

TENANT PARTICIPATION STRATEGY

Involving Tenants in the decision making process



Tenant
Participation



Tenant & Landlord Working Together

Contents

1.	Introduction to Tenant Participation	3
2.	Aims and Objectives	4
3.	Statement of Resources	4
4.	Issues for Consultation / Participation	5
5.	Communicating with Tenants	6/7
6.	Keeping it Simple – No Jargon	7
7.	Equal Opportunities	7
8.	Setting up a Tenant Group	8

Introduction to Tenant Participation

The 2001 Housing (Scotland) Act introduced specific responsibilities on local authorities and Registered Social Landlords (RSL's) to develop meaningful tenant participation and consultation processes.

In particular the Act defined three duties, which the Association has to comply with –

- Duty to notify tenants and registered tenants organisations about matters relating to housing management and services and a duty to have regard to representations made by individual tenants or tenants groups.
- Duty to maintain a Register of tenants groups (Register can be found in Castlehill's main office Reception)
- Duty to prepare strategies for tenant participation and provide an assessment of resources to put the strategy into action.

After consulting tenants (and the Tenant Participation Steering Group) and taking views and comments into account, we produced the following Tenant Participation Strategy.

This document explains how we plan to carry out the above duties, and make tenant participation meaningful.

This is a 'living' document, which means changes can be made and your ideas and comments are always welcome. Could it be easier to read? Can you think of other ways you would like to receive information or be consulted?

If you want to comment on any part of this Strategy, please contact Claire Macdonald, Tenant Participation Officer at Castlehill.



by email - info@castlehillha.co.uk



by telephone – 01224 625822



by post – 4 Carden Place, Aberdeen, AB10 1UT



by fax – 01224 625830

Aims and Objectives

The Strategy has been developed to provide a framework for Tenant Participation, which meets the following aims of the Association –

- To provide effective, clear and responsive consultation and information processes through which to improve housing conditions and management services.
- To positively encourage tenants to be active, either as individuals or as groups.
- To develop a culture and knowledge within the Association whereby staff and Committee view and use participation processes as an integral part of management and service delivery.
- To meet all statutory requirements and observe codes of practice and standards in accordance with the requirements of the Scottish Government.
- To ensure that all service users, regardless of particular circumstances or difficulties, have access to the same rights of participation and consultation.
- To provide for an effective monitoring and review process in respect of service user participation.

Statement of Resources

As Tenant Participation is an important part of Castlehill's day-to-day work, each year we will allocate to it a reasonable budget. This amount will be reviewed throughout the year to ensure that we continue to budget a sufficient amount. The budget is for things such as staffing, newsletter production, leaflet and letter production, postage, stationery, training expenses, financial assistance to tenants group and membership of advisory/support organisations. A resource breakdown is available on request.

Remember



*If you have any ideas to make Tenant Participation more meaningful,
please let us know*

Issues for Consultation / Participation

If we are proposing to make a change to a policy and it affects you directly, we will consult you before that policy is changed.

This also applies to any decisions being made on other issues that might affect you.

Your views and comments will be taken into account, before the final decision is made by Castlehill's Management Committee.

Where tenants say their views are in confidence, this confidence will be respected.

The main issues that tenants will be consulted on (list is not exhaustive) –

- **Any change to our Housing Management/Maintenance policies** i.e. allocations, tenancy agreements, tenant participation, estate management, repairs and maintenance and other services.
- **Rent Setting** - you will be consulted regarding each annual rent review.
- **Modernising / Major Cyclical Repairs** - you will be consulted regarding any improvements to your property as well as any proposed major repairs under planned maintenance.
- **New Build Properties** - if Castlehill propose to develop an area near you, and that development would have a direct impact on you, we will encourage involvement from tenants regarding the scheme layout, design, etc.
- **Scheme Specific Issues** - if an issue arises within a scheme that requires participation, we will consult tenants on the best way forward for these issues, before making a decision.

The remaining pages of the Strategy will explain how we plan to do this.



Communicating With Tenants

Tenant Participation cannot work without making sure that we cover all lines of communication.

