

WALTHAM FOREST **RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY 2018-2021**

Published June 2019



FOREWORD BY LOUISE MITCHELL

CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING

As the Cabinet portfolio holder for Housing, my ambition is to put the needs and aspirations of residents' at the centre of how we design and deliver housing services in Waltham Forest.



“ Our resident involvement strategy aims to provide a variety of ways for residents to tell us about the issues that are most important, so that we can respond to these in the development of our services. We believe working actively and collaboratively with residents is the best way to achieve this. ”

Waltham Forest Housing manages around 12,000 properties, 10,000 of which are tenanted and 2,000 council leaseholder homes and continually improving the services we provide to our residents is a key priority. We value the input of all our residents, whether tenants, homeowners or other household members living in council homes. Throughout this document when we refer to residents, we include all of these groups.

We place great importance in providing good quality homes and a positive environment for all our residents to live in. We also realise the wider impact that our services can have within the community affecting life experiences. It is therefore essential that we are aware of the changing needs and aspirations residents have for their homes and communities. For this reason, we are committed to involving our residents in decisions made about our housing and the services we provide.

Our resident involvement strategy aims to provide a variety of ways for residents to tell us about the issues that are most important, so that we can respond to these in the development of our services. We believe working actively and collaboratively with residents is the best way to achieve this. Our approach seeks to develop opportunities to maximise resident involvement from across all our residents, reflecting the diversity of our communities and the differing needs of our residents, in ways that are convenient and easy to access.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Strategic Tenants and Residents (STAR) Panel, residents involved in the Housing forums, and other groups who have worked with us so far, as well as all our residents who have helped shape the strategy and put it together. I am committed to making this strategy a success with a focus on making our services better for everyone. I look forward to working in partnership with residents in delivering on our commitments.

Cllr Louise Mitchell

INTRODUCTION

The Council's ambition for the borough is to create strong and sustainable communities where people support themselves and each other.

This requires a fundamental transformation of the way we work, in our relationship with residents and businesses, in how we connect communities and people together, in how we harness new technology for the greater good and how we make the most of the borough's amazing strengths.

The Council has adopted three priorities following our biggest ever consultation with residents.

These are:

- Keep Waltham Forest clean and safe
- Work to ensure everyone has a decent roof over their head
- Improve our residents' life chances.

To support the delivery of these ambitions and priorities in the context of a rapidly changing local, regional and national context the Council has set out a new way of working – Creating Futures, underpinned by five driving principles:



Waltham Forest Housing is a central part of this ambition and will play a key role in contributing and delivering on all aspects of the Creating Futures programme. The WFH Resident Involvement Strategy has a particular focus on the practical implementation of the New Relationships Principle of the Creating Future Programme.

NEW RELATIONSHIPS

Creating Futures will create a new relationship with our residents; changing the way we work with one another, empowering residents and connecting communities.

We will commit to ensuring residents are more engaged and involved in the decision making of the Council, recognising that they are often better placed to decide how services are shaped or deliver them directly themselves.

By empowering residents, we aim to encourage greater citizen participation encouraging residents to support community activism; volunteer or set up a social enterprise. We will provide residents with the tools to support and help one another. This strategy is the start of how Waltham Forest Housing will build and support this New Relationship with its tenants, leaseholders and customers.

By collaborating even further with our partners, we aim to eradicate health and social inequalities in the borough and provide better value for money for council tax payers by reducing duplication. We are much stronger and more able to tackle issues such as gang crime, mental health, homelessness and radicalisation if we work together, utilising all the assets of the community.

THINK FAMILY

Our Resident Involvement Strategy is framed within the context of our Think Family approach. This is about ensuring that the residents of Waltham Forest are safe, well, independent and resilient. Our engagement approach will help *empower individuals, families and communities.*



- Enabling people to better manage the difficulties they face by **helping them to learn new skills**
- **Connecting people to their families, friends and communities** so they can turn to sources of support within the community when they need extra help

OUR PURPOSE

Waltham Forest Housing has the stated mission to: 'Provide, manage and facilitate the best possible housing and housing services in Waltham Forest which meets the needs of residents in the borough'

Our vision is that:

- All residents in the borough are living in good quality and well managed homes
- There are a range of homes in the borough which meet the needs of different groups in terms of tenure, type and affordability
- Residents are resilient and have the capacity to pay for and sustain their homes

- Our staff and services are well respected and viewed as professional and innovative by all of our stakeholders
- Value for money is at the heart of all that we do.

