

Tenant Participation Strategy

Creating Better Places To Live



**Ro-innleachd
Com-pàirteachais
Luchd-màil**
Cruthachadh Àitean Fuirich Nas Fheàrr

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Welcome Fàilte



As a review group we welcome you to the launch of Highland's second Tenant Participation Strategy which puts involvement and communication with tenants very much at the centre of housing service delivery and development. We have learned much as a group, and as individuals, from actively taking part and making our views known in developing this strategy. We look forward to working more closely with more tenants over the next three years, and with staff of Highland Council, as we work through the actions we have agreed are necessary to make tenant participation in Highland ever more effective. We hope more of you will join us!

*Tenant representatives from
The Tenant Participation Strategy Review Group*

Working with tenants and staff to develop this Tenant Participation Strategy for Highland has been a process full of energy and commitment.

We value the knowledge and experience our tenants have. By including more people in decision making processes, we can further improve the quality and direction of the services which we deliver. This new Tenant Participation Strategy and Action plan puts practical measures in place which allow *all* to share their ideas.

Whether it's participating from your armchair, or joining more formal decision making forums; this new strategy gives tenants more opportunities to take part. I would like to congratulate and thank everyone involved in developing the strategy and look forward to continuing to work with them to put it into practice.

*Councillor Margaret Davidson,
Chair Highland Council, Housing & Social Work Committee*

Council tenants, tenants' organisations and Highland Council have worked together to draw up this new Tenant Participation Strategy. This strategy will ensure that tenants have the capacity to influence, and that the council is open to that influence. The strategy sets out how we will achieve this: setting objectives which aim to encourage, promote, develop and maintain effective working relationships between the council and tenants in the design and delivery of housing services and services which affect them.

NOTE

This document is a précis of Highland Council's full tenant participation strategy document and action plan which can be found at

www.highland.gov.uk/livinghere/housing/councilhousetenancies/tenantparticipation/

Objectives & Actions

Amdasan & Gnìomhan

Tenant Participation 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.'

National Strategy for Tenant Participation

This is Highland Council's Second Tenant Participation Strategy, continuing our commitment to involving service users in the decisions which affect them. The Action Plan that we have also developed sets out the steps we will take to implement the Strategy.

Seven key tenant participation goals are detailed on the following pages. Alongside these goals we highlight some key actions we will be taking to ensure these goals are met. For full details of the Tenant Participation Strategy Document and Action Plan, please visit:

www.highland.gov.uk/livinghere/housing/councilhousetenancies/tenantparticipation

or, if a Highland Council Tenant, please contact your local Tenant Participation Officer.

Support for Tenant Participation - Key Principles

Tenants and the Highland Council have agreed on the following principles which form the foundations of effective tenant participation. All involved in developing this tenant participation strategy believe that:

1. Tenant participation requires a culture of mutual trust, respect and partnership between tenants, elected and committee/board members, and housing officers at all levels, working together towards a common goal of better housing conditions and housing services.
2. Tenant participation practice should be seen as a continuous process where information, ideas and power are shared, common understandings of problems are strived for and a consensus on solutions is worked out.
3. Good tenant participation allows all parties to contribute to the agenda. All participants require to have all the information needed to consider issues properly; that information requires to be clear, timely and accessible and to take account of equal opportunities concerns.
4. Processes of decision making should be open, clear, and accountable.
5. Adequate time should be given to tenant representatives to consider the issues properly. Tenants should have the opportunity to work out a common view in advance of meeting landlord's representatives.
6. Good tenant participation requires the landlord to recognise the independence of tenants' organisations.
7. Good working relationships evolve gradually and are flexible to adapt to local circumstances.
8. Tenants' organisations require adequate resources for organisation, training and support.
9. Tenant participation in rural areas must be tailored to suit the particular circumstances and needs of tenants in such communities.
10. Tenant Participation must meet the requirements of equal opportunities legislation. Good practice in participation removes barriers to effective participation arising from ethnicity, geographic location, special needs, language differences, learning difficulties, age, sexual orientation, or disability.

