



Melton
Borough
Council

Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Framework

January 2022



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A History of Tenant Engagement in Melton

Tenants Forum Executive Committee (TFEC)

The Tenants Forum Executive Committee (TFEC) was established in 1999, as part of a government funding initiative that supported local authorities to work with and help set up tenant groups, to ensure that services being provided met tenants needs. The Forum aimed to represent all tenants with a fair and equal approach, wanting to ensure that all the concerns and issues that tenants and leaseholders raised would be challenged and addressed with the Council on their behalf. TFEC previously had a membership of over 20 tenants, who lived around the borough.

The Forum won many awards and played a lead role in setting the standard for tenant engagement across the region, including helping to establish a large tenant forum, known as East Midlands Tenant Participation Forum, some 21 years ago.

TFEC has also played a key role in informing and shaping a number of changes including:

- Supporting the procurement of repairs contractors
- Supporting the recruitment of senior council staff members
- Defining a voids / re-let standard when letting council properties
- Representation at a Fire Safety Management Working Group, which oversaw the efficient implementation of the Fire Safety Management Policy and Mobility Scooter Policy for all Melton Borough Council tenants and leaseholders
- Representation on the Housing Improvement Board – a group established to ensure progress against a clear plan to improve health and safety compliance in Council properties

The Forum would regularly engage with tenants on tours of the Borough, which often led to residents joining TFEC. The Forum found this to be useful to learn about tenants' experiences and expectations, especially around tenancy management. Officers and Members would join these tours. There would also be bi-monthly formal meetings for members of the forum, council officers and tenants and leaseholders to attend, where questions could be asked around the management of their homes.

We would like to thank TFEC for their hard work over many years. The work of TFEC has undoubtedly provided tenants and leaseholders with a voice, and has quite rightly held the Council to account. The revised framework builds on this legacy, whilst also refocussing tenant and leaseholder engagement in the context of The Charter for Social Housing Residents. We are grateful to TFEC members for their support in shaping this Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Framework, including the development of service improvement platforms in the future.

The following provides a summary on four other resident groups that have been formed in Melton and work alongside the council. The groups are made up of residents who could be social housing tenants, leaseholders, and private owners:

South Melton Residents Group / Shout-4-Residents

This group was formed in 2005 and addresses issues within the South Melton area, such as ASB, development and community issues. It is a constituted group; therefore, it is self-funded, but supported by Melton Borough Council through officers attending or picking up issues raised at the residents' meetings, which are held six times a year. The group works hard for the community and holds regular Friday coffee morning groups and has continued to do so over the pandemic lockdowns, through virtual meetings. It holds monthly bingo evenings, which are always well attended, and each year holds a children's Christmas party and receives support from local companies.

Residents Action Group, Egerton (RAGE)

Egerton Ward had a strong residents' group – RAGE (Residents Action Group, Egerton) who met on a bi-monthly basis at The Cove Community Centre, on Sysonby Street. RAGE covered the whole of Egerton ward and produced three or four newsletters a year covering local news and issues. The group also supported activities such as day trips for residents to go to the east coast and an annual Christmas bingo evening. It is understood that the pandemic may have impacted on opportunities for the group to meet.

Town Centre Residents Group

This is a non-constituted group and works on behalf of all tenants, leaseholders and residents, who live within the Town Centre location. The area is made up predominantly of residential blocks of flats, with a mixture of supported and general needs tenants. Within the Town Centre we also have two sheltered (former warden based) blocks of flats, Saint John's Court & Granby House. The group has not met since March 2020, due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Most of the members live in and around a sheltered scheme (Saint John's Court), which has recently seen a large amount of change due to fire safety and compliance works. The council has consulted widely with the residents here upon the necessary works and the changes that the tenants have had to deal with, to make sure that they are living in a safe and secure home. The group has worked with the Council on some challenging issues, which include the removal of mobility scooters being stored in communal areas and transition to mobility scooter pods. More recently council has been consulting with the sheltered scheme around the removal of bins out of the original bin store areas, as they pose a fire risk, into external bin store areas.

Springfield Street Residents Group

This is also a non-constituted group, which works on behalf of all the tenants, leaseholders and residents, on the west side of the Egerton ward and is based in the community centre off Springfield Street. It is made up of those who live in the immediate vicinity of the community centre, Nottingham Road and on Welby Lane. It is a very small group and like the Town Centre group, has not been able to meet throughout the pandemic and it is uncertain if the group is still running. In the past, there has been positive work with the immediate community, including monthly afternoon teas, bingo and speakers giving talks on specialist subjects.

