

HARROW COMPACT SUMMARY

Harrow Council and the Harrow Federation of Tenant and Resident Associations (HFTRA) wants all tenants and leaseholders to have their say on how their homes - and the environment nearby - is run.

Our aim is for all tenants and leaseholders to get involved so they can shape and influence our services. The compact sets out what we want to achieve by working together

Our vision for involving residents

Our vision is for all tenants and leaseholders to live in neighbourhoods they are proud of and to create real opportunities for residents to be involved in improving their housing services and quality of life.

Our aims

We will work together to make sure that we keep tenants and leaseholders properly informed and consult and involve them. We will make sure that as many of our residents as possible have better opportunities to take part in their housing services and in managing and maintaining their homes and local neighbourhoods. We are also committed to including tenants and leaseholders from all sections of the community. For example, residents who may not speak English as a first language, have a disability or are vulnerable. And we promise to listen to residents, respond to what they tell us and improve communication

Opportunities for involving residents

We want to offer tenants and leaseholders opportunities to get involved across the full range of housing services and with wider community issues. We will monitor and review what residents see as priorities for involvement. We will monitor and review the types of involvement being developed to make sure it is effective and that we are meeting residents' needs and priorities.

What residents can get involved in

We will invite tenants and leaseholders to get involved in housing policy decisions including investment, renovation, rent setting and monitoring. Residents will also be consulted on repairs and maintenance, collecting rent and tackling arrears and anti social behaviour.

How residents can get involved

We will offer the widest possible range of opportunities to as many residents as possible to encourage people to get involved as much or as little as they want, when and how they want.

As well as encouraging the development of tenants' and residents' associations we will offer a wide range of other methods to gather residents' views and encourage them to get involved in all aspects of improving how services are delivered. These will include:

- newsletters, surveys and questionnaires;
- mystery shoppers (people who pretend to use a service to measure the customer service provided);
- open days, fun days and a youth forum
- and a range of forums for leaseholders, young people, disabled people and other groups.
- estate and neighbourhood 'walkabouts' and inspections

Support available to residents

Reasonable financial help

- We will provide financial help to residents' associations such as start up grants of £250 per year, paying hire costs for rooms and expenses to residents who give up their time.

Facilities

- We will provide stationery, access to meeting rooms and equipment such as computers and photocopiers.

Advice and practical support

- We will provide advice for all recognised residents groups and well as help producing information such as newsletters.

Training

- We will provide many training opportunities for resident groups and their representatives at convenient times and different venues across the borough.

New approaches

We will provide a variety of different options for residents to become involved such as

- cultural activities, arts and sports to encourage new residents to get involved.
- a menu of options for involving residents;
- holding a youth forum each year; and
- providing publicity in different formats and 'introductory letters' to new tenants and leaseholders inviting them to get involved.

Meetings and discussion events

The council, and recognised residents' groups have set these standards to make sure there is effective communication, feedback, dialogue, and negotiation between the council, residents and recognised residents' groups. We back up these standards with our agreed 'code of conduct' for our officers and resident representatives.

Publicity and feedback

We will advertise meetings at least 10 days in advance through newsletters, our website, posters and by phone where necessary. Using the same methods, and face to face meetings, we will feedback to our residents in three weeks.

Access to services

To make sure all residents have opportunities to take part, we will hold meetings and events:

- at times and in accessible venues to allow as many residents as possible to take part;

We will also help by:

- helping groups fund premises to make sure these are accessible to people with disabilities;
- helping with transport costs or providing transport when necessary;
- providing crèche facilities and care facilities or paying towards the cost of childcare or other care; and
- providing signers, interpreters, and induction loops when necessary.

Effectiveness

All meetings will:

- have clear aims and a clear agenda agreed beforehand with resident representatives;
- be run in a fair and democratic way so that everyone gets a chance to have their say; and
- be monitored and reviewed by us and resident representatives to check effectiveness, levels of resident satisfaction and input from traditionally under-represented sections of the community.

Information and feedback

The council and recognised resident organisations aim to make sure that information consistently meets the needs of residents and resident representatives through the following standards.

Access to services

When requested we will provide information and feedback in plain English, different languages and other formats such as Braille and audio. We will provide prepaid envelopes and prize draws to encourage feedback from residents.

We will provide information using:

- newsletters (borough-wide and local);
- letters and leaflets;
- posters, noticeboards, and exhibitions;
- e-mail and our website;
- face-to-face contact with resident representatives, councillors and our staff;
- meetings of resident groups, the HFTRA and the Tenant and Leaseholder Consultative Forum (TLCF); and
- specific forums for young people, people from different ethnic groups, and people with disabilities.

Timeliness

We will provide information for residents about performance and any proposed changes to policy, standards and performance every three months and residents will have at least three weeks to respond to any consultation.

Quality and relevance

We will test how satisfied residents are with information each year.

Residents' groups and residents' representatives

Everyone involved in this compact want residents' groups to have an active role in our decision-making processes. These standards aim to make sure that residents' groups properly represent and answer to the tenants and leaseholders for whom they act. For example they must:

- be open to all residents in the area, be representative and keep financial records
- hold regular meetings and try to include under represented groups
- have a clearly defined area, elected representatives to run the group and an equal opportunities policy in place.
- have the support of at least ten per cent of households in the area.

