

**MORAY HOUSING PARTNERSHIP**  
**Tenant Participation & Involvement Strategy**  
(HAVE YOUR SAY – Get Involved)

Date Agreed:

Under Review

Moray Housing Partnership is now in its 11<sup>th</sup> year and from humble beginnings we are now an established and expanding independent Registered Social Landlord (RSL). We now have assets of £20m with a rental income of over £1m and we are still growing. It's up to you what direction this continued growth takes, we have a firm commitment to involving you, our tenants, in the management of your homes both now and in the future that's why we are called a Partnership.

Working together in this Partnership we can make MHP a dynamic and vibrant organisation with a commitment to high quality service delivery and quality housing.

Your ideas are important and we want to hear from you – yes you!

Read on .....

## Table of Contents

1.	Introduction	3
2.	Background	3
3.	Aims and objectives	3-4
4.	How the Strategy will be developed	4
5.	The benefits of tenant participation	4
6.	Equal opportunities	5
7.	Methods for consulting with tenants and keeping them informed	5
8.	Issues for consultation	6
9.	Feedback from consultation exercises	6
10.	Opportunities to Take Part in the Running of the Partnership	6-7
11.	Working with registered tenant organisations (RTOs)	8
12.	Resources	8-9
13.	Training	10
14.	Reviewing the Strategy	10
	Appendix 1 - Registration of Tenant Organisations	10-15

## **1. Introduction**

Tenant participation and tenant involvement lie at the heart of the Partnership which is MHP and are fundamental to the way we do business. The publication of our Tenant Participation Strategy gives us the opportunity to set out formally what we will do to ensure that all our tenants and members have the opportunity to take part in the decision making process. The production of our strategy is not the end of the process; it will be a working document which will continue to evolve as tenants, committee members and members of staff work in partnership together to continuously improve the services that MHP provide.

## **2. Background**

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 gives tenants new rights to be involved in the management of their homes and also places a duty on landlords to produce tenant participation strategies which set out how this will be done. Our first strategy was approved by our Committee of Management in December 2001. Since then we have increased our housing stock and therefore the number of tenants. We now have houses across Moray in small coastal villages and in the centre of most of the larger conurbations.

Moray Housing Partnership has, of course, since its early beginnings been committed to the principal of tenant participation and involvement and have always strived to give tenants the opportunity to be involved in the management of their homes through regular updates in our quarterly newsletter, Committee and Staff walkabouts and regular contact with a local Housing Officer.

However we have recognised that with our expansion we need to revise our Tenant Participation and Involvement Strategy, ensuring it meets the needs of all our tenants and that it provides or facilitates easy access for all to the running of MHP. This document therefore is MHP's Tenant Participation and Involvement Strategy 2007.

## **3. Aims and objectives**

The Partnership will seek to ensure that:

The aim of our Tenant Participation and Involvement Strategy is to maximise tenant participation in the running of the Partnership by offering a range of methods to allow tenants to take part at a level which best suits them.

### **Objective 1**

To ensure that tenants are consulted on all housing and housing related issues affecting them;

### **Objective 2**

To create a Partnership with our service users to maximise our membership and to maximise the involvement of tenants;

### **Objective 3**

To provide support to tenants interested in setting up local associations or groups and to ensure that resources are provided to enable this activity;

### **Objective 4**

To promote social inclusion and equality of opportunity for our members and their communities;

## **4. How the Strategy will be developed**

We want tenants to be involved in developing this strategy and with this in mind one of our objectives is to ensure they are consulted on all housing related issues affecting them.

To allow us to collate the views of as many tenants as possible, we consulted with all tenants listed on our Register of Interested Tenants.

Before the strategy is finally agreed by the Committee of Management all tenants will be consulted on the finalised content of the strategy.

## **5. The benefits of Tenant Participation**

The principle of tenant participation is central to the objectives and activities of MHP. We firmly believe that the greater tenant involvement in the running of the Partnership, the more effective an organisation it will be. We believe that empowered individuals make empowered communities and that being involved in the running of the Partnership can give tenants the skills, experience and confidence that can make them very effective community leaders. We believe that as well as good quality, well maintained homes, our tenants also need strong and effective communities and we are committed to supporting them in achieving this.

