

Falkirk Council

Tenant Participation Strategy



2009 – 2012



Falkirk Council
Corporate & Neighbourhood Services





the sharing of information, ideas and power to improve the standard

INTRODUCTION

Falkirk Council recognises that involving tenants is an essential part of our decision-making process and we are committed to making sure there are opportunities for all tenants to participate in the design and delivery of their housing services.

Tenant Participation – Definition

“Tenant Participation is about tenants taking part in decision making processes and influencing decisions about housing policies; housing conditions; and 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 service.”

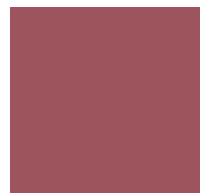
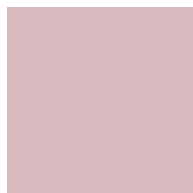
(The National Strategy for Tenant Participation – Partners in Participation 1999)

Background to the strategy

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 placed a legal duty on local authorities and registered social landlords (RSLs) to have tenant participation strategies in place, and to maintain a register of tenants groups (RTO's) meeting the criteria for registration. The Act introduced a right for tenants groups and individual tenants to be consulted by the landlord on issues affecting them

Falkirk Council approved a Tenant Participation Strategy in November 2002 with a review of this strategy taking place in 2006. A further review of the strategy took place in 2008 by the Tenant Involvement Group made up of staff and tenant representatives. This group is co-ordinated by the Tenant Participation team with input from staff representing the various aspect of the housing service:

- Rents
- Housing Strategy



- *Housing Maintenance*
- *Housing Investment*
- *Neighbourhood Offices*

There are 6 tenant members representing 5 Registered Tenants' Associations (RTO's):

- *Tenants & Residents Association, Denny*
- *Upper Greenhill Tenants & Residents Association*
- *Thornwood Tenants & Residents Association, Falkirk*
- *Breton & Corentin Courts Tenants & Residents Association, Falkirk*
- *Avonbridge Tenants & Residents Association*

Scottish Housing Regulator – Performance Guiding Standards

The Scottish Housing Regulator assesses tenant participation according to Guiding Standard 2.2 which says:

"We have published and are implementing a sound strategy for encouraging and supporting tenants, residents and service users to participate actively in all areas of our work. We support tenants who take an active interest in managing their homes".

Aims and Objectives of this Strategy

This strategy seeks to build on the progress made since the previous strategy was published. This progress includes:

- Establishing a quarterly forum for Registered Tenants Associations in April 2007
- Launch of the tenants newsletter "In the Neighbourhood" in July 2007. This is published twice yearly with recent feedback from tenants giving a very positive response to the format and content.
- Developing a further 11 Registered Tenants Associations (the current total is 16) including a young persons' Association in YMCA supported accommodation, who have been successful in obtaining funding from the Scottish Government to promote the concept of tenant participation to other young people
- *Hosting a tenants' conference in 2007*
- *Introduction of Partnership Agreements with Registered Tenants Associations in 2008*
- *Establishing a Tenant Involvement Group in July 2008 to plan and implement tenant participation activities*



- *Hosting a housing and housing related services town centre drop in event in 2008*
- *Conducting an in-depth, district wide consultation process for new housing allocations proposals from January – September 2008*

Tenant Participation Strategy

Aims

- To fully comply with the requirements of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001
- make sure that tenants have the capacity to influence and that the Council is open to influence.
- Make sure the strategy is responsive to changing needs and issues
- continually develop and improve Tenant Participation practice throughout the local authority and across the whole range of housing and housing related services
- recognise that people may wish different forms of involvement and allows for the development of mechanisms to facilitate these.

