

**Dartford Borough Council:**

# Resident Involvement Agreement

**Residents Compact**

A partnership between DBC and Residents

## Foreword

[insert photo for Cllr Kite]

I am delighted to present this agreement between residents and the council.

DBC recognise the need to work in partnership with residents and this document has been written with residents to set out clear guidance on how we will work with you to improve the delivery of housing services.

The agreement will be the main tool for setting the standard when involving residents in the monitoring of housing services. It also sets out the council's commitment to supporting and encouraging residents to get involved.

We recognise that residents want to become involved at different levels and have therefore developed various opportunities for involvement to suit your diverse needs.

I would like to thank Dartford Borough Residents Forum for their hard work in reviewing this agreement. Our relationship really does grow from strength to strength.

**Cllr. Jeremy Kite**  
**Leader of Dartford Borough Council**

## Signatories:

**Dave Worrell**  
Chairman, Dartford Borough Residents' Forum

**Cllr. Pat Coleman**  
Portfolio Holder for Housing Services

**Cllr. Jeremy Kite**  
Leader of Dartford Borough Council

**Peter Dosad**  
Head of Housing Services

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## Introduction

This Partnership Agreement has been developed in consultation with residents (Tenants and Leaseholders of Dartford Borough Council) and Dartford Borough Residents Forum. All parties to this agreement recognise the need for increased and meaningful participation by residents in housing associated policy management decisions. All parties also recognise the views of those they represent. This compact will be reviewed on an annual basis. The results of the review will be made available to the public at the AGM of the Dartford Borough Residents Forum.

For the remainder of this document the term “residents” will be used in place of tenants and leaseholders.

## Statement of Intent

It is the intention of all parties to this Agreement to work together to ensure that the views, concerns and housing needs of Dartford Residents are recognised and addressed by Dartford Borough Council (DBC).

It is the intention of the parties of this Agreement to work together as equal Partners, to help ensure that the needs of Dartford residents are placed at the centre of housing services especially in terms of design, delivering, monitoring and review. The emphasis is upon the residents ‘participating in decision making’.

It is the intention of the parties that Dartford Residents can choose their level of involvement in shaping the policies and practices that affect the landlord services that they receive. This allows residents the opportunity to influence and improve the quality of life in properties and on estates. Levels of involvement can range from simply being kept informed, through consultation to being closely involved in developing policy and strategic decision-making.

All parties will be open and honest with each other to ensure that Councillors, Staff and Residents are able to exchange views and opinions on housing issues.

## The Compact

The Compact is a tool to:

- help ensure council's become more efficient, transparent and accountable, so that people know who exactly will be responsible for decisions and who will be actively involved in helping councils to reach those decisions
- enable residents to make an informed view on their housing services, be involved in planning them, improving them, monitoring and reporting on performance and identifying and taking remedial action
- help residents identify issues of concern and ways of improving their quality of life as part of a wider strategy to improve estates and neighbourhoods

The process of continuous improvement in terms of service delivery is an essential element of the Compact. Resident satisfaction in Dartford Borough Council will be monitored and assessed by the council's internal processes and Audit Commission. One of the methods used to assess levels of resident satisfaction will be the Tenants and Leaseholders Survey, mystery shopping, monitoring groups etc.

Another essential element of the Audit Commission evaluation will be the need to demonstrate that the views expressed by Resident representatives during the 'participation' process are truly representative of the Residents and, where applicable the wider communities they are required to represent.

## Dartford Borough Council's Commitment to Resident Involvement

This Agreement provides a framework whereby residents can be fully involved in challenging existing arrangements, comparing with other Landlords and continually reviewing how consultation and participation can be most effectively delivered.

The Council will ensure that residents are able to take a full and active part in designing, developing, monitoring and reviewing housing services at strategic and local level. To help residents in this the Council will:

- Work with residents, especially the Dartford Borough Residents Forum Portfolio Holders who are responsible for monitoring contracts for the delivery of Council Housing Services
- Commission and undertake resident satisfaction surveys e.g. the Best Value Tenants & Leaseholders Satisfaction Survey
- Share up-to-date and timely information with all stakeholders through newsletters, leaflets, pamphlets, email and the Council website
- Work with residents to establish Focus Groups and Reading Groups
- Ensure regular meetings between the Councillors and residents take place
- Carryout consultation exercises
- Working with other Forums/Residents Association (subject to meeting the Councils recognition criteria) that may be formed to address specific issues/topics
- Provide training to residents to enable them to fully participate in the design, development, delivery, monitoring and review of Council Housing Services
- Work to ensure that all residents are represented with particular focus on those from under represented groups

