

PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL

Housing and Health Committee

9 March 2016

Perth and Kinross Tenant Participation Strategy 2014-17 Progress Report

Report by Director (Housing and Community Care)

ABSTRACT

This report updates Committee on implementation of the Tenant Participation Strategy and achieving the Scottish Social Housing Charter (SSHC) Participation Outcome. Committee is asked to approve the prioritising of tenant participation activities and resources to continue supporting the Rent Restructure Review and take forward new engagement activities with tenants to support digital inclusion and tenant sustainability.

1. BACKGROUND / MAIN ISSUES

- 1.1 Section 53 (1) of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 places a duty on local authorities and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to prepare a tenant participation strategy which includes an assessment of resources required and a statement of the resources to be made available. The Strategy must demonstrate how, as a landlord, the Council intends to communicate with, and listen to, tenants and residents.
- 1.2 The introduction of the Scottish Social Housing Charter through the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 requires Perth and Kinross Council (PKC) to report to the Scottish Regulator annually on the achievement of the Charter Outcomes.
- 1.3 While the involvement of tenants and others is central to achieving of all the Scottish Social Housing Charter Outcomes, the Tenant Participation Strategy focuses on the achievement of Charter Outcome 3: *Participation - Social landlords manage their businesses 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 outcome describes what landlords should achieve by meeting their statutory duties on tenant participation, covering the ways in which social landlords gather and take into account the views and priorities of their tenants; how they shape their services to reflect these views; and how they help tenants and other customers to become more involved.
- 1.4 The Perth and Kinross Tenant Participation Strategy 2014-17 was approved by Housing and Health Committee on 11 March 2015 (Report 15/108 refers). The Tenant Participation Strategy Monitoring and Implementation Group monitor the implementation of the strategy action plan and the achievement of its aims and strategic outcomes.

2. PROGRESS ACHIEVED IN 2015/16

- 2.1 Below is a summary of progress over the last year towards achieving the Tenant Participation Strategy aims and strategic outcomes.

2.2 Outcome 1 - *Develop a range of opportunities for people to get involved, which reflect local circumstances and allow people to participate effectively.*

2.2.1 We have supported local housing staff to implement Estate Based Initiatives (EBIs) and worked with tenants to decide which local improvement priorities will be taken forward in each of the identified EBI areas. For 2015/16 the EBI areas were Letham and Tulloch, Perth City Centre sites, including Pomarium and North Muirton, Pitlochry and Rattray, Comrie, Dunning and Kinross. Over 100 local tenants, as well as elected members and local staff, prioritised over 30 individual projects through the EBI process. Feedback on this will be shared with tenants in the 'On the House' magazine and on the Council's website later in 2016. A new programme of EBIs will begin April 2016.

2.2.2 We reviewed our Rent Setting Consultation Process with tenants who attended our Tenant Participation Forum in February 2015 and received good feedback about how we undertook the process. They suggested some improvement actions, including providing information on how tenants had influenced the rent setting process as part of the information in their annual letter notifying them of rent increases. Tenants also suggested bringing forward the Tenant Winter Forum event to avoid bad weather. Both of these suggestions were implemented and this year more tenants attended both the Summer Conference and Winter Tenant Event.

2.2.3 Tenants have been a key part of the Rent Restructure Review, particularly through the work of the Tenant Working Group. There have been 19 tenants who have contributed to this group, meeting monthly and working with the Project Team. In addition, they were actively involved in recruiting the Tenant Independent Advisor for the project and were critical in helping design the first survey to help shape the new model which will calculate the rent in the future. Around 1,000 tenants responded too, which has been important for informing and developing the models. Tenants have been a constant point of reference for the review, helping develop models and they will go on to help shape the way we engage with the wider tenants about the best way of moving from the current rent pointing system to the new model.

2.2.4 We have also been working with Churches Action for The Homeless (CATH) and the Central Health Team to engage tenants living in St Catherine's Square, supporting their health and wellbeing. As a result, we have developed a range of activities enabling them to get involved and give feedback about the area they live in. This has been a very successful initiative, supporting some very vulnerable people and they have helped shape a programme of activities to enhance community safety and cohesion.

