



Abrohill Housing Association

TENANT PARTICIPATION AND CONSULTATION POLICY

Date Approved	Proposed Review Date
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The information in this document is available in other languages or on tape/CD, in large print and also in Braille.

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TENANT PARTICIPATION & CONSULTATION POLICY

1. AIMS & CONTEXT

1.1 Abronhill Housing Association aims to :

- help develop a strong tenant movement
- help tenants and tenant's associations to have a say in decisions which affect their lives
- work towards achieving outcomes set out in the Scottish Social Housing Charter, in particular :
 - **Outcome 2 – Social Landlords manage their businesses so that** : tenants and other customers find it easy to communicate with their landlord and get the information they need about their landlord; how and why it makes decisions; and the services that the landlord provides
 - **Outcome 3 – Social Landlords manage their businesses so that** : tenants and other customers find it easy to participate in and influence their landlord's decisions at a level they feel comfortable with
 - **Outcome 5 – Social Landlords manage their businesses so that** : tenants homes are well maintained, with repairs and improvements carried out when required; and tenants are given reasonable choices about when work is done

1.2 This Policy has been developed taking account of :

- the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. Appendix 1 summarises tenants' rights to information and consultation laid down in the Act

1.3 It sets out how the Association will communicate with tenants and encourage participation with a Strategy and Action plan for implementation.

2. POLICY STATEMENT

2.1 A good housing service is one which offers choice and takes account of tenant's views. The Association wants to ensure that the service provided meets tenants needs and gives satisfaction. The Association's staff will work with and alongside our tenants in an open and participative manner. We will do this through:

- fostering good landlord / tenant relationships through consultation on a wide range of issues
- providing financial help to tenant and residents groups to help cover initial set up costs, annual operational, administration and service costs.

2.2 We will:

- publish a Tenant Participation Strategy & Action Plan (see Appendix 2)
- offer support and information to help new groups set up
- support existing groups by offering advice and information

- support staff in their work with groups
- liaise with other legal and voluntary agencies involved in tenant participation
- keep groups up to date with our housing service
- maintain a register of Tenants Groups registered with Abronhill HA. The criteria for registration are given in Appendix 3.

2.3 In accordance with the Association's Equal Opportunities Policy, in promoting tenant participation and consultation, Abronhill HA will not discriminate on the basis of age, gender, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, religion, marital status, family circumstances, political or sexual orientation, medical condition, disability, or mental health problems. Abronhill HA aims to promote equal opportunities and meets the requirements of the Race Relations Act 1976, the Sex Discrimination Act 1973, the Equality Act 2010 and the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.

3. COMMUNICATION

- 3.1 Tenants' groups have the right to information on decisions and issues which affect the housing service in their area. We will keep all tenants and tenants' groups up to date with this information.
- 3.2 The Association recognises that tenants groups provide a point of contact, act as a means for tenant's views and criticisms to be represented to the Association. They allow communication on a collective basis as well as information being conveyed between the individual tenant and the Association.
- 3.3 Effective participation relies on the establishment of clear lines of communication between the Association and its tenants. There are a number of ways the Association gives information:

Personal Contact

- all staff wear name badges
- home visits can be arranged when required
- a private room is available for interviews
- telephone calls will always be answered promptly and pleasantly and staff will identify themselves.

Letters

- correspondence will be answered where possible within 10 working days of receipt
- the Association will write to advise tenants of decisions and policies which affect them.

Email and Texting

- Increasingly tenants are using email and text to communicate with staff and where appropriate staff will also use this medium to make contact with tenants.

Other Written Information

- the Association will provide :
 - tenants' groups with reports on changes in our policies and procedures
 - information packs and summary leaflets are available to tenants which outline the Association's housing policies
 - all literature published in plain language which is easily understood
 - Service information is prominently displayed in our office

- a tenants handbook to all existing and new tenants
- regular newsletters
- annual reports
- website information

Public and Tenant Group Meetings

- staff are available to attend public and tenant group meetings.

