

# **Community Engagement Strategy (Tenant Participation) 2017 - 2020**

***Working with tenants and all housing customers to shape and improve our services***

## **What is community engagement?**

Community engagement is all about maximising the involvement of service users, customers and stakeholders in the planning, design and delivery of the services the Council provide.

### **NK Commitment**

North Kesteven District Council has a long-standing commitment to resident involvement and community engagement. The NK Plan is developed in partnership with local people and one of the Council's priorities is focused exclusively on "***Our Communities***", seeking to *promote the sustainability, the Council well-being, safety and health of North Kesteven's evolving communities.*

The Housing Revenue Account Business Plan directly supports the overall aims of these NK Plans. Working together the Council will directly contribute to real outcomes on estates and across communities.

The Council aims to achieve a balance between; spending on housing management, maintenance and support services that meet the needs of our customers and reflect their main concerns, whilst maintaining efficiencies. The Council is committed to ensuring that tenants are involved and consulted in the management of their homes and communities.

### **Community engagement strategy (Tenant Participation)**

The Council has reviewed its approach, looking at what residents have told us, our business needs and regulatory requirements. Essentially the Council wants to provide an approach that aims to:

- Engage a wide range of customers in service development
- Gain greater customer insight to enable focused engagement
- Build community cohesion and resilience
- Develop more effective levels of communication

### **Strategic objectives**

Our strategic objectives are set out below and are the starting point for engaging residents. There are four areas that this strategy will focus on:

#### **1. Engaging customers**

Engaging customers effectively and meaningfully using more innovative and modern communication techniques to reach a wide and diverse audience. The Council wants to deliver outcomes that are beneficial to all stakeholders whilst showing that the Council is a listening and acting Council. Offering opportunities for customers to shape services and ensure that they have the training, skills and ability to scrutinise performance, identify areas for improvement and influence future service delivery.

### **Outcomes:**

- Increase the range of customers that engage with the service to include a wider and more diverse range of people to inform service development and delivery.
- Develop meaningful opportunities for customers to get involved with shaping and influencing the service and local priorities
- Hold informal and engaging events to capture information to inform the service
- Housing and Property service achieves a high rate of satisfaction.

## **2. Customer insight**

To deliver an effective and efficient housing service based on excellent knowledge of our customers. Visit our tenants to gain understanding and insight about their household's needs and aspirations in order to develop projects and initiatives that benefit individuals, communities and the Council. The Council can then identify and target groups of people that would benefit from opportunities and initiatives. The Council can deliver services in ways that suit customers treating everybody fairly and equally.

### **Outcomes:**

- Gather information, opinion and statistics to inform the HRA business plan, to plan for and provide services and initiatives that are relevant to our customers
- Deliver initiatives in ways that suit customers
- Support those customers who need it

## **3. Communities**

To work with our communities and partners to build sustainable communities that are cohesive and resilient. This is a new direction for us and is all about investing in the community by promoting financial inclusion, jobs, training and education, social inclusion and ensuring people have the skills to maintain tenancies. This work will reach out to all sections of our communities, young people and old alike. Initiatives need to be good value for money, provide social value and make use of internal and external partnerships and ensure that services that may already exist are given a tenant focus.

### **Outcomes:**

- Work with partners to deliver training and skills to help tenants to maintain tenancies, promote social, environmental, economic wellbeing.
- To work with communities where specific needs are identified e.g. Newfield Road

## **4. Information and Communication**

Working in partnership with the Communications team we aim to ensure clear and timely communication with people is delivered in a way that suits their needs. This is all about communication and keeping people informed, developing digital contact methods such as online and social media whilst recognising those who still need printed formats and/or face-to-face support. Ensure customers know who to contact.

### **Outcomes:**

- Communicate with our customers in formats that suit their needs best.
- Develop a range of online methods of contacts and information

- Work with parish councils to deliver key messages through parish newsletters
- Implement text messaging for surveys and information
- Develop social media presence
- Review the traditional copy; leaflets, At Home magazine etc
- Customers are clear on how to contact who they need

## Our challenges

The main challenges for community engagement are:

