

Title of Report	TENANT SCRUTINY PANEL REPORT: RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT SERVICE.	
Presented by	Councillor Roger Bayliss Housing, Property and Customer Services Portfolio Holder	
Background Papers	None	Public Report: Yes
		Key Decision: No
Financial Implications	The recommendations put forward by the Tenant Scrutiny Panel can be met by existing resources within the Housing Revenue Account budget.	
	Signed off by the Section 151 Officer: Yes	
Legal Implications	No implications apparent	
	Signed off by the Monitoring Officer: Yes	
Staffing and Corporate Implications	No implications apparent	
	Signed off by the Head of Paid Service: Yes	
Purpose of Report	To seek approval to implement the action plan developed by the Housing Service in response to the recommendations put forward by the Tenant Scrutiny Panel in respect of The Resident Involvement Service	
Reason for Decision	To improve tenant engagement and support the housing service to prepare for anticipated regulations as a result of the publication of the Housing White Paper.	
Recommendations	THAT CABINET APPROVES THE ACTION PLAN PREPARED IN RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE TENANT SCRUTINY PANEL'S INSPECTION OF THE RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT SERVICE	

1.0 CONTEXT

- 1.1 Cabinet approved the establishment of a Tenant Scrutiny Panel (TSP) on 13 March 2012 in response to introduction of the Localism Act 2011. The Act heralded the focus for Housing regulation moving towards a culture of local co-regulation, with greater emphasis on locally determining standards and priorities.
- 1.2 The reforms have also provided social housing tenants with stronger tools to hold their landlords to account through tenant panels, or similar bodies, in order to give tenants

the opportunity to carefully examine the services being offered and form judgements about the cost and quality of the services they receive.

- 1.3 Panel members were initially formally recruited in December 2012 and embarked on their first review in May 2013. To date, the panel have undertaken a further nine inspections with all recommendations approved by Cabinet.
- 1.4 The latest report issued by the Panel in respect of The Resident Involvement is a product of the Panel's work during the 2021/2022 financial year. This is the 10th report published by the panel since they were established.
- 1.5 The panel now consists of three volunteer members.
- 1.6 A recruitment campaign is underway as the aim is to have 8 panel members which is in line with the terms of reference.
- 1.7 The Panel will next be inspecting The Housing Support Service and a report detailing their findings and recommendations is anticipated before the end of 2022.

2.0 INSPECTION OF THE RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT SERVICE

- 2.1 The Panel's full report, including all recommendations can be found in Appendix A. The list of recommendations can be found specifically under section 9. All recommendations have been accepted by the Housing Senior Management Team (SMT).
- 2.2 To ensure the robustness of the inspection the panel worked with tpas who are tenancy engagement experts. They allocated an associate with expertise in tenant scrutiny throughout the process who offered advice and guidance, however the Resident Involvement Team leader also played an active role.
- 2.3 As part of the inspection the panel were acutely aware of the Housing White Paper and many of the recommendations will enable the housing service to ensure it complies with future anticipated regulations as a result of the White Paper.
- 2.4 It is important to note that the report attached has been produced by the Scrutiny Panel themselves, in their own words.

3.0 RESOURCE COMMITMENTS

- 3.1 Recommendations will be implemented through an action plan which outlines actions proposed to address the issues raised. All actions can be undertaken and implemented within existing resources. The action plan can be found in Appendix B.

Policies and other considerations, as appropriate	
Council Priorities:	Local people live in high quality, affordable homes.
Policy Considerations:	Tenant and Leaseholder Involvement Strategy
Safeguarding:	No specific considerations

Equalities/Diversity:	The report aims to increase engagement with a more diverse range of tenants, equality considerations will be monitored by The Tenant Scrutiny Panel.
Customer Impact:	The recommendations in the report will improve customer engagement
Economic and Social Impact:	No specific considerations
Environment and Climate Change:	No specific considerations
Consultation/Community Engagement:	Improved engagement with council tenants
Risks:	The recommendations and any associated risks will be monitored by the Housing Service and Tenant Scrutiny Panel
Officer Contact	Chris Lambert, Head of Housing 01530 454780 chris.lambert@nwleicestershire.gov.uk



