National Tenant Alliance (NTA)

Project Working Group (PWG)

Minutes from meeting held on 1 June 2026, 1:30pm – 3:30pm via Teams

Present: Joseph De-Ville (Chair), Alicia Mortlock, Neal Wylde, Maria McCafferty

In attendance: Aileen Edmunds, Merron Simpson, Neil McGregor Paterson, Martin Wheatley, Stephanie Lee (Note-taker)

Apologies: Faye Wright

Agenda
1. Welcome and apologies 2. Notes, Actions and Matters arising from the last meeting 3. The Workshops 4. Costings 5. Tenants who want to be involved going forward 6. Leadership Programme 7. Tenant payments (to end of May) 8. Wider communications 9. Regulator, MHCLG 10. TPAS (and HQN) 11. Developing an approach to funding 12. Reflections 13. AOB

1. Welcome and Apologies

1.1 Joseph welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1.2 Noted:

- That Maria and Faye have joined the Project Working Group
- That Stella has stepped down from the Working Group due to health issues, but will continue to be part of the National Tenant Alliance and will remain a link between the NTA and ARCH.

1.3 Joseph encouraged PWG members to respond to Rob and Sonji's update on the Leadership Development Programme.

2. Notes, Actions and Matters arising from the last meeting

2.1 Notes from the previous meeting held on 1 April will be circulated following this meeting. It was noted that all actions are complete, the majority of which related to the NTA Shaping Workshops which were successfully delivered on 23 April and 7 May.

3. Workshops

3.1 **<u>Received</u>**: Merron and Neil shared the combined feedback from the in-person and online workshops noting the following:

- Overall feedback was very positive with an average score of 8.85 for the in-person workshop and 8.35 for the online workshop in response to the question - how much did you enjoy the workshop?
- Feedback for the in-person workshop was more positive than the online workshop. This was attributed to the networking element, longer format and greater sense of camaraderie which can be achieved by an in-person session.
- The final 30-minute open discussion at the end of the online event was highly valuable and potentially a format to adopt for online tenant meetings going forward.
- A lot of the qualitative feedback reflected the desire for building momentum.

3.2 It was noted that informal feedback received by PWG members indicated a gap between experienced tenant advocates (e.g. Four Million Homes / TPAS members) and tenants who are newer to advocacy. It was agreed that these groups need to be engaged differently going forward and may need a different offer. For example, the Leadership Development programme may be less relevant to experienced tenancy advocates so a different Leadership Programme or other offer might be required for them going forward.

3.3 Merron and Neil presented the nine key themes that have been drawn out of the workshop write-up *(see slide 7)*. There was a lot of rich material captured from the workshops and the report appendices will capture the full discussion. A key messages document will provide a shorter., more digestible summary.

3.4 **Noted:** PWG Members were supportive of the 9 key themes identified.

3.5 Merron encouraged PWG Members to think about what differentiates the NTA. The following were shared during the meeting and there was an action for Members to email Merron following the meeting with any additional thoughts.

- Born in the regions, not London
- Local and regional
- Tenant-imagined, tenant-led, tenant-run
- Small is beautiful / evolutionary model
- Partnership working (e.g. Welsh Assembly contact)
- No landlord involvement at this stage

4. Costings

4.1 Neil presented the background to the work undertaken with regards to the costings of establishing a new organisation noting the following:

- Outlined the proposed next phases *(see slide 9)*:
- Phase 3 – maintain the momentum
- Phase 4 – the Foundation phase
- Phase 5 – the Implementation phase

4.2 Merron suggested bringing on other tenants that have already expressed an interest in being involved in the NTA as a bridge between phases 2 and 3. AS THCA's funded project ends soon and THCA cannot support the full Phase 3 journey but are willing to support up to four online focused deep-dive sessions on different themes to support transition into Phase 3 – this being additional to the Part 2 project commission. The PWG welcomed this offer and input to the following were suggested:

- Who decides on recruitment parameters for the foundation group?
- How are existing phase 1 and 2 members considered?

- Funding models

4.3 Neil presented as overview of Phase 3 which identified four workstreams, all of which are linked.

I. **Communications** - Taking outputs from workshops and Tenants at the Table and advancing the key messages; establishing what makes NTA distinct and different.
II. **Tenant engagement and development** - Following up with workshop attendees; building on the leadership programme; tapping into enthusiasm and strengths identified.
III. **Building advocacy** - Current advocacy work (regulator, TPAS etc.) is going well but needs to become more planned and deliberate. Who specifically needs to be approached at regional and local level?
IV. **Long-term funding** - Planning must begin now; a blended funding model is expected; the £1/tenancy/year model from landlords may take years to establish.

