



Tenant Participation Strategy 2016-2019



Contents

Welcome	3
1. Introduction	4
2. Background	5
3. Aims of the Strategy	6
4. Keeping our tenants informed	7
5. Getting Involved	8
6. What we will provide	11
7. Our Role	11
8. Equal Opportunities	12
9. How we developed this strategy	12
10. Monitoring and Reviewing the Strategy	12
11. Action Plan	12
12. Get involved! or want to know more?	13

Welcome

Welcome to our fourth Tenant Participation Strategy. Most of us on the Tenant Participation Strategy Group have been working alongside Angus Council since 2002 influencing the Housing service that the council delivers to you.

Our group is made up of Angus Council tenants from all over Angus. Most of us originally got involved in our local neighbourhoods as part of a Registered Tenant Organisation (RTO) or residents group and from there, became involved in working on tenant participation at an Angus wide level.

Here are a few examples of decisions that we have been part of: - Rent Setting, Re-let Standards, Kitchen replacements, Anti-social Behaviour Policy and Repainting contracts. More recently we have been involved in the development of our Scottish Social Housing Charter report card and our first Tenant Led Service Review.

You can become involved in Tenant Participation at a level that suits you – you don't have to come to meetings - it can be as simple as returning a survey.

Becoming involved gives you the opportunity to have your voice heard and to shape services to work for you as well as learning new things and meeting new people.

Angus Tenant Participation Strategy Group



Councillor Donald Morrison, Convener, Communities Committee

Angus Council has a strong commitment and tradition of involving tenants in a variety of ways, to ensure they have a real say in decision making and influencing services and monitoring performance. We aim to ensure that we provide the best customer experience that we can for people in our communities. That's why we recognise that customer feedback and participation is vital, if we are to know what's working well and what needs to be improved. We would like to encourage more people to become involved, in a way that suits them and we hope that this strategy provides the framework to make this happen. Tenants are at the heart of everything that we do and we will continue to build on the good partnership working we have already established.



John Morrow, Service Manager (Housing)

Angus Council's Tenant Participation Strategy Group has come a long way since it formed over 10 years ago, and the positive influence it has had on shaping our services has been fantastic. The commitment that has been shown by the tenants involved has demonstrated a real desire to help create places that people are proud to call home. I'm certainly proud of what they have achieved and I hope that this strategy will help motivate an even wider group of residents to become involved in making our Housing services the best in Scotland.



1. Introduction

This is Angus Council's Tenant Participation Strategy for 2016-2019. In this document, when we say "we", we mean Angus Council, and when we say "you" we mean tenants.

This strategy sets out how we plan to enable you to make a difference to where you live.

This strategy will provide a framework for you to get involved in a way that suits you. We aim to provide a range of ways to become involved:

- As an individual;
- As part of a group;
- For people from harder to reach groups;
- On local issues;
- On issues that affect all tenants;
- By helping us to review our services.

The Council is working on the Transforming Angus Programme which is exploring and improving how we do business with our customers. We are committed to working with communities in new and different ways.

Tenant participation is a two way process which involves sharing ideas and information, influencing and taking part in decision making processes to improve your housing service.

Tenant participation is central to the principles of Community Planning. It aims to ensure that everyone has a chance to have their say in the planning and provision of our services and we will use a range of methods in order to enable people to do this.

We value the feedback it receives and use it to improve and develop the services it delivers. If we don't know what's not working, we can't fix it.

We are committed to focussing on the needs of our customers, being transparent and accountable. We wish to be inclusive and provide opportunities for everyone to get involved whilst making best use of the resources and assets available to us.

We hope this strategy, which will be reviewed annually, reflects these values and encourages you to become involved, in whatever way suits you.

2. Background

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 gave tenants legal rights in relation to tenant participation and placed a duty on Local Authorities and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to consult with tenants and service users on a wide range of housing issues.

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 established the Scottish Social Housing Charter and created the independent Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) who introduced a new regime of inspecting and regulating Scotland's social housing providers to look after the interests of tenants and other housing service users, as well as a desire for greater tenant scrutiny of social landlords' performance.

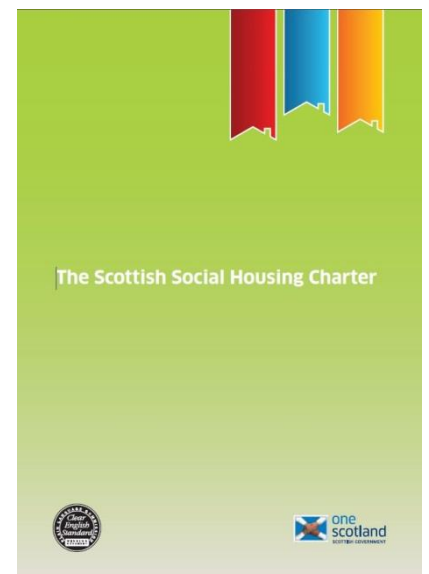
Scottish Social Housing Charter

The Scottish Parliament established the Scottish Social Housing Charter. Our aims, in compliance with the charter, are to:-

- agree service standards with our tenants;
- include tenants in assessing our performance;
- provide an honest assessment of our performance;
- report our performance to our tenants;
- use tenants feedback to improve our performance.

