



**Riverside, 4 Canning Road, Lowestoft, Suffolk,  
NR33 0EQ**

# Scrutiny Committee

## **Members:**

Councillor Stuart Bird (Chairman)  
Councillor Mike Deacon (Vice-Chairman)  
Councillor Edward Back  
Councillor David Beavan  
Councillor Judy Cloke  
Councillor Linda Coulam  
Councillor Tess Gandy  
Councillor Tony Goldson  
Councillor Tracey Green  
Councillor Colin Hedgley  
Councillor Geoff Lynch  
Councillor Keith Robinson  
Councillor Caroline Topping

Members are invited to a **Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee**  
to be held in the Conference Room, Riverside, Lowestoft  
on **Thursday, 17 November 2022 at 6.30pm**

This meeting will be broadcast to the public via the East Suffolk YouTube  
Channel at <https://youtu.be/2oMQ0x6Mr00>

An Agenda is set out below.

## **Part One – Open to the Public**

**Pages**

- |          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |               |
|----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| <b>2</b> | <b>Declarations of Interest</b><br>Members and Officers are invited to make any declarations of interests, and the nature of that interest, that they may have in relation to items on the Agenda and are also reminded to make any declarations at any stage during the Meeting if it becomes apparent that this may be required when a particular item or issue is considered. |               |
| <b>3</b> | <b>Minutes</b><br>To confirm as a correct record the Minutes of the Meeting held on 27 October 2022                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <b>1 - 4</b>  |
| <b>4</b> | <b>Matters Arising Update Sheet</b><br>To receive the Matters Arising Update Sheet in response to the queries raised at the last meeting held on 27 October 2022.                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <b>5 - 7</b>  |
| <b>5</b> | <b>Review of How the Council Engages with Housing Tenants ES/1346</b><br>Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing - Councillor Richard Kerry                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <b>8 - 90</b> |
| <b>6</b> | <b>Scrutiny Committee Work Programme</b><br>To receive any updates in relation to the Committee's Work Programme.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |               |

## Part Two – Exempt/Confidential

There are no Exempt or Confidential items for this Agenda.

### Close



Stephen Baker, Chief Executive

### **Filming, Videoing, Photography and Audio Recording at Council Meetings**

The Council, members of the public and press may record / film / photograph or broadcast this meeting when the public and press are not lawfully excluded.

The Council cannot guarantee public seating areas will not be filmed or recorded. By entering the Conference Room and sitting in the public seating area, those present will be deemed to have consented to the possible use of filmed images and sound recordings. If you do not wish to be recorded, please speak to a member of the Democratic Services team at the earliest opportunity.

If you require this document in large print, audio or Braille or in a different language, please contact the Democratic Services Team on 01502 523521 or email:

[democraticservices@eastsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:democraticservices@eastsuffolk.gov.uk)



**The national Charter and Charter Plus Awards for Elected Member Development**  
East Suffolk Council is committed to achieving excellence in elected member development

[www.local.gov.uk/Community-Leadership](http://www.local.gov.uk/Community-Leadership)

**Unconfirmed**



Minutes of a Meeting of the **Scrutiny Committee** held in the Deben Conference Room, East Suffolk House, on **Thursday, 27 October 2022 at 6.30pm**

**Members of the Committee present:**

Councillor Edward Back, Councillor David Beavan, Councillor Stuart Bird, Councillor Judy Cloke, Councillor Linda Coulam, Councillor Mike Deacon, Councillor Tony Goldson, Councillor Tracey Green, Councillor Keith Robinson

**Other Members present:**

Councillor Norman Brooks, Councillor Tony Cooper, Councillor Tom Daly, Councillor Mick Richardson, Councillor Letitia Smith

**Officers present:** Lewis Boudville (Transport, Infrastructure & Parking Services Manager), Sarah Davis (Democratic Services Officer), Nicole Rickard (Head of Communities), Alli Stone (Democratic Services Officer)

**1 Apologies for Absence and Substitutions**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Hedgley, Councillor Lynch and Councillor Topping.

Councillors Richardson, Cooper and Daly attended as substitutes for Councillors Hedgley, Lynch and Topping respectively.

**2 Declarations of Interest**

There were no Declarations of Interest.

**3 Minutes**

**RESOLVED**

That the Minutes of the Meeting held on 29 September 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

**4 Cabinet Member Scrutiny Sessions**

The Chairman welcomed and thanked Councillor Brooks - Cabinet Member with responsibility for Transport who gave a brief verbal presentation in relation to the Civil Parking Enforcement aspect of his portfolio. Councillor Brooks highlighted that work had been progressing in this area following the introduction of new legislation in April 2020 but there had been delays due to the pandemic which meant the on-street patrols started on 25 May 2020 and off-street patrols started on 2 November 2020. He explained that there had been more non compliance since patrolling started, with over 13,300 Penalty Charge Notices (PCNs) issued in 2020/21, 21,400 in 2021/22 and so far this year over 14,100 PCNs had been issued.

Councillor Brooks stated that a number of errors with on-street signage had been identified which were causing issues with enforcement but, as signage was a County Council responsibility, it was difficult to resolve this quickly but it was progressing. It was noted that the signage in off-street car parks was also being refreshed, to make signage look neater and tariff information last longer.

Councillor Brooks also referred to the thirty-minute free parking sessions which were very popular, although he acknowledged that this meant there was a relatively short dwell time in towns. The possibility of extending the free time period was raised, but he stated that parking charges in the district were reasonable already.

Scrutiny Committee members raised several on-street parking issues and the Cabinet Member responded that, although civil enforcement were spread thinly across the district, they would be sent to areas where issues of non compliance had been identified. In response to a query, he added that new permit schemes for homeowners were also being reviewed but again this required the involvement of the County Council.

The Cabinet Member also gave a presentation in relation to the Transport and Infrastructure aspect of his portfolio. Councillor Brooks stated that work was ongoing to improve car parks, by increasing space size and adding more cycle parking. He also referred to a number of large infrastructure projects taking place including the Gull Wing Bridge in Lowestoft, improvements along the A12 and a village bypass related to Sizewell C and further projects such as the East West Rail link were taking shape.

In relation to Transport East, Councillor Brooks confirmed there was now a regional Transport Strategy in place and government funding for a further three years. Whilst there was little that could directly be done due to the money required, Transport East, with its partners, will provide transport solutions for the integration of rail and bus services making rural mobility more carbon neutral.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Brooks and his officer for their attendance at the Committee.

The Chairman then welcomed and thanked Councillor Smith - Cabinet Member with responsibility for Communities, Leisure and Tourism who gave a brief verbal presentation in relation to the tourism aspect of her portfolio. It was noted that spending and employment in the tourist sector was higher in 2021 than in 2020 but was still not at 2019 levels. There were a number of challenges for tourism locally and

nationally, and it was still too early to see the full impact the cost of living crisis was having on tourism in the area but she would report back to Members on this.

The Cabinet Member explained that the Council had directly invested in a number of physical assets to support the visitor economy, including the Eastern Edge Beach Huts, East Point Pavilion and the Kitchen@Felixstowe which had all been completed in the last year. In response to questions regarding the Eastern Edge Beach Huts, the Cabinet Member stated that she would liaise with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Economic Development to confirm the number of beach huts sold and the reason they did not have felt roofs. She explained that the Council was also working with a number of partners to develop the tourism sector through the Destination Development Plan, funding hospitality skills training, marketing and advertising, and support of local festivals.

Clarification was sought on how the impact of Sizewell on the tourism industry could be mitigated and if any data was collected and the cost and impact of not only Sizewell but the interconnectors and generators etc on tourism was considered as part of the Strategic Plan Delivery Board's deliberations. The point was made that local people who worked in the tourism industry needed to live locally to where they worked and it was queried if Housing colleagues were aware of the importance of affordable housing particularly in prime tourism areas. The Cabinet Member stated that she was sure they were but would get a response from colleagues on both these matters and report back.

The Cabinet Member also gave an update in relation to the grants aspect of her portfolio including those grants available by leisure operators to provide health and lifestyle opportunities and connect with communities. With regards to grants themselves, both individual community grant schemes and Community Partnership grant processes were successful, and always oversubscribed, but could always do with wider promotion. There was a monitoring and evaluation process in place and some successful projects in individual Community Partnership areas were rolled out across the district. Where the monitoring process was not followed the team did then look at whether those groups should receive funding in the future as this was important. Councillors own Enabling Communities Budgets were generally well used, but slightly less had been allocated this year than expected which could be due to concerns around cost of living.

## **RESOLVED**

That the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Communities, Leisure and Tourism report back to the Committee on the following:

- Why do the Eastern Edge beach huts have no felt on the roof?
- How many beach huts have been sold?
- In terms of tourism, how do we mitigate the impact of Sizewell?
- Will data be collected on and do we look at the cost and impact of Sizewell, the interconnectors and generators etc on tourism as part of the Strategic Plan Delivery Board's deliberations?
- Can/do we impress on housing colleagues the importance of affordable housing to support local jobs, especially in prime tourist areas?

- What is the impact on the local tourism industry due to increased living costs?
- How are we promoting grants through ESC?
- How are small grants monitored?

## **5 Scrutiny Committee's Work Programme**

The Chairman reported that the Cabinet Member Scrutiny Session for the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Customer Experience, ICT and Commercial Partnerships had been moved from 17 November 2022 to 15 December 2022. He also reminded the Committee that the scheduled 20 April 2023 meeting would now be an informal review meeting as a formal meeting could not be held during the Pre Election Period.

Following on from the decision at the last meeting to hold an extraordinary Committee meeting to scrutinise the governance arrangements of the Council's LATCos, it was noted that a date for this would be circulated to Members shortly once arranged.

The meeting concluded at 8.15pm.

.....  
Chairman

# MATTERS ARISING UPDATE SHEET

## FROM SCRUTINY COMMITTEE MEETING ON

### 27 October 2022

Updates		
Minute Item Number	Member Query Raised	Cabinet Member/Officer Response (no more than a paragraph required)
4	Why do the Eastern Edge beach huts have no felt on the roof?	The structural build up of the roof is treated shiplap boarding on 19x38mm battens with breathable water impermeable membrane laid on counter battens (19x38mm), on 12mm class 3 plywood fixed to 38x98mm framework. All fixings are stainless steel. In essence, the waterproof membrane is protected from solar degradation by being enclosed within the structure.
4	How many beach huts have been sold?	10 have completed, with another 1 in the process with Legal
4	In terms of tourism, how do we mitigate the impact of Sizewell?	<p>ESC and partners have negotiated a £12m Tourism Mitigation Fund with EDF, which was confirmed within the Sizewell C Deed of Obligation. The fund is designed to minimise and mitigate impacts on the tourism sector throughout the build programme through annual implementation plans agreed by the Tourism Working Group (ESC, partners and EDF). The first implementation plan will be produced ahead of construction commencement during 2023 and will seek to address potential impacts by providing additional investment in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Visitor Experience Development</li> <li>- Infrastructure Assets</li> <li>- Destination Marketing and Promotion</li> <li>- Tourism Business Support Grants</li> <li>- Tourism Support Resources</li> <li>- Research Visitor/Business Surveys (impact monitoring)</li> </ul>
4	Will data be collected on and do we look at the cost and impact of Sizewell, the interconnectors and generators etc on tourism	Monitoring data will be collected on the tourism impact of Sizewell C through the work of the Tourism Working Group (see above). This will examine the impact on visitor numbers and associated spend to inform the delivery of the mitigation fund implementation plan. ESC



	as part of the Strategic Plan Delivery Board's deliberations?	also commissions an annual volume and value tourism assessment which will pick up any wider impacts of the energy developments on the ES visitor economy. Additionally, we will continue to receive industry intelligence through our relationship with The Suffolk Coast destination management organisation.
4	Can/do we impress on housing colleagues the importance of affordable housing to support local jobs, especially in prime tourist areas?	Ensuring there is appropriate housing to support the resilience and growth of the local economy is a key reason for the development of affordable housing in the district. This is particularly true in lower paid sectors, such as tourism and the housing team through its own development and working with developers is fully aware of this need.
4	What is the impact on the local tourism industry due to increased living costs?	The Suffolk Coast DMO, which delivers tourism marketing on behalf of ESC, has seen website traffic reduce by 5% over the year and by 26% between September and November 2022 – cost of living increases are being blamed for this reduction. Industry intelligence also indicates that local hospitality businesses, who have not fully recovered since the removal of pandemic restrictions, are struggling with a number closing and others reducing hours to 3 days pw due to excessive energy costs and ongoing recruitment difficulties. Anecdotally, customer behaviour is also changing with more people just going out for drinks rather than food. A thorough assessment of the impact of the cost of living increases will be available when the annual economic impact of tourism report is produced in 2023.
4	How are we promoting grants through ESC?	<p>We promote community grants through a range of mechanisms – in person at events like the recent money roadshows or specific funding roadshow events, through press releases (including those highlighting the impact of funded projects to inspire other community groups), social media and via the Community Grants pages on our webpages.</p> <p>Business and tourism grants are promoted through a range of networks including local business groups and associations, BIDs, local business support organisations such as Suffolk Chamber of Commerce and New Anglia Growth Hub, the Suffolk Coast DMO, press releases, social media and by direct promotion with town and parish councils. ESC and East Suffolk Means Business have dedicated webpages for open and relevant grants schemes that are used to promote the grants.</p>

4	How are small grants monitored?	Each project funded through schemes such as Enabling Communities Budgets and the recent Boost grants is asked to commit to complete a Grant Monitoring Form as part of their acceptance of the grant conditions. These should be returned upon completion of the project or after 6 months, whichever is soonest. For larger projects, including some of those funded through the Community Partnership Board, projects are asked to complete a quarterly monitoring form.
---	---------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------



**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**Thursday, 17 November 2022**

<b>Subject</b>	Review of How the Council Engages with Housing Tenants
<b>Report by</b>	Cabinet Member with responsibility for Housing - Councillor Richard Kerry
<b>Supporting Officer</b>	Heather Tucker, Head of Housing <a href="mailto:heather.tucker@eastsoffolk.gov.uk">heather.tucker@eastsoffolk.gov.uk</a>  Samantha Shimmon, Tenant Services Manager <a href="mailto:Samantha.shimmon@eastsoffolk.gov.uk">Samantha.shimmon@eastsoffolk.gov.uk</a> 01502 526451

Is the report Open or Exempt?	OPEN
-------------------------------	------

Category of Exempt Information and reason why it is <b>NOT</b> in the public interest to disclose the exempt information.	N/A
<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All Wards All Wards with ESC homes.

## Purpose and high-level overview

### **Purpose of Report:**

Scrutiny Committee requested a review of the how East Suffolk Council (ESC) engages with its tenants.

This report will set out the current opportunities for tenants to be engaged with ESC and the transformational work already in progress, which will provide opportunities for tenants to effectively engage in a meaningful way.

This report will include a review of these five key areas, as agreed by the Scrutiny Committee:

- How and when do we engage with tenants – how do we communicate with our tenants? Is it regular or ad hoc?
- Do we have a good level of engagement with our tenants?
- What is considered best practice?
- Do we have a policy/SLA detailing our commitment and how we will engage with tenants?

What are tenants' expectations of how the Council engages as a landlord?

### **Recommendation/s:**

That the Scrutiny Committee consider this report of how East Suffolk Council (ESC) engages with its tenants and makes any recommendations as required.

## Corporate Impact Assessment

### **Governance:**

The Social Housing White Paper sets out the expectation that landlords inform and engage with their tenants in an effective way. It suggests that engagement opportunities can range from involvement in surveys, focus groups and local events to membership of the organisation's board or scrutiny panel. A more detailed summary and links to the relevant documents can be found in the 'Background' section of this report.

The Tenant Engagement Strategy currently in production will propose a model of engagement that includes a Residents Board and a Tenant Scrutiny function made up of tenants and residents (leaseholders). The strategy will be taken to Cabinet for formal adoption in early 2023.

The purpose of the Resident Board is through co-production with Officers and Members to develop the Council's policy and strategy for its landlord service. It will review our Budgets and Finances, and our housing services within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). Performance of the HRA including arrangements for monitoring and reviewing performance, addressing shortcomings and remedial actions will be a key part of the Board's responsibility.

The purpose of the Tenant Scrutiny function is to take an unbiased view of areas of concern, to drive up performance, and give advice and suggestions to influence standards

and improve service delivery. The reviews conducted by the Tenant Scrutiny function will feed into the Residents Board.

The insight that tenants can provide in the scrutiny process, as recipients of the service will be invaluable and enable us to strengthen the way we deliver the service in the future.

We wish to discuss as part of this review how we embed Tenant Governance into the existing corporate governance structure to ensure we give tenants a voice and influence in how their landlord service is run as well as ensuring Members are able to meet their governance responsibilities.

**ESC policies and strategies that directly apply to the proposal:**

[Housing Strategy 2018- 2023](#)

[Housing Asset Management Strategy 2019 – 2024](#) (Under Review)

[Housing Development Strategy 2020 - 2024](#)

**Environmental:**

There are no Environmental impacts from this report. However, as we look to improve the environmental credentials within our housing stock, we will ensure tenants and residents are fully engaged.

**Equalities and Diversity:**

An EQIA will be developed prior to the Tenant Engagement Strategy being presented to Cabinet for approval.

