

Swansea Council Tenant Participation Strategy 2019 – 2021

Foreword Head of Service

I am pleased to introduce Swansea Councils 2019-2021 Tenant Participation Strategy. This sets out our commitment to continue developing effective ways for tenants and leaseholders to get involved, which helps us to identify what we are doing well, and where we need to make improvements to services.

This strategy also supports the overall vision for the Housing and Public Health service, which is to provide good quality homes and services that support communities and help to safeguard and protect both people and the environment of Swansea.

Mark Wade, Head of Housing and Public Health

Foreword Cabinet Member for Homes and Energy

As a Council, we recognise the importance of working in partnership with tenants and leaseholders to improve services.

This is the Councils 4th Tenant Participation Strategy, which has been developed jointly with tenants. I would like to thank all those who have contributed to developing this strategy and I hope it will encourage more tenants and leaseholders to get involved.

Andrea Lewis, Cabinet Member Homes and Energy

Introduction

This strategy sets out the framework for tenant participation over the next 3 years. The strategy includes the current methods of tenant participation and seeks to explore new ways to encourage more involvement. The publication of a Tenant Participation Strategy is not a statutory requirement but it is recognised as best practice as a way to develop and improve engagement with Tenants and Leaseholders.

This strategy also supports the Welsh Government's commitment to tenant participation across Wales together with a number of the Council's key priorities including transforming services, safeguarding people from harm and tackling poverty.

Development of the strategy

This strategy has been jointly developed with tenant groups and using feedback from face to face surveys and questionnaires. The Tenant Steering Group has been involved in jointly developing these strategies since the first one was produced in 2007 and has continued to monitor progress.

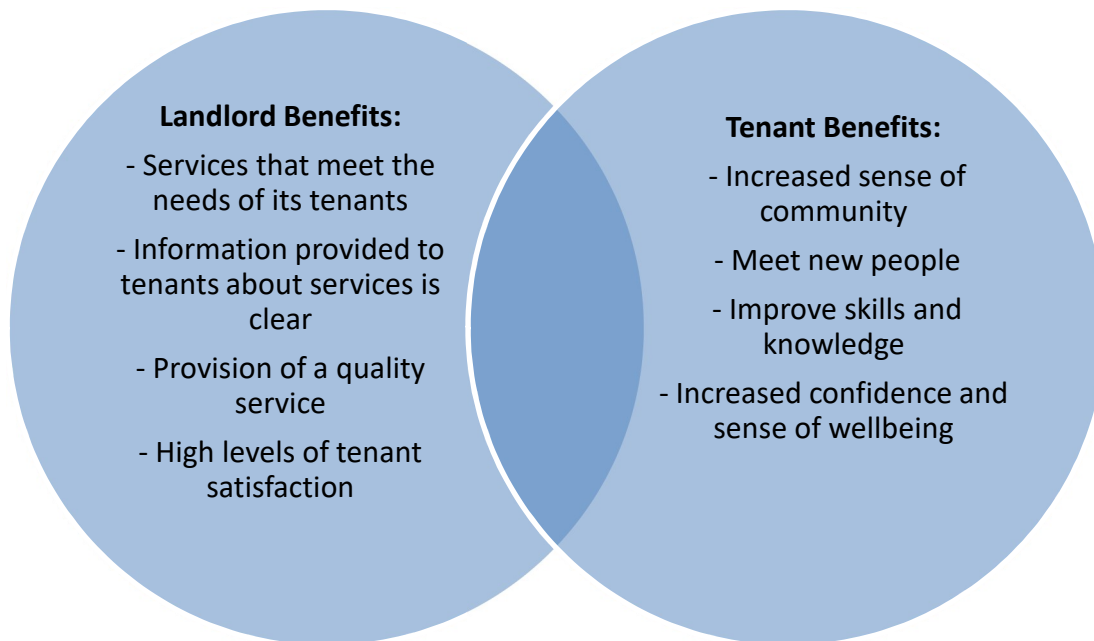
The Tenant steering group felt that the overall aim of the strategy should remain as *"Working together we will aim to promote and develop participation opportunities for tenants and leaseholders and to improve the quality and delivery of housing management services."*

They also felt that the objectives of the strategy were still relevant as they are based on the themes important to tenants. These are set out below;-

- **Objective 1- Increase participation levels**
- **Objective 2- To improve services, homes and estates.**
- **Objective 3- To increase the skills and knowledge of tenants**
- **Objective 4- To improve participation in the wider community.**

What is Tenant Participation?

Tenant and Leaseholder participation is a two-way process working in partnership to share ideas and information to improve services, homes and estates. Some of the benefits of tenant participation for individual tenants and the Authority are detailed below.



Current Tenant Participation activities

The purpose of the strategy is to improve services through greater involvement and methods, which are accessible to tenants. However, we recognise that the way in which tenants want to get involved or access services is continuing to change.

We also understand not all tenants want to take part in the same way. Our 2017 Tenants survey told us that 82% do not want to participate due to busy lifestyle, age and illness. There are currently a range of ways to participate, however, this list is not exhaustive and using tenant feedback new ways of getting involved are being developed.

