



ANNUAL TENANT PARTICIPATION PERFORMANCE REPORT 2024/25

Introduction

In November 2024 our new '**Involving You to Improve Housing Services**' Tenant Participation Strategy for 2025–28 was agreed. It followed consultation with tenants and staff and sets out how we support and promote tenant involvement in West Dunbartonshire. The name of the strategy was changed to help emphasise the purpose of tenant participation and a new logo designed to continue that focus.

This report is to outline progress made in the last year and to highlight the input tenants have had in decisions made and to service improvements. Many of our tenant groups are keen to attract new members and one of the best ways to encourage participation is to show what can be achieved and for people to see that they can make a difference. This report hopefully helps evidence that.



New team member

Jennifer McKechnie joined Tenant Participation in May 2024. She has a wealth of housing and support experience and quickly settled into her new role. She has been actively supporting tenant groups, supporting tenants at walkabouts with housing staff, promoting the Tenant Priority Budget, keeping our TP Facebook page updated and looking at new ways to encourage people to get involved.

Key highlights

1. Continued good response from tenants in rent setting consultation.

Participation in the rent setting consultation was good however we were not able to fulfill our commitment to include tenants early in the rent setting process or be able to discuss possible rent options.



Borrowing costs had been underestimated for 2024/25 which had put additional financial pressure on housing finances and delayed estimated budgets for 2025/26 being finalised. A significant rent increase was required for the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) to balance and 8% and 9% increases were the lowest options that could be offered.

The consultation was launched at a public meeting on 22 November 2024 and information on the options was sent out with the winter edition of the Housing News to all tenants. Voting was made as easy as possible and could be done using a free-post voting card, online, by phone, and by text or email.

A total of 1669 tenants voted for their preferred option which equates to a response rate of 16.6%. This is slightly down from last year when the response rate was 17.3% but considering the level of increase being considered, this was still a significant response.

The survey results were,

Option 1 (8% increase) got 1342 votes = 80.4%

Option 2 (9% increase) got 327 votes = 19.6%

The survey results were considered at the Council meeting on 5 March 2025 and the 8% rent increase was agreed.

2. Annual tenant event

We hosted a tenant event on Saturday 1 June at Clydebank Town Hall and 14 tenants attended. Numbers were down from previous years which reflects the decline in tenant group members but we were also competing with a particularly sunny Saturday.



- we highlighted the range of activities active TRAs carry out to help encourage and inspire other groups. This included the extent of activities that Tullichewan TRA facilitate and the clothing bank set up by Westbridgend TRA.
- we discussed priorities for the Tenant Participation Strategy to ensure that as it was being developed it covered what tenants wanted
- and staff from AICO presented information on reducing condensation and the risk of dampness and mould developing condensation and the role they were playing to install environmental sensors in WDC properties that highlight early warning signs.

WDTRO – tenant champions



Elaine Neeson – Best Community Initiative

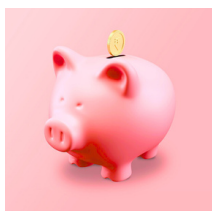


The vital role tenants play was celebrated with a presentation for Best Community Initiative to Elaine Neeson for the Westbridgend clothing bank project. The work of the WDTRO was also highlighted, as they work tirelessly on behalf of all tenants including holding regular Liaison meetings with Housing. Specifically highlighted was their perseverance in helping to get changes made to the Council's Financial Strategy which resulted in the surplus made by Building Services in 2024/25 being retained in the HRA. To recognise their commitment, members of the WDTRO were presented with a Tenant Champion certificate and medal.

3. Tenant involvement in shaping and improving Housing Services

Our Joint Rent Group (JRG) has continued to meet every month. The group includes tenant volunteers, housing and finance staff, as well as the Housing Convener. The group's aim is to improve transparency about the HRA budget setting and assess where tenants could be more involved in these key financial decisions. They also continue to monitor void performance focusing on the void budget and rent loss. They also monitor the Capital Programme which is another large spending area.

The WDTRO helped deliver significant savings to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) through their work on the Joint Rent Group and their lobbying of Councillors, the Council's Financial Strategy was amended to allow the surplus generated by Building Services to be retained in the HRA. This was agreed in Oct 2023 and was meant to be on a phased basis but became an issue again in December 2024 when the HRA was under considerable extra pressure due to increased borrowing costs.



