Aberdeenshire
C O U N C I L   **Environment & Infrastructure Services**

REPORT TO COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE – 9 DECEMBER 2021

TENANT PARTICIPATION STRATEGY (2019-2029) UPDATE

1   Reason for Report / Summary

1.1   To update Committee on progress towards the development of a new approach to tenant participation within Aberdeenshire

2   Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

2.1   Discuss progress made and challenges faced in the implementation of the Tenant Participation Strategy (2019-2029).

2.2   Agree to receive further updates at six monthly intervals.

2.3   Agree to a briefing note being provided to Area Committees outlining progress within the area.

3   Purpose and Decision Making Route

3.1   Committee considered and approved the implementation of a new Tenant Participation Strategy on the 5 September 2019. (Appendix 2)

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 Council 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 continue to impact on the ability to progress objectives set. It is anticipated this will remain the case throughout the 2021-22 winter period. It has been necessary to rely on a range of initiatives to ensure a suitable level of engagement with tenants and service users. Housing remain committed to progressing the TP Strategy throughout the uncertain times.

4.3 Restrictions introduced as a result of the Covid 19 pandemic continue to impact face to face tenant engagement activities – particularly in respect to the need to utilise appropriately sized and ventilated space. This will continue to be a challenge through winter as we balance the wishes of tenants to meet in person and the need to protect vulnerable groups.

4.4 A focus has also been placed on issues that are impacting on local communities and the TP Team facilitated a 2 week roadshow in August 2021. The team will begin planning for a second roadshow for summer 2022 in January.

4.5 There have been significant achievements, including:

- tenants attending online groups and meetings
- tenants now sitting on groups such as the Rent Strategy Member Officer Working Group and Housing Continuous Improvement Group
- ongoing consultation (available on Engage Aberdeenshire) on the future of tenants' groups
- new Registered Tenant Organisation (RTO), Aberdeenshire Council Tenants (ACT)
- annual report to tenants' 2021 video released
- Tenants' Newsletter printed and mailed Oct 2021
- new committee of the Sheltered Housing Tenants' Forum
- digital engagement and funding opportunities to assist tenants
- additional Tenants' Newsletter due in January with a focus on affordability

4.6 Tenants' Groups
Consultation with tenants on how they wish to see groups run completed on 30 November 2021. Comments will be considered and group structures drawn up.

4.7 RTO Update – ACT
ACT was given RTO status by Committee approval in September 2021. The RTO is experiencing some difficulties. The Housing Service has sought independent advice.

4.8   Sheltered Housing Tenants' Forum
The Sheltered Housing Tenants' Forum held elections for their new chair (Norman Strachan) and vice-chair (Hilary Hodgkinson). Norman has attended 3 schemes to date with Kate Macdonald, Sheltered Housing Manager, to encourage participation in the forum. Further dates to schemes are scheduled. Members of the forum have had input into the Place Standard tool.
Norman is leading with 4 tenant sub-groups considering the following topics:
- Staffing in Sheltered Housing
- Buildings and Facilities
- Costs and Charges
- Communication

4.9   Digital Engagement and other funding

Housing have continued to have success in applying to Connecting Scotland to digitally enable tenants who do not have access to a device or internet connection. As at 15 November 2021, the current monetary amount of funding over 8 applications is £410,808.96. A further application is being made on 15 November 2021, and figures can be updated once an award is issued.

Further flexible digital funding includes
- £30,000 for laptops, mifi's, and sims and creation of a lending library
- £1,700 to purchase smartphones and mifi + sims to allow equipment loan for the use of the community safety Noise App

Flexible funding – Food Fund
- £10,000, of which approximately £7,000 has been allocated, used through Aberdeenshire Sheltered Housing Schemes to combat food insecurity over winter months due to financial worries or Covid-19 isolation periods
- £20,000 to be used to combat fuel poverty by assisting in various welfare activities to assist households in warming their home or retaining heat in their home (e.g. assistance with provision of carpet flooring)

Total funding acquired from April 2020 – present: £472,508.96

4.10 An additional Tenants' Newsletter is being produced and will be mailed in January. This issue will have a focus on affordability as Housing recognise the increase in energy prices along with the universal credit uplift and end of furlough ending will have a significant impact on tenants. Tenants will be given details of how to self-refer for funding opportunities at this time.

