

**A need to communicate in a way that's right for everyone.**

**Tenant Scrutiny Board  
Assessment of the 'Tenant Voice  
Panel'  
July 2022**

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# Introduction

This report is about the 2nd stage of our review into the Tenant Engagement Service, how the service involves tenants and residents and how best are tenants able to influence service design, policy and decision making.

A review of the Tenant Engagement Service began in May 2020 and initially we decided it would undertake four stages.

1. Wider tenant feedback and insight - how the service engages and uses feedback from tenants as a whole, with a focus on digital engagement.
2. How the service involves tenants and residents - how best are tenants able to influence service design, policy and decision making.
3. Housing Advisory Panels - How HAPs and the service support wider community activities.
4. Strategic tenant influence – To consider the strategic influence of tenants and the impact on the tenant engagement service of the forthcoming Housing White Paper.

The Tenant Scrutiny Board has decided that stages three and four will now no longer go ahead. The board felt at this point in time our activity and time would now be better spent reviewing other areas of service. Following Covid we also felt there were other areas in Housing that we can concentrate on. The board may revisit both HAPs and the strategic influence of tenants in future.

## Scope

Our 'Stage 2' looked at 'How the service involves tenants and residents and how tenants are best able to influence service design, policy and decision making'.

The Terms of Reference for this review were agreed on the 4 September 2020. When it was concluded that the purpose would be to assess and, where appropriate, make recommendations based on the evidence and research of the board.

At the point of starting Stage 2 of our review, the board had to re-think our approach as the service had developed further its plans to create a new Tenant Voice Panel. This included significant changes to the formal involvement structure, the dissolving of the various city-wide improvement groups and the setting up of a single 'Tenant Voice Panel' with the hope many members from those groups would play a part in the new panel.

As we were unable to review a service that was currently in place, we asked the Tenant Engagement Service to submit to the board how they envisaged the Tenant Voice Panel to operate, its role and how this would work. Ian Montgomery submitted this to the board in May 2022. Our Stage 2 review was therefore more an assessment of the proposals from the service so that we can input and influence the future working of the tenant panel to make this as effective as possible.

The Tenant Scrutiny Board is supported by the Tenant Engagement team. In the early stages of the review, we had external independent support from an Independent Tenant Advisor, Yvonne Davies in order to maintain impartiality and to share information about how other landlords were developing their formal tenant involvement.

Stage 2 of our review was conducted over four meetings; the meetings were conducted virtually and face to face. Some examples of the issues we explored in these meetings were:

- Discussion and clarification on membership of the panel, to include Leaseholders and wider residents
- The more strategic role of the new panel in actually holding the service to account for its performance – and how this works in practice.
- The importance of the wider staff base of Housing Leeds understanding the role of the panel and how they can describe and encourage tenants, residents and others to engage with this.
- How we ensure those tenants who are not online are able to participate in the panel and the wider tenant engagement structure.

The Board would like to thank all those involved in this review. It was carried out sometimes in challenging circumstances. A full list of those who participated is detailed at the end of this report.

Based on the content and issues covered by the Board we have made the following proposals to influence the working of the Tenant Voice Panel ahead of it's implementation:

# Proposals

- We recognise the importance of tenants being able to hold Housing Leeds to account against the Social Housing Regulators Consumer Standards – both current and the new forthcoming standards.
- If the Tenant Voice Panel is to “hold to account” Housing Leeds against the regulatory consumer standards, then these standards must be shared with all tenants in a language easily understood by non-professionals.
- Feedback from the “Holding us to account” meetings also needs to be shared with the Tenant Scrutiny Board and the wider tenant base in an easy-to-understand format and language.
- Staff will also need a full understanding of the Consumer Standards and the increased powers of the Regulator for Social Housing. Training should be provided if needed.
- When there are enough interested tenants willing to join the Tenant Voice Panel, they will need in depth understanding of how the panel will work and what will be required of them. We feel hosting an in person “launch event” would be beneficial. A suggestion would be attendees could break out into smaller groups, with a staff member in each group explaining the finer details of the panel and collating questions.
- Do not forget the expertise within the cohort of previous citywide groups and invite them to join the new panel.
- We consider it important that the current ways of communicating and engaging with all tenants, including those not online, is continued.
- A member of the Tenant Scrutiny Board to be invited to be a tenant representative on the Strategic Housing Board (or equivalent).
- Minutes of the Strategic Housing Board and Tenant Scrutiny Board meetings should be shared with the Tenant Voice Panel. Your Voice

Leeds could be used for this, but hard copies circulated to those not online.

- It is suggested that 10 Tenant Voice Panel members are 'invited' on to TSB for individual reviews and they will have voting rights. TSB are concerned there will be more 'invited' members than 'standing' members, of which there will be 8. We would like to request more clarity around how this will work.
- We recommend holding regular reviews of the Tenant Voice Panel, involving feedback from participants, over the first 24 months after the launch.
- Any review of Tenant Scrutiny Board must be carried out by Housing Leeds in partnership with us.

# Acknowledgements

The Tenant Scrutiny Board would like to thank the tenants, officers and external advisors who gave assistance and specialist knowledge during this review. Please see the table below

<b>Date of meeting</b>	<b>Witness/Presenter</b>
17 <sup>th</sup> September 2021	Ian Montgomery – Service Manager, Tenant Engagement.
19 <sup>th</sup> November 2021	Christine Dawson – Voice of Older Leeds Tenants
19 <sup>th</sup> November 2021	Sue Easton – High Rise Strategy Group
19 <sup>th</sup> November 2021	Andrea Purdy – Voice of Involved Tenants Across Leeds
19 <sup>th</sup> November 2021	Dennis Moody - Voice of Involved Tenants Across Leeds
19 <sup>th</sup> November 2021	Sheila Horne – Repairs & Investment Group
19 <sup>th</sup> November 2021	Chris Briggs - Voice of Older Leeds Tenants
19 <sup>th</sup> November 2021	Yvonne Davies – Tenant Advisor
21 <sup>st</sup> January 2022	Councillor Rafique – Exec member for Communities, Housing and Environment
21 <sup>st</sup> January 2022	Emma Gilpin – Tenants Participation Advisory Service