

REPORT TO GARIOCH AREA COMMITTEE – 24 AUGUST 2021

TENANT PARTICIPATION STRATEGY (2019-2029) UPDATE

1. Reason for Report / Summary

- 1.1 To update Area Committees on progress towards the development of a new approach to tenant participation within Aberdeenshire following the approved amended Strategy (5 September 2019).

2. Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to consider and comment on the progress made and challenges faced in the implementation of the Tenant Participation Strategy (2019-2029) and determine whether to make recommendations to the Service/Communities Committee.

3. Purpose and Decision Making Route

- 3.1 Communities Committee considered and approved the implementation of a new Tenant Participation Strategy on the 5th September 2019.
- 3.2 The Strategy proposed an innovative approach to engagement following an extensive consultation process with support offered by the Scottish Government sponsored 'Next Steps' programme.
- 3.3 Aberdeenshire has a statutory and regulatory duty to produce a Strategy that must outline how it intends to involve tenants in the decision-making process and to ensure that appropriate resources are identified to ensure that this obligation is fulfilled.
- 3.4 The Strategy seeks to deliver a number of key objectives:
 - To provide a menu of opportunities for tenants and other service users to engage ranging from more formal engagement via Registered Tenant Organisations through to use of social media and access to Smartphone apps
 - To engage with tenants and service users within local communities, ensuring joint working with other Council Services to target key issues identified in a coordinated and inclusive manner
 - To empower tenants within local areas to influence budget spend
 - To develop a clear linkage between tenants, Committee and Council Officers to ensure an enhanced level of scrutiny of services provided.
 - To combat digital exclusion to ensure that the Housing Service can communicate effectively, particularly where hard to reach groups are concerned
 - To build capacity by ensuring that tenants and service users have access to training opportunities to allow full engagement in participatory and scrutiny activities.

4. Discussion

- 4.1 The Housing Service has faced key challenges in progressing objectives set by tenants, elected members and staff who engaged in the development of the new Strategy.
- 4.2 Challenges due to Covid 19 restrictions have significantly impacted on the ability to progress most of the key objectives set. It has been necessary to rely on a range of initiatives to ensure a suitable level of engagement with tenants and service users.
- 4.3 Housing remains fully committed to developing opportunities for a wide range of tenants to scrutinize the delivery of services and has been successful in mobilising service users to engage in groups covering Communications, the HRA and Asset Management.
- 4.4 Restrictions introduced as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic have severely impacted tenant engagement activities, however steps have been taken to utilise technology to ensure continuation of tenant group meetings. As at week beginning 12 April 2021, tenant consultation on the structure of strategic groups has begun in order to put a framework in place where tenants will be the primary lead of groups rather than council officers. Wider public consultation is due to take place through August.
- 4.5 Tenant consultation on Housing Finance has been progressed with the agreement of the Rent Strategy Member Officer Working Group to allow up to 2 tenant participants to sit in this group.
- 4.6 Early successes on local community initiatives have been achieved in areas throughout Aberdeenshire including supporting a “Grow Your Own” food initiative in Huntly and improvements of the physical environment around North Braeheads.
- 4.7 A Tenant Participation Roadshow is taking place 9 – 20 August where the team will spend time in the communities speaking to tenants about what issues are impacting them and what they wish to see in their communities. This will be advertised in advance using corporate communications tools.
- 4.8 Covid 19 has brought digital exclusion into sharp focus; however, the service have been successful in obtaining various grant funding including:
 - Connecting Scotland
 - 220 Chromebooks
 - 250 iPads
 - 427 mifi’s with up to 2 years connectivity
 - Flexible Funding – Digital
 - £30,000 awarded for laptops, mifi’s + sims with 20gb monthly allowance for 3 months.
 - Used to reach groups which have been excluded from previous funding streams

- Creating a “lending library” to assist users to undertake limited time digital activities
- Flexible Funding
 - £1,700 used to purchase smartphones and mifi + sims to allow equipment loan for the use of the community safety Noise App
- Flexible Funding – Food Fund
 - Awarded £10,000 for activities relating to food insecurity or social isolation activities involving the use of food

The estimated total of all funding received to date is approximately £340,000. There will be further opportunities for digital inclusion applications through Connecting Scotland which the service intend to apply for.

- 4.9 Other opportunities for the development of new and innovative methods for tenant engagement continue to be explored.
- 4.10 Housing has been an early adopter of the use of Aberdeenshire Council’s public engagement portal Engage Aberdeenshire.
- 4.11 Housing continue to work with Aberdeenshire Council’s UX team on discussions relating to website redesign to ensure more advanced levels of interaction.
- 4.12 Social Media presence has been established with a Facebook page which tenants can join.
- 4.13 A tenant impact statement is currently being collated and will be submitted in line with Housing’s Annual Assurance Statement.

5. Council Priorities, Implications and Risk

- 5.1 This report helps to deliver the Council Priority within the pillar “Our People” and the principle which underpins this priority of “right people, right places, right time”.
The report also helps to deliver the Council Priority within the pillar “Our Environment” and the principle which underpins this priority of “Tackling poverty and inequalities” and “Resilient Communities”.

Pillar	Priority
Our People	Education Health & Wellbeing
Our Environment	Infrastructure Resilient Communities
Our Economy	Economy & Enterprise Estate Modernisation

5.2 The table below shows whether risks and implications apply if the recommendation(s) is (are) agreed.

Subject	Yes	No	N/A
Financial		x	
Staffing		x	
Equalities and Fairer Duty Scotland			x
Children and Young People's Rights and Wellbeing			x
Health and Wellbeing			x
Town Centre First		x	

5.3 There are no staffing / financial implications.

5.4 An integrated impact assessment has been carried out as part of the development of the proposals set out above. It is included as Appendix 1 and

- *there is a positive impact as follows in Appendix 1*
- There are positive impacts on older and younger age groups and persons with disabilities by assisting them in having a voice in the services they use, take part in thematic working groups, and be included in participatory budgeting. These benefits also extend to wider communities facing area deprivation.
- Supporting local area activities such as food growing opportunities positively impacts tenants we work with to encourage healthy eating and promotes mental health through physical activity and being outdoors. These projects also support community resilience and positively impact the quality of the surrounding environment.