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:

- Children's Rights and Wellbeing
  - Active: act Young tenants and children of tenants may work with parents and adults to participate or in consultation opportunities, particularly about the use of space and facilities in their areas; Having a say in housing and community can encourage ownership of an idea and development of positive healthy activity
  - Healthy: Young tenants and children of tenants may have input into participation or consultation opportunities, allowing them to have a say in developing their physical environment; Having a say in housing and community can encourage ownership of an idea and development of positive healthy activity
  - Included: Giving young people the opportunity to be heard and included now will build life-long trust between organisations and the person; Progressing actions proposed by young people let them know they are heard and their voices matter
  - Nurtured: Having a say in housing and community can encourages wider participation and engagement with public services through life
  - Responsible: Allowing young people to take part in positive interaction where their voice may enact change allows them to take pride and

ownership in the areas they live in; Having a say in housing and community can encourage ownership of an idea

- o Respected: Consulting young tenants and children of tenants gives respect to the views of the young person in their local areas; Progressing actions proposed by young people let them know they are heard and their voices matter
- o Safe: Within a family context, safety of having a home and having a say in their communities
- Equalities and Fairer Scotland
    - o Age – Older: work with older tenants to help them inform services and their communities through participatory budgeting and taking part in thematic working groups.
    - o Age – Younger: work with younger tenants to help them inform services and their communities through participatory budgeting and taking part in thematic working groups.
    - o Disability: 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.
    - o Race: Digital enablement through Connecting Scotland has allowed us to work with Gypsy Traveller and Refugee families to support them with devices and internet connections.
    - o Area Deprivation: 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; The team can assist tenants on an area basis to make improvements to their surroundings, positively impacting health and wellbeing.
    - o Low Income, Low Wealth, Material Deprivation: Impact Funding opportunities such as Connecting Scotland and Flexible Funding allow us to assist tenants with low income to combat poverty.
    - o Socioeconomic Background: Tenant participation allows tenants from all socioeconomic backgrounds to have a say in their housing.
- Health Inequalities
    - o Exercise and Physical Activity: Consulting with tenants on outdoor areas to make them more user friendly allows for better space to undertake physical activity.
    - o Healthy Eating: pact Supporting local food growing initiatives which also combat food poverty
    - o Mental Health: Provision of activities, equipment, etc. for socially isolated tenants; use of technology to combat noise nuisance at an early stage
- Sustainability and Climate Change
    - o Infrastructure Resilience: Working with tenants on environmental improvements keeps the physical environment from falling into disrepair.
    - o Quality of Environment: Improved quality of gardens taking part in food growing schemes as volunteers also assist with maintenance.
    - o 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; Tenant Participation allows for communities to come together to enact change, becoming more resilient.
    - o Wildlife and Biodiversity: Supporting food growing community initiatives also positively impacts wildlife and biodiversity as more communities consider not just food growing but the benefit of having areas for pollinators or bees.

- o Consumption of Energy: Digitally enabling tenants through Connecting Scotland allows for tenants to join in remotely saving travel/emissions.
- o Energy Efficiency: Tenants have a say in how the council undertake EESSH/ EESSH2 improvements.
- o Low Carbon Transition: The use of digital technology to engage with tenants means less use of physical facilities (electricity, etc.) and travel (less fuel consumption).
- o Consumption of Physical Resources: act Supporting food growing initiatives which give back to local communities - local produce, no plastic waste.

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

   - no risk identified

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 their comments have been incorporated in this report.

