

To: Housing and Community Safety Policy Board

On: 23 August 2015

Report by: Director of Development and Housing Services

Heading: Customer Engagement for Housing Annual Report 2015/16

1. Summary

- 1.1 The Customer Engagement for Housing Annual Report for 2015/16 is attached as an Appendix to this report. It reviews progress made in relation to the Council's Customer Engagement Strategy during the last year and outlines the resources made available by the Council to promote tenant involvement.
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2 Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Policy Board:
- (i) Notes the Customer Engagement Annual Report 2015/16 attached at Appendix 1
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3 Background

- 3.1 Renfrewshire Council's Customer Engagement Strategy for Housing, was approved in August 2010 and recognises the importance of these issues, but also sets out our plans for widening the scope of engagement across a broader range of customer groups.
- 3.2 This Report outlines how the Council as Housing Authority has engaged with different customer groups over the period April 2015 to March 2016 and is indicative of the approach that Renfrewshire Council has taken to move away

from reporting specifically on Tenant Participation (TP), to a wider remit that seeks to engage with a broader customer base.

3.3 This report also details how we plan to expand and develop this over the year ahead. The actions planned for 2016/17 reflect a number of major drivers which are influencing our approach to customer engagement, these include:

- Our requirements under the Scottish Social Housing Charter to involve tenants and other customers in the scrutiny of our performance
- Consultation and engagement with tenants and groups to inform ongoing service development and continuous improvement.
- The development of a revised Customer Engagement Strategy, to reflect the priorities and outcomes we wish to achieve in the coming years

3.4 The Annual Report will be circulated to Tenants' and Residents' Groups and partner organisations. Copies will also be made available at the Council's Contact Centre, the Johnstone and Renfrew offices and an advert will be included in the next Tenants' Newsletter, 'The Peoples News'.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – None.
2. **HR & Organisational Development** – None.
3. **Community Planning – Safer and Stronger** - Resident involvement in service development can help create more stable communities. This Report shows what is being done to promote tenant/ resident involvement.
4. **Legal** - None.
5. **Property/Assets** – None.
6. **Information Technology** – None.
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** – None.
10. **Risk** – None.
11. **Privacy Impact** - None

List of Background Papers: None

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Customer Engagement For Housing Annual Report

2015 - 16

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1 Renfrewshire Council's Customer Engagement Strategy

The Housing (Scotland) Act requires every social landlord to have a strategy on how they will involve tenants in shaping and monitoring the service they receive, including:

- housing management, repairs and maintenance policies;
- standards of service to be provided in relation to housing management, repairs and maintenance policies; and
- any proposal to change landlord.

Renfrewshire Council's Customer Engagement Strategy for Housing, was approved in August 2010 and recognises the importance of these issues, but also sets out our plans for widening the scope of engagement across a broader range of customer groups.

2 2015 / 2016 Annual Report

This Report outlines how the Council has engaged with different customer groups over the period April 2015 to March 2016 and is indicative of the approach that Renfrewshire Council has taken to move away from reporting specifically on Tenant Participation (TP), to a wider remit that seeks to engage with a broader customer base.

Nevertheless, the formal TP structure is important and underpins the relationship between the Council as a Social Landlord and Council tenants as demonstrated in sections 1, 2 and 3 of this report.

This report also details how we plan to expand and develop this over the year ahead. The actions planned for 2016/17 reflect a number of major drivers which are influencing our approach to customer engagement, these include:

- Our requirements under the Scottish Social Housing Charter to involve tenants and other customers in the scrutiny of our performance
- Consultation and engagement with tenants and groups to inform ongoing service development and continuous improvement.
- The development of a revised Customer Engagement Strategy, to reflect the priorities and outcomes we wish to achieve in the coming years

3 Tenant Participation Arrangements

The participation outcome for the Scottish Social Housing Charter requires landlords to *'manage their business so that: tenants and other customers find it easy to participate in and influence their landlord's decisions at a level they feel comfortable with'*

Our approach to customer engagement ensures we deliver on this requirement. Our current arrangements seek to maximise the use of available resources and provides a focus on local housing and housing related issues. It allows tenant groups to raise issues or concerns with operational staff who can either deal with matters directly or liaise with the appropriate staff in other Council services or partner agencies.

