



**Customer Involvement**

**Strategy**

May 2014

Contents

Page

Policy Timetable for Approval 1

Forward - About Our Company 2

1. **Introduction, Vision and Strategic Aims 3**
2. **Links to Group Strategic Priorities 5**
3. Strategic Context 11

4. Strategic Objectives 16

1. Strategic Development and Consultation 19
2. Strategic Implementation Plan **19**
3. Key Performance Indicators and Targets 21
4. Strategic Review 21

Appendix A:

The detail of the Thirteen Customer involvement Objectives 22

Appendix B

The detail of the strategic implementation plan 28

Appendix C

The detail of Key performance indicators and target 37

**Customer Involvement Strategy**

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| **Name of Strategy** | **Customer Involvement** |
| **Lead Directorate** | **Operations** |
| **Lead Manager** | **Stewart Tagg** |
| **Date of Final Draft** | **31st May 2014** |
| **ET Approval** | **3rd June 2014** |
| **Board(s) Approval:** | **Framework Review to Landlord Boards as follows:** |
| ***Erimus*** | **22nd May** |
| ***Housing Hartlepool*** | **20th May** |
| ***Tees Valley*** | **27th May** |
| ***Tristar*** | **12th May** |
| ***Thirteen Care & Support*** |  |
| ***Thirteen Group*** | **11th June** |
| **Review Date** | **2 years** |

**Customer Involvement Strategy**

**Forward**

On 1st April 2014, Vela Group and Fabrick Group came together to form, a single stronger organisation, **Thirteen Group**.

As a single organisation, it gives us a great opportunity to be more efficient in the decisions we take and more ﬂexible and responsive in the investments we make. The amalgamation of our Partners brings ﬁnancial advantages through efficiencies and tackling the diverse challenges of affordability through economies of scale. This, in turn, will allow us as a business to deliver better value for money.

Thirteen Group owns more than 32,000 homes and operates in an area stretching from Newcastle, in the north, to York and Scarborough in the south. It has become one of the North East’s 10 largest employers and one of the region’s largest housing providers. Its turnover will be around £150 million a year.  
  
Thirteen is about having an **innovative vision of challenging preconceptions, ‘doing things differently’ and pioneering new ways to deliver homes and create sustainable communities**. Joining forces gives us an exciting opportunity to build on Fabrick and Vela’s achievements, by challenging and looking at things differently, to act with confidence and ambition, for the benefit of the individual, the Tees Valley area and the wider region.

Our collective purpose is to be a catalyst to raise aspirations

We understand the economic challenges that we face as a business and those faced by our customers. We are creating a more sustainable organisation with a more efficient cost base. So that we can harness additional capacity to better serve our customers and communities by enhancing services and adding value, in an environment of change and cuts to public expenditure.  
  
Within Thirteen, our partner group companies, Erimus Housing, Tees Valley Housing, Housing Hartlepool and Tristar Homes remain as separate organisations in their own right and have become part of the larger group.  
  
We are developing ‘Thirteen Care and Support’, our housing support arm, bringing together the services of the supported housing team of Tees Valley Housing and Norcare, a specialist Tyneside-based charity.

1. **Introduction, Vision and** **Strategic Aims**

At Thirteen, we know customer involvement can enhance our business. This is why we invest over £1million per year, in this service. We know customer involvement makes us more successful, responsive and helps us understand the risks and challenges on our estates. The opinions of customers are essential to future proofing our Group, predicting future trends and planning for change.

Through listening, engaging and developing our relationship with customers and acting on customer opinion, we will also achieve a commercial advantage and deliver value and outcomes for customers in the services we provide.

We will demonstrate this by delivering a strategy which delivers real accountability to customers and enables customers to engage with us in a way which suits their busy lives.

We know customers give us a unique insight into what is happening in our neighbourhoods. They can help us design services to maximise their satisfaction, reduce waste and support the delivery of value from the investment we make in our neighbourhoods and services.

What we propose is a clear strategic direction and focus which is fresh. This allows us to address the challenges in our business in a way that retains valuable customer support. It uses that commitment in an even more efficient and effective way.

Our Strategy will help us identify and address the needs, expectations and aspirations of customers. We are proud of what has been achieved already, but we will not settle for second best. We want to have the best involvement service in the sector which offers opportunities for every single customer to give us their views and sees us act on those views. We want customers to see the difference they make when they engage with us.

The way we recruit and engage customers and thank them for their work will be enthusiastic. The training we provide will enhance their skills, not only for engagement, but also increase their chances in life. We will use this to support them in where they want to take those skills, to enable success in their lives.

We want to hear a reflective and diverse customer voice from across our business which goes beyond traditional methods of engagement, is dynamic and interesting for customers. We will enable those customers who do not have much time to engage, to choose how their views can impact on our services.

We plan to reach more customers using technology, social media, making better use of our web pages for customer feedback and sharing video clips of meetings to maximise the opportunities for customers to get involved.

Our target for engagement is challenging. By reaching out to a larger and broader range of customers in different ways, we can be assured that what we hear and how we interpret this, enables relevant and high quality services to result.

This Involvement Strategy is built on the experience and success of work in the previous two groups. It is supported by a wide range of conversations focussed on how we can improve what we do. We recognise the new Group offers opportunities and challenges. Customer involvement adds value to the business and has a broader role to play in shaping services, neighbourhoods and holding us to account impacting positively on peoples’ lives.

The Customer Involvement Strategy sets out our commitment to involving customers in governing, shaping and supporting us to improve our services and to grow.

**Our Vision and Values for Community Involvement:**

**“To create customer involvement culture, which enhances our business outcomes, which delivers value to customers by maximising opportunities for dynamic feedback and one which we can evidence their views have been enthusiastically acted upon”.**

The strategic aims are to:

* Support good governance through co-regulation and challenge to our existing ways of working and the services that we provide
* Create a culture which allows more and a broader range of customers to get involved in influencing our work
* Ensure all customers can have a say by introducing, developing and practicing a broader range of options, whether that be at the strategic level or in the neighbourhoods people live
* Build the capacity of customers to influence, where they lead in advising on expectations, the perception of our services and satisfaction with the services we provide
* Enable customers to see the value of engagement through feedback and early action, where involvement delivers value for money and is outcome focussed
* Bring services together across the Group to receive economies of scale and empower customers with a stronger voice

1. **Links to Group Strategic Priorities**

Customer involvement is cross cutting, it supports our strategic priorities in the following ways:

* **Promoting Resilience and Sustainability**

Customer involvement will:

* Support the alignment of our policies, practices and activities which tackle welfare reform, poverty and disadvantage, changing housing markets and reduced investment in care and support. Customers will advise us what matters to them and share their ideas for tackling business challenges
* Protect our assets by working with customers in neighbourhoods to ensure we support local communities and economies, making our neighbourhoods vibrant and ensuring customers have a real stake in our activities and advise us of any early warning signs of neighbourhood decline
* Develop close working relationships between the involvement team and neighbourhood, property and customer contact teams which is harmonious and focussed on removing barriers to improvement and enhancing the operational delivery of services
* A commissioning framework will be introduced where each manager will look ahead each year, at their work programme and customer engagement needs and discuss this with the Customer Involvement Manager. The manager will expect a challenge back on other ways in which they could involve customers, for example in policy and changes in working arrangements.
* Maximise the customer voice, bringing out those who have not previously been involved, building their confidence, supporting them to access other services like employment and training.
* Support cohesion in communities and the life chances of our communities, encouraging self-help, resilience and demonstrating clearly where their voices can be heard and seen to be acted upon
* **Committed to Growth and Adding Value**

