



Foreword

The needs of tenants should be at the centre of what the housing service provides. This new strategy will make this happen by focusing on three main priorities, which come from our tenants themselves:

- To improve the way we communicate with tenants.
- To promote and support tenant involvement.
- To use what we are told to improve our services.

We as a group of tenant reps meet regularly with councillors and housing officers. And together we undertake walkabouts of our estates, community events, partake in training courses and trial the ease of new programmes and initiatives for tenants.



Councillor Alasdair Ross,
Portfolio Holder for Housing,
Ipswich Borough Council

Other tenant reps and I have developed a real passion for social housing through these events and interactions with other tenants. Tenants know that we can help. Having a tenant engagement officer who has a real passion around engagement spurs us on.

I feel my role has helped change some negative feelings about the council to positive ones and together with other representatives we are making a difference. If we can further improve communications with the Council and tenants that will be a positive outcome.



Sally Soon,
Tenant Representative since 2019,
Ipswich Borough Council

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Introduction

Over the past years there have been several national changes that have had a significant impact upon social housing. In recent years, a greater emphasis at a national level has been placed upon the importance of empowering tenants to have their say and have their voices heard.

Ipswich Borough Council is committed to improving the way we work and engage with our tenants and leaseholders. Our Corporate Plan – Proud of Ipswich - has set priorities for meeting the housing needs of our community, including the aim to be an excellent landlord to council tenants.

We also aim to be a financially sustainable council providing good quality service, where Residents can expect to be involved and engaged in the decisions which the council is making.

We want our tenants to feel empowered to hold us to account and have opportunities to scrutinise and become actively involved in shaping the housing service.

We recognise that good tenant engagement can bring benefits not only to our tenants but also to the Council. Tenant engagement ensures that we develop policies and services

that meet the needs and aspirations of our tenants, creating genuine opportunities for them to influence decisions and increase levels of satisfaction.

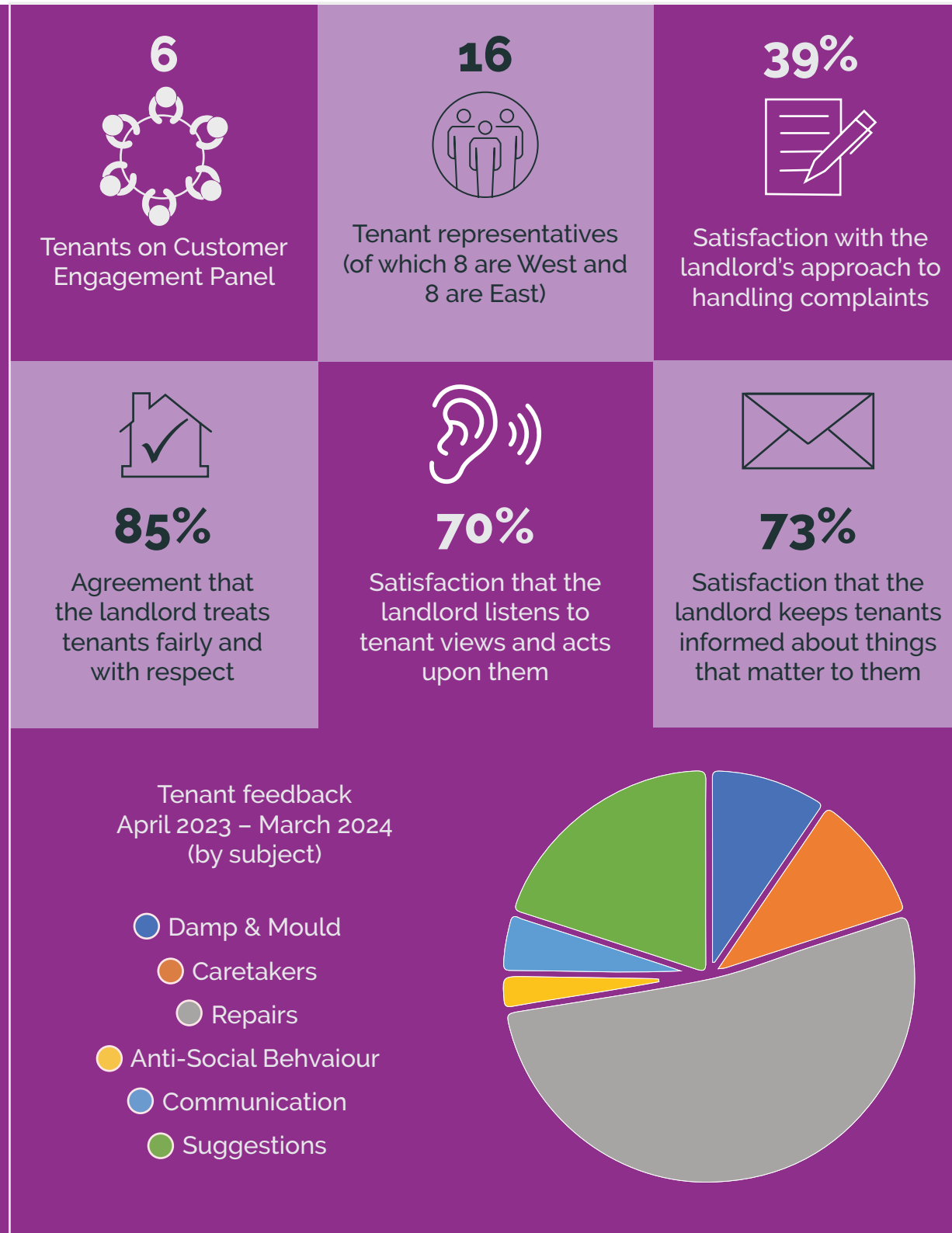
This strategy and the priorities within it have been developed using feedback from tenants over the lifespan of the Tenant Engagement Strategy 2021/2024, from Tenant Representatives, the Customer Engagement Panel, Tenant Satisfaction Measures Surveys, Complaints and Tenant Engagement events.