The key elements of this structure are:

- a. **Registered Tenants' Organisations (RTOs)** – The Council keeps a register of all Tenants Organisations in Renfrewshire. Tenant organisations which meet the Council's registration criteria (as agreed by the Housing and Community Safety Policy Board in August 2010) are included in Renfrewshire's Enhanced Register of Tenant Organisations.

These groups have full access to the Council's Tenant Participation Structures (including participation in the Neighbourhood Housing Forum, Council Wide Forum and Council Wide Forum Executive) and are eligible for grant funding from the Housing Revenue Account.

The annual registration process for 2015/16 was carried out during July and August 2015 and as of March 2016, there were 12 tenant organisations on the Enhanced Register of Tenant Organisations in Renfrewshire. There are 7 other groups which are on the Register of Tenant Organisations but which do not currently meet the enhanced registration criteria.

The re-registration process for 2016/17 is taking place during July and August 2016 and our Tenant Consultation Officer is working with the Tenant and Resident Associations to offer assistance to help them meet the enhanced criteria.

Representatives of Registered Tenants Organisations are consulted by Council officers on a wide range of housing-related issues affecting their members through the various forums and groups in our tenant participation structure and are able to influence the development of housing policy and services.

- b. **Council Wide Forum** - All Enhanced Registered Tenants' Organisations are invited to send delegates to the annual Council-wide Forum (CWF) which is where we consult on issues which affect all of our tenants, Renfrewshire wide. Recent items on the Agenda for the CWF meetings include:
- Local Housing Strategy – consultation
 - Rental Exchange – presentation by Experian and Big Issue Invest Scotland
 - Tenant Scrutiny Panel – update on activities
 - Scottish Social Housing Charter / Tenants Report – update
- c. **Council Wide Forum Executive (CWFE)** - The Executive comprises of up to 18 tenant representatives, 2 owner occupier representatives and Council officers as required (with 2 tenants to be appointed from each Neighbourhood Housing Forum and 2 owner-occupiers appointed at the Council-wide Forum). The Executive meets quarterly and regularly provides feedback to the Neighbourhood Housing Forums and the Council Wide Forum on issues discussed. It has a more strategic role including approving the agenda for the Council Wide Forum, being used as a sounding board and consultation body for new policies and other issues which arise.
- d. **Neighbourhood Housing Forums** – The Neighbourhood Forums concentrate on the day to day issues which affect tenant representatives – for example, particular local problems with empty properties or antisocial behaviour. Officers from Development and Housing Services liaise with other Council services and partner organisations about issues raised by tenant representatives at the Forums.

The Forums are chaired by the Neighbourhood Services Coordinator for that area, and agenda items at Forum meetings have included:

- Local performance statistics (rent arrears, voids, anti-social activity)
- Estate Management issues
- Repairs
- Agreeing small-scale environmental works

During 2015/6, the total amount made available to the Forums for these works through the Neighbourhood Forum Budget was £330,000. Examples of the type of work approved by the Forums include;

- door entry systems
- security lighting
- front hedge removal and replacement with fencing
- slabbing & monoblocking
- hard landscaping of backcourts
- handrails at common paths

- e. **Tenant / Officer Working Groups** – Working groups are established from time-to-time to look at certain aspects of our services in more detail, and bring forward proposals for change. Currently we have one group which is looking at the housing repairs service. The Repairs Development Group met 6 times in 2015/16 and were involved in the following areas of work:

- Review of rechargeable repairs policy
- Creating the new tenants leaflet
- Empty House Standard Leaflet
- Performance review
- Customer satisfaction

- f. **Customer Scrutiny:** We recognise that some tenants feel comfortable taking on added responsibility. To meet this demand we have:

- Quality Circles for High Rise properties and Sheltered housing developments, who undertake service standards inspections at high rise and sheltered developments. They make recommendations for improvements to the service manager through an inspection action plan.
- A Tenant Scrutiny Panel, developed in 2013. The Scrutiny Panel undertakes in depth reviews of key parts of the service. In 2015/16 they carried out a review of the customer experience in dealing with the Customer service centres, contact centre and on line service experience.

