

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL'S



# Tenant Participation Strategy

Summary 2017 to 2020



Our Tenant Participation (TP) Strategy sets out our commitment to develop effective consultation and participation so that by working with our tenants we can continuously improve the homes we provide and housing services. We developed it with tenants and it was approved by the Housing & Communities Committee on 1/2/17. Involving you is the name we have used for our TP Strategy and that is exactly what we want and need to do.

The full Strategy sets out the legal framework for Tenant Participation, tenant's rights, the principles behind the Strategy, how we developed the Strategy and how we will make it happen. This document gives a summary version and copies of the full Strategy are available from the TP team or on the Council's website.

## What is tenant participation?

**“It's about tenants and tenant and resident 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.)

This definition is still relevant today and tells us what tenant participation is, what needs to happen to make it work and what the outcome should be. It isn't just about Tenant & Resident groups and we provide a wide range of participation options for individuals to choose from.

**Aims** - We have a legal duty to develop a Tenant Participation Strategy in consultation with tenants and put the Strategy into practice. We have developed a good working relationship with tenants and the aim of the TP Strategy is to build on that so that we work in partnership with tenants to develop and influence Housing Services. Participation needs to be meaningful to make sure people want to get

involved, as well as stay involved and to ensure the best outcomes.

**Practice** - We need to improve the culture and practice of involving tenants across Housing Services. This is done by providing a range of options for tenants to get involved in from joining a Tenants & Resident Association, completing a survey or being on our Interested Tenant Register and being kept up to date with developments. Housing Services, by adopting this Strategy, are committing to listening to and working with tenants and we need to demonstrate that to our tenants as well as the Housing Regulator.

The Scottish Social Housing Charter aims to improve the quality and value of services provided by Social landlords like West Dunbartonshire Council (WDC). It sets out 16 outcomes and standards that we need to achieve and by which our tenants can measure our performance and hold us to account – you can compare our performance with previous years or even other landlords. Involving tenants in scrutinising our performance is essential to ensure that there is a tenant focus to improvements. We provide regular performance information through our quarterly Housing News. We also have an independent Scrutiny Panel which is made up of tenant and factored owner volunteers so that they can monitor and ensure our performance is improving and to the benefit of tenants and our other customers.



**Achievements** - we have a long history of active tenant involvement and much has been achieved. We achieved TPAS accreditation in 2015 which is valid for 3 years and are committed to maintaining tenant involvement at this standard and aim to improve it. Our quarterly newsletter Housing News was awarded a Chartered Institute of Public Relations (CIPR) Scotland Pride award in 2016 and is used to keep tenants involved in service developments and give clear, understandable performance information to help tenants scrutinise our performance. Our Joint Rent Group is made up of tenant volunteers, Housing and Finance staff to jointly scrutinise the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) to ensure that tenants get value for their rent money and improve our rent setting process.

**Action plan** - as well as the annual Tenant report required by the Housing Charter, we have also created a range of actions to ensure that the aims of 'Involving You' can be put into practice and tenant impact can be measured. Being able to demonstrate outcomes achieved by tenant involvement is one of the best ways

of encouraging more people to get involved and also to ensure that we are a continually improving organisation. Our full TP Strategy sets out the action plan for the next 4 years and progress will be regularly reported to the WDC/WDTRO Liaison meetings- minutes are available on our TP webpages. (details on P7)

**Benefits of volunteering and getting involved**

- we value the time that tenants give up to get involved with us. We hope that any involvement will be personally rewarding but we also provide transport or cover travelling expenses for any tenant attending a meeting arranged by Housing Services and our TP Grants cover out of pocket expenses for Tenant & Resident Association members as well as the running costs of the group.

We will provide support and training to help any tenant get involved. Volunteering in any tenant participation activity can be a good way to help people get back into employment or training and we will provide references for any tenant who has been actively involved for at least 6 months.



Housing staff and WDTR0 representatives receive Silver TP Accreditation certificate from TPAS

# How you can get involved

There is a range of options available so that you can get involved at a level that suits your interest and individual circumstances.

**Housing News** - keep up to date with Housing Service developments and consultations. Tenants can write or email Housing News if they have a question about Housing Services or if they would like to comment on the Housing News magazine.

**Completing surveys or questionnaires** - Quick and easy way to give your views – many surveys are done online but paper versions are always available from TP team too.

