

## **Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Strategy 2019-2021**

## **1. Why do we have a Tenant Involvement & Empowerment Strategy?**

Stroud District Council believes that it is essential to work with and consider the views of our tenants, concerning the services we provide. Tenant Involvement and Empowerment is giving tenants the opportunity to have a say about how their housing service is delivered and placing our tenants at the heart of service delivery. We believe that by listening to and working with tenants, we can ensure that our policies and services are responsive to changing needs. This strategy sets out our commitment to make sure that all tenants, officers and councillors achieve this vision in relation to tenant involvement and empowerment.

The strategy focuses on our approach to tenant involvement and empowerment until 2021. We recognise that it is important to offer a range of involvement methods, providing our tenants with the opportunity to get involved with us at a level that suits them.

The strategy has been developed in partnership with Tenants, Councillors and Officers building on all partners continuing commitment to promote tenant involvement in a wide range of services.

### **Equality & Diversity**

The Council is committed to providing services which embrace diversity and promote quality of opportunity. The Council's goal is to ensure these commitments are reinforced by the Council's values and statutory and legislative requirements, ensuring these are embedded in our day to day working practices.

## **2. Introduction**

For many years, Stroud District Council has worked closely with tenants to improve our services – Tenancy Management, Repairs, Income Collection, ASB, Asset Management and Tenant Involvement. Tenants' views have been invaluable in shaping the service we now deliver in improving homes, neighbourhoods and communities throughout the District.

We want Stroud District Council tenants to be involved in checking, challenging and shaping our services to ensure they meet the varied needs of our communities. This is particularly relevant to adapt to changes in demography with emphasis on achieving cost savings through collaborative work with tenants and the wider community.

This strategy sets out the opportunities for tenants to be engaged in developing, shaping and monitoring our services and policies. This includes addressing needs and helping with aspirations as well as boosting community resilience and self-reliance. The principles apply to current and future residents and communities to whom we provide a service.

### **What have Tenants told us about involvement?**

Our housing profile is made up of:

5088 General Needs Properties which includes 823 Sheltered Housing Properties. We are promoting our tenant and involvement programme across the district to attempt to encourage cross generational involvement. Currently our involved tenants are on average over 60 and we would like to encourage younger people to become involved and hope that through the use of social media outlets we may be able to achieve this.

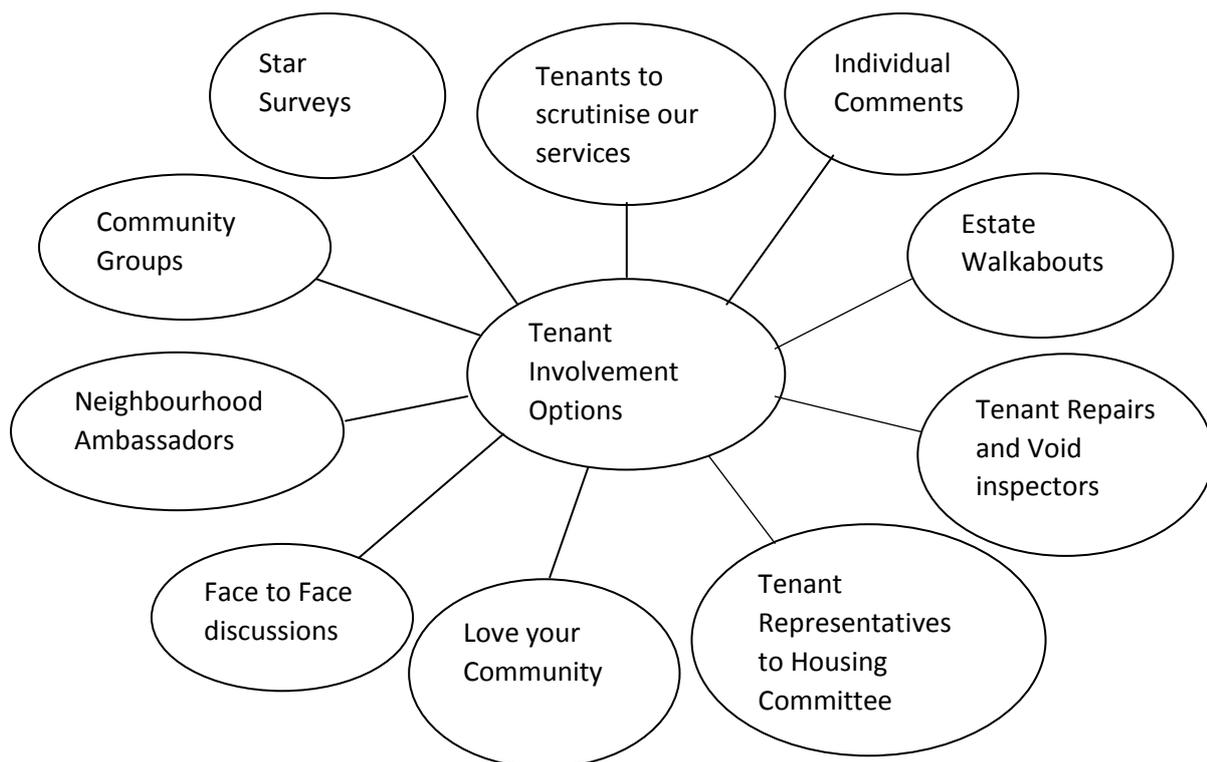
Previous tenant surveys have, the results of which were used to develop our approach to tenant involvement. Tenants told us that:

