

Runnymede Borough Council

Listening and Accountable: Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy 2021– 2026

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Introduction

At Runnymede we want to improve our approach to listening to and working with tenants and leaseholders. We aim to create a culture that values tenant and leaseholder engagement and places the voices of our customers at the centre of the Council's strategic direction and priorities. We understand that listening to tenants and leaseholders gives us the best insight into their priorities and the quality of our services. This enables us to make improvements that deliver increased customer satisfaction and better value for money.

We want our Council tenants and leaseholders to recognise that we are really listening and trying to improve. We are committed to demonstrating how we are achieving this, and we will show how services have developed as a result of us engaging together.

Aims

1. A culture that recognises and values tenant and leaseholder engagement
2. Improved customer satisfaction as we learn from service user feedback
3. Better value for money as we focus on tenants' and leaseholders' priorities
4. Increasing number of tenants and leaseholders engaging with us, especially from groups currently underrepresented
5. Removal of barriers to engagement and increased diversity of residents who chose to engage
6. A more focused engagement approach developed through customer insight.

Context

The Regulator of Social Housing Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard requires landlords to ensure that tenants are given a wide range of opportunities to influence and be involved in the development of policies, decision making, scrutiny, right to manage and agreeing local offers. This strategy aims to ensure that all aspects of the standard are incorporated into the delivery of our housing services. The forthcoming Consumer Standard will also see the Regulator focus on the level of engagement between landlords and tenants – such as how complaints are handled and the role that social landlords play in making information available to their tenants.

The Building Safety Bill is expected to legislate for better information and a stronger voice for residents of high rise buildings.

The Equality Act 2010 says public authorities must consider the need to advance equality of opportunity. This strategy aims to extend meaningful engagement opportunities to groups who have been underrepresented, including young people and people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. By demonstrating the value of really listening to our customers, it will also celebrate diversity and help to address the stigma experienced by some social housing tenants.

The Corporate Plan commits the Council to empowering communities to enable them to make decisions which impact on their future. This strategy supports and facilitates the tenant and leaseholder community within Runnymede to shape the services that meet their needs. It has been developed in consultation with council tenants, leaseholders and Local Councillors.

The Council's Housing Strategy aims to work with partners to deliver:

1. Access to affordable housing for local people
2. Good quality affordable housing for local people
3. Increased provision of affordable housing including low-cost home ownership
4. Specialist housing to meet the identified needs of local people.

The Housing Revenue Account Business Plan contains the following themes and ambitions:

1. Optimising Income and Efficiencies
2. Good Quality Housing
3. New Council owned homes
4. Review and modernise provision for older tenants
5. Well managed neighbourhoods.

Objectives

The Council is committed to showing how we listen to tenants and leaseholders and take account of their views. We will do this by:

- Providing a range of opportunities to engage, with appropriate support systems to meet the diverse needs of tenants and leaseholders and by removing barriers to engagement
- Encouraging as many tenants and leaseholders as possible to participate, particularly from groups who are underrepresented
- Demonstrating that we welcome feedback, sharing results, explaining decisions and giving examples of where we have learnt from engagement and made changes, and ensure this information is easily accessible
- Named staff acting as engagement champions
- Supporting solutions devised by the community without our involvement
- Create opportunities for tenants and leaseholders to be empowered
- Co-creation of policies and services
- Improving insight into tenants and leaseholders experience of our services,
- Collecting feedback to measure how successful we have been in achieving these ambitions.

Better value for money by focusing on customer priorities

Investing in our tenants and leaseholders' priorities will increase customer satisfaction. We will undertake a regular Satisfaction of Tenants and Residents (STAR) survey and introduce a range of transactional and perception surveys of customers using our housing services to identify where our strengths and weaknesses are. We will be pro-active in gaining understanding of our customers' priorities and their views on how our services are developing by using methods such as one-to-one interviews and focus groups. These interactions will use the most appropriate channels including digital and social media.

Understanding more about our tenants and leaseholders

Traditional forms of involvement can result in a 'one size fits all' approach that fails to gather useful data and can be expensive for the landlord to administer. In addition to perception surveys required by regulation, we want to ask recent service users about their experiences to enable us to collect good quality data on what is working well and what is not. We also want to ensure we proactively contact tenants and leaseholders from traditionally under-represented groups, using the most appropriate methods.

To do this we need good quality profiling and contact information. We have started to identify gaps in our current data and seek to complete them within two years from the publication of this strategy, by maximising all the opportunities to interact with our customers. We will then ensure all data is protected and kept up to date.

Measuring Achievements

We will set targets to demonstrate that we are increasingly reaching a larger proportion of residents and gathering a cross section of views. These will include:

- Number of contacts we have with our tenants and leaseholders designed to improve our services, for example satisfaction surveys
- Number of tenants and leaseholders who open an online account for transactions
- Percentage increase in engagement with under-represented groups
- Number of customers interacting with our social media platforms
- Number of tenants and groups actively involved in improving their estates and neighbourhoods
- Publishing the outcomes of consultation on the Council's website.

A dedicated system will help monitor whether tenants and leaseholders receive the information they need for meaningful engagement, to the degree they want and in the most appropriate way.

Performance against these targets and the Action Plan on page 5 will be reported to the Council's Housing Committee as part of the annual review of the implementation of our strategy. This strategy will be reviewed within the next 3 years.

