

## Resident Involvement Strategy 2012-2015

*Listening to your views and acting upon them*



*Putting residents at the heart of everything we do*

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## Regulatory Requirements

The Tenant Services Authority (TSA), the previous regulator for all social housing landlords, published its Regulatory Framework in April 2010. Within this there were six National Standards which all social housing landlords were to use. One of these standards relates exclusively to resident involvement and empowerment. However, it is made quite clear that resident involvement is expected to be at the heart of everything a social housing landlord does.

As well as the national standards we agreed local standards and targets (our own service standards) with residents in late 2010. These relate to the resident involvement and empowerment, home and neighbourhood & community areas.

The national standards which apply to all social housing landlords are:

Consumer Standards:

- **Tenant involvement & empowerment** (customer service, choice, complaints and understanding the diverse needs of tenants)
- **Home** (quality of accommodation and repairs/maintenance standards)
- **Neighbourhood and community** (how your neighbourhood is managed and anti-social behaviour)
- **Tenancy** (allocations, rents and your rights as a tenant)

Economic Standards:

- **Value for Money** (how to get good performance which is efficient at a reasonable cost)
- **Governance and financial viability** (decision making within the organisation, managing money and running services well)

Since the 2010 election, the coalition government has abolished both the TSA (the housing regulator who devised the regulatory framework) and the Audit Commission (which used to inspect landlords against the regulatory framework). The regulatory role has passed to the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), which will only monitor the economic standards.

The HCA will not inspect landlords and will only take action against a landlord if there is evidence of serious detriment to its residents (usually financial). The responsibility for scrutinising the management of landlords and improving their performance, particularly for the consumer standards, now lies between residents and their landlords in a spirit of “co-regulation” or “self-regulation”.

This means that ensuring that Two Castles has effective resident involvement is becoming ever more crucial, not only for the interests of residents to be represented when decisions are made but also for the future well being of the organisation.

The complaints process we must follow has also been updated in line with the Localism Act 2011.

### **Diversity considerations**



We aim to ensure that all our customers can access involvement activities and that the diversity of customers involved reflects our customer base.

We are proud that our Panel's profile is similar to the profile of all our customers in most areas. This means that most groups are represented and their voices heard. Over the last year we have improved the number of young and working people involved, increased the proportion of General Needs tenants relative to Sheltered Housing tenants, and got some people who are not White British involved. However, there is still some way to go to fully

include these groups.

### **How we involve residents**

In our STATUS survey 2010:

- 68% of our residents were satisfied that Two Castles took their views into account
- 87% thought we were good at keeping residents informed
- 32% said being kept informed was important
- 25% said that their views being taken into account was important
- 12% were interested in getting involved in management and decision making at Two Castles
- 84% read Fanfare
- 27% of our residents said they had access to a computer and the internet at home
- Most of our residents said they preferred to be informed or consulted through letters, followed by telephone then personal visit, rather than attending meetings.

We have organised the different activities we run into increasing levels of involvement.

#### 4. Empowerment/Control

- Resident Board Members
- Resident Customer Services Committee members
- Customer Service testers
- Resident inspectors
- Tenant & Resident Associations with devolved budgets.

#### 3. Involvement

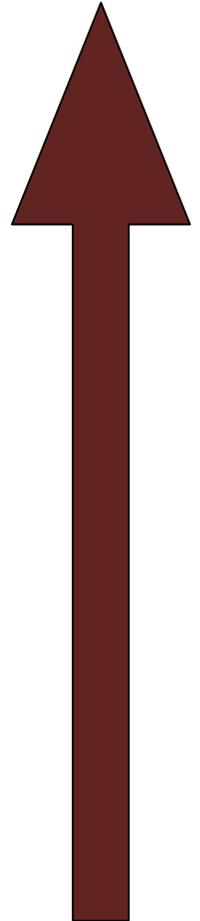
- Fanfare editorial panel
- Customer reading panel
- Service improvement/project steering groups
- Residents' Panel (both virtual and meetings)
- Complaints, compliments and comments
- Tenant & Resident Associations or residents' committees without devolved budgets

#### 2. Consultation

- Opinion questionnaires by letter, online, telephone, or face to face methods
- Responsive satisfaction surveys
- Regular (STAR) satisfaction surveys
- Scheme visits
- Existing networks and special interest groups (e.g. Cumbria Forum; Equality & Diversity group)

#### 1. Information

- Fanfare residents' magazine
- Website
- Leaflets and posters in our offices
- Stalls at events



## Aim & goals

The overall aim of this strategy is to increase active, empowered resident involvement in the work of the Association.