Overall satisfaction was 86%, results were slightly better than the previous survey and when benchmarked the results were generally at or above average in comparison with other Councils who were stock retained

The majority who responded to the survey thought that the Council were good at keeping them informed about issues that affected tenants (80%). However, Tenants felt there was a need to improve communication on common themes, particularly with regards to the repairs and maintenance service, ASB and complaints.

Feedback from the task & finish and working group indicated that Tenants enjoy being involved in decision making and relished the task of researching information from other Council's in order to benchmark where we are.

### **What is Tenant Involvement & Empowerment**



Tenant Involvement is a process of communicating between Stroud District Council and our tenants ensuring that:

- Tenants are given a voice to help improve the services they receive
- Information and best practice ideas to be shared between Officers, Tenants and Councillors.

- Improvement in the quality of our services
- Increased tenant satisfaction
- Increased community involvement
- Better quality of life for tenants
- Improved effectiveness
- Improved efficiency
- Better value for money

By involving tenants the benefits to Tenant Services and our tenants are:

- To empower tenants to have a say in their housing service and the way it is delivered
- To deliver services through continual improvement
- Services that reflect tenants needs
- Better communication between Landlord and tenants
- Increase in stakeholder interest

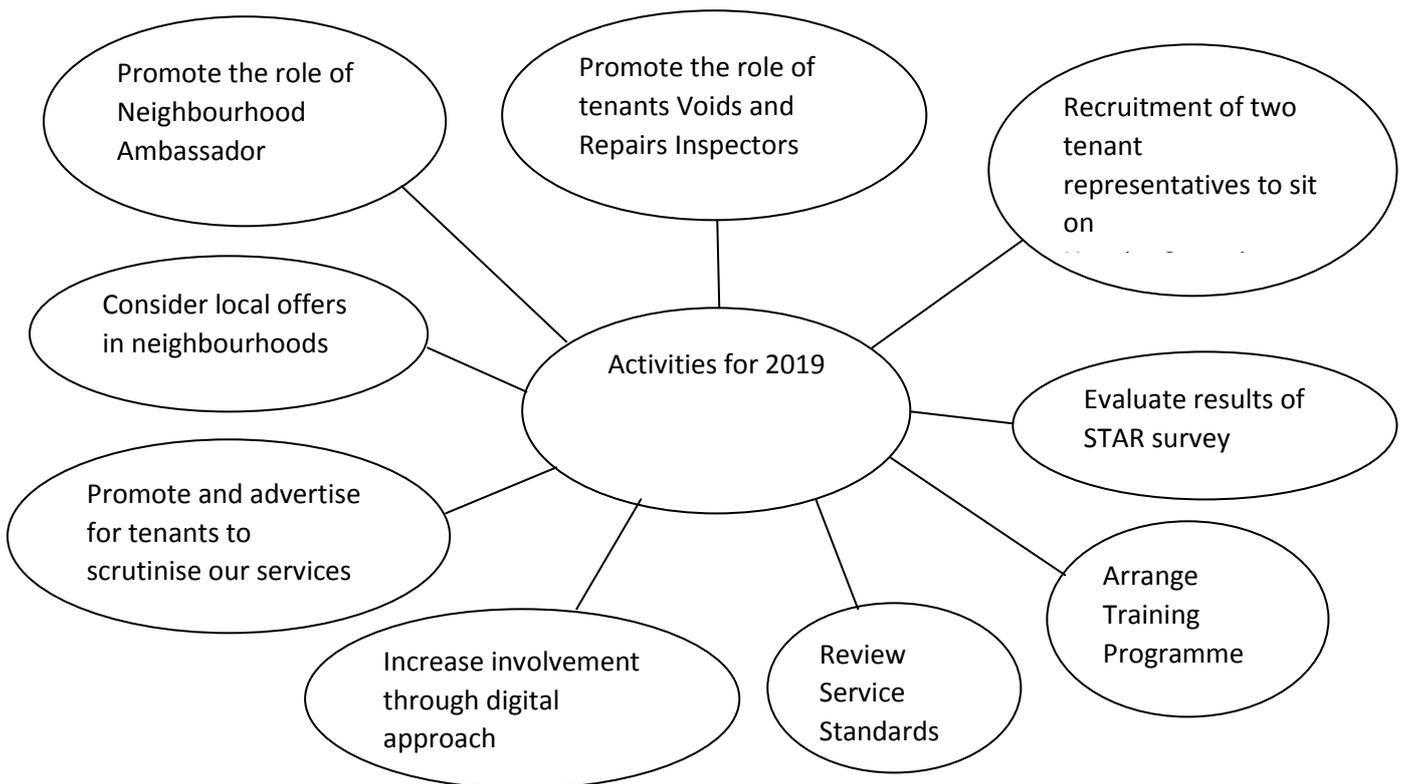
### **Current Tenant Involvement at Stroud District Council**

- We are in the process of training a group of Tenant Void & Repairs Inspectors.
- Tenant Involvement has taken place in the Procurement of an Independent Tenant Advisor to recruit Tenant Representatives for Housing Committee
- Tenants to be involved in an assessment afternoon to recruit Two Tenant Representatives for Housing Committee
- Implemented 'Love where you live' weeks on our Estates to address local issues
- Dementia event for Sheltered and General Needs tenants
- Training and promotion of Neighbourhood Ambassadors arranged for 2019
- Tenants participated in Task & Finish groups to revolutionise the way we engage with tenants and to look at ways of engaging further in the future
