



St Georges Community Housing
Resident Involvement Strategy
2009 - 2012

Putting people at the heart of what we do

www.SGCH.org.uk

WORKING ON BEHALF OF AND IN PARTNERSHIP WITH BASILDON COUNCIL



St Georges
COMMUNITY HOUSING

This document provides information about our Resident Involvement Strategy.

If you would like a copy in large print, in Braille, on audiotape or on CD, please phone Joanne Medurst, our Marketing and Communications Coordinator, on 01268 465112 or e-mail her at: joannemedhurst@sgch.org.uk

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Definitions

We use the word 'resident' to mean anyone who uses our services.

We use the term 'tenant' to mean that all persons living in Basildon Council's tenanted properties, managed by St Georges Community Housing, shall be eligible to be nominated to all panels and committees shown in the Compact. Such persons must be registered on the Council's electoral register and this also applies to all in sheltered accommodation

We use the term 'leaseholder' to mean that all persons living in Basildon Council's domestic leasehold properties, managed by St Georges Community Housing, shall be eligible to be nominated as leasehold representative to all panels and committees shown in the Compact. Such persons must also be registered on the Council's electoral register and this also applies to all in sheltered housing leasehold accommodation.

Introduction

Basildon Council had a history of working closely with tenants for many years, exceeding the requirements of Section 105 of the Housing Act 1985. This section states that landlord authorities must enable secure tenants to be informed and to be able to make their views known about all matters of housing management.

In April 2007, St Georges Community Housing was established as an arm's-length management organisation (ALMO), created with the main aim of delivering housing across the Basildon District that meets, and goes beyond, the Decent Home Standard.

Delivering Decent Homes' is an important priority, we make sure that we consult you on your priorities, and that these influence our long-term investment programme.

Tenants were involved in looking at the stock options over a two-year period and have had a vital role to play in assessing the options, in setting up the new Company and monitoring its progress.

In addition, one third of our management Board is made up of tenant and leaseholder non-executive directors, who have been selected by the Tenant and Leaseholder Panel.

This Strategy explains how you, our residents, can be involved in that process. It outlines how you can play an important part in influencing our decisions, shaping our future and improving our services to you.

In developing this Strategy, we have looked at best practice from other similar organisations and fully consulted with all our residents. We have also included information which you have provided from the annual tenant and leaseholder surveys and your customer profiling forms.

We put our residents at the heart of all our activities. We want to deliver the highest quality of services for you. We believe the best way to achieve this is to involve you at every step of the way. Without your comments, complaints and compliments, we cannot improve and develop as you want us to. We need and value your input, so we have developed this strategy to tell you how you can get involved.

As you would expect, this Strategy is the result of extensive consultation with our residents, the Tenant and Leaseholder Panel, community panels, other groups and partners.

Because of this, we will be ready to provide excellent services and continue to put you, our residents, at the heart of our work. Together, our residents, staff and stakeholders, will help us deliver services that make our organisation second to none. To support continuous improvement, this Strategy will be regularly reviewed to reflect the changes that you want to make.

Our Standards

We promise to -

- Provide high-quality information, in appropriate formats, that make you aware of all relevant housing work and tells you about all opportunities for you to influence our services
- Support resident involvement and to carry out regular consultation to ensure that all service areas understand our residents' needs
- Give you every opportunity to get involved and to influence our services in a way that suits you and to provide a menu of options to enable you to do this
- Remove obstacles that could prevent certain groups of people from getting involved, including young people, people with disabilities, residents with special needs and under represented groups
- Actively involve you in the decisions we make about your home and the area in which you live
- Give you any help, information and training you may need to make sure that you have the skills and confidence to be actively involved
- Give you regular information and feedback about how your involvement has helped us to shape and improve our services to you
- Make sure that resident involvement and consultation is at the heart of all our decisions
- Work with you to achieve excellence in service delivery
- Consult you and involve you in making decisions at an early stage, and to have a clear system for this, that is open and offers clear responsibilities
- To involve residents in a way that helps to achieve continuous service improvements and shows value for money.

