

PlaceShapers Report

The Future Shape of Engagement

21st June 2018





1. Introduction

Tpas and PlaceShapers have come together on this project to explore and find answers to the question of the future shape of tenant engagement within PlaceShapers organisations. What will be fit for purpose and effective today and for years to come?

PlaceShapers and Tpas are united in their ambition to make sure tenants are at the heart of landlords and that now is a critical and unique time to have these conversations and help shape a future offer for tenants.

As organisations PlaceShapers members are diverse but united around key principles.

“PlaceShapers are distinctive. We build more than homes - we shape communities and unite around shared values as a voice for change”.

The government’s Social Housing Green Paper is still expected in summer 2018 and conversations are happening between the government and the sector. It’s important that PlaceShapers are ready in a strong position to be able to influence the outcome of the Green Paper for tenants.

Engagement is changing at pace within organisations and across the sector. The pressures of rent reduction, welfare reform, regulation, supply, affordability, stigma, isolation and value for money, amongst others, all have an impact on how organisations can, and could, deliver successful engagement in the future.

Other important reviews are taking place across the sector, notably from the CiH and the NHF and this project sought to complement those conversations and make sure the tenants voice is heard and represented at national and regional level and within individual organisations.

We really wanted this joint project between PlaceShapers and Tpas to be forward thinking, creative and honest about where engagement is now and could go in the future. We believe we have achieved that.

From the conversations we have had with circa 44 PlaceShapers organisations across the country we are encouraged to see that there is a determined collective ambition for place based and values driven engagement.

This future is possible to achieve. It’s within the desire and capability of PlaceShapers members. Now it requires commitment to the ongoing conversations and open dialogue between landlord and tenants to make it a long-term reality.



2. How did we do it?

As part of the joint collaboration five round table discussions were held across the country between February to April 2018. These round tables were hosted by PlaceShapers landlords in their premises.

The events were co-facilitated by PlaceShapers Board Members (Angela Lockwood, 3 events, Oona Goldsworthy and Matthew Walker, 1 event each) and Jenny Osbourne, Tpas Chief Executive (5 events). Gillian McLaren, Tpas Consultancy Manager, took notes at all events to capture the discussions and key messages.

Techniques of appreciative enquiry were used to enable robust discussion and a thorough appraisal of the issue of engagement. The same approach and questions were followed at each session to ensure consistency.

The roundtable participants were largely drawn from senior manager, director and CEO levels. A table listing numbers attended is provided in the Annex A to the report. The numbers attending represents about 37% of all PlaceShapers organisation members.

Round Table discussions

- Manchester PlaceShapers Roundtable, Monday 26 February 2018
- London PlaceShapers Roundtable, Tuesday 27 February 2018
- Bristol PlaceShapers Roundtable, Wednesday 14 March 2018
- Leeds PlaceShapers Roundtable, Monday 26 March 2018
- Braintree PlaceShapers Roundtable, Tuesday 24 April 2018

This final report identifies the common issues, potential solutions and challenges from all the events and contains the key messages that were captured during the five roundtables.

For the purpose only of ease, in this report the word tenant is used to indicate tenants, residents or customers.

Tpas hope that the trends identified on the current and future shape of tenant engagement will become a key part of PlaceShapers organisations. This work also has the basis to lead and inspire other organisations in the sector.



3. What questions were asked?

Applying the appreciative enquiry techniques really enabled robust discussion and a thorough appraisal of the issue of engagement. Tpas followed the same approach and asked the same questions at every round table session held, to ensure consistency of approach and results.

1. What are we all doing well in engagement now?
2. What are the barriers to delivering engagement?
3. What could great look like in 2030?

4. The key emerging themes

Discussion of the key themes on the current shape of engagement

PlaceShapers organisations are heavily involved in community and tenant engagement. There is no doubt that most organisations have formal structures in place and policies and plans that set out the vision of the organisation with regards to tenant engagement.

