

SCRUTINY GROUP

SESSION 2 REPORT - NOVEMBER 2024

Why Scrutiny?

Scrutiny involves our tenants working in partnership with us to scrutinise, provide feedback and recommendations on how we are doing and help to shape and improve our services. This enables us to be the best we can be and provide the best service for our tenants. This is good value for money, how do we know how good we are doing if we don't ask.



How are the groups made up?

Stereotypical scrutiny is classically made up of a very small select few tenants who are already involved in other parts of the organisation. Since COVID 19 pandemic there has been a higher level of apathy and a need to rebuild trust and relationships.

Our approach to scrutiny is moving away from traditional to be more open and inclusive and for all needs and abilities and levels of commitment that people can give. This is to enable a wide range of feedback and recommendations from across the whole tenant base and not a select section. No organisation has been able to do this so far.

I was asked to bring together two groups for different localities, one in Dundee and one in Angus. We need to be 2 groups in Dundee and Angus as each area have their own views on services in different localities it is relevant to what matters to them. It is engagement from different parts of the community.

Dundee Group

The Dundee group is made up of tenants from different backgrounds and educational achievement. These tenants are quite new to Angus Housing Association and have lived experience in different parts of the housing sector.



Angus Group

The Angus group is made up of tenants from different parts of Angus – Arbroath, Carnoustie, Montrose and Auchmithie. These tenants have lived in their properties between 5 and 15 years. The age range for both groups are between 40 and 80 years of age.

Further action is to try and get younger people aged 18 to 40 involved in scrutiny.

Session plan

Each session will have a detailed session plan and will have an icebreaker quiz. To ensure consistency and valuable feedback each session three questions will be asked (these will be adapted)

- Is there anything you liked?
- Is there anything that surprised you?
- Is there anything you think we can do better?

There will be an evaluation and self-reflection at the end of each session which will be used to help shape and design future sessions ensuring that tenants feel comfortable and keep coming back.

Feedback from Session 2 – Financial Information and Rents

The aim of this session was to find out the level of understanding from the two groups on how the Association set out their rents and spending priorities and how they think that we are performing.

We had a quick true/false quiz with 7 questions on what tenants rent money is spent on. The quiz was used a knowledge checker and overall results showed that half of the participants (9 tenants) did not know that their rent money is used to pay for office overheads and staff costs amongst other things. There was also surprise that the largest part of tenants rent money goes towards the loan principle and loan interest.



This was followed by a conversation about what is rent, who pays rent, why do we pay rent and what does our rent money get used for.



Our guest speaker, Arlene Grant (Director of Finance) then gave a basic overview of the Associations accounts for 2023-24 and how we spent tenants rents during this time, how we decide to spend our money and the budget process.



Dundee Group

- “I really liked the explanation on how our rent is broken up into different areas”.
- “I was really surprised to hear that the Association is not for profit”.
- “The Association is doing really well in these hard times”.

Angus Group

- “I feel more clear about how tenants rent money is spent”.
- “I didn’t know or understand about cyclical budgets and what is involved”.
- “I knew about staff salaries but did not think about pensions and the increases in National Insurance and how this would affect the Association”.

The participants of both Dundee and Angus focus groups agreed that before they came along to the sessions they had a lack of understanding on how the Association operates and what exactly is involved in preparing and monitoring budgets.

There was surprise that the largest part of tenants money goes towards the loan principle and loan interest.

When asked for feedback on how well the groups think Angus Housing Association are doing feedback was positive and recognition about how the Association is performing well, especially within the constraints that the Association have such as reductions and cuts to budgets and subsidies from the Scottish Government.

For more information on how tenants rent money is spent and frequently asked questions please visit our website by clicking on the link below:
<https://www.angusha.org.uk/how-we-spend-your-rent/>

Evaluation of Session 2

At the end of each session the group will be asked what they liked about today's session, was there anything that surprised you and is there anything you think that I can do better for the next session? This feedback will help shape the next session.

Didn't realise how tenants rent money is spent

Lots of chances to ask questions

Guest speaker was very informative

I really enjoyed the session, it was informal and relaxed

It was nice to meet new people

Session 3

The next session dates and times agreed with each group and preferred communication methods. Also agreed to send out information and reports two weeks before the sessions.

At these sessions we will be discussing the Associations standards for letting void properties with a guest speaker from the Maintenance Team.

Dundee Group

- Tuesday 21st January 2025, 1.00pm to 2.30pm at Dundee Office, Ormiston Crescent



Angus Group

- Thursday 23rd January 2025, 2.00pm to 3.30pm at Russell Square Community Lounge, Russell Square, Arbroath