

# Arun District Council

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	<b>HOUSING AND WELLBEING COMMITTEE ON 6 OCTOBER 2022</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY 2022-2026</b>
<b>LEAD OFFICER:</b>	<b>MOH HUSSEIN – INTERIM HEAD OF HOUSING SASHA HAWKINS – RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT OFFICER</b>
<b>LEAD MEMBER:</b>	<b>COUNCILLOR JACKY PENDLETON</b>
<b>WARDS:</b>	<b>ALL</b>
<b>CORPORATE PRIORITY / POLICY CONTEXT / CORPORATE VISION:</b> The strategy will support the following areas in the corporate vision Improving the wellbeing of Arun <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Working with partners to provide advice, support and activities that promote community wellbeing where it will have the greatest impact.</li></ul> Delivering the right homes in the right places <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Support those in our community that most need help, providing a safety net where necessary and working with people and organisations to meet different needs.</li></ul> The strategy will do this as it will provide residents with an opportunity to directly impact and influence the services, they receive from Housing. A key aim of the strategy is to work with residents and partners to create thriving and sustainable communities.	
<b>DIRECTORATE POLICY CONTEXT:</b> This strategy has been developed in response to the changes announced in the Social Housing White Paper to ensure compliance with all current legislative and regulatory requirements.	
<b>FINANCIAL SUMMARY:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The Social Housing White Paper makes clear that housing providers need to have effective resident engagement practices in place, and they will be required to evidence this to the Regulator of Social Housing.</li><li>We need to ensure that we have the right resources in place, otherwise there is a risk of not meeting the aims and objectives set out within the document. Which could lead to us not being compliant with current and future legislative and regulatory requirements.</li><li>As we implement the strategy the resources required will increase as we will be involving more residents through surveys, workshops, scrutiny, and other</li></ul>	

methods than we have done previously. We will also be organising more community initiatives and creating more residents' groups.

- The engagement work associated with the decarbonisation strategy will also fall within this team via a Tenant Liaison Officer, who will liaise with tenants to explain the works we will be carrying out, what to expect from the works, and be the main point of contact for tenants.
- Several projects will be delivered as part of implementation these include creation of a new engagement framework, creation of a scrutiny process, communication plans for engaging on building safety, creation of new resident groups and community initiatives. These projects will be taking place over year 1 and 2 of the strategy and will require dedicated officers to run the project to ensure it is successful. Further projects are also scheduled for years 3 and 4.
- This work will be alongside the day-to-day activities of the Resident Engagement Officer.
- We contacted another local authority who is of a similar size (3300) to see how they resource resident engagement. They have the following roles
- One full time manager
- Three tenant engagement and communication officers working three days a week. This equates to nine working days per week or 1.8 officer pro rata.
- We currently have one FTE Resident Engagement Officer. This report recommends the recruitment of another FTE Resident Engagement Officer as part of a budget review and will be a budget growth request for implementation from 1 April 2023. The post will support the implementation of the strategy and ongoing engagement work.

Cost: Grade 9 Starting scale point 29	£33,486
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On costs	£11,092
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Total	£44,578
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- Since the Resident Engagement Officer has been in post, we have delivered several community events, the majority of these have been funded through partnership working which has kept the cost low for the council, however as we expand the work we do, to deliver against the aims of the strategy we anticipate these costs may rise.
- Having a dedicated resident engagement budget will mean that funds are set aside for this work. An estimation of these increased costs has been given below which will be incorporated into the budget setting for 2023/24

Annual TPAS membership £1479;  
Incentives to reward participation £750  
Community events £750

Estate improvement fund £50,000 which will be for small capital projects which are eligible for funding from capital resources. To qualify, such projects must be categorised as capital expenditure under the relevant regulations.

Total revenue costs £47,557  
Total capital costs £50,000

All these costs will be the subject of budget growth bids in the 2023/24 budget preparation exercise.

## **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To seek formal approval of a new Resident Engagement Strategy covering the period 2022 to 2026.