Outcomes

We aim -

- For you to be satisfied with the opportunities to influence management, decision-making and service delivery and feel confident that we will value and act on your input
- To have active, properly supported and accountable tenants' and residents' panels, Tenant and Leaseholder Panel, trained mystery shoppers (*this will be extended following the results of the Resident Involvement Review and agreed by the Tenant and Leaseholder Panel through the final Appendices*)
- That you have developed the confidence and skills to help you to get more involved in the decision-making process and for you to be able to access high quality and well-resourced training.
- To have all staff responsible for promoting and encouraging resident involvement in a formal context, through job descriptions, one-to-ones and employee development interviews

Valuing and including everyone

The needs of residents, neighbourhoods and estates vary greatly. This Strategy supports these differences, both in meeting those needs, and also in terms of responding to communities who are not currently involved.

This Strategy should be read along with our 'Equality and Diversity Policy'.

We will work to:

- Investigate and overcome barriers that prevent people from getting involved
- Involve all communities
- Make sure that all staff and community representatives receive training on an approach to involving everyone
- Deal with wider community and issues
- Involve a range of partners to help us achieve our outcomes.

Removing barriers

The Basildon District is a vibrant community made up of people with a variety of backgrounds and with different needs.

In conjunction with our Communication Strategy, we will be using various methods to involve as many residents as possible, and ensure that residents who have not been actively involved in the past because of barriers such as access, culture, language, age, disability and learning difficulties can now fully participate.

We will give under-represented groups extra support to make sure they can be involved.

We will –

- Identify 'under-represented' groups and residents, and assess what they need from us to enable them to get involved
- Ask for support and guidance from voluntary and community groups, religious institutions and appropriate agencies that have contact with our under-represented residents
- Provide information in ways that target specific residents, such as people with disabilities
- Carry out specific outreach work to places where we know that under represented groups come together, both formally and informally; and continually look for good practice in reaching under-represented groups and new ways of working to achieve this.

Achieving our objectives

Set out below are the outcomes that will evidence how we are achieving our objectives

Outcome 1: A well-established, effective and comprehensive partnership agreement (Resident Participation Compact)

The Resident Participation Compact is an important part of the Council's commitment, through St Georges Community Housing, to increase local democracy within the ALMO structure, through the Board, Service and Community Panels various working and focus groups, the Tenant Panel, Leaseholder Panel, Sheltered Housing Panel and the Tenant and Leaseholder Panel.

The Compact sets out –

- The various structures for resident involvement and how residents can become involved in decisions affecting them
- How residents can become involved in improving and monitoring the services they receive from St Georges Community Housing
- The level of resources available to support participation
- The standards that we all strive to work to
- An action plan for improving resident involvement
- How we can be sure that the arrangements work
- What we will do when things go wrong.

This agreement has been developed through a partnership between tenants and leaseholders, St Georges Community Housing and the Council and has recently been reviewed to ensure that the new agreement reflects the needs of all partners and the new, increased ways of getting involved that have been agreed as part of the Resident Involvement Review.

This Strategy provides the framework for resident involvement and the Compact sets out how we will deliver against that framework. The Compact was put together by a working group of tenants, leaseholders, sheltered housing representatives and St Georges Community Housing and Council officers (Compact Assessment Board). The Compact Assessment Board then consulted a wider range of tenants and leaseholders about the agreement. The Compact was agreed by the Tenant and Leaseholder Panel, St Georges Community Housing's Board, and the Council's meeting of Cabinet.

The Compact Assessment Board, St Georges Community Housing and the Council regularly monitor and annually review the Compact to make sure that it is achieving its agreed outcomes.

Service Standards

We aim to make sure that we can develop local or themed agreements as and when residents want them to include supporting local community projects and tenants' and residents' groups.

You can influence decisions about the following areas of work:

By giving us your comments, responding to surveys getting involved in various consultation working groups, and through the more formal resident participation structure, you can influence -

- Policies and procedures for carrying out repairs and maintenance, collecting rent and rent arrears, dealing with antisocial behaviour and letting empty properties
- Managing tenancies
- Leaseholder issues and charges
- Sheltered-housing services
- Services for residents who are vulnerable or have a disability
- Various service and performance strategies
- Arrangements for monitoring and reviewing company performance and ensuring that services meet set standards
- Partnering contracts to look at different ways of providing housing services
- Neighbourhood issues which affect your home or how we manage the housing service in your area
- Equality and Diversity issues, including access, and policies on racial harassment, hate crime and domestic violence
- Customer care
- Environmental improvement works
- The way in which we consult with you.

