

COMMUNITY & HOUSING OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Wednesday 17 th July, 2024
Report Subject	Tenant Involvement Strategy
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Housing
Report Author	Chief Officer (Housing and Communities)
Type of Report	Strategic

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Flintshire County Council's Housing Service is responsible for over 7,300 homes across the county comprising of general needs and sheltered accommodation. To support the management of those homes it is important to us that our customers are given the opportunity to share their experiences of those services.

The former Tenant Engagement Strategy expired in 2021 and we have been operating an interim strategy whilst the new draft was being developed and the Survey of Tenants and Residents (STAR) was concluded. The new draft strategy sets out our commitment to tenant engagement and highlights what work is needed to improve our current position.

Further work has been carried out to develop and finalise the full strategy and this report outlines the main details.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	To support and approve the Tenant Involvement Strategy.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	BACKGROUND TO THE STRATEGY
1.01	Flintshire County Council's Housing Service is responsible for approximately 7,300 homes across the county comprising of general needs and sheltered accommodation. To support the management of those homes it is important to us that our customers are given the opportunity to share their experiences of those services through a variety of ways.

1.02	The former Tenant Engagement Strategy expired in 2021 and we have been operating an interim strategy whilst the new draft was being developed and the Survey of Tenants and Residents (STAR) was concluded.
1.03	The new Tenant Involvement Strategy sets out our commitment to tenant engagement and highlights what work is needed to improve our current position.
1.04	In bringing together the strategy and associated action plan the views of our residents have been gathered through active engagement, including full census STAR survey which was completed in 2022.
TENANT INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY 2024 – 2027 (appendix 1)	
1.05	The Tenant Involvement Strategy 2024 – 2027 strategy details our commitment to develop and improve customer involvement throughout the services the Housing and Communities portfolio offers.
1.06	<p>We know we can do much more to involve and engage with our tenants and now is the right time to move forward with these plans.</p> <p>We will embrace new ways of working such as the opportunities presented by the increased use of digital technologies and explore new methods of engagement; whilst also continuing to engage in more traditional ways.</p> <p>There are many ways to communicate with our customers and these need to be expanded to offer a wider reach for our customers so that they reflect the views of our diverse range of tenants.</p>
1.07	Tenant involvement is about tenants and housing staff working together to share information and ideas to improve the quality of housing services we provide. It enables tenants to be able to influence decisions about areas of work such as housing policies, housing conditions and housing services. We recognise that listening to and involving our tenants is an essential part of improving our services.
1.08	<p>Meaningful involvement can benefit tenants and the landlord and is key for shaping services for the better. There are many proven benefits which include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • enhancing the Council’s accountability to its customers • improved outcomes for our tenants with the chance to influence services • creating services that better meet tenants’ needs • increased tenant satisfaction • improved communications • becoming more aware of each other’s perspectives and organisational and financial limitations • creating a culture of mutual trust, respect and partnership between the Council and its tenants

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing opportunities for tenants to increase self-confidence and skills.
What we want to achieve and how we will achieve this	
1.09	The overall aim of our Tenant Involvement Strategy is to ensure we have in place robust involvement opportunities, developed with our tenants, to ensure we are providing a quality housing service that meets their needs and the needs of the community.
1.10	We recognise that listening to and involving our customers is an essential part of improving our services. Tenant involvement is about tenants and housing staff working together to share information and ideas to improve the quality of services we provide. It enables tenants to be able to influence decisions about areas of work such as housing policies, housing conditions and housing services.
1.11	<p>A set of key objectives have been identified so that we can deliver the strategy aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop and provide a range of involvement opportunities for our tenants. • Ensure our tenants are at the heart of driving service improvements and can work with us to shape our services. • Improve and extend communication methods to ensure tenants are informed and engaged. • Improve skills and confidence of our tenants so they feel able to participate in a meaningful way that meets their needs. • Increase participation of our tenants in issues affecting their local community to see positive changes to our estates and communities. <p>This is supported by the action plan (appendix 2) which has key deliverables and timescales for action.</p>
Barriers to getting involved	
1.12	<p>We recognise there are also barriers which prevent tenants getting involved which include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of training and confidence • Understanding of what it means • Lack of awareness of opportunities • Time constraints • Travel, carer and other costs
1.13	<p>The strategy sets out our commitment to offering practical solutions to make it a more viable option for as many tenants as possible. These include but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing training and support to those who are committed. • Providing information in various formats. • Covering transport and associated costs where appropriate.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arranging meetings at times and locations most accessible to tenants. • Making use of digital methods so that people can engage from home at a time and pace that suits them. • Offering a wide range of involvement methods to suit all lifestyles.
	Next Steps
1.14	<p>We will offer a wide range of activities and ways in which people can get involved at various levels of commitment.</p> <p>We recognise that different people have different levels of interest and time to commit but also may prefer a different method of communicating and engaging with us.</p>
1.15	<p>Whilst meetings and tenant groups are an important and integral way to engage with our tenants, we also want to attract a newer and broader audience to get involved. This will help us to ensure we are creating a range of ways to gather and consider opinion of a good and fair representation of our tenant base.</p>
1.16	<p>The results of the STAR survey and other consultation work we have been doing (including Renting Homes Wales and rent setting) have enabled us to establish a much broader core base of tenants who we can formally consult with on such matters.</p> <p>In addition, we have supported a range of tenant groups to establish and thrive within our communities.</p> <p>This provides a much firmer foundation from which we can grow to ensure our tenants have their say and engage with us to inform our plans longer term.</p>
1.17	<p>It is important to ensure active engagement with the workforce to get their views on how tenant involvement can help them to improve the work they do and implement positive changes to our service delivery.</p> <p>We want to ensure all areas of the service are aware of the benefits of involving tenants and that they make efforts to ensure it becomes embedded as a way of working.</p>
1.18	<p>The opinions and views of Elected Members, internal colleagues and partner organisations is of great value and is a key element of this work.</p> <p>We are committed to work together, where appropriate, to strive for our tenants to be more engaged in services and our communities to be sustainable and vibrant places to live.</p>
	How we will monitor & review
1.19	<p>Following the STAR survey in 2022 we have established a steering group of officers and formulated three specific work streams to deliver on identified action plans.</p>

