

REPORT TO:	HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES	AGENDA ITEM: 7
DATE OF MEETING:	1st OCTOBER 2020	CATEGORY: (See Notes) DELEGATED or RECOMMENDED
REPORT FROM:	STRATEGIC DIRECTOR SERVICE DELIVERY	OPEN
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	PAUL WHITTINGHAM paul.whittingham@southderbyshire.gov.uk	DOC:
SUBJECT:	HOUSING CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY	
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	ALL	TERMS OF REFERENCE: (See Notes)

1.0 Recommendations

- 1.1 That the Housing Customer Engagement Strategy Action Plan is approved for further consultation with Housing Customers
- 1.2 That progress against the Community Engagement Strategy 2017-2020 is noted.

2.0 Purpose of the Report

- 2.1 The report summarises progress against the Community Engagement Strategy 2017-2020, which was developed by the Housing Service.
- 2.2 The report outlines the regulatory requirements for the Council with regard to communication and engagement with its tenants and other customers of the Housing Service.
- 2.3 The report also includes a Strategy Action Plan at Appendix A. It is proposed to consult with tenants and other housing customers on the contents of this plan. A final version of the document will be presented to the Housing and Community Services Committee once the consultation process is complete.

3.0 Executive Summary

- 3.1 The Housing Service produced a Community Engagement Strategy in 2017-2020 This document has been reviewed and with the support of the Tenant Participation Advisory Service a revised Strategy Action plan has been devised.

3.2 Achieving the aims and targets within this plan will ensure that the Council meet the current regulatory requirements for involving and engaging with its tenants and other housing customers.

4.0 **Detail**

4.1 A Community Engagement Strategy 2017-20, was developed by Housing Services. The Strategy aimed to:

- Offer Housing customers the opportunity to make a real contribution to the decisions that affect their homes and communities.
- Offer a wide range of involvement opportunities for all customers.
- Support local structures of involvement to deliver projects and events within local communities, improve neighbourhoods and contribute to the Council's Vision of creating homes and places where people want to live.
- Ensure that all involvement was representative and inclusive.
- Support customers and remove all barriers to involvement.
- Develop effective scrutiny, arrangements so tenants and leaseholders could set standards for services, monitor performance and hold the Service accountable for service delivery.
- Ensure customer involvement provide value for money.
- Increase customer satisfaction.

4.2 The Strategy also identified some specific actions which were to:

- Develop formal and informal, involvement methods.
- Explore flexible methods of involvement to include e-involvement and armchair consultation.
- Increase the number of people involved by 30%.
- Offer more project and community-based involvement.
- Ensure that Tenants are able to scrutinise and challenge our performance.
- Involve future and younger tenants by holding a minimum of two Dreamschemes each year.
- Offer tenants training in relevant service areas to develop their skills.
- Continue membership of the national Housing sector organisation's Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPA) and the Association of Retained Council Housing (ARCH).

4.3 The Services Community Engagement Officers have achieved considerable success in delivering these specific actions; especially in creating informal involvement methods and the use of technology to consult with tenants and other customers on a range of Housing projects including the Housing Allocations Policy. The Dreamscheme and other Community projects such as the Christmas Hamper Scheme and consultation events as part of the fire safety works contract have provided tenants with opportunities to contribute to and benefit from the services that the Housing Service provides.

4.4 Unfortunately the recruitment and training of tenants to scrutinise performance has proved more difficult. Delivering this is addressed in the Strategy Action Plan.

4.5 The Council is expected to meet the regulatory requirements of the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard which are now within the remit of the Regulator of Social housing. These requirements are;

Customer service, choice and complaints Registered providers shall:

- provide choices, information and communication that is appropriate to the diverse needs of their tenants in the delivery of all standards
- have an approach to complaints that is clear, simple and accessible that ensures that complaints are resolved promptly, politely and fairly.