**Financial:**

An adequate Tenant Engagement Budget will be required to deliver the Tenant Engagement Strategy, and this will be identified as part of the annual budget setting process with our Finance Business Partner.

**Human Resources:**

The resource required to support future Tenant Engagement and to deliver the Tenant Engagement Strategy will be reviewed while developing the strategy.

We will also be identifying learning and development opportunities for anyone involved in working with tenants, to ensure they have the rights skills, knowledge and expertise.

**ICT:**

We currently use a platform called 'TP Tracker' which completes the STAR Survey (Customer Satisfaction Survey) carried out monthly. We have recently invested further in this platform and received training to enable us to carry out our own tailored surveys.

We are looking at using the platform to capture the Tenant Satisfaction Measures required under the Social Housing Regulation Bill, which is currently going through the formal adoption processes.

Any additional ICT requirements will be developed as part of the drafting and finalising of the Strategy and will be submitted as part of the cabinet report for the adoption of the new Strategy.

**Legal:**

The Housing and Regeneration Act 2008 sets out that Local authorities with social housing stock are "registered providers of social housing". Registered Providers are governed by the [Regulator of Social Housing](#).

The Social Housing Regulation Bill which is currently going through Parliament introduces a stronger regulatory regime for Registered Providers and delivers the measures set out in the Social Housing White Paper. A more detailed summary and links to the relevant documents can be found in the 'Background' section of this report.

The [Building Safety Act 2022](#) details requirements to engage with residents on decisions related to the management of buildings. This is especially relevant to higher risk buildings such as high-rise accommodation or Retired Living Schemes. The Building Safety Act will be regulated by the Health & Safety Executive (HSE).

The [Fire Safety \(England\) Regulations 2022](#) come into effect on 23 January 2023.

The regulations place significant new duties on "high-rise residential buildings". This means a building containing two or more sets of domestic premises that is at least 18 metres above ground level; or has at least seven storeys.

In all multi-occupied residential buildings, the regulations require responsible persons to provide residents with fire safety instructions and information on the importance of fire doors. The regulations apply to existing buildings, and requirements for new buildings may be different.

In high-rise residential buildings, responsible persons will be required to :

**Building Plans:** provide their local Fire and Rescue Service with up-to-date electronic building floor plans and to place a hard copy of these plans, alongside a single page building plan which identifies key firefighting equipment, in a secure information box on site.

**External Wall Systems:** provide to their local Fire and Rescue Service information about the design and materials of a high-rise building's external wall system and to inform the Fire and Rescue Service of any material changes to these walls. Also, they will be required to provide information in relation to the level of risk that the design and materials of the external wall structure gives rise to and any mitigating steps taken.

**Lifts and other Key Fire-Fighting Equipment:** undertake monthly checks on the operation of lifts intended for use by firefighters, and evacuation lifts in their building and check the functionality of other key pieces of firefighting equipment. They will also be required to report any defective lifts or equipment to their local Fire and Rescue Service as soon as possible after detection if the fault cannot be fixed within 24 hours, and to record the outcome of checks and make them available to residents.

**Information Boxes:** install and maintain a secure information box in their building. This box must contain the name and contact details of the Responsible Person and hard copies of the building floor plans.

**Wayfinding Signage:** to install signage visible in low light or smoky conditions that identifies flat and floor numbers in the stairwells of relevant buildings.

In residential buildings with storeys over 11 metres in height, responsible persons will be required to undertake annual checks of flat entrance doors and quarterly checks of all fire doors in the common parts.

In all multi-occupied residential buildings with two or more sets of domestic premises, responsible persons will be required to:

**Fire Safety Instructions:** provide relevant fire safety instructions to their residents, which will include instructions on how to report a fire and any other instruction which sets out what a resident must do once a fire has occurred, based on the evacuation strategy for the building.

**Fire Door Information:** provide residents with information relating to the importance of fire doors in fire safety.

**Risk:**

If we fail to develop, adopt and deliver the actions set out in our future Tenant Engagement Strategy, we will lose the trust of our tenants, their ability to influence and shape our services and their opportunities to hold us to account.

If ESC does not meet the required standards as set out by the Social Housing Regulator, a performance improvement plan notice could be issued to ESC. If we failed to comply with the notice, the Regulator can issue enforcement action, which could have significant reputational damage.

<b>External Consultees:</b>	TPAS – The Tenant Engagement Experts
-----------------------------	--------------------------------------

## Strategic Plan Priorities

Select the priorities of the <a href="#">Strategic Plan</a> which are supported by this proposal: (Select only one primary and as many secondary as appropriate)		Primary priority	Secondary priorities
<b>T01</b>	<b>Growing our Economy</b>		
P01	Build the right environment for East Suffolk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P02	Attract and stimulate inward investment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P03	Maximise and grow the unique selling points of East Suffolk	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P04	Business partnerships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P05	Support and deliver infrastructure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>T02</b>	<b>Enabling our Communities</b>		
P06	Community Partnerships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P07	Taking positive action on what matters most	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
P08	Maximising health, well-being and safety in our District	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P09	Community Pride	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>T03</b>	<b>Maintaining Financial Sustainability</b>		
P10	Organisational design and streamlining services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P11	Making best use of and investing in our assets	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P12	Being commercially astute	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P13	Optimising our financial investments and grant opportunities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P14	Review service delivery with partners	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>T04</b>	<b>Delivering Digital Transformation</b>		
P15	Digital by default	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P16	Lean and efficient streamlined services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P17	Effective use of data	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P18	Skills and training	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P19	District-wide digital infrastructure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>T05</b>	<b>Caring for our Environment</b>		
P20	Lead by example	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P21	Minimise waste, reuse materials, increase recycling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P22	Renewable energy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
P23	Protection, education and influence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>XXX</b>	<b>Governance</b>		
XXX	How ESC governs itself as an authority	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>How does this proposal support the priorities selected?</b>  The governance model that will be proposed in the Tenant Engagement Strategy will need to be developed with tenants, and will support how ESC governs itself as an authority and more specifically as a landlord.			



## Background and Justification for Recommendation

1	Background facts
1.1	East Suffolk Council (ESC) is the social landlord for approximately 4,500 properties, which are owned by the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).
1.2	The stock consists of a mixture of bungalows, flats and houses and includes 13 Retired Living Schemes, one block over 18m tall and a number of properties used as Temporary Accommodation under s188 and s193(2) of the Housing Act 1996.
1.3	There are also some commercial units and some units, which are leased to other providers.
1.4	Prior to East Suffolk Council being created, only Waveney District Council had retained its housing stock. Suffolk Coastal District Council had transferred its properties to a Registered Provider a number of years before. Therefore, the stock is predominantly located in the north of East Suffolk. However, the Council has an ambitious development programme planned, including a new exemplar scheme at Deben Fields in Felixstowe, which will be built to Passivhaus Standard.
1.5	Local authorities with social housing stock became "registered providers of social housing" pursuant to the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008.
1.6	Registered Providers of social housing, which includes both Councils and Housing Associations, are governed by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH).
1.7	The Housing and Regeneration Act 2008, sets out the role of the RSH.
1.8	The RSH has a set of standards, which all Registered Provider (RP) landlords, must comply with. These include 3 economic and 4 consumer standards. The consumer standards are applicable to all RP's, including Councils. Most of the economic standards do not apply to Councils, because the RSH does not have the power to set their standards. The only economic standard, which Councils must comply with is the Rent Standard.
1.9	<p>The Consumer Standards are:</p> <p><b><i>The Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard</i></b> – Customer Service, Choice, Complaints, Involvement and Empowerment and ensuring there is an understanding of the diverse needs of tenants</p> <p><b><i>The Home Standard</i></b> – Quality of accommodation, repairs and maintenance. This includes compliance with the 'Big 6' areas: Fire, Gas Safety, Electrical Safety, Water Safety (Legionella), Asbestos and Lifting Equipment (Lifts and Stairlifts).</p> <p><b><i>The Tenancy Standard</i></b> – Allocations, Mutual Exchanges and Tenancy Management</p> <p><b><i>The Neighbourhood and Community Standard</i></b> – Management of neighbourhoods and anti-social behaviour.</p>
1.10	This report is focussed on the how the Council engages with its tenants. The <a href="#">Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard</a> sets out the following required outcomes:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customer service, choice and complaints <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Registered providers shall: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide choices, information and communication that is appropriate to the diverse needs of their tenants in the delivery of all standards</li> <li>▪ Have an approach to complaints that is clear, simple and accessible that ensures that complaints are resolved promptly, politely and fairly.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>• Involvement and Empowerment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Registered providers shall ensure that tenants are given a wide range of opportunities to influence and can be involved in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The formulation of their landlord's housing-related policies and strategic priorities</li> <li>▪ The making of decisions about how housing-related services are delivered, including the setting of service standards</li> <li>▪ The scrutiny of their landlord's performance and the making of recommendations to their landlord about how performance might be improved</li> <li>▪ The management of their homes, where applicable</li> <li>▪ The management of repair and maintenance services, such as commissioning and undertaking a range of repair tasks, as agreed with landlords, and the sharing in savings made, and</li> <li>▪ Agreeing local offers for service delivery</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> <li>• Understanding and responding to the diverse needs of tenants <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Registered providers shall: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Treat all tenants with fairness and respect</li> <li>▪ Demonstrate that they understand the different needs of their tenants, including in relation to the equality strands and tenants with additional support needs</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>
1.11	<p>In November 2020, the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government published the Social Housing White Paper called <a href="#">The Charter for Social Housing Residents</a>. The charter set out seven expectations that every social housing tenant should be able to expect:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To be safe in your home</li> <li>• To know how your landlord is performing</li> <li>• To have complaints dealt with promptly and fairly</li> <li>• To be treated with respect</li> <li>• To have your voice heard by your landlord</li> <li>• To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in</li> <li>• To be supported to take your first step to ownership</li> </ul>
1.12	<p>The proposals in the Social Housing White Paper were later set out in the <a href="#">Social Housing Regulation Bill</a>, which began its passage through Parliament at the House of Lords in June 2022 and is due to commence its third reading in late 2022. The Bill has been broadly supported and it is expected to receive Royal Assent relatively quickly.</p>

	<p>The Bill seeks to improve the regulation of social housing by having a stronger and more proactive regulatory regime. The measures announced in the Bill include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enabling the regulator to intervene with landlords who are performing poorly on consumer issues and guarantee timely action where the regulator has concerns about the decency of a home</li> <li>• Enable the regulator to inspect landlords and arrange emergency repairs to ensure tenants are provided good quality accommodation</li> <li>• Provide tenants with greater transparency about their landlord's performance by introducing a new set of Tenant Satisfaction Measures</li> <li>• Enable tenants to access information related to the management of social housing</li> <li>• Add safety to the regulator's objectives and require registered providers to appoint a health and safety lead</li> <li>• Require the housing ombudsman and the regulator to cooperate to provide better protection for tenants</li> </ul> <p>The House of Lords has also recommended the following amendments to the Bill:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A requirement for the government to publish a strategy within which standards for reducing energy demands for social housing properties could be set</li> <li>• Enabling the regulator to set standards for registered providers regarding the competence and conduct of individuals involved in the provision of services in connection with the management of social housing</li> <li>• A requirement for the Regulator to make a plan concerning inspection of registered providers.</li> </ul>
1.13	<p>As part of the Social Housing Regulation Bill, all RP's will be expected to report on a standard set of measures. This data will need to be available to view and will be published on the ESC website. These are now referred to as <a href="#">Tenant Satisfaction Measures</a>.</p> <p>From April 2023, these are the measures, which all RP's including ESC will need to report on.</p> <p><b>Overall satisfaction</b></p> <p>1. Overall satisfaction with the service provided by the landlord. Measured by: tenant perception survey</p> <p><b>Keeping properties in good repair</b></p> <p>2. Satisfaction with repairs. Measured by: tenant perception survey</p> <p>3. Satisfaction with time taken to complete most recent repair. Measured by: tenant perception survey</p> <p>4. Satisfaction that the home is well-maintained. Measured by: tenant perception survey</p> <p>5. Homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard. Measured by: landlords' management information</p> <p>6. Repairs completed within target timescale. Measured by: landlords' management information</p> <p><b>Maintaining building safety</b></p>

	<p>7. Satisfaction that the home is safe. Measured by: tenant perception survey</p> <p><b>Safety checks</b></p> <p>8. Gas safety checks. Measured by landlords' management information</p> <p>9. Fire safety checks. Measured by landlords' management information</p> <p>10. Asbestos safety checks. Measured by landlords' management information</p> <p>11. Water safety checks. Measured by landlords' management information</p> <p>12. Lift safety checks. Measured by landlords' management information</p> <p><b>Respectful and helpful engagement</b></p> <p>13. Satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them. Measured by tenant perception survey</p> <p>14. Satisfaction that the landlord keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them. Measured by tenant perception survey</p> <p>15. Agreement that the landlord treats tenants fairly and with respect. Measured by tenant perception survey</p> <p><b>Effective handling of complaints</b></p> <p>16. Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling of complaints. Measured by tenant perception survey</p> <p>17. Complaints relative to the size of the landlord. Measured by landlords' management information</p> <p>18. Complaints responded to within Complaint Handling Code timescales. Measured by landlords' management information</p> <p><b>Responsible neighbourhood management</b></p> <p>19. Satisfaction that the landlord keeps communal areas clean and well-maintained. Measured by tenant perception survey</p> <p>20. Satisfaction that the landlord makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods. Measured by tenant perception survey</p> <p>21. Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling anti-social behaviour. Measured by tenant perception survey</p> <p>22. Anti-social behaviour cases relative to the size of the landlord. Measured by landlords' management information</p>
1.14	<p>It is important that ESC reviews its approach to Tenant Engagement ahead of the Social Housing Regulation Bill being implemented.</p> <p>The Landlord Service had already started a key piece of work to review the approach to Tenant Engagement prior to Scrutiny requesting a report.</p>
	<b>Our Historical Approach to Tenant Engagement</b>
1.15	<p>We have engaged with tenants in various forms for nearly three decades through tenant and resident associations set up across East Suffolk (formerly Waveney District Council area). With the growth in the number of tenant and resident associations in the district a Tenants' Panel was established in 1996, which</p>

	representatives from the associations would attend. These meetings were held around the district in pubs, clubs, village halls and council offices.
1.16	Over time the Tenants Panel reinvented itself as a Tenants' Forum with open access to tenants and residents at its meetings. The Council invested in a dedicated Tenant Involvement Officer and new subgroups were set up such as the Housing Benefits and Tenant Services Consultation Group, which included Members and third sector stakeholders.
1.17	All our residents' groups including the Tenants Forum and Housing Benefits and Tenant Services Consultation Group were paused during the Covid 19 pandemic as face-to-face meetings were not possible and the residents who attended didn't want digital meetings.