## The Role of the Council

The Council will:

- Recognise the invaluable role of residents in designing, developing, delivering, monitoring and reviewing the housing service to ensure that it meets customer needs and continually seeks improvement
- Recognise the Dartford Borough Residents Forum as the main voice of the residents. However, the Council and Dartford Borough Residents Forum will also work in partnership with other bodies that are established to address specific issues, including individuals. Any such groups will have to meet all the requirements of the Council's recognition criteria
- Encourage residents who are not part of the Dartford Borough Residents Forum to get involved in a way that suits them
- Publicise arrangements for Resident Involvement through leaflets, newsletters, email and the Council website. The Council will also ensure that each new tenant is aware of these arrangements when they enter into tenancy
- Support and encourage the development of local resident organisations where these meet the Council's criteria for recognition and represent residents in a given geographical area
- Make sure there are mechanisms for all residents to have the opportunity to become involved
- Make arrangements for residents to receive information and the necessary training to participate in the design, delivery and review of the housing service in general
- Support meetings of specific forums to ensure that the views and needs of those residents can be fully considered

## The Role of the Residents

Residents, through recognised organisations such as the Dartford Borough Residents Forum and in some cases individually, will:

- Work in partnership with the Council to identify and tackle issues of concern
- Work according to an agreed code of conduct as detailed in the groups constitution
- Be open and honest in all their dealings and feedback to their relevant organisations and/or other residents
- Be fair and democratic in representing views of all residents
- Treat information shared as confidential unless stated otherwise

## Standards for Information

### Giving residents a say in setting standards for information

We expect any information provided to residents to:					
▪ use plain language	▪ be of good quality	▪ be clear and jargon free	▪ be translated where necessary e.g. audio, braille, other languages	▪ be tailored to residents needs	▪ be provided in good time

## Meetings and Consultation

### Giving residents a say in standards for running meetings

	Standard
<b>Publicising meetings and consultation</b>	All meetings and consultations will be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Advertised, giving as much notice as possible, but no less than 2 weeks</li> <li>▪ Made available to all residents, where appropriate</li> <li>▪ Give a clear explanation of what the meeting or consultation is about</li> <li>▪ Make use of all local media including, DBC website, The Link, Kent Messenger etc</li> </ul>
<b>Meeting accessibility</b>	All meetings and consultations will be held in venues that are accessible to all e.g. disabled access, bus routes and take into account the time of when the meeting will be held
<b>Support for residents attending meetings</b>	The council will support resident in attending meetings by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Meeting expenses such as carers costs and travel etc (<i>please see expenses policy</i>), depending on each individual basis and agreed in advance</li> <li>▪ Provide practical support such as translators, interpreters etc</li> </ul>
<b>Running Meetings</b>	Meetings and consultations will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Have a clear purpose and agenda</li> <li>▪ Be chaired in a fair and democratic way to ensure that everyone gets a chance to have their say and is kept informed</li> <li>▪ Keep information jargon free, clear and tailored to residents needs</li> <li>▪ Keep an accurate record of what was discussed and agreed</li> </ul>
<b>Follow up after meetings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Minutes for meetings will be typed up and distributed to those present or have given apologies</li> <li>▪ Minutes will be made available via a request made to the Resident Involvement Officer or Dartford Borough Residents Forum</li> </ul>
<b>Cancellation of meetings</b>	In the event that a meeting/consultation is cancelled every effort will be made to notify attendees and an explanation and apology will be given.

## Choice Based Lettings

### Giving residents a say in the allocations and lettings process

Issue	What will happen?	Who will have a say?	Target date	Responsible Officer
<b>Monitor service satisfaction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Survey new tenants on the Choice Based Lettings process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New Tenants</li> <li>All Customers</li> </ul>	Ongoing	Housing Options & Advice Manager
<b>Changes to the allocations and lettings policies and procedures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consultation with residents on the proposed changes</li> <li>Report presented to cabinet with findings and recommendations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dartford Borough Resident Forum</li> <li>All Customers</li> </ul>	As required	Housing Options & Advice Manager

## Planned Maintenance

### Giving residents a say in the delivery of Planned Maintenance

Issue	What will happen?	Who will have a say?	Target date	Responsible Officer
<b>Major work to your home i.e. Capital Programme</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review the Capital Programme</li> <li>Borough wide consultation session to further explain the programme</li> <li>Identify how, where and when major work will be carried out</li> <li>Provide regular updates on progress</li> <li>Consult with residents on schemes which will directly affect them</li> <li>Monitor tenants choice i.e. kitchen consultation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DBRF Executive Committee</li> <li>DBRF Forum Members</li> <li>Local residents affected</li> </ul>	As required	Housing Maintenance Manager
<b>New government legislation which affects major spending (e.g. Decent Homes)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Send out information sheets</li> <li>Publicise via:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DBC website</li> <li>The Link</li> <li>Local Press</li> </ul> </li> <li>Hold consultation/briefing sessions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DBRF Executive</li> <li>All tenants</li> </ul>	As required	Housing Maintenance Manager

