
To: Communities, Housing & Planning Policy Board

On: 29 October 2019

Report by: Director of Communities, Housing and Planning Services

Heading: Housing Customer Engagement Annual Report 2018/19

1. Summary

- 1.1. The Housing Customer Engagement Annual Report for 2018/19 (Appendix1) 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.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. It is recommended that the Policy Board:
- (i) notes the Housing Customer Engagement Annual Report 2018/19 attached as appendix 1.

3. Background

- 3.1. This Housing Customer Engagement Annual Report outlines how the Council has engaged with tenants and other customer groups over the period April 2018 to March 2019. It also set out an action plan for the current financial year 2019/20. Key drivers for this are:
- Regulatory and statutory duties to consult with tenants and to involve tenants in the scrutiny of performance
 - Consultation and engagement with tenants and customer groups to inform ongoing service development and continuous improvement
 - The development of a new Customer Engagement Strategy which reflects current and future priorities and outcomes

- 3.2. The Customer Engagement Annual Report will be circulated to Tenants' and Residents' Groups and partner organisations. Copies will be made available at the Council's Contact Centre in Paisley and the Johnstone and Renfrew Housing Neighbourhood offices. The outcomes and future priorities will also be publicised in the next issue of the tenants' newsletter, 'The People's News'.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – None
2. **HR & Organisational Development** – None
3. **Community Planning – Safer and Stronger** – Involving Tenant/ resident involvement in service development to create more stable communities.
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.
12. **Cosla Policy Position** – Not applicable
13. **Climate Risk** - None

Background Papers

- (a) Report to the Housing and Community Safety Policy Board on 30 October 2018, '*Customer Engagement Annual Report 2017/18*'.

The foregoing background papers will be retained within Development and Housing Services for inspection by the public for the prescribed period of four years from the date of the meeting. The contact officer within the service is Lesley Muirhead, Planning and Housing Manager, 0141618 6259, lesley.muirhead@renfrewshire.gov.uk



Customer Engagement Annual Report 2018 - 2019

Planning and Housing Team,
Communities, Housing and Planning Services

1. Renfrewshire Council's Customer Engagement Strategy

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 requires every social landlord to have a strategy on how they will involve tenants in shaping and monitoring services, 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. It recognises the importance of these issues, but also sets out plans for widening the scope of engagement across a broader range of customer groups.

2. 2018/19 Annual Report

This Report outlines how the Council has engaged with tenants and customer groups over the period April 2018 to March 2019. Along with a continuing focus on tenant participation, the Council has also sought to engage with a broad group of customers on housing and housing related issues.

The 2019/20 Action Plan at the end of this report reflects a number of key drivers which influence the Council's approach to customer engagement, including:

- Regulatory and statutory duties to consult with tenants and to involve tenants in the scrutiny of performance.
- Consultation and engagement with tenants and customer groups to inform ongoing service development and continuous improvement.
- The development of a new Customer Engagement Strategy which reflects current and future priorities and outcomes.

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*'.

The results of the Tenant Satisfaction Survey (2018) indicated that 87.8% of tenants were 'very' or 'fairly' satisfied with the opportunities provided to them to participate in the Council's (as their landlord's) decision making processes.

Renfrewshire Council's tenant participation arrangements seek to support engagement at both local and Renfrewshire-wide levels.

Registered Tenants' Organisations (RTOs)

The Council maintains a register of all Tenant 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.

Tenant groups who meet the registration criteria have full access to the Council's Tenant Participation Structures (including participation in the relevant 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 2018/19 was carried out during July and August 2018. As at the end of March 2019, there were 11 tenant organisations on the Enhanced Register of Tenant Organisations in Renfrewshire. There are 10 other groups which are on the Register of Tenant Organisations but which do not currently meet the enhanced registration criteria.

Representatives of Registered Tenant Organisations are consulted by Council officers on a range of housing-related issues affecting their members and they are able to influence the development of housing policy and service delivery.

