

**Tower  
Hamlets  
Homes**

# **Resident Engagement**

## **Listen and Learn**



Resident-led Scrutiny  
**The Resident Engagement Service**  
Final Summary Report, August 2013

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# Foreword

The Residents' Panel is the committee responsible for resident-led scrutiny at Tower Hamlets Homes. In October 2012, the Residents' Panel decided to carry out an in-depth scrutiny review of the Resident Engagement Service. The key reasons for this decision are given in the introduction.

A Resident Engagement Scrutiny Team was formed to carry out the investigation. The work commenced in November 2012 and was completed in August 2013. The resident members of the Resident Engagement Scrutiny Team were Zoinul Abidin, Ian Campbell, Ayesha Rahman [from March 2013], Orfhlaith Ni Mhordha [from March 2013], and I, Pam Haluwa, as Chair.

During the scrutiny process, Tower Hamlets Homes has been open and made best efforts to meet our extensive requests for information and support. On behalf of the Resident Scrutiny Team I would like to thank the following for their tremendous support during the process: Fokrul Hoque, Strategic Engagement Manager; Kamal Hanif, Resident Scrutiny Co-ordinator; and Irene Bannon, our independent advisor from Campbell Tickell, who facilitated the scrutiny review and prepared this report.

We would also like to extend our thanks to all the residents who attended the focus groups and staff members who came to our interviews. We would also like to thank the staff of Brent Housing Partnership who provided an inspirational insight into best practice during our visit with them.

Our investigations confirmed that the Resident Engagement Service has delivered many fine achievements. However, its resources are scattered, not managed in a focused way, and it is not a resident-led service. If our recommendations are implemented we are confident that these weaknesses will be remedied and that this service will go from strength to strength. We commend this report, and its findings, to the Board of Tower Hamlets Homes and urge them to support the implementation of our recommendations.



**Pam Haluwa**  
Chair Residents' Engagement  
Scrutiny Team

# Introduction

Tower Hamlets Homes (THH) is an Arm's Length Management Organisation (ALMO) set up in 2008 as a not-for-profit company, whose sole purpose is to deliver high quality housing services for residents living in 22,000 London Borough of Tower Hamlets (LBTH) homes.

The Residents' Panel is the body charged with the responsibility of scrutinising the service of Tower Hamlets Homes. In October 2012, the Residents' Panel decided to carry out an in-depth scrutiny review of the Resident Engagement Service.

## **The reasons for scrutinising the Resident Engagement Service**

The key reasons driving the decision to scrutinise the Resident Engagement Service were as follows:

- The service was re-organised in April 2011. Since then it had not been reviewed to reflect the changes to the regulatory framework. The residents wished to assess if the service was successfully meeting its regulatory role.
- There were perceived difficulties in co-ordinating activities across THH with no real accountability. Residents wished to explore how this could be addressed.
- Despite a great deal of effort and resources, the numbers of residents engaged in the participation structures were not increasing.

The key areas for scrutiny were:

- The structures and processes related to Resident Engagement;
- Resident Engagement policies and procedures;
- Residents' views of the service;
- Assessing the impact of the service;
- Partnership working with other agencies; and
- Whether, when compared with others, the service was delivering value for money.

This summary report sets out the findings of the scrutiny team with recommendations on how the service can be improved.

## **How the scrutiny was undertaken**

The scrutiny team decided to take a methodical approach to their work. The principle followed was to look for evidence at all times and crosscheck the evidence, where possible, before reaching any conclusions and recommendations.

The process started with a review of how the service operated followed by a review of current policies and procedures. Various activities were then undertaken to establish whether the current policies and procedures were being put into practice and whether they were effective. These activities included: scrutinising data, interviewing staff and finding out the views of residents.

We looked for examples of external best practice to see if they had anything to offer Tower Hamlets Homes and went on a best practice visit to Brent Housing Partnership.

At all times evidence was sought to establish if value for money was being achieved.

## Schedule of Events

Date	Event
20 November 2012	Resident Engagement Scrutiny Team meeting
5 December 2012	Resident Engagement Scrutiny Team meeting
28 January 2013	Service Improvement Groups Focus Group meeting
5 February 2013	Resident Engagement Scrutiny Team meeting
19 February 2013	Resident Associations Focus Group meeting
5 March 2013	Resident Engagement Scrutiny Team meeting
2 April 2013	Resident Engagement Scrutiny Team meeting
4 April 2013	Staff Interviews
18 April 2013	Community Group interviews
9 May 2013	Best practice visit to Brent Housing Partnership
13 May 2013	Resident Engagement Scrutiny Team meeting
24 May 2013	Staff Interviews
4 June 2013	Staff Interviews
4 June 2013	Leaseholders Focus Group
4 June 2013	Resident Engagement Scrutiny Team meeting
9 July 2013	Resident Engagement Scrutiny Team meeting
21 August 2013	Consultation with residents on draft final report

It is estimated that between preparing for and attending events each resident member of the Residents' Scrutiny Team gave at least 9 full days of their time.



# What is Successful Resident Engagement?

Resident Engagement is a term that could mean many different things to different people. Therefore, at the start of the scrutiny process, we developed a common understanding as to what we felt resident engagement was about.

Resident Engagement was a complex area but the scrutiny team agreed that successful engagement should be able to deliver the following and that it is these attributes that the scrutiny team would be looking for in its work.

