

Housing Resident Engagement Strategy for Croydon

2024 – 2029

CONTENTS

FOREWORD.....	3
INTRODUCTION.....	4
PLAN ON A PAGE.....	11
KEY STATISTICS	Error! Bookmark not defined.
OUTCOME ONE:.....	14
OUTCOME TWO:.....	16
OUTCOME THREE:.....	18
OUTCOME FOUR:.....	18
APPENDICES	
Glossary.....	21

FOREWORD

Text

Mayor or Cabinet Member

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the Council's Housing Resident Engagement Strategy is to set a clear direction and framework for how Croydon will listen to residents' views, fully understand their experiences, and act on this to ensure that residents influence the decisions, strategies, policies, and services relating to Croydon's housing provision. This is the first Strategy of its' kind in Croydon for a number of years.

Developing the strategy and its objectives

Croydon commissioned Tpas – the tenant engagement experts, to support it to develop a framework that will ensure engaging with, and hearing, residents' voices is strongly embedded across the business. To do this, Tpas used its innovative and well-tried-and-tested *Re-engineering Engagement* methodology.

In using the Tpas methodology the key components were to:

- Build a team of staff and residents who, together with Tpas, would work up a new framework.
- Introduce significant concepts including lived experience and an understanding of what 'silent voices' means (reflecting concerns of the Housing Ombudsman).
- Deliver a series of recommendations for improvement without judging current and past approaches, using techniques drawn from strengths-based methods, including Appreciative Inquiry.
- The outcomes from the project to support Croydon in developing a new resident engagement and influencing framework.

Based on some of the key principles of Appreciative Inquiry, Re-engineering Engagement enables:

- An evidence-based approach
- Motivation through its strengths-based focus
- Equality of contribution through use of co-creation techniques
- Options for checking back with participants.
- Qualitative insight, not designed to be statistically reliable.

This Strategy has been informed by the current resident involvement structure at Croydon and previous consultations and work with involved residents to look at areas for improvement. It is essential to meet the Business Plan outcomes including allocating limited resources appropriate to deliver positive outcomes, as far as is practicable at a time when the organisation is under significant financial pressure. The first and most important outcome of the Mayor's Business Plan is therefore:

- 1) The Council balances its books, listens to residents, and delivers good, sustainable services.

Fulfilment of this main outcome is essential to enable us to achieve the subsequent four outcomes of the Business Plan:

- 2) Croydon is a place of opportunity for business, earning and learning.
- 3) Children and Young People in Croydon have the chance to thrive, learn and fulfil their potential.
- 4) Croydon is a cleaner, safer and healthier place, a borough we're proud to call home.
- 5) People can lead healthier and independent lives for longer.

National Context

This framework will underpin and support Croydon in responding to the challenges and requirements of the [Social Housing \(Regulation\) Act 2023](#) and the [Tenant Satisfaction Measures](#), in particular that "Satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them." (Tenant Satisfaction Measure TP06).

It will also support meeting the requirements of the [Regulatory Consumer Standards](#) in particular the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard, as well as the Housing Ombudsman's Code of Practice and the Building Safety Act, Regulated by the [Health and Safety Executive](#) (with regards to communicating and engaging with tenants).

This framework explicitly emphasises the value in using data to hear the resident voice – including the non-vocalised or silent voice - in designing, delivering, and measuring services.

Local Context

Croydon's current engagement framework includes **strategic engagement** with the Tenant and Leaseholder Panel on topics such as the rent increase, a Performance Monitoring Group which scrutinises performance across housing services and resident satisfaction, and a Scrutiny Panel. **Informal feedback** includes STAR surveys and compliance with the new Tenant Satisfaction measures alongside **local engagement** with Croydon encouraging the creation of Residents' Associations on estates and blocks. Croydon also has a 'get involved database' of almost 200 residents who have registered an interest in getting involved in activities such as surveys, task and finish groups or other panels as required.

Croydon **communicates** with residents in a variety of ways – it produces a quarterly magazine 'Open House' for tenants and leaseholders with a bi-monthly e-newsletter sent to residents who have signed up. It also has around 2000 followers on its' involvement Facebook page and has started to use WhatsApp groups as a way of engaging with residents' groups.

