



TENANT PARTICIPATION STRATEGY

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1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STRATEGY

Calvay Housing Association aims to provide excellent standards across our services that meet tenants' expectations and provide value for money. Active and meaningful tenant participation contributes towards us achieving this.

The Scottish Social Housing Charter (2017) states:
"Social landlords manage their businesses so that:

tenants 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 duties on tenant participation. It covers how social landlords gather and take account of the views and priorities of their tenants, other customers, and bodies representing them such as registered tenant organisations; how they shape their services to reflect these views; and how they help tenants, other customers and bodies representing them such as registered tenant organisations to become more capable of involvement – this could include supporting them to scrutinise landlord services."

The National Strategy for Tenant Participation, 'Partners in Participation (1999)' defines tenant participation as *"-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 service."*

The Scottish Government's Guide to successful Tenant Participation (2018) states that:

The Act [Housing (Scotland) Act 2001] introduced a legal framework for TP. It introduced rights for individual tenants and registered tenant groups to be consulted by their landlord on issues affecting them. Landlords have to take account of their views within a reasonable timescale....

Under the Act Landlords have to:

- have in place a TP strategy and review and monitor its effectiveness regularly
- have a registration scheme for tenant organization to register with them and keep a publicly available register of these RTOs
- consult with tenants and RTOs on a range of housing and related services
- provide a range of information to their tenants

2. WHY THIS STRATEGY EXISTS

21 CHA aims to provide excellent standards across our services that meet tenants' expectations and provide value for money. Active and meaningful tenant participation contributes towards us achieving this and ensure we meet standards set by the Scottish Housing Charter.

22 Specific benefits for tenants include:

- Increased control over living conditions.
- Services from Calvay that are better targeted and offer greater satisfaction.
- Greater ability to influence the decisions and direction of the Association.
- More direct avenues to inform Calvay of the issues that matter most to them and their areas
- The opportunity to develop new skills and access training, which can be applied to other circumstances and to the benefit of communities.

23 Specific benefits for Calvay include:

- Better community knowledge and experience, leading to more efficient and cost effective management.
- Services are targeted to needs.
- Calvay is better equipped to respond to changing needs and circumstances.

24 Specific mutual benefits include:

- Increased communication between tenants, residents, and the Association
- The Association and tenants being more aware of each other's perspectives, responsibilities, and limitations.
- Better links between the community and the Association

3. AIMS: WHAT WE WILL DO

3.1 CHA's guiding principle is that all tenants and residents should have the maximum opportunity that is practically possible to be directly involved in, to be consulted on and to comment on decision-making within CHA. The specific aims below detail what CHA propose to achieve this. We will:

- Promote and increase tenant awareness of their rights to participate and the ways in which they can get involved
- Seek to understand any real or perceived barriers that serve to discourage, limit and/or prevent involvement and respond to these
- Develop and expand avenues of participation, alongside tenants and residents
- Maximise and highlight the mutual benefits of participation
- Ensure that consultation and feedback methods reflect the diverse needs of our tenants
- Ensure that we have tenant members as the largest single constituency on CHA's Committee.
- Encourage and support the establishment of tenant groups and/or issue-based groups

3.2 Avenues for participation are set out below.

3.2.1 Share Members

Tenants, residents, and people or organisations who support what the Association does can become share members. Members can stand for election on our Committee, attend our Annual General Meeting, and vote on who joins the Committee.

3.2.2 Tenant Scrutiny Panel

Calway will seek to establish a Tenant Scrutiny Panel (TSP). The TSP will be able to look at all aspects of the organisation, to make sure that we're doing things right. Examples might be looking at our policies to see if we've missed anything, giving ideas on how to improve services, and reviewing the information we give to the Scottish Housing Regulator.

3.2.3 Committee

This group make decisions on the overall direction of the Association and make sure that Calway stick to their vision, mission, and values. They meet ten times a

year for approximately 2 hours. There are also Board of Management sub committees which look at specific areas of business. These include: Operations, Regeneration, Staffing and Audit and these meet quarterly (Operations and Regeneration) or when required by the business (Staffing and Audit).

