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Policy Name	Tenant Participation Policy
Policy Author	Project Officer Corporate Services Officer
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West Whitlawburn Housing Co-operative will provide this policy on request at no cost, in larger print, in Braille, in audio or other non-written format, and in a variety of languages. Please contact the office.

Registered with the Scottish Housing Regulator No. 203
Registered Charity No. SCO38737, VAT Registration No. 180223636
Registered society under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014



1. Introduction

West Whitlawburn Housing Co-operative (WWHC) is a Registered Social Landlord, set up in 1989, with 704 properties in Whitlawburn, Cambuslang, South Lanarkshire.

The Co-operative is a fully mutual housing co-operative with charitable status.

As a fully mutual housing co-operative, community democracy and control is fundamental to the way in which West Whitlawburn Housing Co-operative operates. WWHC is fully controlled by the members and only members can be tenants of the Co-operative.

1.1 Purpose

This Tenant Participation Policy and engagement strategy details the Co-operative's commitment to keeping tenants informed about all aspects of our work and providing opportunities for tenants to participate and influence decisions on the way in which services are delivered.

WWHC aims to ensure local people are fully involved in the improvement and management of their homes, in a meaningful way that helps sustain the ethos of the Co-operative.

2. Legislative Background

The Co-operative embeds tenant participation in all that it does and it fits into its strategic objectives. Tenants have a statutory right to be informed and heard. The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 became law in July 2001. A main provision of this Act was to increase the level of tenant participation in the decisions, which affect them.

The Scottish Social Housing Charter came into effect from 1st April 2012.

Charter outcomes and standards, Section 3: Participation

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".

From October 2019 WWHC committee will provide the Scottish Housing Regulator with an annual assurance statement that it is meeting all regulatory standards. WWHC will be gathering evidence and monitoring the effectiveness of this and other policies as part of this evidence gathering against the guiding standards.

2019 Scottish Housing Regulator, Regulatory Guidance states that:

- The RSL gives tenants, service users and other stakeholders information that meets their needs about the RSL, its services, its performance and its future plans.

- The governing body recognises it is accountable to its tenants, and has a wider public accountability to the taxpayer as a recipient of public funds, and actively manages its accountabilities. It is open about what it does, publishes information about its activities and, wherever possible, agrees to requests for information about the work of the governing body and the RSL.
- The RSL seeks out the needs, priorities, views and aspirations of tenants, service users and stakeholders. The governing body takes account of this information in its strategies, plans and decisions.
- The RSL is open, co-operative, and engages effectively with all its regulators and funders, notifying them of anything that may affect its ability to fulfil its obligations. It informs the Scottish Housing Regulator about any significant events such as a major issue, event or change as set out and required in our notifiable events guidance.

2.1 Tenant participation and performance reporting

Regulation of Social Housing in Scotland Framework February 2019 regulatory requirements states that each landlord must:

- Submit an Annual Return on the Charter each year in accordance with published guidance.
- Involve tenants, and where relevant, other service users in the preparation and scrutiny of performance information. It must:
- agree its approach with tenants
- ensure that it is effective and meaningful – that the chosen approach gives tenants a real and demonstrable say in the assessment of performance
- publicise the approach to tenants
- ensure that it can be verified and be able to show that the agreed approach to involving tenants has happened
- involve other service users in an appropriate way, having asked and had regard to their needs and wishes.
- Report its performance in achieving or progressing towards the Charter outcomes and standards to its tenants and other service users (no later than 31st October each year). It must agree the format of performance reporting with tenants, ensuring that it is accessible for tenants and other service users, with plain and jargon-free language.

2.2 Commitment to best practice

This policy takes into account good practice guidance such as the National Strategy for Tenant Participation – Partners in Participation and the Scottish Government’s Guide to Successful Tenant Participation.

The Co-operative also adheres to the National Standards for Community Engagement, which are good-practice principles designed to support and inform the process of community engagement, and improve what happens as a result.

