

# Tenant Participation performance report 2021/22



12 Tenant & Resident Associations (2 new groups set up)

2 dedicated TP officers

3 consultations completed

230 followers on Facebook – up from 185 last year

1 Tenant Federation (WDTRO)

1 scrutiny exercise completed digitally and new member joined Scrutiny Panel

£18,784 spent on tenant proposals through Tenant Priority Budget

Scrutiny Panel finalists in CIH Awards for 'Most Inspiring Scrutiny Panel'



**GOLD ACCREDITED**  
FOR EXCELLENCE IN  
TENANT PARTICIPATION

## Introduction

Our Tenant Participation Strategy 'Involving You' sets out how we support and promote tenant involvement in West Dunbartonshire. This report is to outline progress made in the last year and highlight the input tenants have had in decisions and service improvements.

The ongoing disruption caused by the COVID 19 pandemic continued to affect tenant participation as well as many other housing services. In these disrupted times it has become even more obvious how important good communication is and TP staff continued to be available by mobile phone and via email so that contact with tenant groups was maintained successfully. The resilience and enthusiasm of our tenant groups was remarkable and most have continued their activities throughout this disrupted period.

Regular meetings continue on Zoom and we have all got more used to using it and these virtual meetings can be as effective as they are face to face. The WDTRO have continued to meet monthly and the bi-monthly WDC/WDTRO Liaison meetings have continued on Zoom to ensure that tenants still had opportunities to raise issues with housing managers and the Housing Convener at such a critical time.

## Key highlights

### 1. Continued good response from tenants in rent setting consultation



Despite the continuing impacts of the pandemic and the consultation taking place remotely, we still had a significant number of tenants having their say on rent setting. A total of 1089 tenants voted for their preferred rent option as part of the consultation - down from 1344 last year but still an 11% response rate. Again it all had to be done virtually but a range of voting options were offered to make it as easy as possible for all tenants. A public meeting and presentation was still carried out but done as a virtual meeting on Zoom.

Keeping the rent increase as low as possible had been the clear message from tenants so the options offered all related to a 2% rent increase but gave different ways of spending the money. All tenants were encouraged to vote for their preferred option with a direct mailing to them and a range of voting methods offered– free-post voting card, online survey, texting and email options.

The vote was close but Option 2 (retain a Tenant Priority Budget of £400,000 and use other £400,000 to accelerate External Wall Insulation programme) received the most votes, 35.7% and this option was then approved by the Council in February 2022.

Over previous years we have encouraged tenants to get involved and influence this vital decision so although the response rate was less than last year, considering all that is going on in the world it is still a clear sign that tenants do want to have their say and how important rent issues are for so many people.

Option 1	31.6%	344
Option 2	35.7%	389
Option 3	32.7%	356
<b>Total</b>		<b>1089</b>

## 2. Tenant Priority Budget

This is an annual £800,000 budget, set aside for tenant priorities. There are set criteria on how this Budget can be used and it is tenants who decide what proposals are value for money and should go ahead which is done through public meetings.

Due to ongoing backlogs in Repairs, there were a number of delays in getting proposals costed up and then carried out. We also received a reduced number of proposals but 12 proposals were completed with only £18,784 of this budget spent in the last financial year. This included fencing at Craigielea Road, solar lights for Drumry community garden and repainting parking lines at Littleholm.

There is £36,692 worth of work still to be completed and being pursued with the Repairs teams. These include repainting parking lines and lock-up doors at Westbridgend, redesign drying area at Kilbowie Court and painting columns and rails in Hood Street.

We will continue to promote the Tenant Priority Budget, as it's a great opportunity for tenants to see improvements being done in their area. We also want to use it to encourage local walkabouts and focus on tenant priorities identified there.

## 3. Communication

We have continued to produce **TP updates** for tenant representatives, elected members and staff to maximise awareness of tenant participation activities and encourage them to increase tenant involvement- [Tenant Participation Updates | West Dunbartonshire Council](#)



The Housing News is produced quarterly and delivered to all tenants, as well as future tenants living in temporary accommodation. Housing staff also receive an electronic version. We try to make the Housing News as interesting as possible for tenants and promote different ways to get involved. TRAs also continue to use the Housing News to promote their activities and we include as much community news as possible. The chairperson of the WDTR0 also has a regular column and uses it to highlight tenant issues and encourage tenant involvement.

