



## **Flintshire County Council Housing Services**

### **Tenant Involvement Strategy 2024 - 2027**

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## **Introduction**

Welcome to our Involvement Strategy.

Flintshire County Council's Housing and Communities Portfolio is responsible for approximately 7300 homes across the county comprising of general needs and sheltered accommodation. To support the management of those homes it is important to us that our tenants are given the opportunity to share their experiences of those services through a variety of ways.

A full census STAR survey to gauge the view of our tenants on the services provided was undertaken in 2022 and we have made a commitment to undertake such surveys every two years. We are using the results of this to work alongside our tenants to develop our strategy and associated action plans moving forward. The feedback given to us through this extensive piece of work is invaluable and will assist us to improve what we do and make changes in our services. This will ensure that our work will be based on the areas our tenants are telling us we need to improve.

This strategy details our intentions to develop and improve tenant involvement throughout the portfolio. There have been many changes in our department over the last few years. Covid-19 brought challenges and many new ways of working for us all. This was then followed by an extensive work to ensure the correct and full implementation of the Renting Homes (Wales) Act.

We know we can do much more to involve and engage with our tenants and now is the right time to move forward with these plans. We wish to embrace new ways of working such as the opportunities presented by increased use of digital technologies and explore new methods of engagement; understanding and realising that many different opportunities are needed if our services are truly going to reflect the views of our diverse base of tenants.

## **What is involvement?**

Customer involvement is about tenants and housing staff working together to share information and ideas to improve the quality of services we provide. It enables tenants to be able to influence decisions about areas of work such as housing policies, housing conditions and housing services. We recognise that listening to and involving our tenants is an essential part of improving our services.

Meaningful involvement can benefit tenants and the landlord and is key for shaping our services for the better. There are many proven benefits for both parties in working together, these include:

- enhancing the Council's accountability to its tenants.
- improved outcomes for our tenants with the chance to influence services.
- creating services that better meet tenants' needs.
- increased tenant satisfaction.
- improved communications.
- becoming more aware of each other's perspectives and organisational and financial limitations.
- creating a culture of mutual trust, respect and partnership between the Council and its tenants.
- providing opportunities for tenants to increase self-confidence and skills.

## **What we want to achieve and how we will achieve this**

The overall aim of our Tenant Involvement Strategy is to:

***Ensure we have in place robust involvement opportunities, developed with our tenants, to ensure we are providing a quality housing service that meets their needs and the needs of the community.***

Our objectives to meet this aim are as follows:

- ***Develop and provide a range of involvement opportunities for our tenants.***
- ***Ensure our tenants are at the heart of driving service improvements and are able to work with us to shape our services.***
- ***Improve and extend communication methods to ensure tenants are informed and engaged.***
- ***Improve skills and confidence of our tenants so they feel able to participate in a meaningful way that meets their needs.***
- ***Increase participation of our tenants in issues affecting their local community to see positive changes to our estates and communities.***

To achieve this there is an action plan which will set out how the involvement service will be delivered. It will include the various activities and tasks that will help us to achieve our key objectives shown above with key timescales and the difference we hope to achieve by undertaking this work.

## **How can I get involved?**

We intend to offer a wide range of activities and ways in which you can get involved at various levels of commitment. It's also about recognising that different people have different levels of interest and time to commit but also may prefer a different method of communicating and engaging with us.

It's not just about meetings and tenants' groups (although these are also important) we want to attract a newer and broader audience to get involved to ensure we are getting the opinion of a good and fair representation of our tenant base. For this we need to look at our digital participation too.

Whatever way you decide to get involved, and however much time you can commit, all views and voices are welcome, and all will help us in developing our services and improving how we work.

We recognise there are also barriers which prevent tenants getting involved including:

- Lack of training and confidence
- Understanding of what it means
- Lack of awareness of opportunities
- Time constraints
- Travel, carer, and such costs

We are therefore committed to offering practical solutions to make it a more viable option for as many tenants as possible. These include but are not limited to:

- Providing training and support to those who are committed.
- Providing information in various formats.
- Covering transport and associated costs where appropriate.
- Arranging meetings at times and locations most accessible to tenants.
- Making use of digital methods so that people can engage from home at a time and pace that suits them.
- Offering a wide range of involvement methods to suit all lifestyles.



Lower level in the comfort of your home - for example complete a feedback survey, engage with online content, register with MyAccount



Lower level in your community - for example join a tenants and residents association, attend a drop-in session



Medium level - for example attend a Housing organised meeting or consultation event to have your say, join a focus group, attend some training



Higher level - for example sit on one of our improvement groups, become a tenant inspector

### **Information**

When we talk about information we mean:

- Informing tenants and other customers about the services that are available.
- Informing tenants and other customers about the various options that are available as a part of the consultation process.
- Information is essential for consultation to be effective.

### **Consultation**

When we talk about consultation we mean:

- Seeking our tenants' and other customers' views about our proposals to improve services. We will listen to your views and then make a decision.
- We will consider these views alongside other factors such as budget restrictions or legal obligations.

- However, if we are unable to use your ideas, we will explain why. Consultation is essential for participation to be effective.

### **Participation**

When we talk about participation we mean:

- Involving our tenants and other customers in decisions about their homes and communities, alongside elected members and managers within the Housing Service

### **Monitoring and Review**

When we talk about monitoring and review we mean:

- Asking tenants and other customers about the quality of the services they receive.
- Reviewing those services with the assistance of tenants and other customers to make improvements.
- The information received through monitoring and reviewing services, with tenants and other customers, provides important evidence in planning future service improvements.

### **Working Together**

When we talk about working together we mean:

- Interacting with our tenants and other customers in a creative and energetic atmosphere, to share and build on each-others' ideas and to develop new or enhanced ways of working.
- Working together is the highest and most productive way of involving our tenants and other customers.
- By working together we are able to share ownership not only of the problem, but the solution.
- By working together we are able to create a true sense of partnership and of moving forward together.

### **Who we will involve & how**

It is our intention to work closely with a wide range of our tenants throughout the County to develop our plans. Our tenants are best placed to tell us how they would like to be involved and how frequently. We will be using the results of our STAR survey as well as going out and speaking to tenants such as our Tenants Federation and local residents' groups in order to formulate our plans longer term as they will be continually evolving.

We will engage with other staff across the Housing Service to see how they think tenant involvement can help them to improve the work they do and see positive changes to our service delivery. We want to ensure all areas of the portfolio are aware of the benefits of involving tenants and that they make efforts to ensure it becomes part of the everyday way of working.

We also value the opinions of our partner organisations and internal colleagues and will work with them where appropriate to see our tenants more engaged in services and our communities more sustainable and vibrant places.

### **How we will monitor and review**

Working with our tenants there will be a constant review process in place. We will ensure that the action plan is monitored regularly to ensure we are on track to meet the targets we are setting out in this plan.

Regular updates will be provided to our Tenants Federation and will be reported to our wider tenants as appropriate as new ideas and ways to get involved are developed and available.