

The Resident Involvement Strategy

We – a group of tenants and leaseholders, and housing management staff from the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC) – have developed this strategy because we believe that putting resident involvement at the heart of housing management will help us improve our services and allow us to develop into a service that is not just excellent, but innovative and forward looking.

On voting for the Council to resume management of these homes, residents called for a new type of housing management, one which residents would be fully engaged and consulted upon.

Since resuming the management of your homes, RBKC councillors have consistently pledged to do just that – to seek to fully involve you in the management of your homes. This strategy sets out a series of actions so that together, we can strive to create a world-class housing service.

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1. Introduction

Here in Kensington and Chelsea, we are ambitious! Ambitious as residents, councillors and officers that the resumption of housing management services by the Council be an opportunity to do things differently and to create a new, world-class model of housing management. We don't just strive for excellence; we are bold and will try new and innovative ways to do things.

We are determined to ensure that 'engagement' is not something which occurs at set times, but occurs continually, and that effective engagement leads to opportunities for meaningful involvement and active participation. We want residents and officers to work together as partners to tackle issues and identify solutions, to continually find new and better ways of delivering services, and to make RBKC homes and estates great places to live. After all, residents are the first to experience issues with their homes and neighbourhoods, and very often have insightful ideas on how to overcome problems within their homes and neighbourhoods and make them better, more vibrant places to live.

These ambitions around increasing resident involvement are also reflected in the **Tenant and Empowerment Standard**, which is laid out by the Regulator of Social Housing. It says that registered providers must ensure that tenants are given a wide range of opportunities to influence and be involved in things like scrutiny of performance and how their housing services are provided.

It is also guided by a Council-wide commitment set out in the Council Plan to use the talents and skills within our communities to co-design and commission better services, as well as other Council strategies to ensure good management and transparency. This includes the **Charter for Public Participation**, to which the Council subscribes, and which sets out how all those who live, work and study in the borough can get involved in Council meetings and decisions.

Furthermore, the Council has recently adopted a **Customer Access Strategy** to ensure that all its services are easily accessible, and that the borough's residents enjoy excellent customer service from all Council departments.

However, RBKC Housing Management wishes to exceed these regulatory standards and create a model of resident engagement and involvement that surpasses regulation.

2. How this strategy came about

In October of 2019 we held a residents' summit, at which over 200 residents joined councillors and officers to explore what 'world-class housing' means.

Key themes were around the need to listen and to communicate much, much more. Residents called for more inclusive ways of communication, better digital involvement and opportunities for collaboration, and better engagement with young people.

Following the summit, a group of residents and officers came together to form a steering group to oversee the production of a strategy. The steering group is made up of residents from a mixture of estates and street properties, tenants and leaseholders.

They concluded at the outset that the strategy must ensure that the ethos of Housing Management should be '**doing things with residents**' and not '**doing things to residents**'.

This is really significant, as emphasis is on well-being, and ensuring that the well-being of residents is considered in all aspects of housing management. We recognise that an important part of well-being is the sense of home and place, and the ability to have control over that home and the way it is managed.

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic accelerated an already recognised need to enable residents to engage digitally, and acted as a reminder of the vital role neighbours and communities can play in providing support networks.

We engaged with residents in the formation of this strategy, testing its principles at a range of meetings. We heard residents talk of the challenges they face in encouraging involvement, of the need for better communications and greater opportunities for involvement, and many put forward practical solutions which we have included in the action plan.

3. Who are our residents?

We are proud of the rich diversity of our borough.

We manage 9,580 homes throughout the borough, which include sheltered homes, temporary accommodation and extra care units. 7,015 of these are rentable and 2,565 are owned by leaseholders.

Our residents come from many different cultures and backgrounds and as a Council we are committed to ensuring that everyone has equal access to our services and is equally able to get involved and participate. We will ensure accessibility through translation services and will also look and specify ways to engage with young people.

Furthermore, we are committed to ensuring that the varied cultures of our residents can contribute to the vitality of our neighbourhoods.