Council Wide Forum

All Enhanced Registered Tenants' Organisations are invited to send delegates to the annual Council-wide Forum (CWF). Recent items on the Agenda for the CWF meetings include updates on the newly implemented Common Housing Allocations Policy; Rapid Rehousing; Digital Participation; Tenant Scrutiny Panel activities and consultation on the annual rent increase.

Council Wide Forum Executive (CWFE)

The Council Wide Forum 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. It has a more strategic role, including discussing the agenda for the Council Wide Forum, acting as a sounding board and consultation body for new policies and other service-related matters.

Neighbourhood Housing Forums (NHF)

The Neighbourhood Housing Forums concentrate on the day to day services which affect tenant representatives – for example, particular local problems with empty properties or antisocial behaviour. Officers from Communities, Housing and Planning Services liaise with other Council services and partner organisations about issues raised by tenant representatives at the Forum meetings.

The Forums are chaired by the Neighbourhood Services Coordinator for that area, and agenda items at Forum meetings include: local performance statistics (rent arrears, voids, anti-social activity); estate management issues; repairs and agreeing small-scale local environmental works.

During 2018/19, the amount of funding available to the Forums for Neighbourhood Forum Budget projects was £242,000. Examples of the type of work approved by the Forums include: front hedge removal and replacement with fencing; slabbing & mono-blocking; hard landscaping of backcourts; handrails at common paths; exterior painting; access roads and appropriate signage.

Tenant/Officer Working Groups

Working groups are established from time-to-time to look at certain aspects of the housing service in more detail and bring forward proposals for change. There is currently one group looking at the housing repairs service. The Repairs Development Group met 4 times in 2018/19 and was involved in the following areas of work: rechargeable repairs; performance review and customer satisfaction.

The group was also involved in a special meeting regarding the Council's approach to fire safety in the high flats.

Customer Scrutiny

Quality Circles for multi-storey blocks and sheltered housing complexes undertake quarterly service standard inspections of the common areas of these property types. Recommendations for improvements to the service are made through an inspection action plan.

The Tenant Scrutiny Panel was established in 2013. The Panel undertakes in-depth reviews of key parts of the service. In 2018/19 it completed its third scrutiny exercise which focuses on tenancy sign-up and tenancy sustainment.

4. Customer Engagement in 2018/19

Over the past year, Communities, Housing and Planning Service have engaged with tenants and wider customer groups on a range of service matters as detailed further within the report.

4.1 Communicating with tenants and customers

- **Peoples News:** The Council's tenant newsletter, the People's News, was delivered to all Council tenants in Renfrewshire. In the last year it has included articles on housing regeneration initiatives such as Johnstone Castle; Common Housing Allocations Policy; Tenant Satisfaction Survey; Universal Credit while also featured items such as intergenerational working between tenants sent to tenants and from amenity housing and pupils from local schools. The newsletter is available in a range of different formats in response to individual needs (such as large print and audio CD) and can be downloaded from the Council's website.
- **Scottish Social Housing Charter Report to Tenants:** following consultation with tenants, a special edition of the People's News was published on the Annual Housing Charter Tenant Report. This outlined improving performance by the Council across a range of housing service areas, such as repairs, rent collection and tenant involvement.
- **The Good Times:** The Council publishes a quarterly newsletter which is distributed to all Council tenants living within sheltered housing complexes. Articles have included health advice, forthcoming outings and events, charity fundraising, quizzes, staff updates and a message from the Convener of the Communities, Housing and Planning Policy Board.

4.2 Customer insight

As part of the Council's commitment to meet the requirements of the Scottish Social Housing Charter and to continually monitor services, regular 'point of service' surveys are carried out:

- **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 2018/19 was 92.5%.
- **Standard of accommodation survey:** When new tenants move in to a property they are asked to participate in a satisfaction survey. In 2018/19 over 340 new tenants took part – 93.3% were either 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with the quality of their home when they moved in.

