

Tenant Engagement Strategy

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Executive Summary

This strategy sets out the vision of South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse district councils (the councils) for engaging with the tenants and housing licence holders (referred to as 'tenants' in this strategy) to ensure that their voices and experiences can meaningfully shape the housing services.

The strategy details the councils' approach to tenant engagement over the coming years, focusing on how the council will work towards ensuring that it can provide accessible information to tenants and create meaningful opportunities for tenants to influence the housing services.

Foreword

"At South and Vale, the housing teams work to provide homes that can meet the real needs of tenants and licence holders. Usually, this takes the form of temporary accommodation.

Temporary accommodation provides vital safety and stability for households during times of transition. At South and Vale, the responsibility is not only to provide accommodation, but also to ensure that every resident feels informed, respected, and able to engage with the services that support them.

Clear and accessible communication is essential to this aim. The councils recognise that people living in temporary accommodation may face significant pressures. This strategy sets out the councils' commitment to removing barriers to accessing information about the housing services, so that all tenants can stay informed about the services that impact them.

Listening is equally vital. Nobody knows more about what it is like to live in temporary accommodation than the tenants. The councils are committed to seeking out tenant feedback so that their voices can meaningfully shape the services that the councils deliver.

The councils also recognise that some tenants may wish to play a more active role in shaping the services they receive. This strategy outlines the council's commitment to supporting tenant involvement by ensuring that opportunities to influence services are accessible, inclusive, and meaningful. The councils will provide the clarity, encouragement, and support needed for residents to engage at the level that is right for them.

This strategy sets out a path ahead stronger relationships between the councils and the people it serves, ensuring that temporary accommodation is not only a place of safety but also a service shaped by the voices of those who use it."

Paul Fielding

Director of Housing and Environmental Services

Introduction

Tenant engagement is defined by the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) as: “being about working with tenants to co-produce effective services that meet a variety of needs... It is about empowering tenants, residents, and communities to work with your organisation to achieve shared aims.”¹

Every one of the councils' tenants will have a unique journey through the councils' services and can provide essential insights about how the councils can improve as a landlord. The councils are committed to working to build a tenant engagement offer that ensures the input of the tenants has a real impact on the housing services.

This tenant engagement strategy lays out the principles underlying the councils' approach to engaging with tenants. This includes how the councils intend to communicate key information, gather feedback from tenants, and provide opportunities for tenants to participate in decision making.

This strategy applies to all those accommodated by the councils acting as a social landlord (those who have been allocated into temporary accommodation by the Housing Needs team). The councils are not responsible for how other Registered Providers, or private landlords, engage with their tenants.

¹ “TPAS: Community Engagement.” <https://www.tpas.org.uk/community-engagement>.

Background / Context

Regulatory Considerations

In 2024 the Regulator of Social Housing (RHS) introduced regulatory consumer standards, which are intended to help ensure all social housing providers act in a fair and transparent manner. The consumer standards include the following (in addition to a [Consumer standards Code of Practice](#)):

- [Neighbourhood and Community Standard](#)
- [Safety and Quality Standard](#)
- [Tenancy Standard](#)
- [Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard \(including Tenant Satisfaction Measures\)](#)

The consumer standard most relevant to this strategy is the Transparency, Influence and Accountability standard, which sets out the duties of registered providers of social housing with regards to tenant engagement.

This standard obliges registered providers to provide tenants with clear and accessible information about their services and performance. This includes performance reporting against Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) on an annual basis. The standard additionally details registered providers' duties regarding tenant engagement, whereby providers must give tenants a range of meaningful opportunities to influence and scrutinise policies, strategies, and services.

The councils are fully committed to meeting the requirements of the consumer standards as a minimum. However, the councils recognise that as a small social landlord that provides temporary accommodation, effective tenant engagement may look different for us than for large social landlords who provide secure tenancies. The councils are therefore committed to developing a strategy tailored to the circumstances of its tenants.

Housing

South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse generally only provide temporary accommodation. This means that the councils house people in emergency and more settled temporary accommodation and provide homes via licences or non-secure tenancies. The temporary accommodation acts as a stepping stone to more permanent housing.