Success is:

- All sections of the community are engaged.
- Engagement opportunities available to those in or out of employment, and to all age groups including young people.
- That outcomes are measured and publicised to encourage further participation.
- Everyone and anyone knowing how to access engagement and being able to have input at anytime.
- Residents engage with THH to improve services rather than complain about services.
- Panel decision to scrutinise departments and services is influenced by other panels/groups.
- Providing opportunities for residents to participate in a variety of ways, from informal to formal, in structures and ways that have been agreed with them.
- Having a clear audit path showing how residents' views have been listened to, acted on, and have affected service delivery.
- The satisfaction rating of involved residents is at least 80%.
- That THH has clear evidence to show that it is meeting its regulatory requirements.

## Is THH meeting their regulatory requirement?

The THH Residents' Engagement Agreement 2012 sets out the opportunities for engagement. This comprehensive offer meets the regulatory requirements.

The scrutiny team went on to review how the Agreement was implemented. We found some areas were working really well, such as the Residents' Scrutiny Panel, commitment to accessibility, some of the Service Improvement Groups, Resident Mystery Shoppers, commitment to meeting diversity obligations and support to Residents' Associations. However, there were areas where THH were not delivering and where improvements were needed. Examples include the estate inspection regime, residents checking the quality of homes before letting, involving residents in Business Planning, some Service Improvement Groups and the Leaseholder Forum. Comprehensive recommendations on how the service needs to improve are covered at the end of this report.

# Scrutinising the Structures

## The Staffing Structure

The current structure is:



In addition to the above, other staff members having a role in resident consultation/ involvement were placed throughout the organisation as follows:

- 4 Neighbourhood Engagement Officers [NEOs] placed, and managed, in the neighbourhood teams;
- 4 Leasehold Advice and Engagement Officers managed within the Leasehold Team; and
- 4 Resident Liaison Officers dedicated to, and managed by the Decent Homes Team.

## Key findings

In the staffing structures, there are no operational links between key areas of resident engagement activity.

There is no clear work plan for Neighbourhood Engagement Officers – their work is very reactive.

Neighbourhood Engagement Officers may spend up to 50% of their time on Housing Management matters.

Resident Engagement work priorities are driven by operational priorities and are not agreed by residents' representative bodies.

Resident Engagement activities are not clearly linked to THH business planning activities.

## The Resident Involvement Structure

The current structure for resident involvement is as shown on the next page.

## Key Findings

The current structure is complex and very labour intensive both for participating residents and for supporting staff.

The current structure allows for duplication where the same matter may be discussed in more than one forum.

Both leaseholders and tenants have expressed their frustration with the current structure and have called for improvements to be made.

It is recognised that in a new structure different roles and functions will need to be performed. Any new structure must recognise, and equally value, all those residents who participate, not placing one method of involvement above another.

# How do I get involved in...



## Rating the service THH provides



## Meeting the THH team



# Scrutinising the policies and procedures

The key documents considered by the scrutiny team were the:

- Resident Engagement Agreement 2012
- Community Regeneration Strategy/Plan 2011-2014.

It was agreed that the Resident Engagement Agreement was a very useful document setting out clearly all the opportunities available for residents to take part in informal and formal participation activities and thereby have an influence over service delivery. It was noted that this document was due to be updated.

The Community Regeneration Strategy/Plan Support was very comprehensive and linked directly back to the THH Business Plan where Community Development was one of the seven Business Plan operational priorities for 2012/13.

There was no corresponding document covering tenant participation activities.

There was no Resident Engagement Strategy document providing an overview of the service, its breadth of provision covering both community development and resident participation, its vision, its service standards/commitments etc. It was noted that THH intends to draw up this document, and an operational toolkit, in the near future.

The key drivers that determine the service priorities are the results of surveys, equalities impact assessments and complying with the regulatory framework.

It is noted that residents do not drive the priorities.

## Key findings

Residents do not play a strategic role in determining the operational priorities in the Business Planning process. Therefore, resident views are not at the heart of driving the business forward.

There is no 'golden thread' linking THH Business Plans through to the operational side of the resident participation activities.

There are no clear strategies, which create operational links between community development and resident participation activities.

There were no policy or procedure guidelines covering resident consultation.

# The views of the Service Improvement Groups [SIGs] and Residents' Panel Members

A focus group was held, with resident members of the above groups. 60 residents were invited to attend and 8 turned up. We felt that this low turnout was significant in itself.

## Key findings

### Resident Engagement in general

Meetings do not always have clarity of purpose. Agendas are often overloaded. Residents attending these meetings may also lack clarity of purpose. The meetings become confused as residents make points that are not relevant. Often meetings are not chaired in such a way as to keep them focused and matters disintegrate into a frustrating waste of time.

Action points are not followed up; they may stay on a list for a long time and are then closed for no apparent reason. As a consequence, THH loses potential active residents as they see this as a waste of their time.

Conflict between leaseholders and tenants can happen because of poor consultation around the impact on service charges when the costs of improvement are discussed. The wider benefit to the community is often lost.

It is difficult to understand the difference between strategic engagement and resident engagement. It is as if resident engagement is on the 'back foot' and not given enough resources.

## Key findings

### Relationship between the SIGs and the Residents' Panel

There is currently no relationship between these committees.

There is no clarity on the different roles and powers of each committee.

It was acknowledged that SIGs and the Residents' Panel do extremely valuable work. Each is playing a potentially complementary role that needs to be developed.

