



Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames Review of Resident involvement

Final Report Executive Summary

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Introduction

- 1.1 The Royal Borough of Kingston (RBK) appointed PSI Ltd in October 2013 to undertake a review of resident involvement. This Executive Summary highlights the main conclusions from the review. The full recommendations are provided at appendix 1
- 1.2 The review made use of a wide range of methods including desktop analysis, interviews with staff and residents groups, focus groups and some telephone based research with 100 tenants and 30 leaseholders.

2.0 Review findings

In summary, it is our view that the resident involvement service at Kingston requires;

- A coherent strategy and framework setting out the reasons why resident involvement is important at RBK.
- Communication methods that use accessible language, are less formal, offer flexibility, form part of an overall strategy and, crucially, focus on outcomes for residents and their communities
- Improved knowledge of residents in terms of profile, their behaviour, aspirations and requirements to ensure there is a clear relationship between this and the targeting of activity and resource allocation
- Tangible improvements in performance and service experience to rebuild confidence and credibility in the resident involvement service and overcome 'legacy' issues
- A broader range of engagement methods which respond to the capacity, capability and aspirations of residents as well as the need for the service to have meaningful feedback. These need to be less focussed on formality and attendance at meetings.
- Wider organisational ownership of resident involvement so that it is embedded structurally, culturally and within performance management arrangements

3.0 The way forward

- 3.1 The recommendations in our report reflect the need for a clear strategy, increased alignment with residents' needs and for a broader range of involvement options to be available. We have suggested that a 'relaunch' of the resident involvement service should have three key components which will both bring tangible benefits and act as a practical demonstration of commitment.

1. The introduction of a technology based method of quickly capturing service experience at the point of contact and then promptly publishing outcomes.

2. A specific focus on a significant group that are traditionally hard to reach such as young people or Asian women with a single, focussed event or activity to capture their views
3. A revised role for the Residents Associations and the Federation to focus on collective interest, mentoring and support, and strategic engagement with other bodies.

4.0 The role of the Federation and Residents Associations

- 4.1 The Residents Federation at Kingston has made significant progress over recent years and there are also a number of successful Resident Associations that are having an impact in their communities. Further development of the service will depend upon a continued constructive dialogue with the people and organisations already committed to resident engagement.
- 4.2 It is recognised that the attendance at meetings is becoming less attractive to the broad base of residents and as such RBK, The Federation and existing residents associations will have to introduce alternative methods. We have recommended that RBK work in partnership with existing bodies to clarify for roles and establish shared objectives.
- 4.3 It is our view that the contribution of the Federation and Residents associations can be enhanced in the future through:
 - A strategic partnership with Kingston to identify emerging issues and develop new methods of engagement.
 - Maintaining independence to both work with RBK to add capacity and provide constructive challenge where required
 - Connections with other organisations in Kingston to work on collective community and neighbourhood interest
 - The Federation working with Residents Associations to identify the projects that would make a difference on their estates and signpost and facilitate these partnerships

5.0 Resident Involvement Structure

We believe the structure of resident involvement at RBK could benefit from some rationalisation particularly around the role of the Housing Consultative Committee and Resident Participation Review Group together with some of the 'ad hoc' groups. In developing alternatives the views and contribution from a range of residents should be taken into account including the Federation, residents associations and sheltered and leasehold forums.

In terms of the staffing structure we believe a sufficiently senior post is required to both lead strategy and influence other stakeholders. This post should be supported by others

able to provide support for the resident involvement infrastructure and utilise information from the delivery of the housing service directly.

5.0 A basis for optimism

5.1 From our dialogue with residents and RBK there is some sense of optimism that a platform is in place to improve the service based on:

- The establishment of Krisp which offers a new dimension to the engagement service
- The Better Homes programme
- The positive impact of recent changes in housing finance
- Improvements in communication with Residents Associations
- The review of resident involvement
- Recent changes in key staff members

5.2 This review has focused on resident involvement as cultural and behavioural rather than the responsibility of a single department. A robust, embedded, resident involvement culture will help support the significant change programme currently being undertaken at RBK and the explicit desire to transform the way services are delivered.

Schedule of Recommendations

Recommendations are prioritised as 1, 2 and 3 which broadly reflects the relative importance of the action. However it also takes into account the necessary sequencing of certain items and the practicalities of implementation.

