

2024-2027

Resident engagement

Our approach and plan



Your resident engagement team. From left to right: Kelly and Janine (Portsea), Gemma (Paulsgrove), Janine (Wecock), Rachel (Somerstown), Becky (Leigh Park), Trish (Landport), Heidi (team leader) and Castiel (engagement assistant).



Foreword

There have been many positive changes to our services over the last fifteen years. Complementing our long-standing traditional resident engagement model, our whole approach centres around placing resident's voices at the heart of what we do. We find ways to listen to our residents and we design our services in response to what we hear. We always strive to understand and respond to what our residents need, want, and expect from us over time.

We pride ourselves on being local, with staff that are visible and accessible in the heart of our communities. We believe in providing more than a home and aim to ensure your communal surrounding areas are safe, clean, and tidy. Through our housing community services – our play and youth services, community centres and participation centre we have built positive relationships with our local communities which continue to strengthen.

No one team is responsible for engaging with residents. Across our services we listen to the voices and experiences of thousands of tenants at the point that they contact us to ask a question, report an issue, ask for advice and assistance, give us feedback, make a complaint, or chase up an outstanding query, and we learn what really matters. We have engagement with residents at every level every day – and staff who have developed an understanding and commitment to 'why' things are done and have a great sense of ownership. Our engaged workforce is proud to represent the council.

Within this document we reflect changes that have been made to the resident engagement service. Our resident engagement team work hard to create opportunities for residents to get involved and have their say, whether this is in relation to service design and delivery, holding us to account for the services we provide, or developing personal skills and involvement in local communities. This document has been written to reflect our approach and what residents can expect.

It clearly shows our commitment to working closely with you, our tenants and leaseholders and believe it will enable us to achieve our vision for your homes and communities.



We pride ourselves on being local, with staff that are visible and accessible in the heart of our communities.

Our approach has been developed in partnership with the resident engagement team, residents, housing, neighbourhood, and buildings (HNB) staff and by elected members of the council's cabinet. There are many ways in which you can have a greater say in:

- The HNB services and the way they are delivered.
- Improving the areas in which you live.

Our three-year plan sets out how we intend to develop our approach and how you can get involved.

Both staff and residents will regularly monitor it to make sure it is achieving its goals. It is important to us that our approach is flexible – participation is forever changing, and we want to be ready to evolve with it and be continuously improving the way we work with the tenants and leaseholders of the council. Thank you to all the hard working and dedicated residents, staff and elected members who helped us in creating this document.

Cllr Darren Saunders

Cabinet Member for Housing and Tackling Homelessness

James Hill

Director of Housing, Neighbourhoods and Building Services

This document has been designed to provide an easy point of reference for tenants and leaseholders of the council. It relates to all council tenants and leaseholders, which will be referred to as residents.

Our pledge to you, our residents

Our residents' pledge sets out our core values and our commitments to you.

Working for the council our core values are:



Respect

We treat everyone with respect, considering the feelings, wellbeing, safety, and rights of others.



Integrity

We are accountable, can be trusted and take responsibility for our actions.



Collaboration

We work together as a team and with our colleagues, residents, partners, and communities to achieve more.



Inclusive

We recognize diversity, are open, fair and provide equal opportunity to all.



People-focused

We put people first and make sure our customers are at the heart of everything we do.

Everything we do is guided by our values. They set who we are as people, what we stand for and how we act.



Our commitments to you:

Quality

You can expect your home and any communal areas to be good quality, well maintained, safe and well managed.

Service design

We will design our services around your needs, listening to understand what it is that you want from us, spending time in the work, and learning when things go wrong so that we continually improve.

Relationships and communication

We will treat you with respect in all our communications and interactions. You will receive clear, accessible, and timely information from us on the issues that matter to you.

Voice and influence

Your views and experiences will be sought and valued, and this information will be used to inform decisions.

Accountability

We will work in partnership with you, providing you with opportunities to independently scrutinise and hold us to account for the decisions that affect our residents.

When things go wrong

You will have simple and accessible routes for raising issues, making complaints, and seeking redress.



Resident Michelle with resident engagement officer Janine at Leigh Park Resident Participation Centre



Donation of games for a new games group at the Acorn Centre.

Background

What is this document?

This document explains the commitment from the council to listen to the voices of residents and to design its services against what is learnt. It sets out our plans for the next three years and shows the partnership working between the council HNB services and its residents. The area of work it covers is any participation/ involvement work involved with the management of the estates and homes in which our residents live.

Reasons for this document

We are committed to being transparent about the way that we listen to residents and to improving the way we listen to residents' views, consult, and involve residents. Residents' voices must be at the heart of decisions about their services and the future of their homes. If services are to improve, they must reflect residents' needs and priorities and residents' views should influence and shape the planning and delivery of those services.

All our resident's voices matter and we need to build confidence in residents that we listen and respond, particularly for people and communities who may face greater barriers to participating through more formal mechanisms – whether that is due to language, neurodiversity or disability, anxiety, or cultural differences. We want to find out why people don't get involved and work out ways to overcome those barriers.

This document shows residents what steps we have in place to positively promote, encourage, and support participation. It includes new measures designed to give all residents a full opportunity to become involved. It has detailed information on the opportunities available, levels of involvement and benefits to residents to help them decide whether and how they might be involved. The document also sets out our priorities for the next three years.