The goals of the strategy are:

1. Reinforce our commitment to resident involvement to residents, staff and stakeholders
2. Provide residents with the information they need about the Association that is accessible, relevant and timely
3. Consult and engage residents in a variety of ways to enable them to influence how services are delivered
4. Listen and respond to issues raised by residents, at both a scheme and Association level
5. Monitor resident satisfaction, particularly in areas relating to resident involvement opportunities
6. Provide support to residents who want to be involved
7. Support the involvement of residents with a diverse range of needs
8. Monitor the impact of resident involvement to show value for money and effectiveness to residents and others
9. Support resident involvement in wider community issues with other stakeholders in our estates
10. Improve staff performance in resident involvement across the Association
11. Require organisations providing services on our behalf to comply with this strategy.

## **Goal 1 - Reinforce our commitment to involvement to residents, staff and stakeholders**

This will be achieved by:

- Increasing awareness about the activities of the Board, Committees and Residents' Panel, including the publication of a document explaining the governance of Two Castles **YEAR 1**
- Involving our Residents' Panel in developing this strategy and action plan and consulting them on any future versions (July-August 2012) **YEAR 1**
- Requesting the views of our staff on the strategy and action plan (July 2012) **YEAR 1**
- Consulting residents who are not usually involved during our summer road show (July-August 2012) **YEAR 1**
- Seeking approval of the strategy and action plan by Board members (September 2012) **YEAR 1**
- Publicising and promoting the revised strategy and action plan: **YEAR 1**
  - on our website
  - via Fanfare, our resident newsletter which is sent to all of our households
  - in the local and sector press to our partner organisations, including contractors, local agencies and Local Authorities.

## **Goal 2 - Provide residents with the information they need about Two Castles that is accessible, relevant and timely**

### General information and updates

- Our quarterly resident magazine *Fanfare* and our website are the main ways we tell residents on a large scale about:
  - Changes and useful information
  - Opportunities to take part in consultations
  - The results of our consultations with residents. **ONGOING**
- We monitor the readership of Fanfare and usage of our website to ensure that it is high **ONGOING**. In 2010 over four in five residents read Fanfare

- However, we will investigate *how* residents read the magazine to inform our editorial decisions. For example, do readers read all or only certain articles, or do they just scan the headlines **YEAR 1**
- We will also look at our website's usage data to see which articles are most read and how we can improve hit rates for important articles. **ONGOING**
- Fanfare is written by an independent journalist, and edited by the Involvement and Equality Officer (IEO) and other senior staff
- Residents and staff are regularly encouraged to submit articles or ideas and photographs
- An editorial panel of residents and staff, which is open to all, is consulted on the design, tone and content of Fanfare and is also involved in proof-reading the magazine before it goes to print
- Every resident, staff and Board member currently receives a printed copy of Fanfare, unless they have requested not to, and Fanfare is also available on our website. Those who would like electronic copies are sent an email when the new edition is published so that they can download it from the website
- We will market the opportunity to opt out of a printed copy of Fanfare and receive it online instead in order to achieve better value for money **YEAR 1**
- We will also develop the online functionality of Fanfare, for example making the contents page clickable, and investigate turning it into a primarily online format, and how this will sit with our current news publishing function on our website **YEAR 3**
- The website is currently written by various staff, edited by the IT team, and designed by a contractor
- We will put systems in place to ensure that website information is kept up to date and that all useful information is present on the website, and that residents are consulted to test and improve the website. **YEAR 1**

### Information on services

- Information about services available to our residents, with any associated costs, is available in our welcome pack, which has been given to all new residents during the signing up process since 2010
- We will add a contents page to the welcome pack so that residents can check they have all the right information **YEAR 1**
- There are also information leaflets in our offices and all our leaflets are published on our website
- The welcome pack, leaflets and website include information about the rights and responsibilities of Two Castles' residents

