Foreword

It gives me great pleasure to introduce our tenant participation strategy for 2013 to 2016. Involving tenants and service users in shaping our housing services is a basic part of delivering an excellent service, providing sustainable homes and communities and making sure we achieve high levels of customer satisfaction.

This document sets out the wide range of methods and support which is available to all tenants to get involved. It also sets out how we will keep tenants informed, consult them and use their views. We have taken on board the comments made by tenants and staff as part of the review and reflected this in the new aims of the strategy.

I’d like to thank all tenants and tenant representatives who currently get involved with us and have returned surveys, gone to public meetings or given up their time to represent their area, carry out inspections and meet with us to discuss important housing issues. I look forward to working with you over the next few years.

I would also like to thank those tenants who made such a major contribution to developing this strategy by taking part in the working group.

I hope that more tenants take up opportunities to work with us including new opportunities to get involved in assessing our services. Together we can show that involving our tenants is the way we do business.

Convenor of Housing, Councillor David McBride

The West Dunbartonshire Tenants and Residents’ Organisation (WDTRO) was set up in 2008 and is made up of tenant representatives from across West Dunbartonshire. The WDTRO is an independent organisation which brings together the activities of all local tenants’ and residents’ organisations with the aim of improving housing and housing conditions for everyone.

This strategy is good news for all tenants – we are looking forward to working with a council that wants to continuously improve by listening to its tenants and local communities. Getting involved is open to all council tenants. Yes it’s true we would like to see more tenants’ and residents’ associations and would definitely like to see something which encourages our younger tenants to get involved. However, you don’t need to be involved in a group to have your say. There are a number of different ways for you to tell the council what you think. These are some of the things you should know:

- Tenants’ and residents’ associations are supported and funded by the council – you don’t have to pay any expenses yourself.
- Meetings can take place at a time and venue that suits you.
- Tenants’ and residents’ associations have opportunities to meet regularly with senior decision-makers within the housing service.
- We are developing good working relationships with our elected members and housing staff.
- We agree with the council what issues or items should be discussed.
- You can put your name down and receive regular information from housing services about what’s happening – the ‘interested tenants’ register’. Then it’s up to you to decide if you want to come to a meeting or not.

We would encourage all tenants to get involved in some way and if you read the strategy or contact the Tenant Participation Team there should be something which interests you – if there isn’t, please suggest it.

WDTRO Chairperson, Hugh O’Donnell
Introduction

Welcome to our tenant participation strategy 2013 to 2016 which we produced with our tenants and tenant representatives. It sets out our commitment to developing effective consultation and involvement so that by working with our tenants we can continuously improve our housing conditions and services.

This is our third strategy and we have built its aims around the views of our tenants who helped us identify what we are doing well and where we need to make some improvements. The strategy will make sure that we can demonstrate we are delivering real outcomes for our tenants and other service users as part of the new Scottish Social Housing Charter.

The ‘strategy’ tells you how we will achieve good tenant involvement in housing services. You can find out how we are going to give you information, how we are going to consult you and use your views and how we are going to work with you so that you can influence what we do and hold us to account. We have set out:

- our aims for tenant involvement for 2013 to 2016;
- an action plan for the period 2013 to 2016 which tells you how we are going to achieve our aims;
- information about the resources and support we make available to support tenant involvement; and
- how we will assess our progress and measure the effect of the strategy.

What is tenant involvement?

“It’s about tenants and tenants’ and residents’ groups taking part in decision-making processes and influencing decisions about housing policies, conditions and related services. It is a two-way process, which involves sharing information, ideas and power. Its aim is to improve housing conditions and services.”

(‘Partners in Participation, A National Strategy for Tenant Participation’ produced by the Scottish Executive in 1999.)

This definition is useful because it tells us what tenant participation is, what needs to happen to make it work and what the outcome should be.
involving you
Involving tenants and other service users in decisions about their homes and communities is now accepted as normal practice within social housing. Involving tenants is an evolving process which has had some important influences as it has developed. Most significant is the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. The Act introduced the first legal framework for tenant involvement by introducing new rights for tenants to get involved and to be consulted as well as new duties on all local authorities and registered social landlords (RSLs) in Scotland.

Your rights

You have a right to:
- form independent representative organisations and apply for registration from your landlord;
- access information about policies about housing and related services;
- be consulted on issues that affect your homes; and
- take part in decisions that affect the services you receive and have enough time to consider draft proposals and put forward your views.

We have a duty to:
- set up arrangements for registering tenants’ groups;
- consult individual tenants and tenants’ and residents’ groups about proposals for managing housing and the standard of service we provide;
- consult individual tenants and tenants’ and residents’ groups about this strategy and make sure that we keep to our duties in terms of equal opportunities;
- consult individual tenants and tenants’ and residents’ groups on proposals to sell, transfer or demolish our housing; and
- take on board tenants’ views before we make decisions.

Created under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010, the new Scottish Social Housing Charter became effective on 1 April 2012. The charter aims to improve the quality and value of services provided by social landlords and sets out 16 outcomes and standards that social landlords should aim to achieve when carrying out their housing activity. (You can get a full list of the charter outcomes by contacting the Tenant Participation Team.)

At the same time as the charter was introduced, a new Scottish Housing Regulator was set up. The regulator is an independent organisation responsible for monitoring, reporting and assessing how well social landlords, like us, are achieving the charter’s outcomes and standards. From 2013 we must gather evidence to show to the regulator, and to tenants and service users, that we are meeting the outcomes.
As well as sending the regulator information every year, we have to report our assessment of progress in meeting the charter outcomes to tenants, other customers and service users. Tenants will play a central role in deciding on the look and content of our report and we will ask them to get involved in assessing our performance.

Of the 16 outcomes there are four main ones within the charter that are particularly relevant to our activity in involving tenants.

**Outcome 2  Communication**
Social landlords manage their businesses so that:
- tenants and other customers (in other words, residents) find it easy to communicate with their landlord and get the information they need about their landlord, how and why their landlord 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 take part in and influence their landlords’ decisions at a level they feel comfortable with.

**Outcome 14 and 15  Rents and service charges**
Social landlords set rents and service charges by consulting their tenants and other customers so that:
- a balance is struck between level of service provided, the costs of the services, and how far current and new tenants and service users can afford them; and
- tenants get clear information on how rent and other money is spent, including any details of individual items of spending above thresholds agreed between landlords and tenants.

Our existing arrangements for involving tenants, new strategy document and action plan will provide the framework for delivering these outcomes.

**Other relevant publications**
It is important that our tenant participation strategy links into and contributes to other council plans and policies. These include:

- West Dunbartonshire Single Outcome Agreement 2011-2014;
- Community Plan 2007-17;
- West Dunbartonshire Council Strategic Plan 2012-2017;
- Housing Environmental and Economic Development Department Service Plan 2011-2015;
- Local Housing Strategy 2011-2016;
- Equalities Mainstreaming Report and Equality Outcomes 2013-2017; and
- “Forward Together” – West Dunbartonshire Joint Voluntary Policy.

As an organisation we recognise the benefits of tenant involvement which is why we provide places for the Tenants’ and Residents’ Federations on our Community Participation Committee.
Our principles

Trust, respect and partnership
It is important that tenants, councillors and our staff trust and respect each other and work together to improve housing services and conditions.

Sharing information, ideas and power
Everyone taking part in involving tenants will share information and ideas. It is important that we have a shared understanding of the issues so that we can work towards a joint solution to take these forward.

Setting the agenda together
We want to jointly agree with you the agenda for involving tenants. We will make sure that everyone has the information they need to consider issues properly. We will provide information that is clear and easy to understand and is available in a variety of formats.

