

Tenant Participation Strategy

2019 - 2024

*Get involved in your
Housing Service*



Interested in getting involved?

In our Tenant Participation Strategy you'll find out about the different ways YOU can have your say on Housing Services in South Ayrshire.

If you're interested in finding out more about how you can get involved turn to pages 9 -12.

We have also produced a short 'Get Involved' leaflet that provides information on the different ways you can become involved. You can view this and other information online at www.south-ayrshire.gov.uk/tp

Alternatively you can contact the Tenant Participation Team:

- Phone - 01292 612968
- Email - tp@south-ayrshire.gov.uk



Facebook

We have an active Facebook page providing information and updates on the work the Housing Service is doing in our communities. Why not like our page at www.facebook.com/sachousingservices

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This document is available on request in Braille, Tape, large print and various computer formats, DVD and community languages.

可按要求將本資訊翻譯成其他語言和轉變為其他格式。

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Portfolio Holder's Foreword



South Ayrshire's Council Plan 2018-22 sets out our clear commitment to engaging effectively with our customers. It places a strong emphasis on working with communities, customer-focused services and improving people's trust and confidence in the Council.

As Portfolio Holder for Housing and Customer Services, it gives me great pleasure to present our new Tenant Participation Strategy – a plan for action that fully embodies these principles. This Strategy is about making sure our tenants' and other customers' voices are heard and that they can have real influence on the work of the Housing Service.

This Strategy is bold and ambitious, acknowledging the positive work we have already done while still recognising that there are areas for further development. Our innovative practice in Tenant Participation has been recognised at a national level, but we must not rest on our laurels. This Strategy will ensure we continue innovating in the years to come with a renewed focus on widening participation, making best use of technology and communicating effectively.

By working collaboratively with our tenants and other customers, we can make real and meaningful changes to benefit Our People and Our Place.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Saxton', written in a cursive style.

Councillor Saxton,
Housing and Community Wellbeing Portfolio Holder

Tenants' Foreword



We, as the involved tenants working group with responsibility for the Tenant Participation Strategy, have been key to the development of this and previous Strategies. This document and South Ayrshire's Tenant Participation service wouldn't be what they are today without tenant involvement. As involved tenants, our ground-level knowledge has contributed greatly to the production of this Strategy, and we believe we have represented customers' and other service users' interests throughout this process.

With the support of Council officers, we have set out our shared vision and priorities for Tenant Participation over the next five years. We would encourage you to see this document as a guide to the work we do in Tenant Participation, and invite you to contribute your unique talents to help improve **YOUR** Housing Service.

What is Tenant Participation?

Tenant Participation is about tenants getting involved with their landlord to help develop the best possible Housing Services. This Strategy sets out how South Ayrshire Council plan to support our tenants and customers (meaning anyone who receives our Housing Services) to get involved in this process in South Ayrshire.

We realise that people's lives, circumstances and communities are all different, and that there is no single 'right' way of involving people. As such, our approach to Tenant Participation is about making sure there are a variety of ways for people to get involved and that people can get involved in ways they feel comfortable with.

We're always looking for new and innovative ways of involving people and new suggestions from tenants are always welcome.

Our responsibilities in involving tenants

The Council has a duty to:

- Have a Tenant Participation Strategy
- Keep an up-to-date register of tenants groups that have become Registered Tenants Organisations (RTOs)
- Consult our tenants and RTOs on rent setting, and significant changes to Housing Services.

We must also ensure we meet the standards set out in the Scottish Social Housing Charter - which is a standard for all social landlords introduced by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010. The Charter is about improving the quality and value of services tenants receive and sets out 16 standards that we as your landlord should meet.

The Charter aims to:

- State clearly the services tenants and other customers can expect, and help tenants hold their landlord to account
- Encourage social landlords to focus on improving the services that matter most to their customers
- Provide a basis for the Scottish Housing Regulator to assess and report on how well landlords are performing

The Charter places a real importance on tenants being able to assess the quality of the services they receive, as well as landlords monitoring their own performance. This allows us to better understand what is working and what isn't. We take these responsibilities seriously, and this Strategy is about making sure tenants have the opportunity and skills to exercise real influence on the services they receive.

Charter Outcomes Relating To Tenant Participation

The Scottish Social Housing Charter sets out 4 outcomes that directly relate to Tenant Participation, and this Strategy will support our achievement of these outcomes:

Outcome 2

Communication: Tenants and other customers (i.e. residents) find it easy to communicate with their landlord and get the information they need about their landlord, how and why it makes decisions and the services the landlord provides.

Outcome 3

Participation: Tenants and other customers find it easy to participate in and influence their landlords' decisions at a level they feel comfortable with.