3.4 We are committed to providing a quality service which responds to our tenants needs. We are therefore open to our tenants' ideas, comments, enquiries and complaints. In order to encourage feedback we do the following:

- display complaints leaflets prominently in the office
- carry out tenant feedback surveys following major planned maintenance works
- encourage ideas from our tenants on how to make our service better :
 - in our Newsletter
 - in our correspondence
 - at open days and other public forums
 - at our reception
 - by formal and informal surveys
 - topic specific workshops and focus groups
 - by contacting tenants who have registered an interest

4. CONSULTATION

4.1 The Association wishes to ensure the involvement of tenants in the decision making processes and it will encourage the establishment of tenants' representative groups at levels to suit the interests of the members of these groups. Decisions taken by these groups will be fed back to the Management Committee and to the tenants. The Association also acknowledges its various roles within the wider social context and therefore the need to consult with other residents and owners on issues which affect them.

4.2 We will consult tenants and owners regarding proposals for their properties on an individual basis.

4.3 Any Forum which is established will be invited to meet with the Management Committee at least annually and decisions taken by them will be fed back to the Management Committee and to tenants.

4.4 We will give tenants the opportunity and time in which to respond to consultation proposals and we will consider their views and taken them into account in making decisions.

5. FINANCIAL SUPPORT

5.1 Active tenants groups are an essential basis for tenant participation and financial support is very important. We will make available grants for tenants groups. Applications will be considered on merit in accordance with the guidelines set down by the Management Committee at any time.

6. TRAINING FOR TENANTS GROUPS

- 6.1 We recognise that tenants groups must be independent. They must be able to make informed decisions and to understand our policies and procedures.
- 6.2 We will offer a range of training on a variety of subjects.
- skills training for new groups and new group members
 - our tenant participation strategy
 - Committee skills training
 - advice and assistance on constitutions.
- 6.3 Our training programme will develop as our policies and procedures change.

7. MONITORING OF THE ACTION PLAN

- 7.1 We will have an annual review of our Participation, Strategy and Action Plan and consultation mechanisms to ensure they remain effective. We will monitor and evaluate the impact of different methods of participation.

8. REVIEW

- 8.1 The Association's Management Committee will review the Policy on Tenant Participation and Consultation every three years.
- 8.2 The Participation Strategy and Action Plan will be reviewed annually.

TENANT PARTICIPATION STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Strategy sets out the principles Abronhill applies to tenant participation; summarises its current plans and sets out a timetable for implementing these.

2. LEGAL OBLIGATIONS AND THE ASSOCIATION'S PRINCIPLES

2.1 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001: Tenant Rights

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 lays down rights for tenants. These are summarised below :

Information

- Tenants must be given a written tenancy agreement.
- Tenants must be given information about the landlords' complaints procedure. They must also be given information on a range of specified matters; for example, the landlord's policy on setting rent, on request.
- Tenants must be given at least four weeks' notice of any increase in rent or other charges and landlords must, where rents are to be increased for all or a group of tenants, consult tenants in advance of any increase.

Tenant Participation and Consultation

In addition to the duties to provide information to tenants under the Scottish Secure Tenancy under Section 23, the Act also requires local authorities and registered social landlords to :

- Prepare a strategy to promote the participation of tenants in making proposals for the management of housing and the provisions of related services
- Ensure that the strategy sets out the arrangements for taking account of views of both registered tenants' organisations and tenants generally, giving them advance warning of matters that are likely to be under consideration, and providing information about the proposals and their effects
- Assess the resources required and provide a statement about the resources proposed to give effect to the strategy
- Maintain a register of tenants organisations that meet criteria specified by Scottish Ministers
- Notify registered tenants organisations and tenants of the likely effect on tenants of proposals relating to housing management, repair and maintenance, standards or service, their tenant participation strategy and any planned disposal of properties and give tenants an opportunity to make representations.
- Tenants can also seek to establish tenant management co-operatives to exercise certain of the landlord's housing functions (which could include management of the houses in its area) by agreement with the landlord.

