

Tenant Participation Strategy 2013-16

July 2013



Introduction



Welcome to the latest in a series of regular briefings prepared by the Housing Strategy team on the big issues concerning housing. These briefings will be shared with staff, tenants and elected members and keep everyone up to date with regards the ever changing policy context that we are operating within.

The Housing Strategy section is responsible for:-

- Supporting the development of a culture of continuous improvement in Housing services and to facilitate opportunities to excel;
- Developing and implementing effective strategies for Housing and Community Safety Services within West Dunbartonshire;
- Developing the Council's housing strategy to ensure that it supports the delivery of our strategic priorities;
- Performance management within Housing and Community Safety services; and
- Promoting effective management and the involvement of tenants across all aspects of Housing Services.

For further information on Housing Strategy please telephone 01389 737889 or e-mail: housing.strategy@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

Briefing Note

Tenant Participation Strategy 2013-16

'INVOLVING YOU'

West Dunbartonshire Council's Tenant Participation Strategy 2013-16

What is tenant participation?

'It's about tenants and tenants and residents groups taking part in decision making processes and influencing decisions about housing policies, conditions and related services. It is a two way process, which involves the sharing of information, ideas and power. Its aim is to improve housing conditions and services'.

(Partners in Participation, A National Strategy for Tenant Participation' produced by the Scottish Executive in 1999.)

Background

The Council's Tenant Participation Strategy 2013-16 was produced in partnership with tenants' representatives and housing staff. It sets out our commitment to developing effective consultation and participation so that by working with our tenants and other service users we can continuously improve our housing conditions and services.

In addition to improving on existing tenant participation practice the strategy addresses new information being made available to tenants about housing performance and new opportunities for tenants to get involved in improving the housing service.

The Strategy sets out:

- our aims for tenant participation for 2013 -16
- an action plan for the period 2013 -16 which tells you how we are going to achieve our aims
- information about the resources and support we will make available to support tenant involvement
- how we will assess our progress and measure the impact of what we do

The strategy is influenced by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 which introduced the first legal framework for tenant participation and new Scottish Social Housing Charter which sets out outcomes and standards that the Council should aim to achieve when performing its housing activity.

In October 2012 the Council set up a small working group to help develop the strategy, this included representatives from tenants and residents' associations, tenants living in sheltered housing accommodation and staff working in housing and community safety services.

The draft Tenant Participation Strategy was published and distributed for consultation in March 2013 and was agreed by the Housing, Environmental and Economic Committee in May 2013.

Main Issues

The Strategy takes account of equal opportunities legislation and good practice. The Council will promote inclusive approaches and work in ways that are appropriate to different people and differing needs within our communities.

Our principles for good tenant participation reflect those of the Scottish Government's National Strategy for Tenant Participation "Partners in Participation" (April 1999)



Our strategic aim is to improve Council housing services by fully involving tenants in developing and influencing how these services are provided. The aims of the strategy are largely built around the feedback received from tenants and staff as part of the review of tenant participation practice.

We will:

1. improve the culture and practice of tenant participation across housing services
2. improve our feedback to tenants so that we can demonstrate where our tenants and other service users have influenced or shaped the housing service
3. promote and provide a wide range of options for tenants to get involved with us
4. encourage involvement of under- represented groups such as young people, homeless people, people with disabilities and minority ethnic groups
5. ensure that tenants are aware of the options available to them (on a local and strategic level) to shape housing services going forward
6. establish with our tenants arrangements to increase tenant scrutiny activity and assess our performance in line with the new requirements under the Scottish Social Housing Charter and new regulatory framework
7. ensure that resources we put in place and practices we carry out are adequate to support and develop tenant participation activity
8. ensure that we communicate effectively with our tenants and provide good quality, accessible information that tenants want

The Strategy contains an action plan which sets out how the Council will achieve each of its aims.

The Tenant Participation Strategy is a working document which will be subject to continuous review through regular monitoring of the action plan. Regular progress reports will be provided to the WDTR0 via liaison meetings but will also extend to the Sheltered Housing Forum and Tenants and Residents' Associations.

What it means for tenants and West Dunbartonshire Council

The strategy sets out how we will achieve good tenant participation in housing services. Tenants can find out how we are going to provide you with information, how we are going to consult with you and use your views and how we are going to work with you so that you can influence what we do and hold us to account.

Tenants' rights:

- to form independent representative organisations and apply for registration from their landlord
- access information about policies about housing and related services
- be consulted on issues that affect their homes
- participate in decisions that affect the services they receive and have enough time to consider draft proposals and put forward their views

The Council's duties:

- develop a tenant participation strategy and put it into practice
- provide resources and support to make sure tenant participation is effective
- regularly review how well tenant participation is working
- set up arrangements for registering tenants groups
- consult individual tenants and tenants and residents groups about proposals for housing management and the standard of service we provide
- consult individual tenants and tenants and residents groups on the tenant participation strategy and ensure that it complies with equal opportunity requirements
- consult individual tenants and tenants and residents groups on proposals to sell, transfer or demolish our housing
- take on board tenants' views before decisions are taken

Key areas of work included in the new strategy include:

- ✓ Staff across housing services will have access to training, information and advice to improve their understanding and their contribution to good tenant participation practice across housing services.
- ✓ The Council will demonstrate where tenants and service users have influenced or shaped the housing service encouraging individual tenants and tenants and resident's associations to get involved with us. Tenants and residents associations will be supported and encouraged to demonstrate their achievements.
- ✓ The Council will promote new and existing ways for tenants to get involved. Accredited training will be provided for those tenants who express an interest.

- ✓ Small grants can be made available to tenants and residents associations to encourage young people within their community to get involved.
- ✓ The Council will provide tenants with annual information about how housing services is performing. We will ask tenants about the type of information they would like to receive and how the information should look.
- ✓ Tenants will be invited to get involved in a 'Tenant Scrutiny Panel' to discuss and scrutinise housing services performance and co-ordinate tenant scrutiny activity such as mystery shopping and tenant-led inspections.
- ✓ The Council will review the grants provided to tenant and residents' associations jointly with existing representatives.
- ✓ A Forum representing tenants living in Sheltered Housing complexes will be developed and supported to take part in the participation process.

Full details of how tenants can get involved and be supported and information about key areas of work can be found in the Tenant Participation Strategy 2013-16. A copy is available on request.

For further information contact:

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