This strategy is intended to include anyone who the councils accommodate in temporary accommodation, from those staying in hostels for a matter of days to those staying for longer. The councils believe that gathering perspectives on all different user journeys through the councils' housing services will allow for the delivery of the best services possible.

Due to the focus on temporary accommodation, tenants will usually be in accommodation for a brief period of time. Some tenants may stay for a longer time,

more than a year, but most tenants stay in their accommodation for weeks or months. This means it is even more important that the councils communicate with, and listen to, accommodation users in an efficient and effective manner, and that the councils engage with them as appropriate.

The role as a temporary accommodation provider means that tenant engagement needs to be tailored in several key ways, including:

- **Low barriers to participation:** many tenants are only in temporary accommodation for a matter of weeks or months so asking them to participate in, for example, tenant groups scrutinising policies over several months, would not fit well with their circumstances. The councils therefore want to prioritise engagement strategies with low barriers to participation and with short durations.
- **Focus on future housing:** because the councils do not currently provide secure tenancies (more permanent social housing), a key part of the tenants' journey will involve navigating the bidding process to secure more permanent housing. Therefore, as well as engaging with tenants about the quality of services (such as the repairs and maintenance service), the councils also want tenants to provide feedback about the support they receive navigating the bidding process.

The councils provide several forms of temporary accommodation. An up-to-date record of each council's housing stock can be found in their annual housing landlord position statements. The range of accommodation provided by South and Vale councils includes:

- **Hostels:** The councils own two hostels, comprising of a total of 16 rooms which are used for temporary accommodation.
- **Council-owned housing stock:** The councils' own homes, which are used as temporarily accommodation for homeless households.
- **Service Family Accommodation (SFA):** The councils currently lease homes from the Ministry of Defence (MoD) to house some households from the Afghan refugee accommodation scheme. These homes will be returned to the MoD by October 2026.

In both council owned stock and SFA, the councils currently house tenants under a Refugee Accommodation Programme. The councils are committed to ensuring that the voices of those accommodated under the refugee resettlement programme are fairly represented in engagement processes.

Those accommodated under the Refugee Accommodation Programme may face additional barriers in engaging with the councils, including English as an additional language. The councils will therefore take steps where possible to ensure that their

engagement strategy can mitigate these barriers to participation.

Good tenant engagement strengthens community cohesion and integration because it builds trust, shared purpose, and meaningful participation among residents. At its core, engaged tenants feel heard, valued, and connected, which directly improves how people relate to each other and to their housing provider.

Priorities and Objectives

Tenant engagement aligns with the priorities and principles set out in both [South Oxfordshire](#) and [the Vale of White Horse's](#) council plans. Both councils aim to provide the homes and infrastructure people need, and to help support thriving communities. The councils also share a deep commitment to working openly, transparently, responsibly, and in partnership with tenants to achieve these goals. Tenant engagement therefore has a crucial role to play in helping both councils achieve their priorities.

The core objective of this strategy is to ensure the councils provide the information and opportunities necessary for tenants and accommodation users to engage with the councils. The councils are committed to using tenant input to improve the quality of services for all.

The strategic priority areas are:

1. **Information:** Crafting the engagement strategy with a view to ensure that tenants are informed of their rights, the councils' obligations, the details of the services offered, and the councils' performance as a registered provider.
2. **Consultation:** Developing a range of accessible feedback channels such that tenants face as few barriers as possible in providing their perspectives.
3. **Participation:** Supporting tenants in providing feedback and becoming engaged in decisions around how the service can be improved.
4. **Culture:** Creating and maintaining a culture that values all council accommodation users.

The high-level objectives are designed to deliver high quality performance across the councils' strategic priority areas. These are set out below but a more detailed breakdown of the specific actions that the councils intend to take in order to deliver across the strategic priority areas can be found in Appendix 1.