There could be duplication of effort with the 'Special Interest Groups', SIGs and the Residents' Panel.

Officers have not followed up the residents' request to refer matters between the SIGs and the Residents' Panel.

The leaseholder committees have broken down.

# Scrutiny of the Service Improvement Groups

## Key findings

SIG information on the website is not kept up-to-date; in some cases it is poorly edited, for example there is a lack of clarity and simple language and no clear case is made on why residents should join the SIGs.

Most SIGs fail to list past or future meeting dates thereby confusing existing members and putting off new-joiners.

There is confusion over which department is responsible for updating the SIG page, and what, if any, the guidelines are from the Residents' Engagement Team.

There is no way for residents to contact the resident Chair, or contribute opinion without attending meetings.

Attendees lack clear information on future dates and meeting reminders.

There is no agreed system for monitoring attendance and replacing vacant positions.

There is a lack of action to improve the diversity of members and the areas that they come from.

The formality of some SIG meetings may deter residents who are not used to such events.

Many of the meetings are 'not relevant' to day-to-day resident issues.

SIG members have complained about meetings 'going round in circles' and 'reinventing the wheel'.

There is no clear record of achievements to inspire more people to attend.

Important topics can be rushed in some SIGs.

Poor chairing has led to some residents 'complaining at length' but not being asked to 'suggest ways to improve'.

Agendas are often presented to SIGs without the resident Chair having input and signing off.



## The views of Residents' Associations

36 Resident organisations were invited to attend a focus group to give their views on resident involvement. Representatives from 11 organisations attended.

### Key Findings

Active Residents' Associations undertake an enormous amount of unpaid work, which brings many benefits to the communities they serve.

Support provided by the Resident Engagement Service is valued, particularly the help given by the Resident Engagement Officers, the grant regime and the support for local community projects.

Residents' Associations feel marginalised and not at the heart of THH's service provision.

There is no comprehensive set of support materials available for Residents' Associations.

The Wyn Garrett Resource Centre is an under-used, but very valued, asset. With the welfare reform changes, where residents will soon have to make their claims online, the centre could provide a lifeline to local residents.

## Monitoring Residents' Associations

We carried out a scrutiny investigation into THH's monitoring arrangements for Tenants' and Residents' Associations.

### Key Findings

The Tenants' and Residents' Association Information Pack 2012 does not set out the monitoring arrangements THH will undertake to ensure that recognised associations are meeting the eligibility criteria.

THH has not regularly carried out annual audits of all recognised associations.

A large number of 'recognised' associations do not meet the recognition criteria.

A large number of associations not meeting the 'recognition criteria' yet have access to, or run, TA halls and venues.

Only 'recognised' associations have received grant funding.



Active Residents give the Resident Scrutiny Team their views

# Scrutiny of Public Information on Resident Engagement

## Key Findings

There is no up-to-date published booklet on opportunities for resident involvement at THH.

There is comprehensive information on opportunities for resident involvement on the 'Get Involved' section of the website but the quality of this section of the website is very variable.

The information on the Service Improve Groups was out of date and inadequate.



# Value for Money Review

## Key Findings

There is evidence that the resources devoted to supporting residents' associations is providing VFM when set against the outputs gained.

The many Community Development projects enhance and enrich the lives of residents but more could be done to create a pathway for residents engaged in community activities to also join in with resident involvement opportunities.

The quality of the department's work has been recognised externally and has won national awards. This year THH's 'Multifaith Project' won the TPAS 2013 Southern Regional Excellence in the Community Award, and the 'We Speak Your Language' project won the Excellence in Equality & Diversity Award. The 'We Speak Your Language' project went on to win the TPAS National award. THH were also highly commended finalists in the Excellence in Annual Reports Award.

Awards have been achieved for the youth project 'Bling my Hood'.

Positive achievements have been made in engagement projects with the Somali Community.

The combined staffing costs for Resident Engagement, which is the major budget spend, is very high when compared with other ALMOs.

The Strategic Engagement Team Budget does not include staff costs for the four Neighbourhood Engagement Officers.

Compared with other ALMOs the THH's Residents' Engagement Team has the highest number of staff per homes served.

## Value for Money Review

...continued

Housemark benchmarking data shows THH ranked 5 out of 7 for residents' satisfaction in this area.

Internal records of resident satisfaction in this area show that there has been an improvement over the last 2 years with 51% of residents now feeling that their views are taken into account and 72% satisfied that they are kept informed.

The weekly cost per household for resident involvement and community development is 47p.

Involved residents have reported their satisfaction with a number of aspects of this service but also call for improvements.

There was poor recording of the 'impact' of resident engagement work

## Best Practice Visit Findings

### Key Findings

BHP provide over 18 different opportunities for residents to become involved from membership on the Board and complaints panels, to taking part in estate inspections, mystery shopping, residents' associations and disability forums. In many ways, the involvement options are very similar to that provided by THH.

To reach out to residents who are not involved, BHP holds open forums four times a year to which all residents are invited. These 'Talkback' sessions start with a surgery where key officers are available to deal with residents' problems. The second part of the event is devoted to a topic of interest such as the effects of welfare reform. One of the keys to the success of the Talkback sessions is the arrangement to pay for the distribution of the invitation leaflets to every resident's home. A second success point is that a written record is made of all the questions raised at the surgeries. The Heads of Service are made accountable to action all questions raised and provide the Chief Executive with a written account of actions taken against each query before the next Talkback meeting.



