

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**Report by the Chief Officer, Housing and Employability****Housing and Communities Committee: 23 August 2023**

Subject: “Involving You”, West Dunbartonshire Council’s Tenant Participation Strategy 2021-24 - Annual Progress Report**1. Purpose**

- 1.1** This purpose of the report is to provide the Housing and Communities Committee with an annual progress report on the implementation of “Involving You”, West Dunbartonshire Council’s Tenant Participation Strategy which covers the period 2021-24.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1** It is recommended that the Housing and Communities Committee:

- (i) Note the progress and achievements made in relation to the implementation of the second year of the strategy’s action plan, including the key role played by tenants and tenant representatives in improving housing services in West Dunbartonshire.

3. Background

- 3.1** The Council has a statutory duty under the Housing (Scotland) Acts 2001 and 2010 to produce and adequately resource a Tenant Participation Strategy and to evidence a strong commitment to involving tenants in shaping and improving housing services.
- 3.2** Our current Tenant Participation Strategy called “Involving You” covering the period 2021 to 2024 was approved by the Housing and Communities Committee in February 2021. This Strategy builds on the positive developments of previous strategies successfully implemented in West Dunbartonshire since 2001.
- 3.3** In addition to being a legislative requirement, involving tenants and other service users in decisions about their homes and communities is now accepted as best practice for all social housing providers. The Tenant Participation Strategy supports this Council’s commitment to deliver positive outcomes for our tenants and wider communities.
- 3.4** West Dunbartonshire Council continues to be an exemplar organisation in supporting tenant participation activities. In 2018 the Council was the first local authority in Scotland to be awarded Gold Accreditation by TPAS Scotland (Tenant Participation Advisory Service - Scotland). This followed a robust scrutiny of our tenant participation provision and included TPAS Scotland examining our practices and interviewing tenants and staff. The

service went through a reaccreditation process in February 2023 and have maintained the Gold Accreditation, this highlights the ongoing exemplar nature of tenant engagement activities in West Dunbartonshire.

4. Main issues






4.1 “Involving You” is underpinned by the following strategic vision:-






“West Dunbartonshire’s Housing Services’ vision for tenant participation is one of sharing information with our tenants, future tenants and other service users in a variety of ways; providing opportunities for them to express their views in a way that suits them; listening to and acting on tenants’ views to improve the housing services we provide and allowing our tenants to scrutinise our performance”.

4.2 The aims of the strategy are to:

- Improve the culture and practise of involving tenants across housing services;
- Improve feedback to tenants to show where they have influenced or shaped the housing service;
- Promote and provide a wide range of options for tenants to get involved;
- Encourage involvement of under-represented groups;
- Ensure that tenants are aware of the options available to shape housing services;
- Assess our performance in line with the Scottish Social Housing Charter and involve tenants in our Annual Tenant Report;
- Ensure that resources we put in place and practices we carry out are adequate to support and develop tenant involvement; and
- Make sure that we communicate effectively with tenants and provide good quality, accessible information that tenants want.

The strategy has a comprehensive set of actions aimed at achieving these key aims over the 3 year period and progress in terms of implementation at the end of Year 2 is summarised below (Appendix 1 sets out the full detail of the action plan).

“Involving You” Tenant Participation Strategy 2021/24						Total
Progress at end of Year 2	16	24	1	0	0	41

Action Status Key				
				
Completed	Not Started; In Progress	Check Progress	Overdue	Cancelled

Improve the culture and practise of involving tenants across housing services

4.3 Improving the culture and practice of Tenant Participation across housing services is a key aim to ensure that changes are embedded across all housing service areas.

4.4 Key achievements during 2022/23 include:

- Gold Award by TPAS for excellence in tenant participation,
- Hybrid meetings were adopted to maximise attendance for those who wanted to attend in person and still offer the virtual option which can be more convenient for many tenants as well as staff,
- iLearn course developed and promoted to staff so that it was easily accessible,
- Published an annual Tenant Participation performance report (attached as Appendix 2),
- The production of quarterly electronic TP Updates for tenant representatives, Elected Members and staff to maximise awareness of tenant participation activities,
- Publicising outcomes of consultations as well as tenant involvement in WDC/WDTRO (West Dunbartonshire Tenants and Residents Organisation) Liaison meetings, Joint Rent Group, Scrutiny Panel and TRAs (Tenant & Resident Associations) activities to demonstrate the impact tenants can have.

