



**LINKHOUSING**

**Tenant Participation Strategy  
2014 – 2017**

## **Introduction**

Link has a strong commitment and tradition of involving tenants across the organisation in a variety of ways.

Tenant participation is about sharing knowledge, decision making and working with staff, managers and our Board to ensure the services we provide meet your needs. Successful tenant participation delivers benefits for staff, landlords and tenants creating a culture of trust, respect and partnership.

It is your knowledge and experience of our services that is our most valuable tool in learning how we can improve. We want you to be able to provide this knowledge and experience without any barriers and participate in a way that suits you.

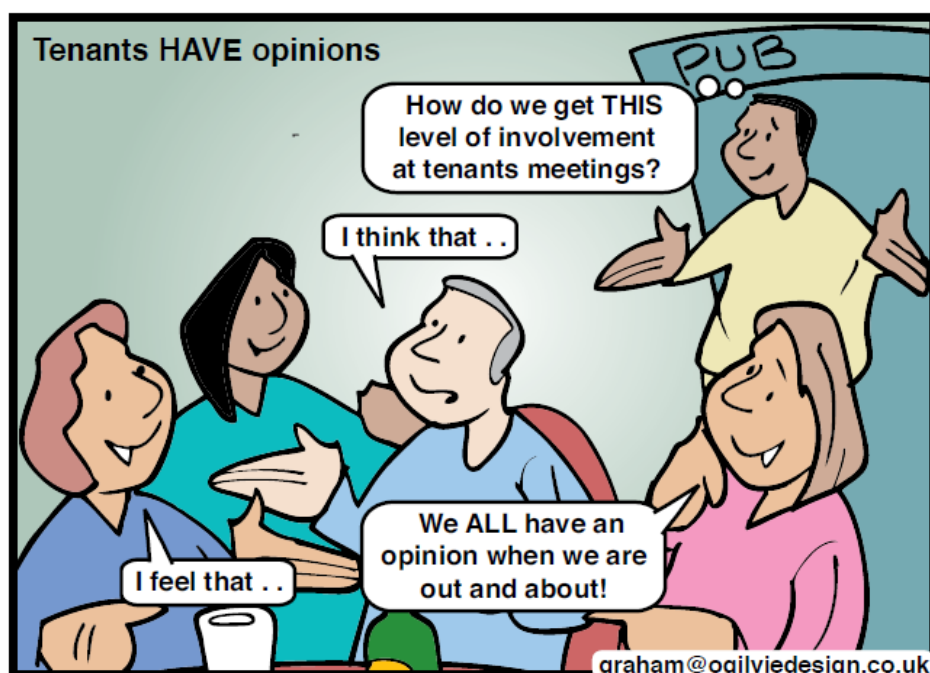
## **Tenant participation is your right**

Tenant participation is about you influencing the decisions made about the service and management of your homes and neighbourhood.

It is a legal requirement for all Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to do this as part of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.

You have the right to be consulted on:

- Link's Tenant Participation Strategy
- Any changes to rents and service charges
- Changes to policies and service standards relating to housing management, repairs and maintenance



## **Scottish Social Housing Charter and tenant scrutiny**

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 sets out the requirement for a Scottish Social Housing Charter which came into effect in 2013.

The Charter sets out the 14 outcomes that all landlords are measured against on an annual basis – this is called the Annual Return on the Charter. The emphasis of the Charter is on tenants scrutinising the performance of our services and governance.

Link's Tenant Participation Strategy describes how tenant scrutiny relates to other types of tenant participation at Link. Scrutiny is using customers experience to improve services (with a focus on evaluating and reporting on performance) and is considered different from other tenant participation activities such as Registered Tenants Organisations, consultations, focus groups, tenant satisfaction surveys and events.

We established a Tenant Scrutiny Panel in 2013 to develop and formalise our approach to tenant scrutiny. The Tenant Scrutiny Panel is responsible for working independently to scrutinise our performance and will work with staff on the first Annual Return on the Charter and tenant report.