**Tenant Scrutiny Panel
Report on:
Resident Involvement**

February 2022

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1. Acknowledgements

The Tenant Scrutiny Panel (TSP) gratefully acknowledges the support, guidance and assistance provided by the members of the Housing Team, including Amanda Harper and Andy Barton, The Resident Involvement Team (Justin O'Brien, Peter Warren and Laura Smythe) and Cllr Roger Bayliss. In addition the Panel would like to make a special thank you to Sam Goodwin (tpas associate) for her ongoing support and encouragement.

2. Executive Summary

The TSP made the decision to inspect the service delivered by the Resident Involvement Team for several reasons. Firstly it was acknowledged that the service had delivered effectively but it had been over seven years since the service had been reviewed. In addition the panel believed the publication of the Housing White paper

which clearly places a focus on social landlords to communicate and engage with their tenants more effectively and the impact of Covid 19 on housing services meant this was a good time to review and update the service.

3. Strengths:

- 3.1. The TSP consists of a group of volunteers who are also tenants of NWLDC, each of whom has different skill sets and seeks to improve their skills and value to the group by identifying development needs and attending relevant training.
- 3.2. Each TSP member knows the importance of adopting a flexible attitude and displays a high level of commitment to their voluntary involvement in working with NWLDC to improve Housing services to tenants and streamline processes.
- 3.3. The TSP mission is to be a “critical friend” to the Council, facilitating service improvements for Council tenants.
- 3.4. The TSP uses differing methodologies to analyse data, collect evidence, report on outcomes and make recommendations to NWLDC to enable changes and improvements to be implemented.

4. Vision and Strategy:

- 4.1 The topic of Resident Involvement is currently in the spotlight and NWLDC will need to change and improve to comply with the Housing white paper. The panel are aware work is being planned to this end and believe this report and recommendations will help move this work in the right direction.
- 4.2 The TSP are aware of the excellent work that has been on going (even throughout the pandemic) with the eight active Tenant Associations that NWLDC support across the district. The decision was taken that the focus of this inspection should be on how the Housing Service engages and communicates with tenants in relation to housing services.
- 4.3 The TSP also understand the current formal mechanisms of engagement, such as the Tenants and Leaseholders Consultation Forum (TLCF) and Working Groups are popular and effective, so rather than being prescriptive on how the housing service engages with tenants the panel believed the best approach was to take a wider holistic view of engagement and offer recommendations to allow for wider improvements of engagement and co-regulation.

5. Report

The TSP has reported on its findings as factually as possible and without any bias. Our inspections have, on occasion, increased awareness of the complexity of the work done by NWLDC and other agencies. However our findings and subsequent recommendations may lead us to be critical of certain parts of the process of reporting/investigating policies and procedures in place.

6. Aim of the Exercise

To review the Resident Involvement service with the aim of improving tenant engagement and assisting the housing service to comply with the housing white paper.

7. Methodology

- 7.1 Reviewed all relevant NWLDC documentation in respect of Resident Involvement.
- 7.2 Interviewed key staff members from Housing Management, Resident Involvement, Customer Services, and Housing Maintenance.
- 7.3 Interviewed Senior Members of staff including the Chief Executive and The Director and Head of Housing. The panel also interviewed the Portfolio Holder for Housing.
- 7.4 Interviewed Involved Residents that are currently engaged with the housing service.
- 7.5 Conducted face to face surveys with non-engaged residents via specifically organised pop up events so the panel were supported to go door knocking in selected areas in the district.
- 7.6 A tpas self-assessment and the subsequent feedback from tpas.

