

Updated Tenancy Agreement

Consultation Report

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1.0 Purpose of the consultation

The purpose of the consultation was to seek tenants' views on the proposed variations to the Tenancy Agreement, including their perceptions of clarity, accessibility, ease of understanding and any other feedback on the changes.

Varying or updating the conditions of a Tenancy Agreement is a process set out in legislation, and by following this process the Council is meeting its legal obligations. The relevant legislation pertaining to the prescribed consultation process are the:

- Section 137 of the Housing Act 1996 – for Introductory Tenancies
- Section 103 of the Housing Act 1985 – for Secure (Lifetime) Tenancies

2.0 How we notified you about the consultation

We issued a Preliminary Notice of Variation ("the Notice") to all introductory and secure (lifetime) tenants, advising them that we were proposing to change to the Tenancy Agreement. The Notice explained the reasons for the proposed changes, how tenants could respond, the deadline for doing so, and how to request information in alternative formats or access support.

The Notice also included links and QR codes to the draft updated Tenancy Agreement, the current Tenancy Agreement, and large-print versions of all related documents.

In addition to the Notice, we sent SMS texts and emails to all affected tenants who had provided contact details, reminding them about the consultation, how to take part, and the response deadline.

3.0 Consultation method

We used an online survey, delivered through Microsoft Forms, as this method has worked well in previous consultations. A link and QR code to the survey were included in the Preliminary Notice of Variation.

Although our preferred method was for tenants to complete the survey online, the Notice made clear that tenants could request a paper version or ask for support to complete it.

We also held 6 in-person events at our Independent Living Schemes, inviting tenants living in those schemes and the surrounding areas to attend, ask questions and share their views. Tenants were notified of these events via SMS and email.

4.0 The results

Section 1: General questions

Comparisons with the tenant profile are based on Northgate data that was accurate as of 24 April 2026.

Number of responses received	476
Number of comments received	1,023

98.7% of respondents were tenants. Around 11% of our tenant population responded to the survey.

Q1: Please tell us who you are.	Number	%	% of Tenant Profile
Council tenants	470	98.7%	11%
Applicants on the housing register	6	1.3%	
Total	**476**		

The following Q2 & Q3 were answered by Council tenants only:

Q2: Please tell us what tenancy you have.	Results		Tenant Profile	Diff
	Number	%		
Introductory tenant	29	6.2%	4.0%	2.2%
Secure (lifetime) tenant	383	82.2%	95.4%	-13.2%
I don't know	58	12.4%		

Q3: Are you an Independent Living tenant (Independent living, formally known as 'Sheltered Housing', is accommodation designed to enable over 60s to live independently)	Results		Tenant Profile	Diff
	Number	%		
Yes	91	19.5%	6.6%	12.9%
No	323	69.3%	93.4%	-24.1%
I don't know	56	12.0%		

Section 2: Demographic questions

The following questions were asked of all respondents, but for the purposes of this report, the results will only show Council tenant responses.

Q4: Please tell us your age	Results		Tenant Profile	Diff
	Number	%		
16-24	7	12.5%	2.6%	9.9%
25-34	72	15.1%	12.8%	2.3%
35-44	68	14.3%	17.7%	-3.4%
45-54	76	16.0%	16.7%	-0.7%
55-64	112	23.5%	19.0%	4.5%
65+	131	27.5%	30.9%	-3.4%
I prefer not to say	4	0.8%		

There was a higher number of respondents between 16-24 compared to our tenant profile than any other age group, however, the others were within the 5% tolerance zone.

Q5: Are you disabled or have a long-term health condition or impairment	Results		Tenant Profile	Diff
	Number	%		
Yes	247	51.9%	6.5%	45.4%
No	188	39.5%		
I prefer not to say	35	7.4%		

51.9% of respondents reported having a disability or long-term health condition or impairment. While this figure is higher than our current understanding of the tenant profile, it is likely to align more closely with future surveys as our tenant data improves through the actions identified within the Tenant Profile Action Plan.

Q6: Please tell us your gender	Results		Tenant Profile	Diff
	Number	%		
Male	128	26.9%	32.6%	-5.7%
Female	342	71.8%	67.2%	4.6%
Non-binary	0	0.0%		
I prefer not to say	0	0.0%		

We received double the number of responses from female tenants, compared to male tenants. This broadly reflects the current demographic of our tenant profile; however, slightly

more female tenants responded to the survey than male tenants.

Section 3: Perceptions and views on the updated Tenancy Agreement

The following questions are the results from all respondents.

