



Queens  
Cross  
Housing  
Association

APPENDIX 1



# Tenant Participation Strategy

2022 -2025

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## Forward

Welcome to Queens Cross Housing Association's Tenant Participation Strategy, which sets out how we plan to involve our tenants and other customers and make sure they can influence and scrutinise the services we deliver.

This Tenant Participation Strategy covers the period 2022 - 2025. It forms part of the Business Plan 2020 – 2025, which is designed to overarch the Association's approach to delivering excellent services across our organisation. Our Business Plan 2020 – 2025, is underpinned by a framework of strategies to help us deliver our promises and set out how we will achieve our commitments.

The Tenant Participation Strategy 2022 – 2025, demonstrates how we will put our tenants and customers at the heart of everything we do and how we want our services to be delivered in the communities we serve.

We recognise that informing our tenants and customers and listening to their views is essential to helping us deliver a housing service to meet their needs and demands. With that in mind we have updated the Tenant Participation Strategy after listening to what our tenants and customers have told us. It builds on the success of the previous strategy and focuses on communicating with our tenants and customers and listening to their views, encouraging more people to become involved and being able to influence the services they receive from us, work more closely with tenants and customers and provide more opportunities for everyone to get involved in a way that suits them.

We value our tenant representatives and the work that they do with us every day. Thank you to all tenant representatives, tenants and other customers who have contributed their views and ideas. We hope this strategy reflects how much we want to achieve and the steps that we will be taking to involve tenants and customers in the next three years.

The Board and staff teams are all fully committed to achieving these outcomes and the Tenant Participation Strategy 2022 -2025 provides a framework to make this happen.

Andrew Burns  
Chair  
QCHA Board of Management

# OUR VISION, VALUES & STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

## Our Vision

Queens Cross Housing Associations Business Plan (*Choose to Live Here, Choose to Work Here*) sets out a vision of “Excellent Housing in Vibrant Communities” alongside organisational values of “respect”, “integrity” and “aspiration”.

## Our Values

### Respect

We see the positive in everyone, especially our tenants and service users. We treat everyone fairly, regardless of age, race, gender or background. We ask for opinions even if we know we might not like what we hear. And we address people’s concerns in any way we realistically can.

### Integrity

What we say in public is the same as what we say behind the scenes. If we say we’ll do something, we mean it. Our tenants and customers can count on us to solve their problems and make sound decisions.

### Aspiration

We seek new opportunities and welcome change. We want the best for all our current and future tenants. We’re not afraid to strive for things that won’t be easy – or try things that haven’t been done before. If it doesn’t turn out as planned, we learn and improve again. And then we try again.

## Our Strategic Objectives

People’s wellbeing and that of our environment is at the heart of everything we do. Central to this is more green space, bringing neighbourhoods together, support to help get a job or to help tenants and customers live at home independently for longer. Improving the lives of people who live in Queens Cross is our number one priority

We will do this by delivering on five clear objectives:

1. Building and sustaining popular neighbourhoods
2. Creating and supporting greater life opportunities for all
3. Developing greener space and community wellbeing
4. Being a dynamic and listening community partner
5. Treating people equally and with respect

## Links to other Strategies, Plans and Services

Queens Cross Housing Association is made up of a diverse range of services who work together with each other and external partners.

It is important that the Tenant Participation Strategy links into and informs other services and their plans and strategies. This approach helps us to improve and deliver better value for money services by making the most of existing resources. Our Tenant Participation Strategy 2022 - 2025 links into and has very strong overlaps with:

- 1. Our Business Plan** – Our “Choose to Live Here, Chose to Work Here” Business Plan has one aim over the next 5 years, to make Queens Cross *the* place in Glasgow to live and work. We want to improve the wellbeing of our communities and the individuals within them by building on our foundations built of excellent housing, community services and accountable decision making. It is an ambitious vision to provide excellent homes in vibrant communities. We seek to do this by challenging the idea of poverty in our communities, contributing to improving health and wellbeing and life chances and delivering excellent services and value for money for all our tenants and customers.
- 2. Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy** - The Association strives to achieve equal opportunity and treatment in all that we do, and to work in a way that values and respects tenants and customers in our communities. We aim to remove barriers to effective participation, whether they are attitudinal, physical or geographical, cultural or financial. We recognise that everyone is an individual and aim to meet their needs accordingly. The vision of Queens Cross is to create '**excellent homes and vibrant communities**', and promoting equality and diversity is a key part of this.
- 3. Our Customer First Strategy** - sets the Associations approach to delivering excellent services across our organisation. We want our tenants and customers to feel valued and we measure customer satisfaction as one of our key indicators of how we are doing. Our Customer First commitments are relevant whether you are a tenant, prospective tenant, factored owner or partner agent. They are equally important in our professional relationships with Queens Cross colleagues; especially the behaviours that govern our approach to internal services.

There are 8 ways that we will ensure tenants and customers are at the heart of everything we do and feel valued. They are a combination of what we do and how we will do it.

We will:

- 1) Ensure our staff **understand and demonstrate the right behaviours** to deliver excellent customer services and adopt a positive approach in dealing with people.
- 2) **Understand who our customers are** and what particular requirements individuals may have – so that we can tailor our services to their needs.
- 3) **Make sure our services are accessible.**
- 4) **Actively seek the views of tenants and customers** so that we focus on 'doing best what matters most'
- 5) **Involve tenants and customers directly** in shaping and scrutinising our services.



- 6) **Establish** clear **standards for our services** so people know what they can expect.
- 7) **Publish what our customers tell us** and how we are responding.
- 8) By **learning from others**.

