

## Winchester City Council

### Housing Engagement & Communication Plan (HEC Plan) – 2024 - 2026

#### The Council Plan 2020 - 2025 priority – Your services, your voice

We want to have high quality, good value services that are continuously improving to address the changing needs and expectations of residents, tenants, visitors, businesses and non-profit organisations across our district –and are accessible to all, whatever their circumstances.

We want our residents to have the opportunity to make their voice heard and be able to see and understand how the council makes its decisions.

#### What we want to achieve

- Know our tenants and their priorities, and shape our business on balanced feedback
- Make it easy for **all** tenants and other residents to share their views
- Understand tenant priorities so they either become our priorities or we explain why they can't be
- Tenants are respected, their views are valued and listened to
- Tenants feel able and confident that it's worthwhile sharing their views with the council
- Engagement is representative
- Engagement leads to improvement

## The benefit to tenants of the Housing Engagement and Communication Plan

‘Listening better’ is at the heart of everything the council does.

Getting engagement right means better services for tenants as they will be designed around an understanding of what’s important to all tenants or they’ll know the reasons why meeting expectations isn’t always possible.

## What does ‘listening better’ mean to tenants?

The following has been determined through talking with Winchester City Council tenants and other stakeholders along with learning from housing sector professionals.

### Key message

The council has a good structure for engagement through traditional methods. Future activities will continue those activities that work well and focus on developing the formal structure to reach a more varied mix of households and finding informal engagement methods to make it easier to capture views from a wider group of tenants.

### Other messages

- Listen
- Provide engagement options that require minimal effort for tenants
- Make it easy for tenants to step into what interests them
- Have a menu of engagement options that offer something for everyone’s level of commitment
- Offer ways to capture the valuable comments that on site staff pickup
- Engagement is part of the day job for every team - generate a positive ethos to respect this
- Good feedback on what has changed as result of listening
- Honest and transparent when things can’t be changed
- Be honest about where you’re failing
- Know who the tenants are and what’s important to them and design services around them
- Go to tenants rather than expect them to come to the council
- Find different ways to listen especially from those we don’t hear from
- People want to easily share local issues

## How will the Plan be delivered?

- **Methods of Engagement**

Tenants able to share their views with the council in the way that best fits their life circumstances, their interests, the time they have available and what they want to get out of talking to the council. (see pages 6 onwards for details)

- Maintain what works well in the existing structure e.g. digital surveys, Service Delivery Groups
- Introduce new options to improve the approach to both formal and informal engagement prioritising those that appeal most to households not currently represented

- **Customer insight**

Invest in data management to make it easier to design services around what's known about tenants

- **Respect and value**

Improve awareness that engagement is central to everyone's role

- **Performance**

Use the Regulator for Social Housing's Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) along with local agreed indicators to measure success

- **Monitoring and Review**

The new Consumer Standard Group for Transparency, Influence and Accountability to check performance and delivery of the plan. The Tenant Involvement Annual Report presented to the Tenant and Council Together Board and will set out the progress made including details of tenants' views have influenced service delivery

<p><b>Communication principles</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen</li> <li>• Use straight forward language</li> <li>• Use various methods/formats to meet all needs</li> <li>• Consult on subjects where tenants have a genuine opportunity to influence the outcome</li> <li>• Only arrange engagement activities when we have something to tell you</li> <li>• Commit to testing out what we hear to check whether it's a majority view</li> <li>• Explain bad news as well as communicating achievements and successes</li> <li>• Give comprehensive feedback when issues are complex to show what options have been considered and why</li> </ul>	<p><b>Housing Engagement Charter</b> Expectations, roles and responsibilities;</p> <p><b>Tenants and leaseholders</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will report any issues relating to their specific tenancy direct to Winchester City Council through the appropriate means.</li> <li>• Ensure complaints are channelled through the formal complaint system.</li> <li>• Abide by the relevant Terms of Reference (and Code of conduct) for the involvement activity.</li> </ul> <p><b>WCC</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will treat all service users with respect</li> <li>• Test out individual feedback with a wider tenant group</li> <li>• Ensure it is accepted that tenant engagement is the responsibility of all housing teams.</li> <li>• To communicate effectively and work toward developing better working relationships with tenants.</li> <li>• Will provide training opportunities relevant to tenant's roles.</li> <li>• Work in a flexible way to adapt to the needs of tenants.</li> <li>• Arrange meetings that are virtually enabled at locations and times that represent the whole district.</li> <li>• Respond to tenant queries, constructively and in a timely manner.</li> <li>• Senior management and Service leads will attend meetings when appropriate.</li> <li>• Abide by the relevant Terms of Reference (and Code of conduct) for the involvement activity.</li> <li>• To feedback annually achievements of the Tenant Involvement Team.</li> <li>• To be compliant with regulatory requirements in relation to tenant involvement.</li> </ul> <p><b>Councillors</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Councillors are responsible and accountable for policy and strategic decisions and ensuring legal requirements are met.</li> <li>• A councillor will (either individually or through council systems) consult, communicate and address the needs of tenants when policies are amended and developed.</li> <li>• Be honest, listen and be non-judgmental when approached by tenants for a change of housing plan.</li> <li>• Be supportive and strengthen links with tenants to promote an understanding of local community issues.</li> <li>• Support an Equality and Diversity policy.</li> <li>• Will attend tenant meetings as and when appropriate.</li> </ul>
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### **Benefits to tenants of being involved**

