

Tenant Engagement Strategy

2026 to 2030



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Introduction and purpose

Dear Resident

On behalf of the council, I am determined to make your housing services better.

We know the best way to improve our housing services is by listening to you – our tenants and leaseholders. We are committed to acting on what you tell us.

We want to encourage residents from all backgrounds to get involved in shaping the services we provide. Whether you have been with us for years or are new to engaging with the council, we want to work with you. This is because you know your block, road, or estate better than anyone, so who better to represent your area?



We want to turn your feedback into real improvements and turn your priorities into reality: such as the quality of our housing repairs service, making you feel safe in your home and supporting our most vulnerable tenants.

We have a strong Resident Engagement Panel who act as a critical friend to the housing service, offering constructive feedback and challenge to help drive improvements. We also have a Communications Group which is helping us present all sorts of communications in an understandable and accessible way. There is a Disability Forum that focuses on the needs of our residents with disabilities, and an Independent Living Forum for those of you who live in our sheltered schemes.

By sharing your thoughts and ideas, you become a voice of change for housing across the district. Together, we can create a housing service that truly reflects the needs and wishes of our diverse community.

I would like to say thank you to everyone who has given up their time to tell us what matters to you and how you want to work with us. This has helped to build this strategy. Your input has been invaluable; we look forward to continuing to work with you and delivering on what matters to you.

Pip Hazelton
Cabinet member for housing

A message from Sheila King, Resident Engagement Panel Chair



We're proud that the Resident Engagement Panel is at the forefront of tenant engagement at Canterbury City Council.

We're a group of likeminded tenants that want to improve the housing service that Canterbury City Council provide.

We oversee council policy, suggest changes that affect all tenants and attend all engagement events of which we very much enjoy!

We were involved in writing this strategy, using plain English and having tenants at the heart of council decision making.

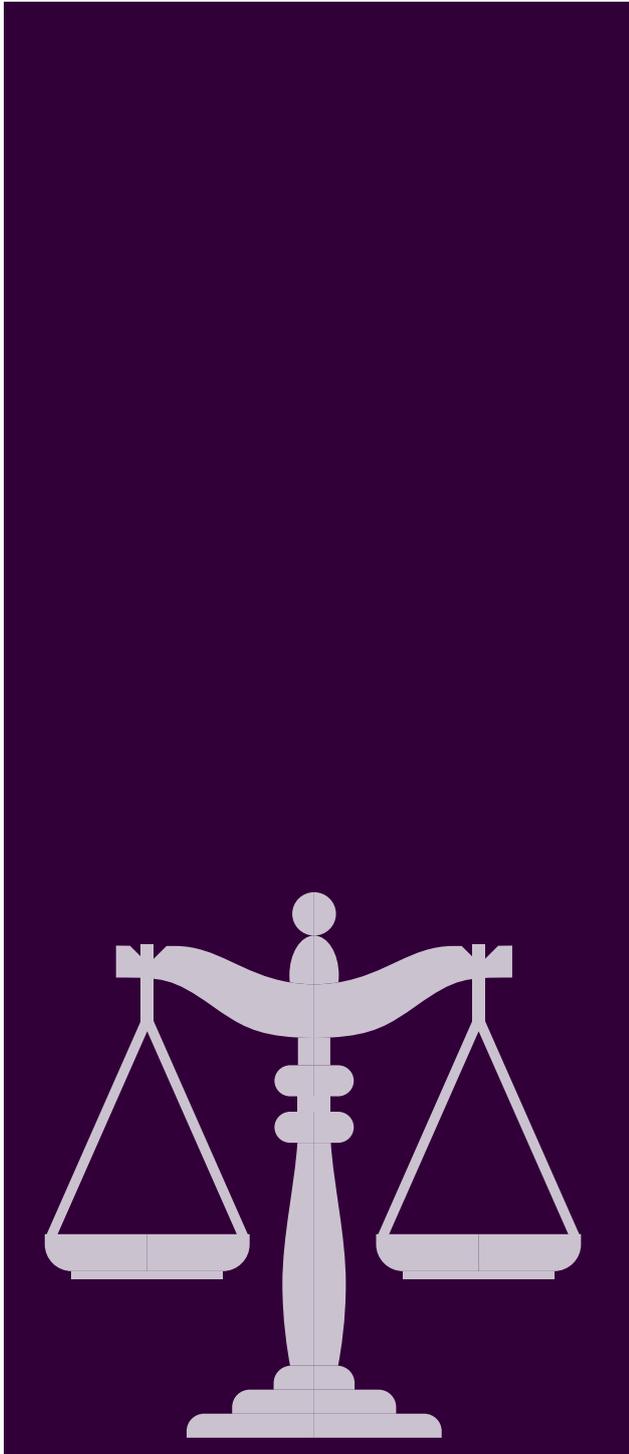
We also work very closely with members of other panels such as the Disability Forum, Independent Living Forum and the Communications Group.

