

BERNOCIA

Tenant Voice Strategy
2022-26

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Introduction

In 2018 we launched our first Customer Insight and Involvement Strategy.

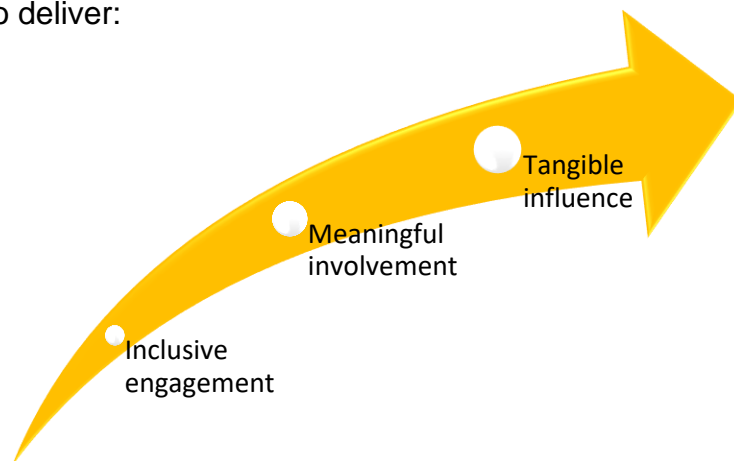
The strategy describes our commitment to bring together insight and involvement so that validated intelligence is available and used to hear both the 'vocalised' and 'non vocalised' customer experience. This in turn informs the work of the more formalised tenant involvement outcomes and impacts.

To achieve this, our approach to tenant engagement is offered in the widest sense – for us every one and every contact counts. Whilst Involvement is delivered in the purest sense – with us empowered, informed and influential tenants make sure every contact does count.

In 2019 a new enhanced framework was developed with tenants. This was designed to build on our strategy commitments to strengthen our coregulatory arrangements and, in doing so, giving tenants a bigger voice and greater influence in the development and delivery of the promises we make.

With the implementation of our stronger coregulatory framework almost complete, a revised Corporate Strategy on the horizon, the views of our tenants known via the Your say campaign and an extremely positive 'deep dive' review of our involvement arrangements by tpas under our belt. It's the right time to update our strategy to further demonstrate how the tenant voice runs up, down and across our business and sits right at the heart of the decisions we make.

Our strategy aims to deliver:



The organisation has clear expectations on a tenant first culture that influences service delivery through strong and effective leadership. Staff have a real positive commitment and this was shown through their behaviours and attitudes both to colleagues and tenants.



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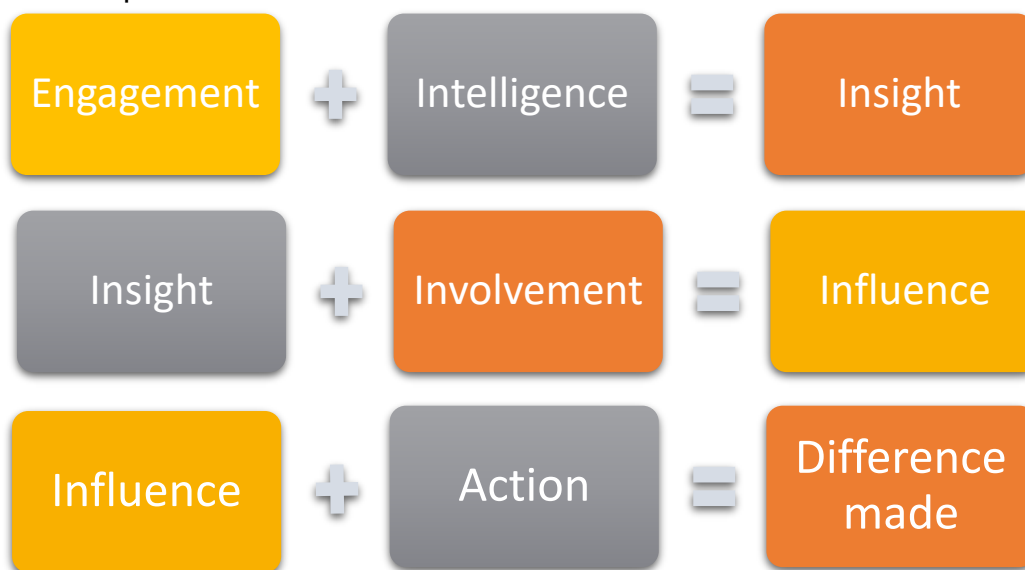
We want to build on just that

Our approach

At Bernicia we're straight talking, straight forward and want our tenants to be able to get straight to the point.