- 4. Our Digital Business Strategy** – We want to make sure we offer tenants and customers a range of different ways to get involved and at the same time we want to promote the use of digital channels of communication. We work hard to increase our digital and online presence through to development of our website, tenant App and use of social media, mainly Facebook and Twitter. This is in line with some of our aims for tenant participation to make tenant participation accessible and inclusive, encourage engagement, build confidence and continue to build on our success.

The COVID-19 pandemic required us to find new and innovative ways of keeping in touch and engaging with our tenants and customers and in particular to make greater use of online communication channels.

- 5. Our People Strategy** - Queens Cross has been providing quality homes and services to tenants and other customers for over 40 years. Our continuing success is due to the commitment, hard work and dedication of our people, who play a crucial role in providing excellent homes and vibrant neighbourhoods that our tenants and customers choose to live in. Our employees ensure that our tenants and customers are involved in the planning and implementation of services that suit their lives, improve the local environment and boost health and wellbeing, while delivering value for money. We want talented, motivated and resilient people to choose to work here, to enable us to meet our strategic aims, now and in the future. Our People Strategy sets out our vision with particular focus on:

- ❖ Achieving High Performance at individual, leadership and organisational levels
- ❖ Encouraging Innovation and the development of new skills
- ❖ Valuing Our People to ensure we have an engaged and diverse workforce

The Board is committed to supporting and developing our people. Our People Working Group oversees the implementation of the People Strategy and reports regularly to the Board, ensuring that our people remain a key area of focus at the highest level in the Association. The People Strategy was developed using feedback from our most recent Investors in People (IIP) assessment, our comprehensive employee engagement surveys and feedback from our staff information exchanges. It sets out measurable milestones to help Queens Cross understand, monitor and evaluate how well we develop and manage our people.

## Who we are

For over forty years Queens Cross Housing Association (QCHA) has been at the heart of our community here in North Glasgow and now manages over 4500 homes. As a leading community based social landlord we not only provide low cost housing for the people who live in our four neighbourhoods, but also an expanding range of other services which we hope support our tenants and customers and help create and sustain stable, welcoming and vibrant communities.

These include:

- Offering free, independent advice on money, benefits, debt, and energy costs.
- Delivering the right support so that 95% of the people we house from homelessness are able to sustain a successful tenancy.
- Expanding the services provided by our highly successful Housing First for Young People to support young people into their own homes and have the best start for their future.
- Offering Community Chest grants for young people aged 1-25 years.
- Delivering accessible services to customers by increasing online services and work to increase internet access for all our households as part of our Digital Strategy.
- Delivering a new Community Opportunities Project in Westercommon and Woodside to understand and play our part in reducing child poverty.
- Delivering a diverse and accessible programme of activities to involve and interest tenants and customers of all ages and backgrounds.
- Supporting more disabled people into employment, creating apprenticeships for young people, and increasing the diversity of our workforce to better reflect our communities.

## Purpose of our Strategy

Tenant participation is an integral part of how we operate at Queens Cross. Our tenants and customers have the opportunity to comment on and influence decisions we make that may affect their tenancy or the services we deliver. In fact, our tenants and customers are at the heart of everything we do. Tenant participation is key to our aim of providing high quality affordable housing and an efficient, responsive and personal housing management service.

This Strategy is also one of the key documents which underpins our Business Plan 2020-2025 which coincides with the period covered by this Strategy.

By 2025 we aim to:

- ❖ Deliver a new tenant and customer engagement programme with much more informed discussion and devolved responsibility on local neighbourhood issues
- ❖ Take a local democracy approach where people are empowered rather than consulted and look at ways of offering real decision-making powers
- ❖ Go to people rather than expect them to come to us. Wider digital access will allow many people who don't participate right now to take part

- ❖ Find ways to ensure the voices of all tenants and customers are heard and that we take account of the diverse needs of our tenants and customers. Ensure our Board and staff reflect the communities we work within
- ❖ Further develop our tenant scrutiny group to ensure best quality services and value for money
- ❖ Continue our Food for Thought sessions run by Glasgow Caledonian University to keep conversations going about today's important social, education and health issues
- ❖ Play our part in the canal partnership to ensure the benefits of its regeneration are maximised for our residents
- ❖ Develop a Participatory Budgeting model that attracts funding for investment in projects chosen by the community
- ❖ Be ready for opportunities that will benefit our communities and be the go to organisation for those looking for expertise and innovation
- ❖ Actively participate in those local, city and national partnerships which will bring positive benefits to our communities

The Business Plan 2020-2025 also highlights the importance of exploring new ways to talk with tenants and customers. Our research has shown that people favour small, informal groups when they want to help us develop, shape and improve services. Our tenants' and customer voices are crucial in shaping our services and we need to know that what we are doing is making a difference to people's quality of life and to give everyone a chance to have their say when there are more challenging decisions to make.

The Tenant Participation Strategy focuses on how we make this happen, using online surveys or groups, for example, to reach working tenants, or those with children. We want to make it as easy as possible for all of our tenants and customers to have their say.

Underpinning all of these is our ongoing commitment to excellent customer service and equalities and diversity. These are central to our values and are woven through how we will deliver all of our objectives. We will listen to people, respond to what they say and seek ways to ensure all voices are heard and inform our decision making, the services we provide and how we provide them.

We treat people equally and with respect and promote equality of opportunity, to eliminate discrimination and harassment and to foster good relationships as an organisation, an employer and service provider. Queens Cross is home to diverse communities and we want to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to participate in a way that suits them, regardless of their background. To do this we will also provide opportunities for local democracy to empower people to lead change in their community.

Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy focuses on six strategic themes:

- **Information, understanding, involvement** – deepening and broadening our knowledge of our communities and our engagement with them
- **Language and communication** – addressing language and other communication needs



- **Service access** – understanding and addressing practical, social and psychological barriers to service access
- **Focus on economic inequality** – helping mitigate economic inequality in our service delivery
- **Diversity in events and activities** – extending our range of events and activities to promote diversity and celebrate difference
- **Being a diverse employer** – demonstrating inclusivity in recruitment and employment practices.

Many of these strategic themes link closely to the Tenant Participation Strategy which focuses on reaching out to more people from diverse backgrounds to increase representation and encourage discussion about what's important about our services, how we can support people to reach their own goals and build stronger communities.

Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy views tenant participation in terms of:

- Participation in the community and society generally, which is of value in its own right, in terms of people's wellbeing and quality of life.
- Participation in the decision-making and/or improvement processes of the Association, the fundamental aim here being to ensure that decisions reflect tenant and service user experiences, needs and wants.

The second definition particularly relevant to the Tenant Participation Strategy is about building strong communities which all members' feel they can contribute to and benefit from is also important.

Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy also looks at how to remove barriers to allow people to participate in the community and in our decision making processes. Considering and addressing the many possible barriers to involvement that may exist for tenants and residents so that we gain more meaningful input. Issues getting in the way of getting involved may include: chronic illnesses; mobility issues; addictions; mental health issues; shame at reduced ability to care for oneself or home; language and cultural barriers. People who have these experiences often have the most useful insight on unintentional barriers in service design and delivery, but are the most likely to be unable to participate in standard methods of engagement.

The better we reach people in Queens Cross, the more opportunities we'll have to involve them in working with us as close partners. We are going to take a more active approach to recruiting a more diverse range of volunteers, especially those in our service and community development groups. We'll actively promote membership, for example, to our Board, Community Involvement Groups and Residents Task Force especially among people who are currently under-represented. Research carried out as part of our Equality, Diversity and Inclusions Strategy has identified that engagement with people would best take place in less formal settings, which could realistically be anywhere that service users come together. From our conversations with tenants, they emphasised:

- ❖ The importance of very local and informal settings that people are comfortable with

- ❖ The branding of activities as social and entertainment opportunities (and not using words like participation or engagement)
- ❖ The diversity of things that people might be motivated to attend like food, music, cultural celebrations, religious events
- ❖ The attraction of a personal invitation


These findings will influence the way we plan our participation activities going forward to make sure they are inclusive and attractive to all members of the community.

With that in mind we have updated our Tenant Participation Strategy to focus on how we will:

- ❖ Communicate with our tenants and customers and listen to their views in a way that suits them
- ❖ Provide more opportunities for tenants and customers to influence the service they receive in a way that suits them
- ❖ Work more closely with our tenants and customers in a way that suits them so we can improve services together
- ❖ Encourage more tenants and customers to become involved with the association in a way that suits them
- ❖ Look at the resources required to make the strategy work

## Legal Framework

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 places a statutory duty on social housing landlords to publish a Tenant Participation Strategy demonstrating how they will communicate with and consult tenants and residents on a range of housing and housing-related services.



**“Tenant Participation is about tenants taking part in decision making processes and influencing decisions about housing policies, housing conditions and housing related services. It is a two-way process which involves the sharing of information, ideas and power. It aims to improve the standard of housing conditions and service “.**

The 2001 Act gives tenants’ rights and sets out duties for landlords.

Tenants have the right to:

- Form independent representative associations
- Access information about housing policies
- Be consulted on issues that affect them, including being consulted on decisions that affect the services tenants receive and be given adequate time to fully consider options. This includes proposals relating to policy on housing management, repairs maintenance, standards of service, the tenant participation strategy and any stock transfer resulting in a change of landlord.

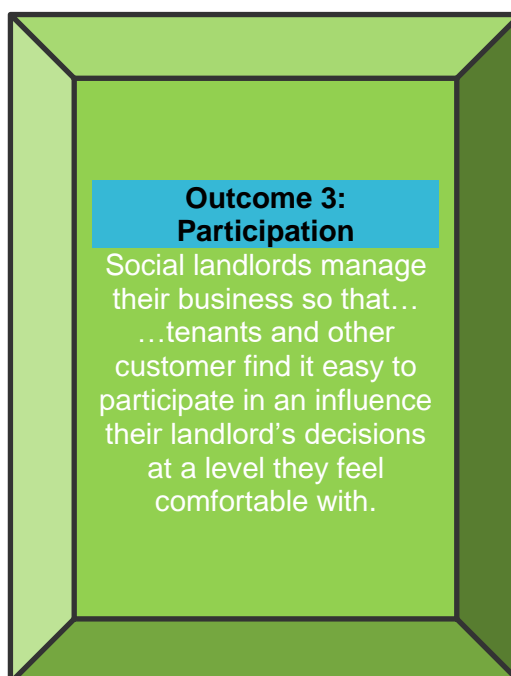
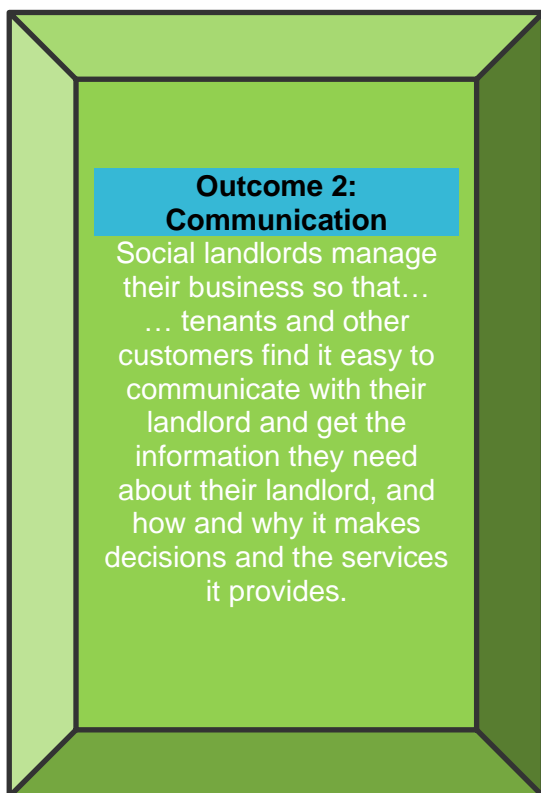
Key Landlord duties are to:

- Publish a Tenant Participation Strategy containing an assessment of resources
- Make sure our Tenant Participation Strategy complies with equal opportunity requirements
- Set up a register of tenant organisations (RTO’s) in line with Scottish Government Guidance
- Inform tenants and RTOs of any proposals for housing management. This includes proposals relating to policy on housing management, repairs maintenance, standards of service, the tenant participation strategy and any stock transfer resulting in a change of landlord.

## The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR)

The SHR is an independent regulator for all social landlords in Scotland. They regulate to protect the interests of people who receive services from social landlords by assessing and reporting on how social landlords are performing. This is mainly through a self-assessment process known as the Annual Return on the Charter (ARC), which enables the SHR to monitor and report on landlords' progress towards the standards and outcomes in the Scottish Social Housing Charter (SSHC).

The SSHC sets out the standards and outcomes that tenants can expect from their landlord in terms of service performance, opportunities for communication and participation in decisions that affect them.



The Charter encourages tenants to get involved and also to scrutinise their landlord's performance. Tenant-led scrutiny of housing services marked a significant change in the evolution of tenant participation and can empower tenants to drive service improvements and challenge their landlord's performance in areas that are most important to them.



## Annual Assurance Statement

In October each year, we are also required to submit an Annual Assurance Statement to the SHR: [www.housingregulator.gov.uk](http://www.housingregulator.gov.uk). The Association needs to confirm to the SHR that it is complying with all regulatory requirements and standards. If we do not meet these requirements, we must advise the SHR and say what we are going to do to address the issues. The Association gathers evidence from various sources to assess overall compliance and this is monitored on an ongoing basis. A report is submitted to the Board for approval. Once it has been approved, the Statement is signed and submitted to the SHR and then made publicly on our website: [www.qcha.org.uk](http://www.qcha.org.uk)

Over the next 3 years we want to build on the achievements of our last Tenant Participation Strategy, and push forward the work of creating thriving, dynamic neighbourhoods with a diverse outlook.

## Achievements

### Year 1

- 🏠 our first Open Day was held in April 2018, giving access to “behind the scenes” and a bus tour.
- 🏠 we launched the Queens Cross App in April 2019, giving tenants an easy, accessible method of engaging.
- 🏠 we launched “Getting to Know You 3” to maintain our tenant profile information. We used this information to inform our Business Plan 2020 – 2025. This information also helped us to tailor our services to meet the needs of our tenants and residents.
- 🏠 we recruited more new members on to our Board.
- 🏠 we created an induction and training pack for new staff, RTF, CIG & Board members, and volunteers.
- 🏠 we set up a working group to integrate the Sharing Lives/Sharing Spaces project across our neighbourhoods.
- 🏠 our Social Regeneration team received around £80,000 in external grants which helped us promote a wide range of activities and offered a variety of different opportunities for our tenants and residents to become involved and active within our communities.
- 🏠 we established a Tenant participation Working Group (TPWG) which brought representatives from across the service together. The TPWG continues to meet on a regular basis to review and monitor progress of the TP Action Plan. The Group work together to ensure consistent practice across the service.

