

# Wherry Resident Involvement Strategy 2011 to 2014

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<b>Scope:</b>	This Strategy applies to Wherry HA
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<b>Signed Off :</b>	Wherry Board and Way Ahead with Wherry
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Enhancing Life Chances

# Wherry Resident Involvement Strategy 2011 to 2014

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## **1. Executive Summary**

This new Resident Involvement Strategy marks a significant change in the direction of Resident Involvement at Wherry, from the more traditional format mechanisms involving residents in influencing services, to a regime of co-regulation which includes a commitment to increase the capacity and build social capital of our residents.

Co-regulation is defined by the Chartered Institute of Housing in their publication 'Resident Led Self Regulation' as "an approach where residents' priorities, views and engagement with relevant processes are at the heart of housing organisations' framework for directing, accounting for, monitoring, assessing and modifying their own behaviour and performance."

This Strategy has been pulled together with feedback from residents and staff. Amongst other things, our residents have told us that they want us to develop flexible opportunities to get involved, whilst ensuring that their involvement makes a real and tangible difference.

We have set up a range of opportunities to get involved, but seek to continually look for new ways that suit the needs and lifestyles of our residents. We will be particularly looking at online opportunities which we hope will give us to new way to capture feedback. We also want to propose making a few tweaks to our structures, to ensure that our Patch Panels, which are central to our Resident Involvement structure, are set up in a way which reflects what our residents want and makes good sense.

To accompany this document we will publish a Resident Involvement Agreement by September 2011, which will set out the detail of how this Strategy will be implemented and the expected Services Standards we will be working towards. In addition, we will publish an Action Plan by September 2011, which will identify specific actions required to implement and embed this Strategy which will be regularly monitored and reviewed by our residents to ensure we are moving forward.

## **2. Introduction and Summary**

Our Resident Involvement Strategy 2011 to 2014 is our commitment to involving residents in shaping the services they receive from Wherry Housing Association. This Strategy builds on our 2008 to 2011 Strategy and contains many of the same aims, but also builds on the success of the last strategy and sets new, higher expectations to ensure Wherry continues to be at the forefront of Resident Involvement development.

Wherry Housing Association has had a long history of encouraging Resident Involvement. The last Resident Involvement Strategy, launched in 2008, began a new journey for Wherry,

introducing a brand new Resident Involvement Structure which saw the creation of Way Ahead with Wherry (our landlord wide resident group) and a network of Patch Panels and Resident Representatives. This allowed Wherry to work with our involved residents in a more strategic and co-ordinated way, whilst also giving Wherry residents a stronger voice.

The last few years have seen Wherry use a variety of new initiatives to engage with residents and create a 'menu' of involvement opportunities: Fun Days on estates; Resident Inspectors; Facebook site; YELL, our Youth Forum; the Community Hero Awards; Excellent Estates programme; our Resident Scrutiny Group- WISP, in addition to the more commonly used methods such as Mystery Shoppers, Readers Panel and Focus Groups.

The current climate and regime require us to refine these opportunities but also look for more ways of involving residents, as well as proactively reaching out to those not traditionally engaged. In addition, the changing political environment has put greater emphasis on empowering communities and this Strategy seeks to meet this objective.

### **3. Our Vision for Resident Involvement in Wherry**

We want to be a leader in the field of Resident Involvement, continuing to make sure that residents are at the heart of our decision making process, providing solutions to housing issues at a local level.

### **4. Context**

The regulator has identified 'Tenant Involvement and Empowerment' as the first of the six national standards for social housing. The standard covers three areas:

- Customer service and choice. This focuses on registered providers taking their residents' needs in to consideration when designing and delivering housing and communicating with residents, allowing them choices over services they receive. This links strongly with our equality and diversity delivery plan.
- Involvement and empowerment. This focuses on the need for registered providers to offer residents' opportunities to be involved in the management of their housing. Registered providers must offer opportunities to influence housing related policy and service policies and delivery and opportunities to scrutinise performance on delivery of housing services. There is also a need for registered providers to support residents to ensure they can be empowered to participate.