4 Customer Engagement in 2015/16

Over the past year, we have continued to communicate and engage with tenants and wider customer groups on a range of service issues.

4.1 Communicating with our customers

- **Peoples News:** In 2015/16 we published three editions of our tenant magazine *The Peoples News*. The newspaper is delivered to all Council tenants. In the last year it has included articles on Welfare Reform and available financial help, Right to Repair, information on the completion the Scottish Quality Housing Standard along with updates on Regeneration Initiatives such as Johnstone Castle. The Peoples News has also been used as a platform for the rent consultation and featured articles on the Tenant Scrutiny Panel as well as other articles outlining how tenants can become involved in consultation and participation activities. The newsletter can be provided in a range of different formats in response to individual needs (such as large print and audio CD.)
- **Charter report to Tenants:** In October 2015, following consultation with tenants, we published a special edition of the Peoples News on the Housing Charter Tenant Report. This outlined how well we had done as a landlord over a number of service areas, such as repairs, rent collection and tenant involvement.

4.2 Customer insight

- **Tenant Satisfaction Survey:** We commissioned a full customer Satisfaction survey in 2015. This was conducted by an independent market research firm during November and December 2015. A total of 1,300 tenants were asked for their views on a wide range of service and neighbourhood issues. The outturns from this survey provide essential customer insight in to service delivery and enables us to prioritise future service arrangements. In addition we use the survey as a method of recruiting interested tenants for any future ad hoc surveys or specific engagement projects. The survey in 2015 saw around 300 tenants express an interest in future customer engagement.

As part of our commitment to meet the requirements of the Scottish Social Housing Charter and to continually monitor services we carry out other 'point of service' surveys:

- **Repairs satisfaction:** Tenants are contacted by telephone following the completion of a repair, to find out what they think of the service they have received. They are asked a series of questions from their method of repair reporting, ease of reporting and overall satisfaction of the service. Satisfaction with the repairs services in 2015/16 was 96.6%.
- **The overall quality of tenants home:** When new tenants move in to a property they are asked to participate in a satisfaction survey. Last year we asked 1300 new tenants about the quality of their home and 82% were either satisfied or very satisfied.
- **Housing Options:** We carry out a satisfaction survey with every client after their first housing options interview at Homeless Services, to gauge the standard of the service they received and the quality of the advice they were given. In 2015/16, of

the 533 service users we consulted with, 95.3% stated that they were pleased with the quality of advice and information they were given.

- **Temporary accommodation:** When clients are leaving temporary accommodation, they are asked to complete a satisfaction survey which asks them if the service met their needs, as well as what they liked and what they did not like about the temporary accommodation. Of the 181 service users who completed 'exit surveys' during 2015/16, 75% said they were either 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with the overall quality of the temporary accommodation provided.
- **Owners survey:** We ask owners about service satisfaction with factoring services. This year 338 owners replied and 51% stated they were satisfied with the service provided.
- **Home For Keeps:** Anyone who attends the Home For Keeps workshops at the George Street service similarly complete a survey on their knowledge before and after attending workshops in order to gauge how effective the sessions are. Satisfaction surveys are also completed, and following feedback from service users, we are now introducing more one-to-one work with service users as opposed to group sessions and workshops.
- **Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme:** In 2015/16, 100% of the people assisted to source accommodation in the private rented sector and responded to our survey, were either very satisfied (95%) or satisfied (5%) with the quality of service that they received from the scheme.