Allowing time to consider issues properly
We will share information in a way that allows everyone time to make an informed decision. Individual tenants and tenants’ and residents’ groups will have enough time to work out a shared view before they meet our representatives.

Openness and accountability in decision-making
We will make decisions in a way that is open, clear and accountable. We will provide feedback following all consultations.

Recognition for tenants’ organisations
We recognise that individual tenants’ and residents’ groups are independent organisations that provide a valuable role in shaping housing services.

Good working relationships
We will build good working relationships with individual tenants and tenants’ and residents’ groups. These relationships need to be flexible to meet local needs and circumstances.

Providing resources for tenants’ and residents’ groups
We will provide adequate resources, support and training to help tenants’ and residents’ groups to work effectively.

Including people
We will take account of equal opportunities law and good practice. We will promote approaches and work in ways that are appropriate to different people and differing needs within our communities.

Equal opportunities
Our commitment to meeting the main parts of the general duty in terms of equal opportunities is set out in our Equality Statement 2013-17.

- We want to get rid of discrimination, harassment and victimisation.
- We want to encourage equal opportunities.
- We want to encourage good relations between all people.

We have carried out an equality impact assessment on this strategy.

Our tenants’ and residents’ associations show their commitment to equal opportunities when they meet the registration conditions (as issued by the Scottish Government) to become registered tenant organisations.

We will continue to use a number of ways to give all tenants the opportunity to get involved and influence decisions about housing services, policies and standards, and provide information in a range of formats and various languages to suit our tenants as set out in our Tenants’ Communication Strategy and ‘Communicating Effectively’, our guidance on communicating with people from ethnic-minority groups and disabled people.
Since we introduced the last strategy in September 2009 we have made some important improvements in involving tenants. Below are some examples.

- A dedicated team (Tenant Participation Officer, Tenant Participation Assistant and administrative support) is in place to help us deliver this strategy.
- We have put a tenants’ communication strategy into practice to support a consistent approach to communication and consultation across housing services.
- We now publish and publicise a tenant participation performance report each year outlining our performance relating to activities to involve tenants.
- We now hold meetings every two months between the West Dunbartonshire Tenants’ and Residents’ Organisation (WDTRO), Convener of the Housing, Environmental and Economic Development (HEED) Committee and senior housing staff responsible for directing and delivering the housing service.
- We hold a tenant information event each year to encourage tenants and customers to get involved with staff on a range of housing and housing-related issues.
- We send out information or briefing notes on a range of housing issues to tenants’ and residents’ associations and tenants who are on the ‘interested tenants register’.
- We provide opportunities for tenants to become involved in assessing our services through the quality circle project and an assessment of how we manage our empty homes.
- All our staff are aware of their duty to include tenant involvement in their work.
- We provide specific training to all housing staff.
- We have set up, and promote, a register of interested tenants.
- We have strengthened and supported the network of tenants’ and residents’ associations.
- We have produced a tenant participation leaflet promoting tenant involvement and support to individual tenants, tenants’ and residents’ groups and under-represented groups.
- We send out the magazine ‘Housing News’ every three months to all tenants.
- We provided funding until April 2012 to help develop the WDTRO and other tenants’ and residents’ associations.
- We developed and put into practice a tenant participation framework during the stock transfer process.
- We set up and supported area panels representing tenants in proposed stock-transfer areas.
How we developed the strategy

In October 2012 we set up a small working group to help us develop this strategy. The people we invited to get involved included:

- representatives from tenants’ and residents’ associations from across West Dunbartonshire;
- tenants living in sheltered housing accommodation;
- tenants who asked for their names to be added to our ‘interested-tenants’ register’ (which means that they can get involved with us when they want but don’t have to be part of a tenants’ and residents’ association); and
- staff working in housing and community-safety services.

To develop the new strategy, we carried out a review of practice in involving tenants to identify what was working well and what needed to improve. The working group agreed which methods to use to carry out a review of tenant involvement and decided how we would consult tenants and other service users about the contents of the draft strategy.

How we carried out the review

The TP Working Group developed a survey to gather views on existing practice. This was based on the ‘Guide to successful tenant participation’ TP Strategy checklist (Scottish Executive and Communities Scotland). We used a number of methods to gather the views of our tenants, tenants’ and residents’ associations, staff and councillors. These included the following.

- A tenant information and fun day held in Dumbarton in October 2012.
- Three area-based (Alexandria, Dumbarton and Clydebank) focus groups held during October and November 2012.
- An online survey.
- A survey included as an insert in the winter 2012 edition of Housing News.
- A tenant participation audit aimed specifically at tenants’ and residents’ associations designed to help both us and tenants assess how tenant organisations are supported to get involved.

We promoted the information day and the focus groups on our website, the partner engagement calendar (promoted through the Community Planning Partnership) and by sending out many flyers. We issued flyers to councillors, area housing offices and the One-Stop-Shop, tenants’ and residents’ associations and tenants on our list of interested tenants. The flyers also went to all sheltered-housing complexes, the bottom of some multi-story blocks, libraries, community education centres and leisure centres.
The Tenant Participation Officer also presented the review of the TP Strategy to the Community Participation Committee and the TP Working Group gave their views on existing practice.

The main recommendations from the review

- Good practice in involving tenants should be carried out across all parts of the Housing Service.
- We need to demonstrate the effect of involving tenants where it has led to a change in housing services or policy.
- We should give information to tenants about our decision-making processes.
- We need to continue to investigate and introduce new ways (including using new technology) to involve tenants.
- We should provide training as an incentive to tenants willing to get involved and include this in the strategy (in particular providing training for tenants taking part in scrutiny activity such as tenant-led inspections or mystery shopping).
- We should develop opportunities for tenants living in sheltered-housing accommodation to get involved.
- Tenants want us to bring area budgets back to encourage tenant involvement at a local level.
- We should carry out audits of involvement and a review each year.

In terms of the capital programme, we should:

- set up a capital programme working group to review information provided to tenants and
- consult tenants as part of the programme; and
- provide regular, accurate and detailed information about our progress in meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard.

Wider consultation

We published the draft tenant participation strategy in March 2012. The working group agreed that the strategy would be promoted and made available on our website and sent to:

- all tenants’ and residents associations, tenants on the Sheltered Housing Forum and tenants on the interested-tenants’ register and local councillors;
- the One Stop Shop, local housing offices, council headquarters and sheltered housing complexes;
- equalities and other community organisations;
- community councils and community forums; and
- tenants involved in the stock transfer area panels.
Aims of the strategy

Our aim is to improve our housing services by fully involving tenants in developing and influencing how these services are provided.

Our aims reflect important legal and regulatory requirements but are largely built around the feedback we received from tenants and staff as part of the review of tenant participation. We will:

- improve the culture and practice of involving tenants across housing services;
- improve our feedback to tenants so that we can prove where our tenants and other service users have influenced or shaped the housing service;
- promote and provide a wide range of options for tenants to get involved with us;
- encourage involvement of under-represented groups such as young people, homeless people, people with disabilities and people from ethnic-minority groups;
- make sure that tenants are aware of the options available to them to shape housing services;
- set up arrangements with our tenants to increase activity for tenants to assess our performance in line with the new requirements under the Scottish Social Housing Charter and new regulatory framework;
- make sure that resources we put in place and practices we carry out are adequate to support and develop the activity to involve tenants; and
- make sure that we communicate effectively with our tenants and provide good-quality, accessible information that tenants want.

Our action plan in section 11 sets out how we will meet these aims.
How you can get involved

We have a long history of active tenant involvement through tenants’ and residents’ associations. While our associations have a loud voice and we continue to support them, we recognise that not all tenants want to or have the time to get involved in this way.