Customer involvement will:

* Support the development of excellent services, enabling us to be acknowledged as an outstanding business group, with an associated high public profile and reputation for being serious and committed to placing the involvement of people, communities and stakeholders at the heart of our businesses
* Explain the potential and existing customer view of new homes and communities, so we build to aspirational standards, provide support which is important to customers and undertake community development which creates homes in which customers choose to stay
* Build on existing partnerships and make new connections, enabling new and existing customers to shape and influence growth, sustainability and new business opportunities.
* Deliver community investment, by finding out what resources exist in neighbourhoods, to enable customers to decide what is important to neighbourhoods and how our resources and facilities can meet those needs
* Enable involved customers to explain what we do and why we do this and be proud of their influence to any new business partners
* **Building a Great Organisation**

Customer involvement will:

* Challenge our governance structure to involve customers in every aspect of their work, ensuring we meet and exceed regulatory standards, listen to customer views and enable that voice to be heard by the Boards
* Enable our Board Members who are customers to link with customer involvement groups, to establish their confidence on behalf of the Board, that there has been customer influence prior to decision making
* Hold us to account for our values, ensuring we are ethical, that we further social justice, are inclusive, people centred and remain grounded to deliver our core purpose and leave no-one behind
* Support us to map out our social investment priorities, monitoring our social aims as critical friends and supporting innovation
* Expect us to deliver value for money for customer facing services, through challenging our cost effectiveness, our quality and supporting us to measure business outcomes
* Challenging our performance by benchmarking across our businesses and neighbourhoods, offering suggestions for improvement. Scrutinising service delivery, promises, complaints and outcomes from strategic and operational objectives
* Invite customers to challenge our transparency and accountability in neighbourhoods, services and the way we work

**There are three areas where customer involvement services will be most active:**

1. Governance
2. Growth and sustainability
3. Inclusion and social investment

**a) Governance**

Regulators and commissioners of services are increasing their scrutiny on governance. Our Boards are required to operate in a transparent way and be accountable to customers.

Regulatory standards on co-regulation require customer involvement, in policy development, performance improvement, scrutiny, complaints, customer care, choice and equalities, across all our work.

Our services have always been scrutinised by customers. We are proud of their support and the way they challenge us to improve satisfaction.

**For Partner and Thirteen Boards, Customer Involvement will ensure:**

* Boards receive regular reports on the impact of our customer involvement work, the way customers are engaged, precisely what has been heard and the outcomes achieved as a result of customer engagement
* Board Members, who are customers, will link with the customer involvement structure, informing Boards of their views of involvement in services. They hold the Involvement Team and other managers to account for transparency and acting on customer opinion
* Transparency, feedback and quick response is encouraged, at all times, when services are reviewed, enabling commentary through social media and the web
* Thirteen Customer Council holds the Boards to account for the delivery of corporate objectives, value for money statements, procurement and social return on investment. They provide an informed view on the challenges facing customers and neighbourhoods, attending part or all of Board away-days as appropriate to inform on matters important to customers
* Thirteen Customers Council monitor performance information and benchmark service performance and satisfaction, across the group and with the landlords. They will hold each Board and service to account, picking up inequalities in service quality across the group. They ensure services to diverse groups and communities are equal and fine-tuned to meet need. They will support communication methods such as the requirement to produce annual reports
* Thirteen Scrutiny Panel reviews 3 services a year, reporting on findings and making recommendations to Board. They have their recommendations monitored by the Group Audit and Risk Committee, in a similar way to Internal Audit reports
* Thirteen Designated Complaint Panel reports on individual complaints at the end of the complaint process, taking any recommendations to Board, which suggest that the individual service failure might be replicated across other services or households, to Group Audit and Risk Committee
* Customer Voice Task and Finish Policy groups are engaged in the delivery of every new policy or new way of working. Customers will be trained to understand the national and local policy context, to explain the views of recent services users. Both those in the meeting and those who have been invited to comment through social media and other methods of engagement
* Thirteen Customer Voice Customer Service Investigators will be commissioned by Boards, Thirteen Customer Council and Business Managers to complete short pieces of scrutiny. About 12 a year to address specific concerns relating to customer care, choice or to consider new ways of working
* Neighbourhood Committees and Audits will hold neighbourhood and property services staff to account for their services and performance. They will also advise managers of customer ideas on resolving local problems

**For Thirteen Care and Support, customer involvement will:**

* Develop a high quality and outcome focussed engagement which is a requirement of existing and potential contracts.
* Support excellence in engagement to develop a commercial edge over competitors, whilst at the same time, ensuring full compliance with the relevant LA’s quality assessment framework.
* Deliver involvement services to a diverse client base. Representatives for specific services are developed, to express their views and monitor services in their schemes, enabling peer mentoring to develop and giving customers confidence their views are heard and actioned.

**b) Growth and sustainability**

Our operating environment is one of growing housing need for energy efficient homes of the right size, with improved facilities, as competition from the private sector increases and homes for life become less aspirational. Vibrant neighbourhoods and communities are equally important as the quality of housing, care, support and other services we provide.

Funding for care and support services and assistance to improve health and wellbeing is under pressure. Thirteen Care and Support and landlords are seeing a reduction in Supporting People funding, as cuts at Local Authorities begin to bite hard.

Organisational development is rapid. Corporate planning is being developed to be flexible, responsive and fit for purpose to meet changing business needs. Our services have always been scrutinised by customers. We are proud of their support and the way they challenge us to improve satisfaction.

Our future is bright. Even at a time of great economic and social stress, we are proud of our responsible growth, our partnerships and the way our customers have supported us, to tackle disadvantage in a positive way. We are proud our values have been influenced by customers and they tell us the way we impact positively or otherwise, in our communities. Customers can support us to learn, grow and sustain our neighbourhoods.

**Customer Involvement will ensure for landlords:**

* Thirteen Ownership Panel give the Group a commercial edge which supports property development growth and where leaseholders and shared owners can support property design, lease development and improvement and influence future services subject to ongoing charges
* Customer Service Investigator projects will review development and services to new and existing developments to enable service improvements,
* Neighbourhood Committees, Tenant and Resident Associations, working with other agencies and clubs will reap rewards for our investment in communities. Where we will support local activities through participatory budgeting and other involvement funding, enabling us to work in partnership to hear about growth opportunities, sustain neighbourhoods and address issues as “can do” landlords

**Customer Involvement will ensure for Thirteen Care and Support:**

* Develop a steering group from their diverse client base, enabling customers to comment and monitor services, practices, procurement, and to lobby for improved services. This supports contract monitoring, delivery of contract requirements and shapes offers made commercially to develop new and existing opportunities.

**c) Inclusion and social investment**

Unemployment and financial inclusion are growing problems in our neighbourhoods. Programmes to alleviate disadvantage are being cut in our communities. The spending power of customers in communities is reducing, causing local businesses and facilities to close. Inequalities are increasing, not only in traditional equality act terms but in the exclusion of other groups in our communities. This is a major concern to our customers.

