

TENANT PARTICIPATION & CONSULTATION

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CONTENTS:

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Compliance**
- 3. The Benefits of Involvement**
- 4. DPHA Rules**
- 5. Community Management**
- 6. Community Development**
- 7. Tenant Representation**
- 8. Group Registration**
- 9. Tenant Participation**
- 10. Policy Consultation**
- 11. Consultation Publicity**
- 12. Customer Satisfaction**
- 13. Monitoring**
- 14. Complaints**
- 15. Training and Awareness**
- 16. Risk Management**
- 17. Review**

1. Introduction

The Association is founded on the principle of tenant involvement in all its forms: participation, consultation and control. We ensure the involvement of tenants (in the form of the Management Committee) in the formulation and review of every policy and in every major decision. However we also ensure that individual tenants are provided with the opportunity to participate in the decision making and implementation process on a more practical level.

2. Compliance

The Association will ensure that this policy complies with current guidance from the Scottish Housing Regulator and the SFHA, and specifically meets all relevant Performance Standards, particularly GS 2.2.

3. The Benefits of Involvement

Tenant involvement is essential because:

- a) it leads to better decision making. Tenants have greater knowledge and experience of the local area than any outsider.
- b) where tenants are involved in the structure and organisation, they are more committed to them and more likely to defend them.
- c) tenants develop skills and talents.
- d) it links voluntary commitment and local knowledge to professional skills and expertise.
- e) even if tenants find it difficult to identify with, influence or control many of the wider issues, they can make things work better at a local level if there is a small-scale, locally responsive group.
- f) it assists in the development of non-housing related activities.
- g) it encourages understanding and support for change and development.

4. DPHA Rules

DPHA operates within the Model Charitable Rules approved by the Membership in August 02, these replacing the Model HSA (Scotland) Rules approved by members in July 1993. These were an update of the similar Housing Corporation Model (HSA) (Scotland) Rules used since formation in 1978.

These rules ensure that the principles of community control via tenant participation are followed.

5. Community Management

All residents within our area of operation are encouraged to become members. The theory of local control and accountability is seen in practice with the membership nominating a Management Committee at the AGM to represent their views and manage their affairs.

To ensure turnover, one third of the Management Committee is required to retire at each AGM.

Within this policy it is recognised that many tenants of the Association have become owners or have relocated outwith Association stock, and that this trend also applies to some members of the Management Committee either before or during their term of office.

The principles of tenant participation are identified in this policy, and clearly within the Associations community-based and community controlled management objectives. Although the balance of the Management Committee composition may vary in terms of members' tenure status, it is the current policy to allow the democratic election process to control this balance provided that the principles and objectives related to democratic consultation, participation and control are always prioritised and achieved in all areas of Committee activity. If it is ever felt that this is not the case, then the matter should be raised by members or the Director at any Management Committee meeting when ability to represent tenure group

may be required to be reviewed (i.e. review Internal Management Plan target).

Tenants participating at management level are also guided by Roles and Remits, and Standing Orders which combine to detail the role of respective committees and how meetings are conducted, and a comprehensive Code of Governance.

6. Community Development

This area of work falls within the remit of a specific committee which meets quarterly. At this meeting members will approve an annual Wider Action Plan which prioritises activities planned over the year; monitor progress; and monitor expenditure of a dedicated budget (see also 'Wider Action, Community Development Budget and Donations' Policy).

All projects are aimed at social inclusion and tenant involvement. Our Wider Action, Community Development and Donations Policy provide more detail on how this is achieved.

7. Tenant Representation

Give the expansion of DPHA and wider geographical spread of our stock, the formation of such groups will be encouraged and training, administrative and financial support will be actively considered providing such groups are representative, formally constituted and meeting regularly.

Such groups may nominate a representative to be co-opted on to the Association's Management Committee providing that the co-option does not result in there being more than one-third of the membership co-opted in total. First priority will be extended to West Dunbartonshire Council and, thereafter, local representative groups.

8. Group Registration

The Association will formally register tenants organisations under section 53(3) of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 where such groups have a written constitution available for inspection that sets out: -

- 1 its objects and its area of operation
- 2 the membership criteria and procedure for application for membership
- 3 the operation of its committee

and other conditions as specified in our Registration of Tenants' Organisations Procedure.

