

REPORT TO:	December Cabinet 2022
SUBJECT:	Adopting the Residents' Charter
LEAD OFFICER:	Katherine Monk, Resident involvement manager
CABINET MEMBER:	Councillor Lynne Hale, Cabinet Member for Homes
WARDS:	All

SUMMARY OF REPORT:

This report provides an update on the development of the Resident's Charter following engagement sessions held with residents between August and September 2022. It presents the Residents' Charter and details the Council's plans to embed the Charter's principles within the Housing directorate.

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:

1. Note and agree the Residents' Charter (Appendix One)
2. Note the Council's plans to embed the Charter's principles within the Housing directorate

1. Background

- 1.1 The independent ARK investigation in spring 2021 into living conditions at 1-87 Regina Road, South Norwood discovered a range of serious problems across the Council's housing service, including systemic problems in how the Council communicates and deals with tenants' concerns and complaints, and a lack of respect and care for tenants.
- 1.2 In May 2021, the Regulator of Social Housing determined that the Council had breached both the Home Standard and the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard, with "actual and potential serious detriment" to council tenants, and that we had "failed to treat tenants with fairness and respect".

- 1.3 Adoption of a Residents' Charter is a core element of the council's Housing Transformation Programme and is essential to ensuring the housing service provided to residents is responsive, effective, respectful and puts residents voice at the heart of delivery.
- 1.4 The council's Tenant & Leaseholder Panel approved the proposal for a Residents' Charter in July 2021. It was developed by three existing members of the panel 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.
- 1.5 It was further amended in June 2022 and the Executive Mayor approved the adoption of a draft Residents' charter in June 2022, with an action plan to follow. The Cabinet also agreed to a process to consult on the charter with residents (amended in the July Cabinet to include a series of engagement workshops).
- 1.6 In September 2022 the Regulator of Social Housing published the outcome of its consultation on Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs). As a result, from 1 April 2023 all registered providers of social housing will need to collect and publish a range of comparable information on areas such as repairs, safety checks and complaints and responsive and respectful engagement with residents. These new TSMs have been developed to assess the extent to which landlords are meeting the standards set out in the Charter for Social Housing Residents.
- 1.7 The current report presents the Residents' Charter to Cabinet and provides an update on resident engagement. The report details the Council's plans to embed the principles of the Charter within housing services, to ensure that residents' experience of the housing services improves, and they are able to influence and be involved in decisions that affect them.
- 1.8 The housing directorate is already actively consulting with residents on key strategic decisions and improvement programmes. At a recent meeting of the Tenant and Leaseholder Panel, residents were invited to input into the council's response to the government's consultation social housing rents. Residents have also been heavily involved in reprocurring the council's new housing repairs and gas servicing contractors and will monitor their performance once appointed. Existing resident involvement structures within housing, such as the Performance Monitoring Group (PMG), health and safety panel, Neighbourhood Voice scheme, complaints and scrutiny panel, also support the key principles of the Charter.

2.0 ENGAGING WITH RESIDENTS ON THE 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 In August and September 2022, the Housing Directorate held 20 Vision & Mission sessions across the borough to identify the direction and future aspirations of the Council's housing service. As part of these workshops, we consulted on the Residents' charter.

2.4 These engagement sessions were attended by the following groups:

- Council tenants
- Council leaseholders
- Council tenants in temporary accommodation and hostel accommodation
- Voluntary and Community Sector partners
- Youth groups and
- Sheltered accommodation.

2.5 The sessions were held in eleven localities across the borough. Online sessions were held both during the day and outside of work hours to increase accessibility.