Our Goals

Ar n-Amansan

Goal 1: EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

Ensuring Everyone Can Have Their Say

Often the people with the greatest needs are the least confident or able to articulate these needs. This strategy includes a commitment to promote equal opportunity and remove barriers to participation. By doing this, we aim to make sure that everyone has a real chance to get their voice heard.

Action 1:

How we will promote equal opportunity

We will actively reach out to under-represented groups, for example younger tenants, those with disabilities and those from minority groups.

We will ensure tenant publications are clear, in plain language and make good use of graphics to convey their message in a clear and accessible manner.

Publications will be available in other formats and languages as required.

Goal 2: INFORMATION

Being Clear

Good decisions are based on good information. The second key theme in our strategy is a commitment to ensuring that good quality, clear and full information is provided on housing services.

Action 2:

How we will improve information

We will involve Registered Tenants' Organisations in developing publications for tenants, including the Highland Tenant Newsletter.

We will review the content, format and design of Housing Advice and Information leaflets, to ensure the information provided is accessible.

We will develop web-based communication with tenants, alongside paper formats.

We will provide Registered Tenants' Organisations with briefing notes on any Housing & Property policy / service developments.



Our Goals

Ar n-Amdsan

Goal 3: CONSULTATION

Listening & Hearing

Listening to tenants, and hearing what they have to say will enable us to make decisions which reflect their priorities. We will make sure that tenants are properly involved in decision making processes, and let them know how they have influenced decisions made.

We will ensure that tenants, Registered Tenants' Organisations and Tenant Area Panels are consulted and informed of the outcome of the consultation on aspects of housing service delivery which affects them.

Action 3:

How we will promote consultation

We will host an annual tenants' conference as a way to promote networking and engagement. This conference will increase opportunities for future consultation, will allow for additional feedback to be given on consultations carried out over the preceding year, and inspire tenant involvement in the year ahead.

We will further develop our Register of Interested Tenants (RIT), using it as an additional avenue to access tenants' views as part of the consultation process. We will actively encourage these RIT tenants and tenants' organisations to participate in policy consultations on areas of Housing & Property Service policy or service development.

We will make sure that the newsletter provides updates on consultations including feedback on the outcomes of any consultations.

We will develop an Involvement Framework. This will include agreeing methods of information giving and consultation which make the most of opportunities and new forums created by the new tenant participation strategy. This will also recognise that different aspects of service delivery may require different approaches to consultation.

We will raise awareness both of staff and tenants of the various opportunities there are to be involved in consultation.



Our Goals

Are n-Amazing

Goal 4: PARTICIPATION *Getting Involved*

We will develop new ways for tenants to be actively involved with policy makers and decision takers. These new forms of participation will promote formal involvement of tenants in policy development and performance monitoring through the new Tenant Area Panels.

Action 4: **How we will promote participation**

We will work to create Area Forums covering all of Highland. Forums will be made up of tenants from the register of interest, registered tenants' organizations and other interested tenants. Forums will enable direct access to those who make decisions at area level.

We will provide briefing papers on all areas of landlord policy development to Forums and Registered Tenant's Organisations inviting feedback and including that feedback in the policy or service development process.

We will ensure that expenses policies allow tenants every opportunity to participate in all relevant activities or structures.

We will organise an annual Highland Tenants' Conference to allow tenants to share ideas, give feedback and to inspire further participation.

We will work with tenants to explore other means of tenant participation and involvement, for example through the Tenant Led Inspection process, or through mystery shopping.



Our Goals

Ar n-Amdsan

Goal 5: DEVELOPING SKILLS

Knowing How To Effect Change

We all need to know *how* to get our voice heard. Key to the success of this strategy is giving everyone involved the skills to get their voice heard, and have an impact. This means good lobbying and listening skills for all. We are committed to promoting training and briefing sessions for tenants, staff and councillors.

Action 5:

How we will increase skills

We will work with tenants and tenants' groups to raise awareness of courses which give tenants the skills to take a more active role in tenant participation, at whatever level they wish to participate. We will fund attendance at such courses, for example on committee skills, IT skills, report writing, funding applications, public speaking, confidence building and assertiveness training.