2.3 Equalities and Human Rights

WWHC are committed to human rights and has an equalities policy that underpins and guides our approach to equalities. All staff have been given equality and diversity training and equalities will be central to this policy on tenant participation. WWHC will meet our legal duties in relation to equality and human rights, including the requirement in section 39 of the 2010 Act to encourage equal opportunities in how the Co-operative performs housing activities.

The Co-operative will encourage and promote active measures to ensure that all members have equal access to participation and that no member is excluded from the participation process. We recognise that our members may wish varying degrees of involvement and this policy provides a range of options and opportunities for this to happen.

To this end when we organise events, which involve members, we will ensure that consideration is given to the following:

- Location and timing.
- Using barrier free meeting venues.
- Allow carers, family members and /or advocates the opportunity to participate on members behalf or alongside members.
- Making information available in appropriate community languages and other forms (e.g. audio tapes, braille) tailored to member's needs, interests and lifestyle.

3. The Importance of Tenant Participation

WWHC believes that tenant participation is essential when it comes to making decisions, which affect members. The management structure ensures full tenant control in that all its management committee members are tenants.

WWHC welcomes the opportunity to work with its members and encourage them to become as involved in the Co-operative in whichever meaningful way.

WWHC believes that member involvement in the Co-operative results in an effective organisation as empowered individuals help to make empowered communities. Being involved in the Co-operative can give members the skills, experience and confidence that can make them very effective community leaders.

The Co-operative will prioritise understanding tenant views to provide the best quality of services, informed directly by the needs of their tenants.

WWHC believes that the benefits of effective tenant participation include:

- better service delivery and improved value for money;
- opportunities to develop new knowledge and skills;
- better communication between staff and tenants;
- better links between the Co-operative and our community;
- informed and knowledgeable tenants who have the skills and confidence to influence decisions;
- staff and tenants being more aware of each other's perspectives and organisational and financial limitations;
- breaking down misunderstandings and building mutual respect and understanding;
- increased tenant satisfaction with their home and neighbourhood;
- increased job satisfaction for staff.

4. Communications

Community engagement starts with information provision. WWHC will maintain openness and transparency throughout all business.

The Co-operative aims to provide its members with information they want and find useful and to produce it in a clear, user-friendly way avoiding jargon or technical language wherever possible.

Information will be timely, accurate and helpful.

The Co-operative will work to create a culture of two way communication. Feedback is crucial to the Co-operative in meeting the needs of tenant members and it is important that the Co-operative promotes such methods that allows tenant members the opportunity to comment on performance or give opinions on how the Co-operative is run.

4.1 Communications strategy

The Co-operative has a communications strategy that has been adopted by Committee and staff and is regularly reviewed. The purpose of the communications strategy is to ensure the quality of internal and external communication.

5. Consultation

Consultations will occur in two stages:

Stage 1: Tenants will be consulted on an issue for review by providing relevant information and requesting feedback.

Stage 2: Account of any comments received will be incorporated into presentation of proposals, which will go to WWHC Management Committee for approval.

The aim of our strategy is to have more members playing an active role in the management of the Co-operative and to facilitate community engagement.

The Co-operative aims to provide its members with information they want and find useful and to produce it in a clear, user-friendly way avoiding jargon or technical language whenever possible. We will use a wide range of methods of consulting with members and keeping them informed of our activities.

At the beginning of the consultation period, tenants will be informed of the method of feedback, timescale and the name and designation of the lead officer involved in the consultation, complete with contact details.

5.1 Consultation and Information Provision

WWHC understand the importance of tenant consultation in relation to policy review and policy development. We, through the tenant participation policy, will fully consult with tenants about making or changing the following:

- Policies regarding housing management, repairs and maintenance, if the proposal is likely to significantly affect the tenant.
- Proposals for the sale or transfer of your house to another landlord.
- Performance standards or targets in relation to housing management, repairs and maintenance.
- WWHC Tenant Participation Policy
- Rent Increases - The Co-operative is legally required to consult annually on the rent increase with tenants and will allow sufficient time for consultation (4 weeks), feedback and notification (4 weeks).
- Tenant Satisfaction on the level of services received by the Co-operative. Surveys will be carried out every 2 years*.

