

Report to: Policy & Performance Improvement Committee – 16 March 2026

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| Report Summary | |
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| Report Title | Enhancing Tenant Engagement at Newark and Sherwood |
| Purpose of Report | To set out a series of measures to build on and strengthen the role and influence of tenants in the management of their homes and neighbourhoods. |
| Recommendations | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To note the current tenant engagement arrangements and the practical ways in which tenant engagement was leading to improved outcomes in service delivery 2. To refresh the current Tenant Engagement Board in the following ways: - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase the number of tenant representatives from three to five • Re-allocate the Chair of the Board to a tenant representative • Rename the current Tenant Engagement Board (TEB)/Housing Assurance Board (HAB) to Tenant Influence and Assurance Board 3. To endorse the proposed enhanced Tenant Engagement Framework, including the programme of recruitment and incentivisation to widen the participation and representation of tenants on the Board and as Tenant Engagement Champions and scrutineers. 4. To note the report will progress to Governance, General Purposes and LGR Committee on 26 March 2026 and Full Council on 19 May 2026 |

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| Reason for Recommendation | <p>The proposed recommendations strengthen tenant influence, participation and assurance within housing services and directly support the delivery of the Council’s Community Plan 2023–2027, Serving People, Improving Lives. They place tenants at the heart of decision-making, improve accountability and service quality, and help ensure housing services are responsive to the needs of Newark and Sherwood residents.</p> |
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1.0 Background

1.1 Tenant Engagement at Newark and Sherwood

Tenant engagement at NSDC is designed as a deliberate and structured process to promote meaningful communication and cooperation between the Council and its tenants. The core objective of this approach is to ensure that the perspectives and opinions of tenants are not only heard but actively included in the Council’s decision-making and governance processes. This extends to all aspects of housing service delivery and plays a significant role in nurturing vibrant, thriving communities where tenants feel heard and can drive improvements and changes to the services they receive.

This structure has been in operation since 2021, providing tenants with opportunities to engage directly with Council representatives and contribute to important discussions about housing services. See Figure 1 below:

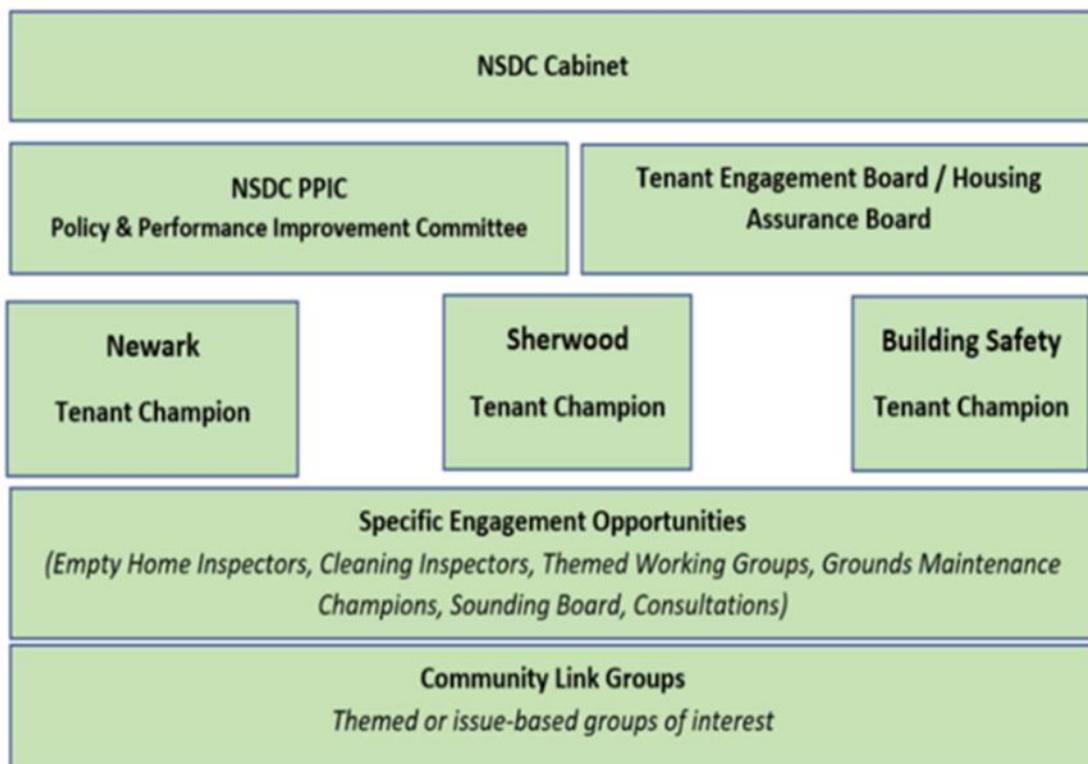


Figure 1 Current Tenant Engagement Structure

1.2

Tenant Champions operate across key service areas and neighbourhoods, supporting service improvement, inspections and scrutiny activity, and acting as a link between tenants and council officers. This ensures that tenant insight informs both operational delivery and wider service development.

Tenant Champions also provide tenant representation within the Council's formal governance and assurance arrangements, sitting on the Tenant Engagement Board alongside councillors and officers. The monthly Champion meetings with housing services staff provide a structured opportunity to discuss emerging issues and develop items for consideration by the Board.

Increasing the number of Tenant Champions from three would strengthen representation, resilience and meaningful tenant influence within the engagement framework.

1.3

Currently the Council seeks to ensure that tenants have a voice and influence in a number of ways, including:

- Getting To Know You visits – where a Tenancy Officer visits the home in person, and discussing engagement activities available to them
- Surveys, consultations and topic-based workshops
- Community Link Group Meetings – held across the district quarterly by the Tenancy Team
- Boughton Hub Drop Ins
- Estate and area action
- Chatham Court Drop Ins
- Estate Walkabouts
- Road naming consultations
- Grounds Maintenance Inspections
- Communal Space Cleaning Inspections
- Empty Homes Inspections
- Tender evaluations
- Considering grant applications for 'Local Opportunity & Wellbeing' funding panel membership
- Co-design workshops – for example policy reviews, Empty Homes inspection forms redrafting, wording and tone for damp and mould communications
- Editing the Tenant Times e-letter
- One-off engagement activities – Yorke Drive Fun Day, Alexander Lodge open day, Ollerton Repairs Day.
- Council Representative at Association of Retained Council Housing

- Representing the Council at TPAS conferences and events

Formal tenant involvement is provided through the Tenant Engagement Board / Housing Assurance Board, which sits within the Council's governance framework and enables tenants to review performance, provide assurance, and influence service priorities.

Recent examples of items of business considered by these boards are: -

- Review and refresh of compliance letters and gas capping
- Consumer standards gap analysis
- External Housing Ombudsman and MHCLG consultations
- Quarterly Compliance Assurance Reports
- Budget Updates
- Outcomes from Cabinet that affect tenants
- Grounds maintenance performance updates
- The Council's Community Plan Performance
- Tenant Satisfaction Measures Action Plan update
- Good Neighbourhood Management Policy

As should always be the case, a review has taken place of the effectiveness of the current arrangements and this has been undertaken in conjunction with TPAS, Tenant Participation Advisory Service – the tenant engagement specialists - and involved tenants; offering their time, lived experience and skills to feedback and support the Council to improve housing services.

The aim has been to strengthen tenant influence and improve service outcomes, reflecting the Council's commitment to ensuring tenant insight shapes decision-making.

A dedicated Design Team—made up of tenants, officers and tenant engagement staff—was formed in July 2025. Through a series of co-design sessions, the team developed a revised engagement framework and recommendations for implementation, which the TEB approved on 18 September 2025 providing the platform to begin progression through the Council's governance process.

This work recommends a clearer and more consistent engagement model.

