



Putting People 1st

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Tenant/Customer Participation Policy (Strategy) 2021 - 2024

H18

This policy document can be produced in various formats, for instance, in larger print or audio-format; and it can also be translated into other languages, as appropriate.

Our equality and diversity policy statement describes our key equality commitments that we use to develop all organisational services; this includes employment services and services to tenants and other customers.

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1.0 Introduction

Pineview Housing Association aims to provide opportunities for all our customers to play an active role in the management of their homes and the delivery of services.

These opportunities will vary to ensure that customers can participate in a way and at a level that they wish to both individually and collectively.

We wish to make sure tenants and other customers are at the heart of everything we do.

We also wish to maximise opportunities for involvement and take away barriers to participation.

Our Tenant/Customer Participation Strategy / Policy therefore contributes to this aim through the provision of a framework for effective participation with a range of approaches to facilitate customer participation and involvement to the degree / extent tenants/customers wish to become involved.

2.0 Our Definition of Tenant/Customer Participation

Tenant/Customer participation is about tenants/customers taking part in decision making and influencing decisions in partnership with us on for example:

- Our policies and practices which affect you
- Your homes
- Housing conditions
- The services we provide
- Issues that affect your / the wider community

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 services.

The benefits of effective tenant/customer participation for everyone include:

- Better service delivery and improved value for money
- Improved communication between staff and tenants/customers
- Stronger links between the community and landlords
- Increased tenant satisfaction with their home and neighbourhood
- Opportunities to develop new knowledge and skills
- Staff and tenants/customers being more aware of each other's' perspective and organisational and financial limitations etc.
- Building mutual respect and understanding between tenants/customers and landlords

3.0 Scottish Social Housing Charter

The Housing (Scotland) Acts 2001 and 2010 introduced a legal requirement for landlords to actively develop and support tenant participation. The 2010 Act introduced the Scottish Social Housing Charter which sets out the standards and outcomes that all social landlords should aim to achieve when delivering their housing services. The Charter was revised in 2017 and under the customer and landlord relationship section sets out 3 main outcomes relevant to customer engagement which landlords should achieve:

Equalities: Every tenant and other customer has their individual needs recognised, is treated fairly and with respect and receives fair access to housing and housing services.

Communication: Tenants and other customers find it easy to communicate with their landlord and get the information they need about their landlord, how and why it makes decisions and the services it provides.

Participation: Tenants and other customers find it easy to participate in and influence their landlord's decisions at a level they feel comfortable with.

The Scottish Housing Regulator measures our performance against the Charter and we will report our performance as a landlord to all our customers. Tenants and residents involved in our participation structures, such as the Pineview Customer Forum will have ongoing opportunities to find out about our performance and shape our services throughout the year. Residents can also look up our performance on the Scottish Housing Regulator website.

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 introduced a duty for social landlords (effective from May 2019) to consult with tenants and applicants on their allocation policy and publish the results of the consultation when amending their allocations policy.

4.0 Principles

- Tenant/customer participation requires a culture of mutual trust, respect and partnership between tenants, other customers, elected and committee/board members and staff at all levels working together towards a common goal of better housing conditions and housing services.
- Participation practice should be seen as a continuous process where information, ideas and power are shared, common understanding of problems are strived for and a consensus on solutions is worked out.
- Good tenant/customer participation allows all parties to contribute to the agenda. All participants require to have all the information needed to consider issues properly; that information required to be clear, timely and accessible and to take account of equality and diversity concerns / issues.

5.0 Aims

- To encourage tenants/customers to be involved in the decisions affecting their home and service at whatever level of participation they choose.
- To improve the decision-making process by enabling tenants/customers to have an input to the decisions being taken by staff and committee.
- To protect the investment in the area by increasing the community's sense of ownership.
- To provide as much information as possible in an easy to understand format and to enable tenants/customers to provide us with information to help identify their needs.
- To create opportunities to get involved and participate with Pineview Housing Association.

To achieve our aims we will make sure that:

- There is a range of options for our tenants/customers to become involved in and to influence decisions
- Our information is understandable, accurate and relevant
- We will consult using a variety of methods
- We will listen to, act on and provide feedback on what our tenants/customers say to us
- Tenants/customers are able to assess and scrutinise our performance
- We will review our Tenant/Customer Participation Strategy at least every 3 years
- We will review our Tenant/Customer Participation Action Plan on an annual basis within our Internal Management Plan Priorities.
- Appropriate resources and support are provided to enable effective participation
- We will support the establishment of Registered Tenants Organisations (RTOs) where there is demand
- We will continue to support, encourage membership and consult with the Pineview Customer Forum
- The differing needs and diversity of tenants/customers are recognised, respected and responded to appropriately

6.0 Information, Consultation and Participation

To maximise tenant/customer opportunities to raise issues and be able to influence decisions we will use a wide range of participation and consultation methods:

6.1 Information

We will provide tenants/customers with up to date, accurate, relevant and accessible information of good quality to enable them to be well informed and better equipped to participate. This includes:

- Newsletters and Information Leaflets
- Letters /Flyers

- Tenancy Agreement
- Tenants Handbook
- Factoring Handbook
- Annual Report / Tenant Report on Charter Performance
- Non confidential minutes of Management Committee meetings
- Website

6.2 Consultation

There are many ways that tenants/customers can make their views known to us and we will involve them in our policy formulation and decision-making processes when relevant. We will consult on:

- Changes to policies or practices relating to housing management or repairs and maintenance where the changes would have a significant impact on tenants/customers. These could include policies and practices relating to allocations, the repairs service, estate management, anti-social behaviour, rent arrears and any proposed increase to rents and service charges.
- Housing management, repairs and maintenance service standards
- Local issues
- Tenant/resident and community projects
- Priorities for capital works programmes – this concerns improvements to your home and the environment
- Housing design and specifications
- Any disposal of our housing stock which would result in a change of landlord.