Objectives

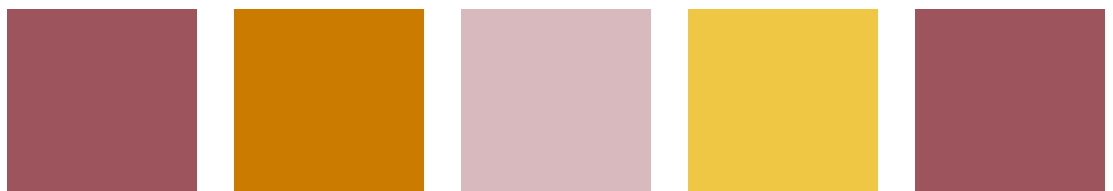
The Council recognises that in order to meet these aims it is essential that the following objectives are met:

- *Improve the quality and accessibility of information to tenants*
- *Consult effectively with tenants*
- *Create opportunities to participate at different levels*
- *Raise awareness of the benefits of tenant participation amongst staff, elected members and tenants*
- *Agree levels of support and resources for tenants groups*
- *Establish a simple and clear working agreement between tenants groups and the Council*
- *Review the Council's Tenant Participation Strategy on a regular basis*

Links to other Plans

The Tenant Participation Strategy sits alongside the following plans:

- *Falkirk Strategic Community Plan, which sets the vision and key priorities for all agencies working within the Falkirk council area*
- *The Council's Corporate Plan, which sets out the Council's key priorities for the coming year and beyond*
- *Housing Service Plan, which identifies priorities for Housing to deliver the Strategic community Plan and corporate Plan. The delivery of the Service Performance Plan is set out in the Housing Management Team Plan, Divisional Plans and Neighbourhood Plans.*
- *The Local Housing Strategy which sets out how we intend to work, with partners, to achieve continuous improvement in housing throughout the area and across all tenures. The first full LHS was compiled in 2004 and is reviewed annually.*
- *The Standard Delivery Plan which indicates how the Council will deliver the Scottish Housing Quality Standard by 2015. The standard was introduced by the Scottish Government in 2005 aiming to improve the quality of housing in the public sector.*



The Benefits of Tenant Participation

The Council recognises that involving tenants in the design and delivery of housing and associated services helps tenants and residents, officers and elected members to develop better working relationships and increase the level of satisfaction with the services provided.

During the review process for this strategy, tenants identified the benefits to them were:

- *Increased knowledge and understanding of council services and legislation*
- *Better equipped to discuss issues and take decisions*
- *Understanding budgetary constraints*
- *Better informed neighbourhoods*
- *Skills development*
- *Keeping tenants informed*

We recognise that some tenants will be more interested in participating than others, and that a range of methods is necessary to keep tenants informed and involved. Before people decide whether or not they want to get involved, they need information.

We aim to provide tenants with good quality, accurate, up to date and easily understood information. Tenants can request information by telephoning, writing, e-mailing or calling into Neighbourhood Offices/One Stop Shops. Regular surveys are carried out to review whether these methods are continuing to keep tenants informed in the way they want and about the information they want.



We currently keep tenants informed in a number of ways. Some examples include:

- *Tenants' Newsletter "In the Neighbourhood" issued in May and November each year*
- *Falkirk Council News – this newsletter contains information about the Council's achievements, community events, local news and housing information to tenants and owners*
- *Scottish Secure Tenancy Agreement – all tenants are provided with a copy of their tenancy agreement which sets out the rights and responsibilities of tenants and Falkirk Council*
- *Tenants' Handbook*
- *Policies and Procedure documents. Tenants can request the following policies and procedures, which are clear and concise:*
 - *Our Corporate Complaints procedure*
 - *Repairs and maintenance procedure "Your Guide to Repairs & Maintenance"*
 - *Our Allocations Policy "Your Guide to applying for a Home in the Falkirk Council area"*
- *Open days and exhibitions – we hold open days, annual conferences or events to inform and consult tenants over major policy and housing related issues such as rent setting and the tenant participation strategy*
- *Information leaflets – a range of literature on a number of housing related topics is on display in all Neighbourhood offices/One Stop Shops*
- *Falkirk Council Website (www.falkirk.gov.uk). We make all of our information on housing and related services available on our website*
- *Electronic displays (TV Screens) in Neighbourhood Offices/One stop Shops*
- *Local newsletters – highlighting relevant news/information in specific areas*
- *Focus Groups*
- *Meetings between officers and registered tenants' organisations (RTO's)*
- *Estate walkabouts with tenants*
- *Home visits*

Please note that all our documents can be made available in community languages, Braille, large print or audio on request.

