

HOW DO I FIND OUT MORE?

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Appendix A



TENANT AND LEASEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT AND COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

2016-2020





STAFFING

Our objective is to embed residents involvement in the way we operate so every member of staff has responsibility for ensuring that resident consultation and involvement underpins all their work.

MEASURING SUCCESS

THE STRATEGY WILL BE MONITORED BY

Review on an annual basis by the Performance Scrutiny Partnership (PSP) which includes tenants, leaseholders and officers.

The Action Plan will be reviewed in line with best practice and legislation. All comments received about this strategy will be taken into account during the review process.

Satisfaction with the Housing Service is reviewed biennially through the STAR survey, the results of this will dictate future amendments of this policy.



THE FUTURE

We are committed to seeking out best practice and applying it where possible to procedures. We aspire to achieving the National Tenant Engagement Standards as issued by TPAS in July 2016.

We will aim to improve our communication with our tenants and leaseholders and consult with them to enable them to influence our Housing Service. It is important that we seek to involve all sections of the community and resources will be targeted to ensure this is the case.

We recognise the benefits that resident involvement can bring to us and to the residents who actively engage with us, we want to build on this to continue to improve the Housing Service.

NEIGHBOURHOOD GROUPS

There are a number of established residents groups across the city. These are supported by funding which is available from the Council. Some have formal constitutions and meet regularly, others are more flexible where the residents come together to address a specific issue in their immediate locality, sometimes on a temporary basis.

Groups represent a neighbourhood that is made up of tenants, leaseholders, owner-occupiers and people who rent from private landlords; groups such as these are found at Beacon Heath, Wonford, St David's and Exwick. Exeter Community Forum has details of many community groups who work throughout the City.

To find out if there is an established residents' group in a particular area or to find out further information about setting one up, the first point of contact is the Housing Community Relations Officer for that area. They will make suggestions about what to do, how and where to hold an initial meeting and how to work to progress the group further, setting up a steering group or committee for example. See also 'How do I find out more?' box on page 16



EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

We use Equality Impact Assessments (EQIA) to improve our work by thinking carefully about the likely impact on people in Exeter and taking action to minimise or eliminate any negative consequences and maximising our opportunities for promoting equality. There is an EQIA written specifically for this strategy.

This strategy has been written to be fully inclusive and we will ensure that there is no discrimination in involvement on the grounds of race, colour, gender, sexual orientation, religion, nationality, disability, parenthood, marital status, age or class.

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INTRODUCTION

Tenant and leaseholder involvement is about residents taking part in decision making processes and influencing decisions about housing policies, housing conditions and housing and related services. It is a two way process which involves the sharing of information, ideas and responsibilities. We believe that tenants and leaseholders should be able to have a real say in the way that the Housing Service operates and we are firmly committed to this.

BENEFITS

We believe that active participation makes our Housing Service more responsive to the needs of tenants and leaseholders. This will help us to improve the standard of housing conditions and services as we believe that partnership working can help improve lives and communities. Becoming involved can have benefits for the participants too, helping them to gain confidence, learn new skills and improve the lives of people in their communities.

COMMUNICATION

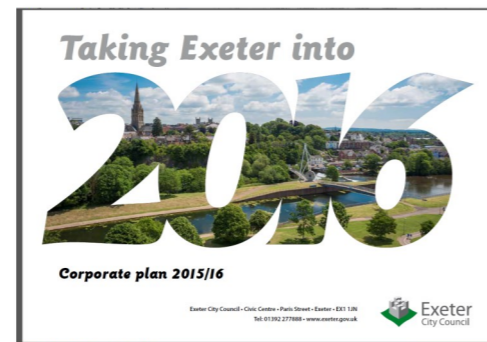
Excellent communication opportunities are vital to enable participation to take place. There are many ways in which we currently communicate with our tenants and leaseholders and we will build on these to make it easier for residents to communicate with us and us with them. We want to ensure that your communication with us is easy, meaningful and worthwhile.

We know that many of our residents would like to participate in shaping the housing service and we aim to provide different opportunities for this to take place.

CORPORATE AIMS

We have a Corporate Plan that sets out our strategic objectives across the city. This strategy complements these objectives:

- To examine alternatives for communicating with and engaging tenants and leaseholders
- To provide services to meet our customers' needs
- To support Exeter's communities
- Our communities know Exeter best. We want to continue working with community and voluntary groups who have an important role to play in helping shape and deliver services.
- To co-design and co-deliver with communities.



HOUSING IS A KEY PRIORITY FOR THE CITY

'We will work closely with our tenants and leaseholders to improve their homes and quality of life.'

RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO SUPPORT RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT

We are committed to allocating appropriate resources to support the activities outlined in this strategy.

