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## ***Proposed review of tenant and leaseholder involvement opportunities***

For consideration by: Housing Scrutiny Commission

Date: 4 October 2021

Lead Director: Chris Burgin

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## Useful information

- Ward(s) affected: All
- Report author: Helen McGarry, Programme Manager
- Author contact details: [helen.mcgarry@leicester.gov.uk](mailto:helen.mcgarry@leicester.gov.uk) 0116 4545129
- Report version number: V1

### 1. Summary

On the 17<sup>th</sup> November 2021 the Government published its Housing White Paper “The charter for social housing residents.” This document outlines the Governments vision for social housing over the coming years. Further legislation, and guidance is required from the Regulator of Social Housing in relation to the specific actions we will need to implement. However, the publication of Housing White Paper provides us with an opportunity to start reviewing our approach to tenant and leaseholder involvement to enhance what is currently in place.

### 2. Recommended actions/decision

It is recommended that members of the Housing Scrutiny Commission agree to a review of our current tenant and leaseholder involvement activities and the development of an Involvement Strategy.

To do this it is also recommended that a working group of current Tenants and Leaseholders’ Forum members is set up to help inform the content of the Strategy.

### 3. Scrutiny / stakeholder engagement

A meeting of the Tenants and Leaseholders Forum is taking place on the 23rd September 2021, where the content of the Housing White Paper will be discussed.

It is proposed that members of the Tenant’s and Leaseholders Forum are involved in a review of current involvement activities and the development of a new Involvement Strategy.

It is proposed the Housing Scrutiny Commission are consulted on the draft Involvement Strategy when this is developed.

### 4. Background and options with supporting evidence

On the 17<sup>th</sup> November 2020 the Government published its Housing White Paper “The charter for social housing residents.” This stems from the Grenfell Tower tragedy in June 2017, where questions were subsequently raised about the quality and safety of social Housing, and also how social housing tenants are treated and listened to. The key aim of this charter, and the reforms it proposes, is to raise the standard of social housing and meet the aspirations of residents throughout the country.

## 5. Detailed report

Leicester City Council currently has a range of options for Tenants and Leaseholders to be involved and have their say on how services are delivered to them, to help identify areas for improvement. These include informal involvement activities such as responding to surveys, for example when a repair is completed, providing feedback through the corporate complaints and compliments process, taking part in local estate inspections, engaging with local tenant associations and contributing ideas for spend against the Environmental Budget. Formal involvement arrangements are also in place through the Tenants' and Leaseholders' Forum and the Leaseholders Forum.

The Tenants' and Leaseholders' Forum has been in place for several years. The Council consults this group when changes to services or new initiatives are being considered. The Forum is also consulted each year on proposals for the Housing Revenue Account Budget and Capital Programme. The Forum allows for a membership of 13 tenants and 2 leaseholder representatives from across the city. However, actual numbers have been declining over recent years and there are currently only 8 dedicated volunteer members who attend meetings. We have struggled to recruit new people onto the Forum. Generally, we have found people don't want to be involved at this level or through this format.

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### Implications of the Housing White Paper for tenant and leaseholder involvement

There are two key areas within the Housing White Paper that relate to tenant and leaseholder involvement. These provide an opportunity for us to start looking at our approach to this and to develop options to build upon what is currently in place.

The first area to consider is the Governments expectation that tenants and leaseholders know how their landlord is performing. To achieve this the Housing White Paper states

3  
actions:

1. The introduction of a set of tenant satisfaction measures for landlords, the results of which will be published.

The Housing White Paper suggests 18 satisfaction measures to be reported on covering the areas of:

- Keeping properties in good repair
- Managing building safety
- Effective handling of complaints
- Respectful and helpful engagement
- Responsible neighbourhood management

These satisfaction measures are yet to be confirmed, but it is certain that we will have to measure areas of satisfaction that we don't currently. Therefore, a future action is required to determine how we will respond to this requirement to measure tenant satisfaction, when these have been confirmed.

2. The introduction of a new access to information scheme for social housing tenants so that information relating to landlords is easily accessible to them.

This scheme is yet to be set up, so it is unclear at present what requirements will be placed upon us.

3. Landlords will be expected to report to every tenant on its performance at least once a year, if not continuously, using technology.

We currently produce an Annual Report to Tenants that is published on the council website, which already contains performance information. It is likely that we will need to enhance the information contained in this in future years, particularly when additional satisfaction monitoring is in place. Consideration also needs to be given as to whether we provide information in other formats and more regularly than annually. We are waiting for further guidance from the Regulator for Social Housing in relation to this requirement.