We have a regular reader's quiz to encourage people to read the Housing News and use the contact with the winners as an opportunity to get their opinion on the Housing News and see if they want to get more involved.

## 4. Online and Facebook

We continually review the content of our TP webpages [Tenant participation | West Dunbartonshire Council](#) and update it with meeting notes from the Joint Rent Group, WDC/WDTR0 Liaison meetings and Pre HACC Forum so that tenants can get access to this information at a time that suits them.



@WestDunbartonshireCouncilTenantParticipation - we now have 230 followers on Facebook and post at least 3/4 times a week with information we hope is relevant to tenants. Our FB page continues to attract new readers (up from 185 last year) and is a valuable mechanism for sharing information and encouraging engagement. TRA's also make good use of Facebook and Tullichewan TRA have 414 followers which is impressive. New TRA's are also using Facebook to help promote their set up and meetings.

## 5. Tenant involvement in shaping and improving Housing Services

Our **Joint Rent Group (JRG)** has continued to meet every month. The group includes tenant volunteers, housing and finance staff, as well the Housing Convener. They have been improving transparency about the HRA budget setting and assessing where tenants could be more involved in these key financial decisions. Regular updates on the Capital Programme are shared with the group, following their concerns about the effectiveness of the programme and its ability to keep tenant's homes up to standard. The group are also looking at the void budget which continues to grow but tenant satisfaction with the standard of properties has dropped which raised concerns over value for money.

The **Pre-HACC Forum** is another opportunity that tenants have to influence decisions made by the Housing and Community Committee. The Forum takes place two days before the Housing and Communities Committee meets and tenants can meet the Housing Convener and staff who have written the papers that are going to committee - the Housing Convener then feeds tenants' views into the committee discussions. These meetings too continued on Zoom and had regular tenant attendance throughout the year. Paper copies of the committee reports, which can be lengthy and more difficult to read on small devices, were delivered to attendees to assist discussions.

**WDC/WDTRO Liaison meetings** take place every 2 months and continues to be a good example of effective partnership working, as the WDTRO and staff can add to the agenda and the WDTRO chairperson and Housing Convener take turns chairing the meetings. Minutes are then shared with all TRAs and posted on TP council webpages.

Holding the Council to account is an important function of tenant participation and it ensures that we can improve services for all tenants. The WDTRO have raised a number of concerns over the last year which has resulted in improvements that all tenants can benefit from, these included:

- Concerns about getting through to Repairs on the phone continued to be raised and call handling performance information has been monitored at these meetings. This has helped the contact centre focus on improving the service and waiting times have been reduced. The WDTRO have asked for the call handling performance information to carry on being shared at these meetings to ensure this performance improvement continues.
- Ongoing delays in repairs being carried out in multi-storey flats to fire doors and landings has resulted in the repairs service creating a dedicated team of staff to specialise in the flats, to build up expertise as they all have different specifications and some unique features. There have been delays in getting the specialist training needed for the staff but it is hoped this service will launch soon and progress will continue to be reported to the Liaison meetings.
- The Council's performance against the Charter outcomes is regularly monitored, as well as updates on the Charter action plan aimed at improving performance.
- The WDTRO have also raised specific questions about progress in addressing the repairs backlog and general repair performance and this will remain a standing agenda item until all are satisfied that progress is being made.
- Following the Housing Officers temporary change to operating in functional teams, the WDTRO raised concerns about difficulties in being able to contact the right officer and this resulted in improvements to information on the Council's webpages and information being included in the Housing News to help explain the situation.
- The WDTRO flagged concerns about the practice of outgoing tenants being told to put the keys through the door and for the door to then be forced open. When restrictions were lifted this was an unnecessary expense and the practice stopped and continues to be monitored by managers.