## **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Housing and Wellbeing Committee
  - 2.1.1 Approve the Resident Engagement Strategy 2022-2026.
  - 2.1.2 Give delegated authority to the Head of Housing to make minor changes to the strategy and any amendments necessary to reflect legislative and regulatory changes.
  - 2.1.3 Approve the submission of budget growth bids of £47,557 revenue costs and £50,000 capital costs for the Council's 2023/24 budget preparation exercise.

## **3 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 3.1 As a registered social housing landlord, we are required to meet all relevant government legislation in the delivery of our housing services this includes the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard.
- 3.2 Since our last strategy, the housing and political landscape has changed a great deal. Following the publication of The Social Housing Green Paper in 2018, which set out proposals to rebalance the relationship between residents and landlords, the Government has now published The White Paper a new

Charter for Social Housing Residents and introduced the Social Housing Regulation Bill into parliament.

- 3.3 The strategy will support the council in meeting the requirements set out by the government and will ensure that our residents have every opportunity to engage with us in the ways that suit them, delivering meaningful and outcome-focused resident involvement where they can influence and shape our current and future services.

## **4 DETAIL**

- 4.1 Since our last strategy there have been significant changes within the housing sector. The Social Housing White Paper was published in November 2020 and set out a seven-point charter that every tenant should be able to expect from their landlord.

- a) To be safe in your home
- b) To know your landlord is performing
- c) To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly
- d) To be treated with respect
- e) To have your voice heard by your landlord
- f) To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in
- g) To be supported to take your first step to ownership

- 4.2 The Regulator of Social Housing will require landlords to show how they have sought out and considered ways to improve tenant engagement.

- 4.3 The publication of the White Paper and the future changes in regulation have meant it is a real opportunity for us to refresh our approach to how we involve our residents and ensure that we are meeting all current and future regulatory requirements. It also sets out a clear vision for resident engagement at the council and what our residents can expect from us.

- 4.4 The strategy has been developed by a combination of input from residents, consideration of current and future changes in legislation and best practice within the sector.

- 4.5 We also worked with TPAS (tenant engagement experts) and were able to benefit from their expertise and guidance to shape the new strategy.

- 4.6 The Resident Engagement Strategy that is set out in Appendix 1 has five aims.

- a) Make engagement easier
- b) Be accountable
- c) Engage digitally

- d) Improve communication
- e) Work with our communities

4.7 Under each heading we set out the work we will do to meet this aim and where we want to be by 2026.

4.8 The new strategy will ensure we meet any current and future regulatory requirements and will also ensure our residents can influence and shape the services they receive in the ways that suit them.

## **5 CONSULTATION**

5.1 The Resident Engagement Strategy was developed with input from our residents, staff and TPAS.

5.2 A satisfaction survey was carried out in Spring 2021, this survey was sent to all our tenants and leaseholders and 1,628 responses were received which equated to a 44% response rate which was higher than anticipated. Analysis of the findings and trends gave us some key areas of focus for the strategy.

5.3 These included improving opportunities to make views known (57% satisfied) and residents having a say in how services are managed (46% satisfied).

5.4 Following development of the aims and objectives of the strategy, consultation was carried out with our tenants and leaseholders to get their views on the proposed aims and objectives. Consultation was carried out from 4 March 2022 to 4 April 2022.

5.5 The consultation was shared online via our website and social media and printed versions were given to residents at coffee mornings held in our sheltered schemes. Residents were invited to take part in an online survey to give their views, with paper forms sent out by request.

5.6 Analysis of the consultation confirmed that the aims and objectives of the strategy were supported. The most neutral aim was engaging digitally where there was concern that all engagement would go digital. This is not the intention of the strategy but to rather maximise the use of technology to engage with more people, but we will offer a variety of ways for residents to engage with us in the ways that suit them. As part of the implementation of the strategy we will be working with our residents to develop a new framework which involves our residents in a way that is accessible and attractive to all.

5.7 The outcome of the consultation was also presented to our residents group Your Voice on 16 June 2022.

5.8 Managers within housing and wellbeing and community were also invited to comment on the draft strategy.

5.9 TPAS were also asked to comment on the draft strategy and provide advice and guidance to ensure it meets best practice and regulatory requirements. Their National Tenant Engagement Standards are attached as Appendix 2.