## 2 Current position


2.1	<p><b>How and when do we engage with tenants – how do we communicate with our tenants? Is it regular or ad hoc?</b></p> <p>This section of the report will start by setting out how and when we currently engage with our tenants, the communication methods we use and also the frequency.</p>
2.2	<p><i>Residents Group – St Peters Court</i></p> <p>We have created a Residents Groups for St Peters Court, Lowestoft. This is our high-rise block of flats. We have been working with the residents to set priorities for their group in the same way the Community Partnerships do to ensure there is a focus to the meetings, and resident agreed actions to deliver on.</p>
2.3	<p><i>Tenant Newsletter</i></p> <p>A tenant newsletter was founded in 1995, which was hand delivered to every tenant by staff and volunteers. This evolved into a tenant led and edited magazine that was delivered to every tenant twice a year until 2019.</p> <p>The magazine continues to be produced in-house, although this was disrupted by the Covid Pandemic across much of 2020 and 2021. The last edition was in Winter 2020 and can be found here: <a href="#">Tenants-Magazine-Winter-2020.pdf</a>.</p> <p>There has been a recent piece of work to create a new edition of the newsletter, which will be delivered to our tenants at the end of November/early December 2022.</p>
2.4	<p><i>Monthly Surveys</i></p> <p>We use an engagement platform called 'TPTracker', which carries out regular customer satisfaction surveys on 100 tenants, selected randomly per month. This is initially sent by email or text if we have a tenant's mobile number and email address and followed up by phone call to ensure we receive a minimum of 30% response rates.</p> <p>The survey is made up of 16 questions, some of which are standard under the STAR Survey (Survey of Tenants and Residents) a nationally recognised survey.</p>

	<p>Other questions are unique to East Suffolk and are about, for example, the 'myHome' digital portal. The questions we ask tenants can be found in Appendix 1.</p> <p>Any complaints and feedback received via the STAR survey are followed up and put through the corporate customer feedback process or actioned if they are a service request such as a repair.</p> <p>Our overall satisfaction rates fluctuate and are impacted by whether we receive more digital responses or phone responses. The more digital responses we receive the lower our overall satisfactions rates. Our overall satisfaction levels can be seen in the table below.</p> <p>Overall, our average satisfaction rate from 2016 to present is 88%, which is positive, but we hope this will increase further when we launch our new Tenant Engagement Strategy.</p> <p>The graph below sets out the average overall tenant satisfaction from 2016/17 to present, which is currently at 86%:</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Financial Year</th> <th>Average Overall Tenant Satisfaction</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2016/17</td> <td>90%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2017/18</td> <td>90.5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2018/19</td> <td>91.5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2019/20</td> <td>87%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2020/21</td> <td>88.5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2021/22</td> <td>85.5%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2022/23</td> <td>86%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Housemark is the leading data and insight company for the UK housing sector, in their monthly pulse benchmarking surveys the median average overall satisfaction is 80%. Therefore, we are currently above the average satisfaction levels for the sector.</p> <p>Officers have recently met with Housemark who have advised that the current method of regular monthly surveys is considered good practice and will be beneficial as we will be able to adapt it to meet the requirements set out in the Social Housing Regulation Bill's proposed Tenant Satisfaction Measures.</p> <p>In 2022, we have expanded our access to the TPTracker platform and are now able to design and send out our own surveys digitally. We have successfully used this for several surveys, including one to help us understand the interest in the resident's group at St Peters Court and will be using this far more going forward.</p>	Financial Year	Average Overall Tenant Satisfaction	2016/17	90%	2017/18	90.5%	2018/19	91.5%	2019/20	87%	2020/21	88.5%	2021/22	85.5%	2022/23	86%
Financial Year	Average Overall Tenant Satisfaction																
2016/17	90%																
2017/18	90.5%																
2018/19	91.5%																
2019/20	87%																
2020/21	88.5%																
2021/22	85.5%																
2022/23	86%																
2.5	<p><i>Ad Hoc Communication</i></p> <p>The remainder of our communication with tenants is ad hoc, it is either communicating information with them such as the annual rent increase letters, or a localised letter about their building and works that are being completed.</p> <p>Alternatively, communication is about repairs, tenancy management or customer feedback and can be initiated by the tenant or by ESC. This can be via digital</p>																

	channels such as the East Suffolk 'myHome' portal, by telephone, written communication or face-to-face.
2.6	<p><b>Do we have a good level of engagement with our tenants?</b></p> <p>This section of the report will set out the current level of engagement we have with our tenants at present. It will also detail an external review of our tenant engagement model, which we commissioned in late 2021.</p>
2.7	<p>We have a very traditional model of engagement which was sufficient historically but does not deliver what is expected of us as a landlord by our tenants, the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) or best practice.</p> <p>Unfortunately, largely due to the restrictions the Country faced as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, our opportunities to engage with tenants were reduced, especially as a number of tenants who were engaged at the time, did not wish to move to digital communication methods such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams.</p>
2.8	<p>Therefore, in late 2021, East Suffolk Council engaged <a href="#">TPAS</a> an industry leading specialist in Tenant Engagement, to conduct a review of our engagement with tenants.</p> <p>The review highlighted that ESC did not meet any of the required tenant engagement standards, which is something we had anticipated.</p> <p>However, the main purpose of the review was to provide ESC with a clear action plan and proposed models of engagement to ensure we are able to deliver what is expected by our tenants, the RSH and best practice.</p>
2.9	The review provided ESC with a total of 48 actions to work on to develop and embed an effective approach to tenant engagement (although some of these are very similar and can be grouped together).
2.10	It is not possible to work on all these actions at the same time, so we have prioritised the development of a co-designed Engagement Strategy, as this will underpin many of the other actions.
2.11	We have commenced work on 6 out of the 48 actions and these are detailed below with indicative timescales:
2.12	<p><i>Action:</i></p> <p><i>Organisational leaders setting a clear sense of direction, stating intent and following through with action – including challenging incomplete information that fails to set out tenant influence in the strategic direction, service improvements, etc</i></p> <p>Current Progress:</p> <p>The Housing Management Team within ESC led by Heather Tucker, Head of Housing have commenced a service review and transformation programme of the landlord service.</p> <p>This work will feed into the new Housing Strategy, which is due for renewal in 2023/24 and will set a clear vision and direction with tenants at the heart of everything we do.</p>
2.13	<p><i>Action:</i></p> <p><i>Leaders across the organisation continuing the messaging by identifying resources to support change and implementing the actions identified in the TPAS review</i></p> <p>Current Progress:</p>

	As part of the Strategy development resources will be reviewed and increased to support the change required, this review will be completed in Quarter 4 of 2022/23.
2.14	<p><i>Action:</i>  <i>To develop an annual report that will provide tenants with statistics from the last financial year</i></p> <p>Current Progress:  This will be finalised by end of Quarter 3 with it being delivered to tenants early in 2023.</p>
2.15	<p><i>Action:</i>  <i>To develop in conjunction with tenants and staff a co-designed engagement strategy that clearly identifies the aims and objectives for engagement as well as the links to the key business aims and priorities</i></p> <p>Current Progress:  The strategy will be adopted by end of Quarter 4 in 2022/23</p>
2.16	<p><i>Action:</i>  <i>To publicise the 'named person' for fire safety and develop key messages and communications plans in conjunction with tenants and the wider community</i></p> <p>Current Progress:  The named person is Stephen Baker Chief Executive Officer as detailed in our Fire Safety Strategy which was approved by Cabinet in May 2022.</p> <p>We are currently developing some of the key messages and communications plans which are building specific as part of our ongoing work to ensure compliance with the Home Standard for which we were served a regulatory notice in May 2022 for breach of the standard.</p> <p>These will be completed by Quarter 4 of 2022/23.</p>
2.17	<p><i>Action:</i>  <i>To establish a working group to agree the priorities and issues for neighbourhoods and then do some targeted work within those communities utilising a strengths-based approach and a delivery action plan</i></p> <p>Current Progress:  We have commenced this work with our existing residents' groups which are localised. Some groups are further ahead than others in identifying their key priorities to enable us together to come up with specific action plans for those groups. We will continue to support tenants in this work, offering training where tenants want this.</p>
2.18	ESC employed a full time Tenant Engagement Officer in December 2021, who has undergone an extensive training programme, which included shadowing all aspects of the landlord service. They are currently completing a Chartered Institute of Housing qualification to further improve their knowledge and understanding of the housing sector.



	They will be focussed on working with the Tenant Services Manager to ensure Tenant Engagement is embedded across the whole of the Housing Service and that the actions identified in the TPAS review are completed.
2.19	The TPAS review and full action plan can be found in Appendix 2.
2.20	<p><b>What is considered best practice?</b></p> <p>As well as considering the opportunities for best practice in relation to Tenant Engagement, ESC must ensure it meets the standards set out in the Tenant Engagement and Empowerment Standard, which is one of the Consumer Standards, set out by the Regulator of Social Housing.</p> <p>The regulator has identified that poor engagement could be an indication that an organisation has poor governance, which demonstrates the importance effective engagement has.</p> <p>TPAS is considered England's leading tenant engagement experts, they have been working for 30 years to promote, support and champion tenant involvement and empowerment in social housing across England.</p>
2.21	<p>TPAS have developed a set of 7 engagement standards or best practice which reflect the renewed focus on, and the recognition of, the importance of the residents' voice. They have been developed ensuring they more than cover the increased expectations of the Regulator of Social Housing, Housing Ombudsman as well as the <i>Building Safety Act 2022</i>.</p> <p>The 7 tenant engagement standards are:</p>  <p>TPAS stress the standards can only be delivered if an organisation has the right behaviours and attitudes (culture) to set the foundations for positive outcomes.</p> <p>TPAS firmly believe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A positive culture starts with the recognition of a mutually agreed role that shows the part residents can play in the governance of the organisation.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• True transparency and unhindered information sharing increases trust and builds relationships between residents and landlords.</li> <li>• Continuous listening and learning allow organisations to respond positively to their environment and the changing needs of its residents.</li> <li>• Meeting the diverse needs of residents, removing barriers to engagement, and providing information in plain language is non-negotiable.</li> <li>• Providing a range of opportunities to engage, with appropriate support systems can produce more meaningful outcomes.</li> <li>• The acknowledgement and support for community-led solutions are a vital part of building local confidence and wider engagement opportunities.</li> </ul> <p>It is against these 7 engagement standards that TPAS reviewed ESC in their SMART Review.</p>
2.22	<p><b>Benchmarking – Nationally</b></p> <p>TPAS promote Hull City Council as having an excellent model of engagement, and scrutiny within a Local Authority setting. The Tenants Compact (Strategy Group) has eight involvement principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open Information</li> <li>• Tenants will decide their own depth and degree of involvement</li> <li>• Everything in housing is open to influence</li> <li>• Involvement is everyone’s business</li> <li>• Early enough influence</li> <li>• Getting everyone involved</li> <li>• Demonstrating that everyone’s views have been taken into account and providing feedback</li> <li>• Planning for successful involvement – and keeping plans on track</li> </ul> <p>Their <a href="#">Tenant Engagement Strategy</a> is aimed at tenants who want to become involved, but they also have a shortened version for all tenants.</p>
2.23	<p><b>Benchmarking – Locally</b></p> <p>As part of the review of Tenant Engagement, we have considered what neighbouring Local Authorities and Registered Providers were doing and look for examples of best practice.</p>
2.24	<p>Ipswich Borough Council have a <a href="#">Tenant Engagement Strategy</a> which they developed from the results of a tenant survey to give three main priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To improve the way we communicate with tenants</li> <li>• To promote and support tenant involvement</li> <li>• To use what we are told to improve our services</li> </ul> <p>The strategy sets out Ipswich’s clear intent to work with residents to develop a new model of engagement and scrutiny.</p>
2.25	<p>Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils approved their Tenant Engagement Strategy in November 2022 and this can be found in Appendix 3.</p> <p>Like Ipswich they have used a Tenant Satisfaction survey as well as working with their existing Tenant Board members and Councillors to come up with five priorities for their Strategy:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Open &amp; Transparent Information</li> <li>• You said, we did</li> <li>• Valuing Diversity &amp; Inclusion</li> <li>• Engagement is Everyone's Business</li> <li>• Early and Planned Engagement</li> </ul>
2.26	<p>New Tide Housing which is the majority stockholder for the southern end of the district splits its engagement into 3 areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Personal – a digital platform for surveys</li> <li>• Local – Spotlights for localised concerns, residents associations and Community champions</li> <li>• Group – Tenant Overview panel, Tenant experience group and a Digital experience group</li> </ul> <p>Further information can be found here: <a href="https://www.newtide-homes.co.uk/your-feedback/get-involved/">https://www.newtide-homes.co.uk/your-feedback/get-involved/</a></p>
2.27	<p>Havebury Housing Partnership worked with tenants, their teams, Board and Committee members to review the ways their tenants could influence and engage with them and have produced a new strategy/booklet in September 2022 which identifies seven levels of engagement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be Aware</li> <li>• Opt In</li> <li>• Chip In</li> <li>• Co-create</li> <li>• Collaborate</li> <li>• Tenant Voice Panels</li> <li>• Lead</li> </ul> <p>Havebury also have a digital platform that allows them to carry out surveys and share the results.</p>
2.28	<p>Orwell Housing Association developed their Customer Engagement Strategy 2021 – 2024 with 4 key areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enhance our engagement with choice and reward</li> <li>• Empower customers through ambitious training and development</li> <li>• Engage with all customers via a blend of equitable practices</li> <li>• Enable insight into what is important to our customers</li> </ul> <p>A digital version of the strategy is not available; however, a copy has been included at Appendix 4.</p>
2.29	<p><b>Summary</b></p> <p>The range of strategies demonstrate that whilst there are similarities, a one size fits all approach is not possible with tenant engagement.</p> <p>Tenants need to be involved in the development of the Strategy and the models of engagement for their landlord. This will ensure it delivers what tenants want and meet the seven engagement standards outlined by TPAS.</p>
2.30	<p><b>Do we have a policy/SLA detailing our commitment and how we will engage with tenants?</b></p> <p>We do not currently have a Tenant Engagement Strategy, but this is being developed at present and further information on the work currently underway can be found in section 3 of this report.</p>

2.31	<p><b>What are tenants’ expectations of how the Council engages as a landlord?</b></p> <p>We are currently engaging with tenants to understand what their expectations are in relation to how ESC engages with them, as their landlord. More information on this can be found in section 3 of this report.</p>
------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

3 How to address current situation	
3.1	<p>East Suffolk Council are actively developing a Tenant Engagement Strategy. To ensure that our tenants are at the heart of the strategy and that the involvement opportunities are maximised and designed to meet tenants’ expectations, we have already communicated with many tenants, using the ‘TPTracker’ platform.</p> <p>We contacted tenants using digital communication methods and asked if they would be interested in joining a group to co-produce our Tenant Engagement Strategy. We are delighted that we have already received contact from over 80 tenants who have registered their interest in being part of this group.</p> <p>We will facilitating focus groups with TPAS, which will enable us to co-produce our Tenant Engagement Strategy 2023 – 2027.</p> <p>The aim of these focus groups is to ensure we understand what our tenants’ expectations are of how we engage with them as their landlord. We will be asking tenants for honest feedback of their current experience of their interactions with ESC and use their insight to support the development of engagement models going forward.</p> <p>There are a number of opportunities we could develop with tenants, which will have different levels of engagement and require more or less of their time. This will give all tenants the opportunity to engage as much or as little as they want whilst still being aware of key information that they need such as Fire Safety in their building.</p>
3.2	<p><b>Vision</b></p> <p>As part of our initial scoping work for the development of a Tenant Engagement Strategy, we have created a ‘vision’, which aligns with a vision the Housing Management Team have developed.</p> <p>Our Vision is:</p> <p><i>At East Suffolk, we want to ensure tenants are at the heart of everything we do, and we want all of our homes to be Safe, Suitable and Sustainable, in communities where residents are proud to live.</i></p> <p>As the development of the strategy is only at a scoping stage, we will be seeking the views of tenants before putting it forward for adoption in the Tenant Engagement Strategy.</p>
3.3	<p><b>Outcomes</b></p>

	<p>To deliver the vision, we have identified 4 proposed key outcomes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure tenant engagement is an integral part of our housing service by involving and consulting tenants to enable services to be shaped to meet their needs.</li> <li>• Maximise the opportunities residents have to scrutinise the service ESC delivers as a landlord. This will ensure residents have the confidence in our services by listening and working together to make a difference.</li> <li>• Widen and increase engagement by offering a range of ways that tenants can get involved, including improved access to digital communication methods.</li> <li>• Enable tenants to make a difference in their neighbourhoods, and communities.</li> </ul>
3.4	<p><b>Aspiration</b></p> <p>We want to engage with tenants to help us deliver good quality housing services. Hearing from as many tenants as possible, through multiple engagement channels will improve services, neighbourhoods, and communities.</p> <p>We want tenants to be at the heart of our service because:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Tenant feedback matters</u> – tenant feedback is important to understanding what our tenants want, and improve and provide those good quality services</li> <li>• <u>Tenants hold us to account</u> – tenants monitoring our services against our published standards, this challenges us to continually improve our performance and services</li> <li>• <u>Improving communities</u> – empowering and helping residents to tackle and care for issues in their communities leads to a better environment to live in</li> <li>• <u>Building confidence</u> – by getting involved, tenants can learn valuable skills and gain experience which can help in gaining employment. By meeting new people in their communities, it can help tackle loneliness and improve wellbeing</li> <li>• <u>Engaging with disadvantaged groups</u> – ensuring we provide clear and accessible information. Engaging with minority groups to ensure fair representation and keep equality and diversity at the core of what we do</li> </ul>
3.5	<p><b>Model of Engagement</b></p> <p>A formalised model will need to be developed with tenants, there are some aspects that must form part of the model from a governance perspective such as a Residents Board, and a Scrutiny function to ensure tenants are part of our Landlord Governance model.</p>

	<p>We also want to have clear engagement channels developed in the Strategy for certain groups of tenants such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• St Peters Court, Lowestoft our high-rise tower block</li> <li>• Retired Living Schemes</li> <li>• Leaseholders and Shared Owners</li> </ul> <p>This will enable us to engage with residents on Fire and Building Safety to ensure we meet the duties set out in the Building Safety Act 2022 and Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022.</p> <p>We also want to be able to engage with tenants and leaseholders in relation to Service Charges and other aspects that are important to them, such as Community facilities or grounds maintenance.</p> <p>The picture below demonstrates a draft model to consult with tenants on as to how they want to engage with us as their landlord.</p>
--	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

3.6 The model shows areas/channels of engagement as opposed to methods of engagement. As we want to work with tenants to co-produce the model and the strategy.



3.7	<p><b>Timescales</b></p> <p>These are the milestone dates for the new Tenant Engagement Strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• November 2022 - Focus groups with tenants</li> <li>• Early January 2023 – Draft Strategy</li> <li>• Late January / Early February - Consultation with tenants on the Draft Strategy</li> <li>• 21 February 2023 - Cabinet Briefing</li> <li>• 7 March 2023 - Cabinet</li> </ul> <p>Once the Tenant Engagement Strategy has been approved by ESC Cabinet, the new model will be implemented in 2023/24.</p>
-----	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

4 Reason/s for recommendation	
4.1	This report is intended to provide an overview of the current models of tenant engagement at ESC and the project currently being delivered to transform the engagement opportunities, which will ensure ESC is compliant with relevant legislation and guidance.

## Appendices

Appendices:	
<b>Appendix 1</b>	STAR Survey Questionnaire
<b>Appendix 2</b>	TPAS Review
<b>Appendix 3</b>	Babergh & Mid Suffolk Tenant Engagement Strategy
<b>Appendix 4</b>	Orwell Housing Association Customer Engagement Strategy 2021 – 2024

Background reference papers:		
Date	Type	Available From
N/A	Engagement Standards 2021	<a href="http://www.tpas.org.uk">www.tpas.org.uk</a>



**STAR Survey Questionnaire**

Q1 - Taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the service provided by East Suffolk Council?