Getting involved

Outcome 2: A variety of ways for you to get involved, in a way and at a level that suits you, and increased satisfaction levels with our resident involvement structure

In the past, Basildon Council and more recently St Georges Community Housing, has focussed on a group of dedicated residents, all who are members of the Tenant and Leaseholder Panel.

Tenant and leaseholder representatives, St Georges Community Housing and Basildon Council are all very aware of the need to increase the number of residents who get involved and this was also a recommendation within the Audit Commission Report of July 2008. To this end, a Resident Involvement Review has been undertaken to find out exactly how our residents want to be involved. Our representatives, however, are continuing to work jointly with St Georges Community Housing and the Council to encourage wider participation from all sections of the community.

This Strategy aims to create more opportunities for residents to get involved by introducing and developing new approaches.

We have developed a 'menu' of options to help you to become involved in a way and at a level that suits you. We will continue to formally consult all our residents using other methods, including the 'St Georges News' newsletter, open days, mail-outs, contract and site meetings, and the more formal methods of community meetings.

Over the last few years we have consulted our tenants and leaseholders on the way in which they wanted their homes managed, Housing Futures, which resulted in Basildon tenants choosing an Arms Length Management organisation.

We know that sometimes, our residents might get fed up with ongoing consultation and want us to, 'Just get on with it!' To deal with this, we will offer you a broad and interesting mix of ways to give us your views. These will include the ways we already consult you, at events such as open days, meetings, surveys, Internet and activities being held in our community buildings, as well as locally-based meetings for residents who want them.

It is recognised, however, that not all residents will wish to, or be able to, become involved but all Compact partners are committed to increasing the numbers involved whenever and wherever possible and are exploring new models and levels of participation to enable residents to have a greater choice in the ways they can get involved.

We recognise and continue to welcome the high level of commitment given by tenant and leaseholder representatives, not only to this process but also to other major reviews aimed at continuously improving our services.

We will actively work to involve more residents and make sure that activities for improving services do not clash and, where possible, are evenly spread over any period of time. We will particularly encourage involvement from our currently under-represented residents and to work with you to break down any barriers that may prevent you from getting involved, in a way that suits you.

There are five levels at which residents can get involved with our organisation –

1. Communication and Information
2. Comments and Feedback
3. Consultation and Informal Involvement
4. Committed Involvement and Monitoring
5. Community Leadership and Control.

The Strategy will allow you to get involved at one or more of these levels. The outcomes are divided below into these levels.

Level 1: Communication and Information

Outcome 3: **For you to regularly receive high-quality information, in appropriate formats, that makes you aware of all relevant housing work and tells you about all opportunities for you to influence our services**

The average level for active resident involvement in the UK is around 2%. We recognise that most residents will want to receive information but not actively take part in any structured events. However, we want to encourage as many residents as possible to get involved.

But, if you choose not to get involved, we need to make sure that you still receive good quality, up-to-date factual information.

We will send you information straight to your home. This will include special newsletters, including the regular newsletter, 'St Georges News', at least every three months, and a Tenants' Handbook, where appropriate. We will also put the information on our website.

All of the information we provide is accurate. We aim to write everything in plain English, and make it available in other formats such as in large print, in Braille, on audiotape, on CD and in other languages. Please see our Communication Strategy for further details on how we will communicate with you.

Level 2: Comments and Feedback

Outcome 4: **To consult you and involve you in making decisions at an early stage, and to have a clear system for this that offers clear responsibility**

We will consult you on the services that we provide which directly affect you or the area in which you live. We will achieve this by way of surveys and through setting up local meetings within the community where appropriate.

In addition, we will record all comments or complaints made about any of our services, whether what we are getting right or where we could improve, and ensure that your views are taken on board to shape and improve our services to you.

We will attend all independent tenants' and residents'- group meetings, if we are invited, wherever possible.

Level 3: Consultation and Informal Involvement

Outcome 5: **Help to achieve continuous improvement in all services through regular resident involvement, and to make the best use of our resources to give value for money.**

Residents are at the heart of our improvement drive. Our various one-off and ongoing resident working and focus groups will examine our services by reviewing the way in which we deliver our services and by regularly monitoring our performance and service-improvement plans.

As we recognise the importance of including your views in all areas of our service delivery, we will undertake comprehensive consultation on all areas of proposed change through surveys and one-off focus groups.

We are not just relying on you to proactively get involved. You have told us that most of you prefer to get involved by way of surveys and we will carry out regular surveys, including a yearly satisfaction survey, to find out how satisfied you are with our performance.