- All residents are informed when a Two Castles policy is changed (or a new one introduced) through Fanfare and residents are invited at this stage to request a copy. Other than that residents are sent copies of the policy when their need for it arises. Longer term residents can request welcome packs if they wish
- We will introduce publication dates on all leaflets so that residents know which is the most up to date version when these leaflets are renewed. **ONGOING**
- Staff are made aware of relevant publications, policies and procedures so that they can supply residents with these documents and help residents to understand them
- Information is provided in the most appropriate format for our residents in line with our knowledge of their diversity needs. We offer information via post, email, telephone, or in person at our offices. We can also provide documents in large print or we can have documents translated or provide an interpreter for persons for whom English is not their first language
- Information on how residents can access our services is contained on our website in a range of formats and is also available from our offices by asking staff either in person or by telephone
- We will develop our ability to automatically send out large print or audio versions of documents so that residents need only request this facility once rather than every time **YEAR 2**
- Information on how residents can get involved in consultation and decision making is contained within our dedicated resident involvement leaflet “Listening to your views and acting upon them.” This is given to all residents at sign up and is available from our offices, and our website. We will review the involvement opportunities leaflet and involve residents in the design of the next one. **YEAR 3**

#### Information on our service standards

- The welcome pack, leaflets and website also include information about our service standards (sometimes called “local offers”)
- The process of how our service standards were arrived at and agreed with residents was agreed in May 2010. Between May 2010 and October 2010 residents were consulted on what the local standards mean and how they apply to our services. Full agreement with residents on what the standards were was completed by April 2011, when our final report was sent to the TSA

- Our performance against our service standards is summarised in our Annual Report to Residents, which is drawn up in consultation with residents and publicised through our resident magazine Fanfare and our website, as agreed with residents **ONGOING**
- More detailed performance reports are presented at quarterly meetings of our Regional Customer Service Committee, which contains residents
- We reviewed and revised our service standards with residents in April 2012 and will continue to review these annually **YEAR 2 & YEAR 3**

### Complaints

- We have a simple complaints procedure that:
  - Ensures complaints are resolved promptly, politely and fairly
  - Includes a range of ways for residents to express a complaint
  - Provides clear service standards for responding to complaints
  - Includes details of what to do if residents are unhappy about the outcome of a complaint.
- Information on how residents can communicate with us and provide feedback is given on our website, in leaflets at our offices and in the welcome pack. Details of our Complaints, Compliments & Compensation Policy are in a dedicated section of our website and a printed leaflet about it is given to all residents at sign up, which is also available at our offices
- We use our complaints information to identify new areas that may benefit from consultation with residents.

## **Goal 3 – Consult and engage residents in a variety of ways to enable them to influence how services are delivered**

### Consultation

We consult with residents in the following ways:

- Our primary method of consultation will be forums comprised of staff, residents and other stakeholders to work on specific aspects of our services, usually recruited from the Residents' Panel and other publicity. We prefer this method of consultation to large, long, multi-topic meetings because it enables residents to develop expertise in the relevant subject, and makes involvement more accessible by making meetings shorter. Key actions relating to forums for 2012-15 are:
  - Some forums can be too over-subscribed to work well so we will develop a procedure for selecting members **YEAR 1**
  - Develop terms of reference for each group with staff and residents **YEAR 1**
  - Elect chairs for all forums so that meetings run smoothly **YEAR 1**
  - Continue to support the forum focussing on leaseholder issues **ONGOING**
  
- We will continue to support and promote membership of our Residents' Panel to all residents and aim to increase the proportion of residents who are regularly involved during these 3 years. The Panel:
  - Is a mailing list which informs residents of opportunities to influence a wide variety of areas through consultation (but not decision making)
  - Has its own Terms of Reference, Code of Conduct, elected Chairperson and Vice Chairperson
  - Is supported by Two Castles in the form of providing refreshments and travel/personal expenses for residents who attend, venue hire, administrative support, and memberships of national and local residents' forums, e.g. TPAS, Tenants And Residents Of England (TAROE), Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) and Cumbria & North Lancashire Tenants and Residents Forum **ONGOING**.
  
- We will trial various options for the format of meetings for the Residents' Panel **ONGOING**. The vision is to develop it from quarterly meetings about a variety of subjects that last all day and are mostly run by staff, to a self organising, resident-led body where residents can share what they have been doing in their various separate forums, and plan future involvement initiatives with staff support **YEAR 3**
- As these changes are made we will update the Panel's Terms of Reference accordingly, in consultation with the Panel. We will start with bi-annual meetings and increase self organisation. **YEAR 1**
  
- When there is enough time before we have to act, we will publicise specific involvement activities to all residents through our resident magazine Fanfare (published quarterly) and the website. But when the decision is particularly urgent we will consult

all residents, a sample of residents, or just Panel members individually, via letter, email, telephone or face to face over a shorter period.