9. Tenant Participation

Tenants will be encouraged to participate in the following ways: -

Close Meetings

Area Representatives from Tenants' Groups

Consultation and choice about major repairs and improvements

Self- help to reduce dependency culture

DPHA Tenants' Meetings (2 per year)

Sheltered Housing Service Review Meetings (3 per year).

10. Policy Consultation

The Housing Act 2001 places a legal obligation on the Association to consult with tenants about a number of areas of our business such as rent increases, allocations: The Association will consult widely when considering a review of any of its major policies which have most impact on our tenants. We will:-

- make arrangements for obtaining and taking account of the views of registered tenants organisations and tenants on proposals and on the nature and content of such proposals.
- notify tenants on such matters
- provide information about proposals and the likely effect on tenant of, specifically:
 - policies in relation to housing management, repairs and maintenance that will significantly affect the tenant.
 - the standard of service we intend to provide
 - the tenant participation strategy itself.
 - any proposals to dispose of stock in the future.
- consult owners and sharing owners.
- consult minority groups.

The Association will also advise residents on :-

- how and when the final decision is taken.
- how the proposals will affect them
- which staff officers can be contacted regarding proposals
- information on where and how to complain

The onus is on tenants to respond to the Association's proposals. The Management Committee will receive all responses and these will be considered prior to adopting any new policy. All comments and suggestions will be fully considered, although members are not bound to accept all comments.

11. Consultation Publicity

The process will take the form of some or all of a combination of newsletters, special publications, use of local press, open days, public meetings, leaflets, posters and invitations to comment (direct correspondence) focus groups, information on our Website and direct e-mailing where possible.

Further details on Housing Services Advice and Assistance including publicity methods and tenant feedback are contained in the Housing Advice and Assistance Procedure Note.

12. Customer Satisfaction

The Association will conduct quarterly satisfaction surveys, questioning tenants on performance over a number of key areas. This form of participation will influence future policy and Results and conclusions will be published annually.

We will therefore attempt to communicate with tenants and measure tenant satisfaction via the following methods: -

- Customer Satisfaction Survey and Action Plan
- Customer Feedback Questionnaires
- Newsletter
- Annual Report
- Annual General Meeting
- Special General Meetings
- Sheltered Housing Tenant Meetings
- Co-option of Tenants Group Representatives
- Management Committee

13. Monitoring

Tenant involvement is primarily about service improvements, and results of consultation and participation will be monitored by Committee Members and Senior Staff via the committee structure and Improvement Plan process. The Housing Services Manager will report to the Housing and Maintenance Sub-committee in general terms on issues concerning Tenant Participation and keep the Sub-committee advised of any requirement to act on specific projects or matters related to participation.

14. Complaints

The Association also uses the Complaints Policy to communicate with tenants and improve levels of service, and we use complaints received to inform us of potential areas of confusion or conflict. We widely promote this policy and aim to deal with complaints in a sympathetic, fair and confidential manner. Experience has taught us that two related but separate procedures are required, with both widely publicised and tenants/residents will always be directed to the most appropriate under the given circumstances:

Estate Management Complaints

Complaints which are specifically related to estate management and the Estate Management Policy.

Complaints- General

These are more general complaints related to any other aspect of DPHA's service provision, excluding Estate Management.

15. Training and Awareness

Meaningful participation and involvement relies on the contribution of informed and knowledgeable voluntary members, and every support and encouragement will be given to individuals to pursue additional training which may improve their contribution.

The Training and Development Policy deals in more detail with our training objectives which will provide the Association with a Committee which can apply control and clear direction for the benefit of all DPHA residents.

We are sensitive to the needs of new Committee Members and take time to gradually introduce them through the New Members Information Pack. Any new representative group forming will also be offered training and assistance

16. Risk Management

<u>RISK</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
Decision making process lacks credibility if tenants cannot influence.	Provide adequate opportunity for tenant involvement.
Management Committee seen as divorced/removed from representative opinion.	Ensure Management Committee awareness of need to consultation and methods of consultation.
Lack of community development stagnates the area and enforces deprivation indicators.	Wider Action/Community Development Plan and Budget.
Lack of tenant support for Association plans, policies	Inform tenants at earliest opportunity and over period of significant plans for change.
No new Committee Members.	Encourage membership and promote work of HA; role of Committee.

17. Review

This policy will be reviewed within 3 years.