It shows:

- A strong commitment to understanding the needs and experiences of residents through listening at the point of demand and designing and re-framing services in response to this.
- A positive commitment from HNB staff and residents to work in partnership to improve services to residents.
- The HNB service is open and accountable to residents and will give full feedback to residents to explain our actions.
- We will ensure housing staff and councillors are trained and informed of the expectations and benefits of designing services based on what we hear at the point of demand, and through more formal resident engagement mechanisms.

- What standards we will strive to deliver and those that we will expect from involved residents.
- We understand the importance of involving residents in the management of their homes.
- How resident's views will be listened to and what opportunities there are to be involved in decisions on housing matters which relate to them.
- What residents want to achieve, together with us to improve local services and quality of life?
- What support and resources are available for residents to help and encourage their involvement.
- How it will be continually reviewed and updated to make sure we are keeping up with any changes that occur.

Good quality resident engagement is integral to improving our housing services and delivering decent homes in areas residents want to live and stay in. This document is part of a comprehensive long-term strategy for designing services around our residents. It works alongside the whole HNB service and feeds into the council's wider housing Strategy.

How will our approach benefit you, our residents?

There are many ways that the approach that we take in listening to residents and designing services to meet their needs, and the more formal mechanisms of resident involvement in the management of their homes, can benefit both the residents themselves and the council. Many residents see improvements to services or estates due to our combined approach. Some may show over a number of years, and some may be more "quick fixes" but whatever the result through this document:

- You will understand our overall approach to ensuring that residents voices matter and are at the heart of all that we do.
- You will get honest, clear, and easy to read information on our responsibilities for resident engagement.
- You will be fully aware of what opportunities are available to you to get involved and understand the benefits and responsibilities of that involvement on you.
- You will understand the different levels of involvement and commitment.
- You can understand the role you can have in making important decisions on housing issues and understand how these can lead to improved housing services.
- You can get support, advice, and training to enable you to take part effectively.

How was the document produced?

Reflections on our approach were drawn together and a planning group of residents was formed. The options available were considered alongside the approach taken and lessons learnt from residents. The group was made up of residents with varying levels of involvement experience and knowledge which provided a wide range of views.

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Chapter 1

Our priorities for the next three years

Your feedback

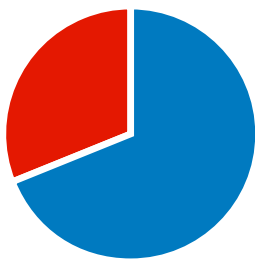
Across winter 22/23 we ran a residents survey asking you on what we could improve.



67%

of respondents are **satisfied with the council as their landlord**. Respondents who are not 'very satisfied' with the council as their landlord would like to see better communication with tenants by the council.

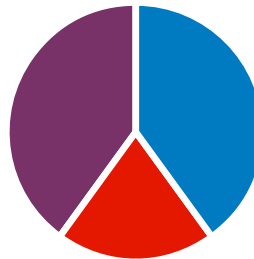
Does the council give you information on things that matter?



69%
of respondents
said **yes**

31%
of respondents
said **no**

Are you satisfied that the council listen to your views and act upon them?



40% said **yes**

20% said **no**

40% were
**neither satisfied
or unsatisfied**

Most respondents have never attended a residents' meeting and had not provided the council with feedback in the last 12 months



53%
felt they are **not likely to attend a residents' meeting in the future**



29%
were **not sure if they would attend a residents' meeting in the future**



43%
of respondents said that they are **unlikely to attend a residents' meeting** as they are not interested.

Other barriers to attending include personal barriers like anxiety and old age or being unable to travel to meetings.

From this feedback, and through working with representatives on our resident's group, we have formed our priorities for the next three years.

1) Improve the way we communicate with you, our residents, providing greater transparency about the services we provide

How will we achieve this?

- We will aim to give you the right access to information that you want and need at the right time.
- We will be clearer on our approach to how we listen to you – explaining the way we work and setting out our resident engagement framework through our resident engagement approach document.
- We will review our policies and procedures and ensure that they are accessible for you.
- We will promote how you can raise a complaint, what you can expect and what support is available to you throughout the process.
- We will involve you in creating and developing of our publications to ensure they are clear, easy to understand and meet your needs.
- We will communicate with you where we have made changes because of capturing residents' voices and feedback about our services.
- We will review our digital offer including our website and social media to enable effective communication with you, with consideration of the creation of a customer portal for those who would wish to access us in this way.

2) Engage with more residents, providing you with the opportunity to share feedback in ways that suit your needs

How will we achieve this?

- We will promote the opportunities to get involved through raising the profile of the resident engagement team.
- We will review the timings and accessibility of resident consortium meetings and other engagement activity.
- We will strengthen confidence that resident voices matter through communicating the difference that capturing resident voices at the point of demand and resident feedback and involvement has made to services and the areas you live in.
- We will create new channels to capture feedback following resident interactions with services we provide.
- We will develop our social media presence to enable effective two-way communication with you.
- We will conduct estate walkabouts seeking your feedback about neighbourhoods and local areas and use that feedback to help shape future priorities.

3) Ensure that residents are better able to scrutinise our performance and hold us to account

How will we achieve this?

- We will present information captured by service areas relating to demand capture, performance, and cost measures to residents through a newly formed scrutiny panel.
- Senior managers will be available to answer questions that residents have.
- We will share learning from complaints received by the service and actions taken as a result.
- We will publish our tenant satisfaction measures annually.
- We will publish an annual report for residents.

