



# Communications Strategy

Agenda Item 4.3

March 2009

**Island Homes Draft Communications Strategy**

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*All policies and procedures are reviewed regularly and may be updated from time to time.  
Please ensure you have the latest version by checking our intranet/internet site regularly.*

## **1. Island Homes' Vision**

- 1.1 To embed a culture within the organisation that places residents at the heart of everything we do. Communication play a key role in this as it involves getting across our messages in an effective and understandable way to all audiences.

## **2. Purpose**

- 2.2 To provide clear direction and a sense of purpose for all communication and promotional activities. Creative and innovative solutions will be used to achieve the strategy's objectives and ensure consistently high standards.
- 2.3 The strategy will deliver effective two-way communication with residents, staff, partners and stakeholders. It will grow the external profile of Island Homes and One Housing Group regionally and nationally, successfully promote both brands and position the Group to influence government and policy makers.

## **3. Objectives**

- 3.1 The strategy will be informed by the environment within which Island Homes operates.

Key objectives are to:

- 3.2 Support the creation and sustainability of putting residents at the heart of services
- 3.3 Positively engage residents, partners and stakeholders, ensuring communications are relevant, engaging, interesting and appropriate
- 3.4 Motivate and empower staff to contribute to both Island Homes and the Group's success and business outcomes
- 3.5 Effectively promote Island Homes' services and branding
- 3.6 Celebrate Island Homes' achievements and convey key news items to a range of audiences
- 3.7 Protect Island Homes from bad news stories
- 3.8 Position Island Homes and One Housing Group to exert maximum influence on local and national policy makers.

## **4. Key Principles**

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The strategy is based on the following key principles:

- 4.1 Ensure inaccuracies, rumours and conjecture about Island Homes are dispelled
- 4.2 Develop clear and consistent messages to promote Island Homes services and the positive images we wish to sustain about Island Homes and the Group
- 4.3 Improve internal communications with staff to create a hardworking but happy and comfortable environment whilst ensuring efficiency
- 4.4 Develop effective tools to enable staff to deliver Island Homes' communication objectives
- 4.5 Ensure communications are genuinely two-way and that residents feel involved in the work of the organisation
- 4.6 Make the connection between communications and delivering key Island Homes strategic objectives such as improving resident engagement, delivering our Resident Involvement Framework and using customer feedback to drive service improvements
- 4.7 Support organisational cultural change to a resident influenced organisation which puts residents at the heart of everything we do
- 4.8 Improve the relationship with stakeholders such as local councillors, the TSA, keeping them involved in and up to date with the organisation's work on an ongoing basis
- 4.9 Maximise networking opportunities and manage external relationships with partners, stakeholders (including our regulators and government agencies), media, policy makers and external agencies to achieve key business objectives
- 4.10 Identify and deliver political goals and targets

The strategy will be delivered through a mixture of in-house expertise and purchased services from external agencies. The strategy is supported by an Information and Access Policy and comprehensive Group Communication Plans.

## **5. Delivering the Strategy's Objectives**

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## **Residents**

Delivering a positive customer experience is vital to our residents' perception of Island Homes as well as our external reputation. The quality of communications is a key element of the customer experience and is critical if we are to deliver our aim of placing residents at the heart of everything we do.

We will:

- 5.1 Ensure all communications are clear and easy to understand
- 5.2 Be creative and innovative in our approach ensuring communications are interesting, engaging and clearly communicate our messages
- 5.3 Understand our residents, their preferred methods of communication and the languages and formats they require
- 5.4 Create communications which are consistent in terms of quality and regularity which customers and staff can rely on
- 5.5 Ensure we proactively and regularly seek feedback on services and demonstrate how feedback from residents is used to improve services

## **6. Staff**

Island Homes staff and other colleagues working with us are our biggest asset. Island Homes can only achieve its ambitions by having a motivated, skilled, engaged and informed staff team. Effective communication is integral to this.

