

## Appendix 1

Lincoln Tenants' Panel and City of Lincoln Council

# Appendix 1-Tenant Involvement Strategy 2018-2021-draft

## Part 1-Introduction

The new Tenant Involvement Strategy works closely with the Vision 2020 document, the City of Lincoln Council's strategic plan that sets out our long term vision of:

“Together, let's deliver Lincoln's ambitious future”

It also sets out the council's strategic priorities:

- Let's deliver quality housing
- Let's drive economic growth
- Let's reduce inequality
- Let's enhance our remarkable place.

The Tenant Involvement Strategy will help contribute to meeting Vision 2020 by helping to 'deliver quality housing.' Involving tenants can lead to a better service. The strategy will also assist in delivering 'Lets reduce inequality' by providing opportunities for tenants to learn new skills and gain confidence. The next section goes into further detail and expands on these points.

## Background

### Why do we involve tenants?

Involving tenants is crucial in helping us to deliver outstanding housing services and without their input it would be difficult to provide quality services to tenants. We specifically involve tenants because:

- 1) **Having a choice matters**-tenants get a say in the service they receive and this can lead to higher levels of satisfaction
- 2) **It helps to get services right**-engaging tenants helps us shape services to meet the needs of tenants and provide value for money. This can result in better service design and reduces the risk that we get services wrong
- 3) **They hold us to account**-by monitoring our services to check we meet published standards and challenge us to improve these
- 4) **Communities improve**- empowering residents to tackle issues in communities, leads to a better environment to live in. For example they can then work together to improve the appearance of their estate, reduce anti-social behaviour and help tackle poverty
- 5) **It helps people**-getting involved can help tenants learn new skills and gain experience. This can lead to them gaining employment. It also helps residents who are suffering with loneliness to make friends and gain confidence.

## What achievements did the previous strategy deliver?

Since the previous strategy was written in 2014 the council has strengthened and developed several key areas of tenant involvement. The key achievements are:

- **Robust tenant scrutiny arrangements.** The Lincoln Tenants' Panel form the centre of our tenant scrutiny arrangements. At their meetings they receive regular reports on items such as performance and the service delivery plan, allowing them to see how well we are performing as their landlord. They can also hold us to account by asking service managers to attend meetings over performance and through quarterly question time the panel has regular access to senior leadership at the council. The panel is also consulted on all housing related Executive Committee reports before they are submitted, this allows tenants' views to be taken into consideration when decisions are made. LTP members also formally sit and participate in Housing Scrutiny Committee meetings.

Through the two review groups 'Allocations and Tenancy' and 'Neighbourhood, Community, Involvement and Home' tenants carry out independent scrutiny reviews of housing services. They are able to look at policies, interview staff, and benchmark performance with other councils. From this they produce a report with recommendations from a customer-point-of-view on how the particular service could be improved. These reports must and have been considered by housing management.

Tenants also play a role in checking published standards around void properties and customer services, through the tenant void inspector and mystery shopper programmes. The former checks that 10 per cent of properties are ready to let against the empty property lettings standard and the latter carries out mystery shopping on customer service. Both groups have provided feedback that is valued by staff members and has led to service improvements.

- **Resident Involvement embedded with staff and working together to improve services.** There has been significant progress on embedding resident involvement with staff and both sides working together to improve services. One of the best examples is the previously mentioned tenant void inspectors. The voids team run the inspection programme and have used the results provided in team meetings and to address issues with contractors. Resident Involvement is also embedded and supported at Service Manager, Assistant Director and Director level at the council. One example is how the

Tenancy Services Manager and Assistant Director of Housing have worked with LTP to improve the anti-social behaviour service and gain the HouseMark ASB accreditation. The Director of Housing and Regeneration has also involved LTP members in taking part in the interview process for senior members of staff. Other members of staff have supported resident involvement through attending meetings, carrying out consultations, supporting community investment and providing training sessions.

- **More opportunities to get involved.** Since 2014 there has been an increased number of ways to get involved with the council. This includes the two review groups, mystery shopping, pop up consultation events, fun days, roadshows and the leaseholder forum.
- **Leaseholder involvement has increased.** Since 2015 a leaseholder forum has been held several times each year and there is also a leaseholder on the Lincoln Tenants' Panel for the first time in a number of years. From these initiatives we have identified a number of issues that leaseholders feel should be improved.
- **Community investment scheme is in place.** This allows for residents' groups and charities to apply for support from the Housing Repairs Service and the council's contractors. The support comes in the form of labour and free materials for projects. Since the launch of the scheme eight projects have been supported.
- **Better training for LTP members.** The previous strategy focused on developing the capacity of tenants who get involved. This allowed us to take a more structured approach to training and write a training programme for LTP based on needs. The result was that all LTP members are trained to the same basic standard and their capacity can then be developed according to individual needs.
- **Digital Engagement.** In 2015 the Housing Facebook page was launched and this was the very first time we had taken a step into social media. The page has experienced sustained growth, on average gaining a couple of 'likes' each month and to date the total stands at almost 200. Our posts reach from 30 at the lowest to 3,583 people at the highest.