Since being involved with the Regulator of Social Housing, the council has made every effort to engage its tenants and make changes for the better.

We're looking forward to the future of engagement at Canterbury City Council, helping staff deliver this strategy including; visiting estates, hosting the garden competition and continuing to remind the council to think of the people living in its buildings.

Sheila King
Resident Engagement Panel Chair

Legal and regulatory context



Over the past few years, the way councils and housing providers are expected to work with tenants has changed. And rightly so.

The **Grenfell Tower fire** was a heartbreaking tragedy that showed what can happen when tenants' concerns are ignored.

More recently, **Awaab's Law** was brought in after a young child, Awaab Ishak, died from damp and mould in his home.

His family had asked for help but no one listened and the consequences were devastating.

These moments have reminded everyone, from councils to national regulators, how vital it is that tenants feel heard, respected and safe.

That's why new laws and rules have been introduced to make sure that housing services put people first.

Some of these include:

- **The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023**, which gives stronger rights to tenants and more power to the Regulator of Social Housing to step in when things go wrong.
- The new **Consumer Standards**, set by the **Regulator of Social Housing**, which all landlords must meet. One of these is the

Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard. It means we must:

- ◆ give tenants clear, timely and useful information
- ◆ offer real ways for you to get involved and shape services
- ◆ listen to feedback and complaints - and act on them
- ◆ be open about how your voice leads to change.

We've already made progress in several areas:

- We've created **Resident Engagement Strategies** for each of our high-rise buildings (Elizabeth Court, Margaret Court and Windsor House). These were shaped directly with tenants and focus on safety, building management and how residents are kept informed and involved.
- We've also launched a **Tenant Engagement Retrofit Strategy** to make sure tenants are involved in decisions about how we make homes more energy efficient. That work came from honest conversations with tenants about comfort, rising bills and long-term improvements.

And we're guided by our council's **Equalities Policy**, which means we're committed to treating everyone fairly and removing any barriers that might stop people from taking part, especially if you've felt overlooked or excluded in the past.

This strategy brings all this together.

Yes, it helps us meet new standards and laws but it is also about doing the right thing for our tenants.

We want you to feel that your voice matters, that your concerns are acted on and that you have a real say in how your housing service works.

Who is the Regulator of Social Housing?

The **Regulator of Social Housing (RSH)** is the national organisation that makes sure landlords, like the council or housing associations, are doing their job properly.

They set the rules that social landlords must follow, called Consumer Standards, to protect tenants and make sure homes are safe, well-managed and that tenants are treated fairly.

If a landlord doesn't meet the standards, the regulator can step in to investigate or take action.

What are the Consumer Standards?

The **Consumer Standards** are four sets of rules that all social landlords, like councils, in England must follow. These rules are designed to make sure tenants:

- live in safe, good quality homes
- can easily raise concerns or complaints
- get clear, honest information from their landlord
- have real opportunities to be heard and to influence decisions.

This strategy focuses especially on the **Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard** - the one that says tenants must be listened to, informed and involved.

Our housing promise



We'll put you and your safety at the heart of everything we do.

We promise to provide a housing service that:

- keeps you safe and your home well-maintained
- listens to you and involves you in decisions
- treats you fairly, respectfully and with care
- supports you when times are tough.

We'll do our best to get things right the first time and, if we don't, we'll fix it and learn from it.

In return, we ask that you:

- pay your rent or service charges on time
- look after your home and community
- be respectful to others
- let us know early if you need support.

Together, we can build safer homes, stronger communities and better services.

Our tenant engagement framework

The voice of tenants will be part of how we work every day and how we make decisions.