- Provide tenants with clear information about the councils' services, their rights, and important updates.
- Ensure communications are accessible to tenants.
- Provide tenants with consistent and meaningful opportunities to feedback to the councils.
- Support tenants to participate decision making.
- Ensure that staff are trained to engage all tenants with respect.

Delivery Plan

At the heart of tenant engagement is the principle that tenants should be given clear and accessible information about how the council's housing service is provided and operated and, where possible and practical, have a real say in how improvements can be made.

In this section of the strategy, the vision for a tenant engagement strategy is laid out, tailored to meet the needs of tenants. This includes how the councils intend to establish strong information provision, robust consultation processes, and lay the foundations for meaningful participation opportunities for tenants.

A more detailed breakdown of the action plan for tenant engagement, including timelines, core action points, and responsible persons can be found at the end of this document in Appendix 1.

Information

Keeping tenants informed and up to date about the councils housing services is foundational to tenant engagement. Ensuring that communications are clear, timely and accessible is a core pillar of the engagement strategy.

The councils are committed to ensuring that information about the councils' services is clear and easy to access. Information about the services, from policies and procedures to the complaints process, can be found on the councils' websites ([South Oxfordshire](#) and the [Vale of White Horse](#)). The councils also intend to archive communications to tenants such as past editions of the Newsletters on their websites to help ensure that tenants have access to key information.

An up-to-date and accessible website is foundational to the council's information provision strategy. The councils commit to ensure that the information on the website is kept up-to-date and aligned with best practice will be ongoing.

In November 2025, the councils launched an Accommodation Users Newsletter, which is circulated to all tenants and licensees via email. This Newsletter provides essential information and updates about the housing service in a timely manner directly to tenants. Articles have included informing tenants of their rights following changes to legislation, and announcements about updates to policies. The councils may also use special editions of the Newsletter to provide more detailed information about issues impacting tenants, such as rent increases. The newsletter will be translated or offered in alternative formats upon request.

Face to face communication with tenants is another core pillar of the approach to information provision. The Property and Tenancy Officers visit tenants in their homes on a regular basis. During these visits, officers can provide tenants with information and updates specifically relevant to them. Officers are also able to answer any questions tenants may raise.

At sign up every new tenant is provided with a welcome pack, which contains essential information about the home, services, and key contact details.

The councils recognise that tenants may face several barriers to accessing communications, like English as a second language and illiteracy. The councils therefore committed to making information channels as accessible as possible. To that end, all communications are written in plain English. Easy Read is also offered and translated options are available; both are available upon request for major communications. For information such as asbestos, the councils will routinely arrange a translated copy of the information to be sent to tenants.

The councils are also aware that those housed under the Refugee Accommodation Programme may face additional barriers in accessing information about their accommodation. The Housing Landlord team therefore partners with the Communities team, who organise drop-in sessions for those housed by the Refugee Accommodation Programme with translators present. These sessions can be used to provide key information about services, and as a forum to address queries.

Consultation

Feedback is vital to helping inform improvements to services. Every tenant will have their own journey through the housing services and will therefore be able to offer unique insights. The councils want to gather tenant feedback on an ongoing basis to help assess what changes could be made to improve the services provided.

The Tenant Satisfaction Measures survey is a key part of the consultation process. The TSMs are a set of core performance measures against which must be published demonstrating the council's performance on an annual basis. This a tenant perception survey measures how satisfied tenants are with the housing services across a variety of metrics. These include:

- Overall satisfaction
- Satisfaction with repairs
- Satisfaction with time taken to complete most recent repair
- Satisfaction that the home is well maintained
- Satisfaction that the home is safe
- Satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them
- Satisfaction that the landlord keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them
- Agreement that the landlord treats tenants fairly and with respect
- Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling complaints
- Satisfaction that the landlord keeps communal areas clean and well maintained
- Satisfaction that the landlord makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods
- Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling anti-social behaviour.

Tenant perception surveys are an excellent opportunity to gain understanding of the areas in which tenants feel services need to improve. The Councils are therefore

committed to encouraging as many tenants as possible to participate. Articles will be included in the newsletter encouraging responses and explaining the importance of the TSMs, and the Property and Tenancy officers will encourage participation during tenancy visits.

