

# **TENANT AND RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY**

**2008 - 2011**

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## **Definitions and abbreviations used in this document**

**Tenant** – The council tenancy holder/s, leaseholder/s and any other member of their household. This definition of “Tenant” relates to this document only. It does not give household members any of the legal rights that tenants themselves have.

**Resident** – Anyone who’s main residence is within the district of South Kesteven.

**SKDC** - South Kesteven District Council

# **South Kesteven District Council**

## **Foreword**

*“Resident involvement is now central to government and local organisations’ approach to the delivery of housing services.”*

(Housing: Improving services through resident involvement, Audit Commission, 2004)

Tenancy Services is dedicated to providing opportunities for tenants to become involved in the management of their homes and their local communities. We will develop diverse, innovative structures that take account of individual needs, enabling effective participation by all tenants and residents.

South Kesteven District Council embraces the views of tenants and residents and will continue to offer opportunities for them to influence the way in which local services are delivered.

We believe that good tenant and resident involvement leads to decision making that truly reflects local needs, leading to improved and empowered communities.

SKDC have created a Resident Involvement Team tasked with delivering “Brilliant” involvement that delivers the services you want.

Tenancy Services Resident Involvement Strategy outlines its vision for involving all resident groups.

Let’s make a difference, together!

## **Resident Involvement in South Kesteven**

Tenancy Services is committed to involving its tenants in the management of their homes and communities.

Tenancy Services has based this strategy on the three following principles:

- To involve tenants in the management of their homes and review and develop the services they receive.
- Resident and groups will be supported and encouraged at a level and pace decided by themselves.
- To seek the views, promote and advance the interests of all residents within the district of South Kesteven on housing, communities and other matters that affect their quality of life.

Resident involvement is an active, continually changing process of developing new opportunities for involvement.

## **Aims and Objectives**

To increase the number of residents participating, to truly reflect the diverse population of South Kesteven, by introducing innovative ways in which to participate.

To encourage all resident to be actively involved in the decision making process, with Tenancy Services.

To provide involvement and participation opportunities at levels and times and that are accessible to all.

To provide clear and responsive consultation, using the feedback to continually develop our delivery of brilliant housing services.

South Kesteven District Council will ensure its employees promote involvement and participate in the process. This will be achieved through training, internal communication and the promotion of good practice to embed resident involvement in our activities.

Where complaints are received, we will use them as an opportunity to learn how and why things have gone wrong and take appropriate action to stop a recurrence.

## **Communication**

To encourage and enable good communication we will use the following methods:

**Telephone** – Conduct telephone surveys asking opinions and/or feedback on proposals.

**Email** – Email consultations, bulletins, flyers, invitations and other relevant information.

**Website** - South Kesteven District Council's website has a link to Resident Involvement so you can find out information first hand. This strategy is posted on the SKDC website. If there is anything you wish to know that is not currently on the website there is a feedback form you can fill in and we will contact you.

**Text Alert** – We will alert you to news, information, meetings and consultations posted on the website.

**Tenants Newsletter** – Tenancy Services funds a quarterly tenant's newsletter currently known as "Skyline". The newsletter is written in partnership with tenants and informs on housing issues. It also gives the various Neighbourhood Groups the opportunity to tell others what they are doing and to promote their activities.

**Tenants Hand Book** – The Tenant Handbook has a separate section which refers to Resident Involvement and describes how tenants can get involved and in what areas.

**District Association Meetings** – The District Association is the umbrella group consisting of tenant representatives from the Neighbourhood groups which are attended by SKDC officers.

**Neighbourhood Groups** - Neighbourhood Groups represent their local communities. All meetings are held locally at various times. Meetings will often have an invited SKDC officer and/or guest speaker which can be representatives from other appropriate organisations.

**Consultation Panel** - This panel consists of tenants who have agreed to receive and complete questionnaires, consultations and feedback forms.

**Neighbourhood Voice** - As a 'Neighbourhood Voice' you will play a

vital role in helping residents communicate with Tenancy Services and have an input into how your homes and neighbourhoods are managed. You will be a representative for your area and communicate directly with your local Neighbourhood Group and/or the Resident Involvement Team.

**Public Meetings** – Where appropriate, the Resident Involvement Team will arrange public meetings. These meetings will be held in suitable, accessible locations at convenient times to encourage as many people as possible to attend.

**Other Meetings** – Where appropriate or by request, other meetings can be arranged.

**Consultation Forms** - We will use these forms when we identify the need to consult with tenants and residents about proposals affecting their homes and communities.

**Individual Letters** – The Resident Involvement Team will send individual letters when an issue arises that may require your personal attention.

All communications will use clear and concise language, using plain English and be jargon free!

### **How to get involved**

If you want to become involved at any level, please contact the Resident Involvement Team who can advise you on your options.

If you agree, your details can be added to our secure, confidential database of residents ensuring you receive relevant information in the format you prefer.

If you would like to join in please contact the Resident Involvement Team on the number below.