Q7: How easy was the updated Tenancy Agreement to read and understand?	**Results**	
	Number	**%**
Very easy	132	27.7%
Fairly easy	202	42.4%
Neither easy nor difficult	86	18.1%
Fairly difficult	36	7.6%
Very difficult	20	4.2%

Overall, **70%** of respondents said that the updated Tenancy Agreement was easy to read and understand. This is a positive result demonstrating an achievement of one of the aims of the review.

Q8: Please tell us why this is, and what we can improve.

142 comments received. This question was answered by respondents who said ‘neither’, ‘fairly’ and ‘very’ difficult.

Respondents who commented said the document was too long, confusing, and full of legal jargon, making it hard to understand—especially for those with dyslexia, cognitive impairments, mental health conditions, or limited English. Many felt overwhelmed, anxious, or worried it implied eviction, and several were unclear about key areas like pet rules and succession rights. Some lacked digital access or struggled with the format, while a few felt the process was intrusive or unnecessary. Overall, tenants

asked for clearer, simpler, shorter information written in plain language.

Q9: Did the wording and language feel clear and accessible to you?	Results	
	Number	%
Very clear	174	36.6%
Fairly clear	215	45.2%
Neither clear nor unclear	52	10.9%
Fairly unclear	21	4.4%
Very unclear	14	2.9%

Overall, **82%** of respondents said the wording and language felt clear and accessible to them.

Q10: Please tell us why and how we can improve this.

87 comments received. This question was answered by respondents who said ‘neither’, ‘fairly’ and ‘very’ unclear.

Respondents who commented said the information was too long, confusing, and full of unclear or repetitive wording. Many struggled to understand it—especially those with dyslexia, autism, learning difficulties, or poor eyesight—and asked for simpler language, bigger text, and clearer explanations. Several felt the layout, tables, and sections were hard to follow, and some wanted clearer guidance on what tenants and the council are each responsible for. Several respondents were worried about new clauses such as audit visits, which they saw as intrusive. Others said elderly residents or those without digital access found the process difficult. Overall, tenants want shorter, clearer, more direct information that is easier for everyone to understand.

Q11: Did the updated Tenancy Agreement make it easier for you to understand your rights and responsibilities?	Results	
	Number	%
Very easy	145	30.5%
Fairly easy	231	48.5%
Neither easy nor difficult	73	15.3%
Fairly difficult	11	2.3%
Very difficult	16	3.4%

Overall, **79%** of respondents said the updated Tenancy Agreement made it easier for them to understand their rights and responsibilities. This is a positive result, demonstrating that the updated tenancy agreement improved most of the respondents' understanding of their rights and responsibilities, one of the aims of the review.

Q12: Please tell us why this is, and ways we can improve this.

100 comments received. This question was answered by respondents who said 'neither', 'fairly' and 'very' difficult.

Respondents who commented said the information was too long, confusing, and hard to understand, with many struggling with the wording, legal terms, and the amount of detail. People asked for clearer, simpler, bullet-pointed explanations and for key changes to be stated plainly. Elderly residents and those with disabilities or reading difficulties said they needed easier formats or face-to-face support. Some were worried about losing existing rights or being evicted, and many strongly objected to audit-visit clauses, seeing them as intrusive. Overall, tenants want clearer, shorter communication that explains what is changing and why, without causing confusion or anxiety.

Q13: Do any of the changes in the updated Tenancy Agreement stand out to you, positively or negatively?	Results	
	Number	%
Yes - and they are mostly improvements	86	18.1%
Yes - and they are a mix of improvements and concerns	67	14.1%
Yes - and they are mostly concerns	23	4.8%
No - nothing stood out	300	63.0%

Overall, 63% of respondents said that nothing in the changes of the draft stood out to them as either a positive or a concern, suggesting that most were content with the updated Tenancy Agreement.

Of those who said 'Yes' most confirmed that the changes were mostly improvements. Only 4.8% of respondents said they had concerns.

Q14. Please tell us what sections these are and why.

174 comments received.

<u>Changes perceived as positive</u>

Respondents said the updated information was clear, easy to understand, and generally an improvement. Several felt the wording was straightforward, responsibilities were well explained, and the changes made the agreement more up to date.

Some highlighted specific sections they found helpful, such as pets, waste and recycling, garden responsibilities, repairs, antisocial behaviour, and succession rights. A few tenants said the changes seemed fair, necessary, or reassuring, and some appreciated stronger rules around property upkeep and safety.