We have set up an involvement database called 'TP Tracker' to better regulate who we consult and on what issues. As part of our annual tenant and leaseholder surveys, you tell us how you want to get involved and the issues that interest you, and this information is fed into and stored on this database. We can then customise our surveys to ensure that we are asking you about the things that you have told us you are interested in, and to make sure that we do not contact you too often. Our aim is to increase the number of residents who give us their views and we are working towards this goal at every opportunity.

If you would like to join our list of specific consultees, we will contact you by post, phone or e-mail or we may ask you to come to focus groups or conference workshops to give us feedback on various aspects of our service, including:

- Your level of satisfaction
- Suggestions for continuous improvement
- Comments on policy changes.

We expect all our services to increase the feedback they get and to use cost-effective ways of consulting people, for example, sending surveys in the same envelopes as rent statements or repairs information and so on.

We will carry out regular satisfaction surveys and compare our levels of resident satisfaction with that of other social landlords, and then share the results with you.

Throughout the process, we will make sure that you know we have listened to your responses, and that we will keep you informed about what we are doing. We will do this through regular feedback in St Georges News, the website and at local meetings throughout the district.

We will try to get as many residents as possible involved at this level as we recognise that it is important for you to be able to be involved in making decisions about our services.

Outcome 6: To help you develop the confidence and skills to get more involved in the process and to be able to access high-quality and well-resourced training

‘We are committed to ensuring that our residents have all the information and skills that they need to get involved at the level of their choice. To achieve this we have a programme of training, including events and courses that are open to all residents, specific training for volunteer workers at the Russell Sharp Resource Centre, and more complex training for our representatives and community leaders.

In addition, we make sure that we train all members of our one-off resident focus and working groups in the area that they will be reviewing.

Level 4: Committed Involvement and Monitoring

Outcome 7: **Active, properly supported and accountable Tenant and Leaseholder Forums, tenants' and residents' meetings, Service Panels – and other involvement groups**

We have developed a mix of existing and new ways for residents to be more formally involved in our resident involvement structures and have systems in place to allow you to review the ways we currently involve our tenants.

By becoming a formal community representative, you can help us to -

- Develop our housing policy and strategy
- Prioritise and assess our options for housing investment and improvements
- Draw up our long-term repair programmes
- Review our anti-social behaviour policies and procedures
- Influence how we manage our organisation
- Help us to monitor performance.

We will also consult leaseholders. We have set up a Leaseholder Forum and ensure leaseholder representation on all relevant Service Panels and other consultative groups to ensure that they are fully involved and consulted before we carry out any work to their shared areas or work where they have to make a financial contribution.

We manage a large number of sheltered schemes and recognise the valuable contribution residents of these schemes made in shaping our Sheltered Housing Service. We continue to involve these residents through the Sheltered Housing Forum.

All reports we send to our Board and committees have a specific section for consultation, to show how we have consulted residents before bringing any decision to a committee or the Board. Whilst some of this consultation is carried out on an informal basis, some consultation is carried out through the more formal resident participation structure.

Level 5: Community Leadership and Control

Outcome 8: For you to be satisfied with the opportunities to influence management, decision-making and service delivery, and feel confident that we will value and act on your input.

One of the functions of our Service Improvement and Performance Committee is to monitor our achievements against our Delivery Plan. To ensure that we have our residents' views in all areas of service improvement, and to enable you to help us to monitor the services that we provide, we have four tenant, one leaseholder and one sheltered housing advisory members on this Committee.

We also have four tenant and one leaseholder non-executive directors who sit on our management Board and who bring a resident view to all issues and decisions made by our Board.

Before making any decisions, we will hold information and training sessions for Board members and stakeholders at important stages.

Our Openness and Confidentiality Policy says that Board meetings will be open to all residents and that we will publish the agendas for meetings five working days before the meetings take place. You can get copies of the agendas at any of our reception areas and St Georges Community Housing's website. These meetings will help you to better understand how the company is run and show you how your views are fed in to our decision-making process.

If you have difficulty coming to meetings, for example because of mobility or language problems, we will work with you to overcome any barriers.

St Georges Community Housing's involvement structure

The five levels of resident involvement

Set out below are all the ways that we involve our residents, at any, or all of the five levels of involvement. Please see **Appendix 1** for details of our resident involvement opportunities.

