



Involvement and Engagement Activity Annual Report – 2025/2026

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Manjit Sidhu – Involvement and Engagement Manager
manjit.sidhu@southtyneside.gov.uk
0191 426 8402

Housing Scrutiny Committee – 24th July 2026

Report to: Housing Scrutiny Committee

Cabinet Portfolio/Lead Member: Cllr Steve Smith

Report of Gary Kirsop, Director of Community Operations

Subject: Involvement and Engagement Activity Annual Report – 2025/2026

Date: 24th July 2026

Wards affected: All wards

Council ambitions: Part of strong communities plus Targeting support to make things fairer

Does the report and any appendices contain information which has been identified as confidential or exempt?

- No, this report does not contain information identified as confidential or exempt.

For Executive Decisions only:

Is the decision a Key Decision? No

Is it included in the Forward Plan? Yes

If not in the Forward Plan is the report: N/A

Relevant Scrutiny Chair: Cllr Michael Oughton

Is the decision eligible for call-in by Scrutiny? No

(If the decision is anything other than any executive decision made by the Cabinet or a Key Decision made by an officer under delegated powers, call-in is not applicable. This should be explained in the report).

Purpose of report

1. The purpose of the report is to provide Housing Scrutiny Committee with a report into involvement and engagement activity across South Tyneside Council Housing Services for 2025-26.

Background information

2. The Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) has set out its expectations for tenant engagement in the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard. This standard requires landlords to be open with tenants and treat them with fairness and respect so they can access services, raise concerns, when necessary, influence decision making and hold their landlord to account.
3. To ensure the organisation demonstrates compliance with these expectations, opportunities for tenant involvement continue to be developed. The 'menu' of involvement and engagement opportunities has been extended to ensure engagement with tenants across a broad range of service areas, and involvement targets have been exceeded this year.
4. During the year a 'mock' regulatory inspection' of Housing Services by Campbell Tickell, highlighted that a significant amount of positive and strong tenant engagement activity is taking place and made some recommendations for improvement.

Implications

5. **Financial and Resources** – some recommendations from improvement activity could incur costs to the organisation and help to deliver efficiency savings whilst delivering a better service to customers.
6. **Legal and Governance** – the organisation is required to empower tenants to effectively challenge and scrutinise service delivery as part of the Regulatory Standards for Social Housing. The recent introduction of the Social Housing (Regulation) Act strengthens social housing regulation placing even greater emphasis on the importance of listening to the views of tenants and acting on them. Governance links from the Tenant Scrutiny Panel to the Housing Scrutiny Committee are strengthened by the change to the Councils' Constitution with the inclusion of a seat on the Housing and Environment Scrutiny Committee of a member of the Tenant Scrutiny Panel.
7. **Risk** – strong tenant involvement will help minimise risks associated with a failure to hear the concerns of residents and acting upon them.
8. **Equality and Diversity and Community** – there is a need to tailor our services to meet the needs of our diverse customers. Some involvement recommendations highlight improvements in services to ensure equality of access. Within the Tenant Involvement and Engagement Strategy the need to improve the number and diversity of involved customers is recognised, ensuring

closer alignment to the diversity of our customer base. Action to enhance the menu of engagement is designed to remove barriers to participation for customers.

- 9. Environmental and Sustainability** – involvement activity support Housing Services teams energy advice and information activity through Energy Roadshows and the Tenant Scrutiny Panel have completed a project relating to carbon reduction which aims to improve the organisation's impact on the environment.
- 10. Council Ambitions, Policies, Strategies and Plans** – Tenant involvement and engagement is a key priority throughout all the Regulator of Social Housing's Consumer Standards. Ensuring compliance with the Consumer Standards by carrying out tenant involvement and engagement activities, as well as delivering on the actions included in the Housing Regulation action plan will support the Council in its preparation for inspection by the RSH as well as achieving the Council's ambitions on a wide range of other plans, strategies, and policies.
- 11. Consultation and Engagement** – All activities highlighted in this report have been done in conjunction with tenant engagement. Each activity highlights the level of consultation and engagement that took place.

