



Resident Involvement Strategy

for Tenants and Leaseholders of
South Cambridgeshire District Council
2024 – 2027



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Introduction



The purpose of the Council's Resident Involvement Strategy is to set out the Council's commitment to provide opportunities for those tenants (including leaseholders) living in Council homes to fully participate in the development and improvement of their housing service.



This Strategy sets out a new framework that provides the means and methods for tenants to have meaningful engagement. It encourages more tenants to be engaged through better communications and providing a variety of opportunities that allow tenants to participate either a little or a lot.



The outcome of implementing this Strategy will be a better informed, empowered tenant community. It promotes a relationship of trust and cooperation between South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC) and their tenants.



Vision and Values

The Resident Involvement Strategy supports a partnership between SCDC and our tenants. It provides tenants meaningful engagement, influence and scrutiny in housing services decisions. Tenants have a key role in helping SCDC deliver a responsive housing service that reflects SCDC's business plan – to deliver a caring, affordable and environmentally responsible housing service for current and future tenants.

SCDC Corporate Values:

- Ambitious
- Collaborative
- Compassionate
- Accountable



Objectives

The Resident Involvement Objectives reflect the need to provide the means and methods of delivering effective, meaningful and collaborative tenant engagement. It provides tenants with the opportunity to influence and scrutinise the housing service. This involvement should result in tenants and SCDC working together to deliver an exceptional housing service.

1. Develop a collaborative tenant engagement programme between SCDC, our tenants and leaseholders.
2. Establish and support a tenant engagement framework that delivers tenant involvement, influence, and scrutiny opportunities. Support the new framework by recruiting and building the skills and capacity of involved tenants.
3. Create multiple communication channels between SCDC and their tenants.



4. Promote environmental engagement, community cohesion, resident wellbeing and reduce stigma associated with social housing.
5. Tenant involvement is planned, resourced, monitored and reviewed regularly with tenants.

Regulatory Requirements

The Resident Involvement Strategy has been developed in accordance with the current regulatory requirements set out in the Social Housing Regulations Act 2023 and specifically within the Consumer Standards published in 2024, which are governed by The Regulator of Social Housing.

The Regulator of Social Housing regulates registered providers of social housing to promote a viable, efficient and well-governed social housing sector able to deliver homes that meet a range of needs. Regulations cover economic and consumer standards.

The economic standards do not apply to local authorities because these are regulated by central government.

The consumer standard applies to both local authorities and registered providers of social housing, such as housing associations. The aim of the consumer standard is to support the provision of social housing, to ensure that it is well-managed and of appropriate quality.





Consumer Standards

The four consumer standards are:

Safety and Quality Standard

Which requires landlords to provide safe and good quality homes and landlord services to tenants.

Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard

Which requires landlords to be open with tenants and treat them with fairness and respect so that tenants can access services, raise complaints when necessary, influence decision making and hold their landlord to account. This standard incorporates Tenant Satisfaction Measure requirements.

Tenancy Standard

Which sets requirements for the fair allocation and letting of homes and for how those tenancies are managed and ended by landlords.

Neighbourhood and Community Standard

Which requires landlords to engage with other relevant parties so that tenants can live in safe and well-maintained neighbourhoods and feel safe in their homes.



Our approach

The Resident Involvement Strategy sets out the Council's approach to giving tenants a greater voice and influence in the services they deliver.

This Strategy sets out how the Council will:



- provide the methods and means for tenants to engage, influence and scrutinise housing decisions.



- make it easy for tenants to access information and share their views by creating user friendly communication channels.



- promote higher levels of engagement so that more people become involved tenants and that the interests of the whole community are represented.



