

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	<b>June Cabinet 2022</b>
<b>SUBJECT:</b>	Adopting the Residents' Charter
<b>LEAD OFFICER:</b>	Susmita Sen, Corporate Director of Housing
<b>CABINET MEMBER:</b>	Councillor Lynne Hale, Cabinet Member for Homes
<b>WARDS:</b>	All

**SUMMARY OF REPORT:**

The following report provides an overview of the proposed Residents' Charter which has been developed by existing residents to improve the Council's relationship with its residents.

The report includes the background to the Residents' Charter, a summary of its content, and a proposal to adopt it.

**FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

The following report will have no direct financial impact on the borough.

Any costs incurred in the future to deliver the Residents' Charter will be contained within the existing approved budget for 2022/2023 to ensure Members are sighted.

**KEY DECISION REFERENCE NO.:**

The Executive Mayor in Cabinet is recommended to...

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- i. Note and agree the adoption of the draft Residents' Charter
- ii. Agree the proposed process set out below for consulting all residents on the Residents' Charter
- iii. Note and agree the provision to Cabinet of an action plan detailing the development and implementation of the Residents' Charter in Autumn 2022
- iv. Provide a progress update to Cabinet on the Residents' Charter in March 2023

## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 Following the coverage of poor housing conditions at 1-87 Regina Road, South Norwood, the Council's Tenant & Leaseholder Panel approved the proposal for a Residents' Charter in July 2021 which had been developed by three existing members of that panel.
- 1.2 The Residents' Charter was developed to foster good relationships between Council residents and the Council's landlord services, in alignment with the Charter for Social Housing Residents: social housing white paper, and subsequent Social Housing Regulation Bill.
- 1.3 The Residents' Charter was shared by the Tenant & Leaseholder Panel with the Housing Directorate Management Team (DMT) for consideration.
- 1.4 Following the presentation to DMT, further work toward the adoption of the Residents' Charter was delayed as the focus switched to establishing the Housing Improvement Board and agreeing the Housing Improvement Plan.
- 1.5 In May 2022, Mayor Perry pledged to adopt the draft Residents' Charter to ensure residents are included in decisions relating to the Council's landlord services and to set out the way forward for strengthening our relationship with residents.
- 1.6 The Regulator for Social Housing declared a breach of the Homes Standard and Tenant Involvement & Empowerment Standard in May 2021 and the adoption of the Residents' Charter is an important step towards meeting the requirements of the standard. The directorate will undertake a gap analysis in the coming weeks to identify the areas where the housing service is in breach of the consumer standards.

## **2. THE RESIDENTS' CHARTER**

- 2.1 The Residents' Charter has been developed to foster good relationships between Council residents and leaseholders and the Council's landlord services. The adoption of the Charter will broaden the Council's existing engagement with residents and demonstrates the Mayoral commitment and Council's corporate commitment to improving services for residents.
- 2.2 The Residents' Charter includes the following objectives:

We will...

- Treat residents with respect
- Respond quickly and efficiently to complaints and learn from problems that lead to complaints
- Be transparent with our residents about how we are performing
- Provide safe homes and a clean environment which residents are proud to live in

- Give residents a voice and encourage meaningful decision-making activities

2.3 The full Residents' Charter can be found in the appendices to this report.

### **3. ADOPTION OF THE RESIDENTS' CHARTER**

3.1 The housing directorate has proposed the following process to ensure the further development and implementation of a Residents' Charter.

3.2 The directorate will work closely with the Housing Improvement Board, Tenant & Leaseholder Panel, and the Cabinet Member for Homes to revisit the draft Residents' Charter. The draft Charter has been produced by three existing Council residents, and a broader consultation with residents across the borough must take place in line with the Charter for Social Housing Residents: social housing white paper.

3.3 Integral to ensuring the Charter is fit-for-purpose will be establishing a baseline to assess the current performance of the housing service and allow our future improvements to be captured. Benchmarking against other London boroughs will also be key to assessing our performance.

3.4 Broad consultation with residents, establishing a baseline and conducting benchmarking will allow SMART targets and key performance indicators to be provided in an action plan. An action plan detailing the development and implementation of the Residents' Charter will be provided to Cabinet in Autumn 2022.

