Gravesham Borough Council

Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy 2026 – 2029

Document Control

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Authors	Head of Neighbourhood
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Foreword

I am pleased, as the Portfolio Holder for Housing, to introduce Gravesham Borough Council's Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy 2026–2029.

As the largest provider of social housing in the borough, responsible for nearly 6,000 homes, we have a clear responsibility to listen to tenants and leaseholders and to ensure their views help shape the services they receive. Good engagement is not simply about asking for feedback; it is about building trust, being open about decisions, acting on what we hear, and showing clearly how tenant and leaseholder voices make a difference.

This strategy has been developed with tenants and leaseholders, drawing on their views, feedback and first-hand experience of our housing services. It sets out how we will strengthen engagement over the next three years, provide more varied and accessible opportunities to get involved, and support meaningful influence and scrutiny across our services.

The strategy is informed by tenant consultation, the requirements of the Regulator of Social Housing, and our commitment to continuous improvement. It is supported by an action plan that will set out how we will deliver our commitments, measure progress and report back on what has changed as a result.

By working together, we can continue to improve housing services and ensure the homes we provide are safe, good quality, and places that tenants and leaseholders are proud to call home.

Councillor Karina O'Malley, Housing Portfolio Holder

Introduction from our Tenant Panel

As members of the Gravesham Housing Services Tenant Panel, we are pleased to introduce the Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Strategy 2026–2029.

The strategy sets out an important commitment to listening to tenants and leaseholders, strengthening communication, and making sure our views are considered when housing services are planned, reviewed and improved. We welcome the opportunity to work alongside Gravesham Borough Council to help shape an approach that is both ambitious

and achievable, with clear commitments to involve people in ways that are meaningful, accessible and worthwhile.

Although the Tenant Panel is still developing, we recognise the important role it can play in representing tenant and leaseholder voices, asking questions, reviewing information and helping to identify where services can improve. We want the Panel to be a constructive and independent voice that supports positive change, while also holding the council to account for the commitments made in this strategy. This includes scrutinising performance, reviewing feedback, considering complaints learning, and helping to ensure engagement leads to clear actions and visible outcomes.

We also welcome the council's commitment to explore further opportunities for themed tenant panels and forums, including areas such as repairs and engagement with young people, so that more tenants can influence the services and issues that matter most to them.

We also recognise that the Panel is only one part of engagement. Not everyone will want to attend meetings or join a formal group, and that is why the new Tenant Engagement Menu is so important. It gives tenants and leaseholders a range of ways to get involved, depending on their time, interests and circumstances.

You may wish to join a panel or forum, take part in a survey or consultation, attend an event, drop-in or surgery, join a digital engagement platform, give feedback on a specific service, or tell us what matters most to you in your area or home.

Every contribution matters, and we encourage tenants and leaseholders to take up the opportunities that work best for them. If you would like to find out more about getting involved, or you would like to join us on the Panel, please contact the Tenant Engagement Team at tenantengagement@gravesham.gov.uk or call 01474 337000.

Introduction

This strategy sets out Gravesham Borough Council's approach to engaging with tenants and leaseholders from 2026 to 2029. It explains why engagement matters, how the strategy was developed, what we have heard, the principles that will guide our approach, our priorities for the next three years, and how we will measure progress and report back.

This is a strategy for both tenants and leaseholders. While many issues are shared, we recognise that tenants and leaseholders may have different experiences, priorities and expectations. We will ensure that our engagement approach reflects this.

The strategy should be read alongside the council's wider housing priorities, annual reporting, complaints learning, and the action plan that will support delivery of these commitments.

Strategic context

Tenant and leaseholder engagement is an essential part of delivering high-quality housing services. It helps us understand people's experiences, identify where services need to improve, and make better decisions.

The social housing sector has changed significantly in recent years. There is now a stronger focus on transparency, accountability and demonstrating how landlords listen to and act on the views of tenants. The Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard introduced by

the Regulator of Social Housing requires landlords to treat tenants with fairness and respect, understand and respond to diverse needs, take tenants' views into account in decision-making, provide clear and accessible information, support effective scrutiny, and address complaints fairly, effectively and promptly.