- The rural nature of North Kesteven – our tenant/resident communities are spread out across 356 square miles of NK. Challenges include lack of connectivity related to digital inclusion and transport
- Reluctance of people to engage – number of tenants/residents engaging with the service is low e.g. 6 road show events were attended by just over 100 people from over 3800 properties. The Council needs to know what would make our customers engage with us and find innovative and interesting ways to do this
- Our older tenants tend to prefer face-to-face contact and would like more support. For example the Council knows that reported repairs fell drastically among tenants when supported housing schemes became general needs housing
- Traditional engagement of predominantly older people – It is necessary to engage with younger people both young tenants and young people living in Council homes and communities
- Ensuring community investment programme is value for money, creates added social value, delivers positive results and specific outcomes for residents, communities and the Council. Make best use of limited resources, including officer time, financial resources, involving and working with partners
- Improving customer service, communication and satisfaction with tenants
- Ensuring there is sufficient support for those people who need it

## Where the Council is now?

- The main message is that most residents believe that NK as a landlord offers a good service, but the Council needs to listen AND act appropriately and concentrate on getting the little things right
- Number of complaints is low but there is low level dissatisfaction that officers deal with on a daily basis which is not recorded
- A section of our residents does not want to get involved but where residents do want to be involved, they want the opportunity to feedback views about what matters to them, and see change as a result
- There are many residents who are unaware of engagement opportunities, so the service needs to work harder to arrange interesting, relevant events in accessible places and communicate what the Council provides
- Surveys attract around a 25-30% return rate from predominantly older people. Satisfaction levels remain high with NK tenants however younger tenants are known to be less satisfied than older tenants
- 9 Tenant Representatives all of whom are retired, (only 7 are fully engaged with the service). Those who do attend are very committed and work hard to support us in finding better ways to deliver our services, but it is the same dedicated few that attend the range of forums and events
- Both Tenant Representatives and Housing Councillors want more meaningful and insightful engagement with officers

- The At Home magazine remains the main avenue for getting general information out to tenants and leaseholders

## Consultation

Survey of tenants and residents (STAR) suggests the following:

Respondents who were satisfied or very satisfied that the Council listens to their views and acts upon them	74%
Respondents who were satisfied or very satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live	91%
Respondents who were satisfied or very satisfied with the overall service provided by the Council	86%

HRA business plan consultation resulted in 25% tenants responding to the survey. Tenants were asked to rank in order of importance from a list of known issues and resulted in the following information.

Q2 Ranking Order of Importance	Rank	n	%
More support for vulnerable people	1	553	56.9
Greater opportunity for communication through face-to-face contact	2	240	24.7
Improving community spaces (e.g. parking, paving, lighting and communal facilities)	3	227	23.4
Improving grounds maintenance to community areas (e.g. grass cutting, weed clearing, gardening)	4	205	21.1
Making it easier (clearer) to contact us	5	199	20.5
Improving the information when allocating properties	6	162	16.7
Improving our customer service	7	130	13.4
Greater opportunity for communication through mobile texts and internet	8	43	4.4

## How the Council engages with residents

The framework is supported by a dedicated team of two plus admin support. There is a small budget to fund activities such as supporting Tenant Representative activities and training, support for community activities, such as coffee mornings and events.

The Council provides good quality written information, including: At Home a quarterly magazine, an extensive 'The Welcome Pack' of leaflets and an Annual Report.

Tenant views are sought through surveys, including the annual Survey of Tenants and Residents 'STAR' satisfaction survey and service specific ones for repairs, major works, ASB. Our present engagement structure is outlined at appendix 1, this will be reviewed to ensure that the opportunities for involvement are appropriate and relevant.

## Equality and Diversity

The Council produces an annual Equality and Diversity statement and have analysed the profile of our most involved residents, and compared this to tenants as a whole. In summary this shows the Council needs to engage with younger people and people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds. The Council is not reaching out to a representative sample of residents.

## **Where the Council wants to be**

The Council wants to achieve high levels of satisfaction for all of our customers. It is fundamental to delivering our strategic objectives.