2.3 Outcome 2 - *Build and develop an agreed programme of scrutiny activities with people who use our services.*

2.3.1 The Service User Review and Evaluation (SURE) Team have completed their pilot scrutiny activity of the complaints handling processes and of the way we communicate to tenants about repairs. They presented their

recommendations to the Housing Management Team (HMT) and after consideration of their findings HMT reported back to them and implemented an improvement action plan based on their recommendations. HMT also explained why, in some circumstances, we were unable to accept some of their recommendations. We have agreed SURE Team's next scrutiny activities for 2016/17 which will start with a review of our Anti-Social Behaviour policies.

- 2.3.2 The SURE Team also had a critical role in the development of our Annual Performance Report to tenants. They contributed to this report by assessing the performance of Housing Service's achievement of the 16 Scottish Social Housing Charter Outcomes. Their comments and validation were included in the report, which was circulated to all tenants in October 2015.
- 2.3.3 We have also implemented an improvement plan based on findings from our Mystery Shopping Project which focused on the delivery of our Customer Service Standards. Improvements included the review of customer service training, the introduction of name badges for frontline housing staff and updating of information about our services. Our Homeless Services have also undergone scrutiny from their service users, with an improvement plan being identified and implemented for Greyfriars Hostel.
- 2.3.4 The very innovative and successful work summarised above and the work undertaken with tenants and service users to develop our scrutiny activities has been recognised through a national award scheme. The Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) National Excellence Awards shortlisted our submission in the Tenant Led Scrutiny category and we are very proud to report that Perth and Kinross Council was the only local authority landlord to be shortlisted for any of the 9 awards presented at the ceremony.
- 2.4 **Outcome 3- *Ensure all tenants, staff and all other people who use our services, will be given access to adequate levels of training and support that will enable them to participate more effectively.***
 - 2.4.1 With the main focus of tenant involvement resources in 2014/15 being the Rent Restructure Review and Estate Based Initiatives, we have been unable to deliver as many Resident Academies this year. However, we have delivered a Chartered Institute of Housing Level 3 Accredited Programme in Resident Scrutiny, in which 6 people took part and we also delivered financial capability support training to housing and members of the Customer and Community Engagement staff, which has helped support our tenants.
 - 2.4.2 We continue to support our Registered Tenant Organisations (RTOs), at their request, and have distributed £4,680 of grant funding to individual tenant groups. We have also supported the development of an informal tenant group with residents of Pomarium flats in Perth. Together with Housing Officers they have developed an action plan to support areas of concerns raised by tenants.

- 2.4.3 A number of tenants also continue to be supported to attend national housing conferences to keep them updated on housing legislation, policy, initiatives and good practice.
- 2.5 **Outcome 4 - *Continuously develop ways of improving communication and information sharing to meet the needs of all.***
- 2.5.1 We continue to think and act creatively, finding ways of communicating effectively and sharing information with tenants. As a result, we have exceeded the target set with tenants (10%) to encourage and increase the number of people we communicate with through our 'interested persons' list' and also through social media. At March 2015 we had 206 people registered as interested persons and this has risen to 251. We have also increased the number of 'friends' on our tenants' Face Book page, from 259, to 517 and our followers on Twitter has grown from 124, to 1,080. Our highest reaching ever post on Facebook was about Condensation and Dampness which reached 4,460 people. The top reaching tweet from PKC Tenants was about the Tenants' Conference in June 2015 which reached 1,896 people. We continue to use text messaging to contact our tenants about a range of information and this channel of communication is now widely used by local Area Housing Team to quickly, cheaply and effectively reach tenants.
- 2.5.2 Our Quality Panel Customer Approved tick is now regular feature on our standard letters and leaflets, signalling to tenants and other people who use our services, that these have undergone quality checks and have been approved by our Quality Panel. This year we have reviewed much of the information on our Housing website pages to suit viewing from mobile devices and each page was reviewed by the Quality Panel and their stamp of approval now is visible on our Housing Services web pages.
- 2.5.3 We worked with our Tenant Participation Forum to review our Annual Performance Report to Tenants and with their feedback and the involvement of the SURE Team, we were able to produce a fresh design and layout for this important publication. The publication is now attractive, engaging and easy to read and feedback from tenants has been very positive. We will continue to review the design with them again in 2016.
- 2.6 **Outcome 5 - *Regularly monitor and review this strategy to ensure it continues to be effective.***
- 2.6.1 We regularly meet to monitor and review this strategy and also hold regular Tenant Participation Strategy Forum meetings to make sure wider consultation on our engagement activities is happening with other tenant working groups.
- 2.6.2 As result of our activities this year, we can demonstrate that we are effectively achieving the Scottish Social Housing Charter 'Participation Outcome'. We are enabling our tenants to scrutinise our performance as their landlord and we have strong evidence of the improvement we are making as a result of their participation. This has been innovative, exciting and demanding work for

tenants and officers, and has resulted in many improvements across housing services.

