

# Tenant Engagement & Communication Strategy



**O**pportunities

**C**onnect

**H**elp

**I**nform

**L**earn



**At Ochil View Housing Association, we believe everyone has a role to play in shaping and delivering the services we provide.**

**Tenants have the power to highlight areas for improvement, suggest solutions and help staff implement them.**

**Staff will work with tenants, listen to their feedback, provide information, and support and deliver on what has been agreed.**

**This strategy sets out how we will achieve this together.**



## INTRODUCTION

This Tenant Engagement & Communication Strategy has been designed as a guide for tenants and staff to utilise in developing and supporting engagement opportunities and how we communicate with each other within the organisation. Both tenants and staff have helped create this through consultation sessions, information sharing and a tenant survey. We have attached the Outcomes Report from this survey as Appendix 2 to the Strategy.

With the appointment of our first Tenant Engagement & Communication Officer in April 2021, we are setting out an ambitious and exciting plan for the years ahead. We want to strengthen the opportunities for tenants to get involved. We want to continue developing the different ways tenants and the landlord can communicate. We want to embrace available technology to ensure that all tenants have the appropriate access to the information they need and to participate.

Attached to this Strategy is an Action Plan which sets out these goals in more detail. This will be continually reviewed, revised, and updated as it progresses. As we develop the plan, we will update the Strategy accordingly. A complete review of the Strategy will occur, at a minimum, every 3 years.

## DEFINING TENANT ENGAGEMENT & COMMUNICATION

Tenant engagement involves a range of processes designed to encourage tenants to become actively involved in how Ochil View delivers its services. This can include things such as informing tenants, listening to their thoughts and ideas, seeking input from them, and supporting empowerment.

Communication is as it sounds – how do we talk to one another? This can be anything from a quick update on the phone, meeting tenants at their home, newsletter updates, letters, social media...the list is endless really.

## BENEFITS OF GOOD TENANT ENGAGEMENT & COMMUNICATION

Engaging with your landlord is hugely beneficial to both the tenant and housing provider. It helps provide an understanding of tenants' perspective, what they feel is working well or could be improved. For Ochil View Housing, it helps us continually improve our services and introduce new initiatives to enhance a tenancy. An example of this was the recent review of the Estate Management Policy. Tenants played a critical role, delivering outcomes such as greater security, an increase in estate visits and improved maintenance of their areas.

There are also many personal benefits for tenants getting involved. It can be an excellent way to learn new skills. Being an active participant can also help increase confidence. It can provide tenants with the opportunity to make new friends. It can also help them understand how Ochil View works and how they can make a difference to how services are delivered. And lastly, it can be a fun experience too!

Communication is key in any area of work. At Ochil View Housing, the aim is to provide a range of communication methods, all designed to ensure that the tenant receives the relevant information in a timely, clear, and transparent manner.

We have set up the following 5 'Ochil' values when it comes to tenant engagement and communication:

### Opportunities

We want to ensure tenants have as wide a range as possible to engage with their landlord. This can be something simple like completing a short survey to more detailed involvement, such as being a representative on our Board. All tenants will be given the opportunity to engage, regardless of how they wish to do so and to what extent.

### Connect

We want tenants to feel truly connected to their landlord and vice-versa, so it is vital that we continue working together to achieve our objectives and deliver better, more responsive services. This comes through strong communication and respect for each other.

### Help

We always aim to be there to help tenants with information and advice when they need it. In turn, we look for tenants to help us as we strive to deliver the best possible performance and services. We will also provide training and support for tenants getting involved, as well as for staff to help build an ethos of engagement throughout the Association.

### Inform

We want to ensure that every tenant, regardless of their health and wellbeing, receives information and guidance in a way that suits them. This includes documents, such as this Strategy, being readily available in a range of formats.

### Learn

We always look to learn from what we have done previously, be it with tenant meetings, information updates or large-scale projects. We can learn as much from what went well as to what could be improved. Through engagement, tenants can also learn and be involved in how Ochil View Housing operates and sets standards and goals for the future.

