



## Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Annual Report

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<b>Lead Member/Relevant Portfolio Holder</b>	Portfolio Holder for Housing, Leisure and Landlord Services (Leader of the Council)

<b>Corporate Priority:</b>	<b>High quality homes and landlord services</b>
<b>Relevant Ward Member(s):</b>	All
<b>Date of consultation with Ward Member(s):</b>	N/A
<b>Exempt Information:</b>	No
<b>Key Decision:</b>	No
<b>Subject to call-in:</b>	No Not key decision

### 1 Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update and assurance regarding the Council's engagement with tenants and leaseholders. The Council introduced a Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Framework in January 2022 and has been delivering in line with the commitments made, which sit within the context of consumer regulation and requirements upon social landlords.
- 1.2 A progress update on tenant and leaseholder engagement was previously provided to Cabinet in May 2023. Updates have also been provided in terms of the Council's

preparations for regulatory change and more recently, the proactive inspection undertaken by the Regulator of Social Housing.

- 1.3 This report seeks to provide Cabinet with assurance that the Council continues to take its regulatory responsibilities seriously and to demonstrate progress and outcomes, particularly in respect of the Transparency, Accountability and Influence standard.

## 2 Recommendation(s)

**That Cabinet:**

- 2.1 **Note the update and progress made.**
- 2.2 **Endorse the actions planned for the next year.**

## 3 Background

- 3.1 After the Grenfell Fire in 2017 the Government released its White Paper; 'The Charter for Social Housing Residents'. The White Paper aimed 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.
- 3.2 This marked a series of changes and improvements for the sector, including to the introduction of the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2024. This increased the powers of the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) and put new requirements on providers of social housing. They introduced a new set of standards called the Consumer Standards. This put a focus on standards for the following areas, with a requirement for landlords to demonstrate compliance with each one:
- Neighbourhood and Community Standard
  - Safety and Quality Standard
  - Tenancy Standard
  - Transparency, Influence and Accountability
- 3.3 Compliance with the consumer standards is assessed via proactive inspection from the Regulator for Social Housing. Melton Borough Council received a C2 judgement in 2024 as part of the inspection arrangements, and progress is being maintained to further strengthen the Council's work and outcomes for tenants in respect of the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard.
- 3.4 The Council places a significant emphasis on excellent homes and landlord services, and this has been reflected in the council's corporate strategy for a number of years. Providing annual updates on this work supports transparency, accountability and continuous improvement. This update reflects the position as of November 2024.

## 4 Main Considerations

### 4.1 Update on previous actions

- 4.1.1 The tenant and leaseholder engagement framework initially set a series of actions to progress our journey, and preparedness for regulatory change. A progress update was provided to Cabinet in May 2023.
- 4.1.2 A further progress update is shown in the table below and demonstrates continued progress:

Action	Rag Rating	Commentary
Publish details of the commitment to engage in a meaningful and proactive way with tenants and leaseholders	Green	Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Framework completed and published
Publish the tenant satisfaction survey results and recommendations	Green	Tenant Satisfaction Measures collected, shared, and put on our website and new provider tendered for and in the process for 2024/25 stats.
Arrange training for staff and stakeholders around the White Paper core values and the Tenant & Leaseholder Engagement Framework	Green	Staff have had internal sessions on engagement and their role within delivering this. Staff away days have been focused on how their roles will change as consultation and engagement forms part of every post. MBC have also signed up to TPAS and will be looking at additional training opportunities for staff and tenants. In addition, detail is still pending, on the requirement for senior officers to hold professional qualifications, and MBC responded to the consultation around this matter. An internal review of staff and qualification has been conducted to identify gaps.
Implement a programme of service improvement groups from February 2022	Green	Your Choice group in place and meeting every 6 weeks and reviewing processes and being supplied feedback on changes they suggest. In addition is the web-based tenants and leaseholders who also received a comment on matters which are shared with the Your Choice group
Engage with tenants to shape the development of the HRA business plan	Green	Completed by interim Assistant Director of Housing who surveyed all customers for their priorities. Asset Management Plan to be reviewed and updated in the summer based on spend and further information about stock condition.  This is shared with tenants and leaseholders vis both the Your Choice meetings and the wider digital platform .
Launch of a Tenant & Leaseholder Facebook Group	Action removed – see explanation	The Council has Facebook Page which Housing Services have been using and it was assessed that having a second Facebook page for tenants only might confuse tenants on where to look for

