

Arun District Council

REPORT TO:	Housing and Wellbeing Committee – 21 November 2024
SUBJECT:	Resident Engagement Strategy 2022-2026 Annual Update
LEAD OFFICER:	Sasha Hawkins – Business Improvement Manager Kat Rance-Shilbach – Resident Engagement Officer
LEAD MEMBER:	Councillor Carol Birch, Chair of Housing and Wellbeing Committee
WARDS:	All
CORPORATE PRIORITY / POLICY CONTEXT / CORPORATE VISION:	
<p>The resident engagement strategy was adopted in October 2022 the strategy supports the following areas in the corporate vision:</p> <p>Improving the wellbeing of Arun</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Working with partners to provide advice, support and activities that promote community wellbeing where it will have the greatest impact. <p>Delivering the right homes in the right places</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 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:	
<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>This strategy was developed in response to the changes announced in the Social Housing Regulation Act which came into effect on 1 April 2024.</p>	
FINANCIAL SUMMARY:	
<p>The community grant fund has a budget of £10,000 and is open for applications from residents, staff members and relevant stakeholders. So far, this financial year we have spent £1000 with several further grants in the pipeline.</p> <p>We also received new burdens funding of £16,760 for the Tenant Satisfaction Measures, which has been used to fund the contract cost of delivering the statutory requirement to carry out surveys.</p>	

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

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Housing and Wellbeing Committee
 - 2.1.1 Note the contents of the report
 - 2.1.2 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 2 priorities and achievements, looks ahead to the year 3 priorities and our response to the Tenant Satisfaction Measures results.
- 3.3 The only year 1 priorities from our action plan remaining as “in progress” are activities that are constantly kept under review. The same can be said for several year 2 priorities, with only one action yet to start.
- 3.4 We have launched a range of new ways for residents to get involved and influence our service. This ensures we are meeting the aims of our strategy, and the requirements set out by the Regulator.
- 3.5 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.
- 3.6 From the period October 2023 to October 2024, 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.
- 3.7 Some of the highlights from the past 12 months include:
 - a) Established “the Voice of...” local meetings for residents to meet with staff and talk about their priorities at a local level.

- b) Established our new “Housing for Older People Forum” – comprising 25 members, with a representative from nearly all our schemes. Members meet to discuss the unique needs of residents living in age-restricted accommodation.
- c) Estate clean-up days were scheduled monthly across various estates, to make a positive contribution to the communities our residents live in
- d) We delivered the first “Odd Job Day” from Chilgrove House Community Hub, where operatives were available to help residents with odd jobs, they may not have the tools to complete.
- e) We run a regular monthly drop-in session from the Hub which has proved useful, especially in helping residents report repairs.
- f) Completion of various surveys including the Tenant Satisfaction Measures survey, the new suite of transactional surveys, the use and condition of our sheltered schemes and various policy consultations.
- g) We continue to be members of TPAS, a not-for-profit organisation that champions resident involvement and empowerment. Our resident engagement officer has attended various briefings and training to ensure we are learning from best practice.
- h) We completed resident portal testing, where a cohort of residents were given early access to the Cx Portal “Arun from Home”.
- i) Our summer edition of Arun at Home was a bumper edition – with contributions from the whole of the team as well as various outside agencies.
- j) We have supported 8 Community Grant Fund applications, which included contributing towards the cost of a defibrillator in Findon, providing bike racks in Wick, and the purchase of a storage shed to help residents continue with their successful growing project in Middleton.

4 DETAIL

4.1 At the Housing and Wellbeing Committee on 6 October 2022 members adopted the Council’s 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 2 of the strategy.

4.2 Aim 1 – Make engagement easier

4.2.1 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.

