

Arun District Council

REPORT TO:	Housing and Wellbeing Committee – 23 November 2023
SUBJECT:	Resident Engagement Strategy 2022-2026 annual update
LEAD OFFICER:	Sasha Hawkins – Interim Business Improvement Manager Kat Rance-Shilbach – Interim Resident Engagement Officer
LEAD MEMBER:	Councillor Carol Birch – Chair of Housing and Wellbeing Committee
WARDS:	All

CORPORATE PRIORITY / POLICY CONTEXT / CORPORATE VISION:

The resident engagement strategy was adopted in October 2022 the strategy supports the following areas in the corporate vision:

Improving the wellbeing of Arun

- Working with partners to provide advice, support and activities that promote community wellbeing where it will have the greatest impact.

Delivering the right homes in the right places

- 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.

DIRECTORATE POLICY CONTEXT:

Our Resident Engagement Strategy is in place for the period 2022 to 2026 it sets out five key aims that support the council in meeting the requirements set out in the Social Housing Regulation Act.

The aims of the Resident Engagement Strategy inform the work we do in Housing services to engage with our residents and ensure they can influence and shape the services we provide. This includes the development of directorate policies and strategies.

This strategy was developed in response to the changes announced in the Social Housing White Paper to ensure compliance with all current legislative and regulatory requirements. The Regulator of Social Housing has also released the proposed amended Consumer Standards and conducted a full consultation period on the proposals, and whilst we do not have an outcome of consultation, we are now much better informed on the direction of travel.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY:

The community grant fund has a budget of £10,000 and is due to launch soon.

We have only used £151.95 of our £3,000 budget for community events due to negotiating with our contractors to donate their time and materials for free on many occasions.

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide members with an update on the progress against the aims of the Resident Engagement Strategy following its adoption in October 2022.
- 1.2 To provide members with an overview of the engagement carried out with residents since the adoption of the Resident Engagement Strategy.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Housing and Wellbeing Committee

- 2.1 Note the contents of the report
- 2.2 Note the progress against the aims of the strategy

3 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 3.1 This report provides members with an update on the progress of the aims of the Resident Engagement Strategy following its adoption in October 2022
- 3.2 It sets out the year 1 priorities and achievements, looks ahead to the year 2 priorities and details any changes we envisage because of the new Consumer Standards.
- 3.3 We are on target to achieve the year one aims set out in our action plan and have already started progressing year 2 priorities. By the end of the financial year, we will have launched a range of new ways for residents to get involved and influence our service. This will ensure we are meeting the aims of our strategy and the requirements set out by the regulator.
- 3.4 Our resident engagement officer continues to embed the strategy throughout housing services and works with residents to ensure they can influence and shape the services they receive.
- 3.5 From the period October 2022 to October 2023, we have delivered a range of initiatives and events to ensure we are involving our residents and making a positive contribution to the areas in which they live.
- 3.6 Some of the highlights from the past 12 months include:
 - Coffee breaks across 11 of our sheltered schemes, carried out every 4 months.

- Estate clean up days, to make a positive contribution to the communities our residents live in
- Working with Osborne Property Services Limited and Tivoli to deliver social value work to benefit residents.
- Completion of various surveys including the Tenant Satisfaction Measures survey, a leaseholder satisfaction survey, a “Getting Involved” survey, and transactional surveys after a service is received.
- We continue to be members of TPAS, a not-for-profit organisation that champions resident involvement and empowerment.
- Customer journey mapping across the areas of anti-social behaviour, repairs and complaints by carrying out interviews with residents who received these services and learning about their experiences.

4 **DETAIL**

- 4.1 At committee on 6 October 2022 members adopted the councils Resident Engagement Strategy to cover the period 2022-2026. This strategy set out five key aims and what the council would do to meet these. An action plan was created to set out priorities for each year, and this report will detail the progress we have made against these priorities. Set out below are the five aims and the work we have done in year 1 of the strategy.
- 4.2 **Aim 1 – Make engagement easier** - With our residents, we want to develop a wide range of opportunities to ensure their views are heard and that they can influence and help shape our services.
- 4.3 A draft framework and menu of opportunities for residents along with a visual aid have been designed. We aim to have this launched by April 2024. Using the feedback from the getting involved survey conducted in March 2023, we will be introducing new ways for residents to influence the services they receive. We are aware that most residents prefer “ad-hoc”, quick methods of involvement and we have considered their preferences when creating this, as we want their involvement to be convenient and accessible.
- 4.4 A centralised housing complaints process has been established. We completed a customer journey mapping exercise to understand where the process could be improved. A cohort of customers that had made a complaint in the past 12 months were interviewed and their comments were used during the journey mapping session to formulate an improvement plan. This has already reduced complaint response time