It’s important that we offer all tenants a choice so that they can get involved at a level that suits their interest and their circumstances.

Individual tenants

We want to encourage all tenants to get involved in shaping our services and provide you with as many opportunities as possible to do this. Tenants regularly contact us by letter, email, and phone or in person at our local housing offices. You can also get involved in the following ways.

Filling in surveys or questionnaires

We use a number of satisfaction surveys which ask tenants about specific areas of our housing service, for example customer satisfaction forms used by our repairs service. From time to time we will include short surveys within the Housing News magazine or on our website and we also enclose tear-off comment slips within some leaflets or documents.

We will carry out a full tenant satisfaction survey called STAR during 2013. After this we will look at providing a rolling programme to gather tenants’ views and provide feedback.

Housing News

We use the Housing News magazine to give you information and invite you to get involved in consultation when it is happening. You can write to Housing News if you have a question about housing services or if you would like to comment on the Housing News magazine.

Going to conferences and events

Every year we hold information and fun days or conferences designed to attract tenants to get involved with housing services. These events raise awareness about services provided, ask tenants and other customers for their views on different areas of the housing service and provide an opportunity to ask questions. A working group involving representatives from our registered tenant organisations is usually involved in designing the events with us.

Going to focus groups and public meetings

From time to time we will set up focus groups or public meetings which look at a particular part of the housing service. For example, we will do this if we review our allocations policy, develop our tenant participation strategy or build new homes. We let tenants know about these meetings by publishing the details in the Housing News magazine or in the local press, by putting information on our website or by putting up posters. We invite representatives from tenants’ and residents’ associations to come to these meetings as well.
The interested-tenants’ register
Many of our tenants are not able to go to regular meetings or in some areas there simply isn’t enough support for a tenants’ and residents’ association. Because we want all tenants to have an opportunity to have their say, we have set up an ‘interested-tenants’ register’.

We give tenants on the register similar information to our tenants’ and residents’ associations and we invite them to get involved in consultations or other activities. They don’t have to go to regular meetings but can still keep up to date with what’s happening in housing services and can be involved in topics that they are interested in. You simply need to let your housing officer or tenant participation team know if you want to be added to the register.

Tenants’ and residents’ association or federation
If you have one, we would encourage you to contact or join your local tenants’ and residents’ association or the federation which represents all tenants across West Dunbartonshire. You can get contact details for all registered tenant organisations from each area housing office (or one stop shop) or from the tenant participation team.

Sheltered Housing Forum
Housing services and community health and care services have developed a joint approach to setting up and supporting a Sheltered Housing Forum. Five from a possible nine sheltered-housing complexes are represented on the new forum which has agreed its remit and is starting to look at developing sheltered-housing service standards.

Tenants’ and residents’ associations
Tenants’ and residents’ associations are made up of local tenants and residents who are democratically elected to work and represent their area to bring about improvements in housing and other related services. We recognise the independence of these associations and the contribution they make over time in improving services for all tenants and in representing the area they live in.

Currently there are 17 tenants’ and residents’ associations throughout West Dunbartonshire which have opportunities to be involved in developing our services by:

- responding to consultations;
- going to consultation meetings, focus groups and working groups;
- carrying out surveys and audits;
- holding training events and information sessions;
- holding open days and other tenant events; and
- acting as a link to a wider range of tenants and providing feedback about tenants’ housing and related issues.

See appendix three for a full list of all tenants’ and residents’ associations.

Registered tenant organisations
Tenants’ and residents’ associations that meet the criteria set out by the Scottish Government can register with us as a registered tenant organisation. Registration is easy and doesn’t need them to do much more than they already have to do under their constitution. The main difference between an association and a registered group is that by registering with us, associations have a recognised role in the decision-making process.
**Tenants’ and residents’ federations**

The Dumbarton and Vale of Leven Housing Federation represent and support tenants’ and residents’ groups in the Dumbarton and Vale of Leven areas. The federation, which represented tenants’ groups (Residents Groups), disbanded in 2012.

West Dunbartonshire Tenants’ and Residents’ Organisation is an umbrella organisation which acts to co-ordinate the activities of all registered tenant organisations (RTOs). Launched in 2008, its aim is to make sure that the RTOs work together to improve housing services and standards. This includes:

1. working together with all tenants’ and residents’ associations across West Dunbartonshire;
2. encouraging and supporting tenants and residents who want to set up a tenants’ and residents’ association;
3. providing information to all tenants’ and residents’ associations on the work of the WDTR0;
4. working jointly with us and other agencies to make sure that we have as much influence as possible over decisions taken about our homes and community; and
5. working jointly with us in the recent arrangements with councillors and council officers to influence and improve housing policy matters.

You can contact the WDTR0 through their website at [www.wdtr0.org.uk](http://www.wdtr0.org.uk) or by contacting the Tenant Participation Team on 01389 737 281.

**Liaison meetings**

We and the WDTR0 meet every two months so that tenant representatives, councillors and senior housing staff can work together to help deliver the housing service. This makes sure that our tenant representatives have direct access to those with decision-making authority. We agree on aims with tenants. We send out the minutes of these meetings to all RTOs.

**Pre-HEED Tenant Forum – new for 2013**

The Housing Environment and Economic Development (HEED) Committee sets the policies and plans for all services provided by housing and community safety services. Decisions taken by the committee are usually taken after councillors have had the opportunity to consider reports by our professional officers.

Before each of the HEED Committee meetings (held every three months) tenant representatives from each RTO will have an opportunity to meet members of the HEED Committee to discuss housing and housing-related items. This is called the Pre-HEED Tenant Forum and it will be introduced during 2013. The purpose of the meeting is to share information and views on housing issues and to allow tenant representatives direct access to those who make the decisions before issues are discussed at the HEED Committee.

**Area panels**

In June 2012 we took the decision not to follow up on our stock-transfer policy. Before we had made this decision, tenants and residents, whose homes were included in the transfer areas, formed area panels to represent their interests. Although we are keeping our housing stock, we continue to share information and keep tenants in the area panels up to date with progress in meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard. We encourage and support members of the panels to form tenants’ and residents’ associations if they want.
Housing action areas

Housing action areas are areas within our local authority which we have identified as priority areas. These areas have large numbers of empty homes or homes which are lower in demand and a range of social or housing-management issues.

To make improvements and make sure that these areas become sustainable communities which are attractive places to stay, an approach involving several agencies will look at solutions which could include:

- **regenerating areas and significant investment**;
- **looking at options in terms of which housing we will invest in and which we will demolish**;
- **localised planning for lettings and reducing the number of empty homes in the area**; and
- **social and environmental issues and working with community safety partners**.

Tenants and tenants’ and residents’ associations in the housing action areas will play an important role in finding those solutions and contributing to discussions about improvements which need to take place within their local area.

Representing all tenants

We know that there are groups of tenants that are often under-represented when it comes to involving tenants. For example, young people, travelling people, homeless service users, people with disabilities, black and minority ethnic groups (BME) and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender groups.

We will look to develop different ways to involve tenants so that we do not exclude groups of people and will gather feedback from these under-represented groups on how they would like to be involved and what aspects of the housing service are of most interest to them.

When consulting and involving tenants we will ask for information on people’s backgrounds to help make sure that everyone has a voice.

Scrutiny

Tenant scrutiny is the name we give to the activities that offer tenants an opportunity to get involved in assessing our housing services. This allows tenants to influence and hold us to account by focusing specifically on how housing services perform.