- **Housing Options:** The Council carries out satisfaction surveys with clients 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 2018/19, of 294 service users who were consulted, 97.2% 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 if the service met their needs, as well as what they liked and what they did not like about the temporary accommodation. Of the 291 service users who completed 'exit surveys' during 2018/19, 92.1% said they were either 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with the overall quality of the temporary accommodation provided.
- **Owners survey:** In 2018/19, over 280 owners took part in a survey about factoring services and 61% stated they were satisfied with the service provided.
- **Home for Keeps:** In response to the feedback from service users, Home for Keeps interviews are now offered on a one-to-one basis for every young person who presents as homeless. This helps identify individual strengths and weaknesses with the young person. When completed in the office comment cards are also completed.
- **Rent Deposit Guarantee Scheme:** In 2018/19, 100% of the people who were helped to find accommodation in the private rented sector took part in the scheme survey. 95.5% were very satisfied and 4.5% were satisfied with the quality of service they received.

4.3 Customer consultation and engagement

During 2018/19 tenants were consulted on a number of matters:

- **Annual report on the Charter:** Tenant representatives were consulted on the performance indicators and the style and format of the Annual Tenant Report on the Charter in October 2018.
- **Rent increase consultation:** An independent market research company was commissioned in early 2019 to ask a 5% sample of tenants for their views on housing priorities, budgets, rents and investment for the year 2019/20. This survey was complemented by an online survey where over 100 responses were also received. In January 2019 at the annual meeting of the Council Wide Forum, tenant representatives were also consulted on the annual rent increase and investment and service priorities.

- **Johnstone Castle Regeneration:** Officers from Communities, Housing and Planning Services continue to liaise with tenants and residents within the Johnstone Castle Housing Regeneration area. Officers are based within the local Community Centre on a Tuesday each week, to allow tenants and residents the opportunity to discuss the regeneration programme and any rehousing requirements with the team. Officers also attend home visits where required.

Recently officers have been holding one to one sessions with the tenants who are moving to one of the new build properties, at these sessions, tenants who have been displaced are choosing their own kitchen units, work top and flooring. Allowing tenants to make their own choices has been very well received, with tenants looking forward to moving into the new energy efficient Council homes.

The Johnstone Castle Housing Regeneration Facebook group was the first of its kind specifically targeted at a group of tenants and residents which enables them to receive information updates on progress as well as allowing the opportunity to ask questions and discuss issues directly or privately with officers as they arise. The social networking website is still used frequently and appears to have been a very successful tool to reach customers.

The Johnstone Castle project group was first established in 2015 and continues to meet on a quarterly basis to discuss rehousing issues and the new build development progress. The group consists of Council officers, tenants, elected members, neighborhood wardens and a representative from the local Tenants and Residents Association. A visit will be arranged for the group to see inside the newbuild homes ahead of the first completions in late 2019.

- **Paisley West End:** The Council approved proposals on a Regeneration Masterplan that set out how the area will be transformed; the Masterplan will see high levels of vacant properties being replaced with around 150 high quality homes for social rent and affordable sale.

Sanctuary Scotland is the Council's development partner, who are working with the Scottish Government and Renfrewshire Council to help transform Paisley's West End.

Tenants and resident owners within the masterplan area were given the opportunity to be considered for one of Sanctuary's newbuild developments at the former Co-op Site on the corner of Wellmeadow Street and Castle Street. Eleven residents within the regeneration area have moved into the new Sanctuary homes.

As the Masterplan progresses Officers from Communities Housing and Planning Services and Sanctuary Scotland will continue to encourage active involvement with tenants, residents and owners of the wider area to keep them informed as matters progress.

- **Tannahill Area Housing Investment Strategy:** The Communities, Housing and Planning Policy Board approved a housing investment strategy for the Tannahill area of Ferguslie Park on 30 October 2018.

The strategy includes the construction of around 100 new Council homes to enable existing tenants and residents who wish to remain in the area to move to newbuild Council housing.

Officers from the Planning and Housing team are based within the Ferguslie Park Library on a Monday and Thursday morning each week, to be available locally for tenants and residents who want to drop in for information and assistance. Staff also do weekly 'walk-rounds' to ensure they are visible and accessible to tenants and residents in the area.

