

TENANT PARTICIPATION STRATEGY



1

Approved: 28.06.2017 (Approved at Board Meeting)
Reviewed: 26 August 2020 (Board Meeting)
Current to: 28 August 2021

CONTENTS

- 1.0 Mission Statement
- 2.0 Introduction
- 3.0 What is Tenant Participation?
 - 3.1 Tenant Participation explained
 - 3.2 Aims
 - 3.3 What you told us
 - 3.3.1 Tenant Satisfaction Survey
 - 3.3.2 Board of Directors
 - 3.4 How this has shaped our Strategy
- 4.0 How do we do Tenant Participation?
 - 4.1 Principles
 - 4.2 Methods
 - 4.3 Scrutiny
 - 4.4 Resources
- 5.0 How do we assess Tenant Participation?
 - 5.1 Monitoring
 - 5.2 Evaluating
 - 5.3 Reporting
- 6.0 Why do we do Tenant Participation?
 - 6.1 Legislative Background
 - 6.1.1 Scottish Social Housing Charter
- 7.0 Related Policies
- 8.0 Consultation
- 9.0 Glossary of Terms
- 10.0 Equality and Human Rights

Our Mission Statement:

We aim to enhance the wellbeing of our tenants and the wider communities of Ayrshire through high quality housing and related services

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Ayrshire Housing was established in April 2003 through the merger of Carrick Housing Association and South Ayrshire Homes. We are a Registered Scottish Charity and a community controlled organisation. Our work is overseen by a voluntary Board of Directors ('The Board') consisting of: our tenants, community volunteers and representatives of South Ayrshire Council.

We recognise the importance of tenant participation and wider community engagement in the operation of the organisation. This is reflected in the objectives laid out in the Corporate Plan, which is reviewed annually.

The above Mission Statement, and our Corporate Plan are underpinned by these core values:

- **We Listen** to everyone we work for and with.
- **We Engage** with our tenants, the community and our people in shaping our work.
- **We Show Respect** striving to provide equal and accessible services to all.
- **We Seek Challenge** to ensure best value to our tenants and benefits to the wider community.

The purpose of this document is to outline our approach to tenant participation. It seeks to explain the reasons for tenant participation and the methods we will use to engage as effectively as possible. It will also outline the measures available to assess, and report on, our performance in this area, as well as explaining the legislation which governs tenant participation.

3.0 WHAT IS TENANT PARTICIPATION?

3.1 Tenant Participation explained

The Tenant Participation Advisory Service (Scotland), known as TPAS, is the national advisory body for landlords, tenants and other related organisations. TPAS define tenant participation as follows:

“Tenant participation is about tenants taking part in decision-making processes and influencing decisions about: housing policies, housing conditions and housing related services. It is a two way process which involves the sharing of information, ideas and power. The aim is to improve the standard of housing conditions and standards.”

- TPAS Scotland.

3.2 Aims

This Strategy seeks to:

- Set out how we will promote the involvement and participation of our tenants in the delivery of housing services.
- Show how we will give tenants the opportunity to express their views on particular issues.
- Demonstrate how we will keep tenants informed of the association's activities in the more general sense, involving both formal and informal means.
- Ensure that the opportunity for engagement is available for everyone. While we appreciate that not everyone wishes to be involved, we will make the options for participation as wide and as varied as possible to maximise engagement.
- Recognise the importance of tenant participation in the formation and implementation of policies, and the benefits to both tenants and the organisation.

3.3 What you told us

3.3.1 Tenant Satisfaction Survey

We carried out a tenant satisfaction survey during 2019 asking various questions about our performance and services. Tenants were asked about the opportunities they have to participate in the decisions we make. The survey showed that 83% of our tenants are satisfied with these opportunities, which has increased from 75% in a similar surveys in 2013 and 2016.

92% of tenants said they are satisfied with how we keep them informed.

Tenants identified the following five areas as their main priorities:

- Repairs and maintenance.
- Housing quality.
- Maintaining good neighbourhoods.
- Being kept informed.
- Landlord listening and acting upon requests.

The survey also showed that the majority of people like to receive information via newsletters and letters. Very few wished meetings, visits, emails or phone calls.

The areas people said they would like more information on were:

- Future plans.
- Repairs policy.
- Energy advice .

3.3.2 Board of Directors

Our Board, which includes tenants and local people, recently looked at our Business Plan and made some suggestions to improve our engagement with our communities.

