



**Clydesdale Housing Association**

**Policy name & number**                      **25 – Governance & Accountability  
Tenant Participation Strategy**

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**Policy by**    **Depute Chief Executive**

**Responsible Officer**                                      **Depute Chief Executive**

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Our Vision is:**

#### **Quality homes and excellent services for today and the future**

Delivered through these Common Values:

- Starting at the point of service delivery, we listen and learn from customers. We use this learning to improve how we work and achieve excellence
- We encourage leadership and teamwork to identify and share progressive ideas
- We value our people's commitment and support their enthusiasm in achieving success

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** Our Management Committee and staff are fully committed to promoting and providing the opportunity for tenants to become more involved in the management of their homes.

**1.3** This document represents our revised proposals for taking tenant participation forward.

**1.4** We will continuously work with tenants and tenant groups to enhance our 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** We currently have two Registered Tenants' Organisations (RTOs) with whom we meet. We regularly meet with the Clydesdale Tenants & Residents' Group to discuss tenants' issues and consult with on service and policy reviews and we have recently met with the Rigside Residents' & Tenants' Association to re-establish communication.
- 2.4** Both the Rigside Residents' & Tenants' Association and the Clydesdale Tenants' & Residents' Group were consulted when the original document was compiled.
- 2.5** The Strategy introduces the concept of "Tenant Scrutiny" which builds on traditional Tenant Participation methods. The scrutiny activities are wide ranging and can involve the intense involvement of tenants.

### **3. THE SCOTTISH SOCIAL HOUSING CHARTER**

**3.1** The Scottish Social Housing Charter details the standards and outcomes landlords are expected to achieve on behalf of tenants. The standards and outcomes specific to Tenant Participation are:

1. Equalities - Social landlords perform all aspects of their housing services so that:
  - *every tenant and other customer has their individual needs recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housing services.*
2. Communication - Social landlords manage their businesses so that:
  - *tenants and other customers find it easy to communicate with their landlord and get the information they need about their landlord, how and why it makes decisions and the services it provides.*
3. Participation - Social landlords manage their businesses so that:
  - tenants and other customers find it easy to participate in and influence their landlords' decisions at a level they feel comfortable with.

### **4. REGULATORY GUIDANCE OF GOVERNANCE AND FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT**

**4.1** The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 placed responsibility for monitoring the performance of Scottish Landlords with The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) to ensure that landlords act in the best interest of tenants. This is an extract from the SHR's Regulatory Guidance of Governance and Financial Management (p28):

*"All RSLs must comply with these standards and guidance and, by doing so, demonstrate effective governance and sound financial management and deliver good outcomes for tenants. The standards are such that any RSL can apply them flexibly to suit their individual organisation. We expect RSLs to use these standards and guidance to assess, confirm and improve their governance and financial management policies and practice and be accountable to their tenants and other service users"*

## **Standard 2 (p35)**

The RSL is open about and accountable for what it does. It understands and takes account of the needs and priorities of its tenants, service users and stakeholders. And its primary focus is the sustainable achievement of these priorities.

### **Guidance**

2.1. The RSL gives tenants, service users and other stakeholders' information that meets their needs about the RSL, its services, its performance and its future plans.

2.2. The governing body recognises it is accountable to its tenants, and has a wider public accountability to the taxpayer as a recipient of public funds, and actively manages its accountabilities. It is open about what it does, publishes information about its activities and, wherever possible, agrees to requests for information about the work of the governing body and the RSL.

2.3. The RSL seeks out the needs, priorities, views and aspirations of tenants, service users and stakeholders. The governing body takes account of this information in its strategies, plans and decisions.

2.4. The RSL is open, co-operative, and engages effectively with all its regulators and funders, notifying them of anything that may affect its ability to fulfil its obligations. It informs the Scottish Housing Regulator about any significant events such as a major issue, event or change as set out and required in our notifiable events guidance.

## **5. AIMS**

**5.1** It is our aim to embed the participation of tenants and their representatives in how we monitor our performance and plan/review services in order that tenants can influence the future direction and quality of the services we provide.

**5.2** 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.

**5.3** We will continue to work with and support community based RTOs such as the Rigside Residents' & Tenants' Association.

**5.4** Activities to inform, consult and involve tenants on an individual basis will continue in addition to the work with RTOs.

**5.5** We will endeavour to ensure that our process for decision-making is open, clear and accountable.

**5.6** We will continue to raise awareness among staff, Management Committee Members and tenants of the benefits of tenant participation.

- It is important to bear in mind that this Tenant Participation Strategy will change and evolve through time. We will 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.

## **6. REASONS FOR THE STRATEGY AND THE BENEFITS OF TENANT PARTICIPATION AND TENANT SCRUTINY**

- 6.1** We have developed this strategy in order to demonstrate our plans for promoting, encouraging and implementing tenant participation throughout our tenant base. The purpose of tenant scrutiny is to give tenants more power to enable them to hold their landlord to account for decisions, performance and conduct. It involves tenants independently becoming involved in how landlords self-assess performance. The feedback from tenant scrutiny activities is reported back to the landlord to improve performance.
- 6.2** 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.
- 6.3** We consider that effective tenant participation will lead to high customer satisfaction levels, improved community spirit and contribute to establishing sustainable communities.
- 6.4** Good tenant participation will assist open, clear and accountable decision-making and encourage a spirit of mutual trust.

