



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

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INTRODUCTION

At Waverley Housing (WH) we are committed to putting our tenants, customers and communities at the heart of everything we do.

Our key goal is putting our customers first and we place a high emphasis on working together with our tenants to ensure their views are heard and acted on.

This Strategy sets out the ways we will work with our tenants, other customers and the communities we serve and explains the different opportunities to get involved and how our customers views will shape the decisions we take. Our engagement activity is underpinned by a commitment to pursuing continuous improvement and value for money.

This Strategy has been developed and agreed jointly with our tenants and staff.

We look forward to continuing to develop our business with our tenants, other customers and communities involved along the way.

KEY STATEMENT

Engaging with our tenants, customers and communities we serve is at the heart of our business.

Customer engagement is about tenants, and other customers taking part in the decision making processes and influencing decisions about our housing policies, standards of service to be provided in relation to housing management, repairs and maintenance, proposals for changing rent and service charges and performance standards.

Customer engagement is a two way process, which involves the sharing of information, knowledge, ideas and power. Its aim is to improve the standard of housing and services that we offer. Involvement in customer engagement can also develop the skills and confidence of those who participate in these activities.

WH are committed to engaging with our tenants, our communities and other customers (where appropriate) in all aspects of the work of the company and recognise the importance of tenant and community involvement in the management, development and improvement of our services. We offer a range of ways in which customers can participate and become involved in the work of Waverley Housing.

WH are committed to offering equal opportunities and we work to support and encourage tenants to be involved in a range of ways that suit them, and ensure that our tenants and other customers are not excluded.

Scottish Social Housing Charter

The Scottish Housing Regulator is responsible for monitoring, assessing and reporting on how well social landlords achieve the Charter's outcomes. The Charter sets out the following specific outcomes and standards for Communication and Participation.

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.

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.

Ways to Get Involved

WH work to ensure the opportunity for tenant engagement is offered at all levels.

WH have a recently introduced the role of Tenant and Community Engagement Assistant (TCEA) to our housing team. This member of staff will be dedicated to work with existing groups and panels and attempt to establish new groups.

Board Membership

WH are committed to the principle that tenants should have the opportunity to initiate and develop corporate strategy and have a right to become involved in the running of the company. The Articles of Association place an obligation on Waverley Housing to take steps to ensure, so far as possible, there is an opportunity for Tenants of the Company to put themselves forward for election as Directors/Members. The Board meet regularly to make business decisions and monitor performance of all aspects of Waverley Housing.

Customer Review Panel

As set out in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 and the subsequent introduction of the Scottish Social Housing Charter in March 2012, a tenant-led, customer review panel was established to meet regularly and scrutinise the services we deliver. The panel carry out independent reviews on our performance and make recommendations directly to the Board. They are supported to use a variety of methods, including interviews, mystery shopping, site visits and paper audits.

Registered Tenant Organisations

As set out in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, Registered Tenants Organisations (RTO) are independent organisations set up primarily to represent tenants on housing related interests. Their aim is to give tenants' organisations, who meet the criteria set out in Appendix 2, a recognised role in the tenant participation process.

Criteria for registration of a registered tenants' organisation are set out in Appendix 2.

Registration will normally be granted for a period of three years initially, subject to the adherence to an agreed constitution. WH will register any RTO which meets all the criteria, set out in Appendix 2.

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

We will maintain a register of Registered Tenant Organisations which will be available publicly, on our website, and periodically in our newsletter.

Estate Walkabouts

WH encourage and support the development of regular tenant-led Estate Walkabouts, carried out jointly with tenants, staff, other residents within the estate and other agencies to work to highlight any issues or improvements in estates where we have properties. A schedule of visits

will be drawn up, in accordance with the Estate Management Policy, and publicised to our tenants and customers.

Focus Groups and Public Meetings

WH will facilitate and promote focus groups to discuss particular housing related issues with tenants and customers where requested or required.

Tenant Opinion Panel

WH promote the Tenant Opinion Panel as a way for individuals to be consulted by the Company without the need to attend meetings or join a formal group. A free post questionnaire will be sent to tenants who have signed up to the Tenant Opinion Panel when consultation is being carried out.