3.5 The adoption of the Residents' Charter must align with and inform the Council's existing improvement plans, including:

- Housing Improvement Plan
- implementation of the NEC Housing management system
- asset strategy
- procurement of the repairs contract.
- transformation plan to address culture
- customer access strategy

3.6 The Residents' Charter report proposes a series of actions to ensure engagement from a broader range of residents. Actions include:

- the use of the Council's existing residents publication, Open House, to request feedback on the Charter,
- the signposting of residents to the Charter via the Survey of Tenants & Residents (STAR).
- use NEC housing to engage with a wider range of residents and facilitate 'virtual chat rooms'
- 350 residents are telephone surveyed each quarter by Acuity to gauge satisfaction levels with our housing services. During the survey residents can be signposted to the charter (online) where they will be invited to provide feedback.

- creating 'Listening Posts' – QR codes or SMS short codes advertised in Open House and on estates
  - promoting the Residents' Charter via the council's website and Resident involvement Facebook pages
  - implementation of the requirements of the Housing Ombudsman
- 3.7 The council will invite residents to suggest ways in which the Residents' Charter can be delivered and develop reporting mechanisms on the Residents' Charter commitments.
- 3.8 Some of the consultation on the Residents' Charter is dependent on the successful implementation of the new housing management software NEC, which has a powerful engagement platform to facilitate discussion on key topics with a much greater number of residents.
- 3.9 The Residents' Charter contains the following commitments:
- Fully involving our residents in decisions which impact their housing or housing services
  - Involving residents in monitoring the services delivered by our partners and contractors
- 3.10 The decision-making powers are retained by the Mayor as outlined in the Executive Mayor's Scheme of Delegation. As part of the review, we will work residents to identify ways in which residents may be fully and effectively involved in decisions impacting services.
- 3.11 The Council is therefore committing to fully involve residents in:
- all major policy decisions impacting on residents
  - the monitoring of the Council and Housing Department's performance on services impacting residents
  - any changes materially impacting residents either individually, in their block or their estate.
- 3.12 We will use the Regulator for Social Housing Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard to support the review and seek to learn from best practice elsewhere. This will include London Councils, Association of Retained Council Housing (ARCH), HouseMark and Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) and other high performing local authorities and housing associations.
- 3.13 A progress update on the implementation of the Residents' Charter will be presented to Cabinet in March 2023.

#### **4. FINANCIAL AND RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS**

- 4.1 The current report will have no direct financial impact on the borough. Any costs incurred in the future to deliver the Residents' Charter will be contained within the existing approved budget for 2022/2023 to ensure Members are sighted.
- 4.2 Approved by Nish Popat, Interim Head of Corporate Finance

#### **5. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS**

- 5.1 Adopting a Residents' Charter will assist the Council in complying with current consumer standards set by the Regulator of Social Housing. There are statutory requirements on the Council to consult with residents where they are likely to be substantially affected by changes in housing management practice or policy.
- 5.2 Approved by Sandra Herbert, Head of Litigation and Corporate Law on behalf of the Director of Law and Governance & Deputy Monitoring Officer

#### **6. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT**

- 6.1 There are no immediate human resources impacts arising directly from the recommendations in this report. However, there will be impacts associated with the adoption of the Residents' Charter. The Residents' Charter constitutes a key part of the Council's statutory response to the Charter for Social Housing residents: social housing white paper; as such, adoption of the Charter will have an impact on the Council's workforce. The Council's agreed human resources policies and procedures will be followed. The Council is launching a cultural transformation programme, which will be an enabler of improved customer service for residents and residents aligned to the Residents' Charter.
- 6.2 Approved by: Dean Shoesmith, *Chief People Officer*

#### **7. EQUALITIES IMPACT**

- 7.1 The housing directorate is in the process of creating an equalities impact assessment for the adoption of the Residents' Charter. The lead officer will work with the Equalities Manager to ensure the EQIA produced accurately assesses the potential impact on vulnerable groups, and groups that share protected characteristics.
- 7.2 The adoption of the Residents' Charter must pay due regard to ensuring to ensuring that all residents in the borough are able to understand the actions

the Council takes in their name, the decisions it makes to spend resources on their behalf, and who is accountable for that action.