The councils are committed to making the TSM survey accessible to tenants. The survey provider carrying out the TSM survey must offer survey materials translated into languages spoken by tenants. They must also be able to offer accessible survey methods.

The councils will clearly publish the results of the TSMs results on the websites and will use communications channels such as the newsletter to direct tenants towards the published performance metrics.

As part of the TSM survey in 2026 two additional questions were added. These were 'If the councils offered a range of ways for tenants to be engaged in its services, what is your preferred way to do this?' and 'What is your preferred way to receive communication and information to us?'

The response to the ways to be engaged was digitally (email, WhatsApp, teams) was 56.6%, surveys 18.9%, face to face 18.9% and focus groups 5.7%.

The response to the ways to receive communication and information was email 39.5%, phone 22.4%, WhatsApp 14.5%, text/SMS 14.5%, and post 9.2%.

The councils will take this feedback onboard when designing engagement opportunities and engaging via communication channels.

The councils aspire to run ad hoc surveys and digital drop ins aimed at getting feedback about areas of the housing service. For example, carrying out a survey or drop-in session which is focused on understanding tenant experiences with the repairs services or understanding the experiences of specific cohorts such as hostel users, those in the refugee accommodation programme, and those in the council-owned temporary accommodation.

The councils want engagement to be as accessible as possible in terms of the method, time involved in the engagement for tenants to provide feedback. The councils will therefore work with experts in the engagement team to help facilitate approaches so tenants regardless of all protected characteristics.

In addition to formal feedback channels, such as the complaints policy, the councils aim to establish an engagement ethos, recognising that feedback may not always come through formal channels. Some tenants will feel more comfortable expressing their views to the Property and Tenancy officers during visits. While Property and Tenancy officers will signpost tenants towards more structured engagement opportunities, the councils are committed to ensuring that weight is given to feedback given no matter what channel it comes through. The Property and Tenancy officers will invite feedback during their visits and will keep a record of any problems

raised. This feedback can then be brought to the attention of the broader team for consideration.

The councils will use feedback gathered to guide improvements to services. The councils intend to adopt a 'you said, we did' framework, where trends in feedback along with the council's response will be publicised, helping to create transparent feedback loops.

Participation

As well as providing feedback during the consultation processes, tenants have a role to play in deciding solutions. The councils want to facilitate tenants actively engaging with decision making processes where possible.

Due to the nature of temporary accommodation, it is recognised that many conventional approaches to tenant participation are likely infeasible. However, the councils are committed to working towards a culture of partnership and participation, whereby tenants can actively feed into decision making. The councils are therefore committed to providing tenants with support for any participation they wish to establish and guide, as well as providing low time commitment ways for tenants to participate.

The councils fully support tenants in any tenant-led activities aimed at scrutinising the housing policies and services. Contact will be made to inform tenants that provide support may be provided should they wish to organise with a view to participate in decision making. Support will be organising sessions avoiding school pick up times, religious festivals such as Eid or Easter and providing a translator if required.

Monitoring and Review

The council's performance against the steps set out in the action plan (found in Appendix 1) will be reviewed quarterly in a meeting of the Housing Landlord Team, with input from partners in the Communities and Engagement teams as required. Ultimate oversight of the implementation of this strategy sits with the Director of Housing and Environment, with regular monitoring being undertaken by the Housing Delivery Manager.

Any data gathered during tenant engagement will be collected, stored, and maintained in line with statutory data protection requirements, as outlined in the councils' Data Protection policy. Details of this can be found on the council's website. Follow the links to [Data Protection - South Oxfordshire District Council](#) [Data Protection](#) or [Data Protection - Vale of White Horse District Council](#).

Alternative Formats

Please do not hesitate to contact the councils if you would like this policy in an alternative format, via email: tenants@southandvale.gov.uk or telephone 01235

422000.