Community Engagement

WH will continue to support and contribute to community initiatives and events, where appropriate, to engage with the wider community.

WH recognise that customer engagement, and tenant participation is a continually evolving process and other methods of consultation and engagement will be developed over time. We provide a menu of options for our customers to engage with us.

Communication and Consultation

Methods of Communication

WH will make sure that all opportunities for engagement are promoted in a range of ways and we will provide our tenants, and other customers with a range of clear information.

This includes but is not limited to:

- Tenants Handbook
- Newsletters
- Website and social media channels
- Access to copies of key policies, available on request or via our website
- How to make a complaint, and our complaints procedure
- Fact Sheets, Leaflets and Flyers
- Information Sessions in various locations/events
- Public meetings
- Public Notice Boards

Accessibility of Information

WH are committed to providing equal opportunities for all and will work to eliminate any barriers preventing our tenants, customers or community from getting involved.

WH aim to provide information in any required format or other language, on request.

Consultation

Consultation with tenants and other customers where appropriate, will be carried out when a review, evaluation or proposed change is being considered, in particular to:

- Rent and Service Charge Reviews

- Changes to policies and service standards relating to housing management, repairs and maintenance
- Community Engagement Strategy
- Our arrangements for consultation
- We maintain a Consultation Register

Timescales for Consultation

Tenants or other customers involved in any consultation process will be given adequate time to respond.

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.

WH will give full feedback to all participants, on the conclusion of any consultation and provide clear information about any subsequent changes to service, as a result. We will also notify all individuals who are likely to be affected by the outcome, giving information on the change, how the consultation was carried out and a report of the results. (Refer to Communication and Consultation Procedure).

Evaluation of Customer Engagement

Customer engagement is a continually evolving area.

In order to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of community engagement, including tenant participation, we will work together with tenants, staff and other customers where appropriate to carry out an annual evaluation of this strategy and its' accompanying annual action plan. An annual report to the Board of Waverley Housing will be produced which will provide information on the Community Engagement activities undertaken in the previous year.

The annual review will report on the quantitative analysis, including numbers of tenants actively involved through tenant groups, opinion panels and individual involvement.

The following will be reported annually:

- Number of groups participating with a comparison to previous years;
- Review of tenant participation budgets with comparison to previous years
- Review of communication and consultation procedures being met.

Qualitative analysis will also be reported on to consider what service have improved or strengthened as a result of customer engagement, and what has been achieved or changed as a result of working together with our customers.

The action plan will be reviewed annually and will be presented to the Board at the end of each financial year. The Board will review the effectiveness and development of community engagement for the year and make any recommendations to the Executive Team.

An overall review of this Community Engagement Strategy will take place 5-yearly, as is set by the Waverley Housing policy review cycle.

Resources and Support

WH are committed to providing adequate resources for the development and sustainability of tenant participation, customer and community engagement.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- Waverley Housing has created a new role within the organisation, Tenant and Community Engagement Assistant (TCEA). This role will be dedicated to ensure the aims of the Community Engagement Strategy are fulfilled.
- Become a member of one of the specialist Scottish Tenant Participation Organisations (TPAS or TIS) to gain expertise, current information, specialist training for both staff and tenants plus allow WH (staff and tenants) to network in this field.
- Budget provision for the development of communication and consultation.
- Budget provision for training opportunities for tenants, to further the work of tenant participation, scrutiny and customer engagement.
- Staff resources to provide assistance and support to RTOs and recognised groups;
- Training for RTO members.
- Financial assistance or assistance in kind towards the administration of recognised tenant groups. Financial assistance to any RTO will be reviewed and agreed with landlord and RTO together, on an annual basis.
- Provision of transport and childcare for tenants who require such support in order to get involved in participation or engagement activities. Reasonable travel expenses incurred by tenants to attend relevant meetings or events will be fully met by the Company. A reasonable childcare allowance will be paid to any tenant that requires such support in order to attend relevant meetings or events. Childcare allowances will only be paid to childminders who are registered with the Care Inspectorate. No-one will be out of pocket for participating.
- Where tenants request information to be provided in a different language or format we will source appropriate support to allow us to meet tenants requests in this connection.
- As part of our annual Action Plan review of our Community Engagement Strategy we will specifically report on how many occasions we have supported tenants with travel, childcare and provision of information in different languages or formats. This information will also be used to ascertain whether or not there are any areas of improvement that we should consider in this connection.