8. Findings

- 1. Staff know the purpose of Resident Involvement and why it is important. However there is inconsistency in staff awareness of the different resident engagement activities and the role of the Resident Involvement team
- 2. NWLDC does not appear to make the best use of digital ways it could engage with tenants. This includes the use of text messaging.
- 3. Many tenants spoken to said they did not know what resident involvement was and did not know there was a Resident Involvement Team. Although it should be acknowledged there was several non-involved tenants who were aware of the Resident Involvement Team.
- 4. There appears to be very little information/publicity about what has changed and improved as a result of resident Involvement.
- 5. There needs to be more local involvement activities
- 6. It is unclear how the various tenant groups and activities interact and feed up to decision makers.
- 7. There appears to be a lack of joined up working when it comes to consulting with tenants. This results in limited or poor consultation
- 8. It is not clear how NWLDC communicates ongoing performance information to enable tenants to challenge and hold the organisation to account.
- 9. There does not seem to be enough promotional information available about the Tenant Scrutiny Panel and what it does.
- 10. There is no tenant involvement in the complaints process. The Housing Ombudsman Service Code states landlords must pro-actively engage with customers in relation to complaints.
- 11. Communication is always a key priority for tenants. It is not clear if tenants know where to find information about housing services. NWLDC needs to ensure they are able to demonstrate that they listen to the diverse range of voices and experiences within their tenant base.
- 12. The Tenant involvement and Empowerment Standard requires social landlords to ensure tenants are aware of the Right to Manage and to show they would support this should there be an appetite, NWLDC does not appear to do this.
- 13. There is some good information on the website under compliance and servicing about health and safety which is a clear priority in the Housing White paper.

14. It is acknowledged the housing service has trained tenants in the past in the recruitment process and tenants have been full members of recruitment panels. However it would appear this has slipped, it would appear mainly as a result of the pandemic.

9. Recommendations

- 1.1 There should be a more formal induction session for new housing staff in relation to Resident Involvement.
 - 1.2 The Resident Involvement Team should attend Team meetings across the housing service to deliver a presentation to staff about the Resident Involvement service.
 - 1.3 There should be two community Days held each year where staff go out and work in the community alongside tenants. It might be worth considering partnering with Tenant Associations to achieve this objective. Team Managers will need to ensure their teams comply with this.
 - 1.4 Key Housing Staff who work directly with tenants should be set an engagement target in their appraisals, this could be attending a working group or a Pop up event
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- 2.1 The Resident Involvement Team needs to do more work to grow and make use of the email group.
 - 2.2 The incoming Tenant portal should be utilised to push out information to tenants and should also be used as a consultation tool
 - 2.3 Wi-Fi should be installed in all community building and sheltered schemes by summer 2022
 - 2.4 There should be better use of social media to push out information, promote resident involvement and for the use of tenant polls.
 - 2.5 The Resident Involvement Team needs to make better use of text messaging services to push out information and advertise events and activities.
 - 2.6 There should be better use of chat applications which are available for use via the ICT team. However it is understood the ICT team will not allow the use of WhatsApp or other chat platforms that young people use so this may not be possible.
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- 3.1 There should be a Resident Involvement Campaign that takes place in 2022
 - 3.2 NWLDC needs to publicise, using all forms of media, the changes/improvements to homes and services that have been brought about as a result of resident involvement.
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- 4.1 There should be a 'You said, we did' article in every edition of the quarterly tenant magazine Intouch.
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- 5.1 Housing Officer Surgeries and Estate Walkabouts need to be scheduled regularly and well publicised in all forms of media.

