



# Tower Hamlets Council **Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy 2024**



# Foreword

As Mayor, I am dedicated to placing our council tenants and leaseholders at the heart of housing services. In November 2023, we took a significant step by bringing housing management services back in-house, ensuring they are more accessible, and better aligned with the other vital services the Council provides.

This Strategy is built around a clear commitment to residents, with their feedback, insights, and experiences shaping decision-making. We aim to create stronger, more direct links with tenants and leaseholders, ensuring they are at the centre of shaping these services.

We want our tenants and leaseholders to be involved in our governance structures to support our aim of continual improvements.

Residents have played a key role in shaping this Strategy, and their expertise is invaluable. They know best what is working and where improvements are needed.

Through this Strategy, we aim to create more opportunities for tenants and leaseholders to be involved in their housing service. This includes formal channels like the Tenants' Voice panel and 'Task & Finish' groups, as well as informal ways such as estate inspections and Community Fun Days.

Placing tenants and leaseholders at the core of the Council's work and ensuring their feedback informs and influences decision-making will drive real improvements to the Housing Management Service. This approach is not only about better services but about ensuring that the needs and voices of our residents shape the future of housing in our borough.

**Lutfur Rahman**  
**Executive Mayor of Tower Hamlets**









On 1 November 2023, Housing Management Services previously provided by Tower Hamlets Homes (THH) came back in-house and are now delivered by Tower Hamlets Council. These services include repairs, maintenance, improvements, caretaking, gardening, and rent and service charge collections. The intention of bringing these services back in-house was to help join-up housing and other council services to make it easier for residents to get what they need.

THH had a number of channels for delivering resident engagement that have changed or no longer exist post insourcing, and its Residents Engagement Strategy (2021–2026) needs to be reviewed and refreshed. In addition, changes to the regulation of social housing (coming from the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023) demand an improved and more robust consumer standard, which became effective from 1 April 2024.

The council is now looking to revise THH's Resident Engagement Strategy, to give council tenants and leaseholders a stronger voice and the opportunity to be engaged and involved in the decision-making process in relation to housing management services.







Before insourcing, the council asked tenants and leaseholders about the best ways to communicate with them and for them to raise complaints. They told us:

- **In its communication, the council should aim to be...**
  - Better (clearer) and speedier responses to queries and more direct engagement with staff. They also wanted to see communication via a range of methods: online, in person and via block posters.
- **When we raise issues, the council should aim to be...**
  - Quicker to respond especially on repairs, keep to timescales and keep residents informed of progress. They also want more accuracy and accountability for leaseholder bills.
- **When making key decisions, the council should aim to be...**
  - More informative and communicate better especially confirming that responses have been received and train staff better (on communicating with residents).
- **To build trust with residents, the council should aim to be...**
  - More responsive and feedback better on outcomes (more you said... we did), treat residents with respect and be more visible on estates.
- **When interacting with the council, we the residents, should aim to be...**
  - Polite, respectful and fair.

We have listened to what our tenants and leaseholders have said and are now consulting with them on the council's new vision for resident engagement. This strategy will provide the blueprint on how the council aims to engage and communicate with tenants and leaseholders in a more transparent and accountable way. It also seeks to build on the engagement successes to drive service improvements and build a stronger relationship with council tenants and leaseholders.



# Vision

“Placing our council tenants and leaseholders at the very centre of what we do. Listening to their concerns and issues, gathering feedback to inform and influence decision-making and to drive improvements to the council’s Housing Management Service. Working with council tenants and leaseholders in an open, fair, transparent and accessible way to provide all residents with the opportunity to shape their new housing management service.”





To meet our vision, and in keeping with the specific expectations laid out in the Regulator of Social Housing's Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard, the council's housing management service wants to make the following three commitments for the duration of this strategy.

**i. To improve the ways which we communicate with council tenants and leaseholders by:**

- a) Reducing and removing the barriers which deter tenants and leaseholders from engaging with the council through the development of accessible routes of engagement and involvement for all council tenants and leaseholders.
- b) Providing clear and accessible communications which meet the diverse needs of our communities and actively listening to their concerns and feedback in a timely manner.
- c) Using data from all engagement activities to drive performance and service improvement and through ongoing discussions with council tenants and leaseholders, enable them to participate in the decision-making process.

**ii. Increase participation and empower council tenant and leaseholders by:**

- a) Fostering a culture of openness and respect between the council and its tenants and stakeholders.
- b) Sharing ideas and knowledge with tenants and leaseholders on operational initiatives, strategies and policies which impact on them.
- c) Acknowledging the feedback and ideas of council tenants and leaseholders to ensure that they feel that their contributions are valued.
- d) Providing council tenants and leaseholders with training and skills to enable them to fully participate and engage with the council's housing management services where they take a formal approach to involvement in the scrutiny of services, strategies, policies and decision-making (Tenants' Voice panel).

**iii. Ensure that the council's housing management service is transparent and open to the challenge and scrutiny of council tenants and leaseholders by:**

- a) Embracing both positive and negative feedback to drive service improvements.
- b) Addressing issues and concerns raised by council tenants and leaseholders and working collaboratively to solve problems or concerns.



# Our ladder of engagement options

There are multiple ways that both tenants and leaseholders can get involved and engage with the council's housing management service; both formally and informally

## Formal ways

**Strategic involvement** – this is helping to inform strategic business priorities, monitoring performance against key performance indicators and undertaking scrutiny reviews. Current bodies include:

- **Tenants' Voice panel** – this group consists of eight tenants, three leaseholders and a tenant of a leaseholder. The group provides strategic feedback and sets our recommendations. The group is connected to the Council's Housing Scrutiny Committee.
- **Tenants & Residents' Associations (TRAs)** – a positive force in the community, TRAs are independent resident-led organisations that bring people together and serve as a platform for residents to influence the management of their neighbourhoods. There are currently 27 TRAs across Tower Hamlets estates. The Council provides support to TRAs to be self-sufficient and well governed organisations. It also actively engages with all TRAs at a local level through front line staff and at a more strategic level through bi-annual Resident Roadshows aimed to provide an overview of the Council, its performance and future direction.
- **Co-opted Membership** on the council Housing and Regeneration Scrutiny Sub Committee







**Local neighbourhood/estate meetings** - this is engaging local residents within specific neighbourhoods/estates to address matters that are important to them. The council will set out work priorities drawn from local consultation and produce action plans.

**Service level/issue involvement** – any tenant and leaseholder can sign up to participate in specific consultation workshops to advise and provide feedback on a particular service area; through 'Task and Finish Groups'.

**Involvement for all** – residents to be given regular key updates and may participate in consultation surveys, attend roadshows, provide digital feedback, or get involved in:

- A community project like a food garden
- Ongoing consultations across services such as new build in fill consultation/ new development design standards
- Qualitative consultation around repair service and major works
- Resident involvement in the procurement of new contracts
- Resident reading group

### **Informal ways**

- Reporting issues or concerns via webpage, Housing Officer or Estate Inspectors.
- Satisfaction Surveys – post transaction, resident surveys, consultation surveys, by phone, text, email or post.
- Focus groups – one-off informal but structured conversations around single issue topics.
- Mystery Shopping.
- Estate inspections
- Newsletters, email updates, the council's web content, survey reports.





If you have any questions or require further information  
about resident engagement, email:

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