Tenant Participation Strategy



better equipped to discuss issues and take decisions

Consultation and Participation

We aim to consult with tenants as early as possible so that they will have the chance to be involved in the policy-making stage rather than the policy implementation stage. We regularly consult with individual tenants and tenants' associations to make sure that tenants have the chance to have their views heard. Tenants who have a particular issue, concern or problem can raise it with us directly, or through their local tenants group.

Issues on which tenants will be consulted:

- repairs and maintenance
- housing management (allocations, estate management, tenancy agreements and tenant participation)
- housing stock improvements
- environmental improvements
- rent setting
- service quality
- complaints procedures
- any proposal relating to the management of the Council's housing stock

Consultation Register

We have a Consultation Register for individual tenants who have an interest in giving their views about housing and housing related issues. This means that tenants can choose to be consulted without having to join a tenants' association.

We reviewed this register in 2008 to make sure that it is up to

date and that those registered still wish to be consulted. Any Falkirk Council tenant can apply to be registered by contacting the Tenant Participation Team.

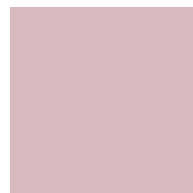
How we will consult with tenants

In accordance with the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 we are legally obliged to:

- Set out how we intend to consult with tenants*
- Indicate the issues that tenants will be consulted on*

In order to consult with as many tenants as possible Falkirk Council will use a number of techniques including:

- Consulting tenants and residents associations*
- Consulting with individual tenants on the consultation register*
- Consulting, where appropriate, other community groups, e.g. Community Councils*
- Consulting as appropriate with ethnic minority groups and people with disabilities*
- Hold meetings on specific issues with individual tenants, residents and where appropriate, the wider community*
- Home visits where requested*
- Surveys (postal, telephone and through the council website)*





consulting with ethnic minority groups and people with disabilities

- Use of random samples to target tenants
- Road Shows
- Area Forums, if appropriate
- The Forum of Registered Tenants' Associations (this takes place at least 4 times a year and all RTO's are invited to send representatives to meet with Senior Managers)
- The Tenant Involvement Group (this includes staff and tenants working together to recommend and assess consultation activity and processes)

Participation

We believe that tenant participation can benefit the service tenants receive as well as the wider community. We also recognise and support local tenant and resident groups who are working to improve their quality of life within their own community.

Issues for participation

Tenants can participate in the review and development of policies and procedures relating to:

- repairs and maintenance
- housing management (allocations, estate management, tenancy agreements and tenant participation)
- housing stock improvements
- environmental improvements
- rent setting
- service quality
- complaints procedures
- any proposal relating to the management of the Council's housing stock

Tenant Participation Strategy

Key Decisions – a timetable and action plan for participation

We will produce a timetable each year that shows when key decisions are taken (e.g. rent setting and agreeing housing investment spending). We will publish an action plan showing how we will consult with tenants to gather feedback which will help to influence the decision making process.

Partnership agreements

In 2008 we introduced partnership agreements with Registered Tenants Organisations (RTO's). The agreement outlines the roles and responsibilities of both parties as well as including commitments to resources etc. It sets out what both parties can expect from each other and is based on the roles and responsibilities of landlords and tenant groups as outlined in the National Tenant Participation Strategy. A copy of the Partnership Agreement is included in the appendices to this Strategy document.