Part of the vision for the majority of landlords is to have tenant engagement embedded at the heart of the organisation. The way this is done in practice will vary from one organisation to another and some will have more options available to tenants than others.

In addition, different organisations will be in a different place with regards to their tenant engagement journey compared to others.

Generally, there is not one size fits all. What every organisation can do is offer options and methods that are valid for their circumstances, combining the right people in the right engagement places with the right skills.

At an organisation level being clear about what tenant engagement is, and is not, about why we want to do it and doing the right things for the right reasons, is a great place to start. Asking questions such as “why engage” should provoke realistic and honest answers.

Tenants need to have the skills, knowledge and confidence to be involved on one hand. On the other hand, landlords need to be committed to putting tenants at the heart of



the organisation and finding out how tenants want to be engaged is the first step in that direction.

What has come across clearly is that having a wide range of options available and a multi channelled approach to engagement is the best way to ensure meaningful engagement and the build of mutual trust.

In the current housing environment, with its specific focus value for money, increasing the use of digital platforms and options is becoming more and more important when making investment decisions in regards to engagement opportunities.

In addition, the use of customer data, segmentation and customer insight is progressing at pace and PlaceShapers members are increasingly understanding the benefits of this approach and weaving this into how they engage and target services for tenants.

Therefore, options for engagement are expanding with more integration of digital and online engagement platforms. Formal or more established structures are being reviewed and refreshed by most organisations. Models where a few representatives take decisions on behalf of the majority don't work anymore. The idea that "*three tenants say and 3,000 get it*" is not the future PlaceShapers members want and organisations are looking for new ways to ensure there are more diverse voices having an input rather than only those that attend meetings.

However, discussion also centred on that including digital options doesn't mean losing sight of the useful role of tenants on boards, scrutiny panels, task and finish groups, the role of the organisation in wider community work, social and informal engagement and much more.

There was recognition from all roundtables that the use of digital platforms will not be the panacea to all issues around tenant engagement. The value of face to face contact, and how helps in tackling increasing isolation in communities, is clearly still an important factor to consider.

Over relying on one form of engagement at the expense of others comes with its own risks and having a wider menu of choices will ensure a more balanced and diverse representation of tenant views.

For example, having tenants involved at the board level or on scrutiny panels is critical when it comes to making strategic decisions. Complementing that with other options such as online surveys or use of online forums or Facebook to gather more views on other topics and questions will ensure more incisive and relevant community insight.



Having options does generally enhance the tenant engagement impact and that is beneficial to the organisation.

A key emerging theme from all the round tables was the united view that PlaceShapers have a unique role to play in leading the debate about tenant and community engagement within the sector, as well as nationally and politically.

Given that PlaceShapers organisations are in a great place in terms of engaging tenants, investing time, effort and money to improve life chances and communities, they have the potential to help increase this work further across the sector.

We discuss below the main forms of engagement that we found people value and are considered to be working well within different organisations.



5. What are we all doing well in engagement now?

Scrutiny

Scrutiny is a key strand of tenant engagement that has many merits and was the strongest and most consistent area across all five roundtables of what's working well.

Scrutiny was seen as important as it provides better information about services through tenant led scrutiny of those service areas. Many organisations felt that scrutiny by tenants produces better results than internal or external auditors. Some organisations are utilising internal auditors to train scrutiny members.

Others use scrutiny panels, and see them as a free, independent internal audit of services. If the culture is right then scrutiny can thrive and flourish. One organisation told of having had up to 70 service improvement recommendations from their scrutiny panel; all invaluable insight.

Another organisation followed up on 90% of all recommendations from their scrutiny panel where they have both tenants and independent advisors involved.

Scrutiny panels can assist with service design and they can be done without the need for meetings; views can be collected in different ways using technology and also working from home.

Recommendations and feedback from customers and tenants leads to improvements and investment in localities that are targeted and therefore more efficient.

