

Corporate Plan

Customer Involvement Framework

2019 - 2022



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Introduction

We were created in 2007 and are a locally based Housing Association in and around Northamptonshire with a commitment to:

- Develop a diverse range of new homes to meet local needs
- Work with our customers to provide **great** homes and Value for Money services
- Invest in communities where it supports our customers and protects our business

Our mission

We will work successfully with our customers and communities to provide **great** services and high quality living environments.

Our values



Respect

We will treat each other and anyone who deals with us with respect and recognise everyone as an individual.



Trust

We will be open and honest with our colleagues, customers and external partners and we will deliver on the commitments that we make.



One Team

We will be one team, working collaboratively, listening and communicating clearly with our customers, to deliver **great** services.



Empowered

We will be bold, progressive, seek to empower our customers and be confident in the decisions we make.



Efficient and Effective

We will work efficiently and effectively, continuously looking for ways to improve and deliver Value for Money.



Executive Summary

Our new Corporate Plan 2019 - 2022 is based on the four key strategies of:

- Transforming our Future
- Growth
- Asset Management
- Finance

The Corporate Plan Customer Involvement Framework is one of four frameworks which underpin the strategies.

Housing has emerged as a key policy area at a national level. Future policy challenges relating to Universal Credit, social care, homelessness and poverty are all connected to housing, and we will need to ensure that the voice of our customers help shape the way we respond whilst delivering **great** services and high quality living environments.

The recent Housing Green Paper 'A New Deal for Social Housing' has shown a move towards strengthening the customer voice through effective complaints resolution, empowering customers and strengthening the regulator. However,

the means by which this will happen are not yet clear. Recent events have shown that failing to listen to customers and their concerns can have big consequences.

The purpose of this framework is:

'Customer involvement is fully embedded across our organisation with evidence that we are listening and responding to the customer voice'.

We will do this by:

- Effectively recruiting and retaining customers
- Offering flexible opportunities and channels of engagement
- Demonstrating the difference our customers make
- Maintaining a strong and consistent involvement structure

This framework will be reviewed on an annual basis and measured by a combination of key performance indicators and operational performance indicators (KPIs and OPIs).



Context

This framework sets out our approach to ensure that the customer voice is heard throughout the organisation. It is one of four corporate frameworks that underpin our four key strategies:

- Transforming our Future
- Growth
- Asset Management
- Finance

Customer and community involvement is not an isolated activity, nor should it be driven by the Customer Involvement Team in isolation. The success of our mission depends on us all working with customers to provide the **great** services they expect.

This means that we will need to understand how our involved customers deliver real benefits to support our work, and how the work we do affects customers and their communities.

When making decisions, big or small, we need to be mindful of the consequences for our customers and communicate these transparently. We need to ensure we involve customers at the earliest opportunity to influence and shape what we do. Wherever customers suggest alternative actions we will

consider and respond to them fairly. Social housing is under increased public scrutiny and the customer voice, along with the importance of the Regulatory Standards relating to involvement, has been brought back to the forefront of landlord and customer relationships.

The National Housing Federation (NHF) responded swiftly in November 2017 and consulted widely with customers to develop 'Our Offer to Tenants', a voluntary charter set up to demonstrate improved accountability and oversight through peer reviews and possible accreditation.

This was followed by a series of Government announcements including a return to inflation plus rent settlement and the scrapping of the local housing allowance (LHA) cap for social and supported housing. These went some way to suggest that the previous desire to deliver housing, primarily via home ownership had shifted. The Prime Minister's announcement in October 2018 that previous local authority borrowing caps had been lifted went further in this regard.

The Government's own Green Paper, 'A New Deal for Social Housing' followed to discuss

how the regulator might be further empowered with regards to the consumer standards and strengthen the customer voice through more effective and streamlined responses to complaints.

Since 2015 we have made significant progress meeting our challenging targets and delivering achievements of which we are immensely proud. In December 2017 we celebrated our 10th anniversary since the stock transfer from the Borough Council of Wellingborough.

We are a financially strong, well-managed and ambitious organisation, and were recently awarded V1 G1 status from the Regulator following an in depth assessment in September 2018.

We have continued to place the voice of the customer at the heart of all that we do from the office to the board room. We are extremely proud to have been invited to share our experience of strengthening the links between customers and the Board by the Chartered Institute of Housing, Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS,) Housing Quality Network and East Midlands Tenant Participation Framework.



