

HOUSING MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD – 22ND MARCH 2017

Report of the Head of Landlord Services

ITEM 8 CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT REVIEW

Purpose of Report

To review the draft Customer Engagement Strategy 2017- 2020.

Recommendation

To note and comment on the draft Customer Engagement Strategy 2017- 2020.

Background

The Housing Quality Network (HQN) has carried out a review of our approach to customer engagement.

The review highlighted the need for Landlord Services to:

- Increase the range of opportunities for engagement, encouraging customers to take part in ways that are convenient for them;
- Engage more with demographic groups currently unrepresented, especially younger people and those living outside Loughborough;
- Empower involved customers so that there is more customer led-activity;
- Measure outcomes and publicise the ways in which services have changed in response to customer feedback;
- Develop performance indicators for engagement with a reporting and monitoring structure.

The key outcome for the review was to produce an effective and workable Customer Engagement Strategy for the period 2017- 2020.

Draft Customer Engagement Strategy 2017-2020

A draft Customer Engagement Strategy 2017- 2020 is attached in the Appendix.

This document offers a model for future development that reflects good practice in the sector and meets regulatory requirements.

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DRAFT

Customer Engagement Strategy 2017 – 2020

Charnwood Borough Council: Landlord Services

March 2017

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1. Our vision

Landlord Services will engage with all of its tenant and leaseholder customers offering them a wide range of opportunities to work with us to scrutinise, improve and deliver excellent services.

2. Our priorities

Our customer engagement priorities are linked to the three key themes in Charnwood Borough Council's Corporate Plan for 2016-2020:

- Creating a Strong and Lasting Economy
- Every Resident Matters
- Delivering Excellent Services.

Landlord Services is working in partnership with all other Council services to realise all three of those themes, although our particular focus is on the second and third themes as they apply to the Council's tenants and leaseholders. These are reflected in the four priorities we have set for delivering our customer engagement strategy:

1. **To make it easier for our customers to engage with us in ways and on issues that interest them.** We will offer a range of options and both traditional and technology-based channels of communication.
2. **To embed customer engagement in all our services.** We will ensure that our officers and contractors understand this is a shared responsibility.
3. **To be more accountable for the services we deliver** by empowering our residents to challenge us and to get involved in setting priorities.
4. **To use customer feedback to improve our housing services and increase value for money.** We will systematically gather feedback from our customers and keep them informed about how their contributions have been used to drive continuous improvement.

3. Scope of our Strategy

Our customer engagement strategy will ensure we meet our regulatory requirements by providing a range of opportunities for customers to influence and be involved in:

- Decision-making about our housing related services, including setting of service standards and agreeing local offers for service delivery
- Developing housing related policies and strategic priorities
- Scrutinising our performance and recommending how performance might be improved.

Customer engagement is about how we:

- Ensure that our tenants and leaseholders are able to challenge and give their views on the housing services we deliver
- Inform and consult customers about changes to our housing services
- Get feedback from customers about our housing services.

This strategy is relevant to:

- Elected members
- Landlord Services officers and contractors
- Our tenants and leaseholders
- Housing applicants

4. Customer Engagement team achievements

The Customer Engagement team has been remodelled and now comes under the management of the Principal Officer for Customer Engagement and Older Persons Services within Landlord Services. There are two Customer Engagement Officers.

During 2016, the Customer Engagement team has achieved the following:

- Delivered a successful networking event in summer 2016
- Supported formal customer groups
- Continued to work closely with established, local residents' groups
- Appointed new chair for Housing Management Advisory Board (HMAB)
- Gained a number of new members for Charnwood Housing Residents' Forum (CHRF)
- Held the annual garden competition
- Completed the annual Tenant Bid process

5. What needs to work better?

A review carried out by external specialist consultants in early 2017 confirmed that whilst our approach to date has delivered continued engagement with some success, we and our customers recognise that some aspects have worked better than others.

Some key areas for improvement identified by the service review are:

- Increasing the range of opportunities for engagement, encouraging customers to take part in ways that are convenient for them. This will include using email, the website, text messaging and social media. We need to work to find ways to involve under-represented sections of our communities, particularly younger people and those living in villages.
- Empowering involved customers, supporting them to challenge us and hold us to account. This must include providing customers with the information they need to help us improve our services and deliver increased value for money.
- Focusing on the outcomes from engaging with our customers and publicise the ways in which services have changed in response to customer feedback.

This strategy will ensure that our structures support fuller engagement, enabling our customers to help us achieve the level of service they expect from us. We have set out a series of priorities to guide us.

6. Delivering on our priorities

The following priorities have been developed as a result of a review of our customer engagement carried out in 2017. They will be revisited and updated as necessary during the life of this strategy.