Involving residents from all sections of our community

We will develop action plans to help involve all sections of our community.

- We will keep a record of the make-up of our overall community and keep up-to-date records of ethnic origin, sex and disability and use the information to tailor our approach to involving residents.
- We will consult with and involve all under-represented sections of our community, for example, through focus groups, community groups, and forums such as the disabled forum.
- We will make sure that information is available in languages other than English, when requested, and in accessible formats to meet residents' needs.
- We will make sure that under-represented sections of our community know how they can be involved.
- We will work with existing residents' groups to help them represent the views of under-represented groups in their community so all communities understand and respect each others' needs.
- We will promote awareness of the Race Relations Amendment Act and the Disability Discrimination Act and how these acts can affect voluntary groups and resident involvement.

- We will monitor our equal opportunities policies including levels of involvement from people from traditionally under-represented sections of our community

Monitoring and measuring performance

We will monitor the success of this compact and report back to residents and the HFTRA on the value for money of the different approaches to resident involvement. We will make sure we keep to agreed procedures for consultation and involvement. If we do not meet standards and targets, we will agree action with the HFTRA.

Roles and responsibilities

Our officers and representatives of our residents have agreed roles and responsibilities to make sure we can deliver this compact fully.

Resident representation

We encourage all residents to make sure they are represented by a resident representative or a resident group. We and the HFTRA have agreed conditions to register representatives and for support for different levels of involvement.

Local representation

Local ‘contacts’ or block, neighbourhood and street representatives

A local contact may be a preferred method if individual street properties are involved. A resident may volunteer to be the ‘contact point’ for council officers and may also choose to be the ‘contact point’ for other residents. Or a resident can be elected by other residents to act on their behalf in any negotiations with the council.

The role of ‘local contacts’ and elected representatives is to:

- help monitor and give feedback on services for example, cleaning the estate, maintaining grounds and improvement work;
- check with other residents that repairs are carried out to a satisfactory level.
- pass on any local issues of concern to the council or the HFTRA
- meet our staff and councillors and take part in ‘walkabouts’ and ‘estate, block and street inspections’.

Local tenants and leaseholders’ groups

Tenants, leaseholders and other residents can organise groups to act as formal representatives on behalf of other residents living in a certain area, in any negotiations with the council and other organisations.

Their role is to:

- gather residents’ views on delivering services, performance, improvement work, priorities for action or improvement;
- monitor performance and feedback on how services are delivered on behalf of other residents;
- take part in consultation and negotiation with the council;

- meet with council officers, local councillors and other residents to take part in 'walkabouts' and 'estate or neighbourhood inspections'.

AREA REPRESENTATION

Harrow Federation of Tenants and Residents' Associations & other groups

HFTRA is the formally recognised group covering the whole of Harrow, made up of representatives from all resident and community groups. Their role is to:

- involve customers in providing housing services;
- monitor the performance of housing teams, contractors and other parts of the housing service;
- develop new ideas and methods for solving council-housing problems;
- consider wider community problems and find solutions to them;
- advise the relevant manager on local priorities for providing housing services and using resources;
- advise the relevant manager on developing an area strategy; and
- work with other groups and organisations.

Borough-wide representation

Tenants' and Leaseholders Consultative Forum (TLFC)

This committee is made up of representatives from the HFTRA, focus groups, forums, tenant management organisations and community groups. The TLFC provides a two way link between residents and the council.

Their role is to:

- consider issues relating to managing housing and provide information, advice and feedback to the council;
- consider wider community problems and propose solutions, such as tackling crime.
- set clear service standards and targets for consulting and involving residents;
- monitor and evaluate different approaches to resident involvement and review our policy and strategy;
- check that we consult and involve residents from all parts of the community;
- assess the results of operating agreements against what was originally expected

Council Housing Staff

Our role is to:

- make sure the compact is put into practice and regularly monitored and reviewed;
- along with the HFTRA, monitor and review resident-involvement standards, targets, and levels of resident satisfaction with our performance;
- check that we develop and put in practice appropriate measures of performance involving residents;
- along with the HFTRA, take action when needed;
- find out about best practice and take part in monitoring with resident representatives and the HFTRA;
- publicise and take part in 'walkabouts' and local inspections every six months with resident representatives;
- go to meetings of resident groups and representatives as and when asked;

- check that follow-up action is taken on matters raised by residents and make sure we give feedback to all residents;
- check that resident associations, resident representatives, the area housing boards and the HFTRA are kept fully informed and have the resources they need;
- take part in joint training with resident groups and representatives.

Harrow Council

Chief officers, elected members and the urban living portfolio holder

Their role is to:

- check that policy on involving residents is properly developed, put in place and monitored;
- support a co-ordinated approach to consultation and involvement;
- help monitoring our performance and resident involvement at ward level and across the council;
- check that tenants' views are heard and take action to find out what tenants are saying by meeting tenants locally;
- check that vulnerable people are identified and supported and encouraged to get involved;
- support our initiatives by taking part in activities such as estate walkabouts and inspections, residents' meetings, and discussion groups;
- check that council tenants and leaseholders are satisfied with our performance;
- check that all arrangements we have put in place for involving residents receive the resources needed; and
- take part in joint training with our staff and residents.

If you would like to get involved in helping to shape our services, please contact:

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