



TENANT PARTICIPATION STRATEGY

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Clydesdale Housing Association Limited is a Registered Scottish Charity
(SCO34228)

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** Our mission statement is “***To provide high quality affordable homes and regenerate communities***”. Our success in achieving this will depend largely on our ability to involve tenants in influencing decisions that affect the services we provide.
- 1.2** The Management Committee and staff of the Association are fully committed to promoting and providing the opportunity for tenants to become more involved in the management of their homes.
- 1.3** We first published a Tenant Participation Strategy in 2002. This document represents our revised proposals for taking tenant participation forward.
- 1.4** The Association will continuously work with tenants and tenant groups to enhance its approach to participation, learning from our own and others’ experiences.

2. THE STRATEGY’S BACKGROUND

- 2.1** The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 requires Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to prepare a Tenant Participation Strategy covering a range of key issues in relation to the implementation of a detailed Tenant Participation Policy.
- 2.2** The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 places a duty on us to consult with tenants:
- prior to the introduction of any proposed increase in either rent or service charges;
 - or where significant proposals are being considered in relation to:
 - repairs and maintenance;
 - all aspects of housing management;
 - the tenant participation strategy itself;
 - any possible change of landlord.
- 2.3** Our first Tenant Participation Strategy was developed in 2002 through close working with tenants using the following methods:
- issuing newsletters to inform tenants of their new right to be involved in housing related matters and seeking views on tenant participation;
 - a freephone helpline run by independent consultants to allow tenants to ask questions and air their opinions;
 - an information slot at our 2002 AGM;
 - a series of informal focus groups/information sessions held outwith Lanark which gave tenants the opportunity to talk to a senior staff member and our consultant.
- 2.4** In 2005 we developed a 5 Year Service Plan which lays out service standards for the Association up until 2010. In developing the Service Plan we enlisted the help of specialised consultants to organise and facilitate four tenant focus groups representing the diverse geographical spread within rural South Lanarkshire where our houses are located. The Service Plan developed through these focus groups was then presented at our first Tenants’

Conference in September 2005. Over 10% of our tenants attended the Tenants' Conference and participated in an electronic voting session (similar to 'ask the audience' from *Who Wants to be a Millionaire*). By the end of the session 99% of those in attendance agreed that they were happy for the Association to move forward with the measures contained within the Service Plan. A Progress Report on the Service Plan was presented by our Chief Executive a year later at our second Tenants' Conference.

2.5 The Association has two Registered Tenants' Organisations (RTOs) with whom it meets regularly to discuss tenants' issues and consult with on service and policy reviews. These RTOs are:

- The Rigside Residents' & Tenants' Association;
- The Clydesdale Tenants' & Residents' Group.

2.6 The Rigside Residents' & Tenants' Association is a well established organisation that represents owners and South Lanarkshire Council tenants as well as tenants of Clydesdale Housing Association in the village of Rigside. The Rigside RTO meets monthly and is attended by staff from Clydesdale Housing Association, the Council, local politicians and Strathclyde Police. In addition to focusing on housing and community issues, the Rigside RTO also organises social events and bus trips for local people.

2.7 The Clydesdale Tenants' & Residents' Group was established in September 2006 following a series of Steering Committee meetings organised by the Housing Association. This Group represents all estates that are owned and managed by the Housing Association. The Steering Committee developed a core of volunteers who, with the support of the Housing Association, drafted a Constitution for presentation at the 2006 Tenants' Conference.

2.8 In September 2006, the Tenants' Conference approved the Clydesdale RTO Constitution and elected a Management Committee of tenants and residents to organise the activities of the Group. Steering Committee members facilitated workshop sessions at the Tenants' Conference designed to identify issues which tenants wished the RTO to take forward with Clydesdale Housing Association. The Clydesdale RTO held its first public meeting in September 2006 and the Management Committee, supported by the Housing Association's staff, meet every month. Although at an early stage in its development, the Clydesdale RTO has started to recruit members, apply for funding and publicise its activities.

2.9 Both the Rigside Residents' & Tenants' Association and the Clydesdale Tenants' & Residents' Group were consulted with in the review of this document.

3. AIMS

3.1 One of Clydesdale Housing Association's Strategic Aims is "***To establish and maintain a broad membership base and encourage tenant membership of the Association and participation in its management***".