- Responding to complaints. This states that all Registered Providers must have a clear and accessible complaints policy. The complaints policy must include reference to how complaints are used to influence and improve services.

Wherry welcomes this focus as we are committed to putting our residents at the heart of everything we do. Effective customer engagement is crucial to ensure our business is meeting the needs of our residents.

The mission of Circle Anglia is to **Enhance Life Chances**. The primary objective of delivering efficient, effective and value for money services, which are targeted to meet the needs of both existing and future residents is at the heart of the delivery of this mission.

Circle Anglia's Strategic Objectives are

- "To be number 1 in the sector for customer loyalty
- To be best in the sector at creating value through assets
- To accelerate our scale to reach more customers
- To be a brilliant place with people who care"

This Strategy is also informed by the Circle 'Customer Engagement Delivery Plan' which sets out our Business Priorities:

- "To put customers at the heart of everything we do and build customer loyalty we must strengthen the effectiveness and inclusiveness of our customer engagement framework to ensure a strong business focus on customer priorities
- Improve the effectiveness of customer engagement at a strategic level
- Meet regulatory standards – in particular the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard, priorities as identified through the current inspection regime and the emerging twin themes of Consumer Protection and Economic Regulation
- Achieve consistency of group customer engagement offer
- Ensure engagement opportunities offer value for money
- Ensure robust and effective customer scrutiny arrangements are in place across all group partners and at Group level with priority to accountability in performance against customer priorities and effective resolution and learning from complaints.

## 5. Our achievements and what we have learned

Since the launch of our 2008 Resident Involvement Strategy we have seen significant changes in the world of Resident Involvement, both within Wherry and in the external environment. We have been successful in getting more residents involved than ever before and in new ways, with our new Facebook site and roving Fun Days. We've been successful in achieving high levels of residents satisfied that their views are being taken into account averaging around 80% and have been selected by the TSA as being a 'trailblazer' with our 'Co-Regulatory' project in Terrington and are developing new ways of working with residents across housing providers through the Norfolk Housing alliance.

We know that, whilst we have seen an increase in younger residents getting involved in activities such as fun days, overall younger residents are less well represented in our Resident Involvement Structure. In addition, there have been a number of changes to the external environment that have had an effect on the direction of this Resident Involvement Strategy. Specifically, the move to the co-regulatory framework and the increase in aims to maximise social capital of our residents.

## **6. What is resident involvement?**

Resident Involvement is the process by which residents are empowered to be able to influence, challenge and control how their housing services are delivered. We hope that by doing this we can help to drive improvements in our housing services and help Wherry to operate more effectively and efficiently.

## **7. Why is it important?**

In addition to being a regulatory requirement, the report "Making Voices Count", commissioned by the TSA in June 2010 demonstrated that a strong practical approach to Resident Involvement is central to raising services standards.

In addition, residents and staff have told us that by involving residents we can hope to achieve the following:

- Genuine resident focused improvements and better defined and tailored services
- Improved communication, sharing knowledge, information and feedback between staff and residents
- Residents who know more about how the organisation works and staff, residents and contractors who know each other and who to contact

- Greater understanding of each other's perspective and better working relationships between staff, contractors and residents
- Improved services, better use of staff time and being able to 'nip problems in the bud'
- A better working environment, improved satisfaction amongst both staff and residents
- More knowledgeable and confident residents able to support each other and ensure things get done in response to residents

All of the above support our overall mission to ***Enhance Life Chances***.

## **8. What are the outcomes we are trying to achieve?**

Our overall aim for Wherry is to continually improve the quality and value of everything we do. We want to be recognised as the landlord of choice in East Anglia and to be rated amongst the very best performing landlords in the country.