The aims of the panel are:

- To work on behalf of customers, and in partnership with Link, to achieve improvements to services provided.
- The Panel shall strive, through investigation, analysis and discussion, in a spirit of cooperation and collaboration, to achieve the best service performance and value possible.
- To increase tenant influence in decision making and the strategic and operational development of services.

## **Tenant participation outcomes – results we want to achieve**

### **National outcome set by the Scottish Government**

Social landlords manage their businesses so tenants and other customers find it easy to participate in and influence their landlords decisions at a level they feel comfortable with.

### **Our Tenant Participation outcomes**

1. Tenants participate and influence discussions and decision making processes on service delivery and service development.
2. Tenants scrutinise performance and governance to influence service improvement and strategic decision making.
3. There will be a range of opportunities and methods developed for tenants to equip them to participate effectively.
4. Information and communication material will be accurate, timely and accessible.
5. We will have informed, supported and knowledgeable tenants who have the skills and confidence to influence and challenge decisions.
6. Tenants will review and evaluate how we support and develop tenant participation

We have a separate Action Plan which details how we will meet these outcomes.

### **How we support tenant participation**

We have a dedicated Tenant Liaison Officer who leads on the development and delivery of the Tenant Participation Strategy and a Tenant Participation Administrator to support this work.

Staff across Link can also help you get involved and we have a dedicated tenant participation budget which can help you:

- arrange local meetings within your community
- organise and fund activities for your area
- access advice and training
- get online with our laptop loan scheme

We also provide travel and childcare costs to those who get involved as we never want you to be out of pocket for participating.

## **How we will keep you informed**

This strategy was developed in consultation with tenants, staff and the Link Housing Association Board.

It sets out the outcomes we are trying to achieve by placing emphasis on feedback from tenants on what their priorities are for service improvements and the decisions they want to influence. Outcomes are the results we want to achieve for tenants.

We will keep you updated on how we are doing via the tenant newsletter, Link's website and through our social media accounts. We will also do an annual impact statement outlining progress.

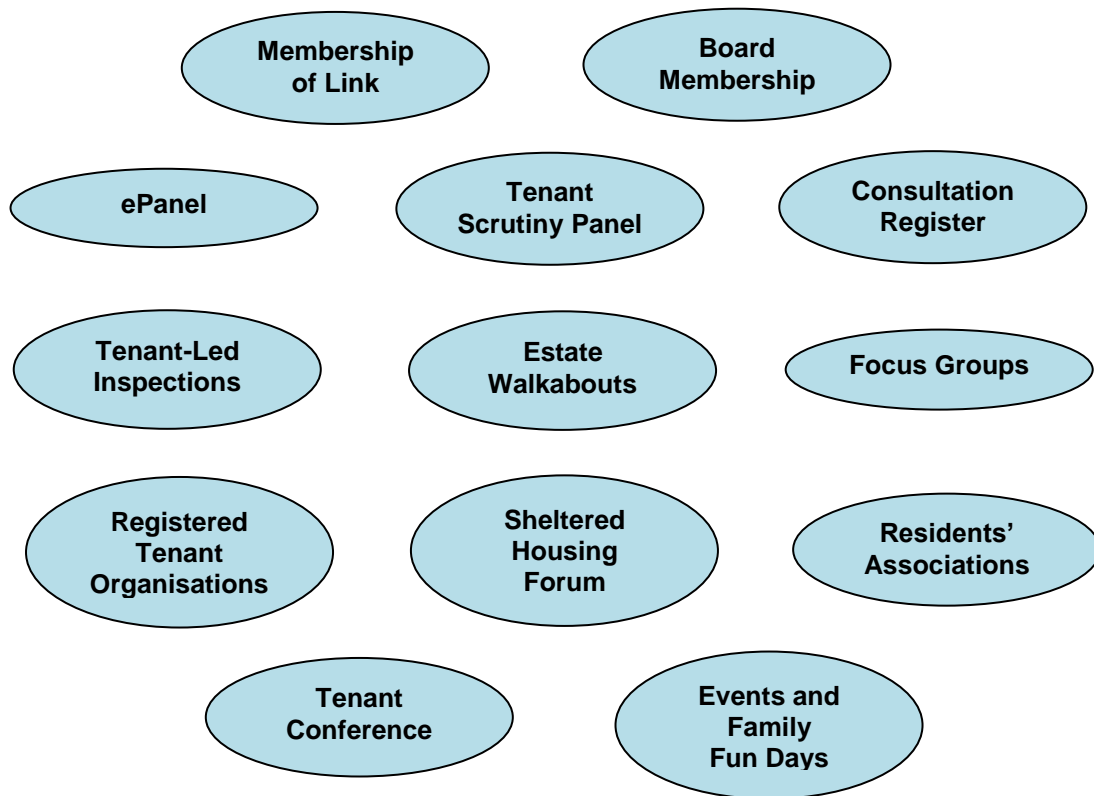
We achieved TPAS accreditation for our tenant participation activities - this is independent assessment against good practice standards.