The team paid a best practice visit to Brent Housing Partnership [BHP]

BHP has a registration and support framework for residents' associations. New associations receive a setup grant of £200 and, if they can demonstrate on an annual basis that they comply with registration rules, receive a yearly support grant of £250. Before the introduction of this framework there were 40 associations operating on differing bases. Now there are 23 registered associations meeting minimum democratic standards.

For residents who attend meetings set up by BHP a flat payment of £20 per meeting is made to cover expenses. This payment does not count as income for benefit purposes. The payment is made directly into resident's bank or rent account. Residents fill out a simple claim form. Officers report that this is a cost effective way to meet residents' expenses with low administration costs.

BHP has a policy on the arrangements for managing community halls. The policy ensures that the halls are run for the benefit of the community and are not used to generate personal profit and gain. The policy works well; one person was stopped from using a hall for personal gain and was finally removed using court action. The Council, and local councillors, do not interfere with this process.

Resident Inspectors receive training from the Chartered Institute of Housing and receive a qualification equal that NVQ level 2.

BHP recognises that residents should be supported to progress from one level of involvement through to the next so that residents who start their involvement by joining in estate walkabouts would be encouraged and supported to join their residents association or a borough-wide forum, and as their experience grows they are encouraged to join scrutiny panels and finally go onto the Board.

The resident engagement service is run by 2 Resident Engagement Officers who are managed by the Estate Service and Resident Involvement manager. This manager is also responsible for estate services, health and safety, travellers, and the borough's two TMO's. The achievements made by the two staff, with a shared manager, for BHP's 13,000 residents is remarkable when set against THH's 8 officers providing residents' engagement service to 22,000 residents.

BHP use IT services to run a 'paperless' service. One of their priorities for the future is to support digital inclusion for residents. They make active use of digital media to communicate with their residents for example sending text messages to invite residents to meetings. These initiatives are proving to be very effective and provide value for money.

BHP is currently seeking TPAS accreditation for their resident involvement service. They report that it has helped them to review, and improve, services in a methodical way and is proving to be well worthwhile.

BHP has access to a GIS system, with an Experian database, which helps them accurately target their services.

# Staff Interviews

## Non-Strategic Engagement Team members

11 staff were interviewed including Neighbourhood Team Leaders, Area Managers, Neighbourhood Engagement Officers [NEO], Estate Officers and staff from the Leasehold team.

## Key Findings

At the neighbourhood level, resident engagement is used as an operational tool to deliver housing management objectives.

Neighbourhood Engagement Officers (NEOs) are seen as the neighbourhood team's experts in resident engagement activities.

NEOs, and others operating at the neighbourhood level, have received no resident engagement training.

Managers and officers, apart from NEOs, had no understanding of the wider role that resident engagement should perform.

At a neighbourhood level, resident engagement is a reactive service dealing with housing management problems. We could find very little evidence of proactive resident engagement activities.

The managers of NEOs have little or no experience of resident engagement and so are not in a position to provide expert guidance, or evaluation, of work outcomes to NEOs.

Until this scrutiny process started there was no framework in place for regular liaison meetings between the Strategic Engagement Team and Neighbourhood Team members. These meetings are about to take place.

Staff, particularly NEOs, often have a need to work at evenings and weekend in order to effectively engage with residents. The current flexitime arrangements are not suitable resulting in some staff not having an opportunity to engage with residents, or having to work many unpaid hours.

The NEOs are not being used to link residents into strategic engagement work such as policy reviews and business planning.

Depending on neighbourhood area management, highly paid staff members may have to spend many hours delivering leaflets and newsletters.

NEOs experience conflict in their work as they have to respond to competing priorities – from Housing Management, local involvement projects and demands from the Strategic Engagement Team. Housing management report that NEOs often have to 'drop everything' when requests from the Strategic Engagement Team comes in, reducing their effectiveness on local projects.

There is no framework to monitor and evaluate the success of local engagement projects.

Housing managers and officers direct residents to SIGs if they wish to get involved in a particular service, but THH staff have little experience or understanding of the workings of SIGs themselves.

Some officers describe some engagement groups, e.g. some SIGs and Special Interest Groups, as sometimes being dominated by small cliques. Some staff members reported that vocal, but unrepresentative, cliques were able to have undue influence on decision making that was not in the interest of THH or the wider resident population.

NEOs have no designated budget.

At the neighbourhood level there is no clarity on the role of the Strategic Engagement Team. There is a perception that it is over resourced and that the role of some officers is to pass work on to others.

Unnecessary duplication is taking place in leaseholder participation.

## Strategic Engagement Team

The Scrutiny Team interviewed the Strategic Engagement Officers (one dealing with projects for hard-to-reach groups, the other supporting the resident involvement infrastructure), the Strategic Engagement Manager and the Resident Scrutiny Co-ordinator.

### Key finding

In respect of project work there is no clarity on how decisions are made to initiate and prioritise new areas of work.

The current structure does not aid good communication between staff delivering resident involvement work across the organisation.

Staff recognised the need to develop a coherent management framework.

It was reported that it is difficult to follow through on some areas of work because the dynamics of the team have been very variable.

There were some very good examples of project work. However, the team failed to capitalise on the potential of the projects as there were no clear procedures to evaluate and record the outcomes achieved or undertake effective follow up.