Co-designed by tenants and staff, the revised approach strengthens transparency, inclusivity and digital accessibility, building a more trusted and effective engagement framework.

1.4

While the Council's current engagement model has achieved several successes—including instigating a review of the empty homes Fit-to-Let standard, and the resultant tenant inspection regime; collaborative creation of the 2024–25 Tenant Annual Report; supported the introduction of a bespoke Housing Services Facebook page which also resulted in a strapline on all Housing email signatures; influenced the tone and language of the damp and mould communications to tenants;

influenced via Grounds Maintenance monitoring, improved performance and satisfaction with the service; influencing the tender process for the Estate Improvement Panel, and influenced the increased distribution of the tenant-edited Tenant Times, - there is scope for improvement.

- Participation rates represent a low percentage of our tenant population, and feedback primarily represents a limited group of dedicated individuals.
- Voices from quieter, unrepresented, and working tenants are not being reached effectively.
- Ensure that we demonstrate value and impact from tenant influence.

While feedback from tenants that have been involved in the review points to more active and consistent engagement, we fall short of our ambition to be 'best in class' in terms of tenant influence and engagement.

1.5 In addition to the revised framework, TPAS also recommended that the Council consider a recognition and incentivisation system that acknowledges tenants' time, knowledge, and dedication to support the Council with improving and scrutinising housing services.

1.6 At present, the Council reimburses tenants for their travel and subsistence which on its own, no longer appears appropriate or commensurate with the expectations on tenant representatives. TPAS guidance and industry research both highlight that a well-structured and transparent recognition system supports creating and maintaining meaningful involvement for the purpose of producing real service improvements.

Researching best practice, Winchester City Council has introduced an in-house Tenant & Council Together (TACT) Board, which commenced as a pilot in 2024. This governance board provides an annual payment of £800 to tenant members to encourage tenant engagement in decision-making. Although many councils continue to maintain voluntary participation for advisory panels and scrutiny groups, the Winchester example indicates a shift toward professionalised and accountable tenant boards.

1.7 Figure 2 below shows the approach taken by Nottingham Community Housing Association (NCHA), Newark's primary social housing partner, which combines attendance payments and support with home broadband for panel chairs and committee members.

| Group / event | Formal meetings p/a (x6) | Adhoc meeting p/a (x8) | Broadband (per month) | Annual member payment | Annual budget impact |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| H&N Panel 12 members | £50 | £30 | £16 | £892 | £10,704 |
| Scrutiny Panel 6 members | £50 | £30 | £16 | £892 | £5,352 |
| Care & Support 2 members | £50 | £30 | £16 | £892 | £1,784 |
| Informal c8 attendees | Nil | £20 | Nil | £160 | £1,280 |
| TOTAL | | | | | £19,120 |

Figure 2

- 1.8 Involving tenants and securing their influence matters in and of itself. Irrespective of housing regulation, it is something that good quality landlords should do. The reality though is that tenant engagement is fundamental to delivering the Regulator of Social Housing's Tenant Involvement and Assurance Standard and the proposed revised framework in section 2 will assist with this.

2.0 Proposal /Options Considered

- 2.1 Figure 3 below sets out a proposed new framework, the objectives of which are to: -

- Broaden activities for inclusivity
- Widen participation
- Increase representativeness of the tenant population
- Increase opportunities for involvement
- Meet and exceed regulatory requirements
- Develop a clear and recognised framework for engagement which formally links the Tenant Board to PPIC for evidenced Council wide scrutiny
- Establish the Tenant Influence and Assurance Board with the same status and accountability as other boards and committees