Waverley Housing undertakes an annual review of the overall resource commitment to customer engagement and tenant participation under the normal budgetary review cycle.

Customer Review Panel Terms of Reference

1. Aims and Objectives

- a. To work on behalf of tenants and customers and in partnership with Waverley Housing to ensure that housing services are delivered to the highest standard and which provide value for money.
- b. To work with Waverley Housing to review housing services and make recommendations for improvement to the Management Team and Board.

2. Role of the Customer Review Panel

- a. To independently review and assess the performance and delivery of housing services of Waverley Housing against agreed service standards and the regulatory requirements of the Scottish Housing Charter and any other area the Panel feels would benefit from customer scrutiny.
- b. To present recommendations for improvement to the Management Team and Board.
- c. To agree, monitor and review annual actions plans for the Customer Review Panel, outlining areas to be scrutinised.
- d. To influence and approve the Annual Report on the Charter.

3. Accountability

- a. The Customer Review Panel will refer to a wide range of formal and informal sources and methods to inform its work, and to reflect the diverse needs of tenants and customers.
- b. The Customer Review Panel will feed back findings to tenants, customers and staff through Waverley Housing's website, tenant and staff newsletters, social media or Annual Report on the Charter.
- c. The Board of Waverley Housing will consider reports from the Customer Review Panel. The Board will provide a response which will ensure that there is a proposed action plan, where appropriate, to bring about service improvements.

4. Equality and Diversity

- a. The Customer Review Panel will operate in a way that is inclusive and will work to reflect the tenant demographic, views and interests of local communities.

5. Membership

- a. Up to 12 places will be available for membership

6. Support from Waverley Housing

- a. An induction programme will be developed for new members between Waverley Housing and the Customer Review Panel;
- b. A training programme will be agreed annually as part of the annual action plan discussions
- c. The TCEA will support the panel and will arrange for staff and administration support and training where requested

7. Access to information

- a. The Customer Review Panel may request reports and information from Waverley Housing to carry out review activities and may invite members of staff to meet with the panel to provide information and advice.

8. Budget / Funding

- a. All reasonable expenses will be paid to members of the Customer Review Panel, which enable and support their work, including travel, childcare, carers' costs, hire of venues, refreshments and stationery.
- b. The Customer Review Panel will have access to independent training which will further their work, and knowledge, based on their training programme, where appropriate.

9. Evaluation of the Scrutiny Group

- a. The Customer Review Panel will undertake an annual review of activities and use this as a planning tool to forward plan the work for the year ahead.

Criteria for Registration of Tenants Organisations

For a tenant's organisation to become registered with its landlord, the organisation must have a publicly available written constitution that sets out:

- a) its objectives and area of operation;
- b) how people can become members of the organisation;
- c) the way the committee will operate;
- d) how people can become committee members/office bearers;
- e) how the business of the organisation will be conducted;
- f) how decisions will be reached democratically;
- g) how funds will be managed;
- h) arrangements for public meetings;
- i) arrangements for an annual general meeting (AGM);
- j) how changes can be made to the constitution;
- k) its commitment to the promotion of equal opportunities; and
- l) 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 organisation'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:

- a) (after the first year) is elected at an AGM;
- b) has at least three members;
- c) can co-opt others onto the committee during the course of the year;
- d) has elected office bearers;
- e) can demonstrate that decisions are reached democratically; and
- f) 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:

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

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

- a) the tenants organisation no longer meets the registration criteria; or
- b) the tenants organisation ceases to exist or does not operate; or
- c) there is mutual agreement between the landlord and tenants organisation.
- d) Removal from the Register should take place only after an agreed period of notice.
- e) 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 Waverley Housing's Complaints Policy.