There is no clear separation between resident engagement and community development either in work streams or in budget provision.

The role of the Resident Scrutiny Co-ordinator has evolved to cover supporting the Strategic Engagement Officers and running key projects. Currently 30% of the officer's time is spent on scrutiny work.



A view of Tower Hamlets

## Views of Community Groups

The Scrutiny Team interviewed representatives from the Council of Mosques and the Tower Hamlets Tenants' and Residents' Federation. Account 3, a provider of advice services to residents of Tower Hamlets, was also invited to attend, but failed to do so.

### Key Findings

Outreach working through local community groups is a good method to engage with hard-to-reach groups

We could find no evidence of plans to continue/ follow up on the benefits gained on one-off projects. As one community representative put it, "They are naive as they expect successful projects to continue on a 'voluntary' basis".

THH is regarded as a 'positive' partner to work with.

The Tower Hamlets Tenants' and Residents' Federation provides a valuable source of independent advice and support to residents.

The current structure for resident engagement is confusing to community groups.

## Scrutiny of Leaseholder Involvement

The scrutiny team undertook a focus group with Leaseholders.

### Key finding

The Leaseholders have no faith in any of the current arrangements for leaseholder involvement.

Current leaseholder meetings are taken up with individual problems that never get resolved.

Communication channels, between leaseholders and their relevant officers, are not working.

Leaseholders are not encouraged to take part in existing involvement activities that are open to them such as Service Improvement Groups.

There are no clear channels to escalate problems when officers continue to fail to resolve issues that leaseholders have raised.

# Recommendations

- **Staffing**
- **Resident Involvement structure**
- **Resident Association Support**
- **Policies and Procedures**
- **Working with Community Groups**
- **Infrastructure**
- **Publicity**
- **Indicative Functional Service Chart**
- **Responsibility table for the roles in the proposed new Residents' Involvement structure**
- **Proposed New Resident Involvement Structure Chart**

# Recommendations

After each scrutinising activity, recommendations were made. This resulted in over 100 recommendations of which a large number overlapped or were repeated. Here we rationalised all of our recommendations into a comprehensive list. We will be asking THH for a formal response to this report which will be published.

The Residents' Scrutiny Panel will request THH to provide a plan showing how they will implement the recommendations. Thereafter, the Residents' Scrutiny Panel will be monitoring the delivery of this plan.

## Staffing

1. Bring the Neighbourhood Engagement Officers into the Strategic Engagement Team for line management purposes. They could remain located in the neighbourhoods.
2. The newly configured team will be responsible for taking the lead in resident engagement, save for the specialist areas of Decent Homes and Leaseholders, therefore the name should be changed to reflect this wider role. It is suggested that it be called the Resident Engagement Team. The manager's job title should be amended to reflect this change.
3. The role of the Residents' Scrutiny Co-ordinator has evolved to cover supporting the Strategic Engagement Officers and running key projects. Therefore THH should take the reconfiguration of this team as an opportunity to review all the team's job descriptions so that they reflect current operational needs.
4. Currently the Strategic Engagement Manager receives support and line management from the Chief Executive. This is a very unusual arrangement. It is considered that, given the breath of responsibility carried by the Chief Executive, he may not be best placed to dedicate sufficient time to support the Strategic Engagement Manager. Therefore, it is recommended that a Head of Service takes on this role.
5. Bring all the costs of supporting Resident Engagement (including the costs of the

Neighbourhood Engagement Officers but excluding leaseholder involvement) into one budget. Divide this budget into Community Regeneration and Resident Participation streams.

6. Review the staffing structure of the newly configured department and look for ways to bring the staffing budget costs closer to the average costs for other ALMOs for this service.
7. We include an indicative diagram, based on the functions of the new team on page 24. We recognise that any reorganisation of the team will be subject to staff consultation, Human Resources considerations, the current neighbourhood review and any future organisation-wide restructures.

## Resident Involvement structure

8. Streamline the leaseholder and resident engagement structures to remove duplication and make them fit for purpose. Leaseholders should have one regular meeting for strategic matters and other separate arrangements for resolving individual problems, for example by holding regular surgeries with relevant officers. The role of the Service Improvement Groups should be included in this review.
9. Create a new forum where Tenants' Associations and the Residents' Panel members can meet on a regular basis to share information, problem solve and support one another. The Chief Executive and lead Council member for housing should be invited to this forum from time to time to address the forum members' key concerns.
10. The new structure should have 4 main sections as follows: Governance and Co-Regulation, Local Engagement, Customer Insight and Other Engagement. The recommended structure is set on page 25. All residents participating should be valued equally for their contributions.
11. The Strategic Engagement Manager to prioritise developing terms of reference for each part of the new structure, in consultation with residents, by February 2014, in line with the roles and responsibility table set out on page 24.
12. All parts of the resident engagement structure to be facilitated by the Strategic Engagement Team.

