

**Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel – 18  
March 2026**

**Tenant Engagement Strategy – Annual Update 2026**

Purpose	For Review
Classification	Public
Executive Summary	This report aims to give the Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel an update on the progress against the Council’s Tenant Engagement Strategy 2024-28. The report delivers an overview of the achievements to date, alongside a progress report on the action plan included within the strategy, and any outstanding actions being delivered. The report is for review/information and allows continued scrutiny of the Council’s Tenant Engagement Activities against the requirements of the Regulator of Social Housing.
<b>Recommendation(s)</b>	<p><b>The Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Review the progress made on delivering the commitments within the tenant engagement strategy; and.</b></li> <li><b>2. Make observations and any further recommendations to the Portfolio Holder for Housing and Homelessness on progress of the Strategy.</b></li> </ol>
Reasons for recommendation(s)	<p>The Council is required to meet the tenant engagement obligations set out in the Social Housing Regulation Act 2023 and associated Consumer Standards.</p> <p>In particular, the Transparency, Influence and Accountability standard places clear expectations on how we involve tenants in shaping and scrutinising services. The tenant engagement strategy has been developed to strengthen the Councils ability to meet this standard, and the recommendations will enable</p>

	the Panel to scrutinise our progress and provide assurance on compliance in this area.
Ward(s)	All
Portfolio Holder(s)	Councillor Steve Davies – Housing and Homelessness
Strategic Director(s)	Peter Matthew – Interim Strategic Director of Housing and Communities
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## **Introduction and background**

1. This report aims to give Members an annual update on the progress to delivering on the commitments set within the Tenant Engagement Strategy.
2. Signed off by Council in April 2024, Housing Resident Services Teams, alongside the Tenant Engagement Team have been delivering on the commitments, four strategic priorities, and action plan set out within the Strategy.
3. The strategy aims to promote continuous improvement in tenant engagement by ensuring we are working with tenants, listening to them, caring about their experiences, and consistently do the right thing. In addition, the Strategy supports the regulatory requirements set out by the Regulator of Social Housing, included within the Social Housing Regulation Act 2023, and associated Consumer Standards.
4. For the purpose of this report, progress on each of the strategic priorities is broken down individually, and then references both the priorities and actions within the action plan.

## **Progress made on Strategic Priority 1 – Listening to our tenants**

5. Since its inception, the Council has made positive steps to develop and deliver services meeting strategic priority 1. This has included:
  - a. Establishing a clear tenant engagement structure. This has been complimented with new recruited tenant volunteers (joining our Tenant Involvement Group (TIG), Tenant Advisory Panel (TAP) and becoming community champions)

and a tenant representative being co-opted to the Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

- b. Introducing a new Community Walkabout programme, ensuring operational teams are visible and present within our communities. The actions and outcomes of these walkabouts have led to improvements within our neighbourhoods and increased engagement in those areas.
  - c. Delivering community outreach via informal door knocking in our towns and rural communities – seeking tenants views on our services and building trust with those who may feel 'seldom heard'.
  - d. Delivering a new approach in Community Days and Coffee and Conversation events in 2025, with a structured plan to increase these further in 2026 and beyond. This supports our aim of breaking down barriers, strengthening community cohesion and providing accessible opportunities for tenants to engage. These events also enable the capture of valuable conversational feedback as a secondary benefit.
  - e. Establishing and continuing to utilise GoVocal, a digital participation platform enabling tenants to review services, take part in consultations and give their views on proposals. These have included:
    - i. Giving feedback on the Council's proposed strategies, including the Landlord Strategy & Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy.
    - ii. Answering surveys, including a new tenant survey for those moving into one of the Council's homes.
    - iii. Taken part in consultations, including service charges, and community improvement plans.
    - iv. Being provided with information on our community walkabouts, and new home information.
  - f. Improving the Council's complaint (for Housing) and ASB recording and handling. This has included a scrutiny review and recommendations undertaken by our TIG, and the introduction of tenant complaint forum to ensure tenants are holding the Council to account.
6. The Council continues to deliver on these commitments while maintaining momentum to further strengthen tenant engagement and progress this priority. The Housing and Tenant Engagement teams are working to:

- a. Expand our use of transactional surveys, providing tenants with a simple and accessible way to tell us how we are performing at a service level.
- b. Build on the work already underway, including further Community Days, Coffee and Conversations and Street Meets.
- c. Strengthen Councillors/Members awareness of Tenant Engagement and Housing activities, creating more opportunities for engagement, conversations and meaningful feedback with tenants.
- d. Grow our pool of tenant volunteers to enable greater scrutiny, co production and co creation through specialisms. This may include the introduction of new thematic 'Panels' to review and scrutinise particular services or areas, such as procurement and new home panels.