		information. In response to tenant feedback, the council has improved its website offer and created a more informative and dedicated section on the website called "Tenants Corner."
Create a specific Tenant & Leaseholder Engagement webpage	Green	Created and updated recently to hold better information for our tenants and leaseholders. It can be found at <a href="#">Tenant Engagement – Melton Borough Council</a> .
Develop and issue the next Homes for Melton newsletter end January 2022	Green	Two newsletters produced and planned to produce two a year, plus the annual report in the summer of 2023. A further two newsletters produced in 2023/24, and a second annual report is being produced for sharing in November 2024.
Refine the proposed 'tenant offer' to guide communication between the Councils and tenant representatives	Green	Tenant and leaseholder policy created and published on the website at <a href="#">Tenant Leaseholder Engagement Policy – Melton Borough Council</a> .  Further work underway to review the terms of reference and operational arrangements for the Your Choice group. The Landlord Assurance Board has also been launched.
Understand requirements to achieve TPAS accreditation	Green	Membership reviewed and retained. Accreditation not pursued at the current time (a longer term aim). Active work with TPAS to review and ensure effective engagement arrangements. Access to TPAS membership supports access to best practice learning and training options.
Develop a communications plan	Green (ongoing)	Tenant and leaseholder policy created and published on the website at <a href="#">Tenant Leaseholder Engagement Policy – Melton Borough Council</a>  Engagement tracker in place which is supporting more proactive communications.
Ensure that tenant engagement is embedded as a core strand of the remit of a new strategic housing officers' group (internal)	Green	Housing Leadership Team in place. Meets bi-monthly and this on the agenda every time.

## 4.2 Inspection of Melton Borough Council's Landlord Services.

- 4.2 In April 2024, the RSH made advised that Melton Borough Council would be one of the first 6 Councils to be inspected against the new regulatory consumer standards.
- 4.3 The inspection process was undertaken between the end of April and August 2024., after which a Regulatory Judgement was published.
- 4.4 During the inspection, the regulator considered all four of its consumer standards: Neighbourhood and Community Standard, Safety and Quality Standard, Tenancy Standard, and the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard.
- 4.5 Following the initial context stage the regulator focussed on two standards: the Safety and Quality Standard and the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard. The regulator gathered information through reviewing an extensive narrative document and a

wide range of evidence and data. They also observed meetings, including the first meeting of the Landlord Assurance Board, a meeting of the Council's scrutiny committee with a tenant workshop, and a meeting with tenant representatives. The inspection team also met with engaged tenants, council officers, councillors and key stakeholders including those who collaborate closely with the council, including police, fire and county council colleagues.

4.6 The outcome of our inspection was that the Council has been awarded a C2 grade which confirms that the Council has provided assurance that it meets the consumer standards in many areas, but for one of the standards, there are areas where the council is at an earlier stage and needs to further develop to ensure consistently strong outcomes for tenants.

4.7 In its judgement, the regulator recognised that the council:

- Is meeting its health and safety obligations, and outcomes across all key areas of compliance are good.
- Has an accurate record of the condition of tenants' homes and that a high percentage of homes meet the Decent Homes Standard, with costed investment plans in place.
- Has a focus on tenant experience and that this is supported by a range of processes, with good interactions observed between staff and tenants.
- Demonstrates a commitment to treating tenants with fairness and respect.
- Demonstrates a commitment to build on existing arrangements to support tenants in influencing and scrutinising policies and services.
- Publicises its approach to complaints and that this is accessible.
- Works in partnership with relevant organisations to deter and tackle anti-social behaviour.
- Uses its housing stock effectively and supports tenants to sustain their tenancies.