Q2 - How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the overall quality of your home?

Q3 - How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that East Suffolk Council provides a home that is safe and secure? E.g. annual gas safety checks carried out etc.

Q4 - How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your neighbourhood as a place to live?

Q5 - How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that your rent provides value for money? *(Leaseholders and Freeholders please select 'Not Applicable')*

Q6 - How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that your service charges provide value for money? (If you do not have service charges please select 'Not Applicable')

Q7-Generally, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way East Suffolk Council deals with repairs and maintenance?

Q8-How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that East Suffolk Council listens to your views and acts upon them?

Q9-How satisfied or dissatisfied are you that East Suffolk Council is easy to deal with?

Q10-How likely would you be to recommend East Suffolk Council to family or friends?

Q11-If you have had contact with the council's housing team, are there any service improvements you would like to see made?

Q12-Is there is anything else you would like to say about your home and/or services East Suffolk Council provides?

Q13-If you would like someone from East Suffolk Council to contact you about your comments, please tick the box:

Q14-East Suffolk myHome online tenants portal

Q14a-Have you registered for the East Suffolk myHome online tenants portal?

If YES go to question 14b, if NO go to question 15

Q14b-How useful do you find the East Suffolk myHome online tenant portal?

Q14c-How easy is the East Suffolk myHome online tenant portal to use?

Q15-If you have not registered to use the East Suffolk myHome online tenant portal and would like some information emailed to you, please tick this box

Q16-If you did want information emailed to you about the East Suffolk myHome online tenant portal, please provide your email address.

# East Suffolk Council (ESC)

October 2021

## Smart business improvement package: Framework

Unlock the business benefit of Engagement

## SMART Review Report

During August and October 2021, East Suffolk Council worked with Tpas on a SMART review of their engagement activities. This included the following:

- A self-assessment by the organisation against the Tpas national Engagement Standards
- 1 day of focus groups, and interviews with key staff and tenants
- Producing a headline report to include recommendations for improvement, learning from the sector, and good practice identified within the organisation

I would like to acknowledge and thank Samantha Shimmon and the team for their help and support during this process and also everyone who took the time to talk to me throughout this process.

### Overall assessment against the seven National Engagement standards:

THEME	ASSESSMENT
Theme One: Governance and Transparency	Not Met
Theme Two: Scrutiny	Not Met
Theme Three: Business and Strategy	Not Met
Theme Four: Complaints	Not Met
Theme Five: Information and Communication	Not Met
Theme Six: Resources for Engagement	Not Met
Theme Seven: Community and Wider Engagement	Not Met

A table of recommendations is provided at the back of this report.

## Setting the Scene

Your Organisation	East Suffolk Council (ESC)
Your Organisation Stock Size	4,500
Is your Organisation part of a group structure?	No
Your Name	Samantha Shimmon
Your Role	Tenant Services Manager
Date of Completion	28/05/2021
Tpas Consultancy Manager	Gillian McLaren
<b>Please give a brief statement on how tenant involvement is delivered in your organisation and how many staff are directly involved in its delivery</b>	
<p>Pre-Covid we had 3-4 localised residents groups who would meet on a monthly basis to discuss issues affecting them directly, they were chaired by one of the tenants but facilitated by ESC. The Chairs and some other tenants from these groups would then all meet on a quarterly basis at our Tenant's Forum to discuss common issues and be kept up to date on projects and news from ESC (landlord services).</p> <p>We also have our Housing Benefit and Tenants Services consultation group (HOBTS) which is a combination of Tenants, Councillors and representatives from the third sector. I have attached the terms of reference for this group.</p> <p>None of these groups have met during the Pandemic and we have not set these up virtually. Now the restrictions are lifting we will look to resume these on a face-to-face basis.</p> <p>We offer a bi-annual tenants magazine which goes to all tenants by post, this carry's relevant articles for tenants, a wordsearch competition and adhoc consultation/surveys.</p> <p>Our Housing Officers carry out adhoc estate inspections and are joined at times by the ward Councillors and tenants, these are prearranged but not on a dedicated schedule and tend to be upon request or where there are pressing issues.</p> <p>We will consult particular residents on issues relevant to them, i.e. our tower block St Peters Court. This is our only tower block and has received a large amount of scrutiny due to the tragic fire at Grenfell Tower. We ensured officers were on site the day of the fire at Grenfell to re-assure tenants and talk to them about any concerns they have. A large amount of additional fire safety work has taken place such as the addition of a sprinkler system. We consulted with residents on this work by conducting a number of face-to-face meetings in the communal room at the block. We were also able to leave an empty flat void which had all the work completed, and became a 'show home' so the other residents could look at the work and understand what the impact would be on their flats to re-assure them.</p> <p>We have 1 part-time (2.5 days per week) Tenant Involvement Officer, and then adhoc officers as required. We have written a JD for a full time Tenant Engagement Officer which has already been submitted to TPAS for comment before any recruitment is conducted.</p>	

## SMART Self-Assessment

Governance & Transparency			
Standard	Yes	No	Unsure
There is a clearly defined and agreed role for residents in the governance arrangements of the organisation		✓	
There are clear, widely publicised routes for residents to hold the organisation to account on standards for service delivery, strategy, performance and decision making		✓	
There is an environment of mutual respect between the organisation and its residents with steps taken to identify and tackle negative stereotyping including understanding the impact of language and behaviours			✓
The organisation regularly considers, and shares publically how it uses the learning from resident engagement as well as its data and insight to improve the services it provides		✓	
The organisation provides regular assurance to its residents how it keeps them safe in their homes and how it meets the regulatory and legal requirements			✓
The organisation engages with residents to produce an appropriate and meaningful Annual Report which should include resident satisfaction measures; performance against its stated commitments; how income is being spent, complaints trends, impact from resident engagement and comparisons of the organisational wage structure and management costs		✓	
There is consistent and honest sharing of information with all stakeholders the risks the organisation faces, the person responsible for managing those risks, how it is meeting key organisational targets and how it plans to deal with areas of concern			✓
The organisation consults at least once every three years on the best way to involve residents in the governance and scrutiny of the housing management service		✓	
The organisation publishes clear information on the roles and responsibilities of senior staff, including the named persons responsible for ensuring it meets both the economic and the consumer standards set by the Regulator of Social Housing		✓	

Your Observations/comments
<p>On the 3 marked unsure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I am not confident that all employees have a respect for our tenants, or identify and tackle negative stereotyping. This has been identified as an area for improvement and training is in the design phase to start to address this.</li> <li>Pre-covid we provided assurance via our HOBTS meetings but this was not information provided to all residents. In addition we put articles in the tenants magazine but this is not consistent in the way an annual report would be.</li> <li>We are involved in Risk identification and management at a corporate level, but not purely for our Housing stock in the way an RP would be so I</li> </ul>

unsure this is sufficient.

#### **Tpas Comments: Desktop and Reality**

The Charter for Social Housing Tenants makes it clear that effective and authentic tenant engagement is expected and widely recognised as an essential way to ensure tenant experiences are embedded across policies, plans and services.

The organisation does have a central tenant mechanism that could report into the Housing portfolio holders and housing management team – the Tenant Board mechanism could be used as the vehicle to commission scrutiny around any underperforming areas and also provide assurance to the organisation that tenants are involved at this strategic level.

Engagement needs to have a purpose – both organisation and those that get involved need to clearly understand the purpose and reason for the engagement

There needs to be a more structured approach to engagement both internally with staff from across the organisation, other tenants and wider communities. More emphasis needs to be placed on deciding on the purpose of engagement opportunities and then be complimented by other blended approaches to engagement e.g. task and finish approaches, virtual forums that are interest based better use of social media platforms to seek views from a wider diverse range of tenants

For the organisation to move forward and to be able to put the tenant voice at the heart of involvement the organisation needs to understand the ‘Why’ - wanting tenants to be involved, ‘HOW’ – channels for involvement ‘BEING SPECIFIC’ - not just expecting tenants to ‘engage’ ‘THE DIFFERENCE MADE’ - so what has changed as a consequence of the involvement mechanism ‘FEEDBACK LOOP’ - making sure the outcomes and impact are fed back to the community and the organisation.

Some organisations within the sector have established customer assurance boards/committees that form a centralised tenant led board. They can then direct a scrutiny function to carry out deep dive reviews within key areas not meeting their targets or areas of concern.

The formal engagement framework needs to address the issues of listening to and acting upon tenants voices within the strategic and formal engagement channels this ensures that tenants opinions ( rather than lived experience) are utilised within service improvement frameworks . It is vitally important that the Governance arrangements can clearly show how tenants have influenced and made changes to the way services, etc. are delivered.

I would consider the use of a ‘Tenant voice’ type logo that can be utilised to show clearly that tenants have been a vital part of this process. This can be used to clearly show how tenants have been involved in the improvement processes.

The organisation should consider a Tenant assurance committee whose role is to offer 'assurance to the organisation around the consumer standards rather than being a consultative panel and would incorporate customer influence into the governance arrangements to increase customer representation and terms of reference with the purpose of providing assurance that customer influence is strong and effective. Helping to provide assurance that the organisation is compliant with the engagement elements of the Charter for Social Housing. This committee would oversee this work and could commission scrutiny or deep dives into areas of concern. It might be worth considering that this scrutiny function could be a task and finish function to ensure that a wider and diverse range of tenants are involved to deliver the challenge to the organisation.

The Tenant assurance Committee - potential roles and responsibilities, insight and evidence could include:-

- Monitoring compliance with consumer standards / new regulation arrangements
- Monitoring compliance with health and safety standards
- Monitors performance & satisfaction levels
- Sets Customer Influence budget
- Utilises information from the 'Influence Through Insight' group to make decisions & recommendations
- Commissioning role with Scrutiny function (The service improvement and challenge panel)
- Interface with Governance about the experience of others
- Oversight of customers training and succession planning
- Decision making via evidence-based reports
- Obtaining evidence of the customers' experience (insight) – via commissioning of 'Influence Through Insight' group

An area that is missing from this engagement framework is the non-vocalised voice of tenants and those that have a lived experience. By only having a small amount of voices heard and acted upon through the engagement framework limits the range and diverse nature that tenants can really influence through their lived experiences rather than their opinions. This is tenant influence – and is currently the missing link in the approach to engagement. This could be through establishing an 'Influence through Insight' group that would be responsible to look at all the customer insight information held by the organisation and could be a staff and tenant led group.



Scrutiny			
Standard	Yes	No	Unsure
Scrutiny activity works to the five Tpas Scrutiny key principles; Independent, Inclusive, Positive, Constructive & Purpose			✓
An appropriate and agreed scrutiny model and process is in place, with clear routes into the governance, business and service delivery operations of the organisation			✓
The organisation, including its staff and governance functions, values scrutiny as a critical friend from an independent resident-led process		✓	
Scrutiny produces evidence based recommendations, is designed to improve services, increase efficiency and provide robust assessment			✓
Scrutiny activity is provided with the financial and administrative support it needs to carry out its business			✓
Scrutiny is provided with all relevant performance, regulatory, legal & benchmarking information it needs to carry out its business			✓
Scrutiny has strong links with the other organisational engagement structures and the wider resident base in order to support its overall aims		✓	

Your Observations/comments
<p>ESC doesn't have a tenant scrutiny panel, but does have a corporate scrutiny panel which is made up of elected members with no tenant's involved. I have, therefore, had to mark most as unsure as I do not know if our corporate model is sufficient for the purpose of resident scrutiny.</p> <p>We do take Housing related topics to scrutiny, rent arrears has been twice in the last 3 years, our fire safety work at St Peters Court (tower block) and our development pipeline have been recently as well.</p>
Tpas Comments: Desktop and Reality
<p>A key expectation from the Social Housing White paper is around the 'scrutiny' element for organisations. This is to provide assurance that tenants are central to service improvements as well as being part of the improvement processes.</p> <p>This area needs to be seen as a Key Priority for the next 6 months to ensure that tenant led scrutiny becomes a key function within East Suffolk Council. For scrutiny to be effective, it needs to embrace the scrutiny key principles of independence, inclusive, positive, constructive and purpose, these principles underpin excellent scrutiny. There also needs to be an embedded co-regulatory framework in place, that includes all of the key outline principles of co regulation. It should be seen to be a real challenge and part of the performance improvement framework of the organisation so it is a key part of improving services, ensuring they are fit for purpose, value for money and are effective and efficient and meeting the needs of the wider communities.</p> <p>Some organisations across the Housing sector carry out scrutiny through a task and finish approach, or a bootcamp approach. The benefits of which</p>

mean that a more diverse range of people can get involved, its time limited, has a start and finish point – this can encourage more people to get involved as they are not having to make such a big commitment.

Other LA ensure that they have the council ran scrutiny functions but also have a tenant led scrutiny approach to ensure that tenants voices are at the heart of the organisation.

Hull CC and Rotherham MBC both have excellent working models of scrutiny within a LA setting.

There also needs to be a comprehensive communication and feedback mechanism established within the organisation that both embraces and places scrutiny at the heart of its improvement function. This needs to include staff awareness of what scrutiny is and what it does and their role within it and also a real commitment from a senior level within the organisation to ensure that recommendations and outcomes from scrutiny reviews are acted upon and implemented as part of any improvement functions within the organisation.

See recommendations in table at end of the report.

Business & Strategy			
Standard	Yes	No	Unsure
Residents are meaningfully engaged in the co-creation, monitoring and review of the organisation's engagement strategy to make sure it delivers clear impact and value			✓
Residents are meaningfully engaged in the development, monitoring and review of the organisation's policy; service; budget and strategic development as well as any local offers for service delivery		✓	
Residents and staff are clear of the purpose and intended outcomes of all engagement activities with clear explanations of the time needed and their level of influence		✓	
The organisation has a clear and publically stated plan for engaging residents in its health & safety responsibilities and makes clear those responsible for compliance		✓	
There is an agreed timeframe to ensure that all engagement activities provide enough time to hear and consider resident views		✓	
There is a clear and consistent method for reporting back to residents how their views have been considered in all engagement activities		✓	
Residents are consulted in a timely and effective manner on any change in landlord or significant change in the management arrangements	✓		

Your Observations/comments
<p>Historically we have not involved residents in the engagement strategy as we haven't had one, but we are in the early stages of having one and we want to involve residents in this.</p> <p>We take a lot of the policies, budgets etc to Cabinet, Audit &amp; Governance and Full Council which all involved elected members and then take to HOBTS once passed by those groups but not before as members expect to see this first at present.</p> <p>When Waveney DC &amp; Suffolk Coastal DC were looking to merge (to become East Suffolk Council) we did a resident consultation that was open to all residents not just tenants and this was positively received by residents. When the merger was actually happening we informed all our tenants that we would have a new name but it was still the same team and level of service they had come to expect to re-assure them.</p>
Tpas Comments: Desktop and Reality
<p>Underpinning the organisations approach to engagement needs to be an effective Engagement strategy. This must include the aims and objectives for engagement, that link to the organisations business objectives, to show how engagement is a key part of the organisations approach to helping deliver its business objectives – this needs to be the first priority for the organisation and could include a co-development approach with tenants and staff to</p>

agree a shared vision.

**Process & Resource: Make it slick**

Pressures of the 'day job' and limited resource can limit the speed and effectiveness with which teams respond.

Given engagement experiences with retail and other sectors, tenant service expectations are high. Speed of response and quality of communication are central to creating a positive experience. In turn, this first experience will influence how meaningful the subsequent engagement is; how likely the tenant will be to subsequently engage and the nature of opinions they share with other tenants.

Furthermore, at the opt-in stage, tenant motivation is 'hot', but this heat will quickly dissipate if a quality response isn't received quickly.

**Menu of Involvement: Make it simple**

Limited, prescriptive or uninspiring engagement channels can no longer align with the diversity social housing populations and their modern lifestyles.

It's important to move away from one-size-fits all approaches and traditional channels such as meetings and paper surveys to more targeted and tailored approaches to engagement that reflect the diverse communication preferences of tenants. In particular, the development of more effective digital channels holds potential to make engagement easier and more rewarding for tenants whilst simultaneously reducing costs for landlords.

**Lack of Clarity: Make it specific**

The generic notion of 'engagement', 'involvement' or 'scrutiny' is too vague and lacks a 'hook' to capture attention and establish relevance.

Engagement opportunities that are general in nature - asking tenants to 'get involved' or join a generic panel or scrutiny process for instance - are less likely to be taken up.

The more specific we are about the nature of the engagement, the easier it is for tenants to understand what's required, conceptualise what the process entails and – crucially – how the outcomes will benefit them.

This clarity will also help shape everyone's expectations about what engagement entails. The ability to provide a service that meets the tenant's expectations is much easier when we are able to mould these expectations beforehand. Not only can the failure to meet expectations result in a spoiled relationship but simply meeting someone's expectations can help foster a positive long-term relationship.

Rather than promoting tenant engagement generally, focus in on specific engagement opportunities:

- What is this issue / service want tenant views on?
- When will they be required to participate?
- Specifically, what will they need to do to submit their views?

- How long will it take?
- What will happen as a result of their involvement?

