TENANT PARTICIPATION POLICY

COMMON/POLICY/HOUSING MANAGEMENT/TENANT PARTICIPATION

Angus Housing Association Registered Charity Number SC020981
Scottish Social Housing Charter | Outcomes
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This policy has been developed with reference to The Scottish Social Housing Charter | 1 Equalities, 2 Communication, 3 Participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standards</th>
<th>Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activity Standards</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guiding Standards</td>
<td>GS2.2, GS3.1</td>
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</tbody>
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**Written by** | **Linlay Anderson**
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**Department** | Housing Management

Approval Date by Committee

**Notes:**
ANGUS HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED

TENANT PARTICIPATION POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

Angus Housing Association recognises that our success as a landlord with satisfied customers is dependent on working in partnership with tenants, owners, communities and their representatives.

The Government’s National Strategy for Tenant Participation defines participation as follows:

“Tenant Participation is about tenants taking part in decision making processes and influencing decisions about:

✓ Housing Policies
✓ Housing Condition
✓ Housing (and related) Services

It 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 services.”

Angus Housing Association is committed to promoting the involvement of our tenants across all the areas of our activity and we recognise that individuals will wish varying degrees of involvement. However, we recognise that our success as a landlord with satisfied customers is dependent on working in partnership with tenants, owners, communities and their representatives.

In this Policy it is assumed that ‘tenant’ participation also covers other groups such as local residents and owner occupiers living in Angus Housing Association’s estates.
The Strategy also takes account of the Scottish Social Housing Charter which was approved by the Scottish Parliament on the 14 March 2012 and came into effect from 1 April 2012. The purpose of The Charter is to help improve the quality and value of the services that social landlords provide.

1.1 Aims and Benefits of Participation

There are a number of benefits in Angus Housing Association taking an active approach to Participation including:

- Improved service delivery
- Assistance for Staff and Management Committee in making decisions and setting priorities
- The opportunity of personal development for tenants, some of whom may go on to become Committee of Management Members
- Increased tenant and owner satisfaction with our services
- Better communication between Angus Housing Association and its tenants and owners
- Better links with the community and Angus Housing Association
- Increased satisfaction with our services

These benefits accrue gradually and are the result of long-term participation. It is important that Angus Housing Association’s participation activities evolve at a pace that is comfortable for Angus Housing Association, its staff and tenants.

1.2 Key Principles

There are a number of key principles that Angus Housing Association recognises are fundamental to the success of participation. We recognise and accept that:
Tenant participation requires a culture of mutual trust, respect and partnership between tenants, residents, elected and committee/board members and housing officers at all levels, working together towards a common goal of better housing conditions and housing services.

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.

Good tenant participation allows all parties to contribute to the agenda. All participants require having 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.

Processes of decision-making should be open, clear and accountable.

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.

Good tenant participation requires the landlord to recognise the independence of tenants' organisations.

Good working relationships evolve gradually and are flexible to adapt to local circumstances.

Tenants' organisations require adequate resources for organisation, training and support.

Tenant participation in rural areas must be tailored to suit the particular circumstances and needs of tenants in such communities.
Tenant participation must meet the requirements of the legislation surrounding equal opportunities. Good practice in participation removes barriers to effective participation arising from ethnicity, geographic location, special needs, language difficulties, learning difficulties, age, sexual orientation, or disability.

1.3 All Staff and Members

It is important to recognise that Tenant Participation affects all members of staff in all departments, Management Committee Members and not, as is traditionally thought, solely Housing Management staff.

2. POLICY FORMATION

This policy has been formulated taking into account Good Practice Guidelines by the Chartered Institute of Housing, Raising Standards in Housing, current Housing Legislation and the views of our tenants/residents groups.

3. AREAS FOR PARTICIPATION

Angus Housing Association wants to involve tenants in participation in areas that affect their homes, services and environment - particularly so if the effect is likely to have a significant impact.

Included below is a list of areas for participation by tenants and residents:

- Rent Levels - However it has to be recognised that Angus Housing Association has various contractual obligations (e.g. in fulfilling planned and cyclical maintenance expenditure) in its Sale and Purchase Agreement with the Scottish Housing Regulator until 2027 and meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standard by 2015. These obligations limit the flexibility that Angus Housing Association has when setting rent increases.
- Tenant Participation Policy and Strategies for implementing the Policy.
- Housing Management services and service standards - Tenancy Agreements, Policies e.g. Estate Management, Allocations etc.
- Property Management services and service standards - Policies, standard of repairs, response times, rechargeable repairs, consulting owners on common repair services.
- Local design and adaptation issues - estate mix, house design, environmental improvements, etc.
- Governance issues, such as the strategic future of the organisation.
- Non-housing issues such as security, social and recreational facilities, transport, social inclusion etc.