Context

Good landlords engage in an open, inclusive, and meaningful way with their residents, creating opportunities for tenants to share their views and responding proactively and respectfully to feedback. It is right that landlords are held to account and embrace the views and voices of tenants to improve services.

In November 2020, the Government released its White Paper; 'The Charter for Social Housing Residents'. The White Paper aims to rebalance the relationship between social housing landlords and their tenants, and it sets out principles to underpin safe and decent housing, ensures that residents (tenants & leaseholders) are treated with dignity and respect and that social housing that is required is provided for the future.

Melton Borough Council has a history of engaging positively with residents, however, there is a need and opportunity for a refresh and focus of this important strand of our work through a new Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Framework. The framework confirms the Council's commitment to listen and be accountable as a landlord and sets out how the Council will engage proactively with its tenant and leaseholders.

This framework will ensure that the voices of tenants and leaseholders are heard and that people are given the opportunity to engage with officers and councillors and other social housing residents, on matters pertaining to their homes and neighbourhoods. Involving tenants and leaseholders, is not an optional extra.

Introduction

About Tenancy Services

Melton Borough Council provides just over 1800 homes in the borough and manages 30 leasehold properties. In August 2020 the council established a Tenancy Services team to manage these properties and provide a safe and effective landlord service to tenants and leaseholders across the borough.

Vision

The vision for the tenancy services team is 'To create a digitally enabled service that is easy to do business with and where tenants and leaseholders are at the heart of everything we do'. This includes providing a range of inclusive and accessible engagement options at every level.

The Council is committed to continually improving the way it delivers services, including the homes it provides. Collaboration with tenants and leaseholders will help shape Melton Borough Council's future direction. This collaboration should be dynamic and transparent, influencing decision making and ensuring there is an emphasis on a joint approach. We will be responsive to tenants and leaseholders, by listening to feedback and improving services.

The five-year Tenant & Leaseholder Engagement Framework has been developed to fulfil the current and future expectations of the council, its tenants and the Regulator of Social Housing and Central Government. As a framework it sets the principles for engagement and will be supported by an action plan to ensure delivery and continued progress.

Melton Borough Council Corporate Strategy (2020-24)

In September 2020 the Council adopted a new Corporate Strategy for the period 2020-2024.

The Corporate Strategy sets out the Council's focus and aspirations for this period. Following public consultation and engagement with our stakeholders and partners, the Council agreed a clear vision and ambition for Melton and the people who live and work here.

We established a set of six priorities which seek to respond to the issues that matter most to local people.

- Excellent services positively impacting on our communities
- Providing high quality council homes and landlord services
- Delivering sustainable and inclusive growth in Melton
- Protect our climate and enhance our rural, natural environment
- Ensuring the right conditions to support delivery (inward)
- Connected with and led by our community (outward)

Within the priorities are a number of commitments. Those that are particularly relevant to the Tenant and Leaseholder Framework are set out in more detail below:

Excellent services positively impacting on our communities

- Improving processes to ensure the best possible customer experience across all the council's service areas
- Invest in digital systems which will improve services to our customers and increase productivity
- Focusing on Priority Neighbourhoods, working in partnership to tackle community issues
- Refocus community support services to respond to the impact of COVID-19

Providing high quality council homes and landlord services

- Significant investment in improving landlord and tenancy services
- Significant investment in the asset management of council homes
- Deliver better and temporary accommodation for those who need it
- Engage with tenants and leaseholders to ensure our services meet their needs
- Improve the quality and value-for-money of our repairs and maintenance services
- Ensure our properties meet the Decent Homes Standard
- Provide new high-quality council homes

Regulatory Context

Regulator of Social Housing Standards

There are four regulatory requirements that housing providers must adhere to. For the purposes of tenant engagement, the council must follow the requirements of the Regulator of Social Housing's Tenants Involvement and Empowerment Standard 2017. The following are the three required outcomes for all social housing providers:


- Customer service, choice and complaints
- Involvement and empowerment
- Understanding and responding to the diverse needs of tenants

The standard underpins the principles of co-regulation and tenant engagement. Co-regulation means that councillors are responsible for ensuring that their landlord services are managed effectively and comply with all regulatory requirements. The council must also support tenants to shape and scrutinise service delivery and to hold councillors to account where standards are not being met.