Priority one: To make it easier for our customers to engage with us in ways and on issues that interest them

We will:

- Develop a menu of opportunities which sets out a range of ways for customers to get involved and explain the time commitment and expected outcome of each one
- Develop ways for customers to get involved for short periods rather than having to make a long-term commitment. These might include 'task and finish' groups to investigate particular topics or consultation groups
- Make more use of informal engagement activities in which officers go out to where our customers live, estate action days, for example
- Provide ways for customers to ask questions, give us feedback and access information using their phones, tablets or computers. That will include developing our website and we will explore with our customers how they would like to use digital routes such as SMS text messaging, Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp and/or other applications
- Ensure that our customers know about the range of ways they can engage with us and encourage them to do so.

Priority two: To be more accountable for the services we deliver

We will:

- Consult our customers on the kind of information they want from us, how often and how they would like it presented. We will continue to involve customers in designing the content and format of the information we provide
- Empower customers to hold us to account by providing appropriate information, training, support and feedback
- Develop and support a resident-led scrutiny process that will challenge our housing services and make recommendations for improvement
- Report regularly to our customers on the number of housing complaints received, the nature of the complaints, any emerging trends and what we have learned
- Promote the outcomes from customer engagement to Councillors, customers and Council officers, emphasising the difference it has made.

Priority three: To use customer feedback to improve our housing services and increase value for money

We will:

- Systematically gather feedback from our customers, using it to understand service weaknesses and identify good practice
- Develop a range of ways to gather feedback, including surveys, mystery shopping and formal and informal consultations
- Ensure that we know the costs and outcomes of engagement activity in order to make sure that what we are doing is providing our customers with value for money.

Priority four: To embed customer engagement in all our services

We will:

- Introduce core objectives and targets for customer engagement through personal development plans (or the equivalent) for all Landlord Services officers
- Facilitate cross-team working within Landlord Services so that the Customer Engagement officers are not working in isolation from the delivery of other services
- Provide briefing sessions to Councillors, to officers in all Council services and to our contractors on the importance of engaging with the Council's tenants and leaseholders as part of delivering the Council's Corporate Plan. Agree with them how we will work together to meet our shared responsibility and deliver this strategy.

7. Delivering the strategy

We will deliver this strategy through implementing a new customer engagement model and will measure and report on our performance. An action plan will ensure that implementation progresses on schedule.

7.1. Customer engagement model

A new customer engagement model is proposed to support delivery of this strategy. It is illustrated in the diagram on page 7.