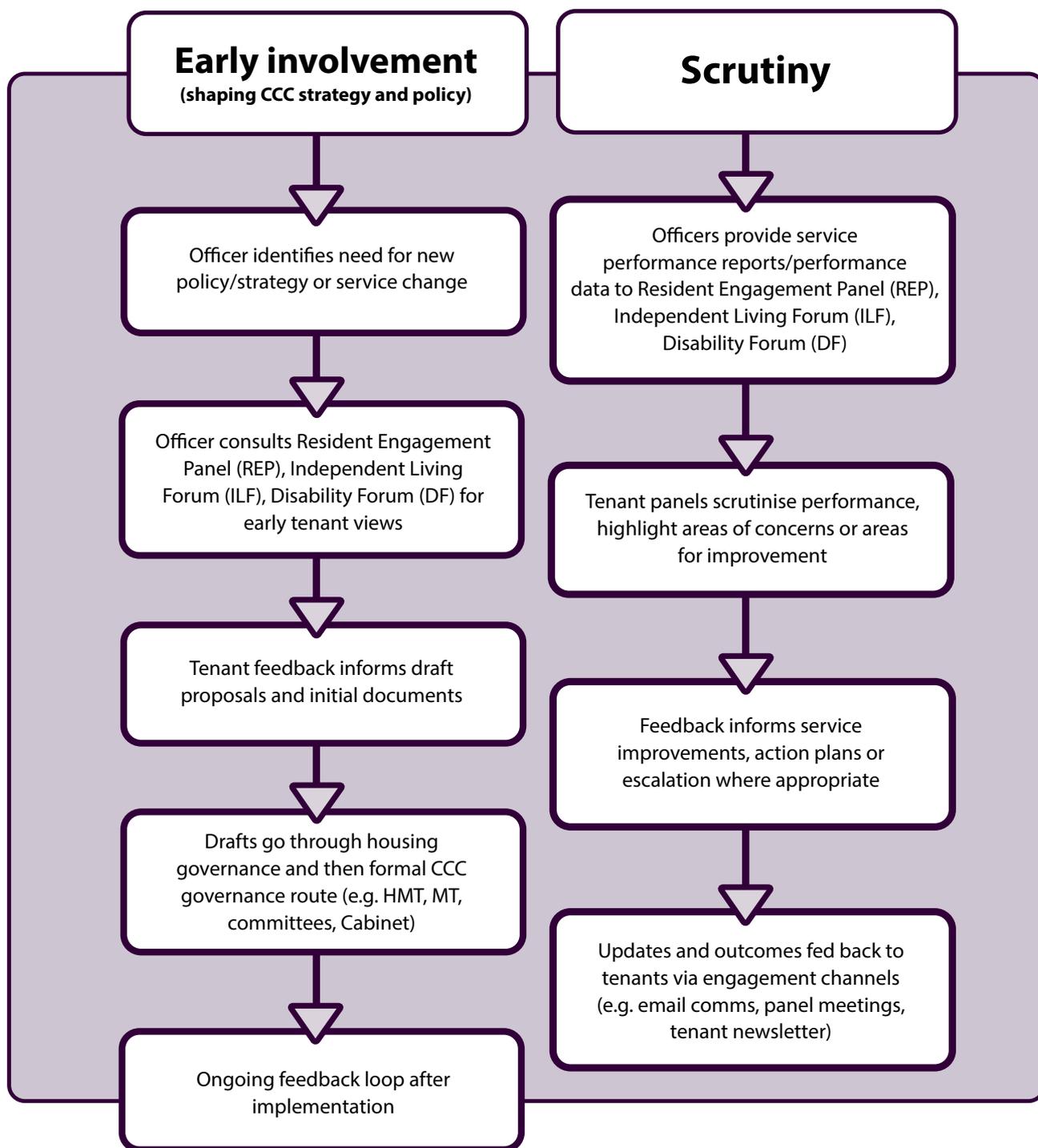
We've created a Tenant Engagement Framework that shows how, where and when you can get involved, how you can have your say and how you can help shape the services that affect your home and community.

We use two main visuals to help explain how our engagement approach works.

You'll see these included below.



1. Tenants' role in governance



The previous diagram shows the full journey of tenant involvement, from shaping services to holding us to account.