## Repairs

### Giving residents a say in the day to day repairs service

Issue	What will happen?	Who will have a say?	Target date	Responsible Officer
<b>Renewing the repairs contract</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Training and information sessions to be delivered to DBRF Executive Committee and include the role of sub contractors</li> <li>▪ Involvement in the selection of contractors</li> <li>▪ Feedback on the results of involvement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Designated portfolio holder(s) from DBRF Executive Committee</li> <li>▪ DBRF Executive Committee</li> <li>▪ Forum Members at quartley meetings</li> </ul>	As required	Housing Maintenance Manager
<b>Is the contract delivering what it promised?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Consultation to be carried out using various tools including focus groups, surveys etc</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Designated portfolio holder from DBRF Executive Committee</li> <li>▪ All Customers</li> </ul>	As required	Housing Maintenance Manager
<b>Repairs carried out in homes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Repair satisfaction questionnaire given to resident</li> <li>▪ Explore the mystery shopper option for monitoring of quality</li> <li>▪ Feedback on results</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Residents who have a repair carried out</li> <li>▪ DBRF quarterly meetings</li> </ul>	Ongoing  Quarterly	Housing Maintenance Manager
<b>Proposed changes to repairs service delivery</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Report will be presented giving an explanation</li> <li>▪ Consultation carried out e.g. survey, road show, meeting</li> <li>▪ Make public any changes to the delivery of service</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ DBRF Executive Committee</li> <li>▪ All Customers</li> </ul>	As required	Housing Maintenance Manager

## Public Realm

### Giving residents a say in keeping your estate clean and tidy

Issue	What will happen?	Who will have a say?	Target date	Responsible Officer
<b>Monitoring Public Realm services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Consultation carried out to review the service and relevant contractors</li> <li>▪ Feedback given at DBRF quarterly meetings and using various media</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ DBRF portfolio holder</li> <li>▪ DBRF Executive Committee</li> <li>▪ All Customers</li> </ul>	As required	Public Realm Manager
<b>Proposed changes to Public Realm service delivery</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Report presented giving an explanation</li> <li>▪ Consultation carried out e.g. survey, road show, meeting</li> <li>▪ Make public any changes to the delivery of service</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ DBRF Executive Committee</li> <li>▪ All Residents</li> </ul>	As required	Public Realm Manager

## Housing Services Delivery

### Giving residents a say in measuring how well the housing services are being provided

Issue	What will happen?	Who will have a say?	Target date	Responsible Officer
<b>Major reviews on how well we are doing against government legislation and best practice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Information session on legislation and review timetables</li> <li>▪ Consultation by way of focus groups, surveys etc</li> <li>▪ Summarise and feedback findings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ DBRF Executive Committee</li> <li>▪ Quality Services Committee</li> <li>▪ All Customers</li> </ul>	As required	Head of Housing
<b>Clear standard of achievements to measure the service provided</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Report on annual performance review</li> <li>▪ Identify boroughs to benchmark against and share good practice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ DBRF Executive Committee</li> <li>▪ Quality Services Committee</li> <li>▪ All interested residents</li> </ul>	Annually	Head of Housing

## Support for Resident Involvement

### Giving residents a say in the support provided for resident involvement

Issue	What will happen?	Who will have a say?	Target date	Responsible Officer
<b>Review the support on offer for resident involvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Agree what opportunities are to be reviewed</li> <li>▪ hold a focus group meeting to review the opportunities available</li> <li>▪ Feedback using appropriate media</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ DBRF Executive Committee</li> <li>▪ All residents who have expressed an interest</li> </ul>	Annually	Resident Involvement Officer
<b>Support and advice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Practical support from the resident involvement officer will be available e.g. writing a constitution, research, funding applications etc</li> <li>▪ A start up pack for residents association to be developed and implemented</li> <li>▪ Financial support will be available by way of a start up grant (see Start Up Pack)</li> <li>▪ Resident Involvement officer will attend meetings wherever possible when invited</li> <li>▪ Attendance of a DBC officer at meetings – requests of a specific officers attendance will be met wherever possible</li> <li>▪ Assist in booking meeting rooms, publicising meetings etc</li> <li>▪ Assistance in developing publicity i.e. newsletters, web-sites etc</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ All residents</li> </ul>	Ongoing  Oct 06	Resident Involvement Officer