No	Theme/Action	Priority 1/2/3	Potential 'Quick Win'
Setting the scene – Strategy			
To respond to the need for coherent strategy and framework setting out the reasons why resident involvement is important we recommend that RBK:			
1	<p>Develop a clear strategy for resident engagement which:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Is owned by staff, residents and other key stakeholders b) Has an explicit relationship with housing and wider council objectives as articulated through (for example) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. One Kingston ii. Kingston Plan - Vision for 2020 iii. The Housing Service Transformation Programme c) Is shaped around the themes of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Knowing the profile, aspirations and needs of residents II. Utilising flexible approaches that respond to the needs of residents and the business III. Ensuring resident involvement underpins service improvement IV. Embedding a resident involvement culture within the broader housing service d) Is supported by objectives in the following areas 	1	

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Community Development/Capacity Building II. Improving understanding of the resident profile as well as the needs, aspirations and experience of residents III. Developing clear standards which capture aspirations and provide a basis against which progress can be measured IV. Developing a communication strategy which focusses on the benefits (outcomes) of being involved V. Establishing collective ownership of resident Involvement VI. Improving access for hard to reach groups 		
<p>2</p>	<p>Create an action plan for the delivery of the strategic objectives which:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> I. Has clear timescales that are realistic in the context of the wider commitments of the housing service II. Has identifiable milestones which are recognisable and valued by both residents and staff III. Is underpinned by outcome focussed measures which capture both progress and the value that is added through the engagement of residents. These might include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • %/Number of residents actively involved (across a range of involvement opportunities) • Targets against age/ethnicity • Satisfaction that views are taken in to account and acted upon • Resident initiated changes • Spend on non-pay resident involvement per managed property 	<p>1</p>	

Setting the Scene – Communications

To respond to the need for communication methods that use accessible language, are less formal, offer flexibility, form part of an overall strategy and, crucially, focus on outcomes for residents and their communities, we recommend that RBK:

3	Develop a Communications Plan to support the strategy that focuses on the <i>benefits</i> (outcomes) of being involved.	1	
4	Use the outcomes of the review to re-launch a ‘new’ approach to resident involvement	1	
5	Once agreed, publish the strategic objectives, purpose and priorities for resident involvement in accessible form within Home News, Home Truths, on the Website and through the internal communications framework. (See MHS practice example)	2	
6	Put in place a ‘You Said – We Did’ initiative to demonstrate how resident feedback has been used to improve service delivery and reinforce the relationship between resident feedback and service improvement	2	✓
7	Establish a ‘Reader Group’ of residents to proof read intended messages and publications as well as test existing media for accessibility and ease of understanding.	2	✓
8	Use the High Level journey mapping (Appendix 2), to identify key ‘touch points’ where messages about both opportunities and outcomes can be communicated.	2	

9	Identify a 'message a week' to be shared with residents at key customer 'touchpoints' such as the Contact Centre, Repairs Service, or at sign up which highlights the benefits of getting involved and captures interest.	3	
10	Put in place a very simple 'style guide' for communicating with residents that sets out the basic requirements for messages such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I. Outcome focus II. Language III. Simplicity 	2	✓
	Amend the existing website (and any other appropriate media) to ensure descriptions of existing involvement methods are focused on what outcomes they deliver for residents and communities	2	
11	Establish a Communication forum to develop a coordinated approach to sending out positive news stories. Home Life, Home Truths (though appreciate independence of this publication), rent statements, local press, RBK Twitter feeds. This should include residents and the corporate communications team.	2	
12	Build on the work that the Housing Department has started with the Corporate Communications Team to promote positive outcomes for residents and capitalise on technological advances in communication. For example initial ideas on promotion of estate walkabouts quickly and cheaply to local residents through use of social media.	2	
13	Continue to develop the strategic relationship with the corporate communications team whereby they advise on how best a message can be communicated and sustained rather than are simply requested to carry out an instruction to (for example) produce a newsletter.	2	

Knowing your Customers

To improve knowledge of residents in terms of profile, their behaviour, aspirations and requirements and to ensure there is a clear relationship between this and the targeting of activity and resource allocation, we recommend RBK:

14	Develop corporate and departmental approach to strengthening the available resident profile data and ensuring it is kept updated	1	
15	Put in place (at least one) Culturally focussed, high profile event to improve access and demonstrate commitment to making involvement opportunities accessible	2	✓
16	Explore the ethnic mix of the Customer profile in more detail to determine specific language or cultural barriers	2	
17	Introduce cultural awareness training for engagement and housing staff	3	
18	Target less involved groups of residents using informal methods to ensure that a diverse range of residents' views are captured in service planning.	2	