It is important to note these achievements were delivered by the council as a whole and not just the Resident Involvement Team. This includes work carried out by several teams and elected members.

We are also committed to our duty to support resident involvement under the Homes and Communities Agency's regulatory framework. Some of the standards that relate to involving tenants include:

- Supporting the formation and activities of tenant panels or equivalent groups and responding in a constructive and timely manner to them
- Registered providers shall consult with tenants, setting out clearly the costs and benefits of relevant options, if they are proposing to change their landlord or when proposing a significant change in their management arrangements.
- Registered providers shall consult tenants at least once every three years on the best way of involving tenants in the governance and scrutiny of the organisation's housing management service.
- Tenants should be given the opportunity get involved in:
  - the formulation of their landlord's housing related policies and strategic priorities
  - the making of decisions about how housing related services are delivered, including the setting of service standards
  - the scrutiny of their landlord's performance and the making of recommendations to their landlord about how performance might be improved.

For the full list of standards please see the HCA's website

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/422709/Tenant\\_I\\_and\\_E\\_Standard\\_2015.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/422709/Tenant_I_and_E_Standard_2015.pdf)

### **Co-regulation**

The Homes and Communities Agency do not actively check these standards are being met, instead they expect councils and tenants to self-monitor through a process known as co-regulation.

Co-regulation means that councils should support tenants to scrutinise and challenge them on performance and service delivery. In return tenants should work to provide constructive feedback and work with the council to improve performance.

## Developing the strategy with tenants

The new strategy has been developed jointly with the Lincoln Tenants' Panel and residents have also been consulted on a number of occasions, these include:

- Initial consultation at the housing roadshow in July 2016
- Through a survey in the Home! magazine
- At several of the neighbourhood boards
- Further consultation at the housing roadshow in August 2017.

## Part 2-The new strategy

### Aim

The new Tenant Involvement Strategy will run between 2018 and 2021. The aim of the strategy is to:

- Explain our vision for tenant involvement
- Set out our objectives for the next three years
- Outline the actions we will take to deliver the strategy.

### Our Vision

*Our vision is to: 'Build on the council's successful involvement structure to further develop and deliver meaningful engagement; so that tenants and leaseholders have a range of opportunities to be involved and their involvement leads to service improvement.'*

### Our Objectives:

We have agreed four objectives for our Tenant Involvement Strategy. These are:

**1. Ensure accountability**-to achieve this we will continue to work with residents to achieve co-regulation. This will mean continuing to support tenants to carry out scrutiny of our services, challenge us over performance and hold us to account over service standards. It is also important that we allow tenants to have a voice and can influence decisions made about the service they receive.

**2. Strengthen Involvement**-to achieve this we will further develop the menu of options for customers to get involved. This is to include, further use of customer feedback to improve services and training for staff on how to effectively involve tenants. We will also continue to provide training and focus on developing involved tenants so they can fully participate.

**3. Help to develop thriving communities-**to achieve this we will incorporate key community development activities, and focus on supporting and coordinating engagement at a local level.

**4. Communicate key messages and increase digital engagement-**to achieve this we will continue to publish the Home! magazine and Annual Report to Tenants. Key messages will also be communicated to residents at estate based events and through Facebook. To increase digital engagement we will look at developing Facebook to carry out surveys and promoting the work of Lincoln Tenants' Panel.

The action plan set out in Appendix A sets out the steps we will take to deliver these objectives.

### **Our menu of involvement**

There are many different ways in which tenants and leaseholders can become involved and these can be tailored to suit each individual. Our menu of involvement shows some of the options available:

- Lincoln Tenants' Panel
- Next Gen
- Mystery shopping
- Review groups
- Focus groups
- Tenant inspectors
- Satisfaction surveys
- Residents' associations
- Community groups
- Community projects
- Consultations
- Mutual Exchange events
- Estate inspections
- Training sessions
- Editorial panel
- Tenant authors
- Pop up consultation events
- Fun days and roadshows
- Sheltered housing forums
- Leaseholder forums
- Elected spokespersons
- Designated tenants' panel.

## **Resources required to deliver the strategy**

We will provide support and resources for tenants that want to get involved. This will include a specific budget that can be used to fund the following items:

- Meeting room hire
- Travel, carer and childcare expenses
- Equipment
- Training
- Catering.

In addition we have a dedicated resident involvement team who will co-ordinate resident involvement across the organisation and provide support for involved tenants.

## **Recruitment**

Successful delivery of the strategy will also require a sufficient number of tenants being involved. It is therefore critical that efforts are made to retain those already taking part and to recruit new tenants to the groups.