**Tel - (01476) 406338**

**[residentinvolvement@southkesteven.gov.uk](mailto:residentinvolvement@southkesteven.gov.uk)**

## **Neighbourhood Groups**

South Kesteven District Council has a network of Neighbourhood Groups, set up by tenants and assisted by the Resident Involvement Team. A member of the Resident Involvement Team and/or a representative of the Council will usually attend meetings if invited to do so. Meetings are minuted and relevant issues given to the Council for action/response.

Neighbourhood Groups are bound by a Constitution, developed by both Tenancy Services and the tenant Chairs and Vice-Chairs of all the Neighbourhood Groups.

All members are unpaid volunteers, receiving out-of-pocket expenses and share an interest in helping their local community.

### **Support**

Tenancy Services promotes and encourages training, seminars and relevant courses to build greater understanding of resident involvement.

We provide a budget to meet the costs of training, travel and out of pocket expenses.

We also encourage you to attend exhibitions, seminars and visit other tenant and residents groups to see how they work, sharing best practice.

We will also provide a budget for Neighbourhood Groups to promote and develop their activities.

Resident Involvement Team will offer help and support as required. We can assist you with the production of letters, posters and leaflets etc.



## **Equal Opportunities**

South Kesteven District Council recognises the importance of equal opportunities. We will aim to implement and monitor our practices to ensure that nobody is treated less favourably on the grounds of sex, race, disability, ethnic origin, marital status, age, religion or belief, housing status, ability and sexual orientation.

All buildings used are compliant and accessible for disabled residents.

South Kesteven District Council will make every effort to ensure all areas of resident involvement are available to all.

All our literature will be easily understood, clear and accurate. Ensuring language barriers and disabilities do not restrict access to information.

In addition to different languages, Braille, large print and audio versions can be made available on request.

The website will be user friendly, up to date with relevant news, views and issues. Enabling users to access information and participate at a level and time convenient to them.

All complaints will be investigated thoroughly and fairly regardless of sex, race, disability, ethnic origin, marital status, age, religion or belief, housing status, ability and sexual orientation.

## **The Future**

We are committed to continually improving our services and opportunities for involvement. We will continue to use established methods, but will also try new ways of getting resident involved.

Some of the new developments that will start during 2008/20011 will be:

**Leaseholder Forum** – this group will provide an opportunity for leaseholders to be consulted on issues that affect them.

**Consultation Panel** - this panel will consist of tenants and residents who have agreed to receive and complete questionnaires, consultations and feedback forms. They will be consulted on various issues including the repairs service and the annual setting of rent.

**“Compact Chest” (£10,000 per year)** – an annual budget over and above the existing grant given to the District Association. To be spent on specific projects chosen by the members of the Neighbourhood Group.

**Resident Conference** – every SKDC tenant/resident be invited to the conferences promoting good practice, achievements and to encourage networking between residents.

**Website** - Resident Involvement Website with the ability to participate online, voting on issues, giving feedback, viewing policies, minutes and the calendar of events. With separate sections for your local areas.

**Diversity** – Improve the representation across the whole resident involvement structure, to reflect our diverse population.

**Estate Inspectors** – A “walk around” with Estate Officers, inspecting the quality of the housing service, estates and the environment, providing feedback and suggestions for improvement.

**Mystery Shoppers** - Develop a network of tenants, trained to inspect all areas of service delivery, from repairs, estate management to customer services, anonymously!

**Children and Young People** - Develop interaction with children and young people, visiting youth centres, schools and arranging other activities and days out.

**Youth Outreach Worker** – A partnership agreement to fund or part fund an outreach worker to engage young people, where their ideas, views and concerns could be gathered. Developing opportunities to enable young people to take part in the decision making process. The results would then be used to formulate a action plan to engage them.

**Garden Tool Loan/Hire Scheme** – A loan scheme to borrow/hire gardening equipment.

**Resident Involvement Calendar** – An annual calendar of events featuring all meetings, events and activities to be distributed to all council properties.

**District Resident Twinning** – Twinning with another tenant group from a similar sized, housing provider (Council, Housing Association or ALMO) with a proven record of quality and innovative service delivery.

## **Our commitment to you**

Tenancy Services provides a dedicated Resident Involvement Team. In addition, all our staff are aware of their role in making resident involvement work.

This will include, involving our tenants in the development and implementation of this strategy through open discussion steering the strategy development as new policies, procedures and practices emerge.

Providing sufficient support to make resident involvement happen, including: staff, equipment, support and general expenditure.

Ensure tenants and residents are empowered and able to participate fully in decision making, increasing satisfaction of tenants with opportunities for participation.

Develop systems to evaluate and demonstrate the effectiveness of resident involvement in improving the services offered by Tenancy Services.

All new tenants are given a resident involvement pack advising on opportunities to become involved.

This strategy has been developed in partnership with our tenants and will be regularly reviewed and evaluated.

This document links into other strategies and policies of South Kesteven District Council.

**If you would like to comment on this Strategy or any related topic, please contact the Resident Involvement Team.**

Email: [residentinvolvement@southkesteven.gov.uk](mailto:residentinvolvement@southkesteven.gov.uk)

**Phone: 01476 40 63 38**

**By Post:** Resident Involvement Team  
South Kesteven District Council  
The Council Offices  
St Peters Hill  
Grantham  
Lincs  
NG31 6PZ

# **Empowering our Community**