5.5 The following Risks have been identified as relevant to this matter on a Corporate Level:

- ACORP006 - Reputation management (including social media). This risk is mitigated through assurances from ACT that their social media is monitored.

6. Scheme of Governance

6.1 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report and had no comments to make.

6.2 The Committee is able to consider and comment on this item in terms of Section B.1.2 of the List of Committee Powers in Part 2A of the Scheme of Governance

- 1.2 To consider, comment on, make recommendations to Services and any other appropriate Committee on any matter or policy which impacts its Area.

Alan Wood,
Director of Infrastructure Services

Report prepared by Tracy Noles, Service Development Officer (Tenancy Services)
Date 9 August 2021

List of Appendices –

Appendix 1 – Integrated Impact Assessment

Appendix 2 - Tenant Participation Strategy 2019-2029 as amended

Aberdeenshire Council

Integrated Impact Assessment

TENANT PARTICIPATION STRATEGY (2019-2029) UPDATE

Assessment ID	IIA-000063
Lead Author	Tracy Noles
Service Reviewers	Rob Simpson, Courtney Duncan
Subject Matter Experts	Susan Forbes, Claudia Cowie, Lynne Gravener
Approved By	Rob Simpson
Approved On	Friday August 06, 2021
Publication Date	Friday August 06, 2021

1. Overview

This document has been generated from information entered into the Integrated Impact Assessment system.

To update Area Committees on progress towards the development of a new approach to tenant participation within Aberdeenshire following the approved amended Strategy (5 September 2019)

During screening 4 of 10 questions indicated that detailed assessments were required, the screening questions and their answers are listed in the next section. This led to 3 out of 5 detailed impact assessments being completed. The assessments required are:

- Equalities and Fairer Scotland Duty
- Health Inequalities
- Sustainability and Climate Change

In total there are 9 positive impacts as part of this activity. There are 0 negative impacts, all impacts have been mitigated.

A detailed action plan with 1 points has been provided.

This assessment has been approved by rob.simpson2@aberdeenshire.gov.uk.

The remainder of this document sets out the details of all completed impact assessments.

2. Screening

Could your activity / proposal / policy cause an impact in one (or more) of the identified town centres?	No
Would this activity / proposal / policy have consequences for the health and wellbeing of the population in the affected communities?	Yes
Does the activity / proposal / policy have the potential to affect greenhouse gas emissions (CO2e) in the Council or community and / or the procurement, use or disposal of physical resources?	No
Does the activity / proposal / policy have the potential to affect the resilience to extreme weather events and/or a changing climate of Aberdeenshire Council or community?	No
Does the activity / proposal / policy have the potential to affect the environment, wildlife or biodiversity?	Yes
Does the activity / proposal / policy have an impact on people and / or groups with protected characteristics?	Yes
Is this activity / proposal / policy of strategic importance for the council?	Yes
Does this activity / proposal / policy reduce inequality of outcome?	No
Does this activity / proposal / policy have an impact on children / young people's rights?	No
Does this activity / proposal / policy have an impact on children / young people's wellbeing?	No

3. Impact Assessments

Children's Rights and Wellbeing	Not Required
Climate Change and Sustainability	No Negative Impacts Identified
Equalities and Fairer Scotland Duty	No Negative Impacts Identified
Health Inequalities	No Negative Impacts Identified
Town Centre's First	Not Required

4. Equalities and Fairer Scotland Duty Impact Assessment

4.1. Protected Groups

Indicator	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Unknown
Age (Younger)	Yes			
Age (Older)	Yes			
Disability	Yes			
Race		Yes		
Religion or Belief		Yes		
Sex		Yes		
Pregnancy and Maternity		Yes		
Sexual Orientation		Yes		
Gender Reassignment		Yes		
Marriage or Civil Partnership		Yes		

4.2. Socio-economic Groups

Indicator	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Unknown
Low income		Yes		
Low wealth		Yes		
Material deprivation		Yes		
Area deprivation	Yes			
Socioeconomic background		Yes		

4.3. Positive Impacts

Impact Area	Impact
Age (Older)	Positive: work with older tenants to help them inform services and their communities through participatory budgeting and taking part in thematic working groups.
Age (Younger)	Positive: work with younger tenants to help them inform services and their communities through participatory budgeting and taking part in thematic working groups.
Disability	Positive: work with tenants who identify as having a disability to help them inform services and their communities through participatory budgeting and taking part in thematic working groups.
Area deprivation	Positive: work with communities and partners using tenant feedback and lived experience to inform services and create positive outcomes in communities through participatory budgeting and taking part in thematic working groups.

4.4. Evidence

Type	Source	It says?	It Means?
Other Evidence	Lived Experience	Lived experience feedback will give direction.	It will give insight into if a project has been successful.

4.5. Engagement with affected groups

Tenant Satisfaction Survey

4.6. Ensuring engagement with protected groups

Undertaken by specialist consultants who undertook a representative sample.

4.7. Evidence of engagement

We are reviewing some of our communications tools for styles that best suit the preferences of tenants.

4.8. Overall Outcome

No Negative Impacts Identified.

The work should lead to engagement at the right place at the right time.

4.9. Improving Relations

Our team can support local initiatives and link them with other initiatives which may benefit them.

5. Health Inequalities Impact Assessment

5.1. Health Behaviours

Indicator	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Unknown
Healthy eating	Yes			
Exercise and physical activity		Yes		
Substance use – tobacco		Yes		
Substance use – alcohol		Yes		
Substance use – drugs		Yes		
Mental health	Yes			

5.2. Positive Impacts

Impact Area	Impact
Healthy eating	Supporting local food growing initiatives which also combat food poverty
Mental health	Provision of activities, equipment, etc for socially isolated tenants; use of technology to combat noise nuisance at at early stage

5.3. Evidence

Type	Source	It says?	It Means?
Internal Data	Northgate reporting; complaints	Captures data relating to antisocial behaviour	Shows how quickly noise nuisance can be resolved by using new technology (noise app)
Other Evidence	Local Groups	Uptake on food growing initiatives	Keeps a record of who is taking part and how much food growing has been distributed within communities

5.4. Overall Outcome

No Negative Impacts Identified.