We don't over complicate. We aim to keep our promises and we truly believe that everyone and every contact counts. This might be through solicited or unsolicited feedback or simple conversations between tenants and ourselves. Everyday interactions bring a wealth of valuable intelligence.

For us it's simple



Notwithstanding this, to do this and keep up the momentum we know we need to work hard. We want to continue to build and grow our relationship with tenants and increase opportunities so that more tenants are heard and listened to no matter what they have to say or how they choose to tell us.

Our approach to involvement has been reviewed by tpa against their National Engagement standards. We're absolutely delighted that we meet all seven standards and excel in three of these.

This is a fantastic endorsement that the commitments in our original strategy have been delivered and that our strengthened co-regulatory framework is viewed as being forward thinking.

In 2019, the Bernicia Group Board approved Bernicia's new approach and framework for co-regulation, to further amplify the tenants' voice and strengthen co-regulatory activities. In November 2019, Bernicia introduced a revised and strengthened approach to co-regulation and Tenant Involvement and Empowerment, built on 5 pillars. This approach is seen as Good Practice as its inclusive, transparent and co-designed with tenants and the Board and clearly puts the 'tenants voice' at the heart of the organisation's co-regulatory approach.



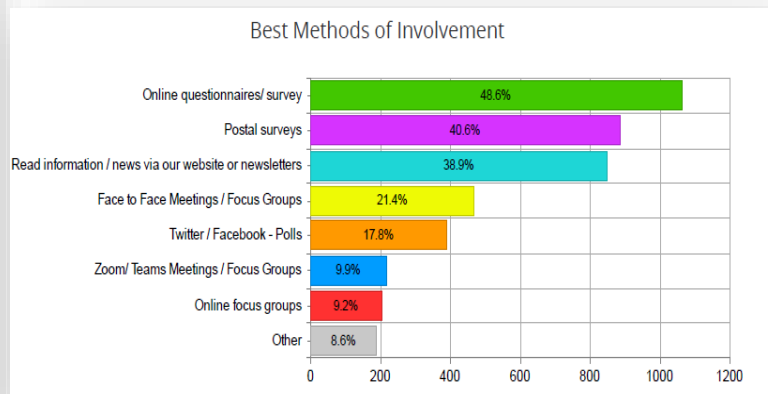
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Developing this strategy

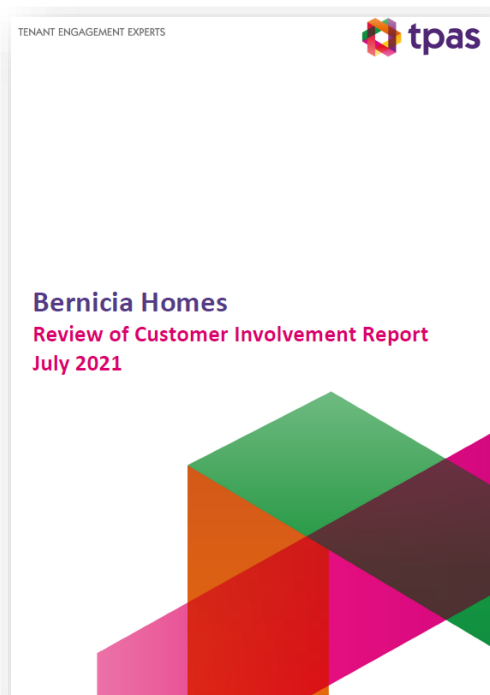
Over the past year a number of things, both internally and externally, have influenced our thinking on our strategy.