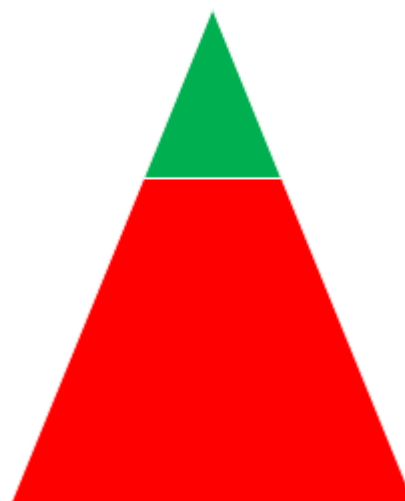
We are very aware that everyone is different, will have different capacities and appetites for involvement and that even when we do want to be involved, that will be done in different ways and on different levels. For these reasons, we have set out a 'menu' of involvement.

Some people do not have the time to attend meetings, some don't like to speak in public, or fill in long forms or have the chance to read long reports. But whoever you are, and whatever your circumstances, you are entitled to know what is going on and have a say in how your home is managed.

Whether you are a busy working mum, a retired IT specialist, or a passionate gardener, there will be something for you – you can get involved as little or as much as you would like!

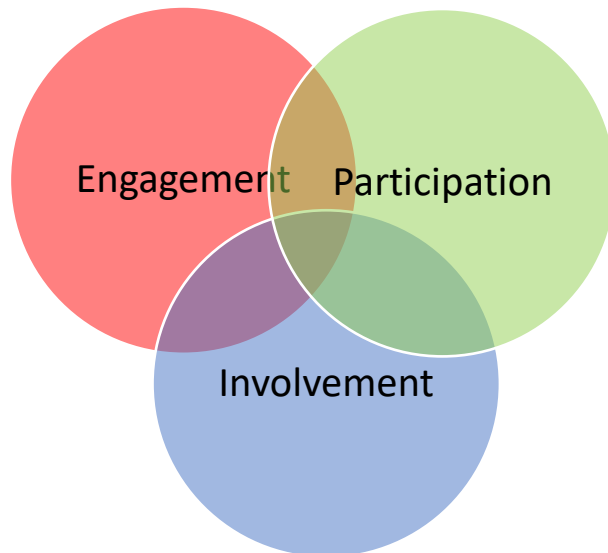
4. Where are we now with resident involvement?

- **The Greens.** We have a few residents who are very involved in the management of their homes and estates, who work hard and give a lot of their time.
- **The Reds** Most residents are not involved.
- At the moment, there are limited opportunities for residents, not already very involved, to get more involved.



- Currently we have a small number of residents who are very involved – we are grateful to those who have given their time, leading their residents' associations, organising events in their estates, and attending many, many meetings.
- This can place a burden on a few shoulders.
- Many residents' associations work hard to try and attract new members and struggle to secure support for meetings and events.
- There is a sense that involvement means a major commitment; having to commit to long term dates and attend regular evening meetings or filling in long forms.

5. Where do we hope to get to with resident involvement?



- We want to reconfigure this model and balance this out, and ensure additional opportunities for involvement.
- We recognise that all residents are different and won't want to be involved in the same way.
- The strategy hopes to create a 'middle ground' where residents can get a bit more involved – perhaps on particular issues which affect them.
- Hopefully, this will allow residents the chance to increase their involvement and climb the ladder of involvement, or descend the ladder if their circumstances change.
- We hope to create a new balanced model, where levels of involvement are flexible, and reflect residents' desires and ability to be involved.

5.1 **Engagement** – Many of our residents will want to be engaged – **maybe you are one of them?**

Wants to be engaged with what's going on – wants to hear about monthly updates by email about their estate telling them about upcoming social events they can attend. Enjoys reading quarterly magazine featuring projects by other residents and longer-term plans for estates. Is interested in attending some consultations on particular policies they feel are significant.

If that sounds like you, we commit to this level of involvement as minimum.

- Alerted to and have access to consultations on any policies which affect your homes
- Kept informed, by texts and email bursts, of estate specific updates and events
- Have access to a named housing officer
- Invited to take part in estate inspections
- Receive the quarterly Housing Matters magazine
- Kept informed about how your estate improvement budget is spent.