All engagement should lead to positive results for those who take part

6. Sustainability and Climate Change Impact Assessment

6.1. Emissions and Resources

Indicator	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Unknown
Consumption of energy		Yes		
Energy efficiency		Yes		
Energy source		Yes		
Low carbon transition		Yes		
Consumption of physical resources	Yes			
Waste and circularity		Yes		
Circular economy transition		Yes		
Economic and social transition		Yes		

6.2. Biodiversity and Resilience

Indicator	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Unknown
Quality of environment	Yes			
Quantity of environment		Yes		
Wildlife and biodiversity		Yes		
Infrastructure resilience		Yes		
Council resilience		Yes		
Community resilience	Yes			
Adaptation		Yes		

6.3. Positive Impacts

Impact Area	Impact
Quality of environment	Improved quality of gardens taking part in food growing schemes as volunteers also assist with maintenance.
Community resilience	Food growing initiatives which give back to the community tackle food poverty. Participatory budgeting can provide spaces and opportunities for tenants to input into what they need and wish to see.
Consumption of physical resources	Supporting food growing initiatives which give back to local communities - local produce, no plastic waste.

6.4. Evidence

Type	Source	It says?	It Means?
Internal Consultation	Meeting with TP team and Groups	Meeting to review success of programs with groups which are being supported.	Gives insight on progress and allows the team to support where needed.

6.5. Overall Outcome

No Negative Impacts Identified.

All engagement should lead to positive opportunities.

7. Action Plan

Planned Action	Details												
Tenant Participation Strategy	<table><tr><td data-bbox="603 488 874 521">Lead Officer</td><td data-bbox="882 488 1479 521">Tracy Noles</td></tr><tr><td data-bbox="603 533 874 566">Repeating Activity</td><td data-bbox="882 533 1479 566">Yes</td></tr><tr><td data-bbox="603 577 874 611">Frequency</td><td data-bbox="882 577 1479 611">Constant</td></tr><tr><td data-bbox="603 622 874 656">Duration</td><td data-bbox="882 622 1479 656">2019-2029</td></tr><tr><td data-bbox="603 667 874 745">Expected Outcome</td><td data-bbox="882 667 1479 745">Meet the outcomes of the strategy</td></tr><tr><td data-bbox="603 757 874 833">Resource Implications</td><td data-bbox="882 757 1479 833">n/a</td></tr></table>	Lead Officer	Tracy Noles	Repeating Activity	Yes	Frequency	Constant	Duration	2019-2029	Expected Outcome	Meet the outcomes of the strategy	Resource Implications	n/a
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Repeating Activity	Yes												
Frequency	Constant												
Duration	2019-2029												
Expected Outcome	Meet the outcomes of the strategy												
Resource Implications	n/a												

ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL'S TENANT PARTICIPATION STRATEGY 2019 - 2029

Working in Partnership

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Glossary

Appendices

1 Introduction

1.1 How was the Tenant Participation Strategy 2019-2029 developed?

The first Tenant Participation Strategy was agreed in 2004 and tenants have been actively involved at various levels throughout the years.

This Tenant Participation Strategy has been developed by tenants, staff, and elected members after the completion of the Scottish Government's "Next Steps" programme. An exercise conducted by the Council's Change Management Team in 2018 recommended that a full review of Tenant Participation be carried out and TP be rebranded. With a reduction in the number of Registered Tenant Organisations (RTOs), new legislation, new ways of communicating and changes in technology the Council and the Tenant Participation Promotion Team (now disbanded) agreed to apply to join the Next Steps programme. After being successful in being accepted on to the programme a series of workshops were held, facilitated by the Tenant Information Service (TIS).

The Next Steps programme gave participants, Local Tenant Voices, Interested Tenants, elected members and staff (see Appendix 1) an opportunity to work with an independent organisation (TIS) using an objective approach to identify key objectives and priorities for tenants that have helped to form this strategy. A large number of ideas, suggestions and improvements were made at the Next Steps workshops (see Appendix 2). Not all of these will come to fruition, but a number of common themes have been identified and will be progressed as part of the TP Action Plan e.g. communication, training, partnership working. Other opportunities highlighted at the workshops will be considered where possible in the future.

2 Strategy background, including legal framework

2.1 Legislation and background to Tenant Participation

The most recent relevant legislation in respect of tenant participation are the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, Housing (Scotland) Act 2010, the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 and the Equality Act 2010.

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 placed a duty on landlords to have a TP Strategy and to set up and maintain a register of Register Tenant Organisations (RTOs).

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 introduced the Scottish Social Housing Charter (the Charter) and a duty on landlords to report annually on outcomes to the Scottish Housing Regulator. Tenant Scrutiny is a key feature of the Charter

and landlords are obliged to promote and facilitate scrutiny of their services by tenants and other customers.

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act sets out rights for individuals and groups to influence decisions about land, buildings and policies that affect their neighbourhood.

The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination and provides protection for people because they are or perceived to have a protected characteristic

The Scottish Housing Regulator introduced new regulatory and governance requirements in 2019 that require landlords to publish an Annual Assurance Statement for tenants

2.2 Scottish Social Housing Charter

The Charter sets out standards and outcomes that social landlords should aim to achieve when carrying out their housing activities

The Charter requires landlords to place tenants at the core of the housing service delivery. The Charter also requires landlords to facilitate tenant scrutiny of the housing service. The Scottish Housing Regulator expects landlord to understand its tenants' priorities and needs. It should involve them in setting priorities, objectives and standards and inform them about its performance. Tenants should be able to hold their landlord to account by having the right information and have a meaningful role in assessing performance. Landlords also need to demonstrate that they have involved homeless people, Gypsies /Travellers and factored owners wherever relevant. The Council must send an Annual Return on the Charter (known as the ARC) to the Scottish Housing Regular on indicators covering areas such as rent arrears, anti-social behaviour, repairs etc. and report its performance to tenants.

