

## **Tenants Participation Strategy 2023/4 – 2027/28**



We can produce this document in different formats such as in larger print or audio-format; we can also translate the document into various languages as appropriate.

Approved : October 2023

## **Contents**

- 1. Background**
- 2. Legislative and Regulatory Framework**
- 3. What is Tenant Participation?**
- 4. Strategic Principles**
- 5. Menu for Involvement**
- 6. Key Decisions Timetable**
- 7. Feedback from Consultation Exercises**
- 8. Resources**
- 9. Benefits of Participation**
- 10. Tackling barriers to participation**
- 11. Monitoring and Evaluation of the Strategy**
- 12. Complaints**
- 13. Appendices – Action Plan**
  - Consultation Report**
  - Useful contact**
  - Glossary of terms**

## **1. Background**

This document is our tenant participation strategy for the period 2023/4 – 2027/28

The strategy outlines how we will in the five years from April 2022 continue to increase participation by working with our registered tenant organisations, individual tenants, other customers, residents and staff. Also how we have and will continue to respond to the changes imposed on us since the Covid pandemic.

The Association views 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.

Tenant participation is a governance strategy that focusses on consultation with tenants and other customers about our policies and services. Our aim is to enable all tenants to become involved at whatever level suits them.

Whilst we are required in law to produce a tenant participation strategy, statutory duties are not to be regarded as an end in themselves, rather a framework of principles for developing tenant participation activities.

Critically we want the strategy takes into account local issues and we do this through the creation of a tenant participation action plan. This will be developed now the strategy has been approved. The action plan will be closely linked to our equality strategy as many of the possible barriers to active participation are linked to barriers relating to structural disadvantage.

For example, poverty and social exclusion can impact negatively on people's opportunities and willingness to participate effectively. Another example is how inaccessible buildings and services can affect the participation of disabled people unless organisations make appropriate reasonable adjustments. This requires having awareness of the barriers to prevent institutionalised discrimination.

This is why we include equality issues throughout all tenant participation activities.

## **2. Legislative & Regulatory 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.

## **3. What is Tenant Participation?**

Tenant participation is about tenants taking part in decision making processes and influencing decisions about Housing policies, Housing conditions, 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.

Involvement is an overall term used to describe tenant engagement at any level

Information is the basis of good communication and strengthening landlord – tenant relationships

Consultation is seeking customer's views and ideas, taking account of those views and providing feedback

Participation is where tenants actively engage in decision-making from planning through to implementation

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

Whilst 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. Strategic Principles**

It is important that our tenants are involved in helping to shape and influence the services they receive from us. We believe that this involvement will help us to further improve our services and communities.

We know that tenant participation is a continuous process of sharing information and improving communication. We want our tenants to be able to play a full and active part in developing our future.

The principles of this strategy are based on comments and views we received during an initial consultation process. We believe that these aims and objectives ensure we put tenants and service users at the heart of our business. Our strategic principles for the period from 2023 - 2027 are as follows:

**1. Equality.** We are committed to being inclusive, free from discrimination and prejudice, recognising that each person has different circumstances and the need to allocate the resources and opportunities needed to reach an equal outcome. Wherever possible, we will remove barriers that prevent people from taking part. We will develop ways of encouraging everyone in our communities to become involved. We will take account of equal opportunities and good practice.

**2. Culture of community participation** We will actively encourage community participation by building mutual trust, respect and partnership between us, tenants, tenant groups and the community. We will provide an environment of openness and honesty, where differences of opinion can be used positively in a culture of mutual respect.

