

This Report will be made public on 12 March 2024



Report Number **C/23/91**

To: Cabinet
Date: 20 March 2024
Status: Non-Key Decision
Responsible Officer: Gill Butler, Chief Officer – Housing
Mike Bailey, Tenant Engagement & Wellbeing
Senior Specialist
Cabinet Member: Councillor Rebecca Shoob, Cabinet Member for
Housing & Homelessness

SUBJECT: TENANT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY 2024-2030

SUMMARY:

The Council's current Tenant Engagement Strategy expires in April 2024, and officers have therefore prepared an updated version to reflect changes in policy and legislation, and to ensure compliance with the Regulator of Social Housing's Transparency, Influence & Accountability Standard which comes into effect in April 2024. The Strategic Tenant Advisory Panel has been consulted on the updated strategy and Cabinet is therefore being asked to approve it.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

Cabinet is asked to agree the recommendations because the Regulator of Social Housing's Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard requires the council as a social housing landlord to give tenants a wide range of meaningful opportunities to influence and scrutinise strategies, policies and services.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. To receive and note report C/23/91.
2. To approve the updated Tenant Engagement Strategy 2024-2030 attached as Appendix 1.

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In April 2021, Cabinet approved F&HDC's first Tenant Engagement Strategy since the housing service was brought back in-house. At that time, the Regulator of Social Housing's Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard required social landlords to consult tenants every three years on the best ways of involving them in the housing service. As such, the current strategy expires in April 2024.
- 1.2 The Regulator of Social Housing has recently consulted on proposed new consumer standards, and from April 2024 the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard will replace the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard. Although the new standard still requires landlords to give tenants a wide range of opportunities to influence and scrutinise the housing service, it removes the requirement to consult tenants on this every three years. It is therefore proposed that the updated strategy runs until 2030, although the strategy will be reviewed annually and any required amendments will be made as part of those reviews.
- 1.3 The current strategy remains largely fit for purpose, therefore rather than a complete rewrite, officers have focused on updating the existing version to ensure it reflects the changes in policy, legislation and F&HDC practice since it was originally written, specifically:
 - The Regulator of Social Housing's updated consumer standards
 - The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023
 - The creation of the Strategic Tenant Advisory Panel (STAP) and other F&HDC tenant engagement activities such as the recently established Tenant Scrutiny Panel
- 1.4 The previous version of the strategy included an action plan. At that time, an action plan was required to ensure that tenant engagement was embedded into the new housing service when it returned to the council, which is now complete. It is therefore proposed that rather than creating an additional action plan to accompany the updated strategy, actions relating to tenant engagement activities and actions relating to tenant satisfaction are combined into one overarching tenant engagement action plan. The first stage of this action plan, which contains actions arising from the 2023 tenant satisfaction survey, was approved by Overview and Scrutiny Committee in January 2024.

2. CONSULTATION

- 2.1 Prior to the original Tenant Engagement Strategy being approved by Cabinet in April 2021, officers consulted with the then Tenant and Leaseholder Board (since replaced by the Strategic Tenant Advisory Panel (STAP)), and directly with a larger cohort of tenants who expressed an interest to be involved in the housing service. The wider tenant community were informed of this consultation, which ran from 17 February to 12 March 2021, via the council website and tenant newsletter. We received seven comments about the strategy, none of which resulted in changes to the document.

- 2.2 Feedback on the original strategy was also given by Overview and Scrutiny Committee in February and March 2021, and their feedback included sharing performance reports regularly with tenants, encouraging individual tenants to be involved as well as groups, and acknowledging the barriers to engagement. These elements are all incorporated in both the current strategy and the updated strategy.
- 2.3 STAP reviewed the updated draft of the strategy at their meeting on 21 February and are happy with the revised version.

3. OPTIONS

3.1 To approve the updated Tenant Engagement Strategy 2024-2030 (recommended option)

This is the recommended option because the council is required as a social housing landlord to give tenants a range of opportunities to influence and scrutinise strategies, policies and services. The updated strategy does this; the only changes from the original version are minor and have been made to reflect changes in policy, legislation and F&HDC practice since the original strategy was approved.

3.2 To make changes to the updated Tenant Engagement Strategy 2024-2030

This option is not recommended because the consultation on the original strategy in 2021 showed support for its content. The Strategic Tenant Advisory Panel have been consulted on the minor changes which have been made to the strategy, and are happy with these.

3.3 Not to approve the updated Tenant Engagement Strategy 2024-2030

This option is not recommended because it would mean the council would not have an in-date Tenant Engagement Strategy when the current version expires in April.

4. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- 4.1 A summary of the perceived risks follows:

Perceived risk	Seriousness	Likelihood	Preventative action
The strategy is not approved, therefore the council would not have an in-date tenant engagement strategy	High	Low	The current approved version of the strategy remains largely fit for purpose. Only minor changes have been made to the updated version to ensure it reflects the changes in policy, legislation and F&HDC practice.

Tenants do not support the strategy	Medium	Low	The Strategic Tenant Advisory Panel have been consulted on the changes to the strategy, and support them.
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5. LEGAL/FINANCIAL AND OTHER CONTROLS/POLICY MATTERS

5.1 Legal Officer's Comments (NM)

The Tenant Engagement Strategy will need to be monitored and reviewed to ensure it continues to meet the regulatory requirements as set out in the report.

5.2 Finance Officer's Comments (LW)

There are no financial implications directly arising from this report.

5.3 Diversities and Equalities Implications (MB)

There are no diversity or equality implications arising directly from this report. Our tenant engagement opportunities have been designed to encourage participation from all tenants in the ways that best suit them, regardless of their protected characteristics.

5.4 Climate Change Implications (AT)

No direct climate change implications to this report.

6. CONTACT OFFICERS AND BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Councillors with any questions arising out of this report should contact the following officer prior to the meeting

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The following background documents have been relied upon in the preparation of this report:

The Regulator of Social Housing's proposed consumer standards from April 2024 (specifically the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard on pages 5 to 10):

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/64bab1c2059dc00125d27e7/20230721_Annex_1_Proposed_Consumer_standards.pdf

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Tenant Engagement Strategy 2024-2030, and tracked changes version