



West Granton Housing Co-operative

Tenant Participation Strategy

This policy was approved by the Committee of Management on 11th March 2020.

It should be reviewed again no later than 2024.

We can produce this document in different formats such as in larger print or audio-format; we can also translate the document into various languages, as appropriate.

This document was developed jointly between West Granton Housing Co-operative and Doctor Stewart Montgomery, Montgomery Housing and Equality Services. If this document is copied, either in part or in full, then our joint authorship should be noted on any copy.

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Section 1: Background

1.1. Strategic context

Tenant participation is a governance strategy that focusses on consultation with tenants and other customers about our policies and services (see note).

In law, we are required to produce a tenant participation strategy (“the strategy”) and our statutory duties are explained in Section 2.

Statutory duties are not to be regarded as an end in themselves, though, but simply as a framework of principles for developing tenant participation activities.

Critically, the strategy must take account of local issues and we do this through our internal tenant participation action plan.

The tenant participation action plan is closely linked to our equality strategy as many of the possible barriers to active participation are linked to barriers relating to structural disadvantage.

For example, poverty and associated social exclusion can impact negatively on people’s opportunities to participate effectively. Again, inaccessible buildings and services can affect the participation of disabled people unless organisations make appropriate reasonable adjustments. This requires, of course, having awareness of such barriers to prevent institutionalised forms of discrimination.

In view of this, we include equality issues throughout all tenant participation activities. This is sometimes referred to as equality mainstreaming.

Finally, at Scottish Government level, a national strategic policy objective is to develop social inclusion and active participation. Tenant participation is the method that social landlords use to translate this objective into practice in public sector housing.

Note: West Granton Housing Co-operative is referred to generally as “we” or “WGHC” throughout this policy.

1.2. What the strategy covers

Our tenant participation strategy covers a range of inter-related sections.

Section 2 describes our strategic policy objectives. This is a very important section as these are the objectives that we implement into organisational services.

Section 3 explains the statutory and regulatory framework that underpins the strategy.

Section 4 summarises how we implement our strategy, including measures we take to promote accessible services in order to enhance tenant participation opportunities.

Section 5 describes the types of training that we provide.

Section 6 explains what we monitor in respect of tenant participation services; this covers both qualitative and quantitative issues.

Section 7 summarises our policy relating to appeals or complaints.

Section 8 describes our consultation and review procedures in respect of the strategy.

The Appendices provide general information that may be of interest to the reader.

1.3. Summary

Tenant participation is a governance strategy through which we explain how we consult with tenants and other customers about organisational policies and services. Our strategy is a framework of principles that is implemented through our tenant participation action plan. This action plan is reviewed continually as part of organisational policy development and the identification of issues to be addressed at local level.

Section 2: Our policy objectives

This section explains the key policy objectives that underpin our tenant participation strategy. The term “participation” is used to include consultation.

In line with our objectives, we:

- meet relevant legal and regulatory standards, including promoting guidance in respect of tenant participation;
- include equality issues throughout our participation services, a process generally referred to as “mainstreaming of equality;”
- apply the strategy to promote other organisational policy goals, for example, developing an area in which people want to live and work (“sustainable community”);
- offer tenants and other customers advice and information about their rights to participate and methods that are available for participation;
- taking steps to remove barriers to effective participation within West Granton through a holistic tenant participation action plan;
- identify levels and types of participation preferred by tenants and other customers;
- manage our performance through a range of performance indicators;
- provide staff training to promote effective implementation of the tenant participation strategy;
- offer tenants and other customers advice and information about our complaint system; and
- review our tenant participation strategy every four years or sooner, as required, for example, because of legal changes or new guidance.

2.3. Summary

Section 2 describes our core tenant participation policy objectives and is, therefore, the essential part of this document. Our objectives are the basis upon which we develop all tenant participation services.

Section 3: Law, regulation and guidance

This section summarises key sections of tenant participation law, as well as explaining regulatory standards and other guidance.

It is emphasised that this section is for general information only and is not intended as a precise statement of law.

Appendix 1 provides information about tenant participation law and other guidance.

3.1. Tenant participation strategy

We are required, in law, to have a tenant participation in place that should be used to promote participation.

This strategy must have arrangements in place, for example, to take account of tenants' (and tenant organisations') views on specific issues (see below).

Note: Local authorities and social landlords must also maintain a register of tenants' groups and keep this available for public inspection.

3.2. Consultation arrangements

Both individual tenants and registered tenants' groups are to be consulted by us on certain issues that affect them.