Internally

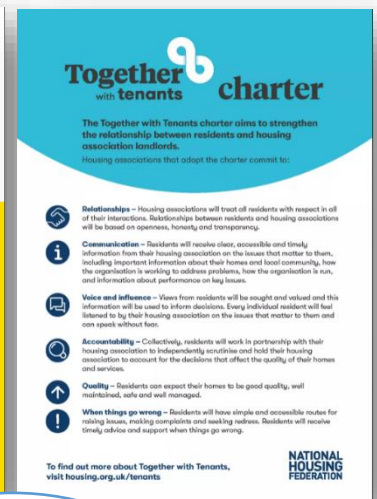
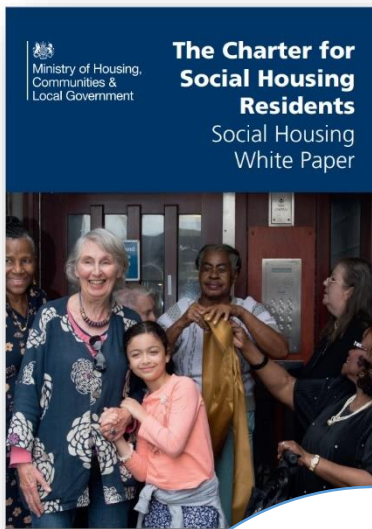
Your say, services your way results show that tenants think we're focusing on the right things



tpas review evidences that we're doing the right things and want to do them right

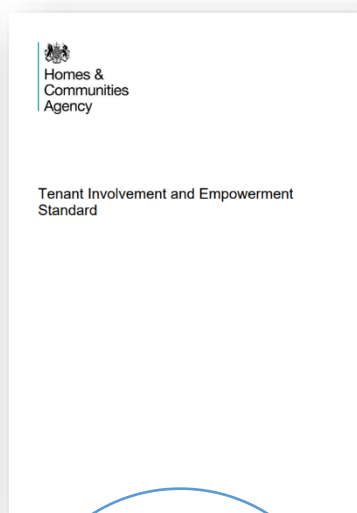


Externally



Quote from government
 “There will be tenants who want to proactively engage with the policies of their landlords and others who simply want to know that their landlord is thinking of them in a way it implements change”

Decision to adopt the charter and its six commitments – relationships / communication / voice and influence / accountability / quality / when things go wrong



Obligation to self-assess against the Complaint Handling Code

Need to have arrangements in place to monitor compliance

Requirement to produce a Building Safety Resident Engagement Strategy

Considering both the internal and external perspective and context in which we operate and reflecting on the drivers and commitments of our original Insight and Involvement Strategy we basically asked ourselves:

If tenants think we're doing the right things in the right way and this is endorsed by tpas and our performance is good – why do we need a new strategy?

We answered ourselves:

We don't, but we do aspire and have the desire and motivation to build on our existing arrangements to further amplify the tenant voice and the difference it makes within our business



We also have some recommendations from tpas and some ideas from our tenants on how we can improve, so we need to reflect these in our strategy

We're in the process of refreshing our corporate strategy along with the core and enabling strategies that sit behind to support and deliver the objectives of this.

Whilst the tenant voice is integral in our corporate and core operational strategies, this is so important that it merits a standalone strategy that sets out the 'what, who, why, how and so what' of the journey on how actionable and influential tenant insight shapes what we do and how we do things.


Our draft, revised Housing Strategy is absolutely tenant focused and the success of achieving the objectives within it are almost exclusively dependant on building interdependent and trusting relationships with tenants that will lead to the clear, effortless and efficient services we want to offer and deliver.

We'll only be successful if we have the right things in place to allow relationships to flourish and information to flow. Therefore, as opposed to duplicating the drivers of the Housing Strategy or try to 'shoehorn' our Tenant Voice Strategy commitments into the same drivers, we've taken a different perspective. Rather than drivers we've looked at the travel of the tenant voice in our business, and the mix of ingredients needed so it grows louder as its journey progresses.

In this strategy our key ingredients are;

Purpose	Being clear about what the tenant voice is, where it comes from and why its important.
Engagement	Making every one and every contact count.
Insight	Taking a step into the lives of tenants and looking at ourselves from their perspective and through their eyes.
Involvement	Having the right structures and relationships to interpret and validate insight, scrutinise performance and be held accountable for this.
Influence	Using the tenant voice in decision making and celebrating the difference made.
Success	Being able to measure and evidence the progress in achieving the commitments of this strategy and the difference made.

We did deliberate on what to call our strategy, but came to the conclusion that all of the ingredients, purpose, engagement, involvement, insight and influence lead to one thing **'the tenant voice'**.