## Ways to get involved

Getting involved doesn't always mean attending meetings – there are a number of ways to do this including fun days, estate walkabouts, and online surveys. It is up to you how much or how little you want to participate.



## **Registered Tenants' Organisations (RTOs)**

Link has 16 Registered Tenants' Organisations. These are independent constituted organisations which meet regularly and report progress to residents at their Annual General Meeting. They are supported with a (minimum) £200 annual grant, given development support and help to access other funding, if appropriate.

Link will continue to support RTOs as this reflects tenant's preferences to meet in their local area, whilst also having opportunities to form tenants groups which cover a wider geographical area.

The groups are supported by Housing Officers, Housing Service Coordinators, Technical Services and the Tenant Liaison Officer.

Current groups are:

- Albany Court Residents Association
- Buccleuch Street Residents Association
- Balmore Housing Residents and Social Club
- Barnton Residents Association
- Carrickstone Tenants Association
- Castings House Tenants Association
- Claddens Place Residents Social Club
- Coatbridge Federation
- Craigmillar Castle Regeneration Group
- Dougall Court Tenants Association
- Glen Lyon Court Sheltered Tenants Association
- Kinnaird Tenants Association
- Kirkshaws Tenants and Residents Associations
- North Lanarkshire Federation
- New Petersburn Partnership
- Peel Court Sheltered Tenants Association

We also support informal unconstituted local groups and hold meetings on tenant participation opportunities in new developments.

## **Involving owners and other Link customers**

This strategy focuses on improving service outcomes, influence decisions and consultation issues that relate to tenants. However, Link also has a range of other customers such as owner occupiers who receive a factoring service, sharing owners, Private Sector Leasing tenants, landlords and Intermediate Rent tenants.

These customers are involved in service development and communication through public meetings, consultation events, questionnaires, landlord forums and newsletters. The factoring service is subject to the Scottish Housing Regulators' regulatory framework and reporting of charter outcomes on the delivery of service and satisfaction levels of owners.

All Registered Tenant Organisations (RTOs) can decide if they want to include other interested parties in their membership and are encouraged by Link to adopt an inclusive approach, if appropriate, and dealing with neighbourhood issues that affect all residents.

Support for other interested parties to be involved in local groups is provided for both tenants and owners and can also become Board members to play an active role in the governance of the organisation.

Link takes a view that all residents are equally important and part of the same community, and the principles and ethos of tenant participation is extended to all residents.

### **How do we know that tenant participation makes a difference?**

We will publish a tenant participation impact statement to review and assess the effectiveness of our strategy and activities. This will give examples of how tenant participation has changed what we do. For example, the recommendations from tenant-led inspections resulted in a range of changes to the Estate Management procedures and policy

Effective tenant participation should result in improved customer satisfaction so this can be monitored by surveys.

