

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET

2 October 2014

Report by Director of Environment

HOUSING SERVICES CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

**PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. To seek cabinet approval for a proposed Customer Engagement Strategy for Housing Services.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

2. It is recommended that the Cabinet approve the proposed Customer Engagement Strategy for Housing Services.

**BACKGROUND**

3. Housing Services has a history of working with its customers to seek their views in order to permit us to improve our service delivery. It is essential that the services we provide are the services that our customers want to receive. We want to deliver the right services in the right manner and at the right time. To be a successful business we need to listen to our customers and provide a service that suits their needs and expectations. Only by listening to our customers can we achieve our vision of being *the best Scottish Council in delivering Housing and Housing Services for our customers*.

4. Our method of engaging with customers has historically been largely through Tenant and Resident Associations supplemented by the use of questionnaires. This methodology was substantially influenced by the requirements laid out in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.

5. However, whilst these legislative duties still remain there are three key reasons why it is necessary to change this approach.

6. Firstly, the current methods of engagement largely via Tenant and Resident Associations can be restrictive and don't recognise the way some people wish to engage. For example:

- some people may not be able or may not want to attend meetings.
- some people may prefer to give feedback anonymously
- some people may want to talk to us face to face whereas other people may prefer to use interviews or meetings to put their views across
- some people may not feel confident enough to speak out at meetings and would prefer to meet one to one or use questionnaires

7. As a result of these pressures, a number of Tenant and Resident Associations have struggled to achieve adequate attendance at their meetings with the result that it is harder for such groups to adequately represent the communities in which they are located

8. Secondly, we are particularly aware that certain groups of people tend to be less well represented. This may be due to the way we seek feedback or that they are simply happy with the service they receive.

9. These groups include:

- younger people
- those living in temporary accommodation
- minority ethnic groups
- carers and carer support groups
- the elderly
- those who wish to use our services in the future such as waiting list applicants, school pupils etc

10. Thirdly, the current method can overly focus upon tenants and does not adequately involve other customers such as waiting list applicants, factored owners or homeless people.

## REPORT

11. The proposed customer engagement strategy aims to address these weaknesses in the current structure. Rather than Tenant and Resident Associations being the overwhelmingly dominant method it will be one of a range of methods that will be deployed

12. A copy of the proposed strategy is attached (Appendix).

13. To summarise the proposed new approach the Council will have a multi-dimensional approach involving:

- East Renfrewshire Tenants Assembly. Housing Services will create an East Renfrewshire Tenants Assembly that will meet two or three times per year to discuss a range of housing issues relating to the day to day management and performance of Housing Services.
- Customer Satisfaction Surveys. Housing Services will use a range of customer satisfaction surveys about specific areas of the service.
- Tenant Satisfaction Survey. Housing Services will carry out a tenant satisfaction survey every two years to ask our tenants for their views on the services they receive.
- Focus Groups. Housing Services will use focus groups to investigate and inspect specific areas of the service we provide and to give us face to face feedback on a specific service they have received.
- Complaints. Complaints are an essential means of receiving feedback. Housing Services has a robust complaints process which places the customer at the centre of how we resolve any issues. Housing Services log all comments, complaints or compliments and they form part of our monthly service monitoring and link to the “you said – we did” element of service improvement.

- Tenant and Resident Associations. As part of the consultation programme we will routinely consult our Tenant and Resident Associations on all issues that affect our tenants and local communities. In order to ensure Tenant and Resident Associations can actively participate we will organise information, training or briefing events for all Tenant and Resident Associations members on specific topics being consulted on or discussed. Tenant and Resident Associations will continue to be supported by Housing Services
- Registered Tenant Organisation Forum. This will meet twice a year and consist of one representative from each geographically based Registered Tenant Organisation, Councillors and Staff. The forum will give our Registered Tenant Organisations the opportunity to engage with Housing Services around local issues, discuss local and national policy and undertake specific areas of performance monitoring.
- Have your say – Neighbourhood Inspections. These will see Council officials walk around a geographical area with local people to inspect the local environment (litter, roads, fly tipping, repair issues) and the general upkeep of neighbourhoods. They will allow face to face discussion about local issues and seek to identify solutions.

## **FINANCE AND EFFICIENCY**

14. It is likely that there will a small increase in cost in delivering this customer engagement strategy. However, given that the strategy is designed to increase the capacity and range of engagement methods such an increase is to be expected. The increase can be met within existing resources.

## **CONSULTATION**

15. Housing Services has undertaken an extensive process of consultation. Each tenant has received a summary of the proposals through the tenant's newsletter. Comments have been encouraged both verbally, in writing and on line. Focus groups have been convened and all four Registered Tenant Organisations have been provided with opportunities to feedback as have 5 non registered tenant organisations.