We involved tenants in this type of activity in our assessment about how we manage empty homes and in the Quality Circle Project (see below). From 2013 to 2016, we will increase the number of opportunities available for tenants to get involved in the scrutiny of our housing services. For example, we will offer tenant-led inspections and mystery shopping.

We will consult tenants about setting up a new tenant scrutiny panel which will serve as a centre for a range of activities and a focal point for assessing our performance and holding housing services to account.

Although the panel would be the recognised group set up to represent the interests of all tenants and other service users it would not be the only method of involving tenants in relation to performance. There could be a range of other less formal methods aimed at involving more tenants.

We will set up methods for the panel to give feedback so that members of the panel can take account of the views of tenants.
Quality Circle Project
The Quality Circle Project involves a small group of tenant and resident volunteers who independently assess and report on the quality of service provided to tenants living in our multi-storey blocks.

Each block is given a score out of 100 with comments given as an explanation where points have been taken off. When we receive the inspection report, we complete an action plan (jointly by estates and caretaking and maintenance and repairs services) before a further inspection is carried out three months later. Each block is inspected at least twice with volunteers deciding whether or not they want to continue to inspect a block or move to a new area.

We will review the project with the tenant inspectors with the aim of recruiting more tenants to the project or extending it out to other types of accommodation.

Complaints and compliments
We are committed to providing the best-quality services we can afford and aim constantly to improve services. Our complaints procedure lets you tell us what you feel has gone wrong and helps us improve our services for everyone. See our complaints procedure in appendix four.
As part of the tenants’ communication strategy, we agreed to keep to the following good practice when carrying out consultation in housing services.

- We will bring tenants and tenant organisations into the consultation and participation process from the start.
- We will use a number of approaches to consulting, for example, the Housing Matters newsletter, leaflets and posters, public meetings, conferences and seminars, open days, home visits, focus groups, questionnaires and surveys and through our website.
- The method of consultation will depend on the scale and significance of the project, we will take into account the views of tenants’ organisation on the consultation methods used.
- We will try and structure our consultation with tenants by asking specific questions. This applies as well as asking tenants and tenants’ organisations for their views more generally.
- We will give detailed information to tenants and tenant groups on any proposals we are consulting on, including:
  - how and when the final decision will be taken;
  - how the proposal will affect tenants;
  - how and within what timescales tenants can make their views known to us;
  - the contact officer dealing with the consultation; and
  - information on how and where to complain.
- Where possible, we will give tenants and tenant organisations at least eight weeks to respond to changes in our housing policy.
- If we want to do this in less than eight weeks, council officers must ask for permission from the Head of Housing and Community Safety. If permission is granted, we will explain why the consultation must be carried out within a shorter timescale.

When we talk about housing policy we mean the following.

1. Rent and rent policy
2. Development
   - For example, the specification for capital work for example, new kitchens and bathrooms
   - The design and layout of new developments, including colour schemes
   - Environmental proposals
3. Managing housing
   - Allocations policy
   - Repairs and maintenance services and standards
   - Managing estates
   - Managing properties
4 Managing our assets
This involves the day-to-day management of the housing stock (and other items such as garages, lock-ups, and shops which we call non-operational assets) and the long-term planning and investment that is needed to make sure that our homes are safe, secure, and fit for purpose. Good management will result in housing estates and communities that are attractive places in which to live.

We have an asset management strategy 2013-2018 which sets out the four main priorities for our homes and other assets.

- Our housing stock must meet and be better than the Scottish Housing Quality Standard by 2015 and beyond.
- Our maintenance and repairs service will continue to provide effective and thorough services.
- Our housing stock meets the needs of current and future tenants.
- We make the best use of non-operational assets which will benefit the council and local communities.

The strategy sets out the direction we should be heading in, but good asset management is simply good housing management.

Feedback
We use the views of our tenants and service users to shape and improve our housing services. It is important that we provide feedback so that you know we have listened to and acted on your feedback. Providing feedback is also important as it encourages others to get involved.

We use a range of methods to gather your views. This might be because we want to know if you are satisfied with a service, because we are reviewing a policy or the way that we deliver a service or it might be because we are considering some other action which will affect a lot of tenants.

When we ask you for your views, we report them back to senior decision-makers and include them in committee reports which are prepared for council meetings or in other draft documents.

We will make sure that we tell you about how we used your views. We can do this by meeting with you, or by letter. We will ask you how you want to receive this information. We will also share these outcomes with RTOs and the WDTRO and publicise it in the Housing News magazine to show you how we are using your views and suggestions. This includes the results of surveys or questionnaires which tenants have taken part in.
Keeping you informed

We know how important it is that we give you good-quality, up-to-date information which is accessible to everyone and free of jargon. Some of the methods we use include:

- letters;
- surveys and questionnaires;
- factsheets and briefing notes;
- website and email;
- local press and radio;
- face-to-face meetings;
- home visits where a need is identified;
- tenants’ and residents’ associations and registered tenant organisations;
- through the interested tenants’ register;
- focus groups;
- public meetings;
- tenant panels;
- tenant handbooks;
- tenant conferences or other tenant events;
- the tenant newsletter;
- notice boards at the bottom of our multi-storey blocks; and
- area housing offices, one-stop shops and other council offices.

And, 94% felt that it was good value for money, and 92% were either very satisfied or satisfied with Housing News. Tenants went on to make positive comments about the magazine:

“We put the newsletter on audiotape for tenants in some of our sheltered-housing accommodation.

As set out in our ‘Communicating Effectively’ guide, we provide all written information in a clear, accessible and easy-to-understand format, using plain language. And, where necessary, we also provide it in community languages. This includes making information available on request in other formats such as in Braille, in large print as well as on audiotape.

In December 2012, 96% of tenants who responded to a survey felt that the new Housing News magazine kept them informed about important developments.

We produce our tenant newsletter ‘Housing News’ regularly and send it to all our tenants, local councillors, area housing offices (or one-stop shops) and to all our tenants’ and residents’ associations.

SECTION 8
Tenants’ handbook

Our tenant handbook is an important part of our commitment to giving you detailed information about our housing services and your tenancy. The tenant handbook was originally produced with the help of tenant representatives of Dumbarton and Vale of Leven Housing Federation and the Association of Clydebank Residents Groups and we have since updated it.

We will invite tenants to help us review the content, look and style of the handbook to make sure that it is in a style and format which is useful, accessible and attractive to you.

The sheltered-housing tenant handbook

Tenants in sheltered-housing accommodation have two tenant handbooks which set out their tenancy rights and responsibilities and support arrangements. We will work with the new Sheltered Housing Forum to produce one new tenant handbook.

Tenants’ and residents’ associations support manual

We will develop a manual designed to support new and existing tenants’ and residents’ associations and give it to all associations or to any tenant who asks for a copy. It will cover all aspects of running and managing a tenants’ and residents’ association, including how to register with us as a registered tenant organisation. It will also provide information and contact details about our services and how to get independent help and advice.

Briefing notes

We produce information or ‘briefing notes’ for associations and tenants on the interested-tenants’ register which contain information about housing issues or topics which have been raised by tenants or by us. The Housing Strategy team also produce regular briefing and information notes to keep staff and tenant and residents’ associations up to date with changing housing policy.

New technology

We are investigating a number of options to use information technology as a way of involving our tenants in the future. In 2012 we launched a new website and have a website working group to develop, update and improve the content within the housing section of our website. We now also have a Facebook page and Twitter Account which tenants can use to get information and provide their comments.

We are investigating other options such as text messaging which may be more attractive to our younger tenants and which we could use to remind tenants about appointments or meetings, or to carry out short surveys.

