

HOUSING MANAGEMENT ADVISORY BOARD

Report of the Head of Landlord Services

ITEM 4 CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY 2022-2025

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To present the board with a draft customer engagement strategy that replaces the existing one.

2. ACTION REQUESTED

The board is requested to note, comment and recommend adoption of the proposed strategy subject to any agreed amendments and cabinet approval.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The existing customer engagement strategy was developed in 2017 as a four-year plan to develop and improve our structures on engagement, involvement and participation with and from our tenants and leaseholders.

3.2 The strategy set out four objectives and a four-year action plan to deliver on those objectives. The four objectives were:

- making it easier for our customers to engage us in ways and on issues that interest them;
- being more accountable for the services we deliver by empowering our residents to challenge us;
- to use customer feedback to improve our housing services and increase value for money; and
- to embed customer engagement in all our services.

3.3 Members of HMAB were given regular update reports on progress in carrying out the actions set out under the four objectives. The last report members received was for the 15 January 2020 meeting. The report stated that the outstanding actions in what was to be the final year of the strategy were on course to be carried out in the forthcoming year.

3.4 In March 2020 the coronavirus pandemic saw the first lockdown take place. One of areas of the landlord service to be affected significantly was customer engagement. All face-to-face meetings such as CHRF, the Senior Citizens' Forum and the

Leasehold Forum were discontinued. Annual events such as the September tenant networking event held in the town hall were cancelled. Consequently the customer engagement strategy itself was effectively suspended: virtually all planned events and actions could not be undertaken.

3.5 During 2021 engagement activities gradually resumed; and we are now in the fortunate position to be able to look forward to 2022 and beyond in terms of re-establishing all customer engagement activities as normal. It is appropriate, therefore, that we now review all our engagement activities and develop a new four-year strategy.

3.6 It goes without saying that the momentum that the customer engagement team built up throughout 2019 was unavoidably halted from the restrictions imposed upon how we had to deliver our services in response to the pandemic. In developing the new strategy we have had to take into account that we were not at the point we would have been in the development of the service had the pandemic not happened.

4. SUMMARY OF THE PROPOSED CUSTOEMR ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY 2022-2025

4.1 The proposed new strategy has retained the four original objectives in that they are still relevant to the engagement service.

4.2 The strategy very much centres itself around a four-year plan of actions. Those actions are, as far as possible, measurable, achievable, time-defined and focused on tangible, practical outcomes. When completed or put in place, they will enhance and improve the opportunities residents have to influence and shape our services and to hold us to account for the stewardship of their rent and service charges.

4.3 The proposed new strategy and action plan is attached as appendix 1 to this report.

5. CONSULTATION

5.1 The proposed strategy was discussed at CHRF on 2 March 2022. Various comments, observations and recommendations were made, some of which resulted in amendments being made to the strategy, for example, the inclusion of a glossary of terms and acronyms.

6. RECOMMENDATION

HMAB members are requested to note, comment upon and commend this strategy to be adopted by the council's cabinet, subject to any amendments being suggested and agreed.

Andrew Staton
Landlord Services Manager

5 March 2022

Customer Engagement Strategy 2022 – 2025

Charnwood Borough Council: Landlord Services

March 2022

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1. Our vision

Landlord Services will engage 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

2.1 Our customer engagement priorities are linked to two of the key themes in Charnwood Borough Council's corporate plan for 2020- 2024:

- Healthy communities.
- Your council.

2.2 Landlord Services is working in partnership with all other council services to fulfil all themes although our particular focus is on the above two themes as they apply to the council's tenants and leaseholders. These are reflected in the following four priorities we set for delivering our existing customer engagement strategy:

- **To make it easier for our customers to engage in ways and on matters that interest them.** We will offer a range of options and both traditional and technology-based channels of communication.
- **To be more accountable for the services we deliver** by empowering our residents to challenge us and to get involved in setting priorities.
- **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.
- **To embed customer engagement in all our services.** We will ensure that our officers and contractors understand this is a shared responsibility.

3. Scope of our strategy

3.1 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.

3.2 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.

3.3 This strategy is relevant to:

- our tenants and leaseholders.
- elected members.
- landlord services officers and contractors.
- housing applicants.