A specific budget is set aside each year to provide for:

- Reimbursement of transport or travel expenses
- Childcare or carer's costs
- Room hire
- Invitations, flyers and posters for meetings and events
- Training for active tenants
- Support and advice



COMMUNICATION AND PUBLICITY

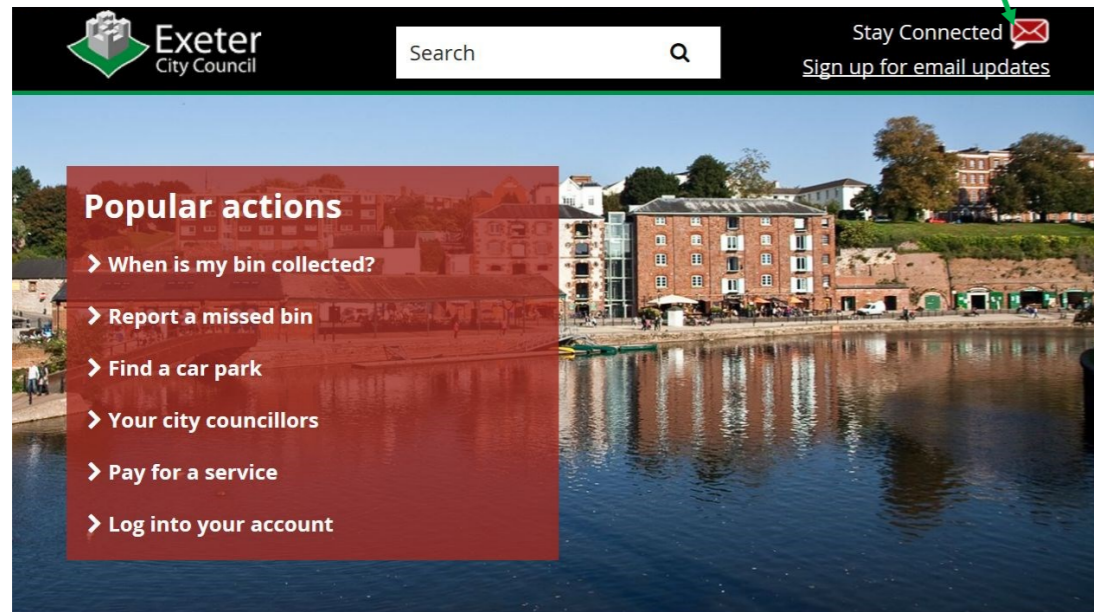
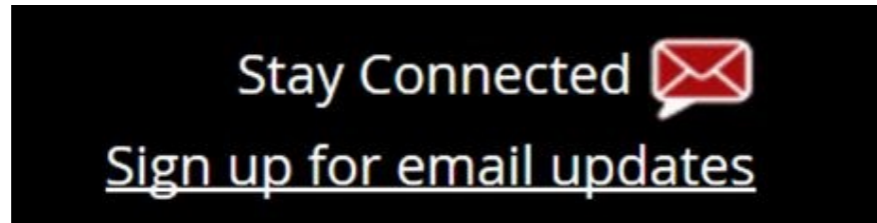
We want to provide different ways of communicating with our tenants and leaseholders, so that we can reach as many people as possible. We already use the ones listed below and are continually looking to find innovative methods of improving our communication with you.

- InSight quarterly newsletter to tenants and leaseholders
- Email
- Housing Community Relations Officers' visits to tenants as first point of contact for tenants
- Neighbourhood surgeries
- Social Media: Find us on Facebook at Exeter Housing Services (facebook.com/ECCHousing) or on Twitter @ ECC Housing



STAY CONNECTED

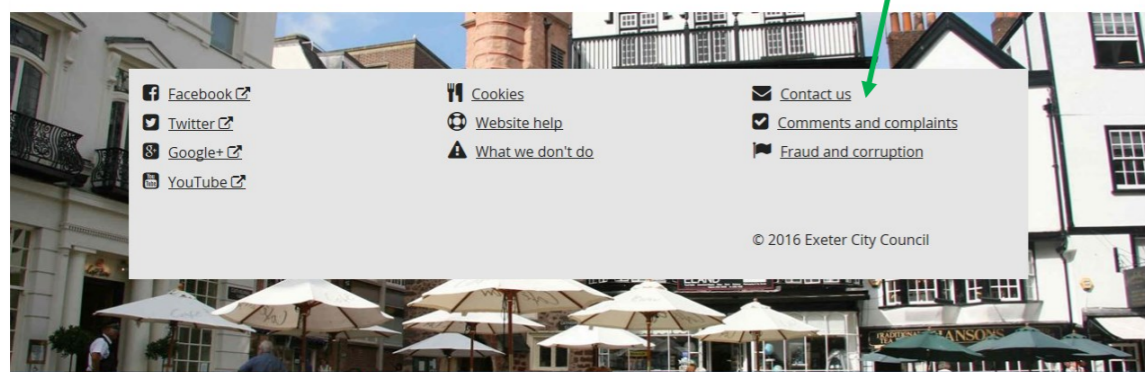
Sign up to Stay Connected on our website www.exeter.gov.uk/



You supply your email address and provide details about what areas of our work you are interested in. We then send you an email alert if we publish anything in those categories.

COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS

You can make a comment, suggestion or complaint via our website (see below), by telephone, email, post or in person to the Civic Centre.



OUR VISION

- It is important and beneficial that tenants and leaseholders are able to participate in the shaping of our housing service.
- We believe that partnership working can have a positive impact on lives and communities.
- We offer a range of opportunities to enable this to take place.

'For you and with you'

We want to continue to work with our residents as part of our continuing commitment to improving services. We listen and respond to your views and provide the opportunities for influencing decision making.

In order for resident involvement to be a success we need to have effective lines of communication. This strategy sets out the many ways in which we communicate with you and you with us.

A RANGE OF OPPORTUNITIES

This strategy outlines methods of participation that are open to you and recognises that you can get involved as often as you like, with issues that suit your interests and ability and for a length of time that is best for you.

AIMS AND PRIORITIES

The aims of the Tenant and Leaseholder Involvement and Communication Strategy are:

- To offer a wide range of involvement opportunities
- To increase the number and diversity of involved residents.
- To provide tenants and leaseholders with the opportunity to have a voice.
- To improve communication with our tenants and leaseholders.
- To improve services and decision making by the Housing Service.
- To provide residents with appropriate and relevant training opportunities.
- To improve residents' satisfaction with the Housing Service.
- To use technology e.g through the creation of virtual forums to improve resident involvement.

NEIGHBOURHOOD SURGERIES

These are arranged by our Housing Team and are held across the city in children's centres or doctors' surgeries. Residents can attend these to speak with their Housing Community Relations Officer about any issue and to report repairs or concerns.



COMMUNITY EVENTS

These are organised by the Housing Team or residents' groups. There is no commitment to attend regularly as these can be one-off events.



INSIGHT EDITORIAL BOARD



This group meets four times a year. The members' responsibility is to look at the draft versions of InSight magazine that is sent to Tenants and Leaseholders and suggest ways for improvements. This group also provides suggestions about content for future issues.

RESIDENTS' GROUPS

There are a number of established Residents' Groups across the City. These are supported by funding which is available from the Council. These groups meet regularly, particularly when there is a specific issue which is affecting the residents or their locality.

To find out if there is an established Residents' Group in a particular area or to find out further information about setting one up, the first point of contact is the Housing Community Relations Officer for that area. See also 'How do I find out more?' box on page 16

INFORMAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR INVOLVEMENT

EMAIL SURVEYS/FOCUS GROUPS

This is the easiest way of getting involved. Residents are encouraged to supply their email addresses during the HCRO visits. If the Housing Team want some instant feedback about a potential project, large or small, then an email will be sent out. The resident can choose whether or not to reply and can make that reply at a time that suits them best.

BENEFITS OF INVOLVEMENT

By getting involved you can improve our service by:

- Making sure we understand your needs
- Helping us to be more responsive
- Be a voice for other tenants and leaseholders
- Improve the overall satisfaction.
- Influence the decisions we make.
- Create and maintain successful and vibrant communities.
- Help us to ensure value for money and identify potential cost savings.

