

## Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION .....	2
STRATEGY OBJECTIVES.....	3
DEFINING TENANT PARTICIPATION.....	3
ENSURING TENANTS ARE ABLE TO INFLUENCE DECISIONS .....	4
PARAMETERS FOR TENANT CONSULTATION .....	5
CONSULTATION STANDARDS .....	5
<i>Information</i> .....	6
<i>Consultation</i> .....	7
FEEDBACK .....	8
FRAMEWORK FOR RESOURCING TENANT PARTICIPATION .....	9
<i>Tenant Participation Overall</i> .....	9
<i>Tenant Groups</i> .....	9
REGISTERED TENANTS' ORGANISATIONS.....	10
<i>CRITERIA FOR REGISTERED TENANTS ORGANISATIONS</i> .....	10
<i>PROCEDURES FOR REGISTRATION</i> .....	10
EQUALITIES .....	11
REVIEW AND MONITORING .....	11
APPENDIX A - Criteria for Registration of Tenant Organisations.....	12

## INTRODUCTION

Eildon Housing Association recognises the importance of tenant participation and is committed to encouraging and supporting tenants to become involved in making decisions about the services we offer. We also recognise the challenges of encouraging tenant participation in a rural area. Given the dispersed nature of the Association's stock and the very broad spectrum of needs provided for by the Association, a wide range of ways in which tenants can, if they so wish, participate, is afforded by the Association. These range from formal participation through an umbrella Registered Tenants' Organisation (ETO) to local meetings in staffed developments.

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 places added emphasis on tenant participation however, Eildon Housing Association remains committed to offering tenants as much involvement in the control and running of the Association as they would like, above and beyond the statutory requirement. Eildon Housing believes that tenants are individuals who, for a variety of reasons, require and desire different levels of involvement with their landlord and different levels of support to participate. Tenants will be offered a range of options providing the opportunity to participate at a time, level and manner which suits them best.

This second Tenant Participation Strategy was reviewed and developed jointly, by tenants, staff and the Committee of Management in 2008 and is a document which sets out the shared goals of tenants and landlord alike.

Tenant Participation is a continually evolving process, progressing as new issues arise. This strategy sets out a framework of supporting tenant participation, on which we can build.

This Tenant Participation Strategy will be monitored and evaluated annually, by tenant and landlord together. The budget for tenant participation will be reviewed annually.

The Tenant Participation Strategy will be reviewed altogether every three years.

## **STRATEGY OBJECTIVES**

The key objectives in this Tenant Participation Strategy are to:

- Define tenant participation
- Ensure tenants are able to influence decision making
- Define a framework for Information and Consultation
- Define a framework for resourcing tenant participation
- Provide Criteria and Procedures for Registration of Tenants Organisations.
- Ensure compliance with equalities requirements and good practice
- Establish a framework for reviewing and monitoring the strategy and assessing its effectiveness.

## **DEFINING TENANT PARTICIPATION**

Tenant Participation is a two-way process involving sharing of information and ideas, where tenants are able to influence decisions and take part in what is happening. Tenants are enabled to have a say in decision making and accountability of the landlord to tenants is promoted

## ENSURING TENANTS ARE ABLE TO INFLUENCE DECISIONS

Eildon Housing Association will continue to support and encourage tenant participation in the following ways (this list is not exhaustive):

- All new tenants will be made aware of Eildon Tenants' Organisation (ETO), its role, that membership is automatic and free and how to contact its committee members.
- All new tenants will be made aware of any other local resident groups in their area, with information about the group, together with contact details for the group committee.
- Through the provision of 3 places on Eildon Housing Association's committee of management.
- Any tenant vacancies on Eildon's Committee of Management will be publicised to all tenants, through the tenants' newsletter and on the Associations Website. Support and training will be given and following a discussion with senior staff, interested tenants will be invited, when there is a vacancy, to attend a Committee of Management meeting, initially as an observer and subject to the rules of confidentiality.
- Utilising and further developing the Tenant Opinion Panel (TOP). The TOP will be widely publicised and will be open to all tenants who have specific interests in aspects of housing management, or maintenance and are happy to be consulted on very specific matters by questionnaire/email/straw poll. All new tenants will be given information about joining TOP.
- Meetings in staffed developments.
- Joint Estate Management Visits with tenants from the local areas
- Working Parties for specific issues, for example, policy review
- Local area / issue based meetings, where requested or required
- Continue to develop and enhance a customer service culture where all staff are aware of and receptive to the value of tenant participation, through staff training and awareness sessions. Many tenants participate in a low key, informal way and this will continue to be encouraged and promoted by all staff. Consideration will be given to ensuring ways in which, while ensuring customer confidentiality, the voice of tenants continues to make a difference in improving quality of service.
- Regular newsletters to all tenants and sharing owners, with readers encouraged to contribute to the newsletter.
- Regular information posted on the Eildon Housing Association Website

