



Resident Involvement Impact Assessment

September 2021 - August 2022



Introduction

Hightown Housing Association owns and manages over 8,000 homes across Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire. We value the views of our residents and recognise that involving residents in developing services is central to how we improve and deliver high quality housing services.

The lifting of restrictions associated with the coronavirus pandemic enabled us to hold more events in person, and we really enjoyed being able to meet with residents in person at a range of events across our estates. In addition, we continued to hold online and hybrid meetings offering residents the option to attend in person or remotely via video link, with the Residents' Voice and Scrutiny Panel holding their quarterly meetings at Head Office and via Zoom.



Why get involved?

Residents can make a difference by:

- changing the way Hightown works to improve the services provided, including setting standards
- improving the area and community they live in
- scrutinising Hightown's performance
- learning new skills and building confidence through working with Hightown staff and other residents.

Why is involvement important?

Resident involvement and scrutiny of our services helps Hightown to continuously improve, and gives residents a say in the management of their homes. Hearing the resident voice is central to the Government's Social Housing White Paper, 'The Charter for Social Housing Residents'. Resident involvement is a key theme of the Regulator of Social Housing's consumer standards.

The value of involving residents can be demonstrated by looking back to see how residents have influenced and helped shape service improvements. This 'Impact Assessment' helps us examine what has been done between September 2021 and August 2022, and how effective it has been.

Why produce an impact report?

We work closely with residents to measure and evaluate the impact and influence resident involvement has had on service delivery. This Impact Assessment Report illustrates the ways in which Hightown's customers have given us feedback, been able to influence and shape services, and have a say in the management of their homes.

Members of the Residents' Voice and Scrutiny Panel have considered our involvement activities and their feedback has been used to produce this report.

The Impact Assessment Report enables Hightown to evaluate areas that have benefited from resident involvement and identify other opportunities to gain resident feedback.

It also shows our partners and stakeholders the benefits of working with Hightown, and our commitment to working with residents and continuous improvement.

Our residents have looked in detail at the engagement activities held between September 2021 and August 2022 and have rated them using the assessment criteria described overleaf.



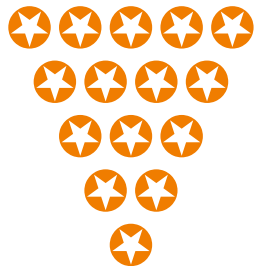
Effectiveness



How effective is resident involvement?

To show at a glance the level of impact made by Hightown's various resident involvement activities, we have used a star system – the more stars, then the more impact the initiative has been assessed as having.

High level of impact



Low level of impact



Value for money

To ensure that we are using Hightown's resources in the best way, the Residents' Voice and Scrutiny Panel has also assessed the Value for Money each initiative offered. When organising an activity, Hightown must carefully consider what we hope to achieve, and consider the costs and time (both of staff and residents) required. This enables us to ensure that the best services and activities are provided with the limited resources available, and in response to customer priorities and needs.



The following symbols have been used to indicate the overall 'Value for Money' achieved, as assessed by the Residents' Voice and Scrutiny Panel. Even if the cost is high and the outcomes and impact are high, then a good Value for Money rating can still be achieved.

- Good value for money
- OK value for money
- Poor value for money
- Don't know









Resources

An annual budget is allocated for resident involvement initiatives (excluding staff costs). Staff working in the Housing Directorate have responsibility for promoting resident involvement and encouraging feedback across service provision. Activities are co-ordinated by a lead officer in the Housing Management team.



Route to involvement	What we did	What it means to you	Value for money/ impact
<p>Quarterly Residents' Voice and Scrutiny Panel meetings</p>	<p>Four Residents' Voice and Scrutiny Panel meetings were held via Zoom and in person, and were well attended by a core group of regular panel members.</p> <p>During the year, the Panel reviewed and assessed the impact and value for money of resident involvement for the annual impact assessment. They also considered resident bids for estate improvements and allocated the budget for the bids received.</p> <p>The Panel received information about the new Tenant Satisfaction Measures being proposed by the Regulator of Social Housing, as well as Hightown's Voids Team and Voids Standards.</p> <p>The Panel received a presentation on Hightown's three yearly review of Resident Involvement in Governance and Scrutiny of the Housing Management Service. The Panel reviewed and gave feedback on the proposed changes to the Complaints Policy and the draft Resident Involvement Strategy, which were incorporated in these documents and approved by Hightown's Board.</p> <p>The Panel reviewed and gave feedback on the independent review of Hightown's Resident Involvement service, which they had previously commissioned.</p> <p>The Panel assisted Hightown's Communications team with the development of the Annual Report for Residents and scrutinised Hightown's performance in key service areas, including lettings, repairs, gas safety checks, anti-social behaviour, rent arrears, and complaints.</p>	<p>The Residents' Voice and Scrutiny Panel has kept abreast of current issues in the Housing sector, and had looked in detail at the draft Annual Report for Residents. Residents' views were incorporated into all the documents that resulted from the discussions, helping Hightown to tailor services based on resident feedback.</p>	
<p>Complaints Scrutiny Group meetings</p>	<p>Four Complaints Scrutiny Group meetings were held. The Group reviewed and gave feedback on complaints relating to a number of different service areas, including caretaking, contractors, estate management, anti-social behaviour case management and customer service.</p> <p>The Group scrutinised Hightown's response to complaints, suggested where Hightown could make improvements, and discussed any patterns or themes identified from the complaints reviews.</p> <p>The Group also reviewed and gave feedback on a selection of the Housing Ombudsman's Spotlight Reports. The Group considered Hightown's approach to learning from complaints and suggested actions for staff training.</p>	<p>The suggestions and comments made by residents were taken into account for future complaints handling and lessons learned. The group also highlighted the positive impact complaints can have on developing services and improving the customer experience.</p>	

