



THE ROYAL BOROUGH OF
KINGSTON
UPON THAMES

Royal Borough of Kingston

Housing and Landlord Services

Resident Engagement Strategy

2022 - 2024

Councillor Emily Davey, Portfolio Holder for Housing;

“I am pleased to share our strategy for engaging with you about all aspects of the housing service, over the next three years. We want residents to have a strong voice in the quality and costs of services. Residents have told us that they want Kingston Council to ensure priorities address areas of concern and meet the requirements of the Charter for Social Housing and Regulatory Standards. This strategy addresses offering residents a rebalanced relationship between the council and tenants and leaseholders.”



Introduction

The draft Housing and Landlord Resident Engagement Strategy complements the council’s approach to engaging with residents and businesses across a wide range of topics and issues outlined in the [Community Engagement Framework](#). This strategy focuses specifically on our work with council tenants and leaseholders, and looks to strengthen our approach to engaging with residents routinely about the services and issues that affect them.

The aims and ambitions included in this strategy are:

- To engage and empower residents in the scrutiny and delivery of housing services;
- To listen and act on residents views and feedback about housing services;
- To ensure people feel safe in their home;
- To ensure homes are safe and meet legal requirements;
- To build more social housing in the Borough;
- To invest in existing properties and assets and make best use of stock;
- Managing homes as efficiently and effectively as possible;
- To make the best use of technology and digital tools;
- To make a positive difference to residents, building confidence and reducing harm;
- Minimising the impact on the environment and contributing positively to net zero targets;

- Tailoring services to the needs of residents who require additional help, support, adaptations, digital enablement, employment and training opportunities;
- Improving health and tackling social and economic disadvantage;
- Demonstrating prudent financial judgement and value for money in the procurement and delivery of housing services;
- Maximising income and collection of rents, fees and charges;
- Promoting diversity and inclusion in all aspects of service delivery;
- To ensure housing estates are looked after and pleasant places to live and work;
- To deliver the regeneration of the Cambridge Road Estate;
- Invest in our staff, teams and relationships demonstrating our values.

1.1 Our commitment

This draft Housing and Landlord Services Resident Engagement Strategy will help Kingston Council to embed a culture that values, listens to and acts on the views and needs of residents. Information about services and how well these are delivered will be shared openly each year so that everyone knows what is happening. We are investing in specialist resources, ICT and people to bring this strategy to life over the next three years.

Our commitments to residents include:

- We will work in partnership with residents to develop and deliver better services;
- We will make it easy for customers to work with us, make their views known and seek redress when services fail;
- We will provide different opportunities for engagement that are easy to access and meet the circumstances and preferences of residents;
- We will treat all tenants with fairness and respect, and tailor services to meet individual requirements;
- We will involve residents in the development of policies that affect their home and involve them in ideas about service changes so that they influence, improve and co-design services with us;
- We will let participants know the results of any consultations, feedback, views and suggestions made.

For the strategy period 2022 - 2024, we have put together an action plan to ensure we achieve our ambitions. This can either be viewed as Appendix One, or you can download the plan by [clicking here](#).

Our model of working with residents is to embed the delivery of engagement activities into all roles as a core part of what our frontline officers do. In addition, we have created a Resident Engagement Specialist role to act as advisor and coach, working with our teams to undertake large scale activities and lead on general communication and consultation events with housing residents.

There are a number of ways that you can find out further information about the engagement activities the council is running:

- Via our website: www.kingston.gov.uk
- By email residentinvolvement@kingston.gov.uk
- By phone 020 8547 5003
- Or on the council's Let's Talk webpage showing our current engagement activities on issues that affect Kingston citizens www.kingstonletstalk.co.uk.

1.2 Together with residents:

Kingston Council is committed to involving and empowering our residents in how we run our services. We currently have a number of ways to get involved, and are in the process of creating further opportunities:

Repairs and Maintenance Panel: This is a new group forming in the spring of 2022 to be part of the performance management for the new contract with Axis Europe.

