
To: Communities and Housing Policy Board

On: 12 March 2024

Report by: Director of Environment, Housing and infrastructure

Heading: Renfrewshire Council Tenant Participation Strategy – Update

1. Summary

- 1.1 This report provides the Policy Board with an update on the Council's Tenant Participation Strategy Action Plan, which was approved by the Board on 25 October 2022.
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2. Recommendations

It is recommended that the Communities and Housing Policy Board:

- 2.1 Note the progress made with regard to the Tenant Participation Strategy Action Plan as set out in Appendix 1.
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3. Background

- 3.1 The Tenant Participation Strategy 2022 – 2027 which was approved by the Policy Board at its meeting of 25 October 2022 sets out the range of opportunities available to tenants and residents to get involved and to influence decisions about the housing services we deliver. The strategy includes an Action Plan which sets out a range of priorities agreed for the period October 2022 – March 2024.
- 3.2 Tenant representatives worked closely with council officers to develop the strategy and continue to work with officers to monitor the progress of the Action Plan on a quarterly basis. Progress to date on the key priorities contained within the Action Plan is attached at Appendix 1 and section 4 of this report highlights some of the actions undertaken.

4. Tenant Participation Strategy Progress

- 4.1 The Strategy covers a five-year period and attached at Appendix 1 is the Scorecard for the Action Plan highlighting what has been achieved since October 2022. The Scorecard was presented to the Tenant Scrutiny Panel for their comments as part of their role in monitoring the Strategy. The Panel provided positive feedback, notably on The People's News, the number of responses received to digital consultation methods, the Council Wide Forum, and they are pleased to see the Quality Circles starting in person again and noted that involvement in regeneration areas may attract wider interest in other general housing matters.

The Strategy will continue to be monitored and developed in consultation with our tenant representatives with an annual update provided to the Policy Board for noting. The following are some key highlights since its inception:

4.2 Consultative Forums

Tenant Scrutiny Panel

- The Tenant Scrutiny Panel consists of volunteer council tenants who meet throughout the year to assess and influence the performance, service delivery, plans and activities of Renfrewshire Council's Housing Service. The Panel also act as a sounding board on how the Service has performed against the Scottish Social Housing Charter and were involved in the design and content of the Tenants Report for the Charter. Influential in developing the Tenant Participation Strategy, they provided a positive assessment on progress of the Strategy so far. The Panel are currently working on a scrutiny exercise examining Tenant and Resident Association (TARA) funding and will report their findings and recommendations in due course.

Tenant Quality Circles

- Tenant Quality Circles are a small groups of volunteer council tenants who carry out inspections of Renfrewshire Council's multi-storey blocks, sheltered housing complexes and council housing estates to ensure a quality standard is being achieved and maintained in every multi-story block, sheltered complex and housing estate. The volunteers help to identify any matters that could be changed, repaired, or upgraded to improve the quality of the buildings and their surrounding areas.
- The volunteers carry out 4 inspections per year, with each inspection usually taking a couple of hours, followed by a meeting after the inspections to discuss the outcome of any issues raised. Volunteers commit as much or as little time as they can and play a vital role in ensuring tenants' feedback is at the heart of shaping services.
- The High Rise and Sheltered Quality Circles have recommenced in-person inspections of multi-storey blocks and sheltered accommodation. Their inspections are followed up with a short report to officers for action.

- A new Estate Management Quality Circle has been developed with representatives from different areas of Renfrewshire. Inspections started in February in the Thornbrae area, and a programme of inspections across different areas of Renfrewshire will be developed. The inspections will cover matters including cleanliness and tidiness of common areas, vandalism and any visible outstanding repairs. As with the other Quality Circles, the inspections will be followed up with a report to for officers to action.
- To help in relaunching the Quality Circles following their activities being restricted during the pandemic period, new logos for each group are being developed to provide the groups with a fresh look.

4.3 **Digital Participation**

The strategy was developed so that tenants and the Service could make best use of digital resources to maximise participation. Throughout the year the Tenants' Scrutiny Panel has continued to meet online using the Microsoft TEAMS platform and the Panel has recently started hybrid meetings.

The 2024/25 Rent Consultation process was conducted using a mix of online and telephone surveys and in total over 1,400 tenants participated in this survey which is more than twice as many as participated in previous consultations.

