

Report to: Housing Review Board



Date of Meeting 25<sup>th</sup> January 2024

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release NA

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## **Resident Involvement Strategy 2024 -2027**

### **Report summary:**

This report outlines EDDC's consultation and re-design of our Resident Involvement Strategy (2024-2027), replacing the previous strategy written in 2019 which has now come to an end. The report details the background of our Resident Involvement Strategy, the consultation undertaken over the past year, and a summary of the key points of the new strategy and the legislation we are governed by.

### **Is the proposed decision in accordance with:**

Budget Yes  No

Policy Framework Yes  No

### **Recommendation:**

**That the Housing Review Board note the report and agree the Resident Involvement Strategy for the next 3 years**

### **Reason for recommendation:**

Continuation and expansion of the Communities Team work to involve residents in the Housing Service, in line with new regulatory requirements.

Officer: Andy King

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### Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- Climate Action and Emergency Response
- Coast, Country and Environment
- Council and Corporate Co-ordination
- Communications and Democracy
- Economy
- Finance and Assets
- Strategic Planning
- Sustainable Homes and Communities
- Culture, Leisure, Sport and Tourism

**Equalities impact** Low Impact

**Climate change** Low Impact

**Risk:** Low Risk; .

**Links to background information** [Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard.](#)

**Link to [Council Plan](#)**

Priorities (check which apply)

- Better homes and communities for all
  - A greener East Devon
  - A resilient economy
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## Report in full

### 1. Background

1.1 The Resident Involvement Strategy Review seeks to realise the vision that Resident Involvement involves all staff in the Housing service and is at the centre of service delivery and decision making.

This in line with the Social Housing Bill, which is placing a renewed focus on engagement with customers and communities. The Bill has introduced new regulatory powers and higher expectations around how we involve customers, implement customer feedback, and involve customers in the development of services.

Tenant/resident engagement or tenant/resident involvement are terms used to describe the opportunities we provide to the people who live in our homes to talk to us, to find out about the housing service, and to influence, monitor and scrutinise what we do.

Including the opinions and thoughts of our tenants within our decision making processes is key in building a successful housing service which works well for everyone. Engaging with our tenants, lets us find out what matters to them, and how the things we do in our capacity as landlord, impact upon them and their lives. We are then able to make informed decisions, which lead to positive outcomes for both us and our tenants.

1.2 The Social Housing Regulation Bill introduces Regulatory Consumer Standards with effect from April 2024. These standards cover four areas, one of which is Tenant Involvement and Empowerment.

[Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Amongst the requirements we need to demonstrate compliance with:

- i. The provision of choices, information and communication that are appropriate to the diverse needs of tenants.
- ii. We must show that we treat all tenants with fairness and respect.
- iii. We must ensure that tenants are given a wide range of opportunities to influence and be involved in:
  - the formulation of 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 about how performance might be improved.
  - the management of repair and maintenance services
- iv. We must provide support to tenants to build their capacity to be more effectively involved.
- v. We must consult tenants at least once every three years on the best way of involving them in the governance and scrutiny of our housing management service.

If we are to meet these standards, we need to adopt a tenant focussed approach to all aspects of our work within housing. It is vital that we include tenants right from the very start of policy formulation, that we give them the training they need to be fully involved, and that we keep them updated with clear, concise, and relevant information about our performance.

## 2. Our Current Strategy

2.1 Our existing Resident Involvement Strategy was produced in December 2019. It details four priority areas:

- i. To increase customer participation to support evolution of service provision.
- ii. To provide support to individual residents and Tenant and Resident Associations to give them the necessary skills, knowledge, information, and resources to enable effective involvement.
- iii. To assess customer satisfaction and seek feedback from a range of customers to ensure equality and diversity in all services.
- iv. To monitor the Resident Involvement Strategy 2019 -2023.

Unfortunately, the Covid pandemic hit within weeks of the launch of this strategy. All face-to-face contact with residents ended. Tenant Participation groups ceased to operate, and frontline staff were placed onto alternative duties.

By the summer of 2022, the Communities Team was largely depleted, due to staff moving permanently to alternative roles and ill health. In October 2022, new staff were recruited to the team, and efforts began to bring this important area of work back up to speed.