## **6. Equal Opportunities**

The Moray Housing Partnership wishes to encourage the participation of all its tenants in the running of the Partnership and recognises, welcomes and values the contributions that all groups can make to this process. We will seek to remove barriers to participation arising from ethnicity, geographic location, special needs, language difficulties, age, sexual orientation or disability. We will support and encourage all tenants who participate in the Partnership while maintaining their right to privacy and confidentiality.

It is our aim that all groups have, and take, the opportunity to play a full and active role in the running of the Partnership. We recognise that to achieve this we must develop effective ways to identify groups which are under-represented and, through consultation with them, actively encourage them to become more involved. This work will be part of the on-going development of the strategy.

## **7. Methods for consulting with tenants and keeping them informed**

The Partnership aims to provide tenants 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 tenants and keeping them informed of our activities including:

- Tenants Handbook
- Letters
- Telephone
- E mails
- Interviews and other face to face contact
- Quarterly Newsletters
- Website
- Neighbourhood Focus Group meetings
- Committee of Management and Sub Committee meetings
- Annual General Meetings
- Rent and service charge consultation meetings
- Tenant and customer satisfaction surveys
- Repair satisfaction questionnaires
- Major improvement satisfaction questionnaires

We will allow reasonable time scales for all consultation exercises and give clear information as to these time scales.

## **8. Issues for Consultation**

Under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 the Partnership is required to consult with tenants and tenants groups on:

- Repairs and maintenance
- Housing management issues
- The Tenant Participation strategy
- Any change of landlord
- Any rent or service charge increases

In developing, monitoring and reviewing policies and procedures Moray Housing Partnership will consult tenants, seeking opinions and feedback, particularly in relation to the following:

- overall standard of housing services and how these services are delivered
- any proposed changes to management or maintenance arrangements which would affect tenants
- review of policies
- extent and cost of services paid for by tenants.

Tenants will be actively encouraged to tell Moray Housing Partnership how services can be improved or delivered more effectively.

## **9. Feedback from consultation exercises**

The Partnership recognises that it is extremely important to give tenants feedback on consultation exercises it carries out. We will provide feedback to tenants in a number of ways including:

- Newsletters
- Individual letters
- On our web site

We will make every effort to demonstrate how the views of tenants obtained in consultation exercises have been taken into account and how they have contributed towards the final outcome.

## **10. Opportunities to Take Part in the Running of MHP**

The ultimate goal for our strategy is to have more tenants playing an active role in the management of the Partnership. We recognise that traditional methods of tenant participation, such as membership of committees, requires considerable commitment of time and energy and that many tenants are unable or unwilling to make such a commitment. They may, however, welcome the opportunity to comment on the Partnership's policies and services, take part in small surveys

or be part of a Focus Group looking at a particular project or issue. The strategy aims to develop a range of different ways to allow tenants to be involved and at a level they are comfortable with.

The Partnership will offer the following opportunities for participation:

### **Area Tenant Boards (ATBs)**

These are locally based Area Residents Associations, very much focussed on local issues and at looking at ways to benefit and improve their communities. Each Area Tenant Board will elect one share holding member to the Partnership's Committee of management. Each ATB will be encouraged to register with the Partnership (see Section 11 of this strategy).

### **Committee of Management (COM)**

The Committee of Management is responsible for the overall management and control of the Partnership with a strong emphasis on strategic planning. Each ATB has one representative on the COM.

### **Sub Committees**

These are responsible for operational issues in all areas of the Partnership's activities. They have considerable input into the review of policies and as such have a real influence in how the Partnership's policies develop.

### **Tenant Volunteers**

We are committed to ensuring that tenants living in remote areas have the opportunity to get involved and take part in the running of the Partnership. Tenant Volunteers act as a point of contact between the Partnership and tenants in such areas.

### **Tenant Contacts**

These are appointed when we are carrying out major contracts. Their role is to pass information between the contractor involved and tenants on a daily basis. The role ends when the contract does.

