

APPENDIX 2

<b>Resident Involvement Facilitator – Work Plan 2013</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>An independent voice allowing residents to be actively involved with their landlord</b></li> <li>• <b>Taking forward the Council’s approach to the localism agenda and neighbourhood working across the city</b></li> <li>• <b>Supporting Council managers in engaging residents and groups through Local community involvement projects</b></li> </ul>	
<b>Requirement</b>	<b>Proposal</b>
<p><b>1. Local Residents’ Groups</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide support and guidance to residents, establishing, developing and supporting residents’ groups and activities</li> <li>• Provide administrative support for residents’ meetings and groups</li> <li>• Provide support to the Sheltered Scheme Residents’ Association</li> <li>• Encourage uptake of funding and grants available to residents’ groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audit on current state of RAs – numbers, funding, involvement, etc</li> <li>• Update rules and regulations for funding/grants</li> <li>• Aim to have 2 active groups in each Housing Office area (i.e. 12 groups total) by end of 2013</li> <li>• Investigate the set-up of residents groups for new-build/redevelopment areas</li> <li>• Support the Sheltered Scheme Residents’ Association</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Neighbourhood resident involvement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deliver Community-based programmes/new initiatives</li> <li>• Promote customer involvement in landlord-related services</li> <li>• Enable service-development through consultations and feedback</li> <li>• Recruit and develop more residents into scrutiny roles</li> <li>• Linking RI with the Council’s wider community development role</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Link with existing community programs being run in estates</li> <li>• Create Residents network email list – with plans to develop into social networking presence</li> <li>• Create options for catching new sign-up tenants/leaseholders</li> <li>• Investigate Incentive scheme</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. Recruiting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruit new residents to resident involvement</li> <li>• Identify the training needs of residents and help build their skills</li> <li>• Enable succession-planning for resident representative roles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skills audit on new volunteers involved through local groups</li> <li>• Improve menu of opportunities – updated ‘tenant compact’ style document</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. Outreach to ‘hard to reach’ residents</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reach out to ‘hard to reach’ residents</li> <li>• Link with the Council’s wider community-development role</li> <li>• Act as a facilitator to promote self-help in the community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish connections with Community Development staff</li> <li>• Link with existing community groups/events happening in our estates</li> <li>• Investigate how STAR Survey can be used to gather meaningful feedback from those</li> </ul>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work and engage with other Council staff, community organisations and other stakeholders to deliver residents' involvement needs</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;">not usually involved</p>
<p><b>5. Residents' Forum</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a Residents' Forum, as an independent coordinating body for residents</li> <li>• Enable the Forum to work with other social landlords' tenants, locally and nationally</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work on forum can only begin once other areas start to gain momentum</li> <li>• Needs an initial core number of new RAs</li> <li>• Aim to start this process in 2<sup>nd</sup> half of 2013</li> </ul>

### 1. Local Residents' Groups

1.1 Approximately 10 years ago, there were up to 24 tenant and leaseholder Residents' Associations around the city. Over the last decade this number has decreased to less than 10, with many only consisting of a hard-core of volunteers that keep the group running.

1.2 As we have moved into the digital age, the traditional model for a Residents' Associations (sit-down meetings, chairs/treasurers, minutes, AGMs, etc) has become less appealing to some people, particularly younger residents. Nonetheless, private Residents' Associations continue to thrive throughout the city, and do achieve favourable outcomes for their residents.

1.3 In order for tenant and leaseholder Residents' Associations to succeed they require an amount of support (as mentioned in Colin Wiles' Report) - which is something that the RI Facilitator role provides. Even in the 4 months that the RIF has been in post, 3 new tenant and leaseholder RAs are already under development, with some more potential groups in the pipeline. An existing number of tenant and leaseholder Residents' Associations are now receiving support from the RIF and are increasing their visibility through publicity and communications, with the aim to increase their membership.

1.4 There is also a drive to set up new kinds of Residents' Associations, but themed around specific issues - for example the environment or ASB. These groups may not be able to apply for funding in the conventional way, but could ask for specific items of equipment to assist them in their work.

1.5 The aim for the RI Facilitator in terms of Residents' Associations is to have at least 2 active groups in each Housing Officer patch by the end of 2013. This would bring the tenants and leaseholders Residents' Associations community up to almost 50% of the strength it was around a decade ago. This growth could obviously continue long term, with the only limiting factor being the amount of time the RI Facilitator could put in to set-up/service/support these groups and the size of the city itself (i.e. number of total potential tenants/leaseholders who could join an RA).

1.6 Ideally, new Residents' Associations would become self-sufficient over time, and as they become more established, the amount of help needed from the RIF would decrease. Some level of support would always be in place - for example attending AGMs, advising and supporting on funding applications and in the production of publicity materials.

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1.7 Residents' Associations often come into being due to a very specific local issue, for example the current redevelopment/new build project. It will be the job of the RI Facilitator to stay up to date with these larger housing issues and offer the support and opportunity to the affected residents who may wish to form a residents' group.

### **2. Neighbourhood resident involvement**

2.1 Many of the initiatives and projects delivered by Community Development already happen in areas of the city where Cambridge City Council has high-concentrations of tenants and leaseholders. Rather than replicate work already being done, it makes sense for Housing to work alongside its Community Development colleagues and support each other in mutually beneficial projects happening on the estates. A good example of this was the recent Hazlewood and Molewood Community Day, organised and run by the RI Facilitator, Local Housing Officer and two local Community Development workers.