Mystery shopping and tenant peer assessors are some other forms that can complement traditional scrutiny activities.

Scrutiny can be resource intensive at times but there was felt to be many ways to make it work and the investment paid dividends in terms of recommendations and insight.

Task and finish groups

Having focused and time limited task and finish groups for specific areas of service reviews is another form of engagement and one that can attract younger tenants that are interested in particular areas.



One organisation uses their involvement database and targets individuals that have already had a problem with the service provided, to be part of task and finish groups with a very specific brief.

There was a general consensus that this type of engagement was increasingly relevant to how organisations run these days and how much time volunteers have to contribute. This type of engagement was focused, specific and had clear outcomes. And was valued by staff and tenants alike when deployed well.

Strength based approach

Working within communities through a strength-based approach is another place-based type of approach. This approach of focusing on what a community **can do**, not what it can't, was viewed positively by many organisations and that significant improvements had been made both physically to communities where this has happened but also in terms of more sustainable relationships and projects as well.

This is happening particularly in areas where there has been devolved funding and structures in place such as the Our Manchester plan.

This approach builds on local priorities and invites communities to co-design future plans together. This type of approach was most strongly articulated as already happening at the Northern and South West roundtables but it was clear that the ambition to do more about empowering communities was there across all PlaceShapers areas.

Wider community work

Some organisations see tenant engagement as an integral part of their long-term work and anchor role within the wider community and about improving quality of life issues such as health as well as individual opportunities in terms of work and work skills.

Using the organisation's procurement process can present work opportunities for residents and tenants who can have work placements in the new build schemes and construction sites.

Tenants and residents can benefit from opportunities such as becoming carers through the Care Academy (Alliance Homes) who uses stories to promote this approach.

Generally building community partnerships, encouraging social business models, creating job clubs and making better use of community venues are areas many landlords are focusing on and feel they have made significant impacts.



Co-designing services

Co-designing is another form of engagement that builds on the wider community engagement and can focus also on building capacity and co-creating services. This approach ensures everyone is on the same side striving to the same goal and make effective use of resources.

Partnerships with other agencies such as health, can be achieved and use a co-designing approach. South Yorkshire HA have a “Live Well” service that is co-designed with health, through a grant from the Department of Health. They also provide consultancy to other housing providers around this approach.

Another example involved working with the local PCT to develop a chair exercise program for tenants with a high proportion of hip fractures. The programme is run through volunteers and enables tenants to retain their independence. The volunteers deliver the sessions and the only part the organisation is involved in is to oversee the volunteers. There are both tangible and intangible benefits such as building confidence, skills and qualifications.

Complaints

As part of the customer journey the role of complaints is also being redefined with many organisations focusing on quicker resolution to customer complaints. Many organisations could point to where involving tenants to redesign the complaints process has brought significant improvements to the time, cost and satisfaction involved.

Benchmarking and comparing with peers has helped: however, taking an even more radical approach and comparing with companies outside the sector such as Amazon has brought in more learning and improvements.

PlaceShapers recognised that the Green Paper will likely focus on complaints and that having a robust complaints process where tenants’ voices are heard and where redress is effective and simplified will be expected.

Integrating digital and online options

Engagement is evolving and new digital options are being integrated. Across all five roundtables there were many examples of where digital options were broadening the reach and quality of engagement:

- Online forums that can bring in more views and can be more diverse.
- Online surveys focusing on specific service areas. One organisation did a grounds maintenance online survey and had a much bigger response of feedback than through previously gained.



- Digital panels of tenants are increasingly used to fit in with tenants' lives and working hours in particular.
- Allowing people to contribute at times of their convenience to a project.
- Virtual Voices – e-mails or online surveys bringing diverse voices and opinions faster.
- E consultations paired up with an incentive for e.g. “love to shop vouchers” brought in more responses and therefore more insight. Response builds the business case for this method rather than standard meetings and helps with their dispersed stock and geography.
- Use of social media platforms, such as Facebook, e.g. for live chat sessions with CEO who takes questions from anyone joining the question and answer session. CEO felt the discussions were more meaningful and honest and there is a value in giving and receiving instant responses.

