

HOUSING AND COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL – 18 JUNE 2025

Social Housing Regulation – Tenant Representative on The Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Purpose	For Decision
Classification	Public
Executive Summary	<p>At the panel meeting held on 19 March 2025, the Assistant Director of Housing gave the Panel a detailed breakdown of the Social Housing Regulator's requirements for Housing providers concerning the Transparency, Influence and Accountability 'consumer standard'. Within that standard, it is noted that 'Registered providers must give tenants a wide range of meaningful opportunities to influence and scrutinise their landlord's strategies, policies and services.'</p> <p>This report aims to inform the members of the Panel and enable support of the proposed recommendation to co-opt a tenant representative to Panel.</p>
Recommendation(s)	That the panel support and approve a tenant representative to be co-opted to the Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel, as a non-voting member, for a period of 1 year, whereby a review will take place to ensure effectiveness.
Reasons for recommendation(s)	<p>The recommendation supports the delivery of the Tenant Engagement Strategy, ensuring tenants can scrutinise and influence our housing services effectively.</p> <p>The recommendation also supports the council's requirement to meet the Social Housing Regulation Act and associated consumer standards.</p>

Ward(s)	All
Portfolio Holder(s)	Councillor Steve Davies – Housing and Homelessness
Strategic Director(s)	Richard Knott – Strategic Director Housing and Communities
Officer Contact	David Brown Tenant Engagement Manager 02380 285191 david.brown@nfdc.gov.uk

Introduction

1. At the meeting held on 19 March 2025, the Assistant Director of Housing gave the Panel a detailed breakdown of the Social Housing Regulator's requirements for Housing providers concerning the Transparency, Influence and Accountability 'consumer standard'. Within that standard, it is noted that 'Registered providers must give tenants a wide range of meaningful opportunities to influence and scrutinise their landlord's strategies, policies and services.'
2. A Tenant, Melvyn Utlej was introduced to the Chairman and Panel at the last full panel meeting, and it was agreed, in principle, that it would be appropriate to have tenant representative attend future Panel meetings.
3. Upon further consideration by the Democratic Services team, it is recommended that Melvyn Utlej is co-opted to the Panel as a non-voting member, enabling a representative tenant voice to be considered and heard within the Council's landlord scrutiny arrangements.
4. This report aims to inform the members of the Panel and enable support of the proposed recommendation to co-opt a tenant representative to Panel.

Background

5. Having further tenant scrutiny of NFDC's Housing Services is a key factor in the Social Housing Regulator's consumer standards, specifically the Transparency, Influence and Accountability standard. This standard sets out the requirements that Registered Providers of Social Housing must meet – namely:

- a. treat tenants and prospective tenants with fairness and respect.
 - b. take action to deliver fair and equitable outcomes for tenants.
 - c. take tenants' views into account in their decision making about how landlord services are delivered.
 - d. communicate with tenants and provide information so tenants can use landlord services, understand what to expect from their landlord, and hold their landlord to account.
 - e. collect and provide information to support effective scrutiny by tenants of their landlord's performance in delivering landlord services.
 - f. ensure complaints are addressed fairly, effectively, and promptly.
6. As noted in the consumer standards, the theme of scrutiny and accountability by and to tenants is embedded within those standards. It is a clear requirement by the Regulator to ensure that 'the tenant voice' is heard clearly through governance structures, that tenants can scrutinise and influence decisions, and hold their landlord to account.
7. At the Panel meeting on the 19 March 2025 the Assistant Director of Housing presented the report highlighting the regulatory Transparency, Influence and Accountability standard, and the work required by the Council to meet and deliver on those standards. Recommendations detailed in a report to the Panel at that meeting noted that one referred to the principal of a tenant attending future scrutiny meetings; to express their views or challenge officer reports.
8. On behalf of the Tenant Involvement Group housing tenant, Mr Melvyn Utley, attended the meeting of 19 March and he was introduced to the Panel and invited to speak by the Chairman. He felt that there was good level of engagement from the council with housing tenants and that the District Council was a good landlord. He felt that tenants had a vital role to play in policy formulation and spoke about possible future tenant involvement at future scrutiny meetings. He reported that he saw himself not as a tenant representative but that he was a representative of the tenants.

