

You are invited to attend

# **LB Southwark Resident Involvement Review Panel – Meeting 6 1<sup>st</sup> November 2018 6pm**

*Objective of meeting: Panel considers digital involvement*

## **AGENDA**

1. Welcome, Introduction & Apologies
2. Summary note of last meeting
3. Decision Table from last meeting
4. Panel reflection on use of digital technology
5. Case Studies
6. Mark Compton-James and Darryl Durno
7. Panel consideration
8. Next meeting(s)

## Meeting Six Chairs Briefing

Please find attached both the summary note and the Decision Table for the last meeting.

Since the meeting I've also come across an example of [engaging young people](#) on grant decision-making. We've not talked much about young people, which was one of the areas highlighted by the Kaizen Review, during our discussions. The example shows how young people can be engaged and supported in their activity.

Before we embark on the main business I'd like the Panel to reflect on its experiences of using digital technology and share these at the meeting. This can be bad as well as good experiences but it helps set a collective view of how digital involvement might work in practice.

In our vision and values we agreed:

- *That the Council should develop a range of ways for residents to be involved*

And in our discussion about strategic engagement we agreed:

- Digital involvement including use of MySouthwark Account, emails and social media

Kaizen report extract

### *8.7 More effective use of digital tools*

*New technology presents considerable opportunities and Southwark Council can take full advantage of social technology to communicate with residents, whilst recognising the barriers that some residents have to using digital technology. In the future more and more residents will be digitally equipped (both psychologically and practically) but it is important to recognise that a digital by default approach will never be appropriate and that there will always be a technology gap between tech understood and used by the older generation and the tech used by young people. Technology can enable wider participation and involvement and it will be beneficial to seek out ways to blend approaches. This will not only save money (via channel shift) but also increase engagement. An example of a digital tool would be to establish an online sounding board or panel. This is something used by other housing providers to good effect and it can provide a way for a more diverse range of tenants and homeowners to be involved.*

The Case Studies summarised below highlighted two issues for me.

Firstly digital engagement can be both about service delivery and resident involvement. Both are of value and there is an element of blurring between them. But it is important to be clear about which is being proposed. Inside Housing's [Tech Leaders](#), also posted on the portal, sets out a range of ways in which technology is being used by the social housing sector.

Secondly it takes time and commitment to make digital inclusion work. I'm aware of a landlord that decided to use Facebook as its tool of digital involvement. There are now less people using its Facebook page than before.

Case Study 1 shows how Facebook can be used to promote resident engagement linked strongly to service development (with a high degree of learning and cultural change). As can be seen digital engagement has moved away from Facebook into contributing to themed methods for involvement.

Case Study 2 shows how there can be a range of on-line Panels working alongside other mechanisms of involvement and accountability. It also shows digital mechanisms supporting both involvement and service delivery.

Case Study 3 shows how a social landlord can take digital approaches to save money, improve services and change experiences. The case made for change to digital is compelling. This sits alongside a wider menu of involvement.

Case Study 4 shows how a social landlord can set out objectives for both involvement and wider digital engagement. It also highlights the issues with ensuring up to date links and that the mechanisms used are freely accessible.

Case Study 5 we have considered before and is more explicitly aimed at digital involvement rather than digital services.

Mark Compton-James, Head of IT and Digital Services, will cover the following:

- What LBS does now in terms of relevant IT
- What the council's aim/vision, plans (and challenges are) are going forward
- What can be possible in terms of resident involvement
- Caveats about what we will need to do/address to be able to deliver the IT support for the new resident involvement system.

He will be joined by Darryl Durno, Digital Change and Innovation Manager.

I'd discussed the points raised at the last meeting about the Group responsible for the Boroughwide fund with the Council after the meeting. I also discussed with them about a strategic group, or groups, where the Panel had set a series of expectations for such groups going forward. The Panel viewed these expectations as reasonable for the Council to apply to any groups fulfilling a strategic role and to discuss them with the existing bodies as part of the consultation following the Panel's report. There are two related issues: There needs to be a joined up approach to both the strategic role and the Boroughwide fund and some further consideration of the bridge between the current groups and any future structure.