### **Tenant Panel**

The Tenant Panel provides (or is made up of) a pool of individual tenants who wish to be consulted on the activities, policies and services provided by the Partnership. We aim for the Panel to be representative of the Partnership's tenants in terms of age, sex, disability and ethnic origin and for every area of the Partnership to be represented.

### **Focus Groups**

We use Focus Groups where the Partnership is reviewing very significant policies or services or for particular projects where a more detailed and long term input from tenants would be valuable. A Focus Group will have a specific remit and will be wound up when the end result is achieved.

## **11. Working with registered tenant organisations (RTOs)**

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 requires landlords to maintain registers of tenant groups which have met certain criteria laid down by Scottish Ministers. The Partnership has a duty under the Act to consult with those members of RTO's who are Partnership tenants.

We will encourage any Residents Associations formed by our tenants to be registered and we will give them any advice, assistance and support they need to meet the required criteria. We will also encourage and support the registration of any Residents Associations which include people from other housing tenures as well as Partnership tenants.

The Partnership will maintain a public register of registered tenant organisations. The register will contain:

- The name of each organisation
- The area it covers
- A contact address for the organisation
- Any other useful or relevant information

The register will be available to view at our offices or on our web site.

We will work and support new and existing Residents Associations with a range of resources:

- Staff time
- Training for tenants
- Administrative support
- Costs of meeting venues, refreshments etc
- Other financial support as required
- Advice and support in applying for external funding

Information on the criteria and procedure for becoming a registered tenant organisation and also on our appeals process can be found at Appendix 1 of this strategy.

## **12. Resources**

The Partnership recognises that resources will be needed to put the strategy into practice and ensure that it is effective in giving all tenants the opportunity to become involved in the running of the Partnership. Resources will be required to meet:

- Costs of the implementation and ongoing development of the strategy
- Costs of consultation exercises
- Costs of supporting Residents Associations
- Costs of supporting individual tenants

- A wide range of resources will be needed including:
  - Staff time
  - Expenses for travel, childcare and other carer costs
  - Typing, copying, postage, minute taking and other administrative support
  - Special needs for individual tenants e.g. production of material in other formats, signers for meetings
  - Costs for hiring venues for meetings, conferences etc
  - Costs of refreshments at meetings, conferences etc
  - Training for tenants and staff
  - Publicity
  - Attendance at conferences

The Partnership recognises that it is important to look at all sources of funding and support for tenant participation and be innovative in how it resources the implementation of the strategy. We provide the following resources to achieve the aims of the strategy:

### **Staff**

The Housing Team will take the lead in putting the strategy into practice and in supporting all tenants who are involved. The Partnership is, however, committed to ensuring that tenant participation and Involvement is part of the mainstream of its work and expects that all members of staff will have some involvement in implementing the strategy.

### **Financial Support**

The Partnership will assess the financial resources required to implement the strategy annually and will make provision in its budgets to support the achievement of the targets for tenant participation and involvement for the year ahead. As well as staff and administrative costs, budget provision will be made for training, tenant expenses, meetings and conferences, and supporting Residents Associations.

### **Administrative Support**

The Partnership will provide administrative resources for the implementation of the strategy including stationery, printing, copying and postage. These resources will also be made available to Residents Associations.

### **Publicity**

The Partnership will provide opportunities for Area Tenant Boards, Residents Associations and individual tenants to publicise their activities in quarterly newsletters and on our web site.

### **External Sources**

The Partnership will investigate opportunities to obtain other resources from outside the Partnership, both locally and nationally. These might include large and small grants and non financial support. We will provide staff time and other resources as necessary to help tenant groups access such funding and support.

## **13. Training**

Moray Housing Partnership is committed to ensuring that tenants and staff have the necessary skills to ensure that our strategy is effective and successful. Training sessions on tenant participation and on our strategy will be included in training programmes for staff, committee members and Area Tenant Boards.

We will work with tenants to help them identify training they require or would benefit from and will provide that training or identify and source other bodies to do so.

## **14. Reviewing the Strategy**

Future development of the Partnership's Tenant Participation and involvement Strategy will be led by tenants and it is the Partnership's aim that tenants should be heavily involved in the development of monitoring its effectiveness.

