

Tenant Participation Strategy 2019-2022



'Selby District Council is committed to tenant involvement and empowerment, listening, believing, understanding and working in partnership with its tenants to ensure the continuous improvement of its services.'



SELBY

DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Foreword

Tenant involvement should be central to the housing service that Selby District Council delivers; and whilst this practice is not new to us, we remain keen to build on current opportunities and increase our expertise and reputation in this field.

Acknowledging recent Government focus, we currently have a real opportunity to develop a genuine partnership with both our tenants and leaseholders, working with them to shape the future of our housing service.

Notably, this strategy has been developed by tenants working in partnership with the Council and we would therefore like to thank everyone who took part in the consultation and helped to develop this document.

This Tenant Participation Strategy will consequently set out how, over the next three years, Selby District Council will look to further cement and improve our relationships with tenants - providing new, diverse and modern approaches to tenant engagement.



1. Introduction

- 1.1 Tenant participation within the field of social housing has evolved throughout the years; and as an organisation, Selby District Council acknowledge that any effective engagement strategy must be developed with consideration to a wide range of local and national factors. Notably, the social housing sector awaits potentially radical reforms with the introduction of the Government's green paper 'A New Deal for Social Housing' published in August 2018. Tenant engagement is a central theme running throughout this consultation paper, and a rebalance of power between tenant and landlord would appear its primary intention.
- 1.2 Successful tenant participation should consequently deliver benefits for all those involved, that being the landlord, its staff, and its tenants. It should create a culture of respect and partnership, with benefits often including fewer complaints, higher tenant satisfaction and shared accountability when making decisions.
- 1.3 With this in mind, our new **Tenant Participation Strategy 2019-2022** will demonstrate how the Council will work in partnership with its tenants and leaseholders to shape and deliver a high quality housing service within the district. It will build on the good initiatives already in place, but also recognise the need to modernise and improve our approach to tenant involvement. It will also set out the standards we work towards in order to ensure that tenants remain involved and consulted at whatever level they choose to be. Tenant views are key to the continual development of our service and such consultation has supported the drafting of this strategy and its objectives.
- 1.4 This strategy will run for three years with review opportunities in each year to further develop our approach to engagement with our tenants and leaseholders. All social landlords have a responsibility to involve local people in the issues that affect them, and moving forward, we aim to engage our tenants flexibly by offering a range of different involvement opportunities. We acknowledge that, as the environment we do business in evolves and changes, as too does the customer base we serve; and we should make every effort to engage all types of tenant, including those most vulnerable and frequently under-represented.



2. What is tenant participation?

2.1 The overall aim of tenant involvement is to understand the needs, aspirations and experiences of Council tenants and to improve services as a result of this. Selby District Council has been a member of the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) since **2015** and we aim to achieve our objectives by following the TPAS community engagement standards set out below:

Engagement Strategy: Building the right foundations is critical for effective engagement. We need to make the most of our tenant involvement strategy by ensuring that tenants are involved in the key issues affecting them and our business.

Resources for Engagement: We need to identify the right support to enable effective engagement. Planned investment is essential and ensures our tenant involvement maximises our effectiveness in delivering our outcomes.

Information and Insight: We must commit to gathering, using and providing the right information to ensure our engagement is fully maximised. This will mean the information we gather truly reflects our tenants, leaseholders and communities.

Influence and Scrutiny: Creating suitable levels of influence and scrutiny drives business performance, helping to streamline our services and systems. This ensures tenants have an accountable role in our decisions, performance and conduct.

Community Engagement: We need to use a range of methods for effective wider engagement and work with communities to understand the issues they feel are a priority. This is about being creative in empowering communities and helping them address issues that are wider than just 'housing'.

Valuing Engagement: Measuring effects and showing the value of our engagement, helps to arrive at cost-effective solutions for both the organisation and local community, and ensures continued support for future work.