Level 1: Communication and Information

We will communicate with you through –

- Sign-up pack for new tenants
- Tenants', Leaseholder's, and Sheltered Housing handbooks
- St Georges News
- Sheltered Housing News
- Rent Statements
- Service Charge Statements
- Service standards
- Posters
- Leaflets
- Website - www.sgch.org.uk

Level 2: Comments and Feedback

- Taking part in satisfaction surveys or other initiatives
- Letting us know when you are pleased with the service that you have received, and telling us how and where we can improve
- By visiting our website and leaving comments
- By attending and participating in road shows and outreach events such as "The Basildon Festival"
- One-off and ongoing service panels and working groups

Level 3: Consultation and Informal Involvement

- Being involved in Mystery Shopping exercises
- Participating in Estate Inspections
- Attending and participating at Community Panel Meetings
- Being part of any focus/benchmarking group
- Joining resident working groups and panels
- Contributing to and taking advantage of our training and conference programme.

Level 4: Committed Involvement and Monitoring

- Joining a local resident group
- Starting a local group if there isn't one
- By volunteering to help at the Russell Sharp Resource Centre
- By standing as a representative on a Community Panel
- By becoming a tenant, leaseholder or sheltered housing representative
- By sitting on the –
 - Tenant or Leaseholder Panels
 - Sheltered Housing Forum
 - District Forums
 - Tenant and Leaseholder Panel
 - Service Panels – Repairs, Gas, Voids and Capital Strategy

Level 5: Community Leadership and Control

- By chairing the Tenant and Leaseholder Panel
- By becoming an advisory member of the Service Improvement and Performance Committee
- By becoming a Tenant or Leaseholder Board Member

Supporting you

Some residents will already be actively involved and will have the skills and confidence to get involved with SGCH and the Council on an equal footing. Other residents may be new to involvement, and see their lack of experience as a barrier. The *Resident Involvement Team* will give all residents the help and information they need to be supported through this process.

We will offer help and financial support for childcare and dependants, and travel costs. The *Resident Involvement Team* will support you and identify any training you need. There are more details in the Compact partnership agreement.

We will encourage you to go on training courses and conferences to build up your knowledge and skills, and mix with other residents around the country.

Are we getting it right? -

Reviewing and monitoring

We will deliver the aims set out in this Strategy, which are shown in our yearly action plan. We have also developed a number of key performance indicators (standards we measure our performance against) to make sure we do this.

We will know we have successfully delivered against this Strategy when:

- There are high levels of resident satisfaction with our services;
- There are high levels of resident satisfaction with opportunities to take part in our services;
- More residents are getting involved in our service;
- Service improvements are introduced as a direct result of resident involvement and feedback; and residents are actively involved in the decision-making process.

We will review this Strategy every year and regularly monitor it through our Service Improvement and Performance Committee, the Tenant and Leaseholder Panel, and St Georges Community Housing Board.

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Appendix 1

Resident Involvement Opportunities

1. **St Georges News**

The quarterly resident newsletter provides information on current events at St Georges Community Housing and publicises resident involvement and other services.

We also seek your views through one-off topic-specific surveys to ensure that we give all our residents the opportunity to comment on our services.

St Georges News can be provided in a range of different formats, including different languages, Braille, audiotape or CD, or electronically via the St Georges website.

2. **Annual Satisfaction Surveys**

Every year we send out tenant and leaseholder annual satisfaction surveys, which contain questions that have been discussed with resident focus groups.

These surveys provide an easy opportunity for all residents to be involved at least once a year and help us to collect information about overall resident satisfaction with the services we provide.

We use these results to improve the way in which we deliver our services and to ensure that we are meeting the needs of all our residents.

3. **The Network**

Our resident involvement database, 'TP Tracker', regulates who we consult and on what issues. As part of our annual tenant and leaseholder surveys, you tell us how you want to get involved and the issues that interest you, and this information is fed into and stored on this database. We have developed a 'network', customising our surveys to meet your preferences to ensure that we are asking you about the things that you have told us you are interested in, and to make sure that we do not contact you too often. Our aim is to increase the number of residents who give us their views and we are working towards this goal at every opportunity.

4. **Training**

We have developed a comprehensive training programme, based on the needs of both SGCH and our residents.

Training is delivered in a variety of ways, to ensure that we are removing obstacles to accessing training wherever possible.