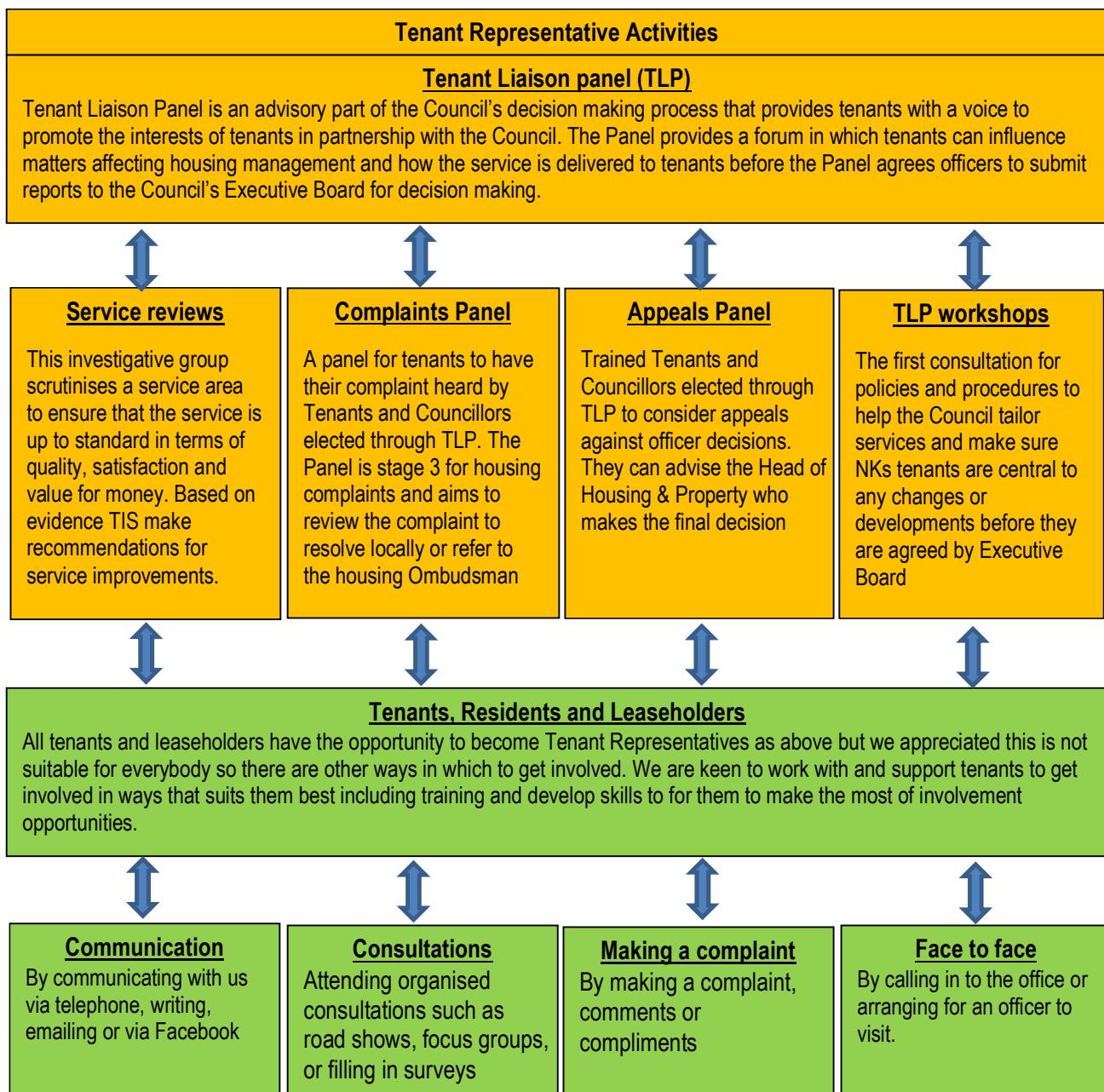
- To achieve excellent services the Council needs to understand what matters to residents and what they would like to be improved. What does it mean to them to live in a Council house? Journey mapping is a tool that could help to identify where improvement is needed. That means reaching out and engaging with more residents, and particularly a more diverse and representative group.
- The Council needs to demonstrate it is listening and taking relevant action.
- The Council needs excellent customer insight to develop and commission relevant services and initiatives and to be able to target the communities that want them
- To ensure there are thriving neighbourhoods, the Council needs to develop strong partnerships with key stakeholders and improve life chances for our communities. Developing skills and training opportunities to help residents maintain tenancies, enhance life skills and/or find work etc. Knowing our customers will direct the types of opportunities the Council needs to offer. Engagement is key to achieving sustainable and resilient and cohesive communities.
- To have a sustainable future, the Council need to maximise our investment and the Council will work in partnership with key agencies who can deliver more than the Council could on our own. The Council will aim to achieve beneficial outcomes, good value and added social value from our resources. The Council will ensure the aims and outcomes of community projects are clear, measurable and deliverable.
- To deliver on all this the Council need ensure all officers are committed to communicating in ways that suit our tenants' needs, and listening and acting to deliver excellent customer services throughout the District.

## **Implementation Monitoring and Review**

Our action plan sets out how the Council will implement our approach, what the Council will do and when the Council will do it by. This action plan is attached at Appendix 2.

