

TENANT PARTICIPATION PLAN 2009 – 2012

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Reviewed by AICC Committee	
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Responsible Person	Chief Executive

Tenant Participation ~ 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.,Communities Scotland GS2.2

Contents

Introduction	3
Key Statement	4
Section 1 : Opportunities for Involvement	5
<i>Tenant Board Membership</i>	5
<i>Registered Tenant Organisations and Focus Groups</i>	6
<i>Individual Tenants</i>	7
Section 2 : Information for Tenants	8
<i>Accessibility of Information</i>	8
Section 3: Consultation	9
<i>Timescales for Consultation</i>	9
Section 4: Evaluation	10
Section 5: Resources	11
Appendix 1 – Criteria for Registration of Tenants Organisations	12

Introduction

This second Waverley Housing Tenant Participation Plan was reviewed and developed jointly by Waverley Housing tenants and staff during 2008.

The Tenant Participation Plan is a document which sets out the shared goals of tenants and landlord alike. Special thanks go to Waverley Tenants' Organisation, who met regularly with Waverley Housing staff during 2008 to contribute to the review of this plan.

Tenant participation is a continually evolving process, progressing as new issues arise.

This plan sets out a framework for supporting tenant participation, on which we can build.

The effectiveness of this Tenant Participation Plan will be monitored and evaluated annually, by tenants and landlord together. The budget for tenant participation will be reviewed annually.

The overall Tenant Participation Plan will be reviewed every three years as part of the Waverley Housing policy review cycle.

Key Statement

Tenant participation is about tenants taking part in the decision-making processes and influencing decisions about

- housing policies
- housing conditions
- housing (and related) services

Tenant participation is a two way process, which involves the sharing of information, ideas, and power. Its aim is to improve the standard of housing conditions and services.

Waverley Housing is committed to involving its tenants in all aspects of the work of the organisation and recognises the importance of tenant involvement in the management, development and improvement of services.

Waverley Housing works to support and encourage tenants to be involved in a range of ways that suit them.

A central principle to the organisation is that tenants have a majority on the Board of directors. This is enshrined in the Memorandum and Articles of Association.

The opportunity for tenants to participate is provided at all levels.

Section 1: Opportunities for Involvement

A central principle for Waverley Housing is to enable tenants and tenant groups to become involved in the development and improvement of its housing services.

Any opportunities for involvement must meet the needs of all individuals. In addition there will be mechanisms in place to ensure that tenants are not excluded through location, discrimination or resource.

Waverley Housing works to ensure the opportunity for tenant involvement is offered at all levels:

- Tenant Board Membership.
- Registered Tenant Organisations' or Tenant Groups
- Individual Tenants

Tenant Board Membership

Waverley Housing is committed to the principle that tenants should have the opportunity to initiate and develop corporate strategy. This is enshrined in the Articles of Association whereby tenants have a majority of membership on the Board.

Board meetings ensure that all board members are kept informed of all company developments.

Board voting procedures are set out in Standing Orders.

Tenant Board Directors are nominated and elected to the Board by fellow tenants.

All Board Members are required to resign every 4 years. They may stand for re-election.

Waverley Housing is committed to the principle that tenants have a right to have the opportunity to become involved in the running of the organisation.

Tenants can become Board members through nomination and election by their fellow tenants. The board has a tenant majority and supports the tenant focus of the organisation.

Full training and support will be provided

Registered Tenant Organisations and Focus Groups

As set out in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, Registered Tenants' Organisations are independent organisations set up primarily to represent tenants and housing related interests. Their aim is to give tenants' organisations, who meet the criteria set out in Appendix 1, a recognised role in the tenant participation process.

However, Waverley Housing recognises that many tenants who wish to participate in some way will not necessarily wish to be part of a Registered Tenants' Organisation. Waverley Housing will consult with tenants through a wide range of mechanisms, in addition to consulting with registered tenants' organisations.

Waverley Housing will provide or arrange for the provision of assistance to be given to any group seeking to become registered. Whilst Waverley Tenants' Organisation (WTO) currently remains the umbrella organisation it is recognised that over time other tenants' organisations may develop.

Criteria for registration of Tenants' Organisations are set out in Appendix 1.

