

REPORT TO: Cabinet

MEETING DATE: 14 May 2024

BY: Executive Director for Place

SUBJECT: Tenant Participation Strategy 2024-2027

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To seek approval of the Council's Tenant Participation Strategy as the basis for effective tenant participation between now and 2027.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Cabinet approves the Tenant Participation Strategy publication in line with legal requirements under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.
- 2.2 That Cabinet recognises that the Strategy is a living document and that as such the action plan in particular will evolve as consultation with tenants and tenant organisations help inform the Council's future plans in this area.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 introduced new rights for tenants and obligations for social landlords in relation to tenant participation and consultation.
- 3.2 These duties include:
- Councils and Registered Social Landlords (RSL's) must prepare and publish a Tenant Participation Strategy. The Strategy must include an assessment of resources required to ensure effective tenant participation. The Strategy should show how the Council intends to take the views of tenants into account, what matters the Council is likely to consult tenants about and the information that it will provide to tenants.

- The requirement to set up a publicly available Register of Tenants Organisations (RTO's) in line with guidance from the Scottish Government.
 - Landlords must ensure that the Tenant Participation Strategy complies with equal opportunities requirements.
- 3.3 The 2020-2023 Tenant Participation Strategy was approved by Cabinet in November 2020.
- 3.4 Prior to the development of the 2024-2027 Strategy, it was agreed with East Lothian Tenants and Residents' Panel (ELTRP), who are the umbrella organisation for tenants and residents' groups in East Lothian, that the 2020-2023 Strategy should first be reviewed before embarking on the development of a new Strategy.
- 3.5 This review of the 2020 Strategy involved East Lothian Tenants and Residents Panel and a group of Council staff looking at the successes and challenges of the old Strategy.
- 3.6 The review of the Strategy included, but was not restricted to, consultation with tenants, tenant groups and staff.
- 3.7 The new draft Strategy was fully consulted on during January and February 2024 and further amendments made to reflect the changes around participation and involvement brought about by the Coronavirus pandemic.
- 3.8 Consultation methods used included, but were not limited to, letter, email, website information, a consultation event hosted by ELTRP, a freephone service.
- 3.9 There was strong support for the new Strategy. All views were considered by the Council and where appropriate changes were made to the draft and reflected in the new draft Strategy.
- 3.10 Subject to formal approval, the Strategy will be formally launched at a joint event with ELTRP, the details and date of the event have still to be discussed and agreed.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Tenant Participation Strategy recognises, links to and underpins other Council Strategies, including the Local Housing Strategy.

5 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 The subject of this report has been through the Integrated Impact Assessment process and no negative impacts have been identified. The report can be accessed using the link below:
<https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/iia-housing>

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Financial – The existing tenant participation budget will not be significantly impacted by the new Strategy.
- 6.2 Personnel – None.
- 6.3 Other – None.

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 7.1 None.

Appendix – East Lothian Council Tenant Participation Strategy 2024-2027

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DATE	May 2024



East Lothian
Council

2024-27 TENANT PARTICIPATION STRATEGY



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East Lothian Tenants & Residents Panel members



Welcome

Welcome to East Lothian Council's sixth **Tenant Participation Strategy**, which sets out how we plan to involve our tenants and make sure that they can influence and scrutinise the housing services we deliver. The strategy sets out our commitment and the importance of involving tenants when we are developing and reviewing our housing policies.

We want to continue to build on our achievements over the last few years, supporting tenants and working in partnership with them and **East Lothian Tenants and Residents Panel** (ELTRP).

We will remove any barriers so that tenant participation is accessible to all. We want

to develop new ways of interacting and participating with our tenants, with the shift to online communication, whilst maximising tenant involvement.

We will continue to make sure tenants are at the heart of our work, giving them a menu of options to choose from, so that they can get involved in a way that suits them.

We value our tenant volunteers and all the work that they do with us every day. We always strive to work together to provide excellent housing services. We hope this strategy reflects how much more we want to achieve and explains the steps we will be taking to involve tenants in the coming years.



Jim Herron
Chairperson
East Lothian Tenants
& Residents Panel



Andy Forrest
Councillor, and
East Lothian Council
Spokesperson for
Community Housing &
Property Maintenance



Monica Patterson
Chief Executive
East Lothian Council



Wendy McGuire
Head of Housing
East Lothian Council

Our Vision for Tenant Participation

Our vision for tenant participation is to maximise the participation of all our tenants, by forming good working relationships, building trust and respect, whilst sharing information and ideas.

