

REPORT TO

**SAFER NEIGHBOURHOODS AND
ACTIVE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY BOARD**

30 January 2020

Subject:	Tenant Engagement and Participation
Cabinet Portfolio:	Cabinet Member for Homes Councillor Hadley
Director:	Director – Housing and Communities Alan Caddick
Contribution towards Vision 2030:	
Contact Officer(s):	Manny Sehmbi Business Manager – Community Partnerships

DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Scrutiny Board:

1. consider the update on the review of Tenant Engagement and Participation.
2. consider if it wishes to nominate a member to be part of the working group on tenant engagement and participation.

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board with an update on the review of Tenant Engagement and Participation.

2 IMPLICATIONS FOR VISION 2030

- 2.1 The review of Tenant Engagement and Participation will support a number of the ambitions of Vision 2030 including:-

Ambition 1 – Sandwell is a community where our families have high aspirations and where we pride ourselves on equality of opportunity and on our adaptability and resilience.

Ambition 8 – Our distinctive towns and neighbourhoods are successful centres of community life, leisure and entertainment where people increasingly choose to bring up their families.

Ambition 10 – Sandwell now has a national reputation for getting things done, where all local partners are focused on what really matters in people’s lives and communities.

3 BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 In considering the 2018 Green Paper, A New Deal for Social Housing and the responses to the Grenfell Fire and report from Dame Hackitt (May 2018), it is seen as an opportunity to review the Tenant Engagement structure within Sandwell. This report outlines the current structures along with opportunities and suggestions to improve this and have a more effective engagement model.

4 THE CURRENT POSITION

4.1 In August 2018 the Government published a Green Paper, A New Deal for Social Housing which requires landlords to give tenants a meaningful voice, increase opportunities for tenants to get involved. It also identifies the need to tackle the stigma felt by social housing residents and promoting the good work many do within the wider community. The paper emphasises ‘A Vision which values and respects the voices of residents, with landlords treating them with decency and respect...’

4.2 In May 2018 Dame Judith Hackett published a report into building regulation and fire safety, and one of the key recommendations covers the need to reassert the role and voice of residents ensuring residents have access to key information about their building and its safety measures. Hence the empowerment of tenants and their involvement of such developments is key.

4.3 The Council have developed the Vision 2030 which impacts on communities and residents of Sandwell and supports the need to engage and empower tenants and residents within their community.

4.4 In addition, there are Regulatory Standards (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/regulatory-standards>) which outline specific expectations and outcomes that providers are expected to achieve. Providers’ boards and local authorities are responsible for meeting the relevant standards and determining how this is done. The Regulatory

Framework encompasses a tenant involvement standard which was last updated in 2017 post Grenfell to reflect the need to be responsive to complaints.

- 4.5 All the above reinforces the need to continue to support and develop tenant involvement and participation and strengthen the tenants voice within the Council and wider neighbourhoods. As well as a statutory reason for the review, through the Regulatory Standards which also recommends a review is undertaken every 3 years.

Current Structures to Support Tenants' Voice

- 4.6 The Council has a Tenant Complaints Panel. This group forms part of the Council's complaints procedure, which provides the opportunity for tenants who make an appeal and to be given the option to be heard by a group of their peers.
- 4.7 SCIPS (Sandwell Community Information and Participation Service) plays an important role in supporting tenants in Sandwell, to be involved and to influence decisions affecting their homes and neighbourhoods. The Council have renewed the grant agreement for a further 3 years, taking the agreement to the 31st March 2023.
- 4.8 The Council supports the Tenant Review Panel (TRP), which is made up of tenants and a leaseholder, with a role to support service improvement and to scrutinise elements of housing services. A representative of this group sits on the councils Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board.
- 4.9 The TRP is made up of 9 tenants and 1 leaseholder but currently has 4 vacancies and has been the case for some considerable time. The role of the group is to work on behalf of tenants and leaseholders to drive forward continuous improvement in the delivery of the Council's Housing Services, through providing challenge and scrutiny of services.

Rationale for Review

- 4.10 The TRP has been running in this format since 2011, following Sandwell Homes being dissolved, and was based on the requirements at the time. However, since then there have been changes, hence, a need to align to A New Deal for Social Housing and recommendations from Dame Hackitt's so that the structure for engagement and participation is current but also reflects the vision in respecting '... the voices of the residents...'
- 4.11 As part of this review consideration needs to be given to broadening representation along with improved opportunities for tenants and residents to feed into the council structures and be able to provide a more

robust challenge to services whilst also developing capacity, skills and knowledge. Which will support the strengthening of engagement and participation.

- 4.12 In addition the review will enable consideration to be given to understanding how local governance, as well as existing Tenants and Residents Associations (TRAs) can complement and support the new agreed model.
- 4.13 The review will also enable us to consider good practice from across the sector and develop a model appropriate to Sandwell.
- 4.14 It is anticipated that the new model will have a framework shaped and influenced by current Government Policy and Reports as discussed above as well as existing activity such as that of TRAs and SCIPS, and the priorities relevant to Sandwell.

Way Forward

- 4.15 A working group is being developed to explore and codesign different models and structures which will then be presented to the Director – Housing and Communities and relevant Cabinet Members for further discussion.
- 4.16 The working group will be representative, including members of the TRP, TRA, SCIPS, members and officers from relevant service areas. The Scrutiny Board is invited to consider if it wishes to nominate a member to the working group to help shape the new model of tenant engagement.
- 4.17 Consultation will take place with existing engagement and participation structures on proposed new structures.

5 CONSULTATION (CUSTOMERS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS)

- 5.1 The review will develop refreshed and strengthened methods of tenant involvement, engagement and participation.

6 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS.

- 6.1 If the Board does not consider the update then the chance to have any input to the Review may be missed.

7 STRATEGIC RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no specific strategic resources implications arising from this report.

8 LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS

8.1 These are set out in the Regulatory Standards (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/regulatory-standards>).

9 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

9.1 No equality impact assessment is required for this report.

10 DATA PROTECTION IMPACT ASSESSMENT

10.1 No data protection impact assessment is required for this report.

11 CRIME AND DISORDER AND RISK ASSESSMENT

11.1 There are no specific crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

12 SUSTAINABILITY OF PROPOSALS

12.1 There are no specific sustainability issues associated with this report.

13 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOCIAL VALUE)

13.1 There are no specific health and wellbeing implications arising from this report.

14 IMPACT ON ANY COUNCIL MANAGED PROPERTY OR LAND

14.1 There are no specific implications for Council-managed property or land. Topics subject to tenant engagement and participation may involve Council managed property, in particular its housing stock.

15 CONCLUSIONS AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS

15.1 The Board is invited to consider the information and proposed way forward and determine if there are any recommendations it wishes to make.

16 BACKGROUND PAPERS

16.1 None.

Alan Caddick
Director – Housing and Communities