

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**Report by the Strategic Lead, Housing and Employability****Housing and Communities Committee: 1 May 2019**

Subject: Involving You - West Dunbartonshire Council's Tenant Participation Strategy 2017/2020 Annual Progress Report

1. Purpose

- 1.1** This report provides the requested annual progress report to the Housing and Communities Committee on the implementation of West Dunbartonshire Council's Tenant Participation Strategy 'Involving You' which covers the period 2017-2020.

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 tenant representatives; and
 - (ii) note and celebrate the Council's Gold Accreditation award from TPAS (Tenant Participation Advisory Service) Scotland highlighted in section 3.5 of this report.

3. Background

- 3.1** The Council has a statutory obligation under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and 2010 to produce and adequately resource a Tenant Participation Strategy 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 2017 to 2020 was approved by the Housing and Communities Committee in February 2017. This strategy builds on the positive developments of previous strategies successfully implemented 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 the exemplar organisation in supporting tenant participation activities and has been nationally recognised in the past three years, being the winner of Tenant Participation Advisory

Service Scotland (TPAS Scotland) Good Practice Awards for Communicating Performance Information to Tenants (2016, 2017) and Involving Tenants in Rents (2018).






- 3.5** In March 2019, the Council was awarded Gold Accreditation by TPAS (Tenant Participation Advisory Service). This followed a robust scrutiny of our tenant participation provision and included TPAS examining our practices and interviewing tenants and staff. The service scored an overall grade of 6 which equates to ‘an excellent provision of tenant participation with outstanding sector leading strengths in the majority of standards.’






4. Main issues

- 4.1** “Involving You” has the following 8 key strategic aims:

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

Progress in terms of implementing the actions aimed at achieving these key aims is summarised below and Appendix 1 sets out the full detail of the action plan.

Tenant Participation Strategy 2017/20						Total
Progress at end of Year 2	10	31	0	0	0	41

Action Status	
	Cancelled
	Overdue; Neglected
	Unassigned; Check Progress
	Not Started; In Progress; Assigned
	Completed

Improve the culture and practise of involving tenants across housing services

4.2 Improving the culture and practice of tenant participation across housing services is a key action to ensure that changes are embedded across all housing service areas.

4.3 Key achievements during 2018/19 include:

- Development of a Tenant Priority Budget which facilitates tenants to engage directly with financial decisions regarding environmental and housing improvements to their neighbourhoods;
- Improved communication with our tenants on and offline;
- The production of a quarterly TP update for tenant representatives, elected members and staff to maximise awareness of tenant participation activities;
- Creation of a new Tenant Participation Leaflet, which promotes the options for participating. This is an easy to read leaflet which will be included in the new tenant pack and circulated to Housing and Homelessness staff and tenant groups for distribution; and
- Developed a walkabout process with tenants and housing staff.

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

4.4 The Consultation Toolkit continues to be used to facilitate effective feedback to tenants when reviewing policies or practices. In 2018/19 it was used in the review of the Design Standard and Rent Setting process and consultation summaries were provided as part of the background papers provided to the Housing and Communities Committee. This can be viewed as positive practice.

4.5 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. Direct feedback to those giving contact details was also given to all tenants attending the public meeting or completing the rent option survey.

4.6 A consultation calendar is provided annually which aims to ensure that tenants are aware of when they can give their views. We have also developed a consultation outcome section to emphasise the impact tenants views have had.

4.7 Tenants and 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

- 4.8** 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 WDTR also have a regular column, called Tenants Voice which they use to promote their activities. Tenant involvement in scrutinising Housing Services is also supported and the Scrutiny Panel's reports are shared with the WDTR as well as being publicised in Housing News and on TP webpages.
- 4.9** We have developed a "walkabout" process for tenants to inspect their local area and produce actions plans for improvements along with housing staff. This has worked well especially in the multi storey flats.

Encourage involvement of under-represented groups

- 4.10** We have continued to facilitate a forum for homeless people in temporary/supported accommodation and are an active member of the West Dunbartonshire Equality Forum. We have carried out some initial scoping work in terms of developing a youth housing forum to involve tenants aged 16-25. This will be further developed in 2019 in partnership with our Housing Development Intern.

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

- 4.11** 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 TP Updates and online.
- 4.12** Our annual rent setting consultation process continues to develop transparency around the HRA which tenants and the Housing Regulator are looking for. Our Joint Rent Group continues to meet monthly with tenant volunteers and key housing and finance staff jointly working 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

- 4.13** 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 2018/19, our Scrutiny Panel completed their fourth scrutiny exercise looking at the Council's compliance with the Scottish Housing Quality Standard and the number of properties we have held in abeyance and the reasons for this. A report was provided to the Housing Improvement Board in November 2018 and all the Panel's recommendations were accepted and will be implemented throughout 2019. We are also supporting the Panel to recruit

more members to assist them in monitoring existing action plans and carrying out new scrutiny activities.

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

4.14 We continue to review the resources required to improve tenant participation and tenant scrutiny. During 2018/19 we have continued to support TRAs, the WDTRO, Sheltered Housing Forum, pre-HACC Forum and Scrutiny Panel to help them function effectively. We have also encouraged tenants to take advantage of many training opportunities which have included:

- funding four tenants to go to the TPAS tenant conference;
- provided independent HRA training to members of the WDTRO;
- funded 2 Scrutiny Panel members to attend a TPAS Participation Bootcamp relating to Tenant Scrutiny; and
- providing in-house treasurer training for new office bearer.

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

4.15 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 commended us on the quality of our communication with tenants and in particular our Tenant Participation Strategy and summary documents.

4.16 Our Tenant Handbook, produced in partnership with tenants, was refreshed during 2018/19 to include updated information following the introduction of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014. We also continually review the content of our TP webpages and use of social media, ensuring they are kept up to date and relevant to tenants.

4.17 During 2019/20 the following key actions from the strategy will be delivered:

- Review and update service standards;
- Publish an Annual 'Involving You' Tenant Report;
- Support TRAs to demonstrate their achievements locally;
- The development of a Youth Housing Forum;
- Develop tenant involvement in the decision making process of rent setting, Capital programmes and agreeing Business Plans; and
- Agree with tenants what Charter Indicators they want in the Tenant Report.

4.18 In addition to the key actions highlighted above, as a direct impact of the Scottish Housing Regulator's new statutory regulatory framework we will be involving our tenants, homeless people and other who use housing services in ensuring that we comply with all regulatory standards.

5. People Implications

- 5.1** There are no people implications from this progress report. The Housing Development team has undertaken a service redesign which has ensured additional resource to support tenant engagement activities and to meet the requirements of the new statutory regulatory framework.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1** Actions required to take the Strategy forward in 2019/20 will be delivered from within current budgetary provision.
- 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 aspiration of tenants, 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.
- 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 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** As a progress report, there is no requirement to consult on the progress of the Strategy. We do however give regular Tenant Participation updates 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 implementation of the Tenant Participation Strategy will continue to support all of the Council's key strategic priorities.

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Date: 15 April 2019

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Appendices: 1. Tenant Participation Strategy 2017-2020 action plan annual progress report.

Background Papers: Tenant Participation Strategy 2017-2020 Involving You

Wards Affected: All

