

Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy

2025 - 2028

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Foreword

At the heart of a thriving community is a strong, collaborative relationship between residents and their local council.

This Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy represents our commitment to placing residents at the heart of our decision-making, ensuring their voices help shape the future of our housing services.

This strategy means more than just consultation. It's about fostering genuine co-design, where residents play an active role in shaping policies, improving services, and driving meaningful change.

Aligning with national policy developments, local housing priorities, and evolving legislation, this strategy reflects a shared vision. A vision built on trust, inclusivity, and accountability.

Following extensive consultation with our Tenants' Engagement Group (TEG) and residents, we have refined and strengthened our housing strategy to ensure it meets both our tenants' aspirations and the council's commitment to delivering high-quality, affordable, and well-managed housing.

Three of our corporate priorities serve as a foundation for this strategy:

- **Decent and Affordable Homes**
- **A More Inclusive Borough**
- **A Resilient and Well-Managed Council**

Through open dialogue, collaboration, and accountability, we will continue working towards a housing landscape where all residents feel valued, empowered, and heard.

Working together, we will build a future where housing services not only meet basic needs but exceed expectations, where social housing is celebrated, where participation is easy and meaningful, and where residents take pride in shaping their communities.

Let's create lasting change, together.

Julia and Alan

Julia McShane Leader of Guildford Borough Council and portfolio holder for Housing, and Alan Wood Chair of the Tenants' Engagement Group.

1. Introduction

This strategy shows our commitment to working with tenants and leaseholders, to understand their experience, for a more tailored approach to our services.

- Resident voices matter – We want residents to help shape housing services.
- Achieving together – We will listen, respect, and include everyone.
- Real improvements – Services will reflect what residents require.
- Stronger communities – By valuing residents' input, we can make lasting, positive changes to our borough.

Together, we will build better housing services that work for everyone.

For the purposes of this draft strategy, the term 'residents' refers to all those living in council-owned properties or accessing the council's housing service. This includes:

- Tenants
- Leaseholders (including shared ownership)
- Those in temporary accommodation under non-secure temporary tenancies or licences.

In addition to the participation of 'residents' (as defined) in the processes of engagement, family members of residents will also have a voice and will be able to be involved in consultation, and providing input and feedback

When we refer to engagement, we mean the ongoing, two-way process of working together with residents to shape, influence and improve housing services. Engagement goes beyond simply gathering feedback. It is about listening, collaborating, and taking action based on residents' experiences, priorities, and needs. This includes:

- formal consultation exercises
- participation in decision-making panels
- resident-led scrutiny groups (independent residents that take a deep look into statistics and challenge the council on their findings)
- co-designing services (co-design is where residents, staff and sometimes other stakeholders work together to create services and find solutions using each party's expertise)
- surveys
- digital interactions
- informal conversations between residents and staff.

Our approach to engagement ensures residents have meaningful influence over the decisions affecting their homes and communities to foster a culture of trust, transparency, and shared responsibility.

2. Strategic context

The Council's [Corporate Strategy](#) has five main priorities, three of which are key to this strategy

1. **Decent and Affordable Homes** – Making sure homes are safe, good quality, and affordable.
2. **A More Inclusive Borough** – Ensuring everyone feels included and listened to.
3. **A Resilient and Well-Managed Council** – Running services well and responding to needs of residents and their families'.

We aspire to be a responsible landlord that provides residents with safe, well-maintained, and energy-efficient homes that meet the Decent Homes Standard. Our goal is to deliver housing services that residents can be proud of.

This strategy is a key part of our [Housing Improvement Plan](#). It ensures that residents' voices are at the heart of decision-making. By working together, we can:

- Improve housing services
- Be open and transparent
- Build trust between residents and the council

Real improvements happen when we work with residents. Their experiences and feedback shape our services. This strategy was co-developed with the Tenant Engagement Group and resident input to ensure their voices are heard, valued, and included in all decisions.

3. Tenants' Engagement Group

The Tenants' Engagement Group (TEG) is a team of volunteer tenants and leaseholders who are committed to improving housing services and making sure all residents have a voice. They work with the council to shape services, influence decisions, and improve housing and communities across Guildford borough.

TEG plays a key role in holding the council accountable. They sit on the Housing Operations Board, providing oversight and scrutiny of important housing issues like

- Anti-social behaviour management
- Property allocations
- Repairs performance
- Customer service standards
- KPIs

This ensures the council meets its legal obligations under the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023.

TEG is also a safe, independent space where residents can raise concerns, seek advice, and share ideas to improve services. Their goal is to build strong communities by ensuring homes meet the changing needs of tenants and leaseholders, and that resident voices are central to policy, service design, and decision-making.

