

Policy on :	Tenant Participation Strategy
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Compliant with Performance Standard :	Yes
Compliant with Tenant Participation Strategy :	Consultation completed on 13th March 2009
Compliant with Equal Opportunities :	Yes
Compliant with Internal Management Plan :	Yes

Date of Approval following consultation:	26th March 2009
Date for Review :	March 2012

Responsible Officer :	Michael Byrne, Housing Manager
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This Strategy has been written in clear and simple language and copies will be available to all our service users including tenants and tenants groups.

On request, this document may be produced in another format including another language, large print or Braille, Please contact the Association on 0141 881 0638.

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1. Introduction

This is the second Tenant Participation Strategy, produced by Barrhead Housing Association in conjunction with tenants, tenants groups, elected members and other key stakeholders, and reflects Barrhead Housing Association's commitment to developing effective consultation and participation. By working in partnership with our tenants we will improve the development of housing and related services.

This strategy describes a series of actions that the Association intends to implement to support and enable tenant participation. It:

- Describes a series of objectives and actions for the period 2009-2012.
- Outlines the resources available to support tenant participation.
- Sets out our priorities for tenant involvement for 2009-2012.
- Provides a focus for individual tenants, tenants groups, Registered Tenant Organisations (RTOs), residents and other community groups who wish to jointly work with Barrhead Housing Association to improve services.
- Shows how we will assess our progress and measure the impact of the strategy

2. Aims and Objectives

Our overall aim is to make sure that tenants have real opportunities to become involved in the decision making process of Barrhead Housing Association.

Our specific main aims are to:

- Offer a range of options for tenants to become involved, both collectively through tenants and residents groups, and on an individual basis.
- Make sure that tenants are adequately encouraged and resourced to fully take part in the participation process and be involved in decisions affecting them.
- Continuously develop ways of improving communication and information sharing to meet the needs of all our tenants.
- Develop and support tenant participation in the Barrhead, Neilston and Thornliebank areas.

Our specific main objectives are, on a year on year basis, to:

- Develop a range of opportunities for tenants to participate effectively that reflect local circumstances.
- Make sure that tenants and staff gain access to adequate levels of training and support that assist them participate more effectively.
- Provide support and assistance to tenants and residents groups.

- Improve communication and information sharing to meet the needs of all our tenants.
- Provide quality and relevant information for tenants in accessible formats.
- Work in partnership with East Renfrewshire Federation of Tenants and Residents Association.
- Regularly monitor and review this strategy to make sure that it continues to be effective.

3. Resources and Support

To support and encourage the development of tenant participation all tenants will have access to the following resources:

- Administrative and organisational support to tenants and residents associations.
- Meeting room available in the offices of Barrhead Housing Association.
- Tenants and residents group grants.
- In kind use of photocopier.
- Use of Barrhead Housing Association Television to promote organisation/events
- Use of Barrhead Housing Association newsletter to promote organisation/events
- Use of Barrhead Housing Association website to promote organisation/events and available minutes.
- Access to Community Learning and Event Co-ordinator to support tenants and residents groups developing wider services to their communities.
- Opportunities to attend joint development events and local and national conferences.
- Tenants' and residents' group "Start Up Pack" providing advice and assistance on setting up and running a tenants' and residents' group including accessing funding.
- Training events and information including joint training with housing staff.
- Support of Association staff including attendance at meetings, where appropriate.
- Access to independent advice and assistance.
- Guidance and support to all groups to assist them to become RTOs although the Association is more than willing to work with tenants at whatever level of participation they wish. The Association recognises that not all groups may wish to become RTO's, our resources and support are available to all tenants who wish to work with us to improve services.

4. Tenant Participation Funding

This section summarises the resources available to support tenant participation in the Barrhead, Neilston and Thornliebank areas. The tenant participation budget for the Association is £3,000 in year 2009/10. Additional resources will be confirmed at a future date for years two and three of this strategy.

These resources do not include additional staff, administration and other forms of support however the tenant participation funding will be spent on items including:

- Providing staff to develop and support participation.
- Providing staff to attend tenants' and residents' group meetings resources depending.
- Hosting the Association's Tenant Conference/s.
- Distributing information including information packs, leaflets, local newsletters and guidance notes.
- Providing publicity material to raise the profile of tenant participation.
- Hosting consultation events such as discussion groups, policy review groups and briefing sessions.
- Providing grant support to tenants' and residents' groups.
- Undertaking a yearly survey of tenants, residents and sharing owners.
- Providing training
- Publishing 3 newsletters per year.
- Assist tenants to attend national conferences.