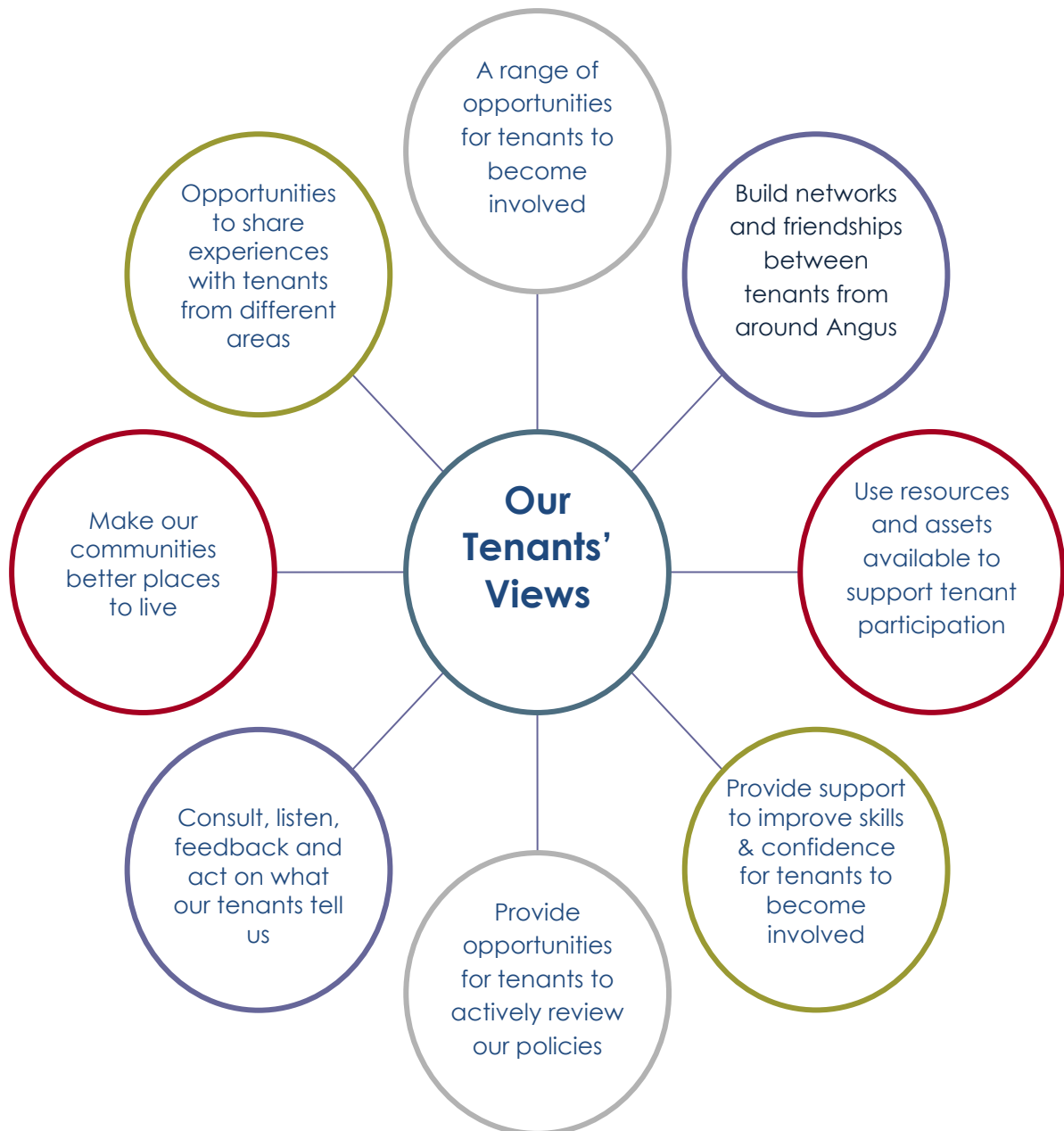
Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR)

The SHR was introduced in 2011 to "safeguard and promote the interests of current and future tenants of social landlords, people who are or may become homeless, and people who use housing services provided by registered social landlords (RSLs) and local authorities" They are responsible for the administration of the SSHC and carry out thematic inspections. They also scrutinise performance of landlords and inspect landlords whose performance causes concern. For 2015/16, Angus Council is one of the nine local authorities where no further scrutiny by SHR is planned. <https://www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk/about-shr>.