I do not want to squeeze that discussion, which is important, into the margins of tonight's meeting but instead allow more time for the Panel, Council and myself for reflection and consideration. I propose to defer the meeting planned for 8<sup>th</sup> November and instead set up an additional meeting on 15<sup>th</sup> November to discuss the strategic bodies and then the final meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> November. I'll prepare a summary, which may look like a draft report, for the meeting on the 15<sup>th</sup> to allow the Panel the ability to reflect on what we have discussed to date.

## Meeting 5 Summary Note

### Attendance

- Mark Morris (Home Owner)
- Adebayo Daniels (Tenant)
- Teresa Fritz (Home Owner)
- Hayley Zoil (Tenant)
- Ina Negotia (Home Owners Council)
- Hilary Dobson (MYSHOB)
- Levi Burke attending on behalf of Sharron Smith (Officer)
- John McCormack (Officer)
- Eva Gomez (Officer)
- Phil Morgan (Chair)

### Apologies

Omalara Daniels (Tenant)

The Panel agreed the summary note of meeting 4, with the inclusion of what a task and finish group was, and the Decision Table.

The Chair reported back on his meetings with Barbara Walsh, Chair of MYSHOB and with Southwark TMOs (which is now on the portal). The TMOs meeting had raised their concerns about the process but were more receptive about proposed changes to cover all communities and reforming the Area Housing Forums.

The meeting noted the LB Southwark update on the work of the Panel and the short summary by Ferenc Morath LBS Investment Manager.

The Chair reported that there are three main funds:

- Tenants Fund (£637,000), administered by the Tenants Fund Management Committee
- Homeowners Fund (£190,000 budget with a contribution of £150,000 from the Homeowners Fund) administered by the Homeowners Fund. A payment is made from the Homeowners Fund to the Tenants Fund to cover TRAs.
- Tenants & Residents Social Improvements Grants (TRSIG) £184,000 administered through a Grants Panel elected by Area Housing Forums

These funds are allocated through the Housing Revenue Account and agreed by the Council. The Panel received reports on the three funds and a summary of challenges arising from the Kaizen Review including a lack of awareness of these Funds, the need to emphasise communities and the need to focus on outcomes.

The Panel also noted reports on the portal about the Homeowners Fund.

The Chair referred to his research of other landlords providing similar grants. The Housing Association examples were very accessible and transparent. There is a clear emphasis on objectives, process, including due diligence and wide eligibility. There was also coverage of outcomes, monitoring and evaluation. There were also two Local Authority examples which showed how estates could apply for funding even without a TRA and also an emphasis on outcomes.

The Panel then considered at length a series of questions around principles, objectives, eligibility, communication, decision-making and impact.

This included discussions around two separate roles for grants going forward. Firstly there was a need for a community/TRA fund focused at a community level. Secondly there was a need for a Boroughwide fund.

For both funds the Panel thought any approach should be 'joined up' with other funds, have a clear focus on outcomes, applicants should be accountable for delivery and manage conflicts of interest appropriately.

For the community/TRA fund the Panel identified the following objectives (which may not be exhaustive):

- Estate cohesion and inclusion
- Quality of Life
- Community development
- TRA support
- Impact

The Panel identified the following as eligible to apply for funding:

- TRAs
- TMOs
- Resident Groups
- Community Organisations (with the support of communities)

The Council should support applications from looser groups without a TRA or a bank account through the Tenant and Homeowner Involvement Team. Groups receiving funding should be inclusive of tenure and wider diversity.

The Panel supported an open and thorough process for communicating this fund stating the purpose, how to apply, what the requirements were and the importance of impact from what the fund supported.

The Panel supported setting up a group consisting of councillors, officers and residents that would decide applications based on a transparent process as well as the precise criteria to be used. This group would review impact annually and apply learning for future fund objectives and criteria. The process should be simple to apply for, administer and decide upon.

This might draw upon the current funds as follows<sup>1</sup>:

- TRSIG £184,000
- TRA grants £228,000
- Small grants scheme for community events £30,000

For the Boroughwide Fund the Panel identified the importance of setting clear objectives and outcomes for the fund. The Panel heard that the current provision of training supported by the Tenants Fund is under review. Current arrangements are weak in terms of outcomes.