## Support for Resident Involvement continued...

Issue	What will happen?	Who will have a say?	Target date	Responsible Officer
<b>Expenses for Resident Involvement</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Out of pocket expenses will be met by the Council (see Expenses Policy)</li> <li>▪ Expenses Policy to be developed and implemented</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ DBRF Executive Committee</li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Oct 06</p>	Resident Involvement Officer
<b>Training for Residents</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Continue TPAS membership who provide extensive training courses to residents</li> <li>▪ Identify a suitable training programme for DBRF Executive Committee</li> <li>▪ Make training available to residents who are involved in residents associations or expressed an interest in setting up a group</li> <li>▪ Provide staff training on involving residents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ DBRF Executive Committee</li> <li>▪ Residents who meet the criteria</li> </ul>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>Oct 06/ Ongoing</p>	Resident Involvement Officer
<b>Community Resource Centre</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Work to be carried to set up a Community Resource Centre for all residents groups to utilise               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- look at suitable venue</li> <li>- cost implications</li> <li>- facilities available such as photocopying, computer, fax etc</li> <li>- Management of centre</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ DBRF Executive Committee</li> <li>▪ Residents Associations</li> </ul>	<p>2008</p> <p><i>Key decision to be made by September 2007</i></p>	Resident Involvement Officer

## Resident Involvement Opportunities

### Giving resident as many opportunities to get involved as possible

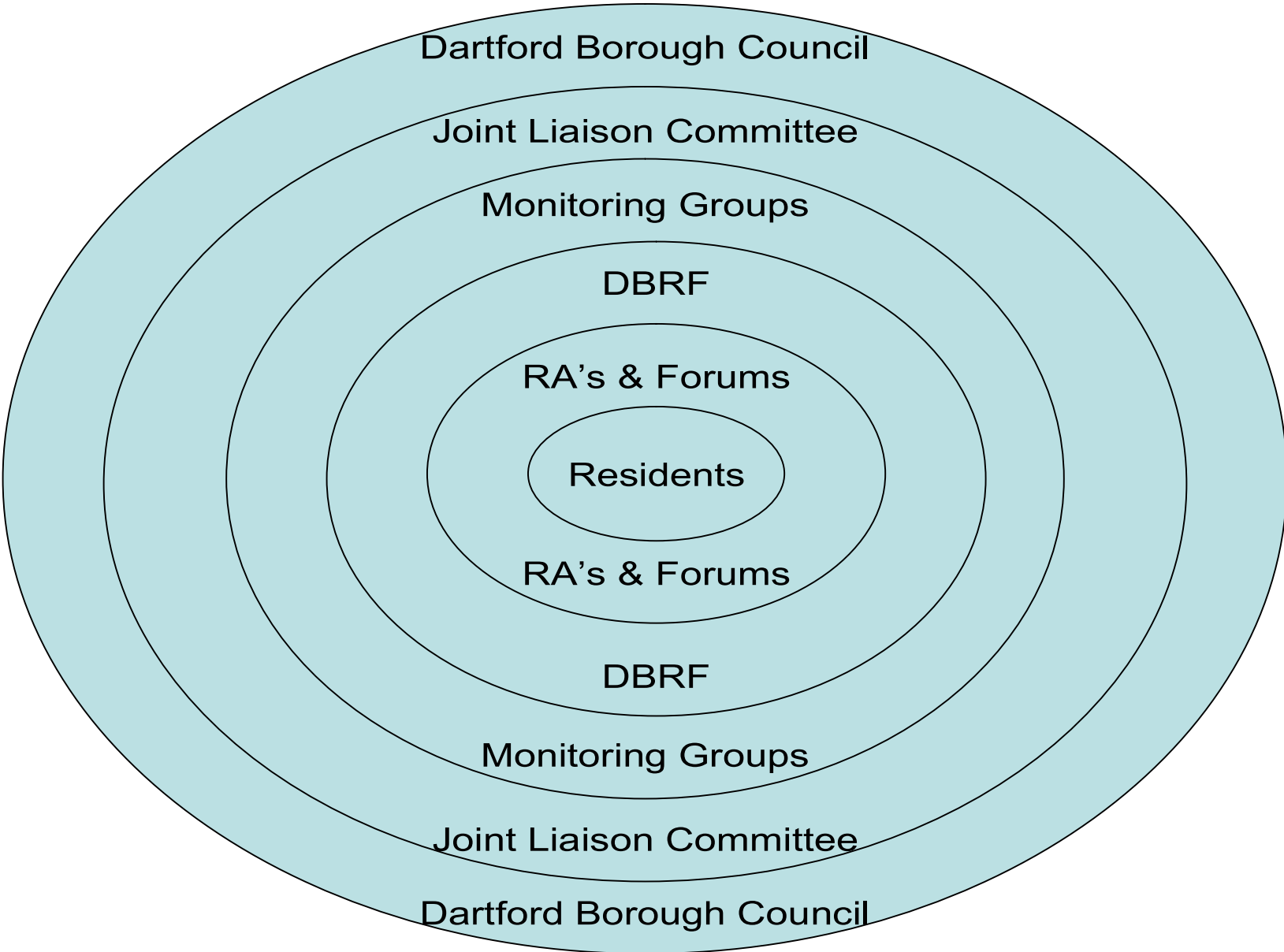
<b>Opportunity</b>	<b>What is it?</b>	<b>Responsible Officer</b>
<b>Dartford Borough Residents Forum</b>	The Forum Executive Committee is elected by forum members, as set out in the Constitution, to work with the Council to monitor the delivery of housing services and contractors. The Executive meet every month to feedback on their progress and then report back to the wider forum at quarterly meetings.	Resident Involvement Officer
<b>Residents Associations</b>	A Resident Association is a group of residents living in an area, block or street who come together to address issues of common concern in relation to the community they live in and the general environment. All residents groups will need to meet the Councils criteria in order to be recognised and eligible for a start up grant.	Resident Involvement Officer
<b>Resident Consultation Database</b>	Residents will be invited to sign up to our database to register their interest in a specific topic(s) or a geographical area that they would like to be consulted on. The database will hold this information and residents will be consulted as and when required. It is not imperative that residents who have registered take part in every consultation and it will not affect their tenancy.	Resident Involvement Officer
<b>Focus Groups</b>	Focus groups will be set up to discuss a specific project/topic with a targeted group of residents e.g. to further consult on a project/development that may affect residents living in the area. Groups will be carefully structure to ensure that everyone is given a fair opportunity to have their say and that all issues are covered.	Resident Involvement Officer
<b>Local Compacts</b>	To support the work of the Resident Involvement Agreement (Residents Compact), local compacts can be designed to address local issues if the need is determined by the residents of a particular community. These will work alongside and support the work of the overall Compact.	Resident Involvement Officer
<b>Surveys</b>	The Council is required by the government to carryout specific surveys and therefore will consult with residents' borough wide to ensure that we are getting the views of all residents. Surveys may be carried out face to face, over the telephone or by post.	Resident Involvement Officer

