



Fyne Homes Limited

Tenant Participation Strategy

First Approved : 15th September 1999
Last Reviewed : 14th May 2008
Next Review Date : May 2011
Version No : 3

Index

1. Introduction.....	6
2. Background.....	6
3. Strategy Aims.....	9
4. Compliance with Communities Scotland Performance Standards	9
5. Key Principles.....	11
5.1 Equality of Opportunity	11
5.2 Consistency	12
5.3 Openness	12
5.4 Accountability.....	12
5.5 Confidentiality	12
6. Objectives	13
6.1 Identifying Barriers.....	14
6.2 Informing and Consulting Tenants and Residents	16
6.3 Issues for Consultation.....	18
6.4 Tenant Groups.....	19
6.5 Opportunities for Participation	21
6.6 Resources	27
6.6.1 Internal	27
6.6.2 External	28
6.7 Monitoring and Review of Strategy.....	28
7. Related Legislation/Guidance.....	29
8. Other Related Policies.....	29

Tenant Participation Strategy

1. Introduction

The Management Committee of Fyne Homes recognises how important it is for our tenants and residents to be at the core of the organisation and is committed to ensuring that there are ongoing opportunities for all our service users to participate in the design and delivery of their housing and associated services.

This ethos is shared by the Director and staff of the Association who welcome the opportunity to implement the following strategy.

2. Background

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 gave tenants more rights to be involved in the management of their home and put more onus on the landlord to formulate a Tenant Participation Strategy in order to deliver this.

Fyne Homes wishes however, not only to fulfil the provisions of the Act but to ensure that Tenant Participation is an integral part of all of our activities and that our tenants and other stakeholders are empowered to take control of their future housing services.

We recognise that this is very much a two way process which involves sharing information and ideas for continuous improvement and will work hard to support and encourage tenants and residents to participate.

Since the last review, we have made very good progress and set out below the ways we are working to achieve real Tenant Participation within our operational areas in Argyll and Bute: (nb: figures quoted are as at the 31st December 2007.)

- Consultation Register – we now have over 190 tenants on the register.
- Resident Groups – we are currently working with over 15 groups (these groups currently represent just over a third of our tenants)
- Focus Groups – we have done some work with a group regarding our Tenants Handbook, the work on this has now been completed and copies of the new handbook will be available over the next couple of months.
- We have employed a full time Community Development Officer to coordinate and support the strategy.
- We have purchased an outreach vehicle, with the support of Communities Scotland, in order to bring services and information to those who have traditionally been excluded because of their geographical location.

3. Strategy Aims

Fyne Homes wishes to ensure that Tenant Participation is an integral part of all our activities and that our tenants and other stakeholders are supported in every way possible in order to take more control in the shaping and delivery of their future housing services.

Our Internal Management Plan further demonstrates this commitment:

Strategic Objective 2: Housing Management

To provide a high quality and responsive Housing Management service, delivered in an equitable and efficient manner with a tenant consultation and participation strategy underpinning the service.

4. Compliance with Communities Scotland Performance Standards

As a registered social landlord Fyne Homes recognises that it must comply with Communities Scotland Performance Standards. The relevant standards are:

GS 2.2 Tenant Participation

We have published and are implementing a sound strategy for encouraging and supporting tenants, residents and service users to participate actively in all areas of our work. We support tenants to take an active interest in managing their homes.

GS3 Service Delivery and Communication

GS3.1 Responsiveness to service users: We place the people who want to use our services at the heart of our work. We treat people with respect and are responsive to their views and priorities

GS3.2 Information and advice: we provide or secure effective information and advise in line with the national standard for housing information and advice services.

GS3.3 Complaints and appeals: we deal fairly and effectively with anyone wanting to appeal against, or complain about any of our decisions or activities. We make it clear that they can complain about us to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman

GS3.4 Performance reporting: we give our stakeholders the information they need about the organisation and its plans, services and performance.

GS3.5 Openness and confidentiality: we are open about what we do and publish information about our activities. We provide information that people ask for unless there are justifiable reasons for withholding it.

5. Key Principles

5.1 Equality of Opportunity

The ethos of equal opportunities underpins this strategy and the Association will at all times carry out its functions with strict regard to this. This means that there will be no discrimination on the grounds of sex or marital status, on racial grounds, or on grounds of disability, age, sexual orientation, language, social origin or family circumstances, or of other personal attributes, including beliefs or opinions, such as religious beliefs or political opinions. Further details are available in the Association's Equal Opportunities Policy.

5.2 *Consistency*

The Association will apply this policy in a consistent manner across its area of operation so all residents are treated in a similar way.

5.3 *Openness*

This policy will be a published document, available for public use and, when requested, will be made available in other languages, in Braille, in large print or on audiocassette.

5.4 *Accountability*

The Association wishes to be accountable to all tenants and, when requested, will always give a clear account of the reasons for action taken and, similarly, will listen and give recognition to the views of its customers.

5.5 *Confidentiality*

The Association recognises the confidential nature of the information given to it by tenants and other customers and respects that it should not be disclosed to anyone who does not have both a need and a right to know it. The Association complies with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998.