Those objectives should include separate advice and support for tenants and homeowners. This could be procured, as with the CAB for Homeowners. Other objectives discussed included holding resident conferences.

The Panel supported accountability for all receiving funding for delivery of objectives and outcomes. It also supported that there are appropriate and applied mechanisms for dealing with conflicts of interest.

The Panel agreed there should be joined up decision making with other parallel funding processes.

That Panel agreed that there should be a Group that sets the objectives, decides upon applications, review impact annually and apply learning for future fund objectives and criteria. This could be the same group as for the Community/TRA fund.

However the Panel were not content that they had enough information or understanding to decide upon whether this should be a new Group to the existing Tenant Council and Homeowners Council or not. The

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<sup>1</sup> This is purely indicative

Panel also noted that the Homeowners Council included residents who had undergone training on grant decisions and heard concerns that this would be lost. The Chair proposed that rather than take a decision now that this is deferred to a later meeting when more information is available<sup>2</sup>.

The Panel decided not to take up the option of being filmed. The Panel noted that the Lead Member, Cllr Cryan, may attend a future meeting.

The next meeting will look at digital involvement.

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<sup>2</sup> It was proposed to take this at the next meeting but this was deferred to an extra meeting subject to the Panel's agreement

## Meeting Five Decision Table

### Decision:

1. That there should be a Communities Fund. This should include the following:
  - a. It should be available for communities.
  - b. There should be clear objectives and outcomes for the fund and accountability for delivering those outcomes.
  - c. TRAs, TMOs, Resident Groups and community organisations (with clear support from the community) would be eligible to bid for funds.
  - d. The Council should support applications from looser groups without a TRA or a bank account
  - e. Set objectives for the fund
    - i. Estate cohesion and inclusion
    - ii. Community development
    - iii. Support for TRAs
    - iv. Quality of life
    - v. Impact
  - f. There should be an open and thorough process for communicating this fund stating the purpose, how to apply, what requirements there were and the importance of impact from what the fund supported.
  - g. There should be a group consisting of councillors, officers and residents that would decide applications based on a transparent process as well as the precise criteria to be used. This group would review impact annually and apply learning for future fund objectives and criteria.
2. That there should be a Boroughwide fund. This should include the following:
  - a. There should be clear objectives and outcomes for the fund
  - b. That those objectives include separate advice and support for tenants and homeowners
  - c. That there is accountability for all receiving funding for delivery of objectives and outcomes
  - d. That there are appropriate and applied mechanisms for dealing with conflicts of interest
  - e. That there is joined up decision making with other parallel funding processes
  - f. That there is a Group that sets the objectives, decides upon applications, review impact annually and apply learning for future fund objectives and criteria.
3. The Panel decided to defer the composition of the Group in decision 2 to its next meeting.

## Case Study 1 - Yarlington Housing Group

Yarlington Chat was set up as part of an approach of moving towards engaging younger more diverse residents. In 2015 it was featured in a [Guardian article](#) which highlighted the need to spend time building relationships and responding to concerns and criticisms. Feedback resulted in changes to the way in which staff communicated and involved results. Top tips included:

- Work with residents to create your community. Have the group with residents leading.
- Be brave and expect criticism. Learn from it and act upon what you learn.
- All posts should be approved before hitting the main group. A full social media strategy in place to protect all involved.
- Admin running the site, who can manage it effectively, filter messages and can communicate extremely well.
- Make it fun and diverse, something for everyone with corporate information but live web chats and quizzes.
- Make the group feel informal and relaxed.

At the time the Facebook Group grew to 3,000 and is now over 4,000 strong, although Yarlington are no longer part of the Group (now ironically renamed [Ex-Yarlington Chat](#)). There is also a related but less used [twitter page](#) which basically redirects people to the Facebook page.