- Where specialist prior knowledge is required for residents to be effectively consulted, we will consult residents who have already been consulted or trained on that issue, e.g. Asset Management, or invite new residents who we know have the relevant knowledge of the subject area (e.g. experience of Anti-Social Behaviour) to make an informed decision. Where specialist knowledge is not present among residents, we will provide briefings and/or training to build their capacity to be effectively consulted on the subject area. **ONGOING**
- We will also consult samples or censuses of residents through postal or online questionnaires when appropriate
- We will also consult residents as part of scheme visits as appropriate. **YEAR 2**

#### Resident scrutiny

- As part of our commitment to co-regulation with our residents, we will develop a resident scrutiny panel, with the help of an independent consultant who will guide the set up process and provide objective training and support to the scrutiny panel and Two Castles generally. **YEAR 1**
- A group of trained resident customer service testers (previously called mystery shoppers), which is open to all, will continue to reality check our services against our published standards and a variety of topics, including how accessible our services are, and how consistently we deliver them. **ONGOING**
- A group of resident inspectors will be developed to inspect empty properties (voids) and properties that have undergone major repairs/building projects, to check that they meet our standards. **YEAR 2**
- Residents will remain involved in the governance of the Association. Residents can be democratically elected by the Residents' Panel or apply using our recruitment process (to fill a skills gap), to our Customer Services Committee (CSC) or

Board. These bodies use our Balanced Scorecard reporting tool to monitor our performance against our business goals, and make sure we achieve high standards of service. **ONGOING**

#### **Goal 4 - Listen and respond to issues raised by residents, at both a scheme and Association wide level**

- For issues that affect more than one scheme, the primary point of contact is the Involvement & Equality Officer. Association wide issues can be discussed as an agenda item at Residents' Panel meetings, Customer Service Committee meetings and Board meetings, or as part of a topic-specific forum of residents and staff.

#### Scheme specific issues

- Our Housing Officers and Property Services team are the primary people with whom residents can raise issues about their particular scheme
- Should a resident not be satisfied with the response, they can approach the Association at a more senior level, through the Regional Housing Managers and their assistants
- When an issue is not resolved through this means, the complaints process should be used.

#### Housing officers and TRAs

- Housing officers aim to visit each scheme annually and hold widely publicised scheme visits for residents from time to time where residents can drop in to report or discuss any issues. We will improve the quality of information and engagement between staff and residents at scheme visits **YEAR 1**
- We empower housing officers to make decisions with local budgets in order to respond quickly and effectively to residents' concerns, expressed either collectively or individually
- We also attend Tenant and Resident Association (TRA) meetings when required, and respond to issues raised by them, as well as consulting with them on relevant issues

#### Conferences and road shows

- We held two Residents Conferences – one in 2007 and one in 2009, to which all residents of the Association are invited. These were very costly but kick started resident involvement very well
- In summer 2010, 2011 and 2012 we have run a road show using a mobile home, which was fairly successful
- The road show will develop into a rolling program of smaller scale visits to schemes by the involvement, housing and property services teams to engage with residents, concentrating at first on schemes which have not yet been visited by the road show. These will include elements of a “fun day” to attract residents to take part and offer them some reward for engaging with us. **YEAR 2**

### **Goal 5 – Monitor resident satisfaction, particularly in areas relating to resident involvement opportunities**

- The Association does a regular resident satisfaction survey (once called the STATUS survey – now called STAR) using the recommended HouseMark method, in order to allow staff, residents and our regulator to compare us with other landlords
- The survey includes questions about all our service areas, but also specific questions on how satisfied residents are that we listen to their views and act upon them, and how well we keep residents informed
- We use an independent research agency to carry out this work and the results are widely reported to residents. **YEAR 1 & YEAR 3**
- We will aim to increase the proportion of residents who are satisfied that we take their views into account and that we are good at keeping residents informed **YEAR 3**
- We also run a Residents’ Panel satisfaction survey **YEAR 3** to understand the strengths and weaknesses of how the Panel is managed, so that we can increase engagement and satisfaction with opportunities for residents to give their views
- In addition, we administer responsive satisfaction surveys following, for example, all repairs and maintenance work and Anti Social Behaviour cases, and report the results to our Customer Services Committee. **ONGOING**

## Goal 6 – Provide support to residents who want to be involved

### Promotion

Residents are recruited to the Residents' Panel involvement mailing list through **ONGOING**:

- Our Customer Profile Survey
- The repairs satisfaction survey
- New homes satisfaction surveys
- The STAR resident satisfaction survey.