5.2 **Involvement.** We hope that some of you will want to become **involved**, which is great. Perhaps you're more like this?

Someone who wants to get involved in the running and improvement of their estate. They enjoy reading the monthly and quarterly updates and have in fact contributed their own article in the past. They have been the RA Treasurer for many years and hope to do more of this when they have time, but in the meantime find it valuable to sit on interview panels for recent staff and feel greatly involved when they take part in induction days for new staff. They also enjoy a casual weekly coffee morning with other local residents on the estate. They take it in turns to organise this, and everyone brings something along.

If this is you, then there are many things you can choose from, depending on your own interests and skills. This could include:

- Taking part in induction days for new staff
- Getting involved in writing articles for newsletters and the magazine
- Being part of focus groups to discuss specific issues
- Starting a community garden
- Organising a homework club for youngsters.

5.3 Participation. Some of you have the time and ability to actively **participate**, to attend regular meetings and work with us on forming new policies and procedures, and this is hugely valuable.

Those who want to represent their fellow residents in the running of projects and decision making. Enjoy taking responsibility over the running of the community centre near where they live and have secured improvements to it by being part of the Council's procurement panel. Have also received support with organising a number of resident activities and social events that take place in the centre. Have recently received training in chairing meetings and are looking forward to trying this out at their next local RA's meeting.

If you're someone who is drawn to participation, we want to fully support you in these roles and maximise your input. This will include:

- Providing training in practical skills, such as chairing meetings and managing budgets
- Arranging visits to other housing providers to see examples of good practice
- Helping you write newsletters for the estate
- Devolving the running of the community centres to you
- Providing administrative costs and support to aid the running of your organisations
- Allowing you to be part of the procurement panel for specific projects.

6. What does good involvement look like? How do we hope to achieve this?

The steering group has been considering what 'good' involvement looks like.

Specifically, it has arrived at five 'principles' which define what 'good' engagement/involvement would look like. These are:

- 1. You influence the decisions that affect you**
- 2. Communicate, communicate, communicate!**
- 3. We improve services together**
- 4. Transparency and accountability in everything**
- 5. Encourage communities**

6.1 You influence the decisions that affect you – decisions which affect your homes and neighbourhoods will affect the well-being and lives of residents, and it is critical that, as residents, you have the ability to shape and influence these.

We will...

- Consult with you on major works to your properties. When serious works need to be undertaken to the buildings of your estates, we will alert you in advance and explain why and how we are planning to undertake these. We will make the consultation as 'real' as possible, e.g. by bringing examples of new doors or windows we will may be replacing.
- Consult with you on policies relating to housing. Whenever policies that affect housing are changed, such as around rent collection or allocations, you will be informed of our intention to make changes and of the reason why we need to do so. We will form task and finish groups and focus groups of residents to work with officers in reviewing and amending these policies.
- Involve you in shaping new housing management procedures. As residents, you know best how effective our services are. We will involve you in the shaping of these so they can continue to evolve and improve.
- Work with other Council departments to bring consultations to your attention. Many other departments such as Planning will be undertaking consultations which will affect your neighbourhoods and communities and we will work with them to ensure you will be properly consulted.
- Consult with you on your estate improvement works. Each year we set aside a budget of £69 per home on estates and we want all residents to be able to express ideas on how this should be spent.
- Develop IT to allow you to join meetings remotely. To ensure all can access meetings we will ensure they can be accessed remotely and securely, and we will work with residents to ensure all have the support and equipment to do this.

6.2 Communicate, communicate, communicate! Communication is critical. We need to keep you informed about what is happening – and to do so quickly and effectively. We recognise how important it is that when you report issues to us, we don't just tackle them but we keep you informed of how we are doing so and of the outcome.