Tenants’ communication strategy

Our communication strategy sets out how we will provide information, the types of information to be provided and how we will provide feedback. We developed the strategy in 2010 with input from our tenants’ and residents’ associations. We will review the strategy to make sure that it continues to be fit for purpose.
To make the process of involving tenants successful, we provide a range of resources which both individual tenants and tenants’ and residents’ associations have access to.

Housing and community safety services staff

All housing staff are responsible for encouraging and supporting tenants to get involved. This can include practical support such as help with photocopying, providing information about our services, going to meetings (when asked), providing training or information sessions and delivering consultation events.

Tenant Participation Team

There is a dedicated Tenant Participation Team responsible for supporting and developing activity on involving tenants across West Dunbartonshire. The Team makes sure that we meet the aims of this strategy by putting an action plan into practice. They also provide encouragement, training and support to individual tenants and tenants’ and residents’ associations to help them to take part.

Funding tenants’ and residents’ associations

Tenants’ and residents’ associations play a vital part in making sure our services reflect the needs of local communities. We are committed to providing support and resources to make sure associations are in a position to fully take part.

Start-up grants are available for new associations and yearly grants are available to existing associations to cover their administration and running costs. For example, to pay for photocopying, phone calls, hiring local community halls, postage or travelling expenses. We do provide one-off expenses to provide equipment such as laptops or PCs if the group is well established.

There are currently nine associations which have a community lease for premises in their area. Most premises are mainly used as office and meeting space, housing-officer and local-councillor surgeries and can be used to provide meeting space for other community activities. We pay for the rent, insurance and utility charges using the tenant participation budget.

Information, training and support

All new tenants’ and residents’ associations are offered support and training from the Tenant Participation Team. Tenant participation officers usually go to meetings until the committee is happy to carry...
on without them. The officers offer formal training covering all aspects of running and managing a tenants’ and residents’ association and guidance to become a registered tenant organisation. We will also offer our associations help to carry out action planning so they can achieve their aims and demonstrate their achievements.

Training is also made available to all housing staff to make sure that we can put our strategy into practice effectively.

Associations will have access to a support manual which covers aspects of running and managing a tenants’ and residents’ association, provides information and contact details about our services and information on how to get independent help and advice.

Our range of information notes keep tenants on the register and associations informed about housing policy or about us.

We arrange information sessions as and when needed in response to developments, to support consultation events or to discuss housing topics asked for by tenants’ and residents’ associations.

We give out the Housing News magazine to all tenants and tenants’ and residents’ associations four times a year.

Conferences and events

If you are represented by a tenants’ and residents’ association or you are on our list of interested tenants, you can come to annual conferences and events carried out by us, the Chartered Institute of Housing, the Tenants Information Service or the Tenant Participation Advisory Service. We pay for the costs of taking part, transport and crèche facilities using the tenant participation budget.

Including everyone

Our resources and support services are there for everyone to get involved. We use the principles set out in the National Standards for Community Engagement to make sure that, where possible, there are no practical barriers to tenants being fully involved. This includes:

- suitable transport to go to meetings;
- general help;
- access to premises;
- communication aids (such as loop systems, advocacy and interpreting services);
- and
- opportunities to meet at a time and a place that suits you.

Tenant scrutiny

Tenants involved in the Quality Circle Project are supported by the Tenant Participation Team to make sure that they are confident and comfortable in carrying out the inspections. We will investigate options for more formal training to support tenants and staff taking part in tenant scrutiny activity as it develops.

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL’S TENANT PARTICIPATION STRATEGY 2013 - 2017
Access to other sources of information, support and advice

Scottish Government
Tenant Priorities Team
Phone: 0131 244 0710
Email: anne.cook@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

Tenants Information Service
Phone: 0141 248 1242
Website: www.tis.org.uk

Tenant Participation
Advisory Service
Phone: 0141 552 3633
Website: www.tpasscotland.org.uk

Equality Advisory and Support Service
Phone: 0808 800 0082;
Textphone: 0808 800 0084
Website: www.equalityadvisoryservice.com
FREEPOST Equality Advisory Support Service
FPN4431

The tenant participation budget

This is direct funding to support activity to help tenants get involved, such as providing information, grants to groups or transport costs and comes from the Housing Revenue Account which is made up of tenants’ rents.

In 2011/12 we spent £70,098.76 on involving tenants, that’s £6.79 for each tenant.

The chart shows you that in the last financial year we spent the largest part of the budget on supporting tenants’ and residents’ associations. This includes the costs to run the associations and federations and their premises. Around 26% of the budget was used to produce information and the Housing News magazine, while a further 15% was spent on providing development support to the West Dunbartonshire Tenants and Residents Organisation and other tenant and resident associations.

The tenant participation budget for 2013-2014 is around £90,000. We will spend this funding on:

- support for tenants’ and residents’ associations;
- costs associated with providing community flats used by tenants’ and residents’ associations;
- holding the WDC tenants’ conference and other tenant events;
- producing the Housing News magazine;
- providing new tenant handbooks;
- holding consultation events;
- providing information (leaflets, guidance notes and so on);
- producing this new tenant participation strategy and associated publicity material to promote tenant involvement;
- training and conference events for tenants provided by other organisations;
- travel expenses and crèche facilities;
- surveys or questionnaires; and
- tenant scrutiny activity.
Measuring tenant involvement

This strategy is a working document which we will continue to review by regularly monitoring the action plan. The Tenant Participation Team will continue to provide regular progress reports to the WDTRO at the liaison meetings. However, they will also extend this out to the Sheltered Housing Forum and all RTOs.

We produce a full tenant participation performance report each year and share it with all registered tenant organisations and tenants on the interested-tenants’ register. It is also available on our website and we offer it to anyone who asks for a copy.

The types of things we measured so far are shown below.

What we put into involving tenants

We measure how much we spend on:

- communication and information;
- tenant and staff training (external);
- tenants’ and residents’ associations;
- informal groups (focus groups or scrutiny groups);
- the tenant participation budget per tenant each year;
- the percentage of the overall budget we give to associations;
- the number of tenants’ and residents’ associations with premises;
- the equipment and facilities we provide for groups without premises;
- in-house training and TP staff briefings; and
- staff time.

What we produced as a result of what we put in

We measure:

- the number of ways in which tenants can get involved;
- the number of tenants involved;
- the number of tenants and staff who received training;
- the number and variety of methods of communication;
- the range of decisions which tenants are involved in during 2011-12; and
- the percentage of tenants responding to formal consultation.

What the outcomes were for tenants

We measured:

- the areas that tenants have influenced;
- satisfaction with opportunities to get involved; and
- satisfaction with information and communication.