4.4 PWG agreed that phase 3 was manageable, particularly with the involvement of other tenants who had expressed an interest in being more involved in the NTA. The following points were noted:

4.4.1 Alicia noted that having the backing of the Regulator by the end of phase 2 will help to strengthen NTA's position.

4.4.2 Aileen noted that it would be good to start looking for seed-funding and that MHCLG and Fusion21 has shown interest. Once the costings element of the project has been completed, this will help to facilitate more robust conversations with potential funders.

4.4.3 Neal suggested making it a priority to get in front of a minister as government endorsement would significantly strengthen funding bids. Joseph noted he had previously corresponded with Matthew Pennycook (who had responded positively) and could write again. Agreed that rather than just an update, the aim should be to push for a presentation/meeting with the minister. Joseph to approach Leah (MHCLG) as a first step to explore whether she could facilitate this.

4.5 Neil presented an overview of Phase 4 - the Foundation Phase - and the key steps *(see slide 11)*. The following points were noted by the PWG:

4.5.1 The foundation group is a transitional group, not the permanent NTA - similar in nature to the PWG. Getting the right people matters, but they are not the 'end game' appointments.

4.5.2 Non-exec directors without tenant backgrounds could be brought in for specialist skills (finance etc.) - but must have no housing association connections to avoid any conflict of interest or perception of landlord influence.

4.5.3 Martin suggested drawing up a skills matrix to guide recruitment - flagging finance experience as an obvious requirement, and also people with prior experience of setting up charities or social enterprises. No one was actioned to do this from this meeting, however.

4.5.4 In addition to having people with the rights skills, it is important to ensure there is diversity of representation amongst the tenants who will be leading and developing this phase. The foundation group must visibly avoid replicating the "white, older male" profile typical of most tenant groups. This is both a credibility issue and essential for encouraging under-represented tenants to engage.

4.6 Neil presented an overview of phase 5 – the implementation phase - with the following points noted by the PWG:

4.6.1 HQ: Not London-based. Birmingham/Manchester suggested as options. However, discussion landed firmly on a virtual/remote model with a registered address only.

Longleigh Foundation suggested as an option or this could potentially be a co-working space such as THCA uses. The benefits of not having a physical office include lower cost and removing accessibility and geographical barriers. It was noted that there is still a place for in-person meetings, but these could be held at community venues around the regions, rotating location to demonstrate NTA's national reach.

4.6.2 Core staffing proposed: MD/CEO; administration support; comms lead; research lead; tenant development and volunteer coordinator; policy and stakeholder engagement lead; membership officer; regional tenant engagement officers. It was agreed that where possible, staff roles could be part-time rather than full-time, combined with a structured use of tenant volunteers which would help to reduce costs. E.g. a part-time paid researcher could set the brief and direction, tenant volunteers could carry out the fieldwork and bring findings back.

4.6.3 Additional budget lines**:** the following were also identified as potentially being areas of the organisation which would need funding: IT infrastructure; stakeholder and data management system; branding; website and social channels; tenant training and support / community researchers; roadshows; integrated marketing/comms plan.

5. Tenants who want to be involved going forward

5.1 Merron presented the numbers from the workshop, including the number of tenants who had expressed an interest in continuing to be involved:

- 106 tenants expressed an interest in the NTA Shaping workshops, 10 of whom were unable to attend either workshop
- 71 tenants have completed the registration form which includes consent for their details to be stored and then shared with Longleigh once the current phase of the project has completed
- 60 attended a workshop (63% of those who registered an interest in the in-person or online workshops)
- 22 attended the in-person workshop - a further 9 were due to attend but sent apologies due to sickness, family matters, or the tube strike
- 38 attended the online workshop, against an expectation of 67 (57%)
- 26 expressed an interest in future involvement
- 6 were identified by the PWG/Co-Production Team for the Leadership Programme

5.2 Stephanie noted that a further follow-up about continued involvement and gathering consent to be added to a database will be included when the project report is shared with all 106 tenants who expressed an interest at the outset.

6. Leadership Programme

6.1 Merron presented an update on the leadership programme, noting that that from the outset the programme’s aims was to:

- To set an expectation about the style of leadership for NTA
- It’s one strand of activity to help prepare some interested tenants to take on roles with NTA at any level - national, regional or local
- To provide ongoing leadership development

6.2 The target completion date for the first draft of the programme is end of June and it is likely the programme will extend beyond the current project into September–November.

6.3 PWG members acknowledged feeling out of their depth when it came to the programme content - by design, as Rob and Sonji were specifically engaged for their expertise in this area.