- 4.5 We have arranged regular coffee breaks at our sheltered schemes and regular clean up days on our highest populated estates, where residents can raise concerns and direct us to problem areas. The coffee breaks are generally well attended with in the region of 12 residents attending each time. See Appendix 1 for feedback from the cleansing team from one of the estate clean up mornings.
- 4.6 **Aim 2 – Be Accountable:** We are committed to working with residents to give them greater opportunity to influence, and to ensure they have the information they need to hold us to account for our performance.
- 4.7 We have completed the first tenant satisfaction measures survey with over 1100 tenants and 145 leaseholders responding.
- 4.8 The report findings have been utilised to guide service planning and delivery and we plan to publish the results by the end of the financial year.
- 4.9 A full suite of measurable performance indicators has been developed with our residents and are being monitored. We asked our residents to prioritise the services most important to them, so we knew we were focussing on improving the areas that mattered to them. These indicators have been designed to ensure transparency about our performance.
- 4.10 A performance board within the housing team is being created to monitor service improvement commitments and actions agreed.
- 4.11 Our complaints performance was published for residents to review in the latest edition of Arun at Home.
- 4.12 **Aim 3 – Engage digitally:** We want to maximise our use of digital technologies to improve our customer experience. Making it as easy as possible for residents to connect with us and share their views to shape and improve the services they receive.
- 4.13 We have conducted various digital ad hoc feedback surveys with residents, including new lettings, complaints, ASB and satisfaction with the LMA at Nightingales. (See Appendix 3.)
- 4.14 We have gone out to tender with companies to undertake these on a regular basis.
- 4.15 The website has been improved and includes performance information that residents can access, enabling them to hold us to account.
- 4.16 We held 8 weeks of digital skills classes at Arun Court and Compton Court to help residents engage digitally. Residents fed back that the sessions were helpful and improved their confidence using laptops and tablets.

- 4.17 Arun at Home is available online, via PageSuite, which creates a professional, easy to read, digital edition for residents to access from home on their preferred device.
- 4.18 **Aim 4 – Improving Communication:** Communication is critical, and it is important that we know who our residents are, how they want to be involved, informed, and contacted.
- 4.19 We have implemented an 8-step process which ensures that we consult with residents prior to submitting policies, strategies, or projects to committee. Together, relevant team members identify any impact on our residents and communicate with the effected parties to gather feedback, prior to submission. (See Appendix 4)
- 4.20 The resident’s newsletter has released its fifth edition and is a collaborative project delivered to residents twice a year, with a small panel of resident readers reviewing and providing feedback before publication. (Appendix 5).
- 4.21 Housing officers and repairs officers both attend coffee breaks so residents can talk to the right people regarding their concerns.
- 4.22 **Aim 5 – Working with our communities:** We believe we have a key role to play in working with our residents, stakeholders, and other partners to create thriving and sustainable communities. Each community has a unique set of skills and strengths, and we want to work with them to make a positive contribution to the areas they live and help facilitate their capacity to address local issues.
- 4.23 Our community grant fund (CGF) is ready to launch providing funding of up to £500 to groups of residents. The focus of the CGF is to provide financial help to provide resident-led estate improvements, wellbeing activities that boost mental and physical health, reduce anti-social behaviour, improve safety or work with our communities to build and improve relationships. If the plan involves work or improvements, we will try to source an internally approved competent contractor in the first instance. For other events and activities, we will pay invoices.
- 4.24 We are aiming to introduce Engagement Champions across the whole housing team who will help promote community engagement objectives within their service areas.
- 4.25 We have continued to work with our contractors to deliver services with social value, including gardening projects, community days and green space improvements. (See Appendix 6).

4.26 **Year 2 priorities**

- 4.27 Work has already begun on our year 2 priorities in line with the resident engagement strategy.
- 4.28 Planning for a legislative and cultural training day is under way and is due to be delivered before the end of 2023 to ensure all housing staff are aware of the requirements from the Regulator of Social Housing.
- 4.29 We plan to launch a resident focussed induction session for all new starters, which aligns itself with the One Arun corporate objective to improve the new starters induction plan.
- 4.30 The website is continually under review, and we plan to have an updated, improved, and informative resident engagement webpage. Residents will be able to access our performance information quarterly. This will also involve the resident's access to the Civica housing portal.
- 4.31 Continue the "You Said, We Did" method of feedback and promoting our good news stories through a variety of methods.
- 4.32 The community grant fund will have a number of success stories in the coming months, and we plan to grow the scheme to enable approval of more applications for resident-led initiatives.
- 4.33 We will be making our first submission to the Regulator of Social Housing in accordance with the Tenant Satisfaction Measures Standard (TSM). We will also carry out the 24/25 survey.