## **Resident Association Support**

13. Provide a protocol clarifying the matters that require separate leaseholder consultation arrangements, for example service charges. All other leaseholder consultation matters, for example the provision of estate services, should be provided by an all-tenures consultation arrangement.
14. The Leasehold Services Manager must have discussion with leaseholders on how communication channels can be improved.
15. Set up a comprehensive framework for registering, monitoring and supporting resident associations ensuring minimum democratic standards are maintained.
16. Include the monitoring arrangements that THH will undertake, to ensure that recognised associations are meeting the eligibility criteria, in the Tenants' and Residents' Association Information Pack 2012 and send this pack to all associations. The monitoring arrangements to include that a THH officer should attend recognised associations' AGMs.
17. Assist associations who do not meet the recognition criteria to do so. If, after receiving this assistance, the association continues to fail to demonstrate that it is meeting the criteria, then it must have their 'recognition status' withdrawn, unless exceptional circumstances exist.
18. THH investigate the feasibility of making a flat payment of £10, per landlord- instigated meeting attended, to cover all resident's expenses save for that of childcare. The payment must be claimed by residents and then paid directly into their bank/rent account. This payment is not intended for one-off consultation events but regular meetings such as the Residents' Panel and Service Improvement Groups.
19. Tower Hamlets Council and THH to agree jointly a policy on how community halls should be run and monitored to ensure that they are not used for personal gain and profit. The policy should cover what support is available to community groups running their own halls.
20. Agree a procedure, with Tower Hamlets Council, to remove the control of Tenants' Association halls and venues from unrecognised associations.
21. In consultation with Residents' Associations, develop a comprehensive set of support materials for Residents' Associations. When ready these materials to be available on the website.
22. THH offer to include tenant halls/premises in their own public liability insurance and pay for Residents' Associations CRB checks.

## **Policies and Procedures**

23. The Strategic Engagement Manager should prioritise developing a strategic resident engagement plan for 2013-16. The plan should set out the strategic purpose of the team and its vision/aims. It should map out the key priorities for the service over the next 3 years, setting out the measurable objectives to be delivered and the key milestones to be reached on the way. Staff and resident representatives must be consulted as part of the plan's development. This plan should then be reviewed and refreshed on an annual basis.
24. Update, and publicise, the Resident Engagement Agreement.
25. Develop strategies, which create operational links between community development and resident participation activities.
26. Develop policy and procedure guidelines covering how meetings with residents are to be planned and conducted. The guidelines to include residents receiving papers for meetings at least one week in advance, with a clear agenda giving sufficient time for each item to have full consideration, ensuring that relevant officers are in attendance, that minutes and lists of actions arising at the meetings are drawn up and sent to all residents who attended the meetings and that there is a named senior officer made responsible for the delivery of the action points.

27. Review the content and format of the Resident Engagement Impact Statements and ensure that they measure real outcomes including the 'changes made', as a result of the work. Consider using other measures such as requests for management transfers, rates of ASB and neighbour disputes, to demonstrate the positive effects of resident engagement.
28. The Strategic Resident Engagement Manager to develop and use a 'toolkit' for running effective meetings and effective engagement projects.

### **Working with Community Groups**

29. Continue to run joint projects, with a variety of well-established community groups who meet objective criteria in respect of meeting the aims of the required project, to make contact with hard-to-reach groups.
30. When planning one-off projects, make provision for 'future proofing' the benefits generated by the project, for example by identifying core, or other, post project, funding opportunities.
31. Ask Community Groups to keep and display leaflets on opportunities for resident involvement at THH.
32. Hold discussions with Tower Hamlets Tenants' and Residents' Federation to explore opportunities to publicise their service to THH residents and use them as providers of resident training.
33. Develop procedures to evidence the benefits generated by projects at their conclusion.
34. To increase evidence of delivering VFM, create a procedure for staff to monitor and report back on the number of residents who:
  - a) are engaged in community projects,
  - b) go on to other things such as employment, and
  - c) become involved in other resident involvement activities.

### **Infrastructure**

35. Forge direct links between Resident Engagement activities and THH business planning activities.
36. As part of the induction process, all staff who have direct contact with residents should receive a presentation from the Strategic Engagement Team on what resident engagement is, how it is used at THH, and the support available to staff to help them successfully engage with residents in their role.
37. The Strategic Engagement Manager to develop a comprehensive project management framework, which will include clear monitoring and evaluation criteria.
38. The Strategic Engagement Manager to create a service-level agreement with the Neighbourhood Managers to deliver services into the neighbourhood.
39. The Strategic Engagement Manager to ensure clarity between resident engagement and community development work streams and provide separate budgets for each.
40. Ensure that the newly established framework for regular liaison meetings between the Strategic Engagement and Neighbourhood team members continues and that its effectiveness is reviewed in September 2013.
41. The Strategic Resident Engagement team set up a framework for a resident inspector service. The residents volunteering to be inspectors must be offered accredited training, for example from the Chartered Institute of Housing.
42. The Strategic Resident Engagement Team must undertake at least four new outreach events per year, using imaginative formats and avoiding formal meetings. For examples of good practice please refer to Brent Housing Partnership and Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation.
43. The Strategic Resident Engagement team set up a framework supporting residents to progress from one level of involvement through to the next. The framework should recognise

