

Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Strategy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Abertay Housing Association (the Association) is totally committed to involving and empowering tenants in the management of their homes.
- 1.2 The Association's Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Strategy sets out how the Association will achieve its commitment.
- 1.3 The term 'tenant' is used in this Strategy to cover our tenants, plus owners and occupiers receiving services from the Association.

2. Strategy Statement

- 2.1 Tenant involvement and empowerment is about how tenants can take part in decision making processes and influence decisions about their housing. There are many ways to become involved but it is always a two-way process which involves sharing information, ideas and decision making. The overall aim is to improve services and to assist the Association in delivering its Mission Statement: 'Abertay aims to enhance the quality of life in our communities'.

3. Legal Background

- 3.1 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 gives the Association a duty to have a Tenant Participation strategy, keep a register of Registered Tenant Organisations (RTOs) and consult its tenants and RTOs on rent setting and any significant changes to housing services.
- 3.2 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 established the Scottish Social Housing Charter. Standard 3 requires us to ensure that 'tenants and other customers find it easy to participate in and influence their landlord's decisions at a level they feel comfortable with'.

4. Regulatory Background: Scottish Housing Regulator's Regulatory Framework

- 4.1 On 1 April 2019, the current Regulatory Framework and statutory guidance from the Scottish Housing Regulator came into force. The Regulatory Framework sets out Regulatory Standards for Registered Social Landlords and local authorities in Scotland. In addition to governance and financial management, the Standards also cover assurance and notification, performance against the Scottish Social Housing Charter, tenants' and service users' redress, whistleblowing and equality and human rights.
- 4.2 Regulatory Standard 2 provides:
The RSL is open about and accountable for what it does. It understands and takes account of the needs and priorities of its tenants, service users and stakeholders. And its primary focus is the sustainable achievement of these priorities.
- 4.3 The Guidance to Regulatory Standard 2 provides:
 - 2.1 *The RSL gives tenants, service users and other stakeholders information that meets their needs about the RSL, its services, its performance and its future plans.*
 - 2.2 *The governing body recognises it is accountable to its tenants, and has a wider public accountability to the taxpayer as a recipient of public funds, and actively manages its accountabilities.*

2.4 The RSL seeks out the needs, priorities, views and aspirations of tenants, service users and stakeholders. The governing body takes account of this information in its strategies, plans and decisions.

5. The Strategy

5.1 Strategy Key Principles

5.1.1 Tenant involvement requires a culture of mutual trust, respect and partnership between tenants, residents, Board Members and staff at all levels, working together towards a common goal of better housing services and housing conditions.

5.1.2 Tenant involvement in practice should be seen as a continuous process where information and ideas are shared, common understandings of problems are strived for and a consensus on solutions is worked out.

5.1.3 Good tenant involvement allows all parties to contribute to the agenda. All participants require to have all the information needed to consider issues properly; that information requires to be clear, timely and accessible and to take account of the principles of equal opportunities.

5.1.4 Processes of decision-making should be open, clear, and accountable.

5.1.5 Adequate time should be given to tenant representatives to consider the issues properly. Tenants should have the opportunity to work out a common view in advance of meeting representatives of the Association.

5.1.6 Tenant involvement activities require adequate resources for organisation, training and support.

5.2 Strategy Aims and Benefits

5.2.1 The Association is committed to an active approach to tenant involvement as it will help us:

- Improve service delivery.
- Assist staff and the Board to make decisions and set priorities.
- Provide an opportunity for personal development for tenants, some of whom may go on to become Board Members.
- Increase tenant and owner satisfaction with our services.
- Improve communication between the Association and its tenants and owners.
- Provide better links between the community and the Association.

5.3 Strategy in Practice

We will implement this strategy by:

- Establishing and maintaining a Register of Interested Residents to channel tenant participation and feedback.
- Issuing a summer and winter newsletter, and an annual report to all tenants. Retirement tenants will have their own dedicated pages within the newsletters.
- Carrying out estate walkabouts with residents at least once a year on every estate.
- Consulting with all tenants on annual rent increases.
- Consulting on any significant changes we wish to make to the services we provide, or charges as appropriate.
- Ensuring information such as our procedures, leaflets, tenant handbooks are freely available and that the views of tenants and stakeholders have been sought before making significant

changes to them.

- Establish tenant groups to review the services the Association provides.
- Holding tenants meetings, focus groups, surgeries, open days to invite views on service provision and other matters.
- Establishing ways to involve the wider community using social media including drop in sessions to help tenants become more digitally capable such as the Connecting Scotland Initiative.
- Implementing a Tenants' Portal to enable tenants to access our services and information relating to their tenancy.

