Tenants Charter 2024 - 2027

# Introduction

Ashfield District Council recognise that involving tenants is an essential part of our decision-making process and we are committed to making sure that there are opportunities for all tenants to participate in the design and delivery of our Housing Service, to ensure that this is transparent and fair.

We are also committed to working together with tenants to promote meaningful involvement in the District of Ashfield. It is for this reason that we have put in place a broad range of opportunities for tenants to participate in the management of their housing service and we expect this to be reflected in greater levels of customer satisfaction in the future.

The Tenants Charter is a three-year plan that sets out various ways in which tenants may be involved with other tenants and the Council, in relation to our service delivery and performance.

This Charter takes account of the right of tenants to receive information and to be consulted under the 1985 Housing Act, Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023, the Consumer Standards set by the Regulator of Social Housing and social housing sector best practice/guidance.

The Housing Service has a long-standing tradition of tenant involvement and participation and we recognise that some tenants want to participate in a limited way and that others want to be more involved.

## Our Aims

The aims of this Charter are:

* To provide opportunities for tenants to be central to our decision making, our future plans and play a critical role in helping us to achieve excellent housing services;
* To ensure that our housing services are delivered in a transparent way, to ensure that tenants are able to hold us to account
* To ensure that all tenants are able to participate at a level that suits them while recognising the needs of special interest groups;
* To effectively use tenant feedback to improve service delivery and meet customer needs;
* Ensure housing services are continually monitored for the benefit of all tenants within Ashfield;
* Ensure that we meet all statutory and regulatory requirements;
* To support positive approaches to achieving sustainable communities in partnership with tenants;
* To support tenants to remove any barriers they may experience in participating with our engagement opportunities.

We will achieve our aims by:-

### Enabling tenants to get actively involved in improving and developing high quality housing services

We will:

* Raise awareness of resident involvement to get more residents involved
* Ensure tenant participation is open and accessible to everyone who wishes to become involved.
* Recognise individual tenants needs, treating them fairly and with respect
* Provide a range of accessible engagement opportunities for our tenants, supporting tenants to remove any barriers to engagement
* Undertake effective tenant scrutiny of the performance of housing services
* through our Tenant Scrutiny Panel
* Incorporate tenant voice, opinion and feedback into our decision making

### Developing effective communication with tenants

We will:

* Ensure that points of contact and communications are used effectively, and frontline staff are trained to record and pass on relevant feedback
* Provide tenants with information through the Council’s publication Ashfield Matters and direct tenant communication through Tenant Matters publications
* Provide good quality information and feedback on consultations
* Continue to develop modern and flexible communication methods, such as online
* services, to ensure information is accessible to all
* Attend and support Tenant and Residents Associations across Ashfield

### Facilitating joint working between tenants, staff, elected members and communities to achieve effective community involvement and actions

We will:

* Facilitate partnership and joint working to avoid duplication and contribute to wider community initiatives
* Co-ordinate the involvement of keys groups and departments
* Support staff to develop active tenant participation in their local area, including tenant’s and resident’s groups and other local initiatives

We will develop with our tenants, an Action Plan which details how we will meet these aims.

## Our approach to tenant engagement

### How can you get involved?

Ashfield District Council is keen to involve a broad section of our tenants in the decision-making process, but we also want individuals to be involved at a level that suits them, meets their availability/capacity and for which they have the required level of knowledge and understanding.

We know that some tenants and leaseholders want nothing more than to receive a quality housing service from their landlord, while others want to be directly involved in the management of their homes.

The Council recognises the importance of hearing the voice of our tenants and leaseholders, when developing and improving the service we provide, as a landlord.

Resident involvement will fall into one or both of the following categories:

### Involvement

This is where tenants/leaseholders and council staff work in partnership with decisions being made jointly. These may take place in various situations from specific meetings to agreements while carrying out estate inspections.

### Consultation

This is where tenants are asked for their views on a particular topic and include, for example, surveys where people are asked their opinions and letters sent to tenants asking for feedback on proposed changes to documents or processes. While tenants’ views are taken into account, decisions are still made by the Council. Consultation is mandatory for some processes.