6.2   The Committee is able to consider and comment on this item in terms of Section D1.1d of the List of Committee Powers in Part 2A of the Scheme of Governance

Alan Wood
Director of Environment & Infrastructure Services

Report prepared by Tracy Noles, Service Development Officer (Tenancy Services)
Date 10 November 2021

List of Appendices –
Appendix 1 – Integrated Impact Assessment (PDF)
Appendix 2 - Tenant Participation Strategy 2019-2029 as amended

1. Overview

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

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

During screening 9 of 10 questions indicated that detailed assessments were required, the screening questions and their answers are listed in the next section. This led to 4 out of 5 detailed impact assessments being completed. The assessments required are:

- Childrens' Rights and Wellbeing
- Equalities and Fairer Scotland Duty
- Health Inequalities
- Sustainability and Climate Change

In total there are 34 positive impacts as part of this activity. There are 0 negative impacts, all impacts have been mitigated. The impact on 1 groups is not known, information is provided in the detailed sections of this document.

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?	Yes
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?	Yes
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?	Yes
Does this activity / proposal / policy have an impact on children / young people's rights?	Yes
Does this activity / proposal / policy have an impact on children / young people's wellbeing?	Yes

3. Impact Assessments

Children's Rights and Wellbeing	No Negative Impacts Identified
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. Childrens' Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment

4.1. Wellbeing Indicators

Indicator	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Unknown
Safe	Yes			
Healthy	Yes			
Achieving				Yes
	Will find out by:			
Nurtured	Yes			
Active	Yes			
Respected	Yes			
Responsible	Yes			
Included	Yes			

4.2. Rights Indicators

UNCRC Indicators upheld by this activity / proposal / policy	Article 2 - Non-discrimination Article 12 - Respect for the views of the child Article 13 - Freedom of expression Article 17 - Access to information; mass media Article 23 - Children with disabilities Article 27 - Adequate standard of living

4.3. Positive Impacts

Impact Area	Impact
Active	Young tenants and children of tenants may work with parents and adults to participate or in consultation opportunities, particularly about the use of space and facilities in their areas.
Active	Having a say in housing and community can encourage ownership of an idea and development of positive healthy activity
Healthy	Young tenants and children of tenants may have input into participation or consultation opportunities, allowing them to have a say in developing their physical environment,
Healthy	Having a say in housing and community can encourage ownership of an idea and development of positive healthy activity
Included	Giving young people the opportunity to be heard and included now will build life-long trust between organisations and the person.
Included	Progressing actions proposed by young people let them know they are heard and their voices matter
Nurtured	Having a say in housing and community can encourages wider participation and engagement with public services through life

Impact Area	Impact
Responsible	Allowing young people to take part in positive interaction where their voice may enact change allows them to take pride and ownership in the areas they live in.
Responsible	Having a say in housing and community can encourage ownership of an idea
Respected	Consulting young tenants and children of tenants gives respect to the views of the young person in their local areas.
Respected	Progressing actions proposed by young people let them know they are heard and their voices matter
Safe	Within a family context, safety of having a home and having a say in their communities

4.4. Evidence

Type	Source	It says?	It Means?
External Consultation	Consultation/ Lived Experience	Young tenants have the opportunity to consult on issues impacting their housing or overall housing strategy.	We listen and consider the opinions of young people when developing housing strategy.
Other Evidence	Social Media	Young people can have access to information through media by having access to files on the Councils website and joining social media pages (facebook, twitter)	Young people are able to ask for and receive information

4.5. Accounting for the Views of Children and Young People

Young tenants have the opportunity to consult on issues impacting their housing or overall housing strategy.

4.6. Promoting the Wellbeing of Children and Young People

Housing will support young people to have their say in appropriate forums.

4.7. Upholding Children and Young People's Rights

Young tenants have the opportunity to be heard in relation to housing activity.

4.8. Overall Outcome

No Negative Impacts Identified.