Waltham Forest Housing recognises the critical role residents play in ensuring that we deliver effective, efficient and accessible services to all our residents. Resident involvement is central to achieving outcomes which ensure our communities thrive.

This strategy will enhance our approach to both formal and informal involvement and ensure we make informed decisions through meaningful involvement and consultation. It will provide opportunities for staff and residents to work together in partnership to deliver services which compare with the very best.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT?

In terms of Resident Involvement, we mean:

- How we find out what residents and communities want and need.
- The ways that residents can get involved if they want to.
- The ways in which we support and empower residents to influence and improve our services.

By working together, residents and staff can:

- Create an environment where residents can shape our services. We want to be truly resident-led.
- Develop meaningful involvement opportunities which produce useful feedback that we can act on.
- Make sure our approach to involvement leads to improvement and positive change for residents, communities and Waltham Forest Housing.

WHAT HAVE RESIDENTS TOLD US ABOUT INVOLVEMENT?

Throughout the summer of 2017, residents took part in a consultation, the results of which have been used to develop our approach to resident involvement. Residents told us that:

- 93% want more of a say in the work that we do
- The top three areas in which residents would like to have a say about are:
 - How homes & neighbourhoods are repaired and maintained – 79%
 - Future plans – 74%
 - How homes and neighbourhoods are managed – 68%
- The same three areas came top in terms of those in which residents would like to have more active involvement with, though slightly lower figures at 73%, 66% and 62%
- 76% would like to be involved through the comfort of their own home (i.e. phone, text and postal questionnaires), 60% through the 'virtual world' (website, email and social media), 53% would like involvement in their neighbourhood (local meetings and events) and 28% would be prepared to go further afield for borough-wide meetings and events
- 60% want to get involved in either improving their local area or things for all Waltham Forest Housing residents, and 19% would get involved if we can find a way that doesn't mean lots of meetings
- 82% can spare anything from 15 minutes to a couple of hours and 19% would give 'whatever time it takes to get the job done'

HOW WE PLAN TO DELIVER EXCELLENT INVOLVEMENT

1. Demonstrate the outcomes and value for money of involvement

Putting residents at the heart of all that we do, we will support and empower residents to play a lead role in checking how we perform, challenging us to improve, and holding us to account if we fail to do so.

To do this, we will:

- Develop a clear method for capturing outcomes from and impact of all our involvement activities, enabling us to demonstrate the value of involvement
- Develop clear routes for feedback on actions and identify what difference has been made as a result of involvement
- Assess the impact of all our involvement activities in collaboration with residents and report back on the difference involvement has made
- Provide opportunities for residents to assess the overall value for money of services through resident-led scrutiny
- Achieve accreditations or be working towards them for excellence resident involvement and resident-led scrutiny

2. Provide a wide range of involvement opportunities which give residents influence over local and strategic decision-making

We know that resident involvement is most successful when it is planned around the lives and interests of residents. We will ensure that there are ways for residents to influence the things that matter to them.

To do this, we will:

- Implement our involvement structure which supports wider involvement and promotes opportunities for residents to challenge and scrutinise our services
- Continue to involve residents in setting standards, performance indicators and targets and reporting on both good and bad performance
- Support the performance monitoring role of residents by providing them with accurate performance data so that they can effectively review services and challenge poor performance
- Support TRAs to widen the communication channels they use within the community
- Enable and support residents to develop local involvement opportunities to meet local community needs

3. Increase involvement and use of resident intelligence to drive service improvements

We know that some residents don't get involved because they don't believe that we will listen and act on what they tell us. We will aim to develop a 'you said, we did' approach that will help residents and staff to see where feedback has made a difference to the way we do things.

To do this, we will:

- Develop our approach to collection of information we have about our residents
- Understand and respond to the diverse needs of residents
- Make our involvement opportunities more accessible to our diverse residents and communities ensuring that residents can have a say without having to travel miles or commit lots of time
- Develop the role and importance of resident involvement and engagement across all housing services

HOW WE PLAN TO DELIVER EXCELLENT INVOLVEMENT

4. Make better use of technology for involvement

We know that residents have busy lives and we want to make use of modern technology to make it as easy as possible for residents to contribute.

To do this, we will:

- Develop the use of modern technology to give as many residents as possible the chance to share and express their views, contributing to shaping and improving services
- Expand our database of involved residents to support consultation and involvement activities
- Explore the potential for improving how we promote, measure and report the impact of involvement through the use of specialist software

5. Provide training, capacity building and other support for both residents and staff

We want to work with residents and staff to create the very best opportunities for residents to truly influence the decisions which impact on their lives.