Related Strategies

Financial Wellbeing Strategy

Digital Transformation Programme

Next Steps

A Steering Group will implement the Action Plan below:

Action Plan

Aim	Where we are now	What we are going to do to make a difference	Where we will be in 2024
<p>A culture that recognises and values tenant and leaseholder engagement</p>	<p>Traditional methods of tenant involvement offer limited insight into satisfaction with the services provided</p>	<p>Transparency and honest information sharing to build trust and sustain relationships</p> <p>Ensure projects consider engagement early in the design process, with sufficient priority for it to influence outcomes.</p> <p>Ensure all policy and procedure reviews consider tenant involvement in the early design process.</p> <p>Staff training, briefings and staff engagement champions so all staff have a clear understanding of the benefits of engagement and how their role should listen to residents' voices.</p> <p>Promote digital engagement, with traditional methods as appropriate.</p> <p>Carry out an annual review of the implementation of this Strategy and report progress to Housing Committee.</p> <p>Inform staff of the outcome and influences of engagement throughout and after each project, as a frequent reminder of its importance and value.</p>	<p>Tenant and leaseholder engagement embedded in service provision.</p> <p>Staff Engagement Champion in each service area.</p> <p>TPAS accreditation.</p>
<p>Improved customer satisfaction as we learn from feedback</p>	<p>Very limited data on satisfaction</p>	<p>Surveys of the customer experience following a transaction e.g. repair.</p> <p>Focus groups of customers who have used a service e.g. renewal of bathroom/kitchen, in a variety of formats including online and social media.</p> <p>Undertake STAR and other perception surveys</p> <p>Maintain a log of rectified complaints and use it as a tool to learn from our mistakes.</p>	<p>Regular reporting on a suite of indicators with targets (for example 90% satisfaction with landlord, 20% of our tenants completing surveys, attending focus groups etc.)</p> <p>Achieving targets for engagement with harder-to-reach groups such as younger people</p> <p>40% of customers signed up for Housing Online.</p>

Aim	Where we are now	What we are going to do to make a difference	Where we will be in 2024
		<p>Promote use of the complaints procedure and demonstrate to residents the service improvements made as a result.</p> <p>Set performance targets for satisfaction with operational services.</p> <p>Regular feedback to residents to demonstrate the value of their input, providing examples of where we have learnt from engagement and made changes, for example 'you said, we did.'</p> <p>Annual Report to tenants and leaseholders will include satisfaction measures and outcomes from engagement.</p> <p>Involve residents in the design of surveys to ensure we collect feedback on the areas that are important to them.</p> <p>Include webpages dedicated to project and consultation results where tenants and leaseholders can view feedback and next action steps.</p> <p>Tenants who have contacted our dedicated engagement email address will be responded to and regularly updated on the project they contributed to.</p>	<p>Programme of regular STAR surveys.</p>
<p>Better value for money as we focus on tenant and leaseholder priorities</p>	<p>Business decisions do not routinely consider tenant and leaseholder priorities</p>	<p>Promote use of cost-effective digital engagement methods including social media.</p> <p>Residents to scrutinise performance measures.</p> <p>Budget for estate improvements identified by tenants.</p> <p>Promote resident-let groups.</p> <p>Consult with tenants on the scope for local offers, for example service charges for communal areas.</p> <p>Benchmark against other landlords and learn from best practice.</p>	<p>Monthly Estate inspection programme.</p> <p>Scrutiny Panel to explore in detail issues of concern</p> <p>Co-creation of policies and services</p>

Aim	Where we are now	What we are going to do to make a difference	Where we will be in 2024
<p>Increased number of tenants and leaseholders engaging with us, especially from groups currently underrepresented</p>	<p>No data on engagement</p>	<p>Evaluate success against targets</p> <p>Launch and promote Housing Online.</p> <p>Remove barriers to engagement, for example training to support digital uptake and by providing information in plain and appropriate language.</p> <p>Support RCRA and recruit new members.</p> <p>Support residents' groups in Independent Retirement Living (IRL) schemes</p> <p>Develop a menu of opportunities so residents can get involved in a way that suits them and is relevant to them, including options for those with limited time availability (e.g. 'Be Heard from Home' and Digital Champions).</p> <p>Promote any resources made available to support engagement and ensure they are fairly allocated.</p> <p>Use targeted methods of engagement for example social media.</p>	<p>Meeting targets for digital engagement.</p> <p>Costed proposal for online chat facility to further enhance digital engagement.</p> <p>Residents signing up for engagement that suits their circumstances: High, medium, low or one-off commitment</p>
<p>Develop a more focussed engagement approach</p>	<p>Traditional methods of tenant involvement</p>	<p>Develop a menu of opportunities available, each with terms of reference to clarify purpose, responsibilities and likely commitment required.</p> <p>Creative and appropriate use of methods, language and tools to form a clear view of our customers' priorities and our progress in addressing them.</p> <p>Establish liaison groups for shared interests or experiences (e.g. IRL representatives).</p> <p>Appropriate use of the most effective methods of engagement including face-to-face, digital and social media.</p> <p>Use of appropriate language, style and presentation.</p>	<p>Able to demonstrate service improvements made as a result of resident engagement.</p> <p>Analysis of most effective forms of engagement</p>

Aim	Where we are now	What we are going to do to make a difference	Where we will be in 2024
		Inclusive engagement that complements digital engagement.	
Business and strategic decisions informed by customer insight	Limited profiling data on tenants available. Very limited profiling data on leaseholders	Initiate a project to collect and refresh profiling data as part of investment in the IT system functionality; and using all available interactions with customers.	Gaps filled and contact data complete for all tenants and leaseholders with procedure in place to keep data up to date. Accurate profiling data available.

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