

Resident Influence and Insight for Council Owned Housing Commitment





1. Introduction

At the City of Wolverhampton Council we take great pride and responsibility in our role as a landlord, and providing safe, secure and healthy homes for all of our residents is a key priority for us. We are the landlord of almost 22,000 properties, and we hold the lease for almost 2,500 properties. The homes are managed across four managing agents, with Wolverhampton Homes (WH) managing all of the Council's leasehold properties.

The policy and legislative landscape for social housing is changing; increasing the emphasis on regulation, transparency, and accountability of landlords. We welcome this change. We are committed to providing safe and healthy homes for all, to listening to our residents' voices and understanding their experiences.

This document sets out our vision and objectives for engaging with residents of council owned housing across the city, ensuring transparency, and establishing mechanisms to enable residents to hold us to account and influence service development and improvement. We want residents of council owned housing to feel empowered to share their views and experiences, and feel confident that their feedback is being listened to and acted upon.

2. Policy Landscape

2.1 National

Social Housing Regulation Act (2023)

The Social Housing Regulation Act (2023) provides a new, proactive approach to regulating social housing landlords on consumer issues such as safety, transparency and tenant engagement. It also sets out the Charter for what every social housing resident should expect:

- 1 To be safe and secure in your home.
- 2 To know how your landlord is performing, including on repairs, complaints, and safety, and how it spends its money, so you can hold it to account.
- 3 To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly, with access to a strong Ombudsman who will give you swift and fair redress when needed.
- 4 To be treated with respect, backed by a strong consumer regulator, and improved consumer standards for tenants.
- 5 To have your voice heard by your landlord, for example through regular meetings, scrutiny panels or being on its Board.
- 6 To have a good quality home and neighbourhood to live in, with your landlord keeping your home in good repair.
- 7 To be supported to take your first step to ownership, so it is a ladder to other opportunities, should your circumstances allow.

Regulator of Social Housing Consumer Standards (2024)

From 1 April 2024 a new set of Consumer Standards will apply to all social landlords, including Councils who are landlords. This includes the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard, which requires landlords to be open with tenants and treat them with fairness and respect so that tenants can access services, raise complaints when necessary, influence decision making and hold their landlord to account.

Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code (2020)

The Complaint Handling Code requires landlords to assess itself against

the expected standards. It must be clear to residents what they can and should expect from their landlord when they complain.

Building Safety Act (2022)

This Act strengthens the regulatory system for building safety, placing increased responsibilities on building developers, owners and managers to ensure greater accountability for the design, construction and occupation of high-risk buildings. Residents must be provided with appropriate information and given opportunities to engage effectively regarding health and safety.

Fire Safety (England) Regulations (2022)

The regulations that came into force in January 2023 build on the requirements of the Fire Safety Order 2005 which require a responsible persons to take steps to ensure the safety of residents and add the need for residents of all blocks of flats to be provided with fire safety instructions and information.

2.2 Local - Our City: Our Plan

Our City: Our Plan is the Council's overarching strategic framework. One of our key priorities is to deliver 'good homes in well-connected neighbourhoods'. More broadly, the delivery of quality, safe and secure housing is a key enabler to the delivery of Our City: Our Plan as a whole, to enable Wulfrunians to live longer, healthier lives. Delivering on this priority and Our City: Our Plan more broadly, in the context of our role as a landlord, will require us to really understand and address our tenants' needs.

3. Consultation and Engagement

We have engaged extensively with our residents to help shape the development of our approach to resident influence and insight, ensuring that their perspectives and needs are central to the work we are progressing. We wanted to understand our residents' current experiences of influence/insight, and to identify areas where we can strengthen our approach and deliver improved resident engagement functions. The findings from this engagement have been used to shape and inform the development of our vision and key objectives.

3.1 Residence Influence and Insight Consultation (2022)

A public consultation process ran from July-September 2022 seeking residents' views on their role and ability to shape and influence decisions on their home. Residents were engaged through an online survey as well as face to face sessions at various events run by the Council's Managing Agents. 128 responses were recorded in total. The key things residents reported they valued in influencing services were: being listened to; feeling valued; and receiving an appropriate response which resulted in change or improvements.

3.2 Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Review (2020)

A Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Review was undertaken in 2020, covering both engagement and complaints. The survey revealed a need to increase tenants' awareness of the opportunities for engagement/involvement and the complaints process. Respondents highlighted the following areas for improvement in the complaints process: being kept informed of progress; communication preferences; and awareness and communication.

4. Vision and Objectives

Our vision is to deliver "safe and healthy homes" through proactive resident engagement and empowerment. We want our residents to feel confident to use their voice and share their views and experiences with us, as well as feel confident that their feedback is being acted upon. This is a two-way process, and it is up to us to establish and embed strong mechanisms for residents to have their voice heard.

Our vision is supported by the following objectives:

- 1 Ensure all tenants receive equal opportunity to be engaged with and influence the services they receive.
- 2 Deliver effective, accessible, and timely complaints processes for all tenants.
- 3 Understand the diverse needs of all our customers through making the best use of customer data.

5. Ongoing Monitoring

To ensure we continue to deliver on our vision and key priorities for resident influence and insight, we have established a number of mechanisms to monitor our progress and performance. Supporting this document will be a full Resident Influence and Insight Action Plan, which will detail our planned activities to meet our vision and objectives. We will monitor progress against the activities in this action plan.

Working in partnership, we are also establishing new scrutiny processes across all providers. This work will include recruiting and supporting tenants and leaseholders to facilitate the scrutiny process and increasing the number and diversity of tenants engaged in holding providers to account. We have commissioned Tpas, the tenant engagement experts, to work with the Council and its' managing agents to deliver a tenant-led scrutiny and engagement service. We are also working to deliver a new residents charter across all providers which will be published and promoted to ensure all residents have access to information about services. This will enable transparency and allow individuals to hold organisations to account.

The City's housing Management Agents will have an important role to play, working directly with tenants and residents to increase their engagement and involvement to scrutinise performance and help improve service delivery. Managing Agents will be required to have a robust Tenant Engagement Strategy/Plan in place which is co-created with, and overseen by, their tenants.

The delivery of this programme of work will be overseen by the Council's Better Homes Board, the Cabinet Member for Housing, and the newly established City Housing Oversight Panel.



Commitments 2023

	Detail	Outcome
1	We will listen to residents and treat them with respect, being honest and taking the time to really understand their situation, then acting promptly to resolve issues.	Residents feel valued and respected. Issues are resolved in a timely manner and do not re-occur
2	We will ensure that residents can access us, providing a range of opportunities for them to influence services and decisions.	Residents are able to contact organisations easily, build relationships with staff in their communities, and influence decisions and services
3	We will be committed and work together, recognising the power of local communities.	Organisations work effectively with each other and with communities to deliver projects and improvements in partnership.
4	We will communicate effectively with residents, using different channels to suit everyone, sharing information that residents need and being transparent.	Residents and staff have access to the information they need and want. Messages/answers to queries are consistent. Residents are not passed to other teams/organisations unnecessarily.
5	We will be accountable for delivering our commitments to residents, taking responsibility when things go wrong and using this to learn and improve.	Residents are able to hold all organisations to account. CWC holds managing agents to account. Complaints are handled effectively
6	We will understand our individual residents and communities and adapt our approaches accordingly.	Organisations understand, embed, and uphold the principles of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and demonstrate this via tailored approaches meeting the diversity of our tenants, residents, and communities



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