

Scrutiny Board:	Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board
Report Title	Tenant Engagement Strategy
Date of Meeting	8 January 2026
Report Author	Louis Bebb Housing Policy and Strategy Officer
Lead Officer	Alan Lunt Executive Director - Place
Lead Cabinet Member(s)	Councillor Vicki Smith Cabinet Member for Housing
Wards Affected	All Wards
Identify exempt information and exemption category	Not applicable
Appendices (if any)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tenant Engagement Strategy 2. Consultation Report - Tenant Engagement Strategy 3. Equality Impact Assessment – Tenant Engagement Strategy

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Tenant Engagement Strategy sets out how we will listen to, involve, and work alongside tenants to shape the homes and communities where they live. It provides a clear framework for partnership working, designed to empower tenants, enhance satisfaction, and build trust. This means providing meaningful opportunities for residents to influence decisions, improve services, and contribute to community wellbeing.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To consider and comments upon the Tenant Engagement Strategy.

3. Proposals – Reasons for the recommendations

- 3.1 Sandwell Council is committed to putting tenants at the heart of our housing services. We recognise that tenants, leaseholders, and residents are key partners in shaping how our housing services are delivered and improved. Our housing stock comprises over 27,700 homes across Sandwell—including

low- and high-rise flats, houses, bungalows, and maisonettes—serving a diverse community. We want every tenant, regardless of background or location, to feel heard, respected, and supported.

3.2 Our key aims are to:

- Strengthen the tenant voice in decision-making and service design
- Improve communication and transparency across all housing services
- Make it easy and accessible for everyone to get involved
- Promote accountability through regular feedback and performance monitoring
- Build trust and stronger partnerships between tenants and the council
- Ensure engagement is inclusive and reaches underrepresented communities
- Use tenant feedback and lived experiences to shape continuous improvement

Tenant Engagement Strategy Development - Task and Finish (T&F) Group

3.4 This strategy has been co-produced with tenants and our key partner, Sandwell Community Information and Participation Services (SCIPS), and it supports our wider housing ambitions. It reflects our shared values of respect, accountability, inclusivity, and transparency. We are embedding engagement into everyday housing practice through clear service standards, regular training for staff, and a range of accessible engagement opportunities—from local tenant groups to borough-wide conferences.

3.5 The tenant representatives on the Task and Finish Group played a central role in shaping the development of the Tenant Engagement Strategy (TES). The group first met on 16 May 2025, coming together as a partnership of tenants and officers to co-produce the Strategy from its earliest stages.

3.6 The T&F has met regularly from May 2025 to November 2025 to develop the strategy. The time taken reflects the depth of discussion and the commitment of tenant members. Across these sessions, the group explored and developed key elements of the Strategy, including:

- The purpose and objectives of a Tenant Engagement Strategy
- Guiding principles and expectations for engagement
- Approaches to communication, accessibility, and inclusion
- Methods for monitoring and reviewing the Strategy
- Drafting and refining the layout, wording, and presentation of the document

3.7 As part of the development process, tenants also helped design the consultation approach. They compiled and agreed the consultation questions used during the public consultation (18 October – 28 November 2025), which saw more than 30 residents take part across a broad range of age groups. Before the consultation launched, tenant representatives also led a discussion with the Senior Management Team (SMT) in Housing to review the draft Strategy and ensure tenant views were clearly embedded.

3.8 **Findings from T&F Group Work**

The Task & Finish Group identified key insights that informed the Strategy:

- Clear purpose, objectives, and accessible layout, wording, and graphics; principles of inclusivity, transparency, and accountability should be embedded.
- Engagement should use multiple channels, including in-person, online, pop-ups, and youth-focused sessions; communication should be accessible, with translations and summaries; engagement should be ongoing rather than one-off.
- The Strategy should include mechanisms to monitor progress and evaluate impact, with KPIs to track engagement effectiveness.
- Tenants should be involved from the earliest stages, including tenant-led review and discussions with SMT before consultation.
- Materials should feature a tenant-branded logo to demonstrate tenant ownership.
- Communication and transparency are critical to building trust; accessibility must be considered at all stages; engagement should be embedded in council processes to ensure sustainability.

3.9 Feedback received during this stage was generally positive, though tenants highlighted concerns around communication, the need for clearer commitments in delivery, and accessibility improvements such as translations and summary versions.

3.10 **Key outcomes of the T&F Group Activity**

- Genuine co-production of the Strategy, with tenants shaping headings, wording, layout, graphics and ongoing revisions
- Joint consideration of how the Strategy will be embedded to remain a live, actionable document
- Creation of a tenant-branded logo and agreement on how and where it should be used

4 **Alternative Options Considered**

4.1 An alternative approach would be not to adopt the Tenant Engagement Strategy. However, without this strategy in place, the council would be unable to fully deliver the objectives of the Housing Strategy 2023–2028, the Asset Management Strategy 2024–2029, Resident Engagement Strategies and the Regulatory Housing Standards introduced in April 2024. Tenant engagement is fundamental to meeting these requirements and ensuring services are responsive, transparent, and accountable. Failure to adopt the strategy would therefore lead to weaker governance, reduced tenant influence, and less effective management of housing services.