We have a fresh call to support our customers and communities into training, employment, to access low cost finance, to maximise their benefits and educate customers on best use of energy, the internet and to rebuild their confidence.

**For Landlords, customer involvement will:**

* Enable us to hear directly from customers involved in neighbourhood committees, neighbourhood audits and to spot early warning signs of individuals and communities being unable to cope, so preventative action can be taken
* Enable and target diverse groups of customers to become involved throughout the involvement structure, to build trust, offer training and support those who are under-represented to participate.
* Ensure any customer commentary includes representatives who can consider the needs of a diverse customer base
* Develop a Talent School where customers will receive information from managers about the operation of the business and develop courses for local delivery in community rooms and offices to capacity build customers to get involved, monitor and influence and to understand the route to further education, training and employment. The Talent School may also be a source for recruiting future Group Apprenticeships and work experience and will offer opportunities for apprenticeships in the wider group to attend courses with customers.
* Where our customers are in dispersed stock, or where other agencies dominate, or where we have management agreements with other landlords which deliver our involvement and other services, the Thirteen Customer Voice will monitor these neighbourhoods and services as much as our areas where we have more activity
* Develop Thirteen Young Voices across the Group. These are our future customers and a group of people we need to engage with and understand their needs. The “Know your Money” service at Erimus has been successful in bringing in over 600 young voices in Middlesbrough and a committee of 15 young people. Along with others, they can be developed and encouraged to volunteer to become involved in our mainstream involvement opportunities as well as have a voice of their own. This is further supported by enabling KYM to use the existing funding set aside across the group for young person projects to lever in partnerships and services which support young people.
* ThirteenAbility will oversee the development of policy and practice which has a specific impact on disabled people. It raises concerns about any practices and supports a communications platform for dissemination of targeted information to disabled customers and those with mobility issues. The group will consider how it might merge with Ability North East, to become a voice for disabled people in social housing, across the North East of England
* Task and Finish groups may be set up specifically to represent the needs of specific groups of customers, for example, BME customers may be asked to comment on Race Hate Crime.

**For Thirteen Care and Support, customer involvement will:**

* Set up a Thirteen Care and Support Steering Group to consider how the Group services on employment, training, financial and digital inclusion can be delivered to their diverse client group

As we move to define our **social investment contribution to neighbourhoods**, we will be able to account for the services we provide and measuring our impact. For example, customer involvement will ensure:

* If customers help us to understand and reduce anti-social behaviour, we will benefit our communities and the sustainability of our homes. This will also support the reduction of crime and improve the health and wellbeing of our communities, taking pressure off police, social and health services
* If we can support customers by training them as energy advisors, we will reduce the impact of fuel poverty on our customers. So reducing the need for high cost finance, the impact of loan sharks in our neighbourhoods and take pressure off voluntary and social services
* If we engage high dependency customers to share with us their views on our support services, we can use this experience to gradually increase their self-confidence and resilience, reducing the pressure on homelessness and social services, moving customers on to less dependency and releasing resources to help others.

1. **Strategic Context**

**External drivers for change:**

**Regulation**

The Tenants Services Authority (TSA) revised their Regulatory Standards in March 2012, which are the basic minimum standards expected by the regulator. These became operational from April 2012 when the TSA was merged into the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA).

The HCA now monitors the delivery of regulatory standards. The HCA is more visible in monitoring the delivery of Economic Standards. There is an expectation of Board self-monitoring on consumer standards. This strategy framework must deliver this regulatory obligation to self-monitor. This is delivered through Thirteen Customer Council.

One of the consumer standards is the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment (TIE) and expectations of landlord performance have been increased in the new regulatory framework. The TIE is a cross cutting standard for all landlord services. It is likely that the regulator will only step in if there is ***“serious detriment”*** *(examples of which might be risks or actual harm to tenants due to health and safety mismanagement*)

This TIE scope is on tenant scrutiny and all other customer structures. Thirteen is expected to be transparent, open and accountable to customers and to ensure engagement and involvement is active in areas of importance to the business and the customer.

The word co-regulation does not appear in dictionaries, nor is it defined in any detail by the regulator. The general definition of co-regulation is one of customers taking the place formerly filled by regulators and audit commission inspectors. They hold their landlord to account through a variety of engagement methods supported by timely information and training by the landlord. In effect, this becomes a mutually reliant partnership between landlords and tenant to shape the delivery of consumer standards.

Expectations from regulation, all met from this strategy includes:

* A partnership between the Board, senior staff and the Scrutiny Panel to review services important to customers and the Board
* An opportunity offered for involvement in internal a Designated Complaints Panel (under the Localism Act 2011, enacted from April 2013).
* Review of customer facing policies
* Influence strategic priorities through Thirteen Customer Council
* Influence on how housing related services are delivered, through engagement in policy reviews
* Influence in setting and monitoring standards by Thirteen Customer Council and Customer Service Investigators;
* Making of recommendations on how performance can be improved
* Specifying and monitoring local offers at Thirteen Customer Council
* The annual report to tenants, reviewed by Thirteen Customer Council
* A project to offer tenants the opportunity to undertake repairs and maintenance themselves, within certain caveats and to share in any savings made (Tenant Cashback), to be considered through a task and finish group and supported by the Inclusion and Property Teams for links to training in the Talent School to complete small repairs.

Given the TIE applies as a cross cutting standard, requirements for customer involvement in the other standards will be considered by the policy groups:

* Customer Care and choice, complaints, access and equality
* Home – decent homes and right first time repairs, consultation on budgets, programmes and spend
* Neighbourhood and Community – ASB and estate management and partnership working in neighbourhoods/communal areas
* Tenancy – fixed term tenure, allocations, mutual exchanges and homelessness
* Rent – affordable and social rent consultation
* Value for Money – stakeholder involvement and review of VFM plans and how to spend saving
* Governance and Financial Viability –consulting on how customers should be involved in reviewing their own involvement in governance and influencing strategic objectives. This will be considered with customers after 2 years with a view to revising this strategy every 3 years.

The risks to landlords for non-compliance in co-regulation include:

* The Housing Ombudsman (or Councillors, MPs or Designated Complaints Panel) may become involved in the non-delivery of standards or promises through the complaints process
* The HCA could enact tools still at its disposal including inspection, external audit, voluntary undertaking or more serious interventions.
* The service of a notice of serious detriment, though this has mainly been on health and safety issues like failure to deliver statutory gas servicing.

**Competition**

* There is a reputational and financial risk to the Boards to not have a fit for purpose and dynamic involvement structure in the competitive environment
* The accommodation offer and demand for the core product of Housing Associations in some locations is a business risk. Partly due to changes in benefit changes (the bedroom tax) but also due to the growth of and lowering of rents( in some cases) in the private sector market and their ability to negotiate with customers for larger accommodation within local housing allowances.
* The competitive environment is subject to greater challenges for innovation in a commercial setting. Thirteen Care and Support competes for work and retenders amongst cuts in care and support services at LAs. Getting client involvement right and being known for engagement excellence will equal or give a commercial edge over similar organisation. (Changing lives have recently offered dedicated CI staff in their tenders). In a similar way, the engagement offer must be excellent to gain the trust of any future stock transfers or any management contracts and development opportunities which support the Partnership and regeneration teams to win work and enable growth of Thirteen.
* It is essential that the customer involvement is business targeted to engaging customers to support the focus on these issues. Customers can help the business, consider access to our homes products, identify the accommodation offer, identify needs for management of accommodation and how Thirteen encourage customers put down roots in communities and manage any move on.

