

TENANTS PARTICIPATION STRATEGY 2020/21 - 2021/22



Foreword

This is not the forward I had expected to me writing when work started on updating the Tenant Participation Strategy in 2019/20 following Paragon's successful involvement in the Next Steps project. We were once again looking to collaborate with Clackmannanshire Council aim and working with the Tenant's Improvement Service to ensure that we had a fully inclusive forward thinking Tenant Participation Strategy.

Delays in the process meant that we only just beginning to look at widespread consultation with tenants and others when we like the rest of the world were confronted with the reality of a global pandemic meaning our office was closed and face to face interactions with tenants put on hold.

Whilst legislation under the 'Scottish Housing Charter' may provide a legal requirement to include Tenants in the decision making process, the partnership working between Clackmannanshire Council, Paragon and Ochil View has long advocated Tenant participation as the way forward. For this reason we refused to allow the Coronavirus lockdown to put Tenant Engagement on the back burner and made the decision to press ahead with Short life Tenant Participation Strategy that will hopefully provide both staff and tenants with the reassurance that we continue to place Tenants and other service users at the heart of the Association.

Reluctantly we have decided to go it alone on this occasion but very much hope to be working alongside Clackmannanshire Council when it comes to developing the next strategy.

As chairperson of Paragon Housing Association, I know how much has been achieved over the years through tenant participation and joint working. The introduction of the Scottish Social Housing Charter sets out the standards and outcomes that all social landlords should now be aiming to achieve when delivering services.

Tenant and other customers remain at the heart of our work. We value their involvement in the Charter self-assessment process for monitoring our performance. We can achieve better performance and improved outcomes through Tenants, Tenant Scrutiny Panel, Staff and Management Committee working together to look at what we do and how we do.

Producing a strategy in lockdown conditions has produced its own unique challenges, not least of which was coming up with innovative consultation opportunities.

This partnership approach working can deliver better results for all of us. I know the hard work, which went into developing our Strategy, and wish to thank everyone involved.



Flora Wallace, Chairperson Paragon Housing Association

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1. Introduction

Welcome to our fifth tenant participation strategy. In March 2020 Paragon Housing Association like other social landlords across the UK, and indeed the world found it's self quickly having to adapt to new ways of working and new ways of working.

This strategy outlines how we will in 2020/21 and 2021/22 continue to increase participation by working with our registered tenant organisations, individual tenants, other customers, residents and staff. It also outlines how we have and will continue to respond to the changes imposed on us by 'social distancing' requires and the Coronavirus lockdown.

However Paragon wants to see events since March 2020 as an opportunity and wants to build on the progress so far and continue to develop new and different ways to increase tenant and other customer involvement.

Our aim is to enable all tenants to become involved at whatever level suits them.

Although this document is entitled a Tenant Participation Strategy, it also covers tenants and other customers.

2. Background

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 placed a legal duty on local authorities and registered social landlords (RSLs) to have tenant participation strategies in place, and to maintain a register of tenants groups (RTO's) meeting the criteria for registration. The 2001 Act also introduced a right for tenants groups and individual tenants to be consulted by the landlord on issues affecting them. These include:

- Housing management repairs and maintenance policies.
- Standards of service to be provided in relation to housing management repairs and maintenance.

The Scottish Housing Charter

The Charter was introduced by the Scottish Government in 2012 and will be a tool to enable tenants and other customers to monitor the standard of performance that the landlord provides. The Charter has been broken down into sixteen outcomes.

Outcome three covers participation and states:

"Social landlords manage their businesses so that:

- *Tenant and other customers find it easy to participate in and influence their landlord's decisions at a level they feel comfortable with."*

This outcome describes what landlords should achieve by:

- Meeting their statutory tenant participation duties;
- How social landlords gather and take account of the views and priorities of their tenants and other customers;
- How these views are reflected in the landlord's services;
- How landlords help and support tenants and other customers to build [up](#) their capacity for effective involvement

The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) will monitor the performance of landlords against the Charter Outcomes and has set indicators that will be used to monitor that performance.