- 3.2 It is the aim of Clydesdale Housing Association to embed the participation of tenants and their representatives in how we monitor the Association's performance and plan/review services in order that tenants can influence the future direction and quality of the services we provide.
- 3.3 The establishment of the Clydesdale Tenants' & Residents' Group enables us to work with an organisation that represents all of our main service users in achieving the above aims.
- 3.4 We will continue to work with and support community based RTOs such as the Rigside Residents' & Tenants' Association.
- 3.5 Activities to inform, consult and involve tenants on an individual basis will continue in addition to the work with RTOs.
- 3.6 We will endeavor to ensure that our process for decision-making is open, clear and accountable.
- 3.7 We will continue to raise awareness among staff, Management Committee Members and tenants of the benefits of tenant participation.
- 3.8 It is important to bear in mind that this Tenant Participation Strategy will change and evolve through time. The Association wishes to ensure that the strategy is:
- flexible enough to cope with changing circumstances;
 - deliverable in terms of outcomes and expectations;
 - "tenant centred" in response to the views and wishes of our own tenants;
 - consistent with good practice;
 - reviewed regularly in response to feedback from tenants and other stakeholders;
 - consistent with legislation and guidance in relation to Equal Opportunities.

4. HOW THIS STRATEGY WAS DEVELOPED AND WHO WAS INVOLVED

- 4.1 This Strategy has been developed with the help and co-operation of the Clydesdale Tenants' & Residents' Group and the Rigside Residents' & Tenants' Association through meetings with their Management Committees and members over late 2006 & early 2007.
- 4.2 The previous Strategy that was developed in 2002 was done so by commissioning a consultant to work closely with the Association and tenants. The methods used to develop the Strategy are listed in section 2.3 of this document.
- 4.3 Over the early course of 2004 we carried out a tenants' satisfaction survey across 391 households, the results of which were published in our May 2004 newsletter that was sent to all tenants, owner occupiers and members of the Association. Some of the key tenant participation results from the survey are listed below:

- Only 5% of tenants surveyed felt that the Association was either bad or very bad at taking account of tenants' views over matters which affect them. However, 34% of those surveyed answered "Don't know".
- Only 6% of those surveyed felt that they "never" get their say on what's happening with the Association. However, 50% of those surveyed answered "Don't know".
- 8% felt that they could "never" influence decisions and services provided by the Association. 54% answered "Don't know".
- 77% of tenants told us that they would be prepared to get involved in future surveys, 23% in meetings and 10% in tenants/residents groups.
- 38% felt that tenants need to influence the Association more.
- Tenants were happy with the way we communicate with them with:
 - 90% saying we were either "good" or "very good" at keeping them informed about activities and services;
 - 93% saying they found the newsletter informative

4.4 These tenant satisfaction survey results have influenced this Strategy and the attached Action Plan.

4.5 The content and format of the Strategy has also been revised in accordance with Communities Scotland guidance as issued in the February 2004 document "Tenant Participation – Does your document measure up?"

4.6 We introduced a range of customer feedback questionnaires in 2006 that seek to obtain the views of service users on the quality of services being provided (including tenant participation). As a depth of feedback is collected we will be able to consider these results and the details of complaints we receive as we review our services and our approach to tenant participation.

4.7 The Association's Chief Executive, Joe Gorman is available to discuss tenant participation issues with individuals or groups of tenants. Joe is contactable on 01555 665316 or email at mail@clydesdale-housing.org.uk

5. REASONS FOR THE STRATEGY AND THE BENEFITS OF TENANT PARTICIPATION

5.1 We have developed this strategy in order to demonstrate the Association's plans for promoting, encouraging and implementing tenant participation throughout its tenant base.

5.2 We believe that the involvement of tenants in shaping the future of the organisation is fundamental to developing responsive services – the views of tenants will be used to influence future service delivery standards that our resources and affordable rent levels can deliver.

5.3 We consider that effective tenant participation will lead to high customer satisfaction levels, improved community spirit and contribute to establishing sustainable communities.

5.4 Good tenant participation will assist open, clear and accountable decision-making by the Association and will encourage a spirit of mutual trust between tenants and the Association.

6. LINKS TO OTHER STRATEGIES AND SERVICES

- 6.1** The Tenant Participation Strategy is linked to all service delivery plans and policies being developed by the Association.
- 6.2** We do not consider tenant participation as an 'add on' activity. Instead we hold the view that tenant participation is a core feature of all our service delivery activities.
- 6.3** Housing Association staff who are responsible for co-ordinating service and policy reviews are routinely required to provide a statement on the consultation activity that was involved in the review process to the Association's Management Committee before approval is granted.
- 6.4** Tenant participation will become an increasing part of how the Association influences local and national issues. Relevant consultation processes on local and national issues will involve us seeking tenants' views where it is practical and effective to do so.

7. HOW TO KEEP TENANTS INFORMED

- 7.1** We will use a range of different methods to keep tenants informed about the activities of the Association. The positive tenant satisfaction survey results on communicating with tenants have shown that tenants' prefer the quarterly newsletter as a mode of communication.
- 7.2** Other methods of keeping tenants informed will include:
- Leaflets;
 - The Annual Tenants' Conference;
 - The Tenants' Handbook;
 - Our Website;
 - Tenant Focus groups on particular topics;
 - Annual Reports;
 - Open days;
 - Meetings with tenants' organisations;
 - Roadshows.
- 7.3** We will review these methods of communicating on a regular basis through surveys and consultation events.