We will consult our tenants about what we measure and our approach going forward will be in line with the Scottish Social Housing Charter outcomes, regulation requirements and equalities monitoring.
Our action plan sets out how we will meet the aims of the Strategy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What we will do</th>
<th>How we will do it</th>
<th>When we will do it</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. We will improve the culture and practice of involving tenants across housing services. | - continue to deliver training for all housing services staff;  
- develop a toolkit to support tenant involvement across the housing service which will include monitoring equal opportunities;  
- help hold working group meetings every three months which will involve all parts of the housing service and tenant representatives so that we can report on, plan and discuss activity in involving tenants;  
- develop and put into practice service standards to make sure that we could include this work in all parts of the housing service;  
- gain accreditation and other relevant awards linked to involving tenants;  
- produce updates every three months for elected members, housing and related services staff with input from all housing service areas. | Yearly programme  
2013  
Ongoing  
2014  
2014-15  
Every three months | Increased awareness and understanding of tenant involvement and requirements across all council services.  
All housing staff will understand and contribute to promoting and supporting, carrying out and recording practice in involving tenants. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What we will do</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| **2.** We will improve our feedback to tenants so that we can demonstrate where our tenants and other service users have influenced or shaped the housing service. | We will:  
- tell relevant people about changed proposals as a result of consultation and publicise this in the Housing News;  
- acknowledge tenants’ and tenants’ and residents associations’ responses to consultation saying how we will use their views and when decisions are likely;  
- support RTOs to demonstrate their achievements locally and to a wider audience of tenants and service users;  
- publish tenant involvement outcomes each year as part of the TP performance report;  
- provide information to tenants about decision-making processes and how the tenant participation framework fits with this;  
- demonstrate the outcomes of tenant involvement in assessment and tenant-scrutiny activities; and  
- produce a report for interested tenants and RTOs. | Ongoing | Tenant participation is working.  
Individual tenants and tenants’ and residents’ associations are encouraged to get involved.  
Tenants better understand decision-making processes and how tenant involvement fits in with this.  
We share direct, up-to-date evidence of the effect of tenant involvement with tenants. |
| We will show that we consider tenants’ views as part of the decision-making process. | Ongoing | Every year | Ongoing | Every three months | Ongoing | Ongoing | Every year | Ongoing | Every three months |
| We will regularly promote the outcomes of tenant involvement to make sure that tenants can see where they are making a difference. | We will:  
- promote tenant involvement outcomes each year as part of the TP performance report;  
- provide information to tenants about decision-making processes and how the tenant participation framework fits with this;  
- demonstrate the outcomes of tenant involvement in assessment and tenant-scrutiny activities; and  
- produce a report for interested tenants and RTOs. | Ongoing | Every year | Ongoing | Every three months | Ongoing | Every year | Ongoing | Every three months |
| **3.** We will promote and provide a wide range of options for tenants to get involved with us. We will review and promote existing methods available to tenants to get involved both as individuals and as part of more formal structures. | We will:  
- promote the menu of options and support in place to encourage tenants to get involved (produce and send out a range of leaflets);  
- support tenants’ and residents’ associations to produce leaflets or websites (or both) promoting the work that they do and how to get involved;  
- review the quality circle project;  
- promote and increase the number of tenants on the interested-tenants’ register;  
- develop training and support provided to tenants’ and residents’ associations, the sheltered-housing forum and tenants on the interested-tenants’ register (including providing accredited training as an incentive);  
- continue to support the development of the sheltered-housing forum and encourage them to become a registered tenant organisation;  
- continue to deliver a tenant conference or event each year;  
- explore new methods to provide information and gather tenants’ views (social media, texting); and  
- investigate options for area budgets with our tenants’ and residents’ associations. | Ongoing | Increase tenants’ awareness and understanding of options and support available to help them get involved.  
Increase the number of tenants getting involved.  
Increase the level of involvement of tenants living in sheltered-housing accommodation.  
Provide new methods of involvement and incentives for getting involved. |
<p>| | Ongoing | 2013 | Ongoing | 2014-15 | Ongoing | Every year | 2013-15 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What we will do</th>
<th>How we will do it</th>
<th>When we will do it</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **4. We will encourage involvement of under-represented groups such as young people, homeless people, people with disabilities and ethnic-minority groups.** | We will:  
• explore opportunities to develop a youth housing forum to involve tenants aged 16 to 25;  
• investigate working with other organisations to achieve this outcome (taking part in the planned West Dunbartonshire Equality Forum);  
• link into established groups to find out how they would like to get involved and what topics interest them; and  
• explore making small grants available to RTOs to help with projects in their area which involve younger people. | 2013-15  
2013  
2013  
2014-15 | Increase the involvement of groups of people who are under-represented when it comes to involving tenants. |
| **5. We will make sure tenants are aware of the options available to them to shape housing services going forward.** | We will:  
• reintroduce the yearly consultation calendar;  
• consult tenants on rents and setting budgets;  
• give tenants information and consultation opportunities as part of the way we manage our assets (how we will look after council properties and make sure they are well maintained and improved); and  
• give tenants and tenants’ and residents’ associations information and opportunities to get involved as part of the work linked to housing action areas. | 2013  
Every year  
Ongoing  
2014 | Tenants know in advance about different options which are open to them to influence housing service.  
Tenants can get involved in influencing housing both in their area and across West Dunbartonshire. |
| **6. We will work with you to develop arrangements to increase tenant-scrutiny activity and assess our performance in line with the new requirements under the Scottish Social Housing Charter and new regulatory framework.** | We will:  
• agree with tenants how often you want us to report to you and in what style;  
• discuss with tenants setting up a tenant scrutiny panel to discuss and scrutinise the charter performance results;  
• recruit tenants onto the tenant scrutiny panel;  
• introduce tenant-scrutiny activities which focus on areas identified by tenants;  
• support scrutiny activity by offering formal training for staff and tenants taking part;  
• agree with tenants how they want to be involved;  
• agree which indicators will feature in the report; | Before April 2014  
Before April 2014  
Before April 2014  
Before April 2014  
Before April 2014  
Before April 2014 | We will make sure that we keep to require-ments under the Scottish Social Housing Charter and as part of the new regulatory framework.  
We will develop an effective performance monitoring group who can challenge us and hold us to account. |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What we will do</th>
<th>How we will do it</th>
<th>When we will do it</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **6 continued...** | **We will:**  
• examine the best style to use to make sure the report is accessible and easy to understand  
• agree a timescale for producing the report: and  
• produce a mock report | **Outcomes**  
By October 2014  
By October 2014  
October 2013 | **We will provide opportunities for tenants to test and influence housing services performance.**  
**We will give you performance information in a format which is useful and easy to understand.** |
| **7.** | **We will:**  
• review the resources needed to deliver tenant involvement and tenant scrutiny requirements;  
• review the grant system and resources provided to RTOs, including the resources needed in community premises;  
• review the registration process;  
• hold an ‘away day’ each year for tenant representatives;  
• carry out an annual audit of tenants’ and residents’ associations; and  
• introduce action planning and support tenants’ and residents’ associations to use it. | **Outcomes**  
2014-15  
2014  
2013  
Every year  
Every year  
2013 | **We want to have enough resources to carry out activity linked to involving tenants and new tenant scrutiny requirements.**  
**We will show value for money.**  
**We will review tenant involvement and share good practice.** |
| **8.** | **We will:**  
• make this strategy accessible and user-friendly;  
• review and improve the content on our tenant participation web page;  
• review the tenant and sheltered-housing handbooks;  
• review the tenants’ communication strategy and make sure that it features in our training;  
• continue to produce regular editions of the Housing News magazine for all tenants  
• inform tenants about the housing capital investment programme and our progress in meeting SHQS:  
• give our tenants’ and residents’ associations information about other sources of funding; and  
• encourage tenants’ and residents’ associations to make the best use of information technology | **Outcomes**  
May 2013  
Ongoing  
2014  
2013  
Every three months  
Ongoing  
2014  
Ongoing | **We will provide improved information and communications for all tenants.**  
**We will provide information that tenants and tenants’ and residents’ associations want.** |
## Appendix 1