3. Our vision

Background

- 3.1 At the end of 2018/19's financial year, Selby District Council had a total of 3284 tenants, spread over our general stock, garages, and homeless accommodation. We also have 156 leaseholders. The views of these tenants and leaseholders have always been of central importance to the Council and we are keen to ensure that tenant participation remains essential in shaping our housing service delivery.
- 3.2 Our previous Tenant Participation Strategy was written in 2010 and there is an acknowledgement that the ways in which we involve and communicate with our tenants has changed. Our mission statement at the time stated that:



'Selby District Council is committed to tenant involvement and empowerment, listening, believing, understanding and working in partnership with its tenants to ensure the continuous improvement of its services.'

- 3.3 Notably, whilst much has changed within the Council's housing service since this time, this commitment has not and remains as valid now as it did in 2010. Our mission statement in 2019 therefore remains the same.

National Standards

- 3.4 All Council and Housing Association landlords are required to meet the National Standards for housing services which provide a framework for:

Tenant involvement and empowerment standard - how we involve tenants in decisions about their home, neighbourhood and community; and how we deal with and learn from tenant complaints and customer care, especially considering tenants with additional support needs.

Home standard - how we look after our tenant's homes, including day-to-day repairs and the quality of accommodation.

Tenancy standard - how we manage tenancies, including allocating empty homes and rent collection.

Neighbourhood and Community Standard - how we manage estate and community, including neighbourhood management, local area co-operation and anti-social behaviour.

Value for Money Standard - how we make sure that the services we provide are cost efficient.

Governance Standard – how we ensure we are making the correct decisions and governing appropriately.

Strategy Aims and Objectives

- 3.5 The above standards have been carefully considered when formulating the overall aims of this Tenant Participation Strategy 2019-2022. They are:



1. To set out how we will encourage tenants to become actively involved and empowered in the decision making processes of Selby District Council.



2. To develop an innovative and modern approach to tenant participation at Selby District Council to achieve diversity in the participation opportunities we offer and the voices we hear.



3. To demonstrate that tenants are part of our continuous improvement process and ensure all Council staff actively participate with the engagement agenda.





4. To promote an honest and trustworthy relationship between Selby District Council and our tenants and leaseholders; focusing on a free exchange of information and ideas.

3.6 To meet these aims, four specific objectives were created following collaboration between Council staff and our tenant Scrutiny Panel. The objectives agreed are to:

Objective 1

Provide development and training opportunities for tenants via local engagement and increase local offer for tenants throughout the district.

Objective 2

Improve communication and transparency between tenants and Selby District Council, helping to facilitate more positive relationships between individual service areas and tenants.

Objective 3

Increase and improve feedback methods for customer communication, better understanding what tenants want from Selby District Council in regards to tenant participation, in order to meet these needs.

Objective 4

Provide a wide range of accessible engagement opportunities for our tenants, focusing on improving our online offer and new forms of communication.

4. Delivering the vision – Action Plan

4.1 Below are the key priorities that we have agreed in order to improve our offer of tenant participation over the next three years. These will form the basis of the Tenant Participation Strategy Action Plan 2019-2022 (Appendix A).

Aim 1:	Priorities:
To set out how we will encourage tenants to become actively involved and empowered in the decision making processes of Selby District Council.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Investigate whether our tenants want a designated disability group as part of our engagement offer to them.• Pilot a 'Tenants Forum' in relation to 2019's Annual Report (allowing all tenants involved in tenant engagement to come together and scrutinise the Council's housing service delivery).• Improve advertisement of tenant engagement opportunities and events district wide, including publishing our first 'Menu of Engagement' and an updated 'Tenants Handbook.'• Explore data profiling opportunities at Selby District Council to ensure we understand our entire customer cohort and their needs in regards to tenant participation.