The Association will also spend additional amounts on services that assist tenant participation and local tenants and residents groups through activities such as training needs assessments and training.

5. Progress Made.

This section summarises the progress we have made to improve and develop participation and tenant involvement over the past three years. We have:

- Helped establish 2 new tenants and residents groups increasing the number of Registered Tenant Organisation from 3 to 5.
- Hosted annual Tenant Conferences with tenants, residents, staff and members identifying key priorities for developing participation.
- Developed and improved newsletters to ensure tenants are kept fully informed and have opportunities to participate locally.

- Made sure that development funding has been made available for all Registered Tenant Organisations.
- Provided training to staff and Committee members about tenant participation.
- Instructed Tenant Information Services (TIS) to carry out a comprehensive review of the current strategy. This review involved the following stakeholders:
 - Staff
 - Tenants
 - Members of the Association
 - Management Committee members
 - East Renfrewshire Tenant Participation Officer
 - All Registered Tenant Organisations.
- Produced an "Information Pack" on setting up and running tenants' and residents' groups.
- Updated our register of tenants' and residents' groups.
- Developed our consultation records to help maximise the numbers of tenants becoming involved.
- Supported tenant involvement in recruiting and selection of staff promoting tenant participation.
- Undertook an extensive community consultation on a range of major housing issues including reviewing the allocations policy, regeneration and the Common Housing Register.
- Completed a Resident Satisfaction Survey and developed an action plan.
- Ongoing use of quality satisfaction surveys for repairs carried out.
- Implemented Policy Review Focus Groups.
- Implementation of a Factoring Forum
- Implementation of a Repairs Focus Group
- Development of Barrhead Housing Association Television
- Development of Barrhead Housing Association website
- Reviewed the layout and effectiveness of our Annual Reports
- Introduction of 'Customer Care' cards.

6. Tenant Participation Standards

This section summarises the standards of service that tenants can expect from us. We will:

- Provide support and information on setting up and running a tenants and residents group, including attending meetings when requested and appropriate.
- Provide information, support and advice on housing related issues to individual tenants and tenants groups.
- Ensure we provide information in an easy to understand way and in accessible formats.
- Facilitate and arrange training and development events to meet the joint needs of tenants and staff.
- Maintain a register of tenants groups and provide advice and support to groups on achieving registration status.
- Recognise the autonomy of tenants groups.
- Ensure tenants have access to agenda setting and adequate time is given for participation and consultation to take place.
- Consult with tenants to further develop standards in relation to tenant participation such as local newsletters, tenant conferences and policy reviews
- Provide feedback to tenants following consultation exercises
- Ensure that groups have the opportunity to influence the review of housing management services with adequate time to respond.
- Ensure that the Association has attempted to overcome any barriers to tenants being involved eg: using accessible venues, arranging meetings/events at times that suit tenants, providing assistance with travel and childcare, providing information in a range of formats and ensuring venues have disabled access.

7. Information to Tenants

The Association recognises that tenants and tenants and residents groups require access to accurate information if they are to participate fully in the decision making process.

Information will be provided by the Association to meet tenants' needs. This will allow tenants to reach an informed view on the issues, and be involved in decision making.

Information will:

- Be expressed clearly, using plain language and avoiding jargon
- Be accessible (using large print, Braille, cassette, translations etc ,on request)
- Not use racist, sexist or other biased language; and

- Be of good quality, timely and relevant to tenants' needs

Tenants and Tenants & Residents Groups will receive information on:

- The areas/ topics where the Association expect to be coming forward with proposed services changes. These will be published in an annual calendar
- Copies of the Association's minutes on request
- Plans for spending and for future work, which will affect tenants. Their homes and their areas

In addition, the Action Plan outlines the tasks, which the Association will undertake in the coming year to refine the information available to tenants.

8. Participation and Consultation

To make sure that participation and consultation is maximised a range of methods will be used. This will offer choice to tenants and assist them to participate at a time, level and in a form that suits them best. This will also allow flexibility and local circumstance to be taken into account.

The Association will employ a range of methods to notify tenants and tenants and residents groups of issues that affect them and to provide feedback. Effective means of information, consultation and participation could include:

- Undertaking roadshows.
- Undertaking an annual conference for tenants and other stakeholders.
- Providing funding and development support for tenants groups.
- Providing briefing sessions.
- Enabling involvement in service reviews.
- Attending conferences.
- Undertaking surveys and questionnaires.
- Enabling tenant led walkabouts.
- Publishing information through newsletters, website, BHTV, local and national media.
- Consulting on draft future plans and strategies.
- Enhancing our consultation database of interested tenants.
- Undertaking focus groups.
- Providing representation at tenants' meetings.
- Attending meetings of East Renfrewshire Tenants and Residents Federation.