## Year 2

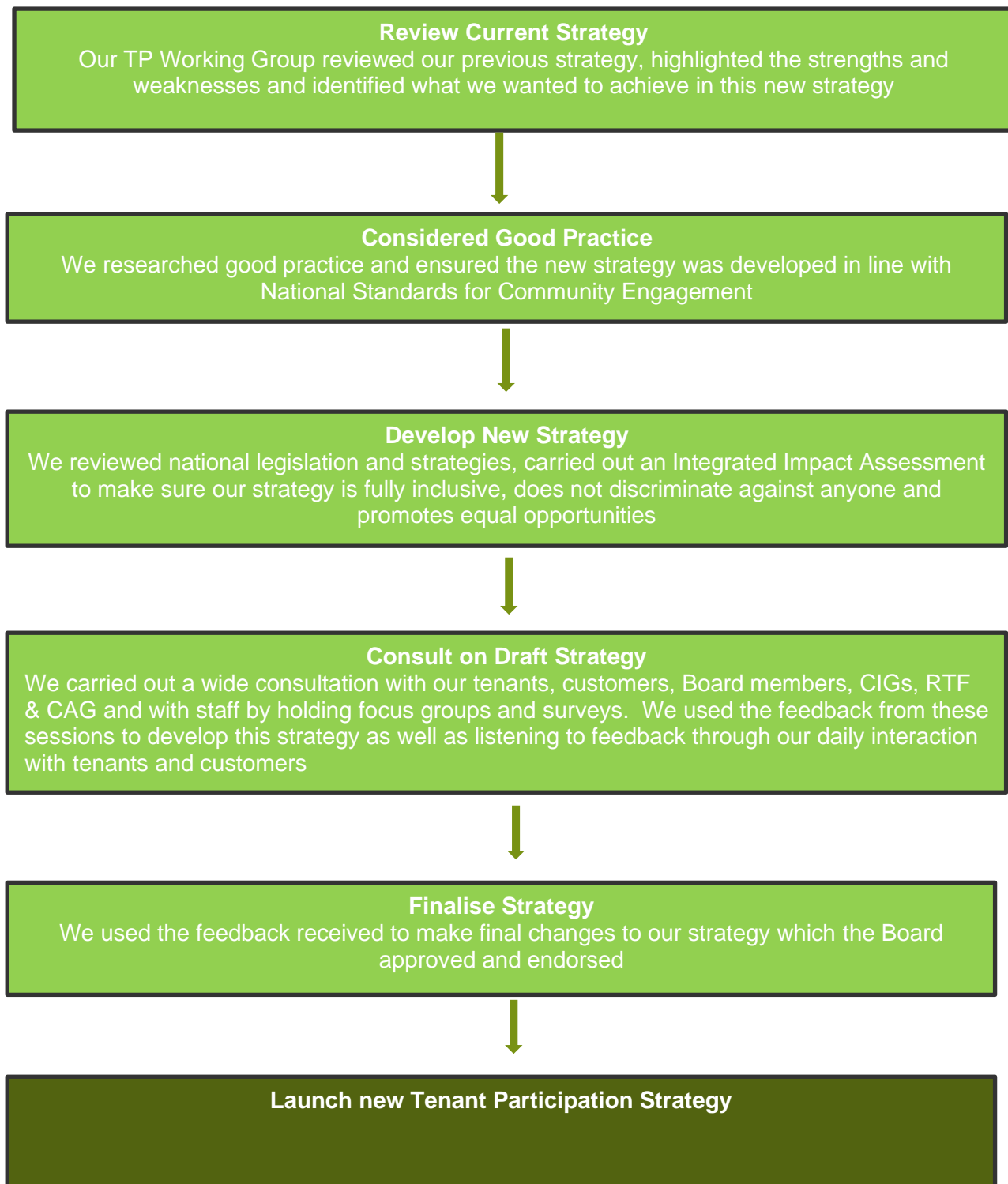
- 🏠 we continued to carry out our annual Tenant Satisfaction Surveys with one third of tenant households. The feedback from these surveys helps us measure if we are achieving the standards and outcomes set out in the SSHC. We share these results with tenants and use the data to help us improve services.
- 🏠 the challenges of COVID-19 restrictions accelerated our use of Social Media. We embraced these challenges. We kept in touch with tenants by email and phone; provided support to enable tenants to attend online meetings with us; gave on-to-one and group support to tenants to attend online meetings on Skype, Zoom and Microsoft Teams
- 🏠 we agreed an annual programme of tenant consultations and scrutiny topics with the Residents Task Force.
- 🏠 we developed a Consultation calendar to record planned consultations across all teams within the Service.
- 🏠 an “Opportunities to get Involved” event was held in March 2020.  
We recruited more new Board members and reviewed our approach to recruitment
- 🏠 we merged our Sharing Lives/Sharing Spaces with our new Community Opportunities Project. This project continues to provide access to ESOL classes, supports our Chinese community to navigate our services and others’, and offers new opportunities to engage with local families.
- 🏠 throughout 2020 we continued to organise a wide range of activities that have been well supported by our tenants and communities. COVID-19 introduced a period of turmoil and our programme was abruptly brought to a halt. We moved many activities online in order to continue aspects of youth work, promoting health and well-being and digital inclusion.
- 🏠 we completed our “critical friend” reviews of our supported housing services. All three of our Wellbeing Support Services: young people, mental health and 60+ continue to achieve high grades from the Care Inspectorate.
- 🏠 we recruited a dedicated Customer Engagement Officer whose role is to ensure that tenant participation becomes an integral part of the organisation.
- 🏠 we delivered staff tenant participation training sessions with Housing staff.
- 🏠 we were successful in receiving funding for IT equipment and devices to support residents to get online during lockdown.



## Year 3

- 🏠 we increased the number of members on our Community Involvement Groups (CIGs) and the number of tenant representatives on our Board despite COVID-19 restrictions on meeting in person. We plan on holding a Board information evening in early 2022 to further promote opportunities and vacancies on our Board.
- 🏠 we carried out a review of our CIGs looking at their roles within the organisation. Improving their responsibilities: including the monitoring of budgets, tasks and procedures
- 🏠 we carried out online consultations, rent and allocations and online board, RTF and CIG meetings to continue with engagement over lockdown
- 🏠 we held two successful online “Opportunities to get Involved” events in February and July 2021
- 🏠 we introduced a new event called Café Conversations in spring 2021, to ask tenants and service users for their views on topics of interest to them as Association customers. Three pilot sessions were held on the topics: “What Makes a Good Neighbourhood”, “The Quality of Your Home” and “Value for Money”. The topics were chosen based on feedback received from our last tenant satisfaction survey
- 🏠 we developed our consultations calendar and set up a consultations Good Practice Guide to aide staff and have a consistent approach to consulting with customers
- 🏠 we carried out a staff survey to gauge levels of understanding of Tenant Participation across different teams, identify training needs and record staff’s ideas about how to improve tenant participation
- 🏠 we launched Queens Cross Connected participatory budgeting project and distributed £15,000 of funding to four local groups voted for by members of the community. The second round of funding will be distributed in late 2021
- 🏠 we introduced Nurture our Neighbourhoods
- 🏠 we signed up to the Tenants Information Service (TIS) Digital Engagement Strategy and our office facilities are being set up for blended online and in person meetings
- 🏠 we set up a Young Persons Panel to ensure the views of younger tenants are heard
- 🏠 we joined the Tenant Participation Advisory Services (TPAS) to expand our membership of independent tenant organisations so that we have a wide range of services and expertise to support our tenants

## How the Tenant Participation Strategy 2022 – 2025 was developed



## Consultation

We carried out a wide consultation in preparing this strategy with our tenants, customers, Board members, Community Involvement Groups (CIGs), Residents Task Force (RTF), Community Action Group (CAG) and with staff by holding focus groups and surveys. We used the feedback from these sessions and surveys to help develop this strategy as well as listening to feedback through our daily interaction with customers.

Our most recent Tenants Satisfaction Survey, carried out in October 2021, 77% of respondents said they were satisfied with opportunities to take part in decision-making (this is down slightly from 81% in 2020). However, the proportion that were very satisfied increased from 37% in 2020 to 44% in 2021. We found that people aged 35-44 were less likely than average to be very or fairly satisfied with opportunities to participate in decision-making (71%).

## Customer Awareness

We asked participants about their awareness of different ways they can get involved.

- Becoming member of the Association - 55% of people surveyed were aware of this option.
- Becoming member of the Association's Board - 54% of people surveyed were aware of this option.
- Opportunities to volunteer in your community - 48% of people surveyed were aware of this option.
- Becoming member of one of Association's four Community Involvement Groups - 44% of people surveyed were aware of this option.
- Inspecting Association's services as member of Residents Task Force - 55% of people surveyed were aware of this option.

Overall awareness levels were slightly lower than those recorded in our 2020 survey, except for awareness of becoming a member of the Association where awareness levels were slightly higher. Tenants with a disability tend to have a higher level of awareness of all types of involvement and respondents aged 65+ were significantly more likely than average to be aware that they can become a member of the Association's Board, become a member of the Association or become a volunteer. Awareness level for all types of involvement tend to be lower among younger age groups. There was also some discrepancy in levels of awareness across our four neighbourhoods.

It's important that all customers know about the involvement opportunities available so over the next three years will work towards increasing awareness for everyone, while focusing on demographics and geographical areas with lower awareness to bring this in line with others.

## New ways to get involved

We asked participants if they would be interested in new ways of being involved with Queens Cross Housing Association.

- Residents' groups - 69% of people surveyed were interested in this option
- Survey panels - 47% of people surveyed were interested in this option

- Mystery shopping - 38% of people surveyed were interested in this option
- Website panels - 34% of people surveyed were interested in this option
- Communication panels - 30% of people surveyed were interested in this option
- Estate inspectors - 29% of people surveyed were interested in this option
- Short life groups - 26% of people surveyed were interested in this option

By providing a wider menu of involvement options, we aim to have something to suit the needs of all tenants and customers and cater to how much time they have available, a level of formality they are comfortable with and a focus of topics they find interesting.

## **Getting more people involved**

We asked participants how important they considered the following things to be with regards to getting more people involved.

- Feeling that you were genuinely listened to - 74% felt this was important
- Being able to choose the issues that were important to you to have your say on - 65% felt this was important
- Being able to take part at a time that suited you - 61% felt this was important
- Being able to have your say without making a long-term commitment - 53% felt this was important
- Being able to take part at local places convenient to you - 48% felt this was important
- Getting to meet and know other people in your community - 32% felt this was important
- The participation activities being fun and interesting - 30% felt this was important
- Being able to take part remotely should you wish (eg Zoom or similar) - 22% felt this was important

The majority of tenants told us that the most important way of encouraging tenants to get involved in decision-making is to ensure they feel that they are being genuinely listened to, followed by being able to choose issues that were important to them, being able to take part at a time that suited and being able to have a say without making a long-term commitment.

## **Focus Groups**

Focus groups were held as part of our Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Strategy consultation. These groups highlighted the importance of having an in depth understanding of the needs of communities (including intersecting communities of interest) to deliver equality of outcomes, which is part of the challenge of customer engagement and participation.

Participants were very positive about the opportunities available. Participants wanted to see these opportunities continue and ideally expanded to make sure that opportunities are available to as many people as possible.

The role of digital participation and ensuring it is not a barrier was also highlighted as being increasingly important. This can be of particular benefit to people that may find it more difficult to travel to events but must not replace other options including telephone and face-to-face engagement.

## Staff Survey

We carried out a survey to establish how much staff knew about Tenant Participation, we asked how they promote it as part of their role and what they thought about engagement. The survey revealed that staff see the benefits of Tenant Participation for everyone involved, but we found different levels of understanding of Tenant Participation across the service.

Staff told us they would like it to be made easier for them to promote participation more often, provide more information about how tenants can participate and introduce new, informal ways for tenants to get involved. We found that our staff are committed to improving communication between different departments, improving information sharing and they would like to see even more resources and training.

We are committed to the pursuit of providing Tenant Participation training for staff to ensure all staff have the knowledge required to actively participate within the Tenant Participation Strategy.

