

ISLE OF ANGLESEY COUNTY COUNCIL	
Committee:	Partnership and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee
Date:	9 th October 2017
Subject:	Housing Tenants Participation Strategy progress report
Purpose of Report:	To provide a progress report to the Scrutiny Committee on the Tenants Participation Strategy for the 2016-17 financial Year
Scrutiny Chair:	Councillor Gwilym.O.Jones
Portfolio Holder(s):	Councillor Alun Mummery – Lead Portfolio Holder Councillor
Head of Service:	Shan Lloyd Williams – Head of Housing Services
Report Author:	Llinos Wyn Williams – Service Manager, Community Housing
Tel:	01248 752190
Email:	Llinoswilliams2@ynysmon.gov.uk
Local Members:	Relevant to all Members

1 - Recommendation/s
<p>1.0 That the Partnerships Scrutiny Committee provide feedback on any areas which may require strengthening. Also to provide officers with feedback on areas to be considered for the 2018-2021 Tenants Participation Strategy</p> <p>2.0 Elected Members and the Senior Leadership Team to play an active part in promoting tenants' participation and ensuring all tenants have a voice and a part to play in future housing and corporate developments</p>

2 – Connection to Corporate Plan / Other Corporate Priorities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Becoming Customer, Citizen and Community Focused - Increasing Housing Options and Reducing Poverty - In line with key factors of the Housing (Wales) Act 2014, Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015 and the Social Services & Wellbeing Act 2014 <p>Links into:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Transforming Adult and Older persons services through providing improved wellbeing activities and resources within our communities to enable people to live independently within their own homes as long as it is safe to do so - Keeping to our place and presence promise within the Corporate plan through increasing the number of positive tenancy based activities within our communities - Linked into the six key themes of the corporate plan, which is to be professional and well run. We listen, value our customers and develop our people to ensure we meet this theme. We are innovative and outward looking. We are committed to partnerships and co-deliver with public and 3rd sector bodies to maximise the potential reached within our Tenants Participation Strategy & commitment

3 – Guiding Principles for Scrutiny

Guiding principles to assist Members to scrutinise this subject:

- 3.1** Impact the item has on individuals and communities [**focus on customer/citizen**]
- 3.2** A look at the efficiency & effectiveness of any proposed change – both financially and in terms of quality [**focus on value**]
- 3.3** A look at the system and any risks [**focus on the system & risk**]
- 3.4** Scrutiny undertaking a performance monitoring or quality assurance role [**focus on performance & quality**]
- 3.5** Looking at plans and proposals from the perspective of the Wellbeing of Future Generations requirements [**focus on wellbeing**]

4 - Key scrutiny Questions

- What is the range of methods used to encourage and facilitate Tenant Participation?
- What is the Service doing about engaging new Tenants into the process of Tenant participation?
- What are the current challenges impacting on Tenant Participation?

5 – Background /Context

5.0 Tenants Participation means giving tenants and leaseholders, the opportunity to have a say in how their home is managed and was first introduced in Anglesey in 1998. As a social landlord in Wales, Isle of Anglesey County Council is required ‘to maximise tenants’ rights to participate and promote excellence in tenant participation’ in order to comply with the Welsh Government’s National Tenant Participation Strategy (published in 2007)

5.1 The Isle of Anglesey County Council Tenants Participation Strategy (LPTS) 2015 – 2018 is the third strategy of its type for the Isle of Anglesey County Councils’ Housing Department.