5.0 **Consultation**

5.1 The public consultation ran from **17 October to 28 November 2025**, during which the Strategy was discussed and feedback gathered through a wide range of forums:

- Tenant and Leaseholder Scrutiny Group (TLSG)
- Tenant and Resident Association (TRA) meetings
- Pop-up events at Rowley, West Bromwich, and Dorothy Parkes
- Youth engagement sessions through the Forum Independent Young Adults (FIYA)
- Workshops at the Council House
- SCIPS General Meetings

- Email submissions from tenants and officers

5.2 Additional outreach included:

- Engagement with Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) and faith partners
- Liaison with regional housing officers
- Promotion through the Tenant Engagement webpage, newsletters, and partner networks

5.3 Key Engagement Activities Timeline

- Early October 2025 – Draft TES shared with senior officers and councillors for review
- 17 October 2025 – TES consultation launched online and in-person
- 18 October 2025 – TLSG meeting to provide feedback on goals and KPIs
- 25 October 2025 – TRA Network Meeting, with paper surveys issued to five TRAs
- 7 November 2025 – In-person workshop at the Council House, attended by tenants
- 12, 19, 21 November 2025 – Pop-up events sharing the TES with tenants
- 25 November 2025 – SCIPS General Meeting, engaging tenant members
- 26 November 2025 – FIYA Young Adults Drop-In, promoting the TES and online consultation
- 27 November 2025 – Lancaster House TRA Meeting, where tenants raised concerns about trust, digital exclusion, and paper communication options
- 28 November 2025 – Consultation closed; findings reviewed to update the TES
- December 2025 – Final draft submitted to senior management for sign-off
- 9 December 2025 – TES report uploaded to mod.gov
- 8 January 2026 – TES presented to the Safer Neighbourhoods and Communities (SNAC) Board

5.4 **Summary of Consultation Findings**

The consultation shows strong support for the council's Tenant Engagement Strategy, with most respondents agreeing that the strategy is clear, well-structured, and addresses key priorities for tenant involvement. However, feedback consistently highlights the need for effective implementation, clear accountability, and visible delivery to build trust and confidence.

Key themes across responses included.:

- **Positive Reception:** Many respondents welcomed the strategy as long overdue, praising its clarity, structure, and focus on transparency, accessibility, and shared decision-making.
- **Concerns About Delivery:** Scepticism remains about whether commitments will be upheld, with respondents citing past failures to act on tenant input and unresolved repairs.
- **Accessibility and Inclusion:** Feedback highlighted the importance of accessible and inclusive engagement, suggesting consideration of alternative formats and approaches to support participation from all communities.

- **Communication and Feedback:** Strong emphasis on improving communication, creating feedback loops, and publishing clear evidence of how tenant input influences decisions.
- **Cultural Change:** Respondents stressed that staff attitudes and organisational culture must align with the strategy's aims for it to succeed.
- **Practical Suggestions:** Ideas included pop-up events, tenant ambassadors, welcome sessions for new tenants, and training opportunities to empower participation.

5.5 **Changes made to the Tenant Engagement Strategy following consultation:**

Following feedback from the consultation, the Tenant Engagement Strategy has been updated to reflect the views and suggestions received. The key changes made are as follows:

- An executive summary has been included to provide a concise, plain-English overview of the strategy.
- The strategy now confirms that an accompanying action plan will be developed in partnership with tenants, responding to feedback requesting clearer performance measurement.
- Additional performance measures have been incorporated to demonstrate how progress against the strategy will be monitored and reviewed.
- The KPI section has been revised to highlight the indicators specifically linked to delivery of the Tenant Engagement Strategy.
- Graphics are being incorporated to support presentation and improve clarity.

A copy of the Consultation Report is included in the appendices to this report.

6. **Financial Implications**

- 6.1 Delivery of the Tenant Engagement Strategy will be through existing Housing Revenue Account (HRA) resources. The council's HRA is ring-fenced specifically for the provision of landlord related services or facilities, provided primary for the benefit of its tenants.

7. **Legal and Governance Implications**

7.1 Legal:

Ensures compliance with statutory requirements for tenant involvement under the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 and associated regulatory standards. The strategy upholds tenants' legal rights to be consulted, informed, and involved in decisions about their homes and neighbourhoods. Legal risks may arise if engagement processes are not inclusive, transparent, or fail to demonstrate how tenant feedback has influenced decisions.

7.2 Governance:

Requires clear accountability, robust monitoring, and transparent reporting on tenant engagement outcomes. Governance arrangements will ensure that tenant voices are embedded in decision-making structures, with oversight provided through established panels, scrutiny groups, and performance reporting to senior management and elected members. Regular evaluation and published feedback ("You said – We did") will demonstrate how tenant

input informs policy, strategic and service improvements, reinforcing trust and accountability across housing services.