Tenant Engagement Framework

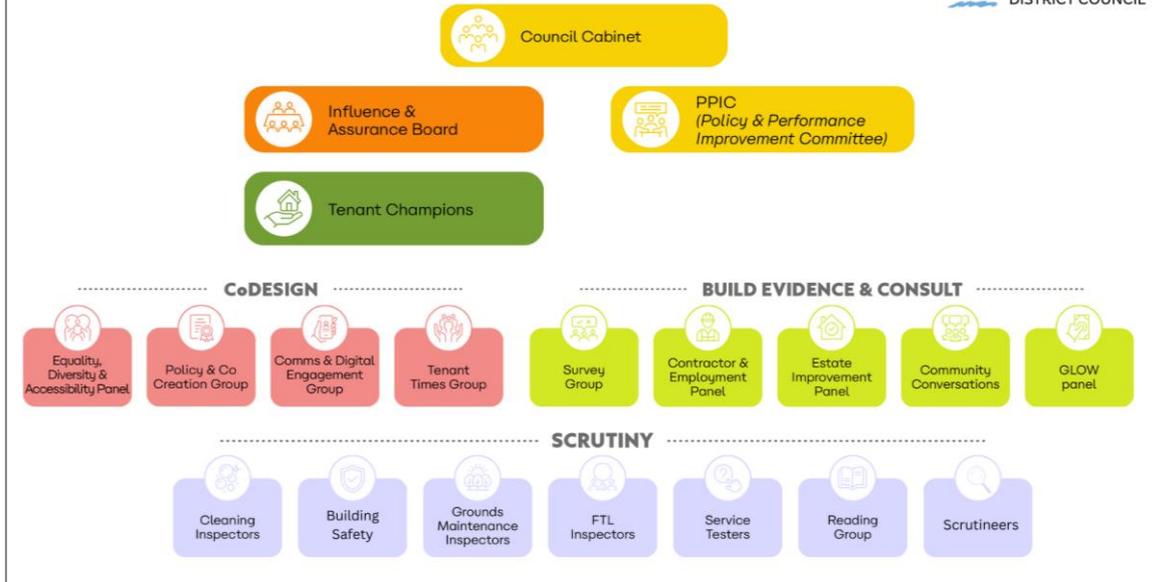


Figure 3

2.2 The specific proposals are:

- Rename the Tenant Engagement Board (TEB)/ Housing Assurance Board (HAB) to be the Tenant Influence and Assurance Board
- Repurpose the role of the Tenant Influence and Assurance Board in accordance with the attached Terms of Reference
- Undertake a comprehensive recruitment process to increase and widen tenant participation, including Tenant Engagement Champions and Scrutineers.
- Introduce a structured recognition and incentives scheme for involved tenants and leaseholders.

2.2.1 Rename the Tenant Engagement Board (TEB)/ Housing Assurance Board (HAB) to be the Tenant Influence and Assurance Board

As the TEB/HAB forms part of the Council's constitution, this proposal is subject to the endorsement of the There is a clear governance process to follow regarding this proposal so this report following presentation at this committee will them progress via Governance, General Purposes and LGR Committee on 26 March 2026 through to Full Council on 19 May 2026

2.2.2 Repurpose the role of the Tenant Influence and Assurance Board.

The revised Terms of Reference are appended to this report. These will bring forward tenant opportunities to chair the board, increase tenant representation, consider data and determine topics for scrutiny and manage the agenda.

2.2.3 Undertake a comprehensive recruitment process to increase and widen tenant participation, including Tenant Engagement Champions and Scrutineers.

A targeted tenant recruitment campaign, supported by TPAS, will be designed to reach under-represented groups by using tailored messaging, accessible formats and multiple engagement routes, ensuring a wider and more diverse range of tenants are able to get involved and influence housing services.

We recognise the input and value the younger generations living in our properties could provide to our engagement activities and will work with agencies such as YMCA and Youth Services at a local level to offer recruitment and participation opportunities

2.2.4 Introduce a structured recognition and incentives scheme for involved tenants and leaseholders

The scheme introduces modest financial recognition – please see figure 4 below - alongside nonfinancial incentives such as training and visible acknowledgement, ensuring involvement remains accessible and inclusive.

