

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Communities, Housing and Public Protection
DATE	1 st November 2022
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Tenant and resident engagement
REPORT NUMBER	CUS/22/248
DIRECTOR	Andy MacDonald
CHIEF OFFICER	Derek McGowan
REPORT AUTHOR	Derek McGowan
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.1.1

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To advise the Committee of progress on tenant and resident engagement in the city.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Committee note the developing approach to tenant and resident engagement outlined in the report.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Tenant and resident engagement remains an intrinsic aspect of being a responsible landlord. Housing, Planning and Transport legislation all require a high level of engagement and consultation with local communities. With over 22,000 Council homes neighbouring privately owned properties, privately tenanted properties, and other socially rented properties it is important that we seek the views not only of those who call our houses home, but those who share common land and areas with us.
- 3.2 Aberdeen City Council has enjoyed the support of a strong tenant scrutiny panel, who for many years have helped us review our processes, identify improvements, and help us deliver them. Most recently this related to our estate and asset management procedures. Our approach to collaborating with our tenants has won numerous national awards, including from the Chartered Institute of Housing, Tenant Participation Advisory Service Scotland and the Tenant Information Service. Members of this group have been invited to

present at National Tenant Participation Conferences and have travelled all over Scotland to promote their work to landlords and their tenants.

- 3.3 Aberdeen City Council has continued to evolve our tenant and resident participation strategy, with a greater degree of digital engagement now appreciated. We have the email addresses for over 50% of our tenants and this is increasing. Gov.Notify is used to send out relevant information monthly on issues like Fly Tipping, using Housing Online and Bonfire Night. At the last long term rent strategy setting exercise, over 1800 digital responses were received, more than were received through traditional means. This meant that meaningful consultation outcomes were able to be considered by Council as part of the budget discussion in March 2020. Importantly, through this exercise over 700 respondents expressed a desire to be more involved in tenant participation.
- 3.4 A tenant established Facebook based Multi Storey Network has around 1400 members and has improved both communication and community spirit, with all our mainstream multi storeys having their own page as well as a citywide page. This has enabled the Council and Partners to have material posted, for example information videos about Fire Safety, information on Resident Led Inspections and Community Led Walkabouts, and how tenants and residents can recycle furniture within their multi storey block. Wellheads New Build has also set up a Face Book Page to bring the community together. For the last four years the annual return on the charter report to our tenants has been digital – with a paper copy provided through Newsbite.
- 3.5 The North East Tenants Residents and Landlords forum was established over 10 years ago – Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire and Moray Councils working with all the Housing Association. From members of this group we were able to work with other local housing providers to establish a Young Persons in Housing group. The initial work of this group has been to establish the views of young people in the city of their housing options. This complements the existing Citywide Sheltered Housing Group, the Citywide Multi Storey Group, both as strategic groups who want to work with the Council to improve the services they receive. This demonstrates our commitment to working with key communities to plan and deliver sustainable housing and communities.
- 3.6 This work with tenants and residents on Housing issues is complemented by ongoing engagement as required on important local issues such as education, roads and greenspace. Our aim is to ensure that local people continue to have the opportunity to influence local decisions and help improve the quality of their local environment. Often the most effective engagement can be done in local areas, through routine contact with tenants and residents. We have established procedures that have been reviewed post-pandemic and that are being re-energised through the new Housing and Support Officer role to ensure we continue to benefit from the views of local communities. Offering this personal interface allows residents to highlight these concerns with elected members and staff, and to gain commitment that issues will be addressed.

- 3.7 Community led walkabouts are an opportunity for local communities to meet with relevant Councillors, council staff and partner agencies in their area, and walk through the issues concerning them. Over the last year 16 of these have been held across the city, as follows:

Area	Number of events
Garthdee	2
Kincorth	2
Seaton	3
Tillydrone	3
George Street	1
Old Aberdeen	2
Hazlehead	1
Woodside	2

These have been led by the Director of Customer Services, and seen a wide range of partner agencies, Housing Associations and Council staff come together to meet with Councillors and residents in their area.

- 3.8 At the last Woodside Walkabout, five pupils from Woodside Primary School participated and brought a different dynamic to the walk, tying in with our aim to be a Child Friendly City. This will be rolled out across the city. These walkabouts give the Community the opportunity to tell us about their wishes for their own community areas, and brings the Council and our Partners into those communities. The Council's Target Operating Model includes key themes aimed at customer and community empowerment, and we can become not only a much more customer focussed organisation by listening to our tenants and residents through these events, but also be more transparent by informing our tenants and residents if we cannot do something and why. These events also provide an opportunity for us to visibly demonstrate our partnership working, for example it was great for the community to see Langstane Housing Association work with the Council to improve lighting, fencing and seating in an area of Seaton.
- 3.9 Resident led inspections follow a similar format but for multi-storey blocks. In addition to those listed above, the Property Factor, Cleaning Services and the Fire Service will be involved in these. Fire safety is critically important in our multi-storey blocks, and there are often issues raised through these relating to combustibles being left in buildings, and goods being left that may block the corridors in the event of a fire. In the last twelve months resident led inspections have been undertaken in all the main stream multi-storey blocks in the city, and continue to be carried out every six months. A video was recently made of a resident of Thistle Court participating in a Resident Led Inspection, which we have promoted to encourage tenants and residents to get involved in their own multi storey block.
- 3.10 One of our Housing & Support Officers developed an App which Officers can download to their mobile device to significantly improve the recording of issues raised during both community walkabouts and resident led inspections, with drop down boxes for recording issues, automatic attachment of