On the left side it shows how tenants help shape strategies and decisions before they're made:

- when a new policy or change is being planned, officers bring it to our tenant panels early
- these groups share feedback and suggestions before a draft is written
- that input shapes the draft, before it's taken through formal council processes (like Housing Management Team or Cabinet)
- once implemented, we check back in with tenants to review how it's working and what needs to improve.

This cycle helps us learn from tenants and improve together.

Feedback and scrutiny from tenant panels is taken seriously.

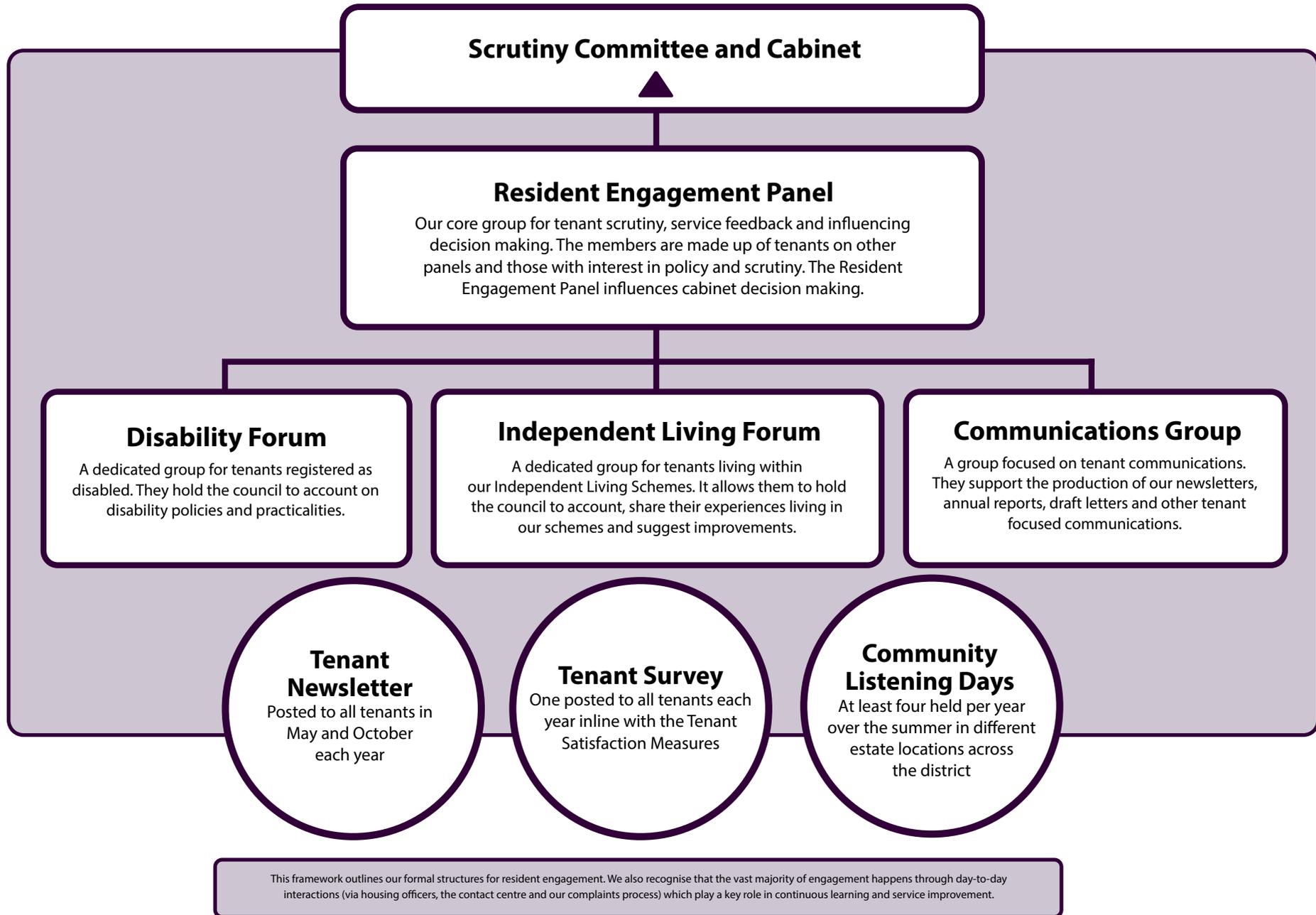
It informs:

- internal decisions by senior officers and housing management
- recommendations to Overview Committee
- reports to Cabinet which is our main decision-making body
- annual performance reviews and action planning

In other words, the voice of tenants has a seat at the table throughout the entire cycle of service design, delivery and review.