### **Raise Awareness of engagement**

Some social landlords lack resources and strategy in how they promote the concept of tenant engagement and specific engagement opportunities. At a very basic level, many tenants simply aren't aware of the engagement opportunities that the landlord has to offer. Whilst this may be due to a range of factors, the teams in this project felt that there are a significant proportion of tenants who simply don't consume any landlord information at all. Beyond basic awareness, there are also issues with misconceptions of who 'engagement' is for and why it exists. It is sometimes felt there was an assumption that engagement opportunities are merely for tenants to raise or make a complaint.

**Build Trust** Tenant trust is a pre-requisite for meaningful engagement. Not only does it increase the likelihood that the engagement opportunity will be taken, but it also influences the mindset that the tenant brings to the engagement.

The general sense of trust that a tenant has in their landlord can be influenced by a wide range of factors based on their wider service experience, the opinions of fellow tenants and wider reputational signals derived from the media. Tenant engagement teams have little or no influence over these wider issues.

However, in the context of tenant engagement, trust in the process is likely to be the key factor – something that tenant engagement teams can exert control over.

The key components to this trust are confidence that the team will:

- **Listen:** pay attention with an open mind
- **Understand:** see things from the tenant's perspective, not the landlord's
- **Act:** ensure that the tenant's input is acted up
- **Feedback:** let the tenant know what their engagement results in and what impact it has had.

### **Increase Motivation**

The ways in which tenants will benefit from engaging are unclear and/or unconvincing.

Any behaviour relies on the individual being motivated enough to undertake it. Engagement opportunities are often framed in terms of how the tenant can help the organisation improve services, without having a clear enough emphasis on how this – and other elements of the engagement – will directly benefit them.

Over-and-above the abstract notion of ‘improving services’ there are a wide-range of benefits associated with engagement that should be communicated as part of promotion efforts. These can range from simple social engagement opportunities, and skills and confidence building, to more formal benefits that lead to an improved CV or more formal training, and this can create a number of knock on effects.

### **Consultation Fatigue**

Tenants can tire of engagement requests through over-reliance on small groups of engaged tenants and over-use of general approaches. Consultation fatigue becomes a barrier when tenants are continually asked to participate in engagement opportunities, and this can create a number of knock on effects.

Firstly, they are highly likely to ‘tire’ of participation and stop engaging. More importantly, the views of this small pool of tenants are almost certainly not representative of the wider population, introducing the risk of designing services for the general population based on the needs of a few. Even at the wider population level, consultation fatigue could become a factor when there is too many large scale, generic calls for participation – for example, the constant request for views and opinions on social media or the overuse of surveys.

### **Fear and Stigma**

Choice of venues and timing, along with fear of judgement from other tenants reduce likelihood of engagement. Issues related to fear and stigma operate at several levels. At a practical level, distance to venues and timing of engagements may reduce the number of those who are willing to engage. For example, night-time engagements requiring public transport may be unsettling or generate an element of fear. Furthermore, if the tenant happens to be behind with their rent, is the focus of an ASB case or hasn’t granted access for their gas safety check, the likelihood that they will engage reduces dramatically. Understandably, the tenant will be apprehensive that they will be asked to discuss these sensitive issues, or even fearful that they will receive sanction. Under the Covid restrictions more flexible blended approaches involving virtual platforms need to be utilised and these can bring with them a wider diverse range of people wanting to get involved.

However, there is a more nuanced social level to ‘fear and stigma’ related to the perceptions of fellow tenants. Tenants are sometimes fearful they will be judged as ‘do-gooders’ by their neighbours or even be suspected of ‘snitching’ on other tenants in relation to income and lifestyle, property condition and anti-social behaviour.

A third level that is more nuanced still relates to a tenant’s self-identity. For some, ongoing issues with the stigmatisation in the media results in a sense that social housing tenants are ‘second class’ citizens. In cooperating with the landlord through engagement opportunities it reinforces the individual’s identity as a social housing tenant, along with the negative stereotypes that go with it.

**Skills**

Some tenants feel that they don't have the skills or capabilities to participate in an engagement opportunity.

Depending on the nature of opportunity, the skills required could vary considerably. Any sort of online engagement requires digital skills and confidence that some people may lack. Any forms of written or verbal engagement requires language and literacy skills that may be a barrier for some. More fundamentally, engagement that requires attending meetings, groups or workshops requires a level of confidence that many tenants may feel they don't possess.

An organisation needs to consider all of the above and ensure that its approach to engagement overcomes any perceived barriers.

Complaints			
Standard	Yes	No	Unsure
There is a clear, accessible and continuously publicised complaints policy designed with residents, that shows the definition of a complaint, how to complain, key timescales, routes for redress, how to access help and support and who has responsibility for the complaints process			✓
The organisation ensures information on the Housing Ombudsman is readily available for all residents and provides assurance of its compliance with the complaints handling code			✓
Complaints are encouraged as opportunities to listen, learn and influence change with a culture that assures that speaking out will not bring negative consequences			✓
Residents are engaged in the continuous learning and development from complaints, with all improvements widely publicised to residents and staff		✓	
Complaints, including those determined by the Housing Ombudsman, are documented, widely communicated and consistently publicised to all stakeholders			✓
Residents are engaged in routinely reviewing the complaints handling policy & process to include self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code		✓	
The organisation encourages resident involvement in complaint handling through the formation of resident panels		✓	

Your Observations/comments
<p>We come under a corporate complaints process (Customer Feedback Policy), so this isn't specific to our tenants. It does have all the right information in required in the statement above but wasn't designed with residents.</p> <p>Corporately and within some managers complaints are seen as opportunities, but some managers and staff do still see them as negative and try to always defend.</p> <p>We do publish information in relation to the Ombudsman on our website, and information is given to all complainants but we do not put in our tenants magazine for example.</p>



### **Tpas Comments: Desktop and Reality**

This needs to be seen as a key area for improvement over the next 12 months as its one of the key expectations from the Social Housing White Paper. We would expect that tenants play a vital part in this process and that there is a link between complaints, learning from complaints into the service improvement framework for the organisation. Some organisations have set up tenant complaints champions, task and finish groups to identify learning from complaints, multi organisation tenants panels and Tenant complaints advocates. The insight from complaints should be seen as a vital part of the service improvement framework for the exec team that ensures that complaints are key to service improvements.

I have put together recommendations for improvements to this key area that we would expect to be seen as a priority.

#### **Recommendations:**

- Investigate setting up the influence and insight group that includes tenants that pull together all of the insight from the organisation and a key part of this is complaints, the trends and the learning. This needs to include a key link to the customer assurance committee, governance and improvement framework including a robust feeding back mechanism – so what's changed as a consequence from complaints
- To review the complaints process through an appreciative Inquiry approach this is a strength based approach that helps people move to a shared vision for the future by engaging others in strategic innovation – this should include those with a lived experience of the complaints process as well as key staff . This ensures that an embedded approach is developed across the organisation.
- Once the above has taken place then this vision / approach to complaints is embedded across all staff to ensure a consistent positive approach to dealing with complaints and includes working with staff behaviours and attitudes so creating a positive complaints culture.
- Consider training of tenants to become a key part of this process from being complaints advocates so helping others through the complaints process to being a key part of the organisations approach to complaints
- Learning from complaints should be a key part of the information gathering of the Customer assurance panel so trends can be analysed and the learning from complaints can be understood. This information can also be utilised by scrutiny to do deep dives around complaints trends.
- Customer journey mapping of the complaints process is an excellent tool that can involve tenants and staff to truly understand the complaints journey by those with lived experience of the process. This can clearly show what's working and what is not and the improvements required.
- Publicity of the complaints process as well as outcomes and learning from complaints needs to be well publicised through many different communication channels
- Working closer with the Housing Ombudsman service to come into the organisation and develop a webinar for staff to understand the new complaints code – Tpas have run many joint sessions on this for all of Tpas members and these webinars can be accessed and used as training materials for staff and tenants as they are all recorded and form part of the Tpas knowledge hub

Learning from others:

1. ForHousing have an insight department that brings together all of the insight held by the organisation including complaints information. They also have a one key contact approach to complaints so that the complainant knows who to contact and is kept informed of the process
2. Derwent Living now a merged organisation utilises tenants as tenant mediators as part of the complaints process
3. Hull CC and Rotherham MBC have really robust processes in place and both are LA

Utilise the Tpas knowledge hub of joint webinars with the Housing Ombudsman for both staff and tenants.

Information & Communication			
Standard	Yes	No	Unsure
Relevant information is provided to all recognised panels and involved residents in an agreed timeframe to allow them to monitor performance and hold their landlord to account on how key organisational objectives are being met	✓		
All information provided to residents is clear and understandable with key points summarised, using an inclusive range of methods and in a format to suit the intended recipient	✓		
In any ad-hoc or specifically focussed engagement activity, information is provided in an agreed timeframe before any activity takes place	✓		
The organisational website holds easy to find and useful information on areas such as governance, regulatory judgements & inspections, compliance, how to get involved, management, repairs, complaints, performance and the impact made from its resident engagement activities			✓
The organisation provides an accessible and unhindered route for residents to request information relating to the activities of their landlord. This should be widely publicised to reflect its resident profile	✓		
The organisation regularly distributes to its residents up to date information including performance against set targets and emerging organisational challenges as well as topics of community and national interest. The frequency, content and methods of distribution will be agreed by the organisation and its residents			✓
Your Observations/comments			
<p>We do provide information on performance to our HOBTS and Tenant Forum but not to wider resident's groups. We also consulted with HOBTS on what performance measures they wanted to see going forwards. No other suggestions were put forward by residents so we continued with the 6 we already reported on.</p> <p>I feel we have governance, compliance, management, repairs, complaints covered on our website but not the other items listed above.</p> <p>We have a bi-annual tenants magazine but there are no longer any residents involved in this process.</p>			
Tpas Comments: Desktop and Reality			
<p>To ensure that information is available to wider communities the website needs to be reviewed and this could be through a task and finish group of tenants and staff to find out what is required on there, the format of it and the outcomes and difference made as a consequence.</p> <p>To ensure that information and communication is meeting the needs of tenants, the organisation needs to understand tenants preferred communication needs as a standard. This will ensure that the right information, in the right format, in the right way is targeted to those who require it.</p> <p>Developing a tenant logo to sense check key information clearly shows that tenants have been involved in the process of reviewing policies etc and shows the wider tenant body that the organisation is a listening organisation</p>			

Key performance indicators need to be established as outlined in the Social Housing White Paper that measure not only qualitative and quantitative outcomes from engagement but also the 'difference made' the impacts. These need to be developed with tenants and be meaningful and robust. Agreement needs to be sought how performance will be shared, with who and what can be accessed via the website

#### Recommendations

- Investigate how to monitor and report on the impact of customer influence, showing costs (including staff costs) and benefits – for example, the number of strategic, policy and process changes implemented – and outcomes from these changes: improvement in service delivery, improvements in VFM and other measures including potentially social value
- The Customer Experience Committee should review progress against targets bi-annually
- Customers' views, satisfaction, commitment and personal outcomes should be tracked and analysed

Resources for Engagement			
Standard	Yes	No	Unsure
The organisation provides sufficient resources to deliver effective engagement and residents have the opportunity to influence the decision about the resources made available		✓	
There is an appropriate system in place for recognition and reimbursement of the time given by residents for engagement activities			✓
Involved residents are offered timely advice, relevant training and where appropriate, effective mentoring			✓
The organisation and its involved residents independently network to gather best practice in resident engagement and increase their awareness of the wider housing sector challenges		✓	
All staff can describe the benefits resident engagement can bring to the organisation, its residents and the wider community and understand how their role can enhance the organisation's ability to hear the residents' voice		✓	

Your Observations/comments
<p>We are looking to recruit a full time engagement officer, and the JD is being reviewed at present.</p> <p>We do have a system for recognition and reimbursement but this requires reviewing.</p> <p>Historically our involved residents had a lot of training and we have a resident training budget but this has not been utilised for some time.</p>
Tpas Comments: Desktop and Reality
<p>The organisation does not have the necessary resources in place to develop and embed an effective approach to engagement. It needs to consider further resource/staff that has enough responsibility to act as a catalyst across departments to ensure that all staff have engagement as part of their role and responsibilities. Unless there is a real commitment to engagement it will always be piece meal or reactive rather than proactive, efficient and effective. ( A further staff member will be brilliant however need to consider how all staff can be part of the engagement framework)</p> <p>It's important that the right resources are in place to ensure engagement is effective and efficient central to this is the culture of the organisation, behaviours and attitudes form the foundation for any approaches to good embedded engagement . It is really clear that new resources are required to meet the expectations from the White paper especially given the emphasis on resident engagement in fire safety and the development of local engagement strategies around this area.</p> <p>Being specific about engagement will also help shape customers' expectations about what involvement entails. The ability to provide a service that meets the customers' expectations is much easier when the organisation can influence these expectations beforehand.</p>

Not only can the failure to meet expectations result in a spoiled relationship but simply meeting someone's expectations can help foster a positive long-term relationship and begin to develop trust.

Rather than promoting tenant engagement generally, focus in on specific engagement opportunities:

- What is this issue / service want customers' views on?
- When will they be required to participate?
- Specifically, what will they need to do to submit their views?
- How long will it take?
- What will happen as a result of their involvement?

It is of equal importance to dedicate resources to track the non-vocalised customer experience, as it is to dedicate resources to listening directly to involved tenants. This information is available within existing data and its extraction and analysis can be translated into actionable insight. Transactional data analysis, alongside demographic information will reveal trends that provide a starting point for then thinking about targeted listening, enabling non-involved customers to influence decision-making by helping to build detailed understanding of tenants' experiences of services. and share outcomes so that customers are very clear about what has changed a as result.

The Culture of an organisation is central, it's the behaviours and attitudes which run through an organisation that set the foundation for positive outcomes to take place; ensuring that all staff understand and see engagement as part of their role is important. It's the behaviours and attitudes within an organisation that form the foundations of either a good approach or not to embedded engagement . Staff need to be provided with the tools to ensure they understand and can get involved with engagement and can understand the 'difference it makes' through the positive outcomes and impacts it brings to an organisation.

For an organisation to have the correct culture it needs to develop a culture of trust both internally and externally this should include the following values and themes:- (People development magazine 2021/09/26)

- |                        |               |
|------------------------|---------------|
| 1. Reliability         | 4 Consistency |
| 2. Sincerity           | 5 Commitment  |
| 3. Integrity           | 6 Competence  |
| 1. Deliver on promises |               |

2. Make it a habit to be reliable and consistent in behaviour
  3. Trust with an open eye
  - 4 Promote the tools that lead to trust
  - 5 Give honest compassionate feedback
- People development magazine 2021/09/26

**Recommendations:** To implement the ideas and suggestions from the above commentary

- Ensure that priorities and issues from local communities are utilised to make changes to and within communities through utilising a place based working tool
- Engagement opportunities need to be specific and focused on what is required
- Develop an organisational wide 'cultural transformation' program for staff that highlights the benefits and outcomes from engagement and that engagement is embedded within everybody's role and utilise tenant champions as part of the process and co design the programme based on appreciative Inquiry: a strength based approach to leadership development and organisational change .
- Review the resources required to ensure an embedded approach to engagement including the new expectations from the Social Housing white paper

Processes designed to support involved tenants can be sub-optimal and resource limitations can result in low quality and/or delayed responses from organisations. Given engagement experiences with retail and other sectors, customer service expectations are high. Speed of response and quality of communication are central to creating a positive experience. In turn, this first experience will influence how meaningful the subsequent engagement is, how likely the customers will be to subsequently engage and the nature of opinions they share with other customers.

Furthermore, at the opt-in stage the stage when customers have voiced they want to be involved, customer motivation is 'hot', but this heat will quickly dissipate if a quality response isn't received quickly.

Limited, prescriptive or uninspiring engagement channels can no longer align with the diversity of social housing tenants and their modern lifestyles. Again, service expectations are informed by the seamless, tailored and rewarding customer experiences that people have with commercial and retail brands. By moving away from one-size-fits all approaches, and traditional channels such as meetings and paper surveys, to more targeted and tailored approaches to engagement that reflect the diverse communication preferences of customers. In particular, the development of more effective digital channels holds potential to make engagement easier and more rewarding for customers. The organisation needs to develop further a blended approach to engagement that encompasses many different channels to get involved from opting in – completing a survey to the more formal strategic involvement.

There is a need for organisations to be 'more specific'. The generic notion of 'engagement', 'involvement' or 'scrutiny' is too vague and lacks a 'hook' to capture attention and establish relevance. Involvement opportunities that are general in nature - asking tenants to 'get involved' or join a generic panel or scrutiny process for instance - are less likely to be taken up.

The more specific an organisation can be about the nature of involvement, the easier it is for customers to understand what's required.

Organisations hold a lot of information regarding their tenants and very rarely use this information to drive engagement forward. It's about better using this intelligence into insight. It's about utilising tenant influence within the organisation to drive forward the engagement framework outcomes.

A key area that is missing from the engagement model is 'influence' 'insight' and 'evidence' this can generally be unstructured and informal and can be accessed through mechanisms like 'Rant and Rave', surveys, etc.