- 2.6.3 Critical to the effectiveness of implementing this strategy is the valuable work of our tenant volunteers. They are at the heart of what we do and are jointly responsible for the successful achievement of this strategy's outcomes. Their work, dedication and commitment are obvious and very much appreciated by Housing and Community Care Services.

3. PRIORITIES FOR 2016 /17

- 3.1 We will continue to implement the Tenant Participation Strategy Action Plan to achieve the existing targets and milestones into 2016/17. Our two main priorities for tenant participation activities and resources in 2016/17 will be to continue to supporting tenants to be involved in the Rent Restructure Review and in Estate Based Initiatives. We will also explore other ways of engaging with tenants to encourage and enable their involvement in a range of activities.
- 3.2 Technology, including smart phones and iPads, is now part of daily life for so many people enabling them to instantly access and share information, communicate with friends and family, shop, pay bills and manage their money. We believe that some of our tenants could benefit by having greater confidence and skills to use this technology to support them in their tenancies and encouraging them to get involved with Housing Services in different ways. In 2016/17 we will look at ways how we can support this through our Resident Academy Programme.
- 3.3 From feedback from tenants from our rent setting consultation work, it was clearly identified by them that some tenants would benefit from face-to-face support to help them manage their tenancies. Part of this work will be undertaken by staff in the Customer and Community Engagement team offering a range of support, including offering financial capability training and rolling out 'Skills with Bills' Resident Academies from March 2016.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1 The report summarises the innovative work and range of activities undertaken in 2015/16 to achieve the Scottish Social Housing Charter Participation Outcomes and evidences the very positive impact of tenant involvement in scrutinising services and influencing decisions about housing services. The report also highlights and values the work of tenant volunteers, without whom we could not have succeeded in so many areas and who have been critical in helping the service achieve these important Scottish Social Housing Charter outcomes.

4.2 It is recommended that Housing and Health Committee:

- (i) Notes the very good progress in achieving the Tenant Participation Strategy aims and the Scottish Social Housing Charter Participation Outcome.
- (ii) Approves the prioritising of tenant participation activities and resources to continue supporting the Rent Restructure Review and Estate Based Initiatives in 2016/17 and progress new engagement activities to support Digital Inclusion and tenancy sustainment.

Author

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Approved

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1. IMPLICATIONS, ASSESSMENTS, CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

Strategic Implications	Yes / None
Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement	Yes
Corporate Plan	Yes
Resource Implications	
Financial	None
Workforce	None
Asset Management (land, property, IST)	None
Assessments	
Equality Impact Assessment	Yes
Strategic Environmental Assessment	None
Sustainability (community, economic, environmental)	None
Legal and Governance	Yes
Risk	None
Consultation	
Internal	Yes
External	Yes
Communication	
Communications Plan	None

1. Strategic Implications

Community Plan / Single Outcome Agreement

- 1.1 This report supports the delivery of the outcomes of the Community Plan/Single Outcome Agreement.

Corporate Plan

- 1.2 This report supports the delivery of the outcomes of the Corporate Plan.

2. Resource Implications

Financial

- 2.1 Head of Finance and Support has been consulted on the proposals in this report. The costs of the activities outlined in this report will be contained within the Tenant Participation budget of £101,000 2016/17. This will be reviewed in subsequent years.

3. Assessments

Equality Impact Assessment

- 3.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, the Council is required to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between equality groups. Carrying out Equality Impact Assessments for plans and policies allows the Council to demonstrate that it is meeting these duties.

This section should reflect that the proposals have been considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment process (EqIA) with the following outcome:

- (i) Services that are the focus of this report provide positive outcomes through care, support and assistance to a range of clients.

Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 3.2 The Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 places a duty on the Council to identify and assess the environmental consequences of its proposals.

No further action is required as it does not qualify as a PPS as defined by the Act and is therefore exempt.

Legal and Governance

- 3.3 The Head of Legal Services has been consulted and there are no direct legal implications in this report.

4. Consultation

Internal

- 4.1 The Tenant Committee Report Panel was consulted on this report and they commented that 'this was a good paper and we continue to encourage the use of all communication tools to keep getting tenants involved.'

5. Communication

- 5.1 None

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

7. APPENDICES

None