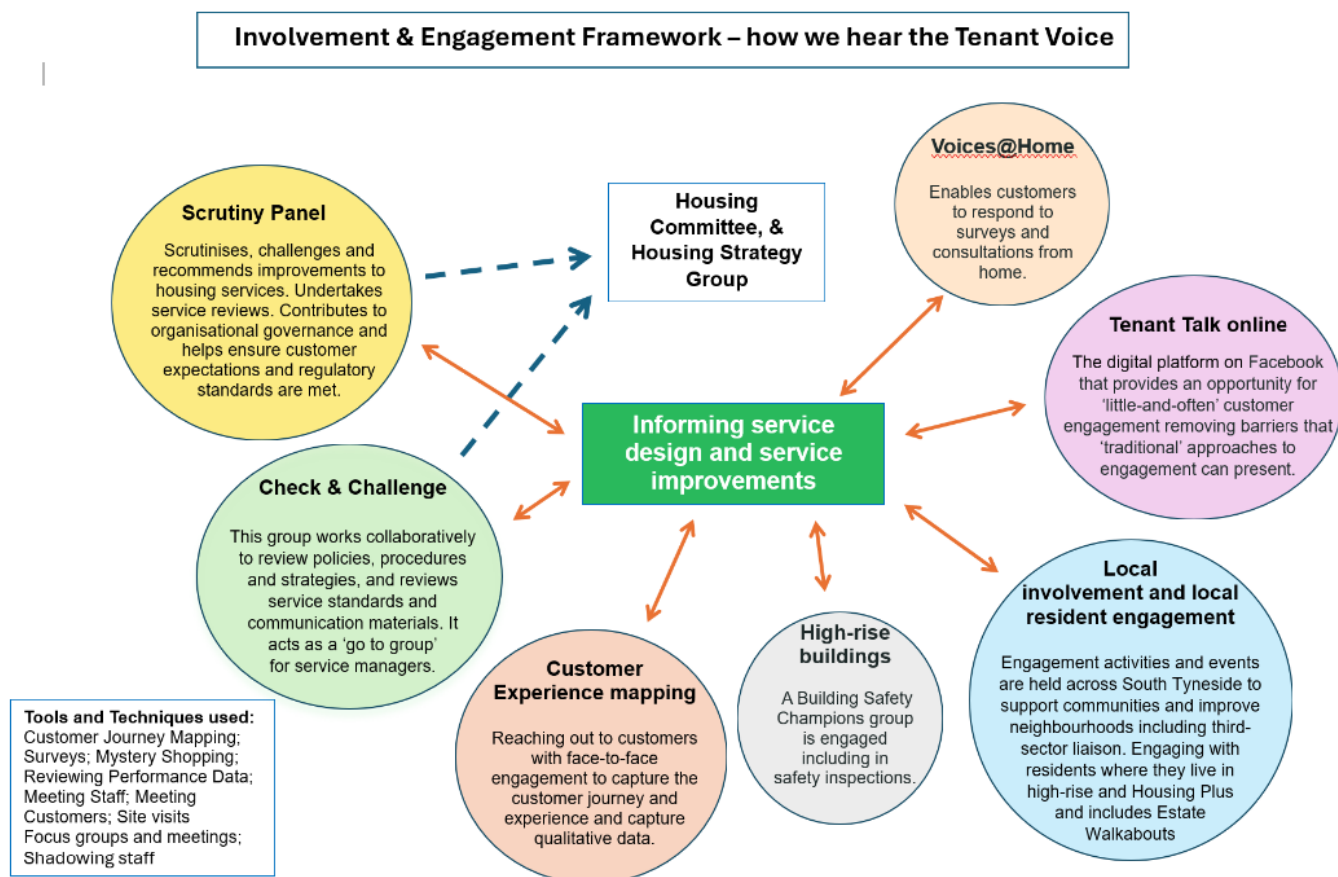
Recommendations

12. Housing Scrutiny Committee are recommended to:

- Note and comment on the content of this report; and
- Agree to receive reports detailing tenant involvement and engagement activity and customer feedback in the future.

Overview of the Involvement Framework

This map shows an overview of the functionality and methods of tenant involvement and engagement used within Housing Services:



Tenant involvement performance overview 2025-2026:

13.The Housing Services Performance Scorecard contains the following indicators that provide a regular overview of performance. This chart provides details for the year-end performance:

Performance Indicator	2024/2025	Current Performance	Target	How Are We Doing?	Direction of Travel
	Year End Total/Cumulative Figure				
The number of customer activities facilitated (wider customers)	118	361	40	✓	—

The number of customers who have actively engaged in each activity during the year	609	1,447	400		
The number of engagement and involvement activities facilitated	49	84	40		
The number of activities undertaken to support the building engagement strategy	New	5	4		

Table 1: Performance overview

14. Tenant involvement is delivered in several ways across the Councils' Housing Services Directorate reflecting the aim to have a broad 'menu of engagement' that helps to both increase the number of customers who are involved and is representative of communities within the Borough.

