

WALTHAM FOREST

HOUSING RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY

WALTHAMFOREST.GOV.UK/HOUSING

2022-2026



FOREWORD BY CLLR AHSAN KHAN



London Borough of Waltham Forest (LBWF) Housing manages around 12,500 properties, just over 10,000 of which are tenanted and almost 2,400 council leaseholder and shared ownership homes. Housing is pivotal to our local vision of working to achieve a healthy, safe, green, and more equal Waltham Forest. We are a diverse and energetic borough which a growing number of people feel proud to call home. We aim to continually improve the services we provide to our residents and we value the input of all our residents, whether tenants, homeowners or other household members living in council homes.

Our resident involvement strategy aims to provide a voice for residents and the tools to ensure that tenants can share their views and influence decisions which affect their homes and neighbourhoods. It is about residents having access to information to assess our performance, challenge us to improve and hold us to

account if we fail to do so.

We believe working actively and collaboratively with residents is the best way to achieve the highest standards and 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.

During the life of this strategy, the requirements of the Charter for Social Housing Residents will come into law, fundamentally changing our relationship with the Regulator of Social Housing and the way we do things. We are committed to listening to residents when improving and shaping services, involving them both informally and formally at a level to suit their commitments and preferences. Providing a wide range of opportunities for residents to be involved is key to our success. We will continue to put residents first by involving them in matters which impact their lives, their homes and neighbourhoods, including safety and security and active involvement in the decisions we make.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Strategic Tenants and Residents (STAR) Panel, the various resident scrutiny teams, 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.

THANK YOU

Cllr Ahsan Khan

Deputy Leader and Housing and Regeneration

INTRODUCTION OUR VISION AND PRIORITIES



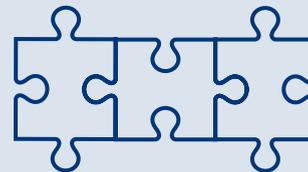
The tragedy and disruption which resulted from the Covid-19 pandemic has had a deep and far-reaching impact on our communities. Public service has been at the heart of Waltham Forest's response to the pandemic, both in how residents helped each other and how the Council has faced the challenges.

The Council has reviewed its priorities, introducing its Public Service Strategy in October 2020 to create a new, all-encompassing definition of public service, focusing on the borough's most significant challenges. This Resident Involvement Strategy will reflect those new priorities as we look to put residents at the heart of our efforts to reset, recover and rebuild with our local communities.

Resident involvement can contribute to the achievement of these priorities; achieving outcomes which ensure our communities thrive, supporting skills development for young people, putting residents at the heart of local decision-making, creating new ways of working together and facing and tackling inequality.

The Public Service Strategy sets out four immediate priorities:

1 **CONNECTING PEOPLE WITH JOBS**



2 **SAFE AND HEALTHY LIVES**



3 **OUR 15-MINUTE NEIGHBOURHOOD**



4 **CONFIDENCE IN OUR FUTURE**



Purpose

This strategy sets out how LBWF Housing define and continue to develop our resident involvement work through five strategic priorities. These priorities are developed into clear and accountable measures for success within the detailed action plan. Outlining the wider sector influences, the importance of a strong tenant voice and embedding the Social Housing White Paper (The Charter for Social Housing Residents) in our approach.

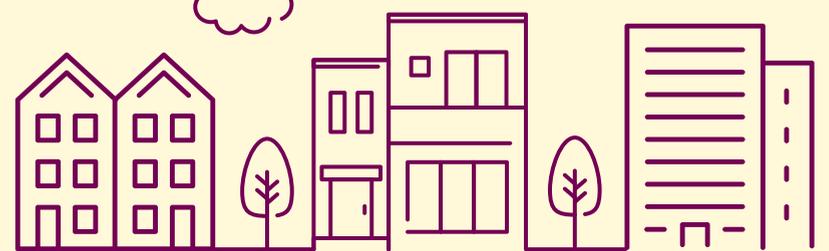


The Social Housing White Paper

The Government published its Social Housing White Paper in November 2020 and legislation was passed in June 2022 bringing its requirements into law. Called 'The Charter for Social Housing Residents', it comprises seven chapters, each relating to an element of the charter.

