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| **London Borough of Camden** |
| Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy |
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1. **Introduction**

Our new Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement strategy sets out our commitment to resident engagement as an essential aspect of our housing service.

Our previous strategy aimed to build upon and strengthen the existing framework for resident involvement. Our new strategy continues this theme, acting on the lessons learnt from the past and building on our successes, and also emphasises the need to broaden our engagement activities to include as many residents as possible.

Tenant and leaseholder engagement is a dynamic process, and the regulatory framework governing resident involvement and empowerment has changed significantly since our last strategy was adopted, placing a greater emphasis on resident involvement and “co-regulation” .

The London Borough of Camden has a long history of vibrant tenant involvement at local and strategic levels and welcomes the opportunity to further improve services with residents.

The Council’s tenant participation activities went through a substantial review by the HASC Scrutiny Committee in 2011. As a result of this evaluation, the Scrutiny Committee approved a number of recommendations for how tenant participation could be developed. The final scrutiny report contained 36 recommendations for development of tenant participation. Many of the recommendations build upon the themes of our previous strategy and emphasised the need to further broaden engagement and offer more ways for people to become involved. This is particularly notable in respect of the many recommendations that concern the needs of disabled residents. Other important themes within the recommendations include continuing to communicate with residents and making sure they can influence decisions.

Our new strategy sets out how we intend to further develop this agenda.

1. **Ambition**

Decisions about the way in which the Council’s housing stock is managed are made by elected councillors. We believe that our tenants and leaseholders should have every opportunity to meaningfully influence and shape those decisions through engagement and participation.

We want to provide residents with a wide range of choices and opportunities for engagement, enabling them to participate in ways that suit them and their lifestyle.

Where residents want to take control of services themselves, we will empower them to do so.

We will at all times seek to make the best possible use of the Council’s finances and assets.

We aspire to be a leader in the field of resident engagement and will continue to explore innovative approaches to engagement that will place residents at the heart of our services.

1. **Context**

The national regulatory framework setting out the Government’s expectations in this area of work is currently subject to some important changes. In April 2012, the regulatory responsibility for social housing passes from the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) to the Homes & Communities Agency (HCA). As part of this process, the TSA has published draft new standards for tenant involvement and empowerment.

The Council is required to set out how it will comply with these standards in a “local offer” on tenant involvement and empowerment. Specifically, we are required to ensure that tenants are given a wide range of opportunities to influence and be involved in:

* the formulation of our 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 our performance and the making of recommendations to us 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

Once these requirements are finalised, the Council will work with residents to revise its current local offer on tenant involvement and empowerment.

1. **Process**

This strategy has been developed through listening to residents through the District Management Committees (DMCs), Camden Leaseholder Forum (CLF), Camden Association of Street Properties (CASP), our Active Tenants and Residents Panel (ATRP) and our We Are Camden website. The strategy is largely based on the recommendations of the HASC Scrutiny sub group on tenant involvement.

Where we have not been able to talk to resident groups directly, we have worked with our colleagues in Adult Social Care and Children Schools & Families to understand the needs of their client groups. We have also talked and listened to community leaders from Black, Minority and Ethnic communities.

An initial discussion paper on the themes of the new strategy was presented our residents groups during December 2011 and January 2012. We listened very carefully to the discussions and suggestions which helped steer the strategy and kept us on track with what our residents want from tenant and leaseholder engagement, whilst continuing to meet our regulatory requirements. A draft of the strategy was presented to the community in March 2012 for further comment.

1. **Aims**

Our Strategy has 7 key aims.

1. Increase the overall level and breadth of resident engagement.
2. Introduce more ways for residents to engage with us, including the development of our on-line services.
3. Make it easier and less bureaucratic processes for people to get involved.
4. Overhaul the recognition process for Tenants & Residents Associations and evaluate moving towards a system of Council accreditation.
5. Share the responsibility for engagement across more housing staff.
6. Provide better opportunities for the inclusion of hard to reach and disadvantaged residents in resident participation.
7. Ensure an efficient and cost-effective approach to engagement that makes best use of the Council’s assets.
8. **Delivery**

In order to deliver this strategy we will undertake the following tasks:

* Work with residents to review our tenant involvement and empowerment standard.
* Work with the Joint Monitoring Group to develop their remit in line with the relevant regulatory standards.
* Continue to compare ourselves with other landlords to ensure our engagement methods are effective and in keeping with best practice and the latest technological advancements.
* Continue to explore ways of utilising new technology to both increase the efficiency of engagement and use on-line tools to share information among residents, reach more residents and encourage the development of new residents’ groups.
* Continue to offer registered groups the loan of IT equipment and training through our scheme.
* Work with residents to improve the business processes of the existing strategic tenant groups such as DMCs. A focus on local based issues and ensuring meetings continue to deliver meaningful outcomes for residents they represent will be encouraged.
* Evaluate a TRA accreditation scheme that will recognise and reward excellent TRAs in the borough and support other TRAs in reaching these standards.
* Continue to work with our colleagues in Adult Social Care to develop new routes of engagement, leading to increasing the number of residents with disabilities and their carers who wish to take part in the decision making process.
* Continue to share tenant participation activities with front-line housing staff, which will enable participatory interaction with a wider range of residents, especially those residents from BME groups that may not engage through traditional methods of participation.
* Continue to work with community groups leaders as advocates for tenant involvement and continue our programme of awareness training throughout the borough.
* Promote resident engagement to all residents, as well as identifying and working with residents to establish new groups on estates where no TRA exists.
* Continue to deliver training to front-line housing staff that promotes best practice.
* Provide a programme of training for residents enabling them to develop their skills and their understanding of co-regulation and scrutiny.
* Ensure that residents who are interested in exploring tenant management options have access to support and expertise, so they can explore these options fully.
* Facilitate the JMG obtaining an industry recognised tenant participation accreditation. The Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH), House Mark and TPAS have devised a tenant involvement accreditation framework, which includes training for tenants and staff and assistance with the accreditation process.

The delivery of the strategy will be set out in more detail in an Action Plan. The action plan will be available on our website and will be updated quarterly.

If you would like to help us monitor our services by becoming a member of the Active Tenants and residents panel please contact our tenant participation team on 020 79742377 or http://www.camden.gov.uk/tenantparticipation