There are three levels at which tenants or leaseholders can choose to get involved, as little or as much as they like, with support from the Participation Officer and Housing staff, these are:

City and Countywide Groups

About	Current Groups
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groups act as a sounding board for new ideas and policies • Attended by Senior Housing Managers • Meets quarterly • Looks at a wide range of issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tenants Consultative Panel - Tenant Steering Group - Building and Repairs Group - Sheltered Housing Representatives Group - Open House Feedback Group - Estate Management Group - Task and Finish Groups

Local Participation

About	Opportunities include
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement and feedback helps to tailor services to meet the needs of tenants and identify where to target resources • Represent the views of your community • Having a say in what estate improvements are needed • Meetings with local Housing Managers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local Tenant and Resident Groups - Ward Member surgeries - Social clubs / groups - Participation during Major Works - Taking part in gardening competition - Local community events - Ad-hoc issue/ service specific events

Individual Participation

About.....	Opportunities include
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having your say about services from the comfort of your own home about services • Giving your views on the quality of WHQS improvement work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Questionnaires/surveys - Responses to individual consultation letters - Providing feedback on topics in the Open House magazine and Housing web pages - Drop in sessions - Housing Facebook group - Home visits from housing staff

During 2018, we undertook further consultation to find out how we could improve ways to get more tenants involved, collating information from a variety of sources, as follows:

Tenants Survey

We undertook a full Tenants survey in 2017 and a survey on customer contact in all our District Housing Offices in 2018.

- ✓ The Tenants Survey 2017 told us that 83% of tenants are satisfied that they are kept informed by their landlord.
- ✓ 82% were satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live.
- ✓ The survey told us that most tenants; 76% access the Housing Service by phone.
- ✓ 80% were satisfied with the information they received prior to improvements work starting.

In addition, a Tenant Involvement questionnaire was sent to 859 Tenants and Leaseholders on the Tenants Consultative Panel (TCP). The overall feedback received was positive and the majority of tenants felt satisfied with existing ways to get involved.

Wales Audit Office review

The Wales Audit Office (WAO) undertook a review to look at whether the Council has effective arrangements in place to meet the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) by 2020 and how it engages with tenants. Overall, the findings were positive and most tenants the WAO spoke to were satisfied with the quality of improvement works done to their homes by the Council, and with the housing service they receive. They also stated that tenants felt that the Council takes their views into consideration, but that the Council could strengthen tenant engagement and make sure tenants are clear about why improvement works are needed. A number of improvements have been added to the Tenant participation strategy action plan to develop these further.

The objectives and actions, which will support delivery of this strategy, are detailed in the attached Appendix 1 Action Plan from pages 8 to 12, which sets out what the Council aims to achieve over the next 3 years.

Tenant Participation budget and resources to support the Strategy

Engagement with tenants and leaseholders is a core part of the role for all staff working in the housing service. There is also a dedicated Participation Officer whose role it is to promote tenant and leaseholder involvement by offering support and guidance.

In addition, there are other resources, which are dedicated to supporting tenant, and leaseholder involvement, which include:

An annual budget of £8000, which is utilised for:

- Support for tenants groups
- Venue hire and refreshments for meetings and events etc.
- Reimbursements for travel expenses and transport for those with mobility problems
- Tenant training and attendance at the tenant conference
- General administration such as photocopying, letters, leaflets, postage etc.



Monitoring the Strategy

The Tenant Participation Strategy is reviewed quarterly by the Tenant Steering Group and Participation Officer. Progress in implementing the strategy will be fed back to tenants at group meetings, via Open House magazine, Housing Facebook group and the housing web pages on the Council's website. Staff will be kept up to date via team meetings and staff web pages.

The Cabinet Member and Senior Managers in Housing and Public Health receive an annual update report on the action plan in order to measure its progress. This ensures that future developments or improvements in tenant participation remain a key priority for the service. Senior Managers are also directly involved in group meetings.

Participation opportunities for everyone

The Housing Service is committed to addressing equality and diversity issues and to complying with legislation and best practice. It will ensure that in delivering services and tenant participation activities it is inclusive and representative.

A number of initiatives have been put into place to increase involvement and include the use of accessible venues for meetings and events, information available in a range of formats, transport arranged for those with mobility problems, reimbursement of travel expenses, staff and tenant awareness sessions on equality issues, a choice of participation methods to suit all needs, a variety of communication methods and a specific requests register.

The Housing Service records customer details such as age, gender, ethnicity and language used, disability, subject to the individual being willing to provide it. The data captured helps to shape and tailor future services to meet the needs of individuals and communities.

Dealing with tenant complaints

The Council recognises that from time to time, the service provided does not always meet with customers' satisfaction. In the first instance, you should speak to the manager of the relevant service where you experienced a problem. If this does not resolve the issue, there is a corporate complaints procedure, which not only aims to resolve complaints but also encourages service users to provide their comments and compliments. This helps to improve services and meet customer needs.