



# Tenant Participation Strategy 2016-2018

## Foreword

I am pleased to introduce our strategy on how we will include our tenants and other service users in improving or changing the services that we deliver to them.

The Board and staff at Ore Valley Housing Association recognise that involving our tenants and service users is an essential part of shaping our services for the future, and we are committed to making sure that everyone has the opportunity to get involved in a way that is meaningful to them.

As always, tenant participation is a two way process, and we welcome your views and comments. If you have a good idea about how to improve where you live, or if you have ever wondered why we do things the way we do, get in touch and let us know your thoughts. Even the smallest idea could help us improve our services.

If you think that you would like to get more involved, please contact me, or any member of our Housing Team, and we will be more than happy to speak to you about the various options that are available.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Colin McInnes".

Colin McInnes  
Housing Manager

## Background

The Housing Scotland Act 2001 places a duty on Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to publish a strategy for involving tenants in the services they receive, or any decisions that will affect them.

In summary we must:

- Show how we will keep our tenants informed
- Explain the issues that we will consult our tenants on
- Explain how we will take into account our tenants' views
- Provide information on the resources put in place to make the strategy work
- Maintain and publish a register of Registered Tenant Organisations (RTOs)
- Respond to comments from tenants and RTOs
- Have regard for the views expressed by tenants and RTOs in our decision making

Proposals affecting tenants are largely ones involving housing management or maintenance, and any proposals in relation to the standard of our service, and how we deliver this service.

## Our Vision, Mission and Values

It is important that whatever we do strengthens and supports our agreed vision, mission and values:

### Our Vision

'For everyone to have the opportunity to live healthy fulfilling lives'

### Our Mission

'Working to provide good quality homes and supporting communities'

### Our Values

- We will be a responsible and caring landlord
- We will be open and accountable for everything that we do
- We will be proactive and innovative in dealing with opportunities and problems
- We will be honest, approachable and reliable
- We will be respectful and give fair treatment to everyone
- We will listen to and learn from our customers and others

## Introduction

Ore Valley Housing Association recognises that tenant participation, in all its forms, has a vital role to play in helping us develop and improve our services; it is important that tenants and other service users find it easy to influence our decisions at a level that they feel comfortable with.

This strategy aims to set out how we will engage with our tenants and the communities they live in, so that they can actively take part in decisions to change or improve our services to ensure we are meeting their needs and expectations.

## Where are we now?

Our current strengths relate to our community based approach and our relatively small estate management areas. We have improved our newsletter and website, and communication options have been enhanced; tenants and other service users now have the ability to follow or contact us on Facebook or Twitter, or via the live chat function on our website.

Weaknesses include the lack of local RTOs for our tenants to become engaged with. We currently have no locally agreed targets for key service areas such as repairs, neighbour complaints or estate management. In general, our tenant participation activities have been driven by regulatory requirements. Historically we have had low levels of tenant engagement and low levels of engagement with local or national tenant organisations. Over the past few years, we have also seen a reducing number of tenants being represented on our Management Board.

## What opportunities are now available to us to improve?

Tenant participation is a clear priority for the Scottish Housing Regulator and support is available from TPAS Scotland and other tenant organisations to work with both tenants and staff. Embarking on this strategy will also give us an opportunity to review our local service arrangements with FFOTRA and any other local RTOs that operate in our area(s).

The potential for joint working with the other Fife based RSLs needs to be explored, especially for initiatives that would benefit from a Fife wide approach such as mystery shopping or the inspection of shared services like applying for a property.

A commitment to tenant participation initiatives will also enhance our ability to deliver an improved governance structure, which promotes more tenant involvement. The aim of this approach is to set up a Tenant Panel that will enable tenants and staff to work together to improve our overall performance and inform Board decisions that have a direct impact on our landlord services.

The phased implementation of the Housing Scotland Act 2014 also provides us with an ideal opportunity for tenants to get more involved. We will be required to let every tenant know about changes to their tenancy agreement under the Act and we will be working with the other Fife based RSLs to develop a local implementation plan for this purpose. Activities

relating to this consultation will also help us to expand what we are doing with tenant participation generally.

## HouseMark

We are also now working with HouseMark Scotland to monitor and improve value for money in key areas of our service. This new approach to how we measure our performance will provide a clear opportunity for tenants to become more involved in scrutinising how we spend their rent money. Tenants will also have the opportunity to work with us to set our priorities as we move beyond the timescale of this strategy document.

## What are the aims of this strategy?

This strategy aims to:

1. Fully comply with statutory and regulatory requirements relating to tenant participation
2. Achieve effective outcomes for our tenants as outlined in the Scottish Social Housing Charter
3. Make sure that our tenants are able to influence and scrutinise the services we provide
4. Offer a wide range of options for tenants to be involved in a way that suits them

## Our strategic priorities for 2016-18

Our priorities are to:

1. Continue to develop and promote improved methods of communication with tenants
2. Promote engagement activities with tenants
3. Review service provision arrangements with FFOTRA and local RTOs
4. Provide training for staff and tenants
5. Set locally agreed targets with tenants
6. Establish a Tenant Panel
7. Develop a forum for staff and tenants to scrutinise performance and value for money
8. Start Customer Led Inspections

## How will we achieve our strategic aims and priorities?

- We will provide a wide range of communication methods to ensure that all tenants have the opportunity to have their voice heard.
- We will create a range of ways for our tenants to participate so that everyone has the opportunity to get involved at a level that they feel comfortable with.
- We will develop and promote mechanisms that will enable staff at all levels to listen and respond to tenants who are communicating with us.