Alongside this, the Tpas National Tenant Engagement Standards provide a strong framework for good practice, covering engagement strategy, resources for engagement, information and insight, influence and scrutiny, community engagement, and valuing engagement.

This strategy responds to that context. It is intended not only to meet regulatory expectations, but to help us build stronger relationships with tenants and leaseholders and improve the services we provide.

How this strategy was developed

This strategy has been informed by a range of tenant and service insight, including tenant and leaseholder survey feedback, discussion with the Tenant Panel, feedback from engagement events and forums, complaints and compliments, service performance information, learning from day-to-day contact with tenants and leaseholders, and feedback on barriers to involvement and preferred methods of engagement.

We recognise that engagement must continue throughout the life of the strategy. This document is therefore not the end of the conversation. It provides a framework for ongoing dialogue, review and improvement. Where further work is needed to strengthen representation, particularly among less-heard groups, this is reflected within our priorities and action plan.

Our engagement principles

Our approach to engagement will be guided by the following principles.

- **Inclusive** – We will work to ensure that all tenants and leaseholders have opportunities to get involved, including those whose voices are less often heard.
- **Accessible** – We will provide a range of ways to engage and will consider format, language, timing, venue, digital access and other support needs.
- **Transparent** – We will be open about what we are asking for feedback on, what decisions can be influenced, and what happens next.
- **Respectful** – We will treat tenants and leaseholders with fairness and respect and will value lived experience as an important source of insight.
- **Responsive** – We will listen to feedback, consider it carefully and use it to inform service improvement wherever possible.
- **Representative** – We will monitor who engages with us and seek to improve the breadth and diversity of participation over time.
- **Outcome-focused** – We will focus not just on how many activities take place, but on the difference engagement makes to services and outcomes.

Who we will engage and how

We want to hear from a broad and representative range of tenants and leaseholders across our communities. This includes tenants, leaseholders, people living in independent living

accommodation, underrepresented groups, digitally excluded tenants, working households, younger tenants, and tenants with additional support needs or language barriers.

We will provide a range of ways for tenants and leaseholders to engage with us, including Tenant Panel activity, a leaseholder forum, surveys and consultations, scrutiny events and service reviews, community drop-ins and surgeries, digital engagement platforms, newsletters and updates, focus groups and workshops, and one-off topic-based engagement. Our aim is to create an engagement framework that allows people to get involved in a way that suits their time, interests, confidence and circumstances.

Equality, diversity and accessibility

We are committed to ensuring that engagement is fair, inclusive and accessible. To do this, we will use available information and feedback to better understand the diverse needs of our tenants and leaseholders, offer a range of engagement methods including both digital and non-digital options, provide information in clear and accessible formats where needed, consider practical barriers such as timing, venue, transport and confidence, support tenants and leaseholders to participate where additional help is needed, work to reach less-heard groups, and review whether our engagement activity is delivering fair and equitable opportunities to influence services. This reflects the expectation in the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard that landlords understand diverse needs, provide accessible communication and make services accessible to tenants.

Our strategic priorities

Priority 1: Improve communication with tenants and leaseholders

Clear communication helps tenants and leaseholders understand services, know what to expect, and hold the council to account. We will review and improve the way we communicate with tenants and leaseholders, including written information, digital channels, website content and service updates. We will aim to use clear language, appropriate formats and a wider range of channels. We will also strengthen communication about engagement opportunities, performance information and how tenants and leaseholders can influence decisions. Success will mean tenants and leaseholders feel better informed, more aware of opportunities to get involved, and more confident about how to contact us and access services.

1. Review and improve all key tenant and leaseholder communications so they are clear, consistent, timely and written in plain English.
2. Introduce a Tenant Engagement and Communication Policy, setting out how we will communicate with tenants and leaseholders, promote engagement opportunities, manage feedback and ensure information is clear, timely, accessible and consistent.
    - Review and improve the housing pages on the council website so information is easier to find, up to date and accessible.
    - Strengthening communication about engagement opportunities, including the Tenant Panel, Independent Living Forum, Leaseholder Forum, Go Vocal, WhatsApp and local events.
    - Provide clearer service updates on key housing issues, including repairs, planned works, building safety, estate services, tenancy matters and rent information.

