**Board Meeting:** Tenants and Communities Panel

**Report for Information**

**Title:** Annual Tenant Participation Report April 2021 - July 2022

1. **Purpose of the report**

A report to cover the period April 2021 to March 2022 was submitted to the Tenants & Communities Panel in June, and a more in depth report was request for a future meeting. This report provides the Tenants and Communities Panel with a more in-depth view of Tenant Participation from April 2021 to July 2022. The report also provides information on changes made due to consultations and input provided by tenants during the reporting period.

**2 Action Required / Recommendations**

 Report is for approval.

**3 Background**

 What is Tenant Participation?

 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**

 Our tenant participation work for this reporting period is based on our Tenant

 Participation Strategy for 2021 - 2024. This Strategy was developed during this last

 reporting period (April 2020 – March 2021). The Strategy was developed following a

 consultation to gather the views of tenants and staff.

4.1 This report sets out what tenant participation opportunities are available and what activities have taken place from April 2021 to July 2022. Similar to the last reporting period, Covid 19 restrictions has impacted on what NWH has been able to deliver during this period (April 2021 to July 2022).

**5 Tenants and Communities Panel**

 The Panel consists of Board members, tenants, and staff, and meets every two

 months. 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.

5.1 During this reporting period the Panel continued to meet online every two months; however, have now returned to face to face meetings.

5.2 In the last year we’ve seen tenant members stepping down from the Panel and have embarked on a recruitment drive. Four new members have recently joined the Panel, three of which are former members of our Tenants Forum.

5.3 Tenant members of the Panel have been provided with a tour of some of our Schemes. The aim of the tour was to provide a great understanding of the different services provided by NWH, and also the variety in the types and locality of our schemes. The Panel members visited Pendinas Hostel, Cae Garnedd Extra Care Scheme, and three general housing schemes in Llain Cytir, Gerddi Canada, and Cae Bold.

**6 Tenants Forum**

 The reporting period of April 21 to March 22 was the first full year of the Tenants

 Forum since it was created.

6.1 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.

6.2 During this reporting period we’ve had 7 members. The Forum has

 been meeting online via Microsoft Teams and has been involved in the following:

* Anti-Social Behaviour – Reviewed current ASB procedures and provided input and feedback
* Tenant Participation – reviewed current practices
* Reviewed sign up process for new tenants
* NWH website and information made available to tenants
* Rent affordability and services charges

6.3 Forum member Bethan has said the following about her experience on the Forum:

 “Being part of the tenant’s forum gives us a voice – sometimes as a landlord North

 Wales Housing might have different priorities and systems that might overlook what we

 need, so our input helps develop the bigger picture.  We are a group of tenants from

 different locations and a range of ages, feedback we give helps North Wales Housing

 see the effect on the tenant to develop a better tenant experience for others.”

6.4 3 of the 7 members have moved onto the Tenants & Communities Panel, and a

 recruitment drive has been undertaken to attract new members. Members progressing

 from the Forum to the Tenants & Communities Panel can be seen as a success, and

 hopefully a regular occurrence in the future.

6.5 We’ve been recruiting new members to the Forum, and the most successful recruitment

 tool has been text messaging. We have used the usual methods of social media, email,

 newsletter; however 8 new members have registered for an introductory Forum meeting

 following receipt of a text message.

6.6 Our Action Plan highlights the requirement of managers and service areas to continually

 take tenant participation into account consider how the Forum can have further input.

**7 Sounding Board**

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

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

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

 this reporting period:

* Rent affordability and services consultation
* TPAS Cymru circulars and surveys
* Chatbot testing
* New tenants sign up process
* Anti-Social Behaviour

7.3 We need to further utilise this group and offer more opportunities for them to provide

 input and feedback. This is highlighted in our Action Plan and managers and service

 areas are to be regularly reminded to consider tenant participation when developing

 policies, procedures, reviewing services, or working on new projects.