Outcome 14 & 15

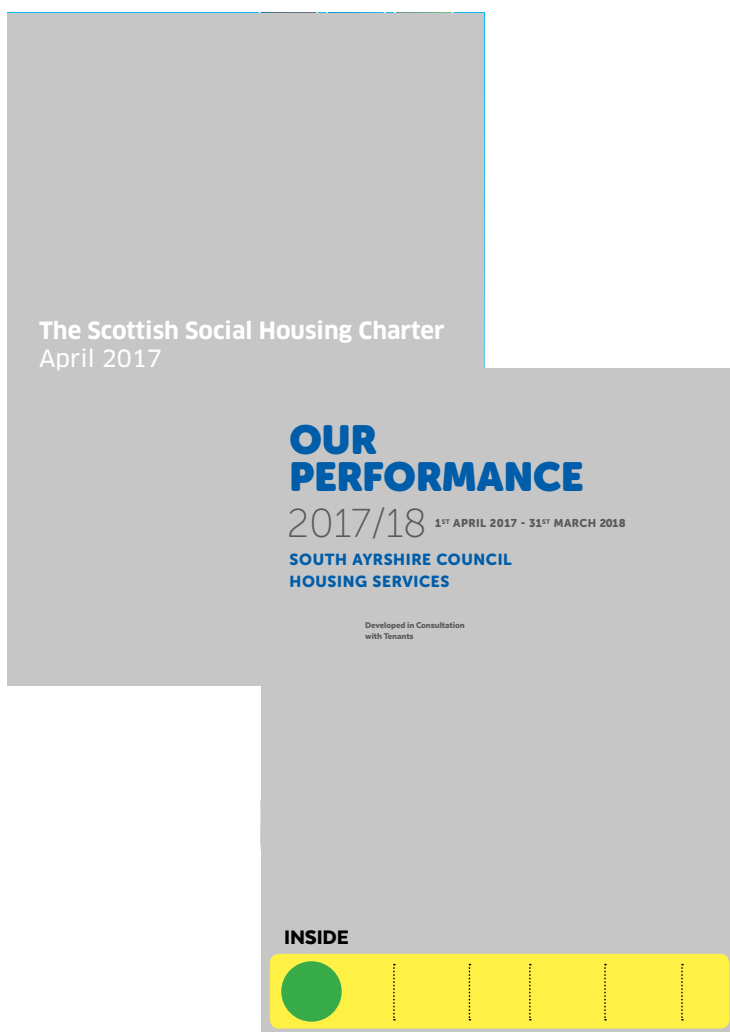
Rents and service charges: A balance is struck between the level of services provided, the cost of the services, and how far current and prospective tenants and service users can afford them. Tenants get clear information on how rent and other money is spent, including details of any individual items of expenditure above thresholds agreed between landlords and tenants.

The Charter requires us to provide a report about our performance against these and other measures to the Scottish Housing Regulator every year through the Annual Return on the Charter, as well as reporting on this to our tenants and other customers. Working closely with tenants, we currently produce an annual Performance Edition of our newsletter reporting on our performance for the previous financial year and setting this in the local context.

The Scottish Social Housing Charter can be viewed in full online at:

<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0051/00515058.pdf>

South Ayrshire Council's Annual Performance Reports can be found online at: <https://www.south-ayrshire.gov.uk/housing/housing-performance>



Equal Opportunities

As a local authority, South Ayrshire Council has a duty under the Equality Act 2010 to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

The Charter also states that we should ensure *“every tenant and other customer has their individual needs recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and Housing Services”*.

In delivering our programme for Tenant Participation, South Ayrshire Council is committed to ensuring everyone is given the opportunity to get involved and that barriers to involvement are removed as far as possible.

In order to achieve this, we make every effort to ensure all tenants are able to participate and their voices can be heard. Examples include:

- Holding meetings, consultations and special events only in accessible venues
- Providing materials in a variety of formats and languages on request
- Offering free, accessible transportation to meetings where required
- Developing new ways of engaging with people who are less likely to participate
- Ensure all meetings adhere to the Code of Conduct and that all tenants treat each other with respect



Vision and Priorities

Involved tenants and officers have worked together to set out our vision and priorities for Tenant Participation over the next five years, and will continue to work together to ensure these priorities are delivered.

Our Vision for Tenant Participation

We will work across all our neighbourhoods and communities to ensure tenants and customers in South Ayrshire have an effective voice, with real influence over the housing issues that are most important to them.

Where do we want to be?

Over the next five years, we will continue to work with our tenants to improve services, and together will look at new ways to involve people in the work that we do. Involving tenants in developing, scrutinising and improving services has had a number of positive impacts on the work we do, and we recognise the valuable contribution our involved tenants have made.

Our priorities are:

- To involve tenants from communities and neighbourhoods throughout South Ayrshire
- To work with tenants who are less likely to get involved in formal ways (such as meetings or satisfaction surveys)
- To improve the visibility of the Tenant Participation service and make sure tenants know about the different ways they can get involved
- To ensure our tenants' involvement is valued and their views are taken into account
- To make greater use of technology to help tenants get involved
- To involve frontline and senior staff in promoting and supporting Tenant Participation
- To communicate effectively with tenants on the work of the Housing Service





How can I have my say about Housing Services?

Our approach to Tenant Participation offers a variety of ways for you to get involved. You can have your say by:

- Completing satisfaction surveys
- Volunteering with the Housing Service as an 'involved tenant'
- Joining a local Registered Tenants' Organisation (RTO) or a Tenants and Residents Association (TARA)
- Giving your views about something we're consulting on (for example, rental charges or a new build housing development)
- Attending a special event, such as our annual Communities Fun Day
- Providing feedback on something you've read in our Tenants' Newsletter or Performance Edition
- Talking to your Housing Officer or Housing Assistant

We are always looking at new ways to improve the service you receive and we need tenant involvement to do so. We want to hear from you!

In short, Tenant Participation is about giving all South Ayrshire Council tenants and other customers a real voice to influence decisions made in the Housing Service.

What do we mean by an ‘involved tenant’?