2. Our tenant engagement framework (2025 to 2028)



The previous diagram shows ways you, as tenants, can get involved in improving the council's housing service.

Engagement ranges from sitting on formal panels, coming along for a chat on the community days or filling in the annual tenant survey.

This framework was shaped directly by tenants. We built it based on:

- feedback from our Tenant Engagement Review which we carry out every three years
- results from the latest annual Tenant Survey
- insight and suggestions from our tenant panels and forums.

This means the structure reflects what matters most to you and gives you flexible, meaningful ways to get involved.

We've grouped them into two main types:

A: Ongoing tenant panels and forums

These are regular groups made up of tenants who help shape our policies and challenge how we're performing:

- **Resident Engagement Panel (REP)** – our central group for reviewing services, influencing decisions and highlighting areas for improvement
- **Disability Forum** – focuses on removing barriers and improving accessibility for tenants with disabilities
- **Independent Living Forum (ILF)** – brings together tenants in our independent living schemes to improve quality of life and services for older tenants

- **Communications Group** – ensures newsletters, reports and other communications are clear, accessible and reflect what tenants want to see and read.

These groups work closely with officers. They influence key decisions and hold us to account.

B: Flexible ways to get involved

We know not everyone has the time or desire to join a group. We also offer ways to take part when and how it suits you:

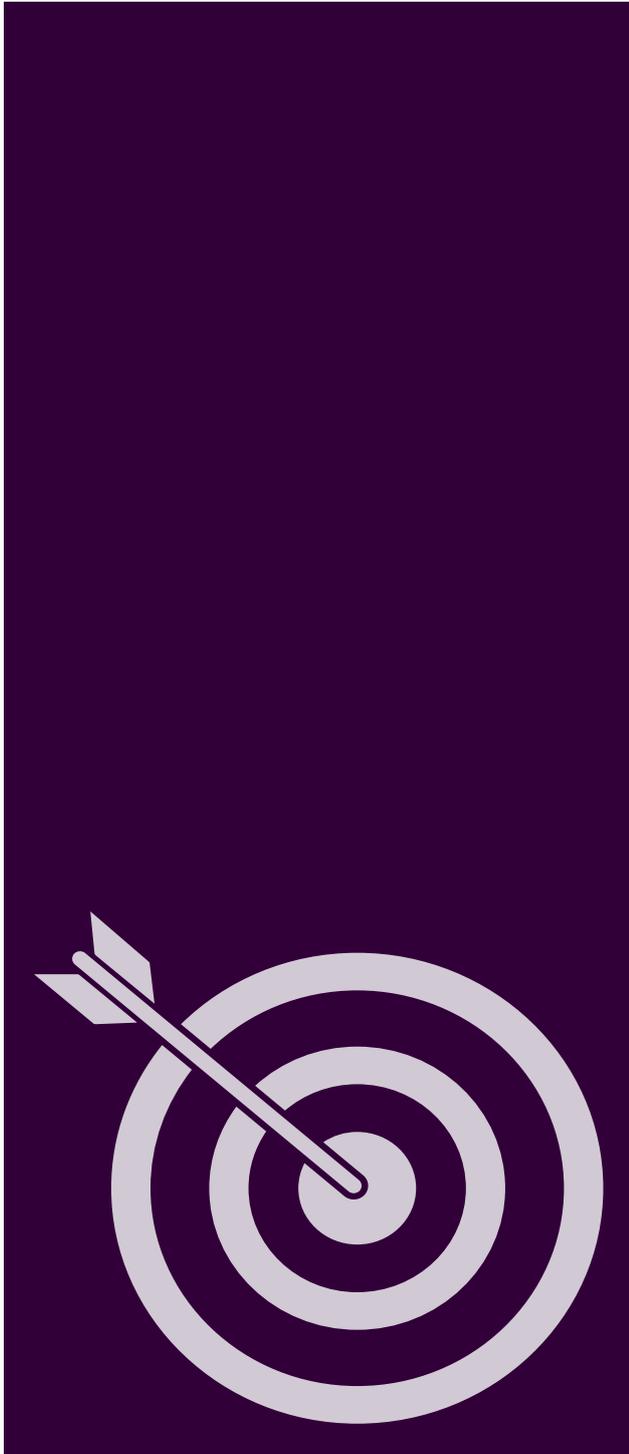
- **Tenant newsletters** – sent out to every household twice a year with updates, stories and ways to share your views
- **Annual Tenant Survey** – a chance for all tenants to tell us how we're doing, what needs to improve and how we compare to national standards in line with Tenant Satisfaction Measures
- **Community Listening Days** – held on estates across the district, where we come to hear your views face-to-face
- **One-off surveys, focus groups or consultations** – when we need quick input on a policy or service change