We will provide resources for tenant participation, give tenants time to consider proposals, involve them and give them the opportunity to influence our decision-making. We will continue to work in partnership with local tenants' and residents' groups and East Lothian Tenants and Residents Panel to further develop our tenant participation and scrutiny activities.



East Lothian Tenants & Residents Sparkle Awards 2023



Background

Tenants have the right to be consulted, set up tenants' groups and participate in decisions that affect them. Landlords must take account of tenants' views, inform tenants of housing proposals, produce a **Tenant Participation Strategy**, and set up a **Register of Tenant Organisations**. Our strategy is a requirement of the **Housing (Scotland) Act 2001** which introduced these rights for tenants.

We developed this strategy by reviewing our last one in partnership with ELTRP and our staff, highlighting the strengths and weaknesses, what we considered good practice and what had worked well. We carried out an **Equality Impact Assessment** to make sure our strategy promotes equal opportunities and does not

discriminate. We consulted with tenants, staff and ELTRP on our draft strategy before finalising it.

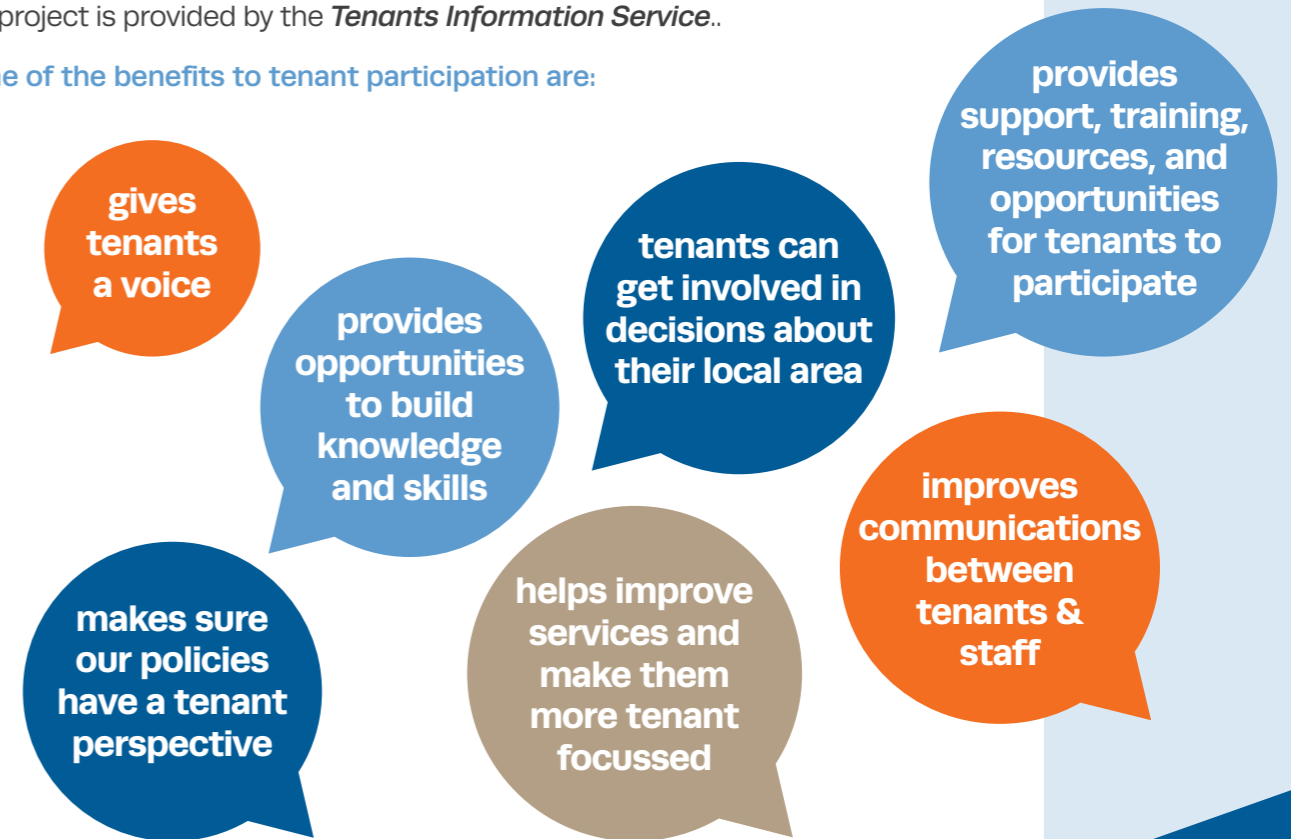
The **Scottish Social Housing Charter** sets the standards and outcomes that social landlords should aim to achieve. We are required by the **Scottish Housing Regulator** to report on our housing service. We produce a **Landlord Report to Tenants** each year to explain how we have performed in key areas of our service, for example repairs, maintenance, improvements, estate management, antisocial behaviour. A full list of the charter outcomes can be found in the Housing Charter.