However, what we heard is that although online and digital options do have clear benefits in terms of increased engagement, increased insight, speed and better-quality feedback, issues around isolation and people who don't have access to the internet remain a concern for organisations.

Finding the right balance between face-to-face and online engagement will be the ongoing challenge for PlaceShapers that serve a wide range of age and social groups.

For the over 65s who don't have access to the internet, don't have the skills or don't prefer it, face to face engagement will still continue to play a role. Even within younger tenants, online engagement cannot represent all forms of engagement as there can be other issues around social exclusion, access, affordability and isolation that remain.

Person Centred approaches

Listening to tenants as customers and engaging with them continuously through the customer journey can lead to improving services.

An organisation organised listening campaigns, through door knocking, and asking tenants what they like and what they want changing.

In another example, the organisation found that there were more complaints from the BME community and they recruited a local community volunteer who went out and did local interviews with the BME community and asked challenging questions. They used the same approach for people with disabilities and found they gained more effective intelligence to be able to deliver services that are relevant. Listening to customers and then acting upon is the critical bit.



Utilising data for insight

Making use of all the data that is available historically from all interactions with tenants is a powerful tool. Analysing that information to identify trends, define geographical and collective approaches is crucial to understand and inform how the organisation can improve and evolve.

The more data is recorded and analysed about tenants generally and on individual habits and preferences the more personalised services can be.

Delivering tailored and person-centred services is a shared ambition of many PlaceShapers members. However, there was a recognition that more needs to be done on the use of consistent data in the housing sector.

An organisation is using in its sheltered schemes an automatic way for tenants to register 'I am ok everyday' through a telephone-based service. Using that service, they are also communicating other messages to tenants such as learning new digital skills through training and they have established 2 groups so far that are up and running in a community hub.

Tenants on boards

This debate largely took place at the Eastern roundtable given the publication of the Labour Party's "Housing for the Many" that week.

For some organisations having tenants on the board was considered a powerful and valued mechanism to bring tenant experience and insight and community reach to the board table. There was recognition that tenants on the board often ask the challenging, the practical or "different perspective" questions that other independent board members may not bring.

Other organisations were more focused on ensuring the tenant experience or voice was heard at board level through other mechanisms such as scrutiny reports which worked well for them.

There was a difference of views on whether having tenants on boards is an absolute and this will be a debate PlaceShapers may want to discuss further.

There was agreement though that the earlier existing tenants are engaged with critical issues the more transparent the process of decision-making becomes and that this should be the aim of boards long term.



Social and events

Complementing other forms of engagement with less formal ways, such as organising social activities, fun days or the use of arts can bring in additional benefits and a wider reach.

An organisation told us they are redesigning services to be more inclusive and are focusing on having more informal involvement through festivals. They have 16 neighbourhoods and neighbourhood reps with a focus on the wider communities. This has led to a broadening of the diversity of tenants' voices.

These models of informal flexible approach can help when it comes to the issue of youth engagement and how to engage with younger tenants and broaden the spectrum of engagement outside the usual representatives.

Some organisations have created youth structures such as the youth empowerment board in Poplar Harca which has 70 elected members and has been running for 9 years.

Bolton at Home have taken a deliberate role in being involved in wider community activities such as the local theatre in order to reach more people in a relaxed setting.

Participants in the round tables emphasized that, despite any barriers, they feel that PlaceShapers should lead the way in terms of representing nationally their own experience and practice of tenant and community engagement, both within the sector and politically.

There was broad consensus that engagement and involvement can, and does, lead to improved services, greater efficiency, personal benefit to tenants in terms of skills and confidence and that there are cascading effects -long term- for generations of families and communities.