Over the life of our Corporate Plan 2019 - 2022 we will continue to ensure the customer voice is heard whilst developing additional ways for customers to become involved (via online methods for example). We will also ensure that we provide feedback to our customers in a consistent manner whilst highlighting the value that involvement brings to the organisation.

Corporate Plan 2019 - 2022

Our areas of focus for 2019 - 2022 are based around four key strategies of:

- Transforming our Future: Implementing our Customer Charter and new ways of delivering services. Embracing digital technology and identifying efficiencies.
- Growth: Increasing the number of homes we own and manage for ourselves and others, expansion and/or improvement of our Customer Charter and increasing our financial capacity through enhanced asset value.
- Asset Management: Providing well maintained, safe and secure homes and high quality living environments that meet the needs of our current and future customers.
- Finance: Ensuring we have secure long term funding in place to achieve our

aspirations to deliver 1,000 additional homes over the next 10 years, invest in our existing homes and estates, and that we remain a financially strong business.

The Customer Charter

Throughout 2018 we worked with our customers to develop and design the Customer Charter. We also created our set of customer commitments, based on the Regulatory Standards, to support delivery of the Customer Charter. These were launched in April 2019.

There are four distinct sections of the Customer Charter, including **great** Value for Money services, high quality living environments, **great** homes and working with customers and communities.

The following statements are taken from our Customer Charter for 'Working with Customers and Communities':

- *"We will work with partners and invest in your communities where it supports you and us."*
- *"We will always listen to you and provide a variety of ways for you to shape and influence our services."*
- *"We will be clear about what your*

responsibilities are, and what we expect from you."

- *"We will support you where possible to live independently."*
- *"We will offer advice and support on money matters, employment and getting online."*

From this we can see that we have the right corporate priorities, underpinned by a framework that ensures customers are at the heart of our endeavours, meaning we are able to deliver against customer needs, both now and in the years to come.

Our framework will enable us to exceed the required regulatory standards and ensure positive outcomes for our customers through delivery of the following:

- Ensuring our involvement framework delivers effective co-regulation.
- Creating a menu of opportunities to maximise involvement and engagement.
- Recruiting, supporting and sustaining our customers to get involved.
- Aiming to ensure involvement is diverse and representative of our customer base.
- Enabling involvement in service improvements.
- Ensuring improved customer satisfaction.



Key achievements over the past four years

Since 2015 we have made some significant steps to ensure that our customers are at the heart of what we do, have the skills to be our critical friend when designing new initiatives, and are informed and empowered to challenge if we do not meet their expectations.

Our key achievements over the life of the previous Customer and Community Investment Strategy 2015 – 2019 are listed below. We:

- Developed and implemented a new customer involvement framework, consisting of Customer Assembly (CA) Customer Scrutiny Panel (CSP) and Service User Panels.
- Aligned Service User Panels with the Consumer Standards to enable effective self-assessment against each.
- Introduced a wide range of opportunities for involvement, including mystery shopping, Neighbourhood Champions and digital panels.
- Introduced Housing Association Charitable Trust (HACT) methodology to measure the impact of customer involvement and community investment and achieved an average ratio of 1:9 against a target of 1:6.
- Involved customers in the recruitment of staff and Board Members.
- Presented our 'sector leading' approach to strengthening links between customers and the Board to the CIH, HQN, TPAS and EMTPF.
- Developed the Training Academy to enhance customers' training needs and employability prospects with 545 customers successfully completing training (2015 - 19).
- Involved customers in the procurement of new contracts generating savings of over £16,500 per annum.
- Implemented 21 services following feedback from customers (thereby delivering consistent upper quartile performance in this area).
- Our Customer Scrutiny Panel completed seven service scrutinies across all of our areas including repairs, Anti-Social Behaviour, estate services, customer involvement and garages management.
- Created a clear and successful pathway for customers to progress from Panel to Board membership.



Purpose & Objectives

The purpose of this framework is simple. We will strive to ensure that **'customer involvement is fully embedded across our organisation with evidence that we are listening and responding to the customer voice'**.

We will do this by...