Customer involvement and engagement in 2025-26:	Numbers of customers engaged
Involvement & outreach across the borough (support & advice)	945
Resident engagement in housing-plus (service related)	489
Tenant Talk Facebook group (feedback)	295
Voices@Home tenants panel including surveys	212
Targeted customer experience projects (feedback)	48
Formal Panels (Scrutiny Panel and Check & Challenge involved customers)	25
Resident engagements in high-rise	13
Total	2040
Involved customer training	21
Total	2061

Table 2: Engagement figures

Involvement and outreach

15. Involvement & outreach includes community events and engagement with resident groups and third sector organisations across the Borough, and by providing support & advice and includes activities such as Borough-wide energy roadshows.

Resident engagement in housing-plus

16. Resident engagement in housing-plus (service related) is led by the Housing Management Team in relation to services delivered and other issues affecting residents.

Tenant Talk

17. The Tenant Talk Facebook group offers digital engagement as a means of interaction and dialogue with customers, including polls and surveys.

Voices@Home

18. The Voices@Home tenants panel enables tenants to give us their views by responding to surveys and consultations from home.

Customer experience projects

19. This approach is a way of reaching out to customers who may not engage with our framework in any other way, to hear their experiences of accessing services and using their feedback to help improve the way that services are delivered.

Formal Tenant Panels

20. Formal Panels includes the Tenant Scrutiny Panel and Check and Challenge group which carry out projects to review and investigate where improvements could be made to services for customers and contribute to governance and consumer standards compliance.

Resident engagement in high-rise

21. Resident engagement in high-rise is led by the Compliance and Customer Safety Team and focuses on matters of building safety.

Customer surveys

22. Hebburn survey – door to door survey carried out by the Tenant Scrutiny Panel – 36 responses. This survey asked about customer satisfaction in the local area and feedback on the housing management service.

23. Housing Management Model survey – digital survey carried out Boroughwide by the Tenant Scrutiny Panel - 76 responses. This survey asked about customer feedback on the housing management service as part of a Tenant Scrutiny Panel Review being carried out.

24. Involvement strategy survey – digital survey carried out boroughwide – 100 responses. This survey asked for customers views on our approach to tenant engagement set out in the draft strategy.

Estate Walkabouts

25. Estate Walkabouts are carried out by Housing Management Teams. An estate walkabout is a planned and publicised walk around a neighbourhood or street. It is an efficient way to highlight what could be improved and are carried out with Housing management teams to ensure issues are recorded and actioned. During the year over 90 were carried out.

Involvement projects - performance on improvement actions

26. Improvement actions from reviews are monitored and updates reported to the Scrutiny Panel and the Check and Challenge groups. Table 3 contains performance figures where actions were due for completion during the year.

Improvement actions from reviews:	Action due in 2025-26	Complete 	In-progress 	Overdue 
Communications in Responsive Repairs Review (2024)	24	22	2	0
Housing Management and Tenancy Sustainment review	16	16	n/a	n/a

Table 3: Performance improvement actions due

27. The Tenant Scrutiny Panel is kept regularly updated with progress of improvement actions. There are no overdue actions outstanding, and 2 are currently still in progress.

Outcomes from involvement projects

28. Below is a summary of the outcomes from previous involvement projects.

Communications in responsive repairs	
Tenants asked for systems to be improved so that the process of delivering repairs could be better.	New software is now being implemented that will initially deliver improved management of repairs asset improvements, and compliance management. This will improve the customer experience.
Tenants asked for survey information to be more accurate.	A new survey report form has been implemented.

Tenants asked for improved text communication.	A new text system has been implemented providing customers with information about repairs jobs and trades attending.
Tenants asked for more pro-active communication with them about repair jobs.	New follow-on jobs procedure implemented to agree appointments whilst with customers.
Tenants asked for an enhanced ability for Housing Service Centre staff to make repairs bookings.	System improvements have been made, and smoother working between departments has been achieved through a culture change programme.
Tenants asked that photographs could be uploaded by customers to aid the diagnosis of jobs	Customer photographs can be uploaded via Connect2.
Tenants asked that sub-contractors are managed better so that work quality and customer care is improved.	The implementation of new software will enable sub-contractors to access and align with Council systems and processes.
Tenants asked for better procedures to ensure that materials required to complete customer repairs are ordered swiftly.	A new stores ordering system has been implemented.