6. What are the barriers to delivering engagement?

‘What are the barriers to delivering engagement?’ was the second question we asked during the round table discussions.

It was interesting to see that not many barriers were identified in terms of what is actively stopping tenant engagement from happening. The Tpas perspective on that is that PlaceShapers are naturally a “can do” proactive group so nothing is seen as a real barrier.

The discussions were more about what are the challenges in doing engagement well. The discussions focused on attitudes too: what causes people to not value or prioritise it in their organisations or across the sector generally.

Some of the suggestions included:

Outcomes and Impact Measurement

Being able to measure the outcomes and impact of engagement in an analytical way within the organisation was deemed a challenge for many. Organisations were trying a range of sector social value models or internal tools to try and capture this in a way that could be easily articulated to boards, tenants, staff and stakeholders but there was recognition that with engagement it was not always easy to quantify.

Housing Policy

At the political level, housing policy in the last 10 years has been focusing on increasing supply and home ownership and this has had implications on how the sector is regulated in particular. Current regulation focuses mainly on economic standards and less on consumer standards, which it is felt gives tenant engagement as an overall sector standard less strength and power.

Pre-Grenfell there was undoubtedly little, if any, focus from Government on social housing and building new homes was all that was expected of housing providers. This narrative has led to tenant engagement being de-prioritised across the sector and has made it harder for organisations that do value it to keep championing the business, personal and economic case for engagement investment.



Relationships

There was recognition of a changing relationship with tenants and residents generally as a result of housing policy that has focused on increasing home ownership and has led therefore to more shared owners within social housing.

Also, various policies have been aimed at changing the nature of social housing as something not for life but for shorter periods of time and the use of fixed term tenancies is increasingly applied by social landlords. Both these policies have implications for engagement because there is increasing diversity within the tenant community that leads to different asks and priorities.

Generally, tenants also have increasing expectations of what good service looks like – such as Amazon or Apple – and organisations have struggled to find a way to ensure engagement can keep up with increased expectations and the use of digital channels.

Implementing Change

Negotiating the right balance between supporting and valuing existing involved tenants with trying to attract new voices was discussed as a barrier for improving or embracing engagement.

Many organisations could point to tensions when a new process or approach was introduced, often met with suspicion or reluctance from those tenants already involved. This was often perceived to be linked to the notion of “power” or influence being eroded or previous volunteer time and commitment being disrespected or no longer valued. This can lead to fraught relationships with staff or between tenants themselves.

The communication of any change was therefore seen as important to manage rightly if engagement is to adapt and respond to a changing landlord environment.



7. What could great look like in 2030?

It was an interesting exercise to ask participants to project themselves in the future and by no means an easy one.

At all the roundtables we took the stance that seamless integration of technology and systems had taken place by 2030 in order to generate more creative discussion. We know that might not be the reality but we wanted the discussion to not just focus on IT systems.

Overall from the roundtables the sense of local community and strong sense of social purpose continued to be strong when projecting in the future.

It is clear that PlaceShapers see their role as for the long-term in communities and to provide consistency and stability. This was expressed particularly so in regards to health, social care and local authority funding all of which PlaceShapers recognised are likely to remain under severe pressure.

Indeed, the view was that by 2030, PlaceShapers will be having to deal with even more issues of mental health, isolation, unemployment etc. given current funding issues and uncertainty post Brexit. The repercussions of all this will be being felt in twelve years' time. Not that far away!

There was agreement that what is crucial is having the right skills, and crucially culture, to enable all parties to develop dialogue and trust. New talent is needed now to ensure boards remain fresh and agile particularly thinking about how the voice of the younger or more diverse sections of communities are heard.

Landlords need to invest in staff and boards now to ensure they will have the skills to deliver on engagement in the future: current skills or attitudes will no longer be enough in a more connected and unpredictable world.