HRA

The HRA was forecast to have a deficit and need a loan from the General Fund and use all HRA reserves to balance but at the same time still had to give over a surplus generated from housing activities to the General Fund (£580,000 in 24/25 and £290,000 in 25/26). The WDTRO argued this was not fair or value for money for tenants and that the surplus should remain in the HRA to reduce the deficit and the financial strain on the HRA. A Council Motion was put forward to support their suggestion and £594,000 was retained in the HRA which benefits every WDC tenant.

The success of the WDTRO in relation to the HRA and their influence in getting this change agreed was recognised nationally when they were **shortlisted for Tenant Group of the Year Award run by TIS** – a great achievement and recognition of the sterling work they do on behalf of tenants.



The Pre-HACC Forum is another opportunity that tenants have to influence decisions made by the Housing and Community Committee. The Forum takes place two days before the Housing and Communities Committee meets and tenants can meet the Housing Convener and staff who have written the papers that are going to committee. The Housing Convener then feeds tenants' views into the committee discussions. Paper copies of the committee reports, which can be lengthy and difficult to read on small devices, are delivered to attendees to assist discussions and there has been regular tenant attendance throughout the year.

WDC/WDTRO Liaison meetings take place every 2 months and continues to be an opportunity for Housing services to work together with tenant representatives. The WDTRO and staff can add to the agenda and the WDTRO chairperson and Housing Convener take turns chairing the meetings. Housing performance is discussed as well as progress on any new service developments and new build progress. Minutes are then shared with all TRAs and posted on the TP webpages.

Holding the Council to account is an important function of tenant participation and it ensures that we can improve services for all tenants. Through the Liaison meetings, the WDTRO have raised issues in the last year which has resulted in improvements that all tenants can benefit from, these included;

- Lack of communication when repair jobs were cancelled was raised and Building Services created a new process to send texts when an Emergency repair was cancelled. A process for non-emergency repairs is also now being tested and will then be rolled out.
- When new windows were being fitted it was identified that sometimes tenants were not being left enough keys for all windows. This was raised with Building Services who confirmed that keys for every window should be supplied and they reiterated this to their window contractor.
- Repairs call-handling performance had improved considerably but updates are still provided quarterly to ensure this is maintained as it is essential that tenants can get through to Repairs quickly and easily.
- Repairs performance is monitored and issues arising discussed.
- Following an inconsistent approach to walkabouts being highlighted, the process was tightened up to ensure that all staff were clear on the process and the objective that agreed actions are completed promptly or updates provided. Walkabouts are still monitored at each Liaison meeting and have helped ensure action sheets are created and tenants attending walkabouts are given updates. There are still some inconsistencies so this will continue to be a focus for the Liaison meetings until they are all as effective as possible.
- Progress updates on the Council's response to dampness issues and the new environmental sensors being fitted in homes have been provided. Tenants have raised concern about the number of dampness repairs that end up being cancelled and this is now being monitored. Through the new Repairs Policy, communication about appointments should be improved and it is expected that repairs cancelled due to no access should be reduced. If this doesn't happen with dampness repairs, Building Services have committed to relook at the process as once dampness is identified, it needs to be treated effectively.
- CCTV is being upgraded through HRA investment and progress updates were provided to the Liaison meetings as it is a key investment and improvement particularly for tenants in multistorey blocks.
- New fire safety information had been put online for tenants and after discussion at a Liaison meeting it was also sent out by text and email to tenants to help ensure tenants noticed this important piece of information.

4. Scrutiny Panel progress



The Scrutiny Panel carried out a scrutiny exercise looking at the repairs process from a tenant’s point of view. They looked at the process and communication from when a tenant reports a repair through to it being completed. They looked at the process information from Building Services and reality checked that against a survey of tenants who had had a repair completed as well as them shadowing staff.

They presented their report to the Housing Improvement Board on 25 November 2024 and made 12 recommendations for improving how tenants can report repairs, arranging appointments and getting repairs done. All their recommendations were accepted and Building Services are now working through implementing them.

5.Tenant Priority Budget

This is an annual budget of £200,000 for tenant priorities. There are set criteria on how this Budget can be used and it is tenants who decide what proposals are value for money and should go ahead, which is done through public meetings and on zoom.

We have been working with colleagues to speed up the process so that tenants can see results quicker and this included several older proposals that needed extensive surveys and Building Warrants.