Involvement and empowerment Registered providers shall ensure that tenants are given a wide range of opportunities to influence and be involved in:

- the formulation of their landlord's housing-related policies and strategic priorities, the making of decisions about how housing-related services are delivered, including
- the setting of service standards,
- the scrutiny of their landlord's performance and the making of recommendations to their landlord about how performance might be improved
- the management of their homes, where applicable
- the management of repair and maintenance services, such as commissioning and undertaking a range of repair tasks, as agreed with landlords, and the sharing in savings made, and;
- agreeing local offers for service delivery.

Understanding and responding to the diverse needs of tenants

Registered providers shall:

- treat all tenants with fairness and respect
- demonstrate that they understand the different needs of their tenants, including in relation to the equality strands and tenants with additional support needs.

4.6 The 2017-2020 Strategy has been reviewed in conjunction with TPAS in the context of the regulatory requirements.

4.7 This review identified the need for further action in a number of key areas to:

- provide a variety of ways for tenants to engage with the Council on decisions that affect their homes and communities.
- share information and communicate regularly and effectively with tenants, including the Housing Service's performance.
- involve tenants in reviewing how customer satisfaction is measured.
- support tenants to develop sustainable ways for them to invest in their neighbourhoods and communities.

4.8 The Strategy Action plan set out at Appendix A to this report has been developed as a draft for consultation with tenants and other customers. It aims to address the above areas whilst at the same time ensuring that the Housing Service's community based activities are much more effectively joined together with similar activities delivered by the Council. along with much closer and clearer relationships between the Housing Service and Local Area Forums.

5.0 Financial Implications

5.1 There are no additional financial implications contained in this report

6.0 Corporate Implications

Employment Implications

- 6.1 There are no direct employment implications contained within this report. The cost of delivering the actions set out in the Action Plan can be met from within existing Housing budget.

Legal Implications

- 6.2 There is a requirement to comply with the Regulatory Guidance within the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment standard

Corporate Plan Implications

- 6.3 This report has a direct impact on the Council's Corporate Plan Aims to:
Engage with our communities Support and celebrate volunteering, community groups and the voluntary sector.
Deliver excellent services Ensure consistency in the way the Council deals with its service users. Have in place methods of communication that enable customers to provide and receive information. Ensure technology enables us to effectively connect with our communities.

Risk Impact

- 6.4 Whilst this report has no direct impact on the risks identified within the Strategic and Service Delivery Risk Registers, it does mitigate any risk associated with non-compliance with the requirements of the Housing Regulator.

7.0 Community Impact

Consultation

- 7.1 Housing tenants and other customers will be consulted with regarding the draft Action Plan using a variety of methods and media. The consultation will begin as soon as possible subject to Committee approval.

Equality and Diversity Impact

- 7.2 Once the consultation period is complete the final version of the Plan will be subject to an Equality Impact Assessment prior to being presented to the Committee.

Social Value Impact

- 7.3 A model for assessing the social value impact will be established and included with the final version of the Strategy Action Plan

Environmental Sustainability

- 7.4 There is no direct Environmental sustainability impact within this report.

8.0 Conclusions

- 8.1 The 2017-2020 Community Engagement Strategy has been successful in facilitating the delivery of community-based projects such as the Dream Scheme and Christmas Hamper project.
- 8.2 The review of this Strategy confirms that further work is needed in order to comply with regulatory guidance regarding the involvement and empowerment of tenants and other customers.
- 8.3 The Strategy Action plan will provide a robust framework for creating meaningful and effective communication with tenants and also ensuring compliance with regulation.

9.0 Background Papers

Notes:

- * Category – Please see the Committee Terms Of Reference in [Responsibility for Functions - Committees](#). This shows which committee is responsible for each function and whether it has delegated authority to make a decision, or needs to refer it elsewhere with a recommendation.
- ** Open/Exempt - All reports should be considered in the open section of the meeting, unless it is likely that exempt information would be disclosed. Please see the [Access to Information Procedure Rules](#) for more guidance.
- *** Committee Terms Of Reference in [Responsibility for Functions - Committees](#).