The next
sections set out
our high level
plans to grow
the tenant voice
in our business

Purpose



We know that every tenant has a voice.

We understand that a lot of tenants will only engage with us when they need something or when we ask about something.

Traditionally, we've asked tenants about their satisfaction with the services we deliver and their perception of us as a landlord. But not so much about their experience – did they feel listened to, were they treated as an individual and with respect, did they feel their views would make a difference etc.

People will only engage if they feel it's worth it – our purpose is to make it worth it!

This starts with us, we believe by engendering a culture of trust, accountability and tenant first we'll display the behaviours that will show to our tenants that it is worth it and why it's worth it.

And it is worth it, the voice of the consumer in any business is so powerful. Businesses who do not listen will neither thrive or ultimately survive. We're no different.

The whole point of engagement is to hear good, bad and indifferent opinions and listen to and act on what's being said.

Therefore, our simple purpose is to be inclusive so everyone can be heard and exclusive in making every contact count.

From conversations with staff and customers it was evident that there was a clear purpose for all the opportunities around the use of insight and involvement as there was an understanding about what was required to be achieved. The culture within the organisation is a 'can do' culture and staff were extremely positive and 'wanted to do the right thing'.



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ACTION

- We'll continue to set out very clear expectations of a tenant first culture and continually provide opportunities for colleagues to develop their skills to ensure that the experiences of as many tenants as possible influence service delivery through strong and effective leadership

Engagement

Everything we do involves engagement.

We're not a complicated business, we communicate and interact with hundreds of tenants every day.

We hear from some tenants more than others and we respect that many tenants only want to engage when they need something from us. We do, however, want to make sure everyone has the opportunity to engage and have their say about things that are important.

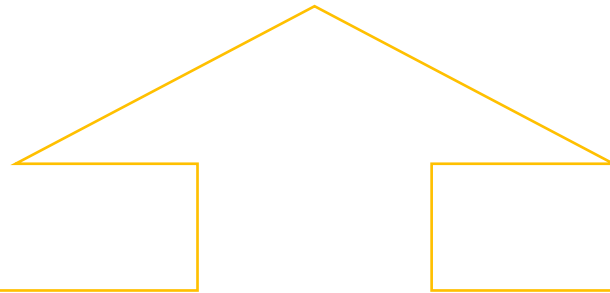
Therefore, we provide a range of ways to engage and capture feedback, and provide information which includes:



We're determined that everyone will have the opportunity to have their voice heard.

We recognise diversity and will continue to explore ways to engage with those where the more traditional routes may present barriers or not meet preferences.

Therefore we need to look beyond traditional methods of engagement to reach those quieter and / or unheard voices, particularly tenants of our specialised supported accommodation.