## 7. Scrutiny Panel progress.



The Scrutiny Panel have continued to work throughout the last year via Zoom and Rita Howard, their chairperson presented their report and recommendations on the Complaints process to the Housing Improvement Board on 25/10/21. All their recommendations were accepted and are being implemented.

The Scrutiny Panel were successful in being shortlisted for a prestigious CIH excellence award and narrowly missed out but it was a great national acknowledgement of the work that they do to ensure that tenant scrutiny is a valued part of WDC's performance management.

While the Council finalises its Charter performance information reporting for 2021/22, the Panel are doing 2 short scrutiny exercises looking at new tenant visits and reviewing how easy the Council's website is to use.

The Panel also have a new member and training for them and refresher training for existing members took place recently in Clydebank Town Hall. The Panel have been embracing hybrid meetings as some prefer to meet in person while keeping the flexibility of an online option and TP staff have supported them in doing that.

## 8. Tenant Participation Budget - £ 56,211.34 spent in 2021/22

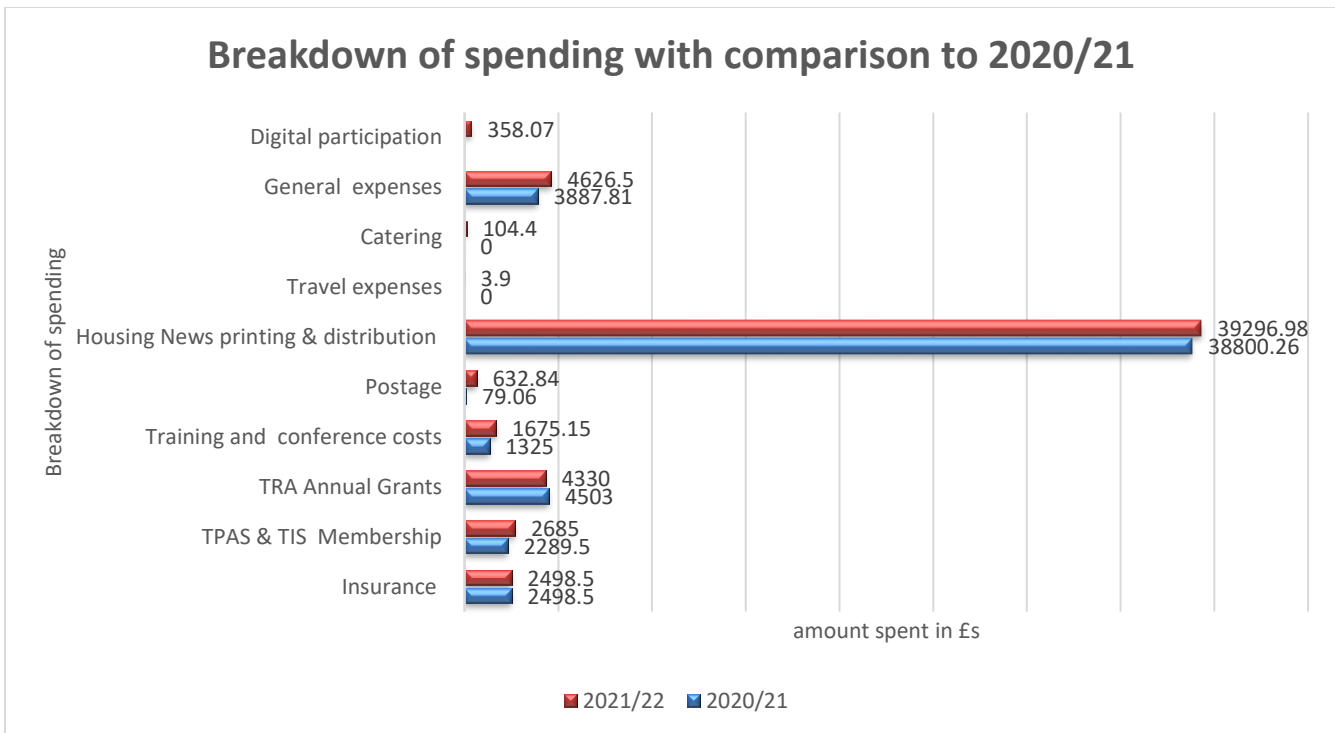
We have a TP budget of £75,395 and spent £56,211.34 of our budget, which is slightly up from last year as more activities took place but still less than 'normal' years, mainly due to reduced expenses and less running costs for tenant groups. Our Budget enables us to financially support 12 TRAs, the WDTR0, Sheltered Housing Forum, Pre-HACC Forum and Scrutiny Panel to help them function effectively and as independently as possible.