4.8 Areas requiring further development and improvement within the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard are set out in the regulatory judgement. This also confirms that the council understands where it needs to make improvements, and that the regulator was assured that the council already had plans in progress to deliver them.

4.9 Specifically, in regard to engagement the following areas were identified, which the council is maintaining focus and progress on:

- Developing a more reciprocal approach to tenant engagement, so as to 'turn up the volume' on tenant voice.
- To improve the collection, quality, and use of tenant information to strengthen the Council's ability to proactively tailor services to tenants' needs and to demonstrate outcomes more clearly for tenants.
- To increase the visibility of performance information for tenants.
- To strengthen IT systems to support complaints reporting and monitoring.

#### 4.10 **Engagement activity and outcomes since the last report.**

4.11 MBC continues to look at how in can improve its engagement with its tenants and over the last 18 months we have continued with this trend by adding to some of our more traditional methods of engagement with our tenants. Our traditional engagement has been as follows:

- **Newsletters** – A further newsletter was developed and sent to all tenants in the summer of 2024 (appendix A)
- **Engagement Tracker** – we continue to capture the engagement we conduct with tenants and leaseholders and the tracker shows:
  - In 2022/23 we completed 20 actions which are all showing as now complete
  - In 2023/2024 we have 21 actions which are either completed or still in progress.
- **Your Choice (YC)** – We have completed 12 YC sessions with our tenant group discussing the following areas:
  - May 2023 – Took a brief overview of ASB and what work is underway, asked for feedback on the ASB survey and how/when to send.
  - June 2023 – Reviewed our current void standard with site visits to 2 voids.
  - August 2023 – Visit to Gretton Court to see what our extra care looks like and offers after YC request.
  - September 2023 – Update on regulations that are coming and or work to address these and update on the Tenants Satisfaction Measures are, who will be doing them and when.
  - October 2023 – A session reflecting on you said and we did with the group.
  - December 2023 – An overview on complaint performance for the year 2022/23
  - January 2024 – A review of the service charge definitions/ regulation update and introduction to Housing Perks app.
  - March 2024 – YC choice the gardening competition categories and how to advertise and provided feedback and input into the Compensation and Re-Imbursement Policy.
  - May 2024 – Performance discussion on what to share and where, Introduction to the Landlord Assurance Board (LAB) and what it is, Housing Service Plan, and update on TPAS plans.
  - July 2024 – YC reviewed the newsletter and advised of several opportunities to be involved further. New YC logo competition, gardening competition going live dates, opportunities to be part of the LAB, info on the Tenants Summer Faye.
  - August 2024 – Judging of the gardening competition entries.
  - September 2024 – Meeting the latest changes to the Housing Team (Chris and Kerry), getting feedback on the Tenant Summer Faye.

4.12 In addition, we have added the following as new methods for engagement over the last 18 months:

- **Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM)** – We completed and submitted our requirement for the TSM's and met our regulatory requirements. A copy can be found on our website at [Tenant Satisfaction Measures – Melton Borough Council](#). A report and update of this was taken to scrutiny for an oversight and discussion. To gather some more insight, we also asked two additional questions to understand why people gave us certain feedback and conducted some in-depth sessions with tenants on set



areas. Additionally, to this we conducted a mirror survey with staff to understand where we might have conflicting areas that could be affecting our perception results.

We have just concluded a procurement process to appoint a new provider to complete all future TSM surveys which have to be conducted annually.

- **Tenant & Leaseholder Annual Report** – We completed and sent out our first professional annual report with the help of our Comms Team (Appendix 2). It included areas such as annual performance, meeting the team, an interview with the income team, how to report a complaint and how to get involved as a tenant.

The next Tenant and Leaseholder Annual Report will be sent out in December. In this edition we will be covering:

- Annual Performance – but in more depth than previous.
  - Meeting the team and the changes.
  - Our commitment to you: High quality homes and landlord services
  - Reporting Complaints
  - Getting involved with us as a landlord.
- **Recruited a new Tenant Engagement and Regulatory Compliance Lead** – The Housing Leadership Team identified an opportunity to change the way we work by updating the Job Description for our Tenant Engagement Officer, whilst maintaining the momentum created while the temporary Regulatory Lead was in post.