Croydon has developed a **Residents' Charter** with three members of the Tenant & Leaseholder Panel (TLP) which was formally adopted by Croydon Council cabinet in December 2022 and outlines Croydon's commitments to residents. The key principles of the Charter include treating residents with respect, being transparent with our residents about how we are performing, giving residents a voice and encouraging meaningful decision-making activities.

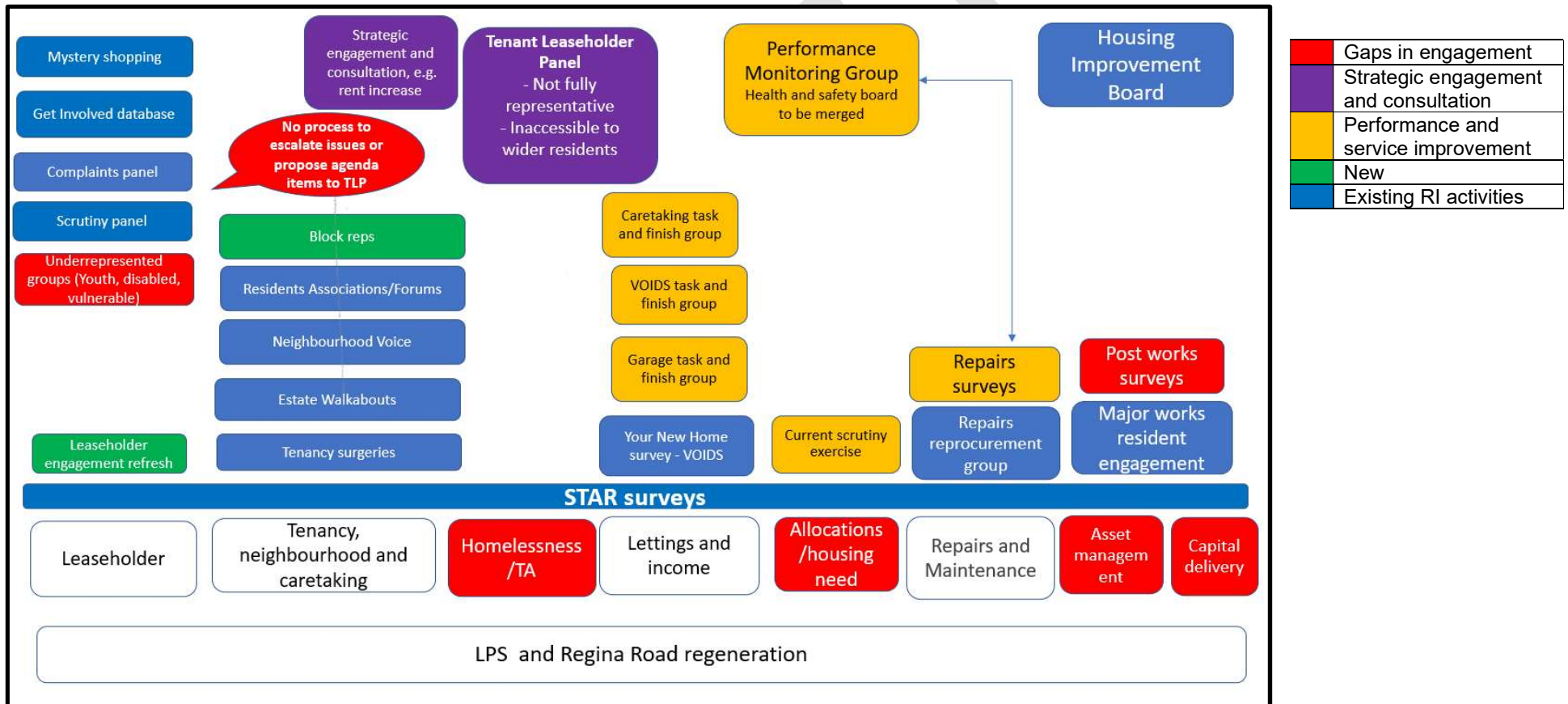
Transformation Programme.