We must have regard to representations by tenants and/or tenants' groups within a reasonable timescale

3.2.1. Issues for Consultation

This consultation process relates to the following issues:

- housing management and repairs policies that are likely to significantly affect tenants;
- standard of service to be provided in respect of housing management and repairs;
- our tenant participation strategy; and
- any stock transfer proposals.

Note: Housing law requires us to provide tenants with certain information such as our complaints procedure, specific policy information and a written tenancy agreement.

3.3. Tenant management agreements

The law sets out arrangements for a tenant management co-operative (TMC) to enter into agreement with landlords to manage their housing stock.

TMCs must adopt a clear and appropriate constitution, including functions of operation, membership, meetings, powers of office bearers and so on.

TMCs (as well as terms of agreement between landlords and co-operative) must be approved by Scottish Ministers.

There is a right to appeal to Ministers if landlords fail to agree terms or refuse to enter into an agreement.

Landlords must make agreement with the TMC if it is satisfied that the TMC:

- has the approval of Scottish Ministers;
- is able to perform the functions it proposes to undertake competently and efficiently; and
- representative of the tenant of the houses concerned.

Note: Either all or some of a landlord's housing functions can be subject to a tenancy management agreement.

3.4. Regulatory framework in Scotland

We are required to promote tenant participation by the Scottish Housing Regulator. This requirement is found in two documents as noted below with further information contained in Appendix 1.

Regulation of social housing: our framework, 2019

“Across all of our work we want to communicate clearly, work effectively with our stakeholders and raise awareness of important issues and risks. We actively involve tenants and other service users in our work, as we set out in our published strategy. We engage with them to help make our work accountable, relevant and targeted.”

“2.5. We promote a strong tenant voice. It is important that landlords involve tenants and other service users in the scrutiny of their performance, and in discussions about affordability and what they get for their rent.

Scottish Social Housing Charter, 2017

One Charter standard is directly linked to participation, namely:

“tenants and other customers find it easy to participate in and influence our decisions at a level they feel comfortable with.”

The Charter has two other standards that are closely linked to promoting tenant participation. Each is now described.

Communication issues

We must manage our business 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 we make decisions and the services we provides.”

Equality issues

We must perform all aspects of our housing services so that:

“... every tenant and other customer has their individual needs recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housingservices.”

3.5. Guidance

There is a diverse range of guidance concerning tenant participation. We take this guidance into account when developing and reviewing our strategy. Further information is provided in Appendix 1.

3.6. Summary

Tenant participation law is limited in scope. It is, though, supported by the regulatory framework, as well as a diverse range of good practice guidance.

Section 4: Implementing our strategy

Section 4 describes key issues that we consider when implementing our strategy. These are covered under the following headings:

- ethos or value system;
- financial resources;
- issues for consultation;
- methods of participation;
- promoting equality and social justice.

4.1. Ethos or value system

In line with the regulatory framework, we promote a culture of participation by supporting what can be termed the citizenship model of participation (see Goodlad, R, in Cairncross, 1997).

This model focusses on people's rights and choices, empowering them to participate in the decision making process. Indeed, as a co-operative based association, this lies at the heart of our constitution and value system.

4.2. Financial resources

We determine each year an appropriate budget to cover investment in tenant participation services. This includes a budget for training.

4.3. Issues for consultation

Issues for consultation are diverse and this section describes some key activities as follows (in alphabetical order):

- environmental improvements and sustainability;
- housing design, including making reasonable adjustments;
- housing policies such as allocations, arrears management, procurement, rent setting and repairs and maintenance;
- information and communications such as newsletters, including meeting quality accessibility standards;
- local services such as garden maintenance and cleaning;
- procurement policy and appointment of contractors;
- property management issues, that is, services to owner occupiers;
- stock transfers;
- strategic policies such as customer care, data protection and equality;
- surveys and their content, for example, customer satisfaction surveys;

4.4. Methods of participation

Housing law is silent on how consultation is to be carried out or how wide it should be. This is deliberate to allow flexibility to cover varying circumstances in different areas.

Examples of consultation methods that we might use are as follows:

- digital options such as skype;
- focus groups;
- information through leaflets, letters, posters and tenant handbooks;
- inter-agency group meetings;
- local events;
- newsletters;
- open days;
- public meetings;
- scrutiny panels, for instance, policy development;
- seminars;
- surveys, for example, face to face and/or by questionnaire;
- tenant conferences;
- training events;
- “walkabouts” with tenants;
- website; and
- working groups.

We are working towards establishing a wide range of options and consult with tenants and other customers as to their preferred options.

