

# Report

Report to:	<b>Housing and Technical Resources Committee</b>
Date of Meeting:	<b>7 February 2024</b>
Report by:	<b>Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources)</b>

Subject:	<b>South Lanarkshire Council Customer Involvement Strategy 2024 to 2029</b>
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## **1. Purpose of Report**

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ seek approval from Housing and Technical Resources Committee for the introduction of the revised Customer Involvement Strategy with effect from 1 April 2024.

## **2. Recommendations**

2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that the revised South Lanarkshire Council Customer Involvement Strategy, attached as Appendix 1, be approved; and
- (2) that the revised strategy be implemented with effect from 1 April 2024

## **3. Background**

3.1. This is the fifth strategy prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and was developed in accordance with relevant legislation and regulatory requirements. The current strategy relating to the approach the Council takes in relation to customer involvement was approved by the Housing and Technical Resources Committee on 23 May 2018.

3.2. On 14 December 2022, Housing and Technical Resources Committee approved the updated Policy and Strategy Review Schedule which confirmed that a review of the Council's Customer Involvement Strategy would take place during 2023.

3.3. The key aim of this strategy is to ensure extensive engagement with tenants and other customers to inform the important decisions taken across housing and related services. The strategy has also been developed to reflect the principles of both the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 and the National Standards for Community Engagement.

## **4. Pre-Consultation Stage**

4.1. During the pre-consultation stage, to support the development of a consultative draft, the following actions were taken:-

- an evaluation of the current strategy against a range of criteria derived from the priorities and objectives specified within the strategy and legal and regulatory requirements

- a review of other Scottish Local Authority Customer Involvement Strategies
- discussions with the Tenant Participation Co-ordination Group (TPCG), customers and other services in relation to content of the draft strategy; and
- a review of the feedback received from those with experience of customer involvement who have used Council services

4.2. The comments received and views expressed during the pre-consultation stage informed the consultative draft strategy.

## **5. Summary of Key Changes from Current Strategy**

5.1. It is proposed that the revised strategy will continue to take forward the learning from the pandemic and focus on the Council's approach to customer involvement, with the following key changes:-

- ◆ undertaking a review of local engagement arrangements with the aim of offering a variety of opportunities that fit with the needs and aspirations of tenants and other customers
- ◆ enhancing our approach to working alongside communities of interest across South Lanarkshire to ensure they have the opportunity to influence important decisions
- ◆ considering how we continue to develop new ways of working and new engagement structures to meet the changing needs and expectations of customers
- ◆ further developing participatory budgeting to ensure that customers can help to shape the use of key aspects of budget
- ◆ developing the "Customer Portal" as part of the new Integrated Housing and Property Management System which will enhance the ability and scope for direct engagement with customers; and
- ◆ consolidating links with Community Planning to reach more local groups across South Lanarkshire

## **6. Key Features of the Revised Strategy**

6.1. To ensure extensive engagement with customers to inform the important decisions taken across housing services, the revised strategy sets out the approach the Council will take in customer involvement.

6.2. This approach is also in line with the Council's values outlined in Connect 2022-2027:-

- ◆ focused on people and their needs
- ◆ working with and respecting others
- ◆ accountable, effective, efficient and transparent
- ◆ ambitious, self-aware and improving; and
- ◆ fair, open and sustainable
- ◆ excellent employer

6.3. The strategy aims to reverse the trend of a decrease in local groups and registered tenant organisations that began pre-Covid-19, by prioritising the continued development of customer involvement whilst also focusing on getting more customers involved and ensuring there are a range of options and opportunities for this to happen.

6.4. The strategy is focused on 4 strategic outcomes which are set out below, with the overall goal of further developing the approach and enabling customers to have realistic opportunities to become involved and help shape housing services. To

achieve each of the strategic outcomes, the strategy details a number of associated priority actions which will be progressed over the next 5 years:-

- ◆ customers are informed and knowledgeable
- ◆ more customers are involved
- ◆ customers drive continuous service improvement; and
- ◆ customers shape change and make a difference

6.5. The key learning from customer engagement during the pandemic has been reflected within the new strategy and the Council will continue to offer a range of online, in-person and hybrid options to give flexibility and further develop levels of involvement.