## WHY DO WE ENGAGE?

The Housing (Scotland) Act in 2010 introduced a Scottish Social Housing Charter that set the standards and outcomes social landlords, such as Ochil View Housing Association, should aim to achieve when performing their housing activities. The Charter establishes what tenants should expect from their landlord and how to hold them to account. It also sets out how landlords should focus their efforts on achieving outcomes, with 16 different outcomes within the Charter itself. For tenant engagement and communication, there are two specific outcomes that we need to focus on:

*Social landlords manage their businesses so that tenants and other customers find it easy to communicate with their landlord and get the information they need about their landlord, how and why it makes decisions and the services it provides.*

*Social landlords manage their businesses so that tenants and other customers find it easy to participate in and influence their landlord's decisions at a level they feel comfortable with.*

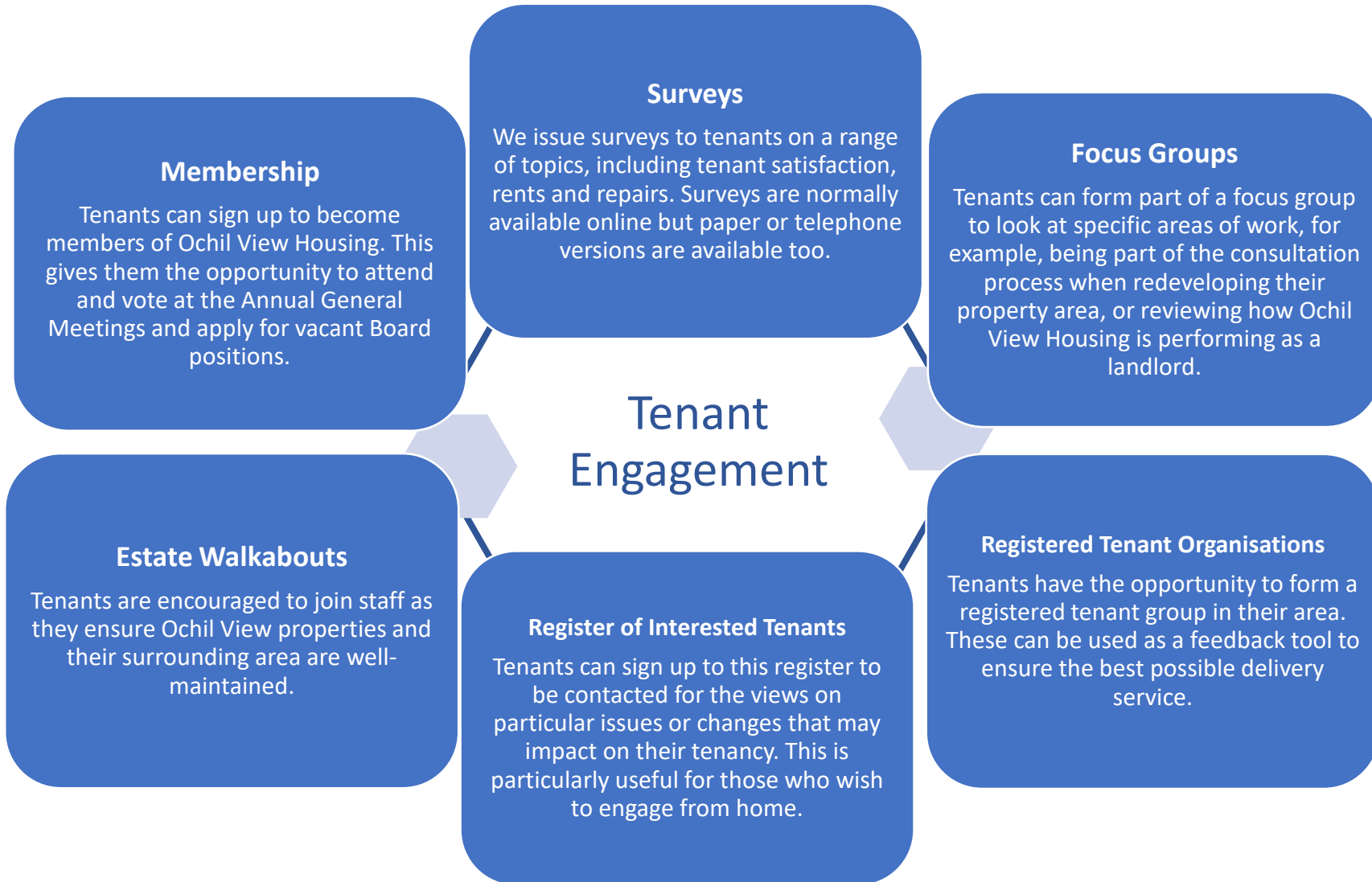
To assess us for how well we are doing with these, the Scottish Housing Regulator reviews how our tenants respond to the following two questions:

