

# Tenant Involvement Strategy 2019-2022



**HOMES** **FIRST**

Lewes and Eastbourne  
Councils  
working together for you

# Joint Foreword

With Lewes & Eastbourne Councils coming together to deliver joint services, it is important to reaffirm our commitment to involving our tenants and leaseholders in the decisions which affect their homes and local communities and place great importance in providing good quality homes.

Understanding the changing needs and aspirations of tenants and leaseholders is vital if we are to deliver truly great housing and related services. Our tenant involvement strategy aims to provide a variety of ways for tenants and leaseholders to tell us about the things that are most important to them and to be involved in shaping our future approach.

Our approach seeks to enhance tenant involvement, with a focus on improving services for everyone. Our thanks go to all the tenants and leaseholders who give their time freely to help us meet these aims. Particular thanks to those tenants who worked with staff through the Strategy Steering Group to make this strategy a reality.

We look forward to working with you and would encourage everyone to get involved.



Cllr Ron Maskell



Cllr Alan Shuttleworth



Roger Eastwood,  
Eastbourne Homes Ltd. Chair



# Introduction

## Stronger Together – Vision & Values

Lewes & Eastbourne have joined forces to deliver outstanding customer service and provide our communities with a great place to live, work and enjoy.

Our shared values are:

- **Customer Focus**

- We care about our customers and understand their needs
- We support our staff to help our customers
- We listen to customer feedback and act on it

- **Achievement Focus**

- We are proud of our staff and the services we provide
- We deliver what we promise
- We set ourselves clear targets and achieve great outcomes:

This strategy will enhance our approach to both formal and informal involvement, which is the role of all staff. It will ensure we make informed decisions through meaningful involvement and consultation. It will provide opportunities for staff and tenants to work together in partnership to deliver services which compare with the very best and contribute to delivering the shared vision and values of Lewes & Eastbourne.



# Scope

Lewes & Eastbourne Council's & Eastbourne Homes Ltd., hereafter referred to as 'Homes First' recognise the critical role tenants play in ensuring that we deliver effective, efficient and accessible services to all our tenants. Tenant involvement is central to achieving outcomes which ensure our communities thrive.

Within the context of this strategy, we use the term 'tenants' in its broadest legal sense to include tenants, leaseholders and any additional tenures of Lewes District Council and Eastbourne Borough Council. When we refer to 'communities', we include residents in other tenures in neighbourhoods where tenants reside.

All services regulated by Homes England's consumer standards:  
[www.gov.uk/guidance/regulatory-standards](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/regulatory-standards) – fall within the scope of this strategy.

## What do we mean by Tenant Involvement?

In terms of Tenant Involvement, we mean:

- How we find out what tenants and communities want and need.
- The ways that tenants can get involved, if they want to.
- The ways in which we support and empower tenants to influence and improve our services.

By working together, tenants and staff can:

- Create an environment where tenants can help shape and improve our services. We want to work with tenants in genuine partnership.
- Develop meaningful involvement opportunities which produce useful feedback that we can act on.
- Make sure our approach to involvement leads to improvement and positive change for tenants, communities and Homes First.



# What have tenants told us about involvement?

Throughout the summer of 2018, tenants took part in a consultation, the results of which have been used to develop our approach to tenant involvement.

Tenants told us that:

- 80% want more of a say in the decisions which affect their homes and neighbourhoods.
- This rises to 94% of tenants responding to the consultation online.
- The top three areas in which tenants would like to have a say about i.e. through surveys or providing comments are:
  - How homes and neighbourhoods are maintained – 78%
  - Future plans – 68%
  - How homes and neighbourhoods are managed – 56%
- The same three areas came top in terms of those in which tenants would like to have more active involvement i.e. through attending meetings, events or other activities, though there was a significant reduction in positive responses at 63%, 57% and 48%; indicating an expressed preference for less formal methods of involvement, whilst still registering a strong number of tenants interested in meetings, events and activities.
- 74% would like to be involved at home, (i.e. online, phone, text and postal questionnaires), 35% on the go (website, emails, social media) and 35% would like involvement in their neighbourhood (local meetings and events). 12% would be prepared to go further afield for district and borough-wide meetings and events.
- 67% of respondents have internet access at home.
- 36% want to get involved in either improving their local area or things for all Homes First tenants, and a further 20% would get involved if we can find a way that doesn't mean lots of meetings.
- 13% of respondents don't believe that their views would be listened to and 7% didn't know that they could get involved.
- 60% of tenants can spare anything from 15 minutes to a couple of hours, with a majority of these (58%) expressing a particular preference for 'now and then' involvement. 13% would give 'whatever time it takes to get the job done'.



# These are our five key aims on how we plan to deliver excellent involvement

## **1. Develop a consistent involvement offer across Lewes & Eastbourne, providing a wide range of involvement opportunities which give tenants influence over local and strategic decision-making.**

We know that tenant involvement is most successful when it is planned around the lives and interests of tenants. We want to encourage as many tenants as possible to have their say, become engaged and participate in our business. We will ensure that there are ways for tenants to influence the things that matter to them, including opportunities which work best for our communities.

To do this, we will:

- Implement a new involvement structure which supports wider involvement and promotes opportunities for tenants to challenge and scrutinise our services
- Involve tenants in setting standards, performance indicators and targets and report on both good and bad performance
- Develop the performance monitoring role of tenants by providing them with accurate performance data so that they can effectively review services and challenge poor performance
- Support TRAs and Area Panels to widen the communication channels they use within the community
- Enable and support TRA's and Area Panels to develop local involvement opportunities to meet local community needs



## **2. Demonstrate the outcomes and value for money of involvement**

Putting tenants at the heart of all that we do, we will support and empower tenants to play a lead role in checking how we perform, challenging us to improve, and holding us to account if we fail to do so.

To do this, we will:

- Develop a clear method for capturing outcomes from and impact of all our involvement activities, enabling us to demonstrate the value of involvement
- Develop clear routes for feedback on actions and identify what difference has been made as a result of involvement
- Assess the impact of all our involvement activities in collaboration with tenants and report back on the difference involvement has made
- Provide opportunities for tenants to assess the overall value for money of services through tenant-led scrutiny

## **3. Increase involvement and use of what tenants tell us to drive service improvements**

We know that some tenants don't get involved because they don't believe that we will listen and act on what they tell us. We will aim to develop a 'you said, we did' approach that will help tenants and staff to see where feedback has made a difference to the way we do things.

To do this, we will:

- Develop our approach to collection of information we have about our tenants
- Make our involvement opportunities more accessible to our diverse tenants and communities ensuring that tenants can have a say without having to travel miles or commit lots of time
- Develop the role and importance of tenant Involvement and engagement across all of Homes First and related Council services



#### **4. Make better use of technology for involvement**

We know that tenants have busy lives and we want to make use of modern technology to make it as easy as possible for tenants to contribute.

To do this, we will:

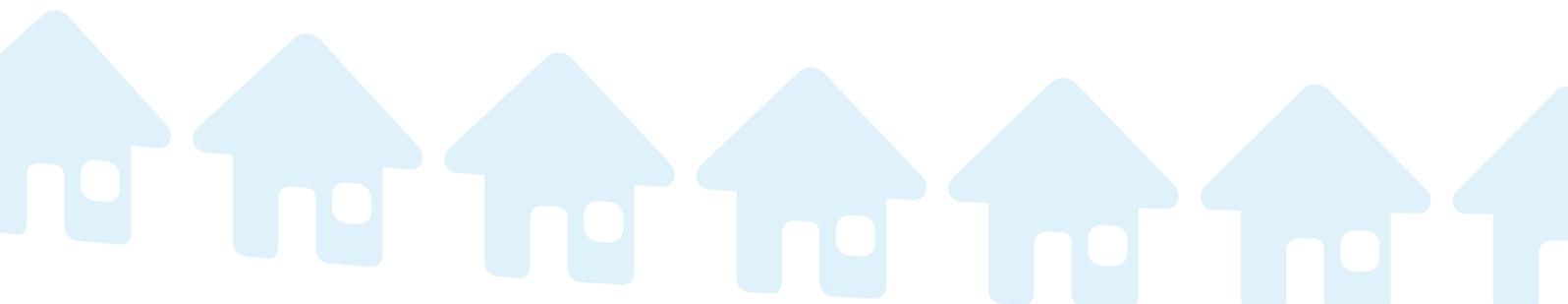
- Develop the use of modern technology to give as many tenants as possible the chance to share and express their views, contributing to shaping and improving services
- Develop a database of involved tenants to support consultation and involvement activities
- Improve our approach to promoting, measuring and reporting the impact of involvement through the use of specialist software

#### **5. Provide training, capacity building and other support for both tenants and staff**

We want to work with tenants and staff to create the very best opportunities for tenants to truly influence the decisions which impact on their lives.

To do this, we will:

- Ensure that staff are aware of the role of involvement, are skilled in delivering effective involvement and supported to achieve clear performance targets
- Offer training, learning and support to all involved tenants to develop the skills and confidence to be effective in their involvement



# Involvement Delivery Model

Homes First are committed to offering practical solutions to make tenant involvement a viable option for as many tenants as possible. To enable this to happen and to fulfil the aims of this Strategy we have developed a range of options in our “Menu of Involvement” for tenants to influence decisions at whatever level suits their lifestyle.

All involvement methods will be delivered on a demand-led basis. This means that we will regularly review our involvement methods and refresh the model.

**Only involvement methods which are both popular with tenants and delivering outcomes for tenants and Homes First will be supported on an on-going basis.**

The full menu of involvement, explanatory notes and model can be found in **Appendix 1**.

## What Next?

Over the life of this strategy, we will:

- Develop this structure including all support documentation (terms of reference, codes of conduct etc.) and provide the support and resources required to ensure involvement effectively delivers the aims of this strategy
- Promote involvement and effectively recruit to increase the numbers and broaden the diversity of those tenants who are involved
- Assess the impact of our involvement activities and review the methods of involvement on an annual basis, focussing our time and resources on the most popular and effective and on developing new involvement opportunities to replace those which do not work



# Support & Resources

We will ensure that tenant Involvement is part of Homes First's core business. There will be a resource commitment and we will review the resources, skills and expertise to ensure our approach is effective. This will help support our objectives and provide a consistent approach across Homes First.

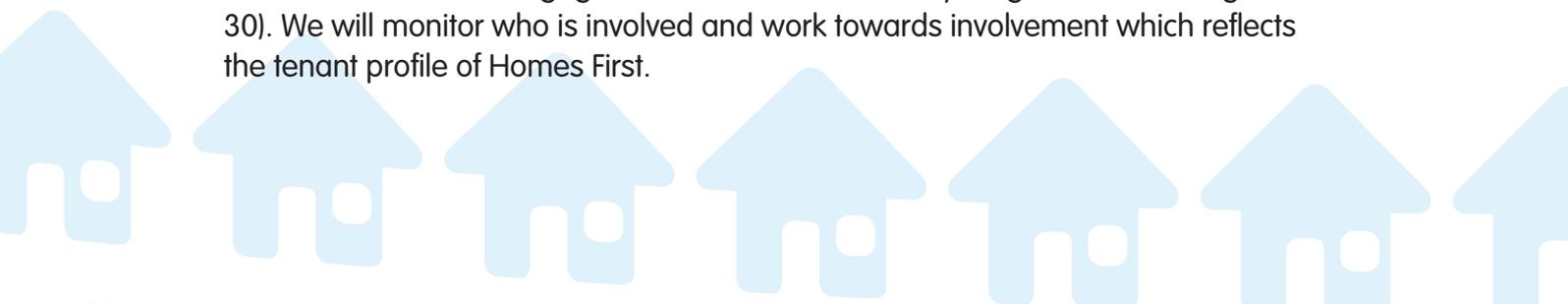
To make sure that support and resources are available for effective involvement, we will:

- Develop a clear expenses, incentives and rewards policy for involvement
- Provide/arrange transport to and from venues for involvement activities, if tenants are unable to do so
- Ensure venues are accessible to all, and meet the needs of all tenants, taking account of diversity
- Vary times and locations of involvement activities to ensure that all tenants have access to involvement, including evenings and weekends
- Provide the appropriate staff to support involvement activities
- Provide dedicated financial resources and equipment to support involvement
- Ensure that appropriate independent advice is available to individuals and groups if they require it
- Assess the training and support needs of individuals and groups and provide the necessary resources to meet need
- Consult and develop grant funding

## Involvement for All

We will ensure that we continue to be inclusive and representative. We want all tenants to be involved regardless of age, disability, marriage or civil partnership, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation and will provide the support needed to enable this.

Our approach to tenant involvement is committed to equality of opportunity for all and to respect the needs of our diverse communities. This is in line with the Councils Equality and Diversity Policy and expectations set out within Homes England's Regulatory Consumer Standards. Our Strategy aims to widen our offer to tenants and suggests a variety of ways to reach diverse groups. There are currently some clear issues of under-engagement of tenants who are younger (below the age of 30). We will monitor who is involved and work towards involvement which reflects the tenant profile of Homes First.



# What will Involvement look like by 2022?

Tenant Involvement at Homes First will be excellent, because it will:

- Be embedded across our service with promotion and support available to tenants from all staff
- Have a broad range of involvement methods which really work and deliver improvements and positive change for both tenants and Homes First
- Take advantage of technology and modern market research techniques to enable as many tenants as possible to contribute their views and shape our services
- Have clear outcomes for all involvement activity, allowing everyone to clearly see the value of involving tenants in all that we do
- Provide and/or sign-post sector-leading training and support that will empower tenants to be involved in improving communities, neighbourhoods and homes
- Ensure that all services are shaped by tenant involvement
- Have a growing number and more diverse group of involved tenants

## Monitoring / accountability

Progress against the strategic action plan **appendix 2** will be monitored by The Tenant Involvement & Empowerment (TIE) Panel and an annual update of progress against the plan will be provided to Eastbourne Homes Board.

Progress will be publicised in the annual tenants report.





## Toolbox Activities

- Mystery Shopping
- Working Groups
- Chat Café
- VITAL
- Surveys/Questionnaires
- Focus Groups
- Walkabouts
- Annual Tenants Day
- Training
- Armchair Advisors\*
- Youth Voice
- E&D Voice

\* Email, Text, Online

# Menu of Involvement

Ways of getting involved – formal our agreed commitment and informal options Appendix 1

## Formal ways for tenants to get involved

**Board Membership** - Eastbourne Homes Limited (EHL) provides housing management and property services to EBC tenants is led by a Board of Directors, three of whom are tenants.

**LDC tenants attend Cabinet** - Two tenants are elected by TOLD (see below) to attend LDC's Cabinet. They are not voting members but are invited to comment on any tenant related issues.

**Tenants Involvement and Empowerment (TIE) Panel** - Working with senior managers from Homes First, TIE Panel members ensure tenants' priorities and views are at the heart of all that Homes First does. Advising and informing on key issues affecting tenants and ensuring that the interests of tenants are fully considered in all aspects of strategic decision making

**Tenants Organisation of Lewes District (TOLD)** - TOLD represents the views of tenants from across Lewes District. The meetings cover topical housing issues with guest speakers; ratify the work of the TOLD Committee, which monitors Homes First service performance in Lewes District. TOLD also manages the Environmental Improvement budget.

