

Title: Housing and Repairs Participation Redesign

Designation (Information/Discussion/Decision Report): Discussion

Recommendations: To note the report

Report Summary:

This report shares our renewed approach for participation, alongside plans for a proposed redesign of the Tenant Participation and Consultation and Engagement teams into a unified service, organised according to the five Neighbourhoods, with each responsible for supporting the Tenant and Resident Associations (TRAs) and affiliated District Management Committee (DMC). The aim of this redesign is to better deliver our regulatory standards and new participation approach, ensuring everyone in Camden-managed homes can become an active resident, and their voices are close to decision-making.

1. Context

- 1.1 Camden Housing and Repairs serves a large community with 22,500 tenants and 9,500 leaseholders living in Camden-managed homes. All need clear communication, engagement, and genuine opportunities to shape the Housing and Repairs service's decision-making and improvements.
- 1.2 Faced with severe financial challenges and a housing crisis, now more than ever, we need to get closer to what matters for residents. Residents have the best understanding of the challenges they face within their community and the potential solutions.
- 1.3 We are also responding to the new regulatory requirements for social housing set out in the Charter for Social Housing Residents. These require landlords to understand and respond to tenant satisfaction measures and a more accountable and transparent relationship between housing providers and tenants.
- 1.4 In Camden, we are fortunate to have strong communities and a long history of social action. DMCs and TRAs across Camden work tirelessly to provide a strong platform

for tenants' voices and action and to make sure that their voices shape the decisions we make and the way housing services are delivered.

- 1.5 This is very much an ambition that we share. As a Council, we want to work together with our DMCs, TRAs and tenants who we don't yet reach, to make sure we're growing local networks even further, building new relationships, understanding what matters to people and supporting social action across our communities.
- 1.6 We know that not everyone wants to get involved in the same way and we recognise the barriers and constraints that prevent people from getting involved.

2. Renewing our tenant participation approach

- 2.1 The conversations we have had with residents over the last two years have enabled us to better understand residents' needs, work with communities to tackle issues, and engage with residents locally. At the beginning of last year we carried out a series of focused engagement to learn more about what we could improve when it comes to engagement. This includes:
 - 883 responses to a resident engagement survey
 - A solutions-focused workshop with 14 residents not currently involved in Housing and Repairs services
 - A youth focus group with 15 young residents at our Somers Town Youth Centre.
 - An older age focus group with residents at our Sheltered Accommodation
 - A staff workshop held with 15 colleagues from across Housing and Repairs services.
- 2.2 We've also learnt a lot from the conversations we had at our Estate Action Days, where we spoke to as many council tenants as possible about what life was like for them and what needs to improve, while also providing practical advice and support. We visited over 6,600 tenanted households in the borough.
- 2.3 In late 2024, we supported active tenants and leaseholders to hold a Resident Action Day Conference, where we heard insights from across the engagement community, including DMCs and TRAs. What has come through loud and clear is that working together and being led by our tenants is the right way forward – for all of us.
- 2.4 Based on the conversations we've had with people living in Council housing over the last year, we've developed our thinking for how we can continue to work together with tenants. Now we want to invite residents to work alongside us on this and share their thoughts and feedback – so we can develop and deliver it together.
- 2.5 Within this new approach, we want to provide opportunities for residents who want different levels of involvement in their estates and neighbourhoods. Some may want to fill in a survey about housing services from time to time, some may want to set up a TRA, while others might want to join a tenant's panel to help decide how services are run in the future. We would like to work together to provide opportunities that work for everyone.

- 2.6 We want to work with TRAs to provide residents with the opportunity to do more on their estates, whether that's a gardening project, a regular coffee morning or an annual sports day. So, we will provide advice and support including 'how to guides' to make it easier to do these kinds of things.
- 2.7 We want to encourage the growth of local networks that can support our communities to flourish and residents to connect with each other, so we are investing in five community champions projects. Each project will be run by a local VCS organisation who will support tenants who want to become 'champions and take action to improve health and wellbeing in their neighbourhood. Our ask of DMCs and TRAs is to work together with us to ensure we are getting lots of residents involved. This includes residents who want to get involved but maybe aren't sure how, or don't want to go down the traditional routes.
- 2.8 The appendices slides provide further information on our ambitions and some of the areas we want to work alongside tenants to explore further and develop.

3. Proposed redesign of tenant participation

- 3.1 To deliver our ambitions for engaging residents and respond better to the Social Housing Regulations (see appendix I), it is clear we need to remodel our tenant participation offer. Some of this work to remodel the service began during a systems review in 2019; however, it was postponed as our COVID-19 response took precedence.
- 3.2 As part of this redesign, we are proposing to merge the Tenant Participation and Property Consultation and Engagement team into one unified Engagement Service. An Engagement Manager will lead the team, and the five Engagement Officers will be organised according to the five Neighbourhoods, with each responsible for supporting the Tenant and Resident Associations (TRAs) and affiliated District Management Committee (DMC) within the geographic area. They will also lead on delivering Neighbourhood Action days (10 annually) in each area.
- 3.3 Housing and Property Engagement Officers will work closely with our corporate Participation and Partnerships team, to ensure a consistent and joined up involvement approach across the borough.
- 3.4 Here, team members will act as engagement experts across Housing and Property Services, playing an essential role in facilitating tenant and leaseholder involvement in housing and property services and improvements to their estates and neighbourhoods. With this, the support and delivery of resident panels, groups, associations, and committees will come together under one team. This aims to respond to resident's requests to better connect resident groups for shared learning and collaboration between groups.
- 3.5 This is in line with organisation change to bring council services, community organisations, and residents closer together under a Neighbourhood model. Camden residents are experiencing more challenging issues that require teams to come around them to provide support. By bringing together the services that work across Housing and Repairs together with engagement officers, unified under a new way of working,

we will aim for a service structure that is more relational and responsive and can deal with everyday issues effectively.

- 3.6 The proposed changes to services are currently in the pre-consultation period. This means there could be adaptations to the proposals based on feedback and insights gathered throughout the consultation process. We aim to provide a further update to DMCs and other resident groups once any changed are confirmed.

4. Appendix I: Engagement with tenants (extract) - Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard Consumer standards (April 2024)

- 2.2.1 Registered providers must give tenants a wide range of meaningful opportunities to influence and scrutinise their landlord's strategies, policies and services. This includes in relation to the neighbourhood where applicable.
- 2.2.2 Registered providers must assist tenants who wish to implement tenant-led activities to influence and scrutinise their landlord's strategies, policies and services. This includes in relation to the neighbourhood where applicable.
- 2.2.3 Registered providers must provide accessible support that meets the diverse needs of tenants so they can engage with the opportunities in 2.2.1 and 2.2.2.
- 2.2.4 Registered providers must support tenants to exercise their Right to Manage, Right to Transfer or otherwise exercise housing management functions, where appropriate.
- 2.2.5 Registered providers, working with tenants, must regularly consider ways to improve and tailor their approach to delivering landlord services including tenant engagement. They must implement changes as appropriate to ensure services deliver the intended aims.
- 2.2.6 Where a registered provider is considering a change in landlord for one or more tenants, or a significant change in management arrangements, it must consult affected tenants on its proposals at a formative stage and take those views into account in reaching a decision. The consultation must:
- a) be fair and accessible
 - b) provide tenants with adequate time, information and opportunities to consider and respond
 - c) set out actual or potential advantages and disadvantages (including costs) to tenants in the immediate and longer term, and
 - d) demonstrate to affected tenants how the consultation responses have been taken into account in reaching a decision.

Report Ends