



REPORT TO: COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE ON 2 APRIL 2019

SUBJECT: TENANT PARTICIPATION STRATEGY 2017-20

**BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR (ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT,
PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE)**

1. REASON FOR REPORT

1.1 To inform the Committee of the progress achieved on the implementation of the Tenant Participation Strategy during 2018/19.

1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (G) (2) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to the Council exercising its functions as a housing authority.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that the Communities Committee considers and notes:

(i) the progress made on the Tenant Participation Strategy Action Plan during 2018/19; and

(ii) agrees that a further report on the progress will be presented to the Committee next year.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 introduced a requirement for social landlords to develop and implement a tenant participation strategy. The Act also requires social landlords to consult with their tenants on a range of housing issues and take account of their views.

3.2 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 introduced the Scottish Social Housing Charter which came into force on 1 April 2012. The Charter sets out the minimum standards that tenants can expect from their landlord and is monitored by the Scottish Housing Regulator. Outcome 2 (communication) and Outcome 3 (participation) of the Charter are the most relevant to the Tenant Participation Strategy.

3.3 The Housing Service has developed and implemented tenant participation strategies since 2003. Following a consultation with tenants, the Tenant

Participation Strategy 2017-2020 was approved by this Committee on 7 March 2017 (paragraph 10 of the Minute refers).

4. PROGRESS ON STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

- 4.1 The overall aim of the Tenant Participation Strategy is to “work in partnership with our tenants to design and deliver good quality housing services”. The strategy is centred around three key outcomes:-

Outcome 1	A strong representation of tenants’ views and a wide range of engagement opportunities.
Outcome 2	Our tenants are fully engaged in the process of policy formation, service review, scrutiny and decision making.
Outcome 3	Our tenants, Council staff and Elected Members have the capacity to work together effectively.

- 4.2 These outcomes are supported by an Action Plan which monitors the implementation of the strategy. As part of the monitoring arrangements, the Communities Committee reviews the Action Plan on an annual basis. Progress achieved during 2018/19 on each of the key outcomes is explained in detail below.

Outcome 1: A strong representation of tenants’ views and a wide range of engagement opportunities.

- 4.3 The Council has one consolidated Registered Tenant Organisation (RTO), the Moray Tenants’ Forum, which represents Council tenants in all areas. The Forum regularly invites guest speakers to its meetings to learn about the challenges in delivering housing services and to be briefed on areas of interest. In 2018/19, guest speakers covered a wide range of topics including housing support, tenancy sustainment, housing allocations, homelessness and disabled adaptations. The Forum also hosted a visit from Stirling Tenants Assembly to share ideas on how tenants are involved in decision making processes.
- 4.4 The Buckpool New Build Tenant Group formed in November 2017. Last year the group were successful in a bid for funding through the Bucks4Buckie initiative and intend to purchase benches for their estate. The group meets regularly to review management issues within the estate. Improvement actions driven by the group include the installation of fencing around the play area and the replanting of trees.
- 4.5 The Housing Service works in partnership with other landlords to promote tenant participation and to share good practice and resources. Last year, North East Tenants Residents and Landlords Together (NETRALT) were runners up in the ‘Best Practice in Involving Customers in Services’ TPAS (Tenant Participation Advisory Service) award for a tenant-led mystery shopping project. The Keith Access Point was one of the locations selected and received positive feedback with just one recommendation to improve signage which has been actioned.
- 4.6 In August 2018, tenant representatives reviewed and tested the Tenant Survey before it was sent to all tenants. Satisfaction with the opportunities to participate has increased from 60% in 2015 to 74% in 2018. A report on the

findings of the 2018 Tenant Survey is a separate item on this Committee's agenda.

- 4.7 The 'Moray Council Tenants' Facebook Group was launched in September 2017 and has over 200 tenant members. The list of interested tenants has 186 members and is used regularly to gather feedback and consult with tenants.

Outcome 2: Our tenants are fully engaged in the process of policy formation, service review, scrutiny and decision making.