- Tenants were involved in the process of reviewing our revised Tenant Handbook
- STAR survey to be sent out to all tenants early 2019
- Estate Walkabouts



*Our new Neighbourhood Ambassadors*

**Tenant Involvement Activities planned for 2019 -2021**



*Neighbourhood Ambassadors discussing the Action plan*



### **Barriers to Involvement**

Stroud District Council recognises that tenant involvement requires commitment from tenants and that there may be barriers, which prevent tenants from becoming involved, such as:

- Lack of training
- Transport
- Family commitments
- Time
- Apathy
- Lack of interest

We are therefore committed to offering practical support to ensure tenant involvement is a viable option for as many as possible by:

- Providing training & Support
- Providing information in alternative formats
- Offering a wide range of involvement opportunities and methods

- Covering financial costs incurred
- Arranging meetings at locations and times accessible to tenants

*Tenant Void & Repairs Inspectors out on site inspecting a void property*



**The Tenant Involvement Strategy commits to:**

- Provide greater choices for more tenants on how they want to be engaged ensuring access to services are improved and adapted to suit all tenants removing barriers that may prevent them becoming involved
- Make best use of Tenant Services limited resources
- Improving our communication with all tenants
- Better measures and reports on what has improved as a result of tenant involvement
- More support to help tenants develop their knowledge and skills and improve their homes, and their neighbourhoods

- Seek tenants' views about service delivery and using this to improve our services and refine how they are delivered including continuous service improvement through tenants scrutiny
- Adjusting the way we work so that engaging tenants is given more prominence. The need to ensure Tenant involvement is a central part of all of Tenant Services day to day activities
- Ensuring tenants are more involved in influencing decision-making and offering more opportunities for developing residents' skills, knowledge and abilities, e.g. through training, advice, and support
- Developing and providing appropriate financial support
- Reviewing the recognition criteria for funded groups to ensure the criteria are fit for purpose.
- Reviewing funding practices and procedures as part of this Tenant Involvement & Empowerment Strategy review.