16. The response from the Registered Tenant Organisations has been varied ranging from opposition to partial support for the proposals. It should be noted that a number of non-registered Tenant Organisations did not formally respond.

17. Comments received from the focus groups, and individual tenants have been supportive of the proposals.

18. As such the Council can be confident that the proposed approach has the support of the majority of the customer base.

## **PARTNERSHIP WORKING**

19. Consultation with community planning partners has not been necessary in the development of this report.

## **IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSALS**

20. There are no implications associated with this report in terms of staffing, finance, property, legal, IT, equalities and sustainability.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

21. The aim of the new customer engagement strategy is to ensure that Housing Services is able to consult with more customers in a manner that meets the needs and wishes of our customers. Only by listening to our customers will we deliver the services that our customers want. A robust and practical customer engagement strategy is essential in order to achieve this.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

22. It is recommended that the Cabinet approve the proposed Customer Engagement Strategy for Housing Services.

Director of Environment

Further details can be obtained from Phil Daws Housing Services Manager on 0141 577 3186.

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October 2014

## **KEY WORDS**

A Cabinet Report to propose a new Customer Engagement Strategy. Tenant, customer, engagement, participation, Housing.

# HOUSING SERVICES

## Customer Engagement Strategy

October 2014



## Introduction – Councillor Danny Devlin, Convener of Housing and Maintenance Services

Housing Services has a history of working with our customers to seek their views in order to permit us to improve our service delivery

Our view is that we exist to provide services for our customers. It is essential that the services we provide are the services that our customers want to receive. We want to deliver the right services in the right manner and at the right time

To be a successful business we need to listen to our customers and provide a service that suits their needs and expectations.

Only by listening to our customers can we achieve our vision of being ***the best Scottish Council in delivering Housing and Housing Services for our customers.***

Some of the things that we want to achieve are also legal requirements. For example the Housing (Scotland) Acts 2001 and 2010 place obligations on Housing Services to put in place a strategy that outlines our commitment to customer engagement. An overview of current legislation is available in Appendix 1

Within this strategy document we will identify some of the key areas we wish to consult on and the methods we will use to gain the views of our customers.

Having a Customer Engagement Strategy helps us to:

- improve the range of services we provide
- improve the standard of the service across all aspects of our work
- identify problems and work together to develop solutions
- be more accountable to our customers
- give people more control over their homes and the services they receive
- promote a greater sense of community
- empower people to get their voices heard and build their confidence and skills
- understand better our customers' needs and expectations
- strengthen our relationship with local Tenants & Residents Associations



**Housing Convener, Cllr Danny Devlin (Right) and Councillor Jim Fletcher, Leader of the Council, with the Tenant Participation Advisory Service Good Practice Award 2013**

The aims of the strategy are to:

- increase the number of customers providing feedback on our services or influencing our service provision
- create new ways to get involved in the feedback process that suit our customers
- ensure that this customer involvement leads to real and measurable improvements in our services and customer satisfaction
- develop a strong tenant and customer base which enhances the role of Tenants & Residents Associations

Seeking our customers input is a responsibility that applies to every part of the work we do and every member of staff has an important role to play in developing customer engagement in their job and ensuring customer satisfaction.

## **Understanding our Customers**

We want to be a customer-focused organisation and will use a range of methods to better understand the views and experiences of customers which will help us to make improvements to the service you receive.

Housing Services has a range of customers that we provide, or could be expected to provide, services to:

- East Renfrewshire Council Tenants
- owner occupiers to whom we provide communal repairs and factoring services
- private landlords
- waiting list applicants (future tenants)
- young people participating in our schools education programmes
- tenants of other landlords seeking advice or assistance
- homeless applicants and those seeking housing options advice and support.
- people in temporary accommodation or those receiving housing support

We recognise that not all of our customers want, or necessarily need, to become involved in telling us how we perform or what we could do differently. However some people that do want to get involved may feel that there are barriers to them participating for example:

- some people may not be able or may not want to attend meetings
- some people may dislike questionnaires or completing forms

- some people may prefer to give feedback anonymously
- some people may want to be consulted more frequently whilst others may not want to be consulted at all
- some people may want to talk to us face to face whereas other people may prefer to use interviews or meetings to put their views across
- some people may not feel confident enough to speak out at meetings and would prefer to meet 1 -1 or use questionnaires

We are particularly aware that certain groups of people tend to be less well represented, this may be due to the way we seek feedback or that they are simply happy with the service they receive.

These groups include:

- younger people
- those living in temporary accommodation
- minority ethnic groups
- carers and carer support groups
- the elderly
- those who wish to use our services in the future such as waiting list applicants, school pupils etc
- those with disabilities or who require additional support

What we need to do is to ensure that we can listen to everyone and ensure that the feedback we receive is representative of all our customers and not just a few.