5.2 The aim of the Tenants Participation Strategy is to consult and involve tenants within the services that the Housing Services provides. This ranges from involvement on tenants and officer groups, through to activities and engagement within communities and across the Island

5.3 **The key benefits of tenant participation include the following:**

- » Improves our service and helps us to achieve our vision of Quality homes: Sustainable communities.
- » Helps us to be open and accountable

- » Create a two way feedback between tenants, leaseholders and landlord
- » Increases skills and knowledge of tenants
- » Regularly monitor and review all tenant involvement activities in terms of cost, impact and effectiveness to demonstrate our commitment to be open and accountable
- » Improves the wellbeing of tenants through a number of approaches which includes estate clean up days, environmental projects, events, employability support

5.4 Currently, an annual budget of £102,000 allocated to support tenant participation activities including staff costs. The headcount for staff within the Tenants Participation team is two full time equivalent – one Tenants Participation Assistant and one Tenants Participation Officer.

5.5 We are always looking at new ways of involving tenants and increase the number of tenants who engage with us through our varied approaches. Our vision remains largely unchanged:
*“ ..to deliver a service which demonstrates meaningful partnership working between tenants and officers which in turn encourages others to become involved knowing that their views **will be listened to** and **will influence service delivery improvements**”*

5.6 The LPTS strategy focuses on an annual action plan, of which is developed in partnership with both tenants and officers. There is a direct link between the LPTS and the Housing Revenue Account [HRA] Business Plan. It is important that our Tenants have the opportunity to shape and influence the business plan.

5.7 The LPTS is monitored quarterly by the Môn Tenants and Officers Voice (MTOV) who work closely with the new Housing Services Board and Housing Services Management Team.

5.8 To develop the current strategy, an LPTS focus group was set up in October 2014. Membership of the group was a mixture of housing officers and tenants. A total of 5 meetings were held and were supported by TPAS Cymru (Tenants Participation Wales Advisory Service of Wales)

5.9 Progress report

5.10 Over the last 18 months, the Tenants Participation Team has been operating with one full time equivalent member of staff, which is in the capacity of Tenants Participation Assistant. This was to allow the full time equivalent Tenants Participation Officer to undertake a secondment opportunity in regards to developing a number of strategies and policies within the Housing Services.

5.11 Through having reduced staff in place, it has affected our ability to maximise our potential in delivering the annual action plan. Despite a reduction in staff headcount, there have been a number of achievements that have progressed during the 2016-17 financial Year. A report was submitted to Housing Management Board who agreed that a progress report be submitted to the Partnership and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee.

5.12 Successes during 2016-17 include:

5.12.1 Computer kiosks

The kiosks are touch screen user-friendly computers and provide short cuts to useful information, which will support tenants to maximise their income, search for jobs and claim Universal Credit.

The computer kiosks are based in Amlwch and Newborough library, Iorwerth Centre Beaumaris, Gwelfor Community Centre and J E O Toole Centre in Holyhead, Llangeferni Council reception and Caffi Y Stesion in Llannerchymedd

We have had some teething problems however, following a visit from BT social telecoms; all issues have now been resolved.

5.12.2 The fight against fuel poverty initiative

The aim of this initiative was to support tenants affected by fuel poverty to reduce their energy bills.

Four tenants living in Dwyran attended the Sheltered Housing Forum in December 2015. During the forum, the Citizen Advice Bureau presented on fuel poverty, which informed tenants on what help and support was available as part of their *energy best deals campaign*.

At the end of the forum, Cil y Graig Dwyran tenants requested the support of the Tenants Participation team concerning fuel poverty. They believed that they were unable to switch suppliers' due to how the gas is supplied to the estate (which is from a large gas tank on the estate serving all the properties). This included 16 bungalows in total. Eight tenants said that their fuel bills were becoming unmanageable. Six tenants said that they did not use the gas, which was supplied by the tank on the estate and had their own gas bottles to avoid high-unexpected bills. These tenants said that they only heat one room at a time. Two tenants reported they *'just accepted that the fuel bill was high and paid it'* and that they adjusted in other ways such as reducing the amount of food they bought.

In partnership with the Citizen Advice Bureau, the Tenant Participation team supported the tenants to negotiate a better deal with their current provider going from 49p per unit to 28p per unit. All tenants were also credited £100 on their gas accounts as part of the new deal.