6.4 Diversity was also noted as a concern. It is important that the Leadership Programme reaches beyond experienced, predominantly white, middle-aged advocates. Suggestions to mitigate this included linking with Kai Jackson at TPAS and framing the programme as a career/CV development opportunity for younger people and returners to work.

7. Tenant Payments

7.1 Agreed: It was agreed to take the discussion about tenant payments offline.

7.2 Noted: That it's possible to do phased payments and PWG members should contact Merron if they have any queries about this.

8. Wider communications

8.1 Neil provided an update on the project's wider communications, noting the following:

8.1.2 The completion of this phase marks the moment to "sing from the rooftops" - now is the time to go public and wide, having previously held back to avoid attracting criticism or negativity in the earlier stages.

8.1.2 The comms programme to announce the end of this phase falls within THCA's current assignment. THCA will pull this together, working collaboratively with the PWG on the messaging.

8.1.3 The intention is to share the workshop report first with all the workshop participants for their feedback and comments before any wider distribution.

8.1.4 The ongoing comms programme over the next six months will be built on the key messages emerging from the report.

8.2 Aileen requested a draft LinkedIn post that PWG members could borrow or adapt, to ensure messaging lands consistently and effectively, noting that "singing from the rooftops" is a broad call to action and people will need the key messages distilled for them. Neil confirmed there is work for the PWG to do first - reviewing what the report is telling them, beyond just the headline themes, so this can inform the ongoing communications.

8.3 Merron clarified that the report will be hosted on the Longleigh website but not actively circulated on social media; a shorter 1–2 page summary document will be the main external-facing piece.

8.4 Alicia noted that the briefing points provided by Neil and Merron for the regulator meeting were pitched at exactly the right level - sophisticated enough for experienced tenant advocates without being patronising - and that this should be the benchmark for external messaging going forward

9. Regulator, MHCLG

9.1 Joseph provided an update on the meeting with the Regulator (Jack and Fleur, RSH), which was very positive and there will be a follow-up meeting (at the Regulator's request) in a few months' time.

9.2 NTA has been invited to become a stakeholder, enabling a two-way relationship where the Regulator shares information with NTA to disseminate to tenants.

9.3 Alicia noted the following points from the meeting:

- Jack's vision is for a five-year developing relationship, with NTA eventually contributing to writing policy.

- The Regulator is not looking for a single national voice - they want to hear from the different groups within NTA's alliance, which fits well with NTA's local and regional model.
- Alicia is speaking at an HQN conference alongside Emma (Welsh Tenants Alliance) and would like to be able to reference the regulator relationship publicly - regulation is a key theme this year.
- Alicia also flagged an opportunity with the Social Housing Roundtable (of which she is a board member) - they would welcome a session from NTA (20 minutes presentation, 40 minutes Q&A). She suggested Faye and Maria might be good people to present alongside her.

9.4 Martin suggested making contact with landlord representative bodies as a next step - National Housing Federation, National Federation of ALMOs, Association of Directors of Housing, and the Chartered Institute of Housing - noting the latter as a potential ally given their active interest in tenant voice and power. Martin offered to make introductions to any of the above if the PWG would find that helpful. Joseph noted that he is attending the NFA conference in Birmingham and hopes to network and raise NTA's profile in person, having had no response to written approaches so far.

9.5 Joseph provided an update on the link with MHCLG noting the following:

- Joseph currently sits on the MHCLG Resident Stakeholder Panel and met Leah (MHCLG) at the TPAS in-person event in Taunton, where she expressed keen interest in receiving an update on NTA's progress. Joseph will share the project report once complete.

9.6 Aileen noted the following in relation to MHCLG:

- MHCLG has invited Longleigh to present to the Resident Stakeholder Forum, with NTA's work suggested as a topic around September. Aileen indicated this would be a decision for Joseph and the PWG.

- In conversations with MHCLG, Aileen has been clear that NTA would welcome government seed funding to get started but would not want to be dependent on it long term.

- Aileen noted how significant it is that both the regulator and MHCLG are showing this level of interest at such an early stage, before NTA even has a fully formed proposition.

10. TPAS (and HQN)

10.1 Noted: The TPAS National Tenants Conference is taking place in Nottingham 14-15 July and having invited NTA to run a 90-minute breakout session on 15 July. Joseph provided the following updates:

- NTA has also been offered a free table in the main hall - estimated 200–225 attendees, with Jenny (TPAS) noting a number of names she doesn't recognise, suggesting potential new contacts.

- Current thinking for the breakout session is a short introduction from PWG, followed by table discussions with questions for attendees - similar in style to the Stoke-on-Trent workshop.