6.6. The full revised strategy is contained within Appendix 1.

## **7. Formal Consultation Process**

7.1. A consultative draft Customer Involvement Strategy was developed in conjunction with the TPCG and issued for formal consultation from 1 September to 8 December 2023. The consultative draft strategy was published on the Council's website, together with an online survey, which was developed to guide responses in relation to the following key aspects of the strategy:-

- ◆ the aims and objectives of the strategy
- ◆ the Council's approach to customer involvement; and
- ◆ that priorities and actions to ensure progress of the strategy are appropriate

7.2. In addition to the launch of the online questionnaire, a range of consultation events and presentations or discussions with existing interested groups, were taken forward by officers including:-

- ◆ South Lanarkshire Tenant Participation Co-ordination Group
- ◆ South Lanarkshire Disability Partnership Housing Sub-Group
- ◆ East Kilbride Sheltered Housing Forum
- ◆ Community Planning Progress Group
- ◆ Autism Strategy Group
- ◆ Corporate Equality and Diversity Coordinating Group; and
- ◆ Clydesdale Local Housing Forum

7.3. Views were also sought from a number of specialist organisations who offer support and advice to care experienced young people, veterans and members of the armed forces community, carers and young people.

7.4. Through the consultation approximately 200 people shared their views on the draft strategy with key responses including:-

- ◆ high levels of support with the priorities and actions detailed in the strategy
- ◆ the importance of ensuring a range of flexible, local options for people to get involved that recognises people's different experiences and interests
- ◆ the benefit of ongoing promotion of the definition of 'customer' to make it easier for people to understand their ability to participate
- ◆ building ongoing relationships with other local groups to make it easier for them to share their views

7.5. Views and comments received throughout the consultation were considered and incorporated as appropriate to inform the preparation of the finalised strategy.

## **8. Next Steps**

- 8.1. Following approval from Housing and Technical Resources Committee, the revised strategy will be implemented from 1 April 2024.
- 8.2. Implementation of the strategy will be progressed in conjunction with the TPCG with an annual report on progress provided to the Housing and Technical Resources Committee.

## **9. Employee Implications**

- 9.1. There are no employee implications associated with this report.

## **10. Financial Implications**

- 10.1. There are no financial implications associated with this report.

## **11. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications**

- 11.1. This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy which impacts on the natural environment, climate change or sustainability.
- 11.2. A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) pre-screening determination was completed as part of the review of the South Lanarkshire Council Customer Involvement Strategy. The assessment confirmed that there is no requirement to complete a SEA.

## **12. Other Implications**

- 12.1. There are no other implications as a result of this report.
- 12.2. The content of this report will contribute to the evidence to support the requirements of the Annual Assurance Statement.

## **13. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements**

- 13.1. Consultation on the draft Customer Involvement Strategy took place between 1 September and 24 November 2023. During this time a range of key stakeholders, including tenants and other customers, partner agencies and external organisations were given the opportunity to comment on the proposed strategy. The views and comments received have significantly contributed to the shape the finalised strategy document.
- 13.2. An equality impact assessment has been carried out on the recommendations contained within this report and where identified, remedial action has been taken. The assessment is that the proposals do not have any adverse impact on any part of the community covered by equalities legislation or on community relations. The results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website.

**Stephen Gibson**

**Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources)**

20 December 2023

## **Link(s) to Council Values/Priorities/Objectives**

- ◆ focused on people and their needs
- ◆ working with and respecting others
- ◆ accountable, effective, efficient and transparent

### **Previous References**

- ◆ Customer Involvement Strategy - Housing and Technical Resources Committee, 23 May 2018
- ◆ Housing and Technical Resources Policy and Strategy Review Schedule 2022/2023 - Housing and Technical Resources Committee, 14 December 2022

### **List of Background Papers**

- ◆ South Lanarkshire Customer Involvement Strategy 2018-2022

### **Contact for Further Information**

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

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