**Appendix 3 shows a profile of our tenant customers**

**How we will engage with our customers.**

As outlined previously it is our aim that everyone who wishes to share their views of our services will have the opportunity to do so in a way that suits them.

Also different issues will require different methods. For example some areas of service provision people may just want to answer “yes” or “no”. On other occasions people may want more scope to be able to tell us why they have answered “yes” or “no”. This broadly falls into two areas of customer engagement:

**The involvement of our customers in some of the decisions we need to make.**

This might include what our allocation policy should be or what our rent levels should be. Alternatively it could be about us asking you about what we could, or should, do differently.



**Involvement in the scrutiny and monitoring of services.** Scrutiny means where our customers can investigate and inspect areas of the service and tell us what they think. This might be through us contacting you to seek your views after we have provided you with a service or through your involvement in a specific review of the service.

## **Methods of Engagement**

There is no single way of us asking the views of our customers that is the correct or best way. We will use a range of methods and seek the views of a range of people.

Wherever possible we will ensure there are no barriers to attending or getting involved, this may mean we provide:

- creche facilities
- transport to and from meetings
- interpreting services where requested or large print publications which meet accessible information guidelines
- out of pocket expenses
- organise meetings at a time, location and accessible venue suitable to those wishing to attend
- ensuring anyone who cannot attend still has the opportunity to contribute by using a range of survey methods.
- providing training, information and additional support resources where required to ensure all those participating have the skills and knowledge to give us their views and opinions which will in turn influence future service provision.

Outlined below are a range of methods which are designed to permit all of our customers to be able to give us feedback and influence our services in a manner that suits them.

### **A East Renfrewshire Tenants Assembly**

The Tenants assembly will meet two to three times per year to discuss a range of housing issues relating to the day to day management and performance of Housing Services. This might include:

- suggested improvements to the service such as repairs, allocations or estate management

- new projects which enhance the service such as factoring services or mixed tenure work
- how we have performed as a service

The Assembly will consist of the Convener and Shadow Convener of Housing and Maintenance Services, ERC Housing Services Staff, staff from other Council services as required and 30 ERC tenants willing to participate and chosen at random from a larger pool.

By inviting tenants at random to attend the Assembly we can ensure a diverse and representative group are involved who can shape and influence the services you receive. Those attending will receive support and training where required.

The Assembly will be responsible for overseeing consultation, performance monitoring and review, policy consultation and budget and asset management analysis.

There are times we may want to seek the view of the same tenants over a period of time in order to see if we have improved on a certain service area. The tenant's assembly will be useful in providing Housing Services with quick feedback on a range of issues.

In establishing the Assembly we will ensure it is representative of our tenants across the Council area and reflects the views of those living in all areas of the Council.

We will ensure there are no barriers to those who wish to participate doing so.

## **B Customer Satisfaction Surveys**

Housing Services will continue to carry out a range of surveys about specific areas of the service and the feedback we receive is important as it improves the service delivery.

We intend to use the tenant's newsletter more in the future to seek the views of our tenants on specific issues and we will develop methods of seeking feedback from our wider customer base.

We will not rely just on postal surveys as traditionally the response is low, we will consider using:

- text surveys
- telephone surveys
- on line survey forms
- face to face surveys at the point of receiving the service

**Appendix 4 gives an overview of current surveys and customer feedback.**

## **C Tenant Satisfaction Survey**

Housing Services carries out a tenant satisfaction survey every two years to ask our tenants for their views on the services they receive. This has tended to be a postal survey however this method is currently under review to ensure we do not present any barriers to those who might wish to participate in the survey and to get as wide a range of feedback as possible across all service user groups.

Survey results are reported through the Tenants Newsletter, the Annual Report to Tenants and will be available on the ERC website.

The value of using this type of survey is that we can target specific groups of customers to gain their views on the service they receive.

In order to ensure we receive a range of responses across all of our customer groupings we will:

- offer incentives for the completion of survey forms
- use a range of methods such as on line, text, telephone and paper surveys to gain maximum feedback

## **D Focus Groups**

Focus Groups give our customers the opportunity to investigate and inspect specific areas of the service we provide and to give us face to face feedback on a specific service they have received. The subject matters of these groups may be guided by complaints or feedback from customer satisfaction surveys and are used to ensure our services meet the expectations of our customers. For example if we receive a lot of complaints from tenants following their homes being re-wired we may hold a focus group in order for us to learn how we can do things better in the future

On other occasions we may use a focus group to give us a better example of why people have certain views on particular topics

## **E Comments, Compliments or Complaints**

For any organisation complaints are an essential means of receiving feedback. Housing Services has a robust complaints process which places the customer at the centre of how we resolve any issues. Housing Services log all comments, complaints or compliments and they form part of our monthly service monitoring and link to the “you said – we did” element of service improvement.