## **6 OPTIONS / ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED**

6.1 Not to approve the strategy. This is not considered a feasible option as the council needs to have a Resident Engagement Strategy that reflects the current and anticipated regulatory requirements, along with best practice in the sector.

## **7 COMMENTS BY THE INTERIM GROUP HEAD OF FINANCE/SECTION 151 OFFICER**

7.1 The report makes recommendations of items to be included in the 2023/24 Housing Revenue Account budget. The HRA is under financial strain at the present time, so it is recommended these items be classified as budget growth items, to be approved only if financially sustainable for the HRA.

7.2 The report also recommends the establishment of an Estate improvement fund of £50,000 which will be for small capital projects which are eligible for funding from capital resources. To qualify, such projects must be categorised as capital expenditure under the relevant regulations.

## **8 RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS**

8.1 There are no implications identified

## **9 COMMENTS OF THE GROUP HEAD OF LAW AND GOVERNANCE & MONITORING OFFICER**

9.1 The report states that “We want to ensure the voice of our residents is heard throughout the organisation and that residents can influence and hold us accountable for our performance”. This has two main legal implications:

9.1.1 The first is that the Council will have duty to consult residents on formative ideas long enough before decisions are taken, give sufficient time for residents to respond and to conscientiously take into account the views of the residents. Failure to do this this could lead to Judicial Reviews and complaints to the ombudsman.

9.1.2 The second implication is that the Council will be judged on the extent to which the obligations set out in this Strategy are being followed. The strategy raises a legitimate expectation that the five key aims will be followed.

9.2 The Council should therefore be careful not to commit to aims which will not be properly funded.

## **10 HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT**

10.1 This report recommends the appointment of an additional FTE for a Resident Engagement Officer.

## **11 HEALTH & SAFETY IMPACT**

11.1 It is anticipated that the proposals will have a positive impact on health and safety. Improved engagement should result in any health and safety concerns being more easily brought to the attention of the council and the strategy should improve communications with tenants on what the council is doing to ensure they are kept safe. For example, the implementation specifically includes communication plans for engagement on building safety

## **12 PROPERTY & ESTATES IMPACT**

12.1 Residents will have greater involvement in improving their neighbourhoods and estates through the development of initiatives to involve them in decisions on estate improvements.

## **13 EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA) / SOCIAL VALUE**

13.1 An equalities impact assessment has been completed and is attached at Appendix 3.

## **14 CLIMATE CHANGE & ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT/SOCIAL VALUE**

14.1 The engagement work associated with the decarbonisation strategy will also fall within this Strategy via a Tenant Liaison Officer, who will liaise with tenants to explain the works we will be carrying out, what to expect from the works, and be the main point of contact for tenants.

14.2 The Council is reviewing its Procurement Strategy and part of this review will be to see what social value contractors can provide to tenants and leaseholders and this will form part of the engagement process

## **15 CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT**

15.1 One of the aims of the strategy is to work with our residents and partners to create thriving and sustainable communities and help facilitate their capacity to address local issues. This in turn could lead to an increase in satisfaction with the neighbourhoods in which our residents live and may contribute to the Safer Arun Partnership priorities such as community engagement and confidence.

## **16 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPACT**

16.1 There are no implications identified.

## **17 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION / DATA PROTECTION CONSIDERATIONS**

17.1 The Strategy intends to review how the Council uses resident data to improve communication. Also improved communication may involve information which may identify an individual. A data protection impact assessment will be carried out prior to any engagement exercise. Further the information produced during engagement exercise will be subject to disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act.

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### **CONTACT OFFICER:**

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### **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:**

Appendix 1 – Resident Engagement Strategy 2022-2026

Appendix 2 – TPAS national standards

Appendix 3 – Equality impact assessment

Link to the Social Housing White Paper

[The charter for social housing residents: social housing white paper - GOV.UK  
\(\[www.gov.uk\]\(https://www.gov.uk\)\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/611212/tpas-national-standards.pdf)