6. Involving and Informing our tenants

6.1 Involving our Tenants

We have developed a wide range of options to make it as easy as possible for tenants to get involved and give their views on what affects their neighbourhood and what the Association does.

- Formal Consultations – we consult with all tenants each year when considering a rent review. We would also consult with all tenants affected by any major change in service delivery we were seeking to introduce or any proposed significant change in our policies.
- Estate Walkabouts – we carry out walks around each estate with a Housing Officer or a Maintenance Officer at least once a year to identify any issues within the estate and how we will aim to resolve them. A timetable is available online and in reception. The Association encourages both owners and tenants to come to the Estate Walkabouts. Action plans listing issues identified during the Walkabout are published online, or available from the Association's head office on request.
- Customer Surveys – we carry out a detailed satisfaction survey of all our tenants bi-annually. In addition, we may carry out surveys of a particular area or group of tenants requesting feedback on a service we provide when the need arises.
- Register of Interested Residents – we encourage all tenants to join our Register of Interested Residents. This includes all residents who have indicated they are prepared to give their views on the services Abertay provides (or could provide). We seek feedback from those on the Register inviting them to complete questionnaires (by post, email, or telephone) and through invitations to Focus Group meetings. We are likely to carry out several consultations in the course of a year, and these can be on any topic where the views of tenants would help us decide what we do. The range of topics which we may seek views on is very wide, from the style of our Tenant Newsletter; to neighbourhood concerns and how the Association should deal with them; to suggestions for how to improve our repairs service. By being on the Register, tenants have a quick and easy way to have an input to improve the Association's services for themselves and their neighbours.
- Focus Groups – these groups include staff and residents and focus on a specific issue and then disband once the issue has been resolved, for example a large planned maintenance project. The groups may also continue on a quarterly basis to review Policies.
- Retirement Housing Road Shows – held annually at various agreed venues with the Retirement Housing Coordinators and senior staff to discuss topics of interest. Dates advertised locally and on Facebook.
- Resident Groups and Registered Tenants Groups – there are no official registered groups at present but we will support setting one up if there is demand. We do have a Retirement Focus Group that meets regularly to discuss local issues.
- Communication – to improve communication with our younger residents with whom we have found it difficult to engage in the past, we have launched our own Facebook page and see

this as an ongoing and valuable method of engaging with residents in the future.

- Connecting Scotland – the Association has provided a digital device to over 100 low-income households without internet access to help get online. These disadvantaged families received a device, with the option of twelve months unlimited data as well as technical help and support to get online safely and securely.
- Digital Assistance – the Association launched its tenant portal in summer 2021. The Tenant Involvement Officer will market and promote assistance / training for our tenants to enable them to access our services remotely, as well being able to access information regarding their tenancy at any time.
- Share Members – the Association presently has around 107 Share Members, the vast majority of whom are tenants. They can attend our Annual General Meeting in September, to elect the Members of the Board, receive the Financial Statements and agree any changes to the Association’s Rules. The Association will involve Share Members in consultation exercises.
- Board – the Association is led by its Board, which governs the Association, sets its strategic direction and scrutinises progress and performance to ensure its objectives are achieved. This Board is made up entirely of volunteers. Of the fifteen spaces on our Board, two are reserved for tenants and two for owners. The remaining eleven spaces can be filled by any person with the necessary skills, knowledge and experience. The Board meets at least six times each year and while the role may seem daunting at first, training is available and Members typically find their involvement incredibly satisfying. Anyone interested can contact the Association’s Chief Executive at the Association’s head office.

6.2 Informing our Tenants

We will provide timely, relevant information so tenants are well informed, equipped to participate if they wish and are given feedback showing the benefits of being involved.

- Leaflets / bulletins – we will provide and distribute a range of leaflets and other information formats.
- Annual Report - annual summary of our performance compared to local and Scottish averages, our key achievements and plans for the year ahead.
- Tenant Satisfaction Survey – largescale surveys will be sent out to all tenants every two years and owners every three years.
- Tenant Handbook – will be updated regularly to provide relevant information.
- Website / Facebook – we will regularly update our Website and Facebook page to give details of our services, items of local interest and how to get involved. Residents can contact us or leave their comments on both the Website and Facebook either publicly or privately.
- Facebook – link on the Website to news items, links and articles on the noticeboard
- Surveys / Questionnaires – we will use these to obtain information on specific issues as required.
- Tenant Meetings / Focus Groups – may be held where appropriate to provide information, seek their views and gather feedback.
- Retirement Housing noticeboards – in each retirement complex and kept up to date by Retirement Housing Coordinators with relevant upcoming events or drop in sessions etc and interesting information with space for local groups if required.
- Abertalk Newsletter – the Tenant Involvement Officer and Retirement Housing Coordinators will work with tenants to produce content for the newsletter twice a year.