We will develop joint training sessions for tenants, councillors and staff.

We will invite staff, councillors and tenants to get involved in wider tenant participation networks allowing us all to learn from good practice elsewhere.

As well as issuing policy briefing papers and inviting response, we will deliver briefing sessions to organised groups and councilors where requested.

Goal 6: WIDER ACTION

Using Skills To Benefit The Wider Community

This strategy is designed to increase tenants' skills and ability to influence housing policies. The skills we are developing with our tenants can also be put to good use in other community planning forums – helping *all* services to be more responsive to their users. We aim to explore and develop integration of tenant participation processes with local community planning arrangements as these evolve in Highland.

Action 6:

How we will encourage tenants to take part in wider Community planning forums

We will provide information to all Registered Tenants' Organisations and Area Forums about the Ward Forum structure, and how they can get involved at this level.

We will explore opportunities for Highland Tenants to link up with tenants from other registered social landlords in Highland where appropriate.

Our Goals Ar n-Amasan

Goal 7: PROGRESS & OUTCOMES

Knowing It Works

We will put a number of measures in place so that we can see the impact this new strategy is having. We are committed to jointly review progress of the strategy with our Review Group "Highland Tenants Together", examine the outcomes and encourage continuous improvement across the network of stakeholders in Tenant Participation.

Action 7: How we will monitor & measure progress

We will work with tenants to identify key successes.

We will produce progress reports.

We will report to tenants via the Highland Tenants' Newsletter, and to the Housing and Social Work Committee so that everyone is aware of our progress.

We will include relevant sessions in the Annual Highland Tenants' conference.



Tenant Representation - A shared goal

Tenants, tenants' groups and Highland Council have a history of working together to ensure tenants' voices are heard in the policy making process. This, our second tenant participation strategy, has grown out of this ongoing dialogue. Our joint goal is to ensure that our structures and processes are "fit for purpose", allowing tenants meaningful representation throughout the decision making process.

This new strategy has developed a number of ways in which tenants can get their voice heard. The formal methods include the Area Forums, the Register of Interested Tenants, as well as the improved involvement of Registered Tenants' Organisations.