Development of the Strategy

We have made the decision to shorten the period covered by the Strategy and for the first time, have reluctantly made the decision to go into alone. Previous Tenant Participation Strategies have been developed in partnership with Clackmannanshire Council and it is very much our intention to return to this partnership approach in the development of future strategies.

Once again we have involved housing staff, tenants and residents and we would like to thank everyone for their time and valuable input in developing this strategy which covers the period 2020/21 – 2021/22.

Paragon Housing Association Limited

Paragon Housing Association Limited currently owns over 1420 properties within the Forth Valley area. This stock is located within the Falkirk, Stirling and Clackmannanshire Council areas and is mainly general needs housing with a small number of amenity properties.

The priority is to ensure that there is effective tenant participation throughout all these communities. Paragon aims to be proactive in terms of tenant and resident involvement. The strategy is inclusive and all tenants have an equal opportunity to participate.

Paragon is a non-profit making organisation, controlled by a voluntary Management Committee. It is a charitable organisation registered with the Office of Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR). It is also registered with the Scottish Housing Regulator as a Registered Social Landlord.

Tenant Participation lies at the core of the Association's culture and the working practice of every member of staff.

3. What is Tenant Participation?

Tenant Participation is about getting tenants involved with their landlord to help develop the best possible housing services.

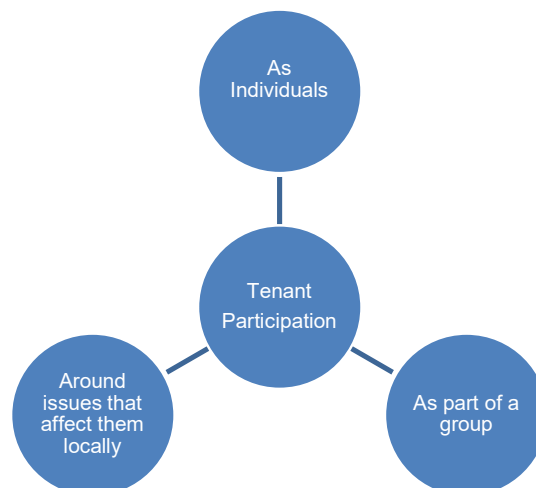
The definition of participation we use is as follows:

"Tenant participation is about tenants taking part in decision making processes and influencing decisions about:

- *Housing policies*
- *Housing conditions: and*
- *Housing (and related) services.*

It is a two way process which involves the sharing of information, ideas and power. Its aim is to improve the standard of housing conditions and services."

We recognise that "participation", will mean different things to different people – ranging from simply receiving the information that tenants need about our services in a way that can be easily understood by tenants.



We provide a range of flexible options which give our tenants and other customers a variety of choices and opportunities to be involved with each landlord. It is particularly important to provide flexibility given the diversity of all participants, tenants' needs, aspirations and individual circumstances.

It must be stressed that while tenant participation is usually associated with housing issues there is a growing agenda of participation in areas indirectly associated with

housing for example welfare rights and community learning. This means that the Paragon is not necessarily the lead agency in every situation. We are however, committed to signposting tenants, other customers and their representatives to the appropriate agency.

Following Paragon's participation in the Next Steps Programme in 2018/19 our Tenant Scrutiny Panel was re-launched in April 2019. Although Tenant Scrutiny is only one element of Participation it is within Paragon a very vibrant and active element and the Panel has been very supportive of wider Participation activity.

4. Aims and Objectives

In developing this Strategy we aim to:

- Implement the principles underpinning the Scottish Social Housing Charter and
- Comply with the requirements of the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) in agreeing a range of standards, targets and outcomes and monitoring our performance against them, with tenants and other customers.

As landlord we have always been committed to working with and engaging with our tenants, seeking and supporting their involvement in housing issues.

