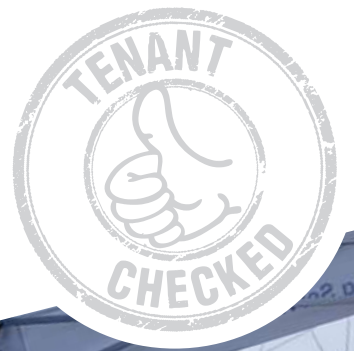


TENANT PARTICIPATION STRATEGY 2025 - 2030



Get involved in your Housing Service

Interested in getting involved?

Within this strategy you will find out about the different ways you can have your say on Housing Services in South Ayrshire.

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 south-ayrshire.gov.uk/tenant-participation or by scanning the QR Code.

If you're interested in finding out more about how you can get involved turn to page 15.

Alternatively, you can contact the Tenant Participation team:



01292 612968



tp@south-ayrshire.gov.uk



We have an active Facebook page providing information and updates. Follow us on Facebook for the latest updates within Housing Services. www.facebook.com/sachousingservices

This information can be made available, on request, in braille, large print or audio formats and can be translated into a range of languages. میں ترجمہ بھی کیا جاسکتا ہے۔ رابطہ کی تفصیلات نیچے فراہم کی گئی ہیں۔ درخواست کرنے پر یہ معلومات نابینا افراد کے لئے اُبھرے حروف، بڑے حروف یا آڈیو میں مہیا کی جاسکتی ہے اور اسکا مختلف زبانوں

本信息可应要求提供盲文，大字印刷或音频格式，以及可翻译成多种语言。以下是详细联系方式。

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ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਮੰਗ ਕੇ ਬੋਲ, ਵੱਡੇ ਅੱਖਰਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਸੁਣਨ ਵਾਲੇ ਰਾਹੀਂ ਛੱਚ ਵੀ ਲਈ ਜਾ ਸਕਦੀ ਹੈ, ਅਤੇ ਇਹਦਾ ਤਰਜਮਾ ਹੋਰ ਬੋਲੀਆਂ ਛੱਚ ਵੀ ਕਰਵਾਇਆ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ। ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਵੱਲੀ ਗਈ ਹੈ।

Niniejsze informacje mogą zostać udostępnione na życzenie w alfabecie Braille'a, w druku powiększonym lub w formie audio oraz mogą zostać przetłumaczone na wiele języków obcych. Dane kontaktowe znajdują się poniżej.

Faodar am fiosrachadh seo fhaighinn, le iarrtas, ann am braille, clò mòr no clàr fuaim agus tha e comasach eadar-theangachadh gu grunn chànanan. Tha fiosrachadh gu h-ìosal mu bhith a' cur fios a-steach.

Ця інформація може бути перекладена іншими мовами та надана в іншому форматі за запитом.

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Cllr Kilbride

As Portfolio Holder for Buildings, Housing and Environment it gives me great pleasure to present our updated and refreshed strategy for 2025 to 2030.

This strategy is based on what has worked well over the lifetime of the previous strategy and incorporates our Involved Tenants ideas and feedback from the consultation.

The Tenant Participation Strategy continues to support South Ayrshire Council's Plan. The plan has three overarching priorities and this strategy supports the following two:

Priority 2 - Live, Work, Learn (Housing)

"Everyone can find a good quality home that they can afford, that meets their needs and is in an area where they feel safe and connected"

Priority 3 - Civic & Community Pride (Community Engagement)

"Everyone has the opportunity to influence and contribute to what happens in their local area"

Tenant Participation provides excellent opportunities for tenants and customers to become involved in activities which ensures tenants are at the heart of our decision-making processes and are empowered to have a voice in influencing how we deliver our Housing Service and work within our communities.

The new strategy builds on our innovative use of technology and demonstrates our dedication to remove challenges and barriers for tenants to become involved. This is shown through our hybrid approach to Tenant Participation meetings, giving tenants a choice of attending in person or online from the comfort of their own home. By attending meetings, I have witnessed firsthand the benefits of the hybrid approach and the benefits this provides for tenant's voices to be heard in shaping the delivery of Housing Services.