Raising Awareness of the opportunities to participate

Tenants can influence Council business and developments in the local community in the following ways: -

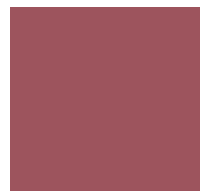
- *Hold local public meetings on specific issues and invite staff and elected members to attend these. Staff can give advice and assistance with setting up meetings.*

- *Join local Tenants & Residents groups - we can provide contact details of groups in your area and information and assistance on starting your own group*
- *At an individual level through the Consultation Register*

Promoting tenant participation in groups

To stimulate interest in setting up tenants & residents groups, we will be proactive in promoting the benefits of collective action. Particular benefits of forming a group include: -

- *Influencing the way we deliver services to respond to the needs of your Neighbourhood*
- *Involvement in the development and review of policies and procedures*
- *Assisting in communication with tenants*
- *Highlighting problems with the way we provide services*
- *Lobbying various bodies on local issues*
- *Fundraising*
- *Community safety*
- *Environmental improvements*



Falkirk Council provides a guide to setting up a tenants association. This guide can be obtained from the tenant Participation team or by contacting your Neighbourhood Office/One Stop Shop.

Identifying any barriers to participation

As part of this strategy the Council is keen to consult with tenants to identify any barriers to participation. These could be:

- *living in a remote area*
- *literacy issues*
- *community languages*

The Council will engage with tenants groups and individual tenants to identify any barriers and ways to overcome these, e.g. through involving specialist agencies or providing skills development.

REGISTER OF TENANTS ORGANISATIONS

In accordance with the requirements of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 we keep an up to date register of local tenants and residents groups.

This register is a publicly available document and can be accessed via the Council's website or by contacting Neighbourhood Offices/ One Stop Shops.

How do Associations register?

To register with Falkirk Council a group must complete a short registration form. A copy of the Associations constitution should be included with the registration form. The constitution must comply with the Criteria for Registration, as set out in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001(Registration of Tenant Organisations) Order 2002. The registration form, and advice and assistance about registration, is available from Neighbourhood Offices/One Stop Shops, the Council website or by contacting the Tenant Participation Team.



guidance and support for
starting new groups

Tenant Participation Strategy

What criteria do Associations have to meet?

You must have a written constitution that is available for inspection and which details:

- Your objectives*
- The area you operate in*
- Who can become members*
- How the committee is elected and how it operates*
- How your business is conducted*
- How you manage your funds*
- How your constitution can be amended*
- Your commitment to equal opportunities*

We can provide you with a model constitution that meets the registration criteria. We have staff who can work with your group and we can provide independent help and advice.

Why register?

Registering your group is a good way to promote your existence to local people.

Also, once a group is registered with Falkirk Council the Council will make an annual grant to the group's funds providing the following criteria are satisfied: -

- the Association has an agreed constitution that meets the registration criteria*
- You have elected office bearers – Chairperson, Treasurer & Secretary*
- Minutes of meetings are available for inspection*
- Accounts are audited on an annual basis*
- Your association holds open meetings that are advertised and accessible to all members*

Annual Updates

Associations will be required to submit an annual update to the Council containing a copy of the minute from their AGM and names and addresses of the association's office bearers. Groups will be required to re-register every three years.

Refused registration

If the Council refuses entry on to the register or removes an Association from the register the committee can firstly appeal to the Director of Corporate & Neighbourhood Services via the Council's complaints procedure.



Under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 if, following this process the Association is still not satisfied, the committee can then apply to the relevant Scottish Minister who may confirm or overturn the decision.

What happens if we don't register?

If you don't register we will still meet with you and include you in any consultation that we do. However, you will not have the statutory rights of a registered association and we will not provide an annual grant. We will provide resources in kind, e.g. photocopying and use of council meeting rooms.

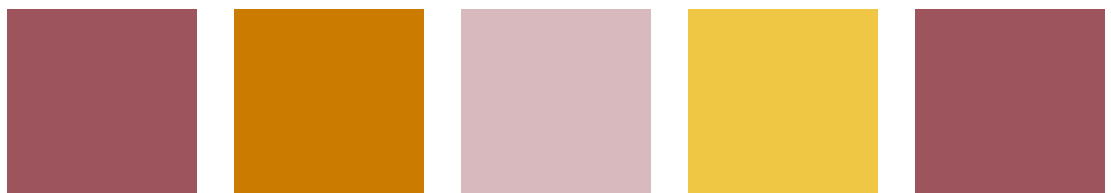
Responding to representations made by groups

We have a legal duty to respond to any issues or concerns raised by a registered tenants group. If requested, we will attend any meetings held by a Registered Tenants Organisation provided that two weeks' notice has been given. Some issues may be resolved through the provision of information whilst others may need a lot more time and consideration before they can be resolved.