Involved tenants volunteer their time, working with the Housing Service to improve the nature and quality of the services we provide. South Ayrshire Council relies on our involved tenants to give us a ‘tenants’ perspective’ on everything from the work we are doing to the ways we communicate with our tenants.

Examples of activities our involved tenants take part in include;

- Reviewing responses from our satisfaction surveys and constructively questioning areas of poor performance
- Becoming a member of working groups to help us shape the work we do in particular service areas
- Representing South Ayrshire’s tenants at national conferences and events
- Contributing to the policy development process
- Scrutinising the provision of services through Tenant-led assessments

As an involved tenant you will:

- Gain a better understanding of the Housing Service
- Receive nationally recognised training and support as required
- Meet new people
- Develop new skills and try new things
- Be reimbursed for any transport expenses or be provided with transport where necessary



TENANT VIEW: *“My best experiences of Tenant Participation have involved interaction with SAC Officers to become more knowledgeable on all the ‘whys and wherefores’ of the Housing Service and also with the other involved tenants and their aspirations, experiences and opinions.”*

Groups for involved tenants

One way that tenants can get involved is through groups that work with officers from the Housing Service to improve services. The groups currently in operation are as follows;

Monitoring Group	<p>This group monitors the Council's whole approach to Tenant Participation. The group will hear about any updates to Tenant Participation, as well as the Housing Service, and discuss how well the other groups are operating. Tenants who attend will also get the chance to raise specific issues during 'Tenant Time' for officers and tenants to work together for a solution. New projects and Housing Service developments are also discussed and agreed at this group.</p>
Communications Group	<p>This group ensures that we communicate well and that publications are interesting and easy to read. Tenants within this group are involved in the production of the newsletter from start to finish by suggesting & reviewing articles, checking fonts/colours/print size and the layout. Look out for the 'tenant checked' stamp on our publications to see what our tenants have been involved in!</p>
Scrutiny & Performance Groups	<p>We have two Scrutiny and Performance groups that allow tenants to review how areas of the service are operating.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maintenance Group: This group looks at issues around repairs, modernisations, settling-in, adaptations and neighbour disputes.• Housing Options and Support group: This group reviews service provision around the issues of homelessness, housing options, housing applications and temporary accommodation. <p>These groups look at the responses from our satisfaction surveys and look to identify areas that are performing well or poorly by comparing satisfaction levels from previous months, comparing this against similar landlords and comparing the performance against our targets.</p>

DID YOU KNOW?

If you receive a satisfaction survey through your door, it is really important that you take the time to complete the survey. Whether your experience was good or bad, we want to hear about it! Feedback from surveys helps us to improve the service or identify areas that are working well. As well as this, key results from our satisfaction surveys are submitted to the Scottish Housing Regulator in our Annual Return on the Charter, and our performance as a landlord is assessed based on the results of these surveys.

Tenant Scrutiny

We also provide opportunities for our tenants to be involved in scrutiny activities. This can mean looking at the survey results with your chosen scrutiny and performance group or inspecting the area of service as a team of tenant assessors. The focus may be on areas that are not performing as well as expected, or indeed areas that are performing well, to recognise good practice in the work we do.

Tenant assessors are able to;

- Undertake job shadowing to learn about services
- Carry out site visits
- Interview members of staff
- Report back on findings and make recommendations

We provide full training and support for our tenants to be able to undertake scrutiny activities

TENANT VIEW: *“I have enjoyed being part of something that I know can and does make a difference. I would recommend people become part of TP so their voices, concerns and ideas can be heard too. You can either sit back and complain about situations and get nowhere, or you can join in and have the ability to help them.”*

Working Groups

Each year, we look into different projects that we would like to achieve for the year ahead. We then organise working groups based on these projects to allow smaller groups of tenants to get involved in what interests them most. Some of our working groups in the past have included;

- **Tenant Events Working Group:** Tenants are involved in the organisation, planning, and running of any events that we organise such as our very successful Communities Fun Day.
- **Tenant Participation Strategy Review Group:** This group works on updating this Strategy and reviewing the included action plan on a regular basis, as well as taking into account updates to legislation.
- **Website Working Group:** This group will look at the content that is available online regarding Tenant Participation, and review it to make sure it is relevant, easy to read and easy to find.
- **Performance Edition Working Group:** Tenants are involved in this special edition of the newsletter, where we report on our Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) performance.
- **Tenants Handbook Review Group:** This group helped produce the updated Tenants Handbook along with the ‘Moving In’ video that accompanies it.
- **Housing Revenue Account Working Group:** This group meets 4 times a year with a view to monitoring the operation of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). Income and expenditure against the HRA are considered, with an action plan for this group’s activities set out at the beginning of each financial year.

We are always looking for different ways to engage with our tenant base and will regularly review and add to our working groups as necessary.

TENANT VIEW: “My best experiences in Tenant Participation have been seeing things getting done and changes being made that we have suggested.”



Young Tenants Group

We also have a very strong group of young tenants who are involved in the Housing Service.

Tenants' Podcast

Young tenants are currently working with Ayr Housing Aid Centre, the Tenant Participation team and other partners to develop a podcast that will talk about issues young tenants want to know about. The project will allow young tenants to ask officers questions about issues they want more information on, and suggest topics that they would like to discuss in the future.

Young Tenants Development Group

This group is working to develop Tenant Participation for younger tenants. This group realise that formal meetings are not for everyone; therefore they look at ways to engage on a more informal basis.

