



Ashfield

DISTRICT COUNCIL

Tenants Charter 2021 - 2023

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Introduction

Ashfield District Council recognises that involving tenants is an essential part of our decision-making process and we are committed to making sure that there are opportunities for all tenants to participate in the design and delivery of our Housing Service.

We are also committed to working together with tenants and service users to promote meaningful involvement in the District of Ashfield. It is for this reason that we have put in place a broad range of opportunities for tenants to participate in the management of their housing service and we expect this to be reflected in greater levels of customer satisfaction in the future.

The Tenants Charter is a three-year plan that sets out various ways in which tenants may be involved with other tenants and the Council.

This Charter takes account of the right of tenants to receive information and to be consulted under the 1985 Housing Act and the national standards for tenant involvement and empowerment set out by the Regulator of Social Housing.

The Housing Service has a long standing tradition of tenant involvement and participation and recognises that some tenants want to participate in a limited way and that others want to be more involved.

The aims of this Charter are:

- To provide opportunities for tenants to be central to our decision making, our future plans and play a critical role in helping up us to achieve excellent housing services;
- To ensure that all tenants are able to participate at a level that suits them while recognising the needs of special interest groups;
- To effectively use tenant feedback to improve service delivery and meet customer needs;
- Ensure housing services are continually monitored for the benefit of all tenants within Ashfield;
- Ensure that we meet all statutory and regulatory requirements;
- To support positive approaches to achieving sustainable communities in partnership with tenants.



Our Aims

The aims of this Charter are to:-

Enable tenants to get actively involved in improving and developing high quality housing services

We will:

- Raise awareness of resident involvement to get more residents involved
- Ensure tenant participation is open and accessible to everyone who wishes to become involved. It is our aim to ensure every tenant has their individual needs recognised, is treated fairly and with respect
- Provide a wide range of accessible engagement opportunities for our tenants, focusing on improving our on line offer and new forms of communication
- Undertake effective tenant scrutiny of the performance of housing services through our newly revised Tenant Scrutiny Panel

Develop effective communication with tenants

We will:

- Ensure that points of contact and communications are used effectively and front-line staff are trained to record and pass on relevant feedback
- Provide tenants with information through the Council publication Ashfield Matters
- Provide good quality information and feedback on consultation through all means available
- Continue to develop modern and flexible communication methods, such as online services, to ensure information is accessible to all
- Attend and support Tenant and Residents Associations across Ashfield

Facilitate joint working between tenants, staff, members and communities in order to achieve effective community involvement and actions

We will:

- Facilitate partnership and joint working to avoid duplication and contribute to wider community initiatives
- Co-ordinate the involvement of key groups and departments
- Support staff to develop active tenant participation in their local area, including tenant's and resident's groups and other local initiatives

We will develop with our tenants, an Action Plan which details how we will meet these aims.

Our approach to tenant engagement

How can you get involved?

Ashfield District Council is keen to involve a broad section of the community in the decision making process, but we also want individuals to be involved at a level that suits them and for which they have the required level of knowledge and understanding.

We know that some tenants and leaseholders want nothing more than to receive a quality housing service from their landlord, while others want to be directly involved in the management of their homes.

Resident involvement will fall into one or more of the following categories:

Involvement

This involves tenants and council staff working in partnership with decisions being made jointly. These may take place in various situations from specific meetings to agreements while carrying out estate inspections.

Consultation

This is where tenants are asked for their views on a particular topic and include, for example, surveys where people are asked their opinions. While tenants' views are taken into account, decisions are still made by the Council.

Ways to get involved

Traditionally tenant participation has focused on consulting with formal Tenants and Residents Associations. However, we recognise that not everyone wants to get involved in this way.

We want to encourage as many tenants as possible to have their say on how the Housing Service is managed and delivered. This is why, over the years, we have developed a range of options for tenants to get involved and to influence decisions that affect them at a level, time and place that suits them best.

Getting involved doesn't always mean attending meetings – there are a number of ways to do this including estate walkabouts, and online surveys. It is up to you how much or how little you want to participate. Some of the ways to get involved are shown on the following pages.

Ways to get involved

Involvement

Consultation



Consultation

On-line and service specific surveys or questionnaires

Consultation is conducted when changes are being considered that will have a direct impact on tenants to seek views on proposals. Consultation methods can vary and could be via letter, questionnaire or through events in local venues to seek the views of all relevant people within the area. At various times surveys and questionnaires will be sent out directly to tenants. This provides customers with an opportunity to give their views and opinions on the services they receive, from the comfort of their own home. We are developing a framework of surveys regarding our services so as to better understand tenant satisfaction levels.

STAR (Survey of Tenants and Residents)

This is conducted every two to three years to gain an overall view of Housing services to help plan for the future development of Housing services.

Estate Inspections

To help ensure estates are kept clean and in good condition, yearly inspections of council estates and related areas are carried out by housing management staff with local tenants, residents and partner organisations, including the Police. This is an opportunity for you to walk around your neighbourhood with our employees and other agencies to discuss any issues or concerns. Estate inspections take between one and a half hours and three hours dependent on the area.

Housing Surgeries

Regular surgeries are held for tenants of Sheltered Courts on a quarterly basis. This gives tenants the chance to discuss issues or raise concerns with their Housing Officer as well as feeding back comments regarding the Court. Housing Officers will also promote opportunities for tenants to get involved.