The success of this project has been recognised by tenants, and as a result has been delivered in 3 other estates. During a period of four months, *'the fight against fuel poverty'* initiative has helped 59 tenants out of fuel poverty. We also received confirmation that all tenants on Calor gas will benefit from the price reduction and this was backdated to January 2016.

5.12.3 Repairs forum:

The Repairs forum meet every two months. Panel members have reported positively concerning the transformation programme within the Technical Services response team. Tenant feedback is that it has made real progress throughout the process.

The repairs forum has and continues to concentrate on Customer Satisfaction levels. This is to ensure that the Housing Services are providing tenants with the opportunity to complete a customer service survey, after works are completed. This also enables tenants to feel valued and understand the Housing departments' appreciation of them providing suggestions tenants on continuous service improvements.

An example of when we have listened to tenants includes:

Gas servicing letters now inform tenants that operatives will need access to the gas shut off; this request was made by one of our tenants who suggested that this is not always easily accessible and may require tenants to move items/ furniture.

5.12.4 **Môn Tenants and Officer Voice – MTOV**

The MTOV group continues to meet on a quarterly basis. Membership includes tenants from across the Island. A number of tenant representatives reside in Holyhead. We were keen to increase tenant participation from other areas on the Island. We have one new tenant from Beaumaris and another tenant from Aberffraw who are now part of the MTOV meeting. We are focusing on other locations to ensure the voice is heard from a varied socio-demographic set of tenants, covering a number of locations from across the Island.

In 2017 – 18 financial Year, we are looking to re-brand and refresh the MTOV structure. This, in turn, should encourage new tenants to attend and provide fresh and innovative ideas within developments in the Housing department.

Tenants on the MTOV have voiced some concern over not having more input on Corporate matters within Isle of Anglesey County Council. This will need to be addressed as priority

5.12.5 **Community Hubs**

There are twenty two communal lounges based across sheltered housing schemes on the Island. Some lounges are used almost daily, others are less frequently.

With the Social Services and Wellbeing Act 2014 and Wellbeing of Future Generations Act 2015, communities have more responsibility and accountability over their personal wellbeing. The communal lounges have been viewed as an excellent base for community hubs to be formed. We are undergoing a consultation to view if tenants are keen to extend their communal lounge to the wider community

Discussions commenced during 2016-17 financial Year with MTOV in order to gather insight into the need for community hubs within the communal lounges. Positive feedback and support has resulted in this idea being taken forward in 2017-18, in partnership with 3rd sector providers Menter Môn, Medrwn Môn, Housing and Adult Services.

Ger y Graig community hub developments have commenced which has resulted in positive events and gatherings forming, alongside funding for a Mens' Shed.

5.12.6 Customer Care Audit by tenants

The Corporate Customer Care Charter was introduced on the 1st July 2015 and is in place to demonstrate the Council's commitment to delivering excellent customer service. To monitor the implementation, the charter is audited annually. Between January to March 2017, tenants from the MTOV group had the opportunity to audit Customer Care levels across services within the Council.

Overall, the standard of Customer Care within Anglesey Council has improved since the last audit however; there is still room for improvement.

MTOV tenants viewed the following recommendations as areas for improvement:

- All emails to include a signature detailing the officer's name and job role.
- Set up automated acknowledgement responses for all publically available emails such as housing@ynysmon.gov.uk
- All officers working in a reception area to wear name badges rather than lanyards.
- Officers responsible for answering the telephones to be aware of the customer care charter.

5.12.7 Estate clean-up days

Twenty-two estate clean-up days occurred during 2016-17. The Housing Management Team, upon their inspection of estates & during walkabouts and new tenant made referrals for estate clean-up days sign-up were able to refer the requirement to the Tenants Participation team for action

Estate clean-up days during 2016-17 include the following areas:

Llangefni, Holyhead, Moelfre, Llanfairpwll, Aberffraw, Newborough, Pentraeth, Llanddeusant, Llansadwrn, Benllech and Cemaes.