**Welfare Reform**

* The impact of the benefit cap and bedroom tax in reducing the Housing Benefit being paid to significant number of customers is already being felt across the group, through higher levels of debt and reductions in demand for some of our homes. Further impacts will be felt following the introduction of Universal credit in 2016/17. Customers can help us understand the pressures in communities and help us to decide how best to support fellow customers to maximise benefits and pay for and stay in their homes
* Changes and reductions in Supporting People and Care, the introduction of Personal Independence Payments for clients of Thirteen Care and Support bring pressure to deliver value for money and reduce services. These are not regulatory or legal obligations if income is not achieved.
* Cuts for Young People and more threats of further cuts to benefit for those under 25 years provide an opportunity for Thirteen, to deliver excellent projects like Know your Money across the Group.

**Internal drivers for change:**

* Overall customers are at the heart of why we are investing in communities. The Group need to see value for money as a return for an investment of just over £1million in the involvement service. This includes staff resource costs, devolved budgets and support to our community assets base.
* Customer involvement needs to be focussed on work to support business challenges, build better business intelligence on the competition, capture outcomes from customer involvement and to be proud to engage and consult customers and see their real influence across the business

**Where are we now?**

* Landlords Erimus Housing (EH), Housing Hartlepool (HH), Tees Valley Housing (TVH), Tristar Homes (TH) and have always enjoyed a full and productive relationship with involved customers. This happened through strategies in Fabrick and Vela which expired in 2014 and had been in existence for 3 years. The Involvement Frameworks of both former groups were planned to be reviewed in 2014
* Erimus and Tees Valley joined most of the involvement activities over the period of the previous strategies with the exception of the landlord consultative panels. Tristar Homes and Housing Hartlepool continued to run quite separate involvement streams. A more joined up approach has been adopted with regards to scrutiny, disability and some task and finish work
* The numbers of involved customers are low. Those very active amount to less than 100 people across the group. There is a need to engage with additional and diverse customers groups
* The current involvement activities are traditional groups which meet on a regular basis and do not get refreshed. Whilst these have given excellent support to Boards, often over and above expectations, there is a need to offer a more varied menu for involvement, including commentary on social media and one off opportunities to get involved
* There is a general feeling amongst staff and customers that there is a need for change to deliver value for money, a desire for consistency and fairness in engagement opportunities and a need to enable customers to participate rather than listen to officers
* Engagement at Thirteen Care and Support (TC&S) is in line with the needs of supporting people funding and shaped by the local Quality Assessment Frameworks (QAF) in operation at partner local authorities (LAs). They have developed their own QAF to enable one assessment to incorporate the needs of many Local Authorities. They are mid restructure but intend create a post for 2 years to build the involvement offer and to support existing staff to develop their skills

**Dispersed Stock**

The dispersed nature of much of Tees Valley Housing (TVH) stock and some Tristar Homes and Housing Hartlepool stock has been a challenge for customer involvement:

* TVH operates in 13 LA areas and 65 Neighbourhoods. Recent development opportunities will soon increase this to 15 LA areas. Some of the dispersed stock, like that in York, is managed by a managing agent (York HA), who have a commitment within the management agreement to deliver TVH Involvement services
* Housing Hartlepool (137 in 4 areas) and Tristar Homes (58 in 6 areas) also have dispersed stock in the North East. Gateshead ALMO has been appointed to manage new homes in Gateshead and Teesdale HA manages some Durham homes
* Opportunities will need to be offered to customers in dispersed stock areas allowing them to engage in involvement activities, but also enabling those customers to give their views locally at least once a year

**Driving us forward**

**For landlords:**

* The staff team will be brought into one team and have a central location hub at the Hudson Quay offices, after April 2015. There is an expectation that the majority of the staff will be based, for most of their week, alongside specific neighbourhood teams or working in a mobile way from a variety of work places
* In creating a new strategy for Thirteen, the customer involvement offer will need to be a fair and consistent offer across the group. One staff team will deliver it, from a cross group structure, as strategies are approved by Thirteen and all staff will work for Thirteen
* A very different menu of involvement will offer short term involvement, opportunities to simply comment and feedback through social media and web consultation as well as structured neighbourhood and formal group activities
* The aim will be to engage with 10% of our customers and to be constantly recruiting and supporting customers to engage. We recognise that this is an ambitious aim but the use of social media and other practices such as virtual panels will engage many more people
* Our community centres are underused. This strategy will enable customer engagement to increase usage to meet local need
* Thirteen wishes to promote self-help. The opportunity to offer training and support through “life, work and volunteering skills” to involved customers, by capacity building will tie in with the inclusion agenda and projects for financial inclusion, digital inclusion and pathways to work. Self-help will require a returned commitment from customers to engage in an involvement or neighbourhood project
* Many customers are already involved in existing structures. This is a new beginning and all recruitment will start afresh. Training will be given for customers showing potential for the new groups. Behaviours are important. Recruitment will be based on skills review and interviews for key standing groups

**For Thirteen Care and Support (TC&S):**

* It is proposed that further work is completed at TC&S to quantify and further develop an outline TC&S strategy. An internal restructuring of TC&S will confirm the best way forward for this partner board.
* The offer to TC&S has the potential to share expertise on engagement in a planned way. It also has potential to bring knowledge of the work of TC&S to other landlords and customers.
* Competitors have specialist involvement staff that have expertise and offer inventive ways to engage vulnerable groups. TC&S want to develop the best possible engagement offer to their clients and customers. This requires mix of research, strategic development, partnership working, support and training for their scheme based staff and office staff.

There is potential that commissioning of work might be traded within the group. In return for TC&S training, for the customers and staff through the Talent School, on dealing with vulnerable people with mental health and other needs for support in the community, Involvement staff can support the TC&S coordinator with techniques and best practice in general needs involvement.

The involvement of Thirteen Care and Support customers will be developed in more detail by the new staff team and in partnership with local recovery services who are part funding the Customer involvement offer.

1. **Strategic Objectives**

The Customer Involvement offer for landlords has been split between the corporate service development offer to the business, the involvement of customers in service development and the offer in the neighbourhoods and property teams.

* The proposal is modern and fresh and will bring about a quite different involvement offer which adds value for the business and opens up a guarantee of customer opinion on change
* The framework will deliver outcomes for customers in return for their time as volunteers
* A recruitment strategy and recruitment drive will involve those who cannot commit to daytime meetings. This will be developed quickly with the aim of having the new customers starting to be involved by September 2014
* The last meetings in the current structure will occur in June 2014 and will take time to thank all those volunteers who have given their valuable time to supporting the current involvement structures

**Value for Money**

Customers are an important stakeholder and will be consulted in our production of an annual value for money statement. Customers will also support us to review policies, suggest service improvements and will hold us to account by scrutinising services.