Policy Readers Panel: To review housing policies every 3 years, unless legislation changes during the life of the policy, together with the relevant lead council officer, to ensure our policy and practice is good.

Leaseholders Forum: This virtual group looks at general issues affecting leaseholders such as service charges, quality and cost of communal services.

Scrutiny Panel: KRISP: This group leads on the scrutiny and challenge of services and carries out two inspections each year on particular topics. The KRISP reports are presented to senior management and recommendations and observations are valued and acted upon by Kingston Council. Training and mentoring is provided for KRISP members to carry out their role successfully.

Residents Associations: These are local groups of residents who get together to discuss issues of local concern in their block, street or estate. If the group is formally

recognised by the council it will have terms of reference, an equal opportunities policy, elected Chair and Vice Chair, Secretary and will be open to all residents who live in that locality. Meetings will be arranged and representatives from housing services and guest speakers will attend, by invitation.

Your home: Your say: The council delivers a range of engagement opportunities to hear your views online. Any resident can contribute to the surveys on a wide range of housing and corporate topics.

1.3 Measures of Success:

To make sure that we are delivering on the strategy objectives as set out, we have compiled the below measures of success that can be reflected on at the end of the strategy timeline in 2024. These include:

- Offering different events and engagement opportunities to suit different lifestyles;
- Improving our online tools to make getting involved and giving feedback easy;
- Ensuring our activities and feedback are representative of our communities;
- Increasing the number of customers that we engage with; and
- Improving and increasing our communication with housing customers.

1.4 Improving services together

Kingston Council wants to get more residents involved in designing, influencing and improving landlord services. To do this we need to promote ways to get involved, keep things simple and ensure performance information is accessible. We will achieve this by:

- Supporting KRISP service inspections, getting more tenants involved in scrutiny and encouraging membership of this group;
- Involving customers in selecting new contractors for housing services;
- Sharing performance information and developing new ways for customers to check and challenge performance and value for money.

This new practice will involve influencing budget setting for the Estate, from 2023-24.

1.5 How will we do it? Our new ways of working during the life of this strategy

A better online offer - use online meetings and webinars to widen involvement and offer consultation to those living and working at home, increase the use of polls, surveys and discussion forums.

Kingston Council will enable the delivery of community fibre connections on housing estates to help deliver access to digital engagement at a reasonable cost.

Improved communications - make the language we use simple, friendly and easy to understand. Have regular campaigns to promote resident involvement. Use different tools to reach a wide audience. Celebrate where customers have made a difference.

Training and support - we will offer training and support to make sure that residents are able to make a difference through mentoring, access to independent advice and membership of TPAS (Tenant Participation Advisory Service).

2. Involvement and empowerment

Over the strategy period 2022 - 2024, Kingston Council will offer a wide range of opportunities for influence and involvement in decisions about Housing and Landlord Services, including:

- Designing and delivering housing-related policies and strategic priorities;
- Making decisions about how housing is delivered and the setting of service standards;
- Consulting on key performance indicators and targets;
- Asking customer views on which transactions are most important and actively seeking views about the customer experience of lettings, repairs, ASB, caretaking;
- The scrutiny of the landlord's performance and making recommendations on how performance might be improved;
- Management of homes and local offers for service delivery;
- Management of repairs and maintenance services.

3. Resident Engagement Activity

Moving forward, we want engagement to be a core part of everyone's role in landlord services. With investment in a specialist role to coach and support staff and residents in all engagement activities to ensure what we do is inclusive and makes a difference. Over the life of this strategy we will develop with residents measures of success to evaluate the impact of engaging with customers.

The most notable success has been the engagement of residents living on the Cambridge Road Estate (CRE). Engagement with residents culminated in a positive vote in March 2020 in favour of a large-scale regeneration of the Estate. The ballot gained an amazing turnout of 86% of eligible residents voting to improve their neighbourhood. 73% of residents who voted supported the regeneration plans. CRE is an example of positive practice in resident engagement.