3.2.4 Individually

Tenants can take part in surveys by letter or online, telephone, email, face-to-face meetings, and are regularly encouraged to voice their ideas and opinions.

3.2.5 Registered Tenant's Organisations (RTOs) and local residents and tenants groups

At present, we currently have no RTOs. However, where tenants would like to establish an RTO, we will offer guidance, training, and advice. We will also support with meeting rooms, access to office equipment, start-up grants, and with seeking further funding.

4. OBJECTIVES: HOW WE WILL DO THIS

Calway will achieve the above aims through implementing the below. We will:

- Ensure a whole-organisation approach whereby all staff members implement this strategy
- Have easy-to-read information detailing tenant's rights to participate and the current avenues for participation
- Ensure the above information is available readily, in both hard copy and as a digital resource
- Ensure communication on participation is clear, regular, diverse, and creative (see Section 5).
- Informally build relationships with tenants through engaging at various community events and at tenant events
- Increase incentives to engage with the Association through widening access to recreational and learning opportunities
- Continuously seek out and explore innovative strategies to encourage and enable tenant participation for everyone, in particular those who are traditionally under-represented.
- Seek out and respond to training needs (tenants and staff) that would facilitate greater participation.
- Develop strong relationships with external agencies across the wider community, such as; schools, community groups, healthcare partners, and employment and voluntary organisations to achieve mutually beneficial support
- Promote examples of tenant participation which highlight the positive impact involvement has for tenants
- Review this strategy in consultation with tenants and residents

5. HOW WE COMMUNICATE WITH TENANTS

- 5.1 We strive to communicate in a way that is inclusive, diverse, and far-reaching. Tenants have stated that their preferred method of receiving information is by newsletter. Tenant's preferences, circumstances, and priorities may change over time and so this will be reviewed.
- 5.2 We recognise that communication is a two-way process and so support a range of communication methods to provide information to, and to receive information from, our tenants and residents. These are detailed below:
- Every household receives a Newsletter four times per year
 - Each tenant receives the Tenant's Handbook on their Sign-Up meeting
 - Sending letters
 - Leafleting and putting posters around the local community
 - Updating the website
 - Door-to-door engagement
 - One-to-one meetings
 - Having stalls at wider community events e.g. those organized by EHRA
 - Organising open days
 - Phoning / texting
 - Arranging public meetings
 - Supporting Close and Block Meetings
 - Directly informing our Tenant Groups
 - Regularly updating Facebook
 - Creating an 'open door' culture whereby tenants and residents are encouraged to share their ideas, opinions, and views

6. HOW WE CONSULT

6.1 CHA recognises its obligation to consult tenants on a range of issues, to consider their views when making decisions.

6.2 In particular we will consult all tenants on;

- Issues affecting their tenancy including any changes to our tenancy agreement
- Changes to rents and services
- The repairs service
- How we will deal with problems
- How we will communicate with tenants
- How tenants and residents can participate

6.3 We will conduct community consultations on specific issues, for example use of space in an area or parking solutions. We will use a variety of methods to consult our tenants, through:

- Using community and tenant events throughout the year for informal engagement to build relationships for further participation
- Door-to-door engagement
- Organising community consultation events
- Conducting surveys, including online surveys

7. HOW WE GIVE FEEDBACK

7.1 When tenants take part in a consultation, we will give them, where possible, the option to choose how to receive feedback, through for example, email, letter, or over the phone. We will also widely publicise results through, for example, our Newsletters, website, social media, letters, and information leaflets.

8. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

8.1 We will encourage and promote measures that ensure all tenants have equitable access to participating, as per the Equalities Act 2010.

8.2 We will achieve this by:

- Using interpreters, signers, tapes and Braille if appropriate.
- Facilitating tenants' and residents' attendance at meetings by ensuring premises are accessible.
- Providing childcare or allowances for childcare.
- Ensuring meetings are appropriately timed so that the maximum number of people can attend.
- Meeting 'Out of Pocket' expenses where necessary.

