility of committee positions. It was noted that under the proposed model, non-resident leaseholders, freeholders, household members and private sub-tenants of leaseholders may sit on the committee and may hold the position of secretary. It was also noted that RPOs for the four RAs affected will work closely with them. An RPO who was in the meeting advised that this would include help campaigning and speaking to residents and if necessary might involve dropping to associate status for a period to allow for development and engagement with the local community. A resident member of the RWG noted that in the past their RA needed committee members, but that after a period of knocking on doors and work to promote the RA, they successfully encouraged new residents to get involved and see the benefits of the RA.

It was discussed that no other members have expressed an objection and that there would not be another vote on this matter, but that their opposition will be recorded in the HROSC report. On this matter, one resident chose to resign from the RWG with around half an hour left of the workshop.

Performance reports - The RWG noted that it needs to be clearer how the wider resident population can benefit from performance reports. The format of the formal structures allows representatives to provide feedback between each level (i.e. from RA to AHP to BRF). It was advised that the Annual Report in Homelife is the main tool for communicating performance with the whole resident population, but that AHP reports are available publicly. It was agreed that more work needs to be done to proactively promote the AHP performance information and ensure this can be found on the website.

Generally, the RWG agreed with the other points and thought that the target times were reasonable.

Informal Structures

Informal Structures

We will:

- Carry out two focus groups per year. One designated for the review of the Annual Report. Other topics to include webpages review, major works consultation mechanisms and RA accreditation procedures - **ongoing**
- Set up new readers' panels as appropriate to review publications, including housing webpages and the RA Handbook - **ongoing, review RA Handbook by April 2020**
- Review the Housing Community Champions scheme to ensure it is well publicised and consider how best to manage it, including a review of funding arrangements to ensure the scheme remains sustainable as it grows - **November 2019**
- Set up a participation register and encourage residents to join - **September 2020**
- Consider the feasibility of mystery shopping exercises for residents to spot-check estate conditions - **September 2020**

The RWG were in general agreement with the priorities set out in this section and the target times.

Focus groups – it was clarified that two focus groups per year relates to financial year, rather than calendar year. The RWG asked for clarification of how the focus group programme will be devised and the Council will confirm.

Housing Community Champions – one resident asked whether HCCs are reappointed each year. It was confirmed that each year the RPO should check whether the HCC is active and decide whether they should continue in their role, supporting them to do so where needed. It was confirmed that the Council will ensure the work of the RPOs is aligned across all areas and to ensure that the procedures are followed.

Engaging the Wider Population

Engaging the wider population

We will:

- Continue to encourage participation, particularly amongst harder to reach resident groups who do not wish to be involved in the formal participation structures - **ongoing**
- Review the Housing Link programme to ensure that satisfaction levels are being captured accurately with a focus on moving towards transactional surveys – **November 2019**
- Work with Chelsea Football Club to continue and expand the Chelsea Kicks programme for both young people and older residents - **ongoing**
- Continue to support older residents to get involved in their local community by providing a programme of activities within sheltered housing schemes and through the work of the community development co-ordinators - **ongoing**
- Continue to reward participation to ensure residents feel appreciated for their input and explore other options available, such as point-based systems and access to leisure facilities – **ongoing, explore other options by June 2020**
- Review the publicity of participation opportunities. Establish a designated resident involvement page in Homelife to provide updates on the action plan, promote participation activities and provide feedback from resident involvement – **April 2020**

Generally, the RWG agreed with the priorities set out in this section and the target times. Following on from earlier conversations, one resident stated disagreement as they felt that priorities for engaging the wider population were inconsistent with proposed membership rules around non-resident leaseholders, freeholders, household members and private sub-tenants.

Activities on sheltered housing schemes and the work of the community development co-ordinators – one resident noted that they had not heard of the community development co-ordinators before and the group agreed that more publicity around their work would be useful.

Next Steps

The draft Resident Participation and Consultation Strategy will be presented to September BRF and HROSC. The HROSC report contains information about the RWG process and recommendations arising from the RWG. RWG members were given a copy of the draft Strategy and HROSC report to review and asked to provide any comment that week.

Following September HROSC, the draft Strategy will go out for a 6 week-public consultation and residents will be encouraged to respond through articles in Homelife, social media and posters on estate notice boards. The draft Strategy will also be discussed at AHPs in September/October. Responses to the consultation will be analysed and help inform the final Strategy which will be presented to BRF/HROSC in November and pending approval, will be launched at an RA conference in early 2020.