**Residents Voice** - Residents Voice represents the views of tenants from across Eastbourne Borough. The meetings cover topical housing issues with guest monitor / improve Homes First service performance in Eastbourne Borough. Residents Voice also manages the Environmental Improvement budget.

**Tenant Scrutiny Team** - Tenant-led scrutiny reviews are overseen by the TIE group, who commission trained tenants to carry out in-depth service reviews. The scrutiny team makes evidence-based recommendations based on which the Homes First Senior Leadership Team will produce an improvement plan which is monitored by the TIE group.

**Tenants and Residents Associations / Area Panels** – a great way to get together to discuss issues in your area. We can help with running costs and activities we can also attend meetings.

**Spends & Saves** - Trained tenants will be involved in the tender processes, looking at contract requirements, selecting contractors and monitoring contract delivery

**Service Improvement Groups (SIGs)** - consider services covered by Homes England's Regulatory Framework Consumer Standards.

**Leasehold Panel** – an independent Panel representing the interests of EHL leaseholders.

**Retirement Housing Forums** - to discuss the views and specific needs of retirement housing tenants

## Informal ways for tenants to get involved

**Quality Checkers** - volunteers who accompany council staff on estate inspection to show Homes First any maintenance or other issues which need addressing. They can also undertake specific quality checks following local works and services e.g. grounds maintenance

**Report it** - provide feedback via the 'Report It' app, a quick and easy way to report environmental problems to the councils when you are out and about – take you can report the problem, give the location and include a photo. Your report then goes straight through to the right team to deal with the issue. .

**Surveys/Questionnaires** - to ask you what you think of your housing service. You can receive surveys by post, text, email or telephone

**Focus Groups** - one-off informal but structured chat with other Tenants to give your views on a specific area of service such as repairs.

**VITAL (Virtual Involvement of Tenants & Leaseholders) / Social media** - Share your views and ideas via the web and social media, giving comments or compliments, engaging in an online discussion forum or joining a virtual community looking at a specific topic.

**Communications Panel / Armchair advisors** - This Panel ensures that communications to the public easy to understand and jargon free for tenants using feedback from Armchair Advisers who review draft communications from the comfort of their homes.

**Mystery Shopping** - trained tenants who test our services to make sure they are delivering services in line with agreed standards and whether those standards are appropriate.

**Chat Café** - Occasionally, we will ask residents to join us at a local community café or other local venue for a cuppa and a chat on the issues that matter most to them.

**Youth Voice** - Specific consultations and events for tenants and license holders aged 16-25 not just tenants and licence holders but young people living in our households.

**Annual Tenants Day** - A Homes First annual event (a conference, community event or door step consultation) to inform tenants of new initiatives, gain tenants views on existing services and changes they would like and to identify customer priorities.

**E&D voice** –Specific consultations and events where services may have a different impact because of a person's age, gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, or disability.