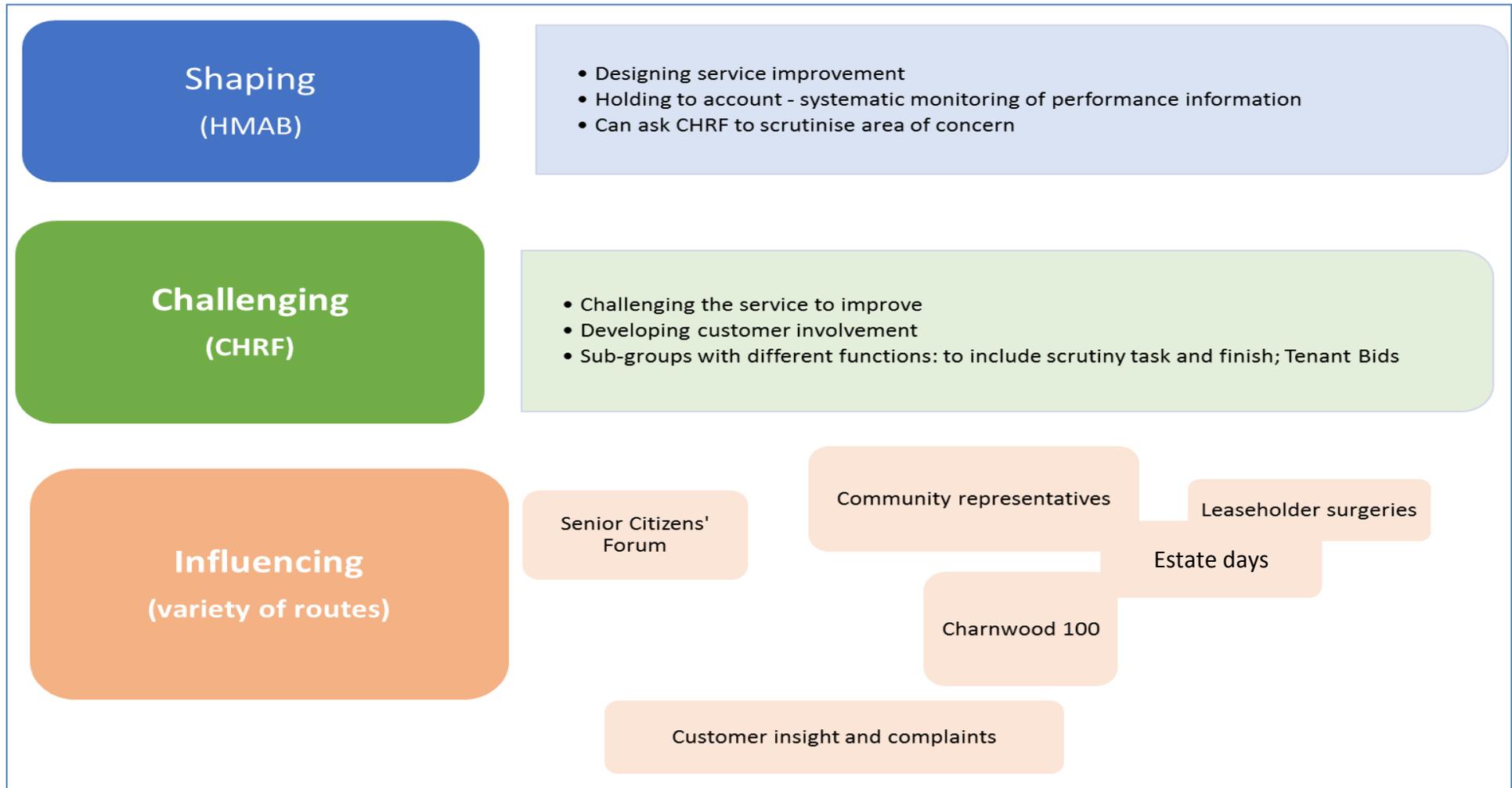
7.2. Key performance indicators

We will report on our performance against a set of indicators agreed with our customers. Regular reports will be made to HMAB and CHRF and to all customers in our annual report.

The current indicators are:

- The number of tenants and the number of leaseholders who are actively and regularly engaged with us
- The number of engaged customers who are members of minority and hard to reach groups
- The number of informal contacts made with customers in which some form of feedback is gathered
- The number of changes made as a result of customer engagement
- Any savings identified as a result of customer engagement.

Diagram to show our customer engagement model



Appendix one: Action plan

This plan will need to be revisited and amended as necessary following a period of consultation and then kept under review as implementation proceeds. Regular reports will be made to HMAB and CHRF and to all customers in our annual report.

1. To make it easier for our customers to engage with us in ways and on issues that interest them		
Action	By when	By whom
Undertake a consultation exercise on this strategy. Consult widely with involved and uninvolved customers using their feedback to finalise the engagement structure and strategy		
Complete a publicity/communication campaign to launch the agreed structure and strategy and encourage customers to volunteer		
<p>Develop and promote a broad menu of engagement activities showing the associated time commitments.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ This will include making more use of quantitative methods such as surveys and customer polling/questionnaires via telephone, text, website, social media and post ▪ Develop and widen the ways we approach consultation, including face to face methods such as housing officer-led focus groups on estates and online 		
Review the Council website pages for Council tenants and leaseholders to accommodate new ways of providing information and encouraging engagement		
Widen and develop the social media and technology options for online and digital engagement including; text and online surveys, online focus group communities, e-bulletins and online estate noticeboards, etc		

1. To make it easier for our customers to engage with us in ways and on issues that interest them		
Action	By when	By whom
Develop a capacity building and training programme for involved residents to ensure that they understand the business and are confident to carry out their roles effectively		
Working across all Landlord Services teams, encourage/target under-represented groups to become involved and ensure that engaged customers involved are more representative of our communities		
Set up and keep up to date a comprehensive database of involved residents which can be used for engagement and communication purposes		
Consider developing an incentive system to support participation in surveys or as part of on-line community		
2. To be more accountable for the services we deliver by empowering our residents to challenge us		
Action	By when	By whom
Implement an agreed new customer engagement structure		
Develop and formalise the scrutiny role/arrangements to be delivered through the HMAB and CHRF		
Ensure that all staff understand the role of scrutiny and provide access to information as required		
Provide information on our services and performance in ways and formats agreed with our customers		

3. To use customer feedback to improve our housing services and increase value for money		
Action	By when	By whom
Develop the systematic collection of feedback from customers and keep them informed about how their contributions have been used to drive continuous improvement		
Introduce a systematic approach to impact assessment of engagement activity, producing a report annually to support service improvement and value for money		
Undertake an analysis of demographic data for Council tenants and leaseholders and use this to target engagement with currently under-represented groups		
4. To embed customer engagement in all our services		
Action	By when	By whom
Set customer engagement core objectives and targets for all Landlord Services officers in relation to their service area		
Ensure that all opportunities for interaction with customers are used to invite feedback and encourage engagement (eg, sign up/new tenant visit) and the response is recorded		
Promote the strategy and engagement model within Landlord Services and across the Council, including presentations/briefings to other departments		