1.20	Our intention through the tenant involvement action plan is to replicate these workstreams with tenants and create an environment to ensure that there is communication and consultation on an ongoing basis.
1.21	Regular updates will be provided to all of our tenants. This will start with our the provision of an update on the action taken to address the feedback from the 2022 full census survey. This will also provide an opportunity to highlight the work the tenant workstreams are involved in and to encourage participation.

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	None.

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT																								
3.01	<p>Recommendation - Key points for decision-makers</p> <p><i>Approval of our involvement strategy 2024-27 along with our Action plan for 2024/25. We aim through our strategy to create a positive impact on our housing communities and an increase in engagement with and from our tenants across all service areas. This will be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains relevant and appropriate for the needs of those communities.</i></p> <p>Date assessment completed: 11/06/2024</p> <p>Impacts Questionnaire</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Impact Indicator</th> <th>Result</th> <th>Justification/Mitigation</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Equality and Welsh Language</td> <td>G</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Health</td> <td>G</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Resilience and Adaptation</td> <td>G</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Housing</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Economy</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Mobility and Connectivity</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Carbon, Nature and Environment</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Impact Indicator	Result	Justification/Mitigation	Equality and Welsh Language	G		Health	G		Resilience and Adaptation	G		Housing			Economy			Mobility and Connectivity			Carbon, Nature and Environment		
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Consumption and Production		
Contribution to achieving your local authority's Net Zero target		
Legend:	G	Positive impacts overall, whether long or short term.
	A	Mix of positive and negative impacts. Trade-offs to consider.
	R	Mostly negative, with at least one positive aspect. Trade-offs to consider.
	RR	Negative impacts overall.

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	In bringing together the strategy and the associated action plan, the views of our residents from the census STAR survey completed in 2022 have been taken into consideration.
4.02	The draft strategy was presented to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny in December 2023.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 - Tenant Involvement Strategy Appendix 2 - Tenant Involvement Action Plan

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	None.

7.00	CONTACT OFFICERS DETAILS
7.01	Contact Officers: Jen Griffiths, Service Manager, Housing Welfare and Communities Telephone: 01352 702929 E-mail: Jen.griffiths@flintshire.gov.uk

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8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	<p>Information</p> <p>When we talk about information we mean:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Informing tenants and other customers about the services that are available. ➤ Informing tenants and other customers about the various options that are available as a part of the consultation process. ➤ Information is essential for consultation to be effective.
8.02	<p>Consultation</p> <p>When we talk about consultation we mean:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Seeking our tenants' and other customers' views about our proposals to improve services. We will listen to your views and then make a decision. ➤ We will consider these views alongside other factors such as budget restrictions or legal obligations. ➤ However, if we are unable to use your ideas, we will explain why. Consultation is essential for participation to be effective.
8.03	<p>Participation</p> <p>When we talk about participation we mean:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Involving our tenants and other customers in decisions about their homes and communities, alongside elected members and managers within the Housing Service.
8.04	<p>Monitoring and Review</p> <p>When we talk about monitoring and review, we mean:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Asking tenants and other customers about the quality of the services they receive. ➤ Reviewing those services with the assistance of tenants and other customers to make improvements. ➤ The information received through monitoring and reviewing services, with tenants and other customers, provides important evidence in planning future service improvements.
8.05	<p>Working Together</p> <p>When we talk about working together, we mean:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Interacting with our tenants and other customers in a creative and energetic atmosphere, to share and build on each-others' ideas and to develop new or enhanced ways of working. ➤ Working together is the highest and most productive way of involving our tenants and other customers. ➤ By working together we are able to share ownership not only of the problem, but the solution. ➤ By working together we are able to create a true sense of partnership and of moving forward together.