6. Objectives

The following are the main objectives identified as being necessary to ensure the successful achievement of our aims:

- 6.1 To identify and minimize/remove any barriers that might prevent our tenants or others from engaging with us
- 6.2 To make available a wide range of methods to provide information for and consult with service users
- 6.3 To ensure that our tenants are fully aware of the issues on which we will consult them
- 6.4 To develop and support resident groups
- 6.5 To provide as many different opportunities for participation as possible
- 6.6 To ensure that adequate resources are in place to deliver the strategy
- 6.7 To ensure that a robust system is in place for monitoring and reviewing this strategy

6.1 Identifying Barriers

The Association recognises that there are certain areas where tenants are particularly at risk of being isolated or under-represented in the participation process due to their rural position or because there are only a few houses owned by the Association in their area.

In order to help us deliver Tenant Participation in these areas, we have purchased an outreach vehicle, with the support of Communities Scotland. The vehicle will be used to deliver information and provide advice regarding various issues, but particularly welfare benefits, in all our areas especially the more rural, less accessible settlements.

We recognise that geography is not the only barrier however, so we will take appropriate measures to ensure that other practical barriers to participation are removed or minimised including:

- Choosing suitable meeting venues which have disabled access and Audio Loop Systems wherever possible
- Meeting at times that suit our tenants e.g. outside normal working hours
- Provide transport to meetings or reimbursing costs of same
- Provide help with childcare and other carer costs
- Welcome carers, support workers, friends and mentors at meetings
- Use video conferencing facilities where appropriate
- Provide written transcripts for tenants with hearing impairments
- Using outreach vehicle to visit areas where tenants may have been excluded due to geographical location
- Produce all documentation in large print or in other languages if this is required
- Review our internal procedures regularly to ensure that we are not putting barriers in the way of our tenants e.g. by asking for too much information or having an unnecessarily long process for a particular item

6.2 Informing and Consulting Tenants and Residents

Fyne Homes aims to provide tenants and residents with good quality, accurate, up to date and jargon free information.

Information can currently be requested by telephone, in writing, by email, by accessing our website (www.fynehomes.org.uk) or calling into any of the Association's offices.

We are always keen to receive comments from tenants and other service users on how the range and delivery of providing information may be improved. Information and feedback is crucial for the development of tenant participation.

We recognise that our service users have differing needs and lifestyles and that they may wish to engage with us in different ways. Therefore in order to maximise participation, we offer a whole host of methods by which we contact tenants or they can contact us:

- *Quarterly Newsletters*
- *Video Conferencing – available in area offices*
- *Interviews and discussions*
- *Main Committee of Management and Sub-Committees*
- *Annual General Meeting*
- *Local surgeries*
- *Close meetings*
- *Resident groups*
- *Surveys and questionnaires*
- *Tenant Satisfaction Survey*
- *Post repair questionnaires*
- *Post Development Questionnaires*
- *Cyclical/Planned Maintenance Questionnaires*
- *Stage 3 Adaptation Surveys*
- *Information Leaflets*

- *Flyers*
- *Posters*
- *Advertisements in local press*
- *Providing copies of policies/procedures on request*
- *Tenant Agreements*

6.3 Issues for Consultation

Under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 the Association is required to consult with tenants and tenant groups on any issues that affect their houses or the Association services they use. We aim to continue consulting on and encouraging tenants to participate on issues such as:

- Repairs and Maintenance issues (day to day repairs, stock improvement, planned maintenance)
- Housing Management issues (allocations, estate management, tenancy agreements, tenant participation and services, anti-social behaviour, neighbour relations)
- Development issues (new build, design and layout of schemes and houses)
- Rent setting and payment methods
- Customer Service issues (customer satisfaction, complaints procedures)
- Wider Action issues (community issues, environmental issues)
- Equal opportunities

6.4 Tenant Groups

We will develop and support tenant groups:

- By encouraging our tenants to come forward either individually or collectively to have their say on what is going on in their development or local area.
- We will arrange venues for tenants to get together and carry out the administrative work in relation to this as well as meeting the costs of any such gatherings, within reason.
- By providing access to a wide range of information on various housing issues in an easy to read and jargon free style using the methods mentioned above.
- We will help identify any training needs or resources necessary for a group to get organised. To do this we will develop, in conjunction with residents and tenants, a form of self-assessment designed to highlight areas of need.
- We will encourage any resident groups that may emerge to adopt an inclusive approach towards involving minority groups in the community.
- Tenant and resident groups who act in a discriminatory or offensive way towards minority groups could be subject to some or all of the following sanctions:

- Withdrawal of funding

- Withdrawal of support in kind e.g. use of premises
- Removal from register of tenants/residents organisations

6.5 Opportunities for Participation

We recognise that traditional methods of participation such as membership of committees may require a considerable commitment of time and energy and that many tenants are unable or unwilling to make such a commitment. However, most people will have something to say about the house or the area in which they live and may welcome the opportunity to comment or give their opinion on the services provided by Fyne Homes.

