

Report to: Policy & Performance Improvement Committee – 13 April 2026

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Lead Officer: Jane Diver and Robyn Henry, Tenant Engagement Officers

Report Summary	
Report Title	Enhancing Tenant Engagement
Purpose of Report	To set out a series of measures to build on and strengthen the role and influence of Newark & Sherwood tenants in the management of their homes and neighbourhoods and seek endorsement for their introduction.
Recommendations	<p>That the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) note the progression of tenant engagement arrangements and the clear service improvements resulting from tenant insight and involvement; b) endorse the refresh of 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) to Tenant Influence and Assurance Board; c) endorse the proposed Tenant Engagement Framework including noting the proposed programme of recruitment; d) endorse the proposed recognition and incentivisation to widen the participation and representation of tenants as Tenant Engagement Champions with five places on the Tenant Influence and Assurance Board; e) note the report will progress to Cabinet on 21 April 2026 for decision on the recognition scheme; and f) consider and note the amended report which will progress to the Governance, General Purposes & LGR Committee on 16 April 2026 with a recommendation for endorsement and an onward recommendation to Full Council on 19 May 2026 for approval of the proposed changes to the constitution.
Reason for Recommendation	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 & Sherwood District Council tenants.

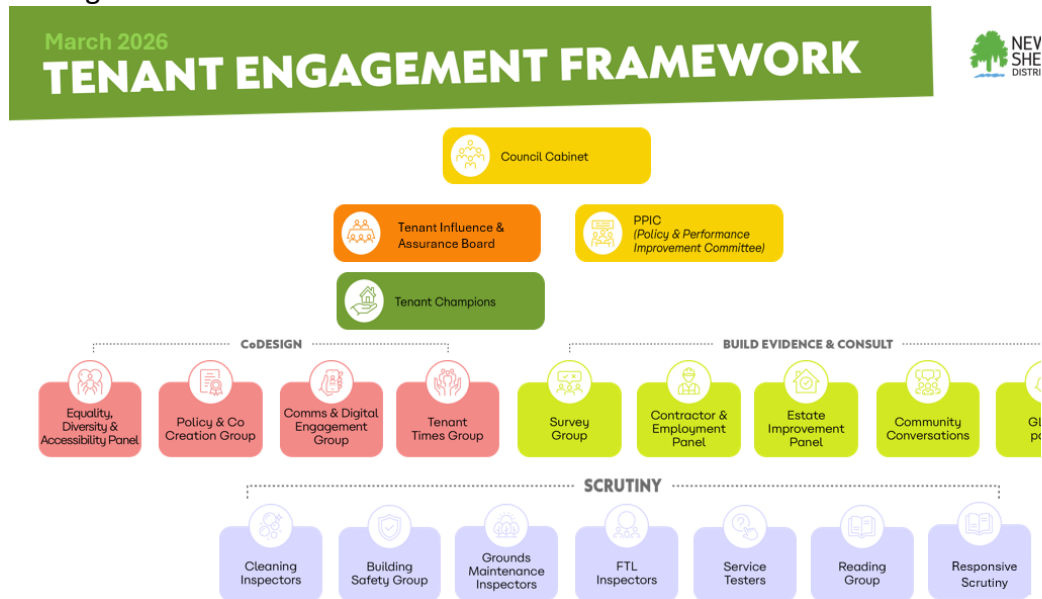
1.0 Background

1.1 Tenant Engagement at Newark & 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.

The 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:



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, Ollerton Drop Ins
- Chatham Court, Newark Drop Ins
- Estate and area action e.g. days of action
- 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 – consider fund applications
- 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 (Newark) Fun Day, Alexander Lodge (Newark) open day, Ollerton Repairs Day.
- Representing the Council at Association of Retained Council Housing (ARCH) conferences
- Representing the Council at TPAS conferences and events

Formal tenant involvement is provided through the Tenant Engagement Board (which also meets with a focus on Housing Assurance), 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 consultations e.g. Housing Ombudsman and MHCLG
- 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
- New Policies e.g. 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 – 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;
- 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, resulting in 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 to:
 - Increase participation rates represent a low percentage of our tenant population, and feedback primarily represents a limited group of dedicated individuals.
 - Increase representation of voices from quieter, unrepresented, and working tenants who 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 placed 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 provider, 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. Tenant engagement is fundamental to delivering the Regulator of Social Housing’s Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard and the proposed revised framework in section 2 will assist with this.