Others noted that while the updates looked good in theory, they hoped the council would enforce them consistently. Overall, these tenants felt the changes were positive, understandable, and beneficial.

Changes perceived as negative

Respondents raised strong concerns about clauses they felt were intrusive or unfair, especially audit visits, which many saw as a breach of privacy.

Some feared losing existing rights such as lifetime tenancies or the right to buy, and others objected to requirements like contents insurance, pet permissions, or digital signatures.

Several comments reflected anxiety about eviction, being forced to move, or being monitored in their own homes.

Several respondents struggled to understand the document due to literacy or disability, making the changes feel even more worrying. Overall, these comments show fear of losing rights, frustration with added obligations, and concern that the council is shifting responsibility onto tenants.

Q15: Do you feel any sections of the updated Tenancy Agreement could use additional detail or a clearer explanation?	**Results**	
	Number	**%**
Yes	49	10.3%
No	331	69.5%
Unsure	96	20.2%

Most respondents said that there weren't any sections that required additional detail or clarity.

Q16. Please tell us what sections these are and why they need more detail or explanation.

Only respondents who answered ‘Yes’ or ‘Unsure’ answered this question. 145 comments were received.

Many respondents put ‘unsure’ or ‘I don’t know’ as their answer. Most of these respondents had already answered ‘unsure’ in Q15. For the purposes of the comment analysis, these comments have not been considered.

Respondents who commented felt the proposed changes were unclear and difficult to understand, and they wanted simpler explanations of what is changing and what they need to do.

People were especially confused or worried about pet rules, overcrowding rules, and whether existing rights—like secure or lifetime tenancies—would be affected. Some feared eviction or being forced to move, while others felt the council was becoming too intrusive, particularly around entering homes.

Several tenants struggled due to dyslexia, mental health issues, or difficulty reading, and found the document overwhelming. There were also concerns about being required to get contents insurance. Overall, tenants want clearer, more reassuring communication that explains changes plainly and protects long-standing rights.

Q17: Do you feel anything important is missing from the updated Tenancy Agreement?	Results	
	Number	%
Yes	35	7.4%
No	366	76.9%
Unsure	75	15.8%

Q18. Please tell us what you feel is missing and why.

Respondents who said ‘yes’ or ‘unsure’ answered this question. 110 comments were received.

Respondents said the agreement needs clearer, simpler explanations of what has changed and how it affects them. People wanted more detail on practical issues such as pets, overcrowding rules, improvements, fencing, sheds, motorhomes, service charges, and repairs. Several felt it should include stronger guidance on antisocial behaviour, neighbour respect, smoking, pest control, mould, and communal area maintenance. Others said it should explicitly protect secure or lifetime tenancy rights, and the right to remain in their home. Some wanted long-term partners or older family members to be able to be added to the tenancy.

Overall, tenants want clearer information, more practical detail, and reassurance that their rights and needs are recognised.

Q19. Do you have any other comments about the updated Tenancy Agreement you would like us to consider?

All respondents were able to answer this question. 265 comments received.

Many respondents had no further comments, but those who did raised a few clear themes.

Some strongly opposed audit visit proposals, describing them as intrusive or distressing. Others were worried about losing secure or lifetime tenancy rights, the right to buy, or protections for long-term tenants and partners. Several felt the agreement needed clearer wording.

Several respondents said day-to-day issues—such as repairs, damp, antisocial behaviour, bin problems, and lack of housing officer presence—should be prioritised over rewriting agreements. Some asked for clearer reassurance about pets, succession rights, and sheltered accommodation status.

Others said the document was overwhelming, especially for elderly tenants or those with dyslexia or mental health difficulties and asked for clearer explanations or in-person support. Overall, tenants want transparency, protection of existing rights, and more focus on resolving practical problems in their homes and estates.

5.0 Conclusions: our response

We would like to thank all tenants who took part in the consultation. Your comments and insights have played an important role in shaping the updated Tenancy Agreement.

Overall, the consultation results were positive. Most respondents understood the proposed changes and were broadly satisfied with the updated Tenancy Agreement. We also received over 1,000 comments, giving us valuable insight into your views. Many tenants told us the revised agreement is clearer, more modern and comprehensive, with appreciation for improvements to sections on pets, gardening, waste and recycling, and repairs and safety. This feedback shows that the changes have made the agreement more practical, accessible, and enforceable.

However, we also acknowledge the concerns expressed about some of the proposed changes. We understand that some updates may feel significant or raise questions, and we want to reassure you that your comments have been carefully considered.

