



## Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council

Forward timetable of consultation and decision making

Scrutiny Commission      31 October 2024  
Executive                      6 November 2024

Wards affected:              all wards

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### Tenant Involvement and Scrutiny Update

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Report of Director (Community Services)

#### **1. Purpose of report**

- 1.1 To provide members with further service updates in relation to the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Housing Consumer Standard, as required by the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023.
- 1.2 To seek endorsement for the Charter for Tenants.
- 1.3 To seek endorsement for the Housing Service's Communication Strategy.

#### **2. Recommendation**

- 2.1 Scrutiny Commission notes the work underway to meet the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Consumer Standard.
- 2.2 Scrutiny Commission endorses the Charter for Tenants.
- 2.3 Scrutiny Commissions endorse the Housing Service Communication Strategy.

#### **3. Background to the report**

The Social Housing Regulation Act 2023 came into effect in July 2023. The Act aims to improve the lives of social housing tenants by strengthening regulations and the power of the Regulator of Social Housing. The Act has three core elements which are:

- to facilitate a new, proactive consumer regulation regime;

- to refine the existing economic regulatory regime; and
- to strengthen the Regulator of Social Housing's (Regulator) powers to enforce the consumer and economic regimes.

3.1 The Act introduces 4 Consumer Standards which are set out below.

- **The Safety and Quality Standard** – outcomes about the safety and quality of tenants' homes.
- **The Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard** – outcomes about how landlords provide information, listen to tenants, and act on their views.
- **The Neighbourhood and Community Standard** – outcomes about how landlords work with other organisations to help ensure tenants live in safe neighbourhoods.
- **The Tenancy Standard** – outcomes about how landlords allocate and let homes and manage tenancies.

Whilst there is a significant amount of work underway across the Housing Service to ensure compliance with all aspects of each of the Consumer Standard, this report focuses more specifically on the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard.

### 3.2 The Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard

Key principle include:

- **Fairness and Respect:** Registered providers must treat tenants with fairness and respect, considering diverse needs such as protected characteristics, language, and support requirements.
- **Communication and Accessibility:** Information provided to tenants must be clear, accessible, and relevant. Landlord services should be accessible, including digital support where necessary.
- **Tenant Engagement:** Tenants must be actively involved in decision-making, with opportunities to influence and scrutinise landlord strategies and services. Landlord communication should be two-way.
- **Information and Performance:** Landlords must provide clear information about services and performance, including through Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs).
- **Complaints Handling:** Complaints should be handled fairly, effectively, and promptly.

The following areas of work are in place or in progress to ensure that the Housing Service continues to meet the needs of its tenants through service delivery and design.

### 3.3 Tenant Scrutiny

Effective tenant scrutiny provides tenants with greater influence and the ability to hold their landlord to account by exercising more power over the business decisions, governance and performance of their landlord. Tenant scrutiny

gives tenants an active stake in the running of their landlord's business rather than just being recipients of services. It enables staff and tenants to work in partnership to achieve better performance and improved outcomes.

Tenant involvement in the scrutiny of a landlord's performance is rooted in the principle that landlords take account of the following:

- Tenants' priorities and needs
- Involving tenants in setting policies and standards
- Taking tenants' views into account before decisions are taken
- How to support tenants to hold their landlords to account

Since the Service Development Team was established, within the housing service, there has been a renewed focus on tenant engagement and influence. This has enabled the formation of the Tenant Influence and Scrutiny panel which comprises 8 council tenants all of whom are committed to providing robust scrutiny of the housing services working practices, policies, procedures and governance arrangements. All offer a different perspective and provide representation from across the borough.

Whilst the panel is in its infancy, it has commenced work to review correspondence and wider communication between the housing service to its tenants. In addition, members of the panel have produced a PowerPoint presentation on what is tenant scrutiny, have attended training with TPAS and presented their learnings to the group.