We will use a range of methods to give our customers and interested parties feedback on this including:

- the tenants newsletter
- the ERC website

- the annual report to tenants
- twitter and facebook

## **F Tenant and Resident Associations (TRAs)**

A tenant and residents association is a group of tenants and residents who live in the same geographical area and who meet to collectively discuss specific issue. These groups are run by the tenants and residents themselves and are not controlled by the council. At present there are 7 associations and an umbrella organisation known as the East Renfrewshire Tenants and Residents Federation spread across ERC.

Because they are independent these are a valuable means of providing feedback to the Housing Service.

As part of the consultation programme we will routinely consult our TRAs on all issues that affect our tenants and local communities, this will include.

- any changes to policies or the way we do things within Housing Services
- national legislation which affects the terms of a tenancy or has an impact on local communities
- our performance as a landlord at a local level

In order to ensure TRAs can actively participate we will organise information, training or briefing events for all TRA members on specific topics being consulted on or discussed.

We will seek evidence that these groups have consulted widely on the issues discussed and that their views are representative, and reflect, local feelings.

The views of TRAs will then be fed back into the review process and reflected in any feedback reports to our customers.

## **G Registered Tenant Organisation (RTO) Forum**

This forum will meet a minimum of twice a year and consist of one representative from each geographically based Registered Tenant Organisation, Councillors and Staff. The forum will give our RTOs the opportunity to engage with Housing Services around local issues, discuss local and national policy and undertake specific areas of performance monitoring.

## **H Interested Tenants Register**

As our customer engagement gains momentum we will keep a list of all those who have volunteered to attend our consultation events. Where we identify new areas of consultation we will invite these interested individuals to attend along with new customers. This will develop a knowledge and skills base around a wide range of Housing Services enabling the participation of those attending and ensuring the transfer of skills to new members.

## **I Have your say – Neighbourhood Inspections**

How often do people get the chance to speak to Council officials in their streets rather than by phone or in an office? Neighbourhood Inspections will see council officials walk around a geographical area with local people to inspect the local environment (litter, roads, fly tipping, repair issues) and the general upkeep of specific neighbourhoods. They will allow face to face discussion about local issues and seek to identify solutions.

We will advertise an annual programme of neighbourhood inspections in our newsletters and on the Councils website and Twitter/Facebook sites to ensure all those wishing to participate have the opportunity to do so.

## **Information**

If customers don't know what we are doing, and how we do it, then they cannot influence how the service is provided and assist us in identifying where we can make improvements. We therefore propose to have a range of information mechanisms

### **1 Annual Report to Tenants**

It is a requirement that we produce an Annual Report to Tenants that outlines our performance set against a number of nationally set outcomes. Whilst this can be used to show how we are progressing in tackling these key issues it also allows customers to assess our performance against national averages. In addition we also intend to report on local performance in areas which are meaningful for our customers also.

### **2 The Tenants Newsletter**

We will issue a newsletter four times per year. The Tenants Newsletter is used mostly to provide you with information the Newsletter will be used more in the future to gain customers views on the services we provide and raise awareness of local issues. Where we receive feedback and change a service as a result we will tell our customers through the newsletter or directly should they not be current tenants.

The Tenants Newsletter is produced in audio format for those in Sheltered Housing or people who might have a visual impairment and is also available on the Council's website. We will produce in community languages and large print on request.

From time to time we will produce newsletters for our other customers for example those who receive a factoring service, those on a the housing waiting list or specific groups of customers.

### **3 Information leaflets**

We will continue to produce a range of information leaflets on a diverse range of subjects, these will be available on the Council's website or can be picked up at any main Council office. Available in alternative formats on request.

### **4 Tenant's Handbook**

We issue all new tenants with a Tenant's Handbook, this is a practical booklet which outlines clearly the requirements of the tenant and the obligations of the Council as a landlord and includes important information on:

- Your rights and responsibilities as a tenant
- What you can expect from us as your landlord
- How to report repairs, gas servicing and maintaining your home
- How to pay rent and other household bills

- How to cope with emergencies
- Useful contacts
- Homelessness and what to do if your home no longer meets your needs

**Copies of the Tenants Handbook are available on request from Customer First.**

## **5 Social Media**

Social media such as Twitter and Facebook are a good method of informing our customers, encouraging their involvement and improving access to information about the services we provide.

We believe social media can assist us in keeping our customers up to date with what's new within the service and encourage people to get involved in their community and decision making. We will make information available to our customers using these methods and details of consultation events and local meetings will be routinely advertised.

## **6 East Renfrewshire Council Website**

We will continue to improve the range of information available on the Council website and wherever possible use on line forms to speed up how you contact us and make contact easier.

