

TRAFALGAR HOUSING ASSOCIATION	
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SUBJECT : TENANT PARTICIPATION POLICY

**DATE ADOPTED BY TRAFALGAR HOUSING ASSOCIATION
MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
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TENANT PARTICIPATION POLICY

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Trafalgar Housing Association is a locally based charitable housing association operating in Clydebank; aiming to provide a first- class service to Tenants, Owners, and other Customers. Where in this document the term 'customers' is used it should be read as encompassing, tenants, owners, applicants and other customers.
- 1.2 Listening to and knowing what customers want from the services provided by the Association helps to ensure that we properly serve the requirements of this community. We aim to provide opportunities for all our customers to play an active role in the management of their homes and the delivery of services. Opportunities vary to ensure that individuals and groups can participate in ways and at a level which encourages individual and collective participation. Our tenant participation policy provides a framework for effective participation, with a wide range of approaches to help participation and engagement to the extent individuals wish.
- 1.3 We are committed to ensuring that we support a wide range of ways in which tenants and other customers can contribute to scrutinising and assessing our performance and to helping us to identify where and how we can improve, recognising what we do well and areas where we can and need to do better.

Scottish Government in its publication, developed in conjunction with the Chartered Institute of Housing and Housemark (Developing Effective Scrutiny – a Practice Guide for Landlords 2014) defines scrutiny as *a critical examination of services, underpinned by good quality, up-to-date performance data and information that is made available to those involved in scrutiny activities. Scrutiny is about being able to ask landlords questions based on clear information and data, such as: why is a service delivered in a particular way; why are particular timescales in place; how much is this costing; can costs be reduced while still providing a good level of service; could we do this better or differently? The answers to these and similar questions should lead to recommendations that result in change and improvement.*

This Guide sets out The Three Principles for Effective Scrutiny are: *Independence – scrutiny activities should be separate from governance, management and mainstream tenant participation structures, but have a formal recognised status with support from the organisation at the outset. Formality – scrutiny activities should*

include clear roles, remit, terms of reference and lines of reporting for those taking part. Power – tenants and other customers involved in scrutiny activities should be able to examine services and standards, and make recommendations for service improvements. Landlords should respond to this by agreeing which measures can be implemented and, where they can't be implemented, explaining fully why not.

Together with tenants owners and other customers, we are committed to developing our approach to scrutiny, to examine our performance and increase opportunities for ensuring we provide value for money.

- 1.4 We also wish to ensure that tenants and other customers find it easy to participate in and influence our decisions at a level they feel comfortable with.
- 1.5 We continue to seek ways of developing our approaches to tenant participation, embracing the requirements of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and also refining our approach to tenant scrutiny as introduced in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010.

2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

2.1 Our Tenant Participation Policy aims to ensure that:

- a) All tenants and owners are aware of the ways they can take part in the activities of the Association.
- b) Practical help is given to those wishing to take part
- c) We continue to operate in the best interests of residents offering a range of opportunities for scrutinising and shaping services.
- d) Tenants and owners can voice their opinions on the activities of the Association and that we provide a range of ways in which this can happen
- e) The positive and active participation of members of the community in the activities of the Association is encouraged as is membership of the Association in line with our Membership Policy.
- f) The aims and objectives of the Association have the support and involvement of the local community wherever possible.

- g) The general public, statutory and voluntary agencies and other organisations are well informed about our activities.
- h) We maintain a Register of Tenant Organisations with whom we will consult, ensuring that consultation is open to all tenants and where relevant to owners
- i) We develop and support those who wish to work with us to scrutinise our performance.
- j) We promote and recognise the differences made by those who have engaged with us, by, for instance, including information on this on our website and in our newsletters
- k) Taking all of the above into account we, together with tenants and owners meet our aim of maintaining and where feasible increasing satisfaction with our services and providing value for money.

3 EQUALITIES

3.1 As part of our commitment to equal opportunities, this policy can be made available in large print or audio tape or translated into another language if required.

We are also committed to meeting Outcome 1 of the Scottish Social Housing Charter which states that Social landlords perform all aspects of their 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 housing services.

4 LEGISLATION

4.1 This Policy takes account of the Housing (Scotland) Acts of 2001, 2010 and 2014

5 SCOTTISH SOCIAL HOUSING CHARTER APRIL 2017

5.1 This Policy takes account of the requirement to report to the Scottish Housing Regulator annually on the Annual Return on the Charter, where several outcomes link to participation. Specifically that 'tenants and other customers find it easy to participate in and influence their landlord's decisions at a level they feel comfortable with' and also that 'tenants, owners and other customers receive services that provide continually improving value for their rent and other charges they pay'.

6 POLICY SCOPE

6.1 For the purposes of this policy the term resident(s) includes tenant(s) and/or private owner(s) in a property or area owned and/or managed by the Association. We also recognise that there are policy areas, such as allocations, where it is essential that we consult with other customers, including those on our housing list.

7 OUR APPROACH

7.1 We recognise that our tenants and owners have busy lives and that we need to be flexible and imaginative in how we promote, encourage and develop participation.

We are committed therefore to developing our approach over time, making use of a wide range of communication methods and after the recent worldwide pandemic we have realised the need to utilise digital technology in order to keep customers and staff safe.

7.2. Housing Association Membership

7.2.1 All residents in properties owned or managed by the Association are encouraged to apply for life membership of the Association and to attend the Annual General Meeting and other general meetings.

