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| Agenda Item | 9 |
| Report No | BSAC/06/20 |

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Badenoch and Strathspey Committee

Date: 11 February 2020

Report Title: Tenant Participation and Engagement Update

Report By: Executive Chief Officer Customer and Communities

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides an update on a range of actions being undertaken to continually improve Tenant Participation in Badenoch and Strathspey.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are invited to **note** the recent tenant engagement activities in Badenoch and Strathspey.

3 Implications

- 3.1 Resource – There are no resource implications arising from this report.
- 3.2 Legal - The efforts to improve tenant participation assist the Council with legal and regulatory compliance as set out in section 4.1 below.
- 3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural) – The proposals set out in this report aim to strengthen community involvement in housing services and ensure that the tenant voice is heard regarding decisions which affect them.
- 3.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever – There are no climate change implications arising from this report.
- 3.5 Risk – There are no risk implications arising from this report.
- 3.6 Gaelic - There are no Gaelic implications arising from this report

4 Background

- 4.1 The Scottish Social Housing Charter sets out the current legal and regulatory Requirements for housing services. The revised Charter was approved by resolution of the Scottish Parliament on 8 February 2017 and compliance with the Charter is monitored by the Scottish Housing Regulator.
- 4.2 One of the fundamental Charter principles is that social landlords need to involve tenants and other customers in the design and delivery of housing services.
- 4.3 The Council's Tenant and Customer Engagement Strategy 2015-2020 was approved at Committee on 4 June 2015 and can be viewed at:-
https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/15379/getting_involved_strategy-tenant_and_customer_engagement

It should be noted that this Strategy is currently under review and an updated version for 2020 – 2023 will be presented to the Housing & Property Committee for approval in August 2020.

5 Tenant Participation and Engagement in Badenoch & Strathspey

5.1 Tenant Groups

- 5.1.1 The Tenant Participation Team are currently working with ten individual interested tenants in Badenoch & Strathspey who have said they would like to be more involved.
- 5.1.2 A group of young mums in Grantown are interested in setting up a fenced-off grassy area for the younger children to play with their outdoor toys safely. The local Tenant Participation Officer is working with them to set up a small group to achieve this.
- 5.1.3 Tenants from Beachen and Dulaig Court felt that an overgrown communal area was an eyesore and are keen to take responsibility for the maintenance of these bushes and shrubs and, supported by the Tenant Participation Officer, they are currently in the process of gauging interest to start a gardening group.
- 5.1.4 Tenants from Beachan Court were unhappy about the location of their bin store. The Tenant Participation Officer carried out a consultation with all tenants and the bin store has now been relocated to their preferred location.

5.2 Rate your Estate Walkabouts

- 5.2.1 Tenants are invited to join Tenant Participation Officers, Council staff and elected Members to inspect their estate. This gives tenants the opportunity to put forward their priorities for improvements to the areas they live in and make sure investment is targeted at community priorities.
- 5.2.2 In 2019, Rate your Estate walkabouts were held in Beachan & Dulaig Court; Collie Cottages and Kinveachy Gardens; Coppice Court; Mackenzie Crescent; Milton Park and Woodburn Place. Twenty-two tenants were involved in these.

A number of estate improvements were identified. These included improving the standard of weedkilling and grass cutting and tackling abandoned vehicles and fly tipping. Many of the identified works have been completed and the tenants involved have been notified in cases where work is awaiting budget approval.

Further walkabouts will be scheduled for Spring / early Summer and a copy of proposed dates will be circulated to all Ward 20 Elected Members.

5.3 Senior Safe Highlander Events

5.3.1 These events are aimed at older tenants and residents and how they can stay safe, well and connected within their communities. Events are held in partnership with NHS, Highland Senior Citizens Network, Trading Standards, Police Scotland and Highland & Islands Fire & Rescue Service. A Senior Safe Highlander event held in Kingussie in 2019 was attended by around 30 tenants and further events are planned for Grantown and Aviemore in 2020.

5.4 Sheltered Housing

5.4.1 Supported by the Tenant Participation Team, Aviemore sheltered housing tenants and Glen Centre users met in July 2019 to share ideas for improving and maintaining the communal gardens in the area. The local community Police Officer also gave a talk on how to stay safe and report any concerns using the appropriate number.

5.4.2 Following up on some reports of instances of anti-social behaviour raised at the meeting the Police carried out a crime prevention survey of the area and made some recommendations to both The Highland Council and The Glen Centre.

5.4.3 New higher gates have now been erected at either end of the path way between Collie Cottages and The Glen Centre. The memorial bench was also repositioned outside the gates to deter anti-social behaviour.

5.4.4 Both Kingussie High School and Aviemore Primary have agreed to talk to the pupils regarding antisocial behaviour and are keen to work together with the Sheltered Housing tenants and The Glen Centre on a garden project in the future.

5.5 Rent Consultation

5.5.1 As part of the Highland-wide Rent Consultation road trip in November 2019, the Tenant Participation Team visited Aviemore and Grantown tenants in their homes to discuss the rent setting in Council houses for 2020-2021. Tenants in other parts of Badenoch and Strathspey were contacted directly by telephone.

5.6 Tenant Forums

5.6.1 A Tenant Forum is made up of representatives from Registered Tenant Organisations, representatives of informal groups and individual interested tenants. They meet quarterly to discuss topics such as the Capital Programme, Housing Performance reports and Budget monitoring reports.