Resources and Support for Registered Tenants Associations

We will provide appropriate support for new and existing groups including the following: -

- Guidance and support for starting new groups*
- Ongoing support for existing groups*
- Assistance with the production of promotional material and photocopying papers for meetings*



- *Staff will attend meetings when invited (Minimum Two Weeks Notice)*
- *Visits and support from all Falkirk Council staff*

We will aim to keep groups up to date with housing issues affecting their area.

Promoting new groups

Falkirk Council is committed to promoting the formation of tenants groups in areas where there is little or no representation. The Tenants Handbook provides tenants with advice that support is available for new groups. Staff will also promote the support available for new groups to new tenants; give new tenants a copy of the Tenant Participation Strategy and how to get information and assistance. Similarly, existing groups will be encouraged to use their expertise to encourage those who are interested in setting up new groups.

Training

Falkirk Council recognises the value of training for interested tenants and staff. Training can be arranged for new and existing groups either in house or by outside agencies such as the Tenants Information Service and the Tenant Participation Advisory Service.

The need for staff training on the development of Tenant Participation will remain under review within the annual staff development and training needs process.

Tenants groups should notify their Local Housing Manager if they feel the need for particular training. Groups will be notified of any training opportunities provided either directly or indirectly by the Council.

Groups can apply to the Council for financial assistance to pay for relevant training provided by a suitable training provider (for example conferences run by TPAS or the Chartered Institute of Housing).

Equal Opportunities

The Council operates an Equal Opportunities policy which covers a range of situations such as employment, access to housing and disability issues. The Tenant Participation Strategy also reflects the equal opportunities policy.

Accessibility

Falkirk Council aims to ensure that meetings are held in venues that are suitable for everyone, at suitable times and will be publicised in a way that all tenants can understand.

Special Requirements

Where appropriate, tenants with specific information requirements will receive information in the appropriate format e.g. Braille, community languages. The Council will develop and maintain a database of tenants with special information requirements.

Equal Opportunities in Tenants Groups

We will encourage tenants groups to adopt an inclusive approach towards involving minority groups in the community. We will offer training on race, gender and disability equality issues to tenants groups.

Tenants and Residents groups who act in a discriminatory or offensive way towards minority groups could be subject to some or all of the following sanctions:

- *Withdrawal of funding*
- *Withdrawal of support in kind e.g. use of premises*
- *Removal from register of tenants organisations*

Implementing the Strategy

We would like to continue to involve tenants in as many areas of our work as possible. The Tenant Involvement Group comprising of officers and tenants, was established in 2008 to take forward the implementation and development of the strategy. An annual action plan detailing all consultation and participations will be developed by this group and will be publicised in the tenants' newsletter "In the Neighbourhood".

Monitoring and Evaluation

Continuous monitoring of the strategy will be a standing agenda item for the Tenant Involvement Group. This group will establish a clear monitoring and review framework involving all stakeholders, including:

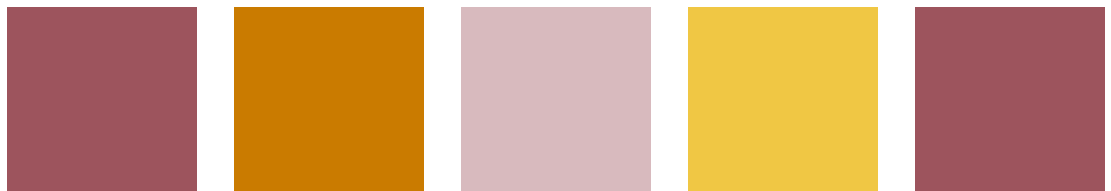
- *Tenants*
- *Registered Tenants Associations (RTOs)*
- *Other relevant community groups*
- *Elected Members*
- *Staff*

The strategy will be reviewed by the Tenant Involvement Group in November each year to make sure that it is achieving what it intends to do. This process will involve tenants and staff. The process will monitor progress and identify areas for further improvement.