We aim to help build sustainable, thriving communities and deliver reliable and effective services that meet the needs and aspirations of our residents. It is therefore essential to us that we reach out to listen to and involve our residents and future residents.

To support the achievement of this overall aim, we will strive to seek the following outcomes:

- Enable residents to influence the quality of their homes and communities that they live in.
- Enable residents to play an active part of their community.
- Enable residents to take opportunities that could potentially enhance their life.
- Ensure that residents believe that they can be part of the decision making/involved if they want to be
- Enable residents to influence the strategic planning and running of the organisation
- Ensure that residents believe that we are delivering the best we can for them, offering value for money services that are efficient and effective.
- Ensure residents that respect Wherry as a leading housing provider and will wish to remain loyal

## **9. How has the development of this strategy been informed?**

This Strategy has been developed with the support of Wherry residents and staff, who gave feedback through Patch Panels and Staff meetings. In addition, we have used surveys and Facebook to reach out to residents who are less likely to be involved in traditional resident

forums. The final Strategy will be signed off by Way Ahead with Wherry, our landlord wide residents group and Wherry Board.

## **10. What are our key aims?**

This Resident Involvement Strategy has the following main aims.

- To increase the ability for residents to access our services, understand everyone's needs and work together to improve the way we do things and opportunities to get involved.
- To increase the capacity of residents that get involved at a range of different levels
- To increase the capability of residents to support the development of social capital to support tackling a range of social, economic & environmental issues that may be faced within their communities.
- To develop the culture of Wherry staff to ensure that Resident Involvement is integral to all aspects of our work.
- To develop the role of co-regulation where residents are actively involved in scrutinising the performance and service delivery.
- To embed Resident Involvement throughout the organisation.

## **11. How will we deliver?**

The Resident Involvement Agreement, which accompanies this Strategy, sets out a range of engagement opportunities at various levels for consultation and participation, along with details of our governance arrangements. We will continue to look for new ways of involving residents, particularly investigating online opportunities and

To make sure that we deliver on these aims we will:

- Actively recruit new members to our various forums and resident groups.
- Offer practical help to support to residents groups such as administrative services and good practice guidance.
- Seek to support residents groups to access funds from other sources, particularly where they seek to deliver a community development agenda where they aspire to this.
- Offer individual training and support.

- Offer grants to support Residents Associations.
- Look at incentivising residents to become more active in their communities.
- Work with our partners in order to provide Resident Involvement services in a more efficient, effective manner.
- Look at new ways to involve groups of residents that are often under-represented to ensure that all views are taken into account.

## 12. Principles

To accompany this Resident Involvement Strategy we will develop a Resident Involvement Agreement which will explicitly specify the various ways and mechanisms to support Resident Involvement activities. The Agreement will clarify that we will do the following.

- Ensure that all aspects of Resident Involvement are delivered in a professional way to a quality standard as required by the residents.
- Understand the commitment required from our residents and therefore look to work alongside and offer convenience with the range of opportunities.
- Offer wide ranging opportunities for resident to get involved, from involvement at a governance level (by sitting on the Board) to local residents associations.
- Offer wide range of areas of influence to include agreeing Local Offers to negotiating Neighbourhood Agreements and Right to Manage options.
- Offer expense to residents for travel incurred to attend meetings. In addition we will offer child care expenses. Carers shall be accommodated at meetings where required.
- Provide transport to and from venues for involvement activities.
- Make sure that venues are accessible to all, and meet the needs of our residents.
- Rotate times and locations of meetings so that residents have the opportunity to attend.
- Ensure that needs are assessed and, where appropriate, special equipment is available to enable individuals to get involved.

### **13. Valuing Diversity**

We will ensure that in delivering services we will be inclusive and representative. We want to ensure that all residents have the opportunity to be involved. We recognise the “protected characteristics” as set out in the Equality Act 2010:

- Age
- Gender Reassignment
- Disability
- Sex
- Marriage and Civil Partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion and belief
- Sexual Orientation

and will provide the support needed to enable this. From time to time this may entail adopting a flexible approach and assessing individuals to identify any specific needs to enable them to be involved.

