

ANGUS COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE – 26 NOVEMBER 2024

TENANT PARTICIPATION STRATEGY 2025-2028

REPORT BY ALISON SMITH, DIRECTOR OF VIBRANT COMMUNITIES AND SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

1. ABSTRACT

- 1.1 This report seeks committee approval for the proposed Tenant Participation Strategy 2025-2028, designed to improve communication and enhance tenant engagement and involvement in the decision-making processes affecting housing services.

2. ALIGNMENT TO THE COUNCIL PLAN AND COUNCIL POLICIES

- 2.1 The approval of the Tenant Participation Strategy will provide a number of opportunities to address the following priorities in the Council Plan 2023-28:

Caring for our people

- Reduce inequalities in all our communities.
- Provide the best start in life for children.
- Create more opportunities for people to live well and achieve their personal goals.
- Improve physical, mental health and wellbeing.

Caring for our place

- Protect and enhance our natural and built environment.
- Enable inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe communities across Angus.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Committee:-

- (i) approves the Angus Council Tenant Participation Strategy 2025-2028 and Delivery Plan, as detailed in Appendix 1; and
- (ii) approves the ongoing development of the Tenant Participation Strategy, during the lifetime of the Strategy.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 sets out the legal requirement for social landlords to actively develop and support Tenant Participation. The legislation introduced requirements for landlords to implement a Tenant Participation Strategy, register tenant and resident groups who meet prescribed criteria, and provide financial and practical support for tenant engagement. The Act also gives tenants and Registered Tenant Organisations (RTOs) rights to be consulted and involved in landlords' decision making on housing and associated services.

- 4.2 In 2023, a draft Tenant Participation Strategy was presented to tenants for consultation. However, following this, staff resources to support Tenant Participation were transferred from the Communities teams back to the Housing Service. A tenant satisfaction survey was conducted in late 2023, revealing a significant decline in tenant satisfaction, particularly concerning communication about services and decisions, as well as the opportunities provided for tenant participation in landlord decision-making. These results indicated a need to revisit and improve engagement with tenants to better understand their preferences for being informed and how they would like to participate, which informed the development of a revised Tenant Participation Strategy.

5. CURRENT POSITION

- 5.1 A Housing Service Improvement Plan has been developed in response to actions required to improve performance and address the requirements of the Scottish Housing Regulator's annual engagement plan with Angus Council. A core principle of this plan is to ensure services are built and led around people.
- 5.2 Tenant participation has declined across Angus, as indicated by feedback from the 2023 Tenant Satisfaction Survey, which identified concerns around limited opportunities for tenants to engage in decision-making and stay informed about services. Further research was completed with tenants in July 2024, aiming to understand the reasons behind this decline and gather updated insights from tenants. 111 tenants responded to this survey. The key themes emerging from this survey highlighted the need to:
- Increase awareness and promotion of Tenant Participation.
 - Demonstrate how tenant feedback influences service improvement.
 - Develop better communication channels between housing services and tenants.
 - Increase visibility of housing officers.
 - Provide various ways for tenants to engage, including in-person meetings, consultations, telephone feedback, surveys and suggestion boxes.
 - Enhance engagement with hard-to-reach groups, including elderly and disabled tenants, tenants who are digitally excluded and younger tenants.
 - Foster stronger relationships between housing staff and tenants to build trust.

The results were presented to the Tenant Participation Group and these results as well as findings from a self-assessment exercise undertaken by the Group helped shape the revised Tenant Participation Strategy.

- 5.3 The draft Tenant Participation Strategy 2025-2028 was presented to staff and tenants for consultation over September and October 2024. This involved attending eight community and tenant groups to discuss and gather feedback on the proposed strategy. A survey was also created on the Engage Angus Tenant Participation Platform and shared via social media, our Housing News Blog and the internal Viva Engage platform and shared directly with tenants signed up to our Register of Interested Tenants and with tenant groups. Hard copies were made available in sheltered housing complexes and on request. We received 38 responses to this consultation – 4 staff members and 34 tenants. A summary of the consultation findings has been published on the [Engage Angus website](#). 76% of respondents agreed that the strategy would have a positive impact on Tenant Participation and 87% supported the proposed strategy overall.