3. Aims of the Strategy

We aim to have our tenants' views at the centre of decisions about your Housing service. In order to meet this aim, we understand we need to provide a variety of ways to enable you to do this.



4. Keeping our tenants informed

We will provide meaningful information so you are well informed and equipped to participate, influence housing policies and make informed choices.

We will communicate with you using all appropriate means available to us and we are currently working on how we can improve how we do this as part of the Council's Transform Angus agenda and Digital First principle.

We will inform tenants and communities using the following methods:-

Housing News: we are currently reviewing how we use and improve our newsletter.

Housing News Blog: we have recently launched the Housing News blog which regularly gives information on topics that we feel would be of interest to our tenants. Find the blog here: - <http://www.angus.gov.uk/blog/housing>

Social Media: we are keen to develop our use of social media to communicate with our tenants and communities as well as linking into existing local networks.

Angus-wide Tenant Participation Meetings: we are keen to develop how we bring together tenants from around Angus to discuss housing issues.

Locally based tenant/community events: we will promote information locally where appropriate.

Registered Tenant Organisations (RTOs): we will keep RTOs informed and support them to communicate with their local communities.

Non- registered tenants/residents groups/community groups/networks: we will link to other community groups in order to reach out to more tenants and improve our communication.

Email: we now communicate with over 1500 tenants by email and aim to reach even more using this method.

Posters/Flyers: we will advertise opportunities to get involved across all our communities.

Local Newspapers: we will use local newspapers when appropriate.

To better enable tenants being at the centre of decision making and improving our service, we aim to ensure that everyone that wants to get involved can.



5. Getting involved

We recognise that different forms of involvement will suit different people, so we will continue to develop options that will allow tenants to become more involved in a number of different ways.

Angus wide options

- **Tenant Steering Group:** This group discusses housing policies, services and procedures, for example repairs, heating/kitchen programmes, housing allocations etc. Any national or government consultations that may arise will also be discussed at this group. At the moment the group meets around 6 weekly. This group also agrees the Charter Report Card which is made available to all of our tenants.
- **Rent Setting and Finance Group:** This group usually meets to discuss and agree annual rent setting as well as other housing related finance matters. This group also discusses income, investment and new build projects and usually meets between the months of May and October, however is currently in abeyance and will reconvene in 2018/19 as a four year rent restructure was agreed in 2014.
- **Scrutiny and Audit Panel:** This group meets twice a year to discuss the performance of the Housing service including the performance information required by the Scottish Housing Regulator in the Annual Return on the Charter – sometimes referred to as the ARC.
- **Tenant Participation Strategy Group:** This group meets twice yearly to monitor and review the tenant participation strategy to ensure that the Council is involving tenants in their decision making process. The group is also involved in discussing tenant initiatives to encourage more involvement.
- **Tenant's E-Panel:** We understand that not everyone is keen or able to attend meetings therefore this is a way of becoming involved in shaping our service from the comfort of your own home. We have a register of tenants that have signed up to be part of the panel and we send out information regarding consultations by email.

We want to involve more tenants in this way. To become registered – email us at tenantparticipation@angus.gov.uk.

- **Tenants' Panel** – We also have a postal panel which has existed for some time. Many of the members have transferred over to the email list, however we understand this does not suit everyone, so there is the option to have information posted out.
- **Customer Satisfaction:** We ask our tenants a range of satisfaction questions as part of the Scottish Social Housing Charter and report on these annually.
- **Tenant Led Service Reviews:** We have recently introduced Tenant Led Inspections in Angus. This initiative actively involves tenants in reviewing housing services based on tenants' priorities.

As part of the service review, a team of tenant volunteers identifies a particular service area that they wish to review and works alongside housing staff to closely examine the service, identify strengths and recommend areas for improvement. The group of tenants and staff set

out and agree a code of conduct for the review. Recommendations will be reported to the Housing Senior Management Team, and committee where required, for approval.

Training is provided to give individuals the tools, skills, knowledge and confidence required to carry out a review. As well as carrying out reviews, there is the opportunity to develop their own personal learning skills and in some cases, receive accreditation for their learning.

We will develop this area over the next few years and will be holding information events and workshops to recruit more volunteers.



Local Options

- **Tenants and Residents Groups including Registered Tenant Organisations (RTOs):**

A tenants and residents group is a community group representing tenants and residents in their area. Such groups which include tenants and which are registered with the Council can also be called RTOs.

Some of the benefits of becoming a registered group include:-

- Having a representative voice on consultations both locally and nationally;
- Helping to create a sense of community by working together and having a bigger voice;
- Helping to make improvements to local areas and their environments.
- Getting to know your neighbourhood;
- Representing your area on Angus wide tenant participation groups.