2.2 The Communities Team are now working hard to engage with our tenants, to keep them updated, and to encourage as many of them as possible to have their say.

The team have re-started, and are currently supporting the following involved tenant groups:

- Repairs and Maintenance
- Scrutiny
- Housing Complaints Support Panel
- Residents Involvement Management Group
- Housing Matters Editorial Group
- Recruitment and Selection Panel
- Community Initiative Fund Panel
- 3 X Residents Associations

Our tenant magazine, 'Housing Matters' is published 3 times each year and sent to all our tenants and leaseholders. A small group of tenants and staff work together to agree on and edit the articles that appear in it. This is a key method used by the Housing Service to give information to all tenants.

The Communities Team have facilitated focus groups on request for other areas of the Housing Service who want to gain a better understanding of tenants' views on their services and policies.

An annual report detailing performance against Housing Key Performance Indicators, and how budgets have been spent is published each year and sent to all tenants and leaseholders.

The tenant conference and recognition awards ceremony is to be re-started. It will bring tenants together, to celebrate and thank them for their time and achievements across the year.

The Communities team have also instigated an initial program of training for many of our involved tenants.

### 3. Reviewing our Resident Involvement Strategy

We adopted an in depth, and detailed approach to reviewing and updating our Residents Involvement Strategy (RIS). We have undertaken extensive consultation and ensured adherence to best practice and legislative requirements. We have completed self-assessments of our current performance against the Consumer Regulatory Standards, our current RIS, and measured ourselves against the strategies of other Social Housing providers.

#### 3.1 Consultations

We have had conversations with some residents who are already involved, and some who are not. We have also spoken to councillors, housing managers and staff to find out what good resident involvement looks like to them. We have adopted their ideas in the development of this strategy.

Part of our consultations took the form of one-to-one conversations with:

- 13 tenants who were already involved in the Housing Service
- 14 tenants who are not involved in the Housing Service
- 2 Council members
- 9 Housing Service managers & staff

Some of the key messages from those conversations were:

- A more diverse mix of residents needs to be involved.
- We need to increase the variety of ways for our residents to get involved, by for example implementing a digital inclusion programme.
- The focus of formal resident involvement groups needs to improve.
- Performance information and reports need to be presented to residents in a clear and concise format.
- Training needs for involved residents should be identified and met.
- More attractive incentives should be offered to involved residents.

We have used these messages to help us create our 5 Aims for Resident Involvement over the next 3 years. We have also reviewed all the new and existing legislation, researched current Best Practice advise, and drawn ideas from other providers of Social Housing. (A full list of research sources used can be found in Appendix 2 of the Strategy)

We also held a large consultation event which was hosted at our offices in December 2022, with 21 tenants and 10 members of staff in attendance.

Main Findings from Consultations	
Areas for Improvement identified	Strengths identified

Formal tenant meetings need to improve	It is good that we hold an annual tenant conference
A more diverse mix of tenants need to be involved	Some tenants give good feedback at meetings
Tenants should be invited to estate inspections	Tenants have been able to shape the Housing Service
There needs to be greater inclusion of tenants from more remote areas	Great that councillors and tenants are involved in the Housing Review Board

### 3.2 Regulatory Self -Assessments

Self -Assessments against the following regulatory papers have been made:

- The Social Housing White Paper
- The Regulator of Social Housings' Regulatory Consumer Standards
- The Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code
- Tenant Involvement & Empowerment Standard

<b>Main Findings from Self-Assessments against Regulatory Standards</b>	
<b>Areas for Improvement identified</b>	<b>Strengths identified</b>
Performance Information needs to be presented to tenants in a clear, concise format	Home Safeguard and MSOs provide regular support to many vulnerable tenants living in our sheltered properties
Training needed for involved tenants should be identified and met	Our community hubs provide regular opportunities to socialise for tenants who might otherwise be alone.
We need a better understanding of who lives in our homes	We have a clear complaints policy, and resident engagement in our complaints process
We need to track and monitor the outcomes from our involvement activities, and keep our progress against our strategy under review with tenants	Renewed membership of TPAS (Tenant Participation and Advisory Service) gives us access to specialist advice and training on tenant engagement.