A Tenant Participation and Involvement Task Force will be implemented and will take the lead in the review of the strategy. We will make reasonable efforts to ensure that representation on the Task Force is as wide as possible by inviting tenants from every ATB area to join. Staff will also be invited to sit on the Task Force.

The Task Force will be responsible for:

- Ensuring that the strategy is being put into practice
- Setting targets for the strategy
- Developing ways of measuring progress and effectiveness
- Planning the future development of the strategy

The strategy will be reviewed bi-annually (included resources required and provided by the Partnership) and tenants will be kept informed about its progress, development and effectiveness.

## **Appendix 1 - Registration of Tenant Organisations**

### **1. Introduction**

Moray Housing Partnership (the Partnership) is committed to maximising opportunities for its members to participate in the running of the Partnership and is working with members to develop a range of opportunities for participation and involvement, including the creation of Area Tenant Boards and Residents Associations. The Partnership will actively support members who wish to set up

Area Tenant Boards and Residents Associations and will work with them to meet the criteria to become Registered Tenant Organisations.

## **2. Housing (Scotland) Act 2001**

The Partnership has a duty under the Act to consult with Registered Tenant Organisations and individual tenants on any of the following proposals and to have regard to representations by tenants or tenants groups within a reasonable timescale. The proposals on which a landlord must consult its tenants are set out in the Act. These are:

- Its policy in relation to housing management, repairs or maintenance where the proposal, if implemented, is likely to significantly affect the tenant;
- The standard of service in relation to housing management, repairs and maintenance which it intends to provide;
- Its Tenant Participation Strategy
- Any proposed transfer of stock which would result in a change of landlord

In accordance with the requirements of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 the Partnership has laid down criteria which Residents Associations must fulfil to become Registered Tenant Organisations.

## **3. Criteria for Registration of Tenant Organisations**

### **3.1 Constitution**

The applicant must have a written constitution available for inspection by the public that sets out:

- its objectives and area of operation;
- its membership criteria and procedure for application for membership;
- its procedure for election of its committee and office bearers;
- how its business is conducted, including delegation of powers;
- how its decisions are reached;
- how its funds are managed;
- its procedures for meetings of members, including the annual general meeting;
- its procedure for amending its constitution; and
- its commitment to the promotion of equal opportunities and tenants' housing and related interests in relation to the Partnership.

### **3.2 Committee**

The applicant must have a committee, the members of which are elected at an annual general meeting of the applicant. Members of the committee must be required to stand down after a period specified in the applicant's constitution.

The committee must consist of at least three members who may co-opt other

members on to the committee during the course of a year.

The committee procedures set out in the constitution of the applicant must require that the decisions of the committee are reached democratically.

### **3.3 Area of Operation**

The applicant must operate within a defined geographical area in which the Partnership owns and manages properties. The area of operation must be set down in detail in the applicant's constitution.

### **3.4 Membership**

Membership of the applicant body and participation in its activities must be open to all tenants of the Partnership:

- under a Scottish secure tenancy or a short Scottish secure tenancy; and
- of a house situated within the applicant body's defined area of operation

If the applicant body is to be open to other Scottish Secure Tenants who are not members of the Partnership then membership and participation in activities must be open to all Scottish Secure Tenants within its defined area of operation.

The applicant body may be open to other residents in the area, for example owner occupiers or tenants with other kinds of tenancy agreement.

### **3.5 Accounting**

An applicant must maintain proper and timely accounting records. Its constitution must require that an annual financial statement is prepared showing income and expenditure and a statement of assets and liabilities. The statement should be independently validated by a body agreed by the Partnership and be presented at the annual general meeting.

### **3.6 Consultation and Representation**

An applicant must be able to demonstrate to the Partnership its commitment to representing the interests of its members. It is recognised that an applicant body may comprise of a mix of Partnership tenants and other residents within its defined area of operation. In this event it must be able to show that, when consulted by the Partnership, it has a mechanism in place to obtain the views of

those of its members who are tenants of the Partnership.

### **3.7 Submission of Application Material for Registration**

The organisation must submit the following application material for registration to the Partnership:

- the written constitution;
- names and contact addresses of committee members (identifying office bearers and any co-optees);
- a map or list of streets and description of the area of operation; and
- a statement setting out how the organisation plans to engage with its members and how it will represent their views.