Our dedication to working in partnership with tenants remains a priority to achieve the commitments outlined within the aims of this strategy. I would like to encourage any tenant or customer to become involved or share their views on the service in a way that suits them as we value and listen to input from the people who use the service.

Finally, I would like to thank all our Involved Tenants and those who have contributed via the consultation to help shape this strategy at its aims.

Involved Tenants Foreword

Welcome to our Tenants' Participation Strategy. We believe that strong communities are built on strong partnerships, and that's why we, the Involved Tenants', are committed to working in partnership with the Council's elected members and officers.

Tenant Participation is about influencing decisions about housing policies, conditions and related services. We see first-hand the benefits of Involved Tenants' working in partnership with the Council. This Tenant Participation Strategy is to make sure

you have your say on the issues that affect you in a way that suits you. We will listen, learn, and act on what you tell us through customer feedback because your views are key to us developing excellent services. Together, we can make our housing services better for everyone in South Ayrshire.



We expect the outcomes of this strategy to improve your housing services, make better use of council resources, and provide a better quality of life for our whole community. This strategy outlines our commitment to ensuring your voices are heard and that you have a real say in the decisions that affect your homes and neighbourhoods. We look forward to working together to create thriving communities for everyone and make sure we are able to influence and review our Housing Services.

We have fully participated in the review of the previous strategy and the development of this new and refreshed strategy. It sets out how we will involve tenants' in shaping and improving our services, from housing management to community development.

The global pandemic had a massive impact on our previous Tenant Participation Strategy (2019 -2024). We had to respond quickly to a rapidly changing situation which presented challenges and opportunities for delivering Tenant Participation activities during that period. Digital engagement became the interface for Tenant Participation to be continued by initially having our meetings online which progressed to our current approach of hybrid meetings (In-Person/Online). The new strategy takes into account the changing environment and challenges we experienced in our previous strategy. This allows us to continue to embrace our new approach through digital involvement in having our say in the delivery and design of Housing Services.

South Ayrshire Council is dedicated to providing high-quality homes and services. This Tenant Participation Strategy is a key part of that commitment. Tenant involvement benefits all Council tenants and customers. We believe that by working together, we can make a real difference and create better places to live in South Ayrshire.

Introduction

Our new Tenant Participation Strategy 2025 - 2030 sets out our continued commitment to working in partnership with tenants and customers to ensure we are delivering excellent housing services to the people of South Ayrshire.

Through the lifetime of this strategy we are working on modernising our approach and offering some innovative options to ensure we can cater for those who want to get involved if the traditional methods don't suit or interest you.

We have worked in partnership with Involved Tenants to review the effectiveness of our previous strategy and develop this strategy.

Over the lifetime of the previous Tenant Participation Strategy 2019 - 2024, some of our achievements include:



Received Gold Accreditation for Excellence in Tenant Participation from the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS Scotland) 2019.



During the Covid pandemic we introduced our Hybrid approach to Tenant Participation meetings, allowing tenants the choice of joining in online from the comfort of their own home or attending in person.



Winners of Excellence in Communication Award for our Communities Fun Day (Chartered Institute of Housing (Scotland) Awards 2019).



Provided our Award-winning Communities Fun Day in Sept 2019 and May 2024.



Winners of Excellence in Scrutiny for our approach to Tenant Scrutiny (Chartered Institute of Housing (Scotland) Awards 2019).



Introduced informal online Tenant Participation coffee and chat to help combat social isolation during the covid pandemic and this is still ongoing.



Acknowledgement of the good work carried out by staff members and teams at various national good practice awards (APSE, CIH, TPAS)



A local Registered Tenant Organisation – Muirhead Tenants and Residents Association, Troon were runners up in the TP Champion Group at the TPAS Scotland Awards



Runner up of Best Practice in Reporting Performance Award (TPAS Scotland Awards 2022).



One of our Involved Tenants, Frances Carson (pictured), was awarded the Alan Ferguson Award for Tenant/Resident Champion of the year at the TPAS Scotland Awards 2022.