4. Customer engagement team achievements

The pandemic has been a challenging time for the customer engagement team to undertake many of its activities. There is one customer engagement officer who is managed by the principal officer for customer engagement and older persons' services within the landlord services team. Despite the restrictions during 2021 the customer engagement team achieved the following:

- Obtained computer equipment for involved tenants to enable them to engage in online meetings.
- Appointed new members to Housing Management Advisory Board (HMAB)
- Held online meetings with members of Charnwood Housing Residents' Forum (CHRF)
- Resumed meetings of the editorial panel

- Held the annual garden competition
- Reviewed and recommenced the tenant bid process and completed works suspended as a result of to the pandemic
- Supported projects and events through the community initiative fund and EEM community donations fund
- Worked closely with the council's communications team to provide updates and information through social media.
- Supported the council's response to the pandemic in providing assistance to residents and our local community.

5. Priorities for 2022-2025

5.1 The priorities that were set for the existing customer engagement strategy will not change in this new strategy; there will, however, be different actions to deliver on the objectives set under these priorities 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 us in ways and on issues that interest them

We will:

- review and expand upon the structures of engagement and the menu of opportunities for tenants and leaseholders to engage in and develop ways for customers to get involved for short periods and more informally rather than having to make a long-term, formal commitment.
- 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.

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
- commit to providing feedback and a response to our customers following their feedback and enquiries

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, identify good practice and provide transparency over value for money of our services
- develop a range of ways to gather feedback, including surveys, mystery shopping and formal and informal consultations
- produce a regular “You said, we did,” article for Your Homes Matter highlighting where customer feedback has made a difference to how we deliver our services

Priority four: To embed customer engagement in all our services

We will:

- 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.
- Introduce core objectives and targets for customer engagement through personal development plans (or the equivalent) for all Landlord Services officers, including use of the tenant bids budget and EEM’s community donation fund. This could include attending events, such as the Tenant Network, or identifying tenant bid projects.

5.2 The detailed action plan to deliver on these priorities can be found in appendix B.

6. Delivering the strategy

We will deliver this strategy through implementing our customer engagement model and will measure and report on our performance. The action plan to deliver this strategy is attached as appendix B.

7. Customer engagement model

Our customer engagement model to support delivery of this strategy is illustrated in the diagram on page 6 as appendix A.

8. Key performance indicators

8.1 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.

8.2 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.

Appendix A: The customer engagement model

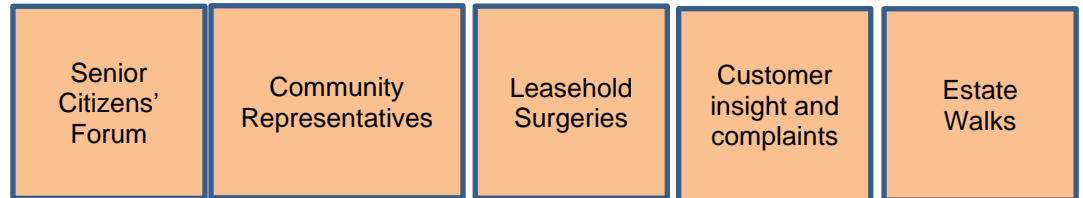
**Shaping
(HMAB)**

- Designing service improvement
- Holding to account – systematic monitoring of performance information
- Can ask CHRF to scrutinise area of concern

Challenging (CHRF)

- Challenging the service to improve
- Developing customer involvement
- Sub-groups with different functions: to include scrutiny task and finish; Tenant Bids

**Influencing
(variety of routes)**



Appendix B

Customer engagement strategy 2022-25 action plan

Ref no.	Priority one: To make it easier for our customers to engage us in ways and on issues that interest them						
	Objective	Priority L/M/H	Milestones/How success will be measured	Progress	Lead	Target date	Status
1.1	Recommence the sheltered courts tenant meetings and senior citizens forum	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Date of meetings set Representation from every court 		Principal officer/CEOs	March 2022	Open
1.2	Work with our communications team to ensure we use all methods of communication to reach a wider audience	H	Monitor hits on website and response to social media announcements		CEOs	May 2022	Open
1.3	Continue to hold the annual tenant garden competition	H	Measure number of entries		CEOs	July 2022	Open
1.4	Develop our website to include online applications for funding opportunities and a live calendar of engagement activities	H	Evidence of online forms completed		CEOs	December 2022	Open
1.5	Introduce more informal engagement activities to engage with our customers in their communities, such as estate action days and short-term activities	H	Estate walks scheduled for 2022		Principal officer/CEOs	April 2023	Open
1.6	Improve relationships with customers and communities by	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Magazine articles in each addition of 		CEOs	April 2023	Open