## Where we want to go next

Although we will build on the foundations and structures developed by our previous strategies, the key themes and emphasis of our current strategy will continue to strengthen the role of tenants and customers in challenging our performance and driving service improvements. We will continue to widen the opportunities for tenants and customers to shape and influence our services, making it easier for them to participate and make their view known to us.

The strategy will also seek to address some of the key challenges of tenant participation within the Association, including:

- ❖ Implementing a tenant-led scrutiny framework
- ❖ Encouraging tenants to get involved in our decision making processes
- ❖ Engaging with hard to reach groups such as younger people, the disabled and ethnic minorities
- ❖ Developing new forms of involvement such as social media and digital communication

To achieve this, we have identified a number of outcomes and supporting actions which set out the steps we will take to implement the strategy. Our 5 outcomes are detailed below. Alongside these outcomes we highlight some actions we will be taking to make sure these goals are met.

These key outcomes are supported by a detailed Action Plan, which forms the basis of how we will check if the Strategy is working. The detailed action plan is shown in **APPENDIX I**.

### **Outcome 1: Communicate with our tenants and customers and listen to their views in a way that suits them**

We actively seek the views of our tenants and customers so that we focus on 'doing best what matters most'. We use this information to make service improvements. We aim to capture a range of views and make it easy for our tenants and customers to speak to us.

In order to maximise tenant and customer opportunities to raise issues and be able to influence decisions we will use a wide range of information and consultation methods. We will provide tenants and customers with up to date, accurate, relevant and accessible information of good quality to enable them to be well informed and better equipped to participate. We will keep you informed and updated in a range of ways, including:

- ❖ Focus Newsletter
- ❖ Annual Landlord Report
- ❖ Annual Tenant Participation Report
- ❖ Details of Local Events
- ❖ Tenancy Sustainment
- ❖ Wellbeing Services
- ❖ Financial Inclusion/Capability
- ❖ Social Media
- ❖ Digital inclusion
- ❖ Tenant App
- ❖ Annual Tenant Satisfaction Survey
- ❖ Focus Groups and Events
- ❖ Programme of Regular Customer Surveys
- ❖ “Getting to know You” Surveys
- ❖ Providing a copy of the Annual Assurance Statement
- ❖ Community Involvement Groups (CIGs)
- ❖ Residents Task Force (RTF)
- ❖ Community Action Group (CAG)
- ❖ Register of Interested Tenants
- ❖ Young Persons Forum
- ❖ Out and About Events
- ❖ Café conversations
- ❖ Food for thought sessions
- ❖ Making places events

The COVID-19 pandemic required us to find new and innovative ways of keeping in touch and engaging with our tenants and customers and in particular to make greater use of online communication channels. During the pandemic we put digital services at the heart of our business, providing a better and more responsive service. We are extremely proud of how we used digital technology to provide better services, during a time of crisis we responded to people's needs resulting in better outcomes for tenants and customers. Thanks to our use of digital solutions such as the new website, the Queens Cross App, digital translation devices and cloud based information sharing, we were able to continue providing excellent services to tenants and customers whilst also advancing digital inclusion so that more of our tenants' customers could get online.



- ❖ Continue to develop our approach to consultation and feedback so tenants and customers can see how they can drive improvements by getting involved.
- ❖ Introduce our new **“Involvement Menu”** making it easier for all tenants and customers to become involved and ensuring that tenants and customers are updated on actions taken because of their feedback
- ❖ Continue to develop and strengthen tenant scrutiny services, for instance we will explore the possibility of introducing mystery shoppers. Mystery shopping is a method tenants and other customers can use to test our services and record their experiences and impressions. It gives those involved a chance to develop interview skills with training and support.
- ❖ While we move forward in the journey of understanding a digital transformation, it is essential that we also create a fine balance between our online and offline presences. We know that there is a significant amount of people in our communities who do not or cannot access the internet due to challenging factors that include: affordability; connectivity; lack of confidence and skills; and access to technology. We will embrace both online and offline services that provide equal opportunities; encourage full participation and deliver maximum impact.
- ❖ Develop an online Tenants Portal containing lots of useful information and details about tenancies that new and existing tenants can download.
- ❖ Further develop our register of interested tenants. This is a list of tenants and other customers who wish to participate and have contacted the Association during activities or other communication channels. As an interested person you will be able to use your experiences and knowledge to improve the services you receive in a way that suits you.

## **Outcome 2: Providing more opportunities for tenants and customers to influence the service they receive in a way that suits them.**

We are fully committed to encouraging the involvement of tenants and other customers at a level that suits them. During the course of this strategy we will seek to expand and promote our range of opportunities that tenants and customers have to make their views known.

- ❖ Succession plan with our Board so we actively recruit new Board members
- ❖ Promote membership of our Community Involvement Groups (CIGs) and Residents Task Force (RTF), with an increased focus on ways for tenants to become involved locally
- ❖ Take a more active approach to recruiting a more diverse range of volunteers
- ❖ Clarify and develop the role of our Community Action Group (\*CAG)
- ❖ Increase the number of members on our Young Persons Forum
- ❖ Develop and implement a tenant-led scrutiny framework which will be overseen by the Residents Task Force (RTF).
- ❖ Continue to seek feedback on a range of services, consultations and policy development
- ❖ Get tenants to identify and prioritise improvement works through our Nurture our Neighbourhoods estate walkabouts and the environmental improvement budget
- ❖ Review and develop our Registered Tenant Organisation (RTO) arrangements to meet the evolving need of our tenant representatives
- ❖ Introduce tenant sign-up packs so that every new tenant is provided with comprehensive information at the start of their tenancy

- ❖ Introduce a capital programme working group to monitor, review and feedback on a variety of programme elements. This can range from the planned maintenance investment for upgrades to existing properties and the development of new build properties
- ❖ Our Resident Task Force (RTF) recently scrutinised how we communicate with our tenants and residents. Our RTF reviewed publications, such as: our Focus newsletter and standard letters and we aim to continue this work to ensure that we communicate clearly and openly with customers.

