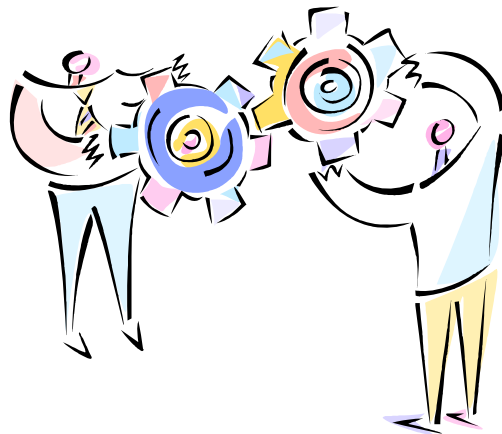


LANGSTANE HOUSING ASSOCIATION

TENANT PARTICIPATION STRATEGY



INTRODUCTION

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 changes the legislative framework for tenant participation. Local Authority Landlords and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) have important new responsibilities which create a framework of statutory duties to consult with individual tenants and tenant groups. These include:

- A duty on Local Authorities and RSLs to prepare a Tenant participation Strategy. This should include an assessment of the resources required and a statement of the resources to be made available, to give effect to the strategy. These strategies must show how a Landlord intends to go about taking account of the views of tenants, the proposals on which they are likely to consult and the information provided to tenants.
- A duty on Landlords to establish a Register of Tenants Organisations based on criteria set by Scottish Ministers.
- A duty on Landlords to notify individual tenants and registered tenants organisations of proposals relating to Housing Management, Standards of Service and the Tenant Participation Strategy itself and a duty to have regard to representations made by individual tenants or tenants groups.
- The Act provides for a Tenant Management Co-operative to enter into an agreement with a Local Authority Landlord or an RSL, with the approval of Scottish Ministers.
- Landlords will be expected to ensure that their Tenant Participation Strategies comply with equal opportunities requirements and promote equal opportunity requirements and promote equal opportunities in general as set out in Section 106 of the Act.

Langstane Housing Association (the Association) is committed to ensuring that its tenants have influence and are involved in shaping the service they receive. Implementation of the Tenant Participation Strategy will enable tenants to take an informed view on their housing services and be involved in decision making processes about the service they receive and the way their homes are managed. This will include development of policies and procedures, improvement proposals, performance monitoring and monitoring of equal opportunities of existing tenants and waiting list applicants.

The Association strives for continuous improvement. Tenant involvement can help the Association become more efficient, accountable and responsive to the needs of those it serves.

In partnership with tenants we aim to:

- Improve services
- Increase tenants involvement and democracy
- Strengthen and sustain local communities

Offer a wide range of participation opportunities to suit tenants' needs and circumstances regardless of age, race, disability, location, sexual orientation, marital status, gender or dependency issues.

COMMITMENT TO DEVELOPING TENANT PARTICIPATION

The Association is committed to resourcing our new Strategy for Tenant Participation in partnership with Tenant Associations and individual tenants. We will continue to review and develop this Strategy in partnership with tenants.

We recognise the need for a strategy which offers a wide range of participation opportunities, formal, informal and ad hoc, to enable tenants to choose the most appropriate method for their needs and circumstances.

We are committed to ensuring tenants have:

- Access to high quality information about the Association and any proposals which would significantly affect them.
- Regular opportunities to consult with Association staff through meetings, consultation and information events and questionnaires.
- Encouragement to become Association Members and attend the Annual General Meeting and stand for the Committee of Management.
- Encouragement and resources to join set up and attend Tenant Association Groups or Registered Tenant Organisations.
- Clear well publicised information on Tenants Rights including how to register your Tenant Group and Tenant Group contact information.
- Equal access to participation regardless of age, disability, location, sexual orientation, marital status, gender or dependency problems.
- Clear information about the workings of the Association and its decision making structures.

INFORMATION

Good quality information is essential to ensure that tenants can participate fully. We will offer a range of methods to provide information such as:

- The Tenants Handbook
- The Association web-site
- Half yearly issues of 'Langstane News' newsletters each year.
- Having appropriate information leaflets readily available.
- Customer care and contact information guides for major improvements.
- Annual Report
- Letters
- Surgeries, seminars and consultation events
- Code of Guidance on Tenant Participation

A Code of Guidance for good practice in Tenant Participation will be developed in partnership with tenants and tenants groups which will include:

- What information can be expected
- How tenants request that information
- How and when the information will be provided
- What, if any, information which tenants do not have a right to, will be reserved

The Code of Guidance will be constantly reviewed to ensure it continues to meet tenants' needs and progresses to meet the requirements of participation initiatives.

Information will be produced in clear everyday language. On request other languages and formats such as audiocassette, floppy disc or large print will be available.