The Regulator expects landlords to agree their Scrutiny approach with tenants and to publicise this approach and for tenants to have a meaningful role in assessing landlord's service delivery and performance. Homeless people, Gypsies/Travellers and owners should also be involved where relevant.

2.3 Annual Assurance Statement

All landlords must prepare and provide to tenants an Annual Assurance Statement from October 2019 in accordance with SHR guidance. The statement will provide assurance and evidence that the Council is meeting all of its legal obligations associated with housing and homelessness services, equality and human rights, and tenant and resident safety. In addition, the statement will safeguard and promote the interest of tenants and other customers and facilitate response from the Council if things go wrong. Tenants will be consulted on the content of the statement.

2.4 Tenant Participation Linkages

Tenant Participation does not operate in isolation and in developing this strategy cognisance has been taken of the wider issues identified at the Next Steps workshops such as national and local objectives concerning tenants and other customers. In particular, the following are pertinent and either directly or indirectly affect tenants or future tenants;

2.41 Local Housing Strategy (LHS);

The LHS provides an assessment of housing need and demand, including housing conditions throughout Aberdeenshire and a strategy to tackle the challenges in the area. Of particular relevance to tenants and housing applicants in the LHS is the future provision of affordable housing and type of housing provided. The Strategic Housing Investment Plans (SHIPs) are part of the LHS process and set out the key development priorities in each local authority to inform Scottish Government housing investment decisions

2.42 Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) and Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (ESSH)

SHQS

SHQS is part of a national standard which decides what is acceptable, modern and good quality housing. Landlords need to produce standard delivery plans to show how their stock will meet the standard.

ESSH

ESSH is the minimum energy efficiency level that all houses and flats must meet by December 2020. It is a requirement outcome in the Charter and is aimed at making tenants' homes warmer and more affordable to heat.

Improvements to properties and information relating to upgrades to tenants' homes were highlighted at the Next Steps workshops as an area that can be better. Tenants need to be involved in setting the investment priorities to meet SHQS and ESSH and in monitoring progress in complying with these standards.

2.43 Homelessness, Rapid Rehousing and Housing First

Local authorities need to have a Homelessness Outcome Statement and Action Plan as part of their [Local Housing Strategy](#).

In 2018 the Scottish Government accepted all of the recommendations from the Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group (HARSAG) and one of the key recommendations from the Group is a swift transition to a Rapid Rehousing approach that eliminates or minimises the period that people spend in temporary accommodation before moving to permanent housing. All local authorities must develop a Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan, this has particular relevance to

homeless people and people on the housing waiting list with a wide range of housing needs.

2.44 Welfare Benefits/Money Advice/Fuel Poverty

Maximising tenants' incomes and reducing fuel poverty is a key way of ensuring that tenants and their household fully participate and are not excluded from the rest of the community and increase their social capital. A survey of tenants identified less social capital amongst tenants compared to the wider population. Social capital broadly refers to effective social groups that include such things as interpersonal relationships, a shared sense of identity, a shared understanding, trust and cooperation. Closer links will be developed with the various agencies and groups that operate in these areas and tenants will be encouraged to engage more.

2.5 Equalities

Aberdeenshire Council recognises the equality characteristics which are protected under the Equality Act 2010 i.e. race (includes Gypsy Travellers), sexual orientation, sex (gender), disability, gender reassignment, age, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity, and marriage and civil partnership. The Charter obliges social landlords to "perform all aspects of their housing services so that every tenant and other customer has their individual needs recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housing services ". The Council will promote equality throughout the Housing service delivery and with all TP activities.

2.6 Health & Social Care Partnership Strategic Plan

Housing works in partnership with the Aberdeenshire Health & Social Care Partnership (AHSCP) and supports the strategic priorities of the AHSCP Strategic Plan 2016-19.

Unsuitable housing impacts directly on health and providing appropriate housing of suitable quality and standard offers the potential to reduce costs to health and social care and allows older people and people with disability to remain independent. The delivery of specialist provision covers a varied range of accommodation for differing needs with access to care and support as appropriate, enabling independent living and reducing health inequalities.

Service users' views on Health & Social Care services and delivery are sought through public engagement. Client outcomes and customer satisfaction surveys are also sought from adaptations services and the Disabled Persons Housing Service to feedback into ongoing improvements in these services. Tenants are encouraged to engage in shaping the provision of appropriate housing to maintain independent living.

3 What is Tenant Participation?

The Charter “outcome” measure for Tenant Participation requires that “Social Landlords manage their business so that tenants and other customers find it easy to participate and influence their landlord’s decisions at a level they feel comfortable with”.

Tenant Participation involves:

- tenants taking part in decision making processes and influencing decisions about;
- housing policies
- housing conditions
- housing services
- expenditure and investment
- value for money

The Next Steps programme identified Tenant Participation as a two-way process with the sharing of information, ideas and suggestions for improvement and action. Of particular importance to the Next Steps participants was the need to communicate well. TP also aims to improve the standard of housing conditions and services to all tenants.

What are the benefits of TP?

- better service delivery
- improved outcomes for tenants
- more value from rent
- working together, respect and understanding
- more informed and knowledgeable tenants
- empowered tenants

This strategy details how the Council will involve tenants and the different range of ways that tenants can become involved. Involving tenants is critical to ensure that their voice is heard and that their ideas, suggestions, and recommendations are used to help shape the housing service.

The TP Action Plan will be updated annually and the TP Strategy reviewed every 3 years. This review process will involve tenants and tenants’ groups, staff at all levels and elected members.

4 Our Aims and Objectives

Aberdeenshire Council will involve its tenants and other customers in the development, scrutiny and improvement of its housing services.