We will:

- Continue to support tenants groups and encourage new ones, formal or informal.
- Continue to improve communication by providing better information and listening more to tenant's ideas and views.
- Ensure that all printed information sent to our tenants will be clearly written in "plain English", jargon free and in other formats, that meets the individual's needs on request.
- Ensure that all tenants' groups are kept informed and updated
- Ensure that opportunities are created to encourage interested individual tenants to participate.
- Ensure that tenants are given reasonable time for consultation and participation
- Maintain a Public Register of Tenant Organisations
- Provide training opportunities for staff, elected members/committee members, tenants and other customers to develop the skills necessary to assist partnership working.
- Hold a register of interested tenants who can be contacted to participate in working groups, surveys or other consultation exercises.
- Support our tenants and other customers to scrutinise the landlord's performance against the Scottish Social Housing Charter outcomes.
- Embrace digital platforms to mitigate the [hopefully temporary] loss of face to face engagement and positively promote participation opportunities.

We want to ensure that the service provided meets our customers' needs and gives satisfaction.

5. Key Decisions - the timetable for participation

Where possible groups and individuals will be consulted over a 2 month-period on a particular issue or topic. However, on occasion, this timescale may be shorter, for example if the Scottish Government have a shorter consultation period.

6. Menu for Involvement

We know that not all of our tenants and other customers will want to (or be able to) be part of a group or regular meetings. We recognise that people are different, and that it is important to provide a range of activities to suit all tastes. People can get involved in a variety of ways. Detailed below are some of the ways tenants and other customers can get involved with each landlord as an individual:

- Surveys (Repairs, tenant and other customers satisfaction)
- Conferences
- Interested Individuals Register
- Garden Competition
- Members of [Resident](#) groups/Tenants and Resident Federations
- [Digital] Focus Group members
- Closed (tenants only) Facebook page

7. Feedback from Consultation Exercises

We recognise that it is extremely important to give tenants and other customers feedback on any consultation we carry out. We will provide feedback to tenants in a number of ways including:

- Newsletters
- Individual letters
- On our web site
- On our Facebook page
- At the Paragon Office

We will make every effort to demonstrate how the tenants' views obtained in consultation have been taken into account and contributed towards the final outcome(s) or service improvements.

8. Resources

Paragon recognises the importance of resourcing tenant participation adequately. We are committed to providing resources and facilities for tenant participation as follows:

- Newsletters – both tenant wide and issue specific;
- Administration (taking minutes, mailings and photocopying);

- Training;
- Access to information and advice;
- Tenants events, including 'pop up events' in partnership with others;
- Supporting the registered organisations;
- Tenant consultations;
- Translation and interpretation services
- Supporting working/consultation groups
- Focus Groups /Meetings initially at least these will be digital ;
- When 'on site' meetings resume Transport to and from venues;
- Costs to provide lunches, teas and coffees when tenants go to consultation and review meetings.
- Crèche facilities;
- Travel expenses for tenants to go to meetings;
- Staff time and travel expenses;

9. Equalities

Paragon aims to promote equal opportunities and will ensure that its staff act in a manner which will not discriminate against any individual, household or group.

We are committed to promoting equal opportunities throughout our work and do not discriminate on the grounds of ethnic origin, disability, gender, marital status, sexuality, age, language, political and religious beliefs, social class or any other form of discrimination.

The Tenant Participation Strategy works alongside our Equal Opportunity Policy.

We will support and encourage all tenants and other customers who participate while maintaining their right to privacy and confidentiality.

We will develop effective ways to identify groups which are under-represented and, through consultation with them, actively encourage them to become involved throughout the period of this strategy.

10. Monitoring and Evaluation of the Strategy

We will continue to review the progress of the Strategy. Tenants will be encouraged to become involved in establishing the monitoring methods.

We are committed to finding new ways to help tenants get involved. To do this we need to regularly look at and consider new ways of working with tenants and interested individuals.

We will:

- Develop an action plan for this short life Tenant Participation Strategy;
- Review the Action Plan once a quarter;
- Ask our tenants and interested individuals for their views on how they think we should or could get more involvement and publicise the results.
- Begin work to develop a [joint with Clackmannanshire Council] Tenant Participation Strategy beyond 2021/22

Each year we will provide the Scottish Housing Regulator through the Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) with key performance information on progressing towards or achieving the Charter outcomes and standards.