### **Progress made on Strategic Priority 2 – Putting tenants first**

7. The Council continue to drive a culture of putting tenants first. In delivering this strategic priority, the Council has:
  - a. Delivered frontline training to teams and all new starters on tenant engagement good practice, enhancing knowledge and upskilling staff to provide an excellent tenant experience. This training is delivered periodically and incorporated into the quarterly induction programme for new employees.
  - b. Ensured that the Tenant Engagement Team maintains a visible presence both in the office and within our communities, helping to embed a culture of accountability and fairness, raise the profile of tenant engagement and encouraging cross-department collaboration.
  - c. Strengthened relationships with community partners through attending community hub sessions on a monthly basis, and inviting key partners and stakeholders to our tenant engagement community days in 2025 (including charitable and statutory partners within those communities).
8. This priority continues to be a team and cultural focus within the Housing Service. There continues to be a strong drive to embed a positive tenant engagement culture and to support a business as usual approach to putting tenants first. The Tenant Engagement Team work closely with all housing services teams to ensure this priority is delivery and sustained.

## **Progress made on Strategic Priority 3 – Knowing our tenants and supporting engagement**

9. Significant progress continues to be made in delivering Strategic Priority 3. Over the last 18 months the Council has:
  - a. Completed a comprehensive review of our tenant and household information and characteristics. This provided an early understanding of our tenant population, their needs and preferences, and informed the development of an action plan to further improve our knowledge, data quality and information management practices.
  - b. Initiated a 12 month project, inviting all tenants to update their household information, needs and preferences. This resulted in over 27% of our tenants providing updated refreshed data strengthening our understanding and enabling more effective service design and delivery.
  - c. Embedded a regular review of tenant and household data as 'business as usual' activity, ensuring information remains current, accurate and relevant. This has been supported through briefings to tenant facing officers and teams on the importance of good information management, alongside continued messaging to reinforce the need for up to date data.
  - d. Started using our tenant data to ensure all tenants have equal access to services, and to inform service design. This has included the introduction of a tenant data dashboard, making it easy and enabling Service Managers and their teams to understand our tenants' needs and preferences.
  
10. Recognising that this priority remains ongoing, the Council continue to:
  - a. Develop and refine the performance framework to ensure tenant feedback directly informs service improvements. This includes analysing our tenant perception survey results, alongside our 'tenant feedback' cases and complaints, and demonstrating how these insights directly influence service delivery and design.
  - b. Focus activities where most needed. For example, delivering Community Days and supporting community partners in areas where housing and related services are needed.

- c. Cross reference tenant data with wider community data to support effective placemaking and ensure services reflect the needs of local communities.

### **Progress made on Strategic Priority 4 – How we communicate with tenants**

11. The Council have made strong progress against this priority, with clear improvements both in how we communicate with tenants, and how tenants receive and understand this information. Since implementing the Strategy, we have seen an 8% increase in tenant satisfaction that the Council keep them informed. To achieve this the Council has:

- a. Developed and implemented a clear outreach programme to strengthen communication and visibility within our communities. This includes regular attendance at our community HUBs, community days, formal and informal walkabouts, and direct engagement with tenants through door-knocking to gather tenant views.
- b. Utilised GoVocal as a digital communication and engagement tool, alongside improvements to our website, including enhanced content on the dedicated tenant engagement page.
- c. Increased our physical presence within our communities/neighbourhoods by ensuring Housing Officers, Building Safety Officers and other key teams are more visible, accessible and available to tenants.
- d. Collected and reported the required Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs), sharing these to our tenants in accessible formats. This supports transparency, enables scrutiny and allows tenants to understand performance hold the Council to account.
- e. With tenants, co-produced a range of topic specific guidance and information documents. For example, Condensation, Damp and Mould guidance, and Being a Good Neighbour guide.
- f. Begun improving the language and terminology (jargon) used by Housing Teams with an aim of reducing stigma such as replacing the word 'void' with 'empty home'. This work is ongoing and being progressed with our Tenant Involvement Group to better understand the impact of language on tenant experiences.

- g. Promoted and continue to promote positive outcomes, improvements and tenant led activities via Hometalk (with tenants telling us that this is their preferred way to receive information) and via additional accessible methods such as the website and GoVocal.
12. The Council recognises that further progress is still needed in this area, and will continue to:
- a. Enhance its social media presence, specifically for Tenant Engagement, including development of a dedicated Facebook page, alongside exploring other social media opportunities (including supporting partner/stakeholder social media communication).
  - b. Support the creation of tenant 'self service' options, through the transformation programme including opportunities within Netcall.
  - c. Use data to ensure our communication remains fair, accessible and tailored to the needs of our tenants and communities.