Tenant representative co-opted to Panel

9. Within the constitution, and specifically highlighted in the 'standing orders for meetings', section 4.13 of those standing order states:
- 4.13 Non-Councillors with particular skills or experience may be:*
- a) appointed to a Panel or Panels by the Council; or*
 - b) co-opted onto a Panel by the appropriate Panel.*
- Such members, whether appointed by the Council or co-opted by the Panel, shall not be entitled to vote at Panel meetings.*

10. It is recommended that the Tenant representative be co-opted onto the Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel. As a co-opted member of the Panel, the tenant representative would act in a consultancy capacity. Recognising that the co-opted member would not be entitled to vote at Panel meetings, in that consultancy capacity, the tenant member would be available to give views on topics and scrutiny related to Housing matters and be available to answer questions from the chair and voting members.
11. The aim of the co-opted tenant role would be to ensure the voice of the tenant is heard within the Council's scrutiny arrangements. Furthermore, the co-opted tenant member would be supported to ensure appropriate challenge of the Council's decision making offering the role of a critical friend, with lived experience of receiving and experiencing the Council's housing services.
12. As a tenant of NFDCs Housing Services, it is noted that Mr Utley can bring specific lived experience of a tenant, as well as scrutiny skills to Panel that have been developed both in his professional life, alongside being a member of the Council's Tenant Involvement Group (TIG). It is therefore recommended that Mr Utley be that tenant who is co-opted to the Panel, for the period of 12 months.

Support and learning

13. To support the co-opted Tenant Panel member, the Tenant Engagement Manager will work with Democratic Services to produce some specific terms of reference for the role. The Tenant Panel member will also be provided with the same opportunities for learning, development, and support as other Members of the Panel.
14. The co-opted Tenant will also be supported by tenant engagement team both in terms of attendance at meetings, as well as any other training and support beyond what is currently provided to existing Members.
15. The co-opted Tenant will also be provided with wider information relating to (but not limited to) tenant satisfaction, common themes from tenant feedback and complaints and updates on service delivery. This information will be provided through their membership of the Tenant Involvement Group (TIG) to help have a rounded view of tenant opinions and feedback, as well as wider through their role as an engaged tenant volunteer.

Financial implications

16. Any associated 'out of pocket' expenses incurred by the tenant co-opted to the Panel will be met by the existing Tenant Engagement budget within the Housing Revenue Account.

17. A co-opted member is entitled to an allowance, to be claimed per meeting on an hourly basis, including reasonable preparation time and training. The travel costs, in line with the travel allowances set out in the Members Allowance Scheme can also be claimed. The costs associated with the appointment of any co-opted member will be covered within existing budgets.

Environmental / Climate and nature implications

18. 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. This may present further opportunities to contribute to the Council's neighbourhood and climate objectives in the longer term.

Equalities implications

19. The Consumer Standards, particularly the Transparency, Influence and Accountability standard are likely to have a positive impact on NFDC tenants as there is a requirement 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. Additionally, the standard requires that landlords must ensure their services are accessible.

Crime and disorder implications

20. Whilst there are no direct crime and disorder implications arising from this report, it is anticipated there will be potential indirect and positive impacts on the Council's tenants and neighbourhoods.
21. The lived experience of a tenant may lead to influence and well-informed decisions regarding the Council's approach to Anti-Social Behaviour and Domestic Abuse, for example.

Data protection

22. 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. All data will be collected and maintained in line with the required legislation.

Conclusion

23. The proposed recommendation of co-opting a tenant representative onto the Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel aims to not only ensure that the Council continues to meet the Regulatory requirements and associated consumer standards but also ensures that the Council's Housing Services are being influenced by its service users, namely the tenants.
24. It is proposed that Mr Melvyn Utleby be Co-opted onto Panel with immediate effect, enabling tenant scrutiny and challenge going forward.
25. The Tenant Engagement & Democratic Services Teams will support Mr Utleby in his role and will take a learning approach to enable effective participation and scrutiny by the Tenant representative. A review will take place on the 1-year anniversary with regard given to Local Government Reorganisation and the potential continuation of this arrangement within any new or existing council governance structure.

Appendices:

None

Background Papers:

Published documents