

Our new future – bringing it home to you.

Our proposal for WLHP tenants

September 2021



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Message from WLHP Chair John Hill



At West Lothian Housing Partnership (WLHP) we pride ourselves in looking forward and not backwards. The past 18 months have challenged all of us, but we rose to the challenges and found practical solutions to them. We have already begun to emerge positively into the ‘new normal’ with fresh optimism and new ways of thinking.

Out of adversity comes opportunity and we’ve certainly made great strides in the last year and a half. Not only that – we have achieved more than we ever imagined possible. As an organisation our staff have gone above and beyond when it comes to delivering excellent services to our customers, throughout our communities.

However, we do not want to stop there. Now is the time to move forward with the opportunities that lie ahead – by building on our advances in the use of technology and delivering core services in our customers’ homes and communities. The opportunities we have now will shape the way we support and serve our customers for years to come. We want you to have your say on these proposals.

We are proposing a new customer-focused way of working which would make it easier than ever before for tenants to get the services they want, when they want.

Our approach to engagement has shifted the balance of power towards our customers. We aim to empower everyone in our communities to make their own choices about the services they want. As part of this new way of engaging, we want to actively involve **more** tenants, of all ages and backgrounds, including pioneering new ways of using digital channels.

This will mean tenants will direct how **£179k** is spent in their communities.

And there has never been a better time to look again at who we are, with our new ways of thinking and delivering services.

These exciting new proposals are only the beginning of what is possible when it comes to serving tenants and communities in the years ahead. This is about aiming high and delivering more than ever before.

This document provides more details. Please take the time to read it and to tell us what you think and make sure your voice is heard.

I hope you will agree these proposals offer a new beginning, an innovative new customer journey and a bright new future for WLHP tenants and communities.

Have your say

Your views on our plans are what is important to us and as we start the consultation phase of the plans we want to hear what you think on what is proposed.

This document explains why the WLHP Board believes the change to our operating model and ways of engagement would bring real benefits for communities and tenants.

All WLHP tenants with a Scottish Secure Tenancy (SST) can get involved and tell us your views. Please make sure you have your say.

Details on how you can give your feedback can be found on page 11.

New ways of working

The pandemic changed how we delivered services in a way no-one could have predicted. Now, through listening to what our tenants have told us and by building on the lessons learned, our new proposals will bring many key improvements to our services.

Customers will see more of their housing officer in their community, be able to book appointments in our premises, and, through digital services, be able to do more for themselves at a time and place to suit them.

Our proposals will see four new key improvements:

1. Customer First Centre

We will launch a new and improved 24 hours a day, seven days a week, centre which will deal quickly and efficiently with customer enquiries at the first time of asking.

The new Customer First Centre will offer a personalised service and is where you'll find all of the advice and support you need and in the one place.

The centre will:

- ▶ be open 365 days a year, 24/7;
- ▶ have highly trained and experienced housing professionals on hand to deal with routine enquiries such as registering for MyHousing, booking repairs and making appointments for wraparound services and much more;
- ▶ embrace the latest technology to allow customers to be in touch by whatever means they prefer – by phone, WhatsApp, text or web-chat;

- ▶ be the most efficient way for tenants to get day-to-day problems solved and questions answered quickly;
- ▶ and free up community-based Housing Officers to spend more time in your communities to support the most vulnerable face-to-face, be visible and active in ensuring our communities and homes look their best. They will also deal with anti-social behaviour and estate management. Housing Officers will work closely with our Neighbourhood Environmental Teams to ensure communities are places people are proud to call home.

2. More services in your home

Our proposed new way of working strengthens and deepens our presence in WLHP communities – without you having to ever leave your home. We will come to you.

Our housing, care and repairs staff, working alongside Neighbourhood Environmental Teams, will be out and about as before – with the latest technology in their hands – taking WLHP services directly to tenants – in their homes, on their doorsteps and in their neighbourhoods.

All of this will be supported by our new 24/7, 365 days a year Customer First Centre which will solve problems you may have and arrange the support you need.

If you wish to speak with us face-to-face, we'll carry out home visits or meet you in local places and spaces where you are comfortable. Whether you want to talk to us in person, on the phone or via WhatsApp or FaceTime, we'll be at the heart of our communities, responding to your priorities.

Our new way of working will see:

- ▶ tenants access services that meet their needs at a time that suits them;
- ▶ local housing officers operating in the heart of communities and delivering services to the door of customers' homes;
- ▶ and staff carrying out home visits, or in locations of your choice in the community, to deal with complex cases, supporting the most vulnerable and dealing with anti-social behaviour and estate management.

Our new way of delivering services also promises:

- ▶ a housing officer will be in touch, no later than the following day, to arrange to see you in person if you call in to speak to them;
- ▶ and you being able to choose an appointment time that works for you.

3. Do more online

We'll improve our online self-services to allow customers to do much more for themselves at a time and place to suit them – and with the support to do this if they need it.

A shift to digitalisation during the pandemic has meant more customers are already using our online services through our self-serve area. Our online services already allow you to:

- ▶ apply for a home;
- ▶ pay rent;
- ▶ and check your account balance.

