

Appendix D - Scrutiny Implementation Plan

The Council wants to ensure that it effectively engages with tenants and provides a wide range of meaningful opportunities to influence and scrutinise our strategies, policies and services. We want to ensure that tenants' views are taken into account in our decision making about how landlord services are delivered and will communicate how tenants' views have been considered.

To help us achieve this the Council is currently working with TPAS, who are a nationally respected organisation that works with tenants and landlords across the country to improve resident engagement. This re-engineering project works through a process of discovery, design and delivery to build a new framework of engagement. Alongside this, and in response to recent changes in regulation and legislation, the Council is also going through the process of adopting a new Resident Engagement Strategy which aims to bring a sharp focus to the landlord-tenant relationship that the Council has with its residents.



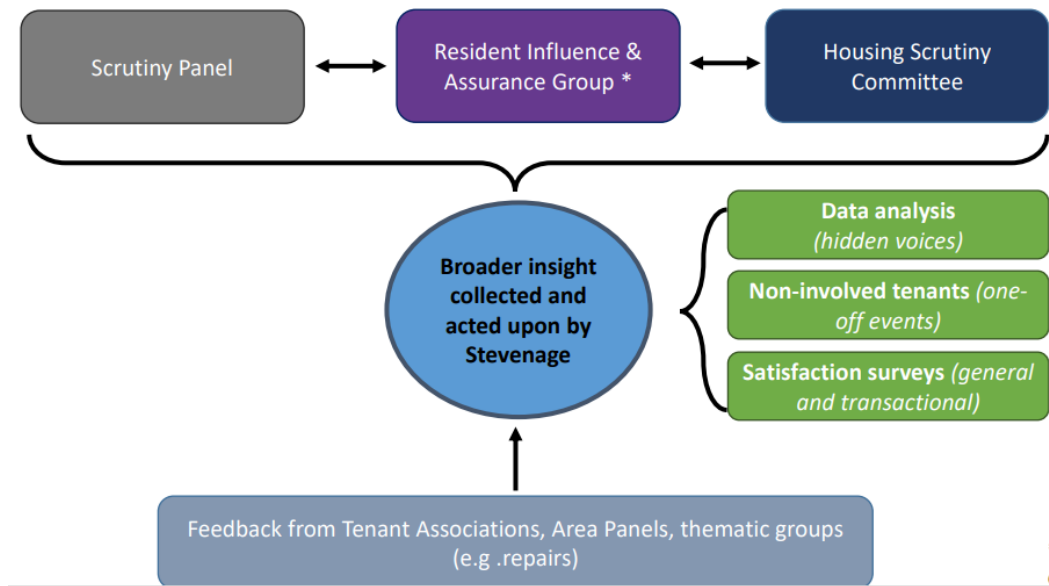
3-D approach: Tpas 2020

The discovery phase of the re-engineering process, which has been undertaken with staff, Members and tenants, has shown some clear themes emerging.

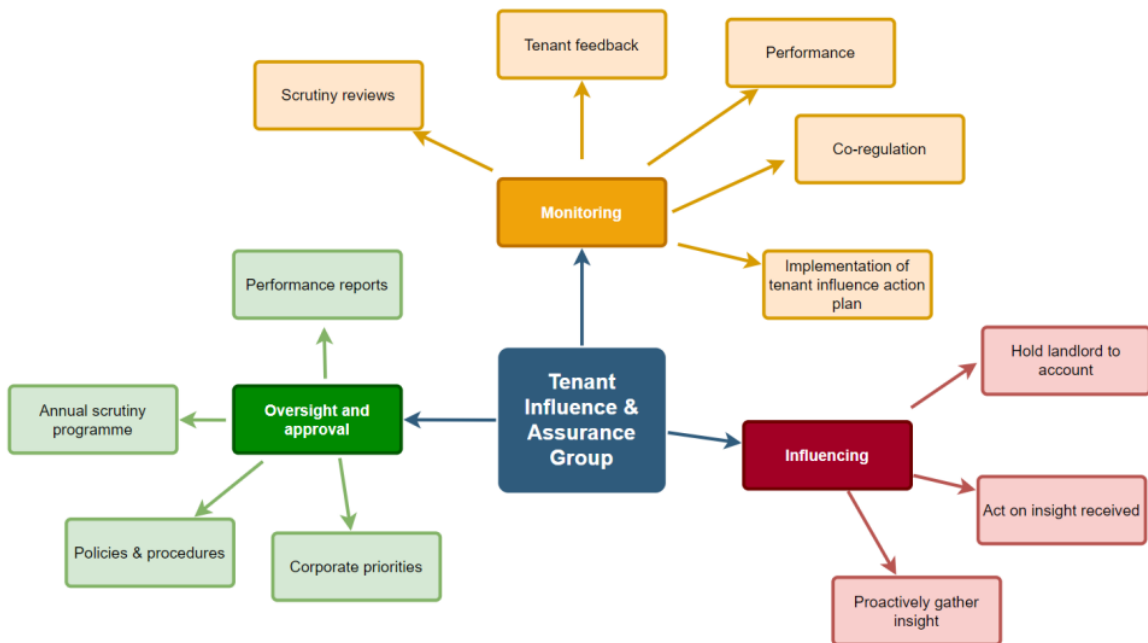
Residents have told us;