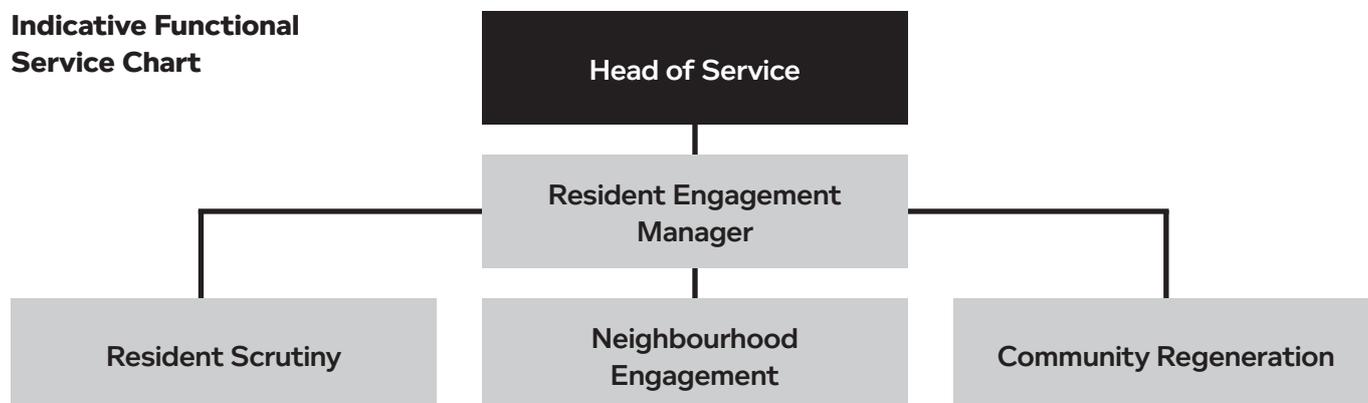
residents experience and encourage them to participate at the right level where their skills can best be used.

44. THH undertake a feasibility study on the cost effectiveness of a 'paperless' format for resident committee meetings by using IT solutions. The results of the study, with recommendations, to be reported back to the Residents' Panel by 1st January 2014.
45. The Strategic Resident Engagement team prepare a report on the benefits of TPAS accreditation for the Residents Panel by December 2013.
46. THHs Business Development team make a presentation to the Residents' Panel on the use made of the GIS system, to successfully target resources to best effect, by January 2014
47. Consult tenants and leaseholders on how 'consultations on changes that could have an impact service charges' can be improved. In particular, review consultation policies to ensure that the benefits to be gained, to the wider community, form part of the consultation process not just the costs involved.
48. The Residents' Panel to ensure that Service Improvement Group members are consulted at the end of each 'in-depth scrutiny review' on the reviews findings and recommendations.
49. The Residents' Panel request that they have a representative on the THH Board.
50. Create an escalation process, ending with the Chief Executive, to be used when officers consistently fail to carry out agreed actions agreed with resident representatives.
51. The Strategic Engagement team provide a comprehensive training programme for NEOs and training in resident engagement for all frontline housing staff.

## **Publicity**

52. The Strategic Engagement team develop a cost effective way to deliver leaflets and newsletters to all residents in all neighbourhoods for example by paying local residents to provide a delivery service.
53. Have a new 'Community Corner' section in neighbourhood newsletters written by NEOs promoting the value of resident participation.
54. Maintain the Wyn Garrett Residents' Resource Centre but have an active programme to promote the centre's wider use.
55. In consultation with residents, produce and publish an up-to-date booklet on opportunities for resident involvement at THH by April 2014.
56. Refresh the 'Get Involved' section of the THH website to make it visually more appealing and consistent.
57. Until the results of the review of the Resident Engagement structure kicks in, make sure that the SIG webpage contents are up to date listing all past and future meeting dates, noting any cancelled/rescheduled meetings, including links to all approved minutes for all past meetings. Provide contact details for each resident SIG Chair, or other resident contact person.
58. The Resident Scrutiny Co-ordinator to do a monthly check of SIG web pages and report failures to update and correct SIG web pages to the Residents' Panel and Chief Executive.
59. Publish information on the services available to Residents' Association, without their own bases, on what assistance is available to them to secure a home for their associations.