**[www.eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk](http://www.eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk)**

## **7 Schools Information and Education Sessions**

Staff at Connor Road Young Persons Housing project provide a dedicated schools housing information and education programme for all 4<sup>th</sup> year pupils across East Renfrewshire.

These sessions focus on the practicalities around leaving home and explore the difficulties young people might face in finding and keeping secure accommodation.

## **What we will seek our customer's views on in the next two years**

It is difficult for us to predict in advance what we will seek our customer's views on as some subjects may not be know to us at the present time. For example the range of topics we will consult on will be chosen though discussion with our customers, ongoing engagement with TRAs, on the request of elected members, due to changes in legislation or identified by staff as being an issue for our customers.

Listed below are a range of topics and our likely methods of consultation.

<b>Topic</b>	<b>How</b>	<b>Timescales and frequency</b>
<b>Annual Rent Setting Consultation</b>	<b>Consultation and Information sharing with a range of interested parties</b>	<b>November – February</b>  <b>Every year</b>
<b>Tenant satisfaction survey (every two years)</b>	<b>Survey of tenants across East Renfrewshire</b>	<b>May – September 2014</b>  <b>Every two years thereafter</b>
<b>Allocations Review Panel</b>	<b>Seek applicants views on the allocations process</b>	<b>February 15</b>
<b>Sheltered Housing Review Panel (Focus Group).</b>	<b>Seek the veivs of our sheltered housing tenants in terms of service delivery</b>	<b>May 2015</b>
<b>Repairs</b>  <b>Repair priorities and Review of non essential repairs criteria</b>	<b>Focus Groups</b>	<b>March 2015</b>
<b>Tenant priorities for the Property Improvement Programme such as re roofing, rendering or internal improvements such as bathrooms or kitchens.</b>	<b>Consultation around the way we deliver improvement programmes and what priorities we should set.</b>	<b>Project spend and tenant priorities</b> <b>November 14</b>  <b>Review of progress</b> <b>November 15</b>



<b>Property Factors Act</b>	<b>Consultation</b>	<b>August 2014 onwards</b>
<b>Aids and Adaptations policy</b>	<b>Consultation on current policy.</b>	<b>November 2014</b>
<b>Review the way we manage our estates and seek tenants views on how well we perform</b>	<b>Consultation</b> <b>2 X Focus groups</b> <b>1 – new tenants</b> <b>1 – existing tenants</b>	<b>November 14</b>
<b>Homelessness service</b>	<b>Seek feedback from our customers on their experiences of being homeless in East Renfrewshire</b> <b>2 X Focus groups</b>	<b>April 2015</b>
<b>Annual Return on the Charter</b>	<b>Performance monitoring and Information Sharing</b>	<b>May each year</b>
<b>Annual Report on the Charter to tenants and customers</b>	<b>Performance monitoring and Information Sharing</b>	<b>September each year</b>

## Supporting Customer Engagement

Customer engagement covers all aspects of the work we undertake and as such it is difficult to give accurate costs associated with delivering customer engagement activity.

Housing Services estimate an annual expenditure of around £75,000 to fund and resource customer engagement every year. This figure includes “support in kind” for example:

- estates housing officers time spent dealing with local issues, undertaking neighbourhood inspections or dealing with enquiries from TRAs
- officers time spent resolving complaints or following up local issues
- time spent producing newsletters, leaflets or website information
- one off meetings with customers to discuss local issues
- developing customer satisfaction surveys and collating responses
- liaison with owner occupiers around property improvements
- dealing with anti social behaviour complaints

Within that amount we also cover:

- running costs for Registered Tenants Organisations
- room hire for meetings and events
- attendance at training and conferences
- one off events or activities which benefit local tenant groups or groups of our customers
- production of the Tenants Newsletter and other information publications

### Tenant and Customer Engagement Officer

In recognition of the need for the Council to engage more effectively with its tenants, customers and those who aspire to use the service. A Tenant and Customer Engagement Officer was recruited in 2012 with the broad remit of developing innovative ways of engaging with those who access our services and supporting the involvement of our customers in the ongoing review and development of services.

### Support to Tenant and Resident Associations

In line with the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 we will continue to provide support to new and existing groups through:

- The provision of funding to enable group development
- The provision of staff support to ensure groups receive appropriate and up to date information and are fit for purpose

- The provision of support in kind such as printing, hall hire and access to resources as appropriate
- Access to resources that facilitate consultation and ensure there are no barriers to their involvement
- Support to groups who wish to register as Registered Tenant Organisations in line with the 2001 Act

## **Appendix 1 – Housing Legislation**

As we have said earlier there are specific legislation requirements we have to ensure we meet. Some of these relate to wider areas of the service we provide and in some cases they are specific to how we engage with our customers.