2.2 Not all residents choose to engage with the council face-to-face (at meetings or community days). Many prefer to be involved in less direct ways. One continuingly popular format is through paper/free-post surveys. While this is still the method that tenants and leaseholders prefer when asked, it does carry a cost - which limits the amount of paper-based surveying that can realistically be carried out. By supplementing these surveys with e-surveying (carried out on computers, mobile phones and other devices), more useful data can be collected for a marginal additional cost.

2.3 Many of the paper forms returned by Open Door readers include contact details and many of the returned forms have given their consent to be contact again by the council for future surveying and engagement. Residents who are door-knocked on community days also often give their consent to be consulted in the future. These email addresses will form the beginnings of a 'Residents' Network' email list of tenants and leaseholders who have agreed to be part of online consultation. In the interests of not excluding those without internet access, these surveys would only compliment the bigger surveys still produced in print and included inside copies of Open Door magazine. The annual STAR Survey is also likely to continue to be provided in print form for the foreseeable future.

2.4 Traditionally, tenants and leaseholders moving into a new property would receive some form of 'new sign-up' pack, which in the past even included a tenant or leaseholder handbook. As this is often the first piece of communication that a new tenant or leaseholder has with the Council, it is a key moment to make a first impression and to invite tenants and leaseholders to join in with resident involvement activities.

2.5 When taking advantage of this first point of contact, It's important to make clear the of types of involvement. These can be broadly categorised under 3 main headings:

- Influencing policy and decisions city-wide
- Scrutinising the quality of their homes and services
- Joining in with or forming local community groups and residents associations

2.6 These levels can also be seen as a journey or progression through different levels of involvement, as individual's skills and confidence improves. Tenant and leaseholder volunteers often start off as members of a local Residents' Association or similar neighbourhood group. For this reason, a revised and updated new sign-up pack will be an important outreach tool for the RI Facilitator

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2.7 Some Registered Social Landlords provide an incentive scheme to their residents, which reward tenants and leaseholders for fulfilling their tenancy conditions and for joining in with wider community activities. While Cambridge City Council has explored this in the past, it ultimately decided not to pursue this. However, now may be a good time to have another look at these schemes and study how successful they really have been to other providers.

### **3. Recruiting**

3.1 As mentioned previously, many of the most experienced tenants and leaseholder representatives began their volunteering in local resident groups, and it is hoped that by resourcing and supporting Residents' Associations again, Cambridge City Council will benefit from a new generation of active tenant and leaseholder volunteers, with the skills and enthusiasm to stand for positions in groups like HMB or HRP.

3.2 A specific role for the RIF will be to look for these tenant and leaseholder volunteers and empower them to make the transition up to citywide decision-making or service monitoring roles.

3.3 It's therefore key to have a clear and up to date menu of opportunities – in print, online and available for all. These documents used to be known as 'tenant compacts', though following the TSA's (now the HCA's) national standards, compacts are now seen as slightly old-fashioned. In fact, one of the best recognised methods for capturing the attention of potential new volunteers is to produce a clear and concise 'new-starter' type documents (mentioned above, in section 2), aimed at those moving into their new Council home for the first time. This kind of quick reference document would cover the basics of the home, the services available and the opportunities for involvement.

### **4. Outreach to 'hard to reach' residents**

4.1 Hard to reach groups in resident involvement are traditionally thought of as young or BME residents. According to the most recent information held on the Councils' housing database, more than 60% of Council tenants and leaseholders in Cambridge identify themselves as White British, while almost 1/3rd are over the age of 55. Nonetheless, this still means there are a significant number of younger and BME tenants and leaseholders who do not get involved with the running of their housing and (in annual tenant and leaseholder surveys) often feel that they are not being listened to or represented.

4.2 Community Development is the Council department with the greatest expertise in engaging these hard to reach residents. As mentioned in section 2, many of their centres and projects are also active within or near to Cambridge City Council's estates and neighbourhoods.

4.3 This is another reason why it is key to work in partnership with Community Development and for the RI facilitator to actively link itself with the various Community Development staff who are based out on estates and neighbourhoods. This is particularly relevant in areas of high council home concentration like Arbury, Abbey, Kings Hedges, Cherry Hinton and Trumpington.

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### **5. Residents' Forum**

5.1 Around a decade ago, there was an independent umbrella body for tenant and leaseholder Residents' Associations known as the Tenant Forum. The Forum gave the various Residents' Associations an outlet to share views and experiences from across the city, and (in the era when having tenants and leaseholders on HMB was still a new concept) provided a valuable, additional challenge to housing services and decisions.

5.2 As tenant and leaseholder Residents' Associations declined across the city, so too did the forum - which eventually saw its attendance diminish down to just a few core residents.

5.3 With the new support in place for Residents' Associations, the intention is to resurrect the Forum and to use it as a counterbalance to some of the topics routinely discussed at HMB - giving a valuable, additional tenant and leaseholder perspective to the decisions made at HMB.

5.4 We now have a vibrant array of various other social landlords in the city that the Council regularly works with in various capacities. Any new Forum should also offer these landlords the opportunity to take part and could be the beginning of an even bigger network of social housing tenants and leaseholders in Cambridge.

5.5 It is important to note that work on the new forum can only begin once other areas start to gain momentum - specifically, there needs to be a good number of new tenant and leaseholder Residents' Associations (as discussed in section 1) before the conditions will exist to really make the new Residents' Forum worthwhile.