5.6.2 There are currently two established Tenant Forums in Highland; one representing Caithness, Sutherland and East Ross and one representing Inverness. There is also a "fledgling" forum in Lochaber. The aim is to have a tenant Forum in each area but until there is sufficient interest in Badenoch and Strathspey to take this forward, tenants are encouraged to attend the Inverness Forum.

5.7 Strategic Tenant working groups

5.7.1 To increase tenant empowerment, officers have supported tenant representatives to set up four strategic tenant groups:-

- the Tenant Finance Group;
- the Communications Working Group;
- the Highland Tenants Scrutiny Panel; and
- the Action Plan Monitoring Group

These groups have the specific objective of helping drive organisational accountability and excellence, thus promoting a system of tenant-focused regulation.

5.7.2 The purpose of the **Tenant Finance Group** is to review information relating to the role of the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) within the Council including scrutiny of:-

- how it operates;
- if the resources contained within benefit tenants; and
- what value for money outcomes can be expected from those resources

5.7.3 The **Communications Working Group** is presently working with the Housing Service to provide up-to-date and tenant-friendly information through various communication channels. This includes reviewing the tenant newsletter and encouraging involvement in the new Highland Tenants Together Facebook pages.

A new Facebook page has recently been set up for tenants in Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey

https://www.facebook.com/Tenant-Participation-Nairn-Badenoch-Strathspey-100309986655395/?ref=your_pages

5.7.4 The purpose of the **Highland Tenants Scrutiny Panel** is to scrutinise the delivery of services from a tenant perspective and ensure that processes and outcomes are fit for purpose. The group carried out a Scrutiny exercise on the Council's complaints process and they produced a report which made several recommendations for improvements. They are currently preparing a Scrutiny report on the Aids and Adaptations process.

5.7.5 The **Action Plan Monitoring Group** is made up of tenants from all over Highland. Their remit is to work with Highland Council staff to review the Tenant Participation Strategy and Action Plan and monitor progress on this

5.7.6 These strategic groups are supported by officers who have taken part in 'Stepping Up to Scrutiny', a training programme initially delivered on behalf of the Scottish Government by the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) and Housemark and now delivered in-house.

5.8 Tenant representation at Committee

5.8.1 At Committee on 19 October 2017, it was agreed that tenant representatives should attend Committee as advisors. Two tenant representatives have been nominated by their fellow tenants and this will hopefully bring tenants closer to the decision-making processes in the Council.

5.8.2 Tenant representatives are also invited to future Policy Development Groups where they can help bring a wider perspective to the discussion and closer working to deliver good housing services.

5.9 Customer Satisfaction

5.9.1 In the comprehensive Customer Satisfaction survey carried out in late 2018 Badenoch and Strathspey returned higher satisfaction rates in all five question areas than the Highland average. This survey is carried out every three years and the questions asked are standard ones set down by the Scottish Housing Regulator. The Tenant Participation team intend to use the survey results to help focus on TP priorities. See **Appendix 1** for further detail.

6 Next Steps Programme

6.1. The Highland Council recently took part in the Scottish Government “Next Steps” programme, delivered by Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) Scotland, to review our Tenant Participation and Engagement. Participants in this programme were Highland Council staff and tenants from across Highland.

6.1.2 One of the messages which came across very strongly from tenants was that face to face contact with tenants was the most effective way to encourage engagement. Over the coming year the Tenant participation team will focus on face to face contact with as many tenants in as many areas as possible.

6.2 Youth Engagement

6.2.1 Youth development projects are underway in Caithness and Lochaber; these work in partnership with High Schools and agencies such as High Life Highland and Criminal Justice. These projects include the Junior Wardens Scheme and the Youth Independence Project which works with older teenagers to engage with them and prepare them for a positive place in society. We are aiming to extend both of these projects to other parts of Highland including Badenoch and Strathspey in 2020.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer Customer and Communities

Date: 28 January 2020

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**Customer Satisfaction Survey – September 2018
Badenoch & Strathspey**

| Customer Satisfaction Survey 2018/19 Badenoch & Strathspey 77 responses | Taking everything into account, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the housing services provided by Highland Council? | Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the quality of your home? | Overall, how satisfied / dissatisfied are you with The Highland Council's Housing Service's management of the neighbourhood you live in? | How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with opportunities given to you to participate in the Highland Council Housing Service's decision-making processes? | How good or poor do you feel the Highland Council Housing Service is at keeping you informed about their services and decisions? |
|--|---|---|--|---|--|
| Very satisfied | 50.65% | 40.26% | 37.50% | 29.87% | 36.00% |
| Fairly satisfied | 31.17% | 38.96% | 40.28% | 33.77% | 40.00% |
| Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied | 6.49% | 7.79% | 12.50% | 19.48% | 13.33% |
| Fairly Dissatisfied | 2.60% | 9.09% | 4.17% | 2.60% | 4.00% |
| Very Dissatisfied | 9.09% | 3.90% | 5.56% | 2.60% | 6.67% |
| No Opinion | 0.00% | 0.00% | 1.39% | 11.69% | 1.33% |
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| Satisfaction rate | 81.82% | 79.22% | 77.78% | 63.64% | 76.00% |
| Highland average | 78.10% | 75.20% | 68.00% | 55.70% | 69.00% |
| Plus / (minus) | 3.72% | 4.02% | 9.78% | 7.94% | 7.00% |