**8 Profile of tenants participating in the Tenants & Communities Panel, Tenants**

 **Forum and Sounding Board**

The profile members are 88% from general needs housing, 8% from our older persons

 and 4% from our Supported Housing. 53% of members live in Conwy, 39% in

 Gwynedd, 6% in Ynys Mon and 2% in Denbighshire. The majority are female at 67%

 and 39% have a disability, with 6% preferring not to say. Age is split evenly:

* 18 – 24 6%
* 25 – 34 4%
* 35 – 44 22%
* 45 – 54 31%
* 55 – 66 14%
* 65 and over 14%

**9 Digital Transformation Project Group**

 This group consists of staff and one tenant who meet to review and determine what

 digital improvements can be made by NWH

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

* Agile Working
* Website
* Digital Communications
* Digital Strategy
* Chat bot

 9.3 Outcome/Changes to service made following participation from tenants:

* Development and introduction of the chat bot
* Requested a group of tenants to be invited to test the chat bot
* Reviewed website and changes made to content and navigation
* Provided input and approved Digital Strategy

**10**. **Chat bot**

 As discussed above the chat bot was developed as part of the Digital Transformation

 Project. It was requested that a group of tenants were invited to test the chat bot before

 going live. Members of the Sounding Board was asked to test the Chat bot and provide

 their input, before it was made available on the website to be used.

10.1 Participants were sent an email with a link to test the chat bot an asked to consider the

 following:

* What worked well?
* What did not work so well?
* What was missing?
* Any broken/missing links?
* Any feedback regarding wording, layout or appearance?
* Any suggestions of feedback?

10.2 Outcome/changes to service made following participation from tenants:

* Certain links were identified as not working and rectified
* It did not provide any information when asked about re-chargeable items for

 damage to property. This was rectified providing a link to this information

* Difficulty in getting an answer or directed to where to find one regarding rent

 and services charges. This was rectified with a link and also contact

 information for the Incomes Team

* It was noted that nothing came up when asking about rent arrears. Rectified

 with how to get support from our Incomes Team

* The overall feel was positive regarding the layout, appearance and ease of

 use

* Feedback helped ironing out parts where there was duplication or

 inaccuracies

* Chat bot is now live and monitored by our Digital Officer who will be working

 on promoting its use

**11 Rent affordability and service charge consultation**

 NWH undertook a consultation to gather the views of tenants on how they view the

 affordability of rent and service charges. It consisted of:

* Online survey
* Face to face events
* Telephone interviews/discussions
* Tenants Forum

 10.1 The online survey was shared on our Facebook page, twitter, and website. We also shared a link to the survey via email addresses held for our tenants. It was also shared by text message.

10.2 Face to face events were used to encourage people to enter a discussion about rent affordability. Participants were also offered the opportunity to complete a paper survey. The face-to-face events took place at Llys Mair Bangor, Llain Cytir Holyhead, Parc Clarence Llandudno, and Cae Bold Caernarfon. Invitations were sent to all tenants on those schemes along with a paper survey and pre-paid envelope. If tenants were unable to attend, they were given an opportunity to put forward their views via telephone or email.

10.3 A series of telephone interviews/discussions took place with interested tenants to gain their views. Members of the Sounding Board were asked if they would like to participate. Staff from the Rents Team also asked tenants who contacted NWH if they would like a call back to participate.

10.4 The Tenants Forum was used as a focus group to gain the views of its members.

10.5 A total of 354 participated in the consultation:

* Online survey – 249
* Face to face events (including returned paper surveys in post) – 72
* Telephone interviews/discussions – 25
* Tenants Forum - 8

10.6 Outcome/Changes to service made following participation from tenants:

* Consultation Plan received input from the Tenants Forum. The Forum were supportive of the plan; however requested phone calls were also given as an added method to consult with tenants
* Meeting arranged with Capita (provides NWH housing system) to discuss possibility of making changes to layout of rent statements. This is ongoing
* Introduced the benefits calculator. Our Income Officers use this tool to assist tenants in maximizing benefit
* Introduced patched based working. Our Income Offices all now have their own geographical patch to manage
* Upskilled Income officers so they are all able to offer financial inclusion advice Previously it has just been one member of the team able to provide this service
* We aim to be more proactive and contact tenants sooner if in arrears
* Service charge leaflets have been produced to go out with rent statements
* We will continue to review the service and request further input from tenants

**11 Anti-social behaviour (ASB) policy and procedure review**

 On of the key arears of interest in discussions with tenants has been anti-social

 Behaviour. Our Tenants Forum and Sounding Board participated in this review.

11.1 Tenants participating were given information on current ASB practices at NWH, the

 most commonly types of ASB reported, reviewed current policy and procedure, and

 viewed policy and procedures of other social landlords.

11.2 Outcome/Changes made to service following participation from tenants:

* New policy and procedures developed
* New ASB section on website with clear and concise information for tenants. Also provides clear definition of ASB and what happens when ASB is reported
* Staff training
* Action Plans developed for each case investigating. This action plan is shared with the tenant
* NWH has entered into a partnership with a mediating organization as an option for some cases, e.g. mediation between two neighbours over a noise issue

**12 Communal green spaces**

 During this reporting period we consulted with residents regarding green spaces on

 schemes. Llys Mair and Parc Clarence were used as a trial before hopefully rolling out

 to other schemes.

12.1 Outcome/Changes to service made following participation from tenants:

* Llys Mair participants wanted to see wildflowers planted on the scheme to

 attract wildlife and to improve how the scheme looks visually

* Suggestions were made about installing a notice board providing information

 about the flowers. This should also help residents respect the area

* Residents didn’t want to see large areas of the green space used and would

 like some of it left as it is

* Small wildflower sections have been planted in different arears of the

 scheme; however, leaving plenty of other green space. Noticeboards have

 also been installed to provide information about the flowers

* Parc Clarence residents commented on the how the communal garden area

 needs to be tidied up and brought back to life. Comments were made about it

 looking run down and not appreciated by residents. The area often attracts

 rubbish, and needs to be made more welcoming. Residents also commented

 about having an area for children to enjoy and play

* Following a consultation day with the residents the area was cut back and

 rotavated and wildflower seeded certain areas

* Insect and bug houses have been installed
* Funding has been applied for to install benches and small play equipment

**13 Penrhos Corner**

 Penrhos Corner provides supported accommodation to residents recovering from, or

 have, a long-term mental health issues. The scheme has a communal area outside

 under utilised and not used by residents. The residents were asked why the area

 wasn’t being used, if they would like to see a project to improve the space, and what

 they would like to see happening with the area.

13.1 Outcome/Changes to service made following participation from tenants:

* Some of the residents commented that they enjoy growing plants, and some

 have individual plants in pots around the scheme

* Comments were made it would be nice to tidy the area and make it a nice

 space to sit outside

* Residents commented it would be good to have a project to improve the area
* Some residents said they would like to grow their own vegetables
* At a later house meeting tenants were provided information about a Keep

 Wales Tidy project to create, restore, or enhance green spaces. The project

 involves the supply of equipment, plants, and a project officer to work with

 participants to install a growing area

* A successful application has been made to Keep Wales Tidy local places for

 nature project. The project officer will work with resident sand staff to install a

 growing area, and also provide advice on maintaining it for the future

**14 Taverners Court**

Taverners Court scheme in Llandudno has 31 flats for residents over 55 and is

 supported by a warden service. The residents have a communal area and often arrange events and activities such as coffee mornings. A small number of residents have enquired forming a group and possibly of getting assistance in applying for funding in arranging further events. A letter sent was to all residents inviting to an open meeting to discuss forming a group and future events

14.1 Outcome/Changes to service made following participation from tenants:

* Significant interest from residents in forming a group to arrange activities and

 events on behalf of the residents

* Advice given to tenants on forming a group, responsibilities, consulting with

 other residents, setting up a bank account, and applying for funding

* Further meeting to be arranged to assist group in setting up
* The group will receive ongoing support

**16 E-biking**

This has been a partnership project with Conwy County Borough Council in providing

 opportunities for NWH tenants to participate and have greater access to an activity to

 improve health and wellbeing. 5 sessions were arranged with an instructor and e-bikes

 supplied. 8 tenants participated and below is the examples of feedback received:

 *Thank you for inviting me it was lots of fun. I’m now saving up for a bike!*

 *It was nice to get out and meet some nice people*

 *I’ve had fun and not been on a bike in years*

 *I’m really glad I came along. it's been really good to have a go at things I would not*

 *normally do*

 **17 Events and activities**

 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.

 These were limited during the last reporting period due to Covid 19 restrictions.

 Although some Covid 19 Restrictions have also been in place at times during this

 reporting period, we have been able to arrange more activities (with thorough risk

 assessments)

 17.1 We visited schemes and arranged outdoor events which were used as opportunities

 to gather tenant input, for example during the rent affordability and service charge

 consultation, Llain Cytir, Llys Mair wildflower project, and Parc Clarence communal

 garden.