- Use a wider range of communication channels, including letters, email, text messages, newsletters, noticeboards, website updates, Go Vocal and WhatsApp.
- Increase awareness and use of Go Vocal and WhatsApp so more tenants and leaseholders receive timely information and can respond in ways that suit them.
- Make communications more inclusive by considering language, literacy, disability, digital access and the needs of tenants who may require reasonable adjustments.
- Develop simple communication standards so tenants and leaseholders know what information they can expect, how often they will hear from us and how to contact the right service.
- Use tenant and leaseholder feedback, complaints, compliments and survey results to identify where communications need to improve.
- Test new or revised communications with tenants and leaseholders where appropriate, so information is understandable, relevant and useful before it is widely shared.

Priority 2: Broaden and strengthen our engagement offer

People want different ways to get involved. A wider engagement offer helps ensure participation is more inclusive and representative. We will develop a broader menu of engagement opportunities, including formal and informal routes, one-off and ongoing opportunities, and both digital and face-to-face options. We will work with tenants and leaseholders to design and review these opportunities, so they are practical, relevant and worthwhile. Success will mean more tenants and leaseholders engaging with us over time, and people being able to choose opportunities that suit their needs, interests and preferences.

- Create and promote a clear Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Menu, setting out the different ways people can get involved and the level of time commitment required.
- Work with the Tenant Panel to test, review and develop new engagement opportunities that are practical, meaningful and accessible.
- Explore opportunities to create additional themed tenant panels or forums, including a repairs-focused panel and engagement opportunities specifically for young people.
- Expand digital engagement through Go Vocal, WhatsApp, online surveys and other accessible channels, while ensuring digital routes complement rather than replace face-to-face options.
- Invest in a dedicated tenant engagement IT system to help record engagement activity, monitor participation levels, understand who is taking part, and track how tenant and leaseholder feedback influences decisions and service improvements.
- Develop targeted engagement routes for leaseholders, independent living tenants, younger tenants, families, and tenants whose voices are less often heard.
- Provide information, support and confidence-building opportunities so tenants and leaseholders can take part in engagement in a way that feels comfortable and worthwhile.

- Use a mix of surveys, focus groups, workshops, informal conversations, forums and one-off activities to make engagement flexible and responsive.
- Review participation data to understand who is engaging, identify gaps in representation and adjust our approach to broaden involvement.
- Regularly review the engagement menu with tenants and leaseholders to ensure opportunities remain relevant, inclusive and effective.

Priority 3: Strengthen tenant and leaseholder influence and scrutiny

Engagement should do more than collect views. It should support meaningful influence, challenge and scrutiny. We will strengthen opportunities for tenants and leaseholders to influence policies, service standards, priorities, procurement activity, contract development and performance monitoring. We will support the Tenant Panel and other engagement routes to play an active role in reviewing information, raising challenge and identifying opportunities for improvement. We will provide appropriate information to support effective scrutiny and be clearer about how feedback has been considered in decision-making. Success will mean tenants and leaseholders can point to examples where they have influenced change, challenged performance or helped shape service improvements.

- Develop themed scrutiny days in partnership with the Tenant Panel, focusing on priority service areas such as repairs, complaints, estate services, building safety and planned works.
- Use survey results, complaints learning, service performance data and feedback from engagement activities to identify topics for tenant and leaseholder scrutiny.
- Provide regular performance updates to the Tenant Panel in a clear and accessible format, enabling members to ask questions, challenge performance and suggest areas for improvement.
- Involve the Tenant Panel in shaping the annual report, including reviewing key messages, performance information and examples of tenant influence.
- Promote Housing Committee meetings and relevant reports to tenants and leaseholders, so they can see how housing decisions are made and where tenant feedback has been considered.
- Support tenant and leaseholder representatives to understand key housing information, including performance indicators, complaints data, policy changes and regulatory requirements.
- Create opportunities for tenants and leaseholders to review and comment on service standards, policies and improvement plans before they are finalised.
- Introduce a Tenant Impact Assessment process for any new or revised housing policy, to ensure the potential impact on tenants and leaseholders is considered before changes are agreed.
- Involve tenants and leaseholders in shaping and reviewing the Tenant Engagement and Communication Policy so it reflects their expectations, experiences and preferred ways of engaging.
- Introduce a tenant engagement in procurement policy, setting out how tenants and leaseholders will be involved at appropriate stages of procuring housing-related contracts, including shaping service requirements, contributing to evaluation where appropriate, reviewing mobilisation plans and providing feedback on contract performance.