A Tannahill Area Liaison Group has been established and has been meeting 6-weekly. The liaison group includes officers from the Council, two representatives from Ferguslie Community Council and tenants and residents from the Tannahill area. A newsletter is being circulated by officers from Communities, Housing and Planning following liaison group meetings to ensure all tenants and residents are kept updated on progress.

The Council have recently appointed Collective Architects to develop a Framework for the wider area in partnership with the local community and other local interest groups. A series of meetings will be arranged with relevant partners who are interested in shaping these plans for the wider Ferguslie area.

4.3 Customer Scrutiny

- **Quality Circles** – Communities, Housing and Planning Services continue to support and develop the role of the Quality Circles (in multi-storey blocks and sheltered housing complexes) to expand the ways in which tenants can become involved in shaping services.
- **Tenants Scrutiny Panel** – During 2018/19 the Tenants Scrutiny Panel concluded its third scrutiny exercise which focused on 'Tenancy Sign-up and Sustainment' which the Panel then presented to the Housing Services Senior Management Team. To increase their IT skills volunteers took part in a series of sessions which were facilitated by Housing Service Digital Participation Officer. The Panel was also involved in self-assessment for the first Annual Assurance Statement.

4.4 Engaging with our wider customer groups during 2018/19

A key outcome for the Customer Engagement Strategy is to ensure there is engagement with various customer groups across the range of housing services and that opportunities exist for customers to be involved in monitoring performance and helping shape service delivery.

In order to improve engagement levels for groups who have been traditionally difficult to engage with, such as people with a record of repeat homelessness, offending or addictions, Turning Point Scotland has been commissioned to provide intensive support and to use a 'Housing First' approach to support and engage with this group of clients.

The Digital Participation Officer has been working with homeless applicants living in temporary accommodation to support them to develop essential digital skills. This includes social media; safe browsing & making online payments safely.

Sheltered Housing and Amenity Housing

A Health and Wellbeing Coordinator now provides a well-established service to tenants in sheltered housing complexes and amenity housing, promoting social and health and wellbeing activities to older residents in Renfrewshire. These activities help to combat social isolation and promote healthy living. A part time Activity Officer post has recently been created to support this work.

The Digital Participation Officer has also been visiting all of our sheltered complexes to support tenants develop their digital skills; including internet safety; online shopping; safe systems and online communication with family and friends.

As well as a broad range of new activities and outings/trips for older tenants, several constituted social committees (e.g. 'Forever Young', 'Cotton Club' and 'Cairn Heights') have been given assistance to apply for funding from various organisations to support their activities.

During 2017, funding was obtained to provide a specially adapted bus to make it easier for older tenants and those with a disability to more easily travel to and participate in activities. This bus was launched in 2019 and is being utilised by tenants on a regular basis. A new befriending service to the councils sheltered housing tenants 'A Listening Ear' has been launched which ensures 1-2-1 support for tenants who currently have no meaningful social contact and are isolated within our community.

The newsletter which is distributed to all sheltered and amenity housing tenants has been improved and expanded following feedback from tenants.

Using feedback from six monthly individual review questionnaires and from quarterly tenants' meetings held within each of our complexes, we produce a 'You Said We Did' to provide information where tenants suggestions have helped us to improve the service.

Housing Support Team

The first 'Service User Involvement Strategy' was developed in 2016/17 which coincided with the launch of a new newsletter which is distributed to all service users. This strategy has now been fully implemented.

A first 'Focus Group' meeting was held at The George Street Service in September 2017 to discuss service-users' views on the services the Council provides. Following feedback, an annual 'open day' will be organised to replace these focus groups.

Service users met with Care Inspectorate officers during the inspections in February 2018 to discuss the service they receive. A summary copy of the latest Care Inspectorate report has been sent to all current service users, along with an invite to attend focus groups to contribute to the development of an action plan following the inspection.

Private Sector

Officers from the Owners Services team provide support to private landlords, private owners and tenants in the private rented sector. The Council engaged with over 2,098 owners during the year to consult on and organise repairs in common blocks.