To do this, we will:

- Ensure that staff are aware of the role of involvement, are skilled in delivering effective involvement and supported to achieve clear performance targets
- Offer training, learning and support to all residents to develop the skills and confidence to be effective in their involvement

INVOLVEMENT TYPE	FORMAL	INFORMAL
LOCAL NEIGHBOURHOOD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tenants & Residents Associations Tenant Management Organisations (TMO's) Housing Forum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Estate Inspectors Estate Champions Surveys/Questionnaires Focus groups Social media Estate Community Fun/Action Days
STRATEGIC / BOROUGH-WIDE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic Tenants & Residents Panel (STAR) Residents' Complaints Panel (RCP) Resident Scrutiny Team Procurement Advisers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Armchair advisers Focus groups Surveys/Questionnaires Mystery shopping Chat Café Go VIRAL (Virtual involvement of residents and leaseholders)
SPECIALIST INTEREST	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Service Improvement Groups Leaseholder Forum Disability Forum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young voices Annual Residents Day
TRAINING & CAPACITY BUILDING	<p>A training skills and needs assessment will be undertaken with all residents involved in formal opportunities and a programme developed to meet their individual and group learning needs. The programme will include in-house delivery, regional and national conferences and events. Sponsorship for accredited learning programmes may also be considered.</p>	



HIGH TIME COMMITMENT
typically 2-4 hours per month with additional time required during busy times



MEDIUM TIME COMMITMENT
typically 2 hours per month



LOW TIME COMMITMENT
typically no more than 15mins – 2 hours on an ad-hoc basis

As a general rule, the scope of influence will increase in line with the time commitment, meaning that those methods which require the greatest time commitment from residents will be afforded the greatest level of influence.

TENANTS, RESIDENTS & LEASEHOLDER ASSOCIATIONS (TRLAS)

TRLAs are a great way for you to get together with your neighbours to talk about your local area. TRLAs can be informal or more structured and we can help with anything from group set-up to providing grants for running costs and activities for recognised groups. We'll also attend meetings when you let us know you want us to.

TENANT MANAGEMENT ORGANISATIONS (TMO'S)

TMO's are groups set up by local residents to self-manage services, which could include the maintenance, cleaning, rent collections and other housing management services for their estate.

HOUSING FORUM

Housing Forums are held in the North and South areas of the borough to update residents on housing initiatives and neighbourhood specific issues as well as secure feedback on existing services or ideas for improvements, with a view to maintaining and improving the area for the benefit of all.

The forums provide local accountability as well as an opportunity to raise individual concerns or questions.

ESTATE INSPECTORS

Estate inspectors volunteer to accompany council staff on estate inspection to show Waltham Forest Housing any maintenance or other issues which need addressing.

NEIGHBOURHOOD CHAMPIONS

Most neighbourhoods have someone that people talk to. As an Estate Champion, you'll listen to the views of your neighbours and meet us every other month to tell us what you think is needed.

SURVEYS/QUESTIONNAIRES

From time to time we'll send you a survey to ask you what you think of your housing service. You can receive surveys by post, text, email or telephone – it's up to you. Just let us know your preference.

FOCUS GROUPS

You'll be invited to one-off informal but structured chat with other residents to give your views on a specific area of service such as repairs, or a specific community.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Keep up to date with all that is happening and share your views and ideas via a range of social media.

STRATEGIC TENANTS & RESIDENTS PANEL (STAR)

Working with senior managers from Waltham Forest Housing, STAR members ensure residents' priorities and views are at the heart of all that WFH does, advising and informing on key issues affecting residents and ensuring that the interests of residents' are fully considered in all aspects of strategic decision making.

RESIDENTS' COMPLAINTS PANEL (RCP)

The RCP aims to ensure WFH is learning from complaints and using feedback to improve services. The panel meets quarterly to review complaints performance and analyse data to highlight trends.

RESIDENT SCRUTINY TEAM

Resident-led scrutiny reviews overseen by the STAR Panel, who commission trained residents to carry out in-depth service reviews. Following initial training, residents can participate on a project by project basis depending on their interest in a particular area. The scrutiny team makes formal evidence-based recommendations which the STAR panel take to the Housing Management Team to produce an improvement plan.

PROCUREMENT ADVISERS

Trained residents will have opportunities to be involved in procurement exercises. Each procurement is different, but this could include aspects such as specifying contract requirements, short-listing companies from tenders received, conducting interviews and site visits and appointing the successful contractor, adding value to the work of WFH by improving services and saving money.