4) Get to know our communities better and empower you to make positive changes to address local issues

How will we achieve this?

- We will get to know our communities better and understand their priorities for their local area.
- We will work in partnership with our communities to make a positive contribution to the areas they live.
- Following a strengths-based approach we will seek to support residents to make changes – linking the people in the community with the resources they need to make change and building their confidence to do so.
- We will promote and celebrate achievements of our residents.



Chapter 2

Our overall approach

The government's social housing charter tells social housing landlords to place residents' voices at the heart of everything that they do. At Portsmouth, understanding our customers' needs and expectations and designing services to meet these needs has been an approach we have taken for many years.

Over fifteen years ago we pledged to become an organisation that places our customers experience as the driver for more effective, targeted efficient services. Since then, we have reviewed many of our work streams, considering what really does matter to the people that live in the homes that we manage for them.

We have followed the experiences of hundreds of tenants and leaseholders and thought about the true purpose of why we are here. The answers are usually quite simple – to provide "the right repair at the right time;" "advice and support when needed;" and to keep home environments "safe, clean and tidy."

For each work area we have created simple steps for our workforce to follow. They are asked to listen, understand, evaluate, and then take the appropriate next steps. When things go wrong, they are asked to put them right and to share their experience wider so that we can always improve and aim to get things right for our tenants and leaseholders first time.

They listen to residents' circumstances and follow-up on agreed actions. They are keen to feed ideas upwards, based on what they hear and see every day; and managers take action to design out any obstacles that cause delays, waste, or prevent us achieving what matters to customers; seeking to continuously improve the service, based on learning.

Listening to what residents ask from us helps us be clear about why our services exist. By being clear about what we are here for, from a resident's point of view, we can then understand what work we should focus on and try to change things that are getting in the way of getting things done for residents. It also helps us to be clear on what information we need to help us to understand if what we are doing is effective – whether we are performing well and whether services are good value for money.

When we want to understand what is happening in a service area, we spend time listening and understanding resident contact – listening to phone calls, attending home visits and appointments, reading emails, analysing requests for a service logged in databases etc., and we write down what we hear in our residents' words. We do this for a long enough time to make sure that we understand all the things that come into the service.

By understanding what residents are contacting us about we then consider what we are here to do from a resident's point of view and define the "purpose of the service". What we don't do is define a service based on what is set down in legislation, based on targets or budgets, or what central or local government is currently focused on. We are here to provide a service to our residents and must be led by what it is that they are asking from us, within the remit of the service area. What residents want from us changes over time therefore we revisit purpose and analyse demand from time to time to make sure we are delivering what we need to.

The purpose of a service from a resident's point of view is usually simple and can be summed up in a few words. A list of purposes defined for HNB-delivered services is here:

Housing rent: To pay rent and receive help when needed.

Housing advice: Provide support and advice when needed to enable people to solve problems and cope to stay in their tenancy.

Sheltered housing: To provide accommodation and support where needed.

Voids: Provide a suitable home when needed.

Maintenance: Right repair, right time.

Planned maintenance: Maintain and improve our properties.

Estate services: Help keep the local area safe, clean, and tidy, and provide advice and support when needed.

Waste: To enable recycling and collect waste on due collection day.

Anti-social behaviour: to help stop ASB (Anti-social behaviour) that affects residents or their local area.

Out of hours: To provide suitable help of office hours.

Once we have defined the purpose of a service, we return to understanding customer contact.

We divide contact into that which is value – things that the service is here to do and that the customer is satisfied to contact the service about, for example "I want something fixing" and contact that is failure – things that residents are contacting us about which aren't within the scope of what we do, or because something has gone wrong for them due to the service not doing something well, for example "somebody was due to come out to do something and they haven't come".

Having divided up what is value demand and failure demand we then spend time listening again and counting how many times each type of demand comes into the service so that we can understand how well the service is doing and

whether there are things that need to be improved. If a service is receiving 95% of calls about something that it is there to do the service is doing well e.g. "this has broken, can you fix it" or "I need help with something". If a service is receiving lots of calls in response to us not doing something well e.g., "I asked for this to happen, and it hasn't been done" or "someone has tried to deal with this six times, and it isn't sorted yet" then there are improvements that need to be made.

To understand how efficient the service is and where something is going wrong, we need to understand each stage of what happens for a resident, from the moment they ask for something, to the time that the situation has been sorted. We do this by mapping each stage of a resident's journey through a process and then thinking about what we are doing at each stage. We think about whether what we are doing at each stage is necessary to get the best outcome for the resident or if it needs to change. For example, person A needs to fill in a form to request something for a resident and this form is then passed to person B. person B places it in a pile until they have time to deal with it. Two weeks later person B puts the information into a computer and sends it through to where it needs to go to. Alternatively, person A puts information directly into a computer and sends it through to where it needs to go. There is no hand-off and no delays caused to the resident.

Studying demand in this way helps us to ask the right questions – Are we able to do the number of things that we need to do? Do staff members have the skills and knowledge to do the different types of things that are asked from them? Are we doing things that are unnecessary? Learning from when we get things wrong or are not doing things as efficiently as possible helps us to understand where we could be spending our time and money doing things better.

