

Angus Tenants

Welcome to our fifth Tenant Participation Strategy. Most of us on the Tenant Participation Strategy Group have been working with Angus Council since 2002, influencing the Housing service that the Council delivers to all tenants.

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 decision-making that we have been part of:

- Rent Setting,
- Re-let Standards,
- Kitchen replacements,
- Anti-social Behaviour Policy and
- Repainting contracts.

Recently we have helped develop our Scottish Social Housing Charter report card and published our first Tenant-Led Service Review.

In addition, we have been involved in the Housing Repairs future contracts options, the new bathroom contracts, the Scottish Government Housing Beyond 2021 consultation paper and a number of tenants are currently taking part in the E-Panel development and the Tenant Participation Forum.

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. Getting 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.

John Morrow, Service Leader (Housing)

Since our last strategy, we have seen many changes across Angus Council. We are becoming a smaller organisation, but one that is better, leaner and more sustainable. What hasn't changed, is that we still have the same strong commitment to our tradition of involving tenants in our decision-making.

At a time when there are so many ways of communicating, it's more important than ever that we find ways for people to get involved that suits them. So they can shape our services, challenge our performance and help us achieve our vision of 'places people are proud to call home'.

We are committed to providing the best customer experience that we can for our tenants. If we are to continue to improve our services, we need customer feedback so we know what's working well and what needs to be improved. We really do need to encourage more people to become involved. We know that expecting people to set time aside from their busy lives is a big ask. But it really will make a difference to the way our service is delivered, if we can find a way that gives more tenants a voice. We hope that this strategy provides the framework to make this happen.

Tenants are at the heart of everything we do and we will continue to build on the good partnership working we have already established, by working together to make Angus a great place to live, work and visit and by creating places that people are proud to call home.

Introduction

This is Angus Council's Tenant Participation Strategy for 2019-2022. In this document, when we say "we", we mean Angus Council, and when we say "you", we mean tenants.

This strategy will set out clearly how we plan to support you to make a difference to where you live, help improve services and have a say about how housing services are delivered.

Over the lifetime of our previous strategy, we have seen many changes to the structure of the Council. As a Council we are continually looking at how we can improve services. In doing this, changes have been made to how we provide services and who provides those services. The Transforming Angus Programme is continually exploring different ways of delivering services and looking at ways to improve how we do business with our customers. We are committed to working with our communities in new and different ways.

Tenant participation is a two way process, which involves sharing ideas and information and influencing decision making processes to improve housing services. We acknowledge that tenant participation is an important part of our service development process and we aim to ensure that all tenants are given the opportunity to have their say in the planning and provision of our services. We value your feedback, we use it to improve and develop the services we deliver, but 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 whilst being transparent and accountable. We want to be inclusive and provide opportunities for everyone to get involved, whilst making best use of the resources and assets available to us. This strategy is designed to reflect these values and encourage you to become involved in a way that suits you.

How we developed this strategy

The strategy was developed using our previous strategy and with the assistance from the Angus Tenants' Steering Group and also the Forfar Community Network supported by Angus Council Housing & Communities officers.

Monitoring and reviewing the strategy

The Angus Tenants' Steering Group will review the strategy every six months to ensure the action plan is on track. Any changes will need to be agreed by a majority vote.

Aims of the Strategy

We aim to place your views at the centre of decisions about your Housing Service, and we understand we need to provide a variety of different ways to enable you to do this.

Keeping our tenants informed

When it comes to keeping our tenants informed, we will provide you with meaningful information, ensuring you understand what it is we are asking you, so that you are well-informed and equipped to participate in influencing housing policies and making informed choices. As a Digital Council we will encourage you to engage with us through digital media where possible, but we will also communicate with you using other appropriate means available to us as follows:

- Housing News blog: our blog has been running since 2015. It gives regular information on topics that we believe are of interest and assistance to our tenants. <http://www.angus.gov.uk/blog/housing> ;

- Social media: we are continually developing our use of social media as a tool to communicate with our tenants and communities, as well as linking into existing local networks;
- Angus wide tenant participation meetings: we are continuing to develop and work with our tenants and communities in bringing together groups from around Angus to discuss housing issues. We will promote information on tenant and community events, to ensure as many as possible engage with us;
- Registered Tenant Organisations (RTO's): we will keep our RTO's informed of new or upcoming changes in our services and support them to communicate with their local communities;
- Non-registered tenants/resident groups/community groups/ networks: we will continue to link in with other community groups, to ensure we reach out to more tenants through improved communication;
- Email: we continue to communicate with a proportion of our tenants by email, through our Digital First Principle we will develop further to ensure we reach more and more of our tenants using this method;
- Posters/flyers: we will continue to advertise opportunities to get involved across all of our communities;
- Local newspapers: we will use local newspapers when appropriate, although we recognise the popularity of this medium is declining.

Getting Involved

We recognise that tenant participation means different things to different people. We will therefore ensure that we use different forms of engagement to suit as many different people as we can. We will continue to develop new options that allow tenants to become more involved in a way that suits them.