- 1 Effectively recruiting and retaining customers**
- 2 Offering flexible opportunities and channels of engagement**
- 3 Demonstrating the difference our customers make**
- 4 Maintaining a strong and consistent structure**

These objectives were proposed by customers and agreed by Board. We have also sourced feedback from TPAS and included it in this framework.

Effectively recruiting and training customers

We need to recruit and retain a diverse range of customers that reflect our wider customer group to ensure that our services meet their needs, and the needs of future customers.

We will ensure that each of our customer panels have sufficient numbers for them to be effective. We will also provide succession opportunities for customers to develop their skills and experiences working with us. This might be moving from a remote panel (such as mystery shoppers) towards a customer panel and from a customer panel towards Board membership.

We will ensure that we provide an effective induction to new involved customers and tailor their interests to the opportunities on offer.

We will ensure that involved customers know what they can expect from us, and in turn what we expect from them.

We will ensure our customers have the right skills to be able to engage with us at different levels through our training academy and other providers.

Offering flexible opportunities and channels of engagement

We want to ensure that our customers are able to work in whatever way suits them. For some this might be working on an in depth scrutiny of our services, whilst for others it may be making an online contribution or observation that does not require attendance at a customer panel.

We will ensure we continue to offer a range of flexible opportunities for customer to be involved.

We will ensure that we listen and respond to the customer voice, be it from complaints, neighbourhood walkabouts, surveys or task and finish groups, and provide evidence that we have listened.

As technology develops, we will need to ensure that our customers can engage with us through the platform of their choice, from social media and virtual meetings through to telephone, face to face and email.

We will ensure that we are visible to our customers in the neighbourhoods that we manage and in our online presence.



Demonstrating the difference our customers make

Customers have told us that we need to show that we have listened, and acted on their feedback.

We will do this by setting up key measurements to show we have listened, acted and to show the value of that feedback.

We will ensure that we have a consistent feedback mechanism which shows staff and customers the difference our involved customers make.

We will use a variety of methods to demonstrate the difference our customers make, ranging from corporate briefings to articles on our website and social media platforms.

Maintain a strong & consistent structure

We will make certain that each of our panels is effective, ensuring that our involved customers have the right training and skills to support and challenge us.

We will evidence good governance through having a consistent structure of engagement.

Each of our panels will have complimentary forward plans and feedback routes, down to agenda setting and minutes.

We will aim to ensure that our involved customers are representative of our wider customer base, and therefore able to represent customers' aims and expectations effectively.

We will continue to maintain good links between customers and the Board and also between customers and staff at all levels of the organisation.



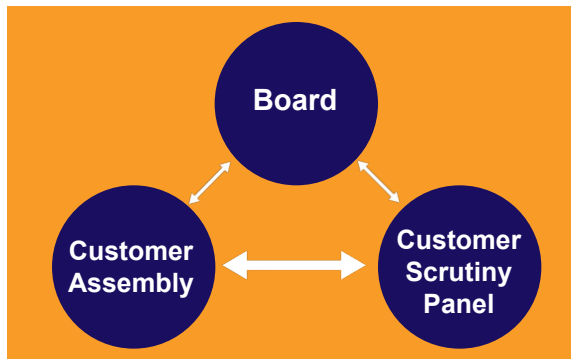
Delivering the framework

In delivering the Customer Involvement Framework, we will strengthen the existing structure whilst seeking to deliver improvements where possible. Our customer involvement structure is shown below.



Should customer requirements necessitate changes to this structure (e.g. the creation of a new panel or completing objectives through ‘task and finish’ groups) then we will consider this in conjunction with the Customer Assembly.

Our customers’ influence on our governance and relationship with the Board is illustrated in the diagram below.



Key actions to delivering this framework are listed in the table to the right.

Customers will monitor performance through the Customer Assembly and will be involved in target setting on an annual basis as part of the business planning cycle.

What we will do	How this links to our objectives
Refresh our initial contact, recruitment and induction.	Effective recruitment and retention. Offering flexible opportunities and channels of engagement.
Implement a clear and structured training plan developed by CA and agreed by Board.	Effective recruitment and retention. Maintain a strong & consistent structure.
Research and develop a rewards or incentives programme.	Demonstrating the difference our customers make.
Develop new ways to show the value of involvement.	Demonstrating the difference our customers make.
Consider ‘gamification’ (the use of competitions and league tables for example) as a technique to embed customer involvement.	Effective recruitment and retention. Offering flexible opportunities and channels of engagement. Demonstrating the difference our customers make.
Implement the recommendations made by the CSP following the scrutiny of customer involvement.	Demonstrating the difference our customers make. Maintain a strong & consistent structure.