The main areas of legislation are listed below, copies of these can be provided on request.

### **Housing (Scotland) Act 2001**

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 introduced new duties for the Council and increased rights for tenants in relation to tenant participation.

Our duties under the Act include:

The involvement of our customers in developing a Customer engagement strategy that will:

- show how we will keep our customers informed
- explain the issues we will consult on
- explain how we will take account of the views of our customers
- provide details of the resources required to make the strategy work
- establish and maintain a register of tenant organisations
- respond to customer feedback and show where we have changed what we do in line with their input

It should be noted that there are some issues such as rent setting and housing repairs which affect only our tenants and as such we would only seek their views on these matters.

### **Housing (Scotland) Act 2010**

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 created two major changes to the 2001 Act in relation to customer engagement

- the introduction of the Scottish Social Housing Charter
- changes to the remit and role of the Scottish Housing Regulator

The Act promotes the need for customers and Housing services to work in partnership to achieve positive outcomes for customers and other service users.

The Council must deliver quality services, involve customers in the design and delivery of the services, involve customers in assessing performance and evidence value for money.

## **The Scottish Social Housing Charter**

The Charter came into being on the 1st April 2012 and replaces performance standards which landlords were required to meet under the 2001 Act.

The first Charter will remain in place until 2017 and will be reviewed at that point. The outcomes included in the Charter are the results landlords should deliver to their customers if they are providing a good housing service.

### **The Charter outcome for Participation states that;**

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

### **The Charter outcome for Communication states:**

***“tenants and other customers find it easy to communicate with their landlord and get the information they need about their landlord, how and why it makes decisions and the services it provides.”***

All Scottish Social Landlords will submit and complete their Annual return on the Charter (ARC) to the Regulator in May of each year. A report to customers is also required by October of each year.

## **The Scottish Housing Regulator**

The Regulator also came into effect on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012 and is an independent regulator directly accountable to the Scottish Parliament.

The Regulator's statutory objective is to safeguard and promote the interests of current and future tenants and customers, homeless people and others who use housing services provided by social landlords.

Annually Housing Services will provide a report to the regulator on its performance and progress in meeting the objectives set out in the Charter.

## **Reporting a Significant performance failure to the Scottish Housing Regulator**

The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) can consider issues raised with them about 'significant performance failures'.

A significant performance failure is defined by the SHR as something that a landlord does or fails to do that puts the interests of its tenants at risk, and which the landlord has not resolved. This is something that is a systematic problem that does, or could, affect all of a landlord's tenants.

If you are affected by a problem like this, you should first report it to us. If you have told us about it but we have not resolved it, you can report it directly to the SHR.

A complaint between an individual tenant and a landlord is not a significant performance failure. Significant performance failures are now, therefore, dealt with through this complaints handling procedure. You can ask us for more information about significant performance failures. The SHR also has more information on their website or by calling 0141 271 3810.

## **East Renfrewshire Council – 5 Capabilities**

In modernising how the Council provides services we have set 5 capabilities which we believe will assist Housing Services in providing a better service which meet the needs of our customers. The capabilities can be summarised as:

### **Community engagement**

Effective community engagement should more actively involve the community and individuals in the development of services and community spend, improving outcomes and improving the perception of Council services. As well as being the right thing to do, community empowerment will soon be a legislative requirement.

### **Prevention**

We need to be able to identify how we can undertake more preventative activity and prioritise early years and re enablement of older people with the aim of improving outcomes for our residents and in the longer term reducing demands on Council services

### **Data, evidence and benchmarking**

The effective use of data for planning services, evidence for knowing what works and benchmarking to learn from other organisations who are achieving better results should improve outcomes. The internet is rapidly changing the availability of data and opening up exciting opportunities for organisations to understand the needs of citizens much better.

### **Modernising how we work**

We will continue to expand on our work on improving processes, automating where possible to make them more efficient. We will keep management costs down, reducing the burden of inefficient management processes, improve our asset management and continually review delivery models to ensure they are efficient.

### **Digital**

The internet and related mobile technologies such as twitter and facebook have now reached a tipping point where we must rapidly improve our digital offering to meet the needs of our customers. We cannot afford to get left behind in the digital revolution that is happening in our communities and in our own homes.

## Appendix 2 - Housing Jargon Buster

Whilst we try to ensure the information we send out to our customers is as easy to read as possible sometimes we use words or phrases that require a little explanation. This is a short list of commonly used phrases or terms that will help you understand what we say in future.

**Action Plan** - a list of things a landlord or tenants organisation must do to meet its aims and objectives

**Asset management** – looking after Council properties to make sure they are well maintained and improved

**CHCP** – this means the Community Health Care Partnership which covers both health and social Work services across the council

**Consultation** - consultation means having a chance to give your views on proposals prepared by the landlord before a decision is taken

**Consultative draft** – a version of a document before it is finalised which is made available to allow others to comment on what it contains. These comments are then used to improve the document.