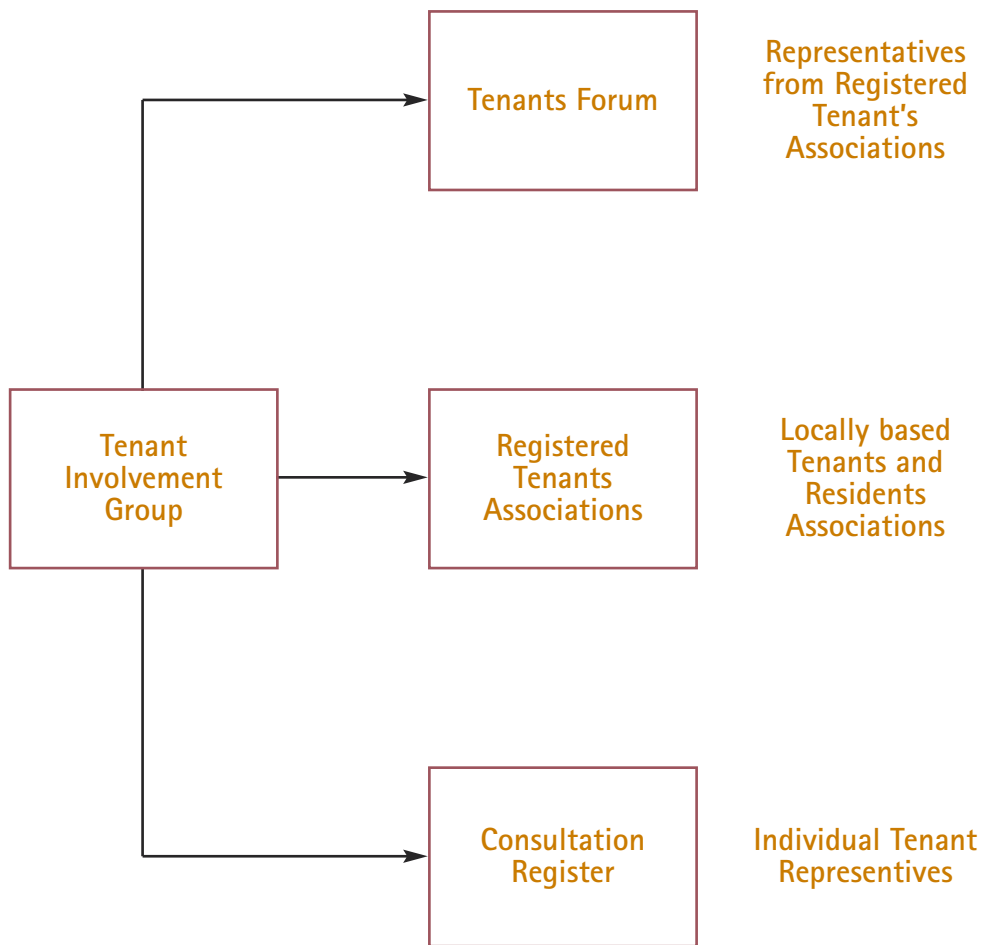
Tenant Participation Strategy

REGISTERED TENANTS' ORGANISATIONS (in compliance with the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001)