- 4.2.2 From our “Getting Involved” survey, we learned that the most convenient way for our residents to share their experience with us, is via survey. We have launched a suite of transactional surveys. The areas covered our new lettings, repairs, anti-social behaviour (ASB) and complaints. We have commissioned these through a third-party company Acuity, who provide us with a real time dashboard with built in alerts so that we can proactively respond to outstanding issues. (Appendix 1a and 1b)
- 4.2.3 The centralised housing complaints system continues to see improved response times and satisfaction results. Lessons Learned papers have been drafted when trends are noticed, and this deep dive helps us to identify changes that need to be made to our processes.
- 4.2.4 We have launched resident groups called “The Voice of...” in our 5 highest populated areas – Wick, Littlehampton, Rustington, Bersted and Bognor. These are focussed on local issues and give residents access to various housing members of staff.
- 4.2.5 We’ve delivered regular clean up days on our estates, where residents can raise concerns and direct us to problem areas. Although the uptake of residents has been low, we have worked with Tivoli and Biffa to remove waste, fly tipping and address problem weeds and in some areas, graffiti. (Appendix 2)
- 4.2.6 The Local Management Agreement (LMA) at Nightingales continues into their third year and we have carried out the second annual satisfaction survey, as well as home visits to interested residents to hear about their experiences living with the LMA. (Appendix 3)
- 4.2.7 Our resident readers continue to review some of our written content, especially Arun at Home.

4.3 **Aim 2 – Be Accountable:**

- 4.3.1 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.
- 4.3.2 Last year, we completed the first tenant satisfaction measures survey with over 1100 tenants and 145 leaseholders responding.
- 4.3.3 For 2024/25, we have decided to move to quarterly satisfaction surveys over the course of the year. This provides us with close to real time opportunities to address issues raised by residents.
- 4.3.4 Our performance measures are shared quarterly with our residents, both on our website and through an update in Arun at Home. (Appendix 4)

4.3.5 The Housing Leadership Team ensure that the action plan developed after year 1 is kept up to date and this is also available to view on the website. (Appendix 5)

4.3.6 We held two in-person meetings to learn about how we can improve our communications. We invited all residents that responded to the communications questions on the TSM survey. We had 16 attendees across the two events in person, with a further 21 residents contributing via an online survey. The results fed into our action plan which is now reviewed and updated with each quarter's results.

4.4 **Aim 3 – Engage digitally:**

4.4.1 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.

4.4.2 We have conducted various digital ad hoc feedback surveys with residents, including 5 policy consultations, a survey collecting opinions on Building Safety statements, our Cx Portal Testing and how we can improve our communications.

4.4.3 The website has been improved and includes performance information that residents can access, enabling them to hold us to account. We also host our draft policies on our website when we are undertaking policy consultation.

4.4.4 We have produced instructional videos to assist residents to access the online portal "Arun from Home". We also intend to run drop-in sessions to provide further assistance if needed.

4.4.5 Arun at Home continues to be available online, via PageSuite, which creates a professional, easy to read, digital edition for residents to access from home on their preferred device. (Appendix 6)

4.4.6 We have a new Policy and Strategy page online, where residents can read our front facing policies, as well as review new policies that are open to consultation. (Appendix 7)

4.4.7 We had six residents complete comprehensive online portal testing. They were provided with registration details and a guide on how to register for their online account. They were then given tasks to complete such as requesting a rent statement, reporting a repair and changing their password.

4.4.8 An online form guided them through the steps and then there were opportunities to feedback after each task. Residents were largely positive about the online portal, with an average score of 7.6/10 for the look and feel of the new site.

4.5 **Aim 4 – Improving Communication:**

- 4.5.1 Communication is critical, and it is important that we know who our residents are, how they want to be involved, informed, and contacted.
- 4.5.2 The Housing Policy and Strategy review was noted by members. Now all the policy reviews are scheduled, we continue to follow the 8-step process which ensures that we consult with residents prior to submitting these policies to committee. Together, relevant team members identify any impact on our residents and communicate with the effected parties to gather feedback, prior to submission.
- 4.5.3 The resident's newsletter has released its seventh 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.
- 4.5.4 Housing officers and repairs officers attend the "Voice of..." meetings, so residents can talk to the right people regarding their concerns.
- 4.5.5 We have launched the new tenant handbook and repairs and compliance handbook. Both these publications were reviewed by residents to ensure the content was useful and accessible. The handbooks have been particularly popular at our in-person events. (Appendix 8 and 9)

4.6 **Aim 5 – Working with our communities:**

- 4.6.1 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.
- 4.6.2 Our community grant fund (CGF) has launched, providing funding of up to £500 to groups of residents. The focus of the CGF is to provide financial help to enable resident-led estate improvements, wellbeing activities that boost mental and physical health, reduce anti-social behavior, improve safety or work with our communities to build and improve relationships.
- 4.6.3 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 pay invoices or make purchases on the applicant's behalf. We have installed bike racks at Greenside, a dog waste bin in Potters Mead, provided a shed for tools storage at Stanley Court and sports and play equipment for Chilgrove House kids club, amongst other projects.