	promoting our community funding opportunities, such as tenant bids, community initiatives fund and EEM community donations.		YHM, including “You said, we did” article. • Report to CHRF & HMAB on funding for the year				
1.7	Introduce a series of informal roadshows throughout the borough	M	Programme of road shows		CEOs	June 2023	Open
1.8	Recommence the annual tenant network event	M	Attendance numbers at event		CEOs	August 2023	Open
1.9	Explore with our customers how they can provide feedback and access information using digital routes through their tablets, phones or computers	M	Customer survey to identify preferred methods of contact and availability of devices and internet		CEOs	April 2024	Open
1.10	Review our “Have Your Say” leaflet to include all opportunities including an indication of time commitments and expected outcomes	H	Production of new leaflet		Principal officer/CEOs	May 2024	Open
Priority two: To be more accountable for the services we deliver							
Ref no.	Objective	Priority L/M/H	Milestones/How success will be measured	Progress	Lead	Target date	Status
2.1	Promote the outcomes of customer engagement activity to all stakeholders emphasising the difference it has made	H	Report generated from TP Tracker for annual report		Principal officer/CEOs	October 2022	Open

2.2	Provide regular reports on complaints received and lessons learned	M	Article in YHM		LSM	October 2022	Open
2.3	Work with our editorial panel to improve the design, content and format of our literature	M	Copies of new materials produced		CEOs	March 2023	Open
2.4	Promote the outcomes of any grant funded activities	H	Articles in <i>Your Homes Matter</i>		CEOs	April 2023	Open
2.5	Develop a training programme for tenants to empower them to hold us to account	M	Record of number of tenants attending training		Principal officer/CEOs	December 2023	Open
2.6	Develop and support a tenant-led scrutiny process to challenge our services and recommend improvements	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recruitment of scrutiny panel members Training of scrutiny panel members Scrutiny report and suggested actions 		CEOs	June 2024	Open
Priority three: To be use customer feedback to improve our housing services and increase value for money							
Ref no.	Priority three: To be use customer feedback to improve our housing services and increase value for money						
	Objective	Priority L/M/H	Milestones/measure of success	Progress	Lead	Target date	Status
3.1	Recruit and train communal cleaning inspectors	H	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Article in <i>YHM</i> spring edition 2022 Recruitment and training of a minimum of 		CEOs	December 2022	Open

			twelve tenant inspectors				
3.2	Use the feedback from our STAR survey to understand service weaknesses and implement improvements	H	All SMT to provide input in to "You said, we did" article for YHM on changes to their service areas		SMT	April 2023	Open
3.3	Complete the impact assessment stage of the grant funded processes for tenant bids, EEM donations and community initiative funds to ensure they deliver value for money	M	Impact assessments to be completed following each grant or bid completed		CEOs	April 2023	Open
3.4	Use our TP Tracker software to produce reports on the cost and outcomes of customer engagement to ensure we are providing value for money	M	Feedback report to be included in annual report		CEOs	October 2023	Open
3.5	Introduce a mystery shopping process to gather feedback and make recommendations for areas for improvement	M	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment of mystery shopper • Training of mystery shoppers • Mystery shopping feedback report and suggested improvements 		CEOs	September 2024	Open

Ref no.	Priority four: To embed customer engagement in all our services						
	Objective	Priority L/M/H	Milestones/measurements of success	Progress	Lead	Target date	Status
4.1	Use the tenant bids budget effectively and in accordance with the new revised procedures	H	Report to HMAB & CHRF, including impact assessments		Principal officer/CEOs	Each financial year	Open
4.2	Use EEMs' community donation fund in accordance with the new revised procedures	H	Report to HMAB & CHRF, including impact assessments		Principal officer/CEOs	Each financial year	Open
4.3	Customer engagement officers to regularly attend team meetings to facilitate cross-team working across all landlord services and support teams to promote engagement in all our services	M	Evidence of attendance at team meetings		Principal officer/CEOs	January 2023	Open
4.4	Introduce core objectives and targets in individuals' appraisals for customer engagement for all landlord services staff	M	SMT to identify achievable targets for their teams		SMT	April 2024	Open

Glossary

CHRF – Charnwood Housing Residents' Forum

EEM – a framework organisation used by the council to procure contracts

HMAB – Housing Management Advisory Board

SMT - Senior Management Team (managers from all areas of Landlord Services)

STAR survey – a nationally recognised survey to gather customer satisfaction feedback from tenants