Croydon held over 20 resident and leaseholder workshops in the summer of 2022. The purpose of these workshops was to explore with participants what the future could look like for the housing service and the areas they wanted us to consider. We also took this opportunity to consult with residents on the Residents' Charter. The workshops helped define the vision and mission for the housing directorate as well as finalising our commitments to residents in the residents' charter.

Findings from the sessions also informed projects which then became part of the Housing Transformation Programme. These included a customer care training programme, an estate walkabout programme, and a complaints process refresh. In addition, the engagement of residents became part of the programme principles for Housing Transformation- all projects which impact on residents are expected to be designed with residents in mind and to involve them in the journey. Examples include the repairs re-procurement project, the rent consultation exercise, the customer care training programme, the new housing and homelessness strategies.

Croydon has been reviewing its' involvement structure, identifying areas for improvement, and implementing newer activities such as engaging with leaseholders and developing block champions. In addition, members of the Tenant and Leaseholder Panel have produced a document outlining proposed changes to the TLP's constitution, code of conduct, its' role in decision making, panel format, structure and membership, wider structural changes to panels/groups and suggested new panels, communications, recruitment, and improved links to local involvement opportunities and those registered on the get involved database.

Current Resident Involvement Framework



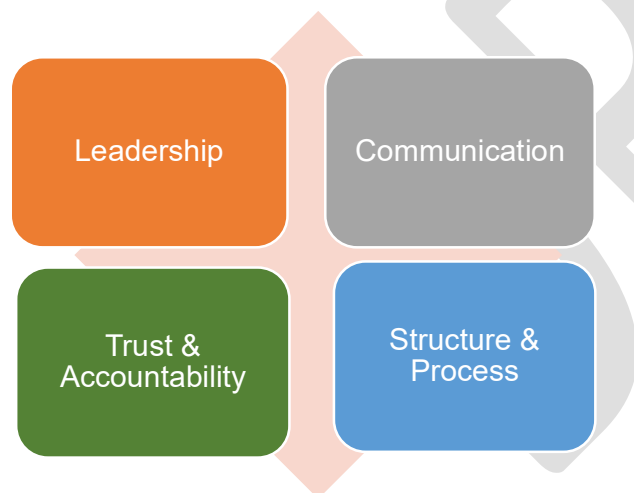
The Re-engineering Engagement Approach

Discovery sessions started the process of thinking about examples of positive resident influence at Croydon, how residents could give feedback and what might be stopping feedback from being heard. Participants were asked to think of the best example of resident involvement they could think of, and were involved in, and then, working in groups they answered the following questions:

1. What did you value most about the experience?
2. What was your direct contribution?
3. What made the experience possible?
4. What would be your one wish for Croydon?

In the same groups, participants reflected on the key factors that made that positive experience of resident influence happen – considering systems, processes, culture, and behaviours.

These sessions identified the factors that enable successful resident influence with four key themes that kept recurring:



Discovery Summary

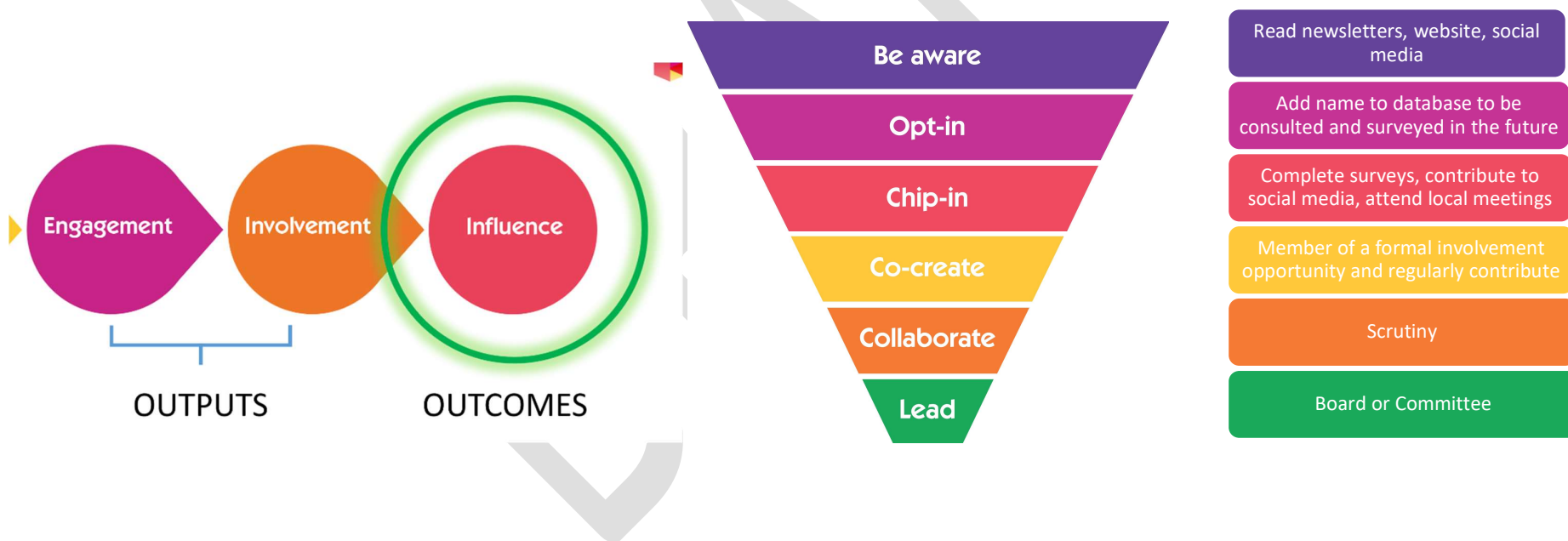
Effective **leadership** is essential in instilling a set of values that drives a culture at Croydon that looks for, values and acts upon residents' voices.

Good **communication** – listening and feedback – are essential in building **trust** from residents and ensuring they see value in engaging with Croydon.

New engagement structures and informal influencing opportunities to be developed from this project will need to properly **resourced**.

Three 'Design' Sessions were then held with a mixture of staff and residents who had volunteered to continue in the process.

- **Session One** provided feedback on the key quotes and themes from Discovery. These were discussed and agreed as the key contributing factors to resident influence. It then continued to build on these themes, considering, in the context of resident influence, how you would know these were happening, and what needs to be in place in order for them to happen.
- **Session Two** then continued design by considering three hypothetical scenarios and how these should be tackled (in an ideal world) to ensure resident influence. The scenarios considered responding to negative feedback regarding an operational service, to survey results (using data and insight) and at setting priorities at a strategic level.
- **Session Three** presented back the final draft framework for discussion and approval. The key elements of the framework are to enable Croydon to move from 'engagement and involvement' outputs to evidenced 'influence' outcomes by combining the effective use of data and insight with the provision of a wide range of opportunities to hear from the full diversity of Croydon's residents, as per the diagrams below.

