

Torus Tenant Voice Strategy



Foreword, Gill Healey, Managing Director of Housing

Welcome to our first Tenant Voice Strategy following the amalgamation of Torus (former Helena and Golden Gates Housing Trust) and Liverpool Mutual Homes on 1st January 2019.

I am delighted to introduce our vision for tenant engagement and the associated Action Plan for the next three years.

The strategy outlines how Torus intends to engage and consult with tenants and leaseholders and how we will support you to get involved. We want to encourage as many tenants and leaseholders as possible to have their say, become engaged and participate in our business and how services are delivered. We have developed a range of options for tenants and leaseholders to influence decisions at whatever level best suits their lifestyle.

We are committed to putting tenants at the heart of everything we do and in view of recent changes following amalgamation it is crucial we keep tenants involved to help shape the future of our housing services across the heartlands of Liverpool, St Helens and Warrington.

We have called our strategy the Tenant Voice as it is the voice of our tenants that must be at the heart of everything we do, we want our tenants to feel they are listened to and see what a difference their involvement can make.

I look forward to working in partnership with tenants to improve our services and to create an association that makes a positive difference to you and the wider community.

Foreword, Graham Burgess, Chair of Board

It is a great pleasure to introduce our Tenant Voice Strategy which sets out how we will involve tenants to help shape our services and hold us to account. It has been created through joint consultation between involved tenants and members of staff.

Torus is committed to listening to and working with tenants and involving them in every aspect of our activities is crucial to the way in which Torus delivers its plans and service

I welcome the range of opportunities that this Strategy and Action Plan offers and I hope tenants will be encouraged to take part and become involved in whatever way suits their lifestyle.

The National Context

Thinking on tenant involvement is a rapidly evolving and an area of public debate. It will continue to be a high-profile issue, being an important focus of the Grenfell Tower fire investigation. The ongoing debate is complex, taking in everything from the broad principles of tenant involvement to detailed questions about how tenants should be included in fire safety decision making.

There is a growing consensus tenant involvement should become a central part of how homes are managed. The 2018 Dame Judith Hackitt Review called on social landlords to “re-assert the role of residents” in a way that sees housing managers working “in partnership” with residents.

There is a powerful push for tenants not only to be engaged but to have a genuine say in how their homes and services are managed and it is argued this is central to building trust. This was a key recommendation of the “Rethinking Social Housing Review” which stated Providers must ensure residents have a real voice and “an opportunity to shape and inform services.”

A key principle in the August 2018 Green Paper: A New Deal for Social Housing was also around empowering residents. It sets out a number of ways to ensure residents voices are heard.

These measures all rest on greater transparency and we expect to see a National Housing Federation led “transparency charter” in the near future as well as new government requirement in this area.

There is also recognition that Tenant Involvement needs to adapt to the rapidly changing ways that residents engage with information. Digital change is quickening, and many previously digitally excluded groups are increasingly accessing services online. Tenants will increasingly expect their housing provider to offer convenient online engagement and we will respond.

Our strategy needs to be a dynamic document with flexibility to innovate and adapt to the changing environment. How we will deliver the strategy is set out in our action plan.

Introduction

On 1st January 2019 Torus (formerly Helena and Golden Housing Trust) joined forces with Liverpool Mutual Homes through an amalgamation to become the North West's largest Housing provider. All former organisations have a long established commitment and track record in Tenant Involvement. The new organisation of Torus remains committed to effective, genuine and meaningful involvement and participation. This will be done in a way that offers choice and flexibility for people to become involved by offering a number of different engagement opportunities.

We are committed to putting tenants at the heart of everything we do and we want to strengthen the tenant voice ensuring it is able to influence decision making at every level.

As an early adopter of the National Housing Federation's Together with Tenants Charter we are committed to working together with tenants to ensure their voice is heard in all decisions which affect their homes, their safety and their communities.

This strategy aims to set out the direction for tenant involvement and supports our commitment to co-regulation by involving tenants in governing, shaping, co-designing and scrutinising services.

Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this strategy is to set out Torus' approach to tenant involvement. It has been developed in consultation with tenants and to ensure transparency and accountability across the organisation with the aim of delivering responsive services that do what matters most to our tenants.