*How good or poor do you feel Ochil View is at keeping you informed about their services and decisions?*

*How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with opportunities given to you to participate in Ochil View's decision making processes?*

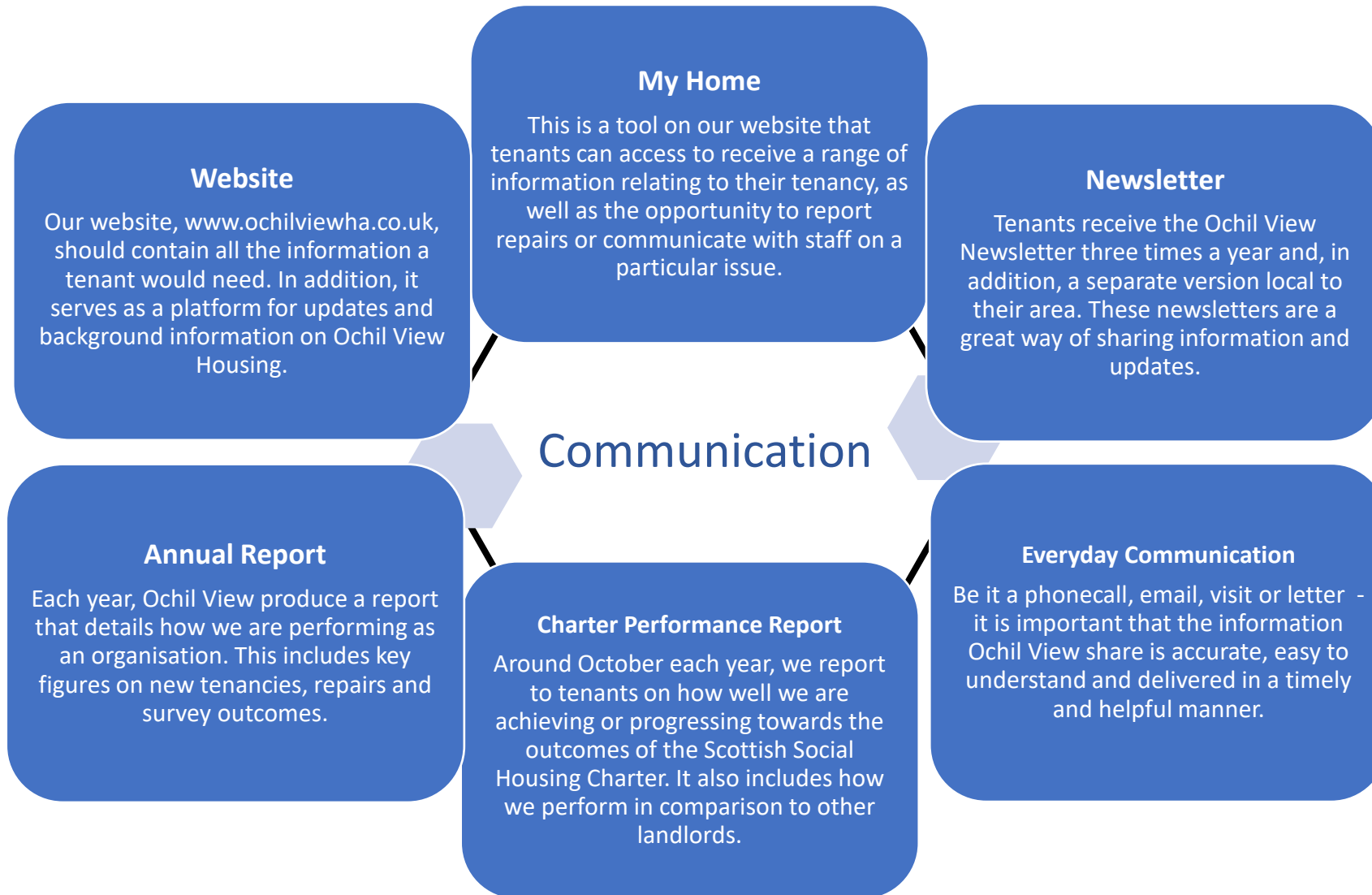


At Ochil View Housing, we have a range of engagement opportunities available for tenants to have their say:



## HOW DO WE COMMUNICATE?

Here are just some of the different methods Ochil View Housing use to communicate with tenants:



## ENGAGING & COMMUNICATING THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

Utilising social media and technology is now vital in delivering successful engagement and communication. At Ochil View, we have two key social media outlets for delivering this, Facebook, and Twitter. Each help to:

- **Improve the customer service for our tenants**
- **Increase awareness of the work we do**
- **Highlight important updates or changes within the Association**
- **Help to encourage engagement and communication through the reply options and private message inboxes**
- **Reflect well on the Association and its ethos of being open and transparent when sharing information**

Our Facebook and Twitter pages contain the following:

- **News and information on upcoming projects and events being organised by the Association**
- **Headline details of available properties, with a link to our 'These Homes' page for more information**
- **Engagement opportunities arising within the Association, directing tenants on how to get involved**
- **Job opportunities**
- **Links to stories and information out with the Association. This can be items such as local events, support groups, relevant national information, awareness days etc.**
- **Links to new documents produced by the Association, such as the Annual Report or our Newsletter**
- **Good news stories and photos from events**
- **Details of upcoming estate visits**