## **Training and development**

Achieving meaningful resident involvement depends on the abilities and capabilities of the different groups to reach their goals. For example Lincoln Tenants' Panel members need to be able to understand performance indicators and then scrutinise the data. The tenant void inspectors need to be able to accurately assess properties against the lettings standard. Community groups need the ability to set achievable goals and implement these.

Many of the residents that get involved already have these skills, however we will provide them with training and guidance where it is needed.

## **Delivering and monitoring the strategy**




The resident involvement team will take the lead in its delivery. Throughout the lifetime of the strategy the resident involvement team will review the strategy to ensure the objectives are being met and activities are providing value.

The Lincoln Tenants' Panel, Housing Scrutiny Committee and housing management will monitor the delivery of the strategy.



## Feedback on the strategy

We welcome your views on our resident involvement strategy. You can:

- \*  email us at: [LTP@lincoln.gov.uk](mailto:LTP@lincoln.gov.uk)
- \*  phone us on 01522 873398
- \*  visit us at Facebook-search City of Lincoln Council-Housing.

**Appendix A-Action Plan**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Team Responsible</b>
<b>1) Ensure Accountability</b>	Lincoln Tenants' Panel to monitor and scrutinise council performance and standards.	Lincoln Tenants' Panel.
	Carry out tenant led scrutiny reviews of services.	Review groups
	Consider re-applying for the National Tenants' Organisation (NTO) accreditation.	Resident involvement team.
	Continue with the mystery shopping programme.	Mystery shoppers/ resident involvement team.
	Undertake estate inspections where needed.	Area Housing Teams.
	Support the tenant void inspector programme.	Tenant void inspectors/Voids Team/ Resident Involvement Team.
	Increase tenant led scrutiny of contractors.	Resident Involvement Team/Investment Team/Lincoln Tenants' Panel.

Objective	Action	Team responsible
<b>2) Strengthen Involvement</b>	Provide a range of ways for tenants to get involved and to shape services.	Resident Involvement Team.
	Set up a tenant led ASB victim support group.	Lincoln Tenants' Panel.
	Train staff on how to involve residents.	Resident Involvement Team.
	Provide training to develop the capacity of involved tenants.	Resident Involvement Team
	Carry out customer surveys and journeys on key housing services.	Quality and Performance Team.

Objective	Action	Team responsible
<b>3) Help to develop thriving communities</b>	Provide grants, support and advice to residents' groups to ensure sustainable involvement within communities.	Resident Involvement Team.
	Support the council's corporate objective of providing training to residents through promotion and surveys.	Resident Involvement Team.
	Continue with the community investment scheme and look at increasing resident participation in decision making.	Resident Involvement Team/Investment Team.

Objective	Action	Team responsible
<b>4) Communicate key messages and increase digital engagement</b>	Ensure all members of staff carry out consultations in accordance with any guidelines.	All teams
	Publish Home! magazine three times a year.	Resident Involvement Team.
	Produce the Annual Report to Tenants each year.	Resident Involvement Team.
	Continue to involve tenants in publications through the Editorial Panel.	Resident Involvement Team/Editorial Panel.
	Communicate key housing messages to tenants e.g. on rent, welfare reform and anti-social behaviour. The messages will be communicated through the Home! magazine, Facebook and estate based events	Resident Involvement Team/Communications Team.
	Support the council's corporate objective around growing digital access to housing services.	Resident Involvement Team.
	Provide surveys through social media and the council's website.	Resident Involvement Team.
	Organise estate based events each year for example a roadshow and/or a fun day.	Resident Involvement Team.

## Appendix B-Risks that threaten delivery of the strategy

There are a number of risks that could potentially threaten full delivery of the strategy. These have been set out in the table below.

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Consequence</b>	<b>Controls in place</b>
Lack of residents involved.	Insufficient numbers involved result in groups not running or operating effectively.	Recruitment plan in place that continually recruits tenants.  Quickly address issues that might cause involved tenants to leave.
Members of staff not complying with resident involvement duties/guidelines.	Residents not consulted or involved, leading to complaints and potentially leading to a regulatory breach. This could also lead to a legal challenge.	Staff awareness training to be carried out.
Key involved residents leave e.g. LTP chairperson.	Groups lose leadership and/or coordination and stop running.	Succession plans to be put in place for key groups.
Disagreements between involved residents.	Groups stop running for a period of time or completely collapse.	Adequate terms of references in place.  Resident involvement team to provide mediation.
Weak or no terms of reference in place for groups	Groups are not able to run due to a lack of clear processes in place.	Resident involvement team to offer advice to groups on terms of references.
Insufficient budget in place	Lack of a budget would mean groups could not pay for meeting rooms, equipment or training. This could severely restrict their ability to operate.	Resident Involvement team and LTP to monitor the involvement budget.