8. CONSULTING WITH TENANTS

- 8.1** The 2004 Tenants' Satisfaction Survey results showed that many tenants were unaware of the opportunity to influence the Association's decisions. Since obtaining those results, the Housing Association has concentrated on promoting and publicising consultation events. Particular emphasis has been given to reporting on the results of these events and the impact those results have on the decisions we make. This 'follow-up' action should encourage a spirit of confidence and trust between tenants and the Association.

- 8.2** We will ensure that tenants' rights to be consulted on changes to rent and service charges, repairs and maintenance services, all aspects of housing management services, the tenant participation strategy and any possible change of landlord are delivered.
- 8.3** Over the next year in particular we intend to use a range of consultation methods in order to engage with tenants over our policies and service standards in relation to:
- Rent charges and rent payment methods;
 - Estate Management and our service charge system;
 - Allocating houses;
 - Repairs and Maintenance.
- 8.4** We will use a wide range of methods for consulting with tenants in order to provide some choice for tenants wishing to take up various levels of involvement. These will include:
- Focus groups;
 - Postal, phone and door-to-door surveys;
 - House visits;
 - Tenants' Conferences;
 - Discussions with tenants' organisations;
 - Road shows, public Committee meetings;
 - Consultation registers
 - Resident involvement in routine estate inspections and grounds maintenance contract quality control checks.
- 8.5** Attendance and access to consultation events held at a specific venue will be supported by the Housing Association. We will identify venues which are accessible to those with physical disabilities wherever possible. We will offer free transport to and from venues for participants. Where possible, we will provide crèche facilities for consultation and participation events. We will consider the use of incentives to encourage turnout at conferences and public meetings e.g. prize draws.
- 8.6** We will continue to provide consultation methods that are responsive to tenant preferences. The majority of tenants who do not wish to attend public meetings or focus groups will be offered consultation opportunities via our quarterly Newsletter or specific questionnaires. Tenants interested in specific issues will be listed in our consultation register and asked to participate in consultation events as they arise. We will continue to ask tenants for information on their preferred method of consultation as consultation events proceed.
- 8.7** We will review the success of consultation methods regularly to make sure that they meet the needs of all groups of people.

9. GIVING TENANTS FEEDBACK

9.1 We will provide feedback on all consultation events to those individually involved and to tenants as a whole.

9.2 The feedback will include details of overall consultation results and how these were considered as part of the decision-making process.

9.3 We will use various methods of providing feedback to tenants, including:

- Newsletter articles;
- Leaflets;
- Website postings;
- Individual letters.

10. MONITORING AND REVIEWING THE STRATEGY

10.1 We will annually publish a statement on tenant participation activity via our Newsletter and Annual Report. The statement will include a summary of tenant participation activities, outcomes from those activities and the resources used in delivering the Strategy.

10.2 The Association's Chief Executive will annually consult with tenants, RTOs, staff and Management Committee members as part of the review process for the Tenant Participation Strategy.

11. PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

11.1 The Association is committed to complying with the Communities Scotland Performance Standard (November 2006) regarding tenant participation below:

GS2.2 - We have published and are implementing a sound strategy for encouraging and supporting tenants, residents and service users to participate actively in all areas of our work. We support tenants who take an active interest in managing their homes.

11.2 Our compliance with this Standard will be assessed by the Association at regular intervals and by Communities Scotland through its regulation and inspection activity.

12. WORKING WITH REGISTERED TENANT ORGANISATIONS (RTOs)

12.1 We have produced a procedure for the Registration of Tenants' Groups. We offer a commitment to any group to work alongside them to develop capacity and where possible to provide resources, either directly or in kind. More specifically:

- The Association will consider requests for a start up grant up to £300, subject to the approval of the Management Committee.
- Applications for additional funding may also be considered by Management Committee.
- We will assist and support RTOs in developing Constitutions and governance frameworks.

- We will offer an annual financial audit service to RTOs.
- A member of our staff will attend RTO meetings as required to respond to specific issues, present performance information and discuss customer feedback results for the Association.
- The Association's offices will be made available to RTOs as a meeting venue.
- We will provide practical administrative support to RTOs as required, e.g. minute taking, meeting document printing and distribution.
- We will consult with RTOs on all major service and policy reviews.
- We will consult with RTOs on proposed annual budgets and rent increases.
- We will reserve a place on the Association's Management Committee for an RTO representative subject to the Association's Rules on electing Management Committee members.
- We will invite RTOs to publicise their activities and membership via the quarterly Newsletter and the Association's website.
- RTOs will be provided with access to the Association's ICT equipment for the purposes of producing documents and RTO related web browsing.
- We will encourage new tenants to take up membership of the appropriate RTO at sign-up stage.
- We will continue to encourage RTOs to emerge.