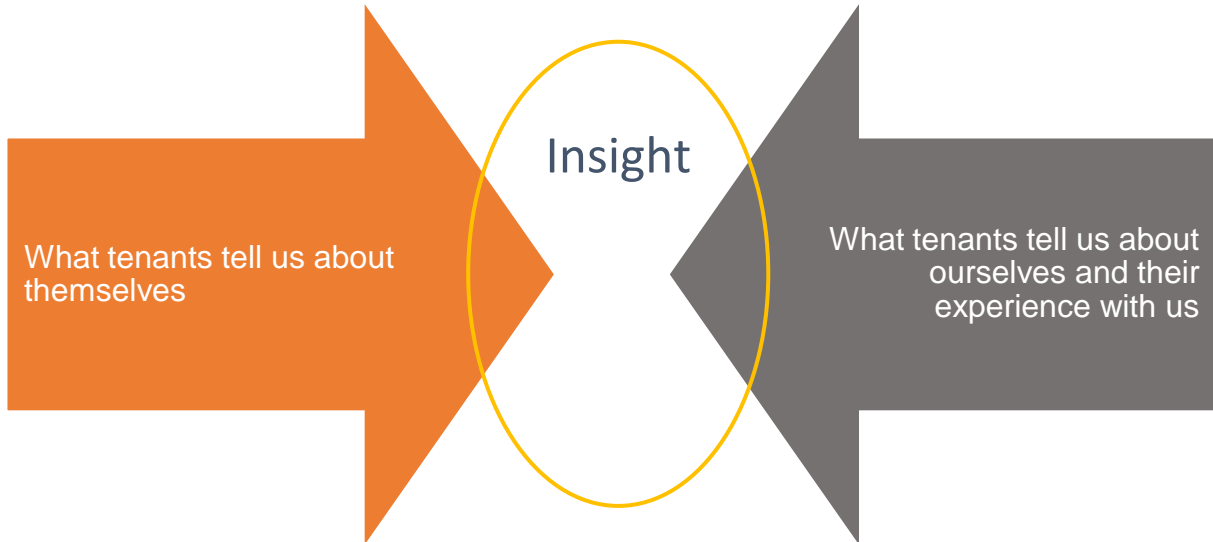


ACTION

- We'll continue to communicate and promote a common understanding of customer engagement and influence across the organisation.
- We'll work with expert organisations and groups to ensure our methods of engagement are inclusive so no one gets left out.

Insight

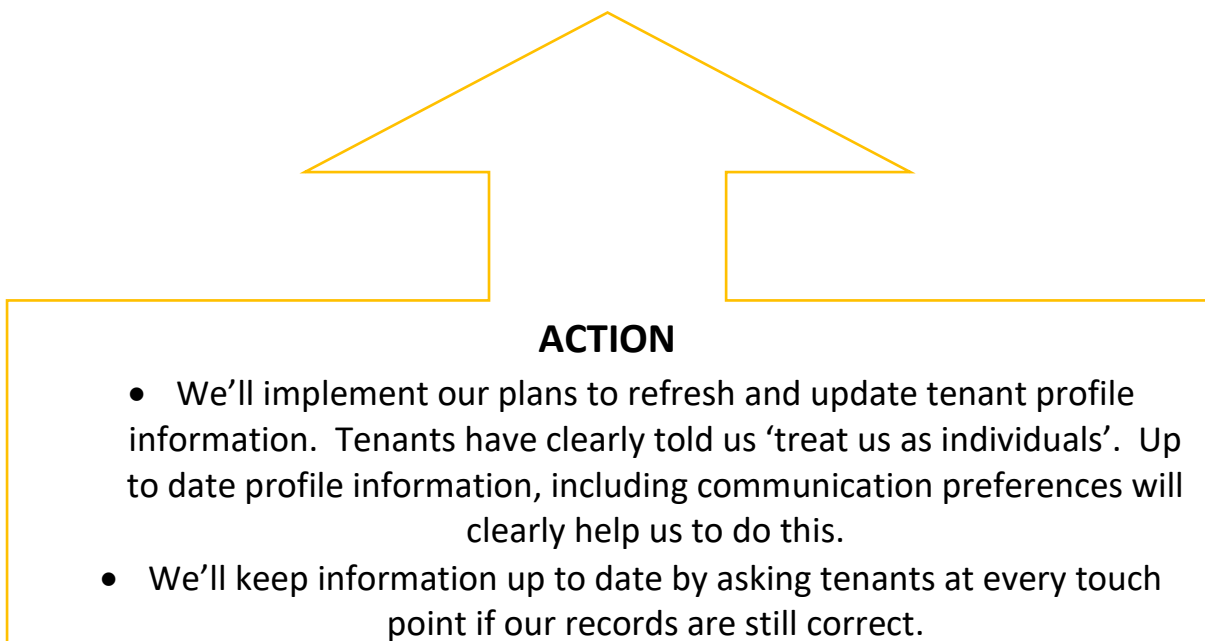
This is what we get from effective engagement.



This really is about being able to step into the shoes of our tenants. It's about knowing about them before they want something from us and being able to live their experience when they're doing business with us.

Insight is business critical, it gives us a greater understanding of our current and potential tenants. It tells us about tenant behaviours and aspirations. Most importantly it drives the change and improvement needed so that we continue to be a landlord of choice.

Insight is only useful if it's up to date and is used to provide tangible outcomes for both tenants and the business.



Involvement

This is the more formal part of engagement. It's where involved tenants, who are highly informed and empowered, work hard to turn insight into plans, priorities, policies and improved performance.

Involved tenants have acted as interpreters and validators to translate what tenants have told us is properly reflected in our revised Housing Strategy 2022-26 and our 'Promise' to tenants. This involvement will continue through to the finalisation of our refreshed Corporate Strategy.