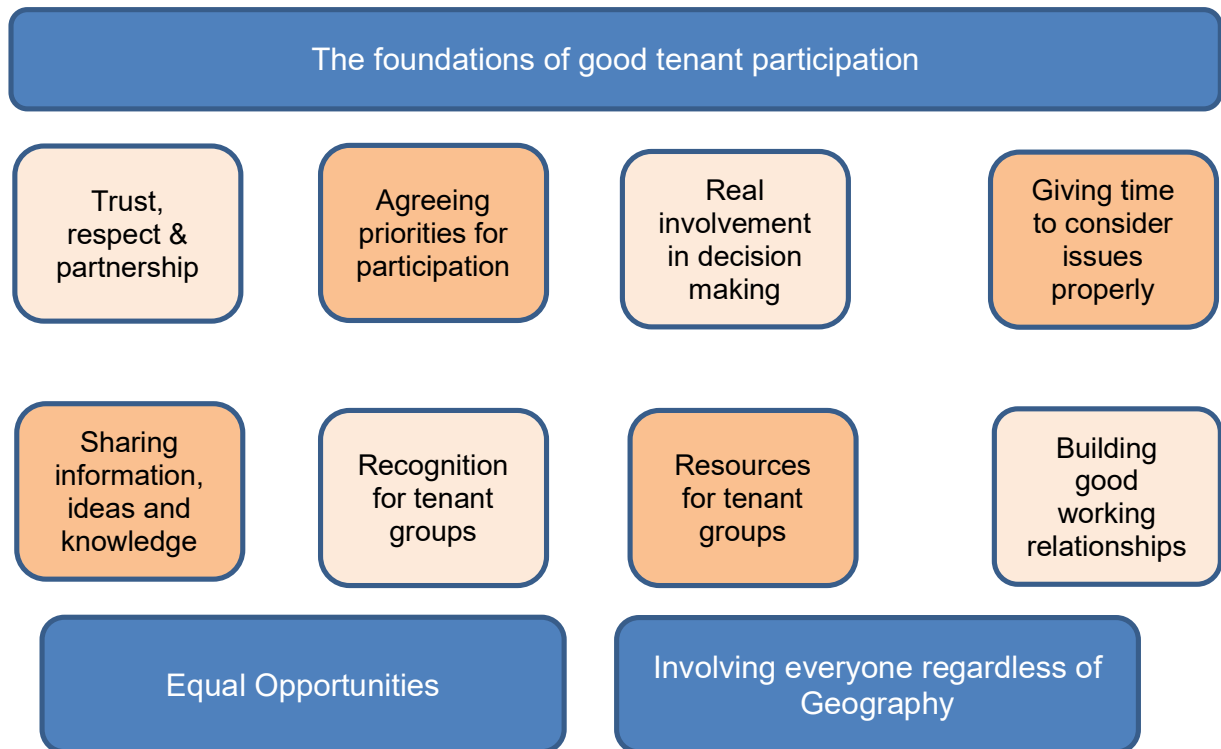
**3. Information, communication and feedback** We will make sure that we communicate with tenants and the community effectively by providing good quality, easy-to-understand information, listening to what we are told, and providing feedback on how we have used the views we've gathered.

**4. Involvement** We will offer tenants different options for getting involved, so they can choose the level and type of involvement that suits them best. This allows tenants to be involved individually or as part of a tenants' group. We will recognise the independence and autonomy of tenant groups and actively encourage and support new groups or individuals to get involved. We will promote and increase tenant and customer awareness of their rights to participate and to get involved in housing issues.

**5. Decision-making** We will make sure that tenants have the opportunity to influence our main housing services taking their views into account before decisions are made. We will encourage tenants to have an input into local and community issues, as well as providing opportunities to shape our services and housing policies that provide good value for money.

**6. Continuous improvement** We will continually review our strategy to make sure it meets the changing needs and circumstances of all our tenants. We will meet the standards set out in the Scottish Social Housing Charter. We will involve tenants and service users in the self-assessment of housing services. We will also continue to work with other agencies such as Tenants Information Service and other organisations Tenants Groups to ensure that tenants are fully aware of wider issues

and influences.



## 5. Menu for Involvement

A key principle of this strategy is that everyone will have a chance to get involved in a way that suits them and part of the process is to develop a 'Menu of Involvement' which will broadly be grouped in three categories.

**Involvement in the decision making process** – participation is about tenants and other customers taking part in the decision making process and influencing decisions made.

**Involvement in scrutinising and monitoring the service** – We want to involve our tenants and customers in scrutinising the services we provide to ensure that not only do we keep our promises and standards of services but continually strive to improve our performance in all service areas.

**Providing views and opinions of services** – We have developed a range of ways for tenants and other customers to provide their views and opinions on the services they receive.