* If WWHC have tendered for surveys to be conducted by an independent company, tenants will be informed *who* the chosen company are and *why* they are being surveyed, in advance of the survey start date.

5.2 Information provision methods and timescales

The methods to be used will depend on the nature of what is being reviewed and the methods preferred by members and can include:

Item	Timescale
Letters	Ongoing as required
Telephone	Ongoing as required
Emails	Ongoing as required
Interviews and other face-to-face contact (office or home visits)	Ongoing as required
Newsletters	3 times per year
Social media	Ongoing as required
Text messaging	Ongoing as required
Performance Bulletin	Quarterly
Leaflets	Ongoing as required
Website	Ongoing as required

Posters	Ongoing as required
Noticeboards	Ongoing as required
Management Committee	Monthly
Performance, Assurance & Risk Sub Committee	Quarterly
Staff and Recruitment Sub Committee	As required
Annual General Meetings (AGM)	Annually
Annual Report	Annually
Tenant Satisfaction Survey	2 yearly
Repair satisfaction surveys	Daily*
Property improvement proposals	As required
Major improvement satisfaction surveys	As required
New tenant survey	Ongoing as required
Tenant Handbook	3 yearly
Tenant Focus Groups	Quarterly or as required
Community information / drop-in sessions	As requested by tenants / members**

**Our repairs satisfaction surveys are distributed to tenants automatically using our customer engagement tool CX Feedback. How often tenants receive these surveys will depend on how often repair work is carried out in their property.*

***WWHC will offer these sessions based on member / tenant demand. If there is little or no demand, WWHC may offer a separate appointment (either face-to-face or telephone) with the parties involved.*

7. Tenant Focus Groups

As a fully mutual housing co-operative, tenant participation is built into the structure of the Co-operative. The Co-operative is also committed to ensuring that tenant members have an opportunity to participate in other ways.

For more detailed scrutiny and feedback tenant focus groups will be able to independently scrutinise the Co-operative's performance and look at ways in which to improve the service members and tenants receive.

Terms of reference have been developed specifically for tenant focus groups and will be regularly reviewed. This document considers aims and objectives, meeting frequency and structure, training and support and other additional information.

7.1 Tenant Focus Group aims

The aims of the panel are:

- Improve services by providing valued opinions.

- Achieve the best service performance and value possible, through investigation, analysis and discussion, in a spirit of co-operation and collaboration.
- Increase tenants' influence in decision making and the strategic and operational development of services.

7.2 Meeting Arrangements

As noted above, the tenant focus groups will work independently to scrutinise and improve the work of the Co-operative. To do so, the focus groups will have access to a private meeting space so that members can speak freely and openly. The Co-operative will endeavour to provide such facilities, either at the Co-operatives offices, Whitlawburn Community Resource Centre, through video calling platforms or other locations provided they are agreed in advance of the meeting taking place and by those who intend to participate.

7.3 Joining a Tenant Focus Group

The Co-operative recognises that in order to participate in feedback groups, tenants will use their free time, discuss and analyse proposals and overall performance of the Co-operative. Any tenant/member is able to join the panel and WWHC staff are encouraged to promote the objectives of such groups to increase overall tenant participation and influence.

WWHC staff will use a range of the methods mentioned in 5.2 to publicise upcoming discussion topics and encourage tenant uptake.

Before joining a tenant focus group, WWHC recommends that tenant(s)/member(s) consider the following:

- Ability to commit time
- Access to technology / internet*
- If active involvement is achievable

*Whilst the Co-operative do not aim to exclude those with limited or no access to technology or the internet, it should be noted that some topics may require the use of both (e.g. website testing, video calling). If this is the case, the Co-operative will endeavour to provide access to these facilities or other alternatives, however, it cannot be guaranteed.