Redesigning Resident Involvement

To underpin tangible improvements in performance and service experience and rebuild confidence and credibility in the resident involvement service and overcome 'legacy' issues

and

Offer a broader range of engagement methods which respond to the capacity, capability and aspirations of residents as well as the need for the service to have meaningful feedback, we recommend RBK:

19	<p>Develop an action plan to identify available transactional data and integrate this into the informing service improvement and engagement priorities, for example</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Complaints ii. Avoidable contact iii. Repairs feedback iv. Exit surveys from IAC Journey mapping 	1	
20	Establish an agreed plan and partnership approaches to addressing legacy issues 'head on' and maintain open dialogue around progress.	2	
21	Use transactional data systematically to set resident involvement (and other) priorities as well as underpin 'You Said – We did' information.	2	
22	Utilise IAC customer journey mapping activities. Focus each month on particular service.	2	

23	Develop the use of 'Mobysoft' and introduce hierarchical satisfaction monitoring for the repairs services (Wakefield and District Housing)	2	
24	Work with the Federation to re-evaluate their role and formalise the demarcation of responsibilities of the various resident involvement vehicles	1	
25	Support the Federation to provide hands on support and mentoring for resident groups and new resident representatives/volunteers.	3	
26	Develop a shared action plan with the Federation to clarify roles, capture respective responsibilities and complementary objectives	1	
27	Introduce service specific groups of residents to focus on areas of improvement priority driven by feedback, objective data and overseen by Krisp. For example responsive repairs, caretaking, Anti-Social behaviour. It is important that contributions to these are service based rather than geographically focussed. These could be virtual groups which make use of electronic methods of communication rather than more formal group meetings if easier and quicker to establish and support.	2	
28	Communicate outcomes from service specific groups regularly to demonstrate their impact both for the residents that are involved and those that are not as it may encourage the latter to engage.	2	
29	Introduce Facebook based forums or other virtual focus groups that make use of electronic methods of communication and target specific service areas	3	
30	Clarify relationship with Repairs contractors to ensure they can contribute to resident engagement at a strategic, collective and transactional level.	2	

31	Work with Better Homes contractors to implement programme of Resident Coordinators to improve communication throughout improvement works.	2	
32	<p>Train resident representatives to contribute to void and repair post inspections. This has a range of benefits including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> v. Improving skills and capacity, vi. Providing the opportunity for regular customer feedback on quality of works vii. Providing useful information for KRISP viii. 	3	
33	Agree programme for utilisation of 'Community Projects' resource with Repairs contractors.	2	

A habit not a department

To establish wider organisational ownership of resident involvement so that it is embedded structurally, culturally and within performance management arrangements we recommend RBK:

34	<p>Consider simplification of the engagement structure to provide a single strategic interaction group with clear terms of reference and specified attendance: This could include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Senior Officers from the Housing Team ii. Executive Member for Housing iii. Federation Representation iv. Krisp representation 	1	
35	Identify resident involvement objectives that fit with RBK’s housing transformation project	1	✓
35	Align the Resident Engagement structure with strategic direction using the principles set out in paragraph 9.13	1	
36	Agree with teams a range of actions that interpret these objectives in a meaningful way and enables individuals to see how their role contributes towards achieving them	1	
37	Include resident involvement as a standard competency for each individual member of staff.	2	
38	Integrate resident involvement actions and targets that are linked to the strategy into operational service plans.	2	

39	Use service delivery team meetings to identify content for 'You Said – we did' features and other resident focussed publications	2	
40	Provide additional training for middle management to reinforce the value of resident involvement and enable them to link with their own service areas.	3	
41	Consider an annual 'Awards event' for staff and resident reps to recognise good practice in working with communities/residents	3	
42	Identify specific budgets for resident involvement activity and devolve as appropriate but preferably with service delivery teams having some degree of delegated budget.	2	
43	Align Resident Involvement staff with specific teams to forge relationships within the organisation, develop specific projects and identify the most effective way of residents informing particular service areas.	3	
44	Develop a network of Resident Involvement Champions (one from each team) to work with the Resident Involvement Manager (RIM) and their Service Manager to promote the value of resident feedback within that their service area.	3	
45	Review progress against strategy and action plans with residents after 12 months of initial implementation	1	