

Resident (Tenant and Leaseholder) Engagement Strategy

Housing Committee 20th June 2023

Report of: Head of Housing

Purpose: For decision

Publication status: Unrestricted

Wards affected: All

Executive summary:

This Committee approved a public consultation on the draft strategy, having completed this consultation Officers now seek approval to formally adopt the Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy.

This will provide an additional mechanism for continuous service improvements, with the aim of increasing tenant and leaseholder satisfaction. It sets out a range of methods to improve meaningful engagement and introduce challenging targets against which delivery can be measured.

This report supports the Council's priority of:

Building a better Council and Creating the homes, infrastructure and environment we need

Contact officer Melanie Davis, James Devonshire Resident Engagement Officer, Head of Housing

mdavis@tandridge.gov.uk, JDevonshire@tandridge.gov.uk – Building a better Council and Creating the homes

Recommendation to Committee:

- A) That the Committee adopt the Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy as set out in Appendix A.
- B) That each political group are approached to nominate a representative to attend and participate in the Engagement Steering Group.

Reason for recommendation:

A Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy with clear objectives and measurable targets is expected to help identify and address weaknesses in service delivery, provide an additional mechanism for continuous change and challenging service improvements. This in turn will lead to increased customer satisfaction and better engagement with tenants and leaseholders.

Introduction and background

- 1 Following the introduction of the Tenants Satisfaction Measures Standard by the Regulator of Social Housing in April 2023, registered providers must collect and provide information to support effective scrutiny by tenants of their landlord's performance in managing their homes and neighbourhoods.
 - 1.1 This will be measured through the collation of 22 statutory satisfaction measures obtained through tenant satisfaction surveys and management information held by the landlord. Both the Regulator of Social Housing and the Housing Ombudsman Service have stipulated that these satisfactions measures should be accompanied by engagement policies and/ or strategies.

The Proposed strategy

- 2 The draft Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy ('the Strategy') can be found at Appendix A. The objective of the Strategy is to set out the Council's commitment to listening to tenants and leaseholders and to take account of their views by:
 - Providing a range of opportunities to engage, with appropriate support systems, to meet the diverse needs of tenants and leaseholders and by removing barriers to engagement.
 - Encouraging as many tenants and leaseholders as possible to participate, particularly from groups who are currently underrepresented.
 - Improving insight into tenants and leaseholders' experience of Council services.
 - Demonstrating that feedback is welcomed, sharing results and giving examples of where Officers have learnt from engagement and (if applicable) made changes.

- Setting out training for Officers and recruitment of Officers to be engagement champions.
 - Creating opportunities for tenants and leaseholders to be kept informed and aim for the collaborative input in policies.
 - Measuring specific outcomes with targets for example increase in profiling data, provide feedback, evidence of any service improvements initiated etc.
- 2.1 Performance against these targets will be reported to the Committee as part of the annual review of the implementation of the Strategy.
- 2.2 The Action Plan sets out the steps proposed to meet the Strategy objectives by 2025 and monitored by a Steering Group. Actions include:
- Collect and refresh profiling data as part of investment in the IT system functionality and using all available interactions with customers e.g. Tenancy Audit visits and new tenant sign-up interviews.
 - Develop a menu of opportunities, with creative and appropriate use of methods, language and tools to form a clear view of our residents' priorities and our progress in addressing them.
 - Remove barriers to engagement, for example training to support digital uptake and by providing information in plain and appropriate language.
 - Regular feedback to residents to demonstrate the value of their input, providing examples of where we have learnt from engagement and made changes, for example 'you said, we did.'
- 2.3 Recent service users will be encouraged to give feedback on their experience to enable the collection of good quality data on what is working well and what is not. Such surveys will increasingly use digital technology, but all engagement will be targeted and involve other methods including face-to-face conversations as appropriate.
- 2.4 In addition to introducing a range of transactional surveys of customers using the Council's housing services, it is proposed to regularly carry out the industry-standard Satisfaction of Tenants and Residents (STAR) survey. This will track improvements to satisfaction ratings over time.
- 2.5 It is anticipated that initiatives such as focus groups will provide insight into residents' priorities and views on how services are developing. A scrutiny panel will look at specific issues in more detail, examining evidence about service performance, making recommendations for service improvements and reviewing outcomes.
- 2.6 Up-to-date contact information is vital to the success of these initiatives. Improved insight will promote effective targeting of communications

including seldom heard groups and aid effective service planning by ensuring services are developed to meet the needs of tenants based on evidence rather than anecdote. The Strategy will detail actions to identify and fill gaps in current contact and profiling data and ensure relevant data is kept accurate. As above this will be facilitated using all available interactions with customers for example tenancy audit visits and new tenant sign-up interviews.

Consultation and next steps

- 3.1 Following Committee approval in January, consultation was published via the Housing Newsletter, social media and Officers when speaking to tenants. Unfortunately, we only received 9 returns and therefore to increase our response rate, we are now examining:
- How we can use our social media channels to inform and engage with our residents
 - Updating our website so tenants can easily find information when it is convenient for them.
 - Provide information in clear and easy to understand formats.
 - Review other ways we can keep in touch with our tenants.
 - Prioritise creating forums, resident associations and working groups so tenants are more fully engaged.
 - Examining whether we can monitor the 'click rate' on our housing newsletter as this is sent via email.
- 3.2 Following this learning, we are already surveying our tenants for up-to-date contact details via a mailing campaign to ensure we have all their contact details including email addresses, encouraging them to sign up to the newsletter and asking if they would like to join the resident forum. This has also included a prize draw to increase the contact rate.
- 3.3 We will be complementing this with a telephone survey in June to understand tenants' issues which will further feed into the Housing Services delivery plan for 2024/25. Tenants will be identified through a random survey approach and the survey itself will ask the same questions as the Regulator of Social Housing's Tenant Satisfaction Measures.

Key implications

Comments of the Chief Finance Officer

The recommendations set out in this report will result in a requirement for Officer time. The 2023/24 budget was set with the knowledge of these requirements.

There are no Capital implications from the report.

Comments of the Head of Legal Services

There are no direct legal costs arising from the initial recommendations. However, in November 2020 the Government published the 'The Charter for Social Housing

Tenants: The Social Housing White Paper' places a renewed focus on engagement with customers and communities. The White paper has signalled changes and expectations on how the Council involve residents, implement feedback and involve in the development of services.

The Council is endeavouring to become compliant with these new expectations before they become law in the Social Housing Act 2023/24. There are tougher expectations on local authorities to listen, understand and consider the voice of residents when reviewing policies. There is a particular emphasis on safety; listening; repairs; complaints, and respect. The Social Housing Act will bring a more proactive Consumer Regulator and Ofsted style inspections on consumer matters. These points set out above appear to have been taken into consideration in the drafting and consultation process of the Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy.

Climate Change implications

This report contains no proposals that would impact on the Council's commitment to climate change.

Equality implications

This strategy will be available to view on the Council's website. Copies in other formats are available should they be required. This strategy aims to promote engagement opportunities with both tenants and leaseholders through means easily accessible by all.

Appendices

Appendix A: Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy

Background papers

None.

----- end of report -----