The Charter for Social Housing Residents

The Government 2020 white paper ‘The Charter for Social Housing Residents’ sets out to raise the standard of social housing and to meet the aspirations of the residents, throughout the country. It talks of safety, quality, family, of life free from the damage of crime and anti-social behaviour, and of the opportunity to being able to move away from renting to home ownership, wherever possible.

The Charter sets out seven expectations for all social housing residents:




	
To be safe in your home	Melton Borough Council must ensure that every home is safe and secure
To know how Melton Borough Council is performing	This will include repairs, complaints and safety, and how Melton Borough Council spends its money, so that its social housing residents can hold us to account. The Council must publish and make available information on how we are performing in key areas of service delivery
To have your complaints dealt with promptly and fairly	Allowing access to a strong Ombudsman who will give our social housing residents swift and fair reparation when required
To be treated with respect	This will be backed by a strong consumer regulator and improved consumer standards for our tenants and leaseholders
To have your voice heard by the Council	For example could be through regular meetings, scrutiny panels or being part of a Service Improvement Group. The Government has stated that help will be given to our tenants and leaseholders, by giving tools to ensure that we are listening
To have good quality homes and neighbourhoods to live in	Melton Borough Council must ensure that our tenants’ homes are in good repair, and that our neighbourhoods are safe and enable our residents to thrive
To be supported to take your first step to home ownership	The Council must ensure tenants can access appropriate home ownership opportunities

About Tenancy Engagement

What is Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement?

Tenant and leaseholder engagement is a term used to cover many different activities within a housing service through which tenants and leaseholders can contribute to how the service is delivered. The council will ensure that tenants and leaseholders are provided with a range of flexible options for involvement and engagement at different levels, which include both formal and informal settings in person and online.

Key Elements of Effective Engagement:

 <p style="text-align: center;">Be Strategic</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Link our engagement priorities to our visions and objectives, that they flow alongside the Council's business objectives ➤ Embed our engagement, ensuring that the structure and approach is fit for purpose and reaches all levels within the Council
 <p style="text-align: center;">Find the right approach</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Involve tenants, leaseholders and staff, ensuring that everyone understands the role of engagement, the role that they play in making it work and the benefits it brings. Offer tenants and leaseholders the opportunity to scrutinise, monitor, decide, influence, comment, and feedback in various ways ➤ Appropriate engagement, enables scrutiny and influence at a strategic and operational level, which will help us to review our processes, to streamline our services, systems, and documents, ensuring that tenants and leaseholders have an accountable role in our housing decisions, performance, and conduct
 <p style="text-align: center;">Review your Engagement</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Track outcomes and value as it is important to understand and be able to show the value of our engagement activities and community development, to arrive at cost-effective solutions, but ensuring that there is continued support for future work ➤ Plan engagement activities to achieve a specific objective. Track, and review what we do, how it was done and the outcomes that were achieved.

Guided by this framework, the council will create a range of ways for tenants and leaseholders to participate in engagement activities safely, as well as supporting tenants and leaseholders to learn and explore new ways of working and communicating to ensure engagement thrives and can lead to change.

Impact and Outcomes of Meaningful Engagement

Effective engagement reaches all tenants and leaseholders, not just those already involved, but ensuring everyone is given the opportunities to contribute. It is not only about what tenants and leaseholders can tell us about their housing experience and needs, but also about giving tenants and leaseholders an understanding of what a housing provider must consider when delivering the service. This exchange of information promotes meaningful engagement, realistic expectations, as well as better decision making, which improves outcomes and value for money.

Meaningful tenant and leaseholder engagement impacts and outcomes may include:

- Increased tenant and leaseholder satisfaction
- Informed service delivery decisions
- Two-way respect, understanding and common goals
- Knowledgeable tenant and leaseholder contribution
- Joint working for service improvements
- Pride in homes and neighbourhoods

The knock-on effect increases customer and staff satisfaction, of pride in a person's home, neighbourhood and workplace, leading to a sense of place within the community. Good engagement is built on mutual respect and the council has an enormous appreciation for the dedication shown by tenants' forums and residents' groups over the years, and for the experience and knowledge of its members. The aim is to expand engagement to increase the positive impact and service outcomes.

Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Structure / Approach

Through the Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Framework we aim to develop a structure which allows tenants and leaseholders to participate as much or as little as they want.