ARMCHAIR ADVISERS

Armchair Advisers ensure our documents are easy to understand before we send them out to lots of people – they do this from the comfort of their own homes.

MYSTERY SHOPPING

Mystery shoppers are teams of trained residents who test our services to make sure they are delivering services in line with agreed standards and whether those standards are appropriate.

CHAT CAFÉ

Occasionally, we will ask residents to join us at a local community café or other local venue for a cuppa and a chat on the issues that matter most to them. Once we've agreed how to resolve any problems, we'll let all the neighbours know what we're doing and how it goes.

GO VIRAL (VIRTUAL INVOLVEMENT OF RESIDENTS & LEASEHOLDERS)

Share your views and ideas via the web and social media, this could include giving comments or compliments, responding to a survey, engaging in an online discussion forum or joining a virtual community set up to look at a specific topic over a longer period of time.

SERVICE IMPROVEMENT GROUPS (SIGS)

SIGs will be called together by WFH to consider any service area covered by Homes England's Regulatory Framework Consumer Standards. Projects could be short-term or may require a significant investment of time over a number of months. Each project will include consideration of Tenant Involvement & Empowerment and value for money/social value.

LEASEHOLDER FORUM

This Forum will develop during the life of the Strategy to provide opportunities for Leaseholder engagement through both meetings and digital inclusion.

DISABILITY PANEL

Residents with disabilities or family members can discuss their views and the specific needs. The Disability Forum is a quarterly meeting for residents with disabilities to update them on issues and initiatives which could directly impact them as well as secure feedback on existing services.

YOUNG VOICES

Specific consultations and events for residents aged 16-25 to give them a voice and make sure we understand their needs and aspirations.

ANNUAL RESIDENTS DAY

Residents Day is WFH's annual summer fun day, which all council tenants and leaseholders in the borough are invited to attend. The purpose of the day is to inform customers of new initiatives, secure customer views on existing services and changes they would like and to identify customer priorities. Stalls are on display from various housing teams, council departments and partner agencies, where residents can get advice and information about the services we provide. We also have a number of fun and informative activities available for people of all ages.

ESTATE COMMUNITY FUN DAYS

Informal fun day events arranged to encourage community cohesion, enable neighbours and partner organisations to connect with each other as well as attract new residents to give information and gather feedback, but most of all to have fun!

TRAINING & CAPACITY BUILDING

For some of these involvement methods, residents will need to complete a selection process to demonstrate that they have the skills required to engage effectively. Free training and support is available to any resident who wants to get involved and training skills and needs assessments will be carried out with members of all formal groups to develop group and individual learning plans.

WHAT NEXT?

Over the life of this strategy, we will:

- Develop this structure including all support documentation (terms of reference, codes of conduct etc.) and provide the support and resources required to ensure involvement effectively delivers the aims of this strategy
- Promote involvement and effectively recruit to increase the numbers and broaden the diversity of those residents who are involved
- Assess the impact of our involvement activities and review the methods of involvement on an annual basis, focussing our time and resources on the most popular and effective and on developing new and involvement opportunities to replace those which do not work

SUPPORT & RESOURCES

To make sure that support and resources are available for effective involvement, we will:

- Develop a clear expenses, incentives and rewards policy for involvement
- Provide/arrange transport to and from venues for involvement activities, if residents are unable to do so
- Ensure venues are accessible to all, and meet the needs of all residents, taking account of cultural diversity
- Vary times and locations of involvement activities to ensure that all residents have access to involvement, including evenings and weekends
- Provide the appropriate staff to support involvement activities
- Provide dedicated financial resources and equipment to support involvement
- Ensure that appropriate independent advice is available to individuals and groups if they require it
- Assess the training and support needs of individuals and groups and provide the necessary resources to meet need
- Provide grant funding for formally recognised TRLAs