These Aims and Objectives (agreed with tenants and tenant representatives) will be used by staff, tenants and other customers as a benchmark for every area of TP to ensure that all aspects of the service are fulfilling the overall TP strategic objectives of placing tenants at the core of the housing service delivery.

4.1 How can tenants become involved in TP?

The Next Steps participants identified the need to involve as many tenants as possible using a variety of ways, most out with the formal methods traditionally used. The geography of Aberdeenshire was also mentioned as a barrier that presented challenges to TP so there will be more emphasis in promoting TP activity at a local level. Specifically, the Next Steps workshops identified the need for a “menu” of TP opportunities for tenants.

A range of ways will be further developed both formal such as Scrutiny exercises and focus groups and informal methods such as using digital access aimed at all tenants (including. young people, elderly people, LGBT, Gypsy/Travellers and minority ethnic groups).

4.2 How will tenants participate and influence decisions?

Tenants views will help to shape the housing service delivery and tenants will be consulted and encouraged to comment and input to all aspects of performance and service.

4.3 What support and resources will tenants receive to effectively participate?

Tenants involved in TP will receive staff advice/support and assistance, training and relevant independent advice to enable them to fully participate at their desired level.

4.4 How will a quality Housing service be delivered?

An Action Plan and programme of Scrutiny exercises will be agreed with tenants with specific recommendations and reviews carried out to ensure objectives are implemented and achieved

4.5 How will staff and elected members facilitate tenant participation?

All staff and elected members will promote TP positively and will commit to engage and assist tenants in delivering a quality, value for money housing service.

5 Communication

5.1 Communication, Information & Feedback to tenants

A common theme expressed by tenants at the Next Steps workshops was the need to improve communication between the Council and tenants and ensure meaningful engagement. In particular, “developing digital opportunities”, “social media”, “taking communication into the 21st Century” and “involving young people” was mentioned.

This strategy will continue to support formal methods such as RTOs but also promote more informal methods of engagement using IT, social media etc. In addition, closer links will be developed with other agencies and groups that affect tenants at a local level such as community planning, welfare rights, money advice and digital skills.

Recognising the different levels of engagement and participation that tenants want will require a “menu” approach to tenant participation.

We will develop new communication methods appreciating that tenants and people in general are more reluctant to commit to formal groups. We will support more “short-life” groups and thematic exercises looking at specific areas of the housing service of interest to tenants.

We recognise the importance of communicating well with tenants and keeping them informed about matters affecting them. To break the cycle of “no one listens” and that tenants’ input is not valued we must provide faster feedback and report on the outcome of tenants’ comments and views.

We will continue to use conventional means of communicating with tenants such as newsletters, leaflets, surveys, website etc. and ensure access to information for tenants/people with disabilities.

We will use appropriate and innovative means of communicating with tenants and develop flexible on-line services to ensure that information is conveyed to all tenants recognising that some tenants may not have IT equipment or want to communicate digitally.

We will also use the latest digital cost-effective methods to communicate with tenants and tenants will be encouraged and provided with advice and assistance to use the Council’s digital facilities.

We will publish an Annual TP Impact Statement that will communicate to tenants the various ways where TP has had a direct effect on the services they receive.

Tenants will approve all documents for circulation (e.g. Specification for the Housing Improvement Programme) using the attached icon; **“Tenant Approved ✓”**

We will use Plain English in documents and we will avoid the use of jargon and make copies available in different formats e.g. large print, translated versions.

5.2 Keeping tenants informed

We will keep tenants informed of all aspects of the housing service that affects them reporting on:

- Annual Return on the Charter and the Annual Report to Tenants
- Annual Assurance Statement
- Rent Setting
- Tenant Satisfaction Survey results
- Intermediate Surveys e.g. anti-social behaviour
- Annual TP Impact Statement
- New Legislation
- Sheltered Housing and supported accommodation

5.3 Customer Service Standards

Staff will adhere to the council's Customer Service Charter (see Appendix 3)

5.4 Decision making

We will be open, transparent and honest in our decision-making processes and promote the Complaints procedures and methods of appeal to tenants if they are not happy with a decision.

We will assist tenants by reporting accurately to them, enabling them to make informed decisions which in turn will trigger the appropriate action by staff and provide a more efficient service and increased tenant satisfaction.

We will ensure that tenants are aware of their right to have decisions reviewed through;

- Appeals to Line Managers
- Complaints procedure
- Significant Performance Failure to the Scottish Housing Regulator
- Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman

We will implement robust methods for recording consultation inputs and outputs i.e. who is consulted, their responses and what impacts they have on issues consulted upon.

We will ensure that we have effective arrangements in place to learn from complaints and feedback

6 Consultation

6.1 Consultation

We will consult tenants and their representatives on all aspects of the housing service. Tenants will be given sufficient time to respond to the consultations. Timescales given to consult will be clearly indicated at the start of the process. This will include but is not restricted to the following areas;

- Policies and procedures
- Rent Levels
- Repairs
- Maintenance
- Improvements
- Investment
- Allocations
- Homelessness
- Anti-social behaviour
- Sheltered Housing
- Neighbourhood management Annual Assurance Statement
- Estate Based Initiatives

6.2 Monitoring, evaluation and Scrutiny

We will provide the opportunity for tenants to review and evaluate the performance of the Housing services by providing regular statistics and information to tenants.

We will use the Tenant Satisfaction Survey and other surveys, focus groups and ad hoc groups to evaluate tenants' satisfaction levels and identify areas for improvement

7 Resources & Support

7.1 Training and development of participants

We will provide training to ensure that tenants gain the necessary knowledge and skills to perform their TP role and/or add value to the capacity of TP groups (see Appendix 4)

We will support tenants attending regional and national conferences (e.g. TPAS, CIH,) where their attendance will prove to be of value to the individual or for the benefit of the wider tenant network where feedback is provided.