Activities will form a number of work streams, including:

A small group of representative tenants and leaseholders known as the **Tenant and Leaseholder Choice Group** that will work with the council at a strategic level, through **thematic service improvement groups**. Their brief will include monitoring performance against the expectations of the 'Charter for Social Housing Residents' and the Regulator for Social Housing's Consumer Standards and specifically the 'Tenant Involvement and Engagement Standard'.

Working alongside senior council officers and the Portfolio Holder for Council Homes and Landlord Services, the group will help deliver and shape service improvements. The Tenant & Leaseholder Choice Group will make recommendations for change and will share the views of tenants and leaseholders.

A pool of residents who have expressed an interest in active engagement will be known as the **'Your Choice'** panel – these residents will be engaged in a **programme of thematic assurance** (the format of this engagement will vary depending on the specific circumstances), through a programme of service improvement assurance groups. The assurance groups will take a thematic approach including:

- To examine one of the four following key service areas in detail and make recommendations for changes, known as 'Your Choice', Service Improvement Assurance:
 - Tenant Engagement – could include but not restricted to, satisfaction surveys, complaints and providing the opportunity for landlord services to be scrutinised
 - Tenancy Management – could include, but not restricted to, allocations, enforcement, and supported services, neighbourhood, ASB
 - Assets – could include but not restricted to, voids, repairs, and planned maintenance
 - Compliance – could include but not restricted to, gas servicing, electrical certificates and asbestos surveys
- Proposals on / changes to key policies
- Major works on estates
- Particular interest topics
- Local area walkabouts and inspections
- Community champions

At least one assurance panel / engagement will be held each quarter, with a short newsletter provided to all tenants and leaseholders to provide feedback and details of any changes and improvements.

There will also be a clear focus to engage and include as many tenants and leaseholders as possible as an ongoing commitment, through a programme of activities that could include, for example:

- Quarterly 'Homes for Melton' newsletter and annual report
- Mystery shopping
- Re-let inspections on voids
- Satisfaction surveys (including annual satisfaction survey)
- Local or tenant-wide online or postal communication
- Quick polls using social media

- Seeking contributions or responses to articles in the 'Homes for Melton' newsletters
- Holding engagement events around the borough, by going out to our tenants and leaseholders
- Asking our residents if there are any specific groups to engage with on a specific issue

We will ensure that we make good use of data and information that we receive about services and satisfaction. This includes learning from best practice in other organisations. Examples include:

- STAR (situation, task, action and result) system, so we can compare our results with other landlords
- Reviewing and resolving complaints and encouraging feedback
- Improving customer experience / efficiency of interactions with us
- Make best use monitoring performance after an interaction/transaction – repairs, combined with customer profile data can help us understand important issues to different groups of tenants and leaseholders
- Collaborative working with other landlord and organisations
- Real-time data so we can quickly identify and respond to issues or concerns