The aim of this strategy is to develop a range of different methods of participation to allow tenants to be involved at a level they are comfortable with.

The Association offers the following opportunities for participation.

Main Committee of Management

As mentioned before, this committee is responsible for the overall management and control of the Association and whilst some of the member is either tenants or ex-tenants of the Association, we would like to encourage more of our tenants to become involved in this important role.

Tenant/Resident Groups

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 requires landlords to maintain registers of tenant/resident groups which have met certain criteria laid down by Scottish Ministers. The Association has a duty under the Act to consult with tenant members of these groups.

We acknowledge the fact, however, that some tenants may wish to engage with us on a less formal basis and we will also support these groups and consult with them as appropriate.

Any work we do with groups, either formally or informally, does depend on the group being able to demonstrate that it was open to all tenants in the area and could fairly represent their views.

Individual Tenants

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 requires landlords to consult with individual tenants as well as with groups. There will be occasions when we will consult with all tenants through newsletters or letters or by inviting tenants to open days and surgeries. On other occasions we will consult a selection of individuals drawn from the Tenant Panel or with Focus Groups.

We also consult with individual tenants when certain major works are being carried out to their homes. For example, where kitchens are being renewed maintenance staff visit each home to let tenants choose units and worktops from a range of samples.

Close Meetings

The Association meets with the members of an individual close or street etc to discuss issues that specifically relate to those houses or tenants e.g. a close meeting will be held prior to cyclical painterwork being carried out to allow those living there to choose the colours to be used.

Consultation Register

The purpose of the panel is to provide a pool of individual tenants who wish to be consulted on the activities, policies and services provided by the Association. There is likely to be quite a considerable turnover of Panel members so recruitment will be an ongoing process.

We will consult members of the Panel selectively; for example for issues affecting a particular area we will only consult Panel members living there. When tenants agree to join the Panel we will ask them the kind of issues they would like to be consulted on.

People on the consultation register will usually be invited to give their views by post, often in the form of a questionnaire. This method provides a useful route of contact for residents and tenants who may choose not to attend open meetings. We will regularly feed back to participants and include outcomes in our newsletters.

We will advertise this by periodic mailouts and including an information sheet in new tenancy sign up packs. Information will also be available at all our area offices.

Focus Groups

When the Association is reviewing a significant policy or service, for example – tenant handbooks, or where a more detailed and long-term input from tenants would be valuable, we will set up a Focus Group.

The Group will be made up of any tenants or other stakeholders who are interested in or affected by the issue being dealt with. The Group will have a specific remit and be wound up when the end result is achieved.

Working with other Agencies

The Association recognises that in order to ensure that there are no barriers to participation for minority groups we must seek the views of these groups and work with them to minimise or indeed remove any barriers to participation.

We will seek to build relationships with appropriate specialist agencies and organisations such as those named below. This list is not exhaustive and is intended only as an example of those we would like to work with:

- Age Concern Scotland
- Argyll and Bute Council – Community Services Department (support services)
- Richmond Fellowship (support providers)

- Community Links
- Achievement Bute
- Scottish Veterans Garden City Association
- William Woodhouse Trust
- HELP Project
- Adult Education

We aim to ensure that all groups have the opportunity to actively participate in the running of the Association. We recognise that to achieve this we must develop effective ways to identify groups which are under-represented and through consultation with them, actively encourage them to become more involved. This work will be part of the ongoing development of the strategy.

6.6 Resources

6.6.1 Internal

Fyne Homes has put in place the resources to deliver the strategy and will monitor that it is effective in giving all tenants a range of opportunities to become involved in the running of the Association.

In addition to financial considerations, there is support in kind such as staff time, assistance with photocopying and clerical assistance whenever a need is identified. A small start-up fund may also be available to provide support to allow a group to get up and running.

6.6.2 External

There continues to be a variety of external bodies to which approaches may be made in order for resident and tenants groups to obtain resources to support them. However, it is increasingly unlikely that unregistered groups will be as successful and for this reason every encouragement will be given in order for groups to see the benefit of taking the step to become a Registered Tenant Organisation.

6.7 Monitoring and Review of Strategy

It is accepted that a continuous review will be necessary in the light of the increasing number of tenant groups, gaps will be identified but the Association is committed to closing any gap as soon as is practicable.

We will monitor progress by:

- Discussing progress at monthly team meetings
- Setting realistic, measurable targets annually in our Internal Management Plan
- Presenting quarterly reports on progress against targets to Housing Management Sub-Committee
- Review progress alongside Internal Management Plan annually
- Review whole strategy on a three yearly basis unless legislative changes require earlier review
- Ensuring consultation register is maintained timeously

7. Related Legislation/Guidance

Housing (Scotland) Act 2001

Housing (Scotland) Act 2006

Communities Scotland - Performance Standards

Disability Discrimination Act

Scottish Federation of Housing Association – Raising Standards

8. Other Related Policies

Customer Satisfaction

Equal Opportunities

Procedure for Registering Tenant/Resident Associations