7.2 Resources

We will continue to fund tenant participation through the Tenant Participation budget (non-staffing costs) and encourage groups to explore other funding avenues.

We will regularly review the TP Budget and funding to tenant groups and individual tenants.

8 Scrutiny & Performance

We will meet the aims of the Charter and involve tenants in assessing the ARC and the production of ART

We will monitor performance and report to tenants

We will facilitate scrutiny exercises on service delivery and HRA and report on recommendations made and delivered

We will ensure tenant involvement and satisfaction measures are reported regularly to Communities Committee

We will issue Performance information on a regular basis to tenant groups and it will also be available on the Council website

9 How tenants can get involved in TP

Tenant Participation and engagement involves a range of methods of involving tenants; such as forming groups, ad-hoc meetings or commenting on current or new procedures as well as one to one discussions with Tenant Participation and housing staff.

9.1 Opportunities to get involved

Are promoted through the Tenants Handbook, Section 10 – ‘Tenant Participation’ but also includes information on:

- Scrutiny
- Estate Based Initiatives
- New Build Inspections
- Void Inspections
- Sheltered Housing Tenants’ Forum
- NETRALT
- Local Tenant Voices
- Local Tenant Voice get-togethers
- Focus Groups
- Mystery Shopping

9.2 We will consult with tenants and their representatives on all aspects of the housing service:

The methods of gathering our tenants’ feedback and these include: postal survey, online survey, one to one discussions, telephone surveys, events, conferences and newsletter reply slips

Tenants can have their say on topics such as;

- Policies and Procedures
- Communications
- Complaints
- Allocations
- Homelessness
- Repairs
- Planned Maintenance
- Void Monitoring
- Neighbourhood Management
- Anti-social Behaviour
- Rent Levels
- Investments

9.3 Sheltered and Very Sheltered Housing

The Sheltered House Tenant Forum (set up in 2014) to give Sheltered Housing tenants a voice about their housing concerns and comprises of voluntary representative from complexes across Aberdeenshire. The Forum meet up to three times a year to discuss issues related to Sheltered Housing.

All our Sheltered and Very Sheltered Housing complexes meet national standards set by the Scottish Government that are monitored by the Care Inspectorate, an organisation which regulate care homes, housing support complexes and other places where people are looked after.

We provide accommodation known as Very Sheltered Housing which gives a degree of support to those in the most need. Very Sheltered Housing itself is self-contained accommodation where on-site support and care is provided by a dedicated 24hr staff team.

9.4 Digital Inclusion and TP

The Charter (reviewed in 2016) highlighted the need for landlords to communicate better with tenants and to make best use of “new technologies such as web-based tenancy management systems and smart-phone applications”.

We will offer advice to tenants and signpost or support them to access IT training within their locality (Community Learning & Development, colleges, local groups).

We will encourage tenants to make more use of digital facilities that are available. This will be on their personal devices in locations that suit the tenant or within public accessible locations e.g. in libraries, local offices or service points. Providing support to encourage tenants to embrace technology.

We will provide the tenants with opportunities to access housing related digital sites and Facebook/Twitter links to council pages to assist them in managing their tenancy.

We will establish a forum of “verified” tenants and customers* to comment on service delivery should they choose a digital approach.

We will develop a Tenant E-Panel to enable people to take part and comment on a range of issues. We will make use of survey results to “home-in” on issues that matter to tenants at a local level

We will continue to test new ways of creating, sharing helpful information and communicating with our tenants with increased use of visual methods rather than leaflets and handouts.

We will test new ways to bring people together in ‘virtual meetings’ using tools like Microsoft Teams and Facebook polls.

We will develop a Digital Code of Conduct to enable tenants to communicate effectively with the Council.

We will support and improve and develop digital inclusion to increase the number of tenants with access to digital facilities and supporting tenants in the use of technology by advising tenants' of mobile technology, email address creation and accessibility, housing apps, websites, facebook and twitter.

9.5 Tenant Participation in Localities/ Mobile Tenant Participation

The Next Steps workshops highlighted the problem in Aberdeenshire of covering such a large area and tenants can feel remote from decision making opportunities. To address this issue TP will be developed at a local level using a variety of ways such as visiting more remote settlements, using Digital technology and working with existing local groups.

We will be working more closely with tenants in each of our 6 localities areas. Each area has a designated Tenant Participation Officer.

We will be working more closely with tenants in each of our 6 localities areas. The areas are split into North and South, both of which, have a designated Tenant Participation Officer.

The TPO is tasked with being available for local tenants, promoting TP locally and with tackling any local issues around TP.

We will continue to engage with individual tenants as "Interested Tenants" as a way of overcoming the challenges of consulting tenants in rural locations.

- We will compile an annual programme of TP surgeries and visits to estates /communities throughout the area.
- We will make staff and tenant reps available at specific dates and times in main council offices.
- We will visit schemes in more remote settlements to meet with tenants to promote TP.
- We will support TP presence at local community/social events throughout the year to increase accessibility for tenants.

9.6 Equalities

Aberdeenshire Council recognises the protected characteristics under The Equality Act 2010

We will use level entry access to meetings, Hearing Loops, Signage and other measures to ensure tenants with disabilities can fully participate in TP (where possible).

We will hold meetings in the most accessible of locations.

We will offer assistance to provide facilities to enable tenants with families to participate.

We will recognise the needs of any religious or minority groups.

9.7 Tenant Participation Impact Statement

The Next Steps workshops identified the need to communicate better with tenants and we will therefore report to all tenants on the changes that have happened as a direct result of TP by producing an Annual TP Impact Statement (see Appendix 6 - relate to Annual Assurance Statement being developed by SHR?). Examples include;

- Housing Improvement Programme
- Scrutiny exercises
- Estate Walkabouts
- Environmental Improvements
- Survey results

We will ensure that tenants can influence and shape the housing service delivery and that recommendations made by tenants are either implemented or a rational explanation is given if their views are not accepted.

We will use complaints to appraise our methods, procedures or policies where appropriate.