### **Our Tenant Involvement & Empowerment Strategy**

We are committed to giving tenants :

- A wide range of opportunities to be involved at a time to suit them
- Expanding our social media and text involvement

Our aim is to ensure that we are communicating honestly and that we are able to demonstrate how we have listened and taken action, feeding back widely and in a timely way. Effective tenant involvement and empowerment is part of our customer service and is everyone's responsibility. The focus of our involvement activity must invest as much in clearly communicating views to decision makers and ensuring a timely response to tenants, (as we do in the activities) to get their views. We must also regularly look at the wider picture; drawing together our feedback and service satisfaction with other performance information. This rebalancing and supporting analysis will ensure that involvement has an impact and gets demonstrable results.

### **What we want to achieve**

There are many benefits of tenant engagement and involvement. It is central to good governance, effective business improvement, and good customer service and our aim is to provide our tenants with excellent services to meet their expectations and needs. Our main outcomes that we want to achieve from our tenant involvement strategy are that:

- Tenants views influence on local offers
- Tenants are supported to improve neighbourhoods
- Tenants are involved in decisions about how housing related services are delivered, including the setting of service standards
- Tenants are involved in housing related policies and strategic priorities
- Tenants involved in the scrutiny of our performance and how it may be improved

### **How we plan to deliver excellent involvement**

#### **1. Demonstrate the outcomes and value for money of involvement**

Putting tenants at the heart of all that we do, we will support and empower tenants to play a lead role in checking how we perform, challenging us to improve, and holding us to account if we fail to do so.

To do this, we will:

- Develop a clear method for capturing outcomes from and impact of all our involvement activities, enabling us to demonstrate the value of involvement
- Develop clear routes for feedback on actions and identify what difference has been made as a result of involvement
- Assess the impact of all our involvement activities in collaboration with tenants and report back on the difference involvement has made
- Provide opportunities for tenants to assess the overall value for money of services through resident-led scrutiny
- Provide regular updates to Housing Committee on progress and success

**Activities planned for 2019 include:**

**2. Provide a wide range of involvement opportunities, which give tenants influence over local and strategic decision-making**

We know that tenant involvement is most successful when it is planned around the lives and interests of tenants. We will ensure that there are ways for tenants to influence the things that matter to them.

To do this, we will:

- Implement a new involvement structure which supports wider involvement and promotes opportunities for tenants to challenge and scrutinise our services
- Involve tenants in setting standards, performance indicators and targets and reporting on both good and bad performance
- Develop the performance monitoring role of tenants by providing them with accurate performance data so that they can effectively review services and challenge poor performance
- Support Neighbourhood Ambassadors to widen the communication channels they use within the community
- Enable and support tenants to develop local involvement opportunities to meet local community needs

**3. Increase involvement and use of tenant intelligence to drive service improvements**

We know that some tenants do not get involved because they do not believe that we will listen and act on what they tell us. We will aim to develop a 'you said, we did' approach that will help residents and staff to see where feedback has made a difference to the way we do things.

To do this, we will:

- Develop our approach to the collection of information we have about our tenants
- Understand and respond to the diverse needs of tenants
- Make our involvement opportunities more accessible to our diverse tenants and communities ensuring that tenants can have a say without having to travel miles or commit lots of time

*Dementia event held at Stonehouse Court Hotel for General needs and Sheltered Housing Tenants*



#### **4. Make better use of technology for involvement**

We know that tenants have busy lives and we want to make use of modern technology to make it as easy as possible for tenants to contribute.