Commonly found key issues not utilizing insight and influence include:

- A minority of customers are involved in feedback, and those that are involved are not representative, which can lead to consultation fatigue and a narrow base of experiences
- A minority view may therefore be more influential than it should be, in the absence of anything else and the voices of customers placing higher demand on services can be unheard
- There is a risk that customer influence is not seen as integral by some staff, and its purpose is not widely understood, leaving it under-resourced and not outcome focused
- There is a minority of customers able to influence through the formal engagement structures, and it is not clear what success this achieves
- Proactive use of other insight or evidence is gathered, although it is not clear how this is used in a systematic or strategic way to drive service change/improvement as a way to understand customers' experiences

The use of insight to hear and to learn from customer experiences both within the engagement framework and outside of it should include the following:

- Insight features as a key ingredient in reports setting out strategic / policy direction (e.g. reports to Board and Committees)
- Insight obtained proactively by the organisation to help it to make decisions and recommendations within the Governance framework
- An Influence through insight group could do the 'heavy lifting' to support the 'Tenant Assurance committee' ( this could utilize a task and finish approach to scrutiny)
- Insight heard throughout all involvement opportunities could utilise staff as well as strategically involved customers to shape services
- Insight proactively sought out by staff as a matter of course to hear the non-vocalised customer experience



Recommendations to include and embed Tenant influence should include the following:

- Incorporating customer influence into governance arrangements by implementing a Customer Experience committee arrangements to increase customer representation and terms of reference with the purpose of providing assurance that customer influence is strong and effective, and helping to provide assurance that the organisation is compliant with the engagement elements of the Charter for Social Housing
- Organisational leaders setting a clear sense of direction, stating intent and following through with action – including challenging incomplete information that fails to set out tenant influence in the strategic direction
- Leaders across the organisation continuing the messaging by identifying resources to support change and implementing the actions identified in this report
- Organising a programme of awareness raising for managers and staff, with resultant expectation of spending time together to identify how individual job roles provide opportunity to build in customer influence, and if necessary devising new systems and process to enshrine the opportunity in to day to day work, leaving no room for doubt or deviation, including attention to outcome measurement
- To look at investing in transactional platforms like ‘Rant and Rave’ to gather transactional feedback regularly
- To establish a ‘group’ that looks at data, experience and curiosity that tests and provides real actionable insight and provide evidence to the ‘scrutiny processes’
- Reality checking the insight
- Collaboration – staff & tenants
- Undertaking the “heavy lifting” to support the Panel
- Providing flexible tenant membership – based on “lived experience”
- Enabling agility in response.

To investigate whether it would be more effective to develop a task and finish function that is commissioned by the Customer experience committee to conduct ‘deep dives(Scrutiny)’ in areas that have arisen from the ‘influence through insight’ group .

This ‘Influence through insight’ group would bring together the data held by the organisation, be curious about what its saying and it’s based on peoples lived experience rather than opinions and thus leading to actionable insight that provides the organisation with a much wider diverse range of insightful evidence to drive forward improvements based on ‘tenants voices’ This group could include both staff involved in ‘insight’ and tenants working together in a more co-design approach

A key part of this process is understanding the difference that customer influence has made and how it can be measured – Outcome analysis –

#### Measuring success

- Monitor and report on the impact of customer influence, showing costs (including staff costs) and benefits – for example, the number of strategic, policy and process changes implemented – and outcomes from these changes: improvement in service delivery, improvements in VFM and other measures including potentially social value
- The Tenants Board should review progress against targets bi-annually
- Customers' views, satisfaction, commitment and personal outcomes should be tracked and analysed
- The Tenants Board / Tenants assurance panel members should undergo performance appraisals annually and the impact reported on a quarterly basis
- Must be able to tell wider communities what has changed as a result of listening
- To consider having an overarching Customer experience committee (Assurance) The Tenants Board could be part of co-designing this approach
- To consider more one off engagement, task and finish approaches, on line voice platforms
- To consider the setting up of a 'influence through insight' group that feeds into the scrutiny function and the Customer experience committee

#### Community & Wider Engagement

Standard	Yes	No	Unsure
There is an appropriate menu of engagement opportunities that; reflects the resident profile; responds to the different needs in relation to equality strands and any additional support, which can be evidenced in the delivery of their services, engagement activities and communications to promote widespread engagement		✓	
The organisation provides opportunities for its residents to engage in emerging social housing sector policy consultations and responses		✓	
Where regeneration or planned improvements takes place, residents will be fully informed and from the start are part of the project planning, delivery and monitoring	✓		
There is a clear approach to promoting and supporting community action in the communities the organisation has residents which includes any Right to Manage opportunities		✓	
Community Investment activities support partnership working and provide opportunities to increase understanding of resident and community priorities			✓

### Your Observations/comments

Corporately we have our Community Partnership Boards but these do not have tenant members to my knowledge. These boards look at the top 3 priorities for each of the areas they cover each year and look to fund and set up projects to align with these priorities.

### Tpas Comments: Desktop and Reality

The organisations engagement opportunities is limited and the Community Partnership Boards who identify the priorities for each area do not have tenant representation. Clearly this does not reflect the resident profile; the different needs in relation to equality strands and additional support.

Recommendations from the above themes would strengthen this approach. Priority needs to be given to collection of further information with regards to how underrepresented groups on how they might want to be involved whether its informal or formal . Also as identified within the improvement plan a comparison of the current demographic profile of those involved and wider communities would be beneficial.

It's about organisations creating the links between different communities and having communication channels so that people have access to both information and also being able to voice their opinions and concerns.

This is an excellent opportunity to make the necessary changes to both formal and informal engagement framework. It's important to be listening to and understanding local communities creating the links into different communities and by using a strengths based approach to working with communities.

Some Local authorities have adopted place based working and utilises the Place standard tool to understand community priorities, what's good and what can be improved. This way of working needs to be utilised across all communities to ensure a real targeted approach to developing lasting sustainable communities and works on a local level to understand local issues and priorities in neighbourhoods this gives an incredible amount of information that is invaluable for the organisation.

### Learning from the sector:

- North Star Housing Group and Wythenshawe community Housing both utilise a strength based approach to working with local communities
- Kirklees council utilise a place based approach and utilise a place based tool to working in Neighbourhoods
- Hull CC – work with local community champions, and tenant inspectors

## Summary Recommendations Table

Theme	Recommendations	Progress
<b>Governance and Transparency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To develop in conjunction with tenants and staff an engagement strategy that clearly identifies the aims and objectives for engagement as well as the links to the key Business aims and priorities,</li> <li>Consider Incorporating customer influence into governance arrangements by implementing a Customer Assurance committee to increase customer representation and terms of reference with the purpose of providing assurance that customer influence is strong and effective, and helping to provide assurance that the organisation is compliant with the engagement elements of the Charter for Social Housing</li> <li>Organisational leaders setting a clear sense of direction, stating intent and following through with action – including challenging incomplete information that fails to set out tenant influence in the strategic direction, service improvements, etc.</li> <li>Leaders across the organisation continuing the messaging by identifying resources to support change and implementing the actions identified in this report</li> <li>Organising a programme of awareness raising for managers and staff, with resultant expectation of spending time together to identify how individual job roles provide opportunity to build in customer influence, and if necessary devising new systems and process to enshrine the opportunity in to day to day work, leaving no room for doubt or deviation, including attention to outcome measurement</li> <li>To look at investing in transactional platforms like ‘Rant and Rave’</li> <li>To establish a ‘group’ that looks at data, experience and curiosity that tests and provides real actionable insight to the tenant and leaseholder panel and provide evidence to the ‘scrutiny processes’ . This group could do the following:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reality checking the insight</li> <li>Collaboration – staff &amp; tenants</li> <li>Undertaking the “heavy lifting” to support the Panel</li> <li>Providing flexible tenant membership – based on “lived experience”</li> <li>Enabling agility in response.</li> </ul> </li> <li>To consider having an overarching Customer experience committee ( Assurance)</li> <li>To establish a co-designed Engagement Strategy</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To consider the setting up of a 'influence through insight' group that feeds into the scrutiny function and the Customer experience committee</li> </ul>	
<b>Business and Strategy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To develop a co-design approach to all consultations and involve key staff and tenants in developing the consultation plans through to the analysis of the resulting information</li> <li>To ensure a robust 'feeding back mechanism' to show the difference made and the outcomes and impact all engagement work</li> <li>To publicise the 'named person' for fire safety and develop key messages and communication plans in conjunction with tenants and the wider community</li> <li>To develop an embedded approach across all services to consultation and that staff understand the importance of involving tenants / communities at the start of this process – this could be through some lunchtime workshops that highlight the importance and link to the expectations of the Social Housing White paper.</li> </ul>	
<b>Complaints</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate setting up a influence and insight group that includes tenants that pull together all of the insight from the organisation and a key part of this is complaints, the trends and the learning. This needs to include a key link to the customer assurance committee, governance and improvement framework including a robust feeding back mechanism – so what's changed as a consequence from complaints</li> <li>To review the complaints process through an appreciative Inquiry approach this is a strength based approach that helps people move to a shared vision for the future by engaging others in strategic innovation – this should include those with a lived experience of the complaints process as well as key staff. This ensures that an embedded approach is developed across the organisation.</li> <li>Once the above has taken place then this vision / approach to complaints is embedded across all staff to ensure a consistent positive approach to dealing with complaints and includes working with staff behaviours and attitudes so creating a positive complaints culture.</li> <li>Consider training of tenants to become a key part of this process from being complaints advocates so helping others through the complaints process to being a key part of the organisations approach to complaints</li> <li>Learning from complaints should be a key part of the information gathering of the Customer assurance panel so trends can be analysed and the learning from complaints can be understood . This information</li> </ul>	

	<p>can also be utilised by scrutiny to do deep dives around complaints trends.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Customer journey mapping of the complaints process is an excellent tool that can involve tenants and staff to truly understand the complaints journey by those with lived experience of the process. This can clearly show what's working and what is not and the improvements required.</li> <li>▪ Publicity of the complaints process as well as outcomes and learning from complaints needs to be well publicised through many different communication channels</li> <li>▪ Working closer with the Housing Ombudsman service to come into the organisation and develop a webinar for staff to understand the new complaints code – Tpas have run many joint sessions on this for all of Tpas members and these webinars can be accessed and used as training materials for staff and tenants as they are all recorded and form part of the Tpas knowledge hub</li> </ul>	
<b>Information and Communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Investigate how to monitor and report on the impact of customer influence, showing costs (including staff costs) and benefits – for example, the number of strategic, policy and process changes implemented – and outcomes from these changes: improvement in service delivery, improvements in VFM and other measures including potentially social value</li> <li>▪ The ( Customer Assurance Committee) should review progress against targets bi-annually</li> <li>▪ Customers' views, satisfaction, commitment and personal outcomes should be tracked and analysed</li> <li>▪ The (Customer Assurance Committee) members should undergo performance appraisals annually and the impact of the Committee reported on a quarterly basis</li> <li>▪ The organisation must be able to feedback to customers what has changed as a result of listening</li> <li>▪ To consider the setting up of mystery shoppers to look at consistency of delivery of services through lived experience and feed this into the insight group as part of the organisations approach to service improvements</li> </ul>	
<b>Resources for engagement</b>	<p>To implement the ideas and suggestions from the above commentary</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To investigate the resources required – staff – to deliver an excellent engagement function as well as acting as a central catalyst for other teams and staff members</li> <li>▪ Ensure that priorities and issues are utilised to make changes to and within communities through the place based working tool</li> <li>▪ Engagement opportunities are specific and focused on what is required</li> <li>▪ Develop an organisational wide 'cultural transformation' program for staff that highlights the</li> </ul>	

	<p>benefits and outcomes from engagement and that engagement is embedded within everybody's role and utilise tenant champions as part of the process and co design the programme based on appreciative Inquiry : a strength based approach to leadership development and organisational change.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Review the resources required to ensure an embedded approach to engagement including the new expectations from the Social Housing white paper around fire safety</li> </ul> <p><b>Recommendations to include and embed Tenant influence should include the following:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorporating customer influence into governance arrangements by implementing a Customer Experience committee arrangements to increase customer representation and terms of reference with the purpose of providing assurance that customer influence is strong and effective, and helping to provide assurance that the organisation is compliant with the engagement elements of the Charter for Social Housing</li> <li>• Organisational leaders setting a clear sense of direction, stating intent and following through with action – including challenging incomplete information that fails to set out tenant influence in the strategic direction</li> <li>• Leaders across the organisation continuing the messaging by identifying resources to support change and implementing the actions identified in this report</li> <li>• Organising a programme of awareness raising for managers and staff, with resultant expectation of spending time together to identify how individual job roles provide opportunity to build in customer influence, and if necessary devising new systems and process to enshrine the opportunity in to day to day work, leaving no room for doubt or deviation, including attention to outcome measurement</li> <li>• To look at investing in transactional platforms like 'Rant and Rave' to gather transactional feedback regularly</li> <li>• To establish a 'group' that looks at data, experience and curiosity that tests and provides real actionable insight and provide evidence to the 'scrutiny processes'</li> <li>• Reality checking the insight</li> <li>• Collaboration – staff &amp; tenants</li> <li>• Undertaking the "heavy lifting" to support the Panel</li> <li>• Providing flexible tenant membership – based on "lived experience"</li> </ul>	
--	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enabling agility in response.</li> </ul> <p><b>Measuring success</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor and report on the impact of customer influence, showing costs (including staff costs) and benefits – for example, the number of strategic, policy and process changes implemented – and outcomes from these changes: improvement in service delivery, improvements in VFM and other measures including potentially social value</li> <li>The Tenants Board should review progress against targets bi-annually</li> <li>Customers' views, satisfaction, commitment and personal outcomes should be tracked and analysed</li> <li>The Tenants Board / Tenants assurance panel members should undergo performance appraisals annually and the impact reported on a quarterly basis</li> <li>Must be able to tell wider communities what has changed as a result of listening</li> <li>To consider having an overarching Customer experience committee ( Assurance) The Tenants Board could be part of co-designing this approach</li> <li>To consider more one off engagement, task and finish approaches, on line voice platforms</li> <li>To consider the setting up of a 'influence through insight' group that feeds into the scrutiny function and the Customer experience committee</li> </ul>	
<b>Community and Wider Engagement</b>	<p>To agree the purpose and approach within the organisation and understand how it will help to meet the organisations corporate objectives</p> <p>To establish a working group to agree the priorities and issues for neighbourhoods and then do some targeted work within those communities utilising a strengths based approach and a delivery action plan</p> <p>To agree the impact and outcomes framework to show the difference made from the different project interventions</p> <p>Agree an internal budget for the work and whether more resources are required in order to deliver against the action plan</p> <p>Agree a communications plan to enable feedback to the wider communities and internally with staff</p>	



## Tpas Landlord Accreditation

### The benefits:

- **A clear framework of standards** that enables you to conduct a self assessment and review your tenant engagement approaches
- **An independent, external validation** of the scope and quality of your approach to involving residents in the design, delivery and scrutiny of the homes and services you provide against the **Tpas National Tenant Engagement Standards**
- **A visible reference** that is clear to see on all your website letterheads, marketing materials, and publications
- **A system that helps you to develop and maintain high standards for all your staff and partners**, protecting and building your reputation for quality service across the sector
- **An assurance that your approaches are inclusive**, evidencing the commitment you have to going the extra mile in ensuring that your services meet residents diverse needs.
- **Peace of mind for all your current and potential tenants, residents and partners!**

Tpas is the leading national tenant and landlord membership organisation with access to the largest tenant involvement base in the Country.

Tpas is recognised as the national market leader who set the highest standards for Tenant involvement and engagement.

If you would like to know more about the Tpas Accreditation:

- Go to the Tpas website [www.tpas.org.uk](http://www.tpas.org.uk) and look at the accreditation section
- Talk to your Tpas Consultancy Manager who will outline the process.



Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils

# **Tenant *Engagement* Strategy**



# Introduction

The councils have developed a Tenant Engagement strategy to reflect the importance and benefits of good tenant engagement - ensuring that all tenants and leaseholders have a voice in the running of the councils' housing services.

With the introduction of the Social Housing Regulations Bill and the new regulatory framework all tenants should have the knowledge, skills, and opportunities to monitor and scrutinise the councils' performance as a landlord.

A home is more than a roof over our heads, as a tenant, we should have a say in the way things are done, and the changes that are introduced. We should have a say in the decisions being made to our homes and be part of the decision-making process.

This strategy offers tenants a range of choices in the ways they can work and engage with the councils, to ensure that the voice of the tenant is heard and considered - supporting the councils' ambition to deliver an excellent customer led service.

Based on the responses from the Tenant Engagement Survey and working with the existing Tenant Board and Councillors, the councils have set out five core goals and promises with a range of measurable actions so, as tenants, we can clearly see where they have succeeded or failed.

Throughout the Strategy you will see some targets that you may feel are stretching but you will also notice that there is a clear delivery plan so tenants can see how the councils are measuring up.

Going forward there will be many more opportunities for tenants to be able to participate in decision making about their homes, communities, and services offered alongside elected members of the councils. The strategy seeks to build a culture throughout the housing services that shows that it listens to, learns from, and values the lived experiences of its tenants, and on top of that acts on the feedback received.



*Liz Perryman*  
**Tenant Board Representative**

**This strategy sets out how Babergh & Mid Suffolk District Councils' will develop tenant engagement opportunities, so that you can effectively and meaningfully work with us.**

The overall aim is to increase the levels of community engagement, using what you tell us to help shape our services and provide you with assurance around our performance, your safety and anything else that is important to you.