5. Mystery Shopping Programme

We have a dedicated and trained group of mystery shoppers who shop the services provided by SGCH on a regular, programmed basis. The results of each mystery shop are analysed and fed back to the Service Improvement and Performance Committee, which sets the programme and monitors any resulting identified actions.

We use local residents to act as 'mystery shoppers' because our own customers are the best people to test the quality of our services.

Once our services have been tested, Service Managers and the Board receive reports and consider any improvements that need to be made. Each mystery shopper is rewarded for their time and effort with high street vouchers.

6. Estate Inspections

Estate inspections are carried out by community representatives and SGCH staff. These inspections may also include other partners, such as the local police, Essex County Council and Basildon Council officers and Councillors, dependant upon the local issues.

7. Environmental Champions

Environmental Champions are local residents who have a particular interest in environmental issues, especially environmental improvement works. These Champions are self-nominated and need to meet a standard criteria. The Champions recommend to the Tenant and Leaseholder Panel the preferred Environmental Projects for the following year.

8. Focus/benchmarking/working groups

Benchmarking and working groups consist of residents who have a specific interest in a particular subject, such as communication or correspondence, and are involved in reviewing a specific strategy or service area.

Focus Groups are also service topic based, for example; Estate Cleaning, where we ask a cross section of residents for their views and help towards making improvements to our services. These groups are set up and meet as required.

Once you are 'signed up' we will consult you from time to time on matters of interest, using one of the following methods: phone or email, a personal visit, a postal survey, or by inviting you to a Focus Group or informal meeting.

9. Community Panel Meetings or local forums

There are currently nine Community Panels, each made up of local residents, and covers a particular area within the Basildon District. Local Councillors and other external partners, such as the police, attend Community Panel meetings but the meetings are run by tenants and leaseholders themselves.

10. Training events and conferences

A comprehensive training programme is agreed each year and is dependent upon the needs of residents, community representatives and SGCH.

11. Local resident groups

(or starting a local group if there isn't one)

Some of our tenants may wish to be represented by a local Resident Association or similar group. Where this is requested, we will work with the group to ensure that have a mandate to represent a defined area, that they meet a simple recognition criteria and are open, accountable and are run as democratic, non-political groups.

12. Russell Sharp Resource Centre

The Russell Sharp Resource Centre is run by a group of dedicated volunteers, who have received specialist training to ensure that the advice they give is accurate and up-to-date.

These volunteers give help and advice on a range of issues, from repairs to benefits and also help local groups and individual to access funding for local projects, though the Grant Finder database.

Volunteers at the Centre also give support to local recognised residents groups, who are able to use the facilities at the centre, including the computers, photocopying and booking the centre for meetings etc.

13. Becoming a tenant, leaseholder, sheltered housing or resident representative

It is vitally important to St Georges Community Housing that we provide a first class housing service all our residents can take pride in.

We can only truly achieve this with the help and involvement of our residents. To continuously maintain and improve our services we need to pay attention to their needs and priorities, which is why we actively encourage residents to tell us what they think we are doing well and what we need to improve upon.

14. Tenant Panel

The Tenant Panel meets quarterly and deals with issues specific to tenants. It is made up of nine tenant representatives. (One from each Community Panel unless agreed otherwise by the Tenant Panel). A tenant deputy, nominated from each Community Panel, may attend, as may two tenant representatives nominated by the Sheltered Housing Forum and a tenant deputy, elected from the Sheltered Housing Forum.

15. Leaseholder Panel

The Leaseholder Panel meets quarterly and considers issues that are important to leaseholders, such as:

- service charges
- major repairs programmes
- insurance costs
- general lease matters.

Any Basildon Council leaseholder may attend a quarterly Leaseholder Panel meeting by prior arrangement.

St Georges also holds a Leaseholder Annual Forum, which is again open to all our leaseholders, and at which they are welcome to give us their views.

16. Sheltered Housing Forum

The Sheltered Housing Forum considers issues specific to sheltered housing residents and is made up of two tenant and two leasehold sheltered housing representatives from each Sheltered Housing Scheme. The Forum meets quarterly.

17. Service Panels – Repairs, Gas, Voids and Capital Strategy

To become a member of a St Georges Service or Policy Panel you must already be a Community Representative.

There is a time commitment involved in being a regular Panel member, which is mainly in the daytime and/or occasional evenings.

The work, however, is varied and interesting and your involvement will help us to improve our services to our residents.