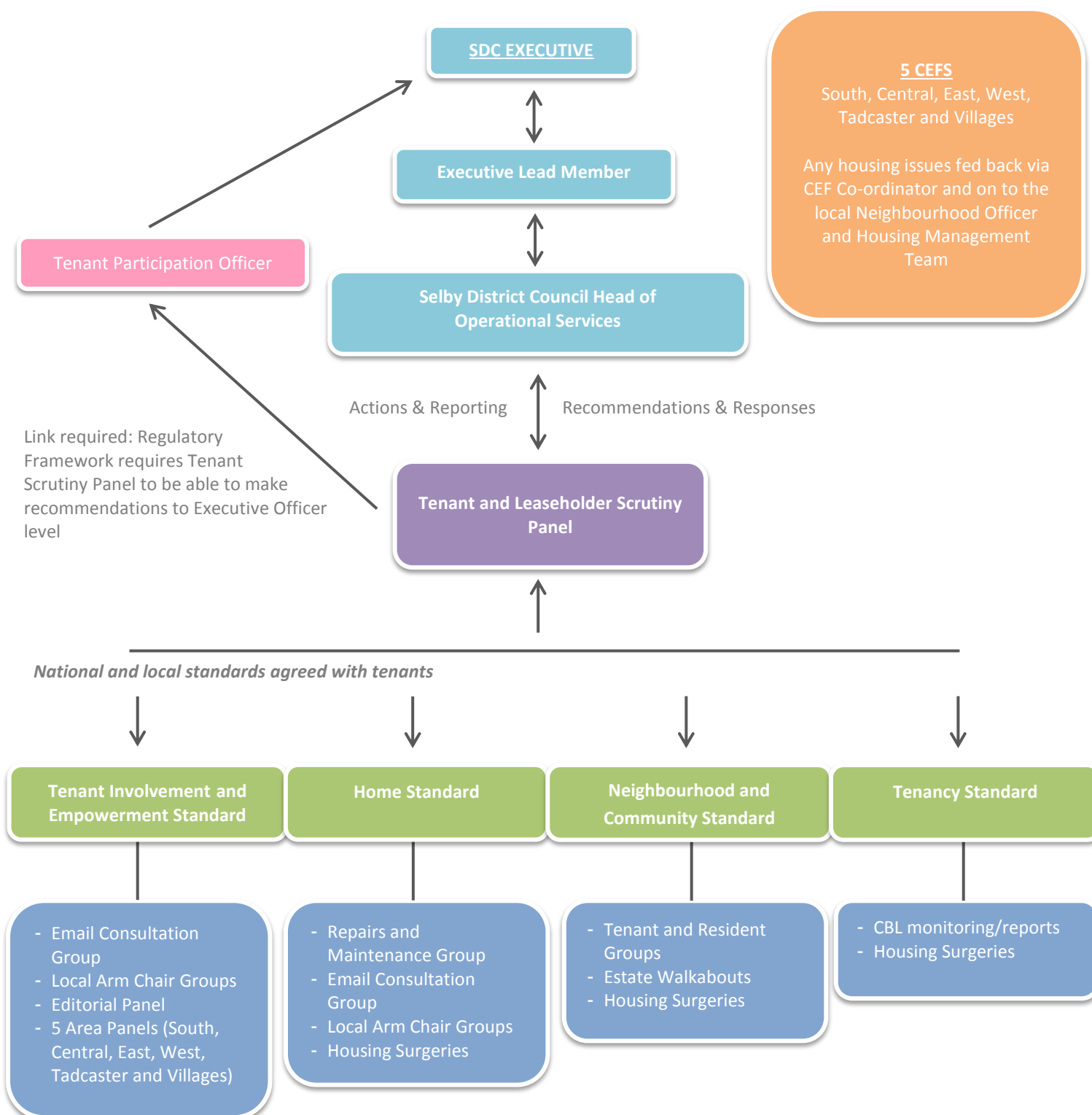
Aim 2:	Priorities:
To develop an innovative and modern approach to tenant participation at Selby District Council to achieve diversity in the participation opportunities we offer and the voices we hear.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure Selby District Council remain up to date with all current legislative requirements and best practice in relation to tenant engagement.• Look to increase innovative and modern ways to communicate with our tenants, focusing particularly on online communication forms, such as our 'armchair' surveys.• Assist both tenants and staff with the adoption of our new online 'Tenant Portal' when it goes live (estimated to be late 2019).• Ensure we communicate with all tenants via their preferred method and appropriately meet their needs. This includes providing communication in various languages and formats.

Aim 3:	Priorities:
<p>To demonstrate that tenants are part of our continuous improvement process and ensure all Council staff actively participate with the engagement agenda.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve and increase Selby District Council staff attendance at relevant tenant engagement events, such as the Repairs and Maintenance Group. • Maintain TPAS membership and continue to provide a dedicated staff resource for tenant engagement, ensuring they are also trained appropriately. • Ensure tenant engagement information is readily available to our Customer Services staff via the 'Campaign' system and that this information is passed appropriately to our tenants in absence of the Tenant Participation Officer.

