



REPORT FROM THE TENANT AND LEASEHOLDER SCRUTINY GROUP

Update 2025-2026

Chair's Foreword

As Chair of the Tenant and Leaseholder Scrutiny Group (TLSG), I am pleased to present this report to the Safer Neighbourhood and Active Communities Scrutiny Board.

This report reflects the commitment, independence, and diligence of our Scrutiny members, who consistently provide constructive and evidence-based challenge in the interests of tenants and leaseholders.

I am extremely proud of the way the TLSG approaches its role: focused, resident-led, and unafraid to ask the difficult questions. I would also like to thank officers for their engagement, the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board for its continued support, and most importantly, the tenants and leaseholders whose lived experiences remain central to our work.

Over the past year, our scrutiny has focused on key areas including the repairs backlog, reasonable adjustments, and the response to damp and mould, alongside the implementation of Awaab's Law. We have recognised positive practice, while also holding services to account where improvement is required, particularly in relation to consistency, communication, and responsiveness.

The TLSG plays a critical role in strengthening accountability and driving service improvement. This report sets out the breadth of our activity over the past year, the strength of the resident voice in our discussions, and the tangible impact of robust, independent challenge.

I commend this report to the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board for its consideration and ongoing support.

Phillippe Brown
TLSG Chair



REPORT TO THE SAFER NEIGHBOURHOODS AND ACTIVE COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY BOARD

From

The Tenant & Leaseholder Scrutiny Group (TLSG)

Update on Activity 2025 –2026

1. Purpose of the Paper

- 1.1 To provide an overview of the activity of the Tenant and Leaseholder scrutiny group in 2025/26
- 1.2 Highlight key themes emerging from scrutiny
- 1.3 Show the impact and value of TLSG challenge to date

2. Context and Focus 2025/26

- TLSG reviews of housing were aligned to:
 - Resident priorities
 - Regulatory expectations
 - Housing Improvement Transformation Plan agenda
- Primary focus on highest-risk and highest-impact areas:
 - Repairs performance and disrepair backlog
 - Damp and mould
 - Safety and estate issues
 - Communication and engagement
 - Value for money

3. Throughout 2025/26 TLSG has:

- Reviewed and provided feedback on key policies, strategies, and performance reports
- Tested: Service delivery against regulatory standards and statutory duties
- Challenged: Underperformance where outcomes for tenants and leaseholders fell short
- Sought assurance that:
- Learning from complaints, inspections, and resident feedback is embedded

In addition, TLSG requested clearer explanations of performance data so residents can understand (this was highlighted in the Annual Report):

- What improvement actions are underway
- How these changes will affect them in practice

4. Overview of TLSG Activity 2025 to 2026

- Reviewed the Annual Report to Tenants, providing feedback that led to clearer explanations of performance data and improvement actions to make the report more accessible to residents.
- Examined SMBC's approach to Reasonable Adjustments, focusing on fairness, consistency, and how well individual needs are identified and met.
- Scrutinised Good Neighbourhood Management Policy, including how antisocial behaviour and tenancy issues are handled and communicated to residents. Recommendations from the group which were added to the policy included having a cross-tenure approach to support neighbourhoods where there may be a mix of social landlords or homeowners.
- Considered the repairs backlog, including causes, prioritisation, and recovery plans, and challenged whether timescales and communication reflected residents lived experience.
- Requested regular updates on how the service managing Housing Disrepair, with attention to timeliness, resident experience, risk management and provided recommendations.

- Assessed performance against Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) and how resident feedback is being used to drive service improvement.
- Provided oversight of the Housing Improvement Transformation Plan, tracking progress against commitments made to tenants and regulators.
- Reviewed the council's response to Damp and Mould, including preparedness for and application of Awaab's Law (Awaab's Law implemented on 27th October 2025).
- TLSG working collaboratively with Tenant Audit Group in workshop sessions to develop the relationship between the two groups.
- Members of the TLSG contributed significantly to the Tenant Engagement Strategy
- Reviewed the Mobility Scooter Policy to ensure it balances safety, accessibility, and resident independence.
- Two leaseholder members have been actively taking part in the preparation for Sandwell's first Leaseholder Conference 2026.
- Examined the Lift Policy, focusing on reliability, communication during breakdowns, and support for residents affected.
- Considered the Capital Investment Programme, including how priorities are set and how resident needs are reflected in investment decisions.
- TLSG looked at the Stock Condition Survey, including coverage, accuracy, and how findings inform investment and repairs planning. The group recommended better communication methods for tenants to be better informed on the need for inspections and, for the contractors undertaking inspections to carry ID cards confirming that they are working on behalf of the council
- Reviewed the Rent and Service Charge Review, focusing on transparency, affordability, and quality of information provided to tenants.
- Examined the Complaints Annual Report, challenging how learning from complaints is embedded and seeking clearer evidence of service improvements arising from resident feedback
- Raised and monitored Leaseholder issues, including communication, consultation, and value for money.
- Reviewed the Domestic Abuse Policy, focusing on accessibility, sensitivity, and support pathways for residents.
- Supported and provided feedback on the Annual Tenant Conference, including resident engagement, key themes raised, and follow-up actions.

