



## THE LANGSTANE GROUP

### COMMUNITY INVESTMENT STRATEGY - 2017 - 2020

#### 1. Introduction

1.1 The Langstane Group, which consists of Langstane Housing Association and any associated subsidiaries, has long recognised the need to go beyond the provision and management of good quality housing in creating communities that people want to live in. This is embedded within Langstane Housing Association's Mission Statement which is:

'to provide good quality housing that promotes social inclusion and generates sustainable communities'

1.2 The Langstane Group provides community investment in a variety of ways. A wide range of support is provided to a diverse range of organisations and communities. This support comes via properties that are made available and varying levels of staff support. The Group aspires to maximise its positive impact by the way it operates and spends its money within communities.

1.3 The Langstane Group strives to be a responsible organisation – as a landlord, as a developer, a buyer, an employer and a community member.

1.4 This strategy will strengthen and direct the Group's positive contribution to the communities within which it operates and its position as a strong asset within the community and as a partner of choice.

1.5 This Community Investment Strategy will contribute to improving neighbourhoods and communities, which in turn will improve the lives of tenants.

1.6 The Group will provide value for money by obtaining maximum community investment from working in partnership, thereby maximising the impact of available resources.

## **2. Aims**

The aims of this strategy are to:

- 2.1 Set down a strategic approach to the Langstane Group's support for the communities within which it operates;
- 2.2 Maximise the positive impact that the Group has on the social, environmental and economic circumstances of tenants and the communities within which it operates; and
- 2.3 Ensure that the Langstane Group demonstrates its position as a strong asset within the community to deliver on its Mission Statement to advance social inclusion and generate sustainable communities.

### **3. Background**

- 3.1 The Langstane Group manages over 2,900 properties which are dispersed over a large geographical area in the North East of Scotland. This provides a challenge in terms of how the Group can contribute in a meaningful and sustained way to the communities within which it operates. It does however, open up diverse opportunities across the North East.
- 3.2 Communities are typically considered in two ways – one as a geographic community e.g. Seaton and one as a thematic community e.g. single, disadvantaged households.
- 3.3 The Scottish Government clearly wants registered social landlords to make a broader contribution than simply developing and managing housing stock. It is also in registered social landlords' interest to contribute towards shaping communities where tenants are happier, healthier and wealthier.
- 3.4 Historically, Langstane has made a significant community contribution in the Seaton area of Aberdeen where it has its head office. This has seen the Association become a well appreciated supporter and partner in the Seaton area, with this bringing recognition outwith the area from other organisations.
- 3.5 The Langstane Group provides a considerable contribution to thematic communities. Good quality, affordable office and residential accommodation is provided to third sector organisations. The Group works in partnership with other local registered social landlords and third sector organisations to develop projects and social enterprises that benefit its tenants and the wider community.
- 3.6 The Group has maximised funding and other opportunities to deliver community investment. Grant funding has been obtained from a variety of sources, most notably the Scottish Government's Wider Role and Regeneration Funds.
- 3.7 The Group's key contribution as a partner is to provide staff development time which includes focusing on attracting funding and providing support to community groups. The Group has invested modest amounts of direct financial contribution. Direct financial contributions are normally made towards a capital project where ultimately the property remains a Group member's asset.

## 4. National Drivers

4.1 The Scottish Government has five Strategic Objectives focused on aspiring to a country that is:

- Wealthier and Fairer
- Smarter
- Healthier
- Safer and Stronger
- Greener

These are reflected across 16 Scottish Government National Outcomes.

4.2 The Scottish Government has previously stated why it thinks registered social landlords have an important contribution to make to the communities within which they operate:

- registered social landlords have strong links to the communities they serve. This makes them well placed to identify local opportunities and needs and deliver outcomes for local people;
- registered social landlords have a particular ability to reach hard to reach groups and individuals; and
- registered social landlords possess significant assets in terms of land, building and the skills and experience of their management committee members and staff.

4.3 The role of many registered social landlords in undertaking a broader role as a community anchor, working to build capacity within other community groups and third sector organisations involved in local regeneration activity, is also recognised and repeatedly stated by the Scottish Government across many communications.

4.4 The Scottish Government created the Wider Role fund in 2003 to encourage and support registered social landlords to make a broader contribution within communities. This was replaced by the People and Communities Fund (PCF) in 2012. This fund integrated a number of separate funding streams, tightened application criteria and was opened up beyond registered social landlords to organisations defined as 'community anchor' organisations.

4.5 The Scottish Government's 'Achieving a Sustainable Future' Strategy (2011) aspires to 'a Scotland where our most disadvantaged communities are supported and where all places are sustainable and promote well-being.' It reaffirms the important role that registered social landlords play in both physical and social regeneration.

4.6 The Procurement Reform (Scotland) Act 2014 introduced obligations on public contracting authorities which, for the purposes of the Act, registered social

landlords are considered to be, to create procurement strategies with the potential use of community benefit requirements in the process of allocating contracts.

Community benefit requirements are defined as 'relating to training and recruitment, availability of sub contracting opportunities or measures intended to improve the economic, social or environmental wellbeing of the authority's area in a way which is additional to the main purpose of the contract into which the provision is being inserted'.