## PARAMETERS FOR TENANT CONSULTATION

Under Section 54 (1)(a) (b) and 54 (2) (c-d) of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 the Association requires to consult tenants either individually or collectively on the following:

- Its policy in relation to housing management, repairs or maintenance where the proposal if implemented is likely to significantly affect the tenant.
- The standard of service in relation to housing management, repairs and maintenance which it intends to provide.
- Tenant Participation Strategy
- Any stock disposal which would result in a change of landlord
- Rent and Service Charge changes

## CONSULTATION STANDARDS

In consulting with tenants Eildon Housing Association will strive to meet the following minimum consultation standards:

- To define clearly to all tenants affected by possible proposals, details of the thinking behind the possible change, options for change and how these would affect tenants.
- Where appropriate, agree a timetable of key events with Registered Tenants' Organisations - for example meetings dates, dates for comments to be returned, including a **four week** consultation period
- How and within what timescales tenants can make their views known to the Association.
- Details of how and when tenants will receive feedback.
- Details of which staff are dealing with the consultation and how to contact them.
- How, and by whom final decisions will be taken.
- Information on how and where to complain.
- In practical terms this will mean all information to tenants being provided timeously and in the appropriate format - see section (4b) above on Information.

## INFORMATION AND CONSULTATION

### *Information*

Underpinning participation will be a clear approach on information and communication to and from tenants. Information will be provided, in appropriate formats - for example large print, braille, on tape, in ethnic languages where required. Where required, signers and interpreters will be provided and in arranging meetings the Association will strive to ensure that venues are fully accessible

When new tenants sign up to their Tenancy Agreement they will be asked to provide details of any particular requirements, for example need for large print documents, and records of this will be maintained. Tenants will also be encouraged to advise staff of any changes in their needs so that these can continue to be appropriately met.

Eildon Housing Association will ensure a variety of methods are used to keep tenants informed. These will include, but are not limited to:

- A Tenants' Handbook will be provided to all new tenants.
- A quarterly Eildon Housing newsletter will be sent to all tenants and sharing owners. Tenants will be encouraged to contribute to the newsletter.
- Eildon Housing Association web-site
- Information Sheets and individual letters, where appropriate
- Tenants Meetings

On request Eildon Housing Association will also provide information to tenants at any time on:

- Tenancy conditions and agreements
- Policy and Procedures in relation to setting of rents and service charges.
- Policy and Procedures in relation to admission to the way our houses are let, allocation priority, transfers, exchanges and repairs and maintenance.
- Right to Buy provisions where they apply and the obligations the tenant is likely to incur if they exercises his/her right to buy, including obligation to maintain the property and any common areas.
- Arrangements for taking decisions in relation to the management of housing and provision of related services
- A copy of the Tenant Participaton Strategy, which will be publicised in the Tenant's Newsletter and on the Association's website
- Any policy relating to service delivery

Statutory Information : Before signing a Tenancy Agreement all new tenants will be given information on the Association's complaints procedure and on Right to Buy.

### *Consultation*

Eildon Housing Association will ensure a variety of methods will be used to enable participation and consultation. These will include, but are not limited to:

- Tenant Satisfaction Surveys for:
  - new builds; major modernisation work; repairs services; adaptations service; welfare benefits and housing support services
- Tenant Opinion Panel Comment Cards with Postage Paid Envelopes
- Face to Face contact with individual tenants, and recognised tenant groups
- Eildon Housing Association Annual General Meeting

### **Timescales for consultation**

Eildon Housing Association will agree with Registered Tenants Organisations, Tenant Opinion Panel members and individual tenants minimum timescales for any consultation item, which significantly affects tenants. As indicated above the provision of timeous clear information in appropriate formats will be one of the corner stones of encouraging participation.