All new opportunities for resident involvement are publicised **ONGOING**:

- On our website and in our resident magazine *Fanfare*
- By direct invitation to all residents interested in general involvement (Residents' Panel mailing list)
- In our leaflet "Listening to your views and acting upon them", available from our offices, our website, and in the new resident welcome pack
- The IEO describing the current opportunities to newly interested residents
- Two Castles approaching residents who have recent experience of the topic (e.g. Anti-Social Behaviour; lettings)

Over the next 3 years we will:

- Investigate introducing a prompting system for staff to promote particular involvement events to residents when they telephone us. **YEAR 3**
- Ensure that photographs of a diverse range of residents are visible on our website and in *Fanfare* to encourage more diverse residents to get involved **YEAR 1**
- Trial "ambient consultation" asking residents who telephone us to complete short satisfaction surveys after their call to see whether this is a viable option for involvement **YEAR 3**
- Develop a system for advertising specific involvement activities on posters at sheltered schemes and through scheme officers **YEAR 1**
- We will ensure that all staff who have contact with residents are kept informed of involvement options so that they can also promote involvement. **ONGOING**

## Administration & Monitoring

- The Involvement and Equality Officer (IEO) is responsible for maintaining the Residents' Panel database of residents who have committed to some form of resident involvement, and monitors the various types of resident involvement in use within the Association **ONGOING**
- We will also enable Residents' Panel members to get involved in the hands on promotion of involvement, recruitment of other residents to involvement and take a more active role in consultation activities (e.g. charring groups, facilitating discussion, and circulating information) **YEAR 1**
- In addition, we will support information exchange between Panel members and other residents by informing residents who Panel members are and enabling Panel members to contact one another outside of organised involvement activities. **YEAR 1**

## Support & Training

- When residents first take up a resident involvement opportunity, they will be asked to complete a resident involvement application form with the resident, to monitor their equality & diversity needs and identify any training/support needs that the resident may have. This ensures that any resident who wishes to become involved is properly supported and, where necessary, trained in areas that would benefit their involvement **ONGOING**
- The level of training and support depends on the type of involvement. For example, resident members of the Board or the Customer Services Committee work through an individual induction plan and are supported by a mentor who is an existing member **ONGOING**
- Members of the Residents' Panel are offered support with literacy & numeracy, learning difficulties, other disabilities, language requirements and mobility issues **ONGOING**

- We will develop induction training for the Residents' Panel which will include background information about social housing, Two Castles and Equality & Diversity, to aid their later participation **YEAR 2**
- Presentations and publications that forums discuss contain all relevant background information **ONGOING**
- The Residents' Panel also undergoes a skills audit to find out what skills Panel members are willing to share with others and also what skills Panel members feel they need to develop their involvement. The IEO then organises appropriate training based on the results. **YEAR 3**
- Residents involved in a specific topic forum may also receive specialised training to support their involvement in the project **ONGOING**
- From time to time we will promote free general training courses to all residents in skills which are important to resident involvement **ONGOING**:
  - For example, Introduction to Social Housing, Assertiveness, running a Tenants and Residents Association, and Information Technology
  - Such courses will include expenses for transport, meals and caring responsibilities so as to not limit access to anyone
  - The courses will be based at various places and times of day to allow a diverse range of residents to benefit from them
  - Where possible, we will partner with outside providers to promote their courses rather than put on our own to maximise value for money.

## **Goal 7 – Promote diversity of involvement**

### Monitoring and action

- It is important to us that resident involvement activity is accessible to all residents, regardless of their diverse needs, and that those residents who are involved are representative of all residents. We therefore monitor the diversity of residents who are involved and where a particular diversity group is significantly less involved relative to our customer profile, we investigate why this is and will take positive action to recruit under-represented groups. The Involvement and Equality Officer (IEO) reports the results of this every year in the Resident Involvement Impact Report. **ONGOING**
- We request customer profile information from all of our households which tells us about the diversity profile and needs of our residents. The non anonymous form will cover the five areas below: **ONGOING**
  - Age
  - Gender
  - Disability
  - Ethnicity
  - Religion/belief.
- Sexual orientation and transgender status of our resident population will be monitored anonymously through our STAR resident satisfaction survey which involves a representative sample of approximately one third of our residents, from which we can extrapolate results about our resident population. **YEAR 1**
- We compare our customer profile information with the profile of residents who are involved in the work of the Association and the IEO asks involved residents with diverse needs about their experiences of involvement to find ways that opportunities can be made more accessible.
  - We also monitor involvement according to geography and the type of tenure a resident has, such as whether they live in rented housing, shared ownership, general needs or supported housing
  - We also look for other things that may affect peoples' access to involvement, such as if residents are working and cannot attend daytime activities, or if a customer cannot understand English so they might need documents translating or an interpreter