6. PROPOSALS

- 6.1 The Tenant Participation Strategy 2025–2028 outlines our commitment to ensuring that all tenants have meaningful vision for Tenant opportunities to influence decisions that affect their homes and neighbourhoods. Our Participation is to 'communicate effectively with our tenants and provide opportunities for participation and involvement that are accessible to all and ensure that tenants voices are heard, respected and at the centre of the decision-making process'.
- 6.2 To achieve this vision, we have developed five priority areas for delivering action. These are:

Priority 1: Empowering Tenants

- We will ensure tenants have the knowledge skills and confidence to engage effectively in decision making processes affecting their homes and communities.
- We will provide resources and support to tenant groups to ensure they can carry out their roles effectively.
- We will work with other service and organisations, community groups and elected members to promote and enhance tenant participation.

Priority 2: Communication and Information

- We will improve awareness of tenant participation.
- We will develop communication channels between housing services and tenants to facilitate open, honest, and transparent dialogue.
- We will provide tenants with timely and relevant information about policies, decisions and changes affecting them.

Priority 3: Improving Services

- We will use tenant feedback to shape and improve housing services, ensuring they meet the needs and expectations of our tenants.
- We will implement regular consultation processes to gather tenant feedback.
- We will demonstrate how tenant feedback influences service improvement.

Priority 4: Inclusion and Diversity

- We will promote equal opportunities and inclusive participation by engaging with a diverse range of tenants, including those from underrepresented groups, to ensure that all voices are heard.
- We will work in partnership with tenants to identify and remove any barriers to participation.

Priority 5: Accountability

- We will be accountable by establishing ways tenants can monitor and evaluate the performance of housing services.

6.3 Each priority includes several focus areas, and we have detailed the specific actions and intended outcomes in our Tenant Participation Strategy Delivery Plan.

6.4 The ongoing implementation of the Strategy will be managed within the Housing Service Improvement governance framework, which was established to oversee the execution of the Housing Service Improvement Plan. The Tenant Participation Group, consisting of tenant representatives and Council Officers, will be responsible for monitoring progress against the delivery plan. This group will report directly to the Customer Excellence Delivery Group to ensure alignment and accountability.

6.5 An annual report that reviews the progress of the Tenant Participation Strategy, including key achievements, challenges, and areas for improvement will be published and shared with tenants.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The Tenant Participation Budget, as outlined in the strategy, totals £164,000 per annum and is funded by the Housing Revenue Account. It has been carefully developed to support a wide range of tenant engagement activities. It includes provisions for staff costs, events and engagement initiatives, Registered Tenant Organisation (RTO) grants, as well as expenses related to conferences and training. Additionally, the budget covers resources for tenant scrutiny activities and tenant satisfaction surveys, ensuring that we have the sufficient resources to effectively support participation and continuously improve the services we provide based on tenant feedback.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

8.1 Failure to approve this strategy poses several risks, including delays in implementation and the inability to deliver on key commitments outlined within the strategy. This could hinder our ability to engage effectively with tenants, resulting in missed opportunities to address their needs and priorities. Additionally, it could impact our compliance with relevant legislation and statutory guidance. Ultimately, not approving the strategy could have a direct negative impact on tenants, as it would limit our capacity to enhance services and ensure their voices are central to decision-making process.

9. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

10. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT, HUMAN RIGHTS AND FAIRER SCOTLAND DUTY

10.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out and is attached (Appendix 2).

11. CHILDRENS RIGHTS AND WELLBEING IMPACT ASSESSMENT

11.1 A Childrens Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment has been carried out within the EIA.

12. CONSULTATION

12.1 In the preparation of this Tenant Participation Strategy engagement and consultation exercises were carried out with tenants, staff and other stakeholders prior to the draft being prepared and once a draft was produced. Consultation has also been undertaken with the Director of Finance and the Director of Legal, Governance and Change.

NOTE: No background papers, as detailed by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above report.

REPORT AUTHORS: Lynsey Dey, Manager (Performance & Improvement), Housing
Leanne Archer, Housing Policy Officer (Performance & Access)
Lucyna Rutkowska, Housing Policy Officer (Performance & Access)

EMAIL DETAILS: communities@angus.gov.uk

List of Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Draft Tenant Participation Strategy 2025-2028
Appendix 2 – Equality Impact Assessment