

Tenant Participation Review 2017-18

Home's for Life's Tenant Participation Strategy sets out what we mean by Participation and sets out what this will mean to you in practice.

- How we will consult you
- What we will consult you about
- How you can get involved in decision making
- How you can help us improve services
- How you and your neighbours can form a registered tenant group (RTO)
- How you can get involved, through membership, attending meetings, take part in policy and service reviews

What did we do during 2017-18

We have continued to consult our tenants' regularly throughout this period and informed them through regular newsletters, briefing notes and to meet with our tenants through meetings as well as through our AGM.

Consultation

- **Ongoing Consultation on Tenant Satisfaction**

We continuously survey our tenant's satisfaction through questionnaires sent out after each repair, gas servicing and home visits after allocations. Issues raised are followed up and policy/procedures amended as necessary to improve our service

These include:-

- **Repairs Satisfaction Surveys**

- **Novus** reactive maintenance repairs – we had a **30.1% response rate to the satisfaction** surveys.

- **Kingdom** Gas Service and Repair call outs –**there was a 30.3% response rate** to these surveys.

- **Post Allocation Surveys** – we carried out **18** post allocation or settling in visits.

- **Annual Rent increase**

Each year we write out to all our tenants seeking their views on the proposed April rent increase. In December 2017 all tenants were sent a consultation notice on the proposal to increase rents. In December 2017 all tenants were sent a consultation notice on the proposed rent increase of 3%.

There were a total of **97 responses**, more than double last year's where tenants were given a range of options and **the highest response we've had to date**. In the consultation we showed that we've kept our increases below other local landlords for the last 8 years, that our rents are lower than other local housing associations and that our rents meet the Scottish Federation of Housing Association's Affordability checker.

We will continue to consult and/or provide information to any tenant who wishes to discuss housing or community matters on an individual or group basis.

Information

- **Newsletter**

- We produced 4 newsletters , to communicate with and consult our tenants. The newsletters also provided feedback from consultations and prize draws.

- **Feedback reports**

We provided tenants with feedback reports on the surveys and rent consultation

- **Rent Statements**

We sent out rent statements each quarter to all our tenants.

- **Annual Report**

Tenants opted to have the Annual Report and the Customer Report on the Charter merged into one document informing them how the Company had performed over the previous year. Our Annual report includes benchmarking against previous performance and against peer averages across a range of Key Performance Indicators. **In June 2017 we arranged a very successful coach trip** round our developments with both tenants and Directors. This was followed by an afternoon tea and discussion over the content and layout of the Annual Report. Tenants were provided with a number of samples of other organisations Annual Report to Tenants and the list of Charter Outcomes. Tenants were satisfied with the current layout out and the data that is reported on, and felt compared to other's reports that Homes for Life's report was clearest.

- **Tenants Handbook**

Our tenant handbook provides essential information for tenants and is updated on an ongoing basis as policies are reviewed or useful information changes. However this is still outstanding for a full review and we are aware that many tenants do not have a comprehensive copy with the most up to date information.

- **Language line**

In order to be able to communicate with tenants who's first language isn't English we have an account with Languageline who offer interpretation services as required. Our re-vamped website now includes a Google translate option which we have already had positive feedback on.

- **Briefings and Flyers**

Throughout the year we have provided tenants briefings on a range of subjects from Universal Credit, the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 to how to deal with Condensation

Participation

- **Tenant Panel –**

- A Tenant Panel was established in 2008 which gave tenants an opportunity to become more involved in the decision making process of the Company. However, the subsequent change in the Articles of Association to ensure we will always maintain a **majority of Tenants on the Board of Homes for Life** means it has become increasingly difficult to maintain tenant interest in attending Tenant Panel meetings. Instead a large number of Tenants opted to review policies and paperwork at home. We call these tenants our **“Armchair Reviewers”**. While we respect this choice, tenant meetings have

many advantages over this form of participation and we will continue to seek ways for closer engagement with our tenants.

- **Constitutional Change**

We have recently sought and received in principle consent from the Scottish Housing Regulator to propose a change to our Articles removing the distinction between Tenant and Non Tenant directors and the need for a majority of the seats on the Board to be held by Tenant Directors. Our application notes if this is agreed we will need to review operation of the Tenant Panel and alternative methods of participation to ensure Tenants interests remain at heart of Homes for Life business.

- **Tenant Information Service –**

- We consulted Tenant Participation specialists Tenant Information Service (TIS) on appropriate ways to increase tenant engagement as a small landlord dispersed over an extensive rural area and made Tenant Participation the focus of our Annual General meeting in September 2016. We are now members of TIS

- **Estate Walkabouts – tenant led inspections**

- Our Tenant Estate Walkabout programme for the year took place in June/July 2017 with visits carried out at 11 of our developments. Where tenants were unable to attend they made contact with the office so their ideas could be included.
- Fewer tenants are attending the walkabouts but they have still produced improvements to developments - from unreported fencing issues, to providing slabbed areas to relocate bins stores. For 2018 we've chosen to also include a **Rate My Estate** form for tenant's unable to attend walkabouts to participate in making suggestions for improvements.
- Since 2010 we have awarded prizes to tenants who were making particular efforts with their gardens and communities, through the Community Pride Awards. Tenants are able to nominate neighbours, put themselves forward for recognition of their contribution or recommend a local community project worthy of recognition. The prizes awarded are always a popular part of the well attended Annual General Meeting

