



**Tenant Participation
Strategy
2023-2026**

Introduction from Chief Executive

At Viewpoint, we recognise that tenants are at the heart of our business. We aim to provide the best possible services to our tenants and people within their homes and communities but we can only be sure we're doing this if we have inclusive, representative and enthusiastic tenant engagement. We recognise that tenant and resident feedback and participation is vital in assessing our performance and identifying improvements in how we work.

Our strategy for 2023-2026 builds on the excellent work that we have done over the last few years and sets out an action plan that underpins our ongoing commitment to involving tenants in the way we take decisions about their homes. We recognise that participation and local accountability, along with the feedback we receive from all our stakeholders, are essential tools for assessing how we operate, deliver change and adapt to ensure our services are provided to everyone residing within our communities. Tenants have the power to highlight areas for improvement, suggest solutions and help staff implement them. Staff will work with tenants, listen to their feedback, provide information, and support and deliver on what has been agreed.

We want our tenants to be able to participate in ways that suit them. In developing the strategy, we talked to tenants and listened to what they had to say and it was clear that local participation is the preferred method of involvement at this time. However, there are many opportunities to be more involved, and these are outlined in the strategy. Please join us and find a way to participate that suits you. If you would like more information on any of these opportunities then please speak to any member of staff. Taking part in any way will give you the opportunity to influence change and be involved in decision making at Viewpoint. You will also gain a good understanding of the varied services that are being delivered. It is essential that our tenants are involved in making changes and shaping the future both for themselves and others. We can make a difference if we listen and learn together.

Tenant participation is a continuous process, and this strategy reflects our ongoing ambitions and plans. Viewpoint Board and staff teams are all fully committed to achieving these outcomes and the Tenant Participation Strategy 2023 – 2026 provides a framework to make this happen. We look forward to working with you.

Best wishes

Jean Gray, CEO

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1. Our Strategy 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 place meaningful, measurable and achievable targets.

We will:

- **Inform:** Share knowledge tenants want
- **Consult:** Listen to hear tenants' views
- **Participate:** Ensure tenants can be involved in the decision making process

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

2. How we developed the strategy and who was involved

In 2017/2018, we engaged TPAS Scotland to independently review our tenant participation activity. By reaching out to tenants in their homes, at local sessions and in existing groups with TPAS Scotland, we listened and heard how tenants like to be informed, express their views, influence decisions and how to reduce barriers to engaging. This resulted in our Tenant Participation Strategy 2018 – 2020 being developed and implemented.

Unfortunately, the Covid-19 pandemic limited what we were able to do, however some positive progress was made.

In order to determine what our revised strategy should look like the Tenant Participation and Communications Coordinator attended local meetings and quarterly walkabouts in many (but not all) of our areas. The message from these meetings clearly indicated that although there was an understanding that participation could be at any level, most tenants wanted to be:

- consulted at a local level
- given good quality clear information
- allowed to participate in a way that was suitable for them

This was very similar to the outcome of the consultation in 2018.

3. Reasons for this strategy and the benefits of tenant participation

We need tenants engaging with us to achieve an improving service, which delivers value for money and good 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 of 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.

4. 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
- Linking with others 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:

- Business Plan
- Asset Management Strategy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Tenants Involvement in Recruitment Policy
- Volunteer Policy
- Registering Tenants Organisations Policy

5. Equality and Inclusion

We will aim to continue to develop communications with all tenants and groups of tenants to advance equal opportunities and prevent discrimination against individuals and groups because of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation.

We recognise that to enhance tenant participation we need to know the needs of our tenants and our communities.

We are happy for tenants to participate in any way that best suits them and aim to ensure that there is a variety of ways to participate.

Our consultation activities will reflect our tenants' diverse requirements.

We will build equal opportunities into our activities by:

- Responding to individual needs where we are made aware of these;
- 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 an activity or group and we will ensure that this is adhered to. The Code will be reviewed and agreed as part of establishing the Viewpoint Strategic Network.

6. Consultation General Findings

6.1 Information

Tenants said:

- Newspoint was liked and the new layout made it easier to read
- Newspoint needed to have more local stories
- Communication was not consistent, and was sometimes poor
- Information was needed on future improvements to homes
- They wanted more feedback on the outcomes of consultation activities and surveys

6.2 Consultation

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

- Preferred participating as individuals and locally
- Did not want to represent other tenants
- Wanted consulted on investment planning
- Wanted consulted when work was undertaken in their own homes and complexes
- For those tenants who were involved in more formal working groups things were a lot better and they felt more involved and wished to see this continue and to develop where appropriate or necessary

6.3 Participation

Tenants said:

- They would like to be made more aware of opportunities to participate
- Liked that quarterly meetings and walkabouts have been re-instated now that Covid restrictions have been lifted.