The Council conducts Tenant Satisfaction Measures surveys to take a sample of tenant's opinions every 3 months. The Council uses the results of the surveys to identify where we could be doing things better and help us to change the way we do things to provide a better service to our tenants. For example, tenants are asked about their:

- Satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them.
- Satisfaction that the landlord keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them.
- Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling complaints.



Key Statistics



Progress & Achievements

The effects of the Covid 19 pandemic had a major impact at the introduction of the Tenant Engagement Strategy 2021-2024.

Resources were re-prioritised and focused on delivering front line services meaning that work on implementing the Strategy was delayed. In addition, because of Covid, there was a move away from in person meeting which made it more difficult for the Council to engage with Tenants. Regular in person meeting have now been re-established.

- There have been considerable achievements in meeting the aims of the strategy but there are some areas where work is yet to completed.
- The new Tenant Engagement Model has been developed and has been partially implemented.
- The Customer Engagement Panel has been established to enable Tenants Representatives to have an overview of and ability to scrutinise the Councils Landlord services.
- Housing Online is up and running, Tenants able to report and track repairs, manage their rent account, and update their personal details.
- A Tenant Satisfaction Measure for Complaints handling has been established and the Councils performance is reported on our website on a quarterly basis.

The "Review of Tenant Engagement Strategy 2021-2024" at Appendix 1. goes in detail about the achievements and challenges encountered in working towards the aims set out in the strategy.

Purpose and Scope

The Tenant Engagement Strategy sets out the Council's overall approach to tenant engagement and defines the vision and priorities. It aims to set out the direction for tenant engagement and supports our commitment to involving tenants in shaping and scrutinising services.

The Strategy will help to support the priorities set out in the Corporate Plan "Proud of Ipswich":

- ✓ A thriving town centre.
- ✓ Meeting the housing needs of our community.
- ✓ A carbon neutral council.
- ✓ Promoting community wellbeing and fairness.
- ✓ A financially sustainable council providing good quality services.

This strategy applies to both Ipswich Borough Council tenants and leaseholders. Any reference to tenants includes leaseholders.

Vision

Our vision is that our Tenants are empowered to hold us to account as their landlord and have opportunities to scrutinise and become actively involved in shaping their housing services.

Approach

The Council recognises that improving the ways in which we engage with tenants is a journey, and one of continuous improvement.

We plan to deliver on the priorities set out in this Strategy through the development and implementation of an action plan. The action plan will underpin the Strategy and will be monitored and reported to tenants and the Council's Housing Working Group on a quarterly basis to drive forward progress, with an annual report published at the end of each financial year.