Detailed below are some of the ways tenants and other customers can get involved with Paragon on an individual level:

- 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
- Estate based inspection
- Tenant scrutiny activity
- Armchair reviewers
- Mystery shopping exercises

We anticipate that the final version of the strategy will expand on the list as well grouping them in the three categories.

## **6. 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.

## **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.

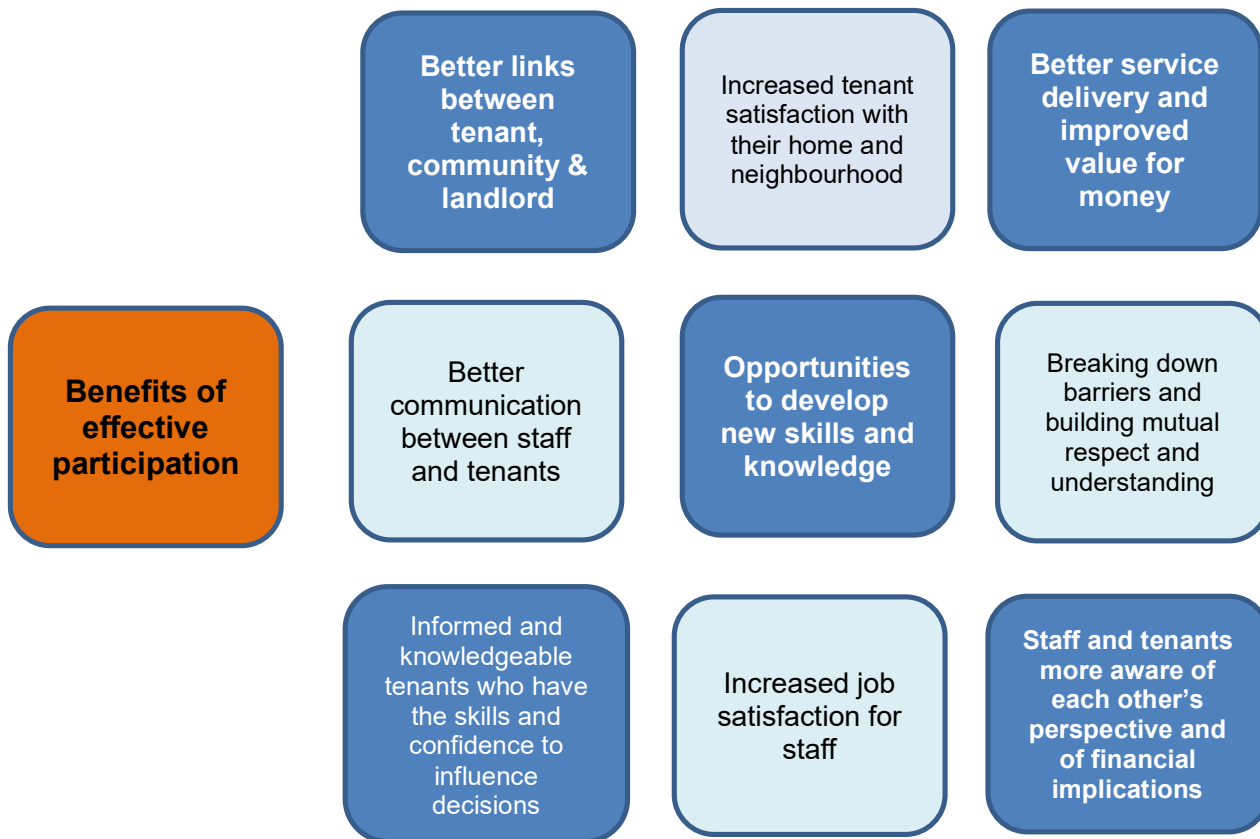
## **8. Resources**



The Association 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. The Benefits of Participation



## 10. Tackling the barriers to participation

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 treating people equally, respectfully and fairly, tackling discrimination and harassment and ensuring our services are accessible for all and in line with all relevant legislation.

The Tenant Participation Strategy looks to mainstream equalities and an Equalities Impact Assessment has been undertaken.

We will support and encourage all tenants and other customers to 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. As part of this process we will make sure we recognise the importance of avoiding main faith holidays when organising events.