Benefits of Tenant Participation

We know it is good practice to involve tenants in our work and this strategy sets out how we will do this. It is important that tenants have independent support to make sure they can participate and get involved in our **Tenant Participation** structures, whether this is as an individual, tenants' group or by being involved with ELTRP. **Tenant Scrutiny** helps our service become more tenant focussed and gives tenants the opportunity to make recommendations for improvement. Our **Development Support Project** provides development, outreach and administrative support to all our tenants, tenants' groups and members of ELTRP.

The project is provided by the **Tenants Information Service**.

Some of the benefits to tenant participation are:



We will remove any barriers to participation and provide training and assistance to our tenants, local tenants and residents groups, members of ELTRP and our staff. We will make sure that tenants' groups get the opportunity to raise issues through ELTRP so that they can feed into our service development and activities. We will continue to participate with tenants in writing, through our tenants' newsletter and by advertising locally so that tenants who are not online can still get access to our tenant participation activities.

We will assist tenants to participate with us and provide support and resources to enable them to attend meetings and events.

New build at Blindwells



Communication

We will consult with tenants and keep them informed of any proposed changes to our housing policies. We will make sure we give them enough time to tell us what they think. We will do this by offering tenants a variety of ways to get involved, for example by attending events, responding to consultations, through estate inspections, arranging Focus Groups, online meetings, and events. We may, at times, use public notice boards, advertise in local community spaces and attend events to promote tenant participation. We will use specific communication methods at times to make sure we reach under-represented groups.

We will keep tenants informed of our work and give them opportunities to give us feedback using:

- **Homefront, our tenants newsletter**
- **social media and through our website**
- **by contacting tenants by telephone, email, text message and in person at our events.**

Feedback we receive from tenants will always be considered by the council and we will explain our decisions.

We will continue to work with East Lothian Tenants and Residents Panel who we consider to be our key partner in all the work that we do. We will support our local tenants and residents groups and help them to become **Registered Tenant Organisations** and we will continue to provide **Grants for Tenants Groups** and other support like access to printing and photocopying and providing venues for meetings.

Digital strategy

We want to make sure we offer tenants a range of different ways for them to get involved and at the same time we want to promote the use of digital channels of communication.

Whilst we will continue to communicate with tenants in writing, through our tenants' newsletter and face-to-face we will also:

- **work with ELTRP promoting different digital channels and social media**
- **increase knowledge and skills to support more tenants to communicate and meet with us online**
- **through online platforms, offer fun and interactive ways for tenants, tenants' groups and ELTRP to participate**
- **help tenants to get online and give them the support they need to participate with us, providing hints and tips and access to equipment through our Development Support Contract**
- **continue to develop more digital online services for our tenants.**

east lothian tenants and residents panel

We are here to help!

We know these current circumstances are difficult, so ELTRP wants to provide it's members with some **'hints and tips'** based on our experience of getting to grips with things like ZOOM, SKYPE and TEAMS.

If you prefer to use other methods, ELTRP can support you with other resources, e.g. videos, that you may find easier to follow.

TEAMS!

ZOOM!

SKYPE!

Successes

We have celebrated a number of successes with tenants and tenants' groups getting involved in estate inspections, local initiatives and making improvements in their area.

We have carried out tenant scrutiny activities which have looked at the process for reporting a repair, communication, signing-up a new tenant and carried out some *'mystery shopping'* in our local housing offices. These activities have led to improvements being made to our services.

ELTRP and local tenants' and residents' groups in East Lothian have received recognition for their work both locally through ELTRP Awards and nationally.