- **Membership**

- At each new sign up tenants are provided with copies of our Tenant Participation Strategy and encouraged to become members. During 2017-18, 13 new tenants became members. Bringing our total tenant members to 142. **Our AGMs are well attended by both tenant members and other tenants. In 2017 of the 43 people attending , 25 were tenants.**

- **Annual Charter Report to Tenants**

The Scottish Housing Charter places tenant's interests at its core and there is an even greater need for tenant involvement in the decision making and scrutiny of the Company's performance. Homes for Life has involved tenants in the assessment of its performance in meeting the Charter outcomes each year and provides them with a report by October.

In June 2017 we arranged a very successful coach trip round our developments with both tenants and Directors. This was followed by an afternoon tea and discussion over the content and layout of the forth coming Annual Report. Tenants looked at the Outcomes to be

measured and a range of reports provided by other landlords. Their feedback was used to produce the 2017 report.

- **Revamped Website**

During May 2017 our website underwent a major overhaul. We asked for tenant volunteers to make suggestions over what they wanted to see on the website and to test run it to help find any broken links. Tenants took the time to review it and provided great feedback. The introduction of Google translate was particularly welcomed and its accuracy appreciated.

Action Plan 2018- 2019

Consultation

ACTIVITY	OUTCOME	INDICATOR	TIMESCALE	OFFICER
Develop issue based groups	Increase tenant consultation in key matters of service delivery and policy issues	Development of working group(s)	As required	Customer Service Manager/ Housing Officer
Undertake repairs satisfaction surveys	Ascertain levels of satisfaction / provide feedback	Survey on all completed repairs reported	Ongoing	Customer Service Assistant /Housing Officer
Undertake Post Allocation Survey	Ascertain levels of satisfaction / provide feedback	Complete surveys	Within four months of allocation	Housing Officer
Undertake survey of the Regulator's 8 Charter satisfaction indicators	Ascertain levels of satisfaction / provide feedback	Complete surveys	Annually – usually in October	Housing Officer/ Customer Service Manager
Undertake Household composition Survey + other specific topic	We hold up to date information. Mid year opportunity for further feedback	Complete surveys	Annually – approx. 6 months apart from main satisfaction survey	Customer Service Manager
Consult tenants on proposals for key changes to service (inc. rent increase)	Inform service review	Timeous consultation	As required	Customer Service Manager / Housing Officer

Information

ACTIVITY	OUTCOME	INDICATOR	TIMESCALE	OFFICER
Produce 4 newsletters per year	Improved written information flow	Production of 4 newsletters	Each quarter	Customer Service Manager / Housing Officer
Produce a combined Annual Report and Tenant Charter Report	Provide performance information	Production of Tenant Charter Report	Each September and by October each year	Business Manager /Customer Service Manager / Housing Officer
Update Tenants Handbook	Provide up to date information on tenancy matters	New handbook	Ongoing	Customer Service Assistant/Housing Officer / Customer Service Manager
Provide written information in alternative formats and other languages if requested	Access to information for all tenants	Production of information in different formats / languages if required	Ongoing at request	Housing Officer
Amendments to Tenants Rights within Tenancy Agreement	Provide all tenants with a copy of Tenancy Agreement amendments with timescales of implementation	All tenants are aware of the changes and have received the addendum	Before 1 st November 2018	Customer Service Assistant/Housing Officer / Customer Service Manager

Participation

ACTIVITY	OUTCOME	INDICATOR	TIMESCALE	OFFICER
Establish working group(s) for reviews of policies and specific issues	Greater Tenant involvement and decision making	Focus group established and operating	As necessary	Housing Officer
Establish 'Armchair Scrutineers' to review policies at home	Increased option/alternative route to involvement	Tenants who don't want to attend meetings are able to participate	Interested tenants updated May 2017	Customer Service Manager
Investigate use of Survey Monkey as a method of online consultation	Increased option/alternative route to involvement	Wider inclusion of survey responses	In time for 2018 Annual Rent consultation	Customer Service Manager
Encourage greater tenant membership of the Homes for Life Partnership	Greater tenant participation in HfLHP activities	Maintain min 25% tenant membership	Ongoing	Housing Officer
Encourage and Replace Tenant Directors on the Board	The Board has the full complement of Tenant Directors as required	Maintain majority tenant directors on the Board	By AGM 2018 and ongoing	Customer Service Manager / Housing Officer
Assist in setting up representative Tenants Organisations	Greater tenant involvement	Establishment of representative tenant organisations	As requested	Housing Officer

Promotion

ACTIVITY	OUTCOME	INDICATOR	TIMESCALE	OFFICER
Continue to promote tenant involvement in decision making, using appropriate methods	Increased tenant involvement	Identification of new and appropriate methods of involving tenants	Ongoing	Housing Officer / Customer Service Manager
Promote participation strategy	Improve awareness and increase involvement	Information bulletin and subsequent newsletter and / or annual report updates	As necessary	All staff and Directors