4. Regulatory requirements:

There are a number of consumer standards set by the Regulator for Social Housing (RSH). The Tenant Involvement & Empowerment Standard 2017 applies to Council Housing. This standard sets out the expectations and required outcomes from Landlords: [Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard - Gov.uk](#). This draft strategy mirrors the Regulatory Standards approach.

The Housing White Paper from the Government, sets out that council's must have an accountable person for the better management of high risk, high rise buildings and a resident engagement strategy for these properties specifically.

The Housing White Paper sets out that there must be a nominated person for safety and this person is widely known to residents and stakeholders.

The Housing White Paper sets out the requirement for there to be a nominated person and regular review of compliance with the Consumer Standards for Housing. Kingston Council will undertake an annual review of compliance against the Consumer Standards.

5. Customer service, choice and complaints

Kingston Council provides choices, information and communication appropriate to the diverse needs of residents about housing services. During 2020, we completed a self assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's complaint handling code to ensure we meet the required standards.

We have a clear, simple and accessible approach to complaints, and ensure that those received are resolved politely, promptly and fairly. This includes offering compensation and redress when we are at fault, and using feedback to influence service delivery in the future

We are keen to ensure that there is easy access to give a compliment, a commendation or make a complaint about services, and we will use learning from complaints to further improve services.

6. Understanding and responding to the diverse needs of tenants

Kingston council:

- Treats all tenants and leaseholders with fairness and respect
- Understands the different needs of tenants and leaseholders and tailors services to meet individual requirements

All resident engagement will follow these principles in the delivery of this draft strategy.

Summary

Kingston Council wants to strengthen its approach to working with residents. The adoption of this strategy and action plan will help us to work with residents who receive housing services from us. This strategy builds on the successful engagement with residents about the regeneration of the Cambridge Road Estate and the existing corporate strategy of involving people in all aspects of life and the provision of services to citizens.

Action Plan for draft Housing and Landlord Services Resident Engagement Strategy 2022 - 2024

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Action	Accountable Officer	Timeline/deadline
Design & deliver a virtual residents conference to gain views and understanding on current engagement with the council	Business Assurance Officer	Completed June 2021
Publish an annual report to housing residents about the performance of the service	Lead Officer Landlord Services	Completed September 2021
Recruit a subject matter expert specifically for housing resident engagement	Lead Officer Housing Services	Started September 2021
Refresh joint walkabouts with residents on the 10 largest housing estates using photo book to record actions and observations	Lead Officer Housing Services	Started October 2021
Design, consult on & deliver a draft strategy for Resident Engagement with housing tenants and leaseholders	Lead Officer Landlord Services	Engagement started December 2021
Involve resident representatives in the monitoring of new external contracts for grounds maintenance/communal cleaning	Resident Engagement Officer	31/03/22
Report to Place Committee to approve draft strategy	Lead Officer Landlord Services	10/02/22

Action	Accountable Officer	Timeline/deadline
Review & revise job profiles to embed resident engagement as a core competency for operational staff	All managers	28/02/22
KRiSP scrutiny panel to carry out a review of repairs handling and scheduling	Business Assurance Officer	28/02/22
Design & develop ways to gain customer feedback on routine transactions such as lettings, anti-social behaviour management and repairs	Resident Engagement Officer	31/03/22
Set up a Repairs Panel as part of the contract management of Axis	Resident Engagement Officer	31/03/22
Continue to recruit and build membership of KRiSP/coach a tenant to take up becoming Chair	Resident Engagement Officer	31/03/22
Continue to recognise community champions through the Francis Moseley Housing Awards	Resident Engagement Officer	June 2022
Review the measures and methods of gaining customer feedback	Resident Engagement Officer	01/10/22
Consult with a panel of residents on annual targets and key performance indicators	Business Assurance Officer	01/02/23
Facilitate service inspections by KRiSP members and respond to the reports and recommendations	Heads of Service	Ongoing
Review housing policies every 3 years with input from a panel of residents	Business Assurance Officer	Ongoing