By bringing insight and involvement together, the organisation has a good blended approach to involvement.

Customers involved with the organisation clearly identified that they had the required support from across the organisation to ensure that their involvement was effective and contributed to the service improvement framework as well as ensuring services were delivered in a way that meets their needs.



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Involved tenants are our scrutineers and critical friends. Not only do they oversee the journey of the tenant voice, they check and challenge performance and monitor and confirm compliance with the Regulators consumer standards. Whilst everything they do is a form of scrutiny, they will also undertake their own 'deep dive' scrutiny reviews.

As part of our new coregulatory framework, involved tenants will strengthen their position within our governance arrangements, forging closer links to our Customer Services Committee and ultimately Board.

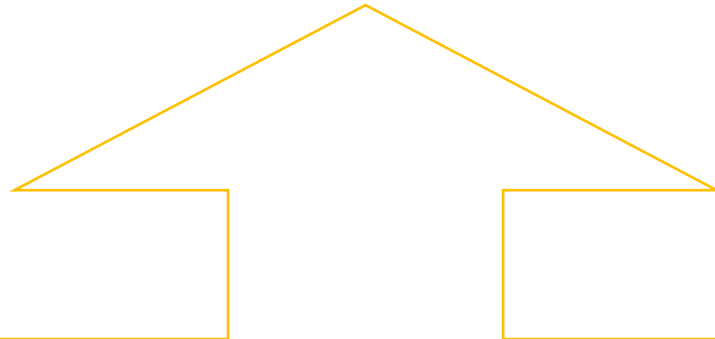
The formal governance structure and relationship with involved tenant groups is shown on page 21.

While we know our current arrangements are robust, in the spirit of our new framework we want to invite more scrutiny through greater tenant involvement.

We believe digital involvement will broaden the reach and potential quality of engagement.

By going digital for some elements of engagement we'll be able to involve more tenants on their own terms. We need to demonstrate our commitment to engaging in this way and to be ready to respond as we would to a collective group. This may mean we need to listen to different voices within communities who may not normally get involved through traditional routes.

We understand that limited, prescriptive or uninspiring engagement channels can no longer align with the diversity of tenants and their modern lifestyles. Service expectations of tenants are undoubtedly informed by their experiences of both commercial and retail brands.



ACTION

- We'll continue to communicate and promote involvement options that ensure strategically and operationally, a blended approach so that tenants can influence and set out how each option contributes to improved services, value for money and builds stronger communities.
- We'll continue to provide adequate resources to continue to support tenant involvement through staff and tenant training, good communications and digital engagement tools.

Influence

This really is about demonstrating that the tenant voice runs up, down and across the business has been listened to and acted upon.

Going right back to our purpose, tenants will only engage if it's worth it and there's something in it for them. So, we really need to articulate and demonstrate the difference made and what comes from engagement and involvement does make a difference.

We've many examples where we've listened, learnt and acted to make changes as a result of collective and individual feedback and consultation.

Under our governance arrangements the impact on tenants is considered in every decision made by a Committee or Board.

There are two major influential events in our annual calendar of involvement. The first being when tenants put forward their priorities for the forthcoming year and the second is the production of the Annual Review.

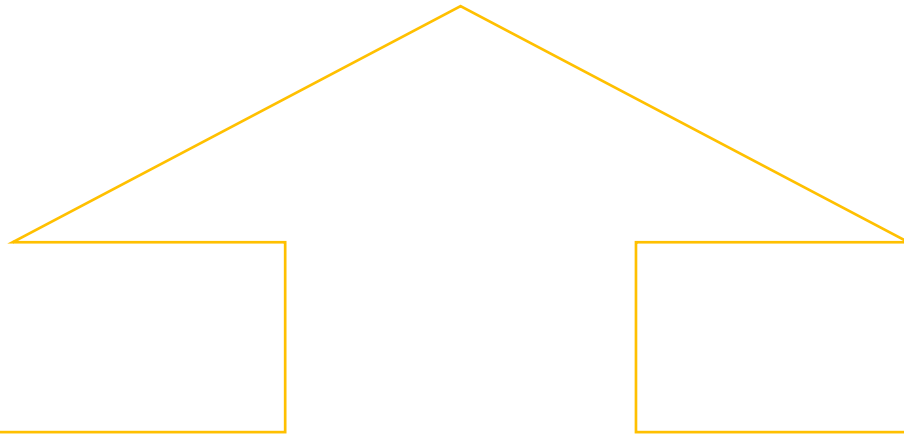
The Annual Review includes a statement by tenants about how we have performed against the Regulators Consumer Standards. This statement is also included in our statutory accounts.