4.3 Customer consultation and engagement

During 2015/16 we consulted our tenants on a number of issues:

- **Annual report on the Charter:** Tenant representatives were consulted on the performance indicators, style and type of report we should use in publishing our Annual report on the Charter in October 2015.
- **Rent increase consultation:** In December 2015 we wrote to all our tenants for their views on the proposed rent increase. We received 118 replies to this consultation of which 81 % agreed with the proposed increase of 2%.
- **Johnstone Castle Regeneration:** Officers have been working closely with tenants, residents and owners of properties identified for demolition as part of the housing regeneration initiative in Johnstone Castle. Staff are available in the local community centre two days a week to allow tenants and other interested parties to drop in and discuss matters with the team. Officers also attend home visits where requested.

The Johnstone Castle Housing Regeneration Facebook group is the first of its kind specifically targeted at a group of tenants and residents which enables tenants and residents to receive information updates on progress as well as allowing them to ask questions and discuss issues directly with officers as they arise.

During winter/spring 2015/16 we worked with a group of local volunteers to establish a new committee and relaunched the Johnstone Castle Tenants' and Residents' Association.

The project group of Council officers, tenants, elected members and a representative from the local Tenants and Residents Association meet 6-weekly to discuss rehousing, demolition and new build progress as well as other matters that arise throughout the regeneration project.

4.4 Customer Scrutiny

- **Quality Circles** – We have continued to support and develop the role of the Quality Circles (in multi-storey blocks and sheltered housing developments) to expand ways in which they can become involved in shaping services. During 2015 members of the Quality Circle groups were also involved in helping design the layout of our Tenants Report.
- **Tenant Scrutiny Panel** –During 2015/16 the TSP undertook their second scrutiny exercise, reviewing the experience of our customers at the Customer Service Centres in Renfrew, Johnstone and Paisley. Their report was presented by members of the Panel to the Convenor and the Depute Convenor of the Housing and Community Safety Policy Board and senior managers from the Council in April 2016. An action plan was subsequently developed to respond to the Panel's recommendations and this is currently being implemented.

4.5 Engaging with our wider customer groups during 2015/16

One of the key outcomes of the Customer Engagement Strategy is to ensure we are engaging with various different customer groups across the range of housing services and increase opportunities for customers to be involved in monitoring performance and helping shape service delivery.

In order to improve engagement levels for those who have been traditionally difficult to engage with, such as those with a record of repeat homelessness, offending or addictions, we continue to commission Turning Point Scotland to intensively support and engage with these service users including the deployment of 'peer workers' to assist with effective engagement.

- **Sheltered Housing and Amenity Housing** - A Health and Wellbeing Coordinator works within our sheltered housing complexes and amenity housing to deliver social and health and wellbeing activities to older residents in Renfrewshire to combat social isolation and promote healthy living. During 2015/16 a part time Activity Co-ordinator officer was created to assist the Coordinator.

Over recent years the Health and Wellbeing Coordinator has set up several constituted social committees (Forever Young, Cotton Club & Cairn Heights) to apply for funding from various organisations to support the range of activities; during 2015/16 £30,394.22 was successfully applied for.

- **Private Sector** - Owner Services continue to provide support to private landlords, private owners and tenants in the private rented sector. The Council also engaged with over 4,090 owners during the year to consult with them to organise common

repairs in blocks. The Council provides a range of specific management services to 973 owners and 1,563 Council properties under the Property Factors Act (Scotland) 2011.

4.6 Supporting Engagement

- **Attendance at National Tenant Events** - We sent 5 delegates to the Tenant Participation Advisory Service conference in St Andrews in November 2015. Delegates contributed to group discussions, attended workshops and shared their experiences with other tenant groups.
- **Resources** - To support and encourage the development of tenant participation, tenants have access to the following resources currently funded from rental income:
- **Staffing** - A dedicated Tenant Consultation Officer promotes the development of new groups and supports existing ones, support of other Council staff, including attendance at evening meetings and Performance Review Officer who leads on Tenant Participation issues.
- **Financial support**, an annual grant (up to £600 per organisation per annum) to assist Registered Tenant Organisations with running costs and if required, one-off grants (up to £500 per organisation per annum) to groups requiring equipment such as printers or computers
- **Training events and information**
- **Access to independent advice** and assistance from the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) and Tenant Information Service (TIS)
- **Opportunities to attend seminars**, training events and national tenant conferences
- **Other forms of support including** venue hire, catering and publicity for consultation events; the cost of transport for delegates to and from consultation meetings, conferences and seminars