- Facilitating tenant participation and consultation with external services and service providers.
- Undertaking joint training with tenants and staff.
- Providing a Tenants Handbook where all new tenants and tenants groups receive a copy of the Tenants Handbook showing detailed information on a range of housing issues.
- Providing written information where tenants and RTOs will be notified in writing of major issues such as major repairs programmes or proposed changes to policies.

9. Action Plan

This section summarises the main actions we intend to undertake to develop tenant participation and deliver the aims and objectives of the strategy. Detailed action plans are also shown in section Appendix 1 which details our priorities both organisationally and at a local level.

Our main actions will include:

- Developing our relationship with East Renfrewshire Tenants and Residents Federation.
- Developing with tenants a mutually agreed code of practice for participation and involvement.
- Developing a rolling programme of training which meets the needs of tenants and staff.
- Setting up a joint implementation, monitoring and review group with tenants and staff to monitor and evaluate the strategy. Monitoring will take place to evaluate inputs, outputs and outcomes.
- Developing an annual consultation and review programme in partnership with tenants which sets out on what, when and how consultation and service review will take place on issues such as service reviews, rent and budget setting, and capital programme works.
- Agreeing at a local level action plans for all areas to promote and develop participation, with clear timescales.
- Undertaking a yearly survey of tenants and other forms of consultation such as discussion groups.
- Developing joint working with external services and Registered Social Landlords
- Maintaining a register of tenants groups and expanding and promoting the consultation database.
- Providing access to training, information and advice to all tenants on participation.

- Reviewing the strategy annually to ensure we are meeting our objectives and to set new targets.
- Reviewing the resources available to support tenant participation.
- Develop arrangements with our FLAIR RSL partners for tenant led inspections to ensure continuous improvements across organisations.

10. Monitoring and Review of the Strategy.

The Tenant Participation Strategy will be a working document subject to continuous review to make sure that it is meeting objectives and achieving targets.

A range of methods will be used to monitor the strategy, these will include:

- A joint Tenant Participation Strategy Monitoring and Implementation Group will monitor the implementation and effectiveness of the strategy on an ongoing basis. This group will meet on at least a quarterly basis and will include staff, representatives of tenants and residents organisations and other stakeholders.
- Progress on implementing and monitoring the strategy will be reviewed annually and reported to the Associations Housing Management Committee.

The Annual Strategy Review will consider a range of information and feedback options exploring:

- How participation took place (i.e. what methods of participation were used; what and how were the issues/topics identified)?
- What arrangements were made to encourage participation and maximise accessibility?
- How were tenants' views represented in the outcome of any participation exercise?
- How were the results of participation fed back to participants?
- What timescales were allowed for effective participation to take place?
- The cost of developing effective tenant participation.
- Did tenants receive adequate information, support and resources to allow them to participate effectively?
- How satisfied are tenants with the participation process and the range of opportunities available to them? How would tenants like the process to be improved?
- Whether tenants had the opportunity to become involved regardless of age, ethnic background, language, sexual orientation, particular needs or location?

To outline proposals for participation over the course of the strategy a number of key targets, progress indicators and anticipated outcomes have been identified.

These have been outlined in the following tables and will be used as a basis for measuring tenant involvement activities. These targets will be monitored and reviewed throughout the strategy implementation. By monitoring these key actions the Association will make sure that the strategy is implemented effectively.

11. Equal Opportunities

Barrhead Housing Association is committed to providing fair and equal treatment to all our customers.

The Association will not discriminate against anyone on the grounds of civil partnerships, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, disability, religion, age, sexual orientation, marital status, civil partnerships, family circumstances, employment status or physical ability.

We will offer customers a range of options for communicating with us, since requiring to contact us may have to be in writing and this may be a deterrent, for example for people with poor literacy skills, visual impairment, or where first language is not English. We will monitor use of our Arrears Management policy and procedure for ethnic origin and disability to ensure that our procedures deliver fair outcomes for different groups of customers

12. Strategy Review

The Housing Management Sub-Committee will review the Strategy at least every three years. However, improvements in performance and service delivery may be made on a regular basis to reflect change and in light of various factors such as:

- New or revised legislation
- Changes in good practice
- Organisational change, e.g. revision of operational practices
- Views of tenants and other service users
- Auditing practices
- Resource requirements

Appendix 1: Action Plan