We seek to ensure that all groups and individuals have equal access and opportunity to engage in activities and we welcome participation from all. Examples of some of the barriers to participation are listed below along with our commitments to help deal with these:

Family Responsibilities: People may be unable to attend meetings because of family responsibilities. We may provide creche facilities during meetings free of charge, or make available child minding allowances to enable people to attend participation meetings. We will help and assist wherever we can.

Transport People may be unable to attend meetings due to the [un]availability and cost of transport. Where appropriate we will provide transport / and or assist with the cost of transport.

Location of Meetings We will try and ensure only fully accessible meeting venues are used and we will wherever possible offer a means of joining meetings virtually (Teams / Zoom etc).

Times of Meeting -We will vary times as much as possible to ensure as wide a range of participants as possible are able to join in.

## **11. 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 work with tenants and other interested groups to:

- Produce an action plan which we will review twice a year
- Develop targets to use when monitoring the development of tenant participation, monitor our performance each year and report to our management committee and to tenants and other service users
- 

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 review the strategy every year to make sure that it is fit for purpose, continues to meet tenants' and residents needs and is still in line with the law.

To monitor and measure out progress we will consider:

- the number of registered tenants' organisations;
- the number of tenants on our interested tenants' register;
- the number of tenants attending events;
- the number of consultation exercises involving tenants;
- the percentage of tenants satisfied with our approach to tenant participation;
- the percentage of tenants satisfied with our consultation exercises; and
- the percentage of our tenants served by registered tenants' organisations

## **12. 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.

## **Appendix 1 Action Plan**

To be developed.


## Appendix 2: Consultation on this strategy



### Tenant Participation Strategy- Consultation



Pre Drafting Consultation

- Discussions with Tenant Scrutiny Panel
- Consideration of good practice / other RSL Strategies
- Completed Equality Impact Assessment




### Tenant Participation Strategy - Consultation

- Strategy, Survey and Newsletter uploaded on to Website
- Newsletter & Survey posted out to every tenancy



### Tenant Participation Strategy - Consultation

1427 Surveys issued and 126 returned (8.83% response rate)



### Q1. Do you think we have explained what tenant participation is?

Have we explained what Tenant Participation is?



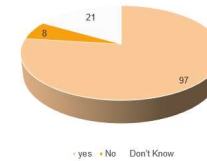
98.37% felt we had explained what Tenant Participation is



### Q2. Do you think the use of graphics is useful in explaining the different levels of involvement and other aspects of participation?

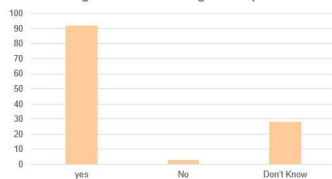
Is the use of graphics useful?

81.51% think graphics are useful



### Q3. Do you agree with our 6 strategic principles?

Agree with the Strategic Principals

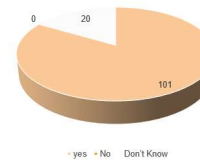


Only 3 people disagreed with the strategic principals. Suggestions for additional / alternatives were all based around a desire to see more on-site interaction with tenants



### Q5. Do you agree with stated foundations of good tenant participation? & Q6. Are there any other ways of participating you think we should include?

Are the Foundations right?



One comment read:

*"you already have the tools i.e. scrutiny, committee, questionnaire, newsletter etc"*



## Suggestions & Comments

maybe online surveys and newsletters and those that want to receive them online rather than paper could subscribe

*contact people directly with a visit and talk to them as a lot of people can't read and are embarrassed to admit it so these survey are waste of time*

Language - the newsletter is entirely in English. A box with a sentence in different languages saying "available to be printed would be helpful. Publicise the accessibility of the office by mentioning hearing loop/stairlift, etc



## Conclusions

- Majority of respondents support the strategic direction of the Strategy
- We can and should do more to promote accessibility – interpreters, hearing loop, stairlift, different formats etc.
- We should consider an 'opt in / opt out' approach to digital / paper engagement



## Next Steps

- TP Strategy will be taken to October meeting for approval
- Action Plan will be drawn up November / December and taken to December 15<sup>th</sup> meeting of Tenant Scrutiny Panel
- TP Policy will be reviewed to reflect TP strategy.



### **Appendix 3:**

#### **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/>

UNDERSTANDING WHAT WE SAY  
Glossary to be developed

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