It was felt we needed to create a more focused role that would support the engagement activities, lead on the major project areas we have planned to offer a more reciprocal approach to engagement while also taking a lead role in assurance that we continue to meet the requirements in the Consumer Standards. This recruitment was successful, and Kerry Roche joined us in August 2024 to fill the role and join the team. It was agreed that this role would be a direct report to the Assistant Director for Housing Quality, Development and Landlord Services as that role is the responsible person for our regulatory compliance to the Consumer Standards.

- **Tenants Summer Social** – Completed our first ever Tenants Summer Social, which was held at Parkside out of office hours and offered tenants a chance to meet with us in a more informal environment and discuss anything they wanted too. There was also:
  - Stands from various teams within the Council
  - Entertainment in the shape of a band, face painting, axe throwing, etc.
  - Awards issued for the gardening competition.
  - Refreshments, food, and ice cream provided.

Feedback from the Your Choice group showed that people might not have attended as much, due to it being located at the Council offices and felt a more neutral location in future might be a benefit. Along with better advertising of the event in future to grow our offer.

- **Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS)** – TPAS are dedicated to improving tenant engagement standards across the country. They bring tenants, landlords and contractors together through a wide range of services, independent and impartial advice, support, consultancy, and training.

They are a leading expert in this area and have been established in the housing sector for many years and support approximately 300 landlords. By partnering with them it provides us with some external expert advice to support us in our journey. So far, we have asked them to complete a desk top review of our high-level documentation and our Your Choice platform.

From this they have provided us with a number of recommendations to consider and implement to provide a more reciprocal engagement model in the future. A copy of these actions can be found in appendix 3 (TPAS Recommendations 2024).

We are now in the process of completing a SMART review with TPAS which will help us to:

- understand how we are performing against regulatory requirements.
- understand how we are performing against the TPAS National Tenant Engagement standard themes.
- enable us to ensure our engagement activities are based on sound strategic decisions.
- enable us to understand what is working, what's not and where to improve.

Our completed SMART review will be submitted to TPAS in December 24 after consultation with LAB tenant members. TPAS will then review this and provide a series of actions for us to improve our tenant engagement offer.

- **Landlord Assurance Board (LAB)** – Prior to inspection we had identified a gap in our engagement offer and felt that we needed a set board for all things housing to go to provide assurance.

The LAB provides an opportunity for council officers, councillors, and tenants to work together, with a focus on high quality homes and accountable landlord services. It has been developed to ensure collective awareness and visibility on important matters, such as regulatory compliance, financial resilience, risk management and performance on matters relating to being an effective landlord.

We recently completed our appointment of four board members who are tenants and now sit on this board and provide us with a tenant perspective. It gives them the opportunity to challenge us, drive improvements and change, and really put the tenants voice at the heart of everything we do. Having attended one meeting so far, it has been really positive to see the enthusiasm and input from tenants.

- **Tenants Corner** – We launched our new tenants focused website which was created using feedback and recommendations from the Your Choice group. They wanted to see certain information on our website which was not available before. For example, 'Who is my Housing Officer', 'what does each contractor do', and information on their tenancy. This feedback was taken on board and the Tenancy Services Manager led this with the Comms Team, and ICT to offer a new and improved website which was approved by the Your Choice group through the development process. The priorities of



the landlord services we offer and the information we supplied was put on the main page of our website to ensure better visibility for tenants who want to engage with us in this forum. You can find the Tenants Corner [here](#).

