

# TENANTS PARTICIPATION STRATEGY 2014 - 2017



Clackmannanshire  
Council

## Foreword

Clackmannanshire Council and Paragon Housing Association have built upon the solid foundations of our successful model of a joint tenant participation strategy to develop this document. It sets out what we are planning to do in partnership with tenants, and other customers to enable and support tenant participation over the next three years.



*Councillor Les Sharp, Housing Convenor*

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.

As the Council moves towards the launch of its Housing Options service, based within Kilncraigs, we are looking to engage even further with our tenants and applicants on the housing waiting list. We will provide Personal Housing Plans for those looking for housing in Clackmannanshire, identifying suitable housing options in the social or private sector.

This may take some time to complete but will give a unique perspective of how tenants may both access their data and also determine the best way forward for their Housing needs. Working closely with the Tenants and Residents Federation and having Elected Members on the Management Boards of local RSL's allows us continuous engagement with our tenants on how we develop and deliver our services, business plans and work streams.

Our Housing Teams are fully committed to further develop participation in order that we involve our tenants in the decision making process and policy formulation, a commitment that I, as Housing Convenor, fully endorse.

This updated strategy continues to make Tenant Participation a vital ingredient in how Clackmannanshire Council and its partners evolve their housing decisions for the future.



*Flora Wallace, Chairperson Paragon Housing Association*

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 are 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, staff and Management Committee working together to look at what we do and how we do.

This partnership 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.

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## 1. Introduction

Welcome to the fourth tenant participation strategy, produced by Clackmannanshire Council and Paragon Housing Association developed in partnership with tenants, residents, Interested Individuals and staff.

This strategy outlines how we will continue to increase participation by working with our registered tenant organisations, individual tenants, other customers, residents and staff. This will detail how we plan to deliver our objectives between 2014 and 2017/8.

As Landlords we want 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

Once again we have involved a review group made up of housing staff, tenants and residents and we would like to thank all members of the review group for their time and valuable input in developing this strategy which covers the period 2014-20178.

### **The Landlords**

#### Clackmannanshire Council

Clackmannanshire Council is a local authority that was formed in 1996 and is situated literally in the heart of Central Scotland. It is bounded by the Ochil Hills to the north and the river Forth to the South. This compact area covers a total of 157 square kilometres comprising a number of small towns and villages set in a mixed urban and rural environment.

The Housing Property and Advice Service manages the housing stock of approximately 5,000 properties and is committed to ensuring the provision of high quality housing and an accessible housing service.

We aim to make Clackmannanshire a place where tenants can influence the decision-making process through a range of involvement opportunities and by working in partnership to deliver a housing service that meets those needs.

#### Paragon Housing Association Limited

Paragon Housing Association Limited currently owns over 1400 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.

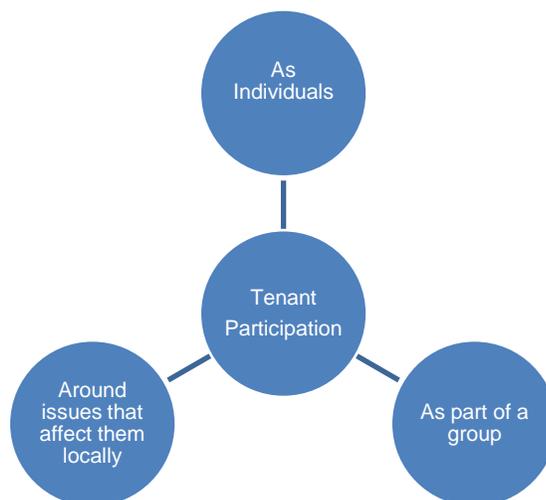
The definition of participation we use is as follows:

*“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 to 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 landlords are not necessarily the lead agency in every situation. We are however, committed to signposting tenants, other customers and their representatives to the appropriate agency.

#### **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 landlords 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.

We want to ensure that the service provided meets our customer tenants' 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 all 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
- Focus Group members

## **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 your landlord's web site
- In libraries
- Your landlord's office(s)

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**

As landlords, we recognise the importance of resourcing tenant participation adequately. We are committed to providing resources and facilities for tenant participation as follows:

- A Newsletter;
- Venues for meetings;
- 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;
- Administration (taking minutes, mailings and photocopying);
- Training;
- Access to information and advice;
- Annual tenants conference or event;
- Supporting the registered organisations;
- Tenant consultations;
- Translation and interpretation services
- Supporting working/consultation groups

## **9. Equalities**

The Landlords aim 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 each landlord's 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:

- Review the full Tenant Participation Strategy every three years;
- Review the Action Plans annually;
- Ask our tenants and interested individuals for their views on how they think we should or could get more involvement and publicise the results.

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 other service users, who use our service.

## **11. Complaints**

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

Tenants or other customers will be encouraged to make a complaint when they are dissatisfied about the landlord's 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 each landlord's 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 2014 – 2017 (See Separate attachment)**

## **Appendix 1**

### **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](http://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](http://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](http://www.tpasscotland.org.uk)

Scottish Federation of Housing Associations  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Sutherland House, 149 St Vincent Street, Glasgow G2 5NW  
Telephone: 0141 332 8113  
Fax: 0141 332 9684  
Website: [www.sfha.co.uk](http://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](http://www.paragonha.org.uk)  
E-mail: [enquiries@paragonha.org.uk](mailto: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](http://www.spsso.org.uk/contact-us)  
Website: [www.spsso.org.uk](http://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](mailto: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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