The group will look at developing the following groups over the course of this Strategy;

- Young Tenants Choir & Drama Groups
- Bowling Nights
- PS4/Xbox Night

Our young tenants – supported by the Tenant Participation team - also take opportunities to speak with different groups and at local events to promote Tenant Participation and the opportunities available.

TENANT VIEW: “I've heard too many times to count negative comments about the council and what they do wrong. Get involved; find out exactly what the council can and cannot do. Help make ideas you have for your community realised through participation and involvement”

Tenants and Residents Associations (TARAs)

Tenants & Residents Associations are groups of people representing tenants and residents living in an area or street. Their aim is to put forward views and concerns about their housing, community and local areas to the Council, so they can take part in the decision-making processes.

Another way you can get involved includes joining (or starting your own) TARA or Registered Tenant Organisation (RTO).

TARAs can register to become an RTO with the Council if they meet criteria outlined by the Scottish Government. By registering as an RTO, the group will have a formally recognised role in the decision making process of the council as well as the right to attend regional network meetings to feed into the Scottish Government's consultations. RTOs can also include tenants of other landlords and other residents including homeowners.

South Ayrshire Council will continue to assist with the development and running of RTOs where necessary. The Council will:

- Provide assistance with the initial start-up of the group
- Provide access to funding
- Provide training where necessary
- Make premises available to hold meetings of the group
- Attend groups' Annual General Meeting on request
- Continue to support RTOs development
- work jointly with RTOs and other partners and agencies to make sure that they have as much influence as possible over decisions taken about their homes and community

The Tenant Participation team will assist and support tenants to start up and maintain TARAs and RTOs across South Ayrshire. The team will also support groups who have been refused RTO status to reapply and support them in meeting the registration criteria.

More information on TARAs and RTOs in South Ayrshire (including our RTO register) are available at: <https://www.south-ayrshire.gov.uk/tp> or contact our Tenant Participation team on the details found at the back of this Strategy.

Registered Tenant Organisations

Registered Tenants' Organisations (RTOs) are key to tenant involvement. The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 (Registration of Tenant Organisations) Order 2002 sets out the criteria for registration as set by Scottish Government.

Tenants and Residents' Associations that meet the criteria set out by the Scottish Government are able to register with South Ayrshire Council as a registered tenant organisation. Registration is easy and doesn't require the Associations to do much more than they are already required to do under their constitution. The key difference between an Association and a registered group is that by registering with the Council, Associations have a recognised role in the decision making process.

Training

We are fully committed to making sure our tenant volunteers and staff receive appropriate training to help them participate effectively and work together positively. Resources are allocated every year from our annual budget for training. The Stepping Up 2 Scrutiny training programme was a recent example of this, delivered to both tenants and staff as a way of fostering good relations and supporting the introduction of Tenant-Led Assessments of services.

Tenants and staff are also given the opportunity to attend local and national events together, to learn from best practice and share our experience of delivering excellent Tenant Participation with other housing providers.





Benefits of Tenant Participation

Benefits to tenants

Tenant Participation has a number of clear benefits, both for our involved tenants and the wider tenant base. Tenant Participation:

- Informs improvements to the services all tenants receive
- Ensures tenants get good information about the Council's Housing Services
- Gives tenants better knowledge and understanding of Council processes
- Empowers tenants to influence decision-making on changes to Housing Services
- Allows tenants to have their say on the design and accessibility of new build dwellings
- Improves relationships between tenants and Council officers
- Gives tenants the opportunity to scrutinise performance and processes
- Helps people build confidence
- Can develop their skills and knowledge
- May help tackling social isolation
- Can give people a purpose
- Gets people involved in making the service better
- Helps people making a positive contribution to their community
- Gives people an opportunity to share their unique perspective based on their circumstances and experiences, and have this reflected in how things are done

Benefits to the Council

- Tenants provide knowledge to officers about how things are working on the ground
- Tenant volunteers bring with them a lifetime of skills and experience, and can make a positive contribution to the work of the Council
- Helps ensure Council services are responsive to tenants' needs and aspirations
- Improves performance through tenant insight, scrutiny and suggestions
- Allows for communications, policies and procedures to be considered and reviewed by tenants to ensure these meet tenants' needs and are effective
- Access to direct views about Council services

Benefits to the wider community

- Better neighbourhoods through improved services
- Offers a voice to the wider community
- Provide the Council with an insight into how services work with and for the community
- Ensures the community is better informed about Council services
- Making sure tenants and other customers' views are heard

TENANT VIEW: *“Come along and learn how the Housing Service works and help to improve the Service. Everyone’s view is important”*

TENANT VIEW: *“My best experiences have definitely been getting to know the other participants and the teams from South Ayrshire Council”*



How Will I Be Kept Informed?

Tenants in South Ayrshire will be kept informed about the Housing Service in a number of ways. These methods have been developed in partnership with our tenants, and we always take tenants' feedback into account. Over the next five years, we will work to deliver:

Informative, easy-to-understand written materials

One of the most important ways we can keep our tenants informed is through good quality, easy-to-understand written materials. Tenants are involved in the production of all TP written materials – including this Strategy – to make sure they are as informative and tenant-friendly as possible. Tenants work with officers and designers to create materials that people will want to read. This includes:

- **Tenants' Newsletters:** All our tenants receive three Tenants' Newsletters per year. Articles for newsletters are chosen by tenants and have a focus on good quality, useful information balanced with fun content.
- **Performance Edition:** Tenants are also given the option to receive our annual Performance Edition of the newsletter that provides information about how our services have performed against the outcomes in the Charter.