- 4.6.4 We have continued to work with our contractors to deliver services with social value, including gardening projects, community days and our annual Christmas tree competition, where our contractors were particularly generous this year, donating over £700 of high street vouchers as prizes. (Appendix 10)
- 4.6.5 We are developing ways to support and encourage residents to start Resident Associations, so that they can come together and feel empowered to drive improvement and hold us to account. (Appendix 11)

4.7 Year 3 priorities

- 4.7.1 Work has already begun on our year 3 priorities in line with the resident engagement strategy.
- 4.7.2 The website is continually under review. Residents will continue to be able to access our performance information quarterly. This will also involve the resident's access to the Cx housing portal. We also plan to launch Resident Readers' reviews of various sections of our website.
- 4.7.3 Continue the "You Said, We Did" method of feedback and promoting our good news stories through a variety of methods.
- 4.7.4 We completed our first submission to the Regulator of Social Housing in accordance with the Tenant Satisfaction Measures Standard (TSM). We have also completed both Q1 and Q2's satisfaction surveys, with the remaining two already scheduled. This will be complete in good time for our second submission in 2025.
- 4.7.5 We plan to launch new video updates, that will give residents an insight into the results of the satisfaction surveys and how we plan to focus our efforts, responding to their feedback. We believe that a video will provide a more personal response to the surveys, whilst enabling them to access at a time to suit them.
- 4.7.6 We continue to work on building sustainable links with partner organisations and have found that being able to work alongside the Wellbeing team now they are within our service area is working particularly well for the benefit of residents.

4.8 Resident Engagement activities

- 4.8.1 The activities undertaken over the last 12 months activities include:
- a) Estate clean-up days and litter picks in Wick, Bersted, Yapton, Rustington, Angmering and the Bognor Trees estate.
 - b) Completed the Q1 and Q2 Tenant Satisfaction Measures survey.
 - c) Secured funding for 23 weeks of exercise classes at a scheme in Middleton.
 - d) Seasonal events for families.

- e) Customer focus groups to learn about how we can improve our communications.
- f) Regular drop-in sessions from the Wick hub and have recently started these in Bersted in October.
- g) Various digital surveys, with one consultation receiving more than 400 responses.
- h) The new suite of transactional surveys with residents about their experiences with repairs, complaints, ASB and new lettings. We also have access to the associated dashboard which allows us to monitor trends and respond to alerts.
- i) Improved website information.
- j) Supported the Local Management Arrangement at Nightingales for another 12 months, and surveyed residents to ensure they were satisfied with the arrangements.
- k) Ran a fire awareness event in Bersted and Rustington with the fire service. This will be repeated to our Housing for Older People's forum to help with the uptake of the fire service's "Safe and Well" visits.
- l) Completed the first round of the "Voice of..." meetings at locations across the district, with the second meetings already scheduled or completed in some areas.
- m) Completed the first "Housing for Older People's forum" meeting.

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 Costs are grant funded aside from Officers time which is met by existing service budgets

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

9.2 An Equalities Impact Assessment was conducted in 2022 and the Council's Public Sector Equality Duties remain ongoing

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 2023.

11 HEALTH & SAFETY IMPACT

11.1 There are no direct health and safety impacts associated with this report.

11.2 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 No impact identified

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 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. 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.

15 **CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT**

15.1 Since the report was adopted in 2022, no impact has been identified. We proactively work with the community wardens to address concerns of crime. 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:

Name: Kat Rance-Shilbach
Job Title: Resident Engagement Officer
Contact Number: 01903 737635

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

[Resident engagement strategy \(arun.gov.uk\)](https://www.arun.gov.uk)