Aim 4:	Priorities:
<p>To promote an honest and trustworthy relationship between Selby District Council and our tenants and leaseholders; focusing on a free exchange of information and ideas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to develop our professional network with other local authorities and registered housing providers in order to share good practice in regards to tenant engagement. • Investigate whether a 'Tenant Complaints Panel' would be beneficial to Selby District Council and its tenants, exploring how this would work and what resources it would require. • Establish what kind of engagement offer would be desired by Selby District Council's leaseholders and ensure this offer is made and maintained.

5. Tenant Engagement diagram

5.1 This diagram illustrates the various participation opportunities available to our tenants and details how this engagement and the information gathered from it, feeds into the Council's wider structure.



6. Opportunities for engagement

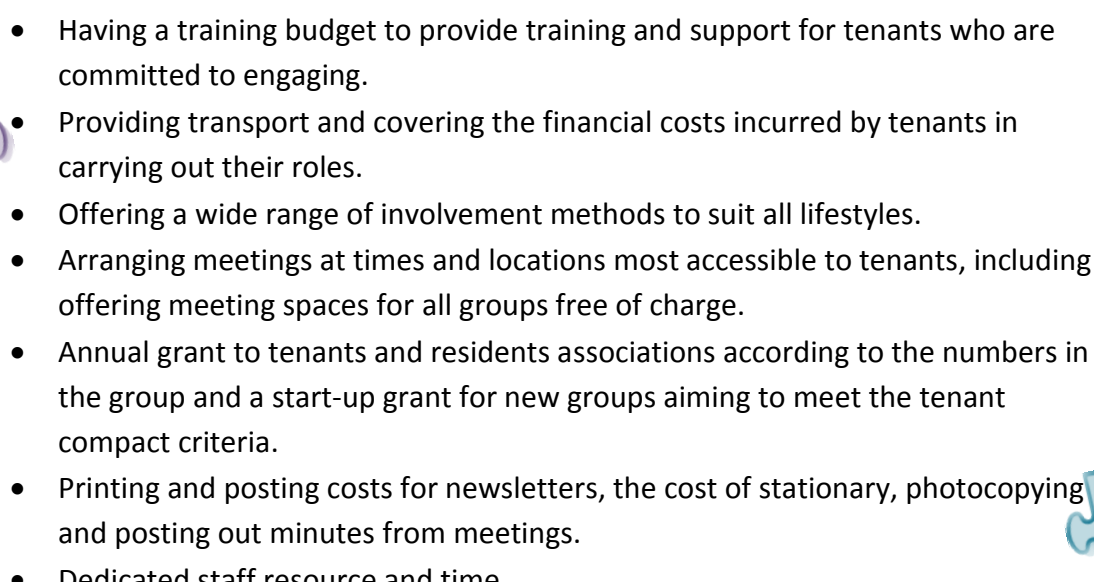
6.1 Below are a number of opportunities available to our tenants with detail as to how they may want to get involved, in relation to the model above. This 'menu' provides tenants with a list of key participation options, allowing them to decide the extent of their involvement with Selby District Council.

Menu of Engagement		
Opportunity	Regularity	Detail
Scrutiny Panel	Monthly	Work within a small team to analyse and provide recommendations in relation to a specific area of the Council's housing service.
Repairs and Maintenance Group	Quarterly	A core group, who represent all tenants, to drive improvement in our Property Services and ensure we are meeting the standards we have set.
Estate Walkabouts	Quarterly	Join a resident led walk through your local area, with Officers from various services, to highlight issues and develop an action plan for improvement.
Editorial Panel	Quarterly	Develop, review and suggest content for the Open Door tenant and leaseholder newsletter.
Local Tenant Groups	Quarterly	Attend meetings in your local area to discuss local issues and build friendlier communities.
Online Surveys	As and when	Provide invaluable feedback as part of a consultation into new services we are developing or proposed changes to those we already have.
Armchair Consultation	As and when	If meetings aren't for you, armchair consultation is! Help us improve from the comfort of your own home, via email or telephone consultation.
Focus Groups	As and when	Help us develop policies and procedures, implement legislation or respond to government proposals by being a member of a focus group.