3.4 How this has shaped our Strategy

As 83% of our tenants have said that they are happy with the opportunities to participate we will continue to maintain and develop the current options we offer, which include:

- Keeping a register of tenants interested in being consulted on our work.
- Holding focus groups.
- Offering the opportunity to join the Board.
- Supporting tenants to set up residents organisations.
- Working with the newly established Tenant - led Scrutiny Group.

We have asked the 'Couch Group', which was identified through the survey, to review this Strategy prior to publishing.

We note that tenants' main priorities are: repairs and maintenance, housing quality and maintaining good neighbourhoods. Therefore, we will continue to issue satisfaction surveys when tenants use the repairs service, and follow up any reports of dissatisfaction. We will also continue to ask new tenants, and tenants moving to another house, their views on their new home.

We understand that maintaining good neighbourhoods does not only involve our own houses and landscaped areas. Therefore we will try to make sure that we carry out annual estate walkabouts with relevant people and organisations within the community, where possible.

Other priorities included: wishing to be kept informed and ensuring we listen and act upon requests. 93% of tenants reported being satisfied with the methods of contact we use, with most people saying that they like to receive information through newsletters. Therefore we will continue to use newsletters as a main form of communication. We will also introduce a comments box in our reception to allow people to share views and ideas.

A suggestion from the 'Couch Group' was to ask people if they wished to 'opt - out' of paper newsletters and receive them via email. Therefore this will be an option we will offer going forward.

As people identified: future plans, repairs policy and energy advice as subjects which they would like more information on, we will ensure that relevant information is provided to tenants through our newsletters and website.

Following suggestions made by the Board and we have created a Facebook page for Ayrshire Housing, which we hope will involve a wider group of people. We will also try to take a stall at local events, such as gala days, where possible.

We are happy that our tenants have developed a Tenant - led Scrutiny Group to look at our work and help us to improve our services. We will give our full cooperation to this Group and will work with them for the benefit of our tenants, communities and the organisation as a whole.

4.0 How do we do Tenant Participation?

4.1 Principles

Our Strategy for tenant participation will be built on a number of fundamental principles:

- To create a partnership with tenants based on trust and respect.
- To acknowledge that developing tenant participation is a continuous process.
- This document is a review of our previous Strategy and will continue to be reviewed based on our experiences and tenant feedback.
- To ensure that adequate timescales are in operation.
- To recognise the independence of tenants' groups which may be formed and supported by the association.
- Tenants' groups and Registered Tenants' Organisations (RTOs) will be adequately resourced.
- All of our tenants are given the opportunity to participate.
- All forms of participation are equally valued, whether short term involvement and consultation or longer term active participation.
- We will take account of local circumstances in ensuring that appropriate participative and consultative arrangements are provided.
- We will take account of good practice in the area of tenant participation. This will include consideration of guidance issued by the Scottish Government, the Scottish Housing Regulator and relevant agencies such as the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) and the Tenants Information Service (TIS). The Code of Practice for Tenant Participation in Rural Areas will also be considered in developing appropriate frameworks.
- We will listen to the views of our tenants regarding the means by which they can participate and also regarding the level of participation and consultation they wish. Tenant participation cannot be forced on tenants.

4.2 Methods

A range of approaches will be adopted to reflect the requirements of our tenants and to enable effective participation. It is important to acknowledge that there will be occasions when consultation and participation will be aimed at all tenants while at other times it will be more specific and targeted.

Informal and personal contact is highly valued. In addition to this we will use a wide range of methods for consulting with tenants and keeping them informed of our activities, including:

- Prior to sign-up:
 - 🏠 Try to invite tenants who have been offered a property into the office to meet their housing officer and have a chat before starting their tenancy.
- At the start of their tenancy:
 - 🏠 Written Tenancy Agreement and Summary Agreement.
 - 🏠 Tenants Handbook.
 - 🏠 Tenant Welcome Pack including information leaflets and signposts for further information.
 - 🏠 New tenant settling in visit and survey.
- At regular intervals:
 - 🏠 Monthly Board meetings (6 tenant spaces on the Board).
 - 🏠 Quarterly Newsletters.
 - 🏠 Annual Report.
 - 🏠 Annual Return on the Charter (ARC).
 - 🏠 Annual General Meeting.
 - 🏠 Annual Estate Walkabouts.
- Ad-hoc
 - 🏠 Personal communication and direct contact with staff e.g. letters, telephone calls, texts, emails, home visits, office interview etc.
 - 🏠 Maintain and develop a Tenant Participation Register.
 - 🏠 Establish and develop a 'Couch Group'.
 - 🏠 Hold focus groups on specific, targeted and relevant topics of interest.
 - 🏠 Liaising with RTOs and informal groups.
 - 🏠 Provision of policies on request.
 - 🏠 Use of local notice boards e.g. in closes.
 - 🏠 Website www.ayrshirehousing.org.uk:
 - * 'You said ... we did' feedback section on the website.
 - 🏠 Facebook page.
 - 🏠 Press releases.
 - 🏠 Presence at local fetes and gala days.