The strategy will be reviewed annually against performance indicators which will be set to measure progress, ensure the outcomes are met and that the Council perform well in the core Survey of Tenants and Residents questions.

## Appendix 1



## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY ACTION PLAN 2016-20:

The actions below are linked to the HRA Business Plan Priorities, initiatives identified within the new Community Engagement role and based on good practice.

Actions	Links to challenges, priorities and customer expectation	By when	Target	Progress	Actions going forward into 2018
<b>Engaging customers</b>					
Develop social media, publicise and use multi-media forums to enhance engagement opportunities with customers and encourage followers	HRA: Engage with a wider audience and use positive practices to encourage more diversity within our consultation groups	Mar 2017	Housing & Property Services Facebook page up and running. Publicised	We have introduced a Facebook page and have an increasing number of members and a target of 150 by April 2018.	We will continue to promote and encourage the use of Facebook for communication and consultation
Trial informal events for ways to engage that are convenient for residents and will attract a wider range of people.	HRA: Engage with a wider audience and use positive practices to encourage more diversity within our consultation groups	Mar 2017 Mar 2018	Trial 1 event Trial 4 events	We organized health and wellbeing group suggested by residents at Ringmoor house. This was well received by the few residents that attended. There is not enough interest to sustain it long term. The art group was reintroduced and is sustaining itself as a craft group they also meet on another day too. We held a meeting on repairs and advertised it in At Home (1 response) and writing personally to those who were dissatisfied (STAR) with repairs (1 attended, 1 phoned in). The aim being if they were dissatisfied they may be willing to communicate with us about their concerns.	We need to reassess how tenants engage with the Council and find innovative ways to make use of all the contact a tenant has with the department  The customer insight survey has questions about how people would get involved and if incentives would encourage tenants further.  We will continue with the surveys and analyse the responses

The Tenants Investigating Services Group will scrutinise services and help to drive improvements in services. Conclusions and any recommendations for improvements will be reported to TLP	Formal engagement framework; Regulation	Mar 2017	1 report	The report on the Allocations service – First contact to getting on to Lincs Homefinder has been submitted to Housing Manager and DMT	<b>PROPOSAL</b> <i>To widen the group to TLP Members and encourage scrutiny of services where satisfaction has declined. How HRA plans are coming along etc.</i>
Identify younger tenants and use more informal activities to engage them with.	HRA: Engage with younger tenants to identify why satisfaction rates are low and produce an action plan to	Ongoing	Identify a baseline figure	We have just 314 tenants under 30 these are being targeted for the customer insight survey	We are targeting these tenants for the insight survey to find out about their needs and satisfaction levels
Develop set of Local offers from HRA survey information	HRA: Regularly review local offers with tenants	Mar 2017	Local offers developed	Local offers have been reviewed in line with the development of the HRA business plan and have been published in the At Home mag	Programme of self-assessment consultations based on regulation standards and our local offers during 2018
Review the formal engagement structure to enhance the role of Tenant Liaison Panel and Tenants Investigating Services  Investigate the viability of using incentives for formal engagement and elections to the Tenant Liaison Panel  Set up an online panel to consult with a wider customer base  Structures for formal engagement will remain. Involved residents are able to influence policy, and explore proposals and issues more thoroughly. It allows residents to		Mar 2018	Formal structure reviewed and agreed  Following structure review seek best practice and report to TLP  Online panel set up – target of 20 people on panel	We have spent time seeing what works and what doesn't; finding out what other landlords are experiencing; and getting some insight on our tenants.  This has all confirmed that things have changed and we need to find new ways to engage with tenants in the future.  Although there is just a small number of Tenant Reps – this is still an important role for those tenants that are interested in housing and the way the service is provided. Therefore the formal structure will remain just slightly amended to reflect the needs of the service and tenants (see structure Appendix 1)  Tenant Insight appears to show us that incentives are unlikely to make a big	Feedback to TLP on findings.  Little change is suggested in the formal engagement structure, outlined in appendix 1.  Aim is to make TLP engagement more meaningful