The Act includes a requirement to create an annual procurement report which includes a summary of community benefit activity and summary of steps taken to facilitate involvement of supported businesses.

- 4.7 The Scottish Social Housing Charter (SSHC) details what tenants can expect from social landlords. Within the Charter's 16 outcomes, there are several outcomes that outline intentions beyond merely the provision of housing. Under the banner of Neighbourhood and Community, tenants should expect to 'live in well maintained neighbourhoods, where they feel safe'.
- 4.8 The Scottish Housing Regulator's increasing focus on the value for money agenda will require the Group to ensure that value for money is managed and demonstrated across all areas of operations.

## **5. Links to relevant Langstane Group plans and strategies**

- 5.1 In recognising the importance for the Group to provide community investment where possible, links can be made to several key plans and strategies, as listed below:
- 5.2 Langstane's Business Plan (2016 - 2018) details its mission statement as the intention 'to provide good quality housing that promotes social inclusion and generates sustainable communities.' Langstane's values statement includes a commitment to 'demonstrating social responsibility'. Business Plan priority 4 is 'Strengthening social inclusion in the communities it serves'. The Business Plan further states that 'At all times the Association's actions and homes must be, and seen to be, a community asset, ensuring it continues to be a landlord, employer and partner of choice'. Within this priority area, support for third sector partners is stated via the provision of accommodation, facilities, advice and assistance where practical.
- 5.3 Langstane's Asset Management Strategy (2016-2021) highlights the need for a 'clear strategy on extracting community benefit from contracts'. Additionally, there is a stated intention to 'work with third sector partners to identify the best approach to increasing the availability of accommodation with support.' A third sector survey was carried out in 2016 which highlighted various interests from third sector partners for accommodation and other services.

- 5.4 The Langstane Group's Public Relations and Marketing Plan (2015-2018) states that 'it is important that the Group recognises what makes it different from its peers and projects a strong, positive corporate social responsibility'.

## **6. What the Langstane Group currently achieves**

- 6.1 The Langstane Group has a rich history of providing 'more than housing'. Support services for tenants are well established and relationships with the third sector are strong, with many properties leased directly to organisations providing social care or support. Third sector organisations also benefit from the provision of good quality office accommodation at competitive costs.
- 6.2 Several community facilities, such as the STAR Community Flat and Port Elphinstone Community House, have been developed in partnership with local authorities and the third sector. These facilities are usually multi purpose and aim to provide information, advice and support in areas such as money advice, employability, welfare reform, housing, computers and health and well being.
- 6.3 Where possible, desk space is offered to third sector organisations, within Langstane's head office and community facilities at competitive costs. Langstane's Fraser Court, Aberdeen Common Room is used by community groups such as Community Foods Initiatives North East and St Machar Credit Union.
- 6.4 Langstane promotes St Machar Credit Union by offering payroll deductions for savings and loans to staff. Community groups benefit from staff support and representation on Boards and Committees. Support for social enterprise is well established via the purchase of goods and services.
- 6.5 Opportunities to develop projects that benefit tenants and the wider community are pursued on an ongoing basis, particularly as new funding streams emerge. Grant applications are made to a variety of funders to support many of the activities that provide wider community benefit.
- 6.6 Langstane has continued to benefit from People and Communities Fund funding for the WorkingRite youth employability project which was established in 2010. Langstane also continues to be a partner in projects that have been routed through Grampian Housing Association for funding e.g. Target employment project.
- 6.7 Several longstanding initiatives around Langstane's head office base in the Seaton area of Aberdeen have received support for many years. This includes providing development, financial and governance support to the multi purpose STAR community flat and a childcare provider.

## **7. The Way Forward**

- 7.1 Langstane will support approaches and activities that have a positive impact on the social, environmental and economic circumstances for tenants and the communities within which it operates.
- 7.2 Where preferable and necessary, partnership working will be promoted to develop viable approaches and activities, particularly given the dispersed nature of the Langstane Group's stock. Initiatives will be developed in partnership with other registered social landlords, local authorities, third sector organisations and other relevant groups. Consideration will be given to offering access to initiatives to the wider community where possible.
- 7.3 Key priorities for the next period are to:
- i. empower and support communities;
  - ii. maximise community investment opportunities; and
  - iii. maximise funding for community investment.

Actions that will assist the above priorities are:

- engaging with community planning processes, supporting communities and the third sector where appropriate;
- supporting third sector partners in the form of advice and assistance;
- providing access to cost effective and sustainable accommodation;
- considering community benefit clauses for every procurement exercise that is undertaken and implementing these where appropriate;
- using contractors who are registered with the Considerate Contractors scheme for new build developments;
- involving communities in the new build design process through engagement with appropriate community organisations (such as Community Councils); and
- working collaboratively with partners to acquire funding to address key challenges to the social, economic and environmental well being of communities.

## **8. Review**

The Community Investment Strategy will be reviewed on a three-yearly basis and achievement of the priorities will be monitored by the Operational Services Committee on a yearly basis.