- Would like to see better feedback from consultations and how this has affected decisions that have been reached
- Would like to see more feedback from surveys and how this has affected the service provided by Viewpoint

7. Actions from General Findings

7.1 Information

We will:

- Provide information in Plain English;
- Use a variety of communication methods e.g. face to face, in writing, online;
- 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 formal and informal groups

7.2 Consultation

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
- Report back on how tenants' views have influenced decisions
- Include the Strategic Network when planning investment

7.3 Participation

We will:

- Publish our annual consultation plans inviting tenants to be involved
- Seek to extend our group of formal volunteers
- Encourage active involvement through the quarterly meetings and walkabouts
- Be more proactive to show how tenants' views influenced decisions

7.4 Implementation and Communication

Appendix 1 shows how we will implement the strategy, the action we will take and the timescale for this activity. **Appendix 2** shows how we will communicate with tenants to ensure they are aware of activities and outcomes.

8. Tenant Participation Structure

- 8.1** We have devised a structure to address tenants' desires to be consulted individually and locally, while offering collective opportunities at all levels of the organisation.

There will be a focus on ensuring tenants can get involved in a way that suits them.

Guided by the overwhelming desires of respondents, we will focus on individual and local consultation opportunities.

8.2 Tenants

We will:

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

8.3 Housing Complex Groups

- Our frontline operational staff will support the forming and running of independent Housing 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, Housing Complex Groups will offer their members opportunities to raise issues, gain information and influence services.
- Whether or not there are Housing Complex Groups, the Association will offer individual and local consultation activities.
- Where tenants support a Housing Complex Group, we will include them in planning local consultations, discussions on local issues, common area spending, estate inspections and Association wide consultation opportunities.
- We will continue to hold quarterly meetings/walkabouts in all areas ensuring that each tenant in the area is invited and that an action plan is created and updated as actions are completed.

8.4 Consultation Volunteers

- We will maintain a list of interested tenants, called Tenant Volunteers. These volunteers will be notified of consultation activities that they may wish to take part in.
- The Tenant Participation and Communications Coordinator will coordinate, promote and support the volunteers.
- Specific activities offered to the volunteers will be supported by staff from the relevant teams, who will ensure the volunteers findings are communicated to tenants, registered tenants organisations and the Viewpoint strategic group.
- We will maintain specific lists of volunteers interested in engaging in recruitment, communication, performance, conference planning, scrutiny activity and Newspoint (our tenant's newsletter).

8.4.1 Recruitment Volunteers will meet when required and will be supported by relevant recruiting manager. They will:

- consider staff job descriptions, where appropriate;
- consider contract tender specifications, where appropriate;
- participate in contractor appointments, where appropriate; and

- participate in the recruitment of staff as detailed in the Tenant Involvement in Recruitment Policy.

8.4.2 Communication Volunteers will undertake investigations into all forms of communication, including methods, content and design of information being planned. The Tenant Participation and Communications Coordinator will support these volunteers.

8.4.3 Performance Volunteers will investigate service issues raised by performance data and make recommendations to improve services. They will be involved in identifying scrutiny activity on Viewpoint services. The Tenant Participation and Communications Coordinator will support these volunteers.

8.4.4 Newspoint Editorial Team will be a joint working group with staff looking at content, timescales etc. The Tenant Participation and Communications Coordinator will lead this group and support the volunteers and the staff on this group.

8.4.5 Conference Planning Team will be a joint working group with staff where we are holding a tenants conference to ensure that tenants views influence the purpose, content and outcomes from a conference.

8.4.6 Review Groups will be involved in carrying out a review (sometimes referred to as scrutiny) of Viewpoint's services. The Tenant Participation and Communication Coordinator, who will ensure that the groups are given access to the appropriate information and staff to carry out the review, will support these groups. It is envisaged that the review groups will feed back to senior staff or the Board on completion of a scrutiny activity and then monitor the outcome of their recommendations.

9. Strategic Network

We will form a group of tenants from Fife and the Lothians to participate at least twice a year in a Viewpoint Strategic Network with the Management Team and Board representatives.

The Network will:

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

The timescale for this will be dependent on bringing together a group willing to work at this level with Viewpoint staff.

10. 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.

11. 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 taking part.

A visual representation of our structure is shown at **Appendix 3**.

We will:

- Regularly explain and advertise opportunities to engage
- Through Newspoint, complex noticeboards, social media and our website, inform tenants of the results of our consultations (individually, locally or Association wide), tenant volunteers activities and the strategic network and how tenants have influenced the Association
- Agree how we can assist tenants groups (either registered or non-registered), tenant volunteers and complex groups to communicate with their members

12. Working with Registered Tenant Organisations (RTOs)

RTOs 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 for an RTO we will discuss this with them before making a decision on whether they can continue as an RTO.