Any group enquiring about registration will be sent a copy of the criteria and the procedure, which will also be available on the Waverley Housing website and will be regularly publicised through the Waverley Housing tenants' newsletter.

Requests for registration will be submitted to Waverley Housing Board for approval.

Registration will normally be granted for a period of three years initially, subject to the adherence with the agreed constitution

Waverley Housing will require to register any Registered Tenants Organisation as long as the RTO has a written constitution which satisfactorily covers the following:

- Main objectives and area of operation
- Membership criteria and procedure for applying for membership
- How the Committee operates, including how office bearers are elected
- How its business is conducted
- How its decisions are reached
- How its funds are managed
- How meetings including the Annual General Meeting are organised
- Its procedures for amending its constitution
- Its commitment to promoting equal opportunities

Regular meetings will be held to provide representatives of tenant groups with the opportunity to input issues relating to the business and seek information from senior management and the Board.

Waverley Housing will maintain a register of recognised Tenant Organisations where such organisations exist.

Where no such Tenant Organisations exist Waverley Housing shall encourage and support the formation of such organisations.

Waverley Housing will provide support and assistance to registered tenant organisations and recognised tenant groups.

Tenants will be encouraged to attend and participate in the meetings of recognised tenants organisations, tenant groups and focus groups.

Individual Tenants

Tenants are provided opportunities to become involved in a variety of ways including, but not limited to, being invited to attend or respond to:

- Surveys and Questionnaires
- Focus Groups
- Public Meetings
- Individual meetings with tenants
- Tenant Opinion Panel

Section 2: Information for Tenants

In accordance with best practice on corporate governance, tenants are provided with regular comprehensive and accessible information. This includes, but is not limited to;

- Tenant Handbook highlighting the services provided, the main conditions of the tenancy, the repair service, both the landlords' and tenants' responsibilities as well as general guidance on tenancy issues including:
 - Location of offices and services provided by each office.
 - Advice on payment of rent, including arrears advice
 - Entitlement and assistance with Housing Benefit claims.
 - Information on adaptations to property.
 - Emergency and safety standards including telephone numbers.
 - How to make a complaint against the company and the right to refer a matter to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman
- Tenants Newsletter, produced regularly and not less than three times a year
- Waverley Housing Website which is kept up to date with relevant information and news
- Copies of key policies, available on request or via Waverley Housing website: www.waverley-housing.co.uk
- Information Fact Sheets, Leaflets and Flyers

Accessibility of Information

Wherever possible, Waverley Housing will provide information in any required format or other language, on request, to meet the requirements of equal opportunities and disability.

Section 3: Consultation

Tenants receive information on a wide range of housing issues and will be offered opportunities to become involved in the decision making processes concerning these.

Waverley Housing Consultation Plan is a supporting document to the Tenant Participation Plan, and should be referred to for the full arrangements and commitment for consultation procedures.

Consultation with tenants will take place on matters which include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Tenant Participation Plan
- Rent Review
- Repairs and Maintenance
- Major Repairs and Improvements
- Estate Environmental Issues
- Allocations
- Arrears and Support Services
- Tenant Responsibilities
- Anti-Social Behaviour and Mediation
- Complaints Procedures
- Company Performance against a range of Key Indicators
- General Tenancy Issues
- Right to Buy

Timescales for Consultation

In accordance with the Waverley Housing Consultation Plan, tenants involved in any consultation process will be given four full weeks as a response time, wherever possible.

However, where consultation is taking place through a Registered Tenants Organisation, six full weeks will be afforded wherever possible, to allow tenant groups to consult with their wider member base.

Section 4: Evaluation

Tenant participation and involvement is a continually evolving area.

In order to recognise, monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of tenant participation work, the Tenant Participation Officer will work together with tenants and staff to carry out an annual review of the tenant participation plan work and will produce an annual report to the Board of Waverley Housing.

The annual review will report on the quantitative analysis, including the number of tenants actively involved through tenant groups and opinion panels and the reporting of tenant participation budgets.

The following will be reported on annually:

- - Is attendance growing or declining?
 - Is the number of regular attendees increasing or decreasing?
 - How difficult is it to recruit people for representative groups?
 - Do groups have the skills needed?
 - Are dedicated budgets and spending decreasing?
 - Are meetings suitably advertised?
 - Are regular newsletters provided?

