

TITLE	Tenants Charter – Modernising the Customer Experience in Wokingham Borough Council – 2 Year on Update Report
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Council on 23 September 2021
WARD	None specific
LEAD VOLUNTEER	Steve Bowers – Chairperson of the Tenant and Landlord Improvement Panel (Involved Tenant Volunteer)

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

In September 2020, the Involved Tenants came to Full Council to outline the benefits to the community and outcomes from the Tenants Charter and Involved Tenants Partnership working has had on the experience of council housing tenants using services.

This report looks back on the past year from September 2020 to August 2021 to again outline the benefits to the Community and positive outcomes that the Tenants Charter and Involved Tenants Partnership working has had on the experience of council housing tenants using services. This report also highlights the achievements of this partnership working, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, and future aspirations the Involved Tenants would like to achieve.

Please see the attached report – Tenant Charter – 2 Years on – What have we achieved together.....so far? This sets out all that has been achieved in the last year in partnership with Wokingham Borough Council Housing Services.

RECOMMENDATION

The Involved Tenants would like to ask the Council to:

- 1) consider the aspirations outlined in the Tenants Charter and continue to work in partnership with the Involved Tenants to achieve these;
- 2) support the Involved Tenants as they begin to look at updating the full Tenants Charter to better suit the current projects, aims and aspirations of the partnership. The Involved Tenants are requesting this as so much has changed in the past year due to the pandemic and they would like to reflect this in areas that are overachieving and those that require further support.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

The purpose of the report is to formally update the Council on the progress of the work, already completed over the last year, to achieve the aspirations of the Tenants Charter.

This report was developed by the Involved Tenants and has been subject to review and approval by the Tenant and Landlord Improvement Panel.

The charter sets out the views of Wokingham Borough Council's Involved Tenants on what is needed to modernise the customer experience and ensure continuous

improvement. It is intended as a series of aspirations, rather than demands, and to stimulate a broader discussion within the council as a corporate body.

There are ten key priorities of Wokingham Borough Council tenants in the modernisation of housing services which are detailed in the Tenants Charter:

- 1. Tackling the stigma associated with being a council tenant*
- 2. Identifying future patterns of tenant need and demand*
- 3. Maximising the accessibility of council services*
- 4. Modernising tenant engagement techniques to increase active involvement*
- 5. Creating an easy 'friction-free' customer experience for tenants*
- 6. Giving tenants greater choice on who does repairs and when*
- 7. Responding to an ageing tenant population*
- 8. Helping tenants manage their personal finances more effectively*
- 9. Greater transparency regarding tenant health and safety inspection results*
- 10. Developing a protocol for the analysis and protection of tenant data*

The formal update report goes through each priority to outline the achievements this year whilst also including future aspirations of the Involved Tenants and ideas of how they would like to get involved in other areas. The Involved Tenants would appreciate any help and support to achieve these.

BACKGROUND

Several factors make it timely to reflect on the future of housing services for council tenants:

- The emerging lessons and review from the Grenfell Tower disaster in 2016 – notably the need for a greater focus on health and safety, tenant involvement in refurbishment schemes and transparency over landlord decision-making.
- The government's Social Housing White Paper and recommendations provided within.
- The Housing Ombudsman Complaints Code changes that have come into effect and require changes to the Complaints Policy and processes.
- The emerging opportunities for digital transformation of service delivery and resident involvement in respect of increased efficiency and an improved tenant customer experience.
- Other social trends such as an ageing population, increasing demand for disability and social care support, increasing customer expectations (particularly amongst younger generations) and the rapid rise of social media and so on.
- The Covid-19 pandemic driving more services and activities online along with a change in the way services have had to be provided in the past year. Many of these changes will remain in place as we continue to be uncertain over an end to the pandemic.

We believe that the council and tenants need to respond to these issues by working together to plan for the modernisation of housing services over the next decade and beyond if:

- Current levels of satisfaction are to be maintained,
- Opportunities to increase efficiency are to be realised and
- Ideas to help the Council achieve Carbon Neutrality by 2030 a reality.

Where suppliers are named, this is for illustrative purposes and does not constitute an endorsement.

Some of the proposals can and have been implemented relatively easily, some will require additional funding, some will be reviewed in the next year and others will require corporate agreement by full council.

List of Background Papers

Tenants Charter – Modernising the customer experience in Wokingham Borough Council

Tenant Charter – 2 Years on – What have we achieved together.....so far?

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