Across HNB we have many different services. Some processes are easy to understand, map and simplify, others are more complicated. In people-based services what residents need/want from a service varies depending on who they are and what is happening for them at that moment in time. We need to respond to this. This means truly understanding the individual's circumstances, and what matters to them, at the point in time that they make contact us and making sure that the service that they receive is adjusted to their individual circumstances.

Leaders and managers need to fully understand residents' experiences of the services provided to them. They can't learn this just from looking at information, or hearing about what is happening from other people. They need to see it for themselves. Our managers spend time "in the work" with front line teams. Here they can see and hear what matters to residents, understand what gets in the way of good service and identify improvements to be made.

Chapter 3

Our resident engagement team and support for engagement activity

Support resources for participation and involvement

We support residents in a number of ways. The support has been tailored to ensure that:

- Residents have the resources and information required to set up, maintain and progress resident's groups.
- Individual residents are encouraged to get involved as fully as they wish.
- Residents are offered training to put them in a stronger position to advocate for themselves and others.
- Residents are offered employment support.

The resident engagement team structure of team



There are six officers in the resident engagement team, an engagement assistant and two independent chairs who chair our resident consortium meetings. The housing resident engagement manager manages the day-to-day running of the team.

The team aims to involve residents in the management of their homes and the improvement of their areas by establishing and supporting local groups, offering focus groups requested by residents, offering employment support and by providing a varied programme of activities and events, all of which are accessible and relevant.

The resident engagement team

- Support the resident consortium in holding regular meetings.
- Support resident led scrutiny of HNB services.
- Support resident involvement in assisting in the recruitment to key roles across the service.
- Provide support and advice to resident associations and informal resident's groups.
- Help individual residents by ensuring they receive accurate and timely information on involvement opportunities.
- Give advice on the availability of funding and grant opportunities.
- Conduct resident surveys including an annual tenant satisfaction survey.
- Advise HNB (Housing, Neighbourhoods and Building) teams on effective ways to engage with residents and support them to do so – this includes developing effective surveys, considering the wording of letters and leaflet and poster design. Advice and support are given about the most effective method of capturing feedback e.g., through door knocking, phone, email, post, text, social media, website etc.
- Produce publications such as the resident's magazine "House Talk" and the annual report.
- Provide training for residents to up-skill them so that they are better able to hold us to account.
- Offer employment support.
- Provide training which is both relevant and accessible for residents' ward councillors and staff on the principles and benefits of resident engagement.
- Work in the community, attending area offices, community rooms, local coffee mornings, events, food banks, community centres, resident groups, and Job centres to listen, share information and encourage engagement and participation.
- Work with residents to create a timetable of resident-led activity, such as special interest groups, arts and craft, seasonal activities, cooking etc.
- Recognise and celebrate positive community activity and the residents that make things happen.

Other staff

Engaging with residents is not just down to a small team. Staff across the HNB service, councillors and executive members are offered training in shaping services around the customers voice and the benefits of participation and the opportunities available for residents.

This ensures everyone understand the importance of listening to residents, and the benefits of our resident participation so that listening and working with residents is an integral part of the service.

The resident engagement team work closely with:

- Area offices
- Estate services
- Building services
- The anti-social behaviour team
- Play, youth and community centres
- Departments across the wider council, including the communications team and project teams, supporting engagement with residents with partner engagement teams on issues that matter to our residents – city regeneration, health, and transport services etc.
- Agencies and institutions that operate within the communities that we serve.

Resources

Resident participation centre

Residents and resident groups can use the resident participation centre in Leigh Park. The centre has a small meeting room, kitchen, IT suite and garden area. The centre can be used to hold meetings, training or leisure activities that benefit the communities in which we work.

Community rooms

The council provides community rooms in some blocks for resident associations and individuals to use for meetings and social events. They are free of charge for residents to use who live in the block.

They can also be used by residents of the block and for private functions like children's birthday parties (a small fee may be charged for this). (Terms available on request from local housing office)

Community centres

We have four community centres – Somerstown Hub, Charles Dickens Activity Centre, Cosham Community Centre, and Paulsgrove Community Centre. These centres offer a variety of community spaces and resources which can be used by residents. Hire fees apply for the use of non-communal areas.

Hub café

Our Hub Café is based at the Somerstown Hub and is a large, bright community space.

Adventure playgrounds and youth clubs

Our six adventure playgrounds (Somerstown, Portsea, Landport, Buckland, Stamshaw and Paulsgrove) and four youth clubs (Somerstown, Portsea, Landport/Buckland and Paulsgrove) provide spaces for children, young people, and their families to come together. Community events are also held from these venues.

Landport community garden

Our community garden is a space where residents can come together to learn, grow, and get advice from our community gardener.

Financial support

We have a small amount of funding for resident's projects to support the community to come together. You can speak to your resident engagement officer about what you want to do, and they can look to see what support is available.

Projects that have been successful in the past include:

- Arts and crafts equipment and jigsaws for resident groups
- Equipment and toys for a children's fun club
- Gardening equipment for a gardening group
- Tea and coffee club within a community centre



Travel

To enable residents to attend formal meetings, training, and events we organise and pay for taxis and public transport.

Refreshments

Refreshments are provided at all meetings, with lunch provided where appropriate.

Equipment loan

We may be able to support community events with resources, such as tables and chairs, gazebos, sports, and games equipment etc, if it is well looked after and returned on time.