10 Action Plan

How the strategy will be monitored and reviewed

The TP Strategy Action Plan (see Appendix 8) has clear milestones and progress is measurable.

The Action Plan will provide the main means of monitoring and reviewing the Tenant Participation Strategy. The progress of the Action Plan will be discussed with tenants on a regular basis to ensure that objectives are being met with a timeline over the next 3 years.

We will agree with tenants an Annual TP Impact Statement detailing all the areas where tenant/customer involvement has changed and improved the Housing service delivery. The Annual TP Impact Statement will be sent to all tenants.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Abbreviation	What it means
ARC	Annual Return on the Charter: the annual report each social landlord has to provide to the Scottish Housing Regulator by 31 May outlining performance against the expected outcomes of the Scottish Social Housing Charter
ART	Every social landlord has to make available an Annual Report to Tenants by 31 October outlining their performance against Charter outcomes
CIH	Chartered Institute of Housing: the professional organisation of those working in the Housing environment
EESSH	Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing: the minimum energy efficiency level that all social housing should meet by December 2020
GMS	The Garden Maintenance Scheme provides a grass and hedge cutting service to disabled elderly and other disabled tenants who have no one living with them able to care for their gardens
HARSAG	Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Action Group: national working group looking at ways to eliminate homelessness
HMT	Housing Management Team consisting of senior officers of the Housing Service
HO	Housing Officer
HRA	Housing Revenue Account: the ring fenced monies, the bulk of which comes from tenants rents, that are used to finance the housing service
ITs	Interested Tenants: A database of interested tenants who are unable to attend meetings but are sent draft documents and any other relevant material for comment
LHS	Local Housing Strategy: Councils are required to undertake a comprehensive assessment of housing need and demand including housing conditions and to produce a Local Housing Strategy to tackle the challenges in their area
LTV	Local Tenant Voices may be appointed to represent their fellow tenants in locations where there are no tenant groups established

NETRALT	North East Tenants, Residents and Landlords Together: local partnership working organisation comprised of tenant participation staff and tenant representatives of all the social housing providers in NE Scotland which aims to share good practice and arranges joint training and events
R RTP	Rapid Rehousing Transition Plan: following on from the HARSAG recommendations, all local authorities must develop means to eliminate or minimise the period that people who present as homeless spend in temporary accommodation before being given a permanent tenancy
RTO	Registered Tenant Organisations – Tenant groups who have reached the required criteria in order to be registered with their landlord, who is then under an obligation to consult with such groups
SHC	The Sheltered Housing Coordinators supervise Sheltered Housing staff in their local area
SHN	Scotland's Housing Network (formerly SHBVN - Scottish Housing Best Value Network) provides opportunities for landlords to share best practice and provides analysis of performance information
SHO	Sheltered Housing Officers provide assistance and support in each Sheltered Housing scheme
SHQS	Scottish Housing Quality Standard: national standard of what is acceptable, modern and good quality housing that all social housing should have met by 2015
SHR	Scottish Housing Regulator: regulates social landlords to protect the interests of people who receive services from them
SHTF	Sheltered Housing Tenant Forum: composed of tenant representatives from Sheltered Housing complexes across Aberdeenshire and Housing staff. The SHTF meets several times annually to discuss matters pertaining to Sheltered Housing
SSHC	Scottish Social Housing Charter: "the Charter" sets out standards and outcomes that social landlords should aim to achieve when carrying out their housing activities
SST	Scottish Secure Tenancy - the tenancy agreement that all social landlords have to provide to their tenants and tenants have to sign
SSST	A "Triple ST" is the Short Scottish Secure Tenancy agreement that allows for short term tenancies in specific situations and for dealing with issues such as anti-social behaviour

TIS	Tenant Information Service: national organisation providing tenant participation advice, training and support to tenants and landlords
TP	Tenant Participation
TPAS	Tenant Participation Advisory Service: national organisation providing tenant participation advice, training and support to tenants and landlords
TPO	Tenant Participation Officers deal with and provide support and advice to both established and emerging tenant groups, Local Tenant Voices, and others involved at a local level
SDO	The Service Development Officer provides support and advice at a core Aberdeenshire level on TP matters
TSS	Tenant Satisfaction Surveys are a legal requirement for landlords to ascertain customer satisfaction and report to the Scottish Housing Regulator, at least every three years

Appendix 1

Next Steps Participants

Appendix 2

Next Steps Opportunities and Suggestions

Appendix 3

Aberdeenshire Council Customer Service Charter

Appendix 4

Tenant Training

We will provide to tenants new to TP a TP Basic Induction training from staff with periodic reviews to identify their training needs. A training “log” will be kept for all tenants involved in TP

TP Basic Training Introduction;

Council overview
Housing Background
SST, Short SST

TP Legislative background
Housing Structure & Responsibilities

TP Enhanced Training

We will provide to tenants involved in Scrutiny exercises, Reviews or Working groups

“TP Enhanced Training” from staff or other organisations to increase their knowledge and skills to ensure that they can comment, contribute and challenge performance and decisions in the relevant field.

TP Enhanced Training (Example HRA)

Training covering the following areas;

Committee Meetings – Terms of Reference, Chairing, setting agendas, taking minutes

HRA & General Fund Budgets

HRA Scottish Government Guidance

Business Plan

Rent Levels

New Build

Recruitment & selection of Housing staff

Formal Training

Tenant activists will be encouraged to undertake relevant training such as Chartered Institute of Housing qualifications Level 2 Award in Resident Inspection and Level 3 Award in Resident Scrutiny.

Joint Training

We will work with Tenants and other local landlords and tenant groups (e.g. NETRALT) that positively contributes to improved service delivery.

We will participate in joint training exercises with other organisations where there is value to be gained by tenants and staff.

We will ensure Best Practise in TP is adopted through links with other tenant groups, landlords and forums (e.g. Scotland’s Housing Network).