Instead Yarlington have set up the [Yarlington experience](#). This sets out five options for engagement:

1. Consultation. Yarlington have a [consultation page](#) with two recent consultations listed (although one wasn't really a consultation). However the other involved Citizen Space. Citizen Space is an online tool to engage with as many customers as possible and provide an open and transparent channel to communicate findings and changes made as a result of consultations. A recent example was a [two-week consultation](#) to improve the handling of complaints, receiving 538 responses from customers and recommendations. Residents without digital access were also included and visited the Customer Consultation Corner to submit their views in person.
2. [Yarlington scrutiny](#) – a resident scrutiny panel
3. Yarlington Innovation - An [innovation forum](#) set up to allow suggestions for improvement.
4. [Yarlington engagement](#) for feedback on services
5. [Yarlington communication](#)

## Case Study 2 - Peabody Trust

Peabody Trust have a number of [on-line Panels](#) to give feedback. Panel topics include:

- Repairs
- Communication
- Customer experience
- Homeowners
- Resident Associations

These work alongside other involvement approaches including:

- [Question and Answer sessions](#)
- Regional Forums (which have the power to escalate problems)
- Resident Associations (where there is an annual review form)
- Monitoring Groups (informal groups who want to discuss issues without setting up a TRA)
- Neighbourhood Charters (Estate Improvement Plans)
- Estate Walkabouts

There is also a [MyAccount](#) for checking rent, service charges, set up direct debits and print statements. This appears to be separate from registering for an on-line Panel.

### Case Study 3 - Halton Housing

Halton Housing have a Digital First strategy. This is driven by the following:

1. 91% of people say the internet make them feel more involved.
2. It improves service delivery
3. It cuts costs (in person £15 per action, by phone £4 per action and by internet £0.90p per action).
4. It meets expectations from other on-line transactions
5. It reallocates resources
6. It mitigates the impact of Universal Credit

There is also a [Housing App](#), which has been downloaded by 5,000 (out of 7,000) residents. The intention is to have 90% of transactions on-line this year.

71% of households have engaged on-line since April 2017 although the number of transactions is currently 88% and rent balance enquiries 99.5%. There is 93% satisfaction with on-line services.

Implicit in this approach is an understanding of how much people want to use digital services, and that the proportion of people with digital access is already quite high and growing. Halton also encourage this gently.

They have a menu of [involvement opportunities](#) including:

- Resident Scrutiny Panel
- Customer Inspectors
- Customer Forum
- Street Representatives
- TRAs

They set out reasons for [being involved](#) including:

- Input into direction of Halton Housing
- Gain access to training
- Manage the Community Fund
- Expenses
- Incentive vouchers
- Build your CV

There is reference to social media with the Facebook page for involvement being followed by 159 people (although the twitter accounts are out of date).

For further background their Chief Executive gives a [very good presentation](#).

## Case Study 4 - Rotherham MBC

Rotherham offer a [menu of opportunities](#) to be involved including:

- Tenant Conference
- Area Housing Panels
- Young Tenants Group
- Housing Involvement Panel shaping services and policies
- Customer Inspectors
- Quality Standards Challenge Group
- Estate Walkabouts
- Newsletter
- Rotherham Federation

There is a [Tenant Involvement strategy](#) in place.

They support digital involvement through the following:

- On-line surveys
- On-line consultations
- [Twitter with](#) 621 followers
- Facebook
- Instagram
- You-Tube

and there is the ability to pay rent on-line.

## Case Study 5 - Hyde Housing

[Hyde Housing](#) is a Housing Association with 50,000 homes.

They set out [why residents](#) should be involved and have a menu of options. They include:

- Hydewide Residents Voice which works closely with the Directors of Service, scrutinising Hyde-wide performance and finding opportunities for improvement. It also influences decision-making that affects resident services and oversees resident-led inspections of services. This has 13 tenants and 1 homeowner.
- Central Home Ownership Panel (CHOP – awful acronym) which covers leaseholder and shared owners and are a sub-committee of Hydewide Residents Voice and can refer or escalate issues to them
- Hydewide Residents Eye which carries out resident inspections
- There is also a Stage 3 complaints panel including residents and opportunities to be involved in staff recruitment and procurement
- There are formal TRAs, informal resident groups and on-line groups
- Hydewide Resident Focus commission four campaigns each year on feedback from residents about specific services

There is also [the OAK](#). The OAK is an online hub, a place where engaged resident community can access information and consultation opportunities. They can also chat with each other via forums, live chat and online meetings from the comfort of their own home, via a PC, tablet or smartphone.

Resident groups have secure areas to access online documents for paperless meetings, and group discussion boards to carry on their work together online.

There's [an example](#) of where discussions led to changes in cleaning and gardening services.