## Statement of Resources

A key requirement of this strategy is to assess the financial and staff resources needed to successfully promote and deliver tenant participation.

We are currently reviewing how we provide frontline services with a shift towards empowering staff to 'listen and respond' to the needs of our customers. Promoting tenant participation means that we will need to ensure that training is available for staff and interested tenants.

Everyone has a role to play in relation to consulting and working with tenants and tenant groups. Some landlords employ specialist staff to oversee tenant participation, however we aim to promote the view that good tenant participation is the responsibility of all staff.

The staff most involved in working with tenants and tenants groups will be frontline staff, the Housing Management team and managers who have decision-making authority. The CEO and the Housing Manager will need to ensure that staff are properly trained and supported to work with tenants. Staff will also need to have appropriate delegated authority to make decisions and respond to comments and requests from tenants when required.

An annual budget will be used to resources and support the following:

- Customer Satisfaction Survey
- Online surveys
- Consultation events
- Quarterly newsletters
- Tenant Conference
- Funding for tenants to attend TPAS and TIS events
- Funding TPAS training for tenants, staff and board members
- Transportation or travel expenses to and from events
- Grants to RTOs and FFOTRA

Resource requirements will be continually reviewed to ensure that the aims and priorities of this strategy are being delivered.

## Measureable outcomes

- We will set locally agreed targets for neighbour complaints and estate management services
- We will increase the number of tenants on our Consultation Register
- We will establish a tenant sub-group to look at specific service areas
- We will identify and develop potential joint working opportunities with other Fife based RSLs
- We will develop a forum for staff and tenants to scrutinise performance and value for money
- We will set up a Tenant Panel
- We will commence Customer Led Inspections

## How will we achieve these outcomes?

- Online surveys
- Promotion of all tenant participation activities through social media and website
- Tenant Satisfaction Survey (2016)
- Open days and themed events linked to 'Healthy Working Lives'
- Annual Tenant Conferences
- Devolve budgets for estate management to local areas
- Estate walkabouts
- Housing Management 'listen and respond' surgeries (15 minute sessions)
- Promote and encourage tenants to join our tenant consultation register
- Link tenant participation activities to digital inclusion projects for our tenants
- Link tenant participation activities to consultation events about the Housing Scotland Act 2014
- TPAS training programme for tenants and staff
- Sharing ideas and resources with the other Fife based RSLs

## When will we achieve these outcomes?

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|--|-------------|
| • Review service provision arrangements with FFOTRA and local RTOs | March 2016  |
| • Devolve estate management budgets                                | April 2016  |
| • Introduce Estate management walkabouts                           | April 2016  |
| • Consult with tenants about the Housing Scotland Act 2014         | June 2016   |
| • Set up an estate management sub-group (4 – 6 tenants)            | July 2016   |
| • Establish a training programme for tenants and staff             | August 2016 |
| • Tenant Conference  | Oct 2016    |
| • Tenant(s) to attend TPAS Conference                              | Nov 2016    |
| • Identify outcomes from Tenant Satisfaction Survey results        | Dec 2016    |
| • Consultation Register (50 – 100 tenants)                         | March 2017  |
| • Set up a Tenant Panel (6 – 8 tenants)                            | April 2017  |
| • Start Customer Led Inspections                                   | March 2018  |

The above action plan will be reviewed on a yearly basis to ensure that the aims and priorities of this strategy are being delivered.

### **Inclusion, Equalities and overcoming barriers to involvement**

Ore Valley Housing Association is committed to achieving equality of access in everything we do, and we will always adopt an inclusive approach towards involving any individuals, groups or minority groups that are at risk of being excluded.

We recognise that people can be discriminated against for reasons including age, disability, sex, gender, pregnancy, race, sexual orientation, religion or belief or because someone is married or in a civil partnership. We are committed to tackling discrimination and prejudice, as well as any other barriers faced by individuals or groups of people within our communities.

Throughout our work, we will not discriminate against any person on the above grounds and we will support and encourage all tenants and service users to participate while still maintaining their right to privacy and confidentiality.

### **Engaging with hard to reach groups and other service users**

It is important that everyone has the opportunity to participate. However, there are particular groups that are traditionally under-represented; these normally include minority ethnic communities, young people, homeless people or tenants or service users with support needs.

Particular attention needs to be paid to these groups to make sure that everyone has the opportunity to be involved in making important decisions about the service that they receive.

The Housing Scotland Act 2014 will place a duty on RSLs to consult applicants as well as tenants about any changes to their allocation policies and careful consideration will need to be given to how we will work with the other Fife-based RSL partners to ensure that these traditionally excluded groups have the same opportunity to be consulted.

### **Beyond the Strategy**

This strategy will be monitored and reviewed on a regular basis by the various stakeholders and will be replaced with an updated tenant participation strategy for the period from 2019 – 2021.

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1<sup>st</sup> March 2016