1. **To be safe in your home.**
2. **To know how your landlord is performing.**
3. **To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly.**
4. **To be treated fairly and with respect.**
5. **To have your voice heard by your landlord.**
6. **To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in.**
7. **To be supported to take your first step to ownership.**

The most critical charter elements for this strategy are two, four and five. The Government has outlined clear intentions for stronger resident engagement and for organisations to be continually improving the way they engage with social housing tenants. Consumer regulation will be strengthened with standards which clearly state what landlords are required to deliver. There is a key focus on providing more detailed performance information to tenants, focussing on values around transparency and accountability.



For LBWF Housing, this means engaging in conversations around the accessibility of our engagement structure and considering how best to communicate performance and engagement successes beyond the annual report minimum.

The White Paper points to several actions that will come from the Government and Regulator of Social Housing in the future, yet the aims of the White Paper are clear. This strategy outlines LBWF Housing's commitment to being a service which looks to proactively strive for best practice, going beyond basic levels of compliance during the five-year strategy period. In terms of resident involvement, we mean:

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:

- ✓ **Place residents at the heart of decision-making.**
- ✓ **Develop meaningful involvement which produce feedback that we can act on, demonstrating fairness, respect and that we are listening to residents.**
- ✓ **Demonstrate our approach to involvement leads to improvement and positive change for residents, communities and LBWF Housing.**

WHAT WE HAVE ACHIEVED 2018-2021

Through our previous Resident Involvement Strategy, we have:

91% ↑

92% ↑↑

83% ↑↑↑

Completed or progressed **91%** of year 1 objectives and **92%** in year 2, including implementing a new involvement structure, developing the STAR Panel and new approach to Resident-Led Scrutiny. **83%** of year 3 objectives have been completed.

Facilitated continued engagement throughout the pandemic by shifting involvement to digital meetings and providing training and equipment to support residents to engage.

Provided a range of training and support, including:

300+



Over **300** residents benefited from Digital Inclusion training and support

600+



Employability Support provided for over **600** residents

6000+



Over **6000** residents communicated with via Granicus emails

49



Resident scrutiny and performance monitoring training delivered to **49** residents

Worked closely with key contractors to deliver a range of social value programmes to benefit residents including training, work experience, apprenticeships, sponsorship for resident fun days, health and well-being workshops and energy cafés.

14

Delivered **14** Christmas events at sheltered schemes each year



15



Building safety training for **15** residents following publication of the Building Safety Bill (Year 3 of the Strategy)

17



Supported **17** formal and informal tenants and residents' associations to be involved in local neighbourhood decision-making

187



Established several estate-based WhatsApp groups involving **187** residents for easy access engagement

18



Delivered **18** community engagement estate fun/action days, attended by an average of **125** residents each and an annual resident's day (pre-pandemic) attended by over 500 residents. We have engaged with over **3000** residents during 2018 – 2021

125



3000+



Supported resident involvement in identifying several estate improvement projects

Delivered a range of focus groups to involve residents in estate regeneration, the development of the Housing Strategy and Resident Involvement Strategy and to support Resident-Led Scrutiny Reviews

Delivered a programme of events and activities to celebrate '100 years of council housing', including community fun days, display and short film

300+



Over **300** residents consulted on estate parking policy and individual estate parking proposals.

Involved residents in the contract specification, procurement, evaluation and selection of our Repairs and Maintenance contractor



500



Involved almost 500 residents in Housing Forum and Disability Forum meetings



Engaged and involved young people in designing and delivering mural projects on estates; film and video production and set up youth clubs.

WHAT HAVE RESIDENTS TOLD US ABOUT INVOLVEMENT?