# Tenant Involvement Strategy Action Plan

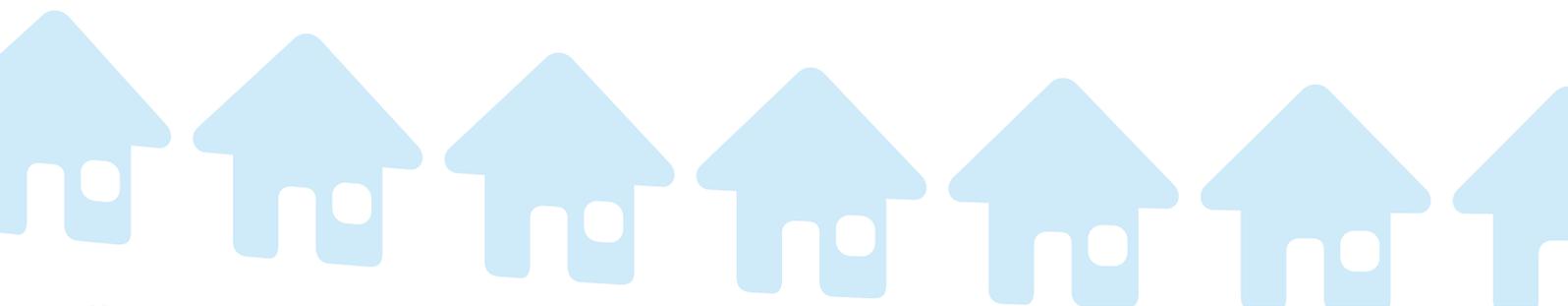
## Appendix 2

	Complies with Tenant Involvement Strategic Aim:	Year 1 by April 2020	Year 2 by April 2021	Year 3 by April 2022
Tenant Involvement team to analyse tenant involvement survey results, following up those who have expressed a desire to be involved.	Aim three and four	✓		
Agree capacity for ongoing Tenant Involvement work	Aim one	✓	✓	✓
Investigate setting up a Retirement Tenants Forum in Eastbourne and review how these operate across Homes First	Aim one	✓		
Agree finances and resources for Tenant Involvement Service and capital and revenue budgets for tenants groups	Aim one	✓	✓	✓
Launch new TP strategy, and "Menu of Involvement" options	Aim one	✓		
Begin to develop the tool box approaches into viable opportunities to deliver outcomes which achieve the aims of the tenant involvement strategy and wider strategic priorities	Aims one, two, three and four	✓	✓	✓
Ensure that equalities information held on the Tenancy Management IT system matches information on Tenant Involvement system.	Aim three	✓	✓	✓
Design a new Tenant Involvement application form for new tenants	Aim five	✓		

	Complies with Tenant Involvement Strategic Aim:	Year 1 by April 2020	Year 2 by April 2021	Year 3 by April 2022
Provide training for Housing First staff on Tenant Involvement promotion	Aim five	✓	✓	✓
Agree Terms of Reference for joint scrutiny team, and undertake recruitment	Aim one	✓	✓	✓
Recruit and build capacity amongst interested tenants and staff utilising tool box approaches to deliver and demonstrate service improvement outcomes	Aims one, three and five			
Establish new strategic tenants group (TIE Panel) terms of reference and recruitment process to the new group.	Aim one	✓		
Revise roles and terms of reference of Residents Voice/TOLD/Area Panels/TRA's, as necessary	Aim one	✓		
Commence work with Tenants and Residents Associations/ Area Panels to develop communication and engagement plans to promote their work	Aim one	✓	✓	✓
Review publications Tenants Voice and Open House	Aims one and two	✓		
Develop service standards (our local offer to tenants) and Performance Information for Tenant Involvement	Aim one	✓		
Provide scrutiny training for tenants and staff	Aim five	✓	✓	✓

	Complies with Tenant Involvement Strategic Aim:	Year 1 by April 2020	Year 2 by April 2021	Year 3 by April 2022
Scrutiny team to commence scrutiny reviews	Aims one and three	✓	✓	✓
Develop a template to be used by TIE/Scrutiny and other a strategic groups to ensure Value For Money is considered and reported on	Aim two	✓		
Promote awareness of tenant involvement opportunities to ensure that Tenant Involvement is integral to all staff roles.	Aim five	✓	✓	✓
Keep under review options for tenant involvement and evaluate the effectiveness of Toolkit options.	Aim three	✓	✓	✓
Develop online options for tenant involvement	Aim four	✓	✓	✓
Develop and deliver tenant involvement procurement process across Homes First.	Aim two		✓	✓
Develop protocol and support to enable tenant groups to access external funding	Aim five			✓
Develop a clear expenses, incentives and rewards policy for involvement	Aim three			✓
Review the Tenant Involvement strategy development and action plan	Aim four			✓
Consider diversity of involvement and feedback, compared to the profile of our tenants and agree steps to redress any imbalance if necessary	Aim three			✓

# Notes



# Notes