## Resident Involvement Opportunities continued...

<b>Opportunity</b>	<b>What is it?</b>	<b>Responsible Officer</b>
<b>Mystery Shoppers</b>	<p>This is an opportunity for mystery shoppers to report directly back to the resident involvement officer on a service they have received, whether it was calling the contact centre or a repair carried out on the property.</p> <p>Shoppers will be asked to complete a questionnaire every time they receive a service from the Council. For each questionnaire completed and returned the resident will receive a token of thanks, this could be a voucher from a local shop. Information will be collated and fed back to the relevant departments on a quarterly/six monthly basis.</p>	Resident Involvement Officer
<b>Estate Inspections</b>	<p>Estate Inspections are carried out regularly and are attended by a Housing Officer along with representatives from Public Realm and Housing Maintenance. The Inspections look at the conditions of communal areas, lighting, grass &amp; hedge cutting, pavement etc.</p> <p>Residents are invited to join the inspections as it is you who know what areas may need attention.</p>	Housing Manager
<b>Working with under represented groups within the community</b>	<p>The Council will work to ensure that it consults with all residents regardless of their age, ethnicity, disability etc.</p> <p>At times the Council will be requested by the government to consult specifically with under represented members of the community and when necessary the Council will seek to work in partnership with local community groups who are already providing a service to and have contact with the community.</p> <p>This work will be carried out following guidance from the Policy and Performance Officer.</p>	Resident Involvement Officer

The Resident Involvement Officer will continue to promote opportunities for involvement and further identify other ways for residents to get involved.

How does it all fit?



## Monitoring the Agreement

The Agreement will be monitored on an annual basis by the Dartford Borough Residents Forum Executive Committee in partnership with Dartford Borough Council and any other residents(s) who has expressed an interest resident involvement.

A formal report will be submitted to the council listing any proposed amendments and feedback will be given to residents' borough wide using all forms of media available.