Improve feedback to tenants to show where they have influenced or shaped the housing service

4.5 The Consultation Toolkit continues to be used to facilitate effective feedback to tenants when reviewing policies or practices. In 2022/23 it was used to develop a number of policy and practice initiatives including the Enhanced Multi-storey flats Strategy and in the Rent Setting process with consultation summaries being provided as part of the background papers to the reports presented to the Housing and Communities Committee.

4.6 Housing News is used to publicise outcomes from consultations to help encourage more tenants get involved and demonstrate that they can influence decisions and policies.

4.7 A consultation calendar is created and published on the Council's website annually which aims to ensure that tenants are aware of when they can give their views.

4.8 Tenants & Residents Associations are also supported to demonstrate their achievements at a more local level as well as using the Housing News to promote their activities.

Promote and provide a wide range of options for tenants to get involved

- 4.9** We continue to promote a wide range of options to encourage tenants to get involved in a way that suits them. We use the Housing News to advertise tenant group meetings and activities, as well as specific articles on the Joint Rent Group and Scrutiny Panel activities. The WDTRO (West Dunbartonshire Tenants and Residents Organisation) also have a regular column which they use to promote their activities and encourage tenants to get involved.
- 4.10** Tenant involvement in scrutinising Housing Services is also supported and the Scrutiny Panel's reports are publicised in the Housing News, on our Tenant Participation webpages and shared with the WDTRO. The Panel have also developed posters to advertise for new members to be displayed in all local libraries.
- 4.11** We use free digital programmes to help create eye catching posters and flyers to help promote TRA meetings, as well as specific events that they host.
- 4.12** New methods to obtain tenants views have been developed with the help of the new housing system QL, which allows text and emails to be sent to tenants and encourage them to get involved in consultations.

Encourage involvement of under-represented groups

- 4.13** Regular contact has been established with tenants at the Gypsy Travellers site at Dennystoun Forge to build trust and meetings have started on development opportunities and site improvements that can be made there. We have developed a positive partnership with MECOPP (Minority Ethnic Carers of People) to ensure ongoing effective partnership with the Gypsy Travellers community.
- 4.14** A partnership with Neighbourhood Networks has been created to give people with additional support needs an opportunity to meet and make improvements to housing services information and access to services and explore any other areas they interested in.

Ensure that tenants are aware of the options available to shape housing services

- 4.15** To ensure tenants are aware of the options available to shape housing services and budgets, we continue to promote these widely through Housing News, our Tenant Participation Updates and online.
- 4.16** Our annual rent setting consultation process continues to develop transparency around the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) which tenants and the Scottish Housing Regulator are looking for. Our Joint Rent Group continues to meet monthly, with tenant volunteers and key housing and finance staff working jointly on improving the Council's compliance with HRA Guidance, as well as making budget processes more transparent.

Improve involvement in monitoring performance through our Scrutiny Panel and encourage tenant scrutiny activities

- 4.17** In line with the Scottish Social Housing Charter we continue to develop tenant involvement in monitoring our performance and becoming involved in scrutiny activities. During 2022/23, our Scrutiny Panel completed their seventh scrutiny exercise looking at the Council's new tenants visit process. A report was presented to the Housing Improvement Board in May 2023 and all the Panel's recommendations were accepted and will be implemented during 2023/24.

Ensure that resources we put in place and practices we carry out are adequate to support and develop tenant involvement

- 4.18** We continue to review the resources required to improve tenant participation and tenant scrutiny. The Tenant Participation budget is monitored monthly and reviewed annually. During 2022/23 we have continued to support 12 Tenant and Resident Associations, the WDTR0, Sheltered Housing Forum, Joint Rent Group, pre-HACC (Housing and Communities Committee) Forum, a short life task and finish group to review the Capital Programme and Scrutiny Panel to help them function effectively.