7. Staff Roles and Responsibilities

- 7.1 Although the Association has a dedicated Tenant Involvement Officer, all staff we employ, regardless of which part of the service they deliver, have a responsibility to deliver the aims of this Strategy. Making tenant involvement and empowerment part of everyone's job strengthens the staff / tenant relationship and improves services.
- 7.2 The role for most staff will be to encourage tenants to take part in activities, listening to and passing on tenant views, ideas and suggestions or providing valuable feedback on the service. The Tenant Involvement Officer will have more specific roles relating to establishing and facilitating various groups and activities.
- 7.3 The Tenant Involvement Officer and relevant staff will be supported in attending relevant training events and seminars as required.

8. Financial Support

- 8.1 The Board will approve a budget annually to support all the activities set out in the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Strategy.

9. Risk Management Statement

- 9.1 The risks associated with this Strategy are comprehensively incorporated within Association's Risk Management Framework.

10. Equality and Diversity Statement

- 10.1 The protected characteristics enshrined in the Equality Act 2010 will be respected when ensuring compliance with the Association's Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Strategy.
- 10.2 The Equalities Act 2010 applies to everyone who receives a public service and every area of our work is covered by this legislation.
- 10.3 We will encourage and promote active measures to ensure that all tenants have equal access to get involved. This Strategy will be implemented within an equalities framework. We will consult and involve tenants from all our communities regardless of their age, disability, ethnic origin, gender, nationality, religion or sexual orientation.
- 10.4 We recognise that for some tenants there will be additional challenges to getting involved, for example people in supported accommodation, young people or people with disabilities. These groups of people are quite often under-represented so we will engage with organisations that represent and support these groups and will listen to their views and advice on the best ways to encourage and promote involvement and participation.

11. Policy Monitoring and Review

- 11.1 The Chief Executive will monitor the implementation and operational effectiveness of the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Strategy.
- 11.2 The Association will regularly monitor good practice from the SHR, the Chartered Institute of Housing and Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS Scotland) and adopt such good practice when formulating the review of the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Strategy.
- 11.3 We will consult all those on our Register of Interested Residents when reviewing our Tenant

Involvement and Empowerment Strategy. We will consult with our tenants and recognised groups before implementing any changes to the Strategy.

- 11.4 The Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Strategy will be reviewed every two years or as and when deemed necessary.

Appendix 1 Action Plan

Objective	Remarks	Target Date
Annual Report Reviews	Consult Focus Group, Register of interested Residents Assist Corporate Services Officer with the compilation of Annual Report. Consult with Register of interested Residents and staff.	July / August 2023 and 2024 (annually)
Review existing walkabout calendar	Review calendar dates / times, consulting staff and Register of interested Residents.	September / October 2023 and 2024 (annually)
TIO to be present at estate walkabouts, be visible in the community, enable tenants to meet TIO and encourage participation within AHA.	In attending the walkabouts, tenants become familiar with the TI Officer and find this a helpful way to engage going forward.	Timetable to be reviewed annually and attended as per specified dates.
Promoting tenant involvement in the community (Reviewing and consulting)	Review all current promotion materials, leaflets, flyers and calling card. Consult with register of interested tenants for their input on what they would like from TP.	Assess and review quarterly. Update as necessary.
Setup and encourage tenants to join monitoring / focus groups, tenants voices group.	Establish small groups to engage with tenants, encourage their involvement and take ownership of their areas and discuss estate based initiatives.	June 2024, once established – meet quarterly.
Tenant Scrutiny Panel	The intention would be to sit quarterly. The Tenant Scrutiny Panel would be involved in looking over draft reports / policies & procedures, giving their feedback / input. The Tenant Scrutiny Panel will be created once initial tenant groups are established.	December 2024 – once established, meeting as and when required to scrutinise policies, procedures and reports.