### Ways to get involved

Traditionally tenant participation has focused on consulting with formal Tenants and Residents Associations. However, we recognise that not everyone wants to get involved in this way and the number of associations has reduced considerably in recent years.

We want to encourage as many tenants as possible to have their say on how the Housing Service is managed, delivered and performing. This is why, over the years, we have developed a range of options available for tenants to get involved and to influence decisions that affect them at a level, time and place that suits them best.

Getting involved doesn’t always mean attending meetings – there are a number of ways to do this including estate inspections, sheltered housing surgeries and online surveys. It is up to you how much or how little you want to participate. Some of the ways to get involved are as follows:

### Ways to get involved

## Consultation

### On-line and service specific surveys or Questionnaires

Following the provision of certain housing services, we may contact you, by a variety of means, to request feedback from you, to assist us with improving the service provision in the future. This provides customers with an opportunity to give their views and opinions on the services they receive, from the comfort of their own home. We are developing a framework of surveys regarding our services to better understand tenant satisfaction levels.

### Specific Consultation activities

Consultation is conducted when changes are being considered that will have a direct impact on tenants to seek views on proposals. Consultation methods can vary and could be via letter, questionnaire or through events in local venues to seek the views of all relevant people within the area. The nature of the consultation will determine if this is mandatory or not.

### Tenant Satisfaction Measures (Tenant Perception Survey)

The Regulator of Social Housing requires us to undertake a survey with our tenants each year. The survey contains specific questions set by the regulator and may include some additional questions set by the Council. The Council do not need to survey all of our tenants, but if we only survey a sample of our tenants the respondents should be sufficient to be statistically representative/representative of our tenant base. We will report the results of the survey to our tenants, officers/managers, elected members and to the Regulator.

### Estate Inspections

To help ensure estates are kept clean, in good condition and tenancy breaches are being managed, yearly inspections of council estates and related areas are carried out by Housing Officers. Local tenants, residents and partner organisations, including the Police are invited to attend and participate. This is an opportunity for you to walk around your neighborhood with our employees and other agencies to discuss any issues or concerns.

Estate inspections take between one and a half hours, and three hours, dependent on the size of the area.

### Housing Surgeries

Regular surgeries are held for tenants of Sheltered Courts on a quarterly basis. This gives tenants the chance to discuss issues or raise concerns with their Housing Officer, as well as feeding back comments regarding the Court and our services. Housing Officers will also promote opportunities for tenants to get involved.

### Roadshows/local events/other site meetings

We will always try to attend local meetings as and when invited, where we will take note of your concerns and suggestions raised and seek to address these at the time, where possible. If it is not possible to address issues at the meeting, we will take these away and provide an update in the future. From time to time, we will hold meetings to inform you about our services or new legislation. These events are a great way of finding out what we are doing, changes that might affect you or what is happening in your local community.

## Involvement

### Tenant Scrutiny Panel

The Scrutiny Panel consists of up to nine members. The role of the Panel is to audit our services, become our critical friends and recommend changes based on relevant findings of their investigations. The Panel will look at one specific area of the business at a time and make recommendations on how this could be approved.

Meetings are regularly and at least three investigations will take place each year, meetings may take place online or in person.

### Customer Opinion and Influencing Network (COIN)

COIN is a network of tenants who share their views on the services received from the Council as their landlord. All feedback received is used to develop and improve services.

There are no formal meetings for COIN and members can provide feedback at any time, and as frequently as they wish. We may on occasion send information to members of COIN and ask for feedback, but this is optional.

### Tenant’s Gateway

The Tenant’s Gateway consists of up to 16 tenants from across the District. Tenants meet with our managers to review policies, procedures and performance. The Gateway is your opportunity to consider proposals for service developments and innovation, improvements to our policies and procedures and to consult on general business.

Meetings are approximately two hours and are held every two months.

