



Cabinet

12th January 2022

Report of: Councillor Ronan Browne –
Portfolio Holder for Council Homes
and Landlord Services

Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Framework

Corporate Priority:	Excellent Services positively impacting on our communities Providing high quality council homes and landlord services
Relevant Ward Member(s):	All
Date of consultation with Ward Member(s):	N/A
Exempt Information:	No

1 Summary

- 1.1 Good landlords engage in an open, inclusive, and meaningful way with their residents, creating opportunities for tenants to share their views and responding proactively and respectfully to feedback. It is right that landlords are held to account and embrace the views and voices of tenants to improve services.
- 1.2 In November 2020, the Government released its White Paper; ‘The Charter for Social Housing Residents’. The White Paper aims to rebalance the relationship between social housing landlords and their tenants, and it sets out principles to underpin safe and decent housing, ensures that residents (tenants & leaseholders) are treated with dignity and respect and that social housing that is required is provided for the future.
- 1.3 Melton Borough Council has a history of engaging positively with residents, however, there is a need and opportunity for a refresh and focus of this important strand of our work through a new Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Framework. The framework confirms the Council’s commitment to listen and be accountable as a landlord and sets out how the Council will engage proactively with its tenant and leaseholders.

2 Recommendation

That Cabinet:

2.1 Approve the Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Framework

3 Reason for Recommendations

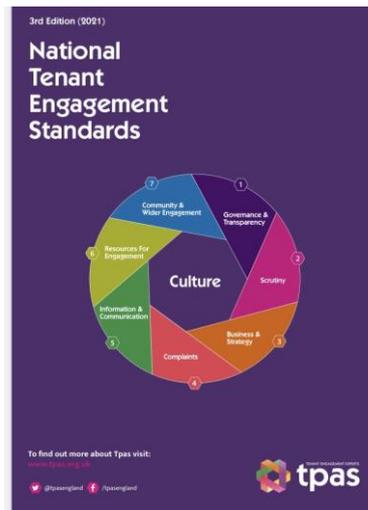
- 3.1 The Charter for Social Housing Residents is a significant marker of the expectations and requirements of social landlords to engage with, listen to and be accountable to residents.
- 3.2 Engagement forms a key strand of our responsibilities as a landlord. It is not an optional extra. The Council must also be able to demonstrate to the Regulator of Social Housing, that it is engaging in a meaningful way with our tenants and leaseholders.
- 3.3 The proposed framework provides a mechanism to deliver on a commitment to meaningful engagement. Delivery of the commitments contained within the framework will be via an action plan.

4 Background

- 4.1 Good landlords engage in an open, inclusive, and meaningful way with their residents, creating opportunities for tenants to share their views and respond proactively and respectfully to feedback. It is right that landlords are held to account and embrace the views and voices of tenants to improve services.
- 4.2 In November 2020, the Government released its White Paper 'Charter for Social Housing Residents'. The White Paper aims to raise the standard of social housing and to meet the aspirations of the residents, throughout the country. It seeks to rebalance the relationship between social housing landlords and their tenants, and sets out principles to underpin safe and decent housing, ensuring that residents (tenants & leaseholders) are treated with dignity and respect and that social housing that is required is provided for the future.
- 4.3 The charter sets out seven core values for all social housing residents:

To be safe in your home
To know how we are performing
To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly
To be treated with respect
To have your voice heard by the council
To have good quality homes and neighbourhoods to live in
To be supported to take your first step to home ownership

- 4.4 The updated National Engagement Standards 2021 (Tpas) also provide clear principles and actions for social housing landlords to adapt to continuously improve the way residents are involved in shaping & improving services. The Tpas Standards can be used as a framework, to guide Councils in line with the likely regulatory changes ahead. They will be used to guide the action plan linked to the Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Framework. Melton Borough Council became a member of the Tpas network in April 2021. It is proposed that the council aims to achieve Tpas accreditation during the period of the framework.



- 4.5 This report presents a new Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Framework which will guide and refocus this work in Melton. It confirms the Council’s commitment to listen and be accountable as a landlord, and sets out how the Council will engage proactively with its tenant and leaseholders.
- 4.6 Through delivery of the framework, the Council will be responsive to tenants and leaseholders, including through listening to feedback and improving services. The Framework is rooted in listening to tenants and leaseholders and using insight from all our interactions to understand what matters most to tenants and leaseholders, and on working wherever possible to co-create solutions.
- 4.7 It will improve how we as a social housing landlord, engage and empower our tenants and leaseholders, in order for us to be seen to be listening and taking on board feedback around the landlord functions that we provide.
- 4.8 It will have a positive impact on services by ensuring full and meaningful engagement, with both tenants and leaseholders. To be successful, engagement must be embedded in all that we do and be recognised as a core component of our landlord services.