In the Annual Review we do tell tenants about how they have influenced decisions and the changes that have resulted from their voice being heard and listened to. Feedback from the Your say, services your way campaign has produced our 'promise' to tenants and has heavily influenced our new Housing Strategy.

We know that our tenant voice is influential but we want to do more to showcase and celebrate this with tenants.

In our last strategy our vision was 'what tenants tell us will influence our priorities and services and we'll see the difference this has made'. In this strategy the subtle change is **'what tenants tell us will influence our priorities and services and, together, we'll see the difference this is making'**.

We absolutely want to do the right things and do them right and it'll be difficult to do this without the input and influence of tenants. They live the experience and we need to understand the lived experience to be able to continue to do what's right. It's not just the look, it's the feel of and pride in recognising something tenants have said or done that has value and benefit and has resulted in positive change, we want to feel and celebrate that with tenants.



ACTION

- We'll provide quality and responsive communication to all tenants either individually or collectively that sets out performance targets, achievements and updates on involvement and where things have changed. This will include a range of medians including videos so tenants can tell their stories.
- We'll continue to routinely measure success through effective outcome and impact analysis on a regular basis.
- We'll continue to provide adequate budgets and resources to support effective engagement and involvement that results in influence.

Success

We're confident that this strategy will successfully deliver our ambition to grow the tenant voice within our business.

Tpas confirm that our existing arrangements along with the recommendations in their review, which are factored into this strategy as actions, will leave us in the strong position of being able to demonstrate that tenants have influenced decision making.

However to prove that we are progressing and that the difference made is lived and felt by tenants we do need a set of clearly defined success factors.

In determining our success factors and targets we're mindful behaviours have changed over the last 18 months and will continue to change. Therefore we need to stay ahead of the game.

That's why culture, relationships and technology will be crucial to our success.

The successful delivery of this strategy is reliant upon:



On an ongoing basis we measure ourselves against a range of key performance indicators, annual plan priorities and individual objectives. These enable us, and those who scrutinise what we do – the Board, Customer Services Committee and tenants – to determine our direction, pace and impact, is progressing towards meeting the ultimate commitments within this strategy.

To a degree, the success measures outlined in our 2018-2023 Customer Insight and Involvement Strategy, will continue to be a good reflection of the successful delivery of this refreshed strategy.

Overall however, it's essential that when we reach 2026 we have clear indicators of success to demonstrate the effect and impact our refreshed strategy has had.

Outlined below are those additional and refined measures which we believe will extend and demonstrate the success of this 2022-2026 strategy.

- Compliance with the Regulator's Tenant Empowerment and Involvement Standard
- The successful adoption of the Together with Tenants Charter
- Increased tenant profile data and clear evidence that it is being used
- Quarterly performance information published on website with the opportunity to challenge
- Increase and impact of digital engagement
- Satisfaction with complaints handling

We'll also continue to monitor and measure the success factors contained within the original 2018-2023 Insight and Involvement Strategy, these being:

- High levels of customer satisfaction levels across a range of services
- High level of satisfaction with views listened to and acted upon
- Impact of insight and involvement on service delivery

Monitoring and review

The actions and activities to achieve success, in line with our purpose and key ingredients are outlined in the relevant sections.

These will be converted into a SMART action plan, to ensure approaches are Specific, Measured, Attributable, Resourced and Timebound.

This will allow the Customer Services Committee and involved tenants to measure progress and outcomes against commitments and timescales, and ensure we remain on course to achieve the overall commitments and purpose of this strategy by 2026.

The Customer Services Committee and involved tenants will take responsibility for the delivery of the strategy outcomes as well as the monitoring of key performance indicators. The Committee and involved tenants will assess progress which, annually, will be reported in the Tenants Annual Review and used to evidence compliance with the Regulators Involvement and Empowerment Standard.