## FEEDBACK

When Eildon Housing Association have consulted with tenants on a particular issue, feedback will be provided to tenants

- Through tenants' newsletter
- Directly to tenants involved in the consultation, if the consultation was localised in a specific area
- Through RTO, resident or public meetings where appropriate.

Eildon Housing Association will provide feedback information on

- what the collective response was;
- how the responses are being taken into account;
- how long the review process will take;
- what the decision that ultimately be taken;
- and will give clear details about who to contact for more information

## FRAMEWORK FOR RESOURCING TENANT PARTICIPATION

### *Tenant Participation Overall*

Tenant participation requires resources in the broadest sense going beyond funding, however, the budget for resourcing tenant participation overall will be reviewed and agreed annually. Costs for quarterly tenants' newsletters, consultations, meetings, training, salary of Tenant Participation Officer and other proposed projects will be taken into account when reviewing the annual budget.

### *Tenant Groups*

Subject to reasonable notice, Eildon Housing Association will continue to make premises available for Registered Tenants Organisations for meetings and administrative support where this is not available within the group- for example, drafting of fliers to publicise tenant meetings etc.

A key component of the base budget for RTO's will be to ensure training needs, identified through a training plan worked up in conjunction with Eildon Housing Association's Tenant Participation officer, are addressed.

Eildon Housing Association recognises that further development of tenant participation requires staff time and resources, throughout the organisation and will allow for this in the preparation of staff training and development plans and budgets.

Eildon Housing Association recognises that a significant obstacle to the formation of new tenant groups and sustaining existing groups is access to funding. Eildon Housing Association therefore are committed to providing an annual budget to assist recognised groups. Two types of grants are available to recognised groups – a Start-Up Grant or and Annual Grant.

### ***Start Up Grant***

An initial grant of £100 may be awarded to new groups working to set up as properly constituted bodies. The purpose of the grant is to cover items of expenditure in setting up, such as postage, hire of meeting rooms, telephone calls etc

### ***Annual Grant***

An annual grant will be agreed and offered to properly constituted Registered Tenants' Organisations (RTO's) to assist with the running costs of the group, including postage, room hire, administration costs, training, projects that encourage other tenants to participate, Annual General Meetings etc. This funding will be agreed by landlord and RTO together, on an annual basis.

## **REGISTERED TENANTS' ORGANISATIONS**

Established under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 Registered Tenants' Organisations are independent organisations set up primarily to represent tenants and housing related interests. Their aim is to give tenants' organisations, who meet the criteria set out in Appendix A, a recognised role in the tenant participation process.

Eildon Housing Association is very mindful that many tenants may wish to participate in some way will not necessarily wish to be part of a Registered Tenants' Organisation. Eildon Housing Association will consult with tenants through a wide range of mechanisms, in addition to consulting with registered tenants' organisations.

### *CRITERIA FOR REGISTERED TENANTS ORGANISATIONS*

Criteria for registration are set out in Appendix A.

### *PROCEDURES FOR REGISTRATION*

Criteria for registration and de-registration are contained in Appendix A. Any tenant enquiring about registration will be sent a copy of the criteria and the procedure which will also be available on Eildon Housing Association website and will be annually publicised through Eildon Housing Association's tenants' newsletter.

Eildon Housing Association will provide or arrange for the provision of assistance to be given to any group seeking to become registered. Whilst ETO remains the umbrella organisation it is recognised that over time other tenants' organisations may develop.

Requests for registration will be submitted to Eildon Housing Association's Committee of Management for approval. Registration will normally be granted for a period of three years initially, subject to the adherence of the agreed constitution

Eildon Housing Association will require to register any Registered Tenants Organisation as long as the RTO has a written constitution which covers the following:

- Main objectives and area of operation
- Membership criteria and procedure for applying for membership
- How the Committee operates, including how office bearers are elected
- How its business is conducted
- How its decisions are reached
- How its funds are managed
- How meetings including the Annual General Meeting are organised
- Its procedures for amending its constitution
- Its commitment to promoting equal opportunities

## **EQUALITIES**

Eildon Housing Association will strive to ensure that its tenant participation strategy and its implementation are taken forward within an equalities framework.

