



Tenant Participation Strategy 2018–2021

Introduction from Chair

I am delighted to introduce this refreshed approach to tenant participation at Viewpoint. The Board understands the critical importance of tenant participation and is fully committed to encouraging and supporting tenants to engage with us to develop and improve our services. The approach set out in this Strategy is based on the views of our tenants who have been clear about how we should prioritise what we do. The Strategy outlines our commitment to ensuring appropriate processes are developed, used and supported in order to facilitate active involvement of our tenants. I look forward to working with tenants, collaboratively, to monitor successful delivery of the Strategy over the coming years.

Jackie Macdonald
Chair

Our Strategy's aims

Our Tenant Participation Strategy:

- Shows our commitment to involving tenants in services, homes and communities;
- Is flexible and reflects local circumstances;
- Set out how we work with tenants to deliver this commitment; and
- Puts in places meaningful, measurable and achievable targets.

We will:

- **Inform:** Sharing knowledge tenant want
- **Consult:** Listening to hear tenants' views
- **Participate:** Understanding to act

Our Strategy reflects what tenants want from us and will be monitored to ensure tenants' views are improving services.

How we developed the strategy and who was involved

We engaged TPAS Scotland to independently review our participation activity. By reaching out to tenants in their homes, at local sessions and in existing groups with TPAS Scotland we have listened and heard how tenants like to be informed, express their views, influence decisions and how to reduce barriers to engaging.

Thanks to all those who contributed to this Strategy meets tenants' needs

Reasons for this strategy and the benefits of tenant participation

We need tenants engaging with us to achieve an improving service, that delivers value for money and higher levels of customer satisfaction. This Strategy is key to learning, what tenants like and value about services and what we should concentrate on improving. This Strategy is our work plan to maximise tenants' engagement so they:

- know our services, standards and targets to make best use our services;
- share with us:
 - what, when and why they like the services we deliver well;
 - any failure to deliver, so we can learn and do it better, and
- can shape future services.

Good tenant participation maximises our use of resources and tenants' enjoyment of their homes and communities.

An ongoing conversation with tenants will aid us achieve the quality services tenants expect. We will not limit this conversation to formal opportunities. Whenever we meet tenants we can share knowledge, listen and hear how best to deliver services and act on our understanding.

Links to other strategies and services

Tenant participation is vital to everything we do therefore this Strategy links to everything we do:

- Day to day repairs;
- Investing in fabric and fittings of existing properties and new homes;
- Setting rent levels and collecting rents;
- Maintaining and enhancing communal areas, open spaces and gardens;
- Managing tenancies;
- Keeping empty homes to a minimum;
- Supporting strong community spirit;
- Enhancing tenants' lives through social and learning opportunities;
- Monitoring contractors and managing staff; and
- Linking with social care providers to meet individual needs.

Implementing this Strategy will mean tenants *know and influence the services Viewpoint offers*.

This Strategy is linked to the following key Association policies and strategies:

Strategic Plan 2018

Asset Management Strategy 2016

Communications Strategy 2018 – 2020

Dementia Strategy 2018 – 2020

Diversity Strategy 2018 – 2020

Tenants Involvement in Recruitment Policy

Volunteer Policy

Consultation general findings

Information

Tenants said:

- Newspoint was liked
- Communication (letters, leaflets, notice boards, handbook, website, social media) could be confusing and not targeted at tenants' interests;
- They were keen for information on future improvements to homes; and
- They didn't hear enough from tenants' groups and consultation activities.

Action: We will:

- *Provide information in Plain English;*
- *Use a variety of communication methods (face to face, in writing, on the internet);*
- *Publish our annual consultation plans and findings of consultation activities;*
- *Offer tenants opportunities to influence when, how and what information we produce via our Consultation Volunteers;*
- *Provide information on investment in tenants' homes and complexes; and*
- *Assist Complex Groups, the Fife Viewpoint Tenants Group, the Lothian Viewpoint Tenants Group and Complex Groups to communicate with their members and promote what they achieve.*

Consultation

Tenants were positive about the benefits of engaging in consultation and they:

- Preferred participating as individuals and locally;
- Did not want to represent other tenants;
- Lacked:
 - understanding of what taking part involves;
 - information about the subjects of consultation; and
 - feedback on the outcomes of consultation.
- Liked the consultation undertaken when work was undertaken in their homes and complexes but wanted consulted on investment planning.

Action: We will:

- *Prioritise consultation opportunities for individual tenants and at the local / complex level;*
- *Set out what is expected of everyone involved in consultation activities;*
- *Link information and consultation so tenants engage from a more informed position;*
- *Include the Fife Viewpoint Tenant Group, the Lothian Viewpoint Tenant Group and the Strategic Network when planning investment; and*
- *Report back on how tenants' views have influenced decisions.*

Participation

Tenants reported a lack of confidence that their views made a difference, with little feedback to issues from individual enquiries, local meetings discussions, Complex Groups, the Viewpoint Tenant Representative Group (VTRG) or the Fife Forum and on how decisions have been reached which gives the impression that tenants' questions, enquiries and views are not a priority.