In addition to benefits for the individual, becoming involved tenants will also improve the service provided to all tenants by sharing their experiences and opinions on service improvements.

- Influence the service tenants receive
- Acting as an advocate for those living in council housing
- Finding out what's happening and why
- Work to change things for all tenants
- Work to improve where you live
- Meet others with shared views and experiences
- Talk directly to decision makers
- Building knowledge and skills
- Being able to direct others to where they can get help with their queries or concerns
- Understand how the council values tenants' views

### **We value your contribution**

Listed below are just a few ways the council shows its appreciation of the time and commitment given by tenants to work together to design services

- Love to Shop vouchers
- Annual prize draw entry for those who've completed online surveys
- Activity specific prize draws
- Refreshments and seasonal thank you events
- Investment in training
- Opportunities to attend national engagement events fully funded

### **Making engagement accessible**

Here are some of the things we do to find solutions to things that may prevent people from sharing their views with the council. Get in touch with Tenant Involvement Team (contact details at the end) to discuss arrangements needed if you are interested in being involved but the options available don't meet your needs.

- Transport costs and provision
- Training to develop skills and knowledge
- Hybrid offer – on line option for face to face meetings
- Equipment loan – laptops
- Hearing loop provision in meeting rooms
- Respect known communication needs – for example - large print, translation, arrangements for lip readers, plain English
- Outreach workers & tenants' advocates welcome to share views on the behalf of others
- Accessible venues
- Evening and weekend activities

## How can I get involved? Menu of engagement options

### Formal options

Activity	Overview	Frequency	Level of Commitment Needed from tenants
<p>Tenants and Council Together Board</p> <p><i>NEW FOR 2024</i></p>	<p>A group with representatives that will be a mix of tenants, elected members and independents.</p> <p>This group represents tenants' and leaseholders' interest in the provision and development of Housing Services. The Board will monitor the performance of Housing Service against key performance indicators and be consulted on key issues that affect the service linked with new Customer Standards Groups (see below) and the council's governance structure.</p>	<p>4 meetings a year</p>	<p>Very high – with requirement to attend training events and conferences</p>
<p>Consumer Standards Groups</p> <p><i>NEW FOR 2024</i></p>	<p>Operational/Policy Groups</p> <p>These Groups have an operational remit designed around the Service Delivery Group model and will centre around the Regulator for Social Housing's new Consumer standards i.e.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safety &amp; Quality – building safety, repairs and maintenance</li> <li>• Transparency, Influence &amp; Accountability – meeting diverse needs, hearing tenant views, complaints processing</li> <li>• Neighbourhood and Community – dealing with anti-social behaviour</li> <li>• Tenancy – letting and managing tenancies</li> </ul> <p>These groups will be a forum for officers to discuss service changes and policy proposals and for tenants to raise queries.</p>	<p>Four meetings a year.</p>	<p>High</p>

Scrutiny	<p>Scrutiny is a specific housing sector engagement function – supported by frameworks, good practice guidance and where supporting organisations which work with housing providers can apply for accreditation.</p> <p>It's where a small group of tenants are invited to undertake a specific and detailed examination of a particular service area to see if the service is performing to the benefit of tenants. All members of a scrutiny group are trained before they begin the exercise and are supported by both internal and if required external organisations to complete.</p> <p>Example – Grounds maintenance scrutiny exercise – tenants formed a task and finish group that collected evidence, visited sites, talked to tenants, the council and contractors to collect information about the service and made recommendations to the council how it could be improved.</p>	<p>Task and finish activity</p> <p>Several meetings and activities within a set timeframe.</p>	<p>Very High</p> <p>Training provided to those involved before activity starts</p>
Readers Panel	The Readers Panel look at all written material produced by council Housing Services to make sure it is easy to read, can be understood and does not contain any unnecessary jargon.	As required – online or postal	Medium
Contract procurement	Work with the council when it's looking to engage contractors to provide certain services such as cleaning.	<p>Task and finish activity</p> <p>Several meetings, activities within a set timeframe.</p>	Medium to high