### Jargon buster

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Initials</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DVOLHF</td>
<td>Dumbarton and Vale of Leven Housing Federation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RT0</td>
<td>Registered tenants’ organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIS</td>
<td>Tenants Information Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TPAS</td>
<td>Tenant Participation Advisory Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WDTRO</td>
<td>West Dunbartonshire Tenants’ and Residents’ Organisation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Main organisation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organisation</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dumbarton and Vale of Leven</td>
<td>The organisation that represents and supports tenants’ and Housing Federation residents’ groups throughout Dumbarton and Vale of Leven.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federations</td>
<td>The collective name given to the federations across West Dunbartonshire (Dumbarton and Vale of Leven Housing Federation and West Dunbartonshire Tenants and Residents Organisation).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scottish Government</td>
<td>This is a collective term for the Scottish Government, that includes ministers and civil servants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scottish Housing Regulator</td>
<td>Regulates all social landlords and the landlord and homelessness services of local authorities and protects the interests of current and future tenants and other service users.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheltered-housing forum</td>
<td>Tenants from sheltered-housing complexes across West Dunbartonshire who have formed a group to represent the interests of tenants living in sheltered-housing accommodation which we own and manage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenants Information Service</td>
<td>A national organisation run by a board of tenant directors that provides information, advice and training to tenants across Scotland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenant Participation Advisory Service</td>
<td>The national tenant and landlord participation advisory service for Scotland which promotes good practice in getting tenants involved throughout Scotland. TPAS works with tenants’ organisations, housing associations and local authorities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We, us (West Dunbartonshire Council)</td>
<td>The government provider of housing in West Dunbartonshire. The umbrella organisation which acts to co-ordinate the activities of registered tenant organisations across West Dunbartonshire.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Word

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Action plan</td>
<td>A list of things a landlord or tenants’ organisation must do to meet its aims.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asset management</td>
<td>Looking after council properties to make sure they are well maintained and improved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital programme</td>
<td>The programme of planned improvements that a landlord carries out to keep its housing stock in good condition (such as replacing kitchens, bathrooms, windows and so on).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultation</td>
<td>Tenant consultation means having a chance to comment on proposals prepared by the landlord before a decision is taken.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix 1
### Jargon buster continued...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communications strategy</td>
<td>A document we have developed with tenant representatives that sets out how we will communicate and inform tenants, tenants’ and residents’ groups and the federations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate plan</td>
<td>A document that sets out our aims and how we plan to deliver our services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community engagement strategy</td>
<td>A document we produced outlining how we will involve the wider community in planning and delivering all council services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal opportunities</td>
<td>Not discriminating against a person on the basis of things like their age, race, disability, sexuality, religion or beliefs. All landlords and tenants’ organisations have to have a commitment to equal opportunities under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing policies</td>
<td>Documents that explain how landlords will deliver services such as allocations, repairs and so on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing (Scotland) Act 2001</td>
<td>A piece of housing law introduced by the Scottish Government in 2001.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing (Scotland) Act 2010</td>
<td>A piece of housing law introduced by the Scottish Government in 2010.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interested-tenants’ register</td>
<td>A list of tenants who want to be contacted about events and consultations but don’t want to be part of a group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local housing strategy</td>
<td>A document produced by all local authorities that assesses the housing need and the resources necessary to meet that need in their areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local plan</td>
<td>This plan identifies areas where new housing will be built.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring and evaluation framework</td>
<td>Measures that we will use with tenant representatives to check how tenant involvement is being delivered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mystery shopping</td>
<td>Tenants volunteer to act as ‘mystery shoppers’ to test the housing service and record their experience and impressions. This helps us to make sure that standards of customer service are maintained and improved where necessary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Strategy for Tenant Participation 1999</td>
<td>The first national strategy agreed by the Scottish Government, tenants and landlords about how tenant involvement should work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Standards for Community Engagement</td>
<td>Standards of good practice issued by Communities Scotland to provide a framework to help people influence the planning and delivery of services in their local area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement</td>
<td>This is when we, tenants, tenants’ and residents’ groups and the federations come together and work as equal partners in making improvements to housing services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership working</td>
<td>Landlords, tenants and other agencies working together to get things done.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality Circles Project</td>
<td>Tenants who volunteer to inspect the standard of service provided in the multi-storey flat accommodation and who make recommendations for improvements where necessary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered social landlord</td>
<td>A non-profit landlord that is registered and monitored by the Housing Regulator.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registered tenants’ organisation</td>
<td>A tenants’ and residents’ group that has registered with its landlord and can show that it is democratic and represents the views of tenants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Register of tenants’ organisation</td>
<td>A register a landlord has to keep up to date which lists the number of registered tenants’ organisations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources</td>
<td>Money or “in-kind” support that is made available to tenants and tenants’ and residents’ groups.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix 1

**Jargon buster continued...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scottish Housing Quality Standard</strong></td>
<td>The Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) is the main measure of housing quality that is used to see if properties reach the necessary minimum standards set by the Scottish Government. The SHQS was introduced in February 2004 and social landlords have until April 2015 to bring their houses up to the standard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scottish Social Housing Charter</strong></td>
<td>Created under the Housing (Scot) Act 2010, the charter sets out 16 standards and outcomes which all social landlords must achieve.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Service standards</strong></td>
<td>A set of measures that outlines acceptable standards of services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social landlords</strong></td>
<td>Organisations such as housing associations and local authorities who provide social rented housing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tenant-led inspection</strong></td>
<td>Tenants volunteer to get involved in reviewing and inspecting our services and make recommendations on how services can be improved. Tenants decide which services they want to inspect and the process should lead to better services and, as a result, better outcomes for tenants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tenants and residents’ groups</strong></td>
<td>Local groups that are set up to represent the views of tenants and residents and to influence services in the area. They are made up of local people who are democratically elected at the group’s annual general meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tenant participation assistant or officer</strong></td>
<td>Council officers with specific responsibility for supporting tenant involvement and delivering the tenant participation strategy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tenant participation working group</strong></td>
<td>A short-term working group made up of representatives from the Sheltered Housing Forum, Quality Circle Project, registered tenant organisations and housing staff.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tenant scrutiny and tenant activities</strong></td>
<td>Tenant scrutiny gives tenants an opportunity to get involved in housing services where they can influence and hold their landlord to account by focusing specifically on how housing services perform. Examples of scrutiny activity include the Quality Circle Project, tenant-led inspections and mystery shopping.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tenant scrutiny panel</strong></td>
<td>A formal group made up of tenants which serves as the hub for the range of tenant scrutiny activity and a focal point for assessing performance and cost and holding us to account.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix 2
### Members of the Tenant Participation Working Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Joanne Martin</td>
<td>Housing Strategy, Tenant Participation Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isa Scullion</td>
<td>West Dunbartonshire Tenants and Residents Organisation (WDTRO)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nancy Garvey</td>
<td>West Dunbartonshire Tenants and Residents Organisation (WDTRO)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gary Miller</td>
<td>Capital Programme, Capital Planning Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chris Kale</td>
<td>Quality Circle Tenant Inspector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cathy Wilson</td>
<td>Sheltered Housing Forum</td>
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<td>John Redpath</td>
<td>Sheltered Housing Forum</td>
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<td>John Henderson</td>
<td>Sheltered Housing Forum</td>
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<td>George Andrew</td>
<td>Sheltered Housing Forum</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tracey Crichton</td>
<td>Housing Officer, Estate Management</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lynette O’Brien</td>
<td>Housing Strategy, Administration Officer</td>
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## Appendix 3
### List of registered tenant organisations (RTOs) and tenants’ and residents’ associations and federations

**Registered tenant organisations**
- Central Alexandria Tenants’ and Residents’ Association
- Dalmonach Tenants’ and Residents’ Association
- Dalmuir Multi-Storey Flats Tenants’ and Residents’ Association
- Duntocher Tenants’ and Residents’ Association
- Littleholm Tenants’ and Residents’ Association
- North Bank Street Tenants’ and Residents’ Association
- North Drumry Tenants’ and Residents’ Association
- Mill of Haldane Tenants’ and Residents’ Association
- Risk Street Tenants’ and Residents’ Association
- Rosshead Tenants’ and Residents’ Association
- The Square Tenants’ and Residents Association
- Tontine Tenants’ and Residents’ Association
- Tullichewan Tenants’ and Residents’ Association
- Westbridgend Tenants’ and Residents’ Association

**Federations (RTOs)**
- Dumbarton and Vale of Leven Housing Federation (representing all groups in the Dumbarton, Alexandria and Vale of Leven areas)
- West Dunbartonshire Tenants and Residents Organisation (representing all groups across West Dunbartonshire)

You can get contact details of all tenants’ and residents’ associations from the Tenant Participation Team by calling 01389 737743.
Appendix 4
Our complaints procedure

We are committed to providing high-quality customer services. We value complaints and use information from them to help us improve our services. If something goes wrong or you are not happy with our services, please tell us. This document describes our complaints procedure and how to make a complaint. It also tells you about our complaints service standards and what you can expect from us.