By producing materials that people want to read we can keep people more informed and also encourage them to get involved in shaping their Housing Service.



Useful information for new tenants

Moving into a new tenancy can be a daunting experience, with a lot to take in and a lot to organise. We have worked with tenants to develop materials for new tenants that are useful, engaging and set people up with the information they need to get started. This includes:

- **Tenants' Handbook:** Our Tenants' Handbook is issued to every new tenant and provides information on tenancy rights and responsibilities, housing management issues as well as wider council services. This has recently been substantially revised in a project driven by tenants to make it as accessible and useful as possible.
- **'Moving In' DVD and online video:** An online video and DVD has been developed to complement the Tenants Handbook, highlighting some of the most important aspects of the handbook and represents some common situations tenants might find themselves in.
- **'Getting involved' leaflets:** These leaflets provide information on the different ways tenants can get involved in Tenant Participation.

By providing new tenants with useful and accessible resources at the start of their tenancy, we hope we can help people respond to issues as they arise and help them manage their tenancies effectively. We will keep these materials up to date and continue to meet tenants' needs.



TENANT VIEW: “Through TP I have met like-minded people interested in what the council actually is all about and the practices they have concerning council tenants, and [about] the projects they’re undertaking to the benefit of Council tenants and their families.”

Special events

We will also inform our tenants about Housing Services and the broad range of services available to them in South Ayrshire through special events. This includes:

- **Communities Fun Day:** Our annual Communities Fun Day is developed as a partnership between tenants and officers to ensure it is both fun and informative. Since taking on this approach, the Communities Fun Day has gone from strength to strength. On average, 2500 people attend the event each year.
- **Our People, Our Place:** The Housing Service also works with other Council departments to deliver Our People, Our Place events, bringing services to the heart of communities and helping people access these services. We want to make information as accessible as possible and we will do this by running events that people want to attend.



Use of technology

Given that most people are now making more use of technology in their everyday lives, it is important that over the next five years Tenant Participation keeps pace with technological change and reflects the ways people interact with information. Examples include:

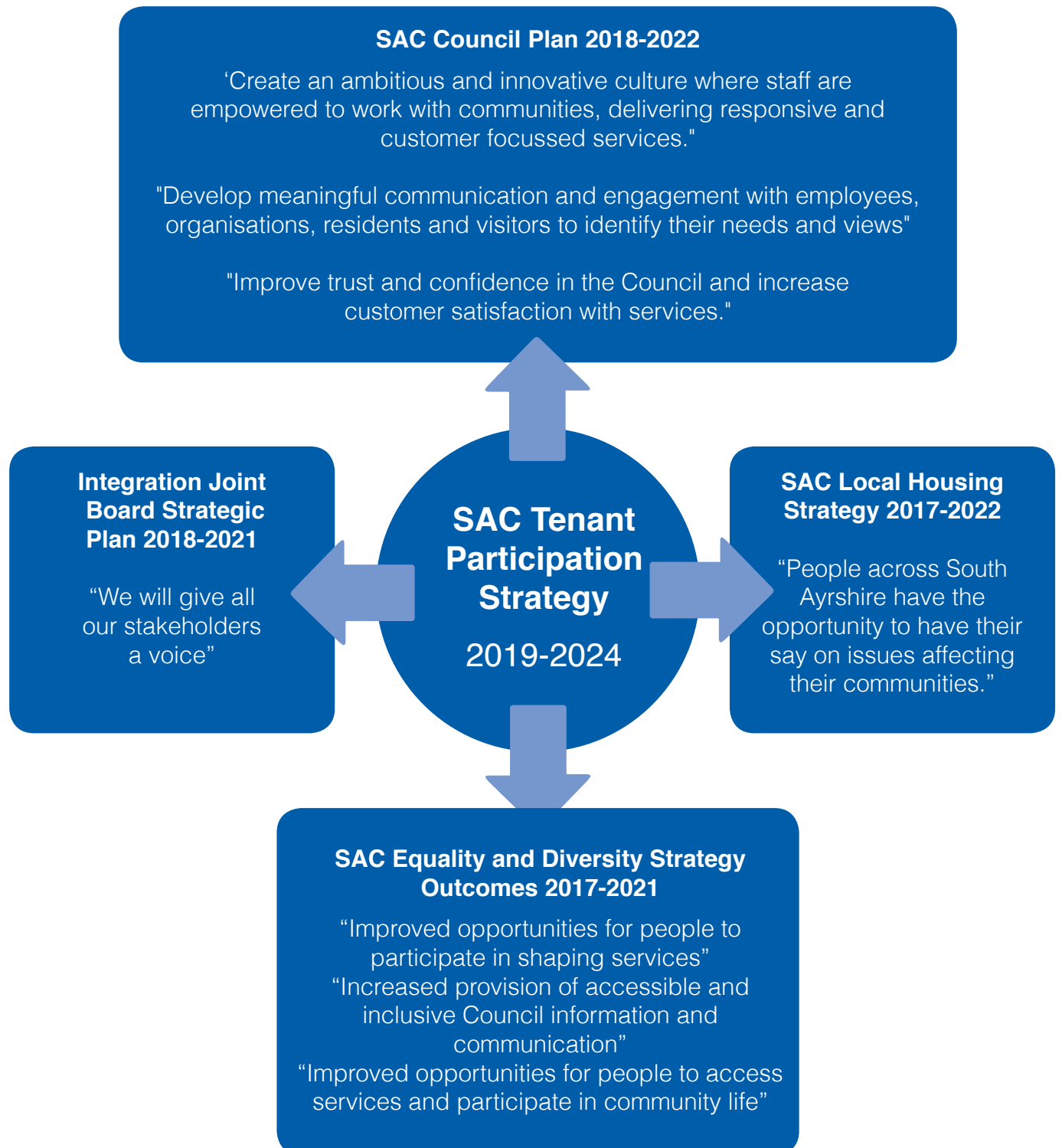
- **Social media:** Our Tenant Participation service has an active and well-used social media presence, helping us get information about our service to as wide an audience as possible. As with our other methods of engaging with people, our social media presence mixes information with fun, including live content, as well as videos and pictures from different relevant events we attend or organise.
- **Consultation:** We have also used online video presentations as a way of involving tenants, giving people who would be less likely to attend a formal event the chance to hear about our proposals before giving us their views.