### 3.3 Best Practice Self Assessments and Comparisons to Other Providers

Self-Assessments against the following best practice papers and engagement strategies from other social housing providers have been made:

- TPAS National Tenant Engagement Standards
- TPAS Report 'Engaging and Empowering tenants in council-owned housing'
- Notes from conference speech made by Kate Dodson, Chief of Regulatory Engagement at the Regulator for Social Housing Conference
- Copperworks Housing Association
- East Ayrshire
- L & Q Housing
- Cambridge City Council
- Buckinghamshire Council
- Dartford Borough Council
- Winchester City Council
- Pheonix Housing Association
- Age UK Digital Inclusion programme

<b>Main findings from Self-Assessments against Best Practice and other social housing providers</b>	
<b>Areas for Improvement identified</b>	<b>Strengths identified</b>
Understanding how our tenants prefer to communicate with us	Our Housing review Board provides a mechanism for tenants to hold the council leadership to account
Promotion of the role of tenants in scrutiny of the housing service and complaints handling	We have a dedicated staffing resource for tenant engagement and a Resident Involvement Strategy which links into the objectives of the housing service
Provision of clear, easily understood information to tenants	We actively invite involved tenants to attend focus groups and meetings
Increase the variety of options for tenants to get involved	We publish a 4 monthly magazine and send it to all tenants to keep them updated and informed about the Housing Service.
We need more encouragement and provide incentives for younger tenants to get involved	
All housing staff need to understand the importance of listening to tenants' opinions and tenant participation.	

#### **4.0 Resident Involvement Strategy 2023 -2027.**

Our new Strategy builds upon the strengths highlighted above, and identifies actions to address the areas for improvement. It also builds upon the work already being done to include our tenants to whatever extent they choose, within our service. It shows our vision to embrace technological advances in the ways people choose to communicate, and to bring our methods up to date, making us more accessible to a wider range of our tenants.

It provides us with a framework to support our tenants so they can get more from their involvement, by providing relevant training, resources, and recompense for their time and efforts.

It also highlights the importance of evaluating, recording, and learning from the outcomes of our tenant involvement, to enable us to move our service forward in a way that benefits both us and our tenants.

We believe this strategy will pave the way for us to meet the standards for Resident Involvement laid out in The Social Housing Act and the Regulatory Consumer Standards.

#### **4.1 Our new strategy**

Our Resident Involvement Strategy 2023 -2027 outlines 5 main objectives.

These are:

- 1. To understand more about the people who live in our homes.**

To achieve this, we have already created a getting to know you survey. In 2024 we hope to launch this to create an area-based analysis of our residents, to guide the development of area-based community development.

## **2. To improve the value of our tenant engagement**

We will make sure that the time our residents give to help us make changes and improvements is valued and impactful. We will give them the training and skills they need to get the most from their experiences of working with us. We will make the time spent with officers as productive and useful as possible so that best use is made of their time too. We will make sure our involved tenants understand what is expected of them, and what they can expect from us in return.

Strengths were identified in this area, which include dedicated staffing resources for tenant engagement and a Resident Involvement Strategy which links into the objectives of the housing service, We actively invite involved tenants to attend focus groups and meetings and our Housing review Board provides a mechanism for tenants to hold the council leadership to account.

## **3. To increase the diversity within our involved tenants**

It was identified in our areas for improvement that a more diverse mix of tenants need to be involved.

To achieve this, will identify which groups of residents are not currently sharing their ideas and experiences with us. We will develop targeted plans to improve our relations with those residents and encourage more of them to become involved. We will make greater use of social media and online methods to make it easier for younger and working residents to have their say.

## **4. To improve our communication and consultation with tenants**

Our strengths in this area identified that we already We publish a 4 monthly magazine and send it to all tenants to keep them updated and informed about the Housing Service We also publish an annual report which offers a transparent overview of the Housing Service. However, we do acknowledge that improvement is needed in this area. From research from best practice, including Age UK, we will implement a Digital Inclusion programme, so we can encourage more residents to get involved.

## **5. To value our involved tenants, volunteers, and communities**

Through the consultation process it was identified that all housing staff need to understand the importance of listening to tenants' opinions and tenant participation. It was also identified that incentives should be offered to reward resident involvement. We will explore ways in which we can offer incentives to increase levels of resident involvement.