Technology is playing an increasingly important role in how we engage and communicate with one another. At Ochil View, we will utilise this technology to broaden our range of engagement opportunities. This includes meetings through Microsoft Teams, online surveys, and one-to-one consultations with tenants. In doing so, this will make it easier for some tenants to partake in helping Ochil View deliver the best possible services.



## TRAINING AND SUPPORT

It is absolutely vital that tenants are given all the guidance and support they need in order for them to be confident in bringing their knowledge and skills when engaging with us.

Ochil View will ensure that training and skills development opportunities will be available to tenants. This training could be for tenants wishing to establish their own tenant body or for those who wish to be more involved working in partnership with the Association to deliver the best possible services.

We want to ensure that there are no barriers to engagement within the Association. This includes, among others:

- Arranging transportation to meetings where necessary
- Making meeting or event venues fully accessible
- Providing hearing loops when needed
- Providing large print documents
- Providing text in different languages or formats

We have a budget specifically for developing and promoting tenant engagement and communication within the Association.

Tenants can also get in touch with our partner body, Tenants Participation Advisory Service, for independent engagement advice.

## EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

Everyone is equal at Ochil View.

We do not discriminate on the grounds of ethnic origin, disability, gender, marital status, sexuality, age, language, political and religious beliefs, social class, or any other form of discrimination. We respect all tenants' rights to privacy and confidentiality.



## REVIEWING OUR STRATEGY

Reviewing the Strategy and attached Action Plan will be a continuous task as we progress with developing our engagement and communication processes. A complete review of the Strategy will occur at least every 3 years, with tenant input.