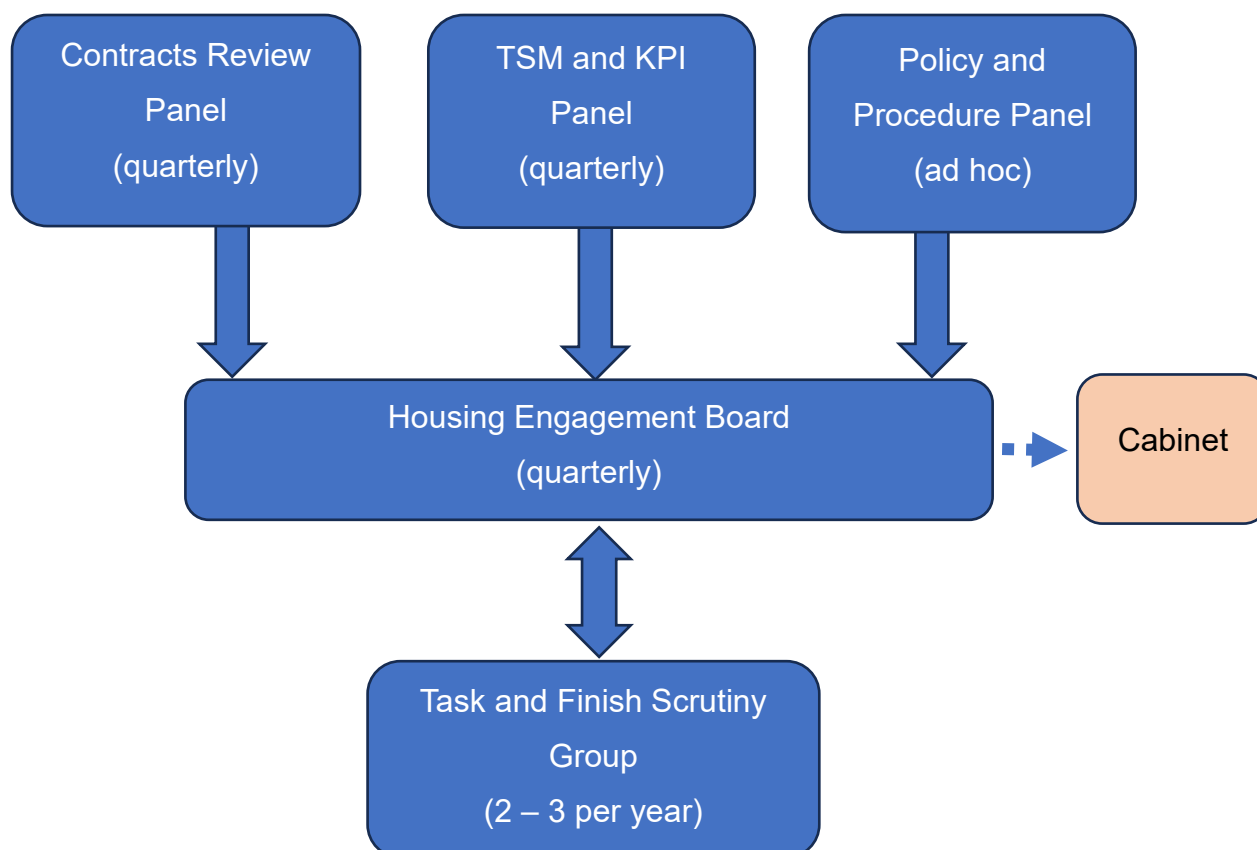
Tenant Engagement Framework

The Council conducted a review in 2023 / 2024 in consultation with tenant representatives regarding the structure of how SCDC engage with tenants, takes on their views in decision making, shapes service delivery, reviews current and new contracts, as well as scrutinises SCDC services.

The Resident Involvement Framework includes a strategic Housing Engagement Board (HEB) and three panels that report directly into the Board.

The HEB will be able to create task and finish groups to carry out scrutiny projects on SCDC services and also feed into the decision-making process when making decisions relating to the Housing Service

All subgroup panels will be non-exclusive, and tenants can be a member of as many or as little as they choose.





New Tenant Engagement Framework

The Tenant Engagement Framework provides a means for tenants, council members and housing colleagues to have meaningful engagement. It creates formal methods to engage, inform, discuss, scrutinise and debate issues that impact on tenants. The Tenant Engagement Framework offers a wider range of opportunities. Tenant engagement also includes informal engagement through customer contact and social media. We will look to develop opportunities for tenants to become involved at a level where they feel comfortable, this may include surveys or armchair reviews. Delivering tenant engagement requires a variety of communication channels that makes it easier for tenants to access information in a timely manner. Digital communication channels are a key method of communication in line with the Council's overall communication strategy for its residents.

The Housing Engagement Board (HEB)

The Housing Engagement Board (HEB) consists of three district councillors, including the Lead Member for Housing, five elected tenant representatives and one elected leaseholder representative, and the Head of Housing. The resident involvement team will provide secretariat support. Tenant representative board members are entitled to a remuneration of up to £400 a year and are expected to meet the criteria set within the terms of reference for the Board, as well as the Code of Conduct for all tenant representatives. Elections to the Board are held every four years. The HEB meet four times a year.



5 tenants and
1 leaseholder



3 councillors



Head of Housing



It provides a forum to consult and scrutinise on new policy or major revisions to policy; to monitor performance on key areas; to receive presentations on topics of interest, request more in depth work on an area, for example through a working group; and receive feedback in the form of minutes from forums and other working groups (see overleaf).

It provides a platform to engage with and consult with tenant and leaseholder representatives at a strategic level, and for those views to feed into the decision-making process in line with the Council's constitution by the Head of Housing and the Lead Member for Housing or recommendation to Cabinet.

Panels

Any tenant volunteer can participate in the Panels. The Panels will be made up of both tenant representatives and appropriate Officers. Each Panel will have a tenant representative acting as Chair, who will feedback into the Housing Engagement Board at its quarterly meetings. Terms of Reference will be agreed for each Panel and all tenant representatives must comply with the Code of Conduct.