Clear guidance will be provided on benefit and tax implications, with tenants able to opt out of financial recognition without affecting their involvement. This approach supports meaningful tenant influence, strengthens assurance and scrutiny, and aligns with regulatory expectations and emerging best practice.

The non-financial benefits could include:

- CPD-accredited training opportunities
- Invitation to exclusive tenant insight events
- Active 4 Today discounted membership
- Free garden waste bin or compost bin
- Entry into prize draw
- Community café or local business vouchers
- Broadband contribution/Microsoft licence
- Annual Tenant Engagement Meet Up Event

| Involved Tenants | Formal Meetings pa x6 | Ad hoc Meetings pa x4 / x8 | Broadband per month | Annual payment per tenant member | Annual Budget Impact |
|--|-----------------------|----------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|
| 10x Champions (5x IAB members, 5x Champions/Scrutineers) | £50 | £30 x4 | Circa £20 | £660 | £6,600 |
| Informal attendees x10 | Nil | £20 x8 | Nil | £160 | £1600 |

| | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--------------|
| Christmas Celebration | | | | | £750 |
| Annual Awards Event | | | | | £1000 |
| Budget Impact Total pa | | | | | £9950 |

Figure 4

3.0

Implications

In writing this report and in putting forward recommendations, officers have considered the following implications: Data Protection; Digital & Cyber Security; Equality & Diversity; Financial; Human Resources; Human Rights; Legal; Safeguarding & Sustainability and where appropriate they have made reference to these implications and added suitable expert comment where appropriate

| Implications Considered | | | |
|--|-----|----------------------|-----|
| Yes – relevant and included / NA – not applicable | | | |
| Financial | Y | Equality & Diversity | Y |
| Human Resources | N/A | Human Rights | N/A |
| Legal | Y | Data Protection | N/A |
| Digital & Cyber Security | N/A | Safeguarding | N/A |
| Sustainability | N/A | Crime & Disorder | N/A |
| LGR | N/A | Tenant Consultation | Y |

3.1

Financial Implications - FIN25-26/8311

The recommended proposal results in an annual cost of £9,950 from 2026/27. This charge will be reviewed at the end of each tenant champion cycle (every 2-3 years). The cost can be accommodated within the existing tenant engagement budget for 2026/27 and future years

3.2

Equality & Diversity Implications

An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken to evaluate the revised Tenant Engagement Framework to ensure it is fair, inclusive, and accessible to all tenants, supporting legal duties and removing barriers to participation. This can be found at Appendix 2.

- **Framework purpose and approach:** The framework establishes a clearer, consistent method for tenant involvement, strengthening tenant voices and offering multiple engagement routes to accommodate varying abilities, time, and confidence levels.
- **Consideration of protected characteristics:** The assessment covers impacts on tenants across all protected characteristics, including age, sex, disability, race, religion, and additional NSDC-specific groups such as carers and care leavers.
- **Identified impacts and mitigations:** Positive impacts include clearer structure and multiple participation methods, while mitigations address potential exclusion from digital or written engagement, incentive imbalances favouring confident participants, and under-representation by monitoring participation and targeted outreach.
- **Wider considerations and monitoring:** The framework addresses socio-economic challenges through flexible, accessible engagement, supports human rights by enabling tenant influence, requires staff

training for inclusivity, and includes ongoing monitoring to ensure fairness as the framework is implemented.

3.3 Legal Implications LEG2526/8935

Any changes to the Constitution require Full Council approval. The Tenant Engagement Board is specifically referred to in the constitution at B6 and therefore any changes in respect of this Board including its dissolution will require Full Council approval. Further legal advice may be required.

3.4 Tenant Consultation

- Feedback from tenants included:
- Tenants co-created the new improved framework and support its adoption
- Engagement is vital for effective recruitment and skill development.
- The framework recognises tenants' contributions to improving and scrutinising housing services.
- Offers support so tenants can make informed decisions on whether to accept the financial rewards available within the new framework
- Tenants have a choice to opt out of financial recognition if preferred.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.