The Tenant Voice Strategy will support the delivery of our Corporate Plan and Torus' four strategic objectives:

- **Regional influence through scale**
- **Investing in the place for the long term**
- **Resilience through self determination**
- **An intelligent organisation that looks ahead**

It will also support us to achieving our vision of growing stronger communities and is directly linked to our design group principles:

Customer First
Digitally Minded

Intelligent data
Our People

We are committed in working together with tenants to create **Great Homes** in **Strong & Safe Communities**. In terms of the scope, it provides a framework that will enable us to meet regulatory requirements and the principles set out in the green paper whilst preparing for the changes that will come with the subsequent white paper. The focus on gathering feedback from all tenant involvement will ensure we know what our customers want and their views of the services we provide, enabling us to be an organisation that listens, learns and then responds appropriately and effectively.

Our Vision

Our vision is for tenant involvement to continue to be ingrained in our culture, with tenants influencing all that we do at every level of our organisation and helping to shape and improve services. We want tenants to feel they are listened to, valued and their views acted upon.

Aims of the Strategy:

- 1) To create a framework that offers a range of accessible ways to be involved and encourages a diversity of tenants to be actively involved in shaping, improving and scrutinising services. Demonstrating the impact of tenant involvement through an outcome led approach.
- 2) To ensure Regulatory Requirements set out in the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard are met and we are responsive to the changing environment and new legislation.

Objectives:

The strategy has the following objectives:-

1. Create and embed a new culture for tenant involvement and adopt one approach across the heartlands of Liverpool, Warrington and St Helens.
2. Learn from Best Practice to create an involvement structure which encourages more tenants and customers to have their say, offering greater levels of influence to a diverse range of tenants ensuring the tenant is heard.
3. Develop tenant led scrutiny to strengthen our commitment to co-regulation and influence and drive performance
4. Enable involvement by providing capacity building and training for tenants and staff
5. Ensure compliance with the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard
6. Respond to the requirements of the Together with Tenants Charter and legislation resulting from the Social Housing Green Paper and new regulatory requirements.

These objectives aim to build upon on our strong foundations for tenant involvement whilst also responding to feedback from tenants (as part of the consultation process) and as appropriate the themes set out in the green paper, a New Deal for Social Housing

- **Ensuring homes are safe and decent**
- **Effective resolution of complaints**
- **Empowering residents and strengthening the regulator**
- **Tackling stigma and celebrating thriving communities**
- **Expanding supply and supporting home ownership**

Throughout this strategy we will keep in mind the things tenants and staff have told us are important:

- One size doesn't fit all and involvement should be accessible
- Involvement should be enjoyable
- Involvement should result in improving services
- It should meet tenant and business needs
- We should offer more online options, to help overcome barriers, such as travel and time
- Tenants need to know the benefit of being involved.
- Staff need to know how tenant involvement can help them

The Tenant Voice Action Plan

The Tenant Voice Action Plan attached at Appendix 1 will continue to be developed and sets out how we will deliver upon this strategy.

How we listen to the Tenant Voice

Customer Transactions

Verbal Feedback to staff
Complaints
Compliments
Service Requests to Contact Centre

Torus Monitoring / Testing

Tenant Inspectors
Mystery Shoppers
Internal Audits

Torus Led Engagement

Estate Walkabouts
Listening Days
Consultation Events
Satisfaction Surveys
Focus Groups
LOC
Scrutiny Panel
Policy Reviews

External Feedback

Inspections
Cllr / MP Enquiries
Stakeholder Surveys/
Feedback

How we use the Tenant Voice
To Shape & Improve Services

How we feedback to Tenants

Website Social Media Phone Offices Letter



Monitoring and Review

Going forward it is very important to ensure this strategy is revisited, progress against milestones is monitored and that we adjust to any changing conditions.

We will do this in a variety of ways:

The Tenant Voice Service Lead will lead in the monitoring and reviewing of the strategy.

It is a three-year strategy and will be reviewed annually with progress reported to and considered by the Landlord Operations Committee.

The Involvement Service Team will meet regularly to monitor and review progress against the aims and objectives of the strategy.

Regular update reports on involvement activities and performance will be provided to the Landlord Operations Committee.