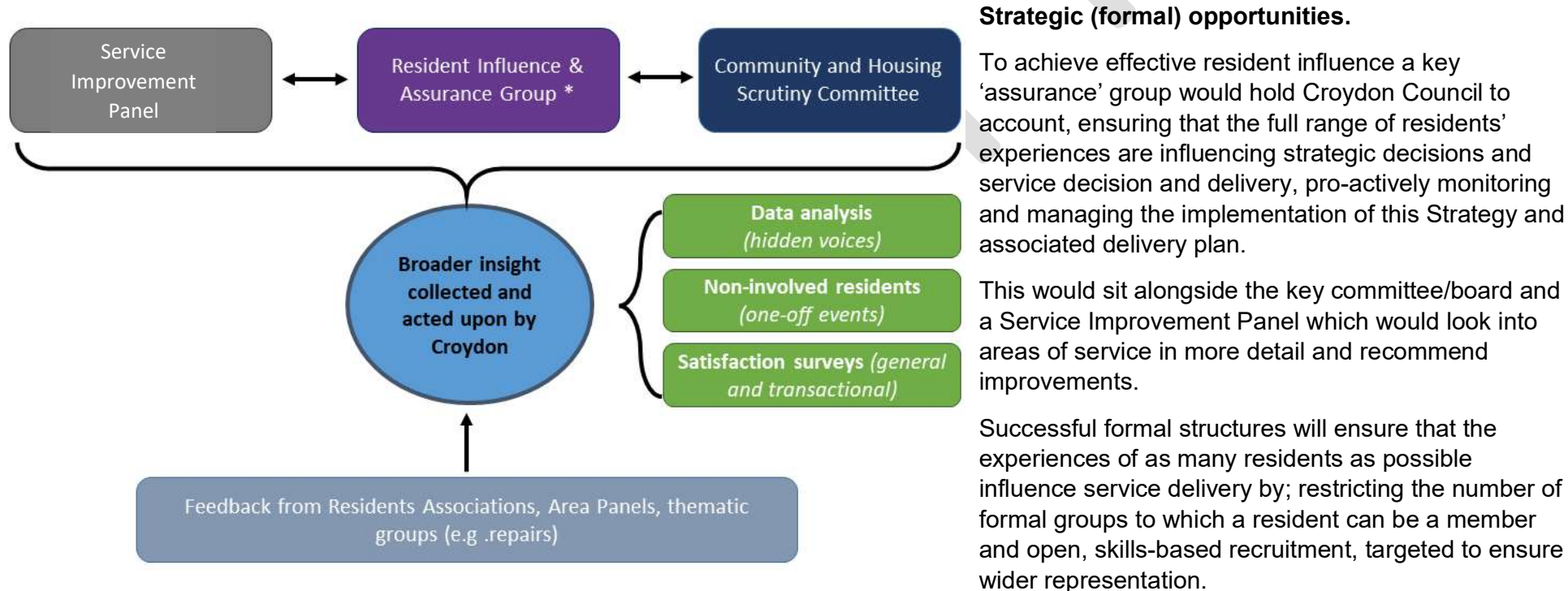


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The new Influencing Structure will continue to be developed and implemented in conjunction with staff and tenant/leaseholders focusing particularly on:

- Ensuring we hear from residents who are currently not involved and truly understand their lived experiences.
- Increasing the numbers and diversity of residents who engage with Croydon across the range of opportunities outlined above, including reviewing our provision of incentives and rewards to maximise engagement and recognise the time, knowledge, and experience of residents in order for them to feel valued when they do engage.

The diagram below provides an example of a Resident Engagement and Influencing Structure combining local, low level and ad hoc/targeted engagement with the use of data and insight, leading up through more strategic involvement opportunities to hold Croydon Council to account.



PLAN ON A PAGE

VISION

All residents living in Croydon homes (tenants and leaseholders) have their voices heard in order to influence decisions, strategies, policies, and services, this is embedded across all relevant departments and includes evidence that Croydon meets the commitments outlined in its' Residents Charter.

<p>Croydon Leadership drives a culture that requires and values resident influence and ensures resources are available.</p>	<p>Timely, respectful, two-way communication is in place with residents having evidence that their voice is heard and acted on.</p>	<p>Residents can trust staff, and staff are held accountable for listening and acting on residents' voices</p>	<p>Effective, transparent, structures and processes are in place for delivering core services and engagement and influencing opportunities.</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Providing a variety of formal and informal ways for residents to engage with Croydon and to influence services which encourage a wide range of residents to engage in a way that works for them. 2. Supporting staff to be confident in understanding and implementing what is expected of them in relation to engaging with residents. 3. Leaders set and drive a culture that reflects the value of hearing residents' voices, listening to staff and residents and using what they learn to improve services. 4. There is a stable leadership team and wherever possible, permanent staff are in post (rather than interims) to bring continuity and consistency to service delivery 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Residents know what their opportunities and options are for engaging with Croydon. 2. Residents have evidence that their voice has been heard and know how they have influenced services. 3. It is easy to contact Croydon and residents know what to expect (<i>response times, service levels</i>). 4. Leaders set and model the behaviours and standards for high-quality, effective communication between residents and staff. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Staff understand what is expected of them and are held accountable to deliver services to agreed standards. 2. Leaders develop a culture and working practices that embed trust and accountability between staff and also between staff and residents. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A robust and comprehensive resident engagement and influencing structure is in place at Croydon. 2. Leaders ensure that resident engagement and influencing activities are approached strategically and are properly resourced. 3. Resources are made available to ensure that IT/digital services underpin service delivery.