The priorities

01 To improve the way we communicate with tenants.

02 To promote and support tenant involvement.

03 To use what we are told to improve our services.

As such they have remained as the priorities for the Tenant Engagement Strategy 2024-2027

10 **Priority:** **To improve the way we communicate with tenants**

Our objectives are:

- **To become easier to deal with**
- **To increase the opportunities for tenant involvement**
- **To ensure tenants are aware of our service standards and how to challenge them.**

We have developed a new model of tenant engagement with tenants, which we need to fully implement and continue to work on. We want to ensure that there are no barriers to prevent interested tenants from joining in, so we will ensure that all face-to-face meetings happen in accessible venues and all materials can be available in other languages. We will work with local organisations to ensure we are fully understanding the needs of all our various communities and understanding potential barriers that may prevent individuals from sharing their views with us. We will review our Service Standards and ensure they are accessible.

We will:

- Implement, in conjunction with tenants, the new model of tenant engagement and scrutiny.
- Explore new ways of engaging with tenants.
- Review and, if necessary, revise our service standards. Publish and promote our service standards and ensure tenants know how to challenge them.
- Make it easier for tenants to report problems to us and take prompt and appropriate action.
- Regularly advise tenants about our complaints process.
- Share improvements and learning from complaints.
- Review and engage with tenants regarding the information about building and health and safety.



12 **Priority:** **To promote and support tenant involvement**

Our objectives are:

- **Increase and improve the opportunities for tenants to engage with us digitally through social media, email and online surveys and groups.**
- **To ensure that tenants have the necessary skills and training to be able to participate / be involved effectively.**
- **Ensure that participation is accessible to all tenants.**

We aim for maximum tenant participation to enhance our service through meaningful engagement. We will develop more informal ways of engaging that do not require an ongoing time commitment by examining the best ways to engage digitally. We already offer Tenant Representatives training, and we will review this to see how best to extend this training. We will examine how we can best remove barriers such as paying travel costs to attend formal meetings, ensuring that meetings are in accessible venues, and can also be available digitally.

We will:

- Consult with tenants about their preferred methods of engagement (for example, digital, face to face, groups)
- Ensure that the Tenant Engagement team have the proper resources to action meaningful change.
- Develop our tenant training program to ensure that every participating tenant receives the necessary support and resources to actively engage through acquiring essential skills and training.
- Promote tenant involvement at every opportunity including through our Tenants Newsletter, tenancy sign up and visits.
- Work with a national recognised body to achieve Tenant Engagement Accreditation



14 Priority:

To use what we are told to improve our services

Our objectives are:

- Use the insight from the Tenant Satisfaction Measures surveys to make positive changes in the areas highlighted for improvement to increase satisfaction and improve customer experience.
- Use complaints as a source of insight to identify issues and introduce positive changes in service delivery.
- Use the feedback from surveys and consultations to ensure tenants views matter.

We will increase the opportunity for tenants to share their views with us, maximising the technology available to us through use of online surveys focused upon dedicated services. We will also increase the opportunity for tenants to have their say about government proposals when we respond to government consultations. When we have asked for tenant and leaseholder views, we will share the outcomes with our tenants.

We will revise how we actively use complaints. Dealing with complaints is a service. We will analyse complaints data to identify aspects of our service that need improving, and how to improve them.

We will:

- Develop our learning from performance, complaints, and satisfaction feedback to help in identifying areas that need review / scrutiny.
- Use complaints to identify issues and introduce positive changes in service delivery.
- Make more use of survey technology to capture the views of tenants and advise of findings.
- Involve tenants in overseeing collated complaints information and monitoring lessons learned.



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Monitoring & Governance

An Action Plan based on the three priorities has been created, which underpins the whole Strategy. A Steering Group that includes tenants will oversee delivery of the action plan and progress will be reported regularly to tenants and the Council's Housing Working Group.

The regular monitoring of the national and local context will also form part of the monitoring and governance process and will also feed into the ongoing development of the Action Plan.

This process will ensure that the Action Plan remains current and relevant, The Action Plan will be available on our website, alongside the Strategy, and will be updated on the website annually.



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