- Effective **leadership** is essential in instilling a set of values that drive a culture at Stevenage Borough Council that looks for, values and acts upon tenant feedback.
- Good **communication** – listening and feedback – are essential in building trust and giving tenants evidence that it is worthwhile engaging with the Council.
- They want tenants at the heart of services, and that **everyone** working in housing knows this and acts upon it.
- The Council needs to provide new engagement **structures and processes** that bring a range of formal and informal influencing opportunities for tenants.

Through the discovery phase, residents have also shared their views on the structure that they think would benefit a collaborative approach to developing tenant influence opportunities.



Furthermore, residents have identified that a Resident Influence and Assurance Group should have a clear remit of scrutiny, making decisions and recommendations and holding the Council to account. Membership would primarily be tenants and leaseholders, with support from staff as required and that appointments to the groups should be made by a rigorous skills and expertise-based process.



What is Scrutiny?

Scrutiny offers residents the opportunity to hold their landlord to account. It gives residents the power to review and influence how well services are being delivered as well as provides the opportunity to meet regularly and provide feedback, gather evidence and make recommendations on how to make improvements to service delivery.

Scrutiny is largely facilitated through Residents Scrutiny Panels that have a diverse range of skills and knowledge and as well as being able to see the bigger picture and can represent the wider resident population. The panel should have a clear remit and terms of reference and be inclusive and representative of a broad resident base.

What does good scrutiny look like?

- Independent – Scrutiny panels should be led by residents who are in control of what they scrutinise and prioritise.
- Seeks realistic outcomes to consider the needs of all residents.
- Accessible and provides equal opportunities.
- Provides residents with support, training and resources to undertake effective scrutiny.
- Effective communication with wider resident base as well as Council staff and Members to ensure real change occurs.

Next Steps

It is a key priority under the proposed Resident Engagement Strategy to deliver more effective scrutiny and to commit to formal arrangements by adopting a new Scrutiny Panel and the co-ordination of scrutiny arrangements between residents and Members. It is also our aim to deliver wider ad-hoc scrutiny opportunities and to develop an annual plan with our residents.

To help us to embed our commitments, we will engage TPAS to assist in the development of an independent and well-equipped Scrutiny Panel. They will help The Council to recruit and induct the panel and ensure that a clear framework and terms of reference are in place to support the scrutiny work to effectively develop.

The Council will also engage TPAS to support the Scrutiny Panel through their first scrutiny exercise, training whilst doing, and assisting the panel through key recommended elements of successful scrutiny;

- Topic selection
- Topic scoping
- Carrying out the review
- Making evidenced recommendations
- Final reporting
- Communicating to key stakeholders and Members
- Track and review progress and measuring impact

Timeline for implementation

The Council will engage TPAS in July 2024 and commence a scoping and desktop review. We will also ask the residents who are engaged in the re-engineering process to be part of the scoping process and identify whether they would like to be involved in the initial Scrutiny Panel or Resident Influence and Assurance Group to help set the direction.

Until the group is established and recruited and can set their own topics for scrutiny, the Council will recommend that the first scrutiny performed is that of the housing Caretaking Service, linked to an independent review that was carried out between November 2023 and March 2024 and which has identified several recommendations.

The recruitment campaign for panel members will commence late August and throughout September 2024, with a hope that if successful, the first scrutiny review can be undertaken between October and December 2024.

Scoping and desktop review – July 2024

Recruitment planning – August 2024

Recruitment campaign- September 2024

Assessing and interviewing candidates – September / October 2024

Inducting for success – October 2024