7. Resources – Fighting the barriers

7.1 To enable tenants and leaseholders to be fully engaged in our housing service and ensure the aims and objectives of this strategy are met, the Council recognise that there must be adequate resources available. Importantly, factors which stop a tenant from participating are important to both acknowledge and try to overcome. We recognise there are many barriers which prevent tenants from engaging with us, including for example: lack of training or confidence, understanding the prescribed information, issues with transport, travel and child-care arrangements, and time constraints.

7.2 Selby are therefore committed to offering practical solutions to make tenant participation a viable option for as many tenants as possible. Resources available include:

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- Having a training budget to provide training and support for tenants who are committed to engaging.
 - Providing transport and covering the financial costs incurred by tenants in carrying out their roles.
 - Offering a wide range of involvement methods to suit all lifestyles.
 - Arranging meetings at times and locations most accessible to tenants, including offering meeting spaces for all groups free of charge.
 - Annual grant to tenants and residents associations according to the numbers in the group and a start-up grant for new groups aiming to meet the tenant compact criteria.
 - Printing and posting costs for newsletters, the cost of stationary, photocopying and posting out minutes from meetings.
 - Dedicated staff resource and time.
 - Continued access to expert organisations, such as TPAS, as and when required.

7.3 Selby District Council is responsible for planning, developing, monitoring and reviewing tenant involvement activities, and we will always look to provide support to tenants trying to further develop new and existing groups, in order to improve service delivery. Our overall aim is to support and empower any engagement activity to the point where it can become self-sufficient and run without direct Council involvement.

7.4 As previously stated, the Council are keen to utilise new and modern ways of engaging with our tenants and leaseholders and will ensure all avenues are fully utilised. A poll conducted early 2017 by BMG Research featured 1,143 social housing tenants and explored the ways in which tenants had been engaging with their landlord in the last year; and whether they would consider alternative engagement methods in the future. The findings showed that 61% of tenants (with internet access) would consider online

involvement with their landlord, and nearly half of those not currently involved with their landlord stated they would consider new involvement through an online method of engagement. Completing online surveys (54%) was the most prevalent method of preferred feedback, although a sizable minority were also interested in becoming involved by providing social media comments (14%), using online discussion forums (17%), or downloading an app enabling discussions and feedback via text/photos/videos (13%).¹



- 7.5 Considering these results, and the more general shift towards self-service and digital inclusion, Selby District Council are keen to embrace and reinforce this agenda. The introduction of a new housing management system and corresponding ‘Tenant Portal’ will consequently improve the way we are able to connect with our tenants and increase our digital offer to them. This portal will not only allow tenants to self-serve, but also provide us the ability to advertise any further engagement opportunities and ensure tenants are fully consulted on any important changes to the service.
- 7.6 Selby District Council also revised its equality and diversity objectives following consultation in April 2017, to ensure all Council policies are non-discriminately in nature. We are consequently committed to treating all our tenants and Selby residents with respect and fairness, and will tackle discrimination and harassment when required; ensuring our services are accessible for all, irrespective of race, religion, disability, gender, age or sexual orientation. Integral to our participation strategy is the want to ensure all individuals and groups have equal opportunity to engage with us.

¹ <http://www.bmgresearch.co.uk/social-housing-providers-involving-times/>

8. Contact us and get involved

8.1 If you are a tenant or leaseholder of Selby District Council and would like to get involved in any of the tenant participation opportunities we offer, you can contact us in multiple different ways.

8.2 By post, you can write to us at:
Tenant Participation Officer
Selby District Council
Civic Centre,
Doncaster Road
Selby
YO8 9FT

8.3 You can email us at:
info@selby.gov.uk



8.4 You can follow us on Twitter/Facebook.

8.5 You can make a face-to-face customer enquiry, either via one of our Customer Services representatives, or by speaking to your Neighbourhood Officer.

8.6 Tenant participation is a chance for you to have your voice heard and have a real say in how the Council delivers its services throughout the Selby district. Your voice matters – get involved!