This means that information will be provided in ways which meet the needs of tenants. Assistance will be provided either directly, or through sign posting to another agency, to enable tenants where they so wish to participate. This could include, but will not be limited to reasonable expenses to attend area meetings, to cover the costs of carers to allow for attendance, where necessary provide crèche facilities etc.

Eildon Housing Association will strive to ensure that tenant participation is representative geographically and that its members are drawn from a wide stratum of tenants in terms of needs and equalities.

## **REVIEW AND MONITORING**

This strategy will require to be monitored, evaluated, together by tenant and landlord on an annual basis. The strategy as a whole, will be reviewed on a three yearly basis.

Eildon Housing Association will agree ,jointly with tenants, a review and monitoring framework for this strategy and agree methods of monitoring the effectiveness of tenant participation

Quantitative information will be recorded and publicised to tenants and the EHA Committee of Management annually on levels of:

- Membership of Eildon Housing Association
- Number of meetings by type, by service, held with tenants and numbers attending
- Methods of participation eg meetings, questionnaires

Qualitative information will be regularly reported to tenants and EHA Committee of Management, in accordance with the consultation standards set out in this strategy.

- What issues have been consulted on
- What has changed as a result of the consultation
- What has improved as a result of the consultation

## **APPENDIX A - Criteria for Registration of Tenant Organisations**

1. The organisation must have a publicly available written constitution that sets out:

- its objectives and area of operation;
- how people can become members of the organisation;
- the way the committee will operate;
- how people can become committee members/office bearers;
- how the business of the organisation will be conducted;
- how decisions will be reached democratically;
- how funds will be managed;
- arrangements for public meetings;
- arrangements for an annual general meeting (AGM);
- how changes can be made to the constitution; and
- its commitment to the promotion of equal opportunities.
- its commitment to the promotion of the housing and housing related interests of tenants.

The aim of this is to ensure that organisations have a structure that allows for election of office bearers, gives opportunities for members to express views and ensures that elected officers report to their members. This does not mean that the body has to be a formally incorporated body, such as an Industrial and Provident society. A simple constitution that spells out how the organisation will be accountable to members will suffice in many cases, but where an organisation has access to substantial funds it may be appropriate to look at more formal incorporation.

It is essential that landlords receive a copy of a tenant association's constitution as part of the registration process. Many landlords, who are working proactively to promote tenant participation, will have acceptable model policies that groups can adopt, if they wish. It is important for landlords to note that the constitution is a basis for registration. If the constitution does not fulfil the criteria for registration, the landlord can refuse to register but landlords should, in any event, work with prospective RTOs to help them meet the criteria for registration.

The organisation must have a committee that:

- (after the first year) is elected at an AGM;
- has at least three members;
- can co-opt others onto the committee during the course of the year;
- has elected office bearers;
- can demonstrate that decisions are reached democratically; and
- promotes equal opportunities.

The organisation must operate within:

- a defined area which includes housing stock owned and managed by the landlord with whom it is seeking to register; or
- membership of the organisation and participation in its activities must be open to all eligible tenants within its defined area of operation.

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

The organisation must demonstrate that it is committed to representing the interests of its members and that, when consulted by the registering landlord, it can represent the views of its members who are tenants of the registering landlord in its defined area of operation.

Application material to be submitted by the tenant organisation to the landlord with whom it is seeking to register:

- the written constitution;
- names and contact details of committee members (identifying the office bearers); and
- a description of the area of operation.

A RTO can be removed from the Register in any of the following circumstances:

- the tenants organisation no longer meets the registration criteria; or
- the tenants organisation ceases to exist or does not operate; or
- there is mutual agreement between the landlord and tenants organisation.
- Removal from the Register should take place only after an agreed period of notice.
- A tenant organisation may appeal against a landlord's decision to: not register the organisation; or remove the organisation from the Register; or not remove the organisation from the Register.

Any appeal will be dealt with under the Association's Complaints Policy. Where internal appeals procedures have been exhausted, a further appeal will be considered by the Scottish Housing Regulator Tenant Participation Team.