Length of the agreement

Many respondents commented on the length and layout of the Tenancy Agreement. The version shared during the consultation was a draft designed to be clear and accessible; it was not the final version. While its length is broadly comparable to the existing agreement, the revised layout may have made it feel longer to some readers. It is also important that tenants have a comprehensive Tenancy Agreement that sets out all legal requirements and obligations clearly, so there is no misunderstanding about rights, responsibilities, or who is accountable for what.

Use of legal terminology

Some of you said you found parts of the Tenancy Agreement difficult to understand because of the legal terminology used. While we acknowledge these concerns, the Tenancy Agreement is a legal document and must therefore include certain legal terms to ensure clarity, consistency and enforceability. However, we are committed to making the agreement as accessible as possible.

To support tenants who may find the full document challenging, we will explore providing it in a range of alternative formats, including large-print versions, summarised translations, short information videos or signposting to external support (e.g.,

translators). These resources are intended to aid understanding, but it is important to note that they will not replace the legal document that tenants are required to sign.

Concerns about tenancy audits

Some respondents raised concerns about tenancy audits. Home visits may feel intrusive, however, as a social housing landlord we have a legal and regulatory duty to ensure our homes are safe, well-maintained, and occupied by the lawful tenant(s).

Legislation such as the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985, the Housing Act 2004 and the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023, requires social housing landlords to proactively identify, and act on risks to tenants' health, safety, and wellbeing, which can include welfare related concerns.

To be able to meet these duties, the Council must be able to access your home when necessary and with adequate notice. Tenancy audits therefore help us identify any repairs or safety issues, prevent tenancy fraud, and allow us to understand where you might need additional support to sustain your tenancy. We appreciate your cooperation when doing this.

Concerns about contents insurance

Regarding contents insurance, the intention is not to place an unfair burden on you but to ensure the protection of personal belongings and furniture you bring into your home, as the Council cannot cover losses resulting from theft, fire or accidental damage. We have reviewed and updated the wording

of this clause to make it clearer. Clear information about low-cost insurance options will be included in the Tenant Handbook.

Concerns about eviction and loss of tenancy rights

We understand that some tenants were worried that updating the tenancy agreement might lead to eviction or a loss of long-standing rights. We want to reassure you that this is not the case.

Updating the tenancy agreement does not mean anyone is being evicted. A tenancy can only be ended for specific legal reasons, such as serious rent arrears or antisocial behaviour, and even then, there is a clear legal process that must be followed.

Your tenancy rights, listed in Section 2.0 of the agreement, are protected by law. This means they cannot be removed, reduced or changed by updating the document.

Concerns about loss of Right to Buy

We also note concerns about the Right to Buy. The updated Tenancy Agreement does not remove or reduce any statutory Right to Buy entitlements. Certain types of properties are legally exempt from the Right to Buy under the Housing Act 1985 – for example, some rural homes, sheltered or supported housing, and properties that have been specially adapted for disabled residents. However, where the Right to Buy applies, tenants' statutory rights remain fully protected.

Concerns about needing to request permission

Where permission is required for pets, alterations, loft use or garden structures, this is to ensure safety, prevent damage or nuisance, and maintain fairness across our homes and neighbourhoods. These permission processes are designed to be straightforward and proportionate, and it is important to note that the requirement to request permission for certain changes already exists within the current Tenancy Agreement. The updated Tenancy Agreement simply provides clearer wording and guidance to help tenants understand when permission is required.

Concerns about downsizing

Concerns were raised about downsizing and fears of being required to move. The Council does not force tenants to downsize; however, where households are under-occupying their home, options may be discussed sensitively and, on a case-by-case basis. Our intention is to support tenants who may be struggling financially or who are finding it difficult to manage or maintain a property that is larger than their current needs or their abilities allow, while also helping to address wider housing demand across the district.

Concerns about the use of digital signatures

Finally, comments about digital signatures and communication restrictions have been noted. Digital signatures are offered to make processes quicker and more convenient, but alternative methods will remain available for anyone who prefers them.

Concerns about communication restrictions

Some concerns were raised on restrictions on communication. Such restrictions are only applied in cases of unacceptable behaviour, and we will manage this in line with our established processes and our Managing Unacceptable Behaviour Policy. The Housing Ombudsman expects landlords to have such a policy in place. These measures are used to protect our staff, operatives, and agents, and to ensure that all interactions remain safe and respectful.