In order to be effective in encouraging wider involvement we will research the particular groups that are not traditionally involved in Resident Involvement activity and seek to identify the methods which will encourage them to get involved. We will proactively reach out to these groups and seek new ways of ensuring that their voice is heard.

We will also ensure that information is available in a variety of formats, including different languages, audio cassette and large print, by newsletter, leaflets, website and facebook. This will ensure that all residents have access to information that is relevant and up to date.

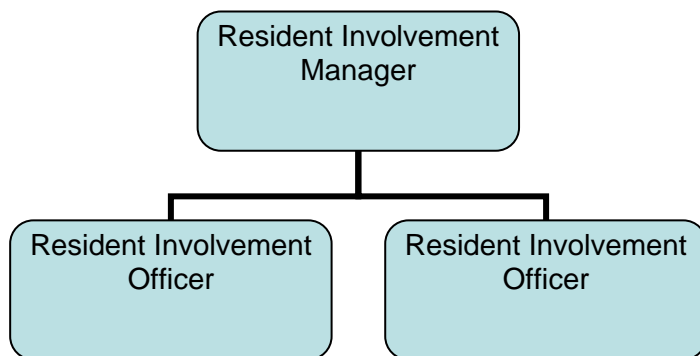
### **14 Value for Money**

Residents have consistently told us that they want Value for Money all services that they receive from us and Resident Involvement is no exception. We want to ensure that we monitor the cost of our Resident Involvement service with residents and share budget information, to ensure that it is achieving its aims and objectives in the most cost effective way. In addition, we will look for opportunities to work with our partners and other

organisations, and seek funding opportunities from elsewhere, to reduce the cost of Resident Involvement projects.

#### 14. Structure for involvement

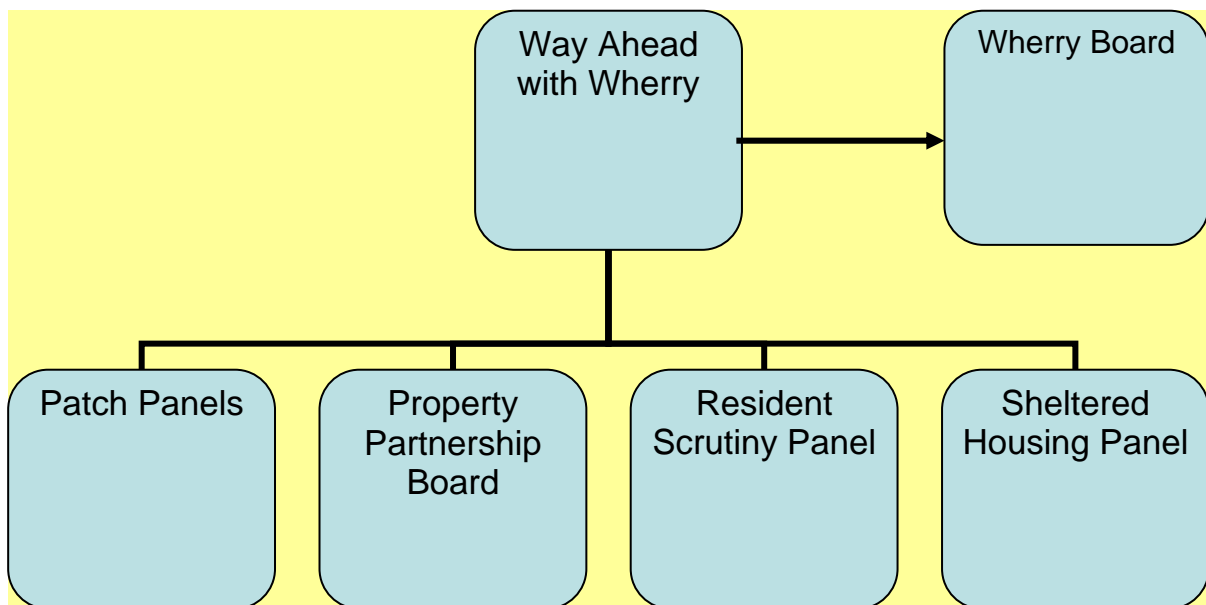
To support this Resident Involvement Strategy our Resident Involvement Team will work alongside our Continuous Improvement Team, to ensure that Service Improvement and Resident Involvement work hand in hand and seamlessly. Currently, the Resident Involvement Team includes 3 dedicated members of staff.