Background

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 are 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.
- Ensure we meet the standards set out in the Scottish Social Housing Charter



National Background of Tenant Participation

Housing (Scotland) Act 2001

Introduced the legal requirement for all Social Landlords in Scotland to actively develop and support Tenant Participation. As part of the requirement, we must have a Tenant Participation Strategy in place that has been developed with tenants to ensure continuous improvement in performance and to support tenants to participate.

Housing (Scotland) Act 2010

Introduced the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) and the Scottish Social Housing Charter (SSHC). The SHR is an independent regulator of social landlords in Scotland. It's statutory objective is to safeguard and promote the interests of current and future tenants, homeless people and others who use the services provided by social landlords.

The Regulator assesses and reports on how social landlords are performing their housing services through the Scottish Social Housing Charter (SSHC). The Charter sets out the standards and outcomes that all social landlords should aim to achieve when performing their housing activities.

Scottish Social Housing Charter

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:

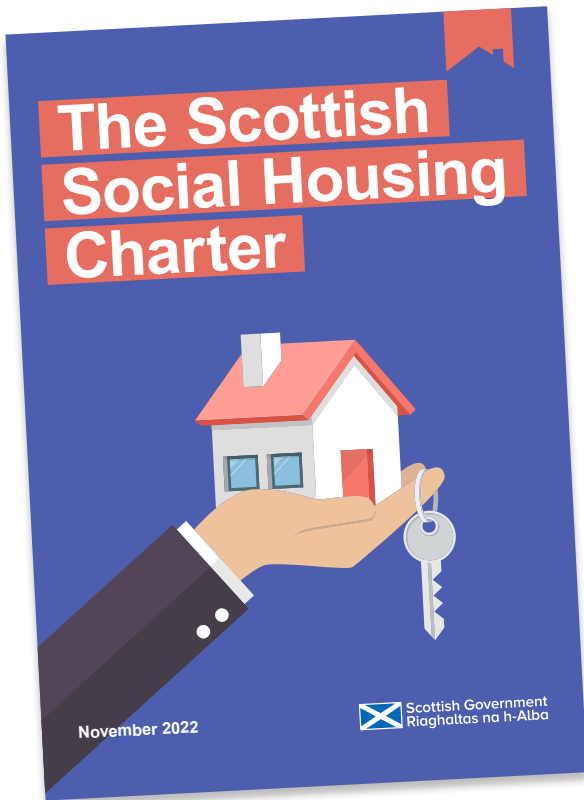
- State clearly the services tenants and other customers can expect, and help tenants hold their landlord to account
- Encourage social landlords to focus on improving the services that matter most to their customers
- Provide a basis for the Scottish Housing Regulator to assess and report on how well 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. The current Scottish Social Housing Charter can be viewed in full online at www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-social-housing-charter-november-2022/



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:

Social landlords manage their businesses so that:

- Tenants and other customers 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:

Social landlords manage their businesses so that:

- 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:

Social landlords set rents and service charges in consultation with their tenants and other customers so that:

- 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.

Reporting Our Performance

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.

Annual Assurance Statement

The Charter also requires us to provide an Annual Assurance Statement which provides assurance and evidence that the Council is meeting all legal obligations associated with housing and homelessness services, equality and human rights, and tenant and resident safety. In addition, the statement safeguards and promotes the interests of tenants and other customers.



Our Tenants Monitoring Group consider the content of the statement on an annual basis and approves it prior to publication.

South Ayrshire Councils Annual Performance Reports and Annual Assurance Statements can be found online at www.south-ayrshire.gov.uk/article/27513/Housing-performance or by scanning the QR Code.



Tenants Together Scotland

Tenants of South Ayrshire Council also have the opportunity to become involved in Scotland's Tenant Participation and Engagement Network.

Tenants Together Scotland is a national network of tenants committed to empowering the tenants of today and tomorrow, ensuring their voices are heard and influence decisions within the Scottish Social Housing sector, to protect tenants rights and make a difference.

Working in partnership with the Scottish Government and key decision makers, tenants, service users, Registered Social Landlords and Local Authorities, across the sector, to achieve a collective goal – to improve the lives and wellbeing of tenants.