7.3 We will endeavour to ensure that tenants and others who have taken out membership fully understand the rights and responsibilities which attach to membership which include the right to attend the Annual General Meeting and the right to stand for election onto the Management Committee.

7.4 Committee Membership

7.4.1 All residents as defined above who are members and who are interested in the running of the Association will be strongly encouraged to stand for election to the Management Committee.

7.5.2 This will be encouraged at all appropriate public / tenant / resident meetings and full training will be provided in the requirements of this role.

8. INFORMATION

8.1 We aim to have up to date written policies and procedures on all customer service issues. Copies of these documents are freely available to all online on our website and customers will be provided with opportunities to comment on and influence these.

8.2 Residents will be consulted on information relating to the content of policies and procedures; and details of any changes that affect the service provided to residents.

8.3 We will produce an Annual Report which will be sent to all tenants, residents and members of the Association. We will aim to involve residents in the content of the Report and to invite feedback on it.

8.4 Newsletters will be produced at least twice per year and sent to all tenants and residents.

8.5 Where there are specific proposals and activities which affect certain groups of residents, we will make initial contact by letter and tenants with resident's meetings arranged wherever appropriate.

8.6 Where feasible, we will seek to present options on proposed work and seek views on those, in order to inform future action.

8.7 We aim to be responsive to all enquiries and ensure that staff are available to answer questions or clarify issues at the request of residents and others.

8.8 We will endeavour to ensure that all information, whether written or spoken is provided in plain, understandable language in a range of formats as required – including large print, different languages etc.

9. RESIDENT CONSULTATION AND INVOLVEMENT

9.1 In addition to endeavouring to ensure that tenants and residents are well informed, we will also consult with and involve residents on all changes that could materially affect the service provided to all or groups of residents. We will comply with all legal requirements (e.g. Housing (Scotland) Act 2001; Guidance; and Good Practice) in taking forward tenant consultation and involvement.

9.2 The aim of consultation and involvement will be to:

- provide the Association with better information and understanding of residents needs and priorities
- to provide residents with a better understanding of the reasons why particular decisions require to be made.
- to provide residents with opportunities to influence such decisions.

9.3 Forms of consultation and involvement may include the following:

- Close and street meetings.
- Public meetings.
- Individual meetings.
- Meetings via video link
- Tenant and/or Resident surveys – either face to face, postal, telephone or on line.
- Provision of written and oral information (newsletters, flyers etc.)
- Formation of local focus groups where appropriate, often short life groups looking at specific issues – eg staffing focus group etc
- Liaison with Tenant/Resident associations.
- Tenant scrutiny activities – such as discussing our Annual Return on the Charter, our Key Performance information, the commissioning of our Tenant Satisfaction Survey and its content, our policies and other areas of interest identified by tenants

10. TENANTS AND RESIDENTS ASSOCIATIONS / GROUPS

10.1 We recognise that tenants and residents may wish to organise themselves and speak to the Association with a collective voice.

10.2 Where such a group is seen to be representative of tenants and residents the Association will actively encourage such a group and provide assistance if required. Such assistance can include, but may not be limited to, the provision of premises for hosting of meetings, training etc. We will also liaise with that group on matters affecting its members.

10.3 We will develop a Tenant/Resident Participation Strategy setting out the resources and support that may be made available.

10.4 We will work with registered groups to ensure that they are well informed and properly resourced; and given access to the decision-making processes of the Association in an effective and positive way.

11. TRAINING

11.1 We will provide induction and continuing training for Management Committee members and staff on an on-going basis.

11.2 Where residents wish to form a Tenants or Residents Association or Group we will support the provision of training for members where this would be appropriate and of benefit and assistance. The Association will also endeavour to provide meeting facilities.

12. PERFORMANCE MONITORING

12.1 We will monitor the effectiveness of this policy and will provide the Management Committee with regular reports on resident consultation and involvement issues and of the outcomes where activities, information and performance has been scrutinised.

13. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

13.1 The role of our Committee is to oversee the implementation of this policy, actively to demonstrate their commitment and interest in tenant participation and its continuing development.

13.2 All staff are required to be familiar with this policy. to be

aware of how to promote tenant participation and to take part in training on this

14 COMPLAINTS

14.1 Any resident or group/association who is dissatisfied with a decision about how this policy is being implemented should first speak or write to the Director.

14.2 If the resident or group/association is still dissatisfied with a decision they may appeal to the Management Committee in writing.

14.3 If for any reason of disability or impairment they are unable to complain or appeal to the Association formally then they may authorise a representative to write on his / her behalf.

14.4 If the matter is not resolved, tenants or former tenants will be advised to complain in accordance with the Association's complaints procedure, copies of which are available on our website, and at our office and available from staff.

14.5 If after exhausting the Association's complaints procedure a tenant or former tenant is still unhappy, they should contact the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO):

- Scottish Public Services Ombudsman
Bridgeside House
99 McDonald Road
Edinburgh
EH7 4NS

Telephone 0800 377 7330 – free phone or 0131 225 5300

Fax 0800 377 7331
Text 0790 049 4372
E-mail ask@spsso.org.uk

SPSO
Freepost

15 REVIEW OF POLICY

15.1 This Policy will be subject to review every three years, or earlier in the event of changes in legislation, guidance or best practice.