

FAREHAM

BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to Housing Scrutiny Panel

Date **27 June 2024**

Report of: **Director of Housing**

Subject: **Draft Tenant Engagement Strategy**

SUMMARY

This report provides Members with an overview of the Draft Tenant Engagement Strategy. The draft Strategy sets out our approach to improving how we listen to and work with our tenants in response to the new regulatory requirements set out by the Regulator of Social Housing.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Panel provide any comments or observations on the draft Strategy in advance of the Council's Executive being asked to approve the Draft Tenant Engagement Strategy for a period of public consultation.

INTRODUCTION

1. The Draft Tenant Engagement Strategy sets out the Council's commitment to improving how we listen to and consider the views of tenants in the services we deliver.
2. The Council currently does not have a Tenant Engagement Strategy in place. Work has been undertaken to prepare a new Strategy in response to the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 and the new Consumer Standards set by the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH). The draft Strategy outlines the national and local context, provides three objectives to help begin the work with tenants and sets out how we will achieve and measure these aims.

BACKGROUND

3. This draft Strategy takes into account our responsibility as a social landlord under the Housing Act 1985, Housing Act 1996, Equality Act 2010, and the Human Rights Act 1998.
4. Through the introduction of the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard, registered social landlords are required to demonstrate how they have taken tenants views into account in their decision making about how their services are delivered.
5. As a landlord, we already work and engage with our tenants, with activities such as their right to manage, right to transfer and other housing management functions. This Tenant Engagement Strategy is aimed at consolidating our legislative duties and incorporating all aspects of the standard into the delivery of our housing services.
6. We recognise that since Covid-19, the Fareham Housing service has not returned to its previous levels of engagement. While a dedicated Tenant Involvement Officer previously carried out tenant engagement work, until recently it fell to our Neighbourhood Officers to incorporate engagement within their existing work.
7. The recent appointment of the Principal Tenant Engagement Officer in April 2024 provides the opportunity to rebuild tenant engagement, beginning with the creation of a Tenant Engagement Strategy, followed by the implementation of the Action Plan.

THE DRAFT TENANT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

8. The draft Tenant Engagement Strategy is attached as Appendix A to this report. It incorporates four main sections: -
 - The National and Local Context
 - The Objectives
 - Monitoring the Tenant Engagement Strategy
 - Continuous Improvement Action Plan

Drafting the Strategy

9. The aims and objectives of the Tenant Engagement Strategy alongside the Menu of Opportunities for Involvement was presented to a group of tenants at an introductory workshop held on 28 May 2024. This was an opportunity to get comments and feedback from our target audience, our tenants. At the workshop, we also provided an overview of the changes in regulations and the new Consumer Standards.

The National and Local Context

10. This draft Strategy focuses on the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 and the enhanced roles for both the RSH and the Housing Ombudsman. Following the Grenfell Tower Fire, the death of two-year-old Awaab Ishak and Building Safety concerns, greater emphasis has been placed on resident engagement which is reinforced by the introduction of the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard in April 2024.
11. The draft Tenant Engagement Strategy seeks to support the Council's corporate approach and priorities. It takes into consideration the Council's Corporate Strategy 2023-2029 and Fareham Housing's Affordable Housing Strategy.

The Objectives

12. To begin this engagement journey with our tenants, the draft Strategy includes three objectives.
13. Objective 1 seeks to 'create a culture that recognises and values tenant engagement'. This objective focuses on promoting the importance of tenant input in the design and development of services and establishing internal buy in. Through this, we can build trust and transparency with our tenants as they begin to see the results and benefits of their involvement.
14. Objective 2 is to 'offer a range of opportunities for meaningful collaboration to ensure all tenants are able to get involved, scrutinise and influence'. Attached in Appendix B is the menu of opportunities for tenant involvement. Included are different options with varying levels of commitments to suit the tenant. This menu of opportunities will be promoted in the next edition of the Tenants Newsletter and all tenants will be encouraged to sign up and get involved.
15. Objective 3 looks to 'improve communication methods ensuring tenants have convenient access to information and news'. This objective will ensure that we are using appropriate methods of communication that suits the needs of our tenants. This objective will also ensure we produce timely and up to date information, this is fundamental for critical issues such as building regulations and fire safety.

Monitoring the Tenant Engagement Strategy

16. The Tenant Engagement Strategy will cover a period of five years, to coincide with the Council's Corporate Strategy, but will be reviewed annually. The Strategy will be reviewed by the Tenant Engagement team, alongside Housing Management and Tenants to ensure it reflects the views and needs of our tenants.
17. This Strategy is subject to regulation through the Consumer Standards as set out by the Regulator of Social Housing.

Continuous Improvement Action Plan

18. The draft Tenant Engagement Strategy contains a live Continuous Improvement Action Plan.

19. This is the beginning of our engagement journey with tenants; therefore, a live document ensures we can update the Action Plan when appropriate as we continue to engage with tenants, leaseholders, and partners in creating and developing actions.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

20. A draft Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) of the Strategy has been undertaken and raises no issues of concern.
21. The EIA found that the Strategy is expected to have a positive impact on all tenants. It aims to remove the barriers of engagement for groups who have been underrepresented and create meaningful engagement opportunities for them to raise concerns and issues that impact them.
22. This will be updated as the consultation progresses. The full EIA will be made available alongside any subsequent recommendation to adopt the strategy.

CONCLUSION

23. The draft Tenant Engagement Strategy will support the Council to deliver on the regulatory requirements and new consumer standards from the Social Housing Regulation Act. This will place the tenant, their needs, and their voice at the centre of Fareham's Housing Service.
24. Members are invited to comment on the draft Strategy included in Appendix A.

NEXT STEPS

25. Following a period of public consultation on the draft Strategy, it is intended that appropriate adjustments are made ahead of it returning to the Executive for approval/adoption.

RISK ASSESSMENT

26. There are no significant risk considerations in relation to this report.

ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS/CARBON IMPACT ASSESSMENT

27. The subject matter of this report is not anticipated to have an impact on the Council's carbon footprint, nor is it expected to have a detrimental or beneficial impact to the wider environment.

Appendices: **A: Draft Tenant Engagement Strategy**

B: Menu of Opportunities for Tenant Involvement

Background papers: **None**

Reference papers: Regulator of Social Housing, Transparency, Influence and Accountability Consumer Standard, (2024) [online], data accessed via [April 2024 - Transparency Influence and Accountability Standard FINAL 1 .pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

Enquiries:

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