

HOMES FOR LIFE HOUSING PARTNERSHIP

TENANT PARTICIPATION STRATEGY

Review Date	April 2013 (Version 4)
Next Review Date:	April 2018
No of Pages:	7
Objective:	To set out how the Company intends to fulfil its commitment to tenant participation
Responsible:	Customer Service Manager

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Homes for Life Partnership recognises the value of working in partnership with Tenants.
- 1.2 We aim to effectively involve our tenants in the process of developing and monitoring the services we provide and to facilitate active participation by our tenants in issues affecting their communities.
- 1.3 This Strategy sets out a framework to achieve this, in line with Section 53 of the Housing (56) Act 2001, and the Social Housing Charter introduced by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010. The Charter sets out the standards and outcomes that tenants can expect from social landlords, in terms of:
- the quality and value for money of the services they receive,
 - the standard of their homes,
 - opportunities for communication and participation in the decisions that affect them

2.0 CONSULTATION

- 2.1 Homes for Life Partnership will use a variety of methods to consult and inform tenants depending on the specifics of the issue(s) at hand.

Working Groups

- 2.2 Working Groups will be established and used to address specific topics, rehabilitation schemes and/or policy review, when considered to be the most appropriate and/or effective method of consultation.

Meetings

- 2.3 General Meetings:- We will convene general meetings appropriate to the scale and importance of the discussion topic. Such meetings will be arranged as and when required.
- 2.4 Local meetings:- Local Meetings with tenants of an area will be used as a means of

- consultation if there are particular issues that affect that street or area.
- 2.5 Tenant Panel meetings:- We will hold meetings twice a year or more frequently as required for tenants who have agreed to be part of a consultative Tenant Panel. The opportunity to attend each meeting will also be promoted to all tenants.

Tenants Groups

- 2.6 The Company participates in a shared register of "Registered Tenant Organisations", maintained on our behalf by East Lothian Council. The Policy covering registration is available on request from our Office. We will positively encourage the establishment of representative tenants groups, whether they wish to be registered or not. We would expect the aims and objectives of any tenants group to be agreed by its members and for the group to be open, inclusive and accountable in its activities.

Surveys

- 2.7 We will survey tenants to gather their views on our performance as a landlord and to highlight areas of service which require review.

These will include:-

- Repairs Satisfaction Survey - of all repairs immediately post completion
- Post Allocation Survey - all allocations, within 4 months of allocation
- The Regulator's 8 Charter satisfaction indicators - as an annual survey of all tenants, together with such other indicators as are agreed and can be accommodated within the maximum 4 page survey as recommended by Ipsos Mori
- Such other one off or periodic surveys as may be required to assess tenant satisfaction with service provision or Charter criteria

Taking Account of Tenants Views

- 2.8 We will take account of the views of tenants and where practicable deliver services that meet tenants' priorities. For example through the community improvements initiated by tenant involvement in estate inspections.
- 2.9 Where our tenants establish groups or choose to be represented through broader area based groups, we will set up regular liaison meetings with them to discuss and feedback on matters of common interest.
- 2.10 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.
- 2.11 Homes for Life will use appropriate consultative methods having regard to the rural location and distribution of our stock.

3.0 INFORMATION

Written Information

- 3.1 We are committed to providing written information in plain language and presented in a manner that is easy to read.
- 3.2 This will include:-
- publishing a newsletter no less than 4 times per year
 - publishing an Annual Review once per year
 - publishing a Tenants' Handbook (which will be reviewed every three years, or after

- a major policy review, whichever comes sooner).
- publishing summary information leaflets covering key areas of service provisions or policies

Alternative Formats

3.3 We are committed to providing written information in other formats so as not to discriminate against tenants. For example, for visually impaired residents or tenants whose first language is not English. This type of indirect discrimination is all the more important to address as it can often be inadvertent and there is perhaps more scope for it to occur.

The Company will provide information to tenants in any special formats as required. Special formats may include:

- large print
- audio tape, audio, CD or computer discs
- translations into relevant languages
- use of language or sign interpreters
- Braille

Please note that it is impractical to have all possible formats available immediately. Our commitment therefore relates to the ability and willingness to produce documents in the formats required, or an interpreter if requested, within a reasonable time, taking account of the urgency of the request. All costs in relation to this will be borne by the Company.

Other Languages

3.4 Where English is not the first language of the household, we will provide on request written information in the first language.

Other Media

3.5 Where appropriate we make use of alternative forms of media for example through the Company's website and text messaging to consult and inform tenants.