During 2015/16, expenditure on Tenant Participation was:

Grants to Registered Tenant Organisations	£3,300
'Peoples News' - tenant magazine and Annual tenants report on the Scottish Social Housing Charter	£30,100
Subscriptions to the Tenant Information Service (TIS) and Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS)	£2,900
Transport	£3,950
Conferences / training	£5,620
Tenant Scrutiny Panel (TSP) and facilitating other tenant meetings	£2,745
Total*	£48,615

*expenditure on staff resources and administration costs are not included in the above figures.

The attached action plan details the improvement actions we will carry out in the year ahead.

Customer Engagement Action Plan – 2016/17

<u>Action</u>	<u>Due Date</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
COMMUNICATION		
In consultation with tenants and service managers continue to produce Peoples News magazine the next year	ongoing	Our tenants are better informed about housing and other matters which affect them.
In consultation with tenants publish our return on the Charter	31/10/ 2016	Tenants are informed of performance, we meet regulatory requirement
Promote the benefits of tenant & customer involvement	ongoing	We keep everyone informed about the importance and benefits of consulting and involving tenants — including tenants and other customers, Council employees and elected members
CUSTOMER INSIGHT		
Undertake a refresh of 'Interested tenants register'. Establish a bank of customers to contribute to policy and service development.	monthly	The service is provide with a customer perspective on service matters.
Continue to carry out satisfaction surveys for key services areas and undertake service improvements where identified from feedback: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standard of temporary Accommodation • Repairs Satisfaction • Quality of home satisfaction • Owners survey 	Ongoing, reported quarterly/annually	Meet regulatory requirements, Customer perspective on services
CUSTOMER CONSULTATION & ENGAGEMENT		
Undertake a review of the Customer Engagement Strategy	December 2017	New strategy prepared
In collaboration with communications team develop opportunities to consult and engage with tenants tenant using digital methods	December 2017	We can consult with a wider audience through new methods
Continue to support existing Tenants' & Residents' Associations and assist in establishing new Tenants & Residents Associations where there are none and there is a demand for such representation	Ongoing	We have a well supported/resourced TRA structure

<u>Action</u>	<u>Due Date</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
Continue to support RTOs: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer advice and assist to associations with the annual RTO registration procedure • Visit each enhanced registered association to offer support, advice and assistance Offer grant funding to enhanced RTOS (start-up, annual & one-off)	Ongoing	We have a well supported/resourced TRA structure
Throughout the year we will continue to consult and engage with tenants in our regeneration projects, specifically : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Johnstone Castle • Ferguslie Park 	Ongoing	Tenants are fully consulted and involved on the proposals for regeneration
CUSTOMER SCRUTINY		
Ensure actions from Tenant Scrutiny Panel reports are completed within agreed timescale	December 2016	Actions Plan complete on Customer Services report
Promote and develop the Tenant Scrutiny Panel, by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting benefits of scrutiny • Attracting new members • Delivering training • Supporting Scrutiny Panel • 	March 2017	We have an effective and well resourced Scrutiny Panel
In partnership with the Tenants Scrutiny Panel identify at least one scrutiny exercise to complete 2016/17	October 2017	Our services are improved by customer scrutiny
Promote and develop Quality Circles in other service areas by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing new quality circle for estate management. • Delivering training • Supporting existing Quality Circles 	March 2017	We have an effective and well resourced Quality circles
SUPPORTING ENGAGEMENT		
Continue to encourage groups to participate in external events	Ongoing	Our groups benefit by sharing experiences of other groups and events