The second area to consider is the Government's expectation that tenant's voices are heard by their landlord. The Housing White Paper states:

1. The Social Housing Regulator will require landlords to seek out best practice and consider how they can improve the way they engage with tenants.

Work has already commenced in this area and we continue to collate information that will be used to help inform our future options.

2. There is an expectation that landlords should tailor their engagement activities in the future, using a range of methods to seek out tenant's views.

Although we currently have engagement activities in place, this is an area we need to develop with a more structured approach and a greater range of options for people, who want to be involved. There is an opportunity to make greater use of technology and social media to engage with a wider number of tenants and leaseholders. We also

need to consider how the feedback we receive through these methods is used to inform the delivery of future services. There is a particular need to look at how we engage tenants and leaseholders at a strategic level to ensure these activities are effective.

3. The Government will deliver new opportunities and an empowerment programme for social housing residents, to support more effective engagement between landlords and residents, and to give residents tools to influence their landlords and hold them to account.

Further information from the Government in relation to this is pending.

### Next steps

It is proposed that officers from the Housing Transformation Team lead on developing an Involvement Strategy for Leicester City Council tenants and leaseholders. This will bring a more structured approach to these activities. It is envisaged this document will set out the range of options available for people to be involved. In developing this strategy officers will consider the requirements placed upon us from the Housing White Paper and good practice, to widen involvement opportunities. This piece of work will need to take into account the resources we have available to deliver potential options.

To support this work, it is proposed that current Tenants' and Leaseholders' Forum members are invited to be part of a working group to help inform the content of the strategy, prior to consultation with the Housing Scrutiny Commission.

It is envisaged that this strategy will have an accompanying action plan to implement change over a period of time, where this is required. This is recommended as a result of advice from the Tenant Participation Advisory Service, which states change to involvement activities "should be made incrementally over time to enable each one to be embedded. This is more likely to succeed than introducing a range of new activities in one go."

## **6. Financial, legal, equalities, climate emergency and other implications**

### 6.1 Financial implications

At this stage the financial implications are not known; clarity will emerge as the strategy is developed and specific proposals are considered.

Stuart McAvoy – Principal Accountant

### 6.2 Legal implications

There are no specific legal obligations arising from this report.

It is unlikely that the proposed legislation will pass through Parliament before 2023, but if enacted largely as proposed in the White Paper it will require action by the council as summarised in the report.

Jeremy Rainbow – Principal Lawyer (Litigation)

### 6.3 Equalities implications

Under the Equality Act 2010, public authorities have statutory duties, including the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) which means that, in carrying out their functions, they have to pay due regard to the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited by the Act, to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't and to foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't.

Protected Characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 are age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

The charter sets out the actions the government will take to ensure that residents in social housing are safe, are listened to, live in good quality homes, and have access to redress when things go wrong.

The report proposes a review of our current tenant and leaseholder involvement activities and the development of an Involvement Strategy. Although there are no significant direct equalities implications arising from the recommendations of the report, there may possibly be some positive equalities outcomes arising from the proposed changes.

Initiatives that make sure landlords look for new and better ways to involve residents should lead to positive outcomes for people from across all protected characteristics. Continued engagement with a representative range of people on individual proposals will aid in assessing the equalities implications,

Equalities implications of a strategy and the supporting actions would need to be assessed prior to the final decision to adopt them. Work has already commenced to do this via the range of engagement methods outlined within the paper. It is important to ensure that the range of input is representative of a range of people from across different protected characteristics and that the proposals are assessed robustly in relation to their impacts specifically on people with different protected characteristics and also to consider how we and any partnership will meet peoples' needs to ensure that the aims of the PSED are paid due regard in the design of the proposals.

Surinder Singh, Equalities Officer, Ext 37 4148

### 6.4 Climate Emergency implications

There are no significant climate emergency implications directly associated with this report.

Aidan Davis, Sustainability Officer, Ext 37 2284

6.5 Other implications (You will need to have considered other implications in preparing this report. Please indicate which ones apply?)

None

**7. Background information and other papers:**

The charter for social housing residents: social housing white paper:

[The charter for social housing residents: social housing white paper - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

**8. Summary of appendices:**

None

**9. Is this a private report (If so, please indicate the reasons and state why it is not in the public interest to be dealt with publicly)?**

No

**10. Is this a “key decision”? If so, why?**

No