



REPORT TO: COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE ON 6 MARCH 2018

SUBJECT: TENANT PARTICIPATION STRATEGY 2017-20

**BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR (ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT,
PLANNING AND INFRASTRUCTURE)**

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Committee of the progress achieved on the implementation of the Tenant Participation Strategy during 2017/18.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (G) (2) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to the Council exercising its functions as a housing authority.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **It is recommended that the Communities Committee considers and notes:**
 - (i) **the progress made on the Tenant Participation Strategy Action Plan during 2017/18; and**
 - (ii) **that a further report on the progress will be presented to the Committee next year.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 introduced a requirement for social landlords to develop and implement a tenant participation strategy. The Act also requires social landlords to consult with their tenants on a range of housing issues and take account of their views.
- 3.2 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 introduced the Scottish Social Housing Charter which came into force on 1 April 2012. The Charter sets out the minimum standards that tenants can expect from their landlord and is monitored by the Scottish Housing Regulator. Outcome 2 (communication) and Outcome 3 (participation) of the Charter are the most relevant to the Tenant Participation Strategy.

- 3.3 The Housing Service has developed and implemented tenant participation strategies since 2003. Following a consultation with tenants, the Tenant Participation Strategy 2017-2020 was approved by this Committee on 7 March 2017 (paragraph 10 of the Minute refers).

4. **PROGRESS ON STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION**

- 4.1 The overall aim of the Tenant Participation Strategy is to “work in partnership with our tenants to design and deliver good quality housing services”. The strategy is centred around three key outcomes:

Outcome 1	A strong representation of tenants’ views and a wide range of engagement opportunities.
Outcome 2	Our tenants are fully engaged in the process of policy formulation, service review, scrutiny and decision making.
Outcome 3	Our tenants, Council staff and Elected Members have the capacity to work together effectively.

- 4.2 These outcomes are supported by an Action Plan which monitors the implementation of the strategy. As part of the monitoring arrangements, the Communities Committee reviews the Action Plan on an annual basis. Progress achieved during 2017/18 on each of the key outcomes is explained in detail below.

Outcome 1: A strong representation of tenants’ views and a wide range of engagement opportunities.

- 4.3 The strategy highlighted an opportunity for digital technology to be used to share information and engage with tenants. To mark Scottish Housing Day, a new Facebook Group for Moray Council tenants was launched on 21 September 2017. The group currently has 71 tenant members and 10 non-tenant members, including Elected Members and staff. A new dedicated email address (tenantparticipation@moray.gov.uk) has been set up and tenants now have the option under the digital services programme to register with myaccount for email alerts and request housing updates.
- 4.4 The Housing Service works with other landlords to promote tenant participation through membership of both the Moray Tenants Partnership (MTP) and North East Tenants Residents and Landlords Together (NETRALT). These organisations aim to promote tenant participation and share good practice and resources. In keeping with the theme of digital engagement, NETRALT also launched a new online Forum in September 2017 through a platform known as Basecamp. This allows tenants, residents and landlords to communicate with each other between meetings, keep track of projects and share links or information. It can also be connected via emails or to a mobile application.

- 4.5 In late 2017, housing staff helped to set up the Buckpool New Build Tenant Group which aims to bring tenants, landlords, Elected Members and the relevant services together to address issues within the estate. The group are currently considering options for a community garden project.
- 4.6 The Moray Tenants' Forum remains the Council's only Registered Tenant Organisation. The Forum aims to improve housing services and conditions for tenants at a Moray-wide level. The Forum has 9 tenant representatives within its membership.
- 4.7 All tenant participation opportunities are regularly promoted through the twice yearly Tenants' Voice newsletter and online through the Council's website and social media. A new leaflet has been created in partnership with the Moray Tenants' Forum to promote the engagement opportunities available and the benefits of tenant participation.

Outcome 2: Our tenants are fully engaged in the process of policy formulation, service review, scrutiny and decision making.

- 4.8 The "Stepping Up to Scrutiny" programme can now be delivered in-house. However, there have been some challenges in progressing tenant scrutiny due to the turnover of tenant representatives and low interest. To encourage tenants to scrutinise aspects of the service, a newsletter review group was arranged both in person and online using the new Facebook group in late 2017. In February 2018, an event took place to give tenants the opportunity to discuss their scrutiny experiences with tenants of other landlords. Two Moray Council tenants attended this event and the long term aim is to support them to re-establish the Service Improvement Panel.
- 4.9 The Housing Service continues to highlight opportunities for tenants to help improve housing services. Housing staff encourage tenants to take up opportunities to scrutinise the Council's performance by taking part in Communities Committee and Housing Best Value Group meetings.

Outcome 3: Our tenants, Council staff and Elected Members have the capacity to work together effectively.

- 4.10 The actions under this outcome relate mainly to communication materials and the provision of training.
- 4.11 In July 2017, the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) met with officers to carry out an informal review of tenant participation in Moray. Following on from this, TPAS visited the Moray Tenants' Forum to consider options for improving the way the group is run and how to increase its membership. The Forum decided to change the format of their meetings to make them feel less formal and now invite guest speakers to talk to them about housing issues and related matters.
- 4.12 Housing staff work closely with tenant representatives to ensure that they have the skills and support to help them fulfil their role. They attend events together where possible, including the annual TPAS conference where they learn about the latest developments in the sector and about good practice in Scotland.

Housing Service Support for Tenant Participation

- 4.13 The Housing Service supports the Moray Tenants' Forum by making £3k available each year in grant funding to cover its running expenses. As part of the Council's Housing Investment Programme, funding of £100k per annum is available for environmental improvement projects identified through estate walkabouts with tenants, housing staff, and Elected Members. The Housing Service also provides additional resources to support tenant participation including:
- staff time;
 - access to free publicity; and
 - administrative support (for example, taking minutes at meetings and arranging venues).
- 4.14 In line with the monitoring and evaluation arrangements of the tenant participation strategy the next progress report will be presented to this Committee in a year.

5. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**(a) Moray 2026: A Plan for the Future and Moray Corporate Plan 2015 - 2017**

Moray 2026 and the Service Plan identify the need to involve tenants in improving service quality. An effective Tenant Participation Strategy will promote healthier citizens and adults living healthier, sustainable independent lives safeguarded from harm.

(b) Policy and Legal

There are no legal implications associated within this report.

(c) Financial implications

There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. Costs associated with the implementation of the Tenant Participation Strategy are included in the Housing Revenue Account budget.

(d) Risk Implications

The Scottish Housing Regulator requires that tenants are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the day to day management of their homes and to be involved in the strategic decision making process. Failure to develop an appropriate tenant involvement structure presents a regulatory risk along with a failure to provide a customer focused service.

(e) Staffing Implications

The work required to implement the Tenant Participation Strategy is met from existing staff resources.

(f) Property

There are no property implications arising from this report.

(g) Equalities

Equalities issues have been considered as part of the development of the Tenant Participation Strategy.

(h) Consultations

Consultations have taken place with the Head of Housing and Property, the Paul Nevin Senior Solicitor (Property and Contracts), Deborah O'Shea (Principal Accountant), the Equal Opportunities Officer, Caroline Howie (Committee Services Officer) and senior managers within Housing and Property. Their comments have been reflected in the report.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 This report updates the Committee on progress with the delivery of the Tenant Participation Strategy and Action Plan during 2017/18.

Author of Report:	Daska Murray, Senior Housing Officer (Information)
Background Papers:	With Author
Ref:	