4.5 Supporting Engagement

- **Attendance at National Tenant Events** - 6 delegates attended the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) conference in St Andrews in November 2018. These delegates then contributed to group discussions, attended workshops and shared their experiences with other tenant groups.
- **Resources** - To support and develop tenant participation activities, funding is provided from the Housing Revenue Account.
- **Staffing** – One of the Development Officers within the Planning and Housing Team is dedicated to Tenant Participation and is supported by other Development Officers and a Service Improvement Officer where required.
- **Financial support** to assist Registered Tenant Organisations with running costs, annual grants of up to £600 can be applied for, along with one-off grants for equipment such as printers or computers (up to £500).
- **Training events and conferences** - Opportunities are made available for tenant representatives to attend seminars, training events and national tenant conferences. Representatives are asked to provide feedback from these events to allow the Development Officer to cascade any relevant information onto other tenant groups to ensure they also benefit from this training/information.

- **Access to independent advice** – We are members of both the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) and Tenant Information Service (TIS). Advice and assistance can be accessed from these organisations as required.
- **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 2018/19, expenditure on Tenant Participation was:

Grants to Registered Tenant Organisations	£4,470
'Peoples News' - tenant newsletter and Annual Tenants' Report on the Scottish Social Housing Charter	£14,985
Subscriptions to the Tenant Information Service (TIS) and Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS)	£3,060
Transport	£2,850
Conferences / training	£5,880
Consultation	£6,435
Facilitating tenant representative meetings, including the Tenant Scrutiny Panel	£3,550
Total*	£41,230

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

Customer Engagement Action Plan – 2019/20

Action	Due Date	Outcome
COMMUNICATION		
In consultation with tenants and service managers, produce at least two issues of the People's News	Ongoing	Tenants are better informed about housing and other matters which affect them
In consultation with tenants, publish Renfrewshire Council's Tenant's Report on the Charter	End October 2019	The Council's performance is reported to tenants in line with regulatory requirements
Promote the benefits of tenant & customer Involvement	Ongoing	Everyone is informed about the importance and benefits of consulting and involving tenants — including tenants and other customers, Council employees and elected members
CUSTOMER INSIGHT		
Commission and report on the 2020 Tenant Satisfaction Survey	Report outcome by August 2020	Customer feedback to inform continuous improvement and meet regulatory requirements
Undertake a refresh of 'Interested tenants register'. Establish a bank of customers to contribute to policy and service development.	Ongoing	The service is able to get 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 annually and six-monthly	Provides a customer perspective on services and meets regulatory requirements

Action	Due Date	Outcome
CUSTOMER CONSULTATION & ENGAGEMENT		
Undertake a review of the Customer Engagement Strategy, to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of consultative processes • Review of the Neighbourhood Housing Forums • Scope out opportunities to consult and engage with tenants using digital methods 	March 2020	Updated strategy prepared that encompasses a range of consultation methods, a framework for meeting with tenants on local and Renfrewshire wide issues, and an inclusive approach which takes account of hard to reach groups
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	Well supported/resourced Tenants and Residents Association structure
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	Well supported/resourced Tenants and Residents Association structure
Throughout the year, continue to consult and engage with tenants on housing regeneration initiatives	Ongoing	Tenants are fully consulted on the proposals for regeneration
CUSTOMER SCRUTINY		
Ensure actions from the last Tenants Scrutiny Panel review (Customer Service Report) are completed within agreed timescale	Ongoing	Actions Plan complete on Customer Services Report

Action	Due Date	Outcome
Promote and develop the Tenants Scrutiny Panel, by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promoting benefits of scrutiny • Attracting new members • Delivering training • Supporting Scrutiny Panel 	Ongoing	An effective and well-resourced Scrutiny Panel
Support the Tenants Scrutiny Panel to complete a new scrutiny review (topic to be confirmed)	End of 2020	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 	Ongoing	Effective and well-resourced Quality Circles to support continuous improvement
SUPPORTING ENGAGEMENT		
Continue to encourage groups to participate in external / national events	Ongoing	Tenants benefit by sharing experiences with other groups and networking with wider groups of tenants