This was the first time the Service has made use of an online consultation method to this extent. Participation in the online survey was promoted by letter and using targeted e mails from the Corporate Communications Team. In addition to the response on the proposed increases, the service received valuable feedback on service quality and standards from those tenants who participated. The mixed approach has proved to be very successful and will be replicated in other future surveys to maximise participation.

4.4 **Communication**

We have worked closely with colleagues in our corporate Communications team to improve the ways we communicate with tenants. We will continue to collaborate with our Communications team throughout the lifetime of the strategy to develop improved channels of communication. During the year we informed tenants of service updates and our regulatory requirements, using:

- *The People's News*, which provided service updates and our performance on the Scottish Social Housing Charter
- Council website to advise of our performance on the Scottish Social Housing Charter and the Scottish Housing Regulator's Engagement Plan

- As noted in section 4.3 above, this year's rent consultation process was extensive, with 12% of tenants participating. All tenants were advised of the telephone and online surveys by letter, which was accompanied with background information setting out service priorities. Targeted e-mails advised over 5,000 tenants of the online survey which again was accompanied with service priorities and background information. In addition to tenant consultation, the Council Wide Forum received a presentation on Service priorities and the background to the rent increase proposals.

4.5 TARA Activity, Training and Events

Re-registration for Tenant and Resident Associations was resumed last year, and six TARAs applied for and were accepted for re-registration. As well as this the TARAs undertook a 'health check' with the Tenant Participation Development Officer who discussed their requirements for the forthcoming year, by way of support and training needs. Tenant and Resident Association members attended the Tenants' Information Service Annual Conference this year.

4.6 Tenant Surveys

During the past year we have changed the way we gather data from our housing repairs satisfaction survey, moving from telephone surveys to electronic surveys which are sent via text message. By making use of text messaging, we can get responses from tenants more quickly and reach a larger audience to increase participation - since April 2023 2,100 tenants have used the text messaging service for repairs satisfaction, the results of which will be reported as part of this year's ARC return. We also surveyed tenants in our new build properties, through a combination of face to face and online surveys. The feedback from all surveys helps inform our services and highlights areas where improvements can be made.

4.7 Consultation with Tenants and Residents in Regeneration Areas

Officers continue to consult with tenants and residents in each of the Housing-Led Regeneration and Renewal areas, adapting to the needs of each community as required and in line with the timeline of the delivery of investment within each area.

- In the Howwood Road area, we have an active Facebook page to ensure active two way communication and we are also investigating opportunities locally for a suitable location for a drop in surgery as matters within that area progress.
- In Springbank, officers are available within the Beechwood Community Centre on a weekly basis, every Wednesday afternoon to allow tenants and residents to pop in and discuss matters relating to their individual circumstances.

- We have a regular on site presence in each of the areas and issue newsletter updates to provide updates on progress across the programme.
- Neighbourhood Renewal Groups have commenced in 2 of the 8 areas and other groups are being established across the others to capture views on key issues affecting residents and what action can be taken to tackle them.

5. Tenant Participation Priorities for 2024/2025

- 5.1 For the forthcoming year the priorities, in addition to day-to-day tenant participation, will see further developments in expanding the ways in which tenants are involved in shaping housing services:

5.2 Tenant Scrutiny Panel and Quality Circles

During the forthcoming year the Tenant Scrutiny Panel will carry out an exercise looking at TARA funding and the registration process and will present their findings to the Service's Senior Management Team on completion. Officers will support the Panel to expand their membership over the course of this year and a programme of topics for the Panel to work on will be developed.

Now that the Quality Circles are meeting again in person, it is expected that there will be an increase in the number of inspections in the multi storey and sheltered housing blocks. The new Estate Management Quality Circle will aim to carry out inspections in at least two of the Council's neighbourhoods this year.

5.3 Digital Participation and reaching out to other groups

Officers are working with colleagues in the council's Digital Participation team to investigate and accelerate new ways of consulting with and involving tenants using digital methods. This will include an increased use of online surveys and looking at alternative online platforms to assist in decision making.

Taking cognisance that many of our tenants use digital platforms as their main source of information, we will work with partner organisations to look at ways to consult with a wider base of tenants, particularly those who do not currently engage with us, such as young people, to maximise their involvement.

