

TITLE	The Tenants Charter – Modernising the Tenant Customer Experience within the Wokingham Borough
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	Council, 21 September 2023
WARD	All Wards
LEAD VOLUNTEER	Steve Bowers – Chairperson of the Tenant and Landlord Improvement Panel (Tenant Volunteer)

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

In September 2019, the Tenant Volunteers came to the Full Council to launch and present their first Tenant Charter. The Tenant Charter shared their aspirations and the benefits to the community that working in partnership with the Tenant Volunteers could have.

Over the last few years, the Tenant Volunteers have shared a report with the Council annually on the continued partnership work and to highlight the achievements over that year.

In October 2022, the Tenant Volunteers launched the new Tenant Charter and the new Tenant Charter Video. This updated Tenant Charter was again created by the Tenant Volunteers and outlined their updated aspirations.

Please see the attached draft Action Plan - Tenant Involvement Strategy – TISG updated 25.08.2023. This is the 2023 update from the work the Tenant Volunteers have completed in partnership with Wokingham Borough Council colleagues, Councillors and Tenants, along with some further recommendations for projects throughout the next year.

This action plan shows some of the projects the Tenant Volunteers have been involved with in the last year.

RECOMMENDATION

The Tenant Volunteers would like to ask the Council to note the Tenant Involvement Strategy Draft Action Plan and continue to work in partnership with them to continue to achieve the aspirations of the Tenant Charter.

SUMMARY OF REPORT

The purpose of the report is to formally update the Council on the progress of the work of the Tenant Volunteers, completed over the last year in partnership with Wokingham Borough Council. This year it is linked specifically to the new Tenant Involvement Strategy.

This report was developed by the Tenant Volunteers and has been subject to review by the Tenant and Landlord Improvement Panel, the Assistant Director of Economy and Housing and the Director of Place and Growth.

The charter sets out the views of Wokingham Borough Council's 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) *Communications with Tenants and Residents across the Borough*
- 3) *Greater Transparency regarding Health and Safety Inspection Results*
- 4) *Modernising Tenant Engagement Techniques to Increase Active Involvement*
- 5) *Identifying Future Patterns of Tenant Housing Need and Demand*
- 6) *Helping Tenants Manage their Personal Finances*
- 7) *Creating an easy 'friction-free' Customer Experience for Tenants*
- 8) *Maximising the Accessibility of Council Housing Services*
- 9) *Giving Tenants Greater Choice on who does repairs and when?*
- 10) *Developing a Protocol for the Analysis and Protection of Tenant Data*

The formal update report goes through the Regulatory compliance updates along with the 3 priorities (from the Aspirations above) in detail to outline the completed achievements over the last year.

The Tenant Volunteers would like to thank the Wokingham Borough Council colleagues, Councillors and Tenants for help and support to achieve these.

BACKGROUND OF THE TENANT CHARTER

The Tenant Charter was initially created and published by the Involved Tenants (now Tenant Volunteers) in 2019. In 2022, we (the Tenant Volunteers) reviewed the Charter and have identified several factors that make it timely to reflect on the future of housing services for council tenants and publish an updated version of the Tenant Charter:

- **The Grenfell Tower Disaster**
 - There have been emerging lessons from the Disaster and subsequent Grenfell Tower Enquiry. Notably the need for a greater focus on:
 - Health and Safety through the new Building Regulator,
 - Tenant Involvement working closely with the Regulator for Social Housing and Housing Ombudsman Service and,
 - Transparency over landlord decision-making ensuring that more information is shared with all Tenants.
- **The Social Housing White Paper**
 - The government's document '*The Charter for Social Housing Residents: Social Housing White Paper*' published by the Ministry of Housing Communities Local Government (now called the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities) was published in November 2020 and requests:
 - Enhanced consumer regulation applicable to councils and housing associations.
 - Landlords to raise service standards, levels of resident engagement and customer satisfaction.
- **Digital Transformation**

- There are emerging opportunities for enhanced communications through digital transformation of service delivery and enhanced resident engagement in respect of increased transparency and an improved tenant customer experience especially regarding accessibility.
- **Demographic Trends**
 - Social trends such as an ageing population, increasing demand for disability and social care support, increasing customer expectations and the rapid rise of social media platforms.

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

- current levels of Tenant Satisfaction are to be maintained / enhanced / monitored, and
- opportunities to increase engagement are to be realised.

This charter sets out the views of Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) Tenant Volunteers on what we feel is needed to achieve the above and to improve the customer experience.

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

Some of our proposals can be implemented relatively easily, some will require additional funding and others will require corporate agreement by full council.

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

We will continue to share an update report on the progress from the 2022 Tenant Charter to Full Council in September / October each year. It is expected that the next review of the Tenant Charter will be in 2025 (unless specifically requested by the Tenant Volunteers in partnership with TLIP)

List of Background Papers

Draft Action Plan – Tenant Involvement Strategy V2.

Tenant Charter Full Council PowerPoint presentation 2023.

Tenants Charter update 2022 – Modernising the Tenant Customer Experience within the Wokingham Borough - [The Tenant Charter \(wokingham.gov.uk\)](http://wokingham.gov.uk). This link includes the full Tenant Charter, both versions as well as the two Tenant Charter videos.

Contact Steve Bowers	Service
Telephone No	Email steve.bowers@wbcinvolved.com

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