



## **Our Communication Strategy**

**'Involving, collaborating and  
empowering...building strong relationships'**

2023-28

## **OUR COMMUNICATION STRATEGY**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Thenue Housing is rooted in its local communities, with over 3000 properties mainly in the East End of Glasgow. We aim to deliver quality, affordable housing and excellent customer service, improving homes, lives and communities. Central to this will be communication and putting customers' voices at the heart of what we do, building stronger relationships with them and our wider community. Our communication strategy sets out how we will do this in a changing communication environment. It outlines the fundamentals of how we will communicate, our approaches, methods and objectives, that together will enable us to actively involve, collaborate with, and empower our customers, communities, people and partners.

### **A CHANGING COMMUNICATION ENVIRONMENT AND OUR STRATEGY**

#### **The Communication Environment**

Over the last few years there has been a step change in the way people communicate and their expectations of communication. Coming out of the pandemic, communication has been about reconnecting and engaging in more flexible and personalised ways of communicating that meet needs and expectations ie engage and involve people, support mental health and wellbeing, remote working and diversity and inclusion.

There has been an increase in the use of and preference for digital communications and a recognition of the continued need for and value of contact with people, whether this is via digital means or in-person. 'Meeting people where they are' requires recognition of the communication approaches and methods that are right for different people and different situations.

Advances in communication technology also continue to drive self-service by customers; and dynamic feedback enabling more accurate understanding of people's needs, what they value and how services measure up to expectations.

Social media is increasingly where many organisations communicate with their customers and manage their reputations. This has resulted in more online communities, customer groups etc that offer more opportunities to interact with customers and wider communities.

## Developing Our Communication Strategy

Our Communication strategy has been developed within the new communication environment and to support the delivery of the organisation's strategic objectives. It sits alongside our People and Wellbeing strategy and our IT strategy. Specifically, it will support:

- A '**customer first**' focus - listening to customers and providing services, but increasingly involving, collaborating and empowering customers to develop and access services in a way that suits them and responds to what they need and value.
- Hybrid and Flexible First working – communication that supports remote working and effective engagement of staff in delivering Thenue's goals.
- The development of a modern communications framework that harnesses greater use of digitalisation alongside a variety of communication approaches to meet people's needs and circumstances.
- Engaging communication, that is relevant and inspires interest and involvement eg strategic conversations that set the everyday challenges within a wider context more where people can be part of both understanding and collaborating on solutions to meet their needs and that of their wider community.
- Recognition of Thenue's role, contribution and positive reputation.

## HOW WE COMMUNICATE – '*being the best we can be*'

We are clear on who we are - a charitable organisation, which is an integral part of the community, delivering excellent customer service and ultimately:

'Quality homes and stronger communities where people want to live'.

The way we engage with people, our style, standards and methods of communication, will reinforce our identity and values and support a positive reputation amongst our customers, communities and stakeholders.

### Communication that engages – *living our values*

Engagement is an integral part of successful communication whether communication is about informing or involving. It is about being relevant and capturing people's interest in and understanding of what you have to say, discuss, explore etc. It is about living Thenue's values ie passion, excellence, respect and connection, as illustrated below:

**Passion** – inspire interest through enthusiasm; positive energy to find solutions.

**Excellence** – well-organised, accessible opportunities for customer participation

**Respect** – communication personalised and relevant, input welcomed/valued/acted on

**Connection** – listening and hearing, involving and collaborating.

At Thenue, engagement starts with leaders engaging their teams and stakeholders, critical to empowering and motivating people in the delivery of goals. Engaging communication with customers aims to attract interest and inspire involvement, enable collaboration and empowerment. For all our audiences, both internal and external, setting communication within a strategic context and developing understanding of the bigger picture will also enable more effective engagement. We aim to

do this through ongoing strategic conversations when addressing future challenges eg net zero, new approaches to flexible housing, developing our digital communications etc.

In addition to our communication being relevant and effective, our focus on being engaging will also support the successful delivery of our regulatory requirements for communicating and engaging with tenants.

### Style and tone of communication

In addition to ensuring that our communication is engaging, staff have identified other key elements of the Thenue communication style:

- Staff want to go the extra mile for customers – think '**customer first**'.
- We are about finding solutions.
- Communication is easy for customers and is encouraged.
- We actively listen, are non-judgemental, inclusive, friendly, polite and helpful.

Ultimately, we want people to feel that:

- We care and aim to deliver (to the best of our ability and with our partners)
- We understand and are an integral part of the community.
- People's voices are at the heart of what we do.
- People are valued and respected.

We want to:

- Build positive and productive relationships based on trust.

### Communication standards

The following standards enable people to check that their communication is of the right quality, whether this is what is said, written, discussed or published online.