Some of the key themes that emerged were around:

Housing policy needs to be more person-led

Participants expressed a number of views on how they saw the sector in recent years having been more asset-led and they saw a need to redress the balance again towards having more person-led initiatives.



Owning assets and using the existing assets for further investment and growth is a great opportunity. However there needs to be a balance between viewing existing assets as an opportunity with the need to continually invest in them.

For housing organisations this shift will necessitate some retraining or re-organisation in order to support and empower staff to truly listen and hear what tenants are saying and be able to take action.

It is about working with tenants as people, it is about having more personalized services for individuals over and above the day-to-day services. And it is critical to focus on current tenants as well as looking to house future ones.

Stigma attached to social housing

There has been recognition from ministers that there is a stigma attached to social housing and the power imbalance needs to change. There have been various campaigns such as Benefit to Society that are trying to challenge the stigma but PlaceShapers believe more needs to be done.

In particular in areas of high property values and adjacent social housing, the stigma and feelings of resentment are high and such issues need addressing. It's imperative that housing organisations seize the current shift in Government rhetoric towards social housing to garner public support, locally and nationally, for seeing social housing as a key part of the solution to the housing crisis.

It is the role of social housing landlords on one hand to ensure that tenants and customers have a voice in the community in which they live. Government policy on the other hand can also emphasize and strengthen the tenant voice. By 2030 the hope is that social tenants are valued and stigma has been replaced by tolerance and respect.

Helping people live better lives

PlaceShapers showed ambition to not only continue the work they are doing in engagement but also to take it further and have measures in place to support people to live better lives.

There is appetite to do more in partnership with other sectors such as health and social care with more joint ventures at the local level. Working with partners outside the sector and utilizing each partner's strength.

The ambition is that different sectors stop all talking to the same "audience" (i.e. your tenants) separately but that a joined-up approach is in place in communities and that PlaceShapers organisations are a key part of this.



Use of data to design and deliver personalized services

The increasing use of data in the future to segment tenants' behaviours and preferences was highly important and will be "just how we do business" in 2030. The housing sector needs to catch up fast to achieve this ambition

Being able to use data and trends at a far more personal level will enable organisations to target services and interventions and make a difference to how they are delivered. PlaceShapers wants to tailor services and resources to meet tenant's needs, rather than meet the needs of the organisation.

More customer segmentation will change the way services are delivered and to whom. Inevitably it will mean more, if not most, services are done online or via self-serve platforms. The savings from moving the majority to this should be used to target more intensive support to those who need it most. That way technology and personalisation becomes an enabler for more support and intervention, not simply less.

Digital integration vs digital isolation

Developing this key theme and projecting it in the future saw many participants highlighting that although the use of digital and online options does have benefits and connects more and new people, it does also have its limitations.

"Digital can be both a connector and a disconnecter".

A paradox exists of technology being a great connector but also an isolator. Human behaviour using technology is difficult to predict. Organisations will need therefore to be agile, flexible, and experimental. People are naturally gregarious and will still want to come together but for what? Understanding that will be key for landlords in the future to get right.

Some participants felt that there will be a more polarized group of tenants by 2030, more people with mental health issues, isolation issues, and older people and therefore policies and approaches need to reflect that.

Loneliness could be the biggest issue affecting communities and in particular the demographic time bomb with elderly tenants who will still need to be reached through appropriate channels.

Momentum for change

In the last few years there has been an increasing momentum for change, for people being engaged and making a difference, especially without the involvement of politics.



Platforms such as Change.org or 38Degrees are a way that people can bypass conventional structures to actively take power and influence themselves to advocate change.

“Clicktivism” is definitely here to stay. Its defined (by Collins English Dictionary) as: ***a policy of using the internet to take direct and often militant action to achieve a political or social aim.***

There is a change in where power resides and how “traditional” hierarchies, processes or structures are increasingly becoming side-lined or ignored. That ability to give real time and public feedback, good and bad, will only grow and Boards and managers need to keep pace with these platforms and recognise the difficulties of controlling any narrative.