8. Risks

- 8.1 **Staffing Capacity and Resources:** There is a potential risk relating to the staffing capacity required to maintain and expand tenant engagement activities. As the strategy aims to strengthen communication and participation opportunities, it is essential that sufficient staff resources are available to support delivery and ensure consistency in engagement across all areas.
- 8.2 **Managing Tenant Expectations:** As engagement activity increases, there is a risk of raising expectations among tenants that may exceed what can realistically be delivered within existing resources and service constraints. Clear communication and transparent feedback will be key to managing these expectations effectively.
- 8.3 **External Policy and Legislative Changes:** Future changes in national policy, regulations, or legislation may influence aspects of the Tenant Engagement Strategy. Ongoing monitoring of external developments will be necessary to ensure the strategy remains aligned with emerging requirements and best practice.

9. Equality and Diversity Implications (including the public sector equality duty)

- 9.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been undertaken on the draft Tenant Engagement Strategy and completed in advance of consultation. The assessment concluded that the Strategy will have an overall positive impact by promoting fairness, inclusion, and equal access to engagement opportunities for all tenants and leaseholders.
- 9.2 The Strategy has been designed to ensure that every tenant—regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, or socio-economic background—has the opportunity to have their voice heard and influence decisions about their home and community.
- 9.3 Particular attention has been given to supporting engagement with underrepresented and vulnerable groups, including those who may face digital exclusion, language barriers, or additional accessibility needs. The Strategy commits to making reasonable adjustments, providing alternative formats, and removing barriers that prevent participation.
- 9.4 By embedding equality, diversity, and inclusion at every stage of engagement, the Tenant Engagement Strategy supports the council's duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty, ensuring that tenant participation reflects the diversity of Sandwell's communities.
- 9.5 The strategy also recognises the importance of addressing the stigma sometimes associated with being a council tenant. Through promoting and showcasing the positive contributions tenants make within their neighbourhoods and communities, the strategy seeks to challenge stereotypes and foster greater respect and understanding. In addition, it aims to build tenant capacity and confidence, supporting individuals to engage meaningfully in shaping services and local decision-making.
- 9.6 Internally, the strategy will also help raise awareness within Sandwell Council by encouraging a more inclusive culture that actively challenges unconscious bias and promotes a balanced and respectful perception of tenants.

- 9.7 A copy of the Equality Impact Assessment is included in the appendices to this report.

10. Other Relevant Implications

10.1 Health and Wellbeing:

The Tenant Engagement Strategy supports residents' health and wellbeing by promoting meaningful involvement in decisions that affect their homes and communities. When tenants are listened to and their concerns are acted upon, it leads to greater satisfaction, reduced stress, and improved confidence in housing services. The Strategy also encourages early identification of issues—such as repairs, safety, or environmental concerns—helping to prevent problems that could impact physical or mental health, particularly among vulnerable tenants.

10.2 Social Value:

By strengthening relationships between tenants and the council, the Strategy delivers strong social value outcomes. It builds trust, encourages collaboration, and supports tenants to play an active role in shaping their neighbourhoods. This shared approach promotes inclusion, civic pride, and resilience across Sandwell's communities.

10.3 Crime and Disorder:

Effective tenant engagement helps prevent disputes, anti-social behaviour, and frustration by ensuring that issues are raised and resolved through open communication and partnership. Clear feedback and transparent processes reduce the risk of conflict and build confidence in how the council manages housing and community issues.

11. Background Documents

- [Sandwell Council Housing Strategy 2023-2028](#)
- [Sandwell 2030 Vision: Corporate Plan 2021-2025](#)
- [Housing Revenue Account 30 Year Business Plan 2023-2053](#)
- [Regulatory Standards for Landlords](#)
- [Reasonable Adjustments Policy](#)
- [Tenant Handbook](#)
- [Tenancy Conditions](#)

12. How does this deliver the objectives of the Strategic Themes?

12.1 Growing Up in Sandwell:

Supports children, young people, and families to have a voice in shaping the places where they live. By involving tenants of all ages in decisions about their homes and communities, the strategy helps create safe, inclusive environments that support children's wellbeing and development.

12.2 Living in Sandwell:

Promotes secure, dignified, and confident living by ensuring tenants are listened to, respected, and actively involved in shaping housing services.

Engagement enables quicker resolution of issues, better communication, and stronger trust between tenants and the council.

12.3 Healthy in Sandwell:

Improves both physical and mental wellbeing by encouraging open dialogue, early reporting of issues, and co-designed service improvements. When tenants feel heard and supported, it reduces stress, increases satisfaction, and contributes to healthier, more resilient communities.

12.4 Economy in Sandwell:

Supports sustainable housing management and community investment by ensuring services are responsive, efficient, and informed by tenant insight. Empowered tenants help shape services that deliver value for money, reduce complaints, and create stable tenancies that enable residents to thrive in work and education.

12.5 One Council:

Demonstrates a joined-up approach across housing, engagement, and customer services teams. The strategy strengthens collaboration within the council and with partners such as SCIPS, ensuring that tenant voices consistently influence decision-making and service improvement across all housing functions.