- 6.1 A flow chat needs to be produced that demonstrates how various groups and activities feed up to decision makers.
- 7.1 All public reports to SMT and Cabinet should include a section on how tenants were consulted where this is appropriate. The panel understands some reports will have little or relevance to tenants.
- 7.2 The Resident Involvement Team should be informed of any tenant consultations taking place within the housing service so they can support and advise on the best activities.
- 7.3 The Service Level Agreement on tenant consultations drawn up by the Resident involvement team should be reviewed and recirculated.
- 8.1 Performance information needs to be relevant, promoted better and made as widely available as possible.
- 9.1 The TSP should consider changing their name and relaunch the group.
- 9.2 The TSP needs to take feedback and information from other tenant groups and the wider tenant base to help inform which topics to scrutinise.
- 10.1 NWLDC needs to explore how tenants can be involved in second stage housing complaints.
- 10.2 Trends and learning from complaints should be shared with the Landlord Services Working Groups at least on a quarterly basis, so they are able to input into improvements and to hold the housing service to account.
- 10.3 The Housing Ombudsman Service should be invited to a tenant networking event to talk about the code.
- 11.1 NWLDC needs to do some site testing of the external website with tenants, to see how and where they would expect to find information, this should be used to help improve the website.
- 11.2 There needs to be times dedicated to more informal opportunities such as the use of data and insight, surveying and information provision. This will be key in meeting the White Paper requirements.
- 11.3 NWLDC needs to consider how they will demonstrate the use of insight and data to understand whose voices they are, and are not hearing from, to help identify ways to hear the 'non vocalised' tenant experience.
- 12.1 The Right to Manage needs to be referenced within Involvement literature so that tenants are aware of the possibility and to show that the housing service would be willing to engage in discussions should tenants wish to explore this.
- 13.1 Details of those responsible for compliance need to be made available to tenants. This will ensure the housing service is able to demonstrate that tenants are able to hold it to account.
- 13.2 The housing service needs to ensure it is able to demonstrate how they ensure tenants receive the information required to show they are meeting standards with regards to fire safety, gas, electric, water, asbestos etc. A quick win will be to ensure the housing service publish performance and compliance information, along with the key roles and responsibilities for health and safety and compliance on their website and should also consider where and how else

this can be communicated to tenants to ensure the Council meets the requirements for transparency of information.

- 14.1 A cohort of tenants should be retrained in the recruitment process and there should be a tenant on the recruitment panel for all housing staff. Customer Services should also consider using tenants on their recruitment panels.

Janet Higgins, Chair, On behalf of the Tenant Scrutiny Panel

NWLDC/TSP/2022 Reports: Resident Involvement.

APPENDIX B

Tenant Scrutiny Panel Action Plan: Resident Involvement Service: March 2022

Recommendation 1:

1.1 There should be a more formal induction session for new housing staff in relation to Resident Involvement.

1.2 The Resident Involvement Team should attend Team meetings across the housing service to deliver a presentation to staff about the Resident Involvement service.

1.3 There should be two community Days held each year where staff go out and work in the community alongside tenants. It might be worth considering partnering with Tenant Associations to achieve this objective. Team Managers will need to ensure their teams comply with this.

1.4 Key Housing Staff who work directly with tenants should be set an engagement target in their appraisals, this could be attending a working group or a Pop up event

Ref	Task	Lead	Target Date	Status
1.1	Develop induction paperwork in relation to Resident Involvement activities and share with managers in the housing service	Resident Involvement Team Leader	June 2022	
1.2	Arrange with managers across the housing service for the RI Team to attend a team meeting to deliver a presentation on the work of the RI Team and to offer ways staff members can get involved	Resident Involvement Team Leader/Resident Involvement officer	January 2023	
1.3	RI Team will identify potential projects and make recommendations to SMT in April 2023. SMT will then decide which projects to support and who will attend and when.	Resident Involvement Team Leader/SMT	July 2023	
1.4	Team Managers will identify the staff in their teams who should have an engagement target and ensure targets are set.	Team Managers/SMT	July 2022	

Recommendation 2:

2.1 The Resident Involvement Team needs to do more work to grow and make use of the email group.

2.2 The incoming Tenant portal should be utilised to push out information to tenants and should also be used as a consultation tool

2.3 Wi-Fi should be installed in all community building and sheltered schemes by summer 2022

2.4 There should be better use of social media to push out information, promote resident involvement and for the use of tenant polls.

2.5 The Resident Involvement Team needs to make better use of text messaging services to push out information and advertise events and activities.

2.6 There should be better use of chat applications which are available for use via the ICT team. However it is understood the ICT team will not allow the use of WhatsApp or other chat platforms that young people use so this may not be possible.