4.5. Promoting equality and social justice

We promote equality issues within tenant participation services by:

- developing an anti-poverty strategy to support tenants to maximise their income entitlements;
- providing accurate and clear information to tenants and other customers about our participation strategy;
- using interpreters for people from black and minority ethnic groups, or for disabled people, as appropriate;
- monitoring participation services to ensure that our services prevent any form of discrimination, as well as promoting awareness of equal opportunity matters; and
- working in partnership with various organisations to promote quality participation services and/or initiatives.

4.6. Summary

We implement tenant participation strategic objectives covering a diverse range of issues and using a range of methods. We consult with tenants and other consultants to ensure that we tailor these services to the needs and preferences of individuals, whenever possible. This approach includes equality themes, including addressing possible barriers to active participation.

Section 5: Staff training

Training is vital if we are to implement tenant participation strategic policy objectives effectively. Section 5 describes types of training and training providers.

5.1. Types of training

Our training programme includes training on:

- tenant participation law and guidance;
- policy and monitoring training for committee members; and
- information and briefing events for tenants and other customers, as appropriate.

With respect to the latter, training will be determined by the type of activity. For instance, if we were to establish scrutiny panels to develop a certain policy issue, then we would provide training and/or information on the issue in question.

5.2. Training providers

We work are working towards working with partner organisations, as required, to ensure that appropriate and quality participation related training is provided. Examples of organisations with which we work are Glasgow Centre for Inclusive Living Equality Academy and TPAS Scotland.

5.3. Summary

Our training strategy includes tenant participation as a core element. This training is practical by linking participation to other key areas such as equality, as well as organisational services such as housing management.

Section 6: Performance management

6.1. Why we monitor performance

We ensure that comprehensive monitoring systems are in place to enable tenant participation services to be audited. This is very important to demonstrate compliance with law and regulatory standards.

Monitoring the implementation of this policy is central to quality assurance, in particular to assess if we are meeting our stated policy objectives.

Finally, monitoring is key to ensuring that tenant participation services are subject to continuous improvement.

We gather information as part of the ARC (Annual report on the Scottish Social Housing Charter) and general information. This is a requirement specified by the Scottish Housing Regulator.

Examples of what we monitor are:

Quantitative

- Scottish Social Housing Charter Outcomes reported in the Annual Return to the Scottish Housing Regulator

Qualitative

This type of monitoring includes:

- assessing how satisfied tenants and other customers are with information that we provide.

6.2. Summary

Monitoring performance is essential to promote effective organisational governance. By monitoring tenant participation services, we also assess how well we are meeting law and regulatory standards.

Section 7: Complaints

We address any complaints about the tenant participation strategy through our complaint handling policy and procedure: [WGHC's Complaints Handling Policy](#).

In the context of tenant participation, a complaint would have to be about the way we applied our tenant participation strategy rather than about the decision itself.

Note: We define a complaint as “an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public about West Granton Housing Co-operative's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of West Granton Housing Co-operative.”

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Section 8: Consultation and review of our strategy

We consult with tenants and other customers if we decide to review our tenant participation strategy.

In line with the strategy itself, we use a wide range of consultation methods to reflect the needs of people in our community.

These methods also take into account of accessibility requirements of disabled people.

We review our strategy every four years or sooner, as appropriate. For instance, we may review our strategy because of changes to law, or monitoring / reporting reveals that a change is required sooner.

8.1. Summary

We consult with tenants and other customers when reviewing our tenant participation strategy. We review our strategy, as required, and plan reviews in a structured and comprehensive manner to ensure full and proper consultation.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Law and guidance framework

Appendix 2: Promoting participation

Appendix 1: Law and guidance framework

This section provides information about law and guidance that is concerned with tenant participation.

Appendix 1: Law and guidance

This is a list of articles and documentation for reference only and it is noted that this reference list is not exhaustive.

Law

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 (as amended)

Secondary legislation

SSI No, 416 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 (Registration of Tenant Organisations) Order 2002

Core guidance

SEDD Circular 7/2002, Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 – Guidance on Tenant Participation, Scottish Executive: Edinburgh.

Other guidance

Communities Scotland, 2005, Guide to successful tenant participation, Scottish Executive: Edinburgh.

Diffley, M et al, 2009, Identifying the Priorities of Tenants of Social Landlords, Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh: Scottish Executive.

Tenant Information Service, 2012, A Guide to Developing Tenant Scrutiny in Scotland, Glasgow: TIS.

Academic sources

Cairncross, L et al, 1997, Housing Management, Consumers and Citizens, London: Routledge

Appendix 2: Promoting participation

Although promoting tenant participation is a statutory requirement, the extent to which participation opportunities are implemented is dependent on other factors.

This section explains this by reference to the following factors:

- organisational commitment;
- awareness of barriers to participation; and
- assessment of personal participation preferences.