86%

86% want more of a say in the work that we do

Throughout the Autumn 2021, residents took part in a consultation, the results of which have been used to develop our approach to resident involvement. Residents told us that:



The top three areas in which residents would like to have a say about are:

83%

Housing performance

83%

How homes & neighbourhoods are repaired and maintained, including building safety

81%

The environment, climate change and sustainability

The top three areas which residents would like to have more active involvement with are:

50%

Future plans

46%

The environment, climate change and sustainability

45%

Housing performance

74%

74% would like to be involved through the comfort of their own home (i.e. phone, text and postal questionnaires), 56% through the 'virtual world' (website, virtual meetings, email and social media), 43% would like involvement in their neighbourhood (local meetings and events) and 17% would be prepared to go further afield for borough-wide meetings and events

56%

43%

17%

78%



13%

78% can spare anything from 15 minutes to a couple of hours and 13% would give 'whatever time it takes to get the job done'

57%



18%

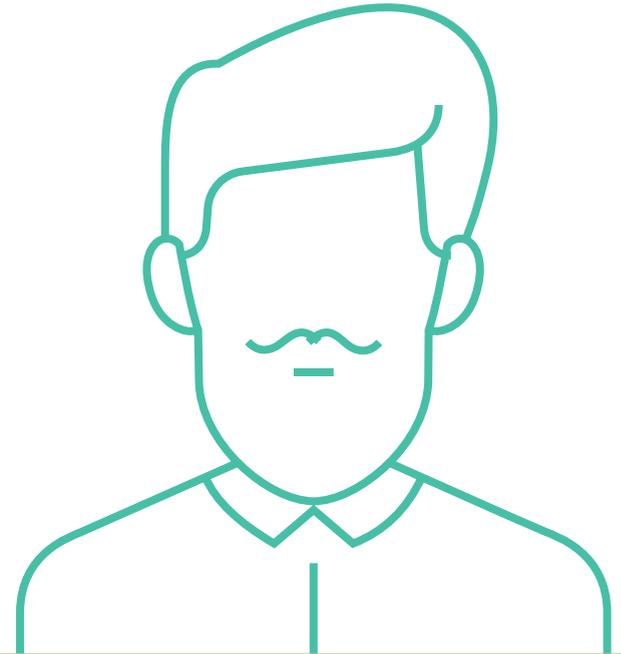
57% want to get involved in either improving their local area or things for all LBWF Housing residents, and 18% would get involved if we can find a way that doesn't mean lots of meetings

Additionally, a range of focus groups told us that residents want:

- ✓ Better communications, tailored to the audience
- ✓ Improved access to information, including improved website search engine

- ✓ Improved response to enquiries with clear response times where residents don't have to chase for a response
- ✓ A flexible approach to meetings with a hybrid of face to face and digital and varied timings to accommodate other commitments
- ✓ Increased knowledge of services offered and more transactional surveys to increase insight of customer experience

HOW WE PLAN TO DELIVER EXCELLENT INVOLVEMENT



1. Empower residents to influence decisions

We will ensure that there are ways for residents to influence the things that matter to them and offer opportunities to make a real contribution to the decisions that affect their homes and neighbourhoods.

To do this, we will:

- ✓ Develop a clear and detailed housing communications plan for the year ahead
- ✓ Develop and publish a consultation plan, mapping all local and borough-wide consultations relating to housing services, policies and procedures
- ✓ Support resident scrutiny teams to scrutinise services and make recommendations for improvement
- ✓ Involve residents in setting service standards and targets and reporting on both good and bad performance
- ✓ Demonstrate accountability to tenants through the production of an annual report
- ✓ Develop the role of residents in service improvement by providing accurate performance data so that they can effectively review services and challenge poor performance

2. A range of ways to be involved

We know that resident involvement is most successful when it is planned around the lives and interests of residents. We will offer a wide range of involvement opportunities that provide flexibility so that residents can be involved to the degree and level that they choose.

