

TENANT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

2021 - 2024



IPSWICH
BOROUGH COUNCIL

FOREWORD

'Council housing has been provided in Ipswich for over 100 years, providing safe and secure homes to thousands of tenants. For many years the council has provided Tenant Participation. However, we would like to strengthen this to provide a Tenant Engagement service, to place the clear voice of tenants at the heart of what we do.

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

To improve the way we communicate with tenants

To promote and support tenant involvement

To improve the service by listening to what tenants tell us

I know that this first piece of tenant-led engagement will not be the last. I hope that there will be a lot more talking, to allow the tenant voice to be heard. Listening to that voice will lead to a service that tenants value and will keep us going for another 100 years.'

Councillor Neil MacDonald
Housing Portfolio Holder
Ipswich Borough Council

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. 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 the tenant satisfaction survey carried out during the summer of 2020.

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 'Building a Better Ipswich'.

- Quality Homes for All
- Safe Communities
- Healthy Communities
- An Efficient and Effective Council

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



VISION

Our vision is that our Tenants feel 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

Using feedback from the tenant survey, the following key priorities have been identified:

- PRIORITY 1** To improve the way we communicate with tenants
- PRIORITY 2** To promote and support tenant involvement
- PRIORITY 3** To use what we are told to improve our services

PRIORITY 1

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

Our Tenant Satisfaction Survey showed us that improving the ease of dealing with IBC is a key priority for our tenants. We will co-create a new model of tenant engagement with tenants. We will ask tenants about their preferred ways of engaging with us and incorporate this into the new model. 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 translated into 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 some from sharing their views with us. We will review our Service Standards and ensure they are shared using a variety of formats.

WE WILL:

- Develop, in conjunction with tenants, a new model of tenant engagement and scrutiny
- 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 provided regarding building and health and safety



PRIORITY 2

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
- remove any barriers to participation and ensure that all tenants have an opportunity to be represented

We want as many interested tenants as possible to engage with us so we can improve our services. We will develop more informal ways of engaging that don't require an ongoing time commitment by examining the best ways to engage digitally. We already offer Tenant Representatives some training and we will review this to see how best to extend this training. We will examine the government's offer of tenant training when published and offer this onto interested tenants. We will examine how we can best remove barriers such as paying travel costs to attend formal meetings, ensuring that meetings are held in accessible venues and can also be attended digitally.

WE WILL:

- Consult with tenants about their preferred methods of engagement (digital, face to face, groups etc)
- Ensure that the Tenant Engagement team have the proper resources to action meaningful change
- Use the newly proposed national training programme for tenants to ensure that all interested tenants are supported to have the skills and training needed to become actively involved
- 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

PRIORITY 3

TO USE WHAT WE ARE TOLD TO IMPROVE OUR SERVICES

OUR OBJECTIVES ARE:

- use the insight from the tenant survey 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 are taken into account

The Tenant Survey showed us that many of our tenants' priorities matched our own. Work has already started on actioning the issues raised by tenants and we will ask interested tenants to be involved in this.

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 will remain a service priority and then, once dealt with, we will analyse complaints data in order to extract intelligence. This will be a new tool that we can use to identify aspects of our service that need improving.

WE WILL:

- Develop action plans to address the three areas highlighted for improvement from the Tenant Survey.
- Develop a model so that data and learning from performance, complaints and satisfaction feedback can help in identifying areas that need review / scrutiny
- Use complaints as a source of intelligence 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



MONITORING & GOVERNANCE

An Action Plan will be developed based upon the three priorities and underpin 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.

Ipswich Borough Council,
Grafton House, 15-17 Russell Rd, Ipswich IP1 2DE

01473 432000

www.ipswich.gov.uk