Table 4: Outcomes from involvement projects
Involvement project activity 2025-26

29. Below is a summary of project activity relating to the Tenant Scrutiny Panel and Check and Challenge group:

Scrutiny Panel review into the Housing Management model	Results and outcomes
The Tenant Scrutiny Panel carried out a review of the Housing Management and Tenancy Sustainment Model. They made 33 recommendations for improvement. These focused on making improvements to the visibility and accessibility of housing staff, and processes for making referrals, keeping information secure, and training and support.	The Scrutiny Panel is updated regularly with progress on actions identified in its report and is satisfied with steps being taken and has noted evidence that improvements are making a difference. 16 recommendations have already been delivered, and more are due for completion next year.

TSM Action Plan review	Results and outcomes
The Tenant Scrutiny Panel helped shape recommendations in the action plan developed by Housing Services following the Tenant Satisfaction Survey carried out in July 2025.	The Scrutiny Panel is updated regularly on delivery of the action plan. TSM is used to inform Scrutiny Panel projects activity
Complaints Policy Review	Results and outcomes
The Check and Challenge group gave feedback on the new Complaints, Compliments and Comments Policy.	Minor amendments were identified, including a spelling correction and the potential inclusion of third-party complaints. Feedback highlighted a need for clearer information on timescales, ASB related queries and complaints about Councillors. There was also an emphasis on improving accessibility, ensuring policies are available or explained for those who are not digitally confident.
Health Literacy Project	Results and outcomes
The Check and Challenge group engaged with the NHS on Health Literacy to develop their knowledge of health literacy around the importance of being able to read, access and understand the information that we are providing for our tenants. The group then applied their knowledge of health literacy to review the overall readability of sample letters used in the building compliance team and housing allocations team.	Tenants developed a clear understanding of what health literacy is, why it can be a barrier and how it affects their ability to access and understand information. They were able to apply this knowledge by reflecting on the letters and communications we send, and they identified ways to make them clearer, more accessible and easier for all tenants to understand. The overall outcome is that improved letters are now being used in communication with tenants.
Housing Plus Re-Branding/ Logo Design	Results and outcomes
Housing Plus tenants were asked to choose their preference for a logo as part of the re-branding of Housing Plus following a move back to the Council. Tenants were surveyed at meetings in their Housing Plus properties and we also gained tenant opinions	A total of 75 tenants took part in voting for their preferred logo, including 66 Housing Plus tenants and 9 votes submitted via the Tenant Talk platform. The results were collated and shared with the Communications team and Gary Kirsop, who confirmed they were

using our Tenant Talk platform via a poll.	happy for the design with the highest number of votes to be selected. This logo is now in use, and tenants were informed of the winning design to recognise their contribution to the final design.
Housing Communications Session	Results and outcomes
The Check and Challenge group reviewed a selection of previous tenant newsletters at the request of the Communications Manager. They provided feedback on the clarity and the tone of the content, as well as the relevance and variety of articles included, helping to identify opportunities to improve future communications so they are more engaging, accessible and better aligned to tenant needs.	Tenants highlighted the importance of keeping content simple, clear and easy to read. They were generally happy with the types of articles included and expressed a preference for more community-focused and positive news stories.
Contact Centre Job Shadowing	Results and outcomes
The Check and Challenge group carried out some job shadowing at the Housing Services Contact Centre. They listened to live calls with customer queries and how they were dealt with.	Tenants gained a valuable insight into the day-to-day workings of the organisation, increasing their understanding of staff roles, systems and the complexity of service delivery. The experience improved their confidence and ability to contribute more informed, realistic feedback, while also supporting greater transparency.
Involvement and Engagement Strategy Review	Results and outcomes
Both the Tenant Scrutiny Panel and the Check and Challenge Group attended a session to give feedback on the draft Tenant Involvement and Engagement Strategy, focusing particularly on the core principles, action plan and design.	Tenants reviewed the document and praised its clear and engaging design. They also supported the proposed core principles of transparency, accessibility, empowerment and inclusivity. Valuable tenant feedback was gathered to refine the action plan, particularly around prioritization and deliver timescales which informed the final version before approval.

