

## 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 Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Strategy Group is responsible for ensuring that the Association does achieve its commitment to the Strategy.
- 1.4 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 2024, 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:

- 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.
- Establishing 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 Empowering and Informing our Tenants**

6.1 Appendix 1 provides the Periodic Timetable in respect of Involving and Empowering and Informing our Tenants.

### **6.2 Involving and Empowering 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.

- Board Membership – the Association is led by its Board, which governs the Association, sets its strategic direction and scrutinizes 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.
- Share Members – the Association presently has around 76 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.
- 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.
- Satisfaction Surveys – we carry out a detailed Tenant 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, an important example would be Planned Maintenance Satisfaction Surveys.
- 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 on the Association's Website and in reception at our Head Office. 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.
- 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 the Association 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.

Appendix 2 provides Guidance for Register of Interested Residents.

- 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 – 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 – 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 – Our Facebook page is an ongoing and valuable method of engaging with residents.
- 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.
- Government Initiatives – 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.
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### 6.3 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.

- Tenant Handbook – will be updated periodically to provide relevant information.
- Annual Report – annual summary of our performance compared to local and Scottish

averages, our key achievements and plans for the year ahead.

- Abertalk Newsletter – the Tenant Involvement Officer and Retirement Housing Coordinators will work with tenants to produce content for the newsletter twice a year.
- Annual Rent Consultation – summary of the Annual Rent Consultation is sent out each year with the Rent Review Letters.
- Tenant Satisfaction Survey – largescale surveys will be sent out to all tenants every two years.
- Owner Satisfaction Survey– largescale surveys will be sent out to all owners every three years.
- Surveys / Questionnaires – we will use these to obtain information on specific issues as required.
- Leaflets – we will provide and distribute a range of leaflets and other information formats.
- 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 are 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.
- Website – our website provides comprehensive information about the Association. We will regularly update our Website to give details of our services, items of local interest and how to get involved. The Website provides access to accessibility tools such as translation, a screen reader and tools to alter the style and background of the text. Residents can contact us through the Website.
- Facebook – our facebook page provides news items, links and articles. Residents can contact us through facebook either publicly or privately.

## **7. Staff Roles and Responsibilities**

- 7.1 As mentioned in the introduction, the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Strategy Group is responsible for ensuring that the Association does achieve its commitment to the Strategy.
- 7.2 Although the Association has a dedicated Tenant Involvement Officer, all staff regardless of which department they work in have responsibility for assisting with the delivery of the Strategy. Making tenant involvement and empowerment part of everyone's job strengthens the staff / tenant relationship and improves services.
- 7.3 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.

7.4 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, the Tenants Information Service (TIS) and the 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 three years or as and when deemed necessary.

## Appendix 1

Periodic Timetable	
Objective	Frequency
<u>Involving and Empowering our Tenants</u>	
Board Membership	As and when required to maintain Board Membership.
Share Membership	Continuous.
Formal Consultations	As and when required – refer to Informing our Tenants.
Satisfaction Surveys	As and when required – refer to Informing our Tenants.
Estate Walkabouts	Annually
Register of Interested Residents	As and when required.
Focus Groups	As and when required.
Retirement Housing Meetings	Quarterly.
Resident Groups	As and when required.
Communication	Continuous.
Digital Assistance	As and when required.
Government Initiatives	In accordance with Government Initiatives.

<u>Informing our Tenants</u>	
Tenant Handbook	To be reviewed Annually.
Annual Report	Annually – published prior to 31 October.
Abertalk Tenant Newsletter	Published twice each year – June/July & December.
Annual Rent Consultation	Annually: December to January.
Tenant Satisfaction Survey	Every Two Years.
Owner Satisfaction Survey	Every Three Years.
Survey / Questionnaires	As and when required.
Leaflets	To be reviewed Annually.
Tenant Meetings / Focus Groups	As and when required.
Retirement Housing Noticeboards	As and when required.
Website	Continuous.
Facebook	Continuous.

## **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 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.

### **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.