Key Statistics

The Tpas re-engineering project ran from July – October 2023 with qualitative participation as follows:

- Discovery Sessions x 5 – five Tenant and Leaseholder Panel members, 10 involved tenants/leaseholders, seven uninvolved tenants/leaseholders, 25 staff.
- Design Sessions x 3 - seven involved tenants/leaseholders, one uninvolved tenant/leaseholder, eight staff (volunteers from Discovery)

Key Quotes – why resident influence is important:

“It’s important we get their approval, or they won’t want to pay for it.

It’s critical how we interact with our residents for the future – it’s the service for them. If you’re not getting feedback from residents, how do you know what the expectations are?

When we have a forum it’s really useful: they’re caring more, taking more interest in the block they’re living in. Make sure you’re delivering services correctly, value for money. Not treating everyone the same but making sure everyone has a reasonable experience.”

Key Quotes – current experience:

“I think there has been a change in the last year with the Corporate Director and managers which is good – of course things will take a long time to get better – cultures and behaviours are changing.

Communication is very poor in the Council.

Yes, Croydon has invited us to this to try to influence and build new strategies, but because our relationship with the Council has been very weak it’s led us to have minimal/lack of faith in them.

We have to be honest with ourselves and realise that residents are so used to not being heard for a long time they feel, “why bother in the first place? - we’ve heard it all before!”

I just want the word accountability to come into this new regime. For too long the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing, people in departments don’t talk to each other and that leaves residents frustrated. To make sure what happened in the past is in the past.

If you want to engage with us, you need to really listen to what we are saying”.

OUTCOME ONE: Leadership

Croydon **Leadership** drives a culture that requires and values resident influence and ensures resources are available.

Objective 1:

- Providing a variety of formal and informal ways for residents to engage with Croydon and to influence services which encourage a wide range of residents to engage in a way that works for them.

What actions will we take?

We will continue to:

1. Resource and support a resident engagement framework.

We will also:

2. Work with the Design Team from this project to create a plan to deliver the recommendations, developing formal influencing structures and creating a toolbox of informal influencing routes.
3. Enable the Design Team to hold Croydon to account by monitoring the implementation of the delivery plan.

What will success look like?

1. Structures & processes support both formal and informal resident engagement influence.
2. Formal engagement structures facilitate residents holding Croydon to account and allow for wider representation.
3. Evidence that diverse residents' views and experiences are influencing decisions, strategies, policies, and services

Objective 2:

- Supporting staff to be confident in understanding and implementing what is expected of them in relation to engaging with residents.

What actions will we take?

We will continue to:

4. Enable, empower, and require all managers and staff to be responsible and accountable for hearing and acting upon residents' voices.

What will success look like?

4. Staff understand their role in engaging with residents and are supported to do this effectively.

<p>We will also:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Build this into service, policy and procedure development and reviews and hold staff to account in 1-1s and annual personal development reviews. 6. Build this approach into Croydon's response to the Building Safety Act in developing resident engagement strategies for high-risk buildings (and generally when engaging with residents around Health and Safety) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Staff are held accountable to engage with residents as part of their role. 6. There is evidence of effective resident influence in the development of resident engagement strategies for high-risk buildings and effective wider engagement with ALL residents around Health and Safety.
<p>Objective 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders set and drive a culture that reflects the value of hearing residents' voices, listening to staff and residents and using what they learn to improve services. 	
<p style="text-align: center;">What actions will we take?</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">What will success look like?</p>
<p>We will continue to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Listen to involved residents and staff to continue to improve. <p>We will also:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8. Ensure that data is used effectively as a method of getting feedback from residents: using actionable insights as a way of hearing the "silent voices". 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Systems are in place in order to hear from the widest range of residents possible combining formal opportunities where residents hold Croydon to account. 8. Croydon is using data and actionable insights to hear from those residents who are not actively involved.
<p>Objective 4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a stable leadership team and wherever possible, permanent staff are in post (rather than interims) to bring continuity and consistency to service delivery. 	
<p style="text-align: center;">What actions will we take?</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">What will success look like?</p>