- 4.19** The personal benefits of participating in tenant activities including training opportunities have been promoted through the Housing News, TP Updates and on Facebook to help act as an incentive for getting involved. Treasurer, secretary and chairperson training are also provided for all new office bearers as well as refreshers for existing office bearers. External training is also utilised, which during 2022/23 included:

- three tenants attended the TPAS Scotland conference in Clydebank;
- Scrutiny Panel member attended a TPAS Scotland Scrutiny learning session.

Make sure that we communicate effectively with tenants and provide good quality, accessible information that tenants want

- 4.20** We continue to ensure that we communicate effectively and provide good quality accessible information that tenants want, primarily through our quarterly newsletter Housing News which is delivered to all tenants. As part of the Accreditation process, TPAS Scotland strongly commended us on the quality of our communication with tenants and in particular our Tenant Participation Strategy.
- 4.21** We continually update the content of our Tenant Participation webpages to keep them up to date and ensure they are a useful resource for tenant groups 24/7 and to share meeting information. In order to be published on the Council's website, all documents must comply with accessibility standards.

4.22 Our Facebook page has increased in terms of the number of followers it has and we use this to share local community news, Tenant and Resident Association activities and promote consultations and ways to get involved.

4.23 During 2023/24 the following key actions from the Strategy will be delivered:

- Involve tenants in pre-rent setting discussions about the Capital programme and business plan options
- Publish an annual “Involving You” Tenant Report;
- Explore opportunities to develop a forum for people in temporary/supported accommodation;
- Assess interest in creating an editorial group with tenants to develop the Housing News;
- Review and update the Tenant Communication Strategy; and
- Feedback to tenants so that we can demonstrate where our tenants and other service users have influenced or shaped housing services.

5. People Implications

5.1 There are no people implications from this progress report. There are 2 dedicated staff members funded from the Housing Revenue Account focused on the development and delivery of tenant participation within the Housing Development and Homelessness Team. In addition, supporting tenant participation is part of the remit of all Housing and Homelessness staff. The Strategy will therefore be delivered with input from staff across all of Housing and Homelessness Services.

6. Financial and Procurement Implications

6.1 Actions required to take the Strategy forward in 2023/24 will be delivered from within current budgetary provision which is reviewed on an annual basis.

6.2 There are no procurement implications.

7. Risk Analysis

7.1 The Council has a statutory responsibility to develop and implement a Tenant Participation Strategy. Our “Involving You” strategy reflects the priorities and aspirations of tenants and tenant representatives, therefore there is a risk that if its key aims are not met then this would produce an adverse reaction from tenants, tenant representatives and from the Scottish Housing Regulator and lead to reputational damage for the Council.

7.2 Our Tenant Participation Strategy builds on the achievements made in developing good working relationships with tenants over the years, improving transparency and a joint working approach to involving tenants. The continued delivery of the strategy is therefore essential in demonstrating the Council’s on-going commitment to continuous improvement across Housing Services and putting tenants at the centre of our activities.

8. Equalities Impact Assessment

- 8.1** An Equality, Health and Human Rights Impact Assessment was carried out as part of the strategy's development and found no substantive negative impacts. This does not require to be updated in respect of this progress report.

9. Consultation

- 9.1** Regular Tenant Participation updates including the implementation of the Strategy are provided at the quarterly WDC/WDTRO Liaison meetings and the minutes of these meetings are circulated to our Tenant & Resident Associations, WDTRO members, as well as being publicly available on the Council's webpage.

10. Strategic Assessment

- 10.1** The Tenant Participation Strategy is the overarching document setting out the strategic direction for engagement with tenants and future tenants. The implementation of the Tenant Participation Strategy will continue to support and contribute greatly to all five of the Council's key strategic priorities.

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Date: 9 August 2023

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Appendices: 1. TP Strategy 2021-2024 action plan
2. TP Annual Performance Report 2022/23

Background Papers: Tenant Participation Strategy 2021-2024 'Involving You'

Wards Affected: All