**Economy**

The costs of the service amount to approximately £1.1million across the group. This is a substantial and important investment for the Partners. Costs are split between 50% staffing (including overheads) and 50% doing. By its nature, involving customers requires a skilled team who are able to communicate and the split is reasonable for what is expected to be delivered within this Strategy.

**Efficiency**

Productivity, in terms of what we invest into Customer Involvement and the benefits partners receive back for the business, is addressed in this fresh strategy by a more flexible, dynamic customer involvement framework which holds staff to account and is more transparent to partner Boards.

**Effectiveness**

Qualitative and quantitative measurements of the service can be collected which show outcomes and progress in delivery. Strategic Objectives and Key Performance Indicators are found later in this report.

The Thirteen Customer Involvement Team works with a number of other landlord customer involvement services, to network and benchmark productivity and to share what works and good practice.

The strategy moves Thirteen to an outcome focused strategy, more in keeping with current business needs but also delivering a better quality of experience for customers, who will see a greater impact from their work as volunteers.

Partners will see more impact from the collective £1.1 million spent on Customer Involvement. The Customer Involvement Managers will set targets for performance improvement, reduced costs, increased customer satisfaction, reduced waste and added social value.

There is no regulatory requirement to collect satisfaction data but Boards will wish to understand the impact of this new service.

Qualitative results will capture feedback as a result of engagement on a more regular basis than 2-3 yearly customer surveys. This will be developed by the Customer Involvement Manager.

**Financial Impact of adopting the Strategy**

The Strategy in 2014/15 is delivered within existing budgets. There are some staffing cost reductions, as a result of removing one manager whilst combining the involvement staff under one team at Thirteen. In 2015/6 and 2016/7, targets will be set for the team as the benefits of reduced duplication and new ways of working become clear.

**The detail of the Customer Involvement Objectives can be found at Appendix A.**

**New Thirteen Customer Involvement Structure**

**Thirteen Care & Support**

Staff will be based in the neighbourhoods and in Hudson Quay, dependent on the role they undertake in the new structure.

**New Thirteen Customer Involvement Staff Structure:**

1. **Strategic Development & Consultation**

This strategy has been informed by the opinion and views during interviews over a 3 months period from January to March 2014, through interviews with Board Members, Lead Officers for Boards, senior staff, managers, officers, and involved customer groups over 23 days.

This was a comprehensive discussion across the business which also enabled reflection on success of the former involvement networks and requirements for improvement as follows:

One to one interviews for 1-2 hours with:

* 16 staff and managers in the involvement team
* 38 meetings with managers and senior managers across the business
* Meetings with Tenant Board Members at Vela and then Fabrick
* 7 meetings with Leaderships Team and Chairs of Boards

And 17 topical Focus Groups of 2-3 hours with groups of involved residents.

This Strategy has been researched and written independently by a consultant in customer empowerment and co-regulation.

The Framework will deliver savings in reduced duplication across the group, but there has been no suggestion in the review to reduce the £1 million to be spent resourcing customer involvement services. This commitment enables customers to hold Boards to account through scrutiny of, business objectives, service development across the group and in local neighbourhoods and housing, support and property teams.

Customer involvement will become more inclusive and offer more opportunities for a new and diverse customer challenge, with Thirteen Customer Council monitoring the delivery of equality in customer involvement.

The Boards will however have the opportunity to review the budgets for Involvement as part of the regular business processes having regard for the delivery requirements of this strategy and other priorities.

1. **Strategic Implementation Plan**

It is important to monitor and review the effectiveness of the key involvement activities to ensure they are effective, achieving required outcomes and providing value for money.

The Implementation plan can be found at **Appendix B.**

**Risk Management**

It is important to consider our risks and how we will mitigate these.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Risk** | **Mitigating factors** |
| Failure to deliver the regulatory code for tenant involvement and empowerment | Thirteen Customer Council will review this quarterly, reporting to Boards on any concerns |
| Failure to engage enough customers to influence the intensive development of policies at Thirteen in 2014-5 | This is a priority target for customer involvement staff at performance reviews and targets will also be set for neighbourhood, property and support staff to engage new customers |
| Failure to capacity build new and existing customer groups to make a real impact on service outcomes | The Talent School is a target for the Customer Involvement Team Leader, who will be held to account by the Thirteen Customer Council |
| Failure to listen to views of customers and engage on business critical issues, to enable a commercial advantage | The review of policies will be scrutinised at Board and Boards can commission scrutiny and customer service investigators to assist with business critical challenges.  Leadership team Boards, Audit and Risk Committee will hold managers to account for delivery of recommendations from customers |
| Failure to involve a diverse customers | The engagement of BME customers and Young Voices will be enhanced by the new Framework which does allows commentary on social media, bespoke task and finish groups to tackle inequality and encourages inclusion. Resources will also be targeted at those customers who reside outside of the main core urban areas |
| Failure to engage all customers on the Customer Voice | Customers will be drawn from their interest group. The database will be monitored to ensure each customer in able to engage in at least one customer involvement activity a year. |

1. **Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and Targets**

It is important to monitor and review the effectiveness of the key involvement activities to ensure they are effective, achieving required outcomes and providing value for money. The measures indicated will be supported at all levels by a new emphasis on the measurement and recording of outcomes.

The KPIs and targets can be found at **Appendix C.**

1. **Strategic Review**

The strategy will be subject to 6 monthly update reports to Boards and Thirteen Customer Council, which will confirm progress and hold staff to account for outcomes.

The Thirteen Board will receive an annual review of Customer involvement against the promises and targets in this strategy. At this time the targets will be reviewed and refreshed

The Strategy will begin to be reviewed in 2 years, in consultation with customers, stakeholders and Boards, with the intention of shaping an agreeing a new strategy from 2017.

**Appendix A**

**The Detail of the Thirteen Customer Involvement Objectives**

The proposed involvement objectives have been split between accountabilities in Scrutiny of the Business, Service Development and Neighbourhood Services:

## A Scrutiny and the Accountability of Boards

Representation on these standing groups will be 2 representatives from each landlord, with any remaining places filled on skills and behaviours. Volunteers will commit to working in the spirit of partnership with Thirteen to drive service accountability and improvements.

## Thirteen Customer Council

The proposal is to have one Thirteen Consultative Panel and to close the existing 4 landlord panels, to make one strong and active Customer Council. This Panel will be managed and supported by customer involvement and will require support from the governance and performance teams. Meetings will be monthly.

## Thirteen Customer Scrutiny Panel

The proposal is to recruit one scrutiny panel who will challenge services across all landlords. This Panel will be managed and supported by customer involvement who will call upon information and data from the governance and performance teams and other managers who might be needed to progress the scrutiny function.

Meetings or activities related to scrutiny will require a commitment of 3-4 days a month.

## Thirteen Designated Complaints Panel (DCP)

The proposal is to recruit a new designated complaints panel under the conditions of the Localism Act 2011. This panel will be managed and supported by the involvement team. The governance and performance teams will support this group with information.

A designated panel member will be expected to commit to 4 days for each complaint heard and dependant on how this role develops, to review lessons learnt and to advocate for customers to manage the complaint at the earlier part of the complaint process.

## Young Voices

The proposal is to recruit a number young people from the 4 landlords, to give a voice to young persons (10-24years), in the neighbourhoods where Thirteen operate.

Young Voices will be developed and supported by the “Know your Money” KYM project and report on this project to the Customer Involvement Team.