7.3 The results of the EQIA will be reported to Cabinet alongside the action plan detailing the development and implementation of the Residents' Charter. The consultation will be undertaken using a variety of channels to ensure that all residents have the opportunity to engage. Alternative formats of consultation materials, such as large print, audio and alternative languages will also be offered.

7.4 Approved by: Gavin Handford, *Director of Policy, Programmes & Performance*

## **8. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**

8.1 The Residents' Charter has no direct environmental impacts, however, through the co-production of services on estates, the Residents' Charter will deliver greater resident ownership of improvements and better outcomes for the environment.

## **9. CRIME AND DISORDER REDUCTION IMPACT**

9.1 The adoption of the Residents' Charter will increase the safety of residents by improving the relationship between residents and the Council's landlord services in relation to repairs and safety as well as residents' concerns. Improvements to the built environment will likely have a positive impact on crime and disorder, including anti-social behaviour.

9.2 When reports of anti-social behaviour are raised by tenants and leaseholders, they will be investigated in line with the ASB Policy. The policy details the London Borough of Croydon's approach to tackling anti-social behaviour.

9.3 Approved by Christopher Rowney, Head of the Violence Reduction Network on behalf of Kristian Aspinall, Director of Culture & Community Safety

## **10. DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS**

### **10.1 WILL THE SUBJECT OF THE REPORT INVOLVE THE PROCESSING OF 'PERSONAL DATA'?**

No, as the report contains no sensitive or personal data

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**CONTACT OFFICER:** Justin Hunt, Director of Tenancy Services

**APPENDICES TO THIS REPORT:**

**Appendix One: Residents' Charter**  
**Appendix One**

**Croydon Council RESIDENTS' CHARTER**

By Yaw John Boateng, Les Parry and Kim Wakeley  
Croydon Council Tenants and Leaseholders Panel

The purpose of this charter is to foster good relationships between landlord and residents of the London Borough of Croydon following the issues at Regina Road and in conjunction with the findings of the ARK report and recommendations.

**1. To treat residents with respect**

What does it look like?

- Listening to, empathizing with, and acting on our customer's feedback or concerns
- Challenging stigma about social housing wherever we encounter it, and positively promote of the contributions our residents<sup>i</sup>
- Being considerate of residents' availability by offering a range of appointments
- Keeping our residents informed about our services
- Communicating with them in a way that's easy to understand and who to talk to when there's a problem

**2. We will respond quickly and efficiently to complaints and learn from problems that lead to complaints.**

What does it look like?

- Making it easy for residents to raise complaints or concerns when things go wrong
- Responding to issues quickly so that problems do not escalate
- Learning from issues that have led to complaints to improve our services
- Introducing a dedicated housing complaints process
- Recognising residents' rights in accordance with Human Rights Legislation for Housing and Homes

**3. We will be transparent with our residents about how we are performing.**

What does it look like?

- Ensuring performance reports are jargon free and easy to understand
- Enabling residents to see how we are performing by sharing reports on our website and in accessible formats
- Publishing an Annual Report which details progress against the delivery of our commitments to residents
- Being honest & upfront with residents about variations or amendments to services

**4. Provide safe homes and a clean environment which residents are proud to live in**

What does it look like?

- To be safe in your home

- Maintaining our homes to the Decent Homes Standard
- Timely estate cleaning
- well-maintained grounds and estates

## **5. Giving residents a voice and encouraging meaningful decision-making activities**

What does it look like?

- Working in partnership with a diverse range of residents to scrutinise and monitor our services
- Enabling our residents to get their voices heard in different ways including focus groups, regular surgeries, residents' associations and a mix of digital and non-digital communications
- Listening to what our residents tell us and communicating what has changed as a result.
- Fully involving our residents in decisions which impact their housing or housing services
- Involving residents in monitoring the services delivered by our partners and contractors

<sup>1</sup> It's Not Okay" guide – designed by See the Person Campaign and Chartered Institute of Housing(CIH ) - <https://www.cih.org/publications/its-not-okay-a-guide-to-tackling-stigma-in-social-housing>

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