The Tenant Influence and Scrutiny Panel will produce a formal report to the Executive and to the Scrutiny committee regarding its activities over the preceding 12 month period. The panel also reports to the Housing Executive Member. Information regarding the Tenant Influence and Scrutiny Framework is outlined in appendix one.

### **3.4 Charter for Tenants**

A Charter for tenants is a clear set of commitments a social landlords can make to their residents, enabling residents to hold landlords accountable on the issues that matter to them.

Appendix two outlines the Housing Services' Charter for Tenants which is a set of guiding principles that the service strives to uphold to ensure that its tenants remain at the centre of service delivery. The Charter has been developed with the Tenant Influence and Scrutiny panel. The Executive is asked to endorse the Charter.

### **3.5 Communication Strategy**

Effective communication is essential to ensuring that the Housing Service delivers services that meets the diverse needs of its tenants. It is recognised that multiple communications methods are necessary across the service. Appendix three sets out the Housing Service's draft Communication Strategy,

which has again been informed by tenants, and seeks to set out the services' commitment to effective communication.

### **3.6 Tenant Satisfaction Measures**

Tenant Satisfaction Measures are a further requirement specified by the Regulator of Social Housing, and are a specific expectation set out within The Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard. From 1 April 2023 all registered providers were required to generate and report tenant satisfaction measures (TSMs).

The council's housing service commissioned Housemark to undertake its TSMs to ensure impartiality and compliance with regulation. The council is required to collect TSMs on an annual basis going forward. The TSMs are a set of 12 tenant perception measures, with a further 10 management measures. To ensure compliance, the survey must be representative and at least 15% of the overall tenant base.

The TSM survey undertaken by Housemark equates to a survey size of 17%, which equates to 550 tenants. Overall, 82.5% of tenants reported satisfaction with the housing service. Benchmarking information suggests that service is in a good position regarding tenant satisfaction.

HBBC housing service were one of the 'early bird' data returns and as such, a report from Housemark summarises our performance against our peers in the industry. This can be found in Appendix four.

### **3.7 Resident Engagement and the Consumer Standards**

The Consumer Standards require social landlords to move beyond limited resident involvement and establish a more comprehensive strategy. This means ongoing and integrated customer involvement. The Tenant Influence and Scrutiny Panel Framework provided in Appendix one outlines how the service will involve residents in a way that is accessible and caters to their needs and preferences.

Prior to the Covid19 pandemic, activity with tenant involvement had dwindled. Efforts to recruit were not successful and online opportunities were not popular during the pandemic, causing existing members of tenant groups to no longer be actively participating.

Tenant involvement was realigned within the remit of service development and a refreshed approach to recruiting tenants to different roles was carried out. We have 160 tenants who have registered for one or more opportunities of engagement, since November 2022.

### **3.8 Wider Tenant Engagement**

Over the last 12 months the following tenant engagement opportunities have been achieved;

- 99 tenants attended drop in tenant involvement events
- 6600 12 page newsletters distributed
- 6 information events held
- Launched Tenant Influence and Scrutiny Panel and framework
- 3 Damp and mould workshops held
- 1 policy revised
- Void cleaning specification created and implemented
- 2 consultations for tenants and residents on major projects
- 200 tenants have registered on the newly developed online portal 'Myhousing'

### 3.9 Tenant Engagement Opportunities

Thanks to an engagement survey being sent out to tenants registered to be involved, we have a number of volunteers who are interested in getting involved in their housing services, which are summarised as below.

### 3.10 Readers Panel

We have 8 tenants who are actively involved in reviewing and scrutinising documents, letters, policies, web pages and leaflets that the services produce. An officer will create a draft copy, which is sent to the readers panel with some supporting information to provide context. The members of the readers panel will review in their own time and send the feedback via email.



Once feedback has been collated, the document is reproduced, and an image will be added to the front page of the document to demonstrate to any readers, that it has been created with tenants.

