

Resident Engagement  
Desk top comparison exercise

## **The Stevenage Model**

Until 2017 resident engagement formed a part of the housing service offer in Stevenage.

Stevenage operates a model where resident groups are supported by the council through a dedicated team of staff. Resident groups are independent in structure and delivery but often rely on the council for minute taking, distribution of agenda/minutes and invites and practical support in meetings.

The council has historically also provided refreshments for resident meetings and paid for venues.

Until 2017 there was no formal link between community development and resident groups, often leading to residents groups purely focusing on housing as tenants of the council.

Resident groups were designed to be the link to further levels of housing focused scrutiny and customer involvement with:

- Resident Inspectors
- Disability Panel
- Customer Scrutiny Panel
- HMAB (Housing Management Board)

The Stevenage model has been successful but often housing driven in approach, meaning wider community involvement has been limited. Many of those involved in resident engagement have been involved for a number of years with a large number involved since Stevenage Homes was a lead provider.

How does Stevenage compare?

## **TPAS**

TPAS helpfully defines the difference between a purely tenant based approach to resident involvement and a community engagement focused response.

"We define Tenant engagement as being about working with tenants to co-produce effective services that meet a variety of needs; for example building in accountability through communication, monitoring and scrutiny. It's about empowering tenants, residents and communities to work with your organisation to achieve shared aims.

We believe Community engagement is about working with communities to address the issues they feel are a priority; for example empowering and supporting communities to develop their capacity to tackle issues they face; addressing issues that are wider than just 'housing'"

Stevenage currently has a mixed approach to resident involvement based on this understanding. Which is similar to a range of other local authorities. Specialist areas of engagement such as resident inspectors and HMAB offer tenant targeted support and empowerment while resident groups should be a voice of the local community they represent.

## **Brighton and Hove City Council**

Neighbourhood working is supported via the councils Community, Equality and Third Sector Team, with each neighbourhood area having a commissioned voluntary sector provider in charge of developing neighbourhood plans ensuring the voice of local people is central to council development.

Resident engagement sits within the Councils Housing Department. Resident Associations are completely independent and volunteer led. While resident groups and 'Area Housing Panels' are managed via dedicated council officers.

There is no formal link between resident engagement and community development, creating a tenant focused service vs a community focused service.

Brighton and Hove begun a large scale review of their resident engagement service in 2017, finding 70% of local people did not interact with their resident group or association with the average age of engagement above 65 years.

These service are currently being remodeled

## **London Borough of Southwark**

### **Community Councils**

Local Councilors, elected to represent the area, sit on the community councils, involve local people in discussion about the issues, and use the points raised to help them take decisions on key areas such as traffic management, community safety, and environmental improvements.

The Community Councils also manage funds and allocate money for local projects and activities. These funds are publicised through the community council meeting, social media and voluntary sector organisations.

Attending the meetings allows local people and councilors a time to get to know groups and organisations that work in the area, including Wardens and the police, as well as meeting new neighbours and getting involved.

Meetings are usually themed around a particular topic, such as transport, health, development, environment, employment etc. with workshops for more specific discussion and presentations from council officers, special interest groups and local initiatives with some relevance to the theme.

### **TRA's**

Tenant and resident associations are supported by the community development team, and allow individual estates or streets to set up place specific themed groups that can share views and arrange place based events and support.

## **Croydon Borough Council**

Croydon operates a digital resident platform alongside community engagement structures and themed groups.

Housing ID is an online portal for tenants who wish to take part in consultations and surveys on a range of housing issues. For those who have less time due to work or home commitments Neighbourhood Voice asks residents for interests in small or specific issues related to their area with quick online or freepost consultations throughout the year.

Those who wish to get more practically involved in consultation can join a range of special interest groups throughout the council, from sheltered housing to disability access.

Resident associations can also be set up by local communities with the support of the Resident and Scrutiny Team.

## **Milton Keynes**

Resident associations are encouraged by the Community Partnership Team but sit completely independently from the council. Associations are encouraged to feedback into the council via the Tenant Scrutiny Panel and the Resident Involvement Newsletter produced monthly online.

A community engagement strategy is under consultation including changes to resident involvement