- 🏠 Comments box in reception.
- 🏠 Encourage tenants to apply to the Communities Fund for activities they are involved in within their communities.

We will ensure that a mechanism is in place for the registration of tenant organisations (RTOs) and that such a register is available for inspection.

Tenants will also be encouraged to participate in activities such as the annual pets' competition and the annual garden competition. For tenants who do not have a garden, alternatives such as 'best hanging basket' or 'best container' can be organised. We believe participation in these types of activities should not be undervalued in terms of the overall participation of our tenants detailed in this Strategy. The garden competitions can clearly benefit the communities where participants reside, as a result of the improvements in the appearance of gardens etc.

Other activities and initiatives will also be considered to give wider opportunities for tenant participation.

4.3 Scrutiny

Tenant scrutiny is the term we use to explain the process whereby our tenants have the opportunity to independently review how well we are delivering our services.

We have a Tenant – led Scrutiny Group (the Group) who operate under our Tenant Scrutiny Framework, and are supported by the Tenants Information Service (TIS). This puts tenants in the driving seat to evaluate how well we are performing and to work with us to achieve change.

We are committed to involving tenants in shaping our services. We recognise that the best way to achieve this is to work in partnership with our tenants.

Our Framework sets out the role of tenants and Ayrshire Housing's staff and Board to work together to deliver self-assessment and service improvement.

We are committed to working closely with the Group to agree annually how we involve tenants in scrutiny. Feedback and outcomes of these scrutiny activities are reported to our management team and the Board as well as on our website.

More information on Scrutiny can be found in our Scrutiny Framework document.

4.4 Resources

We have an annual budget for tenant participation activities, and we will ensure that resources are continually reviewed to ensure that they are adequately addressing the requirements of the Strategy.

Resources will include staff resources, participants' time and accommodation, support will be given including childminding and, where necessary, interpretation services.

Resources will be available for tenants' publications and newsletters. This will include the costs of typing, copying and posting.

Where relevant training or development needs are identified resources will be made available for all participants, including tenants, staff and Board members.

Funding will be made available for tenants and residents organisations. Where a Registered Tenants' Organisation is in place discussion will take place with the RTO about the level of resources required and the arrangements for monitoring and controlling expenditure.

The Tenant - led Scrutiny Group have the support of an independent adviser to provide advice and information as required.

Our Performance and Quality Manager and a representative from the Housing Management team will act as the Link Officers between the Group and Ayrshire Housing. The Link Officers will ensure that the Group has access to relevant information and the Ayrshire Housing staff it needs to carry out its scrutiny work. The Link Officer will be responsible for keeping Ayrshire Housing's staff up-to-date with the Group's work.

The Group will receive administrative and operational support from the Performance and Quality Team.

Disability issues will be considered to ensure that no particular sections of our community are excluded from events and activities.

5.0 How do we assess Tenant Participation?

5.1 Monitoring

We will set annual objectives (Appendix 1) and monitor our performance against these objectives. These will include:

- Numbers of newsletters issued.
- Tenant places on the Board filled.
- Completion of home visits to new tenants.
- Numbers of estate walkabouts.
- Competitions to encourage tenant participation, involvement and area development.
- Responses to complaints/feedback.
- Maintaining a consultation register and holding focus groups.

We will also complete an independent, comprehensive, tenant satisfaction survey at least every three years to obtain tenants views on; the services we provide, value for money and their involvement with us.

5.2 Evaluating

In order to achieve as much as we can from this Strategy we will look at:

- What participation methods were used?
- Which issues did we consult on and encourage participation in?
- What feedback was received from our tenants?
- How did consultation help to develop particular outcomes?

We will monitor and record the number of responses to consultation activities. We will ask our tenants for feedback on the best method of consultation for them.

We will review the costs and benefits of implementing the Strategy. These may include:

- The number of events held.
- The number of participants.
- The number of newsletters and other relevant publications issued.
- The number and type of issues consulted on.

5.3 Reporting

We will report the outcomes of any consultation activities to tenants using the most appropriate method e.g., letter, newsletter, website.

We will provide an annual report to the Board on the delivery of this Strategy.