## **4. Procedure for Registration of Tenant Organisations**

The Partnership will support members who wish to set up Residents Associations in their areas. We will encourage Area Tenant Boards/Residents Associations to become Registered Tenant Organisations as this will ensure that they have a formal role in the Tenant Participation process. The Partnership's Tenant Participation and Involvement Strategy will set out how Registered Tenant Organisations will be consulted and involved in the development of the Partnership's policies, strategies and delivery of services.

A Support Pack will be made available to any Partnership members who are interested in setting up an Area Tenant Boards/Residents Association. This will include information on:

- How to get started
- How to organise public meetings
- Committees and Office Bearers
- How to run successful meetings
- Constitutions
- Equal Opportunities
- Criteria for the registration of Tenant Organisations
- Support which the Partnership can offer the Area Tenant Boards/Residents Associations
- Training for Area Tenant Board/Resident Association committees
- Where to get more help and support

Partnership staff will work with members who are interested in setting up an Area Tenant Boards/ Residents Association to find other people in the area who are interested in being involved and in forming a Steering Group to discuss how to proceed.

A member of staff of the Partnership will attend the first planning meeting of the Steering Group and will offer assistance in organising a public meeting, which

he/she will attend. Attendance by Partnership staff at later meetings will be a matter for agreement between the Board/Association and the Partnership.

If an Area Tenants Board/ Residents Association wish to become a Registered Tenant Organisation, Partnership staff will work with the Steering Group to ensure they meet the required criteria and will assist them in preparing the material they will need to submit with their application. For more information on the criteria for registration see section 3 above.

An application for registration will be acknowledged within 2 working days of it being received by the Partnership. It will be presented for consideration to the next meeting of the Committee of Management.

The Area tenants Board/Residents Association will be advised in writing of the result of the application within 5 working days of the decision being made by the Committee.

If the Area Tenants Board/Residents Association has met the required criteria and the application has been approved by the Committee of Management, it will be formally entered into the Partnership's Register of Tenant Organisations. A report will be sent to the Area Tenant Board/Residents Association advising them that the Board/ Association has been registered by the Partnership.

If the application has not been successful the Board/Association may appeal against the Partnership's decision in writing. For further information on appeals see section 6 below.

## **5. Removal from Register**

An Area Tenants Board/ Registered Tenant Organisation can be removed from the Register in any of the following circumstances:

- it no longer meets the registration criteria; or
- it ceases to exist or does not operate; or
- there is mutual agreement between the Partnership and the Tenant Organisation.

If the Partnership believes that a Registered Tenant Organisation no longer meets the registration criteria or that it has ceased to exist or operate, a full investigation will be carried out. All evidence relating to this will be recorded and presented to the Committee of Management to allow them to make a decision on whether the Organisations should be removed from the Register.

Removal from the Register will only take place after a period of 28 days notice by either party.

## **6. Appeals**

A Tenant Organisation may appeal against the Partnership's decision to:

- not register the Organisation; or
- remove the Organisation from the Register; or
- not remove the Organisation from the Register.

Appeals will be dealt with through the Partnership's Appeals Procedure. Appeals should be submitted in writing to the Chairperson of the Committee of Management. On receipt of a written appeal the Partnership will reply in writing within 2 working days. This letter will advise the Organisation the date on which the appeal will be heard by the Committee of Management and will invite representatives of the Organisation to attend the meeting if they so wish. The application will be considered by the Committee at the first suitable opportunity.

The Organisation will be advised of the outcome of the appeal within 5 working days of it being heard by the Committee.

If the Organisation is still not satisfied, a further appeal will be considered by the Regulation and Inspection Division of Communities Scotland on behalf of Scottish Ministers. Information on this process will be made available to the Organisation by the Partnership.

## **7. Availability of Register of Tenant Organisations**

In accordance with the requirements of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, the Partnership will maintain a Register of Tenant Organisations which have met the required criteria. The Register will show the name of each Tenant Organisation, its area of operation and a contact address. The Register will be available for public inspection on request at the Partnership's office and will be published on the Partnership's website.