## Our Strategy Vision

*"Housing services are delivered through multiple channels that convey clear, streamlined communication with our residents. Meaningful tenant engagement puts tenants at the heart of everything we do."*

# Tenant Satisfaction Survey Results 2022

**Total of 1092 responses**

**16%**  
**Response rate overall**

**453**  
**(42% of respondents)**  
**people told us you would like to engage further**

## The top barrier listed for not being involved

**was:** illness or disability which highlights our aging tenant population, followed by not feeling that views would make a difference.

## How do you want to engage with us?

Top 5 answers were:

- Completing surveys
- Holding us to account on performance
- Neighbourhood walkabouts
- Feedback groups
- Being a local community representative.

## Top 5 ways of engaging split by survey response type

Paper Based Survey Responses	Digital Survey Responses
Paper letters, leaflets & surveys	Emails
Face to Face	Face to Face
Emails	Website
Website	SMS
SMS	Tenant Portal

## Our Tenants Values

We also asked what you valued the most about your relationship with the councils as your landlord and used examples of real tenant values, that were common themes, to inform the strategy's promises and priorities.

# Engagement Values, Priorities and Promises

## Tenant Value

## Priority

## We promise you...

**"Finding information that is required with ease."**

**1 Open & Transparent Information**

- Will receive regular and relevant information that is important to you.
- Can access information you need to give us your views on the services you receive.
- Will be supported so you can hold us to account and that you understand how we can put things right when they go wrong.

**"Effective Communication."**

**2 You said, we did**

- We will always provide updates on what it is we have asked you about.
- We will increase the levels of engagement and opportunities to influence, increase tenant satisfaction and use what you have told.

**"Access to services when required."**

**3 Valuing Diversity & Inclusion**

- That we will provide opportunities for you to get involved in areas that are of interest to you.
- We will make sure that we are supporting those who want to be more digitally consulted with.
- That will remove barriers to involvement for underrepresented tenants and work to end the stigma associated with social housing and ensure you are always treated with respect.

**"To feel we are just as good as everyone else and not made to feel worthless because we are in social housing. Also, when work is done on our home it's done to the standard we deserve, not any old how, because it's a council house and doesn't matter."**

**4 Engagement is everyone's business**

- We will create a culture of valuing engagement across all services.
- We will make it clear where engagement with you has made a difference.
- Are able to challenge us on our performance, that we keep our promises and that you trust us. We want to work in partnership with you.

**"Hoping that my views will be heard."**

**5 Early and Planned Engagement**

- We will make sure that your voice is heard before issues are decided, so you can have a say at the earliest opportunity
- That consultation isn't just a tick box exercise.
- That there will be adequate time and resources to get engagement right.



# How we keep our promises

## 1

### Actions

- We will continue to improve the MyHome Bulletin e-newsletter, sharing essential information and as well as updates on our performance data, tenant satisfaction survey outcomes, safety and compliance information. We will also produce an annual printed edition of MyHome for our tenants who may not be online.
- We will, on request, provide you with the information you need to be able to effectively challenge us and make sure you can see how we are performing.
- We will make sure that we consult you on all housing policies that affect you, and that the feedback you give us is used to develop policies and practices before they are approved, ensuring that we are open and transparent
- We will create a dedicated area of our website and improve our Tenant Portal so that you can access everything that is relevant to you and your home, providing you with a one stop shop.

### What will success look like?

- Access to a wide range of information, so that you can scrutinise and challenge us on areas that are important to you.
- You will trust us, feel listened to and understand how you can work with us. We will see engagement levels increase.



***Satisfaction with the way we communicate will increase to at least 80% by April 2024*** - evidenced by feedback via our annual Tenant Satisfaction Survey.

- A Tenant Approved marker will be added to everything that has been consulted on or designed with you.
- Our web pages will contain the information you need and will be useful, accessible and easy to navigate.



# 2

## Actions

- We will share housing complaints data to make sure you are made aware of when things have gone wrong and what we are doing to put things right.
- We will increase, measure and report on transactional satisfaction, for example, asking for feedback when you have received a repair, moved into your new home, experienced anti-social behaviour or raised a complaint and we will use what you tell us to drive service improvements.
- We will report at least annually on all our tenant engagement work, our tenant satisfaction levels and what has been achieved through working with you.

## What will success look like?



***Housing complaints will reduce by 30% by April 2024 and a further 10% by April 2025.***

- We are following the Complaint Handling Code of the Housing Ombudsman and share our self-assessment against the code annually.
- What you tell us will help us improve services, and we will show you where this has happened.
- You will trust us, feel listened to, understand how you can work with us, and levels of engagement will increase.



**You said,  
we did**



# 3



## Actions

- We will challenge unacceptable views and behaviours associated with someone's protected characteristics, the stereotyping or stigmatising of our tenants and will carry out regular training with all our colleagues.
- We will develop and put in place the support needed to offer a range of opportunities that encourage engagement, about the things that matter to you and at the level of commitment and involvement that you feel comfortable with.
- We will provide training and support utilising our Tenants Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) membership and working with other partners; including the development of digital skills to ensure that we have a structure that is fit for the future.
- We will increase the collection and usage of data, to ensure we are providing accessible and inclusive opportunities and landlord services.

## What will success look like?

- Increased numbers of tenants engaging with us from a more diverse background representative of our tenant population.



***Increased tenant satisfaction to at least 80% Satisfied or Extremely Satisfied by April 2024.***

- Tenants have the skills and confidence to be able to give us feedback, effectively challenge and scrutinise us.



***Increased data held relating to equality, diversity, inclusion, and vulnerability by 100% by April 2024.***

# 4



**Engagement  
is everyone's  
business**

## **Actions**

- We will create, with you and colleagues, performance dashboards across the whole housing service on the information that is important and relevant to you, to provide a 360-degree oversight of all levels of the councils' performance.
- Everyone who talks to you will ensure that they are capturing their engagement activities in our Housing systems and will ensure that all interactions with you are opportunities for engagement, to improve the data we hold about you and increasing your satisfaction with us.
- We will develop, with you, a set of service standards and targets relating to the management of your home, tenancy and neighbourhood and ensure these are accessible to you. We will report on our performance relating to these standards at least quarterly
- We will work with all of the councils' services to ensure that we are working together to deliver on the councils' wider corporate aims and strategies

- We will also work with you to deliver a set of local offers and ensure we report on the performance of these at least quarterly.
- We will build relationships with partners across the housing sector to ensure we are sharing and learning from best practice.

## **What will success look like?**

- The whole the housing service takes ownership for its work and are jointly accountable for its performance.
- We are able to report on the levels of engagement and show where this has increased.
- You will be able to access the information you need to be able to monitor, scrutinise and challenge the council's performance as a landlord.
- Our culture represents the councils' values, and we build trust and mutual respect with you.

# 5

## Actions

- We will showcase where your feedback, influence and involvement has been used in the development of a service or resulted in a policy change so that it is clear for all to see the benefits of designing services with you instead of for you
- We will create a Tenant Consultation Procedure & toolkit to enable all colleagues to effectively engage with you
- We will work towards Tenants Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) accreditation and utilise the full benefits of our membership



## What will success look like?

- Consultation is embedded in all review activities, in line with our consultation framework.
- You trust that we have your best interests at heart, and that we are designing services with you.
- We can showcase where you have made a difference.
- We will apply for TPAS accreditation to demonstrate our commitment to tenant engagement by December 2023.

# Overall Success of the Strategy

A delivery plan, which underpins our goals and promises, accompanies this strategy and can be [found on our website](#), a physical copy can be obtained on request.

The delivery plan will be continually developed and annually reviewed by the Tenant Board and our colleagues, to ensure we are working towards what you want and that we are keeping up with your changing priorities.

We will also ensure that progress of the delivery plan is overseen by the portfolio holder members for housing through quarterly reports.



***Specific targets can be found throughout the strategy and within the delivery plan***

## For us, success means:

- You are engaged in the running of your housing service
- You feel that your views are heard
- You feel that you are treated with respect
- Satisfaction levels increase
- We meet or exceed our targets
- We are working together across all areas of the councils to ensure we are engaging with all our residents and communities
- We are monitoring and comparing our own performance against others to identify how our performance compares

# Tenant Engagement Roles & Definitions

**Tenant Board or equivalent** - an independent body of tenants and leaseholders that scrutinises our performance, monitors satisfaction levels in line with the Tenant Satisfaction Measures, reviews and approves changes to policy and strategy, monitors regulatory compliance, health & safety compliance and makes decisions based on evidence-based reports.

**Tenant Sounding Boards** - to consult and gain the tenant perspective about new or changing initiatives that will directly affect tenants. The boards will focus on different areas of the housing service segmented by what you have told us you are interested in so that you only receive information and are able to influence topics that are of interest to you.

**Neighbourhood Champions** - To act as the eyes and ears of their communities, feeding back and working with the relevant teams about issues affecting tenants in our communities.

**Mystery Shoppers** - to assist us in testing that our services are easy to access, our colleagues are polite, respectful, and helpful and to help us ensure we are getting things right first time.

**Resident Readers** - To give us insight on how easily understood our communications with our tenants are, including feeding into the annual reports.

**Resident Recruiters** - to assist us in the recruitment of tenant facing roles within the councils.

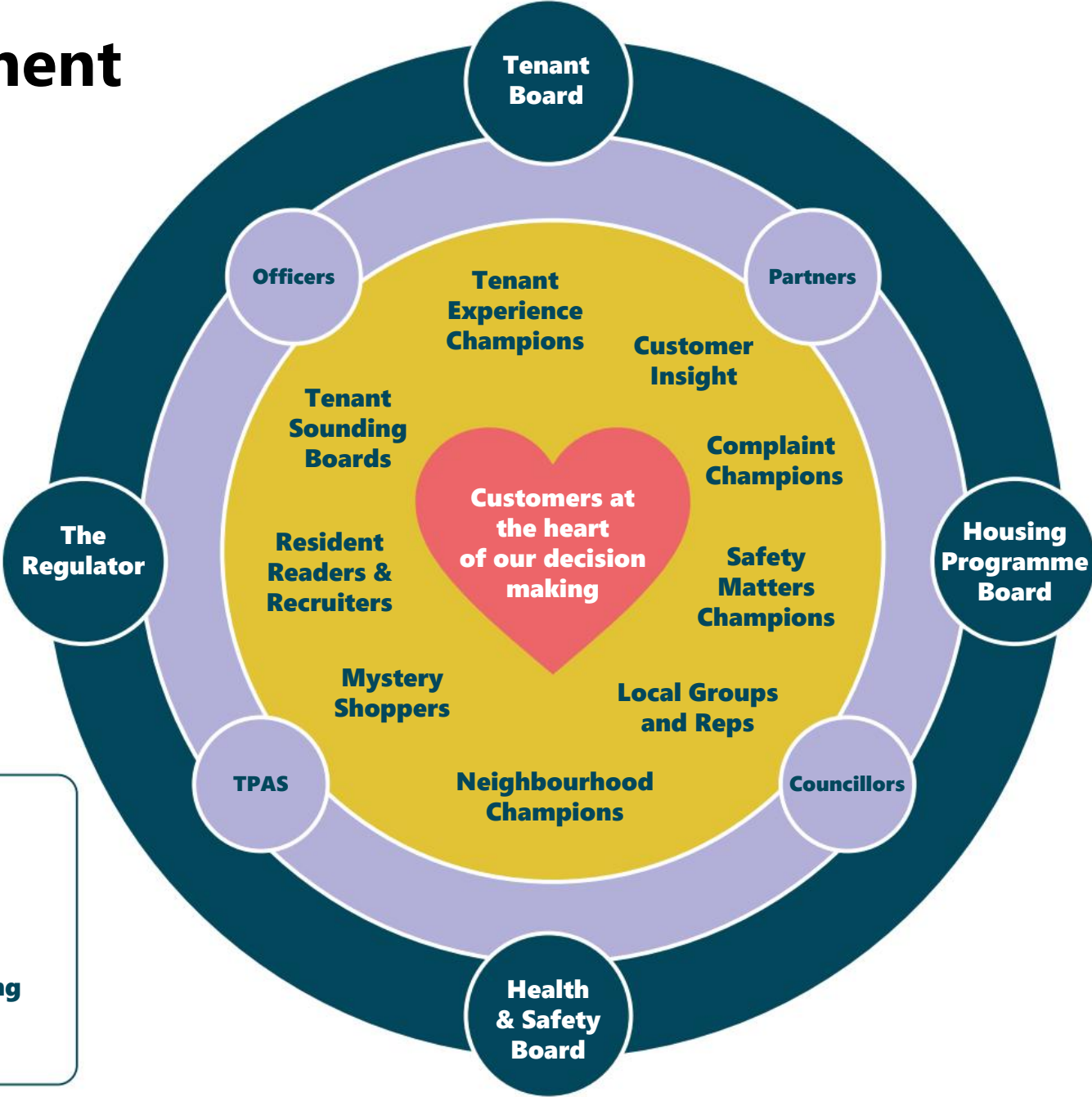
**Tenant Experience Champions** - to work with us when reviewing a specific service or issue, giving us their experiences on their use of that service, and influencing how we can make things better for all tenants.

**Complaint Champions** - to assist us in analysing complaint trends, identify lessons learned and be involved in complaint escalation where appropriate.

**Safety Matters Champions** - Engaging with tenants around the safety of their homes and neighbourhoods, understanding what the council does to keep tenants and leaseholders safe and holding us to account on safety matters.







If you any of these roles would be of interest to you, please contact your Tenant Engagement Team by email: [tenant.engagement@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk](mailto:tenant.engagement@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk) or calling: 01473 296334

# Tenant Engagement Role Structure



## KEY

- = Insight & Influence
- = Other key stakeholders
- = Scrutiny, oversight & holding us to account

					
Engagement Type	Who	Time Commitment	Platform	Function	Frequency
Completing surveys	All Tenants and Leaseholders	Up to 15 minutes	Virtual/Paper /Phone/SMS	Feedback & Influence	At least once a year and after a service has been provided
Neighbourhood Walkabouts	Neighbourhood Champions	1-2 Hours	In Person	Feedback & Scrutiny	At least twice a year
Assisting us with recruitment	Resident Recruiters (Training required)	½ a day interview panel	In Person/Virtual	Scrutiny & Influence	As & when required
Assisting us with procurement	All tenants and Leaseholders (Training required)	1-day tender panel	In Person/Virtual	Scrutiny & Influence	As & when required
Holding us to account on performance	Tenant Board or Equivalent (Training required)	2-3 hours	In Person/Virtual	Scrutiny	4 times a year
Local groups/associations	All Tenants and Leaseholders (Support offered to get started)	Medium to long term commitment	In Person	Feedback & Influence	Regularly
Community Based Events	All Tenants and Leaseholders	½ - 1 day	In Person	Feedback & Influence	As & when required
Virtual Feedback	Tenant Sounding Boards Tenant Experience Champions	30 minutes – 2 hours	Virtual	Feedback & Influence	As & when required
Local Community Rep	All Tenants & Leaseholders	Medium to long term commitment	In Person	Feedback & Influence	Regularly
Reviews of tenant facing policy & procedures	Tenant Sounding Boards Tenant Experience Champions	1-2 hours per quarter	In Person/Virtual	Feedback & Influence	As & when required
Assisting with Complaint panels and Complaint Forums	Complaint Champions	1-2 hours per quarter	In Person/Virtual	Scrutiny & Influence	At least 4 times a year

# Monitoring and Governance

This strategy and the progress of its delivery plan will be monitored quarterly through the Housing Programme Board, progress updates will be provided to the portfolio holder members and shadow portfolio holders for housing quarterly and reviewed quarterly with the Tenant Board for scrutiny.

Our progress will be reported to tenants annually through our annual report, updated quarterly on our website or provided on request.

## Our Organisation Values



OUR  
PEOPLE

*We empower,  
value and develop  
our people to  
work together as  
one dynamic and  
efficient team.*



OUR  
CUSTOMERS

*We care about  
delivering  
high quality,  
customer focused  
outcomes with our  
communities and  
partners.*



BEING OPEN  
and HONEST

*We are open,  
transparent and  
truthful.*



TAKING  
OWNERSHIP

*We take pride in  
our work and take  
responsibility for  
our actions.*



BEING  
AMBITIOUS

*We are ambitious,  
inspiring our  
communities,  
taking pride in our  
places and striving  
for excellence.*



# Background Documents

Tenant Engagement Survey

Tenant Satisfaction Measures Survey

Charter for Social Housing Residents

Regulatory Standards

Corporate Strategy

Customer Strategy

Housing Revenue Account Business Plan

Homes & Housing Strategy



## Customer Engagement Strategy 2021-2024

**Enhance** our engagement with choice and reward

**Empower** customers through ambitious training and development

**Engage** with all of customers via a blend of equitable practices

**Enable** insight into what is important to our customers

We believe that our customers are at the heart of our business and want to ensure we are engaging with them effectively. This strategy sets out our commitment to giving residents a voice throughout Orwell.

This is an exciting opportunity to transform the way we involve customers and develops an approach that is ambitious for Orwell to become leading innovators in engagement.