photographs to evidence the concerns raised. This means that an action plan is automatically generated and recorded, with improved efficiency. The issues raised normally include roads, green space, antisocial behaviour and the cosmetic condition of properties. This action plan can be emailed to all relevant services, community representatives, and posted on local Notice Boards in Multi Storeys. This ensures effective feedback and can be updated to show the community what has been done. Participatory Budgeting will be used to develop the suggestions from the Community, in line with our commitment to ensure 1% of budgets are decided by participative means.

- 3.11 This App has achieved national recognition for the Council with the Officer who developed it presenting to Supporting Communities Northern Ireland; presenting to North East Tenants, Residents and Landlords Together; running a workshop at Tenant Participation Advisory Service National Conference; presenting as a key speaker at the Tenant Participation Advisory Service workers conference and receiving the runner up award for Tenant Participation Officer of the year from the Tenant Participation Advisory Service. The Housing & Support Team have been shortlisted for the Chartered Institute of Housing Team of the Year for using this app to engage with our tenants and residents.
- 3.12 As we move forward, our intention is to identify a member of the Extended Corporate Management Team as lead for each of the 13 wards in the city. They will organise and lead on four community led walkabouts a year in each ward. A lead service will be identified depending on the issues in that ward. The lead service will appoint an appropriate officer to organise the walkabout – send out invitations and contact community representatives to identify areas for improvements or concerns. Housing and Support Officers and our Communities Team will be responsible for identifying local tenants and residents to participate in these walkabouts, including liaising with local schools to encourage pupil participation. Resident Led Inspections will be led by Locality Inclusion Managers, supported by Senior Housing & Support Officer and undertaken by the local Housing and Support Officer. These will take place every 6 months in all main stream multi storey blocks.
- 3.13 This approach will not only significantly increase the opportunities to work with tenants and residents on issues which affect them but also increase ownership by the Council's senior management team for community empowerment. These events will be inclusive of all communities and publicised widely. It is intended to purchase 6 tablets – 2 for each locality for tenants and residents to use at these Community Led Walkabouts and Resident Led Inspections. Tenants and residents will be encouraged to use these to record issues raised during the walkabouts and inspections with the aim of improving participation and empowerment in each community. A page on Aberdeen City Council web site will be developed for Community Led Walkabouts and Resident Led Inspections showing the dates in advance but also the improvements that have been made.
- 3.14 The recently approved Target Operating Model 1.2 includes a Prevention and Early Intervention strategy that sets out key aims for improving community

empowerment and independence, and ensuring a stronger customer voice in decision making. Our engagement through tenant and resident participation is a key strand of this approach and will complement Community Planning Aberdeen's developing Community Participation Strategy.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

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

7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk	Failure to consult and engage with local communities.	Promotion of community led walkabouts and resident led inspections.	L	Yes
Compliance	Failure to comply with relevant legislation requiring engagement and consultation.	Relevant processes in place.	L	Yes
Operational	Failure to understand local issues and address them	Relevant processes in place.	L	Yes

Financial	Potential for costs to arise through inspection and walkabouts.	Budget management.	L	Yes
Reputational	Failure to address local concerns and issues, and to meaningfully engage and consult.	Ongoing use of walkabouts and inspections, in addition to other established methods such as Community Councils.	L	Yes

8. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u>	
	Impact of Report
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore options to make travel to school safer and more child-friendly and to reduce vehicle congestion at school gates. • Work with communities, review the management of council-managed open spaces to create more sustainable and safer green areas and open spaces and develop Community Environmental Improvement Fund, for communities to access, to implement their own small-scale local environmental improvements. • Establish a task force to identify disused and derelict land and buildings and help bring them back into use, including investigating the purchase and conversion of upper floors along Union Street. • Work with communities to establish trusts, community enterprises, charities or other entities that support community empowerment and community wealth building. • Increase the amount of land available for community market gardens, orchards and allotments for community food growing and support the expansion of community food pantries. • Aim to devolve at least 1% of the council's annual budget to communities, allowing them

	<p>to decide their spending priorities through participative budgeting.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate options to install more outdoor gyms in the city. • Improve community safety by continuing to invest in the Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Investigations Team, in City Wardens, in community safety projects.
<u>Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan</u>	
Local Outcome Improvement Plan	<p>The proposals in this paper impact on the four pillars of the Local Outcome Improvement Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economy • People (Children and Young People) • People (Adults) • Place
Regional and City Strategies	<p>Regional Skills Strategy</p> <p>Local Housing Strategy</p> <p>Customer, Digital and Data Strategy</p> <p>Prevention and Early Intervention Strategy</p>

9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Integrated Impact Assessment	Stage 1 IIA completed.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

11. APPENDICES

None.

12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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