4. STRATEGY FOR ACHIEVING PARTICIPATION

Angus Housing Association is committed to consulting tenants and owners on matters that affect them directly. In the production of this Policy we aim to promote, encourage, facilitate and develop meaningful partnerships with tenants - individually and in recognised tenant and/or residents groups - in order to maximise and encourage tenants to participate in the operation of the organisation and influence decisions about the standards and services delivered.

In order for us to implement the Policy we will also agree a Strategy for implementing the Policy. The methods by which we seek to do this is fully covered in detail in the Strategy Document. The Strategy will include quite specific targets and aims for the lifetime of the Strategy

5. SUPPORTING TENANTS/RESIDENTS GROUPS

A key part of our Tenant Participation Strategy is to promote the formation and development of recognised tenants/residents groups. In order for this to
be meaningful and successful we will provide both practical support through staff resources and financial support.

We will assist with training for tenants groups - particularly, but not exclusively, through Housing Officers, and will also assist them to seek independent training from other organisations - e.g. Tenants Information Service, Tenant Participation Advisory Service.

Each year we will be prepared to allocate a suitable and appropriate sum for Tenant Participation that will be determined annually by the Management Committee as part of the annual budget approval process. The tenants/residents groups will have access to that sum in order to fulfil their aims and objectives as per their constitutions.

**Recognition Criteria for Registered Tenants Organisations (RTOs)**

We will formally recognise tenants/residents groups that wish to become RTOs. As a minimum, groups must have:

- Formal written constitutions for the benefit of tenants and which is approved by Angus Housing Association and follows the Guidelines outlined in Statutory Guidance (SSI 2002,416)
- A Committee consisting of a minimum of 3 members
- A defined area of operation
- A Membership Policy
- A commitment to Equal Opportunities
- A mechanism for managing its funds and keeping proper accounts and
- Structures in place for representing and consulting with other tenants

Angus Housing Association will maintain a Register of recognised Tenants and Residents Groups, which is available for public inspection.
(Where Angus Housing Association tenants in any area form part of a wider non-Angus Housing Association tenants/residents association (e.g. with Council tenants, other RSL tenants) we will not formally recognise the Association unless the Constitution clearly allows only Angus Housing Association tenants to vote on Angus Housing Association issues. In the latter case, any funding will be allocated pro rata to reflect the number of Angus Housing Association tenants).

The Director is delegated to formally approve the recognition of such groups.

Groups will be de-registered from the register if:

- They have been formally dissolved in accordance with their Constitution or
- The have ceased to exist or to operate
- They are acting outwith the conditions in their Constitution or
- They fail to keep to the formal registration criteria

The Director is delegated to formally de-register such a group.

Where a group is not satisfied by a decision to either register the group or to de-register the group, it may appeal to the Management Committee.

(If a group remains aggrieved then they may ultimately appeal to the Scottish Ministers who may either confirm or reverse the decision)

6. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

We aim to ensure that all of our Policies and Strategies and those of tenants groups do not discriminate on grounds of race, colour, culture, religion, ethnic or national origin, gender, age or sexual orientation and will be prepared to produce documents in Braille, audio tape and ethnic minority translations.
7. MONITORING AND REVIEW

Monitoring

We will measure our performance by using both quantitative and qualitative indicators such as:

Quantitative:
- Number of tenants/residents/owners groups formally recognised.
- Number of groups in receipt of funding from Angus Housing Association.
- Costs per tenancy of Tenant Participation.
- Number of tenant surveys carried out.
- Number of newsletters, newssheets and other publications sent out.

Qualitative:
- Levels of customer satisfaction with our services.
- Methods of communication.
- Outcomes and achievements.
- The effectiveness of tenants groups.

Review

We will review our Tenant Participation Policy every 3 years and our Tenant Participation Strategy every 2 years to ensure they continually reflect the needs and aspirations of our tenants. We will consult with our tenants and recognised groups before implementing any changes to the Policy.