The Council will support tenants and residents groups. We have several groups in Angus – some registered and some not registered.

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 puts a duty on councils and RSLs to maintain and publish a register of RTOs in their area. To become registered your group must meet certain criteria e.g. be a constituted group with a defined geographical area that your group is representing. Further details of the criteria required and help and support to form an RTO is available from the Communities Officer.

Being registered will strengthen a group's right to be consulted on national housing policy. An RTO will also be entitled to a start-up grant and annual funding to help run the group.

The Council will carry out an annual review of RTOs in order to keep the register up to date.

If you wish to set up a group but are not at the stage of meeting the criteria of an RTO, the Council will still offer help and support to do this.

- **Regional Tenant Participation Networks**

RTOs can also become members of a Regional Network. The Tayforth Regional Network is made up of RTOs from Angus, Dundee, Fife and Perth and Kinross. Being part of the network will give RTOs a voice Scotland wide, as well as sharing ideas and information with similar groups throughout Scotland.

- **Local Neighbourhood Walkabouts:**

Neighbourhood walkabouts are an opportunity for local residents, Council staff and any other relevant parties, including Housing Association tenants to work together to make their neighbourhoods a better place to live. A walkabout consists of a tour around the local neighbourhood, identifying any issues, and working together to create an action plan for solutions.

We are currently developing neighbourhood walkabouts and intend rolling them out across Angus.

6. To help you become involved we will provide:

- Travel expenses
- Accessible venues
- Relevant Information
- Information in different formats
- Support to become involved and access training
- Support to tenants to learn about the national context and from other areas.
- Opportunities for tenants to learn new skills and earn accreditation for your learning.

7. Our Role

The Council will support the work of tenants, service users and staff to meet the aims of the strategy. We will:-

- Work in partnership with other staff and partners to support tenants and residents groups;
- Work with tenants to facilitate learning opportunities and information sessions;
- Provide advice and training on setting up and running a tenants and residents group or RTOs;
- Provide a start-up grant and annual grants to RTOs;
- Facilitate consultations with tenants and residents;
- Continue to promote and recruit new tenant volunteers;
- Ensure tenants and service users feel informed and confident to participate;
- Ensure tenants are given information in a format that is relevant to them;
- Facilitate Neighbourhood Walkabouts;
- Produce and develop news about housing and make it available to all of our tenants;
- Publish our Annual Charter Report (ARC) for tenants;
- Support to provide accessible venues for tenants/residents meetings;
- Continue to support the running of community facilities in Arbroath and Forfar.

8. Equal Opportunities

We aim to ensure tenant participation is open and accessible and that anyone who wishes to become involved can do so in a way that suits them. It is our aim to ensure every tenant has their individual needs recognised and is treated fairly and with respect. We will not unlawfully discriminate against anyone on the grounds of their age, disability, gender, marital status, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation or transgender status.

Equality is about being fair – sometimes this means providing extra help to those who need it the most, to give people who are vulnerable or do not have a voice, the opportunity to have their views heard.

We understand that there are sometimes barriers to participation that can prevent individuals from taking part and we aim to work together to overcome these.

We support equalities legislation and regulatory frameworks, including the Equality Act 2010 and the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.

This document, or sections of it, is available in other community languages, or alternative formats. Contact the council's ACCESS Line on 03452 777 778.

9. How we developed this strategy

This strategy was developed by the Tenant Participation Strategy Group which is a group of tenants from around Angus supported by Angus Council Communities Staff.

10. Monitoring and reviewing the strategy

The Tenant Participation Strategy Group will monitor the strategy every 6 months with a review taking place annually. Any changes to the strategy will require a majority vote by the group.

11. Action Plan

An action plan has been developed to take forward the aims of the strategy and will be updated after every tenant steering group meeting. This is a working document to show continuous improvement and work taking place and it is not intended to be published in this strategy. The latest plan can be provided on request.

The priorities within the action plan are to:

- Review and update the Tenant Participation Strategy
- Involve more tenants
- Ensure tenants are involved in reviewing housing services
- Improve communication with tenants
- Carry out neighbourhood walkabouts across all communities
- Support RTO's and other local residents groups
- Provide relevant training

12. Get involved! Or want to know more?

Contact us:

There are **Communities Officers (Pride in Place)** based in our four localities who can help give advice and support on information given in this strategy.

Our localities are:-

Arbroath

Carnoustie/Monifieth & Sidlaw

Forfar/Kirriemuir

Brechin/Montrose

Please use the following details to contact your local officer.

Email Tenantparticipation@angus.gov.uk or

Call ACCESS Line – 03452 777 778