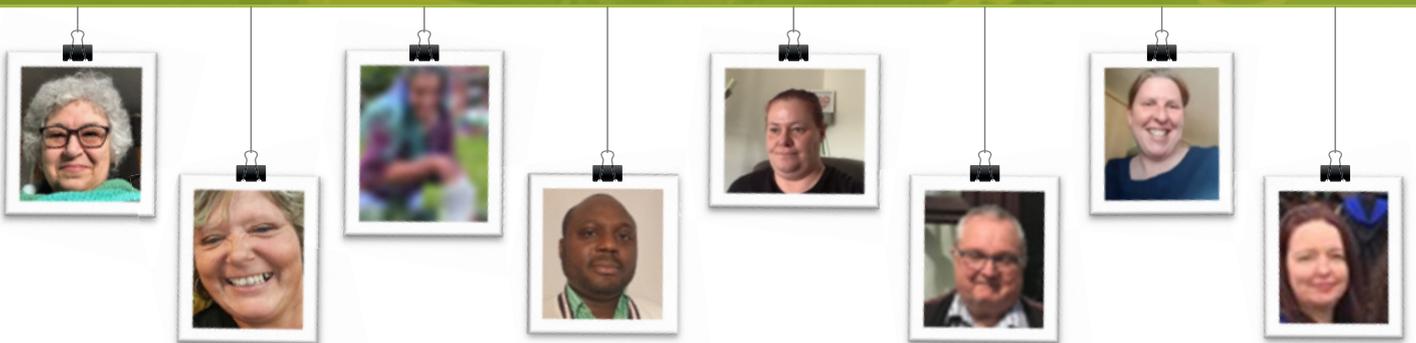




Tenant and Resident Strategic Group Annual Report

1st April 2021 to 31st March 2022



Welcome

As well as developing our group, we engaged in a range of activity during the year 2021/22. From ensuring that we understand how engagement happens across Linc, right through to focussing on specific issues such as supportive approaches across communities, the Tenant and Resident Strategic Group (TRSG) has been at the forefront of activity. This report outlines some of the key issues we have tackled and the impact we made, working as a team in partnership with Linc to make sure the interests of tenants, residents and communities are always considered.

Affordability and Rent Setting

During 2021/22 the results of the affordability survey were shared with us. We learned that over 500 tenants had completed an online and face to face survey explaining Linc's approach to rent setting and capturing tenants' views on what Linc should consider when setting rent. Income, area, property size and property quality were the main factors raised by tenants and these matched Linc's criteria. The survey showed that tenants didn't want Linc to set higher rents for homes that are cheaper to run. We were satisfied that Linc had consulted widely and in ways which were inclusive.

Early this year we were presented with Linc's Local Rent Affordability Policy and Rent Review recommendations.

IMPACT:

In our role as 'challengers' we engaged in the discussion, raising several questions.

We agreed that Linc's approach to rent setting and a rental increase of 3.1% (for the majority of Linc tenants) was fair and balanced the needs of the business with affordability for tenants. We learned about measures used to assess affordability including tenants' views, charitable guidelines, and other Linc insight.

"We agreed that the proposal was reasonable, and we also said we would like to receive reports about changes to levels of rent arrears as well as assurance at future meetings that the service is set up to cope with increased demand due to the possibility of more tenants facing hardship. This will help us feel that the interests of tenants and the organisation are being safeguarded."
said Haylie Griffith.



Information Review



We held several discussions around information to tenants, including the type, quality, and accessibility of the mediums we use. With Linc no longer providing a traditional newsletter, we were concerned about reduced access to news and information. We acknowledged the importance of digital means especially due to cost and environmental factors, however, we wanted reassurance that residents were getting up-to-date and relevant information on issues such as money advice, local services, and key issues affecting communities. In response to this, Linc set up an internal colleague group to look at the information that was being sent out to customers. We engaged in an ongoing

dialogue with Linc who brought back the results of the review to our meetings.

IMPACT:

Our discussions with Linc resulted in changes to the way Linc provides information, including the piloting of a community newsletter. We also made it clear we found the website inadequate and difficult to navigate. This is now being overhauled. In the meantime, Linc have updated information, where possible, on the existing website. They are now hoping to work to identify customer preferences for communications. This is something we feel Linc need to do and look forward to the results of this.