To do this, we will:

- ✓ Further develop our menu of involvement and continue to invest time and resources in supporting those opportunities which are both popular with residents, and deliver outcomes for both residents and LBWF Housing
- ✓ Increase access to involvement through the communications plan, using a broad range of channels and making better use of social media
- ✓ Develop a virtual involvement panel with a clear incentives package to support sign-up and engagement levels
- ✓ Offer regular virtual meetings, focus groups and bitesize briefings on subjects of interest to residents
- ✓ Develop a consistent and effective approach to resident involvement in project-based steering groups



3. Improve digital connectivity

We know that residents have busy lives, and we want to make use of digital technology to make it as easy as possible for residents to be involved. We want to build on the progress we have made and explore innovative and emerging technologies to reach more people, more effectively and offer engagement options that are dynamic, fit for purpose and appropriate to residents needs. **To do this, we will:**

- ✓ Review all our existing digital platforms to provide a single 'voice of the customer' view, with enhanced opportunities for real-time feedback and service improvement
- ✓ Make better use of social media to expand and diversify our scope and reach to engage a younger audience
- ✓ Investigate and develop an online space to deliver interactive engagement tools and support dynamic and more diverse resident feedback
- ✓ Align with LBWF's Digital Inclusion strategy, following cross departmental recommendations and working to address areas of identified digital exclusion



4. Inclusivity

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. **To do this, we will:**

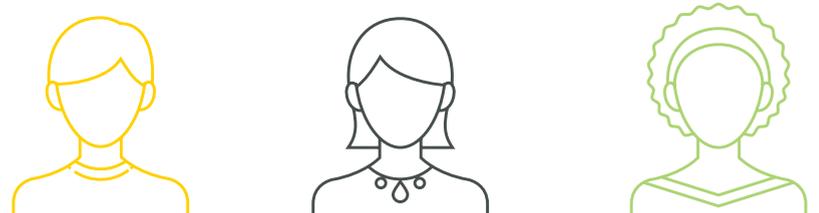
- ✓ Develop our approach to neighbourhood profiling and segmentation to support effective communication and engagement
- ✓ Deliver virtual meetings and focus groups for specific audiences to increase involvement by those who we know are currently under-represented
- ✓ Work with wider Council teams and specialist voluntary and community organisations and Young Advisors to support increased and effective involvement of under-represented groups



5. Value for money

Resident involvement is not free. You invest through your rents and through the time that you give freely. Everyone's contribution is important, and we will ensure there is a balance between the money spent, time invested, and the benefit felt by the majority of residents. **To do this, we will:**

- ✓ Undertake an annual financial review of all involvement activities and expected outcomes, in partnership with the STAR Panel to identify potential cost savings or improved ways of working.
- ✓ Develop opportunities for residents to be involved in procurement including specifying contract requirements, short-listing companies from tenders received, conducting interviews and site visits, and appointing the successful contractor.
- ✓ Improve transparency and understanding of involvement by publishing an annual impact assessment, celebrating success, and detailing service costs and the difference made.
- ✓ Work closely to ensure that LBWF Housing is making the best use of joint services and activities, avoiding service overlap and duplication.



INVOLVEMENT MODEL

| Involvement type | Formal | Informal |
|---------------------------------|--|---|
| Strategic / borough-wide | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic Tenants & Residents Panel (STAR) Resident Scrutiny Team Resident Building Safety Group Procurement Advisers STAR Survey Webinars | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Armchair advisers Focus groups Surveys/questionnaires Mystery shopping Chat café Waltham Forest 500 (Virtual Involvement Panel) |
| Local neighbourhood | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tenants & Residents Associations Informal estate resident groups Tenant Management Organisations (TMO's) Housing Forum | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Estate inspectors Resident Building Safety Champions Surveys/questionnaires Focus groups Social media Estate community fun/action days Environment & Sustainability Champions |
| Specialist interest | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tenants & Residents Associations Informal estate resident groups Tenant Management Organisations (TMO's) Housing Forum | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Young voices |

 **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

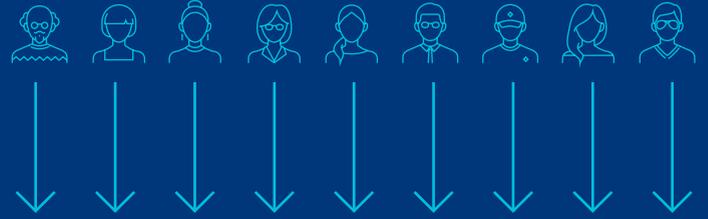
Training and capacity building

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; training skills and needs assessments will be carried out with members of all formal groups to develop group and individual learning plans.