**Overall difference progress is making & assurance**

13. Delivery of the commitments and actions within the strategy continues to produce the outcomes the Council are aiming for, both in meeting the Regulatory requirements, and in ensuring our services remain tenant focused and tenant led. Assurance is obtained through feedback mechanisms, internal auditing, and ongoing engagement with tenants, helping to ensure the Council continue to focus in the right areas.
14. Tenants tell us that this approach is working. Through our TSMs the Council is able to monitor and demonstrate year on year that our commitments and priorities within the strategy are making a positive difference to our tenants. Tenant satisfaction that the Council listens and acts, treats tenants with fairness and respect, and keeps tenants updated all have seen increases since the inception of the strategy as outlined in the table below.

<b>Measure</b> (Your landlord...)	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	↑↓↔
Listens and acts	68%	71%	73%	↑ <b>5%</b>

Keeps you informed	79%	81%	87%	↑ 8%
Treats you with fairness and respect	82%	86%	86%	↑ 4%

15. Additionally, qualitative measures also demonstrate a continued culture shift within the Housing Service. Customer and tenant feedback is now consistently sought and used to inform service improvements; learning from complaints being a monthly agenda item for Service Managers, and teams increasingly consulting and working with the Tenant Engagement team and directly with tenants to review services, develop service improvements and explore new ideas. Tenants' views are being considered at the earliest stages of service improvement, policy and strategy conception (working with, rather than informing/consulting after decisions are made). This approach is resulting in tenants feeling informed, aware of how to provide feedback, and increasingly confident in approaching both the Tenant Engagement team and wider housing teams to get involved.
16. The Tenant Involvement Group is kept updated and reviews progress annually at least (with periodic reviews based on service performance information and service reviews). This enables tenants with ongoing assurance regarding delivery of the strategy.
17. In Autumn 2025, Southern Internal Audit Partnership undertook an audit of the Tenant Engagement Service to assess compliance against the Transparency Influence and Accountability Regulatory Consumer Standard. The service received an overall rating as 'reasonable', providing further assurance that the priorities and actions within the Strategy are delivering the right outcomes and supporting regulatory requirements.
18. The Council is now able to use accurate and up to date tenant data, supported by the tenant dashboard to shape services and tailor service to better meet tenants needs.

### **Corporate plan priorities**

19. Priority 3: Meeting Housing Needs – particularly in relation to working with our housing tenants to understand their needs and provide high quality service standards in line with the government's new Social Housing Charter and regulatory regime.

## **Financial and resource implications**

20. Any expenditure required in relation to the Strategy and associated action plan will continue to be met from existing budgets within the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).
21. No additional expenditure beyond what has already been budgeted for within the longer term business plan is expected to arise from the delivery of the Strategy to 2028.

## **Legal implications**

22. The Regulator of Social Housing launched its regulatory framework on the 1 April 2024 which outlines our requirements as a social housing provider including compliance with its consumer standards.

## **Environmental / Climate and nature implications**

23. Whilst the report has no direct implications, the work of NFDC will include improving the energy efficiency of our local housing stock, providing better services on our estates, including open spaces, and the positive contribution to neighbourhoods.

## **Equalities implications**

24. The Consumer Standards are likely to have a positive impact on NFDC tenants as there is a requirement under the Transparency, Influence and Accountability standard for landlords to 'understand the diverse needs' of tenants, including those arising from protected characteristics, language barriers, and additional support needs and assess whether all tenants have fair access to, and equitable outcomes of, housing and landlord services.

## **Crime and disorder implications**

25. Whilst there are no direct crime and disorder implications arising from the Strategy, it is anticipated there will continue to be potential indirect and positive impacts on the Council's tenants and neighbourhoods.
26. Through successful implementation of the Strategy the Council will see an improvement in partnership working with Tenants and local partners, such as the Council's Community Safety Team and the Police in the reporting, investigation and resolution of Anti-Social Behaviour in local communities.
27. Increased feedback and communication mechanisms may also highlight new and emerging issues relating to crime and disorder which will allow the Council to plan and respond appropriately.

## **Data protection / Information governance / ICT implications**

28. The collection, retention and deletion of Tenant data is governed by GDPR and associated guidance. The Housing Ombudsman has also given a clear direction on expectations for data collection and data handling. There are clear and legitimate reasons for the Council to hold and process data and sensitive data relating to tenants to enable delivery of the services that are provided. However, all data will be collected and maintained in line with the required legislation.

### **Appendices:**

Appendix 1 – Action Plan progress action specific update.

### **Background Papers:**

[New Forest District Council Tenant Engagement Strategy 2024 - 2028](#)

[Social Housing Regulation Act 2023](#)

[Regulatory standards for landlords - GOV.UK](#)