ELTRP Anti-Social Behaviour Consultation Event, March 2023



ELTRP Annual Gathering 2023

Links to other strategies & services

Our Tenant Participation Strategy links in with our council policies and strategies. We will continue to work together with colleagues in other departments, councillors, staff and tenant representatives in other councils across Scotland to learn from them and hear about their good practice. We will go on study visits and learn from good practice to improve our tenant participation activity.

Some of the council strategies which share our commitments are:

- **Digital Strategy 2022–2027**
- **Council Customer Strategy 2023–2028**
- **Council Plan 2022–2027**
- **Equality Plan 2021–2025**
- **Local Housing Strategy 2024–2029**
- **Community Housing & Homelessness Service Plan 2024–25**
- **Children's and Young People's Service Plan 2023–26**

We will provide information, support and training to make sure tenant participation is successful. This support will be tailored to suit the tenant, making sure their tenant participation experience is meaningful and rewarding.

We know it is important to regularly review how we are performing and carrying out our tenant participation activities and we will monitor this through our **Action Plan** (shown in the Appendix).

Appendix: Action Plan

Our Action Plan explains what actions we will take to achieve our aims for tenant participation. We will monitor the plan regularly through our Tenant Participation (TP) Strategy Group.

Aim 1 ► Form good working relationships

Action	Timescale	Owner	Outcome
Involve tenants and staff in our tenant scrutiny activities	2024-27	ELC/ELTRP/TIS (Tenants Information Service)	Increase tenant involvement and improved services
Set up regular TP Strategy Group meetings involving both tenants and staff	2024	ELC/ ELTRP/ TIS	Quarterly meetings, monitoring of our tenant participation activities
Include local housing staff and encourage them to engage and support when starting up new tenants' groups	2024-27	ELC/ELTRP/TIS	Increase communications between staff and groups
Restart TP Forum meetings with staff from other Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) in East Lothian	2024-27	ELC	Six monthly meetings, improved communications with our RSL partners

Aim 2 ► Communicate and empower tenants

Action	Timescale	Owner	Outcome
Include ELTRP representatives in our Homefront (Tenants Newsletter) Editorial Group	2024-27	ELC	ELTRP representatives influence content of our tenants' newsletter
Invite tenant representatives to be involved in our Communications Group	2024-27	ELC/ELTRP/TIS	ELTRP involvement in our planned communications with tenants
Encourage tenants and tenants' groups to get involved in estate inspections, Area Partnerships and Local Housing Partnerships	2024-27	ELC/ELTRP/TIS	Increase tenant participation in local communities and involvement in making improvements
Use a variety of methods of communication, particularly in relation to under-represented groups to maximise participation	2024-27	ELC/ELTRP/TIS	Maximise the participation of as many under-represented groups as possible
Provide information in an easy-to-read format and in other formats on request	2024-27	ELC	Provide information in easy-to-read format and Plain English

Aim 3 ► Share information and ideas

Action	Timescale	Owner	Outcome
Invite ELTRP representatives to get involved in our Working Groups when we are developing or reviewing our housing policies	2024-27	ELC	Make sure our policies have a tenant perspective and influence
Publicise our tenant scrutiny work and encourage tenants to get involved	2024-27	ELC/ ELTRP/ TIS	Increase tenant scrutiny, improved services
Implement Tenant Participation Strategy 2024	2024-27	ELC	Raise awareness of tenant participation

Aim 4 ► Give tenants time to consider proposals, involve them and provide opportunity to influence our decision-making

Action	Timescale	Owner	Outcome
Involve ELTRP representatives in our Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Consultation Group	2024-27	ELC	Tenants involved in our annual rent consultation
Work in partnership with ELTRP to agree how we will consult with tenants	2024-27	ELC/ ELTRP/ TIS	Tenants influence the design of our consultations
Consider feedback we receive from tenants and use this to inform and shape our services	2024-27	ELC	Use feedback from tenants to help shape and inform our services

Aim 5 ► Provide resources for tenants' groups

Action	Timescale	Owner	Outcome
Provide independent development support, information, and advice to ELTRP, tenants' groups and tenants	2024-27	ELC	Maximise tenant involvement by providing support and advice to tenants to encourage participation
Help and support the setting up of a new tenants' and residents' groups	2024-27	ELC/ ELTRP/ TIS	Increase in local group activity
Offer grants to tenants' groups	2024-27	ELC	Enable local groups to operate independently
Provide meeting venues and other in-kind support to tenants' groups (e.g. access to printing and photocopying facilities)	2024-27	ELC/ ELTRP/ TIS	Support local groups
Provide ELTRP with an office base and delegated budget	2024-27	ELC	Support ELTRP to operate as an independent organisation