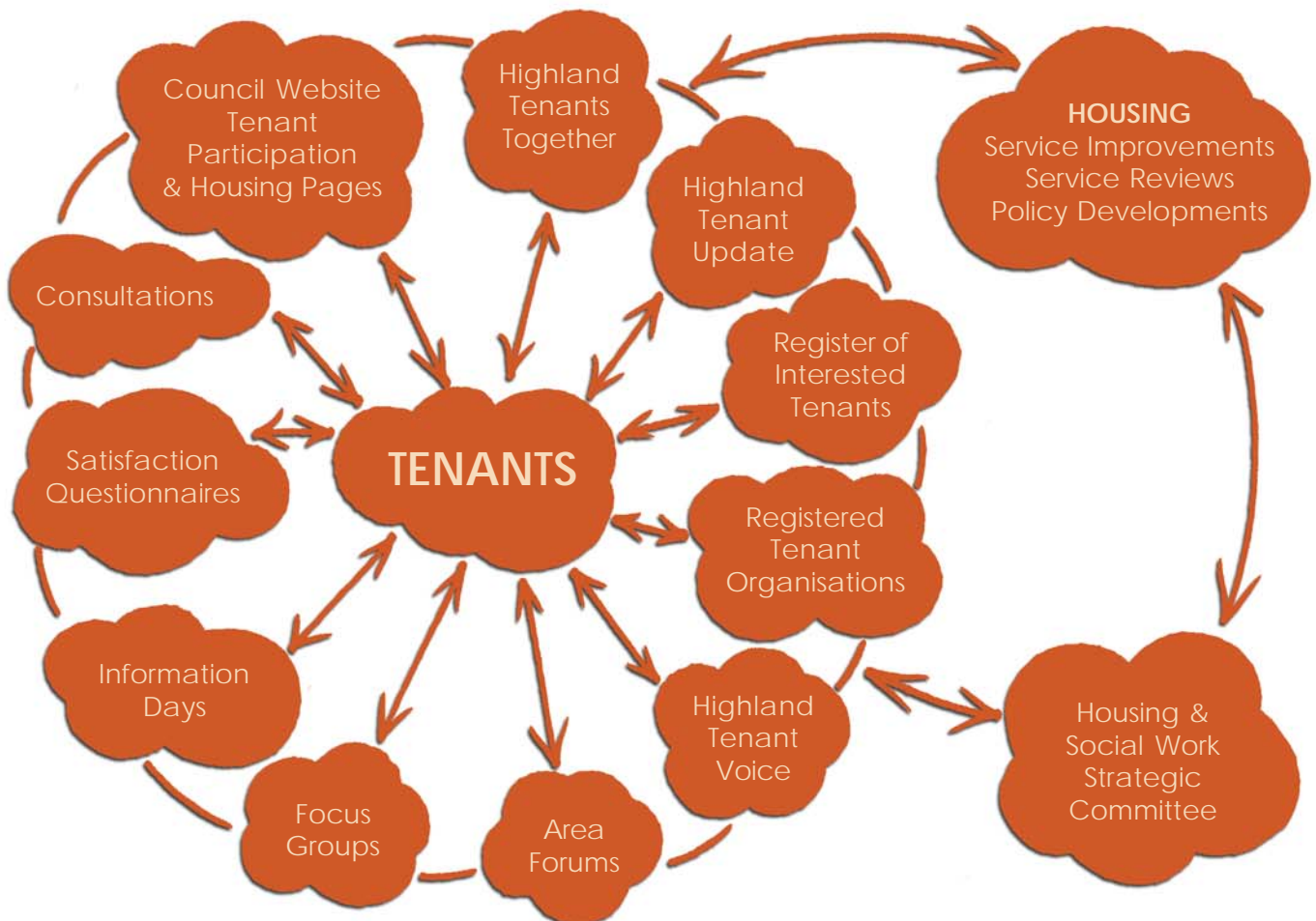
- Tenant and Resident Groups will continue to be supported and new ones will be encouraged to develop and register as a statutory Registered Tenants Organisation.
- Area Forums will be supported to meet and will provide the groups in their areas with the opportunity to discuss local and wider issues, share skills, knowledge and experience.
- The previous Tenant Consultative Group will be replaced by a Highland wide group "Highland Tenants Together" consisting of tenant reps from the Area Forums.
- Area Forums will be encouraged to meet four times each year in their own area and once a year to meet together.



Riochdachadh luchd-màil - Amas co-roinnte



Tenant Participation & Communication Links



Useful Contacts

Seòlaidhean Feumail

The Tenant Participation Strategy 2009 - 2012 and the Action Plan are available from the Highland Council's web-site at:

www.highland.gov.uk/livinghere/housing/councilhousetenancies/tenantparticipation

LOCAL TENANT PARTICIPATION CONTACTS

Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey

01463 724516

Ross, Skye & Lochaber

01349 868471

Caithness, Sutherland & Easter Ross

01408 635380

General Enquiries, HQ

01463 702863

To find out more about Tenant Participation in Scotland

You might also be interested in finding out about the national Tenant Participation network, what tenants across Scotland can achieve through participation, and what wider resources and support are available. The following organisations offer a range of support to tenants and tenants' groups and registered social landlords:

Tenant Information Service (TIS)

Suite 124 - 128 Baltic Chambers

50 Wellington Street, Glasgow G2 6HJ

Tel: 0141 248 1242

www.tis.org.uk

Tenant Participation Advisory Service Scotland (TPAS)

74-78 Saltmarket, Glasgow G1 5LD

Tel: 0141 552 3633

www.tpasscotland.org.uk

With thanks to everyone who took part in our photo competition - many of the entries have been used to illustrate this document.

To request this information in an alternative format,

eg, large print, Braille, cd, audio tape, or different language, please contact:

Housing & Property Service - Telephone: 01463 702863 - Email: housing@highland.gov.uk