Abbreviations

Abbreviations used in this strategy include:

- ASB: Anti-social behaviour
- KPI: Key performance indicator
- MoD: Ministry of Defence
- RSH: Regulator of Social Housing
- SFA: Service Family Accommodation
- TPAS: Tenant Participation Advisory Service
- TSMs: Tenant Satisfaction Measures

Communication and Contact Information

For further information about strategy, please contact the Housing team on email: email tenants@southandvale.gov.uk or telephone 01235 422000.

Change Record

Change Record	
Strategy Title:	Tenant Engagement Strategy
Version Number:	1
Owner(s):	Housing Delivery Manager & Housing Landlord Team Leader
Author(s):	Housing Delivery Manager & Housing Landlord Team Leader
Approved by:	
Approved date:	
Effective date:	1 August 2026
Renewal date:	1 August 2028

Appendix 1: Action Plan

The strategic priority areas for this strategy are:

1. **Information:** Crafting the communications strategy with a view to ensure that tenants are informed of their rights, the councils' obligations, the details of the services offered, and performance as a registered provider.
2. **Consultation:** Developing a range of accessible feedback channels such that tenants face as few barriers as possible in providing their perspectives.
3. **Participation:** Supporting tenants in providing feedback and becoming engaged in decisions around how the service can be improved.
4. **Culture:** Creating and maintaining a culture that values all council accommodation users.

The following table lays out the actions the councils plan to take to progress in each strategic priority area, along with expected outcomes and timelines.

Action	Strategic Priority Area(s)	Measurable Outcome	Action Owner	Target Date
Ensure that the property and tenancy is fully explained at the start of the tenancy	1: Information	Tenants reporting a clear understanding of their duties and the councils' duties regarding their accommodation, to be measured via feedback to Property and Tenancy officers, and tenant feedback surveys when launched.	Housing Landlord Team Leader	Q1 2027

Ensure tenants can raise questions, and that those questions are promptly answered	1: Information	Regular audits of the tenants' inbox and call logs should show that queries are resolved promptly.	Housing Landlord Team Leader	Ongoing
Publish a landlord position statement for each council on an annual basis. Ensure this is made available for tenants	1: Information	Landlord housing position statement should be posted to the council's website annually, with tenants being updated via the newsletter.	Housing Delivery Manager	Ongoing
Publish clear information about performance, including TSM results	1: Information	Information will be published about the TSM results	Housing Delivery Manager	Q2 2026 & annually thereafter
Implement accessibility best practice across communication channels	1: Information	Communications should be written in plain English. Any images should include plain text descriptions. Major communications should be made accessible to all tenants, through	Housing Delivery Manager	Ongoing

		modifications such as Easy Read or translations.		
Complete the TSMs survey	2: Consultation	Tenant perception survey completed, with sufficient response rates.	Housing Delivery Manager	Q2 2026 then annually thereafter
Pilot accommodation users' consultation at key tenancy points	2: Consultation 3: Participation	Launch a pilot programme offering different ways to engage i.e. surveys or digital drop.	Housing Landlord Team Leader	Q4 2026
Publish clear 'you said, we did' responses to feedback following the tenant perception survey	1: Information 2: Consultation 3: Participation	A page on the housing sites will be dedicated to responses to feedback. Awareness of this information will be raised by writing to tenants in the newsletter.	Housing Team Leader	Q 4 2026
Publicise the support the councils can offer	3: Participation	An article featured prominently in the	Housing Delivery Manager	Newsletter article: Q3 2026

tenants in organising to participate in decision making.		Newsletter advertising the support the councils will offer tenants wishing to participate in housing decision making. This information will also be publicised on the councils' websites.		Website content: Q3 2026
Ensure all staff have and maintain all diversity, safeguarding training	4: Culture	All housing landlord team members will be undertaken the relevant training modules. Team leaders will ensure that team members are fully up to date with their training.	Housing Delivery Manager	Ongoing
Ensure that Equality impact assessments are created for key tasks and reviewed regularly	4: Culture	Equality impact assessments will be carried out before any key decisions or changes are made to services. These will be reviewed regularly.	Housing Delivery Manager	Ongoing