Why I belong to the TRSG

“During my time as part of the TRSG group, I have enjoyed meeting other members, understanding the different policies that Linc develop. Also, encouraging Linc to engage with all tenants as much as possible and engaging in discussions with other tenants about small changes that need to be addressed to ensure all tenants are treated respectfully. I look forward our future meetings.” Julia

Improving Services

We continued the dialogue around changes to the structure of the 'housing management' team. We continued to discuss themes such as tenancy sustainability and improving services. We asked for 'more time for engagement and more access to performance information', especially around how well our contractors are performing.

IMPACT:

We have been key in the development of Linc's neighbourhood strategy, ensuring that the services provided to Linc customers are sensitive to individual and community need. One of the items we looked at was the consultation results of the survey to seek views on LCB's own Code of Practice. Nearly 100 tenants participated in the survey. We were happy with the way tenants had been consulted and looked forward to the improvements the new Code would bring.

LCB said the quality and variety of survey responses were really useful for service improvement, particularly understanding issues faced by carers, older tenants, and those with disabilities. "Wow! This is hugely helpful and Linc has clearly gone to a lot of trouble to make sure we received meaningful feedback. Absolutely brilliant!"
Jane Nelson, LCB Continuous Improvement team.

Board Impact Session

In December 2021, we met with the Board of Linc to discuss how we could strengthen the relationship between the Board and the TRSG. Background papers were provided to the Board to stimulate discussion and a range of outcomes emerged from the session.

IMPACT:

Together, we have agreed that we need to maintain an ongoing relationship with the Board. At the moment we report back to Board after every meeting, but meeting every six months provides a great opportunity to link in. From our session, Linc agreed to provide us with the same performance information that is received by the board to guide future discussions. We have since worked with TPAS to define our annual agenda and TPAS have held sessions with the senior leaders to bring everybody to the same level of understanding about the importance of a robust and meaningful tenant engagement strategy. We look forward to producing annual reports to the Board. One of the changes made immediately after our meeting was a new category has now been added to the board paper template – 'is this in the interests of tenants and residents?'

"We worked with the Board and they were really engaged, providing us with pointers such as asking us to let them know what is important to tenants, ensuring this is backed up with data that includes views from the wider tenant base. Having monthly performance information updates will enable us to work together and make sure tenants are getting value for money whilst living in their home". Danielle'

Other Activity

Tenant engagement, community initiatives and wellbeing mapping exercise

Linc shared a range of information about how they involve tenants, residents, and communities. We could see what activities were taking place across Linc to inform our discussions and we were able to share our aspirations around tenant and community learning. Linc are now working with the Open University in Wales to develop a tailored customer learning hub.

Community events

We received a presentation on the 17 community events that had taken place across the Summer, following the lifting of lockdown rules. We heard about the impact these sessions were making at a community level ranging from volunteers signing up to become sustainability champions right through to an afternoon tea party to promote a local community pantry. We also learned how neighbourhood officers were championing events. "Our street party was amazing – it brought people back together after a tough time. We can't thank you enough for supporting us," Anne Spiller, Cavendish Close tenant.

Scrutiny

Moving into a new home – We were provided with an update on the scrutiny that had taken place on the topic of 'moving into a new home'. We learned that several recommendations from Linc customers were being adopted - and that a new furniture recycling project was being set up, as well as many other changes that we agreed with. We felt that Linc had engaged with a wide range of tenants and had listened to and acted on their concerns and priorities.

Partnerships

Members of the TRSG joined the Linc team at the signing of their Memorandum of Understanding at the University of South Wales (USW). June Davies, Chair of the group said: 'An incredible initiative and we'd like to be kept informed and updated about outcomes from this'. The partnership will ensure that Linc can meet their ambitions to deliver outstanding and innovative services based on further research and insight. One of the projects they are working on is around engagement in extra care settings following the pandemic and post covid recovery around activities.

TPAS Support

Over the year we have attended consultation session and events, often run by TPAS Cymru. We worked directly with TPAS to help strengthen the impact we have, and we would like to thank TPAS Cymru for their support.