6.0 Why do we do Tenant Participation?

6.1 Legislation Background

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 included provisions giving rights for tenants in relation to tenant participation and consultation. These rights for tenants and duties for Landlords allow tenants the opportunity to influence the housing services they receive.

There are particular requirements as part of this legislation. For example, we are required to consult tenants on proposed changes to rents or service charges and we must take account of their views.

We must also consult our tenants when significant proposals are to be made in relation to:

- Repairs and Maintenance (including standards of service).
- Housing Management (including standards of service): this includes allocations and transfers, estate management and anti-social behaviour.
- Any possible change of landlord.
- Our Tenant Participation Strategy.

Our Tenant Participation Strategy has been developed and reviewed to meet the requirements of the legislation and to ensure that our tenants have a wide range of opportunities to participate and influence the quality of services provided.

We are also now required to report to our tenants on our performance with regards to the Scottish Social Housing Charter. This must be done in a way which engages with our tenants.

6.1.1 Scottish Social Housing Charter

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 laid the foundations for the Scottish Social Housing Charter (the Charter) which came into being in 2012. The Charter sets the standards and outcomes that all social landlords should aim to achieve when performing their housing activities. The Charter therefore provides the legal framework, ensuring tenants input drives forward performance improvement. This Strategy relates specifically to outcome 3 of the Charter - **Participation**:

Social landlords manage their businesses so that:

“Tenants and other customers find it easy to participate in and influence their landlord’s decisions at a level they feel comfortable with. This outcome describes what landlords should achieve by meeting their statutory duties on tenant participation. It covers how social landlords gather and take account of the views and priorities of their tenants; how they shape their services to reflect these views; and how they help tenants and other customers to become more capable of involvement.”

— The Scottish Government.

7.0 Related Policies

The delivery of our services is influenced by tenant participation and involvement. Therefore, this Strategy will help to influence all of our policies and procedures. In particular it will work alongside:

- Business Plan.
- Complaints Procedure.
- Tenant Scrutiny Framework.
- Equality & Human Rights Policy.

8.0 Consultation

The draft Strategy was sent to staff via email on 7th April 2017 to check that it; made sense, was workable, met the legislative requirements, and that people were happy with their role within it. Areas of change were clearly identified. Two responses were received with some grammatical adjustments and suggestions, and some notes on the content. All responses were considered and adjustments made.

The draft was then sent out for tenant consultation on 13th April 2017 to the 'Couch Group', which was identified from the recent Tenant Satisfaction Survey. This group was cross-referenced with the existing Tenant Consultation Register of people who wished to be consulted in this way.

Twenty-five copies of the draft Strategy were issued to the group along with a pre-paid return envelope and covering letter, asking for comments and feedback on the document by 1st May 2017. Three were returned with minimal changes and one suggestion for service improvement which has been added in.

Attempts were made to establish a focus group to consider the draft but this did not receive enough interest to go ahead.

A further email was sent to staff on 10th May 2017 asking for any feedback by 19th May 2017 to allow for final adjustments prior to sending the Strategy for Board approval in June 2017. Six further responses were received and (mainly grammatical) amendments made.

9.0 Glossary of Terms

Annual Report - Document published by Ayrshire Housing reporting on our activities and performance for a particular year.

Annual General Meeting - Event held once a year, open to all tenants of the association to hear details of activities and performance similar to that of the Annual Report.

Community Engagement - Talking to people in the areas in which we have houses, not just our tenants.

Communities Fund - A pot of money set aside by Ayrshire Housing. Individuals/Groups can apply to the fund for help towards the costs of an activity benefitting their community.

Corporate Plan - The document which details what we plan to achieve over a period of time and how we hope to achieve it.

Couch Group - A list of people who have expressed an interest in reviewing policies and other documents from home. Allowing those with disabilities and/or caring or employment commitments to be involved more easily.

12

Approved: 28.06.2017 (Approved at Board Meeting)

Reviewed: 26 August 2020 (Board Meeting)

Current to: 28 August 2021

Focus Groups - Small groups of tenants meeting to discuss and review a particular issue or area of our work.

Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 - The piece of legislation written by the Scottish Government which housing providers must follow.

Registered Tenant Organisations (RTOs) - Groups set up by tenants of an area, which have a written constitution and committee, and have registered these details with either ourselves or the local authority.

Tenancy Agreement - The legal contract signed at the start of a tenancy, between a tenant and a landlord.

Tenant Handbook - A detailed document given to a tenant at the start of their tenancy explaining more about the association and their rights and responsibilities.

Tenant-Led Scrutiny Group - A group of tenants who meet to examine our policies and procedures and make recommendations for changes or improvements.