To do this, we will:

- Develop the use of modern technology to give as many tenants as possible the chance to share and express their views, contributing to shaping and improving services
- Develop a database of involved tenants to support consultation and involvement activities
- Explore the potential for improving how we promote, measure and report the impact of involvement through the use of specialist software

#### **5. Provide training, capacity building and other support for both residents and staff**

We want to work with tenants and staff to create the very best opportunities for tenants to truly influence the decisions which impact on their lives.

To do this, we will:

- Ensure that staff are aware of the role of involvement, trained and are skilled in delivering effective involvement and supported to achieve clear performance targets
- Offer training, learning and support to all tenants to develop the skills and confidence to be effective in their involvement

#### **Monitoring performance in Tenant Involvement**

- Tenant Services recognises that a commitment to involving and engaging tenants can be weakened by a failure to effectively monitor progress and performance against these aims. Therefore, to support the continued promotion of tenant involvement activities as a key function in the delivery of services to tenants, we will collect information against a series of Performance Indicators (PIs) which will be

created with tenants that monitor the impact and effectiveness of tenant involvement activities.

- Develop a flexible involvement offer that is focused on results and outcomes, and action. As well as being embedded in the business planning cycle, proactively informing plans and strategies. It will be responsive to emerging priorities and issues by pop-up panels and task groups as well as one-off customer enquiry events.
- Ensure we understand feedback by looking at other performance information and through additional clarification or further research.
- Grow our activities and involvement opportunities in response to changing tenant needs, as well as through a continual striving for better engagement.
- Assess which tenants are impacted by change, and create tailor-made approaches to gain meaningful feedback. Our tenant involvement will be embedded throughout the organisation in a culture of good customer service and continuous improvement. Our involvement activities and our organisation will grow, evolve and develop in response to our residents' needs.
- Present performance information to Housing Committee at least annually, publish information on the website and social media as appropriate, publish improvements in the tenants newsletter (Keynotes)
- Ensure feedback is prompt. Regularly and widely communicate our tenants views and our response and action to them.
- Widely report on what our tenant and residents are saying and how we have responded and on a "you said we did" web page which will include 'you said- why we didn't' with a response to explain the situation.

This strategy will cover the period 2019 – 2021 but still be reviewed annually to ensure it remains fit for purpose and may change if the regulatory standards change or an act of legislation affects it.

Monitoring arrangements are to be fed back to Housing Committee

## Regulatory Compliance

The Regulator for Social Housing has a Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard (2017) which can be seen at:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/725831/Tenant\\_Involvement\\_and\\_Empowerment\\_Standard.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/725831/Tenant_Involvement_and_Empowerment_Standard.pdf) *With required outcomes for customer Service, choice and complaints including:*

Registered providers shall ensure that tenants are given a wide range of opportunities to influence and be involved in:

- The formulation of their landlord's housing-related policies and strategic priorities
- The making of decisions about how housing-related services are delivered, including the setting of service standards
- The scrutiny of their landlord's performance and the making of recommendations to their landlord about how performance might be improved
- The management of their homes, where applicable
- The management of repair and maintenance services, such as commissioning and undertaking a range of repair tasks, as agreed with landlords, and the sharing in savings made, and
- Agreeing local offers for service delivery.

### **Specific expectations**

- How tenants can access services
- The standards of housing services their tenants can expect
- How they are performing against those standards
- The service choices available to tenants, including any additional costs that are relevant to specific choices
- Progress of any repairs work
- How tenants can communicate with them and provide feedback
- The responsibilities of the tenant and provider
- Arrangements for tenant involvement and scrutiny.
- The provision of timely and relevant performance information to support effective scrutiny by tenants of their landlord's performance in a form which registered providers seek to agree with their tenants. Such provision must include the publication of an annual report which should include information on repair and maintenance budgets
- Providing support to tenants to build their capacity to be more effectively involved.

Registered providers shall consult with tenants on the scope of local offers for service delivery. This shall include how performance will be monitored, reported to and scrutinised by tenants and arrangements for reviewing these on a periodic basis.

Registered providers shall consult tenants at least once every three years on the best way of involving tenants in the governance and scrutiny of the organisation's housing management service.

### **APPENDIX B – Action Plan**