INVOLVEMENT FOR ALL

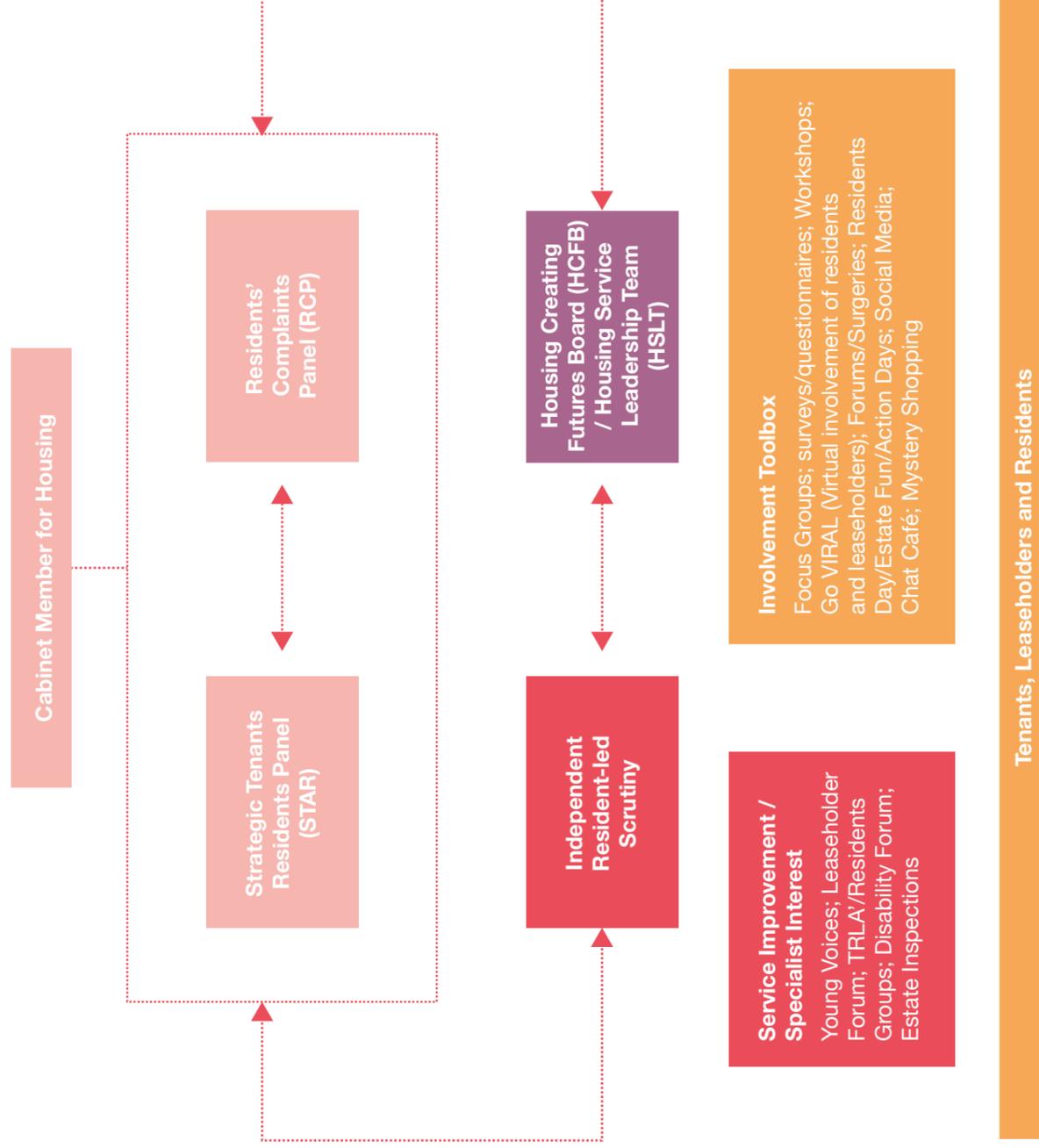
We will ensure that we continue to be inclusive and representative. We want all residents to be involved regardless of age, disability, marriage or civil partnership, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation and will provide the support needed to enable this.

WHAT WILL INVOLVEMENT LOOK LIKE BY 2021?

Resident Involvement at Waltham Forest Housing will be brilliant, because it will:

- Be embedded across our service with promotion and support available to residents from all staff
- Have a broad range of involvement methods which really work and deliver improvements and positive change for both residents and Waltham Forest Housing
- Take advantage of technology and modern market research techniques to enable as many residents as possible to contribute their views and shape our services
- Be recognised as being amongst the best in Housing, achieving or working towards accreditations for excellence in both Resident Involvement and Resident-Led Scrutiny
- Have clear outcomes for all involvement activity, allowing everyone to clearly see the value of involving residents in all that we do
- Provide and/or sign-post sector-leading training and support that will empower residents to be involved in improving communities, neighbourhoods and homes
- Ensure that all services are shaped by resident involvement
- Have a growing number and more diverse group of involved residents

RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT FRAMEWORK



For further information about our involvement options please email us at engagement@walthamforest.gov.uk or call 0208 496 4984

Waltham Forest
Housing