For more information on Tenants Together Scotland visit www.tenantstogether.scot

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 Scottish Social Housing 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 a Hybrid approach to meetings where possible (Online and In-person)
- 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 and staff members with respect
- Provide support based on the individual needs of each person
- Welcome participants from all cultures and communities, embracing the diversity of our community
- Ensure information is clear and easy to understand without jargon

Vision and Priorities in South Ayrshire

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, assessing 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 opinion about Housing Services as well as becoming actively involved?

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

- Completing satisfaction surveys such as a repairs survey
- Volunteering with the Housing Service as an 'Involved Tenant' (*find out more on pages 15-18*)
- Giving your views about something we're consulting on (for example, Rent Setting 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 any member of Housing staff
- Joining a local Registered Tenants' Organisation (RTO) or a Tenants and Residents Association (TARA)

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

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 Local and National conferences and events
- Reviewing and inputting towards policy development
- Scrutinising the provision of services through Tenant-led assessments

As an Involved Tenant you will:

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

Menu of ways to get involved in your Housing Service

High

- Becoming an Involved Tenant and attending one or more of our main groups (see page 16)
- Being part of reoccurring Working Groups such as Podcasting, Tenants Handbook development/review or Communities Fun Day
- As an Involved Tenant attending housing related National events or Conferences

Medium

- Attending a local Tenants and Residents Group
- Taking part in a Focus Group – Set up to concentrate on a particular area of the service such as a review of the Garden Maintenance scheme
- Attending Sheltered Housing events and activities
- Form a tenant group in your area or become a member of an existing group

Low

- Reading our Tenants Newsletter or taking part in the competitions within them
- Completing a Satisfaction Survey after receiving a service such as a repair
- Taking part in Rent Setting Consultation
- Attending our Award-Winning Communities Fun Day
- Providing feedback to the service via a compliment or complaint
- Being on the Interested Tenant Register
- Attending Information Sessions
- Estate Walkabouts
- Attending Council run events in your community
- Connect with us on social media

Groups for Tenants to get involved in

Our Main Groups

One way that tenants can get involved is through attending any of our groups that work with officers from the Housing Service to improve services. You can choose to be involved as much or as little as you like.

The groups currently in operation are as follows:

Tenants Monitoring Group

This is the main group for Tenant Participation and is open to tenants who want to be more involved in the Housing Service. Tenants and staff come together to work on all areas of the service. This group influences and has input on housing policies, procedures and practices, and provides feedback to further develop services.

This group also monitors the Council's whole approach to Tenant Participation and will hear about any updates across the Housing Service and other relevant services. The group monitor progress within the other Tenant Participation groups listed below 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.

The group is continually involved in some of the following activities:

- Discussions and pre-consultation of any proposed changes to how the service operates
- Overview of our Annual Return on the Scottish Social Housing Charter Results and sign off before submission to the Scottish Housing Regulator (How the service performs annually)
- Assessing our performance against the Scottish Social Housing Charter and providing the Scottish Housing Regulator with an updated Annual Assurance Statement in support of the Charter
- New build site visits and department visits to gain knowledge of how things operate across the service
- Monitoring the operation of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA)

Tenants Communication Group

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!

Tenants Scrutiny & Performance Groups

We have two Scrutiny and Performance groups that allow tenants to review how areas of the service are operating.

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.

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. Both scrutiny groups 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 assessing 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.

Most recently the Maintenance Group have undertaken a Tenant Led Assessment on the Letting Standard. The tenants identified areas for the service to consider improvements when letting a property to a new tenant.

A number of considerations were proposed following the assessment by tenants with the service adopting the majority of the considerations.

You can find the full Tenant Led Assessment on the Letting Standard Report and the follow up Conclusion Report on our website at <https://south-ayrshire.gov.uk/article/27554/Tenant-led-assessments> or by scanning the QR code.



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 action plan on a regular basis, as well as taking into account updates to legislation.

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 will be re-established to review and update the current Tenants Handbook.

Tenants Podcasting Group: This group produce informative podcasts on various aspects of the Housing Service. 'Tenants Natter' provides information to Tenants from a Tenants perspective.