- We aim provide feedback no later than six weeks after a consultation
- We will ensure we use plain English in any correspondence and it is concise, accurate and jargon free
- We will provide information in large print, Braille or audio tape on request or translation services for customers whose first language is not English
- ensure our offices and consultation venues offer equal access for all our customers
- We will keep you up-to-date with relevant information via newsletters, our website and social media

A set of indicators will be developed to evidence the impact of tenant participation:

- Developing software to assist with recording evidence of change
- Tenant satisfaction figures in particular with customer service and satisfaction with opportunities to participate and influence (SHR indicators).
- Aim for 10% target of tenant involvement
- Numbers of tenants groups – registered and unregistered
- Example of budget spend on locally identified issues – eg environmental enhancements
- Developing a value for money framework for tenant participation and consultation – involvement in efficiency and value for customer in the way contracts/services are managed and delivered.
- Develop indicators for assessing our scrutiny indicators – independence, setting own topics, lead staff/senior staff representatives.



## **How the strategy can help achieve Link's strategic objectives**

Link's aim is to improve the lives of more people. We will do this by providing homes that people want to live in and by delivering high quality services that are affordable to people on limited incomes.

### **Providing Homes**

We will build at least 1000 new rented homes over the next five years that meet people's needs. Ensure our homes are well maintained, affordable to heat and are adaptable as people's needs change.

- Tenant participation will help us achieve this by involving and consulting tenants in our strategies and plans for development and asset management, energy, affordable warmth and sustainability. This will ensure tenants priorities and views inform our plans for meeting future and current needs.
- Tenants in new developments will be encouraged to feedback their views via satisfaction surveys and are offered support to establish local residents groups or other participation opportunities.
- Tenants will be involved in the development of our Design Guide which sets out the design principles for new developments.

### **Building communities**

We will support communities and encourage residents to influence decisions in their local area and work with other organisations that use their profits to invest in their communities.

- Tenant participation will help us achieve this by encouraging local tenants and residents groups to identify local issues and solutions to ensure our services meet their needs and expectations as well as improving service and satisfaction levels.
- We will develop local partnerships in which tenants and residents groups can influence improvement and development of services to their neighbourhood
- We will develop digital communication to meet the needs of tenants

### **Valuing People**

We will find out from customers what they want from us, work with them to improve our services, and their lives. Support and encourage our employees and Board members to give of their best at all times. Share our knowledge and experience to help others and promote the impact of our work. Treat people as individuals and with respect at all times.

- Tenant participation will help us achieve this by identifying ways to improve services and customer satisfaction. Tenants will be involved in service and policy reviews including action planning from the customer satisfaction survey and performance improvement planning.
- We value the time, skills, knowledge and experience that tenants give by volunteering as part of tenant participation activities and we will commit

resources to providing training, support and personal development opportunities for tenants.

- We want tenants and other customers to find it easy to participate, so that there are no barriers to getting involved. An equalities impact assessment has been carried out for the Tenant Participation Strategy and all consultations and participation activities will consider impact.

## Working Together

We will help more people improve their chances of getting and sustaining employment, grow our business according to social enterprise principles, to increase the extent of our work and ensure we take care of our resources and use them to best effect.

- Tenant participation can help us achieve this by developing a framework to measure value for money and efficiency of services. Tenant participation will help us deliver better more efficient and responsive services. Tenant scrutiny of services and governance is a key part of this strategy and will build on the culture of collaboration and partnership between tenants, staff and Boards. The Tenant Scrutiny Panel will work to ensure that Link's Annual Return on the Charter matches tenants reality of the service by using evidence they gather independently.
- Tenant employability can be assisted by tenant participation skills development and opportunities advertised via tenant participation communications such as newsletter and tenants organisations. We shall encourage tenants and residents groups to work in partnership with other local organisations to set up or expand community facilities, and to attract employers to recruit locally and set up or expand local employment.



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