Customer Engagement means the opportunities that we have to listen to customers, capture their opinions and work with them to shape services. Customer Engagement also means how we talk to customers about Orwell and about the homes and communities in which they live

Engagement is about empowering and enabling customers to influence and improve services. It is about how we communicate, and more importantly - how we *listen*. We know this improves customer trust in the way we manage homes and services.

We commit to giving customers a choice about how they wish to be involved by providing a broad range of opportunities to engage with us. We know that one size does not fit all so we commit effort to creative engagement that delivers equity and accessibility across all tenures and types of accommodation Orwell offer.

It is important that we are capturing all of the feedback from our customers about our services and their local neighbourhoods and that we are valuing this and using it effectively to improve and develop our services.

We know that involvement needs to be seen to effect improvements to attract more widespread contribution. This strategy sets out how we will measure and communicate the

impact of customer engagement. You have told us to shout about it, and we will!

### **People Focused · Ambitious · Collaborative · Effective**

This strategy will be implemented in line with our PACE organisational values.

**People-focused:** By offering a blend of engagement options that reflect the way our customers have told us they want to engage with us we will ensure that our engagement is equitable and accessible for all customers across our accommodation types and will meet diverse communication needs.

**Ambitious:** We aim to establish ourselves as thought leaders and innovators in engagement by embracing high performing digital channels, horizon scanning across and outside of the housing sector to stay at the forefront of customer engagement practice.

**Collaborative** We will work together with our customers and colleagues across the organisation to embed co creation and co design as a way of working.

**Effective** We will work efficiently, and support insight to enable data-led decisions. We will ensure our engagement offer is modern, fit for purpose and delivers value for money. We will develop and support performance monitoring by customers, ensuring information is accessible, timely and clear.

## **Customer Engagement in Context:**

The Regulatory Framework, specifically the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard sets out a number of requirements for us to develop, implement and support and opportunities for customer involvement and empowerment.

The Social Housing white paper and the prominence it places on engaging customers is welcomed by Orwell. The new Charter for Social Housing is fundamentally about empowerment and accountability, setting out several ways of ensuring the voices of customers are heard. This includes a requirement for landlords to make performance monitoring information accessible and clear. This strategy and associated action plan will enable us to do this.

The conclusions of the Hackitt Report into fire safety, and the publication of the Building Safety Bill emphasise the importance of actively engage with customers to ensure that health and safety compliance is fully embedded in what we do, and our customers understand the homes that they live in.

As early adopters of the NHF Together with Tenants Charter, Orwell embraces the greater emphasis on strengthening the relationship with customers. We are committed to ensuring the customer view is sought and valued throughout the organisation and we actively seek creative means to ensure customers feel listened to by Orwell on the issues that matter to them.

Recently there has also been a renewed emphasis on the social purpose of housing associations. We acknowledge and embrace our role within wider neighbourhoods and communities over and above that of landlord. We recognise our role as a source and generator of social value, over the next 12 months we will start to scope social value and community initiatives into a separate

strategy and reporting framework. Customers will be our partners in this work, co creating and outlining our priorities and monitoring our progress.

Conscious of the sector wide evolving approach to more consistent, comparable Environmental, Social and Governance reporting we recognise that adopting an ESG reporting standard as an opportunity to demonstrate our social purpose. A new ESG reporting standard recently endorsed by NHF has also received support from Homes England and the Regulator of Social Housing.

Digital change is accelerating, with many previously digitally excluded groups increasingly accessing a wide range of services online. The Covid19 pandemic quickened this process and across the sector we acknowledge that customer engagement needs to adapt to the rapidly changing ways that residents engage with services. Our customers have told us that they prefer to connect with us online. We will respond to an increasing expectation for us to offer convenient digital engagement as set out in our Digital Strategy 2021-2024 by introducing high-performing digital channels that can be accessed 24hrs a day, 7 days a week.

Customer engagement will continue to see changing regulations and debate. We embrace the need for flexibility, creativity and innovation and are ambitious to be thought leaders in this area. Therefore, our strategy must be a dynamic document with the ability to adapt within this changing environment.

**Throughout this strategy, we'll keep in mind the things customers and staff have told us are important:**

- Involvement should be inclusive and accessible to everyone, meeting the diverse needs of residents with information provided in plain language.
- Involvement should be seen to be enjoyable and rewarding.
- Engagement should result in evidence of improving services.
- We should offer a range of intuitive, simple and interesting digital engagement options to help overcome barriers to engagement, such as travel and lack of time.
- We should talk about it a lot more.
- We should make it easy, instinctive and seamless for staff to connect with the customer voice.
- We should promote clear communication channels for customer suggestions.



## Customer Engagement: how we will achieve our objectives

The Customers and Community strategy includes 6 Drivers. Effective customer engagement underpins our success in meeting our strategic objectives of:

*Providing exceptional customer service - putting customers at the heart of what we do to ensure our decisions are driven by customers' needs and aspirations.*

*Making a positive social impact in our diverse communities- through better understanding of needs and developing services that create social value.*



This Customer Engagement Strategy will support delivery of these objectives in the following ways:

## Customers interacting with us via a range of engagement options and channels

**This will deliver:** Opportunities for every customer to share their views with us in a way that suits them.

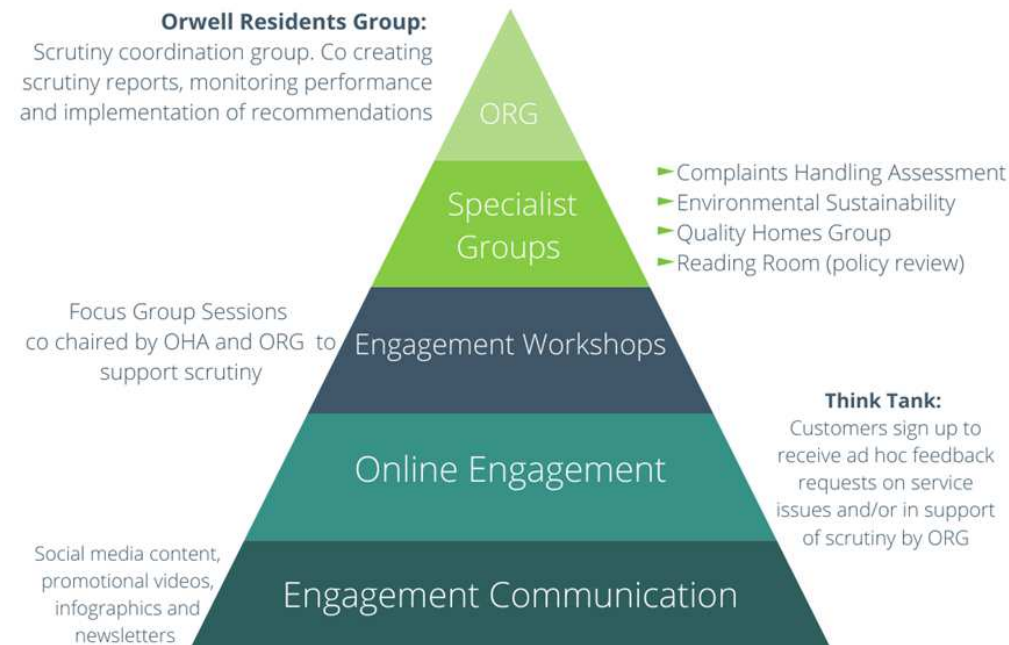
**Why do we need it:** We know that some engagement is lightweight and some is in-depth. We value both and everything in between. Having a mix of people with varying levels of engagement is a good thing because being effective at engagement means being able to choose from a blend of methods that deliver agility and responsiveness to the task. Sometimes that's light-touch feedback from lots of people, and sometimes is an in-depth consultation with a few people with a specific lived experience.

We also know that by enabling quick and informal engagement we myth-bust about the commitment involved in participation in the process and organically increase contribution.

**How will we deliver?** Using creative communication that is modern, attractive and accessible we will promote engagement with a broad brush through social media and newsletters with multimedia content. A high-performing digital engagement platform will be appealing and result in timely, credible reporting. Online and offline meetings will be publicised, open to join with minutes published in a clear and accessible format.

Neighbourhood engagement will be purpose driven and deliver value. We will emphasise the impact of all acts of connection, ensuring that we do not correlate commitment levels with importance of engagement objective.

## Empowered Customer Engagement



## Develop a system for defining and measuring levels of customer engagement, and embed a process for keeping this under constant review

- This will deliver:** Insight into who is engaging, when how and why. Thematic insight into customer groups that are tending not to engage. Measuring the reach and depth of our engagement enhances Orwell's ability to reflect the community and enhance the diversity of those represented and able to influence.
- Why do we need it:** Insight around engagement uptake will enable data led approaches to future offers that ensure a diverse, representative voice. This supports our diversity objectives and ensures our engagement processes are inclusive, delivering equality of opportunity.
- How will we deliver?:** We will support and develop customer engagement insight using internal and external data sources including CRM and CX. We will develop an equality impact reporting for engagement activities. We will invest in high-performing digital customer and community engagement that facilitates insight and review of levels of engagement alongside the profile of those engaging.

## Consult with customers to gauge satisfaction levels and hear about their needs and aspirations.

- This will deliver:** We know that customers are the experts about our services, we seek insight greater into what is important to our customers, to understand their diverse requirements and expectations.
- Why do we need it:** Confidence that our insight is far reaching and credible will enable us to make informed and inclusive decisions about the services we offer. Moving beyond measuring satisfaction about the services we offer at the point of a transaction with us, or on an annual basis we aim to develop engagement to become a tool that offers meaningful insight. We are ambitious to develop a more refined index incorporating a range of measures around wellbeing, happiness and aspiration.
- How will we deliver?:** We will work to ensure that our customer satisfaction feedback channels are accessible, timely and clear. We will publish customer satisfaction levels, celebrating our successes and being transparent where we need to make improvements. We will undertake a review of how we measure our customers' experience of our services. The results of this will be scrutinised by the ORG and published in the Annual Report to Tenants. ORG scrutiny activities will always utilise high performing surveys and focus groups as a method of gauging satisfaction with service areas.



## Ensure that customers are empowered by involving them in designing and scrutinising at least three service areas each year

<b>This will deliver:</b>	Customer engagement that is aligned to our governance. High quality performance monitoring from a customer perspective. Evidencing regulatory standards have been met to ensure we are confidently viable.
<b>Why do we need it:</b>	We are required to demonstrate that we meet RSH Regulatory Standards to evidence transparency in our performance, governance and decision making processes, and that we provide customers with an opportunity to influence the decision making process. We are ambitious to empower customers to identify service areas for scrutiny, and to enable them to coordinate this scrutiny and report outcomes within our governance framework, and externally to all stakeholders.
<b>How will we deliver?:</b>	By offering ongoing enhanced training to ORG about the expectations of the RSH Regulatory Standards, and how we assess ourselves against them. With further training in understanding performance information and using this to identify areas for customer-led scrutiny. We will support and facilitate scrutiny by promoting the benefits of customer-led scrutiny with all stakeholders, including staff. We will provide independent support where necessary. The ORG will be trained, supported and empowered to co-create visually engaging and informative reports following scrutiny that they will present within our governance framework, and to other stakeholders. This will be promoted online with timely and supportive comms across all channels. ORG will be tasked with ensuring that we deliver on our Customer Engagement commitments. We will look at ways that customers can review progress against the plan and include this as part of the purpose of the group.

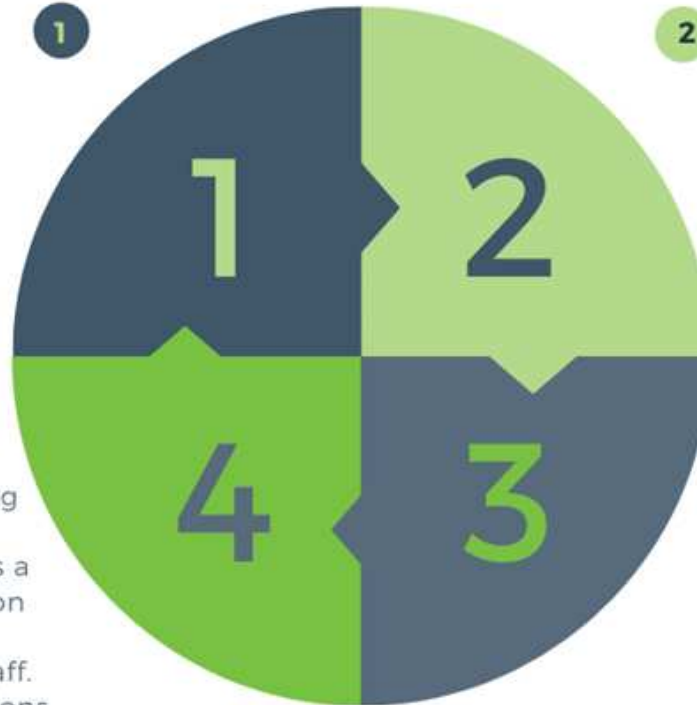
# Empowered Customer Influence

## Board Performance Report

KPIs, transactional surveys, satisfaction outcomes provided to ORG. Board representative meets ORG and/or provides a narrative update on performance

## Present to Board

ORG co create engaging and inclusive scrutiny outcome reports across a blend of communication platforms to Board, customers and OHA staff, making recommendations and monitoring progress of these.



## ORG Meet to Review

Performance report to identify potential areas for further scrutiny and/or monitoring. Planning objectives, scope and methodology of scrutiny project.

## Coordinate Scrutiny

Interviewing OHA staff, conducting surveys, benchmarking, hosting focus groups with tenants and residents, attending training and any activity appropriate to the scrutiny task.

## Improving value for money, services and driving innovation and change

<b>This will deliver:</b>	Increased assurance in the value of customer engagement by , understanding, ESG credentials. Efficiencies with procurement. And to create and deliver an offer of choice to residents, whilst adding value to the organisation.
<b>Why do we need it:</b>	To reinforce the idea that CE is important, we report how it has contributed towards achieving VFM. We want to confidently display our ESG credentials knowing that we are a viable organisation that demonstrably involves our customers in performance monitoring and identifying opportunities to increase efficiencies. Reviewing the effectiveness of engagement methods, with residents and staff, to improve or remove non-cost-effective offers.
<b>How will we deliver?:</b>	Make sure our engagement is providing exceptional VfM through use of high performing methods including digital. Use in house expertise to deliver training and support to engaged customers. Demonstrate successes of customer engagement as a key contributing factor in achieving value for money in service delivery. Provide performance reporting to engaged residents alongside training to enable confidence in translating the data. Make sure that the customer experience is a fundamental consideration in our procurement activities and demonstrate the impact delivered by increased customer satisfaction. Prioritising the use of digital and innovative platforms, to use as customer engagement tools reaching a bigger audience and collecting data in thoughtful ways. This includes a simple, easy to use online involvement area. Pushing boundaries, to explore new ideas:

## Understand what is important to our customers and their communities

<b>This will deliver:</b>	Customer and community engagement facilitates identification of customer and community priorities. It supports our understanding where our customers value our social impact the most, and how we can increase it
<b>Why do we need it:</b>	Better engagement with communities precedes responsive delivery of improved neighbourhoods. This enhances the quality of community life through influence, control and empowerment. We aim to deliver social impact to customer identified areas to maximise support and target resources.
<b>How will we deliver?:</b>	We will commit to community engagement in placemaking projects through high performing digital channels and an investment in customer insight to coordinate quantitative and qualitative data. We will utilise modern methods of insight capture like mapping surveying and reporting tools including participant relationship management, e-newsletters, social platforms, blogs, informational widgets, levels of visibility data insights, data summary reports, demographic breakdown, comment analysis, exportable formats and charts. We will be ambitious to form mutually supportive partnerships and connections with existing assets in our communities

# Customer Engagement: how will we measure our success?

Our targets and aspirations are:

**Customer satisfaction with housing services at 95%.**

**Level of customer engagement at 30%**

## Create meaningful customer roles within our business

Define the role and purpose of the ORG and promote this with great multimedia communications internally and externally.

ORG members will receive corporate induction, access to staff benefits platform, IT hardware and support plus an ongoing training and development package.

Establish a complaint handling assessment group of customers, providing them with training and support to hear and respond to complaint handling.

Establish specialist Quality Homes Group of customers to work with us to deliver engagement and compliance with the customer facing elements of the Building Safety Bill and Fire Safety Bill

## Ensuring developmental opportunities for those who engage with us

ORG members to have a full induction programme

Offer access to skills, improvement programmes and learning opportunities

## **Embedding co creation within Orwell Housing**

Demonstrating outcomes and value for money from our co creation with residents

Embed co creation as a way of working with our customers; ensuring we continue to develop efficient and transparent processes for customers to work together with staff to design and deliver services

## **Supporting Orwell customers and staff to enhance the engagement experience**

By shouting about the successes of customer engagement through great communication.

Staff training

## **Taking engagement opportunities to all areas of our community**

Enable residents to engage more online, freeing up staff time to enhance and reshape face to face engagement

Ensure our Communication is inclusive, and put in place customer champions within our local communities to spread the word about engagement benefits and encourage participation

Targeting harder to reach groups of customers through new approaches to engagement and partnership working with external agencies

This strategy will be delivered by an inclusive and dynamic partnership with customers, staff and Board members.

We're proud of the way residents and staff have shaped this strategy. It creates an exciting way forward for customer engagement, within Orwell and the sector.