However, we recognise that resident involvement must go beyond the Resident Involvement team to ensure that it is embedded and embraced by all. Therefore, we will ensure that resident forums are supported by staff other than the Resident Involvement team and aligned to an Operational Manager.

In addition, we have structured the Resident Involvement network in a way to ensure that all our Resident Forums feed into one central body, Way Ahead with Wherry. WAWW provides an overall resident voice for Wherry residents, acting as both Resident Involvement Champions and our Scrutiny Panel. Way Ahead with Wherry have been formally recognised by Wherry Board and a protocol between the two forums ensures that there is a constructive two way dialogue.

### “Way Ahead with Wherry” Structure



Central to the structure of Way Ahead with Wherry is the network of Patch Panels who feed into it and nominate members to sit on the WAWW Executive. Following consultation, we have set up each Patch Panels in areas where there is a high concentration of Wherry residents and individuals can chose which Patch Panel to attend. In turn, WAWW have set up a subsidiary Scrutiny Panel, who makes recommendations to WAWW on what areas to scrutinise.

We will continue to support this network, and particularly we will work with WAWW members to ensure that their voice is heard. We will support WAWW to raise their profile so that more residents are aware of their work which in turn will support our ongoing recruitment campaign.

#### **16. Measuring and Monitoring the Resident Involvement Strategy**

The monitoring of this strategy will form part of our overall strategic performance management framework and falls under our strategic aim to extend our scale and reach out to more residents as we see this as ensuring we are co-regulating and involving as many of our residents as possible.

**Service Standards:** This Strategy is a separate document to our Resident Involvement Agreement. The Agreement will be published by September 2011 and will clearly sets out the service standards that our residents can expect from our Resident Involvement service, such as the information received in terms of content and timeliness. It also specifies the range of opportunities for residents to participate in the services they receive.

**Resident Involvement Action Plan and Impact Assessment:** We want to ensure that the needs and priorities of residents are taken into account and information from involvement activities should be dealt with in a joined up way. We also want to be sure that residents who are involved can see what has been achieved and believe that they have made a difference.

Therefore, we will work alongside residents to continually review the delivery of this strategy. Specifically we will produce quarterly updates to be reviewed and monitored by Way Ahead with Wherry. In addition we'll produce a Resident Involvement Action Plan and Impact Assessment, which will be published by the end of September 2011.

**Resident Involvement LPis:** The following performance measures will be introduced to ensure that we achieve the aims and objectives set out in this Strategy. We will agree these LPis with our resident group, Way Ahead With Wherry.

- % of residents satisfied that their views are being taken into account (broken into diversity strands)
- % of residents who are satisfied with learning outcomes when asked after training (broken into diversity strands)
- % of residents covered by a Resident Representative or Residents' Association.
- Total non-pay spend on Resident Involvement per property managed
- Total spend on Communication per property managed
- Number of services changed, implemented or withdrawn during the year as a result of Resident Involvement

## Version history

<b>Version no.</b>	1	<b>Date effective:</b>	
<b>Full / partial review?</b>	n/a		
<b>Brief summary of changes:</b>	n/a		
<b>Staff consultation (teams):</b>			
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<b>Other consultation:</b>			
<b>Signed off by:</b>			
<b>Author:</b>			