***Action:** We will review, with tenants, how we communicate at all levels from individual service requests, enquiries and complaints to issues raised through meetings and activities, to increased reporting of how tenants' views influenced decisions. This will be achieved, and the revised approach implemented, within one year of this Strategy coming into force.*

Revised Tenant Participation structure

We've devised a structure to address tenants' desires to be consulted individually and locally, while offering collective opportunities at all levels of the organisation and consulted on it. We view this as a transitional structure for the period we focus on building confidence in our ability to respond and we will use this to further tailor our activities to tenants' needs. Guided by the overwhelming desires of respondents, we will focus on individual and local consultation opportunities.

Tenants

We will:

- Offer a range of opportunities so individual tenants can give views;
- Report what tenants tell us; and
- Use responses to inform other consultation opportunities and decision making.

To listen and hear what tenants are saying, we will advertise and use questionnaires, surveys, texting, social media, tenants' conferences, Fife Viewpoint Tenant Group and Lothian Viewpoint Tenant Group events and local and Association wide events so individuals and complexes can inform Viewpoint of their views locally.

Staff will consult tenants via local meetings and activities. We will agree their frequency with tenants. If desired and practical, we will share activities with groups of complexes.

Local meetings / activities will include local issues, common area spending, estate inspections, providing information and Association wide consultation. Our local staff will be available to hear individuals' views on services generally and on consultation topics.

We will plan our consultation activities and publish them in a consultation calendar to prevent too great a demand being placed on tenants, allow them (and the Association) to plan and ensure that Viewpoint understands and acts.

We will use a variety of ways to inform tenants of the outcomes of these activities; including Newspoint, texting, social media, web site, notice boards and leaflets. We will share outcomes from individual and local consultations with the Fife Viewpoint Tenant Group and Lothian Viewpoint Tenant Group, staff and our Board.

Complex Groups

Our frontline operational staff will support the forming and running of independent Complex Groups by tenants. If tenants' desire and they meet the criteria we will add their group to our Register of Tenant Organisations. Where they exist, Complex Groups will offer their members opportunities to raise issues, gain information and influence services. Whether or not there are Complex Groups, the Association will offer individual and local consultation activities.

Where tenants support a Complex Group, we will include them in planning local consultations, discussions on local issues, common area spending, estate inspections and Association wide consultation opportunities.

Consultation Volunteers

We will maintain a list of interested tenants, called Consultation Volunteers. These Volunteers will be notified of consultation activities that they may wish to take part in.

We will identify a member of staff who will coordinate, promote and support the Volunteers. Specific activities offered to the Volunteers will be supported by staff from the service(s) being considered who will ensure the Volunteers findings are communicated to tenants, the Fife Viewpoint Tenant Group and Lothian Viewpoint Tenant Group.

We will maintain specific lists of Volunteers interested in engaging in Recruitment, Communication and Performance.

Recruitment Volunteers: meet when required and supported by relevant recruiting manager will:

- consider staff job descriptions and contract tender specifications; and
- participate in staff and contractor appointments.

Communication Volunteers: undertake investigations into all forms of communication, including methods, content and design of information being planned. We will name a staff member who will support these Volunteers.

Performance Volunteers: investigate service issues raised by performance data and make recommendations to improve services.

Fife Viewpoint Tenant Group and Tenants Action Group – Lothian

These two groups were established and have their own constitutions and elected committees. They will receive ongoing support to become more established and independent.

Our expectation is that these Groups will be run by and for Viewpoint tenants.

In line with the views expressed by tenants during the consultation on this Strategy, we propose that each Viewpoint Tenant Group will:

- Be open to any tenant who meets their membership criteria and adheres to their Code of Conduct;
- Meet 4 times a year to:
 - Discuss shared service issues and experiences;
 - Hear of and comment on Association wide policy and proposals;
 - Hear responses and progress on issues raised by the
- Elect a Committee every 2 years from members to:
 - run the Forum; set its agenda, report to tenants and attend the Strategic Network;
 - Produce an annual programme of its planned activities and a report of its work for tenants;
 - Agree each year how the Association will support the Forum;
- Respond to common and significant issues from tenants and work with Viewpoint to learn lessons to improve service if we:
 - fail to deliver the service standard we promised; and
 - the service standard we promised was delivered but was not adequate, in the tenants' view.
- Address any failures to respond to tenants;
- Provide tenants' view on policy, practices, standards, targets, performance and methods of communication and consultation;
- Monitor our information and consultation activities and advise and support VHA to effectively consult tenants; and
- Monitor VHA's use of the outputs from consultation activities.

We will seek to involve the Viewpoint Tenant Groups in consultation activities and when setting service standards and targets and share the results of consultation with them.

Strategic Network

We will invite the Fife Viewpoint Tenant Group and Lothian Viewpoint Tenant Group to participate at least twice a year in a Strategic Network with the Management Team and Board representatives.