2.0 Proposal /Options Considered

2.1 Figure 3 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

2.1.1

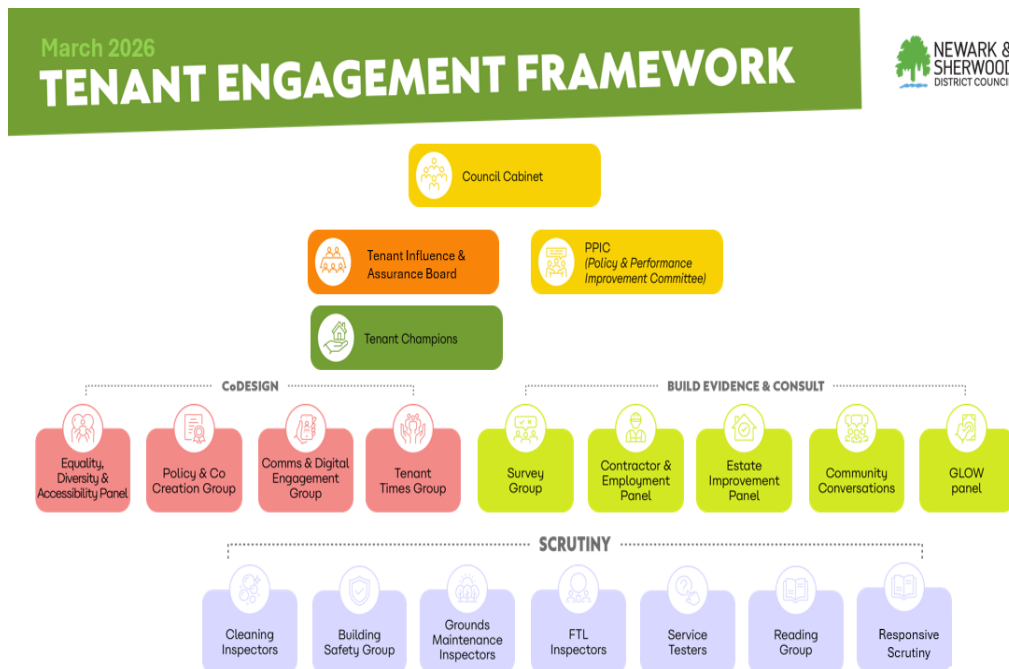


Fig.3

2.2 The specific proposals are:

- Rename the Tenant Engagement Board (TEB) with the Tenant Influence and Assurance Board (TIAB).
- Redefine 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) to be the Tenant Influence and Assurance Board

As the TEB forms part of the Council's constitution, this proposal is subject to the endorsement of this committee. There is a clear governance process to follow regarding this proposal so this report following presentation at this committee will then progress via Governance, General Purposes and LGR Committee on 16 April 2026 through to Full Council on 14 July 2026

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

Revised Terms of Reference are appended to this report at **Appendix 1**. 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.

The Council's current Tenant Champions have been in post for several years and have worked tirelessly in support of our services and tenants. The diversity of work in this area has meant that the 3 champions have been stretched at times and need some additional support. Recruitment in this area however has been difficult.

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 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 non-financial incentives such as training and 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 subject to final agreement by the TEB may 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

Any costs associated with these non-financial benefits will be contained within existing budgets and will be subject to maximum take up e.g Garden Waste bins

2.2.5 Figure 4

Involved Tenants	Formal Meetings x6 Per annum	Ad hoc Meetings pa x4 / x8	Broadband per month	Annual payment per tenant member	Annual Budget Impact
10x Champions in total (5x IAB members, 5x Champions/Scrutineers)	£50	£30 x4	Circa £20	£660	£6,600
Informal Attendees	Nil	£20 x 8	Nil	£160	£1600
Christmas Celebration					£750
Annual Awards Event					£1000
Budget Impact Total per annum					£9950

2.3 Recruitment and Appointment Process

NSDC will run a targeted, inclusive recruitment campaign to appoint Tenant Engagement Champions and TIAB Members.

- Information will be jargon free and available in multiple formats and routes to apply.
- For the first campaign, TPAS will independently manage the shortlisting, ensuring fairness, transparency, and consistency.
- Recruitment will focus on attracting younger tenants and under-represented groups, with support available for all applicants.
- A criteria-based selection framework will assess communication, reliability, ability to represent wider views, confidentiality, and constructive engagement.
- Representation factors such as geography, age, lived experience and diversity will be considered.