4. Legal context

After the Grenfell tragedy, the Government introduced the Social Housing White Paper to make landlords more accountable for safety, quality, and transparency. A separate Building Safety Resident Engagement Strategy ensures residents in high-rise buildings are involved in safety decisions.

The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023, which was given Royal Assent in July 2023, strengthens oversight, accountability, and housing standards. It seeks to ensure that residents live in safe, high-quality homes with stronger rights and protections.

A key outcome of this Act is the new Consumer Standards, including the Transparency, Influence, and Accountability Standard, published in April 2024. This requires landlords to:

- Be open and transparent with residents
- Treat residents fairly and with respect
- Provide accessible services that meet residents' needs
- Enable residents to raise complaints and influence decisions
- Be fully accountable in service delivery and governance

Compliance is mandatory. The Regulator of Social Housing holds housing oversight boards and Councillors responsible. Failure to meet the standards can lead to serious regulatory action, fines, reputational damage, and reduced resident satisfaction.

The council is fully committed to meeting these requirements, ensuring best practice in resident engagement, service delivery, and housing management to improve outcomes for tenants and leaseholders.

5. Our shared vision

This strategy aims to build a culture of listening, valuing, and acting on resident feedback across housing services.

To give residents real influence and opportunities to scrutinise and shape services, we must:

- **Build trust** by learning from residents' experiences, acknowledging their contributions, being transparent around our decision-making, and welcoming scrutiny of our services.
- **Work collaboratively** to develop high-quality services, value-for-money that reflect residents needs and priorities.
- **Promote inclusivity and compassion**, ensuring our engagement reflects the diverse needs of our residents and removes barriers to participation.
- **Strengthen the role of the Tenants' Engagement Group** as a 'critical friend', supporting them in providing significant and constructive feedback that drives meaningful change.
- **Tackle the stigma** of social housing and deliver homes and services that residents can be proud of.
- **Demonstrate** genuine resident involvement through regular engagement activities so that residents have their voices heard and ensure they shape decisions in a real and measurable way.

6. Residents' priorities

To understand what resident engagement means and how we can truly co-create this strategy, we have listened to feedback through the Tenants' Engagement Group and Tenant Satisfaction Measures Survey. We will continue working with residents throughout this process to ensure our plans reflect their priorities.

Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) survey findings

An independent company conducted the TSM survey between 21 June – 19 July 2024, with 596 tenants responding. Key findings:

- 61% of residents were satisfied overall.
- Most felt treated fairly and with respect.

Areas for improvement include complaints handling, listening to residents, acting on feedback and engagement influence.

We are committed to improving in these areas through the Housing Improvement Plan and other initiatives. To track progress, we will use two types of surveys:

Perception surveys – These ask residents how they feel about the council's housing services overall. For example, "Are you happy with the way your home is maintained?" or "Do you feel listened to by the council?" These surveys help us understand the big picture and track how well we are doing over time.

Transactional surveys – These are short surveys sent right after a resident uses a service, such as a repair, complaint, or customer service interaction. For example, "Was your repair completed on time?" or "Did we handle your complaint fairly?" These help us get real-time feedback to improve specific services quickly.

By using both, we can understand overall satisfaction and identify specific areas for improvement in our day-to-day services.

Key priorities raised by residents

The council engaged with residents through in-person focus groups – offering residents the opportunity to feed back their concerns and issues directly to staff. Additionally, through the TSM survey, online consultation, workshop with the Tenants' Engagement Group and discussions with residents, five common-themed key priorities emerged:

- **Complaints Handling** – Residents want complaints to be taken seriously and resolved quickly and effectively.
- **Resident Involvement** – Residents expect the council to listen, learn, and act on feedback. Many want more opportunities to scrutinise and shape housing services.
- **Communication & Customer Service** – Residents need clear, honest, and inclusive communication with accessible ways to engage with the council.
- **Repairs & Maintenance** – Well-maintained homes are a top priority. Residents want high-quality, timely repairs, clear reporting processes, and realistic timeframes.
- **Communal Area Maintenance** – Clean, well-maintained estates and green spaces positively impact resident wellbeing and pride in their community.

We will use this feedback to guide our service improvements, policy decisions, and engagement activities, ensuring we deliver what matters most to residents.

7. Key focus areas

To improve engagement with residents, we have identified key priorities that will shape our action plan. These priorities are based on resident feedback, TSM survey data, staff input, and discussions with the Tenants' Engagement Group.

Improve communication and interaction

- Residents will receive clear, timely, and transparent updates about housing services.
- Identify barriers to engagement and create inclusive opportunities for more residents to get involved.
- Focus on issues that matter most to residents and improve how we engage on these topics.
- Expand communication channels to reach more residents and provide accessible information.
- Strengthen digital solutions to improve access to services and increase engagement.
- Ensure fair and timely complaint handling, using feedback to drive service improvements.

Strengthen engagement, participation, and empowerment

- Residents will have regular opportunities to shape housing services in an inclusive and accessible way.

- Use everyday interactions with residents to shape service delivery.
- Regularly consult on services, policies, and strategies to understand resident priorities.
- Foster a sense of community empowerment, ensuring residents feel heard and valued.
- Develop targeted engagement for young people, minority groups, and leaseholders.
- Remove barriers to engagement for residents who are disabled, neurodivergent, non-English speakers, and those with limited digital access.

Create and support thriving communities

- Residents will feel proud of their homes, estates, and services through meaningful involvement.
- Improve homes and estates through a resident-led planned maintenance programme.
- Maintain high estate standards, with walkabouts involving residents and staff.
- Support residents who want to improve their homes and communities by increasing awareness of involvement opportunities.
- Celebrate resident contributions with events, awards, and community success stories.
- Focus on timely, high-quality repairs, improving response times and keeping residents updated.

Build a culture of respect and collaboration

- Residents' voices will be at the heart of decision-making, fostering a positive relationship between staff and residents.
- Host regular open workshops for residents and staff to share ideas and solve issues together.
- Provide ongoing staff training on communication, active listening, and diversity awareness.
- Embed co-designing services with residents to create solutions that benefit the whole community.
- Offer more officer physical presence, developing strong working-relations with residents.

Strengthen scrutiny and accountability

- Residents will have confidence in the council's compliance with the Consumer Standards and will be able to hold the council to account.
- Publish tenant satisfaction data to ensure performance is visible.
- Establish a resident-led scrutiny group that can be utilised to review services and recommend improvements.
- Improve access to performance data, making it easier for residents to hold the council accountable.
- Provide training and support for residents who want to engage in scrutiny.

- Track engagement data, identify gaps, and take action to increase resident involvement.
- Ensure residents see the impact of their feedback through "You Said, We Did" updates via newsletters, social media, and meetings.

These key focus areas will direct Housing Services to improve resident engagement, strengthen service delivery, and create a housing service that listens, learns, and acts on resident feedback.

Following consultation with residents on this strategy, it was clear that people need to feel safe and supported when offering their feedback. Residents should never feel like raising concerns is a nuisance or that they may face any negative consequences for speaking up. We welcome and encourage honest feedback, as it helps us improve services for everyone.

We are committed to supporting residents who wish to be involved, and we will do our best to make participation easy and accessible. Wherever possible, we will schedule appointments at convenient times and offer both in-person and online options to fit around individual lifestyles and needs.

8. Monitoring and reviewing the strategy

The success of this strategy depends on ensuring that staff understand and apply it effectively, while actively involving residents in shaping housing services.

The Resident Engagement Officer, senior management, and the Tenants' Engagement Group (TEG) will monitor progress, with TEG reporting to the Housing Operations Board.

The strategy will be reviewed and updated based on new legislation, local needs, TSM survey data, complaints, and resident feedback. Any necessary changes will be consulted on with residents and reported to the Housing Operations Board.

The Assistant Director of Housing and the portfolio holder will oversee the delivery of this strategy, ensuring it meets the Regulator of Social Housing's requirement. Progress will be tracked through the strategy's action plan, which will be regularly reviewed and reported to the TEG and Housing Operations Board annually.

9. Equality and diversity

The Council is committed to promoting fair and equal access to services and equal opportunities in employment, the procurement of goods and as a community leader. The Council's policies, procedures and day to day practices have been established to promote an environment which is free from unlawful and unfair discrimination, while valuing the diversity of all people.

Discrimination on the grounds of race, nationality, ethnic origin, religion or belief, gender, marital status, sexuality, disability, and age is not acceptable: the Council will take action to ensure no person using the council's premises or services receives less favourable treatment or is disadvantaged by requirements or conditions that cannot be justified. The Council will tackle inequality, treat all people with dignity and respect and continue to work to improve services for all service users.

The legal framework for the Council's approach is provided by the Equality Act 2010 and specifically by the Public Sector Equality Duty, under which a public authority must work consciously to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people with differing characteristics.

By embedding equalities and diversity into our engagement strategy, we aim to build a housing service that reflects and responds to the needs of all our residents, creating a sense of belonging and shared purpose.