Here are some examples of SGCH service panels: -

- Repairs Panel
- Capital Strategy and Budget Panel
- Voids Panel (empty properties)
- Gas Panel

18. Tenant and Leaseholder Panel

The Tenant and Leaseholder Panel provides the mechanisms to deal with housing policy and strategic matters as well as matters referred to from individual Community Panels. The Panel also promotes the role of community representatives and resident participation within the Council and SGCH.

The Panel enables elected tenant and leaseholder representatives to communicate their opinions to the Housing and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the Council and St Georges Community Housing officers, other council departments and statutory bodies. The Panel also forms part of the process by which the Council and St Georges Community Housing feeds information to community panels, specialist panels and individual tenants and leaseholders. Four tenant representatives, one leasehold representative and one sheltered housing representative are eligible to sit on the Council's Housing and Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee and speak on behalf of representatives on the Tenant and Leasehold Panel.

The Panel meets monthly and consists of one representative and one deputy representative from each Community Panel, plus two leaseholder representatives and two representatives from the Sheltered Housing Forum.

Community representatives who are not members of the Tenant and Leaseholder Panel may attend open meetings to observe and to contribute at the discretion of the Chair. In line with SGCH Openness and Confidentiality Policy, all meetings of SGCH are open to the public and press.

19. Compact Assessment Board

This Board meets annually to review the Resident Involvement Compact and recommends any changes to this document to the Tenant and Leaseholder Panel.

20. Service Improvement and Performance Committee

This Committee is made up of nine members of the Management Board, selected by the Board, and six tenant and leaseholder representatives, selected by the Tenant and Leaseholder Panel.

The main role of this Committee is to monitor the performance of SGCH, including customer complaints, and to make recommendations on any proposals to make significant changes to its activities or business.

21. The Management Board

The Board is made up of 15 non-executive Company directors who meet regularly to review and make decisions on SGCH's housing management policy and strategy. The Board has overall responsibility for directing the Company's business, and for making sure the Company operates within the terms of its official management agreement with Basildon District Council.

The Board members comprise five independent members, five local Councillors, and four tenant and one leaseholder members. The tenant and leaseholder Board members are voted on to the Board by the Tenant and Leaseholder Panel, after a thorough recruitment and selection process.

Resident Involvement Strategy Action Plan

(To be developed following consultation and with the agreement of the Compact Assessment Board and Tenant and Leaseholder Panel)

Objective	Action	Timescale	Outcome	Future
To have a well-established, effective and comprehensive partnership agreement (Resident Participation Compact)	Produce new Compact 2009 –2012.	April 2009	Compact Produced, distributed and placed on web site	Review annually
To develop a variety of ways of involvement, at different levels, and increased satisfaction levels with our resident involvement structure	Using results of consultation, develop a menu of options which meet the involvement needs of our residents.	TBA	Menu of options introduced, advertised and recruited to. Awareness sessions / information sheets provided to all sections of St Georges.	Monitor take-up of menu options and numbers participating. Review after one year and make recommendations for improvement.
	Include menu of options in Compact	April 2009	Increased numbers of residents participating in the work of St Georges	Identify and feed into future review

Objective	Action	Timescale	Outcome	Future
<p>For you to regularly receive high-quality information, in appropriate formats, that makes you aware of all relevant housing work and tells you about all opportunities for you to influence our services</p>	<p>Produce 4 St Georges News and 2 Sheltered Housing News publications per year. Ensure they are available in different formats where possible and practical.</p>	<p>On going</p>	<p>Newsletters produced on time and to a professional standard in a variety of formats, using the principles outlined in the Communications Strategy.</p>	<p>Carry out satisfaction survey on newsletters annually</p>
<p>To consult you and involve you in making decisions at an early stage, and to have a clear system for this that offers clear responsibility</p>	<p>Formulate guidelines on who to consult on any given issue.</p> <p>To begin identifying customers areas of interest and preferred methods</p>	<p>Feb 2009</p> <p>Feb 2009</p>	<p>Guidelines rolled out to all front St Georges officers</p> <p>Information placed on TP Tracker software. TP Tracker used as primary tool in identifying participants</p>	<p>Review guidelines to ensure they remain relevant to statutory obligations and our residents' needs.</p> <p>Regularly update database as information is received and /or changed</p>

Glossary of Terms

Advisory member	A non-voting member of a meeting
SGCH	St Georges Community Housing
Voids	Empty properties awaiting letting