CONSULTATION

The Association is committed to consulting tenants prior to any major decision being taken on any proposal which would significantly affect tenants. The Association will ensure that tenants have a reasonable time to respond and the Association will take account of tenants' views as part of their decision making process. Tenants will be advised of outcomes and given reasons for the decision being made.

Consultation will take a variety of forms including:

- Surveys
- Questionnaires
- Tenant panels
- Comment forms
- Consultation events
- Tenant group meetings and working groups

Registered Tenant Groups will be consulted on relevant reports to be presented to the Committee of Management.

Guidelines for consultation will be developed for:

- Proposed policy changes
- Changes to service delivery
- Rent setting
- Improvement programmes
- Monitoring and evaluation framework
- Any proposed transfer of stock

These guidelines will explain consultation and participation structures and timescales clearly and will describe how tenants contribute to and influence decisions. They will also state how feedback will be given on consultation results and why decisions have been made.

PARTICIPATION

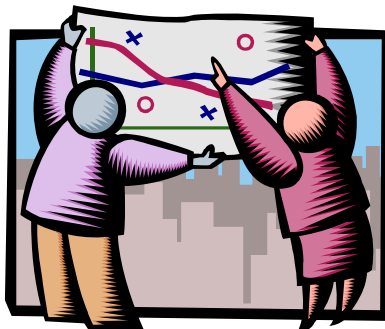
The Association are committed to working with Tenants to enable them to take part in and influence the decision making process on issues which affect them, their homes and the environment in which they live. To support the continued development of Tenant Participation the Association will:-

- Support members who wish to set up Tenant Organisations in their areas. We will encourage Tenant Organisations to become Registered Tenant Organisations as this will ensure that they have a statutory right to be consulted in the Tenant Participation process.
- Ensure that all tenants of the Association have equal access to the necessary information, training and support to enable them to make informed decisions and to participate fully.
- Actively promote Tenant Organisations, Tenant Participation Volunteers and interested people to become involved in the participation process.
- Encourage Tenant Participation regarding proposals, which will significantly affect the tenant, such as rent increases or major works to their home or environment.

The Association recognises that not all tenant groups will want to register. These groups might not feel able or willing to operate within a formalised environment. This may be due to a number of legitimate reasons.

The Association will continue to work with non-registered tenants groups, to notify them of relevant issues. Groups, which do not or cannot become registered, will continue to be consulted and notified of relevant issues.

Non – registered tenants groups will receive support, for example, staff assistance to get started or help with photocopying. However, in order to receive financial support or resources all groups must have adopted a recognised constitution and an equal opportunities policy.



MONITORING AND REVIEW

The Association recognises that there will be a need to identify from experience any improvements or changes that may need to be made to the Tenant Participation Strategy. The Association will work to develop structures to:

- Enable tenants to have a role in setting service targets and monitoring performance levels.
- Agree meaningful ways to evaluate performance targets.
- Encourage tenants to propose service improvements and amendments.
- Assess tenants' satisfaction with the participation opportunities available.
- Include tenants' views in developing the Housing Service Plan.
- Agree an open and constructive procedure for dealing with disputes.

The Association is committed in principle to continuously improving all services it provides to tenants through the Best Value Framework. We are currently carrying out a Best Value Review of Response Repairs. We are aiming to extend Best Value to other services such as allocations, rent arrears and anti-social issues.



RESOURCES

The Association is committed to ensuring the provision of a budget to support tenant participation and ensure that all aspects of the Tenant Participation Strategy are implemented. This includes staff training and joint tenant/staff training to promote the development of good practice throughout the service.

Tenant Groups need funding to be able to take part in the Tenant Participation process. Groups may require different levels of grant depending on the level of the Group's development. Additional grant funding will be made at the discretion of the landlord. All Tenant Groups who meet the criteria for grants will be able to apply for Start-Up and Annual Grants from the Association.

A Tenant Participation Co-ordinator will be responsible for implementation of Landlord duties regarding participation. The Tenant Participation Co-ordinator will also be responsible for:

- Helping Tenant Groups to become registered.
- Helping interested tenants who want to set up a Tenant Group or Association.
- Helping Tenant Groups with photocopying, typing, producing newsletters and publicity information.
- Helping Tenant Groups with organising meetings, preparing constitution, making an application for Start-Up or Annual Grants.
- Access to conferences, seminars and training courses. Providing advice and information on Tenant Participation.

If you want to comment on any part of this strategy, please contact Susan George, Tenant Participation Co-ordinator, Langstane Housing Association.

By telephone: 01224 423152

By email: susan.george@langstane-ha.co.uk

By post: 680 King Street, Aberdeen, AB24 1SL

By fax: 01224 423030