Roadshows/local events/other site meetings

We will always try to attend local meetings as and when invited where we will take note of your concerns and suggestions. From time to time, we will hold meetings to inform you about our services or new legislation. These events are a great way of finding out what we are doing, or what is happening in your local community.

Involvement

Tenant Scrutiny Panel

The Scrutiny Panel consists of up to nine members. The role of the Panel is to audit our services, become our critical friends and recommend changes based on relevant findings. Meetings are held at least six times a year.

Customer Opinion and Influencing Network (COIN)

COIN is a network of tenants who share their views on the services received from the Council as their landlord. All feedback received is used to develop and improve services.

Tenants and Residents Forum

The Ashfield Forum is led by a number of involved tenants that represent Tenants and Residents Associations operating in the District. This provides tenants and residents the opportunity to discuss the strategic objectives of organisations within Ashfield, providing feedback and suggestions from local tenants and residents, and allowing for a regular exchange of information. Meetings are usually around two hours per meeting and are held every three months.

Tenants Gateway

The Tenant's Gateway consists of up to 16 tenants from across the District. Tenants meet with our managers to review policies, procedures and performance. The Gateway is your opportunity to consider proposals for service developments and innovation, improvements to our policies and procedures and to consult on general business. Meetings are approximately two hours and are held every two months.

Tenants and Residents Groups/ Community Associations

These are community groups acting in the interest of tenants and residents in a particular area. They can also be called tenants and residents associations or community associations/groups. Local residents may establish a group to discuss any issues that affect people living in their area. These are not restricted to housing matters and many groups will also arrange social events for their residents. This is your opportunity to make a real difference in local communities.

Meet our involved tenants

Pat Simms

Pat is chair of our Tenants Gateway and has been actively involved in tenant involvement on the Coxmoor Estate in Kirkby in Ashfield for close to 40 years. She was elected onto the board of Ashfield Homes Ltd when it was set up in 2002 and served for eight years prior to the transfer of the Arm's-length management organisation (ALMO) to Ashfield District Council.

Pat is passionate about tenants being at the heart of the services the Council are delivering and works closely with officers to ensure that the services provide the best support for tenants to live in Council properties.

Minister Myrrha Hibbert

Myrrha is a member of the Tenants Gateway and is still active in holding the service to account on behalf of tenants.

As a Minister, Myrrha has a very busy life outside of a being tenant representative as in her local community of Hucknall.

She also works tirelessly to support a number of charities and community groups, however, Myrrha still finds time to be actively involved in the housing community working for some time as the vice chair of the Beauvale Tenants and Residents Association in Hucknall.

She served for eight years helping to ensure that the tenants' voice was heard from the move to ALMO and ensuring the service where maintained and developed. Following the move back to Ashfield District Council, she became vice chair of the Ashfield Tenants and Residents Forum.

Barry Gentry

Barry is a member of the Tenant's Gateway and a Mystery Shopper and is committed to making a difference and holding the Housing Service to account.

Barry represents the tenants of Sutton-in-Ashfield on the Tenants Gateway and shares his experiences of the services he receives to help the Council to shape the services it delivers to tenants.

Before joining Tenants Gateway, Barry picked up valuable skills during his career working as a Merchant Navy Deck Officer and travelling the world which gives a very different and valued perspective to the group in scrutinising the services and working collaboratively to improve what is delivered to tenants.

Resources and Support available

All housing staff are aware of their responsibility to support and encourage tenant participation and will attend meetings, where appropriate.

To support and encourage tenant participation there are a range of resources and mechanisms to engage which tenants groups and individuals can access including:

- Offering a wide range of involvement methods to suit all lifestyles. We want to ensure that individuals and groups have equal opportunity to engage with us
- Arranging meeting at times and locations most accessible to tenants
- Annual grant to tenants and residents associations according to the members in the group and start-up grant for new groups aiming to meet the Council's criteria
- Travel allowance to cover the financial costs incurred by tenants when attending
- Training for tenants who are committed to engaging
- Dedicated staff resource and time

Monitoring and Evaluation of the Tenants Charter

The Tenants Charter is a working document subject to continuous review to ensure it is meeting objectives and achieving targets.

We have a separate Action Plan produced with the Tenants Gateway which details how we will meet these outcomes.

The Tenants Charter and action plan will be monitored and evaluated on a six monthly basis by the Projects and Partnerships Lead Officer and the Service Manager - Housing Management and Tenancy Services.

A progress report on the action plan will be developed, updated and made available annually. This will be also reported to the Tenants Gateway.

The report will evaluate the success of the Charter in meeting its identified aims and objectives and identify future actions to ensure that tenant participation practice continues to develop, evolve and strive to include all Council tenants and other stakeholders.

The Charter will be reviewed at least every three years.



Contact us to get involved

If you are a tenant or leaseholder of Ashfield District Council and would like to get involved in any of the tenant participation opportunities we offer, you can contact us in a number of ways:-

- By email: coin@ashfield.gov.uk
- By phone: 01623 450000 option 1 housing, then option 3 tenancy
- By post: Projects and Partnerships Lead Officer, Ashfield District Council, Housing and Assets Directorate, Council Offices, Urban Road, Kirkby-in-Ashfield, Notts, NG17 8DA



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