The Network will:

- Monitor the Tenant Participation Strategy;
- Agree Viewpoints annual consultation plan; and
- Consider our Annual Return on the Charter before it is sent to the Scottish Housing Regulator.

Social and learning opportunities

Tenants told us they value social and learning opportunities. We believe that to reflect the changing needs and interests of tenants we need to explore, with tenants, the social and learning opportunities they desire and how best to deliver them ourselves and / or with community partners.

We will: consult tenants individually and by complex and speak with other potential community partners to devise how the social and learning opportunities our tenants desire can be delivered and sustained.

Giving tenants feedback

Tenants have told us that they are not aware of what different parts of our consultation structure are for and achieve. We believe that this has a significant negative impact on tenant's engaging and if we show that engaging makes a difference, we can increase the numbers take part.

We will:

- *Regularly explain and advertise opportunities to engage;*
- *Through Newspoint, complex noticeboards, social media and website, inform tenants of the results of our consultation (individually, locally or Association wide), Consultation Volunteers activities and the work of the Fife Viewpoint Tenant Group and Lothian Viewpoint Tenant Group and how tenants have influenced the Association; and*
- *Agree how we can assist both Viewpoint Tenant Groups, Consultation Volunteers and Complex Groups to communicate with their members.*

How the Strategy will be monitored and reviewed

This Strategy will be monitored by setting and reporting on annual targets set by the Strategic Network in the Strategy Implementation Plan and assessing its impacts.

Over the life of the Strategy, we will:

- *Increase the number and variety of:*
 - *Service information available to tenants;*
 - *Consultation opportunities, especially individual and locally; and*
 - *Social and learning opportunities available to tenants.*
- *Raise awareness of how tenants' views have improved services*

Performance standards

Along with providing data we will assist tenants to understand how this data has been collected, analyse it and use it to improve services.

We will:

- *Make available our performance standard, targets and results to all tenants and through the work of the Fife Viewpoint Tenant Group, Lothian Viewpoint Tenant Group and Strategic Network ensure their members can investigate our performance; and*
- *Support Performance Volunteers to scrutinise our service performance and make recommendation to improve services. All recommendations*

will be responded to by the Association, an implementation plan agreed for agreed recommendations and the Performance Volunteers and Strategic Network will monitor its progress and impacts.

Working with Registered Tenant Organisations (RTOs)

RTO are tenants' groups that meet standards set out in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 guidance. Once registered we will consult the group, in addition to consulting tenants, on annual rent setting and any significant changes to services.

We will support tenants to establish RTOs when they can show support from tenants and meet the basic requirements of registering.

If tenants decide not to register their group, we will consult them when they can show support from tenants.

We ask RTOs annually to give evidence of tenant's support for them and show they are adhering to their constitution and will assist them to meet the requirements.

We will advertise all our RTOs.

If we are concerned about a group meeting the requirements we will discuss this with them before deregistering.

Resources

Tenants will never be out of pocket by engaging.

We will fund transport, food and care of household members to engage as an individual or as part of a group.

We will provide a support grant for a Complex Groups, the Fife Viewpoint Tenant Group and Lothian Viewpoint Tenant Group to undertake the activities agreed with them each year.

We will ensure that there is a budget for information and tenant participation included in our annual budget that meets the anticipated needs.

Time to responses

When planning consultation activities, we will take account the time required for tenants to give informed responses.

After information has been provided, we will normally give a minimum of:

- *three weeks for responding to individual consultations; and*
- *four weeks for Complex Groups, Fife Viewpoint Tenant Group and Lothian Viewpoint Tenant Group to respond.*

For significant, planned activities we will agree specific timetables.

We will respond within four weeks to Complex Groups, the Fife Viewpoint Tenant Group and Lothian Viewpoint Tenant Group enquiries.

Tenants have told us that our responses to their queries aren't adequate. We believe that this requires fully explored and should be included in a comprehensive examination of our customer service standards.

We will undertake consultation, make proposals for customer service standards and implement them

Training

Developing knowledge and skills of tenants and staff is a priority.

We will offer training as part of consultation activities rather than a separate activity, so training has immediate relevance.

If required, we will seek external training for staff and tenants.

Equal opportunities

Our consultation activities will reflect our tenants' diverse requirements.

We will build equal opportunities into our activities by:

- *Responding to individual needs;*
- *Providing options to:*
 - *receive information, and*
 - *attend events and activities at various times, places and venues.*
- *Using suitable premises and transport;*
- *Considering cultural and religious needs; and*
- *Recognising that not everyone's needs are visible, and many tenants have complex needs.*

We will act to ensure all tenants and staff are welcome at our events and supported to engage. Our Code of Conduct will be for anyone taking part in activity or group and we will ensure that this is adhered to. The Code will be reviewed and agreed as part of the establishing the Fife Viewpoint Tenant Group and Lothian Viewpoint Tenant Group.