5 Main Considerations

- 5.1 There are several things creating an opportunity to reset and refresh the approach to engaging with tenants and leaseholder in Melton including:
- The need to demonstrate a robust response in line with the principles of the Charter for Social Housing Residents
 - Increased national visibility and profile of the importance of meaningful engagement and accountability of landlords – tenant expectation
 - Limited (and reducing) engagement from tenants and leaseholders in existing and longstanding tenant engagement groups
 - Willingness of existing tenant engagement groups to ‘refresh and rebrand’
 - Longstanding champions of tenant engagement stepping down from key roles
 - Changes to staffing and leadership arrangements within the Council

- g) Improving service delivery models, policies / processes and procedures, IT systems
- h) Council emphasis on housing as a corporate priority in Melton
- i) Absence of a visible and accessible tenant and leaseholder engagement approach
- j) Continued progress to de-escalate key compliance risks (Housing Improvement Plan)
- k) Progress towards development of 30-year HRA business plan, supported by greater understanding of our housing stock and enabling a transition from a predominantly reactive repairs / risk management approach to a proactive / planned maintenance approach
- l) Baseline tenant satisfaction survey completed by sector lead Acuity Research & Practice in September 2021, enabling benchmarking against other landlords. The results have been analysed leading to a number of recommendations and areas to build into the framework
- m) Engagement with existing residents' engagement groups to understand 'what good looks like' from their perspective and to seek views on how residents could be more involved in the future

5.2 The Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Framework confirms the Council's commitment to listen and be accountable as a landlord and sets out how the Council will engage in an inclusive, proactive and meaningful way with tenants and leaseholders. It sets out a proposed structure / approach to tenant and leaseholder engagement over the next five years. The Framework will be accompanied by a delivery plan.

5.3 As part of the new approach, it is proposed to implement a programme of service improvement / assurance groups from February 2022, to encourage tenants and leaseholders to help the Council to understand how we can improve upon the current landlord services that we are providing. The assurance groups will take a thematic approach and are set out in more detail in the framework. The themes link directly to the areas that the Council has heard from residents (including via a recent tenant satisfaction survey) that it needs to make improvements.

5.4 Residents will also receive quarterly newsletters and an annual report. A newsletter was sent to all tenants and leaseholders during November 2021. This was the first quarterly 'Homes for Melton newsletter'. This is attached at Appendix B for information.

5.5 The Charter for Social Housing Residents is a significant marker of the expectations and requirements of social landlords to engage with, listen to and be accountable to residents.

5.6 Engagement forms a key strand of our responsibilities as a landlord. It is not an optional extra. The Council must also be able to demonstrate to the Regulator of Social Housing, that it is engaging in a meaningful way with our tenants and leaseholders.

5.7 The Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement framework sets out our aims, ambitions and commitments for developing and improving meaningful tenant engagement over the next five years.

5.8 A number of activities / programmes of work will be required to deliver the commitments contained within the framework.

5.9 To oversee and ensure progress, an action plan will accompany this framework. The nature of this work means that whilst there will need to be overarching framework and plan, the action plan itself will need to be dynamic and responsive to the needs of the tenant engagement programme – it will be a working document.

- 5.10 The action plan will be overseen by a Strategic Housing Officers Group (internal), which will form in 2022. Progress updates will be shared regularly with the portfolio holder and will be presented to SLT on a six-monthly basis.
- 5.11 An annual tenant and leaseholder engagement update will be presented to Cabinet every twelve months.

6 Consultation and Engagement

- 6.1 The Portfolio holder for Council Homes and Landlord Services has supported the development of the proposed Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Framework, including providing a clear steer on the importance of implementing a programme of assurance and accountability.
- 6.2 Engagement with the two main tenant groups, Tenant Forum Executive Committee (TFEC) and South Melton Residents Group (Shout-4-Residents S4R) has been positive and has shaped the framework. Representatives of these groups have suggested options for a revised brand and approach for tenant engagement in Melton. The discussions have also supported officers to understand ‘what good looks like’ from their perspective and to seek views on how residents could be more involved in the future. It is clear from these discussions that there is a desire for greater involvement from more tenants and that increasing opportunities for engagement should be a priority.
- 6.3 Wider engagement on the proposed framework has not been carried out, however the framework and proposed engagement approach incorporates feedback from tenants and leaseholders:
- 6.3.1 A number of Tenant & Leaseholder Engagement events were held in June 2021. 100 tenants and leaseholders attended and completed a short survey, which showed that those who attended 80% were satisfied or very satisfied with the overall housing service provided, however, the feedback identified that areas of concern for tenants included:
- Repairs and maintenance
 - Capital program and stock improvements
 - Tenant engagement
 - Garden management
- 6.3.2 A baseline tenant satisfaction survey was completed by sector lead Acuity Research & Practice in September 2021, enabling the Council to benchmark its performance against other landlords. The feedback from this survey showed that 78% respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied with the services provided by the council and that 83% were either satisfied or very satisfied that rent they paid for their home was value for money. However, the survey also told us that the Council needs to improve in the following areas:
- Repairs & Maintenance
 - Communications
 - Neighbourhood Management