Officer time and support

Officers are experienced in the roles of committees and can support and advise resident associations and resident groups when requested. They will also take minutes and help arrange venues and meetings if requested by committee members to do so.

Translation services

We offer a translator at resident consortium or resident association meetings, providing sufficient notice is given.

Contact the team:

✉ housing.engagement@portsmouthcc.gov.uk
☎ 023 9283 4835



Stamshaw adventure playground.



Landport community garden, residents and Lord Mayor Hugh Mason celebrating the Queen's Jubilee.



Landport Community Garden's ethnic garden.

Chapter 4

Involvement opportunities

Involvement opportunities

The resident engagement team aims to give all our residents every opportunity possible to get involved and influence decisions affecting their homes and areas they live in.

It is widely considered that participation of residents can be successful in improving housing services and bringing communities together. However, we aim to not only support the more traditional methods but to also complement these by introducing new ways for residents to get involved.

We have a menu of different ways to get involved, with differing levels of involvement and commitment needed, in the hope that it will be easier for more residents to take part. By increasing the numbers involved we hope to get a broader and more representative set of views in the decision-making process.

Ways

There are many different ways for residents to be involved with the work of the council's housing service.

Information

This is where we tell you about a decision that has been made and how it will affect you. We can provide information to you in a range of different ways. We may tell you in a leaflet, a letter, an email, via the website or social media. Alternatively, we may present information at a housing meeting or knock on your door.

Participation

This is where residents, councillors, and officers work in partnership to improve or change a service, discuss, and agree details of a new policy or consider plans for a proposed scheme of work. Residents may also work with staff on decision making for matters such as budgetary controls including rent setting, or the recruitment of key roles within the service.

Consultation

There are many ways in which you can be consulted or asked your views on an issue or proposal. Remember proposals can be changed because of what people have to say.

For example, you can:

- Complete a survey to give your view on what needs to be prioritised.
- Be invited to give your views on a new improvement scheme.
- Be invited to an open meeting to discuss policy changes.

We use many methods to consult with residents. These are carried out on a needs basis, and we have a bespoke engagement and consultation strategy for each project that we work on, with consideration given to the residents that will be consulted and the most appropriate methods. These include:

- Surveys
- Door knocking
- Focus groups
- Public meetings
- Public events
- Letter / leaflet drop with requests for feedback – includes telephone, email, sometimes QR codes
- Poster display

In using a range of methods for a project we hope that every resident feels able to give feedback, should they wish to. We can support residents in a number of ways where needed to overcome barriers, e.g. through literacy support / translation support etc.



In using a range of methods for a project we hope that every resident feels able to give feedback, should they wish to.

◀ Mary, Becky & Gemma at Warren Park community engagement day

Levels of commitment

We recognise that there are many barriers for residents in getting involved. Residents may have different levels of knowledge and understanding, different levels of time that they can commit and interests in differing areas. We believe that any resident should be able to get involved at any level they are comfortable with.

No commitment

Our approach to listening to residents at the point a demand hits the service means that even if you are not formally involved in engagement activity your voice will be heard when we consider our service design and in the service that you receive.

Very low level

- You are on our database and from time to time we will ask for your views about a specific issue.
- You are happy to complete our annual tenant satisfaction survey.
- You attend resident events from time to time and offer feedback.

Low level

- You are happy to respond to surveys.
- You may attend a focus group such as the House Talk magazine planning meeting, communications group etc.
- You are part of a local social club or resident association.

Medium level

- You may be a committee member of a resident associations or lead a social activity in your locality.
- You regularly attend resident consortium meetings.
- You are a member of a scrutiny panel.

High level

- You regularly attend resident consortium meetings.
- You represent the resident consortium at housing and homelessness committee
- You may sit on the recruitment panel for key roles within the service.

Whatever your chosen commitment level we will give you all the support and training you need to be as involved as you feel comfortable with.

Resident consortium

This is a formally constituted forum for residents. Membership to the consortium is automatic if you remain a tenant or leaseholder of the council.

The consortium:

- Is organised and summarised by a member of the resident engagement team.
- Generally, hold monthly meetings.
- Is chaired by an independent chairperson.
- Sets their own agendas.

The consortium is one way in which the council can have two-way information exchanges with residents on housing matters. Residents also can tell others what is happening in their area. The consortium is part of the consultation process for all key decision making including:

- Rent setting
- Repairs
- Estates

As a local authority landlord, the city council constitution sets out how we operate, how decisions are made and the procedures which are followed to ensure that these are efficient, transparent, and accountable to local people.

Three resident consortium members are voted in annually to act as consortium representatives at the housing and tackling homelessness decision meetings, during which reports are presented for information or decision. The representatives receive briefing packs in advance and make representations on behalf of the consortium for consideration by the Cabinet Member. Representations are also made on behalf of residents by elected councillors. Briefing packs are published on the city council website in advance of any meeting.

All residents can attend these meetings and other cabinet meetings and sit in the public gallery. If residents wish to make a deputation, then they must inform the local democracy officer before 12pm the day before the meeting. These meetings are all live streamed and recorded.

Resident focus groups

Focus groups are organised for residents interested in a specific housing subject. They are held on an ad hoc basis, set up by the resident engagement team, in partnership with the service area. Focus group members can call for a meeting and can request specific information to be presented to the group.