Full details are in our Registering Tenant Organisations Policy.

13. 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 Viewpoint strategic network to ensure their members can investigate our performance; and
- Support review groups 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 review group will monitor its progress and impacts. The Viewpoint strategic network will be given a copy of the report that the review group sends to the Board and the outcomes from this.

14. Time to responses

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

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

- three weeks for response to individual consultations; and
- four weeks for complex groups, RTOs and the strategic network

For significant, planned activities we will agree specific timetables.

We will respond within four weeks to enquiries from Housing Complex Groups, working groups, strategic network group and Registered Tenants Organisations.

15. Training

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

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

All recruitment volunteers will receive specific training on recruitment and selection.

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

16. Resources

Tenants will never be out of pocket by engaging.

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

We will provide a support grant for a complex group, any registered tenant organisation or other group that is involved in tenant participation. Any grant given will be discussed with the group and activities agreed with them each year.

We will ensure that our tenant participation strategy is supported by our annual budgeting process with sufficient financial provision to deliver anticipated requirements.

17. 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

The implementation of the strategy will be reviewed annually by the strategic network (when operational) and any registered tenant organisation.

A report will be prepared for the Board or an appropriate Committee on an annual basis showing progress of the implementation of the strategy.

Implementation Plan

Topic	Action	Timescale
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Rent and service charge levels and proposed changes	We will consult with all tenants on an annual basis on our proposals for changes to rent and service charges	Annually
Tenant Performance Report and Scottish Housing Charter	We will discuss the Charter and Charter outcomes with a group of interested volunteers in addition to any RTO and the strategic network* We will discuss the ARC outcomes and agree a format for the tenant performance report with a group of interested volunteers	Annually Annually
Quarterly Meetings and walkabouts	We will hold quarterly meetings/walkabouts in all areas, which is managed by the Housing Officer and the Technical Officer. Action plans will be produced and updated regularly.	Quarterly
Housing and Assets Services	We will consult with tenants in addition to any RTO and the strategic network whenever we plan to make significant changes to services.	As Required
Policy Review	We will consult with a group of interested tenant volunteers on policy reviews that affect services to our tenants.	As required
Tenant Participation Strategy	We will consult with the strategic network* to review and monitor our tenant participation strategy	Annually/ At the end of the strategy period
Repair Satisfaction	We will send out a repair satisfaction to any tenant who has had an urgent or routine repair carried out to allow them to comment on the repair process and their satisfaction with the repair. We are unable to do this for common repairs at this time.	Ongoing throughout the year
Satisfaction with improvement projects	We will consult with tenant before, during and after completing improvement work. Feedback on any satisfaction surveys will be reported back to tenants	As Required
New Tenant Satisfaction Survey	Every new tenant will have the opportunity to complete a survey regarding their satisfaction with their new home.	Ongoing throughout the year
Tenant Satisfaction Survey	We will survey all tenants on a three yearly basis, covering service provision.	Every three years

Review of Services (Scrutiny)	A group of tenant volunteers will focus on specific areas of services and after thorough investigation will send a report to the Board of Management. This will include any recommendations from the group.	Ongoing as
Review or development of information leaflets (including tenants handbook)	We will consult with a group of interested tenant volunteers on the review of existing , or the development of new information leaflets for tenants	As Required
Production of Newspoint	We will consult with Editorial Team on the content of our newsletter	Three times per year
Annual General Meeting	All members are invited to attend on an annual basis.	Annually

* Once established

Appendix 2

How we will communicate with tenants

Method	Aim	Timescale
Newspoint – Tenant Newsletter	We aim to give information – that is of interest to our tenants, including updates on our	Three times per year

	<p>services, feedback from surveys with actions that have been identified, local news from around our houses, external information that may be of use to our tenants.</p> <p>Large print, audio and braille editions of Newspoint are available for those who have requested this.</p>	
Leaflets	To provide leaflets to ensure they are tenant friendly and jargon free and meet the needs of our tenants. We will produce these in consultation with our tenants.	As Required
Tenant Handbook	Our Tenants handbook (reviewed in 2022) is given to all new tenants. In addition there is a copy available online and any existing tenant can also ask for a copy.	As Required
Texting	We are able to send short text messages to tenants with information.	As Required
Website	Our website has a publications page where many documents can be downloaded including policies. We also have a 'News' section in addition to our services and our staff.	Ongoing
Tenants Conference	We will hold a tenant's conference at least every two year on topics that may interest tenants, giving an opportunity for tenants to meet up, share ideas and speak to staff at all levels within the organisation, as well as participating in specific activities for the conference.	Two Yearly
Noticeboards	We have noticeboards within many of our developments and electronic information screens in some areas. Information is posted on a regular basis to keep tenants informed and used to publicise activities within the complex or area.	As Required

Tenant Participation Structure

