**Board Meeting:** Tenants and Communities Panel

**Report for Information**

**Title:** Annual Tenant Participation Report April 2020- March 2021

**1 Purpose of the report**

1.1 To provide the Tenants and Communities Panel with an update on Tenant Participation at North Wales Housing from April 2020 to March 2021.

**2 Action Required / Recommendations**

2.1 Report is for information and members are asked to review and note its contents.

**3 Background**

3.1 What is Tenant Participation?

3.2 There are a number of definitions of tenant participation or engagement. A widely used definition is provided by TPAS Cymru:

 “Tenants participation is a way in which tenants and landlords share ideas and co-operate. It is a way for the tenant to be involved in the decision making process that occurs during discussions about improving the standard of housing conditions and services”

**4 Introduction**

4.1 Our tenant participation work for this reporting period is based on our Tenant Participation Strategy for 2018-2021.

4.2 Following a consultation the Strategy was developed around the views of our tenants and staff who helped us identify what we were doing well, and where we needed to improve.

4.3 Consultation for our new Tenant Participation Strategy (2021-2024) commenced

 during this reporting period and will be discussed in this report.

4.4 This report sets out what tenant participation opportunities are available and what activities have taken place from April 2020 to March 2021. Covid 19 restrictions has impacted significantly on what NWH has been able to deliver during this period. Face to face events and activities have been impacted upon; however, this report will hopefully demonstrate how NWH has adapted during this period.

**5 Tenants and Communities Panel**

5.1 The Panel consists of Board members, tenants, and staff, and meets every two months (currently via online). It has the responsibility for scrutinising our services and performance to ensure all residents receive the highest possible standards of service. The Panel and its tenant members are also a key part of the governance of NWH.

5.2 During this reporting period the Panel has adapted to meeting online and continued to meet every two months.

**6 Tenants Forum**

6.1 The Tenant’s Forum was set up towards the end of the last reporting period, with the

 first meeting held face to face just before Covid 19 restrictions came into force.

6.2 It meets on a regular basis and provides its members with an opportunity to obtain

 Information, influence our decision making, and strengthen our services. The aim is to

 dedicate each meeting to a particular topic, allowing members to learn more about

 North Wales Housing, and provide input and feedback to improve the services we

 provide.

6.3 The forum currently has 8 members and has been meeting online via Teams

 throughout this reporting period. Please see below topics looked at by the Forum:

* Participated in the development of a code of conduct for members of the Forum
* Session and overview NWH and different services provided
* Identified areas of interest for Forum members
* NWH website – reviewed current website and provided input and feedback on how it could be improved
* Tenant Participation at NWH (Reviewed current practices and strategy, and provided input into the new Strategy for 2021- 2024)
* Corporate Plan – Session on the content of the Corporate Plan, and also the opportunities it could give to tenants to have more input on NWH services
* Anti-Social Behaviour – Reviewed current ASB procedures and provided input and feedback

**7 Sounding Board**

7.1 The Sounding Board is a database of tenants who are interested in acting as a

 ‘reader’ of leaflets’, forms, policies etc. and providing feedback.

7.2 There are 35 members, and they were involved in the following areas of work during

 this reporting period:

* Survey of Tenants' Views of the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS)
* Live Chat (on website) survey
* NWH website – input and feedback on how it could be improved
* Rent consultation
* Tenant Participation at NWH (Reviewed current practices and strategy, and provided input into the new Strategy for 2021- 2024)
* TPAS Cymru circulars and surveys

**8 Digital Transformation Project Group**

8.1 This group consists of staff and two tenants who meet to review and determine what

 digital improvements can be made by NWH

8.2 The group have been and are currently looking at these areas of work:

* Agile Working
* Website
* Digital Communications
* Digital Strategy

**9 Tre Cwm Wall Project**

9.1 This a partnership project with Catrefi Conwy and CALL (Culture Action Llandudno)

9.2 The Tre Cwm housing estate in Llandudno consists of North Wales Housing, Cartrefi

 Conwy, and a small number of private properties. This housing estate is encompassed

 by a wall, segregating the community living there from the surrounding town. This is

 the wall around Churchill Close.

9.3 The aim of the project has been to develop artworks with the community which

 transforms this wall, addressing issues of exclusion, division and social isolation.

9.4 The project has also developed informal partnerships with Tre Cwm Action Group,

 Llandudno Museum, Llandudno Archives, Ysgol John Bright, and Llandudno Football

 Club. Llandudno Town Council and North Wales Police have also given their support

 to the project.

9.5 CALL were successful in securing a grant from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation to fund

 the project. The funding has also gone towards the commissioning of two artists to

 deliver the project

9.6 A number of activities were arranged to engage with young people on the estate,

 such art workshops, treasure hunt around the estate, and open days at the local

 community centre. These activities were undertaken during the last reporting period

 and prior to the first Covid lockdown.