The sessions were promoted in the following ways:

- Executive Mayor's press release
- Sessions advertised in hard copies of Open House distributed to over 13,000 households
- Promotional emails to tenants and leaseholders
- Promotional emails to chairs of Resident Associations and Resident Forums
- Promotional emails to local councillors
- Sessions promoted on Croydon Resident Involvement Facebook page
- Flyers and posters and posters distributed across the borough (on estate noticeboards) including by Members

2.6 There was broad agreement for the above themes with additional detail sitting beneath e.g.

- Deliver to timeframes and publish them (complaints)
- Keep us informed – treat us as adults
- Engage us meaningfully before decisions are made (ask our views)
- Small things matter – respect that small issues may mean something to customers
- Always be truthful even if it's not what we want to hear
- To listen – not interrupt – make us feel heard
- Routine inspections of estates and repairs
- Understand the cultural needs and different expectations of respect and service
- Report quarterly performance in a Housing newsletter
- Tell us who to contact
- Consider Community based alternatives to Housing services
- Better communication for residents who don't live on estates

- 2.7 There will be further promotion and engagement with residents via Open House e-newsletter in November and the early part of December 2022 before it is formally adopted.

The finalised Charter will also be publicised in the printed Open House newsletter (January 2023), via resident's associations, forums and local community groups and other communications channels, including the council's website.

ASSESSING THE DELIVERY OF THE CHARTER

1. Assessing the delivery of the Residents' Charter will form part of the governance of the Housing Transformation Programme.
2. Performance against these principles and commitments can also be measured in line with the newly published Tenant Satisfaction Measures which are reported quarterly to Performance Monitoring Group and shared with service leads within housing. They are also shared with tenants and leaseholders in Open House.
3. The refreshed resident engagement strategy will place the Resident's Charter at its heart.
4. We will conduct an annual review with residents to evidence service delivery and improvement against the principles of the Charter.

4. FINANCIAL AND RISK ASSESSMENT CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 There are no additional financial pressures expected from the development of and implementation of a Resident Charter. 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 Orlagh Guarnori/Sarah Atwood, Head of Finance (Housing)

5. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1 There are no immediate legal considerations arising directly from the recommendations in this report.
- 5.2 The Council is legally required to comply with the Home Standard and the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard issued by the Regulator of Social Housing, and the Residents' Charter will help the Council to demonstrate compliance with these Standards.
- 5.3 The Council has general powers of management in relation to its housing stock under Section 21 of the Housing Act 1985.
- 5.4 Approved by Sandra Herbert, Head of Litigation & Corporate Law on behalf of the Director of Legal Services & Monitoring Officer

6. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPACT

- 6.1 There are no immediate human resources impacts arising directly from the recommendations in this report.

6.2 Approved by: Gillian Bevan, Head of HR Resources and Assistant Chief Executives, on behalf of the Chief People Officer

7. EQUALITIES IMPACT

7.1 The Council has a statutory duty to comply with the provisions set out in the Equality Act 2010. In summary, the Council must in the exercise of all its functions, “have due regard to” the need to comply with the three aims of the general equality duty. These are to

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it; and
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it

7.2 Residents with disabilities or parents of children with disabilities may be treated more favourably than others in relation to housing improvements. This will not amount to discrimination in relation to the Equality Act 2010.

7.3 The Resident Charter encourages engaging with and listening to all residents. An EQIA will be developed alongside the action plan to ensure that we are proactive in establishing dialogue with residents with protected characteristics.

7.4 The Council will encourage its suppliers to adopt the Council’s standards for equality in the borough: Croydon’s Equalities Pledge and the George Floyd Race Matters Pledge.

7.5 Approved by Denise McCausland, Equalities Manager

8. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

8.1 The Residents’ Charter has no direct environmental impacts. However, through the co-production of services on estates with residents, the Housing Improvement Plan will deliver better services for our housing stock and improved outcomes for the environment.

8.2 Approved by Susmita Sen, Corporate Director for Housing

9. DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS

9.1 WILL THE SUBJECT OF THE REPORT INVOLVE THE PROCESSING OF ‘PERSONAL DATA’?

No, as the report contains no sensitive or personal data

CONTACT OFFICER: *Susmita Sen, Corporate Director for Housing*