<p>We will continue to:</p> <p>9. Put in place a stable leadership team to support the development and embedding of a culture of hearing and acting upon residents' voices.</p> <p>We will also:</p> <p>10. Work to minimise the use of interim positions in the staffing structure, recruiting and retaining permanent staff where possible.</p>	<p>9. Stable leadership team and staffing structure in place enabling clear culture and consistent services to residents.</p>
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<h2 style="text-align: center;">OUTCOME TWO: Communication</h2>	
<p>Timely, respectful, two-way communication is in place with residents having evidence that their voice is heard and acted on.</p>	
<p>Objective 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residents know what their opportunities and options are for engaging with Croydon. 	
<p>What actions will we take?</p>	<p>What will success look like?</p>
<p>We will continue to:</p> <p>1. Promote engagement.</p> <p>We will also:</p> <p>2. Once developed, promote the new range of engagement and influencing opportunities so that residents know how they can get involved.</p>	<p>1. Residents know how they can influence decisions, strategies, policies, and services at Croydon.</p>
<p>Objective 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residents have evidence that their voice has been heard and know how they have influenced services. 	

What actions will we take?	What will success look like?
<p>We will continue to:</p> <p>3. Ensure that working structures and practices build in opportunities (<i>and requirements</i>) for staff to listen, act upon and feedback to residents.</p> <p>We will also:</p> <p>4. Structures and processes facilitate and require staff to feedback to residents as a matter of course.</p> <p>5. Ensure that residents have evidence (feedback) that their voice has been heard – including when Croydon is unable to provide what is being asked for.</p>	<p>2. Outcomes from resident engagement are clearly communicated to residents.</p> <p>3. Communication is clear and consistent to residents – receiving feedback on individual issues/concerns and transparent responses to wider consultations/engagement.</p>
<p>Objective 3: It is easy for residents to contact Croydon and residents know what to expect (<i>response times, service levels</i>).</p>	
What actions will we take?	What will success look like?
<p>We will continue to:</p> <p>6. Provide suitable ways for residents to contact Croydon and ensure that staff respond to contact from residents within agreed timescales.</p> <p>We will also:</p> <p>7. Clearly communicate service standards across the range of housing and maintenance services that Croydon provides so residents know what levels of service to expect and what they should do if the standards are not met.</p>	<p>4. Residents are able to contact Croydon easily and receive a response within agreed timescale.</p> <p>5. Residents know what service levels to expect and have ways of holding Croydon to account if those levels are not met</p>
<p>Objective 4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders set and model the behaviours and standards for high-quality, effective communication between residents and staff 	

What actions will we take?	What will success look like?
<p>We will continue to:</p> <p>8. Lead by example, setting a culture of transparent communication.</p> <p>We will also:</p> <p>9. Review and develop the ways in which Croydon communicates with residents. For example, resident newsletters and community noticeboards.</p>	<p>6. Staff understand how other teams work and link in with them to ensure seamless services for residents.</p> <p>7. Customer Communications is effective, providing the information that residents need in the formats required with residents communicated with in a timely and transparent manner.</p>

OUTCOME THREE: Trust and Accountability

Residents can **trust** staff, and staff are held **accountable** for listening and acting on residents' voices

Objective 1:

- Staff understand what is expected of them and are held accountable to deliver services to agreed standards.