While this framework shows our formal routes, we also know that most of our engagement happens in day-to-day conversations:

- with Neighbourhood Management Officers
- through repairs and service calls
- through complaints, compliments or even a chat on the doorstep.

We treat all this as valuable insight and we're working to make sure that what we hear on the ground feeds into our wider council service improvement plan and decision-making.

Our strategic objectives



We're committed to listening, learning, and acting on what tenants tell us.

These objectives ensure that everyone – especially those who are often underrepresented – has a voice.

They also support the council's wider Consultation and Engagement Strategy, helping us build stronger relationships and better services.

Objective 1: Keep tenants informed

Provide clear, timely and accessible information about rights, services and performance and show how feedback shapes decisions.

Objective 2: Create real opportunities to influence

Offer varied and meaningful ways for tenants to shape policies, services and decisions.

Objective 3: Show we listen and take action

Act on feedback, learn from complaints and show how tenant input drives change.

Objective 4: Remove barriers to participation

Make engagement inclusive and accessible so every tenant can have a voice.

Objective 5: Build confidence and skills

Support tenants to engage effectively to hold us to account.

Objective 6: Understand and respond to diverse tenant needs

Provide fair and accessible services for everyone.

Objective 1: Keep tenants informed

The Regulator of Social Housing judgement found *'weaknesses in its sharing of service standards for some areas and sharing of regular performance information'* and noted *'repair target timescales were not clearly set out for tenants'*.

You'll always know what to expect from us and how we're performing. You'll always have clear, timely information about your rights, services and our performance.

This helps you make informed decisions and hold us to account.

Our commitments:

- Publish regular updates in plain English across digital and print channels
- Offer multiple ways to access information – online, by phone and in print
- Work with the Tenant Communications Group to simplify communication and make services easier to access
- Make digital information easier to use and accessible for all
- Publish clear service standards for all areas including repairs, adaptations and complaints
- Share performance data quarterly showing how we're meeting these standards
- Be transparent when we are not meeting standards and explain what we are doing to improve

- Make performance information easy to understand and accessible in multiple formats
- Use noticeboards effectively, keeping them up to date with relevant information
- Work with community centres to help spread information about services and engagement opportunities

How will we know we are succeeding?

- 80% of tenants report being satisfied with information provided through the annual survey
- Updates published on time 100% of the time
- Tenant feedback shows improved understanding of rights and services
- Communications Group confirms materials are clear and accessible



Objective 2: Create real opportunities to influence

The Regulator of Social Housing judgement (October 2025) positively noted we are *'engaging tenants in the redesign of its tenant engagement and communication strategy'* and *'tenant feedback had directly and positively impacted service delivery'*.

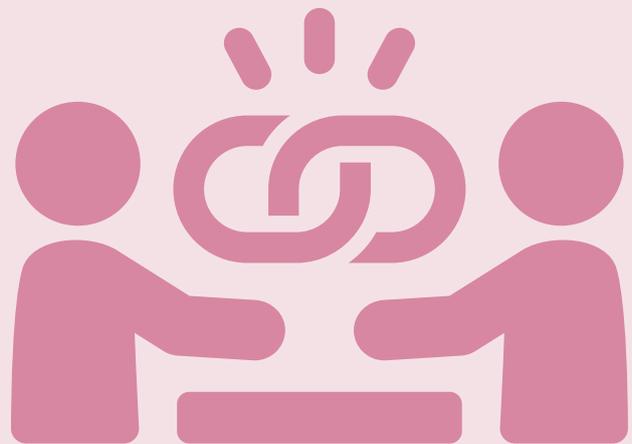
Your voice matters. We'll provide meaningful ways for you to shape policies, services and decisions that affect your home and community.