Similarly, we will look to work with other partners and community groups to engage with other tenants who may not usually be involved, such as disabled groups or tenants from ethnic communities.

5.4 Communication

With the assistance of colleagues in Corporate Communications we will make use of the GovDelivery channel to communicate with tenants on a subject-by-subject basis. This channel enables us to contact 4,100 tenants by e mail.

We do recognise that tenants may not be interested in being involved with all aspects of the housing service, so it is proposed to make use of GovDelivery to enable tenants to select areas that interest them for their views.

We will continue to publish The People's News newsletter and our Annual Report to tenants on the Scottish Social Housing Charter. We will improve our consultation process on the style and content by asking tenants targeted questions on what they would like to see reported and how it is reported.

5.5 Council Wide Forum and Neighbourhood Forums

We will hold another Council Wide Forum in the forthcoming year, which will provide tenants with service information and consult them on service priorities. We will look at how the Neighbourhood Forums could link in with the Council Wide Forum to enable more tenants to have a say in Participatory Budgeting

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** - none arising directly from this report.
2. **HR & Organisational Development** - none
3. **Community/Council Planning** -
 - **Our Renfrewshire is thriving** – effective tenant participation gives tenants the opportunity to influence decisions about housing services and gives the Council stronger links with local communities.
4. **Legal** - none
5. **Property/Assets** - none
6. **Information Technology** - to support tenants the new strategy will be aligned to the Council's Digital Strategy.
7. **Equality & Human Rights** - the Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.
8. **Health & Safety** - none
9. **Procurement** – Where external consultants may be required to support tenant participation activities, these will be commissioned in line with the Council's requirements on the procurement of services.

10. **Risk** - none
11. **Privacy Impact** - none
12. **COSLA Policy Position** - N/A
13. **Climate Risk** - N/A

List of Background Papers

- (a) Report to the Communities and Housing Policy Board, 25 October 2022, Renfrewshire Council Tenant Participation Strategy'
- (b) Report to the Communities and Housing Policy Board, 17 January 2023, 'Housing Customer Engagement Annual Report 2021/22'

Author: Ray Walkinshaw, Housing Regeneration and Development Manager

Email: ray.walkinshaw@renfrewshire.gov.uk



Tenant Participation Strategy Action Plan

Scorecard for 2023/24

www.renfrewshire.gov.uk



<p>Priority</p> <p>To ensure tenants and residents are well informed</p>
<p>What have we achieved</p> <p>In consultation with tenants and service managers, we issued a copy of The People’s News in October 2023, with a further copy scheduled for Spring 2024. Copies of The People’s News are available in different formats on request.</p> <p>In consultation with tenants, we published Renfrewshire Council’s Tenants’ Report on the Charter.</p> <p>We reported the outcome of our Rent Consultation with tenants to the Council at its meeting on 29 February 2024. This year we received over 1,400 responses to our rent consultation.</p>
<p>Priority</p> <p>We will develop our digital participation opportunities and embed digital engagement across Renfrewshire</p>
<p>What have we achieved</p> <p>We have met the Tenants Scrutiny Panel and continue to meet with tenants’ groups online using the MS Teams platform.</p> <p>With the support of the Digital Participation Officer tenants and residents have received equipment to work with the service online.</p> <p>New members of the Tenants’ Scrutiny Panel received training and resources to participate online.</p> <p>Our rent consultation for 2024/2025 was carried out using a telephone survey and an online survey to reach a wider audience. We received over 1,400 responses to the survey which included valuable service feedback as well as views on the proposed rent increases.</p>

Priority

To listen to tenants and consider their views before decisions are reached and promote real opportunities to participate and influence housing services.

What have we achieved

To maximise participation, the Rent Consultation Survey for 2024/25 was conducted both by telephone and online. All tenants were advised by letter of the online survey and the telephone survey. The online survey had 840 responses, and 609 tenants were consulted by telephone.