All of these methods of informing people will be kept under review by our involved tenants and officers, particularly through our Communications Group, who regularly suggest new ways of engaging more effectively with our tenants.

We want to continue to improve the ways we get information to our tenants, and over the next five years we will make sure our approaches reflect tenants’ needs and wants with regard to being kept informed.

Links to other strategies and services

Our Tenant Participation Strategy plays a vital role in the Council's approach to involving people. The table below shows how TP supports other important local strategies in housing, health, and improving outcomes for our tenants and their communities.





Consultation

Effective consultation includes a wide range of methods to allow tenants and other customers to participate in a way that they are comfortable with. In order to achieve this, tenants and officers have set out the following priorities when consulting with our tenant base;

- We will take a bottom-up approach when consulting with our tenants and tenant organisations by hearing proposals before any policies are developed
- We will ensure tenants and RTOs are given sufficient time to consider, debate and discuss issues for consultation with the tenants they represent, and make sure that their views are taken into account
- We will use a number of methods to consult with our tenants including; the Tenants Newsletter, social media, poster advertisements, leaflets, surveys, the Communities Fun Day, focus groups and online video presentations
- We will continue to work with tenants using our current methods of consultation and look to develop new ways to get feedback on Housing Services developments
- We will structure consultations to make them meaningful to all our tenants
- We will provide detailed information on our consultations that outlines
 - What we are proposing
 - How proposals will affect tenants
 - How and when we will report back on consultation
 - Timescales for implementing proposals

Consultations may include but are not limited to;

- **Changes affecting your tenancy:** For example rent structure reviews
- **Housing Developments:** Getting tenants' and residents' views about New Build housing development

- **Policy & Strategy changes:** Examples include changes to our allocations policy or the development of our Local Housing Strategy
- **Estate walkabouts:** An estate walkabout involves Council officers, tenants and residents walking around their communities, identifying issues and trying to find solutions

Feedback and Influencing Decisions

We rely heavily on feedback from our tenants and service users in order to shape and improve Housing Services. It is important for us to respond to tenants and service users to let them know that they have been listened to and recommendations have been considered and/or acted upon. Providing feedback allows tenants to see that they are being listened to and that being involved is meaningful and does make a difference.

When you're involved in any of our consultations your feedback will be directed to senior management and/or elected members in the form of a committee report. We will report on the outcome of consultations in the form of letters, tenants' newsletters, publications on our website and social media.

We will also report back on our less formal methods of feedback such as satisfaction surveys, through our Performance Edition and include "You Said, We Did" sections within our newsletters. More generally, in whatever way you're involved in Tenant Participation, you can be sure that your views will be taken seriously and will influence the decisions taken about the Housing Service.

TENANT VIEW: *"Tenant Participation has given tenants the chance to discuss proposals for their houses, rather than a decision without any choice or options being foisted on us"*



How we'll work with other customers

Temporary Accommodation

As well as making sure we listen and provide information to our tenants living in permanent tenancies, it is equally important that we take into account the views of people living in temporary accommodation, such as those living in our hostels and temporary furnished flats.

Service User Forum

South Ayrshire Council has an established and active Service User Forum, made up of hostel staff, current and previous service users, and representatives from other Housing Services when required.

The Service User Forum is customer-led and seeks to:

- Work with service users to deliver the best service possible and ensure best value
- Provide feedback to both current and ex-service users
- Work together to review the service user experience within temporary accommodation
- Review service paperwork and accommodation rules or processes
- Report back on suggestions and queries made at previous meetings



This group meets quarterly with the scope to form ad hoc working groups to take forward larger projects when required.

Service users have played a lead role in the direction and planning of group meetings, the agendas being followed and the topics for discussion. In addition, the group will review and discuss the following results and information:

- Quarterly satisfaction survey results
- End of stay survey results
- Placement rules and procedures
- Support paperwork and the methods used for monitoring progress

After each meeting objectives and tasks are set out, and progress on these will be discussed at the next meeting. To ensure progress is being made on these objectives and to highlight the work of the group, service users have requested that we display the following information:

- A statement about the ethos of the hostel service
- A poster highlighting the work the group has been doing in the “You Said – We Did” format
- Current and previous successes from ideas put forward by the group

Over the next five years we will continue to develop the Service User Forum to engage with this group of service users and progress their priorities.