We will ensure our communications enable staff to:

- 6.1 Understand our strategic objectives; how we plan to achieve them and the role they play in making them a reality
- 6.2 Understand how adopting our values are integral to delivering our objectives
- 6.3 Be engaged in a two-way discussion about the direction of the organisation and the quality of services, empowering staff to contribute to the organisation's future plans
- 6.4 Value their contributions and celebrate their success
- 6.5 Feel part of Island Homes and have clarity about how the Group structure to create a cohesive organisation and enable staff to positively promote the organisation to residents' customers and stakeholders

## **7. Stakeholders**

Gaining the support of our stakeholders, such as local councillors, the TSA and other regulators, is key to achieving our long term goals. The quality of communications with this group is vital to improving our existing relationship with them.

We will:

- 7.1 Ensure all stakeholders are kept aware of Island Homes' improvement plans
- 7.2 Ensure all communications are clear and in the appropriate format, tone and language
- 7.3 Maintain a two way communications process which allows stakeholders to contribute to the future direction of the organisation and to feel involved with its work on a day-to-day basis
- 7.4 Organise regular face to face meetings with key stakeholders to maintain a good working relationship with them

## **8. Profile and Promotion of the Group and how Island Homes fits into the Group structure**

Raising and further developing the external reputation and profile of One Housing Group and Island Homes is key to achieving our business objectives and stock transfer promises - success will open doors and provide the organisation with the opportunity to showcase achievements, influence policy and practice and take advantage of new business ventures.

To achieve this, we will:

- 8.1 Implement a strategic approach to networking, maximising relationships with key stakeholders to support the delivery of agreed business outcomes
- 8.2 Develop effective relationships with trade, national and local media and use those relationships to maximise positive news coverage to a range of different audiences
- 8.3 Develop positive relationships with the TSA and HCA, as well as the other regulators/agencies we work with, ensuring we deliver both transfer promises and government objectives
- 8.4 Develop relationships with politicians, policy makers, the Chartered Institute of Housing and the National Housing Federation in relevant areas of operation
- 8.5 Develop a reputation for being a leader in resident involvement and stock transfers the 'go to' organisation for commentary on these issues
- 8.9 Substantially boost the profile of Island Homes to support the Group's wider objectives in East London
- 8.10 Ensure we maximise business growth and development opportunities to

reinforce our brand and positioning

8.11 Implement an annual Resident Events Programme and publicise to raise awareness of the organisation's initiatives and events

8.12 Improve understanding of OHG and the benefit it brings to Island Homes

## **9. Outcomes**

Successful implementation of this strategy will lead to the following outcomes:

9.1 Clarity and understanding among staff, residents, stakeholders and externally about who Island Homes and OHG are and what they do as well as how Island Homes fits into the Group structure

9.2 Improved resident satisfaction about the quality and methods of communication, and trust that their views are being heard and acted upon

9.3 Resident and stakeholders feel engaged with the organisation and able to get involved with and contribute to its work

9.4 Staff understands and buy in to our strategic aims, objectives and achievements and are motivated to achieve these

9.5 Ethos of residents being at the heart of what we do is embedded throughout the organisation

9.6 Staff are ambassadors of Island Homes in communicating with our residents and stakeholders

9.7 OHG is recognised as a major regional player and is known for best practice in terms of resident involvement and stock transfer

9.8 Regular Stakeholder Perception Surveys show improvements in perception among Island Homes stakeholders compared to the benchmark established in 2007/8

## **10. Critical Success Factors**

Critical success factors include:

10.1 Effective use of resources to implement the strategy, including staff time and financial resources

10.2 Development of a focused annual Action Plan which ensures we are meeting

the strategy's objectives

- 10.3 Ensuring staff are clear about the organisation's business objectives, have effective communications skills and are provided with clear guidance and support
- 10.4 Development of innovative communications and marketing materials that effectively support our objectives
- 10.5 Only engage in networks that add value to Island Homes' business priorities

## **11. Evaluating Success of the Strategy**

- 11.1 The delivery and effectiveness of this strategy will be monitored on an ongoing basis by the Senior Management Team (SMT), staff feedback/surveys, governing body, Consumer Panels and other resident groups.
- 11.2 In order to ensure that the strategy continues to respond to the communication needs of our residents, staff and stakeholders and that is capable of delivering our business priorities, this strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis and adapted accordingly.