We will also report our performance to our tenants and service users.

11. Complaints

Paragon is committed to providing high-quality customer service and value complaints. They use information from complaints to help improve their services.

Tenants or other customers will be encouraged to make a complaint when they are dissatisfied about our action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by that landlord or on their behalf.

Any complaints arising from the operation of this Strategy will be dealt with under our Complaints Policy and procedures.

If the complainant is still not satisfied that their complaint has been resolved then they can progress their complaint to the Scottish Public Service Ombudsman (SPSO). The SPSO will assess whether there is evidence of service failure or maladministration not identified by the service provider.

The SPSO does not normally look at complaints from homeowners about a landlord's Factoring Service. The Homeowners Housing Panel (HoHP) deals with these. They will try to resolve complaints and disputes between homeowners and their property factors. So if a homeowner has a complaint about their factoring service, and they are still dissatisfied after their Factor's investigation stage they can go to the Homeowners Housing Panel.

The contact information for the Homeowner Housing Panel is contained in Appendix 1 List of Other Contacts/Useful Sources of Assistance.

12. ACTION PLAN 2020/21 – 2021/22 (See Separate attachment)

Appendix 1: Consultation on this strategy

The Coronavirus pandemic has meant that the usual focus groups and drop in sessions were not possible. The draft strategy was published on our website along with a survey. This was signposted in the summer newsletter and on our Facebook page. The strategy was also shared with TIS, the three local authorities and local RTO's. The Tenant Scrutiny Panel has also reviewed the draft strategy.

Whilst feedback from individual tenants was minimal we did receive very positive feedback received from the Tenant Scrutiny Panel and Tenants Information.

Following approval of the Strategy an Executive Summary will be produced in Newsletter form and this summary will be issued to all tenants in the 2020/21 Winter Newsletter and will thereafter be given to all new tenants at sign up.

Appendix 2

List of Other Contacts/ Useful Sources of Assistance

Scottish Housing Regulator
Highlander House, 58 Waterloo Street, Glasgow G2 7DA
Telephone: 0141 271 3810
Website: www.scottishhousingregulator.gov.uk

Tenants Information Service
Suite 335, Baltic Chambers, Wellington Street, Glasgow. G2 6HJ
Telephone: 0141 248 1242
Fax: 0141 221 1911
Website: www.tis.org.uk

Tenant Participation Advisory Service
74-78 Saltmarket, Glasgow. G1 5LD
Telephone: 0141 552 3633
Fax: 0141 552 0073
Website: www.tpasscotland.org.uk

Scottish Federation of Housing Associations
3rd Floor, Sutherland House, 149 St Vincent Street, Glasgow G2 5NW
Telephone: 0141 332 8113
Fax: 0141 332 9684
Website: www.sfha.co.uk

Paragon Housing Association Limited
Invergrange House, Station Road, Grangemouth FK3 8DG
Telephone: 01324 664966
Fax: 01324 664930
Website: www.paragonha.org.uk

E-mail: enquiries@paragonha.org.uk

Scottish Public Services Ombudsman

4 Melville St, Edinburgh, EH 3 7NS or SPSO, Freepost EH541, Edinburgh, EH3 0BR

Telephone: 0800 377 7330

Online contact: www.spsso.org.uk/contact-us

Website: www.spsso.org.uk Mobile site: <http://m.spsso.org.uk>

Homeowner Housing Panel

Europa Building, 450 Argyle Street, Glasgow, G2 8LH

Telephone: 014- 242-0175

Fax: 0141-242-0141

Email: hohpadmin@scotland.gsi.gov.uk

Website: <http://hohp.scotland.gov.uk/>

Glossary of Terms

RTO's – Registered Tenants Organisation

RSL's – Registered Social Landlords

AGM – Annual General Meeting

PHA – Paragon Housing Association

TIS – Tenants Information Service

SHR – Scottish Housing Regulator

SPSO – Scottish Public Services Ombudsman

HoHP – Homeowners Housing Panel

OTHER CUSTOMERS - adjoining homeowners, housing applicants and other customers who are not a tenant.

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