5. Training

- Members of the TLSG attended Scrutiny Training alongside councillors in May 2025
- Members of the group also attended report writing and questioning skills training in November 2025 provided by an organisation called Tpas who are a national organisation which specialise in supporting all activities related to tenant engagement

This training received was really beneficial to the group and has increased the confidence of group members.

6. Rotation of Membership

2025 also saw the first formal refresh of membership of group and two members volunteered to step down. We would like to thank Ahmed and Sue for their commitment and contribution to the group over three years and their ongoing support to improve the housing service in other ways.

7. The Tenant Audit Group (TAG)

It is also crucial to highlight the important work being carried out by our colleagues in the Tenant Audit Group. During this period, this group of tenant volunteers undertook audits on repairs complaints and anti-social behaviour and Choice Based Lettings. The group has produced comprehensive reports and made a number of recommendations which have been implemented or will be implemented in the coming months. These changes will make processes easier for tenants to understand and follow and therefore improve their experiences of dealing with these parts of the housing service.

8. Key Outcomes and Observations

During 2025/26, the Tenant and Leaseholder Scrutiny Group (TLSG) provided wide-ranging and robust scrutiny across core housing services, policies, and strategic programmes that directly affect resident safety, service quality, and trust. TLSG's work focused not only on performance data, but on how policies and services are experienced by tenants and leaseholders in practice.

As a result of TLSG challenge, improvements have been made to the clarity of resident-friendly reports.

The Annual Report 2025 therefore reflected the current regulatory judgement and actions being taken to improve, indicators showing whether performance in key areas such as repairs is improving or not in comparison to the previous year and comparisons in performance in terms of Tenant Satisfaction Measures.

Across repairs, disrepair, damp and mould, engagement, complaints, and investment planning, TLSG consistently challenged whether services are fair, accessible, timely, and clearly communicated, particularly for vulnerable residents. The Group placed strong emphasis on transparency, accountability, and learning, seeking assurance that resident feedback, complaints, and satisfaction data are actively driving service improvement rather than being used solely for reporting purposes.

The TLSG are also pleased to see that the service standards for the Housing Hub and other teams, makes a specific commitment to staff training and refresher training. This is something TLSG has been highlighting for action for some time.

TLSG also played an active role in shaping engagement and scrutiny capacity, contributing to the Tenant Engagement Strategy, supporting tenant and leaseholder events, and strengthening its own effectiveness through targeted training.

Through this work, TLSG has provided meaningful resident insight and independent challenge, helping the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board gain assurance that improvement plans, regulatory commitments, and investment decisions are grounded in real resident experience and focused on delivering measurable outcomes.

9. Future Activity

- Continue to monitor and challenge the implementation of the Housing Improvement Plan in the best interests of tenants and leaseholders
- Particularly in partnership with TAG focus on damp and mould and voids
- Actively contribute to the planning of the next Leaseholder conference and Tenant Conferences 2026

- Review the outcomes following the implementation of recommendations made by the TLSG and Tenant Audit Group
- Monitor the implementation of the Tenant Engagement Strategy

Recommendations

- That the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board continue to support the Tenant and Leaseholder Scrutiny Group to evaluate the outcome of scrutiny work from the viewpoint of those affected i.e. tenants, leaseholders, and other service users
- That opportunities for co-learning continue i.e. sharing elements of training and other events to build mutual understanding and good practice with residents in scrutiny roles.

The Tenant and Leaseholder Scrutiny Group would like to thank members of the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board, senior officers, and team members across housing departments for their support, openness, and engagement with the TLSG and scrutiny process. TLSG also recognises the commitment of tenant and leaseholder volunteers, including colleagues in the Tenant Audit Group, whose time, insight, and lived experience strengthen the quality and impact of resident-led scrutiny.