## 5 Future Consultation

- 5.1 As we continue to review and learn from our experiences in terms of our tenants and leaseholders' engagement we continue to plan and adapt our approach to suit the needs of our tenants and leaseholders. We plan to continue to consult, engage and collaborate with our tenants and leaseholders over the coming year(s).
- 5.2 Over this new year, the following activities are planned:
- 5.3 **TPAS** – We have committed to looking at how we can get to a position of being at the level we need to be to be accredited with TPAS accreditation, although we may not apply for it. To achieve this, we have commissioned them to support us and our tenants and leaseholders on learning and building on our engagement. We have started this process by completing their own in-depth assessment tool to review and challenge our own engagement offer to see where gaps and risks are.
- 5.4 **Re-launch of the Your Choice platform** – In December, this year we are re-launching the YC group. We have some new members and want to change the tone of the meetings and put tenants more in control of the meetings. To do this we have had a tenant design the new logo, and a group of YC members met with us to create the terms of reference in a task and finish group. We hope this will bring us more reciprocal engagement and that tenants will become the driving force. With the hope that in the future they could chair the meetings.
- 5.5 **Re-instatement of the estate walks** – Bringing back estate walks with key teams and partners across the borough and looking to recruit local Estate Champions who can join us and keep an eye on our neighbourhoods and report any concerns or repairs when needed.
- 5.6 **A re-launch of the digital offer** – We hold a list of tenants who have stated that they want to engage with us, and we are currently reviewing and contacting these tenants to understand if they are still interested and how they want to be involved. We will be looking to encourage some of them to be part of a Digital Panel, where we can send surveys, and questions to them for quick engagement and feedback.
- 5.7 **Tenant Data Project** – We want to have a better understanding of the tenant's data we hold, and we recently launched our tenant profile data project which reports into the Helping People Board. This project is looking at the data we hold, where we hold it and how we can collect better more insightful data. It will also then need to be reviewed regularly. This will allow us to be able to understand our tenants better and allow us to engage with them in methods that suit the tenants and their requirements.
- 5.8 **Tenant Roadshows** – Looking at this option instead of a Tenant Summer Social at the Council offices due to feedback from tenants after the last social. Instead going out into our tenant's communities and running a fun engagement event there for them.
- 5.9 **Clear performance measures for engagement** – With our new Tenant Engagement and Regulatory Lead now in post we have been looking around the sector to see what performance measures we could incorporate to show more clearly how we are performing in this area. We intend to introduce a new suite of KPI's which will identify things like,

number of engaged tenants/ leaseholders, number of events held, and changes to services from tenant and leaseholder involvement.

- 5.10 **Quarterly complaints overview and new complaints tracking system** – In the coming year, the Performance and Comms Team will be implementing a new complaint logging and tracking system. This will enhance our understanding of complaints, trends and allow us to use automation to save time on the processing. It will also enhance our ability to track actions and outcomes which we have started to do quarterly and provide valuable insight into where complaints have changed the way we deliver our services and our learning from them.
- 5.11 **No voice, no sign off** – consideration to be given to the introduction of evolving our decision-making council wide. This would show that where reasonably practicable we will in our decision making consider the tenants voice by way of consultation where a change will impact more than one tenant/leaseholder. This would help us in turning up the volume on tenant’s voice.
- 5.12 **Engagement Champions** – implement a plan to upskill staff across our Housing Services to support with tenant engagement within their own teams.
- 5.13 **Anti-social behaviour (ASB)** – We have implemented a new ASB Policy and as part of this project we have purchased a new case management system to support our future work. As part of this project, we will be having open communications setting clear action plans with complainants of ASB to make expectations easier to manage, we will be promoting the reporting of ASB in our newsletter, events and on posters. We will also be sending satisfaction surveys YC supported us in developing after we close a case to help our learning.
- 5.14 **Continuous Improvement** - It’s important to recognise that we are not the finished article as stated in our inspection when it comes to engaging with our customers, but we have identified our areas for development and continuous improvement and how we can offer more for our tenants and leaseholders to support a more reciprocal relationship.

