

# Ardenglen Housing Association



## The Big Conversation Our Tenant Participation Strategy 2022 - 2025



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Welcome and intro from Chair/CEO  
Subject to approval by the board April 2022

## 1. What is Tenant Participation?

- 1.1 The “National Strategy for Tenant Participation – Partners in Participation (1999)” describes TP as being “about tenants taking part in decision making processes and influencing decisions about housing policies; housing conditions; and housing (and related) services. It is a two way process which involves the sharing of information, ideas and power. Its aim is to improve the standard of housing conditions and service”.
- 1.2 The housing sector’s approach to TP in Scotland is underpinned by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 (‘the Act’), which created a legal requirement for landlords to actively develop and support TP. The Act introduced requirements for Landlords to have a TP strategy in place, register tenant and resident groups who meet prescribed criteria and to fund and support TP. It also gave tenants and Registered Tenant Organisations (RTOs) rights to be consulted and involved in landlords decision making on housing and related services.
- 1.3 Effective participation gives tenants an opportunity to influence decisions about the housing services they receive, and it helps landlords deliver better services that focus on tenant priorities. Effective participation is, therefore, an important component of meeting the expectation to continuously improve landlord performance.

## 2. Background to the development of this Strategy

- 2.1 Ardenglen recognises the need to strengthen our approach to tenant participation, customer engagement and accountability. As such, in 2021, when developing the Business Plan 2021 – 2024, the Association engaged the support of IBP Strategy and Research. The remit of that commission was to deliver a series of surveys and focus groups that would ensure that the business plan was grounded in an understanding of the needs, expectations and priorities of our customers. This process of engagement launched “The Big Conversation” for Ardenglen which has now been branded as our approach to participation.

### 2.2 The objectives of the IBP commission included

- Develop an overall understanding of the key things that tenants want from the Association.
- Identify tenant priorities in relation to aspects of their home.
- Identify tenant priorities in relation to core landlord services.
- Identify tenant priorities in relation to other potential activities and services that Ardenglen might deliver.
- To develop an understanding of preferred service delivery approaches for the future.
- To consider how the above range of priorities relate to one another.

- 2.3 Furthermore, the Association commissioned Tenants Participation Advisory Service to audit our current approach to participation and to highlight strengths and areas of improvement that could be incorporated within this Strategy.
- 2.4 TPAS also delivered a series of particular group sessions for the Association to our Board, our colleagues and interested tenants. These sessions provided an overview of tenant participation and focused a discussion on priorities, ideas for implementation and suggested areas for improvement.
- 2.5 The outcomes and findings of both of these commissioned initiatives form the basis of this aims and objectives of this strategy and the detailed deliverables are contained within the Action Plan.

### 3. Aims and Objectives

- 3.1 The Ardenglen Business Plan 2021 – 2024 remains the overarching principle document that outlines the vision and priorities of the Association. The **vision** set by the Board describes the difference Ardenglen wishes to make for the benefit of our customers and community:

***“By providing aspirational homes and high-quality services we will transform communities to enhance the quality of life for our customers.”***

### 3.2



### 3.2 The Aims of the Tenant Participation Strategy are:

- To provide tenants and service users with opportunities to influence the delivery of our services and scrutinise our performance in a way that suits our tenants.
- To develop a menu of participation options that enables tenants to get involved with us in a variety of ways.

## 4. The benefits of Tenant Participation

4.1 Once established, a robust approach to TP will deliver clear benefits for tenants, staff and Ardenglen alike. These include:

- Better service delivery and improved outcomes for tenants which give value for money;
- working together for common goals with respect and understanding;
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- Informed and knowledgeable tenants who have the skills and confidence to influence decisions;
- increased tenant satisfaction with their home and neighbourhood;
- identifying actions for service and performance improvements and working together to implement these recommended improvements.

Enhancing life skills, training opportunities, employability skills and community empowerment. This existing framework of community development will offer a robust foundation upon which to build a strong approach to tenant participation that truly influences and directs the business and priorities of Ardenglen HA.

- 4.3 It is recognised that the benefits of TP and the improvements in service delivery they bring will evolve over time as effective information, communication and participation structures strengthen.

## 5. The legal framework for Tenant Participation

5.1 The Act introduced a legal framework for TP. It introduced rights for individual tenants and registered tenant groups to be consulted by their landlord on issues affecting them. Landlords have to take account of their views within a reasonable timescale. The Scottish Secure Tenancy (SST) and a Short SST, further gives tenants' rights to information and consultation.

5.2 Under the Act Landlords have to:

- have in place a TP strategy and review and monitor its effectiveness regularly;
- have a registration scheme for tenant organisations to register with them and keep a publicly available register of these RTOs;
- consult with tenants and RTOs on a range of housing and related services;
- provide a range of information to their tenants.