**East Renfrewshire Tenants Assembly** – a group of tenants, councillors and staff that meets to discuss housing issues as they relate to our customers

**Engagement** – How our customers “take part” in a range of activities that ensure customer involvement in the planning, delivery and review of the Housing Service

**Neighbourhood Inspections (Estate walkabouts)** – an opportunity for local residents to participate in a structured walk around their area identifying local issues and ensuring input from a range of agencies.

**Equal Opportunities** - not discriminating against a person on the basis of things like their age, race, disability, sexual orientation, faith, religion or beliefs. All landlords and tenants organisations are required to have a commitment to equal opportunities under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001

**Local Housing Strategy** - a statutory document produced by all local authorities that assesses the housing need and resources required to meet that need in their areas

**Outcome** – a result that Housing Services and its customers, want to happen and that can be achieved by the end of this strategy.

**Participation** - this is when the Council, customers, tenants and residents groups and other interested parties come together and work as equal partners in making improvements to Council housing services

**Partners** – people and organisations that the Council will work with to deliver the Strategy, including tenants and their representatives, other users of Housing Services, other social landlords and other agencies such as Police Scotland.

**Partnership Working** - landlords, tenants and other agencies working together to get things done

**Registered Social Landlord** – the Council or a not for profit landlord registered with the Scottish Housing Regulator, such as housing associations

**Registered Tenants Organisation** - an independent organisation set up primarily to represent tenants' housing and related interests. Registering with their landlords supports the groups' rights to information and consultation

**Register of Tenants Organisations** - a register a landlord has to keep up-to-date which lists the number of Registered Tenants Organisations

**Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS)** - a standard set by Scottish Government that defines what good acceptable quality housing is. All council and housing association properties need to achieve this by 2015.

**Scottish Housing Regulator** - regulates registered social landlords and the landlord and homelessness services of local authorities; protects the interests of current and future tenants and other service users

**Scottish Social Housing Charter** –developed by the Scottish Government, sets results that all social landlords should be achieving for their tenants and other customers

**Scrutiny** – where customers review, investigate and inspect an element of our service and report on their findings.

**Service Improvement Plan** – Housing services produces this plan on an annual basis, the plan outlines areas where the service wants to improve and this is influenced by customer feedback, elected member input or changes to legislation

**Strategy** - a detailed plan for achieving success in situations such as business, industry, or sport, or the skill of planning for such situations

**Tenant and Customer Engagement Officer** – Specific member of staff tasked with developing and monitoring customer engagement across all aspects of the Housing Service.

**Tenants and Residents Groups** - 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



## **Appendix 3 - Customer Profile and Target Groupings some key facts**

At the time of writing this strategy we have approximately 3000 properties for rent across East Renfrewshire

### ***Minority Ethnic Households***

- Current estimates would indicate Housing Services have around 1% of tenants who identify themselves as being from a Minority Ethnic (BME) background.
- Across the Council area the BME population is estimated at around 4%.
- Around 30% of all BME tenants live in the Barrhead area.

### ***Tenants aged 60 and over***

- Similar to trends across the Council area almost 50% of our current tenants are aged 60 or over.
- We estimate almost 45% of those aged 60 or over live in the Barrhead area.
- East Renfrewshire has an ageing population which will continue to increase.

### ***Tenants aged under 25***

- Around 5% of our tenants are aged 25 or under.
- We estimate that almost 70% of the 5% aged 25 or under live in the Barrhead area.
- This grouping is under represented in our current engagement structure.

### ***Tenants aged 26 - 59***

- Around 45% of our tenants are aged 26 – 59.
- We estimate around 65% of those aged 26 – 59 currently live in the Barrhead area.
- This grouping is under represented in our current structure

## Appendix 4 - Customer Satisfaction Surveys

Housing Services has reviewed how we gain feedback from our customers and we are trying to make it simpler for you to tell us about the services you receive. We carry out a wide range of customer satisfaction surveys in order to receive feedback from our customers however we recognise these can be time consuming and lengthy.

Where customers have received services from us in the future they will be able to complete a “one off” satisfaction survey in a number of ways:

- On line
- By completing a short satisfaction survey which will be available in our tenant newsletter and at our offices
- By calling in and speaking to us about the service you received

All tenants will receive a copy of our customer satisfaction survey with every quarterly newsletter. The survey form will also be available at any time in council offices and online.