Initial research to replicate KYM and ensure no duplication with the role of other agencies, outside Middlesbrough will be undertaken prior to April 2015. Casual youth staff currently employed by KYM will research and develop Young Voices and make a proposal for Young Voices to be a permanent panel supported by KYM from April 2015 onwards.

This proposal will also consider the role of any new permanent staff to support this project beyond April 2015. Funding of £60k will enable this research and development from the 2014-15 CI budget and progress will be agreed and monitored by customer involvement. Youth project funding from landlords will be channelled through KYM to enable success.

## B Service Development Accountability

Representation on these task and finish groups will open to as many volunteers as wish to indicate a preference or interest in a particular subject. Volunteers will commit to working in the spirit of partnership with Thirteen to drive service improvements.

## Thirteen Customer Voice (a database/virtual group)

Any customer wishing to volunteer to be involved in service development, neighbourhoods and property services will be able to volunteer from July and August 2014 to express interest and skills which will be kept on an electronic database.

Recruitment campaigns for new customers to get involved will be the responsibility of the Customer Involvement, Neighbourhood and Property Team but will be led by Customer Involvement. The target will be to have at least 10% of customers engaged and available on this database. Staff in neighbourhoods, property and involvement will be required to suggest residents for the virtual panel.

Business Managers, Boards and the Customer Council will commission Customer Involvement to take volunteers from this Panel who have recently experienced a service to be investigated. From this, the volunteers may also be asked to join staff led Panels and give a customer perspective, for example to get involved in procurement or to train as energy advisors.

Opportunities will be advertised to influence Thirteen to this database and on social media. This pool of customers will include all those who are available to be called upon for the menu for involvement offer below:

## Thirteen Customer Service Investigators

We will recruit from the Customer Voice a group of customers who will undertake small scrutiny projects lasting no more than 5-8 weeks. These are short intensive projects.

The Investigators will be managed and supported by Customer Involvement with information from the business manager commissioning the project and may require additional information and support from the governance and performance teams.

## Thirteen Policy Groups (task and finish)

The task and finish Policy groups will be recruited from the interest expressed at the Customer Voice. The projects will be intense and will replace the current Focus Groups, Service Improvement Groups and Panels.

Volunteers will have recent experience of receiving the service/policy application and be prepared to articulate those views along with other participants on this task and finish groups.

The tasks (which it is envisaged will take 3 volunteer days to complete), will involve:-

* explaining the task and training to the volunteers on day one on the national and local context for the service/policy area
* others who cannot make the meeting and wish to express an opinion on how the policy/service can be improved, will be able to express their opinion online or through social media for a short time period
* a discussion on day two of the revision of the policy/service, where other online submissions and social media commentary will also be discussed
* Customer feedback collected from and given by customers to involved customers will be summarized in the board/leadership reports
* On day three the manager will come to the group and show the policy they have developed after the second day, to get feedback on the proposed policy/service direction

Thirteen will be going through intensive policy review in 2014 and 2015, many of the Task and Finish groups will be very active as new and existing services are developed group wide.

## Thirteen Talented Customers (Talent School)

The Talent School will be the training offer to involved customers who wish to gather information on services or may require skills to support the task they have volunteered for.

The Talent School will be managed and supported in the Customer Involvement Team. Training will be delivered locally and to all customers who need the skills and be based on business need or needs identified during skills audits for customers.

Training and information events at the Talent School will be advertised on social media and the website.

Interest will be expressed on line and those who cannot use the internet but wish to get involved will be supported to be digitally included.

Opportunities will be sought to link the Talent School to inclusion activities at Thirteen and the self-help agenda (for example digital inclusion training or bedroom tax payments, in return for giving something back or incentivising involvement). No customer will be out of pocket and expenses will be processed to enable those who wish to be involved to stay involved.

Opportunities will also be sought to link the Talent School to recruitment of apprentices in Thirteen and to give apprentices opportunities to attend customers training in the Talent School.

## Thirteen Ownership Panel

A panel interested in supporting the landlords to develop and clarify the offer of services to the shared owners and leasehold customers will be brought together from the Customer Voice.

This panel will not duplicate any work on service delivery, for example garden maintenance, communal services and repairs, where the shared owners and leaseholders will be expected to engage and get involved through volunteering for the corporate groups from the customer voice

This panel will be managed and supported by the Leasehold Team with advisory support from the Involvement Team.

## ThirteenAbility or Ability North East

A disability panel for Thirteen will be developed to influence service for disabled groups from the customer voice. This Panel will be supported by the customer involvement and might develop to become Ability Northeast multi-landlord panel, served by Thirteen involvement staff and represent the voice of social housing tenants in the north east. All 4 landlords are currently members of this Panel.

## C Neighbourhood services

Representation on these standing groups will be open to as many volunteers as wish to indicate a preference or interest in a particular subject. Volunteers will commit to working in the spirit of partnership with Thirteen to drive neighbourhood accountability and improvements.

## Neighbourhood Committees

New Neighbourhood Committees will replace former area panels, with patches aligned to neighbourhood management areas and support services.

Customers will be identified from the Customer Voice and recruitment campaigns for new customers to get involved will be the responsibility of the Neighbourhood Manager and involvement staff linked to neighbourhoods.

These Committees will hold neighbourhood, support and property staff to account for local service delivery and will receive reports on local issues and neighbourhood plans, offering critical friend support.

Activities, meetings and events linked to the neighbourhood committee will be advertised on social media and the website in such a way to give easy access to involvement in the local area.

Neighbourhood and community investment activity will be resourced from the Customer Involvement Team, both in door knocking to understand the needs of local communities and in the delivery of community investment activities, building partnerships with other agencies and providers.

## Thirteen Neighbourhood Auditors

Customers wishing to volunteer to be involved in local neighbourhood and property auditing will be able to volunteer and express interest and skills through the customer voice.

Business Managers and Boards will commission the audits, including estate inspections, armchair auditing and visits to view the condition of estates.

## Neighbourhood Tenant and Resident Associations (TARA’s)

TARAs will be managed in the neighbourhood teams with support from involvement staff based in the neighbourhood.

TARAs will be expected to meet qualifying criteria for financial support and will be expected to be able to run the group themselves with occasional support.

**Community Investment in dispersed stockholding areas**

Customer involvement will target areas of small stock outside the 3 main areas of operation within Thirteen with annual consultation and community development events bespoke to that community in a similar way which TVH has undertaken.

Not all neighbourhoods and estates will have a neighbourhood plan. This is true where the housing stock is small (10-30 homes) or in an area where another HA is dominant. This does not preclude the need to invest in consultation with local groups in these areas.

Every year, at least once, the Customer Involvement Team will go to these neighbourhoods and engage with customers on what services are good and what services need improving, encouraging further involvement and feeding back on matters raised.

Current community investment has been patchy but includes excellent projects with schools for gardening and cross generational activities, over 40s men’s sports club to alleviate loneliness, breakfast clubs cookery classes, singing lessons, basic computer courses, healthy eating and budgeting classes.

Similar ad hoc consultation has been successful with sponsorship of other meetings like Zumba class coffee gatherings (after class), to gather opinions from local people and consultation at school gates to gather local opinion.