The next phase of online services will put you in control and allow you to:

- ▶ book – and track – repairs in your home at a time and date to suit you;
- ▶ choose a time and date for appointments with your housing officer or with one of our support services, including fuel and welfare benefits advisors.

We'll also introduce a new online community engagement app for tenants and staff to keep in touch and report issues in the neighbourhood.

Our Neighbourhood Environmental Teams will also be using a new app to provide updates on work they are carrying out to improve communities.

4. Our new hubs – Centres of Excellence

If you do not want to see us at your home, you can choose to meet us at a convenient location, either in your local community or by arrangement at our premises in North Bridge Street, Bathgate. This centre will be available for you to book appointments with staff and receive support face-to-face.

Customers will receive more support than ever before and be offered outstanding, personalised customer services through the support from our community-based staff.

A new way of engaging

Communities are at the very heart of our organisation. We want to create a renewed sense of community right across West Lothian which will bring our tenants and neighbourhoods even closer together.

Our new way of engaging builds on what we have learned during the pandemic to allow more tenants, of all ages, to get involved and have their say. There will be no barriers to how you engage with us. We have looked at the best ways of engaging with customers from across the world to create stronger voices for stronger communities in our areas.

There will be more opportunities to engage face-to-face with us at times and locations that suit tenants. By using new modern digital tools we'll make it easier for you to be heard, to influence, to decide and know what is going on locally.

From new online polling in our 'You Choose Challenges' to tenant meetings on Zoom from the comfort of your own home, we'll embrace new technology and support you to do this as well.

Our new way of engaging with customers will have many benefits, including:

- ▶ a wide range of options on how to engage with us – through traditional methods as well as digital;
- ▶ greater flexibility for customers in how they engage with us;
- ▶ more opportunities to meet with local community-based staff in our communities;
- ▶ a real opportunity for customers to feel empowered to shape what happens in their communities;
- ▶ and more opportunities for customers to have a say on decisions affecting their homes and services.

Stronger voices, stronger communities

We aim to empower everyone in our communities to make their own choices about the services they want. We want to involve 50 tenants, of all ages and backgrounds, in our new way of engaging.

An online Customer Voice Forum will be made up of around 20 tenants using the very latest technology, such as webinars and online chat, to gather your views and feedback on our services and performance.

On top of this, around 30 tenants will be asked to get involved in a new-look Wheatley Group Scrutiny Panel; our environmental inspection teams, and different focus groups, which would explore new ideas and services.

Whichever way you would like to get involved with us, there will be an option to suit you, letting you choose how much control you have in decision making.

You choose how to spend £179k

Putting you in control and giving you the power to decide and shape the future is key to our new engagement strategy.

For example, we want you to tell us your investment priorities and project ideas - and better still, we want you to decide how this money is spent.

Over the next five years, we are proposing to spend **£179k** on customer priorities. This includes work you tell us is important in your community: improvements to communal fencing, additional storage for both bikes and bins, and paths and seating in common areas.

We will repeat our recently piloted 'You Choose Challenge', where you can vote online on which projects are funded in an area. This will be a simple and engaging way to get involved, with minimal input.

You will decide – from the comfort of your own home - through our website, our Facebook page (@wlhousingpartnership) or using a new community smartphone app we are developing. You can also become involved in deciding how investment is spent by joining one of our focus groups.

Your voice

This is a new and exciting approach to a customer-focused operating model where it will be easier than ever before for our tenants to get the services they want, when they want.

As we've said now, more than ever, is the time for us to grasp the opportunities and learn from what customers have told us they want and adapt and change for the future.

In summary, we believe this will;

- ▶ allow our customers to have a stronger voice and allow them to have a say in shaping services in their homes and communities;
- ▶ allow customers the opportunity to engage in ways they want to and when they want to;
- ▶ allow us to achieve more together. This will include increasing our ambitions of building more new homes, investing much more in our customers' homes, as well as creating new jobs and training opportunities.

Through our new way of working, you will receive a new and improved service where your enquiries will be dealt with at the first time of asking, you will benefit from stronger connections between our staff in your communities as well as being able to do more online.

In addition, our new ways of engagement will make sure you are more in control than ever when it comes to connecting with us.



Your choices

We want to hear your views on our proposals. Please read the questions below and let us know your views in the attached feedback card.

Do you support plans to introduce a new way of working and of delivering services to benefit tenants and communities?

Do you believe the planned new way of engagement would make it more open and accessible for tenants to get involved and have their say?

How to make your voice heard

You can have a say on our proposals by completing the enclosed feedback form and returning to us by Monday, 25 October 2021.

But that's not the only way to make your voice heard.

You can also:

- ▶ have a chat with your housing officer with your feedback;
- ▶ email us at talk@wlhp.org;
- ▶ call us on 01506 416438; or
- ▶ contact the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS).

We will collect all the views from the consultation and update tenants by newsletter and on our website at www.wlhp.org

Independent advice

TPAS support tenants' groups and are very keen that the views of customers are heard. They help tenants and communities to have a strong influence on the future of their area. They are there to support you to improve and thrive through community engagement so please take the time to contact them.

- ▶ Email: lesley.baird@tpasscotland.org.uk
- ▶ Freephone: 0800 049 5761
- ▶ Web: www.tpasscotland.org.uk
- ▶ Facebook: TPAS Scotland



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