- Joseph suggested the session could be used to gather additional data for the project on anything that wasn't covered sufficiently in the workshops.

10.2 The following discussion points were noted:

- Neil (McGregor Paterson) suggested using the session to agree the organisation's name - with 200+ tenants in the room this would be a unique and high-profile way to do it, and having a name is urgent as web domains get bought up quickly once searches begin. The group responded positively to this idea.

- Alicia noted that based on her previous TPAS workshop experience, sessions can take on a life of their own with questions - the format needs to be flexible. She suggested "small is beautiful" and the regional model as potential discussion themes, encouraging attendees to go back to their housing associations and advocate for engagement with NTA.

- Aileen confirmed that Longleigh is happy to support with the design of the workshop/stand collateral. The PWG happy to support with design (Charlene).

- Merron offered to develop a set of workshop questions that the group could use or adapt.

10.3 Alicia has volunteered to represent NTA at a HQN event – the idea for which initially came from Rob. Alicia has been working with Emma from the Welsh Tenants Alliance on a joint session which is taking place online on 14 July.

11. Developing an approach to funding

11.1 Martin presented developing an approach to funding (*see slide 19.)* It was acknowledged that this area will need more time and likely a dedicated session, but that it was useful to start to think about this now before the end of the project's current phase. The following points were noted:

- There is no single funding answer – it is most likely that the NTA will be a blended funded model that changes over time.

- Core/running costs are the hardest to secure and often the most critical challenge for any new organisation.

- The £1/tenancy/year landlord contribution model (as in Wales) is seen as viable medium-term but must be introduced carefully to landlord bodies if it is to land well.

11.2 The following discussion points were noted:

- Joseph noted that many tenants don't know that the Ombudsman and Regulator are already funding through their rents and this awareness gap is something that the NTA needs to address and could be used to make a case for tenant funding of a national voice.

- Neal highlighted that tenants are already unknowingly contributing to organisations such as the National Housing Federation that don't represent their interests - making tenants aware of this could be a powerful argument for funding NTA instead. He suggested adding a funding question to the TPAS conference workshop to ask tenants whether, knowing what they already pay into other bodies, they would be willing to contribute towards the NTA.

- Aileen noted that even a £1/tenant ask, while seemingly small, raises questions about how many would actually pay and whether it would raise enough - a diverse funding portfolio across multiple sources is likely needed.

- Merron noted that MHCLG is unlikely to be a long-term funding solution, but could potentially fund the interim phases (Phase 3 and 4) to help get NTA off the ground. She suggested inviting Leah (MHCLG) to a future PWG meeting to explain what MHCLG funding could realistically look like and open up a conversation about what they might be able to support. Joseph also flagged MCHLG's rules on grant funding would be considered *(see slide 20.)*

12. Reflections / AOB

12.1 **<u>Agreed:</u>** A provisional date of last week of June / first week of July was agreed for the next meeting so that the draft costings are ready.

12.2 **<u>Noted:</u>** Joseph confirmed that when paid project funding ends, he hopes the group continues on a volunteer basis during any gap.

Actions

#	Action	By who	By when/ Status update
1.	Share Leadership Development information with Maria	Joseph	ASAP
2.	Pick up with Alicia the informal feedback received from tenants following the online workshops.	Merron	Complete
3.	Email Merron and Neil with what differentiates the NTA	PWG Members	19 June
4.	Reach out to Leah (MHCLG) to enlist support with getting a meeting with the Minister.	Joseph	End of June
5.	Share funding research being done for the Greater Cambridge tenants forum.	Martin	End of June
6.	Speak with Faye about being the PWG link with the Leadership Programme and Rob and Sonji	Joseph	Closed as Faye has stepped down from the PWG
7.	Feedback to Rob and Sonji that the PWG's limited input is not disengagement but reflects a deliberate division of expertise.	Merron	Complete
8.	Contact PWG members to agree next payments	Merron	Complete
9.	Decide on what collateral is needed for the TPAS conference – workshop and stand – and let Aileen know	PWG Members	End of June
10.	Ask TPAS to cover travel expenses for speakers.	Alicia/Joseph	Complete
11.	Contact Merron and Neil if want to have a conversation about questions that could be used in the TPAS workshop that could help gather data and insight for the NTA project e.g. the name	PWG members	End of June
12.	Explore whether Leah (MHCLG) can attend a future PWG meeting to discuss what MHCLG funding could offer.	Merron	End of June
13.	Arrange dates for deep-dive sessions to take place in July, one of which will be in relation to funding.	Merron / Stephanie	End of June