All members of the Panels will be entitled to claim up to £400 per year in line with the HEB subject to the terms of reference.

Contracts Review Panel

To monitor current contracts and address areas of concern, as well as participating in the award of new contracts.

Tenant Satisfaction Measures and Key Performance Indicators Panel

To monitor the new Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM), alongside existing Key Performance Indicators (KPI). Areas of concern to be reported to HEB.

Policy and Procedure Panel

To input into housing policy development and review existing policies, prior to consideration by HEB.



Task and Finish Scrutiny Group

Task and Finish Scrutiny Groups will be tenant-led, giving tenant representatives/volunteers the opportunity to undertake a 'deep dive' on a particular topic. The topic will be identified by the Housing Engagement Board for further scrutiny, with the outcome and recommendations reported back to the HEB. It is anticipated that between 2 and 3 topics will be scrutinised per year.



Tenant Estate Inspections

Tenant Estate Inspections are done in conjunction with housing officers, trained tenant inspectors and local tenants. The inspections run from April until October. Estate inspections are promoted using social media, newsletters and by the housing officers. Estate inspections are a valuable activity in building relationships with the local community, gaining their feedback and to monitor the condition of estates.






Tenant Communication

A successful tenant involvement programme requires good communication between the Council and their tenants. Good communication relies on understanding tenants' priorities, staff engagement, multiple communication channels and monitoring. The benefit to the tenants and the Council is being able to build a productive, positive working relationship that delivers a better, value for money housing service.



The tenant communications' objective is to enable tenants to:

-  • Have access to the latest news, events and meetings
-  • Easily find information regarding housing services
-  • Share their views and be consulted on tenant issues

To achieve these objectives, the Council uses multiple communication channels:



Tenant and leaseholder newsletter. This is available online, published every month.



Sheltered Housing newsletter. This is a dedicated newsletter for our sheltered housing tenants and leaseholders which is printed and delivered to every sheltered housing property every month.



Tenant satisfaction survey. SCDC will undertake an annual tenant satisfaction survey and publish the findings on its website, alongside other performance measures.



Website. Our website has a housing section which is being developed further to include additional features to improve communications.



Meetings. Meetings and groups provide valuable person to person contact with tenants. The opportunity to talk to someone about concerns, grievances or ideas is important to tenants.



Other forms of tenant contact are also being explored, such as after service surveys, on-line reporting of repairs and the ability to track repairs and the development of a customer portal.

Digital technology is key to increasing contact, provide information and to gain feedback. Digital tools that are available include:



One view portal to deliver personalised content



Social media to inform and gain feedback



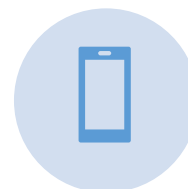
E-newsletter to inform



Surveys and polls to respond to specific questions



Analytics to gauge response and popular content



Housing management system may provide other options including emailing or SMS messaging.

Tenant Programmes

Community Gardens is a new initiative to bring local tenants together to create outdoor space that will promote the Council's "Green to our Core" value. The Community Gardens initiative will not only help to improve the tenants' local



environment, the Council's land, but will also bring tenants together socially which will help to tackle loneliness as well as promoting a healthy activity.

The resident involvement team works to promote tenant, community and individual wellbeing. The service is cross-cutting throughout the Council, promoting the work undertaken by the sustainable communities and the environmental teams that benefits our tenants.

Additional offers of wider tenant engagement will be offered in localities within the district led by tenant representatives and facilitated by the Resident Involvement Team.

Accountability

The resident involvement team provides an annual report to tenants and leaseholders regarding how the housing revenue account money is spent. There are numerous opportunities to provide more regular information to tenants.

This includes:



Regular updates on housing services and key performance indicators.



“You said, we did” – publish actions SCDC has taken in response to tenant requests, complaints or ideas.



Minutes of meetings – publish and promote outcome and actions from involved tenant meetings.



Resources

The Council supports a small team of resident involvement staff including:

- Resident Involvement Team Leader (full time permanent post) – covering policy and strategy and ensuring compliance with Consumer standards.
- Resident Involvement Officer (full time permanent post) – covering day to day resident involvement work such as supporting meetings, group activities, responding to requests.
- Housing Communications Officer (full time permanent post) – covering project work such as digital rollout and newsletters / promotional events.

It is important to allocate resources to ensure that resident involvement objectives are met.

1. Prioritise resident involvement activities to support the framework and communications. Set realistic targets.
2. Train, develop and support staff across the housing service, so they can identify and promote resident involvement opportunities.
3. Provide support and training for involved tenants and leaseholders so they can be effective in their roles.
4. Consistently deliver social media and newsletters content. Support staff to deliver digital engagement by providing training and mentoring.
5. Regularly review resident involvement outcomes to determine that activities are delivering objectives and offering value for money.