When we consulted on the development of this Strategy, one of the main concerns from tenants was the amount of paper that could be wasted and postage costs. See listed below how we are going to raise awareness of Tenant Participation and how we plan to consult you, while addressing wastage concerns.

- Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement and Hand Book
- Newsletters / Leaflets
- Individual Letters (*if you would prefer us to email – please let us know*)
- Castlehill Website
- Telephone
- Public Meetings
- Scheme / Block Specific Issues
- Tenant Satisfaction Survey

Tenancy Agreement and Handbook

You are covered by the rights and responsibilities contained in the Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement. One of your new rights is to be consulted on issues that affect you – i.e. Tenant Participation. See Section 8 of your Agreement. Your handbook also has a section on Tenant Participation.

Newsletters / Leaflets

Castlehill already produce a Newsletter / Magazine twice per year (Summer and Winter). We will use this to inform tenants of issues coming up for consultation and notify you of outcomes. In between Newsletters, we may produce leaflets to bring issues to your attention.

Individual Letters

We will only use individual letters when an issue arises that requires particular individual attention. For example, the rent review consultation.

Website

This Strategy is posted on Castlehill's website. Our Website is www.castlehillha.co.uk
You can also contact Castlehill via this website.

Telephone

You can speak to staff about Tenant Participation, by calling the office. If someone is not available for you to speak to, you can leave a message and someone will get back to you.

Public Meetings

When we are consulting on an issue that might be better explained at a meeting, we will arrange meetings. Castlehill's properties are spread over Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire and Moray, so we will hold meetings in various locations.

Scheme / Block Specific Issues

Sometimes we will consult a specific housing scheme or block of flats only. In this case, we could, write, call, arrange visits, meetings, or send leaflets. All tenants will be advised of the outcome of consultations by letter.

Tenant Satisfaction Survey

We will carry out regular surveys to get feedback on satisfaction. We will consult tenants on the content of this. All tenants will be advised of the outcome in Newsletters.

Keeping it simple – No Jargon

All forms of communication between Castlehill and tenants will always be clear and concise - plain language, jargon free!

Equal Opportunities

One of our Aim and Objectives is to ensure that all service users, regardless of particular circumstances or difficulties have access to the same rights of participation and consultation. Castlehill will endeavour to make all areas of Tenant Participation available to all tenants. We will –

- Ensure that all public meetings are ‘barrier free’. This means that people who have mobility problems or people using wheelchairs can attend any meetings held, and use the facilities.
- Arrange a home visit if you are unable, because of a disability, to attend a public meeting.
- Arrange, where possible, interpretation of documents into different languages, on request.
- Ensure that the website is up to date with all Tenant Participation issues, so that you can make your views known via any personal computer.
- Ensure that, on request, large print documents, or audio versions, or Braille versions, are made available to persons with impaired sight.

Setting Up a Tenant Group

Registered Tenant Organisations

Castlehill have a duty to consult tenants and Registered Tenants Organisations (RTOs) on issues that have an effect on them (as noted earlier). We will take ideas and comments, from tenants and RTOs, into account before making a decision on the issue.

To become a Registered Tenant Organisation, you have to follow conditions laid down by the Scottish Government.

Please contact Claire Macdonald at Castlehill (01224 625822 or email info@castlehillha.co.uk) for more details about applying to become a RTO. The full list of conditions (Scottish Government criteria) will be sent to you, along with what support Castlehill can offer if you become registered.

Informal Tenant Groups

While we encourage RTOs, we appreciate that not everyone wants to become as 'formally' involved. For this reason, we also encourage, and support, non-registered tenant organisations, which wish to meet informally.

Training - RTOs and Informal Groups

Castlehill can arrange free Tenant Participation training for interested groups. These events could cover issues, including –

- Your rights as tenants
- Building your organisation's membership
- Improving consultation

Please note that we can also pay expenses such as –

- Mileage / travel costs - to the training event
- Childcare can be arranged and costs will be met to allow you to attend the training event.

Admin Support – RTOs and Informal Groups

Castlehill will also, as best it can, assist you with the production of newsletters, leaflets, typing of letters, etc.

We can also provide basic stationery for your meetings (pads, pens, etc).