17.2 Our gardening competition was again 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

17.3 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 Amy Hale of Gerddi

 Canada Holyhead and Cliff Astil of Cae Clyd Craig y Don

17.4 The Older Persons Team: This year continued to be a challenging period where we

 could still not open up properly for full participation. However, with careful risk

 assessment and management the Older Persons Team were successful in delivering

 the following activities and projects:

* Quality of Life Surveys
* New Digital Inclusion Projects
* Numerous Fundraising Events
* Exercise Classes
* Regular Tenants Newsletters
* Gardening Projects
* Celebration Parties and Entertainers
* Coffee Mornings and Afternoon Teas
* Signposted to external events ie Walking Clubs
* Provided Smart TV’s and Tablets for Zoom Meetings/Activities/Training
* Invited Speakers to Schemes
* Inter-Generational Contact Visits/Trips with Bangor University Students
* Age Connect Forums at two Schemes
* Bounce Back Post Covid Project – Llys y Coed
* Falls Prevention Sessions
* Tenants Meetings
* Action on Hearing Loss
* Community Worship
* Quiz/Floral Art Classes/Film Nights

17.5 Supported Housing: The Supported Housing Team continued to provide a variety

 methods to engage with residents.

* Calendar of Events & Activities provided to each resident within the scheme
* House meetings for residents to discuss any issues or concerns they may

 have. It also provides residents an opportunity to share any achievements /

 successes they’ve had during the week

* Cooking on a Budget sessions where residents cost up the ingredients for a

 dish, then prepare and cook it

* Recipe booklets being created for residents to take with them when they

 move on from scheme

* Residents participating in gardening at all the hostels, while Penrhos Corner

 is consulting with its residents regarding utilising a green space at the

 scheme for a residents’ project

* Budgeting and planning skills
* Film nights
* Quiz nights

**18 Personal Development Grant**

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

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

18.1 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

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

* An application to assist with costs towards work clothing as an apprentice plasterer
* An application to assist with costs for books and college equipment

**19 Community Fund**

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

 community, recreational or resident groups.

19.1 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

19.2 We’ve had 3 successful applications during this reporting period:

* An application from a Cylch Meithrin operating in an area with NWH properties (pre-school through medium of Welsh) for cost towards resources and providing an outside space for the children
* An application from a junior football club for training equipment. The club operates in an area with NWH properties
* An application from a community group providing classes and activities for young people. The group operates in an area with NWH properties

**20 Future Actions**

 Their needs to be continued expectation to provide tenants the opportunity influence

 services, such as the work done on rent affordability and service charges, and anti-

 social behaviour. Service Arears need to consider if any tenant participation is

 required when reviewing or making changes to ways of working/policies and

 procedures.

20.1 Continue looking at ways to recruit new members to the Tenants & Communities

 Panel, Tenants Forum, and Sounding Board. Also look at underrepresented groups,

 for example, younger tenants, possibly a targeted campaign at younger tenants or

 other groups.

20.2 Prior to the Pandemic NWH provided opportunities for tenants to participate in outdoor

 activities such indoor climbing, hill walking, kayaking with the aim of improving health

 and wellbeing. Such activities proved popular with supported housing residents. We

 have to re-started activities and e-biking recently finished.

20.3 During the next reporting period NWH will be going for the QED, Award with Tai Pawb.

 QED stands for Quality in Equality and Diversity. The QED Award will provide a

 framework for improving equality and diversity across the organisation. The process

 will include a working group of staff, but there will also be a tenant focus group.

 Following the review NWH practices by Tai Pawb and the development of an action

 plan to carry out any improvements required, tenants will be invited to participate

 again.

20.4 NWH will be working with other landlords including Newydd Housing, Grwp Cynefin,

 Cartrefi Conwy (and others) to develop a tenant engagement portal. This will be a

 platform providing our tenants with opportunities to participate in online activities,

 events and training. We will be asking tenants to test the portal prior to its launch.

20.5 NWH is looking to appoint a new company to provide a new housing management

 system and tenants will be invited to participate in demo sessions provided by

 interested companies.

20.6 A rent affordability consultation with tenants will be carried out.

20.7 NWH will be looking to develop neighbourhood plans and consultation with tenants will

 be required.

20.7 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 –**  |
| **Equality impact assessment –**  |
| **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 |