Online Tenant Participation Coffee & Chat: Alongside our Involved Tenants we have developed and introduced a monthly Online Coffee and Chat session. This provides Involved Tenants the opportunity to come together and meet with the Tenant Participation Team outwith the main formal tenant groups.

With no agenda set for Coffee and Chat sessions tenants can informally chat about various aspects of the Housing Service, ask questions, discuss outstanding issues, and have a general chat from the comfort of their own home.

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 and Residents Associations (TARAs)

Tenants & Residents Associations (TARAs) are groups of people representing tenants and residents living in a street or community. 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 Tenants Together Scotland meetings and events 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 any RTO's or TARA's 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: www.south-ayrshire.gov.uk/tenant-participation or contact our Tenant Participation team on the details found at the back of this Strategy.

Registered Tenant Organisations (RTO's)

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 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

Tenant Participation has a number of clear benefits, for our Involved Tenants, the wider tenant base and the Housing Service.

Benefits to Tenants

- Informs improvements to the services all tenants receive
- Ensures tenants get good information about the Council's Housing Services
- Develops tenants knowledge and understanding of Council processes
- Empowers tenants to influence decision-making on changes to Housing Services
- Gives tenants the opportunity to review performance and processes within Council services
- Tackles social isolation
- Gets people involved in making the service better
- Gives people an opportunity to share their views based on their circumstances and experiences, and have this reflected in how things are done

Benefits to the Housing Service

- 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
- Improves performance through tenant insight, reviews and suggestions
- Allows for communications, policies and procedures to be considered and reviewed by tenants to ensure these meet tenants' needs
- Access to direct views from tenants about Council services

Benefits to the Wider Community

- Better neighbourhoods through improved services
- Offers a voice to the wider community
- Provides the Council with an insight into how services work with and for the community
- Ensures the community is better informed about Council services

How Will I Be Kept Informed about Housing Services

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 two 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. Sign up to receive this by visiting <https://forms.office.com/e/fYcY9n4vBw>.

By producing materials that people want to read we can keep people more informed and 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. Available in other formats on request.


'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.

How Will I Be Kept Informed about Housing Services (Cont.)

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 Award Winning 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, 4000 people from across South Ayrshire attend the event each year. Each year our working group of Involved Tenants work with officers from the Housing Service in partnership with our Thriving Communities Service to plan the event. Tenants provide assistance for the event with helping with ticketing, organising supplies, set-up for the event and carrying out various volunteering duties on the day.

Events in the Community: Members of staff from the Housing Service attend local community events across South Ayrshire where possible with the Housing Services stall. This provides opportunities to promote various aspects of the Housing Service and provides the tenants and customers with the opportunity to talk to staff face to face in their local community.

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 changes in technology and reflects the ways people interact with information. Examples include:

- **Social Media:** Our Tenant Participation service has an active social media presence, helping us provide 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, as well as videos and pictures from different relevant events we attend or organise and widens the access to information and support available to tenants and customers.
- **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.
- **Hybrid Meetings:** Where possible our Tenant Participation meetings take place as 'Hybrid' meetings. This means that tenants are provided with a choice of attending the meeting in person or online from the comfort of their own home. Our team provide assistance to tenants (where required) to support them with technology to join in from home.

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 provide 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.

South Ayrshire Council Plan 2023-28

The ambitious plan outlines the Council's priorities and objectives over the next five years.

Feedback from a recent public consultation was used to help form the plan and map out our new priorities.

The three overarching priorities of the plan are:

- Spaces and Places
- Live, Work, Learn
- Civic and Community Pride

Under each of these priorities sit outcomes that outline what we want to achieve.

These outcomes include a focus on quality education and lifelong learning; supporting local businesses; ensuring everyone has opportunities to take part in play, sport and recreation; and encouraging tourism and increased visitor numbers. You can view the plan in full at www.south-ayrshire.gov.uk/council-plans



Local Housing Strategy 2024 - 2029

Good quality, affordable housing that meets our needs is fundamental to our health and wellbeing. South Ayrshire Council is committed to improving access to housing, supporting people to live well, enhancing the quality and energy efficiency of homes, creating well designed places, and reducing poverty and inequalities by firstly listening to and understanding the needs of our local communities.