What actions will we take?	What will success look like?
<p>We will continue to:</p> <p>1. Set SMART (<i>specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, timed</i>) targets for engaging with residents with staff are measured against and held accountable for these targets.</p> <p>We will also:</p> <p>2. Ensure this is embedded across teams, not only Resident Involvement</p>	<p>1. Staff are held accountable, across all relevant teams, for engaging effectively with residents.</p>

Objective 2:

Leaders develop a culture and working practices that embed trust and accountability between staff and also between staff and residents.

What actions will we take?

What will success look like?

We will continue to:

2. Build positive working practices that embed a culture of trust, accountability and respect between different teams and departments.

2. Residents' experiences of contacting or working with the council officers means that they can trust them to do what they say

OUTCOME FOUR: Structure and Process

Effective, transparent structures and processes are in place for delivering core services and engagement and influencing opportunities.

Objective 1:

- A robust and comprehensive resident engagement and influencing structure is in place at Croydon.

What actions will we take?

What will success look like?

We will continue to:

1. Support and improve resident engagement at Croydon.

We will also:

- Agree clear objectives for resident engagement and influencing work at Croydon.
2. Build the engagement structure to include formal and informal influencing opportunities that give a diverse

1. Leaders drive and enforce processes that require the resident voice to be heard.
2. Leaders ensure that appropriate and robust structures and processes are in place to ensure timely engagement and that resident feedback is acted upon.
3. Influencing structure enables representation across the diversity of Croydon and avoids any conflicts of interest.

<p>range of opportunities for residents to engage with, and influence, services.</p> <p>3. Ensure the influencing opportunities and processes for recruitment/retention are transparent and fair.</p>	
<p>Objective 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leaders ensure that resident engagement and influencing activities are approached strategically and are properly resourced. 	
<p>What actions will we take?</p>	<p>What will success look like?</p>
<p>We will continue to:</p> <p>4. Ensure that appropriate resources are available support the resident engagement framework.</p> <p>We will also:</p> <p>5. Revise these resources to ensure they are appropriate to develop and embed a new resident engagement framework – this to include training, equipment, and time, as well as money.</p> <p>6. Review ICT/digital opportunities to underpin effective resident influence and service delivery.</p> <p>7. Review the provision of incentives and rewards to encourage and support tenants and leaseholders to engage effectively with us and influence decisions and services.</p>	<p>4. All service delivery is underpinned by good processes and appropriate structures that include a requirement to hear the resident voice.</p> <p>5. Formal engagement structures facilitate residents holding Croydon to account.</p> <p>6. Resident influence (RI) is “baked in” to service reviews so that RI is effective right from the start, not part-way through.</p> <p>7. Tenants and Leaseholders are encouraged to engage with Croydon and feel their views and experiences are valued.</p>

Conclusion

This Strategy reflects Croydon's aspiration to move to an evidence-based, outcome-focused, resident influence framework that goes beyond compliance with regulation and invests in providing the homes and services our tenants and leaseholders deserve, putting them at the heart of Croydon's decision-making.

It underpins the approach to be taken and the plan to embed this across Croydon's housing services, with a commitment for all staff to understand their role in meeting the objectives of this strategy with engagement being everyone's business.

It will be delivered via a robust action/delivery plan that will be co-produced with staff, tenants, and leaseholders (from the Design and Discovery phases of this project with others brought in as appropriate) who will then hold Croydon to account for its' delivery, challenging where appropriate and monitoring/recognising the difference made as it is implemented.

Glossary

Resident Influence

When we use the term *Resident Influence*, we are talking about two things:

1. Proactive involvement of residents. For example, where a resident completes a survey, makes a complaint or engages in a formal group.
2. Influence that may not be conscious or proactive. This is where an organisation will **notice** the expectations, experiences or needs of residents through analysis of data, for example.

Outcomes from Resident Influence

In thinking about evidencing resident influence, it is sometimes the case that influence is deemed to have occurred at the output stage rather than having reviewed the outcomes.

For example, if a Resident Inspectors group develops a new void standard, then the test of whether it has delivered improvements – and, therefore, that residents have influenced services - is only known if new resident satisfaction with their home is measured.

The end-goal isn't in just having a new void standard, but that that standard makes a positive difference.