## **5. Recommendations**

**That the Housing Review Board note the report and agree the Resident Involvement Strategy for the next 3 years**

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**Financial implications:**

There are no specific financial implications.

**Legal implications:**

There are no legal implications on which to comment. The legal framework is set out within the report.

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# Equality Impact Assessment



Before completing this EIA please ensure you have read the EIA guidance notes and other resources, available on the [intranet](#)

<b>Version</b>	1	<b>Date Completed</b>	8 <sup>th</sup> January 2024
<b>Description of what is being impact assessed</b>			
Update of the Resident Involvement Strategy. The Strategy will guide the delivery of the resident involvement service for the next 4 years.			
<b>Evidence</b>			
<b>What data/information have you used to assess how this policy/service might impact on protected groups?</b>			
Officers responsible for the delivery of this strategy have examined best practice from other Social Housing providers and have carried out a self assessment against the following:  The Social Housing White Paper The Regulator of Social Housings' Regulatory Consumer Standards The Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code Tenant Involvement & Empowerment Standard			
<b>Who have you consulted with to assess possible impact on protected groups and what have they told you? If you have not consulted other people, please explain why?</b>			
To shape the development of this Strategy, we have consulted with Tenants, councillors, and staff. Consultation took the form of one-on-one conversations and focus groups, a large consultation event and will now be available for public consultation through the council website for a set period of time.			

## Analysis of impact on protected groups

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires us to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations with protected groups. The Council also has a legal duty to have due regard to armed forces personnel when carrying out healthcare, housing and education functions. Consider how this policy/service will achieve these aims. In the table below, using the evidence outlined above and your own understanding, detail what considerations and potential impacts against each of the three aims of the Public Sector Equality Duty. Based on this information, assess the likely outcome, before you have implemented any mitigation.

Protected group	Summary of impact	Negative outcome	Neutral outcome	Positive outcome
Age	Age can play a huge part in exclusion and loneliness. The 5 aims to improve resident Involvement activities outlined within the Strategy are designed to increase inclusivity of residents of all ages. Resident involvement is also a potential way to help combat loneliness.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Disability	Disabled people are especially likely to experience digital and social exclusion because they may find it hard to find technology that has been appropriately adapted to meet their needs. Mobility issues may also impede them from taking part in activities which leads to social exclusion. Reasonable adjustments will be made to allow a person with any disability to take part in Resident Involvement that applies to digital equipment or covering the cost for transport to travel to meetings.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Gender reassignment	No impact has been identified that is specific to this equality group	☐	☒	☒
Marriage and civil partnership	No impact has been identified that is specific to this equality group	☐	☒	☒

Protected group	Summary of impact	Negative outcome	Neutral outcome	Positive outcome
<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b>	No impact has been identified that is specific to this equality group	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Race and ethnicity</b>	No impact has been identified that is specific to this equality group	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Religion or belief</b>	No impact has been identified that is specific to this equality group	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Sex</b>	No impact has been identified that is specific to this equality group	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Sexual orientation</b>	No impact has been identified that is specific to this equality group	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Armed Forces (including serving personnel, families and veterans)</b>	No impact has been identified that is specific to this equality group	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>Other, e.g. carers, care leavers, low income, rurality/isolation, etc.</b>	No impact has been identified that is specific to this equality group	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Protected group	Summary of impact			Negative outcome	Neutral outcome	Positive outcome
<p><b>Negative outcomes action plan</b>            Where you have ascertained that there will potentially be negative outcomes, you are required to mitigate the impact of these. Please detail below the actions that you intend to take.</p>						
Action taken/to be taken	Date	Person responsible	How will it be monitored?	Action complete		
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Select date			<input type="checkbox"/>		
<p><b>If negative impacts remain, please provide an explanation below.</b></p>						

<b>Completed by:</b>	<b>Rebecca Meakin</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>08/01/2024</b>
<b>Approved by:</b>	<b>Andrew King</b>
<b>Date:</b>	<b>09/01/2024</b>
<b>To be reviewed by:</b>	
<b>Review date:</b>	