Our commitments:

- Involve tenants in designing improvements to services identified as needing work including adaptations, complaint handling, health and safety communications
 - Offer a range of options – surveys, panels, workshops, community events, and digital tools
 - Arrange regular coffee mornings with tenant representatives, with officers available to speak to residents
 - Target underrepresented groups with tailored outreach
 - Promote opportunities through channels you trust so you never miss a chance
- Show clear follow-up on how your feedback has been used and what's changed

How will we know we are succeeding?

- 80% average attendance rate maintained across tenant panels and forums
- Two council tenants will attend Cabinet Advisory Committee
- Tenants will be involved in 100% of service redesign projects from the start
- We will offer at least four different engagement activities per year
- 100% of major relevant policy/service changes include tenant consultation before implementation
- 10% of tenant population will participate in at least one engagement activity annually



Objective 3: Show we listen and take action

The Regulator of Social Housing judgement (October 2025) noted *'weaknesses in the promptness of responses to tenants' complaints and in the oversight of complaints made directly to contractors by tenants'*.

We'll act on feedback and complaints, learn from them and show you the difference your voice makes.

Our commitments

- Respond clearly and share updates on changes made
 - Publish annual 'you said, we did' reports and complaints learning summaries
 - Use complaints as a chance to improve services and prevent repeat issues
 - Involve tenants in finding solutions and reviewing outcomes
 - Respond to complaints within published timescales
 - Track and monitor all complaints including those made directly to contractors
- Share regular complaint data including response times and lessons learnt
 - Involve Resident Engagement Panel (REP) in reviewing complaint themes and improvement actions

How will we know we are succeeding?

- 'You said, we did' report published annually showing minimum 10 tangible examples
- 90% of complaints responded to within timescales
- 100% of contractor complaints tracked and monitored
- Reduction in repeat complaints on same issues by 25%
- Tenant satisfaction with complaint handling improves year-on-year



Objective 4: Remove barriers to participation

The Regulator of Social Housing judgement noted that *'Canterbury City Council provided evidence of relevant and accessible information so tenants can use landlord services.'*

Every tenant should have a voice. We'll continue removing barriers and make it easier for everyone to take part.

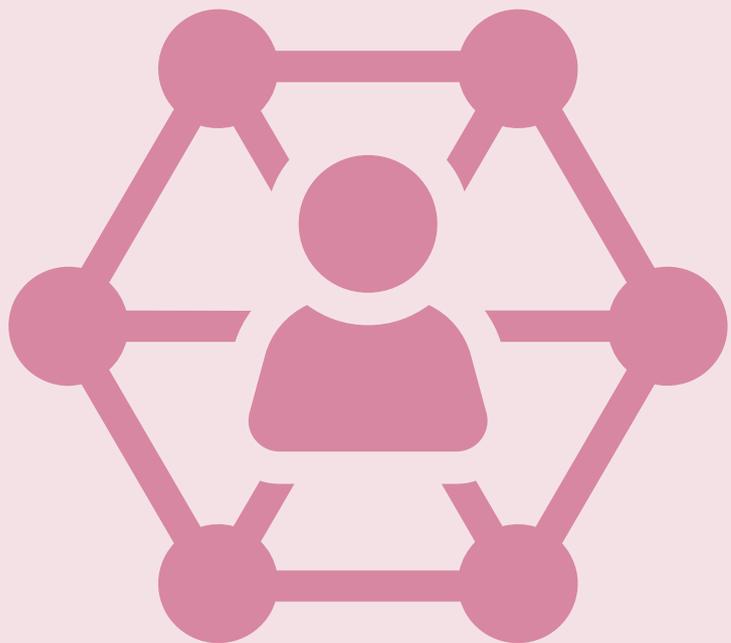
Our commitments:

- Provide flexible ways to engage — online, by phone, in person or in writing
- Increase use of email communications to make engagement more accessible
- Offer interpretation and accessible formats when needed
- Collect voluntary data to understand who we're reaching and who we're missing

- Create safe, informal spaces like pop-ups at community cafés
- Ask, listen and act on the barriers you tell us about

How will we know we are succeeding?