If you require any further information relating to this Strategy, its Action Plan, or Tenant Engagement and Communication in general, please contact:

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You can find out more on the Association's performance and how we compare to other landlords across Scotland by visiting the Scottish Housing Regulator website:

<https://www.housingregulator.gov.scot/>

The Scottish Social Housing Charter can be read in full here:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-social-housing-charter-april-2017/ee>

## STRATEGY CONSULTATION PROCESS

Survey on Draft Strategy Issued to Tenants	June 2021
Final Draft, including Survey findings, issued to Management Team	July 2021
Draft Strategy Recommended by Customer Services Committee	
APPROVED BY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE	
Date of Next Review	

## Action Plan for Tenant Engagement & Communication: 2021-2026

### Objective One: To build and strengthen opportunities for tenants to be actively involved in Ochil View's service delivery.

Task	Objective	Timeframe
Utilise and develop the current Register of Interested Tenants for engagement projects.	In doing this, we can build a strong body of tenants who are keen to engage on a range of issues.	Ongoing
Explore and develop the opportunities to engage with tenants who have signed up to 'My Home'.	A substantial number of tenants now have access to this online portal, and this can be used to engage with tenants on a large scale, gathering a wide-ranging perspective on issues.	Ongoing
Develop tenant engagement via text messaging.	This would provide us with a means to quickly gather thoughts and opinions on particular issues. It may also help as we look to engage with younger tenants.	Medium term
Engaging with tenants on surveys – how they are issued, what we ask, what we learn and how we feedback.	With tenants' help in ensuring we maximise our use of surveys, we will be able to appropriately identify issues that need surveyed, how these are structured and how we build the responses into the work.	Medium term
Review and, if necessary, revise and update the process for tenants' becoming Members of the Association.	This will help to create better awareness of the benefits of becoming a member and improve the level of tenant attendance at AGM's and, potentially, tenant representation on the Board.	Longer term
Introduce informal drop-in engagement sessions at the office and local community centres	Inviting tenants to visit us in the office helps to strengthen an open and transparent approach to working with tenants, as well as an opportunity for information sharing. At community centres, it will give tenants from that local area the chance to meet staff and hear about future project work and initiatives relevant to them.	Medium term

Develop and promote an engagement training programme for tenants wishing to be more actively involved in the Association's governance.	This programme will give tenants the confidence to engage at any level within the Association. It will be particularly useful for tenants who are perhaps a little apprehensive about getting involved due to lack of experience in this environment.	Longer term
Liaise with tenants on our current rent review process and implement any agreed changes.	Rent setting is a critical process and one where we need to demonstrate consultation with tenants. When liaising with tenants, we will be able to shape how this process is carried out and its outcomes relayed back to tenants.	Medium term
Develop a method for engaging with tenants on our complaints process and how we learn from the issues raised.	By working with tenants on how the complaints process is delivered and its objectives met, we can identify any areas for improving the service.	Long term
Create a mechanism that provides tenants with the opportunity to scrutinise the Association's performance.	In developing this, we will be empowering tenants to review our service delivery and identify any areas of improvement. It should also help to strengthen the working relationship between tenants and their landlord, as well as reflect positively for the organisation.	Short term
Develop range of digital engagement methods, including virtual meetings and 'Near Me' service.	With an increasing reliance on digital technology for engagement, developing these methods will be an attractive opportunity for tenants to get involved without the potential obstacles of physically attending meetings or information sessions.	Ongoing
Create and support an engagement mechanism for evaluating day-to-day repairs and longer-term replacement and upgrade programmes.	Having this in place will give tenants a better understanding of how the Property Team work and deliver on long-term projects. In turn, it will aid the team in how they can best shape future service delivery in this area.	Short term
Develop a range of regular competitions for tenants to participate in.	By having this range of competitions, we can engage with tenants on a broad scale, through the likes of a survey, to targeting more specific groups, such as children, keen gardeners etc.	Ongoing