Tpas Network

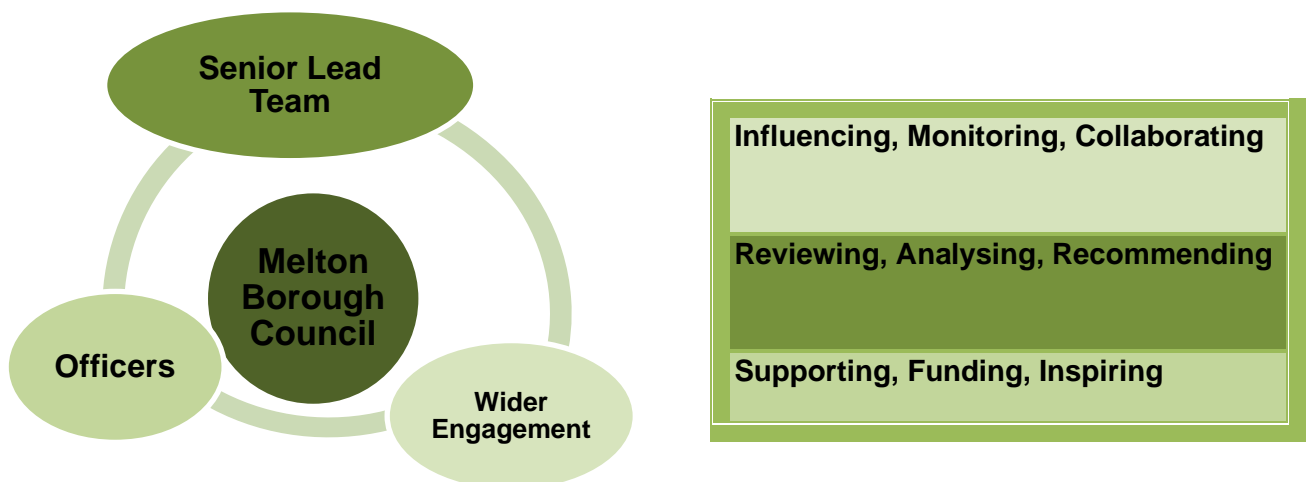


Tpas is a national organisation that promotes, supports and champions tenant involvement and empowerment in social housing across England. Membership with Tpas is key to be able to enhance tenant and leaseholder engagement. Melton Borough Council became a Tpas member in April 2021. This membership is not only for council officers, but also for tenants and especially key tenant representatives. <https://www.tpas.org.uk/>

The National Tenant Engagement Standards set by Tpas are crucial for us to be able to provide effective engagement across the Council. They help set out why it is important to recognise the tenants' voice, but also that our actions speak far greater than our words, when engaging with tenants. The Council aims to achieve Tpas accreditation during the life of this framework.

Culture is also important and this framework sets out to ensure that everyone who is part of the Council, understands and recognises the need to have true and transparent engagement, where we use the information to respond positively to the ever changing needs of our tenants and leaseholders

Successful Engagement:



Supporting a Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Culture

Tenant and leaseholder engagement comes from and promotes a culture of mutual trust, respect and partnership working between tenants and the landlord. It exists when these interests work together towards a common goal of better housing conditions and housing services. Tenant and leaseholder engagement will not be the responsibility of one member of staff but will be a responsibility and expectation of all members of the housing team. Embedding tenant and leaseholder engagement as a core part of our housing offer will be a key focus as we implement this framework.

Barriers to Engagement

It is important to identify the barriers to engagement that hinder tenant and leaseholder engagement and how these can be overcome. We recognise there are many barriers that prevent engagement, for example:

Barriers to consider

- The capacity and ability of different stakeholders to participate
- 'Hard to reach groups' such as young people, older people, minority groups or socially excluded groups
- Levels of community infrastructure
- Contested or divided communities
- Rural isolation
- Gaps in information
- Literacy and numeracy levels and dominance of oral culture

The council is therefore committed to offering solutions and opportunities so that tenant and leaseholder engagement is as easy as possible to access. These solutions include, but are not limited to:

Solutions:

- Training and support for tenants and leaseholders who wish to engage
- Information in a range of formats
- Allowing reasonable time for tenants to understand the information
- Cover financial costs incurred by tenants and leaseholders
- Wide range of engaging methods
- Vary times and locations
- Support as necessary

Diversity Values

We are committed to providing a fair and equitable service and ensuring that tenants and leaseholders are treated without discrimination. This framework helps us to deliver our commitment. We will make sure that in delivering our services we continue to be inclusive and representative. We want all our tenants and leaseholders to have the opportunity to be involved, regardless of age, disability, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, marital status or civil partnership, pregnancy or maternity status. We are committed to a digital agenda but also will provide information in other formats when required and will ensure that there are a range of opportunities and ways in which residents can get involved.

Training

Tenant and leaseholder engagement is not an optional extra. We must embed it into all that we do. For the framework to be a success we are committed to ensuring that key staff members, tenants and leaseholders have the right knowledge, skills and approach and can access appropriate training and information. A comprehensive training program will be developed and added to the tenant engagement offer.

Communication

Good meaningful communication is key to keeping tenants and leaseholders appraised. It supports our aim to develop a landlord/tenant relationship that encourages feedback and engagement. Quality can be measured in terms of the style, frequency, and content of the communications. As part of the framework the council will:

- Publish a newsletter quarterly, this will also form part of our annual reporting update and to provide 'good news' stories
- Performance information
- Ensure all documentation is clear and accessible
- Develop and improve the website for the council housing pages
- Have an ongoing presence on social media

Tenant Offer

Effective relationships between the council and its tenants / leaseholders will depend upon trust and clear and honest communication in both directions.