For more information about the TP requirements of the Act go to: [www.opsi.gov.uk/legislation/scotland/acts2001/20010010.htm](http://www.opsi.gov.uk/legislation/scotland/acts2001/20010010.htm)

## 6. The Scottish Social Housing Charter

6.1 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 introduced the Scottish Social Housing Charter (The Charter). This sets out the standards and outcomes which landlords should be delivering to all social housing tenants, wherever they live. The Charter came into effect in 2012 and was reviewed in 2016 with a revised Charter in place from April 2017.

- 6.2 It focuses landlord activity on services that are important to tenants and other customers, and encourages a culture of involving service users in the design, delivery and performance of services. To ensure this succeeds, tenants are empowered to work in partnership with their landlords to monitor and challenge decisions and performance.
- 6.3 The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) is responsible for monitoring, assessing and reporting on how well social landlords, achieve the Charter's outcomes.
- 6.4 The Charter sets out the following specific outcomes and standards for Communication and Participation:

### **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 it provides.”*

### **Participation**

*Social landlords manage their businesses so that:*

*“Tenants and other customers find it easy to participate in and influence their landlord's decisions at a level they feel comfortable with.”*

- 6.5 The Charter makes it clear that the outcomes on communication and participation should be reflected across the whole of a landlord's activities. It is clear that where these outcomes are being achieved a landlord's overall performance is better.

## **7. Role of the Scottish Housing Regulator**

- 7.1 The SHR is the independent regulator of Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) and Local Authority housing services in Scotland. It was established on 1 April 2011 under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010. The SHR has one statutory objective, to: “safeguard and promote the interests of current and future tenants of social landlords, people who are or may become homeless,



and people who use housing services provided by local authorities and housing associations.”

- 7.2 The SHR monitors and reports annually on landlords’ performance in achieving the outcomes and standards in the Charter. Landlords are required to provide information each year to report on their performance against the Charter. The SHR’s landlord reports show every landlord’s performance on the areas that matter most to tenants such as on repairs and quality of the home. In relation to Tenant Participation, each landlord report details – for example – how satisfied tenants are with their landlord keeping them informed about their services with the opportunities to participate in their landlords decision making processes. Tenants and landlords can access these reports and other information on the SHR website, and compare performance between landlords and against the national average.
- 7.3 More information on the SHR’ s responsibilities and landlord annual reports on the Charter can be found at: [www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk](http://www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk)

## 8. Scrutiny and performance management

- 8.1 The aim of scrutiny is to improve organisational performance and the quality and standard of services that we provide for their tenants. We want to develop a common way of working where we are able to know, understand and respond to our current and future customers. We will do this by developing approaches and mechanisms to engage with our customers and involve them in decisions about their homes and the services they receive from Ardenglen. Through scrutiny, tenants and other customers can make a substantial contribution to influence our services and standards and the assessment of our performance.
- 8.2 We will work closely with our community to establish a Performance and Scrutiny Group that will oversee all elements of our approach to Tenant Participation and service delivery.

## 9. Keeping our Tenants and Staff Informed

- 9.1 We will discuss and agree the most effective means of keeping our tenants informed and will tailor these preferences to individuals. We recognise that tenant’s preferences, circumstances and priorities may change over time and how they want to be kept informed will depend on the particular issue. We will therefore develop a review mechanism that supports the delivery of our customer service and communication methods.
- 9.2 This will include, but is not limited to:

- newsletters and information leaflets;
- a tenants' handbook, online tenancy management forms
- open days and conferences;
- road shows;
- consultation registers/tenants panels
- website and IT developments (tenant portal)
- focus groups;
- text messages;
- email bulletins
- Roll out of social media updates from all areas of the business
- Information sessions for staff and new employees

#### 10. How we will consult

10.1 We will develop a robust consultation framework that is reviewed on an annual basis. This framework will detail what we will consult upon, when, how and for what purpose. This will be agreed in advance with our Performance and Scrutiny Group, once established.

10.2 We will develop a range of consultation methods which may include:

- focus and working groups;
- postal, phone and door-to-door surveys; capturing frequently asked questions for possible AI use
- house visits;
- conferences;
- road shows;
- Facebook/Twitter;
- tenants' forums; and
- Consultation registers.

10.3 We will also introduce a formal means of offering feedback to all consultation initiatives. It is crucial that for those tenants who gave up their time to take part in an event and give their views freely, can see how their opinions can influence decision making and policy direction.