They are currently in the following subjects:

- **Rents** – meet to go through spending on a line-by-line basis annually. Consulted with in relation to rent setting and saving areas.
- **Repairs and maintenance** – ad hoc meetings on updates and changes in the repairs service.
- **Estate walkabout** – locality based inspections and discussions on priorities.
- **Communications** – ad hoc meetings during which residents feedback on how we can improve our communication.
- **Tenant satisfaction measures** – planning for the resident's survey and giving consideration of the findings annually.
- **House Talk** – an editorial meeting three times per year for our resident magazine. Residents can propose content and submit articles.
- **Housing standards** – reviews our performance against the housing standards and considers if we are meeting what we have set out in our resident's charter.
- **Staff recruitment panel** – members of the resident consortium who join the recruiting panel for key roles.
- **High rise living building safety** – for residents who live in our housing blocks over seven-storeys high.

"I never thought I'd win, but it was only a quick survey so I gave it a go and look what I've got! I'm so glad I took part."

TSM survey winners.



Chapter 5

Resident associations and Informal resident groups

We are keen to help and encourage any individual or resident group that wishes to be involved. When residents express an interest in participating for the first time, we ensure they get all the relevant information on opportunities available to them and help them work out the best option of involvement for them. Any level of involvement from a resident is important and is treated as such.

Support for new groups

Officers work hard to help and support residents who are keen to set up a new group and to assist them through the initial stages of developing the group.

If a resident/s approach us about setting up a new group, we:

- Speak to the resident/s and explain the process of setting up a group as if others are requesting a group.
- Write to residents in the area to gauge interest.

If enough residents want a group, we:

- Help with first meeting and venue.
- Provide publicity for the meeting and attend if requested.
- Provide support for any stationery required for initial start-up, this can include production of agendas, minutes, and organising any necessary training.
- Provide general advice and support as needed.

Resident Associations (RAs)

We are fully committed to the existing resident association structure. With both the support of our staff and the RAs ability to do things for themselves they bring resources into their area and organise activities and events that benefit the community.

To achieve these aims certain standards need to be set to ensure groups know how to operate and meet the criteria for formal recognition by the council.

What is required to be recognised by the council?

Resident associations wishing to be formally recognised by the council will need to show the resident engagement team they are democratic, accountable, and properly run by having read, agreed, and signed the following (available on request from the resident engagement team):

- Constitution
- Code of conduct
- Groups aims and objectives

They also need to:

- Have at least three committee members – chair, secretary, and treasurer.
- Hold a minimum of four open meetings a year.
- Keep accurate and timely accounts to be certified by the council each year.
- Take minutes at each meeting and send a copy to the resident engagement team for checking.
- Hold an annual general meeting once a year – this can be three yearly as agreed by the group.
- Show they are democratic and accountable.

Benefits of formal recognition

Once recognised by the council, resident associations benefit in a number of ways:

- Access to grants and other funding
- Attendance by housing staff at association meetings when requested.
- Auditing of association accounts

Annual Monitoring – or three years as agreed by the group

Every year the resident engagement officers will help the resident association's (in their area of responsibility) to complete the relevant registration forms.

This ensures that associations:

- Remain formally recognised and supported by the council.
- Have a chance to point out any areas of concern they may have in their area.

Stopping the support

Should a resident association fail to meet the necessary criteria required from them by the resident engagement team then formal support will be removed.

We are keen to avoid this happening and will give associations all the help and advice they may need. However, if the association are still not able to meet those standards, then the group will be derecognised.

Informal groups

Sometimes residents don't wish to form a constituted resident's group, they may prefer to meet regularly but without a formal committee. This can be on a purely social setting or to discuss a specific issue happening at the time. We will help residents set these up if requested as we are keen to promote community spirit.

Areas with no resident association

We will actively seek the views of residents living in an area not yet represented by a resident association. This will be done in a range of ways including organising an open meeting inviting everyone living in the area, going out to the community, and gathering views. Feedback will then be provided to the residents.

Individuals

We always want to see new faces on our groups and attending events. Any resident can join us on a number of different activities. We invite individual residents to get involved in any of the activities set out in this pledge but there is also the opportunity to attend networking events and to support the team as a volunteer at community events.

Encouraging representation from different community groups and individuals

We are keen that residents that voice their opinions, work alongside us, hold us to account and are active in our communities are representative of all of our residents, and that everyone feels confident that their voice will be heard. We recognise that our resident associations and resident consortium are typically made up of more mature, white British people. We are keen to promote the opportunities that are available to all of our residents, understand the barriers to people getting involved and encourage all of our residents, whatever their ethnic origin, level of disability, age, or sexuality to participate and feel comfortable and valued doing so.

Mixed tenure areas

Many of our participation and consultation opportunities are open to anyone who lives on our multi tenure estates, not just our tenants and leaseholders. This can help build cohesive communities and avoid "them and us" attitudes.

We think that every resident living in an area should be able to give their views and help to improve their area. Although people may have a different landlord or own their own home there are still issues that are priorities to everyone such as the environment, crime, and the welfare of the community.

For this reason, we hold open access local events and work in partnership with many external agencies and other social landlords.

Chapter 6

Resident training and employment support

Resident training

Many residents are keen to be involved but may not have much experience or knowledge to carry their role out to their full capability. We aim to encourage residents to attend training relevant to their role to ensure that groups are well-run, and residents are able to give their views confidently and better represent and serve their community.