The Service continues to carry out tenant satisfaction surveys for key services areas and undertake service improvements where identified from feedback, for example:

- Standard of temporary accommodation, this survey is carried out at point of service by our Homeless Services team and our return for this survey is consistently over 90% satisfaction.
- Repairs satisfaction, our method of collection for this survey has changed to text surveys to ensure an immediate response and maximum participation. Since September 2023 2,100 tenants have taken part in this survey, the results of which will be reported in this year's ARC return.
- Quality of home satisfaction. This survey is carried out at point of service by housing staff when a tenant moves into a new home.
- Owners' survey, this survey is carried out by post each year to gauge satisfaction with the service provided by Owners Services.
- Our most recent survey for tenants in New Build properties was carried out online. The survey has been publicised in *The People's News*.

<p>Priority</p> <p>Increasing Tenant Participation Opportunities</p>
<p>What have we achieved</p> <p>The most recent edition of The People’s News promoted the benefits of tenant participation which attracted interest from tenants who not been involved before. A number of these tenants attended the Council Wide Forum in December and have noted their interested in joining the Estate Management Quality Circle and the Tenant Scrutiny Panel. These new members will help refresh these groups and support existing members in developing the role of the Quality Circles and Tenant Scrutiny Panel.</p>
<p>Priority</p> <p>Local Tenants and Residents Associations (TARAs)</p>
<p>What have we achieved</p> <p>As part of our support to TARAs each association was offered a ‘health check’ as part of the TARA registration process. This check identified areas where each association required additional support and training requirements.</p> <p>The Tenants’ Scrutiny Panel have started a scrutiny exercise looking at the Registration Scheme for Tenants’ and Residents’ Associations and how TARAs are supported.</p>

<p>Priority</p> <p>Council wide Tenants' Forum and the role of the local Neighbourhood Forums</p>
<p>What have we achieved</p> <p>We held the first 'in person' Council Wide Forum for three years in December 2023 which was well attended. At the Forum, participants were consulted on the proposed rent increase with additional information on service priorities and investment. In addition, a presentation on fire safety and other home safety measures was provided which was well received by attendees. Feedback from the Tenant Scrutiny Panel on the Forum was that it was a very positive and informative meeting.</p>
<p>Priority</p> <p>Tenant Scrutiny Panel</p>
<p>What have we achieved</p> <p>New members were recruited to join the Tenants' Scrutiny Panel. The Panel has resumed working on a hybrid basis and has started a scrutiny exercise looking at the Registration Scheme for Tenants' and Residents' Associations and how TARAs are supported.</p> <p>During the past year the Panel has been involved in the design and content of the Tenants Report on the Scottish Social Housing Charter.</p>

<p>Priority</p> <p>Expand the Quality Circles</p>
<p>What have we achieved</p> <p>A new Estate Management Quality Circle was established in January 2024. Inspections started in February in the Thornbrae area of Johnstone. It will meet monthly with local housing staff looking at estate management issues in agreed neighbourhoods.</p> <p>To provide a fresh start for the High Rise and Sheltered Quality Circles will be part of a rebranding exercise.</p> <p>The High rise and Sheltered Quality Circles have both recommenced in person inspections. These had been previously put on hold during the pandemic. Initial feedback from tenants involved was that they were pleased to be back working on these projects.</p>
<p>Priority</p> <p>Participation in regeneration areas</p>
<p>What have we achieved</p> <p>We have used a range of consultation methods in each of the Housing-Led Regeneration and Renewal areas, adapting to the needs and requirements of each community as required and in line with the timeline of the delivery of investment within each area, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Groups using social media to promote activity and to keep involved. o Regular community drop-ins where staff can provide information to residents. o Newsletters, and o Neighbourhood Renewal groups have started in 2 areas to capture the views of local people affected by the proposals.

<p>Priority</p> <p>To provide resources and support to empower tenants and residents to influence decisions about housing services</p>
<p>What have we achieved</p> <p>We continue to fund tenant participation activities through an identified budget for tenant participation which facilitates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Support for TARAs through the provision of grant funding. o Support for tenant participation activity, with Housing staff regularly attending TARA meetings to provide advice and support. o Training and development for tenants' groups, tenant representatives have attended external tenant participation events that provide opportunities to exchange good practice and network with other tenants. o Membership to independent organisations such as The Tenant Participation Advisory Service and the Tenants' Information Service. <p>We continued to support existing Tenant & Resident Associations and assist in establishing new TARAs.</p>



Environment, Housing & Infrastructure
Renfrewshire Council
Renfrewshire House
Cotton Street
Paisley
PA1 1BR

www.renfrewshire.gov.uk