What is a complaint?

We treat a complaint as any expression of unhappiness about our action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by us or on our behalf.

What can I complain about?

You can complain about things like:

- delays in responding to your enquiries and requests;
- failure to provide a service;
- our standard of service;
- council policy;
- treatment by or attitude of a member of staff; and
- our failure to follow proper procedure.

Your complaint may involve more than one council service or be about someone working on our behalf.

What can’t I complain about?

There are some things we can’t deal with through our complaints handling procedure. These include:

- a routine first-time request for a service, for example a first-time request for a housing repair or action on antisocial behaviour;
- requests for us to pay compensation; and
- things that are covered by a right of appeal. Here are some examples.

If you are not satisfied with the level of priority you have been given when applying for a house, you have the right to appeal against the decision.

If we have refused your planning application, you have a right of appeal to Scottish Ministers within six months of the decision.

If you believe your house is incorrectly valued for council tax, you can appeal to the assessor.

If other procedures or rights of appeal can help you deal with your concerns, we will give information and advice to help you.
Appendix 4
Our complaints procedure continued...

Who can complain?

Anyone can make a complaint to us, including a representative if you want to use one. We will confirm the details of the representative and check you are happy for us to discuss information with your representative. Please also read the section ‘Getting help to make your complaint’.

How do I complain?

You can complain using our online complaints form, by email, by phone, in person at any of our offices or in writing to Customer Relations at Rosebery Place, Clydebank, G81 1TG. It is usually easier for us to sort out complaints if you make them quickly and directly to the service concerned. So please speak with a member of staff within the service you are complaining about. Then they can try to sort out any problems on the spot. When you make your complaint, tell us:

- your full name and address;
- as much as you can about the complaint;
- what has gone wrong; and
- how you want us to deal with the matter.

How long do I have to make a complaint?

Normally, you must make your complaint within six months of:

- the event you want to complain about; or
- finding out that you have a reason to complain, but no longer than 12 months after the event itself.

In exceptional circumstances, we may be able to accept a complaint after the time limit.
If you feel that the time limit should not apply to your complaint, please tell us why.

Online Complaints form: www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk
By email: customer.relations@west-dunbarton.gov.uk
By phone: 01389 738273
In writing to: Customer Relations, Rosebery Place, Clydebank, G81 1TG

What happens when I have complained?

We will always tell you who is dealing with your complaint. Our complaints procedure has two stages.

Stage one
Sorting out on the frontline
We aim to sort out complaints quickly and close to where we provided the service. This could mean an on-the-spot apology and explanation if something has clearly gone wrong, and immediate action to deal with the problem. We will give you our decision at stage 1 within five working days, unless there are exceptional circumstances. If we can’t sort out your complaint at this stage, we will explain why and tell you what you can do next. We might suggest that you take your complaint to stage 2. You may choose to do this immediately or some time after you get our initial decision.
Appendix 4
Our complaints procedure continued...

Stage two
Investigation
Stage 2 deals with two types of complaint. These are those that have not been sorted out at stage 1 and those that are complicated and need detailed investigation.

When using stage 2 we will:

- acknowledge that we have received your complaint within three working days;
- discuss your complaint with you to understand why you are still not happy and what outcome you are looking for; and
- give you a full response to the complaint as soon as possible and within 20 working days.

If our investigation will take longer than 20 working days, we will tell you. We will agree new time limits with you and keep you updated on progress.

What if I’m still not satisfied?

After we have fully investigated, if you are still not satisfied with our decision or the way we dealt with your complaint, you can ask the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) to look at it.

The SPSO cannot normally look at:

- a complaint that has not gone through our complaints procedure (so please make sure it has done before you contact the SPSO);
- events that happened, or that you became aware of, more than a year ago; or
- a matter that has been or is being considered in court.

You can contact the SPSO in the following ways.

In person at: SPSO, 4 Melville Street, Edinburgh, EH3 7NS
By post: SPSO, Freepost EH641, Edinburgh, EH3 0BR
Freephone: 0800 377 7330
Online: www.spso.org.uk/contact-us
Website: www.spso.org.uk
Using your mobile: http://m.spso.org.uk
Complaints about social work

The procedure for complaints relating to social work is slightly different from our general complaints procedure as it currently follows specific laws and guidance. This legislation and guidance is being reviewed by the Scottish Government.

The Community Health and Care Partnership (CHCP) deliver health and social-care services together, but must keep to two separate statutory complaints policies, procedures and governance arrangements.

These two procedures are under one process for managing complaints. Please follow this link to see this process. http://www.wdchcp.org.uk/publications-policies/

Complaints about care

If your complaint relates to a care service we provide, you can choose whether to complain to us or the Care Inspectorate. You can find out more about their complaints procedure, or make a complaint, by contacting them. The Care Inspectorate has several offices around Scotland. Please see:

http://www.scswis.com/ (Online complaints form). Or, you can contact them in the following ways.

By phone: 0845 600 9527
By fax: 01382 207 289
By email: enquiries@careinspectorate.com

Getting help to make your complaint

We understand that you may be unable, or reluctant, to make a complaint yourself. We accept complaints from a representative. We can take complaints from a friend, relative or advocate, if you have given them your permission to complain for you. You can find out about advocates in your area by contacting the Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance.

Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance
Phone: 0131 260 5380
Fax: 0131 260 5381
Website: www.siaa.org.uk

Customer relations

We are committed to making our service easy to use for all members of the community. In line with our duties towards equal opportunities given by law, we will always make sure that we make reasonable adjustments to help customers access and use our services.

If you prefer to make your complaint in writing and need help to do this, please contact us for more information. Our contact details are below, please choose the option that suits you best.

Online complaints form: www.west-dunbarton.gov.uk
By email: customer.relations@west-dunbarton.gov.uk
By phone: 01389 738273
Write to: Customer Relations, Rosebery Place, Clydebank, G81 1TG
Appendix 5
Who’s who in Housing and Community Safety Services

We are made up of four main directorates or departments.
They are:

- Corporate Services
- Educational Services
- Community Health & Care Partnership (CHCP)
- Housing, Environmental and Economic Development (HEED)

The Housing Environment and Economic Development (HEED) Committee sets the policies and strategies for all services provided by Housing and Community Safety Services.

Responsibility for delivering the housing service lies with the Head of Housing and Community Safety. The housing service is delivered by four managers each with responsibility for different parts of the Housing Service.
Other formats
This document can be provided in large print, Braille or on audio cassette and can be translated into different community languages. Please contact:

Corporate Communications
Council Offices
Garshake Road
Dumbarton G82 3PU
Tel: 01389 737000