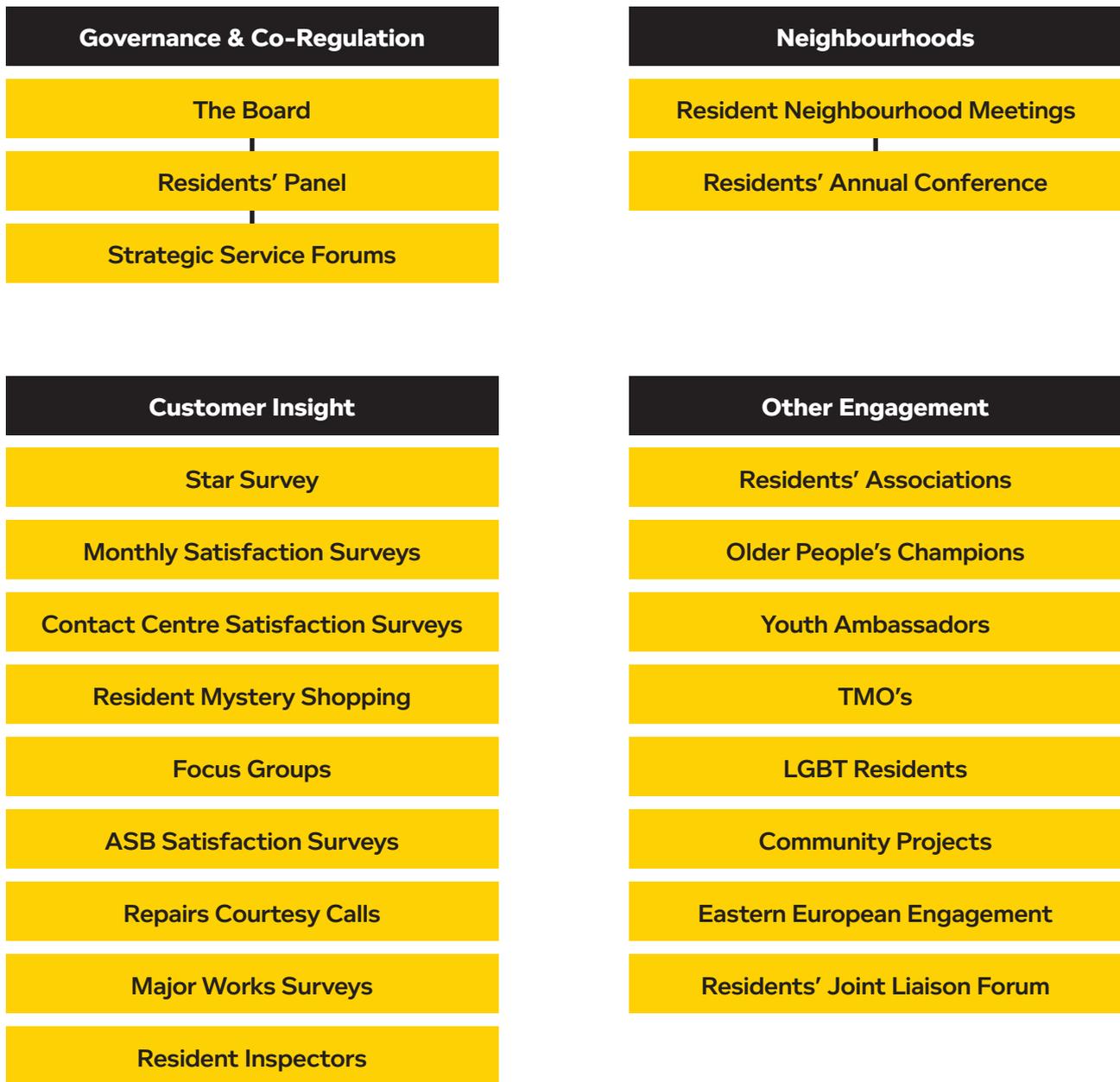
## Indicative Functional Service Chart



## Responsibility table for the roles in the proposed new Residents Involvement structure

Name	Role	Meeting
THH Board	Govern the organisation: Receives scrutiny reports from the Residents' Panel.	Bi-monthly
Residents' Scrutiny Panel	Carry out co-regulation duties. Send reports to Board, work in co-operation with strategic service forums, commission surveys and mystery shopping.	6-weekly
Strategic Service Forums — Repairs — Environmental — Leasehold — ASB	Residents playing a strategic role in developing and improving borough-wide services. Sends reports to, and receives reports from, the Residents' Panel. Refers matters to Residents' Panel for scrutiny.	6-weekly
Residents' Joint Liaison Forum	For all active residents to share information on participation activity. Contributes towards the development of the business plan, budget priorities, policy direction and help shape resident involvement policy.	3 times a year
Residents' Neighbourhood Meetings	Area-based meetings to discuss local issues which will feed into, and receive reports back from, the Residents' Panel. One each for Stepney & Wapping, Bethnal Green, Bow and Poplar.	3 times a year
Residents' Conference	Bring all residents together to discuss matters of concern and give their views on the service.	1 per year
Customer Insight	Various arrangements which facilitate residents to contribute an insight on how service delivery is actually felt at the point of delivery.	As and when necessary
Other Engagement	Many different bodies that are formed to give a voice to particular sections of the community and support residents to build their capacity to become more effectively involved.	As and when necessary

## Proposed New Resident Involvement Structure Chart



# Hallmarks of Success

The Scrutiny Team will re-convene in September 2014 to confirm that the recommendations have had the desired effects. They will look for the Hallmarks' of success, which will be as follows:

1. The newly configured Resident Engagement Team is in place and, on being surveyed, staff report that it is working well.
2. The new structures for resident engagement are in place and, on interview, involved residents report that resident involvement has improved.
3. There is evidence to show that the monitoring system for registered resident associations is in place, that it is being used, that the monitoring arrangements have been included on the Tenants' and Residents' Information Pack 2012 and that this updated pack has been sent to Resident Associations and is available on the web.
4. There is evidence to show that the Strategic Resident Engagement Plan for 2013-16 is in place and residents have been involved with its development and have approved the plan.
5. There is evidence to show that Resident Engagement Impact statements are demonstrating measurable outcomes.
6. There is evidence to show that the Resident Inspectors project is completed with resident inspectors having access to an accredited training course.
7. There is evidence to show that the Resident Engagement web pages have been updated, are accurate, in an improved format.
8. That, following a repeat survey, the satisfaction rate for resident involvement, from involved residents, is 55% or above.
9. That, following a repeat survey, awareness of opportunities for involvement, from uninvolved residents is 55% or above.
10. That the following documents are in place:
  - a) Project Management Framework.
  - b) The framework for supporting residents to progress from one level of engagement through to the next.
  - c) Policy and procedure guidelines on how meetings with residents and to be planned and conducted.
  - d) Updated Resident Engagement Agreement.
  - e) Data tracking how many new residents are becoming engaged, in what activities, including their ethnic profiles.





Tower  
Hamlets  
Homes

# Resident Engagement

## Listen and Learn

Resident-led Scrutiny

**The Resident Engagement Service**

Final Summary Report, August 2013