Training can be provided in a range of subject matters and may be provided in-house or by external providers. All courses are free and travel expenses will be covered.

South coast training

The South Coast Training Group consists of nine housing providers who organise conferences that bring a whole range of tenants together for quality training delivered by professional trainers.

The day-long events take place twice a year and are usually held in the Novotel Hotel in Southampton. Around 80 tenants' spaces are available with spaces allocated to each of the different housing organisations.

Residents received training on a variety of subjects from welfare reform and tackling anti-social behaviour to housing law, mental health, and public speaking.

There is the opportunity to learning both information and skills that enable them to get involved more and make a difference where they live.

One important benefit of south coast training is the opportunity it provides for residents to meet with people from other towns and organisations, to compare issues and share ideas. The atmosphere is open, relaxed, and friendly.

Lunch, refreshments, and transport are provided free of charge on the day.

Other training

Some of our internal staff training courses are available to residents who show an interest. Training courses are amended from time to time but may include:

- Equality and diversity
- Financial rules & anti-fraud, bribery, and corruption
- Health & safety / fire safety
- GDPR
- Cyber security awareness
- Managing difficult conversations
- Making every contact counts
- Mental health first aid for adults
- Mediation skills
- Safeguarding

Training can be provided a number of ways:

- E-learning
- Attending training sessions, provided sufficient numbers of delegates can be found.
- One to one with staff on certain subjects

All of the courses are free, with travel expenses paid for.

Four million homes

The government's department for levelling up, housing and communities offer a website with resources for social housing residents, including guidance on social housing resident rights and the services landlords are required to provide. There is information on a wide range of issues including repairs and maintenance and anti-social behaviour. Free webinars and training events are offered throughout the year. **www.fourmillionhomes.org**

Employment support

The resident engagement team offer help to any resident, or member of their household who is looking for work. Resident support can include help with:

- Job searches
- CV writing
- Photo ID
- Training courses
- Work clothes
- Travel expenses
- Signposting to job clubs

Chapter 7

Information

What information can be expected?

To ensure we reach as many residents as possible, the resident engagement team shares information with residents in a variety of ways.

All the information the team provides can also be provided in large print, braille or in another language. We also avoid using jargon, racist, sexist, or other biased language and write in plain English wherever possible. We work with teams across the service promoting clear and concise communication methods and translating often complex information so it can be easily understood.

Resident volunteers and our communications panel are consulted on any participation information leaflets before they are printed, to check they are understandable and written in clear English. Other department information is also consulted on in advance, where we are able to do so.

The different ways we share information:

House Talk

House Talk is a resident's magazine produced three times a year. It is a useful way to share information on new housing information and local news with all residents of the council. House Talk is directly mailed to every resident. Content of the magazine is decided by the editorial panel, which is made up of staff and residents who meet to decide which articles will go in. House Talk is reviewed regularly to ensure it meets residents' needs and provides good value for money.

Resident engagement pledge and service document

This document is produced with residents and has information to all residents on their opportunities to participate. It will be reviewed by both housing staff and residents and recommendations for change to the charter will be actioned where possible.

Information and consultation events / gazebo days

Local events are organised to provide residents with local information, information on the HNB service and information on opportunities to get involved. Local organisations are invited to attend with information on their service so that we get the most out of the events.

Meetings

Meetings can be organised to consult with residents on specific issues as they arise, or they can be organised in advance to enable exchange of information and views. For example, issues affecting a block or local area will be discussed at meetings in an appropriate communal space, issues such as proposed rent increases and policy changes may be discussed at special meetings, focus group meetings or resident consortium meetings which are held monthly. The information can then be fed back to other residents by the attendees at the meeting.

Officers will organise, minute, and distribute relevant papers prior to meetings. They can also make presentations on request and will attend resident association committee meetings as required.

Website

Portsmouth City Council has an accessible website which is regularly updated. There is a specific section for resident engagement, and it is here that residents can find details of documents, meetings, and other events.

Email

Email is an important way of sharing information, and we use this method of information sharing on a regular basis. It is a quick and reliable way to stay in contact with residents. Residents email addresses are collected on our database when they indicate they would like to be involved.

Texting

Text messaging can be a cheap, quick, and easy way for residents to contact us and for us to keep them up to date with information.

Publications

We produce a variety of publications and information which will be made available to residents, including our annual report.

Tenant satisfaction measures

We will collect and publish data for tenant satisfaction measures annually.

Personal information

Any personal information that we gather is stored securely and reviewed. We have a service Privacy Notice, published on the council website, and available on request.

Chapter 8

Meetings

Meetings need to be effective, or they are a waste of people's valuable time. This is regardless of whether they are organised by the council, resident associations, or individual residents. They are an excellent opportunity for all to participate, share their views and contribute to the decision-making process. For effective meetings, the following points should be followed.

Before

- We will offer the use of meeting rooms, free of charge.
- Booked venues should be accessible, comfortable, and convenient.
- Meetings should be publicised effectively and in good time.
- All those that should be there should be invited.
- All groups of society should be welcomed and encouraged to join.
- Try to make sure that meetings don't clash.
- Have an agenda relevant to the aims and objectives of the meeting.
- Encourage people joining to read papers in advance of meetings and prepare questions/comments.
- Make sure the meeting will meet everybody's needs e.g., caters for people who are hearing impaired, need a translator, aren't in conflict with religious beliefs (e.g., alcohol served).