10.4 The Scottish Government's 'Community Engagement How to Guide' features information on these practical techniques and others. You can find this guide on the Scottish Government's website at:

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/engage/HowToGuide>

## 11. Establishing and working with Registered Tenants Organisations (RTOs)

11.1 The Act gives tenant and resident organisations who register with their landlord a recognised role in the TP process. An RTO is an independent organisation set up to represent tenants' interests on housing and related issues. Usually groups cover a mix of tenants and owners, reflecting the different tenures in the communities they live in.

11.2 We will work with our local community and interested tenants to support new and developing tenant organisations. This support may include facilitating training, offering admin support or the use of premises. We will also explore the issue of creating a "youth board" to encourage engagement with our younger tenants.

11.3 On gauging interest with our community, we will develop an agreed approach to supporting new groups to become established and registered. We will liaise with external agencies to identify how best to engage with the groups in our communities that are seldom heard.

## 12. Resources

12.1 implementing a successful approach to TP requires an appropriate allocation of resources. This will be discussed and agreed with the Performance and Scrutiny Group as part of each budget setting cycle within Ardenglen. This may include, but not be limited to:

- training and support for tenants, staff, elected members and committee members;
- providing or hiring meeting rooms;
- the cost of providing lunch, teas and coffee for meetings and events;
- providing crèche facilities;
- consultation costs;
- travelling expenses;
- going to conferences and seminars;
- printing and posting newsletters and other information if necessary;
- funding to help new, developing and established tenant organisations;
- access to IT and support networks;
- staff time;

### 13. Training

13.1 We will continue to invest in training for our Board and Staff to ensure that they are knowledgeable and competent to work closely with our community in a participative manner.

13.2 We will also introduce joint training sessions wherever practical to help build robust, engaging and productive relationships with our community

13.3 The Scottish Community Development Centre (SCDC) website details training and development available to community organisations the link is as follows:

<http://www.scdc.org.uk/>

### 14. Equality and Diversity

14.1 The Act was a major landmark in re-enforcing and promoting equal Opportunities in Scottish housing. The Act requires landlords to approach TP in a manner that encourages equal opportunities and observes equal opportunity requirements laid out the Equalities Act 2010.

14.2 The Charter also includes an outcome on equalities which states that: “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.” landlords should be meeting this outcome in all their activities.

14.3 Ardenglen has an Equality and Diversity Policy which sets out how Ardenglen is committed to supporting and promoting Equality and Human Rights.

### 15. Strategic Action Plan

15.1 In order to ensure delivery of the aims of this Strategy, an annual action plan will be developed and implemented based on the views and priorities of our customers.

15.2 The plan will include – but not be limited to – actions pertaining to improving

- Communication and keeping our tenants and staff informed
- Consultation methods and frequency
- Service Delivery
- Training and Capacity building
- Performance and Scrutiny

15.3 The annual action plan will be appended to this Strategy as appropriate, highlighting the priorities, timescales and responsibility for delivery

### 16. Monitoring and Review

16.1 The strategic action plan will be monitored on a quarterly basis and reported to Board and regular monitoring will also serve as a review of emerging challenges or changing priorities.

16.2 On an annual basis, a wholesale review of the plan will be undertaken with our Performance and Scrutiny Group to identify and respond to new priorities involvement. It is hoped that this may also encourage others to get involved, if they see tenants making a difference to policies and practices. This review will not only focus on outputs of the plan, but also the outcomes achieved and benefits realised by the community.

16.4 The annual review will also include, but not limited to:

- Charter performance;
- progress with the annual action plan;
- tenant and staff training (what training they have had and what they need);
- reviewing minutes from tenants' and residents' meetings to monitor progress;
- feedback and follow up on surveys;
- The number of events held and the numbers attending.
- an improvement in housing services and standards;
- an increase in tenant involvement in decision making;
- tenant satisfaction with housing services, standards and living conditions;
- promoting TP among equalities groups;

## 17. Organisational Efficiency and VfM

17.1 The Charter sets out outcomes and standards that landlords should be achieving in relation to VFM. Outcome 13 of the Charter on Value for Money states that social landlords manage all aspects of their businesses so that:

*“Tenants, owners and other customers receive services that provide continually improving value for the rent and other charges they pay.”*

17.2 This **standard** covers the efficient and effective management of services. It includes minimising the time houses are empty; managing arrears and all resources effectively; controlling costs; getting value out of contracts; giving better value for money by increasing the quality of services with minimum extra cost to tenants, owners and other customers; and involving tenants and other customers in monitoring and reviewing how landlords give VFM.

17.3 We will develop a framework for measuring VfM with our Performance and Scrutiny Group. This will include, but is not limited to:

- doing the right things – improving current services and developing new ones based on an understanding of what tenants and other customers want, within locally agreed policies and service standards;
- doing things right – delivering more cost-effective services by getting the processes and systems right; and
- Driving down costs – by making sure the approach to organisational structures, procurement and contract management is right.