Examples of recent documents reviewed by the panel include:

- HRA Investment Strategy Report
- A tenant's guide to Condensation, Damp and Mould
- Damp and Mould policy

### 3.11 Housing Hub - Editorial Panel

We have 4 tenants who make up the editorial panel, along with the Service Development Officer and Performance and Service Development Team Leader. The panel choose topics or provide images and content for our 6 monthly Housing Hub Tenants Newsletter.

### 3.12 Neighbourhood Champions

We have been unsuccessful so far in recruiting to the Neighbourhood Champions role. The description is: someone who can help promote tenant

involvement activities in their neighbourhood. This can be a range of activities from assisting with events we hold, and encouraging others such as your neighbours, to join in. This role will vary depending on your neighbourhood, some aspects may be online, and some may be in community centres or local meet ups.

Although we don't formally have any volunteers for this role, we have received support from members of the other panels and roles, who have been invited to support events or activities that interest them personally. A new involvement survey will be issued in April 2025 and we will review this role following this exercise.

### **3.13 Customer Experience Champion**

This is a new role, and our volunteers will work closely with management to enhance our housing complaint handling process by contributing to the following.

- **Complaint Review:** Twice yearly meetings with managers to analyse housing complaints, satisfaction rates, and identify lessons learned.
- **Performance Monitoring:** Assist the Service Development Team in reviewing transactional survey data from customers who have recently made complaints.
- **Accountability and Improvement:** Use performance data to hold the organisation accountable and propose enhancements to complaint handling procedures.

### **3.14 Void Property Inspector**

Tenant void property inspectors were in place some years ago, but then volunteers were no longer able to commit, and the activity stopped.

Following our involvement survey, 6 tenants have expressed an interest in this role. They will visit void (empty) properties with staff to inspect and ensure they meet the standards and provide feedback. This will take place in the daytime, for approximately 2 hours per month, we provide transport to and from the empty property and an officer from the Service Development Team will meet with tenants to inspect the property together.

This role has been popular as tenants will work in pairs and will attend on a rota basis. This is a low commitment role, with a topic and opportunity that is interesting to our tenants. This activity will begin in Q3, with the procedure and risk assessments being finalised prior to commencement.

It is hoped that the range of opportunities that are now available to tenants will enable greater involvement and engagement so that our tenants remain at the centre of decisions, service development and delivery.

**4. Exemptions in accordance with the Access to Information procedure rules**

4.1 To be taken in public session.

**5. Financial implications [CS]**

5.1 A £25,000 budget has been approved to cover the costs of an upgrade to the housing case management system, including the housing officer mobile report.

5.2 All other work is being met from existing resources or new burdens contributions.

**6. Legal implications [ST]**

6.1 None.

**7. Corporate Plan implications**

7.1 The objectives of this report align with the following aims of the corporate plan:

**People:** Help people to stay healthy, happy and active and continue to provide initiatives that support children and young people, older people and our vulnerable residents

**8. Consultation**

8.1 None

**9. Risk implications**

9.1 The following significant risks associated with this report / decisions were identified from this assessment:

Management of significant (Net Red) risks

| Risk description                                     | Mitigating actions   | Owner           |
|--|--|-----------------|
| Failure to comply with regulatory requirements       | Self-assessment against objectives completed, action plan devised to develop all areas of regulation | Head of Housing |
| Failure to meet requirements due to limited resource | Resource needs to be mapped out  | Head of Housing |

**10. Knowing your community – equality and rural implications**

10.1 The objectives of this report relate to council tenants.

## **11. Climate implications**

11.1 Regulatory reform imposed by the Social Housing Regulation Act will support the reduction of the council's carbon footprint.

## **12. Corporate implications**

12.1 By submitting this report, the report author has taken the following into account:

- Community safety implications
- Environmental implications
- ICT implications
- Asset management implications
- Procurement implications
- Human resources implications
- Planning implications
- Data protection implications
- Voluntary sector

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Background papers: Report entitled- Social Housing Regulation Bill and Social Housing Regulation Update Compliance and Performance

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