Angus-wide options

Angus Tenants' Steering Group: this group has been established for many years. Over the years the remit of the group has evolved with the changing nature of housing. The group discusses:-

- Housing strategies/policies – for example this Tenant Participation Strategy and Common Allocation Policy;
- Service and procedures – for example repairs, heating/kitchen/bathroom programmes;
- Rent Setting and Financial Matters – for example income, investment, new build projects and annual rent setting;
- Scrutiny and performance - for example annual Charter Return.
- National consultations – for example Scottish Social Housing Charter Review & Housing Beyond 2021;

We continue to engage fully with this group, which helps us come to decisions which are right for all tenants. It continually monitors and reviews our current policies and assists us to develop new strategies or policies.

The group is also involved in discussing tenant initiatives locally and nationally to encourage more engagement.

Other ways to get involved

We want to involve more tenants in shaping and improving our services so we are developing new ways of becoming involved, if you are interested, please register at tenantparticipation@angus.gov.uk .

Tenant's E-panel: we understand not everyone is keen or able to attend meetings. Therefore, we are committed to developing a way of becoming involved in shaping our services from the comfort of your own home by getting involved in our E-Panel. We are looking to get tenants signed up to be part of our panel. Once we have enough participants registered we will send out information regarding new policies, procedures or consultations that we wish to discuss with them by email, or use social media as a more interactive method to get a discussion going, for example a closed group on Facebook or other social media platforms.

Customer Satisfaction: we ask a randomly selected group of 1000 tenants a range of satisfaction questions which, as well as giving us important information about how our services are performing, also contributes to our Scottish Social Housing Charter return.

Tenant Led Scrutiny /Service Reviews: Scrutiny and service reviews involve tenants in the self-assessment of services. It was introduced to give tenants an enhanced role in the scrutiny of performance and enable them to compare their landlord's performance against others. In Angus, we have so far completed a valuable review into our unplanned repairs service. Our group have been able to get involved in reviewing our performance and providing us with recommendations for improvement which we are taking forward with one of the Housing Improvement Teams.

We provide training to give individuals the tools, skills, knowledge and confidence required to carry out this type of activity, but it doesn't have to stop there, we have opportunities for our group to develop further their own personal learning skills and in some cases, receive accreditation for their learning.

If you wish to get involved on our next service review, please contact tenantparticipation@angus.gov.uk.

Local Options

- **Tenants and Residents Groups including Registered tenant Organisations (RTOs):**
The Council will support tenants and residents groups. We have several across Angus, some registered and some not.
To become a registered group, there are criteria to be met, such as being a constituted group with a defined geographical area that your group is representing. If you need more details about the criteria required and you are looking for the help and support to form a RTO please contact our Communities Officers at tenantparticipation@angus.gov.uk.
If a group becomes registered, it strengthens their rights to be consulted on national housing policy. There is also an entitlement to start-up grant funding and annual funding to help with the running of the group. We will carry out annual reviews to keep the register up to date. If however, you wish to set up a group or already have a group established but don't meet the criteria of an RTO, we will still offer help and support to meet these requirements.
- **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 & Kinross. Being part of this larger network ensures RTOs have a voice Scotland-wide, enabling them to share ideas and information with similar groups throughout Scotland.
- **Local Neighbourhood Walkabouts:** Neighbourhood walkabouts are an opportunity for local residents, council staff and any relevant parties, including Housing Association staff and tenants to work together to make their neighbourhoods a better place to live. In Angus, we have been developing these walkabouts, and we have also been taking actions forward through our charrette activities at a larger scale by locality. We will be continuing these activities at local neighbourhood level and wider locality area events across Angus.

Achievements through Participation

We are seeing positive achievements from the feedback and participation of our tenants and local communities. We want to build upon these achievements across Angus. See below some of the activities where our tenants have been able to shape the delivery of our services and housing developments.

Timmergreens Regeneration – through successful engagement with tenants and residents the final plans have been shaped to meet the needs and address concerns of those living in the area;

Housing Beyond 2021 – a group of social housing tenants from across Angus were involved in national consultations undertaken by the Scottish Government on the future of Scotland's Housing;

The Vision for Restenneth - a film was produced through the result of a series of Pop up events and Summer Fun sessions supported by the Lordburn Restenneth and Pitreuchie Action group and council staff. It focusses on what is good about living in the area and what improvements could be made. The group continues to look at prioritising the emerging themes and how to make the improvements;

Three Streets, Carnoustie – Community Appraisal which has led to an Employability event at Carnoustie Golf Hotel in response to the feedback from our tenants and residents.

Our role in helping you participate

We are fully committed to support the work of tenants, service users and staff to meet the aims of this strategy. We will:

- work in partnership with other staff, partners and voluntary sectors to support tenants and residents groups;
- work with tenants to facilitate learning opportunities and information sessions;
- provide advice, training and support on setting up and running a tenants and residents group or RTO;
- provide start-up grant funding and annual funding to RTO's;
- Help tenants and residents respond to consultations ;
- continue to promote and recruit new tenant volunteers;
- ensure tenants and service users have the skills, knowledge and confidence to participate;
- ensure tenants are given information in a format that is relevant to them;
- Organise neighbourhood walkabouts;
- proactively pursue opportunities for establishing tenants groups;
- produce and develop news about housing and make it available to all of our tenants;
- publish our Annual Charter Report (ARC) for tenants;
- provide accessible venues for tenants and residents meetings;
- Cover expenses associated with participation;
- proactively seek to engage with hard to reach groups as identified.