## Objective Two: To develop engagement opportunities and partnership working within a community setting.

Task	Objective	Timeframe
Promote, encourage, and support greater tenant involvement in estate walkabouts.	Increasing tenant involvement in this process will give them a better understanding of the challenges faced in maintaining properties and their surrounding area. In addition, it will hopefully give tenants an increased pride in looking after their area.	Short term
Increase awareness of community initiatives around matters such as social activities and events.	This will help tenants create a stronger bond with the community around them and, in turn, may give them the confidence to organise and facilitate events themselves.	Ongoing
Build a partnership of information sharing with local and national community groups and services around health and wellbeing.	Tenants face a range of challenges – health issues, poverty, domestic abuse to name a few. By opening up to these local and national bodies, we can engage with tenants and provide suitable guidance.	Ongoing
Utilise, support, and develop local initiatives to create a range of engagement opportunities for younger tenants in their area.	Engaging with younger tenants is often a challenge. Offering a suitable environment, such as social clubs or activities, should allow increased engagement opportunities.	Ongoing

## Objective Three: To foster a positive engagement ethos within Ochil View Housing Association

Task	Objective	Timeframe
Hold monthly Engagement & Communication Meetings within the office.	These meetings will be held with a rotation of all staff. This allows everyone to gain an understanding of the ongoing engagement and communication work, as well as give them the opportunity to put forward their own thoughts and ideas.	Ongoing
Encouraging and supporting use of social media for engagement and communication.	All staff can feed into this process by highlighting key action areas that tenants need to be aware of, as well as upcoming news and information and useful feedback received from tenants.	Ongoing

Provide a training service for staff around engagement and communication.	By making this available to staff, they can further increase their knowledge and understanding of why we engage and how best to utilise this.	Ongoing
Liaise with national tenant advisory support bodies on techniques to encourage and support tenant engagement across the organisation.	Working with the likes of TPAS allows us access to what engagement initiatives are taking place elsewhere and of any Governmental changes or reviews that could impact on tenant engagement. They also provide independent support on engagement to tenants.	Ongoing
Support and maintain the use of a Tenant Engagement calendar & inbox through Outlook.	Having a specific calendar for tenant engagement means we can easily identify ongoing work and projects. The inbox will be useful for separating the engagement information from other work and having a separate email address reflects well on how important this is within the organisation.	Ongoing

#### Objective Four: To strengthen and develop communication methods within the organisation.

Task	Objective	Timeframe
Enhance tenant role in production and content of the "Ochil View" Newsletters.	The newsletters are an excellent source of communication, and it will reflect well on the organisation to have greater tenant input. This will also be of benefit to the tenants themselves as it will likely serve as encouragement to be more actively involved.	Medium Term
Developing use of social media for communication, including tenant input into what is shared.	By utilising tools such as Facebook and Twitter, we can quickly share information across a wide spectrum. Getting tenants involved with this will mean more tenant-focused content and help to encourage tenants to develop their IT skills.	Ongoing
Explore potential for an Ochil View YouTube channel.	Having our own YouTube channel means we can share information in a modern, attractive way. It can also be of benefit to visualise how Ochil View Housing works as a landlord and the services it provides.	Long term

Create a format for tenants and staff to work in partnership for reviewing the Association's communication channels.	It would be useful to get tenant input into the documents we send out, such as letters, reports, updates etc. This way, we can ensure the information is being presented in a clear, precise, and readable manner.	Long term
Produce monthly updates on tenant engagement to all tenants signed up to 'My Home'	In doing this, we will be able to regularly communicate with tenants on what engagement work is taking place, what is coming up soon and their opportunity to feedback or get involved.	Medium Term
Produce an annual report to all tenants and staff on tenant engagement and communication over the past year.	This will help to give an overview of what has occurred over the past 12 months and what we hope to achieve in the year ahead. Tenant input into how this is designed, and its contents is essential.	Medium Term
Promote good engagement and communication practices within the Association.	It is important that we share our successes, particularly when it involves satisfactory outcomes for tenants. Communicating this through various media strands will reflect positively on Ochil View.	Ongoing
Explore potential for possible future Webinars.	These could be a useful tool to share information and advice with tenants. There is a plethora of topics that could be discussed, with the opportunity for tenants to have questions answered and gain some knowledge.	Long term
Create, produce, and manage information postcards.	This may be particularly useful for new tenants. Each postcard could relate to a specific topic – i.e., ways to get involved, repairs, health support information, benefits advice etc.	Long term