Appendix 5

Registered Tenant Organisation (RTO) Criteria

The Council will support and work co-operatively with tenant groups where a partnership agreement exists between the tenant group and Aberdeenshire Council. The Council acknowledges that although some tenant groups may choose to become a registered tenant organisation, other groups may take the decision not to apply to become registered.

Aberdeenshire Council has a mandatory duty to support the delivery of tenant participation by registered tenant organisations whose membership includes Aberdeenshire Council tenants. It also has the discretion to recognise and support the delivery of tenant participation by non-registered tenant organisations and to work with other community groups for example Focus Groups, which are working on housing-related issues.

Local Tenant Participation Officers will work closely with local tenant groups and provide support and assistance to these groups, to help them to become effective, constituted, and registered groups. Relevant Officers will attend meetings by invitation from local tenant groups to address specific concerns.

Aberdeenshire Council maintains a register of tenant organisations. This register is available for inspection during office hours upon request from any Housing Office.

Criteria for registration of tenant organisations

Tenant groups must meet specific criteria as set out in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, "Registration of Tenant Organisations Order 2002/416" to be accepted as a registered tenant organisation. Aberdeenshire Council has produced a leaflet and an application form to be completed for registration and these are available from the Tenant Participation Development Officer. In brief, groups will require to:

- have a publicly available constitution
- a formally elected committee
- operate within a specific area and have a defined membership
- have appropriate accounting records, showing income and expenditure and a statement of assets and liabilities, present an audited annual financial statement to its annual general meeting and agree to work within the financial framework for tenant participation agreed annually with the Council
- demonstrate that it is committed to representing the interests of its members and that, when consulted by Aberdeenshire Council, it can represent the views of its members who are Aberdeenshire Council tenants in its defined area of operation.

Aberdeenshire Council will encourage tenant organisations to apply for registered tenant organisation status if they wish. Applications must be in writing and include:

- a copy of the group's written constitution, as agreed at its most recent annual general meeting
- the names and contacts details of committee members (identifying office bearers) as agreed at its most recent annual general meeting
- the name and address of the contact person dealing with registration matters
- specific details of the group's current area of operation
- the names and addresses of other landlords with which it is registered or is seeking to register.

All other aspects of registration of tenant organisations within Aberdeenshire will be governed by the Registration of Tenant Organisation Order 2002/416. This would include arrangements for:

refusal of registered status by Aberdeenshire Council
removal of registered status by Aberdeenshire Council
appeal against Aberdeenshire Council's decision to refuse or remove registered status.

Appendix 6

Annual TP Impact Statement (will be linked to Annual Assurance Statement)

TP Impact statement will detail the effect that TP has had on the following areas over the last year, such as;

Financial Management/Business Planning
Housing Improvement Programme
Scrutiny exercises
Estate Walkabouts
Environmental Improvements
Sheltered Housing
Survey results
Tenant Safety
Homelessness
Tenant Satisfaction
Anti-social behaviour
Allocations- RRTP & Housing First
Equalities

The Annual TP Impact Statement will be reported to all tenants

Appendix 7

Tenant Participation Code of Conduct

Guidelines for all tenants, housing service users and residents involved in meeting with others as a group as part of the Council's TP Strategy 2019-2029

The purpose of the Tenant Participation Strategy is to encourage and support Council tenants and other customers living within the communities to:

- Represent the interest of all tenants and other customers in discussion about the delivery of the Council's Housing Service
- Represent the interest of all tenants and other customers within their estate, neighbourhood or community, in matters which affect or impact on all residents
- Build bridges and good working relationships between tenants and other customers, housing officers, and other partners or external organisations
- Ensure that all TP meetings are planned, well-run, are productive and lead to positive outcomes

All tenants and other customers, who want to work together in the Council's Tenant Participation structures, will be invited to agree Terms of Reference. They will be expected to adhere to the Code of Conduct to help their meetings work well and to achieve the outcomes the participants aim to achieve.

The Council will provide appropriate training and support, including equalities and diversity training, for housing officers, tenants and other customers as required.

All tenants and other customers who are involved in Tenant Participation activities will be expected to:

- Promote equal opportunities
- Oppose discrimination
- Turn off all mobile devices or put them on silent mode during meetings
- Give an apology in advance when unable to attend a meeting
- Respect the Chair of the meeting and the right of all individual members, officers, and invited speakers to speak at the meeting
- Follow the meeting agenda (any change to the order of discussion or content shall be as agreed by the Chair)
- Listen and contribute during the course of the meeting to give everyone a chance to speak

- Raise their hand to be invited to speak, so everyone can hear what is being said
- Consider, discuss, and respect different views to reach a consensus of opinion where possible
- Be punctual
- Show common courtesy and do not behave aggressively towards staff or participants
- Not to use group meetings to raise issues which relate to their own personal circumstances: instead issues raised must be relevant to the work of the Group and have some general applicability
- Abide by confidentiality when it is agreed by the group to keep any commercially sensitive or personal information that has been discussed during the meeting confidential within the group
- Record attendance, apologies, actions agreed and for progress made to be reported to the next meeting
- Represent the group positively at any external training/meetings/conferences etc. and promote the aims of the group
- Report outcomes to the group after attendance at any external events
- Attend regularly where membership is required
- Respect the group's Terms of Reference and any agreed Code of Conduct.

If a member of any group fails to attend **three** consecutive meetings of a group, without a reason which is acceptable to the group, they will be asked to explain their absence and could be excluded from that Group in the future.

The Chair has the authority to ask any attendee to leave the meeting if a member is in breach of the Code of Conduct.

A group may exclude any member from future involvement if there is evidence that the individual has significantly breached the Code of Conduct. (There is a right of appeal via the Council's TP staff to the relevant Housing Manager, whose decision will be final).

Agreement to Accept the Council's TP Code of Conduct

I agree the need for Group meetings and all TP activities where staff, tenants, housing service users and residents work together, to be welcoming and productive. I will abide by the above Guidelines when attending any Group meetings and related TP activities, and I will take part in any relevant training when offered by the Council.

I (Print Name):
Of (Address):

Signed:

Dated: