

Nomination Form

Housing Organisation of the Year



TIS National Excellence Awards 2024

The **TIS National Excellence awards** recognise and celebrate housing organisations, staff, volunteers, tenants, residents, and community groups **who are leading the way and making positive change in the Scottish social housing sector.**

Categories honour excellence in everything **from partnership working, tenant participation and scrutiny practice, to digital creativity and innovation.** Hotly anticipated, the awards offer a seal of approval for the most outstanding work.

Finalists are selected by an expert and independent judging panel, and **winners announced at an awards ceremony on Thursday 7th November 2024 at the Grand Central Hotel in Glasgow.**

The closing date for applications is 5:00pm on Thursday 11th July 2024. TIS accepts submissions in more than one award category.

Category Overview

The **Housing Organisation of the Year** award recognises an outstanding housing organisation who has demonstrated an exceptional commitment to embedding tenant participation, scrutiny, and wider community engagement into the culture of the organisation.

Submissions must **evidence how the organisation is dedicated to going above and beyond, to ensure tenants' rights are at the forefront,** have a meaningful say, and are pivotal in influencing housing policies, services, and standards. The organisation must promote quality and recognise that tenants are at the heart.

Who you can nominate

This award is open to housing organisations operating across the Scottish social housing sector.

About you

Please note information about the individual, organisation, or group submitting the application:

Name	Tracy Noles
Position	Service Development Officer
Organisation	Aberdeenshire Council
Email address	Tracy.noles@aberdeenshire.gov.uk
Telephone number	01467 532 866

About the nominee

Please note information about the housing organisation you are nominating:

Organisation	Aberdeenshire Council
Email address	Tracy.noles@aberdeenshire.gov.uk
Telephone number	01467 532 866

Background

Maximum 250 words

Please outline background information about the housing organisation that you are nominating.

For example, detail:

- The background of the organisation, including: total number of homes, total number of employees, and the geographical areas the organisation covers, etc.
- A brief background of their tenant participation, scrutiny, and wider engagement practices.

Aberdeenshire Council – Tenant influence at ALL decision making stages.

Aberdeenshire Council's Housing Service has a housing stock of 13,106 (as at 31 March 2023) across the geo-political area of Aberdeenshire [6,313 square kilometres (2,437 sq. mi)]. In the year 2022/23 Aberdeenshire Council undertook a complete Business Plan Review, Rent Review, and Tenant Satisfaction Survey. Prior these taking place, the tenant participation team worked with tenants and housing functions to review and streamline strategic participation opportunities to be more effective. Most importantly, the tenant participation team worked with elected members and the legal and governance framework to place tenants at the heart of decisions which affect them – with tenants now regularly appearing at Member-Officer Working Groups and sitting alongside elected members at Committee.

Tenants' views were at the heart of each of these processes, which allowed the service to make recommendations for prioritisation of areas of business, priorities for rent levels over the next 3 years to fund these priorities, and to receive feedback on the satisfaction of areas of business so that these may be considered in ongoing business planning.

Actions

Maximum 500 words

Please outline specific actions the housing organisation has taken to make an exceptional commitment to embedding tenant participation, scrutiny, and wider community engagement into the culture of the organisation.

For example, outline:

- How the organisation has gone above and beyond to ensure tenant rights are at the forefront.
- How the organisation has made a real difference to the lives of tenants.
- How the organisation promotes equality and recognise that tenants are at the heart.
- How the organisation has explored innovative new ways to get people involved.
- The work involved and their overall aim.

2022

(1) Post Covid-19 Restructure of tenant groups

During the period of Covid-19 restrictions, the tenant participation team facilitated opportunities to participate through digital methods. Previous in-person groups were now held through Microsoft Teams. Where tenants did not have internet access or appropriate ICT kits, the team assisted in supplying required kits through funded opportunities and partnerships such as Connecting Scotland and The Good Things Foundations "Databank" program.

As restrictions eased, tenants who were taking part preferred to keep a hybrid approach. It was agreed that the Housing Service and Tenants would consider streamlining tenant working groups to a more effective model to make use of the new and improved communications tools which were now available.

(2) Tenant Inclusion in Member-Officer Working Groups (MOWGs)

Aberdeenshire Council's Housing Service use short-life working groups which include housing staff and elected members to discuss matters of strategic importance that will require decision making at Committee level. Typically, the MOWG will hear the background of the information, view and discuss any data, and make recommendations for decision or action to go to Committee. From 2022, the Housing Service have ensured that tenants are represented at each MOWG and able to comment and input on discussion and outcomes.

(3) Inclusion in Committee

The Service Development Officer (tenant participation) worked with the legal and governance team to facilitate a way forward which allows tenants to be present at Committee for Housing Items. The tenants can express a view on the papers and received by Committee which Councillors are making decisions on. Tenants typically have a pre-meeting discussion with the Housing Service prior to Committee to discuss any concerns.

(4) Business Plan Review

Aberdeenshire Council's Housing Service, in conjunction with research partner IBP, undertook a significant consultation process relating to the review of its 30 year business plan. The key goal through this process was to engage with tenants on a meaningful level in the face of severe budget constraints. This consultation included:

- 17 Stakeholder Interviews (professionals, 3rd sector organisations)
- 12 focus groups consisting of 64 tenant participants which took place both in person and online, during the day and the evening. Groups met three times (1x per week for 3 weeks) to discuss their experiences, service priorities, and preferred rent options for the next 3 years.
- 1,000 tenant interviews
- A large scale quantitative survey which was made available to all tenants with a response rate of 1,233
- Inclusion of tenants who identify as Gypsy/Traveller, who have particular needs, and women who have been victim of domestic violence

2023

(5) Restructure of HRA Monitoring

Tenants and the Housing Service made the decision to restructure the HRA Methodology Review Process and are currently developing finance and performance regular reviews within the working groups that are now established. This will provide a better contextual understanding of the HRA and how it links to performance.

Overall

(6) Lasting Benefits

Through each of these changes, appropriate training was arranged. Tenants have access to Aberdeenshire Council's online learning and development platform, ALDO. DFacilitated workshops on complex topics such as HRA vs. General Fund and Council Decision Making have also been undertaken.

Outcomes

Maximum 700 words

Please outline positive outcomes achieved as a result of the housing organisation's commitment to embedding tenant participation, scrutiny, and wider community engagement into the culture of the organisation

For example, detail the impact on:

- The delivery of housing services.
- The improvement of satisfaction levels.
- The strategic approach of the organisation.
- The culture of the organisation and its core values.

- Communication, strengthening relationships, and partnership working.
- The inclusion and lasting benefits of tenants, residents, and/or communities.
- The skills and knowledge of other tenants, residents, and/or communities.
- How others can learn from the organisation's good practice now and in the future.

The outcome of these changes and consultations in 2022/23 allowed tenants to clearly give their ranking of service their preferences for day to day services, investment priorities, rent preferences, and satisfaction with surveys.

(1) Post Covid-19 Restructure of tenant groups

Tenant groups are now structured in a way which allows for tracking of actions which are created through group workplans and are able to consider performance monitoring and financial (HRA) information within the context of an operational service.

The groups can use both a lived experience and data led approach to referring topics to the scrutiny panel. The use of action planning provides a route of clear accountability for the housing service.

Decisions made by Committee (as per Council governance process) can then be referred back to the appropriate working groups for monitoring.

This structure means the tenant voice and opinion is at the start and end of the decision-making process.

(2) Tenant Inclusion in Member-Officer Working Groups (MOWGs)

The success of the wide-scale business plan consultation brought agreement that member-officer working groups would reconvene every three years to carry out a review of a business plan, and tenants will remain a permanent inclusion within this process.

Additional MOWGs are called when required, with an expectation that tenants who have an interest in the topic being discussed will be invited. This is now **normal practice**.

(3) Inclusion in Committee

Tenants are now regularly present at the highest decision making level. They can attend for both public and exempt reports and give a tenants' view on the recommendations put forward for decision. Tenants are also able to discuss with other tenants on a peer-to-peer basis how a decision was made and the practical impacts it could have on the tenant community.

(4) Business Plan Review

The comprehensive business plan review and all of the work undertaken prior to information being submitted to Committee received positive feedback from tenants and high praise from elected members. As demonstrated in the 2024 Tenant Satisfaction Survey, there was an increase in tenants' satisfaction in taking part in opportunities to participate.

(5) Restructure of HRA Monitoring

Tenants and the Housing Service are working together to develop a new and meaningful HRA Monitoring framework. The group would previously meet 3 to 4 times per year and focus solely on budget lines. The decision made with tenants was to disband the traditional group, and move towards a budget scrutiny within the existing streamlined working groups, but to also relate this to service performance, so that there is a better level of context and understanding of how finance can impact on service delivery – this information will also be made available far more regularly. Tenants and the Housing Service are currently in the process of developing a dashboard mechanism with the intention that information could be shared in this format in Annual Reporting to Tenants.

(6) Lasting Benefits

Continuation of the methods used to increase tenant participation in the governance process means the Housing Service can clearly demonstrate the amount of consultation undertaken and clearly detail tenants' preferences for service priorities and standards. Results are referred for discussion to tenant working groups for comment, to Member-Officer Working Groups (which include tenants, housing staff, and elected members), and onto Committee (which includes tenant representation for comment).

Ongoing training for tenants who wish to be involved on a strategic level is offered, and at present tenants and tenant participation team are working together to develop Scrutiny training for ALDO to be made available to tenants and the housing service.

Tenants have expressed they have a greater understanding of the decision making process and where their views can be put forward in the most effective way.

2024

Tenant Satisfaction Survey

The majority of tenants are very or fairly satisfied with the opportunities given to them to participate in the Housing Service's decision-making processes (77%, up from 73% in 2021).

What makes this nominee stand out from the rest?

Maximum 100 words

Please provide a short testimonial on why this housing organisation deserves to win.

This nomination stands out for the following reasons:

- The scale and amount of in-depth consultation
- The ongoing commitment to ensuring tenants have a say in the services provided to them
- The increase in regular opportunities to engage with senior level managers and local government decision makers (and the fact that this will remain a staple principle)
- The assurance that the changes made between 2022 and present day have been completed in a way that puts tenants at the heart of decision making, and a permanent fixture in the governance process.

Declaration

As the proposer I have completed this nomination form to the best of my knowledge, and the information provided is a true representation of the nominee's achievements.

Name	Tracy Noles
Signature	T Noles
Date	12.07.24

Thank you for taking the time to complete this nomination form.

Please submit your nomination by **5:00pm on Thursday 11th July 2024** to TIS by email at: info@tis.org.uk or by post to: **TIS – Clockwise Offices, 77 Renfrew Street, Glasgow, G2 3BZ.**

Next steps

- **All applications will be acknowledged on receipt by TIS.** If you do not receive acknowledgement within 3 working days, please contact us to ensure your application has been received.

- An **independent judging panel** will rate your application against the award criteria. The panel will consist of representatives from organisations across the Scottish social rented sector.
- Your award submission will provide the basis for both the shortlist and final decision of the winning entry.
- **TIS welcomes applications in more than one award category.**
- Please ensure you answer all questions as fully as possible and keep the content of your nomination focused – avoid exceeding the suggested word count.
- **TIS will inform all proposers of the outcome of their application Thursday 29th August 2024.**
- Finalists will be invited to the **TIS National Excellence Awards Ceremony**, as part of the TIS National Housing Conference and Exhibition, on **Thursday 7th November 2024** at the Grand Central Hotel in Glasgow.