- Report back on the outcomes of scrutiny activity, including what was reviewed, what was recommended, what action was agreed and what difference it made.

Priority 4: Develop local and in-person engagement opportunities

Not everyone wants to engage online or through formal meetings. Visible, local and in-person engagement can help remove barriers and strengthen relationships. We will develop place-based engagement opportunities, including events, drop-ins, surgeries and the use of community spaces such as Shears Green Community Centre. We will explore how an engagement hub or dedicated space can support more regular face-to-face activity. We will also work with internal teams and partner organisations to offer activities that are relevant to local needs and interests. Success will mean tenants and leaseholders have more opportunities to engage locally and in person, and participation broadens beyond those already involved.

- Hold regular themed drop-in sessions on key housing issues such as repairs, tenancy support, building safety, rent, estate services and planned works.
- Use community venues across the borough, including Shears Green Community Centre, so tenants and leaseholders can engage closer to where they live.
- Make in-person engagement accessible by considering timing, location, transport, language, disability access and caring responsibilities.
- Collect feedback at each event and use it to shape future sessions, locations and topics**.**

Priority 5: Close the feedback loop

Engagement is most effective when people can see what difference it has made. Reporting back is essential to trust, accountability and continued involvement. We will improve how we show tenants and leaseholders the impact of their feedback, including through clearer “you said, we did” reporting, better communication after consultations, and more visible examples of how tenant and leaseholder views have informed decisions. Where a suggestion cannot be taken forward, we will aim to explain why. Success will mean tenants and leaseholders have greater confidence that their views are being considered seriously and that engagement leads to visible outcomes.

- Publish regular “you said, we did” updates on the website, Go Vocal, newsletters and noticeboards.
- Provide a clear summary of consultation findings after each consultation, including the main themes raised and what action will be taken.
- Explain where tenant or leaseholder feedback has directly influenced a policy, service change or decision.
- Create a feedback tracker to monitor suggestions, actions agreed, progress and outcomes.
- Use the new tenant engagement IT system to maintain a clear record of feedback, actions agreed, progress made and evidence of tenant and leaseholder influence.
- Share examples of service improvements that have happened because of tenant and leaseholder involvement.
- Report back to the Tenant Panel on key feedback themes and how these are being addressed.

- Ensure tenants and leaseholders are told when feedback cannot be acted on, with clear reasons why.
- Use plain English and accessible formats so feedback outcomes are easy to understand.
- Review complaints, compliments, survey responses and engagement feedback together to identify common themes.
- Include feedback-loop outcomes in annual reporting so tenants and leaseholders can see progress over time.

Measuring success

We will measure success using a combination of quantitative and qualitative information. This will include the number of tenants and leaseholders engaging across different activities, the diversity and representativeness of participants, awareness of engagement opportunities, satisfaction with communications and opportunities to influence, evidence of service improvements informed by engagement, scrutiny activity and resulting actions, complaints learning linked to service change, and tenant feedback on whether they feel listened to and respected. We will also invest in a dedicated tenant engagement IT system to help monitor engagement levels, understand participation across different groups and channels, and provide clearer evidence of how tenant and leaseholder feedback has influenced decisions, actions and service improvements. Success will not be measured only by the number of events held, but by the extent to which engagement helps improve services and strengthens accountability.