A qualitative analysis will also be reported on, to consider what services have improved or strengthened as a result of tenant participation, and what has been achieved or changed as a result of working together with tenants.

The review of tenant participation will take place annually, together with tenant and landlord. Board members will initiate, develop and evaluate both strategic development and implementation and regularly review tenant participation within this process.

A whole plan review will take place 3-yearly, as is set by the Waverley Housing policy review cycle.

Section 5: Resources

Waverley Housing shall ensure resources are in place to meet obligations towards tenant participation and consultation.

This shall include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Waverley Housing employs a Tenant Participation Officer, as a joint initiative with another local RSL
- Budget provision for newsletters, flyers, leaflets etc. for tenant information and feedback.

Staff resources to facilitate the establishment, support and liaison with recognised and registered groups.

Training for members of recognised tenant groups.

Information sessions for focus groups

Financial assistance or assistance in kind towards the administration of recognised tenant groups. Financial assistance to any recognised Registered Tenants Organisation will be reviewed and agreed with landlord and RTO together, on an annual basis.

- Provision of meeting facilities, stationery, clerical support etc.

Waverley Housing will undertake an annual review of its overall resource commitment to tenant participation under the normal budgetary review cycle.

Appendix 1 – Criteria for Registration of Tenants Organisations

The organisation must have a publicly available written constitution that sets out:

- its objectives and area of operation;
- how people can become members of the organisation;
- the way the committee will operate;
- how people can become committee members/office bearers;
- how the business of the organisation will be conducted;
- how decisions will be reached democratically;
- how funds will be managed;
- arrangements for public meetings;
- arrangements for an annual general meeting (AGM);
- how changes can be made to the constitution; and
- its commitment to the promotion of equal opportunities.
- its commitment to the promotion of the housing and housing related interests of tenants.

The aim of this is to ensure that organisations have a structure that allows for election of office bearers, gives opportunities for members to express views and ensures that elected officers report to their members. This does not mean that the body has to be a formally incorporated body, such as an Industrial and Provident Society. A simple constitution that sets out how the organisation will be accountable to members will suffice in many cases, but where an organisation has access to substantial funds it may be appropriate to look at more formal incorporation.

It is essential that landlords receive a copy of a tenant association's constitution as part of the registration process. Many landlords, who are working proactively to promote tenant participation, will have acceptable model policies that groups can adopt, if they wish. It is important for landlords to note that the constitution is a basis for registration. If the constitution does not fulfil the criteria for registration, the landlord can refuse to register but landlords should, in any event, work with prospective RTOs to help them meet the criteria for registration.

The organisation must have a committee that:

- (after the first year) is elected at an AGM;
- has at least three members;
- can co-opt others onto the committee during the course of the year;
- has elected office bearers;
- can demonstrate that decisions are reached democratically; and
- promotes equal opportunities.

The organisation must operate within a defined area which includes housing stock owned and managed by the landlord with whom it is seeking to register.

Membership of the organisation and participation in its activities must be open to all eligible tenants within its defined area of operation.

The organisation must have appropriate accounting records and present an audited annual financial statement to the AGM.

The organisation must demonstrate that it is committed to representing the interests of its members and that, when consulted by the registering landlord; it can represent the views of its members who are tenants of the registering landlord in its defined area of operation.

Application material to be submitted by the tenant organisation to the landlord with whom it is seeking to register:

- the written constitution;
- names and contact details of committee members (identifying the office bearers); and
- a description of the area of operation.

A RTO can be removed from the Register in any of the following circumstances:

- the tenants organisation no longer meets the registration criteria; or
- the tenants organisation ceases to exist or does not operate; or
- there is mutual agreement between the landlord and tenants organisation.
- Removal from the Register should take place only after an agreed period of notice.
- A tenant organisation may appeal against a landlord's decision to: not register the organisation; or remove the organisation from the Register; or not remove the organisation from the Register.

Any appeal will be dealt with under the Waverley Housing Complaints Policy. Where internal appeals procedures have been exhausted, a further appeal will be considered by the Scottish Housing Regulator Tenant Participation Team.