Organisations customers will increasingly lead the debate rather than be mere recipients of it. Real power will begin to rest with individuals who make a positive public difference, be that politically, within their communities or in ways that cultivate and enhance heritage, sport, culture or arts.

The notion of Citizenship

There was discussion of the growing shift from “Consumer” to “Citizen”. A new era where the role of the citizen will have an increasingly important place in any market. The citizen shift is digital and is a feature of the move to a more participatory society: to ask ourselves what we can all participate in and contribute to rather than merely consume or sell. The *New Citizenship Project* work was discussed and the ideas resonated with many participants in how this links to future expectations around engagement.

“The shift from consumer to citizen is a truly big idea. If you’re in a position of strategic influence, I strongly recommend you engage with this and consciously explore what it might mean for your organisation” *New Citizenship Project*

Community Led

Communities are wonderful assets of people and the internet is facilitating people connecting across neighbourhoods more and more. There are new tools and approaches that are being developed, moving from representative to participatory methods of decision-making. An example is Loomio, a decision-making tool within communities.

Coupled with increasing public distrust of large organisations and a human need to feel more locally connected there was discussion that we could see communities taking ownership of key assets having the potential to become more commonplace.



It will be interesting to see if post-Grenfell there is any strong resurgence of the co-operative movement with communities deciding they want more control of their own lives and decisions away from structures and politicians.

Should engagement in the future be about providing the necessary skills, information and training to tenants and staff so that they have genuine opportunities for real choices?

Accountability

Mechanisms of accountability will be important in the future. In 2030 there could be a more mature relationship of regulator, tenants and boards built on mutual trust and transparency. PlaceShapers recognise that housing associations have received criticism over recent years from politicians, councillors and local authorities about their social purpose. It is important to challenge that perception and showcase the key role HA's play in contributing to the local and national housing agendas. Social landlords have historically managed and built homes whilst also nurturing strong social values as part of their business models.

Continuing to do so in the future will be about really thinking about how to facilitate and build communities of people that live together in the same community but have different expectations and preferences. Taking them all into account and responding with tailored services, methods and messaging will be crucial alongside building more new homes.

Regulation and the need for a clearer role on consumer standards

The current scope of the regulator in England as proactively regulating economic standards and reactively regulating consumer standards is being felt as too heavily focused one way. Participants in the round tables would like to see a wider focus, and a clearer role, for the regulator not only on economic standards but also on consumer standards. This should not be a tick box however and there was consensus that no-one wanted a return to Audit Commission inspection. But generally, the hope was that by 2030 there would have been a fairer rebalancing between protecting customers and protecting assets and money.

In addition, widening the focus of economic standards regulation to include information about tenants, existing homes and communities as well as value for money considerations, could benefit existing and future communities.

Current homes matter as much as new homes and there was a feeling that the information provided by housing associations to the regulator as part of the regular IDAs should also contain information about existing homes and residents.



The role of PlaceShapers

The housing association sector is a very diverse sector in terms of geography, size of organisations, profile, and customer groups served

However, there is one thing that all PlaceShapers have in common. It is where they come from historically and the fact that they have social values embedded at the heart of the organisation. They do not offer only bricks and mortar. It is clear that PlaceShapers want to still be championing this in 2030.

It is the added value that makes PlaceShapers different from standard house builders or developers and community issues are seen as part of the landlord responsibility.

Within the wider sector, PlaceShapers are in a great position to advocate and champion community and tenant engagement. Extending this even further, there have been suggestions that by 2030 one of PlaceShapers' responsibilities should be getting engagement of local communities into the local democratic systems and having a real voice through elected local representatives.

It can be envisaged that there will be a power shift in favour of the new citizens of the future who participate and co-create the structures and policies they want to see in place. This is done through shared leadership, devolved power and trust.