Equal Opportunities

We aim to ensure tenant participation is open and accessible to all who wish to become involved in a way that suits them. We 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. 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.

Action Plans

An action plan has been developed to take forward the aims of this strategy and will be carefully monitored, reviewed and updated periodically. As it is a working document which will show continuous improvement, any work going forward will not be included in the strategy but the most up-to-date plan will be available on request. It is also our intention to produce local area action plans, as we understand what works in one area might not work in another, so these plans will be developed with our Communities and each of our Community Housing Teams ensuring a plan to develop tenant participation works for each of our teams.

Our Priorities for 2019 to 2022

- We will explore the feasibility of establishing RTO/Tenant/Residents groups in 3 areas per year. This will include engaging with harder to reach groups; and increasing our membership for our Angus Tenant's Steering Group;
- We will establish a tenant's E-panel for consultation and information sharing with tenants and explore options for making this interactive, such as a closed Facebook group;
- We will establish a Scrutineer panel for 2019/2020 service reviews and provide training to carry these out;
- We will update our groups and Housing Improvement Teams of the tenant participation activity every six months;
- We will support and maximise learning and achievement opportunities for our Angus Tenant's Steering Group and RTO's;
- We will continue to undertake tenant consultation on rent setting;
- We will continue to undertake tenant consultation on performance scrutiny and develop the way we present our annual performance with our tenant groups/panels;
- We will facilitate a range of housing consultations when they arise, giving support and assistance to tenants to allow them to participate fully in the consultations, including providing feedback on the outcomes of consultations and how these changes will effect tenants;
- We will give recognition for learning and participation through awards and accreditations;
- We will continue to promote and advertise tenant participation in the best format for our tenants; and review and revise our information about tenant participation;
- We will produce a Calendar of tenant participation opportunities including attendance at community events, supermarkets, hospitals and libraries etc. to promote tenant participation activity;
- We will arrange networking events to allow our tenant groups to learn from other groups from other areas in how they work together to make tenant participation a reality;
- We will consult on how our tenant participation budget is spent each year with the members of the Angus Tenant's Steering Group;
- We will develop tenant involvement on our Housing Improvement Teams;
- We will develop local area action plans in partnership with our local Community Housing Teams.

Want to know how to get involved!

We have four Communities Officers (Pride & Place) based in our four localities, who can give you advice and support on all information in this strategy and how to get involved in a way that suits you.

Our localities are:
Arbroath
Carnoustie, Monifieth & Sidlaw
Forfar & Kirriemuir
Brechin & Montrose

Please contact them at email – tenantparticipation@angus.gov.uk

Tel – ACCESSLine – 03452 777 778

This document, or sections of it, will be available in other community languages, or alternative formats. Please contact the council's ACCESSLine on 03452 777 778 if you require an alternative format.

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

Glossary

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 in areas of performance which show signs of difficulties or that are challenging landlords. They also scrutinise performance of landlords and inspect landlords whose performance is causing concern.

Transforming Angus Programme

All of our business activities are focused on achieving better outcomes for the people and communities of Angus. To be able to do that we are changing how we conduct our business. We have stated that by 2020, the council will be better, stronger, more sustainable and smaller and this means that we are all now engaged in change programmes which touch every aspect of our business.

Scottish Governments Digital Transformation Policy and the digital participation strategy,

These are documents outlining Scotland's full potential in a digital world. (Scottish Government, 2014) This policy is committed to delivering digital public services that **meet the needs of the public.**

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.

Service Review

A group of tenant volunteers identifies an area of service that they wish to review, they work alongside housing staff to examine the service, identify strengths and recommend areas for

improvement. The group set out and agree a code of conduct, a method of how they will carry out the review and who they require to talk to. Once the review is completed, a report highlighting the strengths of the service and any recommendations for improvements will be sent to our Housing Management Team and committee, if required, for approval. **Tenants and Residents Groups including Registered tenant Organisations (RTOs):**

A tenants and residents group is a community group representing tenants and residents within a defined area. Groups can become more formal by registering with the Council and becoming a Registered Tenant's Organisation (RTO).

Neighbourhood Walkabout

This consists of a tour around the local neighbourhood, identifying any issues, and working together to create an action plan for solutions.

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001

Gives tenants legal rights in relation to tenant participation and places a duty on Local Authorities and Registered Social Landlords to consult with tenants and service users on 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. The Act also created a requirement for greater tenant scrutiny of social landlords' performance.

Charrette

This refers to a collaborative session between all stakeholders, (i.e. council officers, tenants, residents, local businesses) to design and plan a solution to a problem in an area e.g. empty shops within town centre, new housing, regeneration of an area etc. These happen over a period of time and serve as a quick way of generating a solution to a problem, taking into consideration all views at a local level.