4.34 **Resident Engagement activities**

- 4.35 The activities undertaken over the last 12 months activities include:
- 33 coffee breaks across most of our sheltered schemes
 - Estate clean up days and litter picks in Wick, Bersted, Yapton, Rustington and the Bognor Trees estate.
 - Worked with Osbornes and Tivoli to deliver social value work to benefit residents such as raised vegetable beds, water butts, painting outdoor furniture, a community day, pumpkin carving, additional weeding and planting, handyman jobs and more.
 - Completed the Tenant Satisfaction Measures survey via census for all residents to respond to.
 - Seasonal Easter, Christmas and Halloween events for families.
 - Digital skills classes at two sheltered schemes.

- Customer journey mapping across the areas of anti-social behaviour, repairs, and complaints by carrying out interviews with effected residents and learning about the experiences.
- We provided drop-in sessions with two members of staff and laptops to facilitate residents applying for the energy bill support scheme, helping them claim the £400 they were entitled to.
- We conducted a “Getting involved” survey to find out how our residents preferred to provide feedback.
- Transactional surveys with residents about their experiences with repairs, complaints, ASB and their moving journey.
- Ad-Hoc surveys for comments on a new tenant handbook and reviewing the communal facilities within our sheltered schemes.
- Improved website information.
- Supported the Local Management Arrangement at Nightingales for 12 months, and surveyed residents to ensure they were satisfied with the arrangements.

5 CONSULTATION

5.1 None required

6 OPTIONS/ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERS

6.1 This report is for noting only

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

7.1 This report is just for noting and the £10,000 mentioned is within the current budget, there are no additional financial implications arising from this report.

8 RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 Not applicable.

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

9.1 The report recommends that members note the report. As the report is for noting there are no legal or governance implications

10 HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT

- 10.1 There is one FTE resident engagement officer in post delivering the work outlined in this report with collaboration with the wider housing team. This remains the same as in 2022.

11 HEALTH & SAFETY IMPACT

- 11.1 There are no direct health and safety impacts associated with this report. However reporting on resident engagement and the progress against the strategy can help to highlight improvements to service areas which include repairs and compliance, which will help support the effective management of health and safety risks.

12 PROPERTY & ESTATES IMPACT

- 12.1 The recommendations of this report have no impact on the Councils General Fund Portfolio or the delivery of Property, Estates, and Facilities functions.

13 EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA) / SOCIAL VALUE

- 13.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment was conducted before the strategy was adopted in 2022. In Arun, we have a high proportion of residents over the age of 60 and we identified that these residents were more satisfied overall. The recent Tenant Satisfaction Measures survey indicates that this assessment is still accurate.
- 13.2 To address this, we have conducted a range of activities across the district to appeal to the younger demographic, including family events at Ellis Close, Bersted Green hub and Chilgrove hub. We have also undertaken more digital surveys this year, as this cohort of residents expressed that this is their preferred method of providing feedback and we have seen an increase in younger demographics taking part in the surveys.
- 13.3 We will also shortly be holding focus groups with residents from younger demographics to understand more about how they want to become involved with our service and how we can improve our communication with them.
- 13.4 We will continue to monitor the Equalities Impact Assessment each year to ensure that our range of opportunities are attractive and accessible to all.

14 CLIMATE CHANGE & ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT/SOCIAL VALUE

- 14.1 There is no impact identified to climate change.

14.2 Many of the activities undertaken have had a positive environmental and social impact. We have undertaken regular litter picking and clean up events on our estates. We have also undertaken activities that have promoted health and wellbeing, such as gardening and exercise classes. A group of residents were also supported to grow their own fruit and vegetables.

15 CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT

15.1 Since the report was adopted in 2022, no impact has been identified. However, this remains under review as future initiatives could have a positive impact.

16 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPACT

16.1 There are no implications identified.

17 FREEDOM OF INFORMATION / DATA PROTECTION CONSIDERATIONS

17.1 There are no implications identified

CONTACT OFFICER:

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BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

Appendix 1: Resident engagement strategy 2022-2026

Appendix 2: Photos and feedback from estate clean ups

Appendix 3: Nightingales LMA satisfaction survey results

Appendix 4: 8 steps to engagement process

Appendix 5: Arun at Home summer 2023 edition

Appendix 6: Photos of work with Osbornes

Appendix 7: Resident Engagement Strategy Action Plan