Activities, meetings and events linked to community investment will be advertised on Thirteen social media and the website in such a way to give easy access to involvement in the local area. Adverts for community and neighbourhood activities run by other like-minded organisations can also be included on these pages.

**Participatory Budgeting:**

The proposal is to have a twice yearly participatory budget, where communities, Neighbourhood Committees, Community Investment projects and local TARAs can apply for community development funding linked to neighbourhood and business priorities agreed by Boards. Funding criteria and opening times will be advertised on social media and web pages.

**Appendix B**

**Strategic Implementation Plan**

**General**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| What | How | When | What does success look like for Boards and Customers? |
| Recruit to the combined Customer Involvement Team | Recruitment of managers and staff in the involvement team | From June 2014 | An enthusiastic team brimming with ideas for engaging customers in a way which enables customers to express their interest and enhances our business |
| Celebrate with customers who have participated in the former involvement structures | Thank customers for their time, support and hard work and encourage their participation in new involvement groups | June/July 2014 | Enable the customer to see the successes achieved in the former engagement structures  Help customers to decide how they can help us to make this strategy a reality and even more successful |
| Develop a new menu of involvement to market opportunities to volunteers | Produce a leaflet and advertise on social media and the web | August 2014 | The menu will hold the likely time commitment required from each formal group and the skills and training offered to participate |
| No customer will be out of pocket for volunteering | Develop an expenses policy | October 2014 | Bring together the current expenses policies across the group to ensure equity and fairness |
| Review the use of community centres and the resident resource centre in Middlesbrough | Audit each centre against activities required and delivered in each neighbourhood | By April 2015 | Ensure they support the framework but beyond that ensure that our investment in buildings contributes more broadly towards building resilience in people and communities |
| Review self-help in the context of involvement | Work with other teams to establish what reward is possible for involvement |  | Link involvement to self-help, including consideration of whether Boards should expect something back for bedroom tax and other contributions |
| Close existing involvement structures in June/July 2014 and re-recruit in July/August 2014 | All new and existing groups will be recruited based on skills, behaviour, a willingness to learn and an appetite to listen and gather information from other customers | From June/July 2014 | Brief role descriptions for customers will be drawn up, advertised and agreed to ensure buy in and give customers the opportunity to consider where they can best add value to the remits of any meeting or activity. |

**Landlords**

In all activities, this is the role of the **Customer involvement Manager**, reporting to Board and Thirteen Customer Voice.

All formal standing groups (Scrutiny) will include at least 2 tenants from each of the 4 partner landlords with remaining places being filled with tenants and customer stakeholders on skills and behaviours.

All other groups will have a diverse mix of customers from the 4 landlords and where possible represent as wide an area as possible.

To avoid repetition of some customers on multiple groups, each customer would be on no more than one corporate group, however they may volunteer for as many service development or neighbourhood groups as they have the time for and as commissioned by the business through the CI team.

Given the strategic role of Board Members who are customers, they will not be part of the four scrutiny groups, but act as a conduit for information on the work of the groups to the Boards and vice versa. They will be free to participate in the service development and neighbourhood involvement initiatives.

**Scrutiny**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| What | How | When | What does success look like for Boards and Customers? |
| Thirteen and landlord boards to receive an annual report | Board will review Customer Involvement outcomes | May 2015 | Assurance that co-regulation is impacting on business priorities.  Board commission scrutiny work. |
| Group Audit and Risk Committee will receive reports from Scrutiny and Complaints Panels | Committee will agree action plans and monitor progress with recommendations though exception reporting (similar to internal audit reporting) | September 2014 onwards - at all meetings | Confidence that scrutiny recommendations have been actioned.  Confidence that co-regulation is met. |
| Landlord and Thirteen Care and Support Boards | Boards will receive six monthly update reports on progress with the implementation of this strategy | September 2014 onwards - at all meetings | Assurance that co-regulation is impacting n business priorities.  Confidence that co-regulation is met.  Boards commission customer to undertake task and finish work. |
| Thirteen Customer Council | Every 6 months performance and progress reports on delivery of this strategy.  Approval of the Annual Report and VFM statement annually. | Panel to be recruited by September 2014 | Schedules for meetings to plan out the monthly meetings to enable time to be given to monitoring strategy, operational and regulatory issues.  Customers reporting on discussions to Boards  Confidence that co-regulation is met. |
| Cross group Scrutiny Panel | Business and Customer commissioned projects to look intensively at areas of poor performance or customer service | Panel to be recruited by September 2014 | Diverse mix of skilled customers and a fair representation from partner boards.  Timely information to enable. the Panel to undertake their work.  Referrals to Panel from Boards of scrutiny subjects;  Confidence that co-regulation is met. |
| Cross group Designated Complaints Panel | Panel to consider complaints when internal complaints system is exhausted.  Panel to consider wider role on advocacy for customers at first stage of complaint and to monitor performance and lessons learnt on complaints | Panel to be recruited by September 2014 and registered with HoS, following training in December 2014 | Diverse mix of skilled customers and a fair representation from partner boards.  Timely information to enable the Panel to undertake their work.  Referrals to Panel from complainants, Councillors and MPs.  Decisions ratified by Housing Ombudsman Service (HoS);  Confidence that co-regulation is met. |
| Young Voices | KYM to make connections in Hartlepool and Stockton areas and research potential for extending KYM to these regions and to set up young voices Panels similar to Middlesbrough | Research completed in 2014.  Panels by the of 2015/16 in 3 core areas, followed by investigation offer to dispersed stock | Fledgling Young Voices in the 2 core areas in year one.  Middlesbrough Panel to become active in the customer voice in year one.  Young Voices Panels in 3 areas in year two and actively involved in the customer voice and other panels.  Extend success to links with dispersed stock in year three. |

**Service Development**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| What | How | When | What does success look like? |
| Customer Voice | Data base to be established which collects and excites interest from customers to influence services | Recruitment to begin in July 2014 with door knocking, literature and roadshows of the new involvement offer | Understanding of interests of involved customers and how often they would like to volunteer to influence services.  Diverse and new customers supporting existing involved customers to shape services. Recruitment to be constant.  Customer engaged to support recruitment. |
| Developing a commissioning Framework | A realistic plan where demands on the team can be planned and named staff allocated to specific projects. | By October 2014 | The team leader will arrange at least 2 meetings a year with the commissioning managers to establish progress against requirements.  The work of the involvement team will be planned and through to get the best results. |
| Social Media | Develop a social media strategy for customer involvement which enhances the amount of views received on services and influences change |  | Initial work to update current websites with new involvement approach.  Invitations to customers to comment on new policies and services.  Use of video clips from customers inviting involvement in specific groups and explaining how to volunteer.  Use of Facebook/twitter to share messages from each customer involvement meeting.  Some meetings to be recorded live and invite immediate comment through social media |
| Customer Service Investigators | Business Manager commissioned projects to consider areas of concern | First project across the group to begin in September 2014 | Diverse mix of skilled customers and a fair representation from partner boards.  Timely information to enable CSI to undertake their work.  Referrals to CSI from Managers and Thirteen Customer Council. |
| Task and Finish Policy Groups | Business Manager commissioned projects to Policy timetable | First project across the group to begin in September 2014 | Planning ahead from business managers for commissioning of customer involvement in policy review.  Confidence that co-regulation is met. |
| Talent School | Deliver courses to involved customers which increases the impact of the customer voice in the business | First courses to begin in September 2014, using a variety of venues | Skills audit of customer volunteers.  Courses aimed at equipping customers with the skills they need to understand and influence;  Courses which develop skills to enable some customers to undertake more formal engagement.  A stronger louder customer voice, heard by managers and Boards, which impact through tangible in changes to the way we work. |
| Ownership Panel | Customer Impact on shared ownership and leasehold services | Panel to be recruited by September 2014 | Customer shaping new build homes and services for shared owners and leaseholders.  Customer influencing revised standard lease.  Clarity of customers of what to expect from services subject to charges.  Improved satisfaction from leaseholders and owners. |
| ThirteenAbility | Disabled customer impact on service design | Panel to be recruited by September 2014 | Customer shaping services and influencing policies for disabled customers.  Success in moving Thirteen Ability to Ability NE to become the voice of disabled social housing customers in the North East of England. |