4.0 PARTICIPATION

4.1 Tenants are eligible to become tenant members of the Company.

Tenant members can attend members meetings, nominate for election, stand for election and vote in elections for appointment of tenant directors to serve on the Company's board. The Board of Directors can be made up of between 7 and 15 directors of which Tenant Directors must form the majority.

We will continue to promote tenant membership as part of the initial allocation process and thereafter.

4.2 Tenants are eligible to become members of the **Tenants Panel** which will review policy and service issues. The Panel will meet no less than twice a year

4.3 Tenants may take part in Policy and Service reviews without attending meetings by agreeing to be on the **Tenant Register**. These tenants will receive the appropriate paperwork and guidance for them to review proposed policy or service changes, from home.

4.4 Tenants who express an interest in participating will be offered appropriate training opportunities to develop skill for effective participation.

4.5 Tenants may accompany the Housing Officer in inspections of their estate and submit proposals for the use of their community improvement budget.

5.0 SETTING OBJECTIVES

- 5.1 We will establish action plans in relation to tenant participation.
The action plan for the period 1st April 2013 to 31st March 2018 is attached as Appendix 1.

6.0 RESOURCES

- 6.1 To encourage and facilitate effective participation we will resource tenant participation through a tenant participation budget. Following consideration of the resources required to successfully implement the strategy and the activity plan a budget of **£3438** has been set aside for the forthcoming year.

Where appropriate Homes for Life will approach other agencies for support and /or financial assistance for tenant participation, if such agencies are formally involved.

- 6.2 We will make available accommodation, training, materials and secretariat support, for consultative meetings and meetings of representative Homes for Life tenants groups.

- 6.3 Where tenants wish to set up a Tenant Group or RTO we will pay grants toward funding required to assist them to develop and achieve their aims.

Currently the start up grant is **£200** with an annual payment of **£75** plus **£1** per tenancy thereafter.

- 6.4 Annual grants will be payable to any group meeting the registration conditions set out in our joint policy with East Lothian Council and East Lothian Housing Association on Registering Tenant Organisations (RTO)

These will be paid into the bank account of the group within one month of a claim being submitted and annually thereafter providing the group remains registered and continues to satisfy the registration criteria.

- 6.5 For any group in the process of getting started, legitimate expenses will be met by us from the start up grant, with any balance being paid into the bank account of the group once it has registered. Each RTO that receives a grant will be required to maintain annual accounts and show their accounts to us each year.

Tenants groups that choose not to register may still apply for funding and will have to specify how much money they need, what it will be used for, and how it will be protected for the use of the group.

- 6.6 We make available an annual budget of £5,000 for community improvement requests initiated by tenants.

7.0 MONITORING AND EVALUATION

- 7.1 We will measure the success of this strategy through tenant satisfaction surveys, against previous performance and, where appropriate, against the services provided by other Registered Social Landlords.

Resources

- 7.2 We will monitor the use of resources, money, equipment and staff time, to ensure that participation is adequately funded, and that accommodation, equipment and staff time are being used effectively.

Reporting

- 7.3 Homes for Life Board will receive the following:-

- an annual report on progress against the action plan.
- timeous reports on the outcome results of surveys and a report on variances with previous surveys.

8.0 EQUALITY and DIVERSITY

8.1 Every tenant is entitled to have their voice heard. We will accommodate any special needs that they may have. We will ensure that meetings are accessible to all and that literature is provided in alternative formats or languages where requested.

9.0 REVIEW PROCEDURE

9.1 This strategy aims to provide a foundation on which to build. Through tenant participation this document will evolve. It will be reviewed regularly and changed as necessary to reflect the wishes and needs of the tenants.

Action Plan 2013- 2014

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 comprehensive tenants survey	Ascertain levels of tenant satisfaction / provide feedback	Completion of tenants survey	Once every three years- next during 2013	Housing Officer/ Customer Service Manager
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	Housing Officer/ 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 Annual Report	Provide performance information	Production of Annual Report	Each September /October	Business Manager
Produce a Tenant Charter Report	Provide performance information	Production of Tenant Charter Report	By October each year	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

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
Encourage greater tenant membership of the Homes for Life Partnership	Greater tenant participation in HfLHP activities	Maintain min 25% tenant membership	Ongoing Ongoing	Housing Officer
Replace Tenant Directors on the Board	Maintain majority tenant directors on the Board	The Board has the full compliment of Tenant Directors as required	By AGM 2013 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