We will listen to all comments and make sure that they influence our work. This includes:

- Pineview Customer Forum
- Our Annual General Meeting
- Surveys and questionnaires
- Newsletters
- Focus and working groups
- Local events / information days or meetings
- House visits
- Office interviews
- Our website
- Social media
- Consultation Register

6.3 Participation

Methods / ways in which we will encourage participation in addition to the above include:

- Promoting membership of the Association and appointment to our Management Committee
- Information and support to our Customer Forum

- Encourage attendance at our Customer Forum through publicity in our Newsletter, website and staff communications.

7.0 Resourcing of Tenant/Customer Participation

Pineview Housing Association will provide assistance to the Customer Forum and RTOs in the form of staff time, facilities such as paper, photocopying and training. This will be identified as part of the Tenant/Customer Participation Action Plan mentioned above.

A budget for newsletters, annual report, surveys and any social activities will also be included in the Association's budget.

8.0 Equality and Diversity

Our core values include providing a fair and equal service for all people and this is detailed in our Equality and Diversity Policy. Our approach to tenant/customer participation will reflect that commitment.

10. Complaints

Anyone who is not happy / satisfied with the service they have received as a result of this policy has a right to complain. Please see the Association's Complaints Policy for detail on how to do this.

11. Review

This Strategy /Policy will be reviewed at least every 3 years unless amendment is prompted by a change in legislation or monitoring / reporting reveals that a change in policy is required sooner.

Our Tenant/Customer Participation Action Plan will be reviewed on an annual basis within our Internal Management Plan Priorities.

Appendix 1

Remit of Pineview Customer Forum

1.0 Introduction

This document sets out the key roles and responsibilities of the Pineview Customer Forum, and how Pineview Housing Association will support the Forum.

2.0 Role of the Customer Forum

The role of the Customer Forum is to provide an opportunity for customers to work together with Pineview Housing Association on matters of operational practice and policy that impact upon all or many of the Association's customers.

The Forum will be focused on operational issues facing Pineview Housing Association, allowing customers to shape and influence service and policy development in a constructive and focused way.

The Forum should enhance existing tenant participation arrangements by introducing a tier of accountability' to help ensure Pineview Housing Association remains customer focused whilst striving for continuous improvement.

Pineview Housing Association recognises that by working closely with customers we can best determine the needs, wants and aspirations of our customers. The Forum allows customers to influence service development which in turn should lead to higher levels of customer satisfaction.

3.0 Membership of the Forum

Membership rules are 'informal', open to local people with an interest in the Association and all tenants aged 16 and over.

4.0 Staff and Management Committee attendance at Forum Meetings

The Forum will be supported by the Association's staff with the relevant staff members being in attendance at each meeting. Management Committee members may attend Forum meetings when required but on an 'observe only' basis.

Staff members will be invited to the meetings as required and according to the planned agenda items for discussion.

5.0 Frequency of Meetings

The Forum will meet 9-10 times per year usually avoiding traditional holiday dates and times of reduced staff cover. This frequency will remain under review, taking account of the wishes of customers and staff members.

6.0 Conduct of business

A Chairperson will be agreed at the beginning of each meeting. An offer will be made at the beginning of each meeting for a volunteer to chair the meeting. This can be either a customer or staff member. Items for discussion will be agreed in advance.

All participants in the Forum should treat each other with respect, allowing everyone to have their say. A Code of Conduct is signed annually by Forum members.

7.0 Support for the Customer Forum

Pineview Housing Association will provide the Customer Forum with the necessary support required to fulfil their role. This includes:

- Use of meeting rooms
- Access to appropriate staff at meetings on request
- Access to training and information as required
- Transport for those that need assistance to travel to the office

8.0 Priorities for the Customer Forum

The priorities of the Customer Forum shall be agreed by customers at forum meetings in consultation with staff members.

Appendix 2 – Registered Tenants Organisations (RTOs)

The Association will encourage tenants to establish themselves as Registered Tenants Organisations although this will not be a substitute for consulting with individual tenants.

The Association will hold a Register of these Organisations as part of our duties under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. The register will include the name of the group, their area of operation, a contact address and any other information such as dates of meetings etc.

The following sets out the criteria that tenant / residents organisations must be able to demonstrate when seeking registration:

- its objectives and area of operation
- how people can become members of the organisation
- the way the committee will operate
- how the business of the organisation will be conducted
- how decisions will be reached democratically
- how funds will be managed
- arrangements for public meetings
- arrangements for an annual general meeting and
- how changes can be made to the constitution

The organisation must have a committee that:

- after the first year is elected at an AGM
- has at least five members
- can co-opt others onto the committee during the course of the year
- has elected office bearers
- hold meetings that are open to any member of the organisation
- can demonstrate that decisions are reached democratically and
- promotes equal opportunity

The organisation must operate within:

- a defined geographical area and
- an area which includes housing stock owned and/or managed by the Association

When registering the RTO should submit the following to the Association:

- a written constitution
- names and contact addresses of committee members (identifying the office bearers)
- a map and description of the area of operations and
- a statement setting out how the organisations plans to engage with its members and how it will represent their views

RTOs will be removed from the register when:

- it no longer meets the registration criteria or
- it ceases to exist or does not operate or
- there is mutual agreement between the Association and the RTO