- For members who are unable to travel to meetings, consultations take place via postal, telephone and email methods.
- We will approach venues we know are used by residents who are less likely to be involved, such as mothers of young children or young people, and consult these groups on how best to involve them. **YEAR 2**
- We will continue to run and publicise social events for Residents' Panel members to thank them for their involvement from time to time. **YEAR 1 & YEAR 3**
- We ensure that all involvement activities are open to all residents, no matter what their disability:
  - Venues for meetings are accessible for wheelchairs and those with decreased mobility
  - We provide hearing loops
  - All our publications are available in large print, CD or cassette on request
  - Our website is fully accessible using high contrast, browse aloud, translation software, and large print
  - We also have a specific group of disabled residents whom we use for consultation on issues relating to disability.**ONGOING**
- We will develop our use of new technologies in order to offer more accessible involvement for residents who are unable to attend meetings due to geography, disability, lack of time or other factors. This will also promote greater value for money. This will include:
  - Improvements to the timeliness and amount of information on our website **YEAR 1**
  - Online surveys **YEAR 1**
  - Social media **YEAR 2**
  - Text messaging invitations and reminders **YEAR 3**
  - Staff prompted to actively collect and update email addresses from residents whenever they come into contact **YEAR 2**
  - We will continue to offer both online and print options to all residents so that they can choose their preferred method.

- We will develop **YEAR 1** and implement **YEAR 2** a Youth Involvement Strategy and aim to achieve proportionate youth involvement (of residents but also children of residents) to our customer profile **YEAR 3**. This will include research with young residents to identify what they need us to do differently to secure their involvement. **YEAR 1**
- We will concentrate our involvement recruitment activity in the Kendal management area to improve participation in this area. **YEAR 1**

### Residents' Panel members

Residents' Panel members are offered training in Equality & Diversity to avoid individuals from minority groups such as ethnic minorities, religions/beliefs, ages, abilities and disabilities, genders, and sexual orientations being discriminated against or treated badly. They are also expected to behave in accordance with the Residents' Panel Code of Conduct, which they sign and contains Equality & Diversity considerations.

### Staff, Committee and Board members

All staff, Committee and Board members also receive Equality & Diversity training to ensure that discrimination is challenged at all levels, should it occur, and that good practice is adopted in all we do. We also monitor the diversity profile of staff, Committee and Board members, to ensure that they are as representative as possible of the communities we serve. Our three-year Equality & Diversity Strategy & Action Plan introduced in July 2011 details various activities.

## **Goal 8 – Improve monitoring and feedback about the impact of resident involvement**

- Each year the IEO and members of the Residents' Panel will produce a Resident Involvement Impact Report which summarises all involvement activities for the last year to show value for money and effectiveness to residents, staff and others **ONGOING**. The report includes:
  - The numbers and diversity (compared to our customer profile data) of residents who participated in our resident involvement activities
  - The costs of various activities

- Changes to policies, procedures, standards, services etc that were a result of requests from, and consultation with, residents
  - Satisfaction with involvement opportunities
  - Commentary on how resident involvement could be further improved
  - Presented to the Panel and the Board
  - What we have achieved against our goals for resident involvement over the past year
  - Actions for the following year showing how we intend to improve
  - Sent to our regulator, as evidence of how we have consulted with our residents in the governance and scrutiny of our services
  - Summary of the report promoted to all residents in Fanfare and on the website.
- In addition, we include “You said, we did” articles in our resident magazine Fanfare and on our website showing the impact of individual activities residents have been involved in. All stories in Fanfare, where appropriate, say how residents can become involved in the activity, and/or show the outcome of the involvement of residents.
  - Additionally we will include impacts in our quarterly resident involvement reports to the Customer Services Committee.
- YEAR 1**
- We will also review our procedure for writing up consultations with residents, including meetings, and how we ensure that each resident suggestion is followed up by a named member of staff, giving an update on what has happened as a result of their comments, and why. **YEAR 1**