Non-appointed applicants will be directed to wider engagement and scrutiny work including training to fill skills gaps to enable recruitment to the TIAB later. We will encourage participation in alternative engagement activities, helping to retain interest, capture insight, and ensure willing tenants can continue to influence housing services.

2.4 Budget and Link to Levels of Involvement

All recognition will be funded within the existing Tenant Engagement budget with a ceiling of —£9,950 per year.

Three levels of involvement link directly to budgeted recognition:

- 1) Tenant Engagement Champions, made up of five TIAB members and five Scrutineers
 - Eligible for up to £660 per year, based on active participation of 80% attendance per annum
 - Recognition reflects preparation, responsibility, and scrutiny work
 - This will be paid quarterly in arrears based on data collated by Tenant Engagement Officers in line with an agreed performance framework
- 2) Informal Involvement
 - Informal attendees can take part in drop-ins, surveys, workshops, and one-off activities, within a budget ceiling of £1600 per annum defined by an agreed forward plan
 - Engagement activities advertised will clearly state whether reward and recognition payment is applicable – and these will be spread throughout the annual calendar
 - The Tenant Engagement team to collate data to analyse the levels of involvement associated with paid activities
 - When budgets are spent, remaining opportunities for involvement are voluntary with reimbursement costs covered only
 - No financial recognition—supports tenants who want to contribute flexibly or occasionally
- 3) Voluntary Participation
 - Tenants can opt out of recognition entirely while still being active contributors
 - Ensures involvement remains accessible for all motivations and circumstances
- 4) Budget Review
 - The budget for the reward and recognition scheme will be closely monitored in line with existing budget monitoring processes and reviewed formally at year end
 - The forward plan, in line with the corporate governance approach will support budget management and monitoring

This structure keeps governance proportionate, widens representation, and ensures spend remains within the established budget, supporting alignment with the Transparency and Influence Standard:

- Demonstrating that involvement is structured, accountable and not tokenistic
- Showing tenants are valued without compromising independence

2.5 Term Length

To support continuity and long-term development, formal roles carry fixed terms:

- TIAB Members: two-year term, renewable once (maximum four years)
- Champions/Scrutineers: one year term, reviewed annually
- TIAB Members and Champions/Scrutineers will hold one formal role within the engagement structure

To ensure future candidates remain engaged and ready for future vacancies, tenants who are not appointed—or whose term has ended—will be encouraged to stay active through:

- Informal involvement (drop-ins, surveys, workshops)
- Voluntary opportunities aligned with their interests
- Officer support, learning opportunities, and wellbeing check-ins

This approach ensures NSDC maintains a pipeline of skilled and motivated tenants, ready to step into Champion or Scrutiny roles when places become available.

2.6 Clear Distinction Between the Three Tenant Roles

Engaged Tenants – Flexible and Informal

- Drop-ins, surveys, workshops, conversations
- One-off or occasional involvement
- Share personal experiences

Tenant Engagement Champions – Active, ongoing involvement

- Prepare for, attend and actively participate in meetings
- Contribute to scrutiny, co-design and service reviews
- Represent wider tenant views, including unheard voices
- Support and encourage other tenants to get involved

TIAB Members – Strategic Voice of Tenants

- Set the agenda and work programme for tenant engagement and scrutiny based on data supporting a larger tenant voice
- Respond to and challenge performance, policy proposals and service changes
- Participate in formal scrutiny and assurance activities
- Make evidence-based recommendations
- Represent tenants collectively, not as individuals
- Maintain confidentiality and objectivity

This is important as these roles require different levels of skill, have different responsibilities and time commitments. TIAB and Champion roles are more complex and accountable, supporting a recognition mechanism.

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	NA	Human Rights	NA
Legal	Y	Data Protection	NA
Digital & Cyber Security	NA	Safeguarding	NA
Sustainability	NA	Crime & Disorder	NA
LGR	NA	Tenant Consultation	Y

3.1 **Financial Implications - FIN25-26/8311**

The recommended proposal results in an annual cost of £9,950 from 2026/27. These charges will be reviewed at the end of each tenant champion cycle (every 2 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 LEG2526/1062

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 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.

None