We continue to aim to put our customers at the heart of what we do, and we want to move to a place of being able to offer our customers all sorts of ways of being involved that suit them depending on how they want to engage with us, and these could be:

Level	What does that look like?
Lead	Commit to a formal role with specific responsibilities.
Collaborate	Help to deliver services or engage others.
Co-create	Guide our plans and help to improve services.
Chip in	Respond to specific questions and requests.
opt in	Commit to future engagement
Be aware	Know about services and plans

## 6 Financial Implications

- 6.1 Fulfilling responsibilities and commitments have meaningful impact on tenant engagement means that this does need to be resourced effectively. Where possible, activities are managed within existing resources.
- 6.2 There is a budget in place for our engagement activities, which is managed and monitored by the Tenancy Service Manager
- 6.3 Carrying out Tenant Satisfaction Surveys is not new to the Council is now a regulatory requirement and there is a cost associated with ensuring the surveys are carried out in the correct format and with the necessary methodology, assessment and analysis.
- 6.4 New burdens funding towards these for 23/24 and 24/25 has totalled £28,129. This still creates a shortfall, which must be met from existing resources. The new burdens payment in 23/24 was £17,751 and £10,378 in 2024-25.
- 6.5 All social landlords must also make a payment to the RSH to support the cost of regulating the sector. For 2024-25, this is £8,886.
- 6.6 Access to external support, training and expertise has also incurred costs. This includes:
  - 6.6.1 House Mark, which will provide us with a much-needed benchmarking facility and access to best practice in the sector which we can learn from to improve services for our tenants and leaseholders, but this comes at a cost of just under £14,000 over the next 3 years.
  - 6.6.2 HQN, which provides the sector with training opportunities, webinars and learning opportunities to develop our staff. This costs £1,950 per annum.
  - 6.6.3 TPAS, which is supporting us to get to providing a reciprocal engagement method, and we pay £1,170 per annum to be a member, and have paid £3,400 for a SMART engagement review
- 6.7 There is a requirement for housing staff to meet certain levels of competency, however the detailed requirements remain unknown. Preparations are underway and a number of colleagues are undertaking qualifications, which are being funded through the corporate training budget.

**Financial Implications reviewed by: Director for Corporate Services**

## 7 Legal and Governance Implications

- 7.1 This report addresses the Council's responsibilities under the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2024 and Housing and Regeneration Act 2008, along with regulations made under both. The 2008 Act allows the Regulator of Social Housing to set standards which the Council must meet in relation to its housing stock and tenants. The Council has been subject to proactive inspection by the Regulator which confirmed that it is largely compliant however, further actions were required to improve the level of compliance. The Council is continuing to engage with the Regulator to deliver on these actions.
- 7.2 Any Landlord that cannot meet the standards should self-refer to the Regulator of Social Housing at the earliest opportunity, however, there is no suggestion that there is any need to do so given the level of compliance confirmed by the Regulator.

**Legal Implications reviewed by: Monitoring Officer.**

## 8 Risk & Mitigation

Risk No	Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Risk
1	Failure to meet consumer standards	Low	Critical	Medium
2	Customer feedback ignored or not acted upon, and lessons not learnt	Very Low	Marginal	Low
3	Unable to provide suitable feedback for TSM's	Very Low	Critical	Low

		Impact / Consequences			
		Negligible	Marginal	Critical	Catastrophic
Likelihood	Score/ definition	1	2	3	4
	6 Very High				
	5 High				
	4 Significant				
	3 Low			1	
	2 Very Low		2	3	
	1 Almost impossible				

Risk No	Mitigation
1	Lead person named within MBC (Assistant Director for Housing Quality, Development and Landlord Services) for ensuring compliance with regulatory changes and learning from other organisations through House Mark, TPAS and HQN and other supporting posts within the organisation (This will be supported by the Tenant Engagement and Regulatory Compliance Lead).
2	Tracker created and over seen by several leads withing Housing Services to ensure we are on track with engagement/ consultations and that we are providing feedback to customer and learning from our experiences.
3	TSM provider tender complete and initial kick of meeting taken place, plan to go live with TSM survey in late January 2025 to provide plenty of learning and understanding from results and time to submit before summer 2025 deadline.

## 9 Background Papers

- 9.1 Engagement Tracker
- 9.2 Tenant and Leaseholder Framework
- 9.3 Tenant & Leaseholder Policy

## 10 Appendices

- 10.1 Appendix One - Newsletter- Summer 2024
- 10.2 Appendix Two - Annual Report 2023
- 10.3 Appendix Three - TPAS Recommendations 2024