### **Goal 9 – Support resident involvement in wider community issues with other stakeholders in our estates**

- Where we are approached by community organisations who wish to develop links with our residents for consultations or other activities:
  - We support this within reason (bearing in mind that our properties are spread out over a large geographical area)

- We may ask residents whether they wish to be involved and provide contact points or venues which are convenient for our residents to take part at
  - The bulk of the duties and costs involved in setting up such activities will rest with the organisation who is funded to undertake the activity.
- Our housing officers attend meetings with organisations such as the police, healthcare, schools/colleges, fire services and local councils so we can have an input and learn about activities in our local areas.
  - We recognise and respect the right of Tenants and Residents Associations (TRAs) to be independent from the Association:
    - We encourage residents to form TRAs
    - When there is sufficient interest from residents to do so, we help to set TRAs up by:
      - Providing advice (including how to make sure they are representative and that they respect equality and diversity issues)
      - Providing training for members and grants for expenses.
  - We also attend TRA meetings where required, respond to issues raised by them and will consult with them on various issues.
  - When residents request it, we provide funds for membership of wider residents' groups, e.g. TAROE, TPAS and Cumbria & North Lancashire Tenants & Residents Forum
  - We also support wider housing related events and initiatives across our areas
  - We will try to establish a residents' forum in the North East region, in partnership with other similar organisations **YEAR 1**
  - We will investigate the viability of tenant cash back and right to manage proposals from residents if these arise. **ONGOING**

## **Goal 10 – Improve staff performance in resident involvement across the Association**

- In order that no opportunity to recruit a resident into involvement is missed, we will fully brief all staff who have contact with residents on the range of resident involvement activities that we actively promote **YEAR 1**
- The Involvement and Equality Officer (IEO) will inform and support staff through presentations, workshops and information explaining the range of resident involvement work within the organisation and encouraging new ideas to be submitted by staff
- We will also train senior staff in good consultation practice such as hard (selecting consultation methods, agendas, information circulated in advance, minutes, selecting members, feeding back results) and soft (chairing, facilitation, reaching consensus, handling conflict) skills to ensure that staff who run consultations use the best methods **YEAR 2**
- Involvement will be planned for the year ahead shortly after the Balanced Scorecard for that year is agreed (in April/May) to ensure that residents are meaningfully consulted and not simply being asked to “rubber stamp” decisions that have essentially already been made. **YEAR 2**
- We will aim to always:
  - Plan consultations so that residents have meaningful input from first principles and benchmarking with other organisations to the final draft
  - Train relevant staff in how to write in Plain English and avoid jargon
  - Ensure we involve representative proportions of diverse residents from our customers and the communities in which we are based
  - Encourage lively debate and ensure all residents participate
  - Ensure that the consultation experience is positive and enjoyable for all residents
  - Always tell residents when they can expect feedback following their input
  - Give adequate, timely feedback following a consultation to encourage future participation.

- We will introduce resident involvement requirements into the staff appraisal system and investigate the viability of establishing an involvement awards scheme for staff **YEAR 2**
- The IEO actively seeks out key sources of national expertise about resident involvement, such as the Homes & Communities Agency, TPAS (Tenant Participatory Advice Service), the Chartered Institute of Housing, and HouseMark (a national organisation that housing companies use to share good practice and compare performance)
- The IEO also communicates with, and plays an active part in, regional resident involvement networks. This ensures that the Association is up to date and using the best possible methods of resident involvement. Where these sources are not sufficient, we seek advice from independent expert consultants on specific issues.
- We will fully investigate the best ways of benchmarking resident involvement more formally, such as through HouseMark. **YEAR 3**

#### **Goal 11 - Require organisations providing services on our behalf to comply with this strategy & action plan**

- Where we use contractors to undertake resident involvement work on our behalf, such as the resident satisfaction (STAR) survey, or groundworks review, we will provide them with a copy of this strategy and action plan and require a written statement that their methodology and approach will comply with it
- Contractors who are not delivering resident involvement work directly are still expected to have read this strategy and to actively identify appropriate points for resident involvement to take place in their work
- Residents are actively involved in assisting staff to select contractors, and this is already happening with the Asset Management forum, Resident Inspectors in Cumbria, responsive and void repairs, the painting & decorating framework and the ground works review.