### **Outcome 3: Work more closely with our tenants and customers in a way that suits them so we can improve services together**

We want our tenants to be empowered and have opportunities to build the skills that will enable them to make a real contribution to the service.

- ❖ We will work with our tenant representatives to make sure that appropriate training and capacity building opportunities are made available.
- ❖ Keeping up to date is essential for staff and tenant representatives. There is value in joint training where possible, although some training specifically for tenants will always be appropriate
- ❖ We will carry out a training needs analysis to identify training requirements for tenants and relevant staff
- ❖ We will seek opportunities to access training and share resources with other partner organisations
- ❖ In recent years, the emergence of accredited learning courses has been a significant development in capacity building initiatives for tenants. Such initiatives offer tenants the opportunity to undertake a programme of learning that can help build their capacity not only to undertake tenant representative duties but also get a better understanding of a range of housing services such as tenant-led scrutiny, tenancy sustainment, performance management, repairs and finance. We will continue to support any tenant representatives wishing to participate.

### **Outcome 4: Encourage more tenants and customers to become involved with the Association in a way that suits them**

We recognise that every person has different skills, interests and knowledge. We want to make the best use of our tenant and customer experiences by providing opportunities for them to get involved in things they are most interested in and in a way that suits them. We will make sure that everyone who wants to participate is supported appropriately. This support will be delivered in different ways ranging from providing good quality information on specific topics through to direct support for tenants who want to form and run a tenants group.

- ❖ We will work together to promote equal opportunities and remove barriers to participation.
- ❖ We recognise that certain groups may be under-represented and that a special effort may be needed to encourage involvement. The Action Plan (APPENDIX I) identifies such groups and we will support informal and innovative methods of engagement that may better their needs

- ❖ Appropriate methods to involve under-represented groups will be explored and investigated, for example, partnership working with other agencies and informal discussions
- ❖ We will encourage more tenants and residents to take part in our community events
- ❖ We will continue to attend community activities and events to promote the different opportunities to get involved.
- ❖ We will introduce a Good Neighbour Charter for staff, tenants, and customers to work together to create desirable neighbourhoods where people choose to live and work.
- ❖ To help ensure estates are kept clean and in good condition we will further develop our Nurture our Neighbourhood estate inspections. Inspections will be carried out by local tenants and staff on a programmed basis. The programme will be made available on our website and other social media platforms to encourage as many people to attend. After each inspection, the information will be collated and a report prepared grading the estate and highlighting areas for improvement
- ❖ We will introduce tenant participation taster sessions for new interested tenants
- ❖ We will encourage tenant representatives to attend conferences and wider professional discussion events

## **Outcome 5: Look at the resources required to make the strategy work**

We take our commitment to tenant participation seriously and as such tenant participation is included in our annual budget. Our budgets cover the cost of:

- ❖ Information and training to help build the capacity of tenant groups
- ❖ Tenant travel and specific out of pocket expenses
- ❖ Participatory budgeting - provide funding for priorities identified for environmental improvements
- ❖ Independent advice from the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS), Tenants Information Service (TIS) and the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH)
- ❖ Writing, designing, printing, distributing newsletters
- ❖ Other information produced for tenants
- ❖ Tenant satisfaction surveys and other ways of getting feedback
- ❖ Tenant participation events such as training and tenant open days
- ❖ Miscellaneous activities to encourage tenant and customer involvement

## **Independent Tenant Organisations**

The Tenants Information Service (TIS) and the Tenant Participatory Advisory Service (TPAS) are independent organisations who promote good practice in tenant participation throughout Scotland by working with both tenants and landlords. These organisations offer access to expertise which help us develop key principles, best practice and aid continuous improvement to ensure we are at the forefront of engagement activities. They provide tenants and staff with opportunities to learn about tenant participation, take part in training and information sessions and will enable networking with others. They are an important resource that will help us to achieve the goals set out in this strategy.

We are members of both organisations and by working with them, we can ensure that good practice is maintained and shared. Membership of these bodies demonstrates our commitment to tenant and community engagement, enable tenant participation to become part of our organisational culture and help provide tenants with the skills and confidence they need to be actively involved.

We aim to encourage as many tenants as possible to get involved with us and will give them a range of options. We want tenants to get involved in a way that suits them and will agree timescales with tenants to make sure they can properly participate. We will make sure our tenant participation activities are accessible to all and will be responsive to tenants' individual needs. We will provide tenants with access to the services and resources they need to allow them to become fully involved.

## **How we will monitor and measure performance**

The Tenant Participation Strategy and action plan are working documents subject to continuous review to make sure that outcomes and targets are met.

Continuous monitoring of the strategy and action plan is essential in identifying issues or areas of slow progress. This will be monitored by the Community Involvement Groups (CIGs), Community Action Group CAG and housing staff. The Strategy and action plan will be reviewed regularly by the Tenant Participation Working Group (TPWG) so that the milestones in the action plan and set outcomes are met.

Annually, a report outlining Tenant Participation activities over the period will be presented to the Board. The Board scrutinises performance information for the service and makes sure that it achieves maximum value for money and best value in service delivery.

The Tenant Participation Strategy will be reviewed every 3 years.

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