We will:

- Keep you informed about the staff who will be working on your estates. When staff, who you are used to seeing about, such as estate coordinators, change, we will alert you and make sure new staff are introduced.
- We will report back to you. If you raise something with us, we will not just action it, but report back to you so you know it is being looked at, and let you know the outcome and how it has been resolved.
- Use social media to inform you of what is happening. We will make use of text messaging and social media to share information.
- Maximise resident internet access. To facilitate communication, we will work with providers to ensure good internet access on estates, and allow residents a choice of internet access. Our community centres will be equipped with Wifi.
- Let you know when we are undertaking works on your estate. If we need to undertake reactive work to your estates, we will inform you as soon as possible, explaining the reason for and extent of the works.
- Develop estate newsletters. Where residents' associations produce newsletters, we will provide support with printing and distribution and we will help set up newsletters on estates that don't have them.
- Write to all residents with important information. Whilst new forms of communication will be used, we will still write to all residents with important information when it's required.
- Publish a quarterly magazine for all residents. Housing Matters is developed with an editorial board of residents and officers and contains a range of items and stories.

6.3 We improve services together. As residents, when it comes to your homes and estates and the services you receive from us, you know best what works and doesn't work. It is only with your input that we will be able to make improvements to our service.

We will:

- Ensure that residents are involved in the recruitment of new staff. For all customer-facing staff we will ensure a resident is on the selection and interview panel. These residents will be provided with training in interview skills to support them in this role.
- Involve residents in the induction of new staff. When new staff arrive, we will ensure they meet resident representatives to hear first-hand of their experiences and watch films made by residents to directly understand the historical and current experiences of residents in the borough.
- When large contracts which have an impact on your homes and estates, such as grounds maintenance and cleaning, are terminated or renewed, we will involve you during the development of the specifications and in the procurement process.
- Ensure that residents and officers visit other boroughs and housing providers to see models of good practice. Through these trips, we can see together things we want to emulate and put into practice here.
- Involve residents in the management of the Housing Management website. The website needs to serve you and provide you with all the information you need and we need your feedback in order to make it work.
- Set up a quarterly Repairs Forum for residents and officers to look at our repairs reporting service and identify ways to improve it.
- Publicise estate inspections. We will let residents know when we are undertaking inspections of their estates and invite them to attend and take part.

6.4 Transparency and accountability in everything. We need to be open in how your homes are managed and how your rents and service charges are spent, and we will instil a culture of accountability to residents.

We will...

- Ensure regular meetings between senior officers and residents. These will include the Tenants Consultative Committee, the HOMES group, Homeowner Panel and Local Area Meetings. Dates will be publicised in advance and information will be shared in advance of these meetings and they will be minuted. In addition, officers will attend and present at meetings organised by resident associations.
- Ensure that the Tenants Consultative Committee has sight of new policies and procedures. This committee is made up of representatives of our compacts (organisations for small estates that cannot sustain RAs) and residents associations. It meets monthly and will comment on and endorse all major decisions.
- Hold local area meetings in five areas of the borough, three times a year where we will report on our performance around cleaning, repairs and anti-social behaviour, and agree with residents how these performance standards are set out.
- Provide training on scrutiny to allow residents to have a more in-depth understanding of Housing Management workings.
- Present the Housing Revenue account to the Tenants Consultative Committee each year, setting out our expenditure from the previous year and the Business Plan for the coming year.
- Set out model constitution for residents' associations and compacts to ensure they operate fairly and are accessible for all residents.

6.5 Encourage communities. Utilise involvement and participation to encourage neighbourliness, and to allow connections to develop between groups and individuals.

We will...

- Use data to inform us on the diversity of our communities so that our services reflect this. We will ensure that we collate necessary information to ensure that our methods of engaging are appropriate.
- Celebrate our cultural diversity. Ensure we plan events that allow us to actively promote and celebrate diversity, such as Eid, Black History Month and Pride.
- Research and celebrate local history. RBKC has a very rich and varied history, and in particular a social history linked to our housing estates, and we will work with residents to record these for posterity.
- Support the establishment and development of residents' associations and compacts. Where estates and blocks don't have RAs or compacts in place, we will help set these up, and provide practical support to those running them.
- Seek to actively involve young people and ensure their voices are heard in consultations around their estates, and to involve them in undertaking the consultations themselves, for example by making films.
- Deliver a range of community social events. We will work with resident groups to facilitate social events that allow residents to come together. These will be borough-wide and localised.
- Deliver digital training to residents, recognising that an ever-increasing level of social interaction takes place online.
- Establish strong and sustainable links with local voluntary groups. The borough has many active community groups, and we look to work with these to deliver projects to the benefits of our residents and the borough.