Ref	Task	Lead	Target Date	Status
2.1	Develop and promote the virtual panel ensuring managers in the housing service are aware of the panel and how to use it.	Resident Involvement Team Leader	July 2022	
2.2	Work with the AIP Team to ensure the tenant portal can and is used as effectively as it can be for tenant communication and resident engagement	Resident Involvement Team Leader	July 2022	
2.3	Work with the ICT Team manager to ensure all community buildings have Wi-Fi access	Housing Management Team Manager/ Resident Involvement Team Leader	September 2022	
2.4	Develop communications plan which incorporates social media, text messaging and the use of chat apps	Resident Involvement Team Leader	July 2022	
2.5	As 2.4 above	Resident Involvement Team Leader	July 2022	

2.6	As 2.4 above	Resident Involvement Team Leader		
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Recommendation 3:

3.1 There should be a Resident Involvement Campaign that takes place in 2022

3.2 NWLDC needs to publicise, using all forms of media, the changes/improvements to homes and services that have been brought about as a result of resident involvement.

Ref	Task	Lead	Target Date	Status
3.1	Set up a task and finish group of tenants to inform the development of an involvement campaign and deliver the campaign	Resident Involvement Team Leader/Resident Involvement Officer	September 2022	
3.2	Develop communications plan highlighting the impact of Resident Involvement in partnership with the Communications Team, this should be linked to 2.4 above.	Resident Involvement Team Leader	August 2022	

Recommendation 4:

4.1 There should be a 'You said, we did' article in every edition of the quarterly tenant magazine Intouch.

Ref	Task	Lead	Target Date	Status
4.1	'You said we did' article added to the forward plan for all future editions of Intouch	Resident Involvement Team Leader	April 2022	

Recommendation 5:

5.1 Housing Officer Surgeries and Estate Walkabouts need to be scheduled regularly and well publicised in all forms of media.

Ref	Task	Lead	Target Date	Status
5.1	Schedule to be established and promotion completed.	Principle Housing Management Team Leader	July 2022	

Recommendation 6:				
6.1 A flow chat needs to be produced that demonstrates how various groups and activities feed up to decision makers.				
Ref	Task	Lead	Target Date	Status
6.1	Develop a flow chart highlighting the linkages between working groups and engagement activities and how this feeds into decision making.	Resident Involvement Team Leader	July 2022	
Recommendation 7:				
7.1 All public reports to SMT and Cabinet should include a section on how tenants were consulted where this is appropriate. The panel understands some reports will have little relevance to tenants.				
7.2 The Resident Involvement Team should be informed of any tenant consultations taking place within the housing service so they can support and advise on the best activities.				
7.3 The Service Level Agreement on tenant consultations drawn up by the Resident involvement team should be reviewed and recirculated.				
Ref	Task	Lead	Target Date	Status
7.1	Review reports paperwork to ensure there is a section which highlights when and how tenants were consulted.	Housing Management team Manager/Resident Involvement Team Leader	May 2022	
7.2	As part of the RI Team attending Housing Team Meeting (1.2 above) a section of the presentation should be dedicated to highlighting how the RI Team can and should help with all housing consultations.	Resident Involvement Team Leader	January 2023	
7.3	Review the SLA the was developed to sure it is up to date and fit for purpose and distribute to all mangers within the housing service	Resident Involvement Team Leader	June 2022	
Recommendation 8:				
8.1 Performance information needs to be relevant, promoted better and made as widely available as possible.				