Involvement for all

We know that there are a range of reasons why some residents don't get involved but we also know that sometimes barriers exist which prevent involvement and we are committed to helping anyone who wants to be involved to overcome those barriers:



Barrier

Solution

“ The meetings are too far away ”



We aim to have more local meetings and offer virtual meetings whenever possible.

“ I'm young, it's not for me ”



We aim to make involvement relevant to young people by working with young people to arrange involvement activities that they are interested in.

“ I cannot afford to get to meetings ”



We cover all expenses including travel costs and childcare.

“ I don't know enough to comment ”



Your experience as a resident will often be enough but we can organise training courses to support you to engage as much as you want.

“ I'm at work during the day ”



We can organise meetings at different times of day, including evenings and weekends.

“ I don't know anyone else ”



We can help to set up local residents groups or ask another member to be your buddy whilst you get to know everyone and how things work.

“ I am not confident using digital technology to join or take part in virtual meetings ”



We will provide ongoing digital inclusion support/training in group and 1-2-1 sessions for residents, as required.

“ I don't have the necessary equipment to join online meetings or events ”



Through our Digital Inclusion Strategy, we will aim to support the creation of local equipment loan schemes through libraries, IT Hub's and community centres.

WHAT NEXT?

Over the life of this strategy, we will:

1. Monitor implementation of White Paper, engaging residents in service response to the requirements.
2. Promote involvement and effectively recruit to increase the numbers and broaden the diversity of those residents who are involved.
3. 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.
4. Continue our journey to support effective digital engagement whilst retaining a flexible approach to involvement, providing opportunities for residents to be involved to the degree and level that they choose
5. Increase our understanding of local neighbourhoods and tailor communications and involvement opportunities to target audiences, including those currently under-represented.

By 2026 resident involvement at Waltham Forest Housing will be brilliant, because it will:

1. Be embedded across the culture of LBWF Housing, ensuring residents are at the heart of decisions which affect their homes and local neighbourhoods.
2. Have a broad range of involvement methods which really work and deliver improvements and positive change for both residents and LBWF Housing.
3. Make use of new and emerging technology to ensure residents can contribute their views and influence what happens from the comfort of their homes.
4. Continue to offer involvement activities for those who prefer not to engage digitally.
5. Celebrate success whilst being open and transparent about the ways in which LBWF could improve.
6. Have clear outcomes for all involvement activity, allowing everyone to see the value of involvement in all that we do.
7. Provide and/or sign-post sector-leading training and support that will empower residents to play a full and active role in improving neighbourhoods and communities.
8. Have a growing number and increased diversity of involved residents to ensure that decisions made are reflective of the needs and priorities of residents as a whole.

Support and resources

To ensure support and resources are available for effective involvement, we will:

1. Use existing and emerging technology to reach people more effectively and do more, for less.
2. Support residents' groups to develop skills, potential and local knowledge to access information, advice, and financial support.
3. Ensure venues are accessible to all, and meet the needs of all residents, taking account of cultural diversity.
4. Vary times and locations of involvement activities to ensure that all residents have access to involvement, including evenings and weekends and a mix of digital and face to face meetings, events and activities.
5. Provide the appropriate staff to support involvement activities.
6. Provide dedicated financial resources and equipment to support involvement.
7. Ensure that appropriate independent advice is available to individuals and groups if they want it.
8. Assess the training and support needs of individuals and groups and provide the necessary resources to meet need.