### Informal options

Activity	Overview	Frequency	Level of Commitment
Transactional surveys – Repairs, Anti-social behaviour, Complaints, Temporary accommodation, New Homes	Completed by customers about services that have recently received to gauge satisfaction, identify shortcomings and learn how we can improve	As required	Low

Tenant Satisfaction Survey	Survey commissioned to collect views from a random sample of tenants to improve our services and see how we perform compared with other housing providers.	Annual	Medium only if included in sample
Online survey	All tenants have the opportunity to participate in consultations without the requirement to be part of a physical group	Average of six surveys a year. Tenants choose which to complete.	Low Step in only if interested
Mini survey	Short 1 or 2 question survey following up on an engagement activity	As required	Low Step in only if interested
Focus groups	Small informal face to face groups organised to discuss a specific topic or new ideas	As required	Medium Step in if interested
One off community events	Events organised around a specific community interest or concern; local residents are invited to come along and talk to the council	One off opportunity	Low
Mystery Shoppers	Help test the services the council provides.	As required	Medium
Tenant Monitors • Grounds Maintenance	Work with Housing Estate Services to help maintain communal and local areas by monitoring the contracted services.	Regular – following contractor visit	Medium
Estate Improvements	Consultation with the local community regarding proposals for area improvements such as communal garden space, installation of a door entry system, improved lighting and additional parking.	Task and finish activity	Low Step in only if interested

### New informal options for 2024- 2026

The following will be developed in reference to the Listening Better Survey Nov 2023 i.e. priority will be given to those activities that appeal to groups not currently fully represented and are at the top of the list.

- Phase 1 – 2024-2025 – Outcomes will be reviewed ahead of moving to Phase 2

Activity	Overview	Frequency	Level of Commitment
Investigate text messaging / WhatsApp surveys/ surveys generated by housing systems	Messages that ask 1 or 2 questions only	Dip in, dip out	Low Step in only if interested

Collect feedback from Leaseholders	Leaseholder and Right to Buy satisfaction surveys	As required	Low
Tenant Monitors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cleaning</li> <li>• Inspectors</li> </ul>	Work with Housing Estate Services to expand the areas where tenant monitors are used to check service delivery.	Regular – following contractor visit	Medium
Finding our silence	Contact with random selection of tenants by officers from all housing teams whom the council doesn't hear from	One off opportunity	Low

- Phase 2 – 2025-2026

Activity	Overview	Frequency	Level of Commitment
Coffee, cake and chat	A programme of visits to where people already meet across the district and asking 'How are things?'. Focus on underrepresented groups.	One off opportunity	Low
School gate/Supermarket engagement	Ice-cream van / pizza with officers asking – what works well, where do we need to improve	One off opportunity	Low
Tenant Involvement Team tenant 12 month anniversary phone calls	Calls to ask 'How are things?'	One off opportunity	Low

### Other Areas of Engagement work

Outcome	Activity
Know who our tenants are - understand differences between tenant communities	Improve approach to collection, management, analysis, application of customer insight data and use to inform service delivery and priorities
Comments made to staff on site and in tenant homes are captured	Developing a systematic method of collecting the feedback made to front line staff and ensuring this information is actively used. Report back to tenant
Community spirit generated	Work with corporate community team to promote community & neighbourliness
All those providing housing services are respectful and courteous.	Briefing sessions with all teams providing housing services
Community Engagement Officers	Work together with the local community (people and parish) to empower them to input to the decision making process within the council and to 'have a say' about their local environment (crime & disorder

	concerns, estate issues). Work in partnership with those with responsibility for matters outside of housing's remit.
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### **More information**

If you'd like to more about how this plan was developed visit the Tenant Involvement Webpage – link below

### **Details of how to get in touch**

[Tenant and Leaseholder Involvement - Winchester City Council](#)

Phone: **0800 716 987**

Email: [tenantinvolvement@winchester.gov.uk](mailto:tenantinvolvement@winchester.gov.uk)

Facebook Page: [www.facebook.com/WinchesterTenants](http://www.facebook.com/WinchesterTenants)

Or join our [Tenants' Facebook Group](#)

### **Other document formats**

If you'd like this Plan in another format or language contact the [housing@winchester.gov.uk](mailto:housing@winchester.gov.uk)