Outcomes

By achieving the objectives of this framework we will be able to realise benefits for us and our stakeholders, but more importantly for our customers. We will have created and enabled value across the whole organisation thereby challenging the perceived stigma associated with being a customer of a registered provider.

- Customer Involvement will be embedded across all areas of our organisation and we can evidence 'listening' and 'responding' to the customer voice.
- Customers will be given timely and efficient feedback – using 'you said, we did!' principles.
- We will share the value and expertise of our involved customers, through our website and social media channels.
- Our involved customers will feel valued and appropriately rewarded.
- We will continue to measure the impact of our customer and community engagement functions.
- We will increase our involved customers.
- We will increase our online engagement.
- We will develop and participate in 'sector leading' best practice, looking outside of the sector for new ideas.
- Our service will be externally evaluated and accredited by TPAS.



Measuring success

In order to measure success in the delivery of this framework we will be using a combination of new and existing OPIs.

The customer involvement structure mirrors and supports the Regulator's consumer standards so that our customers can assess our compliance against the standards with confidence as shown in the table to the right.

Consumer standard	Our service panel
Tenant Involvement & Empowerment Standard	Customer Assembly Panel
Home Standard	Asset & Development Panel*
Tenancy Standard	Neighbourhood Services Panel*
Neighbourhood and Community Standard	Neighbourhood Services Panel*

*The Customer Assembly Panel agree and sign off all self-assessments from relevant service panels prior to Board submission.

Targets will be set as part of the annual Corporate Planning cycle and will be aligned to priorities, strategies and risks. Individuals will have objectives set as part of their yearly appraisals which compliment these targets.

Measure	Link to
Number of involved customers (including digital/mystery shoppers)	OPI
Number of involved customers retained after 12 months (including digital/mystery shoppers)	OPI
Percentage of panels with full membership	OPI
Percentage of customers satisfied with opportunities to become involved	STAR metric
Percentage of customers satisfied that we listen to views and act on them	STAR metric
Percentage of customers feel valued for their work	OPI
Number of service scrutinies completed	OPI
Percentage of scrutiny recommendations completed within target	OPI
Number of services changed or improved following customer involvement	HouseMark
Social value ratio	HACT
Number of mystery shops completed per quarter	OPI
Percentage of mystery shops rated good or above	OPI
Percentage of follow up mystery shops rated good or above	OPI
Number of customers receiving training or support during financial year	OPI
TPAS accreditation/retention (this will be measured once accreditation is achieved)	TPAS



Monitoring the framework

References

In order to ensure our objectives are met we will review this framework on an annual basis and report the outcomes of the review to the Customer Assembly and the Executive Management Team.

To demonstrate that we listen to the customer voice and act on it, we will meet quarterly with the Customer Scrutiny Panel to provide assurance that we have undertaken their recommendations.

OPIs will be reported by exception to the quarterly performance and assurance clinics (PAC).

We will report our annual impact assessment for customer and community involvement to the Customer Assembly, the Executive Management Team and the Board.

Where performance metrics are available to benchmark, we will do so on a quarterly basis via Housemark.

Customers will review our compliance with each of the consumer standards in the regulatory framework.

Corporate Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Underpins the Corporate Plan 2019 - 2022.
Growth Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring appropriate consultation for stock acquisitions and merger opportunities.
Transforming Our Future Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing digital channels of engagement. Ensuring we utilise our resources on those who need us most. Embedding the right internal culture.
Asset Management Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring that customers help shape and prioritise capital spend. Involving customers in procurement of outside contracts.
Finance Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring that our investments reflect customer priorities.
Privacy and equality implications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring that our involvement opportunities are open and accessible to all. Moving towards online processes and agile services could disadvantage customers who are digitally excluded. However, new customer intelligence will actually allow us to focus on those customers that are more vulnerable.
Customer consultation and implications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Customer Assembly was consulted and agreed the principles of this framework in December 2018. The framework and the objectives were developed following the CSP scrutiny of customer involvement in 2018.





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