The cost of producing the Housing News also comes out of our Tenant Participation Budget and this takes up the majority of our communication costs. 4 TRAs have community flats that they operate from and the running costs for these are included in the costs for supporting TRA's, along with annual top up grants to cover their administration costs to support their functioning. Public liability insurance is also paid for each active TRA.

Due to Covid restrictions, we made savings in relation to catering, paying transport costs to and from meetings, as well as reduction in many running costs for TRA's while they remained closed. This year did create some new general costs for us in relation to ensuring that groups had computer and printing equipment as well as our Zoom license. We have had a TPAS membership for a number of years and last year also took out a TIS membership – they are another national tenant participation organisation and been very proactive in providing good digital participation advice so we have renewed that too.

A breakdown of our spending and comparison with the previous year is shown below:

## Breakdown of spending with comparison to 2020/21



### 9. Training

Training opportunities were still limited this year but the following good online events were attended:

- Coaching confidence in communication for tenants.
- Scrutiny learning session run by TIS.
- Staff member completed TPAS certificate in TP and Community Development.
- Rent setting and affordability session run by TIS.
- WDTR0 member attended Housing Engagement and Energy Efficiency Zero Ambitions run by TIS.

### 10. Volunteering hours - measuring the time given is also a recognition of the energy, effort and skills that comes with it.

We really value and appreciate the time that tenants give coming to meetings and started to count volunteering hours a few years ago so that we could measure the time that tenants give.

Measuring the time given is also a recognition of the energy, effort and skills that comes with it.

The Sheltered Forum has been the only group that didn't want to do meetings via Zoom but are going to be restarting with separate meetings for Clydebank and Dumbarton/Vale in June, to keep numbers smaller and safer.

All other groups continued to meet via Zoom and 190.5 volunteering hours have been given to meetings with Housing Services throughout 2021/22 which is a true testament to the commitment of our tenants that are involved.

The WDTR0 Liaison, Joint Rent Group and Pre-HACC Forum all had an increase in attendance but the overall total was reduced by less consultations taking place. Most groups have been affected by some members not wanting to do online meetings or due to other reasons.



## 11. The year ahead

The WDTRO sadly lost a valued member Polly Wheelans, who passed away in January. She was a hard working member of the WDTRO and Littleholm TRA and is sadly missed. Billy Neeson also had to step down from the WDTRO and the Joint Rent Group (JRG) due to ill health. Billy was a founder member of the JRG and his knowledge and understanding will be hard to replace.

With 2 new TRAs being set up in Haldane and Whitecrook, there is much optimism for increasing numbers of tenants getting involved in the year ahead. As the Council slowly re-opens we are also hoping to be able to facilitate hybrid meetings, so that those who prefer meeting face to face can do so, while keeping the flexibility of meeting virtually available, which may be particularly helpful for staff and save travel time.

Recruiting new members has also been more difficult due to the restrictions on meeting up but hopefully this year we and TRAs can be more visible and help generate new members.

Walkabout are also being promoted as ideal ways for staff and tenants to assess individual streets or areas and make improvements happen. We want to make sure these are effective and well-advertised.

Our focus will be on ensuring that any involvement with Housing Services is a positive experience for people and that all the support for effective participation is in place.

***Thank you to all our tenant volunteers and to housing staff who make tenant participation work.***

## **Please give us your feedback.**

We want to continue to improve how we provide feedback to tenants, so please review this annual report format and let us know what you liked, what you didn't and what you want to see included in the future.



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