2.2 Abronhill HA is committed to:

- looking for new ideas and better ways of delivering a first class service

- consulting tenants and others carefully and taking those views into account when making decisions
- developing new ways of involving tenants and others
- consulting tenants individually and in groups
- developing and supporting residents groups where there is a demand
- ensuring that everyone is given the opportunity to participate fully regardless of age, gender, race, colour, ethnic or national origin, religion, marital status, family circumstances, political or sexual orientation, medical condition, disability or with literacy or other barriers to written or spoken communication
- following relevant legislation and guidance on involving tenants

3. EXISTING PROVISION & CURRENT PLANS

3.1 A Tenant Participation & Consultation Policy is in place. This includes our commitment on equal opportunities and sets out proposals for:

- communication with tenants
- consultation
- financial support for tenants groups
- training for tenants associations
- preparing and monitoring an Annual Action Plan

3.2 The Association has established a track record in:

- producing tenants newsletters and annual reports
- supporting local organisations and forging links with other voluntary groups and organisations

4. IMPLEMENTATION

4.1 The Association will annually produce a tenant participation action plan. The Plan for 2022/2023 is detailed below:

Ongoing Membership Drive	All year round
Repairs Satisfaction Survey	Monthly
Continue to promote the tenant engagement via topic specific focus groups eg Anti-Social Behaviour	July 2022
Carry out full Tenants' Survey	September 2022
Continue to promote the services offered by AFTAR	Ongoing
Explore alternative methods of developing effective tenants engagement	Commencing June 2022

5. POTENTIAL GAPS & PROPOSED ACTION

5.1 Staff Commitment & Skills

The Association recognises that to implement its plan requires a commitment from all staff to tenant participation and consultation and a willingness to undertake training in this area where required.

Housing Officers attend conferences and/or forums and are encouraged to attend relevant training courses.

5.2 Promoting Engagement

The Association recognises that there are challenges in promoting the engagement of tenants in Abronhill. The Association will continue to seek innovative ways of offering opportunities for tenants to engage with us at various levels and on a variety of issues.

5.3 Funding

Although the Association has very limited funding available for community initiatives, it recognises that this may not be sufficient to support its strategy. It will apply for any available funding from the Scottish Government or any other appropriate source to complement its own limited resources.

5.4 Legal & Regulatory Requirements

The Association recognises its responsibilities under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 to consult tenants about any significant proposals in relation to repairs and housing management and should its current plans, policies and priorities change then appropriate arrangements will be made to consult tenants.

The Association will meet all regulatory requirements as outlined in sections 1.1 and 1.2 of this policy.

ABRONHILL HOUSING ASSOCIATION

CRITERIA FOR REGISTRATION OF A TENANTS GROUP

The organisation must have a publicly available written constitution

Abronhill HA will assist (if requested) tenants groups applying for registration to establish a written constitution which complies with the requirements of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.

The organisation must provide information on the area it operates within

Abronhill HA will only consider registration of groups where Abronhill HA manages property and where membership of the group is open to Abronhill HA tenants.

The organisation must have appropriate accounting records and present an annual financial statement to the AGM

Abronhill HA will provide training to groups in managing finances

The organisation must demonstrate that it is committed to representing the interests of its members and that, when consulted by Abronhill HA, it can represent the view of Abronhill HA.

Abronhill HA will, if requested, provide advice to groups who wish to produce newsletters, conduct surveys, and hold public meetings. Groups which represent more than one landlord must be able to show how they will represent the views of Abronhill HA tenants.

The tenants organisation will make efforts to ensure that it reflects the communities it works within and promotes membership to traditionally excluded groups such as the disabled, black and minority ethnic households, gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender households and lone heads of households particularly women

Abronhill HA will provide tenants organisations seeking to register with training in Abronhill HA's commitment to the promotion of equality and seek evidence of their commitment.

Information required for an application to register

When making an application for registration a tenants' organisation will have to provide to Abronhill HA

- the written constitution:
- names and contact addresses of Board members (identifying the office bearers)
- a map and description of the area of operation; and
- a statement setting out how the organisation plans to engage with its members and how it will represent their views.

Abronhill HA will provide new tenants' organisations with information explaining the criteria for registration set out by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and application forms.