

Meeting of:	<b>Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee</b>
Date of Meeting:	<b>Wednesday, 15 September 2021</b>
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Homes and Safe Communities
Report Title:	<b>Interim report on the development of the new Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy</b>
Purpose of Report:	To examine progress to date and emerging themes from the review of Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement
Report Owner:	Miles Punter - Director of Environment and Housing
Responsible Officer:	Farida Aslam, Senior Neighbourhoods Manager
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	This report will affect all Council tenants and therefore no individual ward member consultation has been undertaken. The report has been reviewed by Officers from the Legal and Finance teams
Policy Framework:	This report is within the Policy Framework and Budget.
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The report updates members on the development of a new Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy. It highlights some emerging themes and aims and sets out the next steps in terms of finalising the Strategy.</li> </ul>	

## **Recommendations**

1. That Scrutiny examine the report highlighting the emerging themes from the review of Tenant and Leaseholder engagement and notes the draft aims and objectives proposed.

## **Reasons for Recommendations**

1. To ensure that the review of current mechanisms and engagement work is robust, and the new Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy provides an effective means for all council tenants and leaseholders to have an opportunity to take part and have the opportunity to shape the services they receive.

## **1. Background**

- 1.1 The previous Tenant Engagement Strategy was approved by Cabinet in June 2018 (Cabinet Minute C97 refers) and incorporated feedback from the Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee. Subsequently the Scrutiny Committee has received regular updates regarding progress made.
- 1.2 The 2018 Strategy had four priority themes, firstly: integrating the tenants voice into the Housing section's decision-making process; secondly, creating a more inclusive approach to 'engagement'. Specifically, expanding opportunities for all tenants to take part and broadening the range of tenants taking part, so tenant engagement was representative of the broader tenant population. Thirdly, building capacity, i.e. ensuring that tenants and tenants groups have access to training and support and also the skills and confidence needed to take part. The fourth and final theme concerned 'listening and learning' which was about seeking feedback and using this to drive improvements to key services.
- 1.3 The last update report to Scrutiny in March 2021 highlighted the significant progress made over the last three years and set out that the new strategy will aim to build on these successes and drive further improvements to tenant and leaseholder engagement.

## **2. Key Issues for Consideration**

- 2.1 It has become clear that a new vision for tenant and leaseholder engagement should be considered, in line with good practise and tenant feedback received. Provisionally it is suggested that the new Vale Homes vision should be:
- 2.2 *"To create a culture where we develop and maximise the opportunities for tenants and leaseholders to contribute towards creating tenants and leaseholders centred services"*.

**2.3** To deliver this vision, it is suggested that three key themes and one overarching theme are adopted. These themes will group the work together, that we look to take forward over the next 3 years.

**2.4** The themes are:

1. To INVOLVE tenants and leaseholders to work to cocreate and develop tenant & leaseholder centred services that are meaningful and offer value for money.
2. To INVEST in staff and financial resources to enable the development of tenant and leaseholder driven services.
3. To support tenants & leaseholders to help INFLUENCE and shape current services, projects and initiatives from a service users' perspective and to help tenants and leaseholders realise their potential.

In addition to this, the overarching theme is:

4. To be LISTENED TO AND VALUED, ensuring that our tenants and leaseholders feel that their opinions are valued and listened to, we will operate in a continuous improvement manner, learning lessons by building in reviews and providing feedback to our service users.

**2.5** Underpinning these high-level themes are three drivers which stem from the STAR satisfaction survey feedback:

- the need for the organisation to listen and act on our tenants' views and
- the need to keep tenants informed and
- the need to continue to achieve an increase in overall satisfaction with Vale Home services

**2.6** This strategy will be measured by these three indicators and supported by a comprehensive action plan. The action plan will cover both internal staff actions to embed cultural change and external supportive actions, which will help engagement and to realise our ambitious vision for Tenant and Leaseholder participation in Vale Homes.

**2.7** The comprehensive action plan sets out what we will deliver, when and by whom. The action plan will be reported on quarterly in the internal Staff Working Group and Tenant Working group and the Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee on a six monthly basis.

- 2.8** In terms of next steps, the draft Strategy will be finalised following the discussion at Scrutiny Committee and go to Cabinet for approval of the working draft. There will then be further public consultation of the document and a further opportunity for input from Homes and Safe Communities Committee. Thereafter the final Strategy will be approved and adopted.
- 2.9** Following adoption, the Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee will be responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Strategy via six monthly update reports outlining progress against the various actions.

### **3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?**

#### Long term

- 3.1** The new Strategy will ensure that a planned approach is taken towards the long term, that services continue to improve, and customers can access the services they need when they need them.

#### Prevention

- 3.2** The approach to tenant and leaseholder engagement ensures that services provided remain focussed and relevant and meet the needs of tenants and leaseholders. Tenants and leaseholders have the best knowledge of their local areas and which services are required, therefore involving them in service design and key decisions will ensure that services are fit for purpose and neighbourhoods continue to thrive.

#### Integration

- 3.3** The Strategy will support a holistic approach to customer service which is focussed on outcomes and problem resolution, ensuring that different Officers and teams work together to bring about solutions to complex problems.

#### Collaboration

- 3.4** The Strategy will recognise that several factors contribute towards an effective Housing service and will set out a framework for several Council teams i.e. Rents, Neighbourhood Management, Assets and Repairs- to work together with residents to deliver high quality services.

#### Involvement

- 3.5** Better tenant and leaseholder engagement and increasing their voice is the driving force behind the new Strategy. Taking account of their' needs and views is vital to support the aim of providing high quality, responsive services. There is also an acknowledgement there needs to be a wide range of flexible ways for tenants and leaseholders to take part. As well as the traditional tenants' association structures, it is important to open opportunities for tenants and leaseholders from different backgrounds. This might be light touch, informal ways like completing surveys, attending estate walkabouts or taking part in

volunteering as well as more formal roles like joining the editorial panel for the tenant newsletter or joining the tenant scrutiny group.

## **4. Resources and Legal Considerations**

### **Financial**

- 4.1** The new Tenant and Engagement Strategy is being delivered within existing departmental resources. Financial investments are being made from tenant participation budget and expenditure will be monitored quarterly.

### **Employment**

- 4.2** There are no direct employment implications arising from this report.

### **Legal (Including Equalities)**

- 4.3** There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. The Strategy is however designed to ensure that all tenants and leaseholders have an opportunity to get involved and influence the way services are delivered. This includes people who may not have taken part previously and vulnerable people who may require more assistance. The Strategy also takes account of the need to make communications available in English and Welsh.

#### Public Sector Equality Duty

- 4.4** The public sector equality duty (see section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) came into force in April 2011. Public authorities like the Council are required, in carrying out their functions, to have due regard to the equality needs set out under s.149 of the Equality Act 2010 to:
- eliminate discrimination (both direct and indirect), harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
  - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
  - good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 4.5** The Council must also comply with the specific equality duties imposed by the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties)(Wales) Regulations 2011, SI 2011/1064 (“the Regulations”), particularly regulation 8 (imposing specific duties to make arrangements for assessing the impact of its policies/practice and monitoring of the same).

## **5. Background Papers**

None.