5.12.8 Police surgeries

Ten police surgeries across the Island, which includes Benllech, Amlwch, Moelfre, Llanfairpwll and Llangefni. Relationship with the police continues to go from strength to strength, in particular local PSCO's who are always keen to drive forward with community initiatives, involving tenants and police surgeries.

5.12.9 **Anti-Social Behaviour forum**

Housing Services recognise that anti-social behaviour ('ASB') can have a significant impact on the lives of our tenants and residents.

We believe that all tenants and residents have the right to enjoy peace, quiet and security in and around their home. We appreciate that anti-social behaviour can have a devastating effect on victims and to this end, the Isle of Anglesey County Council's Housing Service is committed to tackling anti-social behaviour as quickly and effectively as possible, by working in partnership with a variety of agencies and using the full range of powers available, as defined in the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014.

The first anti-social behaviour forum occurred in December 2016. Response from tenants who wanted to form part of this forum was healthy. The next anti-social behaviour forum will take place in October 2017

5.12.10 **Environmental Projects**

Five tenant communities were in receipt of environmental projects during 2016 - 17. The total cost of these projects were £7,000. The environmental project group, which consists of MTOV tenants approved the applications that were provided by each group.

One of the highlights of the environmental projects has been with the Glan Cefni sheltered housing scheme, based in Llangefni. Tenants requested astro-turf to be laid down in order for them to access their garden 365 days per Year. This has resulted in more tenants using their garden who have in turn, reported an improvement on community cohesion and wellbeing

There is more focus in 2017- 18 on improving environmental projects across the Island. We have seen an increase in environmental project applications over Q1 2017-18 for park benches, picnic tables, recycling area

5.12.10 **Sheltered Housing Forum**

The Sheltered Housing Forum continues to attract 60 to 70 sheltered housing tenants per quarter. Feedback forms are provided for all attendees to provide their feedback and satisfaction on the content of the agenda. Tenant ideas are paramount to the success, retention and increase of attendance within the sheltered housing forum.

5.12.11 **Grant support**

We have successfully supported the Trem Eryri Monday and Tuesday club to secure grant funding from Horizon nuclear. This has enabled the group to refresh their lounge, buy-in a cleaner on a weekly basis and expenditure for tenants to spend on a day out. We have since supported another group in Aberffraw with private grant funding and we hope we can take this forward across the board

during 2017-18 to ensure consistency and improving community resilience through groups applying for their own grant funding to improve their wellbeing and access to activities

5.13 Focus for 2017-18

- Re-branding of MTOV in order to refresh the group and encourage new tenants to attend, creating new models of tenant and community engagement that delivers real positive outcomes
- To commence the engagement and development of the 2018- 2021 Local Tenant Participation Strategy, in partnership with tenants, and ensure strategic links with the HRA Business Plan and Council's Corporate Plan
- To re-instate the quarterly tenant bulletin for all panel members, ensuring they are fully aware on activities and developments that are underway and seeking their feedback on an ongoing basis
- Involve tenant in tackling issues and finding local solutions for significant changes such as the full rollout of Universal Credit
- To increase the number of communal lounges transformed into community hubs
- To be clear on communal lounges that are not used and will not be used in future. A decision will need to be made on what the Housing Services' plan will be in respect to lounges to which tenants and / or the wider community do not want to use as a hub. For example, transforming these into accommodation
- To recruit a Tenants Participation Officer thus ensuring the quota of staffing within the function is at the budgeted level
- To develop a training plan for panel members in order to improve knowledge on a number of areas. One area noted by the MTOV panel is mental health awareness training as this is becoming an increased challenge within our communities

6 – Equality Impact Assessment

Not applicable – progress report on existing strategy only

7 – Financial Implications

Not applicable – the budget has been set and agreed. The budget is allocated from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

8 – Appendices:

9 - Background papers (please contact the author of the Report for any further information):