PlaceShapers want to be at the forefront, not the tail end, of this change.

8. Concluding thoughts

It has been a great process of listening to and gathering views from staff members of PlaceShapers organisations on current and future trends of engagement.

We hope this report can bring a step change and influence future asks for tenants and communities across the sector.

Key learning for now and the future:

1. Organisations need to constantly strive and re-invent to make engagement inclusive and to have a wide reach into the community. Engagement can't stand still but neither should there always be the need to constantly re-invent. Organisations need to retain what's working as well as trying the new. Think about how people's expectations of how they would like to engage will change as society changes. Less "done to", more "done with".



2. Include options that are different, varied, appropriate and relevant. Not all residents and tenants will want engage all the time but those who do should find options that work for them. In order to get tenants to work on more detailed projects such as scrutiny or on the board, organisations need to cast a wide net of contact points and opportunities for informal involvement so as to reach as many as possible at different stages of engagement.
3. Scrutiny functions work and have a vital role to play in the future. Make them flexible, make them accountable but always make sure the work of the tenant scrutiny function is communicated well, acted upon and given respect by Board and staff.
4. Understand the importance of physical as well as online and digital engagement. Getting the mix right is vital and getting technology to be an enabler for greater interaction is key. This needs a multi-channel approach that ensures insight and decision making are spread widely across more tenants and communities. When a few tenants are in a decision-making role it needs to be clear on what basis decisions are being made and how the voice of wider tenant consultation/input was implemented.
5. Organisations need to gain the trust of their communities in order to create advocates for the future. Landlords need to continually assess their relationship with their current tenant base and continually reflect on how they are listening. This means understanding the direct and indirect influences and identifying where you they can make most impact to gain trust. Build trust now for respect in the future.
6. Recognise the importance of clear accountability and mechanisms for redress. This builds trust and transparency as an organisation. In a social media world, organisations will no longer be able to control the narrative. Boards and staff need to get close to their communities so problems are dealt with before they spiral online.
7. Be at the heart of designing and creating services that are informed by data, customer preferences and choice to deliver personalised services. Focus on the whole customer experience rather than just looking at customer service as a function. What are your customers truly saying about you?
8. PlaceShapers are clear they have a role right at the heart of wider community work and investment and could be advocates in getting communities more involved in local democratic frameworks to enable them to be part of wider local,



regional and national solutions. The future is likely to be PlaceShapers more as community catalysts or enablers rather than just a housing provider.

9. Investing in listening to tenants is as important as investing in your assets. Both are there for the long term. Building new homes will require building new communities from the start. Don't leave that to chance but take a strategic approach to building engagement mechanisms even before the first brick is laid.
10. PlaceShapers should own their own future and have the capability to lead the sector in showing what engagement could be. No matter where Government policy may veer in the future, PlaceShapers can take the lead on listening to tenants now and truly embedding the ethos in their organisations for the long term. Having the right culture that can shift, adapt and respond will be key for making engagement great in 2030.

9. Next steps

This report was shared with the Board of PlaceShapers on 13th June 2018 in final draft form and is now to be disseminated throughout the PlaceShapers' membership so that it can be discussed locally, particularly with tenants. Accompanying the report will be a note from the PlaceShapers Chair linking this project clearly to PlaceShapers' key priority themes 'We Care' and 'We Share' and the opportunity that exists for further collaboration on this crucial agenda.



Annex A

Participating organisations

Location	Date	No of attendees	No of PlaceShapers members represented	PlaceShapers Vice Chair	Tpas Staff
Manchester	Monday 26 Feb	11	11	1	2
London	Tuesday 27 Feb	9	9	1	2
Bristol	Wednesday 14 Mar	8	7	0	2
Leeds	Monday 26 Mar	11	11	0	2
Braintree	Tuesday 24 April	10	6	1	2
		49	44		