9.7 During this reporting period plans for the artwork were finalised and engagement was

 made online via zoom, email, and also text messaging.

9.8 One face to face event was arranged during this period, in accordance with government

 guidelines and open to a limited number of people (i.e. those living on Tre Cwm who

 had participated in the project). This event was an open-air cinema event with a film

 produced chronicling the whole project.

9.9 Following the end of this reporting period the artwork has been successfully installed

 on the wall and the project completed.

**10 Events and activities**

10.1 We usually organise events and activities to engage with our tenants. These

 events and activities should give tenants the opportunity to get involved at North

 Wales Housing and improve the quality of life in communities in which our tenants live.

10.2 Get to know your landlord/Pop up events on our schemes have been on hold.

 However, as restrictions ease, we will be planning these events again.

10.3 Prior to covid we worked with an organisation called the Outdoor Partnership to

 provide our tenants with the opportunity to take part in outdoor activities such as hill

 walking, indoor climbing, and biking for the benefit of physical and mental health. We

 will look to do something similar again and grant funding has been secured to fund

 some electric biking taster sessions for our residents.

10.4 While we were unable to provide face to face events etc, during this reporting period

 many staff from across the organisation made welfare telephone calls to our tenants.

 This included checking if any assistance was with shopping or collecting medicine,

 and also, was any financial inclusion assistance required from our specialist staff. We

 also used these calls as an opportunity to collect tenant profiling information.

10.5 Our gardening competition has continued to be popular with our tenants, and

 increased entries were received for the competition during this reporting period. A

 tenant can nominate themselves or a neighbour in the following categories:

* Best garden
* Most improved garden
* Best container garden
* Best kept communal space/garden

10.6 This reporting period was our third Good Neighbour Award. The aim is to pay

 tribute to our tenants who have made a significant difference to the lives of their

 neighbours or the local community. We had two joint winners with Geoff Uttley from

 Llys y Coed, and Jean Hayward of Hafod y Parc.

10.7 In a difficult and challenging period the Older Persons Team adapted and used a

 variety of methods to engage with the residents at the Extra Care and Sheltered

 Scheme’s:

* Inter-generational communication with local schools who exchanged cards and letters with tenants at our schemes
* Regular Newsletters and Well-Being Calls/Doorstep Visits
* Setting up a shop to assist with groceries/essential items
* Setting up food and parcel delivery services
* Delivering of gifts and treats
* Well-Being Packs delivered to Sheltered/Extra Care and Leasehold schemes with gift
* Donations from ASDA
* Supplied and Distributed Puzzles/Crosswords/Sudoku/Jig-saws/Colouring Books
* Pets Therapy Visits
* Social Distance Bingo
* Arranged Zoom meetings for Tenants to contact families
* Garden concert at Llys y Coed
* Social Distance Armchair Aerobics
* Charity fund-raising events – sponsored walks/raffles
* Supported and promoted Gardening projects on the scheme

10.8 The Supported Housing team also faced challenges due to Covid-19, and adapted to

 engage with residents:

* Following the introduction of robust procedures, and the use of IT and online platforms, activities commenced again, albeit in a different format than previous times
* Residents embraced the use of online technology and the reintroduction of well managed activities and support sessions,
* Communal hostel garden areas continued to be an asset, and this open space allowed residents and staff the opportunity to engage in activities, whilst being able to talk to others at a safe distance
* Due to the available space in Pendinas, cooking on a budget recommenced (on a 121 basis) for example, and more arts and craft activities became more available.
* 121 sessions around Mental Health and peer influences
* Online resources researched and implemented with residents on a 121 basis, which has led to improved outcomes for the residents as activities now have to be tailored to individual identified needs rather than for a generic group activity

**11 Tenant Participation Strategy Consultation**

11.1 During this reporting period we consulted with tenants on a new Tenant Participation

 Strategy for 2021-2024. The Strategy was approved by the Tenants and Communities

 Panel.

11.2 Pre-Covid the most successful method of gathering tenant input and feedback has

 been face to face, for example using small events on schemes and activities to

 engage with tenants. Sadly, this was not possible due to Covid restrictions; however,

 we did use a variety of methods to ensure we gathered enough input:

* Board Strategy Day (Tenant members of the Tenants & Communities Panel attended the session along with Board members)
* Tenants & Communities Panel (Tenant Participation was included on a meeting agenda and an in-depth discussion was had with suggestions made
* Tenants Forum (The Forum was used as a focus group to discuss tenant participation, and two sessions took place)
* Online Tenants Survey (A survey was shared online, on our Facebook page, Twitter, and on the website. The survey was also sent to our Sounding Board)
* Staff Survey (A survey was shared with staff via workplace and email)

11.3 A full consultation report was produced and is available to view.

11.4 The new Strategy has new been developed and approved along with an action plan

 on how to meet its aims and objectives.

