

Specification of External Review of Tenant Engagement

This review will encompass all tenant engagement activities across housing functions within Birmingham City Council. These services are spread across several directorates therefore there will be a requirement to interview a range of service leads.

The review also needs to compare current activities with the requirements set out in the Social Housing White Paper and tenant engagement elements in the Building Safety Bill. A measurement against best practice implemented by other similar service providers is essential. To complete this large-scale evaluation the following areas will need to be reviewed and an improvement plan developed where there are gaps in service provision: -

- **Governance and Transparency**

- There is a clearly defined and agreed role for tenants in governance arrangements
- There are clear, widely publicised routes for tenants to hold Birmingham City Council (BCC) to account on standards of service delivery, strategy, performance and decision making
- There is an environment of mutual respect between BCC and its tenants, with steps taken to identify and tackle negative stereotyping
- BCC regularly shares publicly how it uses the learning from tenant engagement, as well as its data, to improve the services it provides
- BCC provides regular assurance to its residents how it keeps them safe in their homes and how it meets the regulatory and legal requirements
- BCC engages with tenants to produce an appropriate and meaningful Annual Report which includes satisfaction measures, performance standards, how income is being spent, complaints, impact from resident engagement and comparisons of the organisational wage structure and management costs
- There is consistent sharing of information with all stakeholders including risks faced by BCC, the person responsible for managing those risks, and how it plans to deal with areas of concern
- BCC consults with tenants on the best way to involve them in the governance and scrutiny of the housing service
- Clear information is published on roles and responsibilities of senior staff, including the named persons responsible for ensuring BCC meets standards set by the Regulator of Social Housing.

- **Scrutiny**

- Tenant scrutiny activities need to be independent, inclusive, positive, constructive and purposeful
- A scrutiny model needs to be in place which has been designed and agreed with tenants. The process needs to include a clear governance framework, which measures the service delivery operations of BCC
- BCC values tenant scrutiny as a critical friend from an independent resident-led perspective
- The scrutiny framework provides an evidence-based action plan, designed to improve services, increase efficiency and provide robust assessment of performance
- Scrutiny activity is provided with the financial and administrative support it needs to carry out its core functions
- Scrutiny is completed for all relevant housing functions to measure performance against regulatory, legal & benchmarking standards

- Scrutiny has strong links with the other organisational engagement structures and the wider resident base in order to support its overall aims

- **Business and Strategy**

- Tenants are meaningfully engaged in the co-creation, monitoring and review of the BCC's engagement strategy to make sure it delivers clear impact and provides value for money
- Tenants are meaningfully engaged in the development, monitoring and review of BCC's policies, budget and strategic development as well as any local offers for service delivery
- Tenants and staff are clear of the purpose and intended outcomes of all engagement activities
- The organisation has a clear and publicly stated plan for engaging tenants in its health & safety responsibilities and makes clear those responsible for compliance
- There is an agreed timeframe to ensure that all engagement activities provide enough time to hear and consider resident views
- There is a clear and consistent method for reporting back to tenants how their views have been considered in all engagement activities
- Tenants are consulted in a timely and effective manner on any significant change in the management arrangements within BCC

- **Complaints**

- BCC has a clear, accessible and continuously publicised complaints policy designed with tenants, that shows the definition of a complaint, how to complain, key timescales, routes for redress, how to access help and support and who has responsibility for the complaints process
- BCC ensures information on the Housing Ombudsman is readily available for all tenants and provides assurance of its compliance with the complaints handling code
- Complaints are encouraged as opportunities to listen, learn and influence change, with a culture that assures that speaking out will not bring negative consequences
- Tenants are engaged in the continuous learning and development from complaints, with all improvements widely publicised to residents and staff
- Complaints, including those determined by the Housing Ombudsman, are documented, communicated and publicised to stakeholders
- Tenants are engaged in reviewing complaint handling policies and procedures to include self-assessment against the Housing Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code
- BCC encourages resident involvement in complaint handling through the formation of resident panels.

- **Information and Communication**

- Information is provided to all recognised panels and involved tenants, in an agreed format and timeframe, to allow them to monitor performance and hold their BCC to account on how key organisational objectives are being met
- BCC has electronic tools in place to share information with tenants in a quick, efficient and cost-effective way
- All information provided to tenants is clear and understandable, using an inclusive range of methods and in a format to suit the intended recipient
- In any ad-hoc or specifically focussed engagement activity, information is provided in an agreed timeframe before any activity takes place
- The BCC website holds easy to find and useful information on areas such as governance, compliance, how to get involved, management, repairs, complaints, performance and the impact made from its tenant engagement activities

- BCC provides an accessible route for tenants to request information relating to the activities of their landlord. This should be widely publicised to reflect its tenant profile
- BCC regularly distributes to its tenants up to date information including performance against set targets and emerging organisational challenges as well as topics of community and national interest. The frequency, content and methods of distribution will be agreed between BCC and its tenants residents
- **Resources for Engagement**
 - BCC provides sufficient resources to deliver effective engagement and tenants have the opportunity to influence the decision about the resources made available
 - There is an appropriate system in place for recognition and reimbursement of the time given by tenants for engagement activities
 - Involved tenants are offered timely advice, relevant training and effective mentoring
 - BCC and its involved tenants independently network to gather best practice in engagement and increase their awareness of the wider housing sector challenges
 - All employees within BCC's housing service can describe the benefits tenant engagement brings to the organisation, its tenants and the wider community and understand how their role can enhance the BCC's ability to hear the tenant's voice.
- **Community and Wider Engagement**
 - There is a menu of engagement opportunities that is reflective of the tenants profile, responds to the different needs in relation to equality strands and any additional support, which can be evidenced in the delivery of their services, engagement activities and communications to promote widespread engagement
 - BCC provides opportunities for its tenants to engage in emerging social housing sector policy consultations and responses
 - Where regeneration by the Birmingham Municipal Housing Trust or planned major works are planned to take place, tenants will be fully informed and from the start are part of the project planning, delivery and monitoring
 - There is a clear approach to promoting and supporting community action and evidence that tenants are aware of Right to Manage opportunities
 - There is clear evidence of joint working between engagement services across BCC to meet the needs and aspirations of tenants
 - Tenants are supported in making the best use of green spaces and parks in their ward to realise health benefits of exercise, fresh air and community activities

The criteria within this specification is based on the TPAS National Tenant Engagement Standards 3rd Edition (2021).