Tenancy Fraud Policy	Results and outcomes
Check and Challenge gave feedback and opinions on the new Tenancy Fraud Policy.	Tenant feedback confirmed that the Tenancy Fraud Policy was clear, understandable and supported that it effectively communicates its purpose. As a result of the tenant input, improvements were made by adding clearer information on reporting and including more detail on proactive checks, ensuring the policy is more transparent and informative for tenants.
Anti-Social Behaviour Policy	Results and outcomes
The Check and Challenge group provided feedback on the updated Anti-Social Behaviour draft policy.	Tenant feedback led to several proposed improvements to the ASB policy, including making it clearer and more accessible by reducing content, increasing font size and adding a short summary. Tenants also recommended placing the definition at the beginning, providing clearer expectations on communication and confidentiality and exploring a timeline of the ASB process so residents understand what happens after reporting – these changes are now in place.
Repairs Policy and Handbook Consultation	Results and outcomes
Check and Challenge and the Tenant Scrutiny Panel participated in consultation on the new Repairs Policy and Handbook.	Tenant feedback highlighted the need for clearer communication and greater support for vulnerable tenants, particularly around appointment flexibility, decoration support and understanding property features. They also highlighted areas where the policy/handbook could be simplified and clarified (e.g. Right to Repair, emergency repair criteria and contact details), along with stronger encouragement for tenants to report repairs early and understand their responsibilities.
Tenancy Agreement	Results and outcomes

The Tenant Scrutiny Panel and Check and Challenge group were engaged in relation to the to the Tenancy Agreement Consultation. Feedback was provided in relation to the proposed approach to communications to be used to engage with wider tenants, and on the presentation of the content of the Agreement itself.	Feedback highlighted the need to simplify and shorten the document to make it more accessible, and recommendations were made to improve the clarity and consistency of the messaging in the text content.
Decant Procedure	Results and outcomes
The Check and Challenge group reviewed the new Relocation Procedure and the Step-by-Step Tenant Guide to gather tenant feedback to ensure both documents were clear, fair and easy to follow.	Tenant feedback confirmed the updated Relocation/Decant Procedure was clear and generally well received, with only minor wording and formatting improvements suggested. Discussions also highlighted the importance of clear communication, reassurance during moves and tenant experience, with a further review planned once the process is in place.
Housing Regulation Plan	Results and outcomes
The Tenant Scrutiny Panel is engaged to provide comment and challenge to actions in the plan.	The Scrutiny Panel is updated regularly on delivery of the Housing Regulation Plan.
Housing Strategy review	Results and outcomes
The Tenant Scrutiny Panel was engaged to provide comment on the proposed content of the Housing Strategy review.	Further future engagement on this is the next step.

Customer Experience Projects

30. The following customer experience projects were carried out using Customer Journey Mapping (CJM) methodology via planned 'structured conversations' with customers to map their experiences, and identify areas for service improvement:

Complaints Process	Results and outcomes
Bi-monthly Customer Journey Mapping with approximately 7-10 tenants that have recently made a complaint with us. An ongoing process that focuses on the tenant's experience and feelings throughout.	Recommendations are discussed with the Complaints Manager and forwarded to relevant team managers where required.
Housing Management model (Scrutiny Review) (See above)	8 customers were spoken in-depth. These were survey respondents who indicated they wished to have further conversations to provide detail on their experiences.

Digital engagement

31. The Tenant Talk Facebook Group is a means to extend digital customer engagement. It provides an opportunity for 'little-and-often' customer engagement removing barriers that 'traditional' approaches to engagement can present.

Tenant Talk	Results and outcomes
This Facebook group now has 295 members	Interaction and dialogue with customers on survey topics, events and other activities, including promoting opportunities to apply to join Involvement Panels. Feedback from customers feed into and support other improvement projects that are taking place.

Table 6: Tenant Talk

Local involvement and outreach

32. Local involvement & outreach includes community events and engagement with resident groups and third sector organisations across the Borough, and by providing support & advice and includes activities such as Borough-wide energy roadshows.