Ref	Task	Lead	Target Date	Status
8.1	Review with SMT what performance information can be produced, this will then be ratified by the Performance and Finance Working Group and communicated in line with the communications plan identified in 2.4 above.	Resident Involvement Team Leader/SMT	September 2022	
<p>Recommendation 9:</p> <p>9.1 The TSP should consider changing their name and relaunch the group.</p> <p>9.2 The TSP needs to take feedback and information from other tenant groups and the wider tenant base to help inform which topics to scrutinise.</p>				
Ref	Task	Lead	Target Date	Status
9.1	Arrange a session with an external trainer to look at the name and identity of the TSP	Resident Involvement Team Leader	July 2022	
9.2	Develop a communications plan for how the TSP maintains regular contact and communication with other groups, specifically looking at the TLCF	Resident Involvement Team Leader	July 2022	
<p>Recommendation 10:</p> <p>10.1 NWLDC needs to explore how tenants can be involved in second stage housing complaints.</p> <p>10.2 Trends and learning from complaints should be shared with the Landlord Services Working Groups at least on a quarterly basis, so they are able to input into improvements and to hold the housing service to account.</p> <p>10.3 The Housing Ombudsman Service should be invited to a tenant networking event to talk about the code.</p>				
Ref	Task	Lead	Target Date	Status
10.1	Set up a Task and finish group of tenants to get their views and the findings will be presented to SMT	Resident Involvement Team Leader	September 2022	
10.2	Add 'Learning from complaints' to the LSWG forward plan every quarter.	Resident Involvement Team Leader	May 2022	

10.3	Contact the Ombudsman service and invite them to the next Resident Networking event that is organised.	Resident Involvement Team Leader	August 2022	
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Recommendation 11:

11.1 NWLDC needs to do some site testing of the external website with tenants, to see how and where they would expect to find information, this should be used to help improve the website.

11.2 There needs to be times dedicated to more informal opportunities such as the use of data and insight, surveying and information provision. This will be key in meeting the White Paper requirements.

11.3 NWLDC needs to consider how they will demonstrate the use of insight and data to understand whose voices they are, and are not hearing from, to help identify ways to hear the 'non vocalised' tenant experience.

Ref	Task	Lead	Target Date	Status
11.1	Set up a task and finish group of tenants to site test. Different devices should be used and the focus should be the full council site and not just housing. Outcomes need to be fed back to the Communications Team	Resident Involvement Team Leader/Resident Involvement Officer	October 2022	
11.2	This should be linked to communications plan in 2.4 above	Resident Involvement Team Leader	September 2022	
11.3	As above	Resident Involvement Team Leader	September 2022	

Recommendation 12:

12.1 The Right to Manage needs to be referenced within Involvement literature so that tenants are aware of the possibility and to show that the housing service would be willing to engage in discussions should tenants wish to explore this.

Ref	Task	Lead	Target Date	Status
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12.1	Review website and RI literature to ensure the 'Right to Manage' is referenced and add 'Right to Manage' to a future TLCF meeting for discussion.	Resident Involvement Team Leader	June 2022	
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Recommendation 13:

13.1 Details of those responsible for compliance needs to be made available to tenants. This will ensure the housing service is able to demonstrate that tenants are able to hold it to account.

13.2 The housing service needs to ensure it is able to demonstrate how they ensure tenants receive the information required to show they are meeting standards with regards to fire safety, gas, electric, water, asbestos etc. A quick win will be to ensure the housing service publish performance and compliance information, along with the key roles and responsibilities for health and safety and compliance on their website and should also consider where and how else this can be communicated to tenants to ensure the Council meets the requirements for transparency of information.

Ref	Task	Lead	Target Date	Status
13.1	There should be a dedicated compliance page on NWLDC website detailing who is responsible for what in terms of compliance.	Asset Management Team Manager	July 2022	
13.2	In addition to a dedicated compliance webpage, this information should be published at least yearly in Intouch and the TLCF should receive regular updates in terms of how we as a housing service are managing our compliance responsibilities.	Asset Management Team Manager	July 2022	

Recommendation 14:

14.1 A cohort or tenants should be retrained in the recruitment process and there should be a tenant on the recruitment panel for all housing staff. Customer Services should also consider using tenants on their recruitment panels.

Ref	Task	Lead	Target Date	Status
14.1	Arrange training session with HR and invite interested tenants to attend. Communicate to all managers in housing and customer services of the availability of tenants to undertake recruitment interviews and promote this as good practice across the service.	Resident Involvement Team leader	July 2022	