During

- Have a confident chairperson who is able to control the meeting.
- Provide an agenda.
- Welcome and introductions put new members and guests at ease.
- Advise attendees of the code of conduct.
- Think about what you say and the way that you say it.
- Try not to let individuals dominate the conversation.
- Encourage participation from everyone present and listen respectfully.
- Try to ensure that aims and discussions are relevant to the group and community, as opposed to about an individual's personal circumstances.
- Ensure clear decisions are made when necessary and everyone knows what was agreed.
- Take minutes with clear outcomes and actions.
- Provide refreshments where appropriate.
- Establish when the next meeting should be, what you hope to achieve from it and who should attend.

After

- Circulate the minutes of the meeting.
- Follow up any actions.
- Provide feedback and updates to those that attended and others that request it.
- Review how the meeting went.

Conduct

Resident associations, and the resident consortium constitution both have key sections explaining the standards expected in meetings. Resident associations also have a Code of conduct that the committee have to sign to show they understand the importance of effective meetings.

In addition, the resident consortium has agreed, publicised meeting dates for the whole year and the minutes are distributed by the resident engagement team to resident associations, attendees, area housing offices, Councillors and to individual residents who request a copy.



Meetings are an excellent opportunity for all to participate, share their views and contribute to the decision-making process.

◀
House Talk focus group.

Chapter 9

Comments, compliments, complaints

Comments

We would like to hear from you if you have a suggestion of how we can improve the resident engagement service. You may write to us, email us, call us, or tell any member of staff.

Compliments

If you are happy with any part of the service, you receive please tell us. You may write to us, email us, call us, or tell any member of staff. We will record your views and pass them on to the people involved.

Complaints

We aim to provide the best possible service to residents. However, if we get it wrong, we want to know about it and will try to put it right as soon as possible.

Our aim

We take complaints very seriously. While we try to provide a good service, we know that things sometimes go wrong. We have developed a complaints procedure in response to this.

We aim to sort out complaints quickly and fairly and we will try to sort out any mistakes or misunderstandings straight away. Sometimes it may take longer, but we will tell you how long it will take.

What we learnt from complaints

We keep records of all complaints we receive and monitor them regularly. This helps us to:

- Identify areas of service we need to take changes and improvements.
- Make sure we are dealing with the complaint effectively and consistently.

Tell us what you think

You can submit compliment, complaint, or suggestion.

Contact your local housing office:

- Email us at **hnblandlordcomplaints@portsmouthcc.gov.uk**
- Fill in complaints from online at **www.portsmouth.gov.uk**

Disputes

Consortium disputes

The consortium terms of reference include details of the procedure to try to resolve disputes within the consortium.

- Every attempt will be made to resolve disputes within the consortium as they occur.
- The housing resident engagement manager will offer mediation.
- If unresolved there will be a referral for arbitration by the Cabinet Member for housing and tackling homelessness

Resolving disputes amongst groups

Resident associations that are formally recognised by the council have a standard constitution. This also includes a process for resolving disputes within groups.

It states:

- In the event of a dispute within the association the first place for negotiation must be at the next general meeting.
- If the dispute is not resolved, then the resident engagement team can be asked to arbitrate.
- If the dispute cannot be resolved, then the resident engagement team have authority to dissolve the association.

Any member of the association has the right to ask the resident engagement team to intervene in matters where they feel the committee is acting against the terms of the constitution.

Resident associations also have to adhere to a code of conduct and terms of reference. These, along with the constitution are available on request from the resident engagement team.

Chapter 10

Monitoring and reviewing resident engagement activity and our three-year plan

Monitoring and reviewing

A review group made up of landlord representatives and residents will meet to monitor the achievements and the effectiveness of resident engagement activity and whether the terms set out here are met. This will enable the group to see what has worked and what hasn't. The review group will build on their findings by:

- Consulting other residents.
- Sharing experiences and good practice across neighbourhoods and tenures.
- Challenging the existing system and making recommendations for better outcomes.

The review group will then use this information to update the document if necessary.

Changes will be made providing:

- All partners are in agreement.
- All amendments are reported to all residents through House Talk.
- The newly agreed action plans are publicised.

**A review group
will allow all to
see what has
worked and
what hasn't.**

▶
Party for Paulsgrove engagement event.
Resident completing housing survey.



Performance and accountability

We will take the following into account when reviewing the work of the resident engagement team and wider services:

We will look to review the **levels of engagement** through our current communications with tenants.

- The number of people who engage with telephone surveys.
- The number of people who respond to questionnaires.
- The number of people who attend meetings and events.
- The number of people who access House Talk online.

We will consider the **effectiveness** of specific activities in light of the following:

- The number of customers who took part.
- The resources needed to obtain feedback.
- The quality of the feedback obtained.
- Whether the engagement activity successfully engaged a range of customers from different groups (including hard to reach groups)
- Whether the engagement activity resulted in positive change
- Whether residents feel listened to and that their opinions and feedback make a difference

We will be fully accountable for any findings that the review group discover and will try to correct any failings.

Evaluation-impact assessment

The review group will work on ways to promote resident engagement and participation to a wider audience and widen its impact.

You can give us your views by:

- Email
- Post
- Phone
- Text



You can get this information in large print, Braille, audio or in another language by calling 02392 834 835