At present work is ongoing to encourage young tenants to engage in Tenant Participation.

5. Equalities and Fairer Scotland Duty Impact Assessment

5.1. 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		

5.2. Socio-economic Groups

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

5.3. 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.
Race	Digital enablement through Connecting Scotland has allowed us to work with Gypsy Traveller and Refugee families to support them with devices and internet connections.

Impact Area	Impact
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.
Area deprivation	The team can assist tenants on an area basis to make improvements to their surroundings, positively impacting health and wellbeing.
Low income	Funding opportunities such as Connecting Scotland and Flexible Funding allow us to assist tenants with low income to combat poverty.
Low wealth	Funding opportunities such as Connecting Scotland and Flexible Funding allow us to assist tenants with low wealth to combat poverty.
Material deprivation	Funding opportunities such as Connecting Scotland and Flexible Funding allow us to assist tenants in material deprivation to combat poverty.
Socioeconomic background	Tenant participation allows tenants from all socioeconomic backgrounds to have a say in their housing.

5.4. 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.
External Consultation	Rent Strategy Consultation	In progress November 2021.	It will give insight of what factors of rent strategy and affordability are most impacting tenants and allow council to make strategic decisions.
Internal Consultation	Sheltered Housing Tenants Forum	The forum gives tenants in Sheltered Housing the opportunity to have input into how the service runs.	The SHTF allows tenants voices to be heard and consulted which feeds into reports and allows committee to make decisions based on lived experience.

5.5. Engagement with affected groups
Tenant Satisfaction Survey

5.6. Ensuring engagement with protected groups
Undertaken by specialist consultants who undertook a representative sample.

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

5.8. Overall Outcome

No Negative Impacts Identified.

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

5.9. Improving Relations

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

6. Health Inequalities Impact Assessment

6.1. 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			

6.2. Positive Impacts

Impact Area	Impact
Exercise and physical activity	Consulting with tenants on outdoor areas to make them more user friendly allows for better space to undertake physical activity.
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

6.3. 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

6.4. Overall Outcome

No Negative Impacts Identified.

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

7. Sustainability and Climate Change Impact Assessment

7.1. 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		

7.2. 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		

7.3. Positive Impacts

Impact Area	Impact
Infrastructure resilience	Working with tenants on environmental improvements keeps the physical environment from falling into disrepair.
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.
Community resilience	Tenant Participation allows for communities to come together to enact change, becoming more resilient.
Wildlife and biodiversity	Supporting food growing community initiatives also positively impacts wildlife and biodiversity as more communities consider not just food growing but the benefit of having areas for pollinators or bees.
Consumption of energy	Digitally enabling tenants through Connecting Scotland allows for tenants to join in remotely saving travel/emissions.

Impact Area	Impact
Energy efficiency	Tenants have a say in how the council undertake EESSH/ EESSH2 improvements.
Low carbon transition	The use of digital technology to engage with tenants means less use of physical facilities (electricity, etc) and travel (less fuel consumption).
Consumption of physical resources	Supporting food growing initiatives which give back to local communities - local produce, no plastic waste.

7.4. 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 suport where needed.
Other Evidence	North Braeheads environmental improvements	Working closely with tenants on improving the environment in the North Braeheads area of Fraserburgh.	Taking action on tenants' concerns in the area and making improvements improves the relationship between council and tenant, and improves the physical area.

7.5. Overall Outcome

No Negative Impacts Identified.

All engagement should lead to positive opportunities.

8. Action Plan

Planned Action	Details	
Tenant Participation Strategy	Lead Officer	Tracy Noles
	Repeating Activity	Yes
	Frequency	Constant
	Duration	2019-2029
	Expected Outcome	Meet the outcomes of the strategy
	Resource Implications	n/a

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 (EESSH)

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.

EESSH

EESSH 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 EESSH 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 with 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 then 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

9

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.
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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