

Mid Devon District Council

Tenant Involvement Strategy

Policy Number: HSG

{HSG – Housing & Property Services}

April 2018

Version Control Sheet

Title: Tenant Involvement Strategy

***Purpose:* To set out the Council's plan for increasing tenant involvement to ensure that service delivery meets the needs of tenants and leaseholders, and to support them in making a difference to the quality of service provided**

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***Status:* Draft**

***Review Frequency:* Every 4 years or sooner if required and in accordance with legislation and/ or the regulatory framework for social housing**

***Next review date:* April 2022**

***Consultation* This document was sent out for consultation to the following:**

Management Team

Cabinet Member for Housing

The Tenants Together Housing Scrutiny Group

Document History

This document obtained the following approvals.

Title	Date	Version Approved
Director of Operations	10 April 2018	V5
Leadership Team	8 May 2018	V5
Tenants Together	10 May 2018	V5
Homes PDG*	22 May 2018	V5
Cabinet*	14 June 2018	V5

*- Delete if not applicable

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This new strategy for 2018-2022 builds on previous tenant involvement strategies.
- 1.2 The purpose of tenant involvement is to identify the priorities of our tenants and this includes leaseholders. The Housing Service is committed to listening to tenant's views and to ensuring that tenants are able to advise on future service delivery by scrutinising performance and identifying areas for improvement. During 2014, we surveyed tenants asking them how they wanted to engage with us. A further consultation is planned with a view to identifying any issues or themes which may require further investigation.
- 1.3 The main aims and objectives of our strategy are to make sure that tenants:
 - Can contribute to the debate about how we use the resources available to us in such a way as to deliver services appropriate to their needs
 - Have opportunities to identify issues relating to service delivery and to advise on service improvement
 - Feel that they have been listened to and their views considered
 - Have confidence in the Housing Service and are satisfied with the service which they receive

2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to all those with an interest in the Housing Service:
 - Elected members
 - Tenants, residents and leaseholders of Mid Devon
 - Mid Devon District Council employees
 - Organisations working in the community and voluntary sector
 - Partners and other stakeholders

3. Related Documents

- a. The Tenant Involvement & Empowerment Standard in the regulatory framework for social housing
- b. The Housing Act 1985
- c. The Council's suite of tenancy agreements
- d. The Tenant Involvement Policy

4. The Statutory & Regulatory Framework

- 4.1 The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing operated by the Regulator for Social Housing (RSH) contains a National Standard relating to Tenant Involvement and Empowerment. This contains certain expectations and, as a result, registered providers of social housing (RPs) must:
 - Tailor our services to meet the needs of our tenants
 - Treat all tenants with respect and fairness

- Ensure tenants are given opportunities to be involved in shaping services to reflect local priorities
- Give tenants opportunities to identify areas for improvement and delivery
- Offer training and support to tenants to help them develop their skills and capacity so that they can make a meaningful contribution

5. Meaningful Involvement

- 5.1 Our approach is to encourage as many tenants as possible to have their say, to become engaged and to participate in the running of the Housing Service. However, we acknowledge that it is necessary to support involvement activities by working to maximise participation and accountability. We accept that the extent to which tenants wish to get involved will be affected by many factors and, for this reason, a menu of involvement options is used to ensure that they can get involved to the extent and in the way that suits them best.
- 5.2 Tenant involvement can be described as how the Housing Service engages with tenants and other residents, including leaseholders, across the District. That may be through both formal and informal routes, to provide information and to receive feedback on our services. It is to engage tenants in our activities from a strategic level through to a neighbourhood level.
- 5.3 The Housing Service needs to reach as many tenants as possible. To this end, we will promote opportunities for tenant involvement using a variety of media channels, including print, social media, and the web. We will also use our customer knowledge to understand the preferred channels of engagement. We recognise that the way in which people wish to use new technologies, where possible, to increase access to information, and to receive feedback, ideas and information. This will include, but is not limited to, the use of the web, social media, mobile apps, email lists and text SMS.

6. Menu of Involvement

- 6.1 The menu of involvement for 2018-2022 is set out below, and more detailed information about delivery is contained in Appendix A and B of this strategy.



Our programme of involvement is divided into three parts:

- Staying informed (low level of demand on time)
- Being consulted (some demands on time)
- Participating in decision making (higher level of demand on time)

6.2 Staying Informed

- Website
- Facebook, Twitter, electronic email and any other forms of social media
- Service Business Plan and Performance Information
- Annual Report
- Letters to individual tenants about their tenancy and work to their home
- Housing News 4U

6.3 Being Consulted

- Facebook, Twitter, electronic email and any other forms of social media
- Surveys and web polls
- Email group
- Neighbourhood Walkabouts
- Estate Representatives
- Tenants and Residents Groups
- Neighbourhood Based events

6.4 Participating in Decision Making

- Tenants Together (TT)
- Attending the Homes Policy Development Group (PDG) meetings
- Attending the Housing Performance & Improvement Board meetings
- Facebook, Twitter, electronic email and any other forms of social media
- Tenants inspectors for Voids
- Tenant Inspectors for Planned Maintenance
- Short-term Focus/ Working Groups
- Editorial Group
- Local Tenants and Residents Groups

6.5 Scrutiny Arrangements

6.5.1 The Regulatory Framework encourages landlords and tenants to work together to improve the levels of service delivered. We are committed to offering opportunities for tenants to scrutinise the work of the Housing Service and have a well-established scrutiny group, known as Tenants Together. This group's role is to:

- Monitor and check performance
- Challenge and improve services
- Ensure the Housing Service runs the business well and that it meets the needs of its tenants

7 Training

7.1 We recognise the need for targeted training and development opportunities for tenants and staff. We give new staff a briefing about tenant involvement as part of the induction process. We also encourage and support tenants to access training activities. This enables our tenant representatives to have an understanding of current housing issues. Training has been focused on individuals but group training is also available, if a need is identified.

8 Increasing Involvement

8.1 The Council appreciates that there may be barriers which may limit the involvement of tenants. These may include transport issues or caring responsibilities. In order to encourage greater involvement, the Housing Service operates an expenses scheme in relation to any out of pocket expenses for travel and other reasonable costs. The aim of this scheme is to enable tenants to attend events and to participate in activities, appropriate to their role. The Housing Service has an obligation to deliver

value for money and, for this reason, expenditure will be monitored to ensure that only the cost of legitimate expenses is covered.

9 **Supporting Involvement**

- 9.1 Any tenant who is interested in working with the Housing Service should seek more information; there is a dedicated email address, tenantinvolvement@middevon.gov.uk or they can telephone the Lead Officer using 01884 255255.
- 9.2 Those engaged in involvement activity will be asked to sign a Code of Conduct.
- 9.3 Those tenants working as part of our Tenants Together Scrutiny Group will be bound by clear guidelines which have been agreed by the Group. This includes the Code of Conduct and terms of reference.

10 **Conclusion**

- 10.1 Performance relating to tenant involvement will be monitored by the Housing Performance & Improvement Board and by the Tenants Together Group. This strategy will be reviewed in 2022.