**Neighbourhoods**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| What | How | When | What does success look like? |
| Neighbourhood Committees | Hold housing, property and support managers to account for services to neighbourhoods and give intelligence to managers to address areas of poor performance | Committees to be recruited by September 2014 and then meet quarterly | Meetings which customers do not want to miss attending.  Performance information shared to hold managers to account.  Information discussed which supports local managers address business challenges in partnership with customers. |
| Neighbourhood Auditors | Business Manager commissioned projects to address customer concern | Auditors to be recruited by September 2014 | Conversations to establish how customer auditing can deliver value for money for the business and improved services.  Implementation of a customer audit plan led by business need. |
| Tenant and Resident Groups (TARAs) | Support existing TARAs to be self-sufficient and dynamic in communities and influencing neighbourhood services | Recognition criteria by October 2014.  Assessment of current position and support required to meet recognition criteria by November 2014. Annual visits to begin in January 2015 | Develop recognition criteria.  Develop understanding of where additional support is required to become self-sufficient.  Develop a support visit schedule to assess what further support TARAs require to support their community/area.  Support neighbourhood staff to sustain TARAs. |
| Community Investment in dispersed communities | Supporting our customers in dispersed stock to feel valued and to invite their opinion once a year through roadshows in their locality | Assessment of current community investment by November 2014; Annual visits to begin to dispersed stock in January 2015 | Assess current connections with customers in our dispersed stock.  Develop a plan to start or build upon existing connections.  Establish connection with other services who may wish to connect to dispersed customers.  Develop a roadshow which will establish views on services annually from customers. |
| Participatory Budgeting | Enable individuals and groups in our neighbourhoods to access funding and support to address local challenges | First participatory budgeting applications to be submitted in November 2014,for consideration in December | Agree criteria for funding with Boards.  Establish a route map for open advertisement of available funding and how customers may influence and choose their preferred ideas.  Establish a route to carry over unspent funding to future years.  Excite and engage local people in ideas for projects which enhance their quality of life and meet Board priorities. |

**Thirteen Care and Support**

In these activities, the Customer Involvement Coordinator in the TC&S team will take the lead, with support from the Customer Involvement Manager.

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| What | How | When | What does success look like? |
| Develop a strategic approach to customer involvement in TC&S | Develop a strategy which suits the client groups and creates engagement opportunities in local schemes and across the business | From September 2014 | Research best practice.  Work in partnership with recovery services to enable a balance between contracted work for this service and the wider customer involvement offer in TC&S. |
| The strategy will meet all of the QAF commissioning requirements | Meet local commissioners and understand their needs | Already complete | This will continue to be a focus for the way we work |
| Support will be offered to scheme managers to deliver real local engagement | Create a training and development plan and begin training | Plan from November 2014, delivery starting from January 2015 | Scheme managers to have meaningful discussion with clients to demonstrate action |
| Develop the social media offer for feedback and engagement | Link to the development of social media at the landlord | From November 2014 | Develop new and additional ways to receive feedback |
| Develop a role for reality checking | Set up mystery shopping service to test local promises | From January 2015 | Customers testing services and seeing improvements |
| Learn from satisfaction surveys | Invite customers to tell us what questions to ask which are important to them | From January 2015 | Ensure KPIs are benchmarked on what is important to commissioning managers and customers |
| Use our own best practice as a platform for public speaking | Raise awareness of the good work done | As soon as the post-holder is appointed | Maintain excellence |
| Links to the Talent School | linking up with projects on employability, digital inclusion and money advice | From January 2015 | TC&S customers using the Talent School and course designed to meet their engagement needs |
| Support clients at the end of their period in supported housing to remain involved | Encourage move on customers to volunteer for other customer groups in the involvement structure | From November 2014 | Devise a support plan which enables our outgoing customers to connect with communities and remain involved with us as volunteers |

**Appendix C**

**Key performance Indicators and Targets**

For Landlord services, this is the role of the **Customer Involvement Manager**, reporting to Board and Thirteen Customer Voice.

**Scrutiny**

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| Thirteen Customer Council to meet at least 10 times a year |
| Cross group Scrutiny Panel to complete 3 service reviews a year |
| Cross group Designated Complaints Panel to be approached as the choice option to hear 80% at the end of the internal complaint process |
| Young Voices to be developed around the Stockton and Hartlepool Base in 2014/15 and set up as Young Voice Panels in 2015/6 |

**Service Development**

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| Customer Voice to increase from 100 to 1000 involved customers, giving feedback to the Boards in 2014/5, then 2000 in 2015/16 and 3000 in 2016/17 |
| Customer Service Investigators to complete 12 mini scrutiny projects a year, |
| Task and Finish Policy Groups to train customers on national and local policy context, to advertise on social media for opinions on services and to provide commentary on policies prior to Board approval, planned in accordance with the Thirteen Policy review Schedule |
| Talent School, to deliver at least one course a month locally for customers who wish to improve their real impact on service improvement and to shape services |
| Ownership Panel to meet 4 times a year |
| ThirteenAbility to meet 4 times a year |

**Neighbourhoods**

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| Neighbourhood Committees to be set up in 2014, to meet quarterly and to receive reports from neighbourhood, property and support services from Thirteen Landlords |
| Neighbourhood Auditors to be commissioned at least 4 times a year, by service managers to audit estates and neighbourhoods |
| Tenant and Resident Groups to receive support to be fully self-sufficient by the end of 2015 |
| Community Investment in dispersed communities to be planned and agreed in 2014, to enable one visit a year to each community over the first 12 months of this strategy and annually thereafter |
| Participatory Budgeting priority areas to be agreed by Boards and development of process to ensure that innovative ideas and applications for funding can be dealt with quickly and monitored for outcomes in 2014 |

**Thirteen Care and Support**

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| Develop a training programme for scheme managers, which support the setting up of focus groups for individual and specific support services from across the Thirteen Care and Support Care portfolio of services |
| Set up a Steering group of customers in 2014, to support the business to develop a commercial customer involvement approach by March 2015 |

**General**

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| --- |
| Set targets and recruit to achieve a diverse range of customers who are representative of our communities and applicants |
| Develop measures for local team performance, including satisfaction with customer views taken into account, no. engaged from new lettings, services changed as a result on involvement, no. of customer attending training/events and outcomes |