Officers will be available to help and avoid potential frustration or confusion, about any matters that are affecting both tenants and leaseholders, who are living in the Council's properties. It is therefore important to be clear on expectations so that there are no misunderstandings on either side. A tenant's offer has been developed to demonstrate how the Council will communicate on a proactive basis, but also how, Tenant Groups and Officers should communicate with each other in relation to service requests, on behalf of tenants and leaseholders. It will be refined through engagement with our residents. (The draft can be made available by contacting Customer Services 01664 502502, and ask for the Tenant Engagement & Service Improvement Lead, or email Housingconsultation@melton.gov.uk)

Tenants and Leaseholders Key Priorities

Feedback received from the tenant and leaseholder engagement weeks in June 2021 showed that key service delivery priorities of concern were:

- Repairs and maintenance
- Capital program and stock improvements
- Tenant engagement
- Garden management

Additionally, a baseline tenant satisfaction survey was completed by sector lead Acuity Research & Practice in September 2021, enabling the Council to benchmark its performance against other landlords. This has shown that the Council needs to improve in the following areas:

- Repairs & Maintenance
- Communications
- Neighbourhood Management

The tenant satisfaction survey will be repeated each year, and will inform the Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement action plan.

Monitoring Our Performance

It is important that tenants and leaseholders are able to hold us to account, that we do what we say we will do, and our performance against the commitments set out in this framework are visible to tenants, leaseholders, councillors and other key stakeholders.

We will update tenants and leaseholders on the following:

THEME	TENANT SATISFACTION MEASURES
Keeping properties in good repair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Decent Homes Standard compliance ➤ Responsive repairs completed right first time ➤ Tenant and leaseholder satisfaction with landlord's repairs and maintenance service
Maintaining building safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Compliance with health and safety obligations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Gas safety ● Electrical safety ● Fire safety ● Asbestos ● Water safety ● Lift safety
Effective handling of complaints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Number of complaints relative to the size of the landlord ➤ % of complaints resolved within agreed timescale ➤ Tenant and leaseholder satisfaction with Melton Borough Council's complaints handling
Respectful and helpful engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Number of complaints relating to fairness and/or respect, relative to the number of social housing properties that Melton Borough Council own ➤ Tenant and leaseholder satisfaction that Melton Borough Council listens to their views and takes notice of them ➤ Tenant and leaseholder satisfaction with Melton Borough Council's engagement with tenants and leaseholders
Responsible neighbourhood management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ % of communal areas meeting the required standard ➤ Number of complaints relating to communal areas, relative to the number of social housing properties that Melton Borough Council own

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Tenant and leaseholder satisfaction with Melton Borough Council's actions to keep communal areas clean and safe ➤ Tenant and leaseholder satisfaction with Melton Borough Council's contribution to the neighbourhood associated with their home ➤ Number of complaints relating to anti-social behaviour, relative to the number of social housing properties that Melton Borough Council own ➤ Tenant and leaseholder satisfaction with Melton Borough Council's handling of anti-social behaviour
Overall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Tenant and leaseholder overall satisfaction with the service that Melton Borough Council provides

Action Plan

The Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement framework sets out our aims, ambitions and commitments for developing and improving meaningful tenant engagement over the next five years. A number of activities / programmes of work will be required to deliver the commitments contained within the framework. To oversee and ensure progress, an action plan will accompany this framework. The nature of this work means that whilst there will need to be an overarching framework and plan, the action plan itself will need to be dynamic and responsive to the needs of the tenant engagement programme – it will be a working document.

The action plan will be overseen by a Strategic Housing Officers Group, which will form in 2022. Progress updates will be shared regularly with the portfolio holder and will be presented to SLT on a six-monthly basis. An annual tenant and leaseholder engagement update will be presented to Cabinet every twelve months.

Initial actions include:

- Publish details of the commitment to engage in a meaningful and proactive way with tenants and leaseholders
- Publish the tenant satisfaction survey results and recommendations
- Arrange training for staff and stakeholders around the White Paper core values and the Tenant & Leaseholder Engagement Framework
- Implement a programme of service improvement groups from February 2022
- Engage with tenants to shape the development of the HRA business plan
- Launch of a Tenant & Leaseholder Facebook Group
- Create a specific Tenant & Leaseholder Engagement webpage
- Develop and issue the next Homes for Melton newsletter end January 2022
- Refine the proposed 'tenant offer' to guide communication between the councils and tenant representatives
- Understand requirements to achieve Tpas accreditation
- Develop a communications plan
- Ensure that tenant engagement is embedded as a core strand of the remit of a new strategic housing officers group (internal)