The views of tenants will be sought and used to demonstrate progress, and wider methods of communication will be deployed to ensure all tenants have opportunity to scrutinise and challenge service delivery in relation to performance, cost and quality.

Conclusion

We're very proud of our relationship with tenants, the routes of engagement we've built and developed with tenants and the arrangements we have in place to hear the tenant voice right up to Board level.

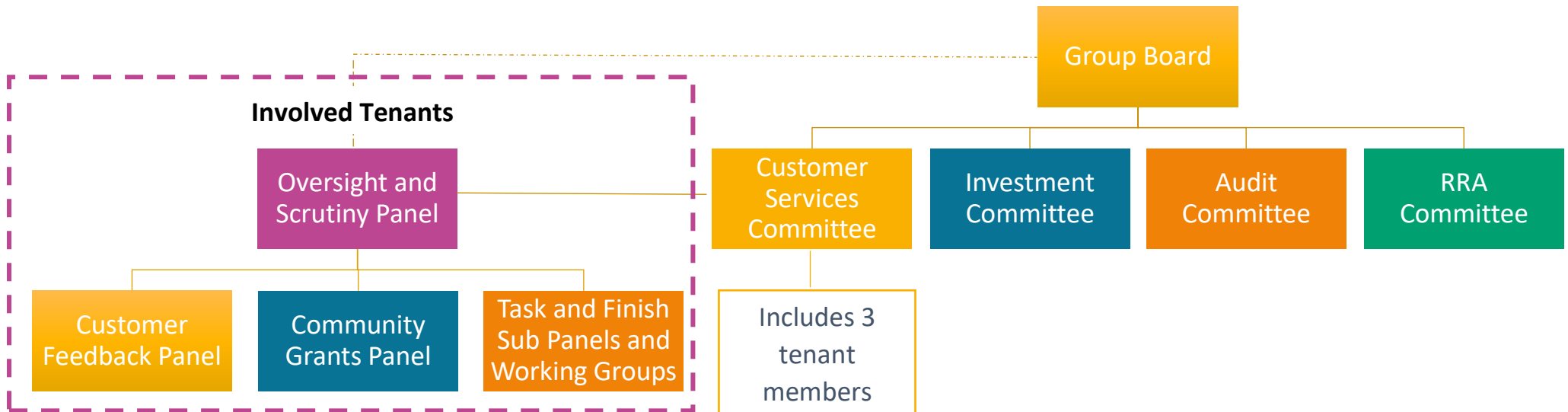
We've undergone a robust review of our arrangements undertaken by tpas against their National Standards which confirm that we are doing the right things, in the right way.

In the Your say, services your way campaign tenants have told us that, largely, we're focusing on the right things in terms of encouraging, seeking and responding to feedback, being accessible and providing choice and, involving tenants.

With these endorsements we believe we're in a pretty good place to build on and grow the relationships that produce the insight and influence needed to support the objectives of our Housing Strategy and ultimately Corporate Strategy.

We believe this strategy will do just that.

Our governance structure



Glossary of terms

Registered provider	Includes local authority landlords and private registered providers such as not for profit housing associations like Bernicia and for profit organisations.
Regulator of Social Housing (RoSH)	Regulates registered providers of social housing to promote a viable, efficient and well governed social housing sector able to deliver homes to meet a range of needs.
Consumer Standards	Standards set out by the Regulator of Social Housing. The role of the regulator is to intervene where failure to meet the standards has caused, or could have caused serious harm to tenants.
Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard	Is one of four consumer standards which sets expectations for registered providers of social housing to provide choice, information and communication that is appropriate to the diverse needs of tenants, a clear approach to complaints and a wide range of opportunities for tenants to have influence and be involved.
National Housing Federation (NHF)	Is the voice of housing associations in England.
Together with Tenants Charter	Is a National Housing Federation sector wide initiative focused on strengthening the relationships between residents and housing association landlords.
Survey of Tenants and Residents (STAR)	Provides a framework for periodic survey of customer perceptions.
Institute of Customer Service (ICS)	Is a professional independent membership body for customer service, working across all sectors.
Tenant Participation Advisory Service (tpas)	Is a national tenant and landlord participation advisory service helping tenants, landlords and communities to have a strong influence on the future of their homes and communities.
Housing Ombudsman Service	Is set up by law to look at complaints about housing organisations that we register with the service.

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