Updates on all the Tenant Priority Budgets proposals are now given at each WDC/WDTRO Liaison meetings so that progress can be monitored and they are given the attention they need.

£10,471.92 was spent in 2024/25 on the following projects,

Kilbowie Court & Park Court laundries- engineering surveys plus Building warrants	£5292
Manse sheltered housing community garden	£3653.27
Inler community garden	£1146.65
Mill Road community garden	£380
Total	£10471.92

This is an under-utilised budget and speeding up the process remains a priority as it’s a great opportunity for tenants to see improvements being carried out in their area and can be particularly useful for tenant priorities identified on walkabouts that can't be covered by other budgets.



6. Community activities

Alternatives (a community based drug recovery project) continue to make use of the meeting space in Overtoun Court, Dalmuir TRA 's community flat and still have plans to re-open the community café in some capacity. Westbridgend now host a successful clothing bank and a weekly coffee morning at 1 Lomond Court as well as their regular TRA meetings. Tullichwan TRA started a craft group for kids which has been popular and an adult group is now also being tried. They also team up with Time for Tully to put on community events. CATRA continue to do amazing clean ups in Alexandria as well as community gardening, hosting cooking and woodcraft groups in their community flat. Risk Street TRA open their community flat each week and use it for their meetings.

It is great to see the TRA community flats being used so widely and making them a vital centre for communities.

7. Communication

Communication is really important for effective participation and is a vital way to help build trust and encourage involvement. We have continued to produce TP updates for tenant representatives, elected members and staff to maximise awareness of tenant participation activities – Tenant Participation Updates | West Dunbartonshire Council



The Housing News is produced quarterly and delivered to all tenants, as well as future tenants living in temporary accommodation. It is also available on the Council's website and the link is sent to Housing staff and Councillors.

We use the Housing News to promote TRA activities and include as much community news as possible. The chairperson of the WDTRG also has a regular column and uses it to highlight tenant issues and encourage tenant involvement.

Online and Facebook

We continually review the content of our TP webpages Tenant participation | West Dunbartonshire Council and update it with meeting notes from the Joint Rent Group, WDC/WDTRG Liaison meetings and Pre HACC Forum so that tenants can get access to this information at a time that suits them.



@WestDunbartonshireCouncilTenantParticipation – we now have 415 followers on Facebook (up from 312 last year) and post at least 2/3 times a week with community information and updates on ways to get involved locally. Our FB page continues to attract new followers and is a valuable mechanism for sharing information and encouraging engagement.

The Council has restrictions on the use of social media so Facebook is our only available option but we are looking to use a digital platform called Mighty networks to create another digital option to participate through.

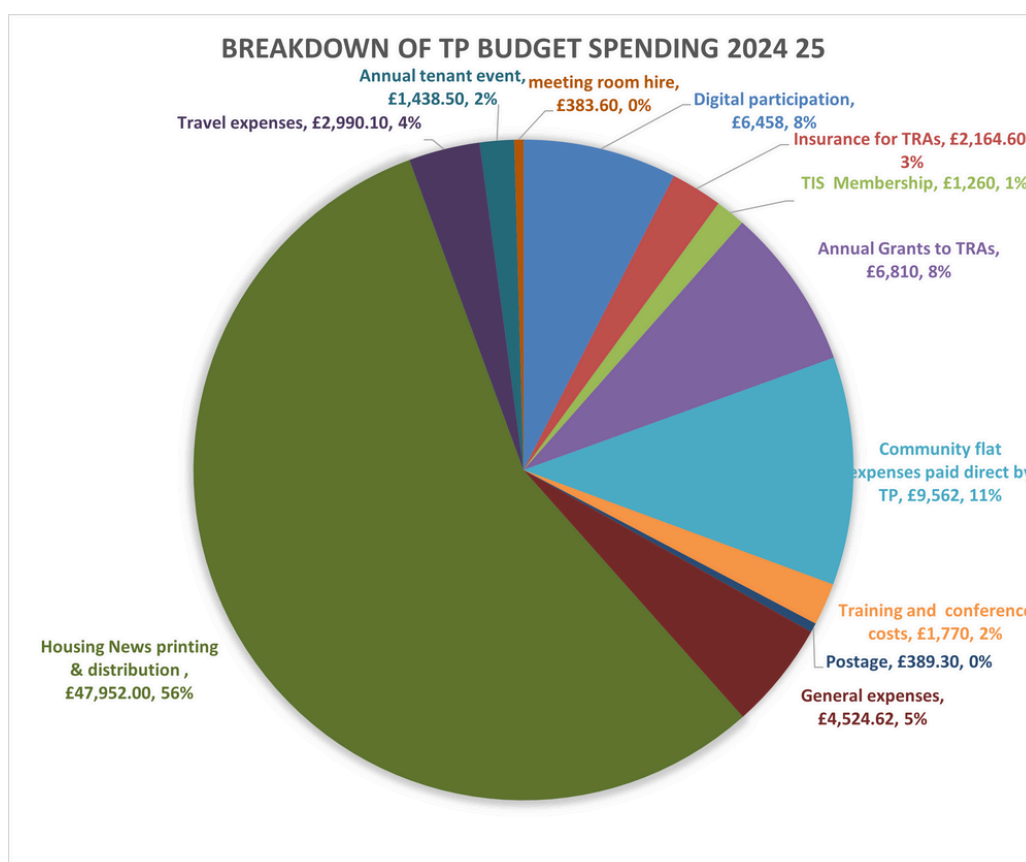
8. Tenant Participation Budget- £ 85,702 spent in 2024/25