8.3 We are aware that for some groups there are additional barriers to participation and are thus at risk of being under-represented across tenant participation. Such groups include:

- People from black and minority ethnic (BME) communities
- Lone parents
- People with additional support needs
- People with physical disabilities
- Young people
- Older people
- People in supported accommodation
- People experiencing mental ill health

We will actively engage with these groups and with the services and agencies that represent and support them. We will listen and learn to ensure we are implementing best practice for encouraging and supporting participation from these groups.

9. TRAINING

9.1 To achieve involvement that is meaningful and capable of influencing CHA's decisions, we will ensure that:

- Staff receive training in developing and supporting participation.
- We make a demonstrable commitment to tenant and resident involvement will be included in all person specifications when recruiting staff. For some posts, this will be an essential requirement e.g. Housing Manager / Housing Officers.
- New staff will receive induction training on Calvay's approach to tenant participation.
- Skills and knowledge in techniques for assisting and developing participation will be part of ongoing staff training and development
- Staff are adequately informed and supported when involved in consultation and dialogue with individuals and groups.
- We will consult with tenants on their training needs and facilitate these opportunities internally or through various external organisations, for example; Tenant Participation Advisory Service, Tenant Information Service, Chartered Institute of Housing, SFHA and SHARE.

10. RESOURCES

10.1 We recognise that sufficient resources are required to implement the strategy effectively. While CHA does not have a member of staff dedicated to Tenant Participation, budgets for consultation exercises, training for staff and groups, staff time, supporting registered and unregistered groups, and initiating specific projects will be supported.

We also provide 'in kind' resources for all of our tenant-led groups by providing:

- Hire of meeting rooms
- Photocopying
- Provision of child care
- Provision of any special requirements
- Attendance at conferences
- Out of Pocket' expenses

11. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

11.1 Calvay will monitor the impact of this Strategy through recording the following:

- Percentage of tenants responding to consultation
- Number of tenant group memberships and how this has changed over time
- How we have engaged with tenants

12. INVOLVEMENT IN THE REVIEW OF THIS STRATEGY

12.1 This strategy will be reviewed in consultation with tenants and residents through:

- Facilitating discussions with groups of tenants around what the strategy should contain
- Issuing the strategy to our Tenant Scrutiny Panel for feedback
- Providing all tenants and residents with an easy-to-read summary of the strategy with an invitation to give feedback.

13. LINKS TO OTHER POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

13.1 This strategy is part of a broader package of involving tenants and residents in the work of the Association. Other elements include;

- Our Equal Opportunities Policy
- Business Plan
- Our Tenant Satisfaction Surveys

14. APPENDIX A – REGISTRATION CRITERIA FOR REGISTERED TENANTS ASSOCIATIONS

Registration gives groups (Tenants Associations) a recognised role in the decision making process. Calvay will assist groups through the decision making process.

The group (tenants association) must have a written constitution that is available for inspection and which details:

- the group's (tenants association) objectives;
- the area in which it operates;
- the membership process;
- how the committee operates and is elected;
- how business is conducted;
- how funds are managed;
- when meetings are held, including the Annual General Meeting;
- how the constitution can be amended;
- the group's (tenants association) commitment to equal opportunities;
- how the group (tenants association) intends to promote housing and housing related matters.

The group (tenants association) must have a committee that:

- is elected annually and committee members must be required to stand down after a certain period (this period should be included in the constitution);
- consists of at least three members who can co-opt other members on;
- reaches decisions democratically (the decision making process should be included in the constitution).

The group must operate within a defined area that includes the landlord's housing stock, and it must be open to all tenants within that area.

The group must have proper accounting records showing income and expenditure, assets and liabilities. The constitution must require an annual audited financial statement to be presented at the Annual General Meeting.

The group must be able to demonstrate how it plans to represent the views of its members and how it will keep them informed.