Standard	Examples
Accuracy	Content is factually correct
Timely	Sufficient time to contribute; Board/staff hear before public; in line with service standards
Clear	Plain English; concise
Open and honest	Truthful and transparent
Relevant	Of interest/significance to audience
Accessible and flexible	Evident where to obtain information; seamless links between different channels; methods appropriate to customer/communication aims

### Purpose and methods of communication – a changing landscape

Being clear about the purpose of our communication enables us identification of the most appropriate approach and method as illustrated in the table below.

Purpose	Approach	Method
<b>Inform</b> – to share, update, advise.	Print/published online.  (In-person, face-to-face etc relevant where purpose wider eg informing to involve.)	Newsletters, website, social media, email, letters, video communication/podcasting  Real time messaging  Team charters
<b>Involve</b> – to invite response, input and communication	Face-to-face eg in-person or online          Digital – increasing, but personalised	Board meetings  Area Association/ Community Council meetings  Service centres  Feedback mechanisms  Staff Forum  Focus groups  Consultations
<b>Collaborate</b> – to engage, work together, problem solve, share.	Events, get togethers, eg for informing but equally collaborating.          Digital – increasingly more personalised and being used to collaborate, influence.	Staff Together  Scrutiny Panel  Strategic conversations /strategy sessions  Special events  Business Forums  Social media  Staff Forum  Community Events
<b>Empower</b> – to enable, encourage, innovate.	In-person 1 to 1; In-person group working; 1 to 1 via digital means	Appraisals, personal development/training

		Customer Apps and online customer services
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The above is guide as the purpose of any one communication can be varied. Generally, the more sensitive the communication or the more need for collaboration or empowerment, the fewer number of people will tend to be involved eg larger events will include breakout groups or 1-to-1 discussions as appropriate.

The table also recognises that increasingly printed or published online communication is becoming more personalised ie targeted to the individual. This is made possible through digitalisation and technology that captures a variety of valuable information about customers and data on their interactions enabling greater opportunity to understand and respond more personally to people's needs. In turn this is changing the communication method landscape. It enables effective online communication where in the past more in-person communication would be utilised. This is significant in meeting people's needs preferences for digital communications that fit with their lifestyle and with supporting the effective delivery of services by remote working staff members.

Digitalisation also provides opportunity for a multi-channel approach to communication which (seamlessly) links different methods of communication to provide the level of information or involvement relevant to people, when they need it and in a way that is most convenient to them. For example, the newsletter that links an article to the website that links to a customer app for self-service. In addition, to offering more personalised and empowering communication, this also enables people to easily and increasingly access the information they need, in line with our IT Strategy.

At Thenue we recognise that although there are real opportunities and advantages associated with developing our digital communication, this will be done in a way that ensures our communication is accessible and flexible, using methods and approaches that are driven by the needs of our customers, people and partners.

## **OUR AUDIENCES**

Being responsive to the communication needs and preferences of our different audiences is key to delivering our goals. Our audiences are summarised in our strategic themes ie customers, communities, our people and partners and in more detail below:

Internally (our people):

- Board Members
- Employees
- Unions

Externally (our customers, communities and partners)

- Tenants, owners
- The Scottish Government

- Glasgow City Council
- Regulatory bodies
- Community organisations eg Area Associations, Community Councils
- Funders
- Partner organisations eg other housing organisations
- Support agencies
- Suppliers, contractors, consultants and service providers

We are clear that we all own communication and have responsibility for working with each other and our individual stakeholders in a way that is aligned to the style, standards and approaches outlined in this strategy. Our individual objectives will reflect our communication responsibilities and training and development will be available to support the development of communication skills and associated behaviours.

## **OUR STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION OBJECTIVES**

We recognise that, in building stronger relationships and a reputation for excellent services, we need a clear focus on what successful communication looks and feels like and how it will support the delivery of our strategic goals. Our strategic objectives provide a pathway for achieving this:

### **Our customers and community**

To increasingly put **'customer voice at the heart of what we do'** we will:

- Review customer and community communication and marketing to establish the baseline, understand opportunities and identify priorities for our action plan in line with this strategy (using surveys, focus groups, feedback from customer groups, Scrutiny Panel, etc)
- Develop a modern, multi-channel approach to communication that 'meets people where they are' – in-person, digital, print etc and reflects the Thenue brand (style, values, etc)
- Working with customers, develop existing and new ways of engaging with a wider customer and community base including:
  - Effective ways to engage with Community Councils, Area Associations, etc
  - Social media and other digital opportunities
  - Communication champions/influencers
  - Events run jointly with partners/local businesses
- Identify opportunities to increasingly personalise communication eg using customer interaction information
- Encourage and facilitate access through self-service technologies, integrated feedback opportunities.