We have a TP budget of £ 101,403 and spent £85,702 in 2024/25. Our Budget enables us to financially support 12 TRAs, the WDTRO, Sheltered Housing Forum, Pre-HACC Forum and Scrutiny Panel so they can function effectively and as independently as possible.

Public liability insurance is also paid for each active TRA.

The cost of producing the Housing News also comes from our Tenant Participation Budget and this takes up most of our communication costs £47,952. This also includes the costs for communication around the rent setting consultation and the performance inserts that go with the Housing News. Our Budget also helps fund digital developments to the self-serve tenant portal which helps tenants report repairs, check their rent account as well as provide zoom option for meetings to assist attendance.

A breakdown of our spending is here



9. Training

It's essential that housing staff have a good knowledge of what tenant participation is so that they can encourage tenants to get involved and we have an online training course called 'What is tenant participation?' for all new housing staff and also as a reminder for existing staff which is now encouraged through their team updates.

We funded 2 tenants to attend the TIS conference in Glasgow which covered a range of subjects and is really useful for meeting like-minded people.

Training and support is available to all tenants and tenants groups as well as opportunities to learn from each other.

10. Volunteering hours – measuring the time given is also a recognition of the energy, effort and skills that comes with it.

The commitment of tenants and tenant groups continues to be resilient. We really value and appreciate the time that tenants give coming to meetings and started to count volunteering hours a few years ago so that we could measure it. Measuring the time given is also a recognition of the energy, effort and skills that comes with it.

There was a reduction in overall volunteering hours, down slightly from 252.5 to 242 hours. This was mainly due to there only being the rent consultation during the year and that only involved 1 public meeting. If you take consultations out the equation as they will vary each year, the overall volunteering hours was up and particularly the Pre-HACC and Joint Rent Group numbers increased.

The figures we collect are only for the meetings that are with Housing Services which we can quantify, over and above this, there is also all the hours people give attending local tenant group meetings and walkabouts– all truly commendable and really adds up.

11. The year ahead



Our new TP Strategy sets out key actions for us over the next 3 years so we will work through that and give regular updates to the Liaison meetings and annually to the housing committee so that we are accountable. The key emphasis is on how tenant participation can help improve housing services.

We have a staff working group to help implement the TP Strategy as not all the actions are for TP staff to deliver. The involvement of other housing teams will help further embed TP across the whole of housing services and ensure that any tenant's involvement with Housing Services is a positive experience for people.

Recruiting new members for groups continues to be a key priority and we are supporting TRAs to be as active as possible in their local areas to help attract new members. Local walkabouts are a good way to get improvements in an area and get new people involved so we will continue to support tenants taking part. They also help build trusting relationships with local staff which is really important. The walkabout process will continue to be monitored at the bi-monthly Liaison meetings to help ensure they get carried out consistently well and are effective.



Thank you to all our tenant volunteers and to housing staff who help make tenant participation work.

Please give us your feedback.

We want to continue to improve how we provide feedback so please let us know if you have any comments on this report or on tenant participation in general– thank you.



TP webpage link



jane.mack@west-dunbarton.gov.uk



0798 354 2993