8. Feedback and satisfaction

WWHC is committed to providing feedback to tenants following consultation exercises and will use a variety of the above methods to do so. (Section 5.2).

9. Committee

The Management Committee is the main way in which members participate in and direct all aspects of the Co-operative's business, at all levels. The Management Committee can have up to 15 members, all of whom are also tenants of the Co-operative.

All major decisions affecting the Co-operative are taken by the management Committee, who employ the staff team to run the organisation's operations on a day-to-day basis.

The Management Committee is elected by the Co-operative's membership at the Annual General Meeting which is held in August/September each year.

Advance notice of the meeting is sent out to all members. This includes a nomination form for election to the Management Committee.

Members are encouraged to become Committee Members through newsletters, at the sign up of their tenancy and through other publications.

The Co-operative will continue to promote Management Committee membership, as having an effective Management Committee is fundamental to the success of the Co-operative and the membership that it serves.

10. Tenant Engagement Strategy

WWHC is a community based RSL. The Co-operatives strength lies in its community links and the good will between staff, committee, its members and other stakeholders.

The Co-operative will run a number of community events annually, use discretionary small donations to give to good causes (subject to Management Committee approval) and work with the local schools. This intends to benefit the community as well as give the Co-operative an opportunity to talk to tenant members, in an informal setting, about any issues and concerns they may have.

11. Monitoring

An annual report will be prepared by the Director and presented to the Management Committee at the end of each year for discussion. The report will record and analyse the levels of member participation achieved, and set targets for the forthcoming year.

WWHC further recognise that tenant participation is an ongoing and open-ended strategy and therefore, must be reactive to ensure it meets the changing needs of tenants. To this end, we will be proactive in our approach in monitoring tenant participation. The Co-operative will consider other factors (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal, and

Environmental) and take account of changes requested by our tenants / members.

12. Registered Tenant Organisations

The Co-operative supports any tenant(s) who wish to set up a Registered Tenant Organisation (RTO).

An RTO is an independent organisation set up by tenants to represent their housing and related interests. It will normally have elected office bearers and a formal constitution. An RTO can represent views of people from a defined specific area or about a specific issue.

- RTO's, where established, will have a recognised role in the tenant participation process.
- RTO's will have advance notice of how and when decisions will be taken which affect the management and maintenance of the housing stock and will allow time for meaningful participation and proper consideration of tenant's views.
- RTO's will be consulted on how they can be involved in decision making.
- RTO's will have the opportunity to make representations to the Management Committee.
- RTO's will be involved in the development and review of our Tenant Participation Policy.

WWHC recognises the RTO's are key to the tenant participation process. Any RTO's operating within WWHC stock should be registered with the Co-operative.

This register will be a public document available for view at WWHC's office during working hours. The register will hold the following information:

- Name of the group;
- Area of operation;
- Contact address; and
- Relevant information (meeting details, web sites etc.)

13. Resources and Funding

The Co-operative recognises that resources are required to put the strategy into practice and to ensure that it is effective in giving all members the opportunity to get involved. With this in mind, it commits to resourcing this activity effectively and will consider:

- Staff time required
- Cost of information production
- Management Committee member induction and ongoing training requirements
- Management Committee member expenses

- Management Committee member conference attendance
- Hiring meeting rooms
- Cost of translating or reformatting materials
- Costs of refreshments at meetings
- Access to technology and internet and whether or not alternatives can be provided

The Co-operative will assess the financial resources required to implement the strategy and action plans annually and will make provision in its budgets to support the achievement of the targets for member participation for the year ahead.

14. Equalities

We are committed to ensuring equal opportunities and fair treatment for all people in our work. In implementing this Policy, we will provide a fair and equal service to all people, irrespective of factors such as gender, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, language or social origin, or other personal attributes.

15. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed 3-yearly unless an amendment is required by legislation or guidance. Reviews will be subject to tenant consultation on proposals.