### **Our people**

The leadership team aim to create a modern working and communication environment that supports people **'to be the best we can be'** and together with people across Thenue we will:

- Identify and implement personal objectives that support the delivery of communication objectives, style and standards, with a renewed focus on 'Customer First'
- Incorporate these objectives and associated behaviours in our appraisal process and provide appropriate training to support
- Build skills for 'strategic conversations' that enable people to understand the wider context and contribute creatively to meeting goals
  - Focus on the future in collaborating, empowering
  - Adopt an external perspective – building awareness of needs, social/ technological/environmental challenges/opportunities etc
- Ensure communication supports hybrid working and 'meets people where they are' supporting:
  - a creative, collaborative environment
  - wellbeing and performance.

## Our partners

We aim to work in partnership with all our stakeholders, delivering on our commitments, working collaboratively to identify creative and innovative solutions and building our reputation as partner of choice. In doing this we will:

- Review opportunities for communication with existing and new partners, identifying opportunities to further build valued relationships and measures of improvement
- Involve and collaborate with partners to share best practice and develop solutions to national and local issues eg:
  - supporting strategic conversations on environmental and sustainability goals
  - raising our profile and reputation as a valued 'voice' in the local and wider business community eg establishing new local links; developing opportunities for engagement on current and future challenges; supporting stakeholder activities and events.

## OUR COMMUNICATION OUTCOMES

### Supporting Thenue's strategic outcomes

Our communication strategy outcomes directly support Thenue's strategic outcomes and are:

**CUSTOMERS and HOMES** – Customers' voices at the heart of what we do through relevant, authentic and proactive communication and engagement that meets customers' needs and aspirations and enables the organisation to deliver for them.

**COMMUNITIES** – Positive reputation in the community based on proactive development of valued relationships with a wide range of stakeholders and promotion of the value-added services and opportunities available.

**PEOPLE** – A creative, supportive, performance orientated working environment where staff are fully informed, engaged and empowered; and communication supports hybrid working, wellbeing and recognises excellence.



**PARTNERS** – **Effective engagement** with partners that delivers for customers and positions Thenue as a partner of choice.

### Specific communication outcomes

Underpinning the above will be a modern communication approach and infrastructure that specifically aim to deliver the following:

- Excellent communication style and standards that reinforce Thenue’s identity and values and support the delivery of objectives.
- Innovative and effective approaches that successfully **engage a wider range of customers** eg through community partners, social media, local influencers, communication champions.
- **‘Strategic conversations’** are part of the way we communicate; people understand the wider context and know their involvement in developing our services and finding solutions to future challenges is valued.
- Communication increasingly **personalised**, accessible and flexible.
- Digital communication strategy in place as part of a **multi-channel approach** that 'meets people where they are', and truly engages and empowers.
- Increasingly we enable self-service where **people actively access information** and use it in a way that meets their needs.

### MEASURING SUCCESS

We have identified some key measures for establishing progress in meeting our communication objectives. These will be supplemented by a more detailed annual action plan.

- Baseline for communication established through review of methods, responses to surveys, customer and staff feedback/consultations and analysing data from service technology.
- Refreshed and new opportunities introduced for involving, collaborating and empowering customers and other stakeholders eg Scrutiny panel, customer panels, social media opportunities, influencers.
- Strategic conversations held internally and externally producing results and valued by those involved – evidenced through feedback, action taken and communication of outcomes eg at Board, Staff Together, customer events/panels.
- Style, standards and messaging evident in our branding, interactions with people and the content of our communication and reflected in the way people understand and feel about Thenue.
- Appraisals identify success in achieving communication objectives and training available and undertaken to strengthen skills and behaviours.
- Ongoing feedback from customers, partners, staff to measure recognition of changes and impact.
- Multi-channel approach to communication including digital strategy is developed and meets people’s needs and enables ‘self-service’ and personalisation of communication.

## **EMBEDDING OUR STRATEGY**

We are clear that we all need to own the communication strategy and make it an integral part of the way we go about our work, leading by example and reinforcing the links between what we do and our strategic objectives. To enable this we will ensure that:

- Communication is 'on our agendas' for meetings, in reports, team charters and as part of our objective setting and appraisal process.
- Our branding reinforces our communication style, standards and messaging.
- Qualitative and quantitative measures of our progress are in our action plans.
- As our internal and external operating environments evolve, we are responsive and adapt to how we embed and meet our communication objectives.

## **CONCLUSION**

This strategy provides the basis for a modern, effective communication approach in a changing communication environment. It reinforces the fundamentals of communication, recognising the importance of successfully engaging with our audiences and living our values, and sets out our communication objectives that support the delivery of Thenue's strategic objectives.

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