Energy Roadshows	Results and outcomes
Energy Roadshows outreach events across the Borough	27 Energy Roadshows were held across the Borough during the year, attended by over 250 people. The events provided energy advice, education and support regarding Carbon Monoxide poisoning, financial advice, and more. The roadshows were supported by Groundworks' Green Doctor, WHiST, Northern Rights, Northumbrian Water along with other South Tyneside Council colleagues and our Welfare Support Team.
Other outreach events	Results and outcomes
A series of energy advice events.	Over 200 customers were engaged through a wide range of events held in community locations including Family Hubs, schools, on the Key2Life bus and so on.
Chat & Challenge event	Results and outcomes
A drop-in event for customers and local residents.	20 local residents and customers attended to meet with service teams to get answers to any queries about housing services and hear about housing performance.

Table 7: Local involvement and outreach

Resident engagement in Housing Plus

33. Housing Plus internal and external schemes provide engagement opportunities for local residents.

Housing Plus	Results and outcomes
Engagement in Housing Plus.	489 residents were engaged to feedback on safety, communal area housekeeping and other issues, where they live, enabling

	improvements to be made. As a result, improvements and changes are being put in place including implementing a new approach to gardens and grounds maintenance, re-vamping resident meetings and regular satisfaction surveys.
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Table 8: Resident engagement in Housing Plus

Resident Engagement in high-rise buildings

34. There are 4 high-rise building in the Borough and there are opportunities for residents to engage about the safety of their homes.

High Rise Building Safety engagement	Results and outcomes
Ongoing building safety engagement and Building Safety Champions.	13 residents were engaged to feedback on safety issues. A Building Safety Champions group has been established to undertake regular safety inspections in all high-rise blocks with the Building Safety Officer and Building Safety Inspector. Policies and procedures are reviewed including the Mandatory Occurrence Reporting procedures. They have received the same fire safety training as staff.

Table 9: Resident Engagement in high-rise buildings

Other involvement activity

35. Involved tenants are involved in other projects each year:

Tenants' Annual Report	Results and outcomes
This sets out performance of the organisation across all service areas from a customer perspective.	Our report is developed by tenants for tenants, and the level of engagement is something which has been recognised by sector peers. Delivery contributes to the process of continual performance improvement by the organisation, as well as demonstrating regulatory compliance.

	Work of involved customers amounted to over 200 volunteer hours spent on developing the report.
Performance Scorecard Review	Results and outcomes
The Scrutiny Panel carries out quarterly reviews of performance by looking at the KPI strategic scorecard.	Challenge to Heads of Service enables exploration of performance and action being taken to improve. This also supports the identification of future areas for improvement and for scrutiny review.

Table 10: Other involvement activity

Training for involved customers

36. To ensure that involved customers receive training that helps them in their roles the following training was carried out:

Training	Results and outcomes
Heath Literacy Training by Sunderland and South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust	Discussion and feedback in relation to effective communication and understanding of messages in health and housing.
Four Million Homes	Training courses on: Overview of Resident Panels – why the Scrutiny Panel operates and Regulatory Standards were held with the Tenant Scrutiny Panel.

Plans for the year ahead

37. Our plans to develop and enhance services in the coming year include:

- To promote a culture internally of encouraging tenant engagement in the development of housing services.
- To develop and strengthen engagement with the Housing Scrutiny Committee.
- To continue to develop our website to report feedback on positive outcomes from tenant involvement activity.
- Create an involvement toolkit for staff that explains and defines tenant involvement and engagement.

- To further develop a menu of engagement opportunities for customers, including the extension of outreach activities, working with diverse groups across the Borough.
- To continue to support the North East Regional Involvement Network to discuss key developments and share ideas and best practice and to continue learn from peers in the housing sector.
- Continue to ensure a rigorous and robust approach to challenging the delivery of housing services and how we are meeting the requirements of the new Regulatory Standards for Social Housing through the work of the Scrutiny Panel and Check & Challenge group.
- Customer-led Annual Report – to continue in-depth involvement of tenants in developing our Annual Report.
- Rigorous approach to service reviews – our processes are constantly reviewed and revised as part of our approach to continuous learning with reports consistently adding value to the organisation and identifying areas for improvement.

List of Appendices

N/A

Background Papers

The following is a list of the background papers (excluding exempt papers) relied upon in the preparation of the above report:

Background Paper	File Ref:	File Location

Contact Officer:

Name: Manjit Sidhu
Job title: Involvement and Engagement Manager
Contact number: 0191 426 8402
Email address: manjit.sidhu@southtyneside.gov.uk