Aim 6 ► Set the agenda with tenants

Action	Timescale	Owner	Outcome
Work in partnership with ELTRP and local tenants' groups to help raise issues with ELC Managers at Business Plan meetings	2024-27	ELC/ELTRP /TIS	Tenants' issues are listened to, working together to find solutions
Carry out Point of Service Surveys and respond to tenants' feedback	2024-27	ELC	Listen to tenants' feedback and make changes to our procedures
Work in partnership with ELTRP on tenant scrutiny activities	2024-27	ELC/ELTRP /TIS	Carry out tenant-led scrutiny activities to improve services

Aim 7 ► Build trust and respect and work in partnership with tenants

Action	Timescale	Owner	Outcome
Recognise the success of tenant participation through local events and awards	2024-27	ELC/ELTRP /TIS	Celebrate the success of ELTRP, tenants' groups and tenants
Publicise the results of our tenant consultations and explain the reasons for our decisions	2024-27	ELC	Provide information to tenants on consultations and subsequent decisions
Nominate tenants and tenants' groups for national awards and local recognition	2024-27	ELC	Celebrate and raise awareness of tenant participation activity in East Lothian
Work in partnership with ELTRP to produce our annual Landlord Report to Tenants	2024-27	ELC/ELTRP /TIS	Provide information to tenants on how we are performing as their landlord

Aim 8 ► Create equal values and opportunities

Action	Timescale	Owner	Outcome
Encourage all tenants to get involved in tenant participation by providing different methods of involvement	2024-27	ELC	Maximise tenant involvement
Provide information in a range of different ways on request	2024-27	ELC	Provide information to tenants in the format that suits them
Continue to develop our Digital Strategy in partnership with ELTRP when communicating with tenants	2024-27	ELC/ELTRP/ TIS	Maximise the range of ways tenants can get involved
Create through our Development Support Project innovative ways to engage with all tenants in under-represented groups and those with vulnerable characteristics including Gypsy Travellers and those with disabilities	2024-27	ELC/ELTRP/ TIS	Maximise tenant participation removing any barriers to involvement
Develop and support new opportunities for involvement e.g. Armchair Critics, Quality Circles, Community Champions, Knowledge Exchanges and Study Visits	2024-27	ELC/ELTRP/ TIS	Create and support new and innovative methods of participation
Proactively engage with young people/children to make sure we meet the duties under the UNCRC Act and use specific steps to aid involvement	2024-27	ELC/ELTRP/ TIS	Ensure children and young people are valued contributors in their communities
Develop our online services through the implementation of a new Housing Management System	2024-27	ELC	Offer tenants more online services
Carry out an Equality Impact Assessment on our TP Strategy to make sure we are achieving improved equality	2024-27	ELC	TP Policy meets equalities legislation, and all tenants have the right to participate



Contact Us

If you would like to get in touch and find out more about Tenant Participation, please contact us:

East Lothian Council

Email: tenantconsultation@eastlothian.gov.uk

Call: 0800 431 721

Visit: www.eastlothian.gov.uk

East Lothian Tenants and Residents Panel

Email: tenantspanel@eltrp.co.uk

Telephone: 0131 665 9304

Visit: www.eltrp.co.uk



Versions of this leaflet can be provided in Braille, large print, audiotape, or your own language. For assistance call our Community Housing freephone: **0800 413 721**

Verbal abuse and threatening behaviour is never acceptable. #zerotolerance

We're living through stressful times right now, and everyone's feeling it.

Our staff are doing their best to assist local residents and businesses whilst delivering essential services.

Please, be nice.



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BE NICE
RESPECT US AS WE RESPECT YOU

East Lothian Council welcome feedback.
Visit www.eastlothian.gov.uk/feedback

Data Protection

East Lothian Council uses the personal data you provide for purposes associated with the delivery of our services. For more information go to: www.eastlothian.gov.uk/communityhousingpn

Personal data will be retained in line with East Lothian Council retention policies. Data Protection Officer, East Lothian Council, John Muir House Haddington, EH41 3HA. Email: dpo@eastlothian.gov.uk