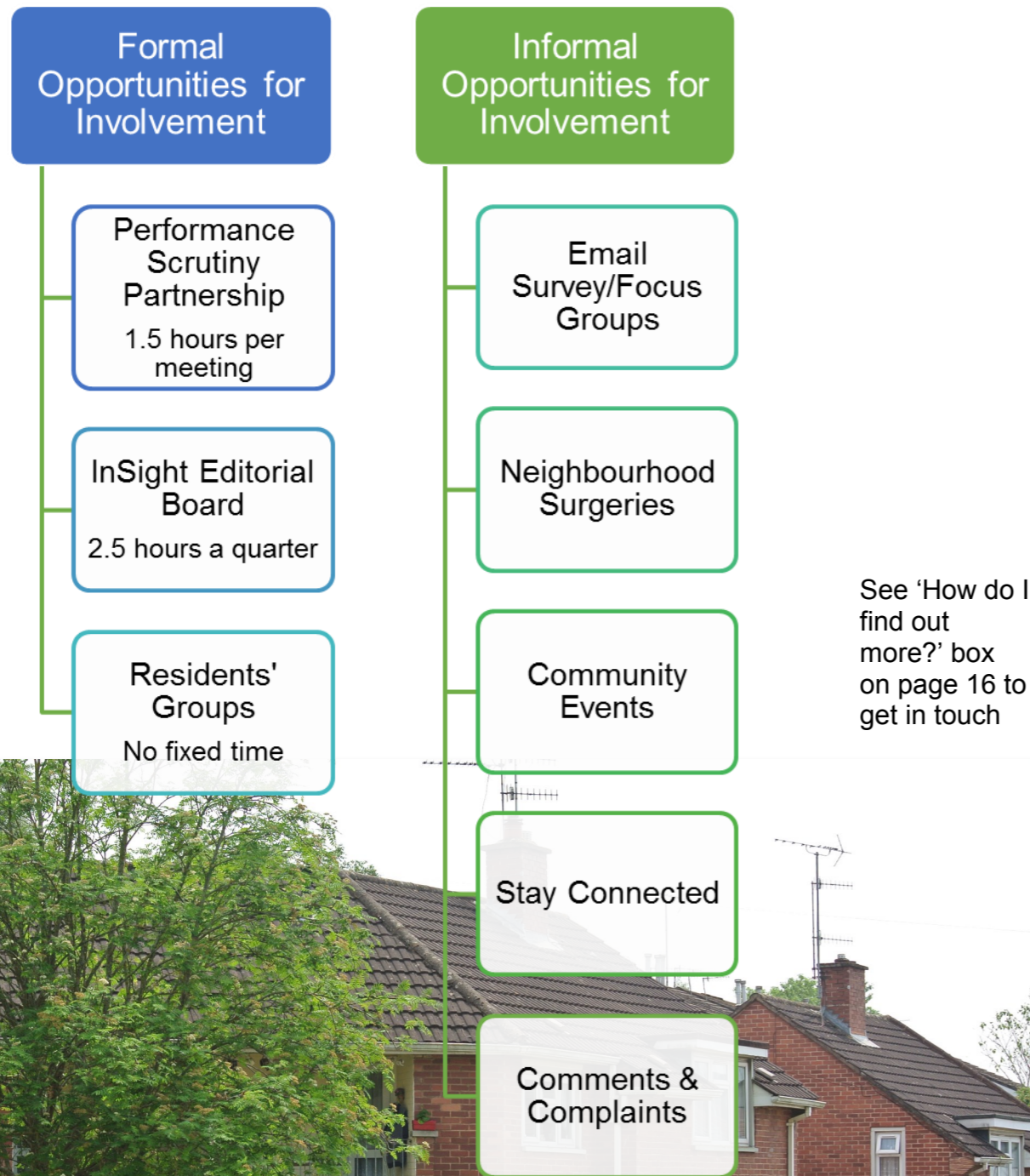
There are benefits for you too:

- Helping us to improve services and knowing that you have made a difference
- Meet new people
- Learn new transferable skills
- Gain confidence
- Help improve the quality of life for others
- Help make your neighbourhood and community a better place to live
- Improving the local environment, its safety & security, health & wellbeing and so the quality of life of its residents.



MENU OF INVOLVEMENT

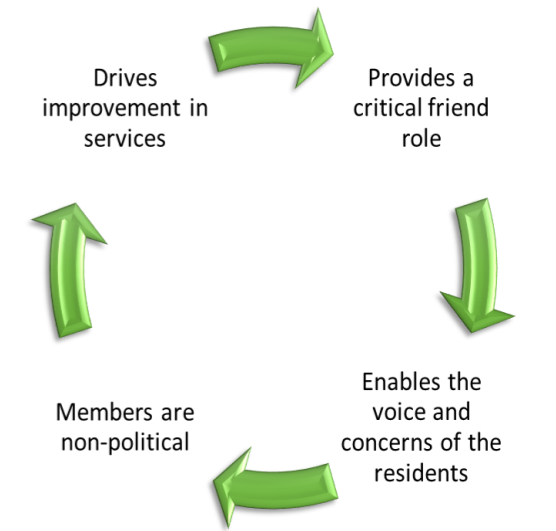
We want to provide a range of opportunities to become involved in shaping the housing service. You can choose what to do and how long you are able to commit to this.



FORMAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR INVOLVEMENT

PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY PARTNERSHIP

This group meets at least 6 times a year. Our PSP is a group of tenant and leaseholder volunteers who provide lively and valuable discussions in reviewing housing performance and services, providing us with feedback. It examines our quarterly and annual performance summaries. The members are also consulted on a wide range of issues including policies and procedures that affect tenants and leaseholders.



PSP CYCLE



In developing this strategy we have looked at what works best in other organisations and have involved our residents through the Performance Scrutiny Partnership from the outset. In the past year the PSP has contributed to a number of different projects including: shaping the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy; the Garage Allocation Policy and the review of the Council's new website. The PSP may also act as a designated panel to consider complaints addressed to the Housing Service.