<p>Code of Conduct</p>	<p>Prior to establishing such a group, it would be the intention for the group to compile a 'Code of Conduct', due to the confidential nature of the information they would be handling.</p>	<p>Sit within Tenant Scrutiny Panel</p>
<p>Retirement Housing Conferences</p>	<p>Continue with the Annual Retirement Housing Conferences, aiming to cover a range of current topics with the Association as well as input from the retirement tenants as to the issues they would like to cover, including guest speakers from other organisations.</p>	<p>Once annually</p>
<p>Working with local primary school – Longhaugh Primary.</p>	<p>Currently working in the community with Longhaugh PS, sponsoring their boys and girls sports teams. Abertay will be attending their initial games to offer our support and promote our work within the community.</p>	<p>Current and on-going Engage with a further 2 community based organisations 2024</p>
<p>Newsletters (Summer / Winter)</p>	<p>Discuss with tenants what they would like to see in our newsletter. Collate good news stories and features appropriate to the time of year and current affairs of the moment affecting our tenants.</p>	<p>June and December annually</p>
<p>Digital assistance</p>	<p>The Association launched its Tenant Portal in summer 2021. The Tenant Involvement Officer will market and promote assistance / training for our tenants to enable them to access our services remotely, as well being able to access information regarding their tenancy at any time.</p> <p>Training committee members with any digital requirements.</p>	<p>'Active as of summer 2021</p>
<p>Planned Maintenance</p>	<p>To work with the Property Services Department as and when planned and cyclical works need to be carried out. Contacting tenants upon completion of PM works.</p>	<p>Consult tenants for feedback once PM are completed 2 x consultation exercises annually</p>

<p>AGM (September)</p>	<p>AGM to be held annually a blended approach to enable tenants to attend in person or virtually. The TI officer will promote and assist with training to enable this to happen.</p>	<p>Held annually, planning from June each year</p>
<p>Rent Consultation</p>	<p>Tenant Involvement Officer to consult with tenants on a one-to-one basis along the same format as other consultation surveys. Setting specific dates / times for various areas to speak to tenants for their feedback and comments on rent consultation, as well as the usual format of consulting via mail and online links.</p>	<p>Once annually</p>
<p>Tenant Satisfaction Survey</p>	<p>The Tenant Satisfaction Survey will be sent out to all of the Association's tenants, to evaluate the housing services and properties provided by the Association. The survey will provide a safe forum for tenants to give feedback on the Association's services and their current living situation. This survey will highlight strengths and areas for improvement.</p>	<p>Every 2 years</p>
<p>Owner Satisfaction Survey</p>	<p>The data will be collected in various methods - personally (as with previous surveys), digitally and a paper version. The owner satisfaction survey will be sent out to all owners to evaluate the factoring services etc provided by AHA. The survey will provide a safe forum for owners to give feedback on Association's services and their current living situation. This survey will highlight strengths and areas for improvement.</p> <p>The data will be collected in various methods - personally (as with previous surveys), digitally and a paper version.</p>	<p>Satisfaction Survey every 3 years. Next scheduled summer 2025.</p>
<p>Close Cleaning Consultation</p>	<p>Consult with tenants and owners regarding the factoring and cleaning of their block. The purpose of the survey will provide a forum for tenants to give feedback on the cleaning services to their block. The data will be collected using various methods, depending on the preference of the tenant – online links to surveys digitally, as well as hard copies sent in the post.</p>	<p>Annually</p>

Appendix 2 Guidance for Register of Interested Residents

Register of Interested Residents

The Association has a duty to consult with individual tenants on a variety of issues. One of the ways in which we do this is by compiling and supporting a 'Register of Interested Residents'. Residents who wish to receive information or be involved in consultation but who are unable to get involved in other events will be invited to register their interest with us. We will contact these residents to provide them with information and to ask them for their views. In addition to the information made available to all residents, we will aim to communicate with our residents using the following methods:

- Letters and emails
- Information leaflets and factsheets
- Annual Performance Report
- Website and Social Media
- Estate Management Walkabouts
- Consultation proposals

Consultation Proposals

The method of consultation will depend on the scale and significance of the project; we will take into account resident views on the consultation methods used. Detailed information will be provided to residents on any proposals we are consulting on, including:

- How and when the final decision will be taken.
- How the proposal will affect residents.
- How and within what timescales residents can make their views known to us.
- The details of the Tenant Involvement Officer dealing with the consultation.

Feedback

When we ask residents for their views, we will always provide feedback.

We will provide feedback using a range of methods (Abertalk newsletter, the Association's website and directly to participants)

- We will ask participants during consultation about how they would like to receive feedback.
- Feedback will demonstrate how our residents' views have been taken into account and how views have been considered.
- We will provide regular feedback from our surveys and questionnaires and we will tell residents how we have used this information.

The Association is continuously developing new ways of improving communication and information to meet the needs of all our tenants.