**Interested Tenant Register** - if you have limited time or don't want to be involved in a group, you can be added to our 'Interested Tenant Register'. Tenants on the Register are given the same information shared with our Tenants and Residents Associations and receive direct invites to get involved in consultations or other events. This is also a good option if you want to be able to dip in and out or if there isn't a TRA in your area.

**Reader's Panel** - Our Reader's Panel is another option for individual tenants to get involved and can be done in your own time and at home. Members read over publications to make sure they are understandable and their comments are used to improve our publications.

**Attending tenant events** - the Council holds annual information / fun days or conferences designed to attract individual tenants to engage with Housing Services and to develop existing groups. These events raise awareness about



Members of the Sheltered Housing Forum helped develop a specific handbook for sheltered housing tenants

South Drumry TRA put on a Christmas event for local kids







Tenants have helped develop clear and understandable financial information as part of our rent setting process

services provided, ask tenants and other customers for their views on different areas of the housing service and provide an opportunity to ask questions.

**Attending focus groups and public meetings**

- from time to time we will set up focus groups or public meetings which look at a particular part of the housing service, for example if we review our Allocations Policy or the Joint Rent Group set up to scrutinise the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

**Sheltered Housing Forum** - this Forum gives representatives from all nine sheltered complexes an opportunity to get together with Housing and Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) staff to discuss the Sheltered Housing Service Standards, raise issues directly with staff and monitor developments. The Forum meets every 2 months and each complex takes a turn in hosting the meeting to make sure as many tenants as possible can attend.

**Tenants and Residents Associations (TRAs)**

- TRAs are made up of local tenants and residents who represent their area to bring about improvements in housing and their communities.

Groups can apply for a Tenant Participation Grant if at least half of the elected committee (50%) are West Dunbartonshire Council tenants. This is because the grants are funded from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). Groups that do not wish to apply for funding can still become a registered tenant organisation (RTO) with West Dunbartonshire Council.



Tenants events help share information

# West Dunbartonshire Tenants and Residents Organisation (WDTRO)



The WDTRO is an umbrella organisation which acts to co-ordinate the activities of all registered TRAs and work together to improve housing services and standards.

The Council and the WDTRO have regular bi-monthly meetings so that tenant representatives, Councillors and senior housing staff can work together. Objectives are agreed and driven jointly by tenants and Council representatives with both being able to put items on the agenda. The meetings are chaired alternatively by the Housing Convener and the WDTRO chairperson or their deputies to reflect the partnership.

You can contact the WDTRO through their own website at [www.wdtro.org.uk](http://www.wdtro.org.uk) or by contacting the Housing Development Team on 01389 737 281.

**Pre-HACC Forum** - the Housing and Communities Committee (HACC) sets the policies and strategies for all services provided by the Housing Service. Prior to each of the quarterly HACC meetings, tenants have an opportunity to meet with the Housing Convener and officers who wrote the reports. The purpose of this Forum is to exchange views on the papers going before the HACC Committee and to allow tenants direct access to the Housing Convener prior to issues being decided on. The Housing Convener then



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presents these views as part of the Committee's discussion and forms part of the decision making process.

**Local engagement** - Housing Services have been since 2016, organised into 3 operational teams to focus housing management resources in a local area. Housing Officers in particular, work closely building up relationships with the tenants within their patch and develop services with them.

**Complaints** - quick and easy way to tell us what you feel has gone wrong and helps us improve our services for everyone.

**and compliments** – also good to hear when things work well and any compliments are passed onto the staff involved so they are aware of the difference they are making.

The Tenant Participation Team are here to help you get involved however you want to do that;

You can contact,

Jane Mack on 01389 737281, 07983542993, jane.mack@west-dunbarton.gov.uk or Dawn Conner on 01389 737697, 07811814402, dawn.conner@west-dunbarton.gov.uk

We also have a webpage that is kept up to date <http://www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk/housing/council-housing/tenant-participation/> and a Facebook page West Dunbartonshire Council Tenant Participation

**Or speak to your Housing Officer**





### **Other formats**

This document can be provided in large print, Braille or on audio cassette and can be translated into different community languages. Please contact:

Corporate Communications

Council Offices

Garshake Road

Dumbarton G82 3PU

Tel: 01389 737000