12.2 The criteria for registration is as follows:

Any tenants' organisation may apply to the Association for registration. Application must be made in writing or electronically using the form supplied to the Association's offices.

- a copy of the organisation's written constitution must accompany the application;
- the Association's Chief Executive will be responsible for:
 - acknowledging receipt of the application;
 - advising the group of the application process and the appeals procedure;
 - scrutinising the application to ensure that the group complies with the criteria for registration;
 - liaising with the group to suggest amendments or seek clarification;
 - making recommendation to the Association's Management Committee as to whether an application should be accepted;
 - advising the group of the outcome of their application;
 - adding successful applicants to the Register of Tenants' Organisations;
 - advising unsuccessful applicants of their right to appeal;
 - in the event of a successful appeal, amend the Register accordingly;
 - dealing with the procedure relating to the removal of an organisation from the RTO Register.

13. RESOURCES

13.1 As part of our annual budget preparations we will develop assumptions for resourcing this Strategy.

13.2 Resources identified for tenant participation activities will include:

- Cost of meeting facility hire;
- Catering costs;
- Childcare costs;
- Traveling expense reimbursement/ provide free transport;
- Publicity & postage costs;
- Start-up grants for new RTOs;
- Consultant fees;
- Training costs;
- Staff time.

13.3 Details of the resources allocated to tenant participation activities will be published as part of the annual statement to tenants referred to in section 10 of this document.

14. TIME TO COMMUNICATE

14.1 We will give tenants enough time to contribute to consultation processes on particular issues.

14.2 When we are reviewing a policy which affects services to tenants we will invite comments on the existing policy from tenants via the methods outlined in section 8. We will usually allow at least a 6 week consultation period before reviewing responses.

14.3 We will use the responses received to develop or revise an existing policy or service standard.

14.4 We will publish an annual consultation calendar that clearly sets out achievable priorities for the year ahead and the consultation methods to be used. The calendar will be published in our newsletter each Spring.

15. TRAINING

15.1 We are committed to ensuring that tenants, Committee members and staff have the necessary skills and resources to allow them to get involved.

15.2 Staff and Committee training needs will be assessed on an annual basis and form part of our budget setting process.

15.3 Where possible, joint training sessions involving tenants, Committee and staff will be held in order to achieve best value and enhance joint working.

15.4 Training outcomes will be assessed in order to ensure that learning objectives have been met.

16. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

16.1 We take our responsibility to promote and practice equality seriously. Our approach to tenant participation will reflect this attitude.

16.2 We will do as much as possible to make participation available to all tenants of Clydesdale Housing Association by:

- Holding consultation and participation events in accessible premises;
- Presenting information in formats that are easy to read and understand;
- Presenting information in alternative formats such as audio tape, CD-ROM and Braille on request;
- Translating information into other languages on request.

16.3 We will endeavor to break down barriers and to involve as many people as possible by finding out our tenants' needs and developing procedures to meet these needs.

Approved by the Committee of Management on: 14 March 2007	
Signed: Secretary/Chairperson	Signed: Chief Executive/Senior Staff Member

17. ACTION PLAN

Activity	Target Completion Timescale
Publish an Annual Consultation Calendar	April 2007
Publish an Annual Tenant Participation Report Card	April 2007
Include a Tenant Participation Resource Plan in the annual budget	October 2007
Publish at least 3 newsletters per year	Ongoing
Consult with tenants & RTOs annually on rent and service charge increases	December/January/February 2007/8
Maintain & update the register of tenants who wish to participate in consultation activity (arranged in topic order)	Ongoing
Distribute copies of the Annual Report to all tenants	August 2007
Hold 3 public Management Committee meetings in local venues outwith Lanark per year	June & August 2007 & March 2008
Regularly provide feedback on the outcome of consultation events and decisions reached by the Association to individual tenants involved and the whole tenant base	Ongoing
Regularly report on the Association's performance levels via the quarterly newsletter	Quarterly
Publish customer feedback results in the Newsletter	Quarterly
Publish details of the Association's major and cyclical repairs programme & report on progress	Quarterly
Consult individual tenants regarding relevant major repair contracts	Ongoing
Involve residents in estate inspections and grounds maintenance quality control inspections	Ongoing
Involve future service users in the design of new housing	Where possible
Promote RTO membership take-up at new tenant sign up	Ongoing
Establish RTO sub-section in CHA website	June 2007
Hold 3 rd Annual Tenant Conference	September 2007
Complete suite of leaflets for all major service areas	June 2007