- 4.8 Tenant-led scrutiny can be a fairly intensive process for those involved and this has created challenges in developing a programme in Moray. Although the Service Improvement Panel (SIP) has been re-established, there are only three members. Other social landlords are facing similar challenges, with some having to consider incentives to encourage participation. To date the SIP members have completed their induction training and developed an introductory pack for new members. As an introductory scrutiny exercise, the SIP plans to review the Housing Service's written communications with tenants whose homes are undergoing planned maintenance works.
- 4.9 During 2018/19, the Housing Service consulted tenants and other service users on a broad range of subjects:
- Local Housing Strategy;
 - Allocations Policy;
 - Evictions Policy;
 - Short Scottish Secure Tenancy (SSST) Policy; and
 - Neighbour Disputes and Antisocial Behaviour Policy.
- 4.10 On 7 March 2017 this Committee agreed to a change to the way the environmental improvement budget was managed (paragraph 10 of the Minute refers). Tenants have the opportunity to influence how this budget is spent by taking part in annual estate walkabouts with housing staff and Elected Members.
- 4.11 The Moray Tenants' Forum helped to develop the Housing Service's 2017/18 Annual Performance Report which included the tenant approved stamp on the front cover. Tenant feedback also suggested that the report should only be printed on request which resulted in a substantial financial saving to the Council.
- 4.12 Tenant representatives have the opportunity to scrutinise the Council's performance through representation on Communities Committee and Housing Best Value Group.

Outcome 3: Our tenants, Council staff and Elected Members have the capacity to work together effectively.

- 4.13 The actions under this outcome relate mainly to communication materials and the provision of training.
- 4.14 Housing staff work closely with tenant representatives to ensure that they have the skills and support to help them fulfil their role. They attend events together where it is possible to learn about the latest developments in the sector and about good practice in Scotland. In 2018/19, tenant

representatives participated in a consultation event for the development of the next Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH) and attended the annual TPAS conference in Aviemore. One tenant composed an article on their experience of the TPAS conference for the Tenants' Voice newsletter with the aim of encouraging tenants to get involved.

- 4.15 Moray Council is one of eight social landlord applicants chosen to take part in the Next Steps Programme. This is a Scottish Government funded programme which aims to support landlords to develop their tenant participation strategies, scrutiny arrangements and improve their performance against the outcomes and standards of the Scottish Social Housing Charter. TPAS are facilitating several workshops and will carry out a desktop audit of the Council's tenant participation arrangements and prepare an improvement action plan.

Housing Service Support for Tenant Participation

- 4.16 The Housing Service supports the Moray Tenants' Forum by making £3k available each year in grant funding to cover its running expenses.
- 4.17 As part of the Council's Housing Investment Programme, funding of £100k per annum is available for environmental improvement projects identified through estate walkabouts with tenants, housing staff, and Elected Members.
- 4.18 The Housing Service also provides additional resources to support tenant participation including:
- staff time;
 - access to free publicity; and
 - administrative support (for example, taking minutes at meetings and arranging venues).
- 4.19 In line with the monitoring and evaluation arrangements of the Tenant Participation Strategy, the next progress report will be presented to this Committee next year. Since this will occur within the final year of the strategy, a draft strategy will also be developed in consultation with tenant representatives and other stakeholders.

5. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))

Both Moray 2026 and the Service Plan recognise the importance of involving tenants and other service users in the design and delivery of services.

(b) Policy and Legal

There are no legal implications associated within this report.

(c) Financial implications

There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. Costs associated with the implementation of the Tenant Participation Strategy are included in the Housing Revenue Account budget.

(d) Risk Implications

The Scottish Housing Regulator requires that tenants are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the day to day management of their homes and to be involved in the strategic decision making process. Failure to develop an appropriate tenant involvement structure presents a regulatory risk along with a failure to provide a customer focused service.

(e) Staffing Implications

The work required to implement the Tenant Participation Strategy is met from existing staff resources.

(f) Property

There are no property implications arising from this report.

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

Equalities issues have been considered as part of the development of the Tenant Participation Strategy.

(h) Consultations

Consultations have taken place with the Acting Head of Housing and Property, Senior Solicitor (Kathryn Macpherson), Deborah O'Shea (Principal Accountant), the Equal Opportunities Officer, Caroline Howie (Committee Services Officer) and senior managers within Housing and Property. Their comments have been reflected in the report.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 This report updates the Committee on progress with the delivery of the Tenant Participation Strategy and Action Plan during 2018/19.

Author of Report: Daska Murray, Senior Housing Officer (Information)
Background Papers: With author
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