- 6.3.3 The tenant satisfaction survey will be repeated each year and will inform the Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement action plan. The 2021 survey report will be published on the Councils website.

7 Other Options Considered

- 7.1 The Charter for Social Housing Residents is a significant marker of the expectations and requirements of social landlords to engage with, listen to and be accountable to residents. This is not an optional extra. Instead, engagement forms a key strand of our responsibilities as a landlord. We must also be able to demonstrate to the Regulator of Social Housing, that we are engaging in a meaningful way with our tenants and leaseholders. For these reasons, no other options have been considered.

8 Next Steps

- 8.1 Subject to approval of the Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Framework, officers will begin to implement the initial action plan, including:
- Publish details of the commitment to engage in a meaningful and proactive way with tenants and leaseholders
 - Publish the tenant satisfaction survey results and recommendations
 - Arrange training for staff and stakeholders around the White Paper core values and the Tenant & Leaseholder Engagement Framework
 - Implement a programme of service improvement groups from February 2022
 - Engage with tenants to shape the development of the HRA business plan
 - Launch of a Tenant & Leaseholder Facebook Group
 - Create a specific Tenant & Leaseholder Engagement webpage
 - Develop and issue the next Homes for Melton newsletter end January 2022
 - Refine the proposed 'tenant offer' to guide communication between the councils and tenant representatives
 - Understand requirements to achieve Tpas accreditation
 - Develop a communications plan
 - Ensure that tenant engagement is embedded as a core strand of the remit of a new strategic housing officers group (internal)
- 8.2 Progress updates will be shared regularly with the portfolio holder and will be presented to SLT on a six-monthly basis. An annual tenant and leaseholder engagement update will be presented to Cabinet every twelve months.

9 Financial Implications

- 9.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

10 Legal and Governance Implications

- 10.1 The Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard is one of four consumer standards that registered providers of social housing must comply with to ensure that tenants are given a wide range of opportunities to influence and be involved in the development of policies, decision making, scrutiny, right to manage and agreeing local offers.
- 10.2 It is anticipated that The Charter for Social Housing Residents will lead to legislative changes and new regulatory standards.
- 10.3 The Regulator for Social Housing is also expected to define a set of Tenant Satisfaction Measures. All social housing providers will be expected to demonstrate performance in line with these measures. It is likely that an inspection regime will also be introduced.

The Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Framework should ensure all aspects of the standards are incorporated in the Council's housing service delivery

Legal Implications reviewed by: Monitoring Officer

11 Equality and Safeguarding Implications

- 11.1 There are no specific equalities or safeguarding implications arising from this report. The Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Framework seeks to enhance opportunities for residents to engage with the Council as a landlord, to share views and feedback and to hold the Council to account. The framework enhances the opportunities for residents to be involved. This will be reviewed as part of the action plan that accompanies the Framework to ensure that the Council is adopting a best practice approach.

12 Community Safety Implications

There are no specific Community Safety implications arising from this report.

13 Environmental and Climate Change Implications

There are no specific Environmental and Climate Change implications arising from this report.

14 Other Implications (where significant)

- 14.1 None.

15 Risk & Mitigation

- 15.1 None identified.

16 Background Papers

- 16.1 2021 Resident Satisfaction Survey Report (carried out by Acuity). This will be published on the Councils website during January 2022.

17 Appendices

- 17.1 Appendix A: Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Framework 2022
17.2 Appendix B: November 2021 Homes for Melton Newsletter

Report Author:	Lesley Armstrong , Tenant Engagement and Service Improvement Lead Michelle Howard , Director for Housing & Communities
Report Author Contact Details:	mhoward@melton.gov.uk
Chief Officer Responsible:	Michelle Howard , Director for Housing & Communities
Chief Officer Contact Details:	mhoward@melton.gov.uk