challenge our performance and service standards.				difference, though we don't have a significant number of responses just yet. Facebook provides an online community that we can utilize to communicate and consult with tenants	
Provide support and training to support effective formal engagement. Benefits to residents are; improved employment prospects, using the skills and experience gained, and building confidence.		Annual	No residents receiving training - 5	Ombudsman training for appeals and complaints panel members Tenant participation training online for 1 tenant EMTPF attendance for 4 reps	Training is available to Tenant Reps when there is something that appeals to them. Ad hoc training is provided both internal and external
The Council will improve how the Council capture resident feedback from a variety of sources, including comments made to staff, and report key themes  Ensure that feedback from customers is used to inform business planning and developing our strategies.		Ongoing	Report to DMT – ad hoc	Developing way forward. Delayed due to change of head of Service	Work with teams to find out what the hot topic of the month is, what officers are hearing on a daily basis from tenants.  Report back to HRA BP review meeting
<b>Customer insight</b>					
Develop and carry out a lifestyle questionnaire to gain greater knowledge of our tenant population. What are their needs and aspirations? What does living in a Council house mean to our customers?	HRA: Continue to review the information the Council hold on customers and investigate new methods for everyday communication in order to communicate with tenants by their preferred method	Mar 2017	Visit 200 residents on former sheltered schemes	Survey developed and being implemented. First 29 were tenants who were identified as being dissatisfied with the service. These have proved difficult conversations and required further actions to be completed. Otherwise these are proving to be a very positive step in supporting tenants	Ongoing  Carry out 6 week visit for new tenants

Face to face engagement with residents in isolated communities	HRA: To ensure the housing service is responsive to those who live in isolated towns and villages throughout the district	Mar 2017	Visit 100 hard to reach residents in isolated areas	We aim to visit a wide variety of customers across the District including those in isolated communities	Customer insight survey visits
Use customer insight to identify vulnerable tenants that may need help with maintaining tenancies, getting work, money advice etc	HRA: Provide more support for vulnerable tenants		Refer to TSOs Requires use of definition of vulnerability, how and when would the Council use it.	The consultation is identifying those tenants who are vulnerable and have needs that are not being addressed in any other way. Referrals, niggles and repairs are being addressed	Customer insight survey visits
Report annually on the number and nature of complaints and what has been learned or changed as a consequence	HRA: To review tenant complaints and use them to improve service delivery	Annual	Report to TLP and in Annual report	Annual report delivered	Annual report in October
Use journey mapping as a tool to identify where improvements can be made to the service	HRA: Regularly review local offers with tenants				
<b>Tenant communities</b>					
Continue with community engagement activities for the duration of the Newfield Road re-development Provide skills training as required Support families during works with advice and information Work with community and partners to create a 'lasting legacy'	HRA: Regeneration of Newfield Road estate	Mar 2018	Lasting legacy	Activities are being provided for the children of Newfield during the works. Summer activities were once again successful run by Childrens' Links. Site visit for health and Safety prevention purposes. They have been asked at Residents Meetings if they wants skills training. Charity rounders match was well received	Continue with Newfield Road community work

Consultation with residents on former sheltered schemes regarding Communal room usage Drop in sessions/ Activities TV licences Lifelines Service charges	HRA: Ensure service charges provide value for money by consulting on the use of communal rooms with tenants and carrying out an options appraisal		See above	Consultation took place regarding communal room usage and Lifelines. The schemes have had 6 monthly meetings. The attendance is limited and the same subjects have to be addressed at every meeting. There is limited scope for these meetings.	Work with Heighington community and develop the use of the communal room. Possible intergenerational project  Work with Community Safety partners
Arrange meetings at each scheme on 6 month basis to give information and support to residents while using groups to gain feedback about the service		Mar 2017	All 12 schemes had 1 meeting each	All schemes have had 3 meetings if these are to carry on there needs to be a specific reason or activity, otherwise we just go over the same things every time	???
Investigate partnership opportunities to deliver skills training as identified by engaging with customers		Mar 2018		We need to firstly understand what skills are needed, by whom and where those people are.	
Equipment to help tenants maintain their tenancy					Project to re-distribute those useful items that are left in void properties such as gardening tools, linked to 6 week visit survey
<b>Information and communication</b>					
Investigate options for 'Welcome pack' or similar and produce new information  Develop text messaging  Review At Home magazine and Annual report  Review and update website	HRA: Improve our customer service and communication with tenants	Mar 2018  Mar 2019  Mar 2017			Develop new welcome pack of information  Review website  Attend DMT every 2 months for TLP agenda, At home articles, Facebook messages

Work with parish councils to use parish newsletters as a way of communicating key messages		Oct 2017		Presently working with Billinghay Parish council to create community garden and to promote art group and wellbeing group	
Investigate the development of 'apps' and options for U-tube video's for life skills training		Mar 2019			