Housing plays an important role in supporting the Council to achieve many of our priorities around child poverty, homelessness, fuel poverty, tackling climate change and promoting inclusive growth.

You can view the Strategy in full at www.south-ayrshire.gov.uk/media/14025/Local-Housing-Strategy-2024-2029/pdf/SAC_LHS_2024-2029.pdf?m=1738252438430



Links to other strategies and services (Cont.)

Community Learning & Development Partnership Plan 2024 - 2027

In South Ayrshire, Change to Community Learning and Development (CLD) plays a crucial role in breaking down the barriers faced by individuals, ensuring learners, families and communities across the area reach their full potential, improve their life chances and raise their aspirations. This is developed and delivered through youth work, lifelong learning, community engagement and community empowerment.

The Plan sets out a clear emphasis on Community Empowerment and Engagement and through working collectively with our communities, we aim to develop communities that are stronger, more robust and ultimately that local people are empowered to make positive, informed choices and contribute to their local communities.

You can read the plan in full at www.south-ayrshire.gov.uk/community-learning-development



Local Outcomes Improvement Plan 2024 - 2029

The Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP 2024 - 2029) outlines a range of key priorities and commitment across all community planning partners to work in collaboration to reduce inequalities and improve outcomes for everyone in South Ayrshire supporting our vision of 'growing, caring and living a better life'.

You can read the LOIP in full at www.south-ayrshire.gov.uk/cpp



Consultation, Feedback and Influencing Decisions

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 Registered Tenant Organisations 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 setting consultation
- Housing Developments: Seeking tenants and residents views about New Build Housing developments
- 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

Links to other strategies and services (Cont.)

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.

Look out for a satisfaction survey after accessing our services for example, if you have received a repair to your property, housing options advice or a settling in visit.



How we will work with other customers

– Involving all customers

We recognise that some groups of tenants and other customers are often under-represented. While our statutory duty is to provide participation opportunities to tenants, we are committed to ensuring participation and feedback opportunities are available to all our service users and customers where appropriate.

- Digitally excluded and socially isolated customers
- Private rented sector tenants
- Individuals or households experiencing/at the risk of homelessness
- Gypsy/Travellers
- People with accessibility needs
- Young people
- Minority Groups
- Resettlement & Support

If you would like further information on how under-represented tenants and other customers can be supported please contact our Tenant Participation team. (Contact details on back page)



Tenant Participation and Community Development

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 and partners to achieve improvements across our neighbourhoods and communities.

This can include:

- Working in partnership with colleagues from our Thriving Communities Service to host our Annual Award Winning Communities Fun Day which brings together tenants, residents and those working in South Ayrshire for a day of fun and access to various Council services, local groups, local charities and Council partners. The Housing Service including Tenant Participation and various other Council services utilise this event to provide information and gather views of our residents and those working in South Ayrshire
- Taking part in one-off local events to improve our neighbourhoods, including Community Clean Up days, beach cleans and estate walkabouts
- Representing the Housing Service at local community events such as Gala Days
- Working with tenants residing in our Sheltered Housing Units to set up and maintain Social Clubs to bring tenants and local residents together
- 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 for local consultations and events

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



Resources for Tenant Participation

Staffing

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

- Work in partnership with Housing staff to ensure tenants feedback, comments and assessments are considered to further develop and improve services
- Support tenants to be involved by being approachable, flexible and accommodating
- Co-produce publications and communication materials with our tenants
- Engage with tenants in a variety of different ways to make sure people have a choice and can be involved in a way that suits them
- Develop tenants' knowledge and understanding of the Housing Service
- Provide tenants with the opportunity to learn new skills
- Provide opportunities for tenants to volunteer and work alongside staff where appropriate
- Deliver special events, including our 'Award Winning' Communities Fun Day on an annual basis

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:

- Tenant Participation Groups
- Working Groups
- Consultations
- Special Projects
- Opportunities for our Involved Tenants to develop their knowledge and skills, for example, attending National Housing Conferences and events in person or online
- Providing training and support to Involved Tenants
- Tenants Newsletters
- Annual Performance Edition reporting our performance against the Scottish Social Housing Charter
- Carrying out customer satisfaction surveys to gather tenants feedback on the service provided
- Tenants Handbook
- Design of any promotional or information booklets in relation to Housing
- Providing support to Registered Tenant Organisations (RTO's), Tenant and Resident Associations (TARAs) or Sheltered Housing Social Clubs

Volunteers

South Ayrshire Council's Housing Service greatest resource is the commitment and dedication of its Involved Tenants who volunteer their time. Our Involved Tenants give up their own time to take part in a wide range of activities from attending meetings, assisting at events, training, assessing services, reviewing and inputting on publications and consultations.

Without tenants across South Ayrshire becoming involved many of our Tenant Participation activities in South Ayrshire would not be as successful.

Strategy Development

This updated and refreshed strategy for 2025-2030 was co-produced with a group of Involved Tenants who expressed an interest in taking part in the TP Strategy Review. This group met regularly during the process of reviewing the previous strategy to consider what worked well and what could be improved for the lifetime of this one.

Involved Tenants input has contributed to:

- Establishing the aims and objectives of the TP Strategy
- Agreeing a Vision for Tenant Participation in South Ayrshire
- Working with officers to update key parts of the TP Strategy
- Setting out approaches to the consultation on the TP Strategy
- The design and wording of this document to ensure that it is understandable and easy to read for our tenants and customers

The wider tenant base was also encouraged to give their views on the TP 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 TP Strategy. RTO's were also given the opportunity to give feedback on the document. A copy of the draft TP 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 TP 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 RTO's, and establishes our Vision for participation.

Aims of the Strategy

Throughout the lifetime of this strategy, we will work towards our 7 aims detailed below, with timescales and the responsibility of the aims reviewed on a regular basis with Involved Tenants.

Aim 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 RTO's, including encouraging members to attend meetings and consultation events
- Carry out estate walkabouts in partnership with tenant and resident groups as required
- Deliver a range of consultation options that allow people to participate in ways they feel comfortable with
- Increase and develop Tenant Participation by marketing opportunities and providing different methods of getting involved

Aim 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

Aims 3 & 4 →

Aim 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

Aim 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 Tenant Participation 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 Involved Tenants have the opportunity to review and assess services through Tenant-Led Assessments and Scrutiny and Performance Groups
- Officers and tenants work together to oversee Tenant Participation activities through the Monitoring Group
- Establish working groups that meet both service needs and tenants' interests

Aims 5, 6 & 7 →

Aim 5

Make greater use of technology to help tenants get involved

- Continue to use social media to allow wider participation
- Continue to embrace technology and other tools to support those unable to attend meetings to participate from the comfort of their own home
- Consider other projects that could benefit from the different approach taken such as the Informal Online Tenant Participation Coffee and Chat
- Consider technology to gather tenants views using a number of methods such as online, text messages, emails while continuing to use traditional methods such as letters, leaflets and newsletters

Aim 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 Tenant Participation
- Ensure staff continue to promote Tenant Participation at sign-up and settling-in visits
- Develop materials for new staff

Aim 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 Scottish Social Housing Charter
- Continue to use Social Media such as Facebook to provide and share information
- Continue to develop 'Tenants Natter' Podcast to provide information direct from tenants

Monitoring & Review

The aims of this Strategy will be monitored and reviewed on a regular basis by the Tenants Monitoring Group. We will ensure that we keep our tenant base and housing staff up to date with developments on this Strategy. We will regularly report updates from Tenant Participation through the Tenants' Newsletters and across 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

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

South Ayrshire Council 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 relevant management teams by the Tenant Participation Team.

This Strategy has been approved by South Ayrshire Council's Cabinet, and updates will be provided as required/requested.

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 south-ayrshire.gov.uk/tenant-participation and this will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Printed copies of the Strategy are available on request.



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**.

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

We also have an active Facebook page providing information about the good work the Housing Service is doing in our communities. To keep up to date, follow our page at www.facebook.com/sachousingservices



*Inside you will find out more about
Tenant Participation in South Ayrshire.*