7. Governance for greater involvement

- 7.1 The Tenants' Consultative Committee (TCC).** The TCC is a joint body made of recognised resident associations, local compacts and HOMES Group representatives; a model for representation is set out below. The Lead Member for Housing attends, and members of the Housing select committee group are invited. Senior officers always attend. The Committee aims to act as a forum so that residents' voices can be heard at the highest level and inform decision making.

The TCC is recognised by the Council and is embedded in the development and delivery of housing management services. It provides a forum for ensuring that the Council is accountable to residents for the services it delivers.

The TCC normally meets every month.

- 7.2 HOMES.** The HOMES group is intended to allow representation of residents who live in street properties and small estates or blocks which do not have residents' associations or compacts.

It follows a similar agenda to the TCC, is attended by senior officers and usually meets every other month.

- 7.3 Homeowner Panel** – This panel seeks to facilitate engagement with leaseholder residents. It is led by the Housing Management leaseholder team and jointly considers the delivery and improvement of any service specifically relevant to leaseholders, such as S20 consultation, the major works programme and the cost involved, building insurance, service charges and how they are calculated.

The Panel normally meets every quarter.

- 7.4 Local Area Meetings** – These meetings are intended to allow a local level of scrutiny. The borough is divided into five 'areas' – North Kensington, Kensal & Portobello, Notting Dale, Brompton and Worlds End & Chelsea.

All members of resident's associations and compacts are invited, as are members of the HOMES group and local ward councillors. Each meeting is chaired by an assistant director, and a range of officers from different services attend. Housing Management performance statistics are presented at these, as are any policies or procedures currently under review and local issues are discussed.

These meetings are held three times a year.

- 7.5 Panels** – There are several other panels – groups which meet continually – to review key aspects of housing. Currently a disability forum, a procurement

panel, an editorial board for the Housing Matters magazine and a repairs forum are ongoing.

These usually meet quarterly.

- 7.6 Task and Finish Groups.** These are groups set up for a specific purpose which end when their project is complete. We have had groups reviewing our anti-social behaviour policy, reviewing tenancy conditions and creating this document! These usually entail about four or five meetings, and we are always looking for new residents to join.
- 7.7 Focus Groups.** These are specific groups, usually held as one-off or at most two meetings to review specific things. For example, we have had a group to look at the standards of our voids and to evaluate the engagement around the capital works.

Table of representation at the Tenants' Consultative Committee

	No of such estates	Representation at TCC
Estates of over 300 homes	5	4 (2 of whom must be tenants)
Estates of between 200 and 300 homes	4	2/3 (1 of whom must be a tenant).
Estates of between 200 and 100	10	2
Estates of between 100 and 50 homes	8	1
Estates/Blocks of under 50 homes	36	1
HOMES representatives		2

8. How will we measure success?

We want to make sure this strategy leads to tangible improvements, and to a real culture of engagement, involvement and participation. In addition to the general satisfaction survey carried out among Housing Management residents, we will look to measure some statistics so we can ensure that levels of resident involvement are improving. These will be:

Performance Indicator	Target
No of resident meetings held	100 per year
No of individual resident attendees at meetings	1,000 per year
Input by residents on new policies	100%
Residents undertaking training courses	20 per year
New resident supported in getting 'online'	30 per year
New RAs and compacts established	5 per year
No of estates with newsletters	80%
No of joint RA/HM projects	10 per year
Sum of match funding secured for projects	£10,000 per year

9. Invitation

Thank you for reading through this draft strategy. We would like to end with an invitation to join us.

We hope this strategy has given you an idea of the many ways you can join us and be involved, and an indication of the difference you can make. We hope it will lead to rewarding experiences for you and make for real improvements in your lives and those of your neighbours. By getting involved, you may well make new friends, discover abilities and hone skills.

Please do consider joining us, because together we can make a world-class housing service.

To hear more or for an informal chat, please contact:

housingconsult@rbkc.gov.uk

or call 020 3772 2602

We look forward to hearing from you.