- 100% of engagement events offer accessible formats/interpretation when requested
- 100% of eligible travel costs when attending meetings, including taxis, will be booked in advance or reimbursed when requested
- No one will miss out on engagement opportunity due to transport barriers
- We will organise at least four listening community days held across different schemes annually



Objective 5: Build confidence and skills

The Regulator of Social Housing highlighted *'we observed Canterbury City Council's cabinet meeting and a Resident Engagement Panel meeting'*.

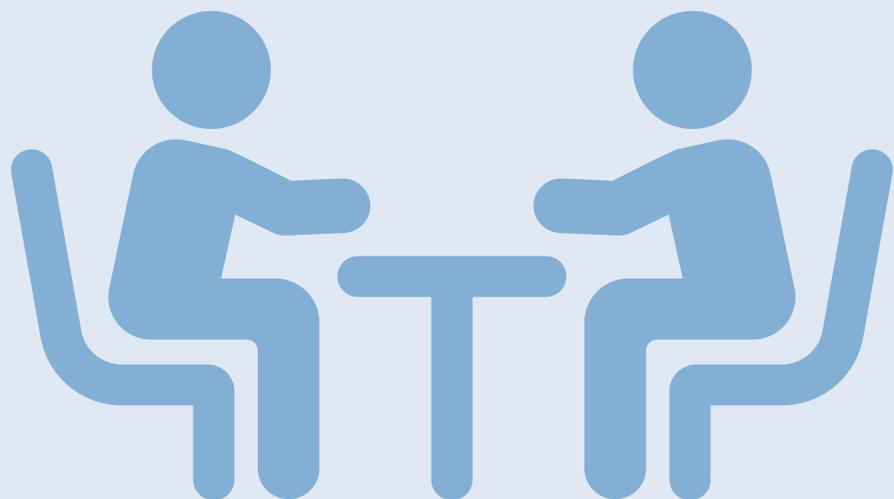
We'll support tenants to feel confident, informed and able to make a real difference.

Our commitments:

- Offer training, information sessions and help residents to help each other
- Use plain English and keep information clear and transparent
- Provide flexible options — local drop-ins, online resources and shorter sessions
- Cover travel costs and offer practical support for those taking part
- Promote an inclusive culture by sharing real tenant stories and showing impact

How will we know we are succeeding?

- Tenant panel retention of 75% year-on-year
- We will offer minimum of four training/information sessions annually
- Two council tenants will attend Cabinet Advisory Committee



Objective 6: Understand and respond to diverse tenant needs

The Regulator of Social Housing judgement (October 2025) noted that *'there is a limited assurance that Canterbury City Council has an understanding of the diverse needs of its tenants across all protected characteristics to ensure that its services are accessible and equitable'*.

We will collect and use tenant data, with your consent, to understand who you are and what you need, so we can provide fair and accessible services for everyone.

Our commitments:

- Regularly review who is and isn't engaging with us and actively reach out to underrepresented groups
- Use tenant insight to identify and remove barriers to accessing services
- Involve tenants with lived experience in designing improvements to services

- Report annually on tenant diversity data and how it's shaping our service delivery

How will we know we are succeeding?

- Analysis shows we are reaching tenants from all backgrounds in our engagement activities
- Tenants from diverse groups report that services meet their specific needs
- We can demonstrate service changes made based on understanding different tenant needs
- Gap analysis shows reducing disparities in satisfaction levels between different tenant groups



Next steps

We want this strategy to lead to real action and strong tenant involvement over the next three years.

1. Share the strategy

We'll publish this document on our website and add a summary to the next newsletter (May 2026).

2. Launch the engagement framework

Our tenant engagement framework will be live on our website, along with clear information on how to join panels, forums and flexible engagement opportunities.

3. Promote opportunities to get involved

Look out for invitations to upcoming community listening days, surveys and recruitment for tenant panels. We'll make sure these are widely advertised and easy to access.

4. Set up training and support

We'll start offering training sessions and resources to help tenants feel confident and informed when taking part.

5. Monitor and report progress

We'll publish regular updates and an annual performance report to show how your feedback is shaping services.

Want to get involved now?

To register your interest email getinvolved@canterbury.gov.uk call 01227 862 142 or visit canterbury.gov.uk/getinvolved