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Joint estate inspections with Estates Champions	<p>The Estates Champions met with their Property Services Inspector and carried out a routine estate inspection at the following estates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Braithwaite Court, Watford • Farm End, Hemel Hempstead 	<p>The Estates Champions gained more understanding on how Hightown carries out inspections and gave feedback on the grounds maintenance contractor's performance. Hightown's Property Services Inspectors took a number of actions based on the comments from Estates Champions, such as providing additional feedback to the communal cleaning contractor and liaising with the managing agent, as well as agreeing actions to monitor outstanding resident concerns until they were resolved.</p>	
Estates Champions Forum meetings	<p>Hightown set up an Estates Champions Forum so members can meet with each other and Hightown staff. The Forum discussed the role of the Estates Champions, and how Hightown can work with residents to maximise the positive impact from this resident involvement activity.</p>	<p>The role of the Estates Champions was clarified and two focus groups were arranged. Hightown's resident portal was updated and options for residents to register an interest in being an Estate Champion and to suggest an improvement for their estates were added.</p>	
Resident Focus Group meetings	<p>Residents reviewed and gave feedback on Hightown's draft Resident Involvement Strategy, and the final version was approved by Hightown's Board. Residents gave feedback on the Estates Champions role and estate inspection forms, which highlighted the areas important to residents.</p> <p>Residents also gave feedback on Hightown's anti-social behaviour information pack and suggested changes.</p>	<p>The amendments suggested by the residents were incorporated in the Resident Involvement Strategy.</p> <p>Residents agreed changes to Hightown's estate inspection form and anti-social behaviour information pack.</p>	
Contractor Tender and Selection	<p>Two residents took part in the tender evaluation and interview processes for the gas servicing contractor for Hightown properties. The residents gave feedback during the tender process and ensured issues which matter to residents were considered as part of the tender process.</p>	<p>Residents assisted Hightown's Procurement team by giving feedback and taking part in the interviews with prospective contractors which ensured that residents had a say in the awarding of the contract.</p>	
Parking consultations	<p>Residents took part in consultations about parking arrangements on the estates they live, including Peregrine Close and Alexandra Road in Hemel Hempstead, as well as Newland Avenue in Bishops Stortford.</p>	<p>Residents gave feedback and this was taken into account when considering changes to the parking arrangements for residents. As a result of the feedback received from residents, no changes were made to the existing parking arrangements.</p>	

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CCTV consultations	Residents took part in consultations about CCTV on the estates they live, including Steppingstone Place in Leighton Buzzard, Fielding Place in St. Albans and Wisteria Court in Waltham Cross.	Residents' views were considered in relation to proposed changes to the CCTV on Hightown estates. This resulted in the installation of CCTV at all three estates, with the aim of preventing and detecting crime and anti-social behaviour.	 
Have Your Say - Door Knocking events	We held 'Have Your Say' events, which took place in person and gave residents the opportunity to give feedback and make suggestions for improving different service areas. In total, 84 residents took part across eight Hightown estates.	<p>Residents' comments and suggestions were followed up, and Hightown completed a number of estate improvements based on the feedback received from residents. Follow-up newsletters were sent to residents to summarise the feedback Hightown received, including positive comments and suggested changes or improvements. In these newsletters, residents were provided with further information about the matters raised as important to them, including Hightown's services, customer service standards and methods of contact, as well as tenant responsibilities.</p> <p>In addition, residents were kept updated about the progress of some of the issues raised such as, communal repairs, planned works, and estate improvements.</p>	 
Have Your Say - Remote Estate surveys	11 residents across five Hightown estates gave feedback via digital and postal surveys. Hightown invited feedback from residents, including any suggestions about how Hightown could improve different service areas.	Residents assisted Hightown to understand what service areas are performing well, and Hightown staff responded to tenancy queries raised by residents. There was a low response rate, which has impacted the ratings for this activity.	 
Anti-Social Behaviour Policy review	Four residents met as part of a Focus Group to give feedback on the review of Hightown's Anti-Social Behaviour Policy. The suggested changes were incorporated into the final version of the Policy, which was approved by Hightown's Chief Executive.	Residents' comments and suggestions, including changes to wording were incorporated into the review of the Policy.	 

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Tenancy Fraud website page review	50 residents took part in telephone surveys and gave feedback about the Tenancy Fraud information available on Hightown's website.	Residents' comments and suggestions were taken into account for the review of the tenancy fraud information available on Hightown's website. This ensured that Hightown's tenancy fraud webpage was tailored to provide information that residents want and need, including tips on how to spot the signs and signposting to external agencies linked to tenancy fraud.	
Summer Estate events	<p>Hightown hosted several summer events which had an environmental sustainability theme and focused on getting feedback from residents about Hightown's services. Events took place at seven Hightown estates, and over 85 residents attended in total. The events were held at:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lester Road, Aylesbury • Dennis Street, Aylesbury • Haygarth, Knebworth • Waverley Lodge, St Albans • Siskin Drive, Hemel Hempstead • Kite Way, Luton • Morningside, Rickmansworth 	Residents had the opportunity to meet Hightown staff, Board members, and partner agencies, including the Police, Waste management services, Local Authority staff and local Councillors. Residents gave feedback on Hightown's services and Hightown staff addressed tenancy and estates queries raised by residents.	