## **7 TENANT SCRUTINY ACTIVITIES**

There are a range of tenant scrutiny activities tenants can become involved in:

- Tenant surveys;
- Complaints, compliments and comments;
- Estate inspections and/or walkabouts;
- Involvement and feedback from Tenants' and Residents' Groups and other community groups;
- Focus groups;
- Tenant led inspections;
- Mystery shopping;
- Tenant scrutiny panels.

Tenant scrutiny activities will be developed over time and will complement existing tenant participation activities.

## **8. LINKS TO OTHER STRATEGIES AND SERVICES**

- 8.1** The Tenant Participation Strategy is linked to all service policies being developed by us.

- 8.2** 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.
- 8.3** Our 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 our Management Committee before approval is granted.
- 8.4** Tenant participation will become an increasing part of how we influence 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.

## **9. HOW TO KEEP TENANTS INFORMED**

- 9.1** We understand the importance of keeping tenants informed about our services and decisions. Results from tenant surveys that show tenants’ service priorities will be reflected in the information we provide.
- 9.2** We will use a range of different methods to keep tenants informed, including:
- Newsletters;
  - Leaflets;
  - The Annual Tenants’ Conference;
  - The Tenants’ Handbook;
  - Our Website;
  - Facebook;
  - Results of tenant satisfaction surveys;
  - Tenant Focus groups on particular topics;
  - Annual Reports;
  - Open days;
  - Meetings with tenants’ organisations;
  - Roadshows.
- 9.3** We will review these methods of communicating on a regular basis through surveys and consultation events.

## **10. CONSULTING WITH TENANTS**

- 10.1** 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.

**10.2** 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;
- Anti-Social Behaviour;
- Allocating houses;
- Repairs and Maintenance;
- Tenant Participation Strategy.

**10.3** 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.

**10.4** We will support attendance and access to consultation events held at a specific venue. 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.

**10.5** 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 and 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.

**10.6** We will review the success of consultation methods regularly to make sure that they meet the needs of all groups of people.

**10.7** We will keep a register of tenants who are interested in tenant participation events.

## **11. GIVING TENANTS FEEDBACK**

- 11.1** We will provide feedback on all consultation events to those individually involved and to tenants as a whole.
- 11.2** The feedback will include details of overall consultation results and how these were considered as part of the decision-making process.
- 11.3** We will use various methods of providing feedback to tenants, including:
- Newsletter articles;
  - Leaflets;
  - Website postings;
  - Individual letters;
  - Facebook.

## **12. MONITORING AND REVIEWING THE STRATEGY**

- 12.1** 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.
- 12.2** Our Depute Chief Executive will consult with tenants, RTOs, staff and Management Committee members as part of the review process for the Tenant Participation Strategy.

## **13. WORKING WITH REGISTERED TENANT ORGANISATIONS (RTOs)**

- 13.1** 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:
- We 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, where possible, to respond to specific issues, present performance information and discuss customer feedback results;
  - Our offices will be made available to RTOs as a meeting venue;
  - We will provide practical administrative support to RTOs as required 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 our 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 our 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.

**13.2** The criteria for registration is as follows:

Any tenants' organisation may apply to us for registration. Application must be made in writing or electronically using the form supplied to our offices. Note:

- a copy of the organisation's written constitution must accompany the application;
- the Association's Depute 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 recommendations to our 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.

**14. RESOURCES**

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

**14.2** 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.

**14.3** 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.

## **15. TIME TO COMMUNICATE**

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

**15.2** 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.

**15.3** We will consider the responses received when developing or revising a policy or service standard.

**15.4** 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.

## **16. TRAINING**

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

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

**16.3** We will support tenants involved in RTO, participation or scrutiny activities with appropriate training as required.

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

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

**17. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**

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

**17.2** We will do as much as possible to make participation available to all of our tenants 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.

**17.3** We will endeavour 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.

**17.4** We will seek to promote and to achieve equality of treatment and opportunity for all groups in society without discrimination or prejudice on any grounds. The Equality Act 2010 introduces the term "protected characteristics" to describe groups against whom any sort of discrimination is unlawful. Section 4 of the Act specifies nine protected characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Pregnancy and maternity
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Gender (referred to as "sex" in the Act)
- Gender reassignment
- Sexual orientation

<b>Approved by the Committee of Management on:</b>	
<b>Signed:</b>	<b>Signed:</b>
<b>Secretary/Chairperson</b>	<b>Chief Executive/Senior Staff Member</b>

**18. ACTION PLAN**

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Target Completion Timescale</b>
Publish an Annual Consultation Calendar	Annually
Publish an Annual Tenant Participation Report Card	Annually
Include a Tenant Participation Resource Plan in the annual budget	Annually
Publish at least 3 newsletters per year	Ongoing
Consult with tenants & RTOs annually on rent and service charge increases	Annually
Maintain & update the register of tenants who wish to participate in consultation activity (arranged in topic order)	Annually
Distribute copies of the Annual Report to all tenants	Annually
Regularly provide feedback on the outcome of consultation events and decisions reached by the Association to individual tenants involved and the whole tenant base	Annually
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	Annually
Consult individual tenants regarding relevant major repair contracts	Ongoing
Involve residents in estate inspections and grounds maintenance quality control inspections	Ongoing
Promote RTO membership take-up at new tenant sign up	Ongoing
Establish RTO sub-section in CHA website	June
Hold Annual Tenant Conference	Annually
Establish a Tenant Scrutiny Panel	Ongoing