We will continue to seek the same range of customer feedback from:

- customers accessing our temporary accommodation
- customers using our young person’s accommodation
- customers receiving Major Property Improvements
- customers on the housing waiting list
- customers using our Homeless service
- asking customers involved in the Mixed Tenure Scheme for their feedback
- seeking the views of our Sheltered Housing customers to ensure the service meets their needs

We will continue to monitor complaints, compliments or comments about the services we provide and use these as a method of improving the service and ensuring the service meets your needs.

If you would like information on any of the methods of engagement outlined in this document, or you want to find out more about how you can get involved please contact.

**Brian Coles, Tenant and Customer Engagement Officer**

**Telephone: 0141 577 3696**

**E mail: [brian.coles@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk](mailto:brian.coles@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk)**

**Address: Housing Services, 211 Main Street, Barrhead, G78 1XG**

This document can be explained to you in other languages and can be provided in alternative formats such as large print and Braille. For further information please contact Customer First on 0141 577 3001 or email [customerservices@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk](mailto:customerservices@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk)

آپ کے لیے اس دستاویز کی دیگر زبانوں میں وضاحت کی جاسکتی ہے اور یہ دیگر مختلف صورتوں میں جیسا کہ بڑے حروف کی لکھائی اور بریل (ناپیدا افراد کے لیے) کے لیے انگریزی کے بڑے حروف کی لکھائی) میں فراہم کی جاسکتی ہے۔ مزید معلومات کے لیے برائے مہربانی ٹیلیفون نمبر 0141 577 3001 پر کسٹمر فرسٹ سے رابطہ کریں یا [customerservices@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk](mailto:customerservices@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk) کے پتے پر ای میل بھیجیں۔

এই পত্র অন্যান্য ভাষায় বর্ণনা ছাড়া নানা বিকল্প আকারেও দেয়া যেতে পারে যথা – বড় ছাপান অক্ষরে এবং উঁচু গঠিত বর্ণমালায়ও (Braille) দেয়া যেতে পারে। এ বিষয়ে আরও খবরাখবরের জন্যে যোগাযোগ করুন কার্শৌমার ফার্স্ট টেলিফোন: ০১৪১-৫৭৭ ৩০০১ অথবা ইমেইল : [customerservices@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk](mailto:customerservices@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk)

आप के लिए इस दस्तावेज़ की व्याख्या अन्य भाषाओं में की जा सकती है और बदलवें रूपों जैसे बड़े अक्षरों और ब्रेल पर भी प्रदान की जा सकती है। कृपया अतिरिक्त जानकारी के लिए कस्टमर फस्ट वालों से इस फोन नंबर पर संपर्क करें: 0141 577 3001 व इस पते पर ईमेल करें: [customerservices@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk](mailto:customerservices@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk)

ਤੁਹਾਡੇ ਲਈ ਇਸ ਦਸਤਾਵੇਜ਼ ਦੀ ਵਿਆਖਿਆ ਹੋਰਨਾਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਵੀ ਕੀਤੀ ਜਾ ਸਕਦੀ ਹੈ ਅਤੇ ਇਸ ਨੂੰ ਬਦਲਵੇਂ ਰੂਪਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਜਿਵੇਂ ਵੱਡੇ ਅੱਖਰਾਂ ਅਤੇ ਬਰੇਲ ਤੇ ਪ੍ਰਦਾਨ ਕੀਤਾ ਜਾ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ। ਵਧੇਰੇ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਲਈ ਕਸਟਮਰ ਫਸਟ ਵਾਲਿਆਂ ਨਾਲ ਇਸ ਫੋਨ ਨੰਬਰ ਤੇ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰਨ ਦੀ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾਲਤਾ ਕਰੋ: 0141 577 3001 ਜਾਂ ਇਸ ਪਤੇ ਤੇ ਈਮੇਲ ਕਰੋ: [customerservices@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk](mailto:customerservices@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk)

**We would welcome your thoughts on how we can improve the way we engage with our customers. Please complete the attached form and return to any local Council Office.**

**Name.....**

**Address.....**

**Telephone ..... Mobile No.....**

**E Mail .....**

**Did you find the document easy to read and understand? Yes No**

**If not please tell us what we need to change**

**Is there anything you feel we have missed out from the document?**

**Which method of contact suits you best?**

<b>Telephone survey</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Postal survey</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>On line survey</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Facebook/Twitter survey</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Newsletter</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>			

**Please tell us your comments or suggestions on issues we should consult on**

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

**Would you like to be part of our Tenants Assembly?**

**Yes No**

**What are your views on the proposed Tenants Assembly?**

**Alternatively to discuss this matter further please contact Brian Coles, Tenant and Customer engagement Officer on 0141 577 3695**

**e mail [brian.coles@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk](mailto:brian.coles@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk).**

**Complete the survey on line at:**

**<http://getinvolved.eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk/housing-services/customer-engagement-strategy-cons>**

***We will enter every completed form into a prize draw for £25 worth of vouchers***