11.5 The next Tenant Participation Report will provide an update on how we are meeting

 those aims and objectives.

**12 Rent consultation**

12.1 A consultation was undertaken to gather feedback on the level of rent charged for

 April 2021 to March 2022. Due to Covid-19 restrictions and timescales this

 consultation included a survey only, which was posted online on our Facebook page

 and website. A link to the survey was also sent out by email to members of the

 Tenants Forum and Sounding Board.

12.2 The survey was open from the 16th of December 2020 to the 13th of January 2021.

12.3 The survey gave the following options for rent levels between April 2021 and March

 2022:

* No increase
* 0.5% increase
* 1% increase

12.4 The following text was included with the survey:

 *Last year the Welsh Government*

 *gave Housing Associations the ability to raise rents by up to 1% + CPI (inflation*

 *based on September prices) for the next 5 years. If we applied this maximum rate the*

 *rent increase from April 2021 would be 1.5%.*

 *This year has been like no other and we understand the impact the pandemic has*

 *had on all our lives and finances. We appreciate how difficult this year has been and*

 *the consequences are likely to run in to the New Year, therefore we are proposing a*

 *rent freeze from April 2021 to March 2022.*

 *We are obliged to hold a consultation for rent increases; however, we have been*

 *unable to do this for some time due to the delay in Government announcement. As we*

 *have a 5-year commitment from Welsh Government we will undertake rent*

 *consultations, starting with this year. With every consultation there are options*

 *therefore we are proposing the following options for rent levels between April 2021*

 *and March 2022:*

* *No increase*
* *0.5% increase*
* *1% increase*

 *Please be assured there will be no fall in service levels if the ‘no increase’ option is the*

 *preferred option.*

12.5 It was agreed that there would be no increase in rent.

**13 Personal Development Grant**

13.1 Our Personal Development Grant has been developed to tackle financial barriers that

 may be preventing our tenants from accessing education, training or employment.

13.2 Examples of what can be funded include:

* Tools or equipment for a job or qualification e.g. hairdressing kit of books for college
* Course fees
* Outfit suitable for an interview

13.3 We’ve had 2 successful applications during this reporting period:

* An application to assist with costs on an Art course at Coleg Menai
* An application to assist with costs in gaining a CSCS Labourer’s Green Card

**14 Community Fund**

14.1 Our Community Fund has been developed to provide funding to assist voluntary,

 community, recreational or resident groups.

14.2 These Organisations/groups should be developing projects and initiatives that benefit

 the local community. Organisations applying for funding must be:

* A constituted organisation/group and have a bank account with a minimum of two signatories
* Follow an open access policy towards membership, use of their facilities and participation in activities
* Be non-political

14.3 We’ve had 1 successful application during this reporting period:

* An application from a community group (Who operate in area in which we have significant number of tenants) to assist in financing dance classes for children.

**15 Future Actions**

15.1 The new Corporate Plan has greater expectation on getting more tenant input when

 changing or developing services. This should give greater opportunity for more

 tenants to have their say on how decisions are made. For example, our Tenant Forum

 will be involved in reviewing our Anti-Social Behaviour procedures. We will also be

 consulting with newer tenants on the sign-up process and how this can be improved.

15.2 During the next reporting period we will be undertaking a consultation on rent

 affordability and service charges.

15.3 Depending on any further changes in Covid restrictions, we will begin planning what

 activities can be delivered face to face.

15.4 We will look to consult with our tenants on how to improve any communal green areas

 schemes, for example providing a wildflower garden, or communal garden space for

 tenants to enjoy. One scheme will be chosen as a pilot so lessons can be learnt,

 before potentially replicating on other schemes.

15.5 A recruitment drive will be undertaken for new members for the Tenants &

 Communities Panel.

15.6 Invite a tenant member from the Tenants & Communities Panel to a Tenant Forum

 meeting.

15.7 This report will be translated and published on our website.

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| **Additional Information** |
| **Corporate Plan Strategic Objective (s):**  |
| **Resource implications****Financial:** Tenant participation budget**Personnel:** Tenant Participation Co-ordinator |
| **Sustainability impact –** N/A |
| **Equality impact assessment –** N/A |
| **Risk:** NWH does not listen to our tenants. Tenants are not given the opportunity to influence decision making.**Inherent Severity and probability:** Impact = 3 Probability = 3 Total = 9**Risk controls:** Tenant Participation Strategy and Action Plan**Further actions:** None |
| **Confidentiality –** Not a confidential item |
| **Contact Officer –** Iwan Evans Tenant Participation Co-ordinatorTel: 01492 563232 |
| **Appendices –** Appendix 1 - Photos |