This group will also be vital in ensuring the wider Housing Service takes these service users' views into account.

Hostel Activity programme

One major success of the Service User Forum was the introduction of a Hostel Activity Programme, aimed at improving the lives and life-chances of service users. Three-quarters of homeless people in South Ayrshire suffer from mental health or addictions issues and require intensive support to develop the skills required to resettle effectively in the community. Following input received from service users, hostel staff recognised that in order to support people in rebuilding their lives, they needed to actively involve them in opportunities to learn new experiences and skills. Funding was secured to support the development of an annual activity programme and by working in partnership with service users staff were able to create a series of activities that would meet their needs, encourage participation and have positive outcomes. These range from games nights to cookery, trips away to DIY – and feedback so far has been very positive. Service users have reported that the programme has helped them better prepare for moving into their own accommodation because it recognises that people need more than accommodation alone to rebuild their lives.

Temporary Accommodation Newsletter

We will produce a bi-annual Temporary Accommodation newsletter with the intention of providing information to service users, sharing the results of satisfaction surveys and consultations, and seeking people's views on the services we provide.

Gypsy/Travellers

South Ayrshire is home to a small community of Gypsy/Travellers whose views we must also take into account. Over the years we have established a very positive relationship with this group, through regular ongoing engagement, listening to their views and responding to these accordingly. In addition to this our Tenant Participation team carry out an annual visit with the Housing Officer for the area to complete a satisfaction survey with the group. It was agreed with the group that a face-to-face survey was found to be the best way to ask people their views. This has also helped us build familiarity and develop a good quality relationship with the families.

This has been particularly important in recent years, as our long-standing site for families from this community unfortunately flooded in December 2015, and our development team has worked closely with the group to develop proposals for alternative accommodation on a new site. This process has involved discussion with the families about their culture and lifestyle, their existing and projected needs, as well as their future energy needs. A physical model was built up to help the families' visualise the proposed accommodation options being considered. We will continue to engage with families to make sure their needs are being effectively met by the accommodation provided.

How can Tenant Participation link in with wider Community Development?

We recognise that our tenants' lives are about more than the homes in which they live, and that's why we take opportunities where we can to work with our colleagues throughout the Council to achieve improvements across our neighbourhoods and communities

This can include:

- Taking part in one-off events to improve our neighbourhoods, including Community Clear-up days and beach cleans
- Representing the Housing Service at community events including Participatory Budgeting decision days and the recent "Our People Our Place" events bringing services to local schools
- Feeding back our tenants' views on wider community issues where appropriate
- Working with local tenants' and residents' groups to carry out estate walkabouts, and providing support where required for local consultations and events
- Our Communities Fun Day helps tenants and residents become more involved in their community and neighbourhood by highlighting services and groups operating locally

In delivering the Tenant Participation service we regularly work in partnership with other services, including Community Learning and Development, Children and Families, Community Planning and many others to maximise positive outcomes for the people of South Ayrshire.



TENANT VIEW: *"I became involved in TP because it sounded interesting and I wanted to be more involved in my community. I also wanted to be better able to understand how council housing works and how TP is beneficial to the community."*

Staffing

Our Tenant Participation team will work with tenants to deliver a professional and responsive service, and achieve this Strategy's aims. We will:

- Work in partnership with housing staff to ensure tenants' voices are heard
- Support tenants to be involved by being flexible and accommodating
- Co-produce publications and communications materials with our tenants
- Co-ordinate consultation with tenants on behalf of the Housing Service
- Engage with tenants in a variety of different ways to make sure people can be involved in a way that suits them
- Develop tenants' capacity and skills
- Deliver special events – including the Communities Fun Day

Financial

An adequate dedicated annual budget for the Tenant Participation team will be prepared to ensure that involving our tenants and other customers of the Housing Services remains a priority. This budget will deliver the following activities:

- Communities Fun Day
- Housing Revenue Account (HRA) monitoring with tenants
- Working Groups
- Consultations
- Special projects
- Opportunities for our involved tenants to develop their knowledge and skills, for example attendance at Tenant Participation Service Scotland (TPAS) and Tenant Information Service (TIS) conferences
- Three Tenants' Newsletters sent to all tenants annually
- An annual Performance Edition reporting on our performance against the Charter
- The Tenants Handbook and short film - 'Moving In'
- Providing support to Registered Tenant Organisations (RTO's) and Tenant & Resident Associations (TARA's)
- Engagement with Temporary Accommodation tenants

Volunteers

South Ayrshire Council's greatest resource is the commitment and dedication of its involved tenant volunteers. This group is involved in a wide range of activities, as highlighted previously. Without our volunteers' input, many of the Tenant Participation activities in South Ayrshire would not be as successful.



Strategy Development

This Tenant Participation Strategy was co-produced with a group of involved tenants who expressed an interest in the TP Strategy Review. This group met regularly during the process of developing the Strategy, and their input has contributed to:

- Establishing the aims and objectives of the TP Strategy
- Agreeing a Vision for TP in South Ayrshire
- Working with officers to write key parts of the Strategy
- Setting out approaches to consultation on the Strategy
- Reviewing and agreeing the content of the document
- The design of the document for publication

The wider tenant base was also encouraged to give their views on the Strategy through an article in the Tenants' Newsletter, posts on the Housing Service's Facebook page and a more formal process of consultation. We also sought the views of the rest of our involved tenants not specifically involved with the TP Strategy Review, and took these views into account when finalising the Strategy.

