**Board Meeting:** Tenants and Communities Panel

**Report for Information**

**Title:** Annual Tenant Participation Report April 2022 - March 2023

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 2022 to March 2023.

**2 Action Required / Recommendations**

2.1 Report is for approval.

**3 Background**

3.1 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**

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

 Participation Strategy for 2021 - 2024.The Strategy was developed following a

 consultation to gather the views of tenants and staff.

4.2 This report sets out what tenant participation opportunities are available and what activities have taken place from April 2022 to March 2023.

**5 Tenants and Communities Panel**

5.1 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.

5.2 During this reporting period the Panel has returned to meeting face to face, although has the options for members to attend virtually via Microsoft Teams.

5.3 We have six tenant members; with 4 tenant members attending regularly during this reporting period. .

5.4 Earlier in this reporting period tenant members of were provided with a tour of some of some of our Schemes. The aim of the tour was to provide a greater understanding of the different services provided by NWH, and 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.

5.5 Following the governance review at North Wales Housing, the terms of reference and code of conduct of the Panel have been updated. Members of the Panel participated in the review of the terms of reference and code of conduct.

5.6 TPAS Cymru have been appointed to undertake training and support sessions for the Panel which will take place in the next reporting period.

**6 Tenants Forum**

6.1 The Forum is a less formal setting for tenants to attend. Its aim is to provide an

 opportunity to obtain information, influence decision making, and strengthen services.

 A meeting will be dedicated 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 The Forum currently has 7 members and meets every two months. We have asked

 current members about preference between face to face or online meetings. Although

 there was some interest in beginning to meet face to face, it was agreed that online

 meetings would continue, making it easier for people from a variety of different

 geographical areas to attend. Members also commented that online allows more

 flexibility with timings and fits in easier alongside other commitments.

6.3 Forum members have agreed to trial evening meetings to see if this makes the

 meetings more accessible, convenient, and to attract new members.

**7 What has the Tenants Forum done since April 2022 and Outcomes?**

7.1 As we’ve had new members in the last year, we have reviewed the Code of Conduct.

 This has also ensured it meets the Tai Pawb QED requirements (See section…)

7.2 Due to new members a meeting was dedicated to learning about tenant participation at

 NWH and why we do it. During this meeting Forum members were able to familiarise

 themselves with our Tenant Participation Strategy and Action Plan.

7.3 **Tenant Participation Action Plan**. As confirmed above the Forum has learned about

 Tenant Participation at NWH, but also reviewed and provided feedback on the Action

 Plan. Members made the following suggestions which have been included or strengthen

 in our plan:

* Commented that strengthening what NWH offers online and improving

 information shared on social media is important, however meeting tenants

 face to face in communities is very important

* Members are keen to be invited to participate in any one off focus groups,

 testing, and consultations

* 1. **Rent Affordability Consultation**. This has been an annual consultation with tenants for the last two years. consultation plan. The Consultation Plan received input from the Tenants Forum. The consultation plan included events and a survey shared on social media platforms, website, and via email and text messaging; however, Forum members

 suggested that phone calls could be an extra option providing an alternative for people to

 have their say. Phone calls were included in the consultation.

7.5 Forum members also discussed their experiences of the rent charged by NWH:

* *Comments that rent statements were clear and understandable*
* *Rents were affordable but other costs are going up which will be of concern for everyone*
* *Understandable that everyone will be concerned about rising costs*
* *From personal experience members had a positive outcome when contacting the Incomes Team and satisfied with service*
* *It would be good to have a breakdown of what the rent is used on. What it’s spent on*
* *Comments from some members paying service charges that there should be more information on the standard of service and what should be expected*
* *Comments made that it was positive that money saving tips etc were shared on Facebook, however many tenants may not be following the North Wales Housing Page. Explore other areas in which information can be shared with tenants*

7.6 **Policies and Procedures submitted to the Forum**. The Forum has looked at the

 following pollicises:

* Lettings Policy – Group in agreement that document was easy to follow. No issues or concerns with document.
* Hate Crime Policy – Reviewed document and no issues or concerns.
* Subject Access Request & Data Rights Policy – No concerns with document. In terms of accessibility did say this policy or some of its content could made available on our website to highlight our rights, NWH’s responsibilities, and how to make a subject access request.

7.7 **Enhanced Safety Letter**. The Forum reviewed a draft letter to be sent out by the

 Neighbourhood Team to tenants living in schemes with shared communal areas. The

 Forum were happy with the layout and its content. Also commented it was easy to read

 and follow. Some members asked if tenants had received any information prior to this

 letter. The Forum was advised it has been an ongoing process of raising awareness of

 the need to keep hallways clear.

7.8 **Tenant Forum Leaflet**. Members made the following comments which have been used

 in producing the leaflet which will be referred to when creating a new leaflet:

* Increase font size
* Amount of text should be limited and keep it simple. Briefly describe what the

 Forum, confirm we’re looking for new members, and ask people to contact NWH

* Highlight that the meetings are relaxed and informal.

7.9 **Housing Management System Project** (See also section 11). Two Tenant forum

 members participated in the demo sessions provided by potential suppliers. Feedback

 provided by the two members and other participants were used in the process of

 choosing the supplier. There will be potential for further involvement in the future

 regarding the Tenant Portal.

7.10 **Tai Pawb QED Project**. During this reporting period NWH has begun the process of

 applying for the QED (Quality in Equality and Diversity) Award. The process has included

 a working group of staff, and also a tenant focus group. Four members of the Forum

 were involved in the focus group (with other participants) and feedback is to be used to

 develop an action plan to make improvements across NWH.

7.11 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.”

**8. Sounding Board**

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

 ‘reader of leaflets’, forms, policies etc. and providing feedback. There are 35 members,

 and they were involved in the following arears of work during this reporting period:

* Rent affordability and services consultation
* Tenants Forum Leaflet
* TPAS Cymru circulars and surveys

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

 input and feedback.

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

 **Forum and Sounding Board**

9.1 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%

**10 Rent affordability consultation**

10.1 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

 10.2 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.

10.3 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 Parc Clarence Llandudno, Cae Bold Caernarfon,Gallt y Sill Caernarfon, and Stad Maes Rhydd Gaerwen. If tenants were unable to attend, they were given an opportunity to put forward their views via telephone or email.

10.4 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.

10.5 The Tenants Forum was used as a focus group to gain the views of its members, and also reviewed the consultation plan.

10.6 A total of 304 participated in the consultation:

* Online survey – 237
* Face to face events (including returned paper surveys in post) – 34
* Telephone interviews/discussions – 25
* Tenants Forum - 8

10.7 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
* Upskilled Income officers so they are all able to offer financial inclusion advice
* We aim to be more proactive and contact tenants sooner if in arrears
* Incomes staff regularly attending events and activities to be available to provide support and information
* Comments relating to service charges received during consultation. Project team set up to look at service charges which will include gathering tenant feedback on the service charges they pay and the service received
* We will continue to review the service and request further input from tenants

**11 Housing Management System (HMS) Project**

11.1 NWH has been looking to purchase a new housing management system. As part of the

 process tenants participated in the demo sessions provided by potential suppliers.

 Participants were then invited to provide their feedback. 5 tenants participated in the

 process.

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

* Feedback from tenants were used as part of the tendering process to appoint the chosen supplier.
* Briefing session was held to inform participants how their feedback was used and to confirm the chosen supplier.
* Participants advised there is likely further input required in the future. Potentially in respect of improvements to the Tenant Portal.
* The consultant assisting NWH in the process of tendering and appointing the new system commented that from his experience he’s not seen other landlords involving tenants in the process of choosing and testing a new HMS.
* As the new system is not yet in place and is a long term project benefits will not be seen for a period of time.

**12 Quality in Equality and Diversity Award (QED)**

**12.1** In partnership with Tai Pawb NWH is working towards achieving the QED award. It’s a

 quality mark that demonstrates continuous improvement to advance equality and

 diversity in the Welsh housing sector. The process has involved discussions with staff

 and Tai Pawb reviewing policy and procedures and ways of working at NWH.

12.2 The process also involved arranging a focus group of tenants. The purpose of the focus

 group was to have an informal conversation about experiences related to equality and

 diversity, the services received by NWH, involvement at NWH, and what could be done

 differently to improve outcomes for tenants. 7 tenants attended the focus group.

 12.3. Outcome/Changes to service made following participation from tenants:

* The discussions had in the focus group has contributed to the development of an action plan with Tai Pawb. The purpose of the action plan is to make improvements in terms of equality & diversity and move NWH towards gaining the QED quality mark.
* Some of the actions and improvements included an accessibility checklist for events; the development of a new complaints leaflet, updated code of conduct for both Tenants & Communities Panel and Tenants Forum, a plan to collate and record diversity characteristics and aims for greater representation. There are number of other actions in the plan around governance, services, access, involvement, and culture.
* Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Strategy to be developed with participants invited to provide input an feedback.

**13 e-Cymru**

13.1 NWH has been working in partnership with other landlords to create e-Cymru. e-

 Cymru is a platform that offers free events, engagement, and e-learning opportunities.

 It’s free to all NWH tenants to use (and the tenants of the partner landlords in the

 project). NWH tenants were involved in the testing and development of the platform

 alongside tenants from other social landlords across Wales. 4 NWH tenants

 participated in the testing alongside tenants of other landlords

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

* Tenants have tested how easy the platform is to navigate, registration, logging in, and booking places on to events
* Change have included increase in font size
* Change in background colour
* Feedback form developed for course/events participants
* Development of a how to guide for registration

**14 Communal green spaces**

14.1 During this reporting period the Rakes & Ladders Team worked on tenant

 engagement projects to involve tenants with own communal spaces. They worked in

 partnership with the Neighbourhood Officer and tenants on improving the communal

 green space at Maes Creuddyn. A similar project was developed at Bron Bethel.

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

* Maes Creuddyn tenants were asked were asked for feedback and what if any

 changes/improvmdents they would like to see with the communal green

 space relation. Comments were made to the lack of colour and it looked tired

 and if anything could be planted. This would improve how the flats would look

 visibly from the outside. It would also be a nice place to relax.

* Following the consultation, the Rakes & Ladders Team arrange a planting

 with the tenants to plant some daffodil and tulip bulbs.

* Comments were made by Born Bethel tenants about how the green space is

 not being utilised and should be improved visually. It is also a space in which

 they look out at if sitting outside their homes in the summer months.

* Options and examples of what’s been done at other schemes were discussed

 with the tenants

* In agreement a wildflower space will be trialled. The area is being left for the

 first year to see what grows and will then review again with the tenants.

**15 Penrhos Corner**

15.1 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.

15.2 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 was made to Keep Wales Tidy local places for

 nature project. The project officer worked with residents and staff to install a

 growing area in August 2022, and also provided advice on maintaining it for

 the future

* The growing area has continued to be used by residents and staff

**17 E-biking**

17.1This was partnership project during the summer of 2022 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*

 **18 Events and activities**

 18.1 We 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. They are also

 an opportunity to collect feedback or undertake any necessary consultations.

 18.2 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

 events were organised for Parc Clarence Llandudno, Cae Bold Caernarfon,Gallt y Sill

 Caernarfon, and Stad Maes Rhydd Gaerwen.

18.3 Engagement events were also organised in the run up to Christmas in Bethesda and

 Llandudno. These events included activities for children and families, and also had

 presence from members of the Neighborhoud and Incomes Teams to answer any

 queries.

18.4 Skip days have also been re-introduced with tenants able to dispose of items. It is also

 an opportunity to tenants to meet staff, and for NWH to have a greater presence and

 engagement in communities.

18.5 Our gardening competition was popular with tenants. 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

18.6 This reporting period was our fourth 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 winner’s; Dorothy Caudwell of

 Llys y Coed Extra Care Scheme, and Rachel Turnbull of Noddfa Hostel

18.7 The Older Persons Team:

 the Older Persons Team were successful in delivering

 the following activities and projects:

* Digital Inclusion Projects
* Numerous Fundraising Events
* Exercise Classes
* Regular Tenants Newsletters
* Gardening Projects
* Celebration Parties and Entertainers
* Coffee Mornings and Afternoon Teas
* Invited Speakers to Schemes
* Age Connect Sessions
* Tenants Meetings
* Community Worship
* Quiz/Floral Art Classes/Film Nights/Knit & Natter Group
* Welfare visits
* Promoted British Sign Language Week with residents participating in sign language practice sessions

18.8 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
* Budgeting and planning skills
* Film nights
* Quiz nights

**19 Personal Development Grant**

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

 That may be preventing our tenants from accessing education, training or

 employment. 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

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

* An application from one of our hostel residents to assist with costs towards work clothing as an apprentice plasterer.
* An application from a tenant commencing studies at Coleg Menai to assist with costs for books and college equipment.

**20 Community Fund**

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

 community, recreational or resident groups. 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

20.2 We’ve had 1 successful applications during this reporting period:

* An application from a from a community group running an arts project in Maesgeirchen Bangor.

**21 Future Actions**

21.1 A plan for a recruitment campaign to recruit new members to the Tenants Forum and

 Tenants & Communities Panel is required.

21.2 More events will be planned to increase engagement opportunities, for example

 Community Litter Pick Days.

21.3 A successful grant was awarded last year to fund E-Biking sessions (See section 17 of

 report). If similar funding not available identify potential other activities to increase

 engagement, and health & wellbeing benefits e.g. a walking group.

21.4 Possible further involvement required on the HMS project.

21.5 Service Charges consultation. Tenants have previously voiced concerns about the

 value for money of service charges and also understanding of what they’re paying for.

21.6 Possible tenant participation required as NWH looks to develop neighbourhood plans.

21.7 Explore the possibility of developing mystery shopping at NWH, giving tenants the

 opportunities to test and measure how well we are delivering certain services.

21.8 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 |