Measurable success criteria by priority

Priority 1: Improve communication with tenants and leaseholders

- Increase tenant and leaseholder awareness of engagement opportunities, measured through surveys, feedback and participation data.
- Review and update key housing webpages, leaflets and standard communications to ensure they are clear, accurate, accessible and written in plain English.
- Introduce, publish and periodically review a Tenant Engagement and Communication Policy, informed by tenant and leaseholder feedback.
- Monitor use of communication channels, including website updates, newsletters, Go Vocal, WhatsApp, email and text messages, to understand reach and effectiveness.
- Improve tenant and leaseholder satisfaction with the clarity, timeliness and usefulness of housing communications.
- Use complaints, compliments, survey feedback and contact data to identify and address common communication issues.

Priority 2: Broaden and strengthen our engagement offer

- Increase the number of tenants and leaseholders taking part in engagement activities across the life of the strategy.
- Monitor participation through the tenant engagement IT system to understand who is engaging, which channels are being used and where there are gaps in representation.
- Publish and regularly review the Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Menu with input from tenants and leaseholders.

- Develop and test additional themed engagement routes, including repairs-focused engagement and opportunities for young people.
- Increase participation through digital channels while maintaining face-to-face and non-digital engagement options.

Priority 3: Strengthen tenant and leaseholder influence and scrutiny

- Hold regular scrutiny activities or themed review sessions with tenants and leaseholders on priority service areas.
- Record recommendations made through scrutiny activity and track actions agreed, progress and outcomes.
- Provide regular performance information to the Tenant Panel in an accessible format and record questions, challenge and feedback received.
- Evidence where tenant and leaseholder feedback has influenced policies, service standards, improvement plans, procurement activity or contract monitoring.
- Monitor the use of Tenant Impact Assessments for new and revised housing policies, including evidence of how tenant and leaseholder impacts have been considered before decisions are made.
- Introduce and monitor the tenant engagement in procurement policy, including examples of tenant involvement at appropriate stages of housing-related contracts.

Priority 4: Develop local and in-person engagement opportunities

- Deliver a programme of local engagement events, drop-ins, surgeries or themed sessions across the borough.
- Use community venues, including Shears Green Community Centre, to increase opportunities for tenants and leaseholders to engage closer to where they live.
- Monitor attendance, feedback and follow-up actions from local engagement activity.
- Review whether local engagement is reaching a wider range of tenants and leaseholders, including those who do not usually take part in formal meetings or online engagement.
- Use feedback from in-person events to shape future locations, topics, services and engagement activity.

Priority 5: Close the feedback loop

- Publish regular “you said, we did” updates showing what tenants and leaseholders told us and what action has been taken.
- Provide consultation summaries after engagement activity, setting out key themes, decisions made and next steps.
- Use the tenant engagement IT system to track feedback, actions agreed, progress, outcomes and evidence of influence.
- Report feedback themes, scrutiny outcomes and service improvements to the Tenant Panel and through annual reporting.
- Measure whether tenants and leaseholders feel listened to and can see how their feedback has influenced decisions and service improvements.

Governance, accountability and review

This strategy will be overseen by the Housing Service, with delivery supported by the Tenant Engagement Team and other service areas across the council, including teams involved in policy development, procurement and contract management. Progress will be monitored

through a supporting action plan setting out key actions, timescales, lead officers and measures of success. The action plan will also support the introduction of Tenant Impact Assessments for new and revised housing policies, helping to ensure tenant and leaseholder impacts are considered before changes are agreed.

The Tenant Panel will have an important role in helping to review progress, provide challenge and identify where improvements are needed. Progress against the strategy will also be reported through appropriate governance arrangements, including internal management oversight and committee reporting where relevant. We will provide regular updates to tenants and leaseholders on progress and will review the strategy annually to ensure it remains relevant and effective.

Action Plan

A supporting action plan will sit alongside this strategy and will set out how each priority will be delivered in practice. The action plan will include specific actions, lead officers or teams, timescales, measures of success and arrangements for monitoring progress. It will be reviewed regularly with the Tenant Panel and relevant service areas to ensure commitments remain on track, risks or delays are identified early, and tenants and leaseholders can see how the strategy is being turned into practical activity and measurable outcomes. Progress against the action plan will also inform annual reporting and future reviews of the strategy.

Contact the Tenant Engagement Team

Email: Tenantengagement@gravesham.gov.uk

Phone: 01474 337977

Website: www.gravesham.gov.uk

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