Tenant Participation Register - A list of tenants who have expressed an interest in being involved in different association activities.

Tenant Satisfaction Survey - A comprehensive survey of our tenants, carried out by an independent consultant at least every three years, asking opinions on different areas of our service. Other surveys are carried out in-house more regularly for specific areas of service.

The Board - A committee made up of: tenants, community members and representatives of the local authority. The Board oversees all of the work of the association.

TIS (Tenants Information Service) - An independent training, support and advice service, run by tenants for tenants and landlords.

TPAS (Tenant Participation Advisory Service) - The national tenant and landlord participation advisory service for Scotland. They promote good practice in tenant participation throughout Scotland for both tenants and landlords.

10.0 Equality and Human Rights

Ayrshire Housing is committed to equal and fair treatment of all sections of the community. Accordingly, no person will be discriminated against during the implementation of this Policy on the grounds of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. In delivering this Policy, Ayrshire Housing's staff will comply fully with the requirements of the association's Equalities and Human Rights Policy.

Aim: Promote the involvement and participation of our tenants in the delivery of housing services.

Action	Who	Target/Performance Measure	Timescale	Progress/Comments
Establish and maintain a positive relationship with new tenants.	Housing Assistant (and Housing Officers)	New tenant visits to be carried out and feedback recorded.	Within 6 weeks of tenancy start.	
Promote and Demonstrate increased participation in association activities.	Performance and Quality Manager/ Housing Officers /Housing Assistants / Head of Housing Services	Establish and develop Scrutiny Group.		
		Encourage Panel/Focus Group activity, where relevant.		
		Minimum of 10 tenants on Consultation Register.		
		All tenant places on Board filled.		

Aim: Give tenants the opportunity to express their views on particular issues.

Promote tenant involvement in estate management related activities.	Housing Officers	At least 50% of areas to receive estate management inspections. Tenants to participate in as many as possible.	Annually	
	Housing Officers	Estate visit feedback summary reports to tenants.	Within 4 weeks of inspections	

			Tenants to participate in garden and pets competitions.		
	Consult on considered changes to housing management or related services	Head of Housing Services	Endeavour to achieve a minimum of 6 weeks consultation with tenants on any proposed changes.		
Aim: Keep tenants informed of the association's activities in the more general sense, involving both formal and informal means.					
	Tenants will be provided with regular, high quality information about AH services, performance and estate management issues.	All Staff	AH Newsletter to be issued at least 4 times per year.	Quarterly	
			Performance information published in newsletters.	Quarterly	
			Annual report to AH Board.	Annually	
	Raise tenant awareness of current, relevant or topical housing issues.	Head of Housing Services/Money Advice Officer/ Technical Services Manager	Articles in Newsletter.	Quarterly	
		Head of Housing Services/Money Advice Officer/ Technical	Articles/sections on Website	Regular updates	

		Services Manager/ Administration Assistant	Use of local notice boards	Occasional	
		Administration Assistant/Director	Develop Facebook Page	2017/2018	
			Write Social Media Policy/Procedure	2017/2018	
Aim: Ensure that the opportunity for engagement is available for everyone.					
	Promote equality and inclusion in our tenant participation activities.	Administration Assistant	Publicise the availability of information in other formats and languages and respond to all requests received.	Quarterly in newsletter.	
		Director/Administration Assistant	Provide opportunity to increase skills & confidence	2017/2018	
		Money Advice Officers & Housing Officers		2017/2018	
		Administration Assistant	Ensure that meetings and events are held in accessible venues and locations.		
		Technical Services/Housing Management	Consider the use of postcard-sized surveys, where relevant.		

16

Approved: 28.06.2017 (Approved at Board Meeting)

Reviewed: 26 August 2020 (Board Meeting)

Current to: 28 August 2021

Aim: Recognise the importance of Tenant Participation in the formation and implementation of policies and processes.					
	Use Complaints Procedure, Compliments and Suggestions to influence better service provision.	Head of Housing Services	Report to Board on nature, volume and outcome of complaints.	Quarterly/ Annually	
	Provide practical and/or financial support for activities which benefit our tenants and our communities. (Community Fund Applications).	Director/Head of Housing Services	Community Grants.		
		Housing Officer/Housing Assistant	Have a presence at local fetes, events and gala days, where possible.	Throughout the year.	

Scrutiny Group Activity:

17
 Approved: 28.06.2017 (Approved at Board Meeting)
 Reviewed: 26 August 2020 (Board Meeting)
 Current to: 28 August 2021