RTOs were also given the opportunity to give feedback on the document. A copy of the draft Strategy was sent to each RTO for comment at the beginning of our formal consultation period and feedback was used in finalising the document.

This Strategy is in place to guide our work in Tenant Participation over the next five years. It sets out the Council's priorities – developed in partnership with tenants, involved tenants and RTOs – and establishes our Vision for participation.





Action Plan

Throughout the lifetime of the Strategy we will work towards our priorities (detailed in the table below) with timescales and responsibility of the aims reviewed on a regular basis with involved tenants.

Priority 1: Involve tenants from communities and neighbourhoods throughout South Ayrshire

Continue to support tenants from across South Ayrshire to attend meetings and events

Continue to work with RTOs, including encouraging members to attend meetings and consultation events

Carry out estate walkabouts in partnership with RTOs and tenants as required

Deliver a range of consultation options that allow people to participate in ways they feel comfortable with

Priority 2: Work with tenants who are less likely to get involved in formal participation

Continue to develop and deliver the Communities Fun Day in partnership with tenants

Explore and deliver new ways for people to get involved, specifically targeting those less likely to participate

Work with partners who have strong links with particular groups

Priority 3: Improve the visibility of the Tenant Participation service and make sure tenants know about the different ways they can get involved

Promote Tenant Participation through a variety of methods

Attend local events to promote Tenant Participation

Explore advertising options within the Council and externally

OUR VISION: *'We will work across all our neighbourhoods and communities to ensure tenants and customers in South Ayrshire have an effective voice, with real influence over the housing issues that are most important to them.'*

Priority 4: Ensure our tenants' involvement is valued and their views are taken into account

Continue to deliver a co-production approach, working with tenants to develop and deliver all TP activities

Ensure tenants receive feedback from formal consultations to demonstrate how this has influenced decisions

Provide tenants with opportunities to raise issues they feel are important at meetings and during consultation

Ensure tenant scrutiny through tenant-led assessments and Scrutiny and Performance Group

Officers and tenants work together to oversee TP activities through the Monitoring Group

Establish working groups that meet both service needs and tenants' interests

Priority 5: Make greater use of technology to help tenants get involved

Continue to use social media to allow wider participation

Investigate apps and other tools to support those unable to attend meetings to participate

Consider other projects that could benefit from the approach taken to the Tenants' video

Priority 6: Involve frontline and senior staff in promoting and supporting Tenant Participation

Continue the delivery of Stepping Up To Scrutiny training

Provide training to support staff's knowledge and understanding of TP

Ensure staff continue to promote TP at sign-up and settling-in visit

Develop materials for new staff

Priority 7: Communicate effectively with tenants on the work of the Housing Service

Continue to provide relevant and up-to-date information in the Tenants' Newsletter and Performance Edition

Continue to develop the annual Performance Edition to report on our performance against the Charter

Deliver separate Temporary Accommodation newsletter and investigate possibility of Sheltered Housing newsletter

Monitoring and Review

The action plan for this document will be monitored and reviewed on a regular basis. We will ensure that we keep our tenant base and housing staff up to date with developments to this Strategy. We will regularly report updates to Tenant Participation through the Tenants' Newsletters and on the Council's social media channels. Tenants involved in the development of this Strategy will be included in the continuous monitoring and review process.

Internal Monitoring

TP Monitoring Group: Our Monitoring Group involves both tenants and officers, and will continue to review our general approach to Tenant Participation.

TP Strategy Review Group: The group responsible for the development of this Strategy will continue to meet regularly to ensure the actions set out in this Strategy are being carried out. We will also review the relevance of the Strategy annually, making any changes in the form of an update if required. This will take into account any developments in legislation and guidance that may affect this Strategy.

SAC Management: Progress on this Strategy and its actions will also be subject to internal monitoring and review through South Ayrshire Council's management structure, with regular updates on progress being provided to the Corporate and Housing Policy Manager by the TP Team.

External Monitoring

Scottish Housing Regulator: Performance against the Charter is reported annually to the Scottish Housing Regulator. As noted previously, four Charter outcomes directly relate to Tenant Participation, in the areas of Communication, Participation and Rents/Service Charges.

Independent Tenants' Organisations: South Ayrshire Council is a member of the Tenant Participation Advisory Service Scotland (TPAS Scotland). This allows officers and our tenants to learn & share best practice across the sector.

The information contained in this Strategy is correct at the time of publication. The most up-to-date version of the Strategy is available at www.south-ayrshire.gov.uk/tp and this will be reviewed on an annual basis. Printed copies of the Strategy are available on request.

Inside you will find out more about Tenant Participation in South Ayrshire and our plans for developing this throughout the lifetime of this strategy.



Interested in getting involved?

We hope this Tenant Participation Strategy has given you useful information about the ways YOU can influence Housing Services in South Ayrshire.

For more information, why not give our Tenant Participation team a call on 01292 612968 or 01292 473469.

Alternatively you can email the team at tp@south-ayrshire.gov.uk or visit our Tenant Participation webpage at www.south-ayrshire.gov.uk/tp

We also have an active Facebook page providing information about the good work the Housing Service is doing in our communities.

Why not 'Like' our page at www.facebook.com/sachousingservices