### Tenants and Residents Forum

The Ashfield Tenants and Residents Forum is led by a number of involved tenants that represent the Tenants and Residents Associations operating in the District. This provides tenants and residents the opportunity to discuss the strategic objectives of organisations operating within Ashfield, providing feedback and suggestions from local tenants and residents, and allowing for a regular exchange of information.

Meetings are usually around two hours per meeting and are held every three months.

### Tenants and Residents Groups/Community Associations

These are community groups acting in the interest of tenants and residents, in a particular area of the District, and are run by their members. They can also be called tenants and residents associations or community associations/groups.

Local residents may establish a group to discuss any issues that affect people living in their area and invite relevant organisations to attend to help address their concerns. Meetings are not restricted to housing matters and many groups will also arrange social events for their residents. This is your opportunity to make a real difference in local communities. The Council may provide funding and support to Tenants and Residents Associations, subject to their constitution and the make-up of their membership.

The frequency and duration are set by the group, meetings are normally held in person in the locality of the area the group represents.

## Meet our involved tenants

### Pat Simms

Pat is chair of the Ashfield Tenants and Residents Forum and has been actively participating in tenant involvement activities on the Coxmoor Estate in Kirkby in Ashfield for over 40 years.

Pat was elected onto the board of Ashfield Homes Ltd, as a tenant board member, when it was set up in 2002 and served for eight years prior to the transfer of the Arm’s-length management organisation (ALMO) to Ashfield District Council.

Pat is passionate about tenants being at the heart of the services the Council are delivering and works closely with officers to ensure that the services provide the best support for tenants to live in Council properties.

### Barry Gentry

Barry is a member of the Tenant’s Gateway and is committed to making a difference and holding the Housing Service to account.

Barry represents the tenants of Sutton-in-Ashfield on the Tenants Gateway and shares his experiences of the services he receives to help the Council to shape the services it delivers to tenants.

Before joining Tenants Gateway, Barry picked up valuable skills during his career working as a Merchant Navy Deck Officer and travelling the world, which gives a very different and valued perspective to the group in scrutinising the services and working collaboratively to improve what is delivered to tenants.

## Resources and Support available

All housing staff are aware of their responsibility to listen and feedback tenant’s views, support and encourage tenant participation and will attend meetings, where appropriate.

To support and encourage tenant participation there are a range of resources and mechanisms to engage which tenants groups and individuals can access including:

* Offering a range of involvement methods to suit all lifestyles. We want to ensure that individuals and groups have equal opportunity to engage with us
* Arranging meeting at times and locations most accessible to tenants
* Annual grant to tenants and residents associations according to the members in the group and start-up grant for new groups aiming to meet the Council’s criteria
* Travel cost reimbursement to cover the financial costs incurred by tenants when attending engagement activities
* Training for tenants who are committed to engaging
* Dedicated staff resource and time

## Monitoring and Evaluation of the Tenant’s Charter

The Tenant’s Charter is a working document subject to continuous review to ensure it is meeting objectives and achieving targets.

We have a separate Action Plan produced with the Tenants Gateway which details how we will meet these outcomes.

The Tenant’s Charter and action plan will be monitored and evaluated on a six monthly basis by the Tenant Engagement Officer, Consumer Standards Lead Officer and the Assistant Director - Housing Management.

A progress report on the action plan will be developed, updated and made available annually. This will be also reported to the Tenants Gateway.

The report will evaluate the success of the Charter in meeting its identified aims and objectives and identify future actions to ensure that tenant participation practice continues to develop, evolve and strive to include all Council tenants and other stakeholders.

The Charter will be reviewed at least every three years.

## Contact us to get involved

If you are a tenant or leaseholder of Ashfield District Council and would like to get involved in any of the housing engagement opportunities we offer, you can contact us in a number of ways:-

* By email: coin@ashfield.gov.uk
* By phone: 01623 457590
* By post/in person: Tenant Engagement Officer, Ashfield District Council, Housing Management Team, Council Offices, Urban Road, Kirkby-in-Ashfield, Notts, NG17 8DA