Name	Job Title	Company	Address
Mrs M Cooper	Secretary	Breton & Corentin Court Residents Association	C/o 142 Corentin Court Finistere Avenue Falkirk FK1 1TZ
Ms Anna Hunt	Secretary	Letham Tenants & Residents Association	24 Letham Cottages Letham Falkirk FK2 8QJ
Mr Alex Crosbie	Secretary	Parkfoot Court Tenants & Residents Association	5/2 Parkfoot Court Falkirk FK1 1YX
Mr John Storrie	Secretary	Callendar Park Tenants & Residents Association	C/o The Club Room Leishman Tower, Seaton Place Falkirk FK1 1TP
Mrs Kaye Findlay	Chairperson	Bantaskine Tenants & Residents Association	21 Shannon Drive Falkirk FK1 5HU
Mrs Mary Fox	Secretary	Upper Greenhill Tenants & Residents Association	30 Leapark Drive Bonnybridge Falkirk FK4 2DX
Mr David McDonald	Chairperson	BOLD Tenants & Residents Association	64 Overton Crescent, Little Denny Denny Falkirk FK6 5AZ
YMCA Administration Staff	Administration Staff	Seaforth House Residents & Ex Residents Association	Seaforth House 74 Seaforth Road, Langlees Falkirk FK2 7TW
Mrs Mary MacDonald	Secretary	Thornwood Tenants & Residents Association	9 Thornbridge Road Falkirk FK2 9AZ
Mrs Michelle McCallum	Secretary	Carronvale Tenants & Residents Association	14 Jubilee Road Dunipace Denny FK6 6NH
Mr Hugo Butts	Secretary	Avonbridges Tenants & Residents Association	43 Bridgend Road Avonbridge Falkirk FK1 2NT
Mrs Mandy Ballantyne	Secretary	Allandale Residents Association	65 Allandale Cottages Allandale Falkirk FK4 2HE
Mrs Elizabeth Stewart	Secretary	Glenwood Tenants & Residents Association	10 Tarduff Place Stoneywood Falkirk FK6 5HT
Mr Stuart Murray	Chairperson	Hallglen & Glen Village Residents Association	1 Morven Court Hallglen Falkirk FK1 2QD
Mr Joe Lamb	Secretary	Braesview Tenants & Resident Association	232 Braesview Denny Falkirk FK6 5ND
Mrs Jean Berrington	Secretary	Parklife Tenants & Residents Association	15 Fleming Gardens Camelon Falkirk FK1 4BS



FORMAL FLOWCHART OF PARTICIPATION STRUCTURE



Tenant Participation Strategy

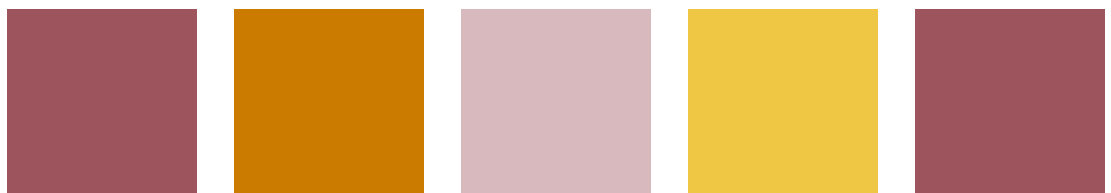
ACTION PLAN

Aim 1 To fully comply with the requirements of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001

Action	Timescale	Participants	Outcome
Annually review the activity of each registered tenants organisation to make sure the required criteria is being met	Ongoing – following each annual general meeting	Tenant Participation Team	RTO's meet legislative requirements
Monitor and review Tenant Participation Strategy	November 2009	Tenant Involvement Group	Strategy objectives being met
Consult tenants and tenants & residents associations on proposals relating to housing management. Service standards and the Tenant Participation Strategy	Ongoing	Tenant Participation Team / Tenant Involvement Group/ Senior Neighbourhood Managers	Increased tenant involvement in decision making

Aim 2 Make sure that tenants have the capacity to influence and that the Council is open to influence

Action	Timescale	Participants	Outcome
Inform tenants of the benefits of developing tenants & residents associations and encourage representation from traditionally excluded communities	Ongoing	Tenant Participation Team / Neighbourhood Offices	Increased awareness of Tenant Participation opportunities Establishment of new associations Increased membership of Tenants Forum
Increase tenant membership of the Tenant Involvement Group	April 2009	Tenant Participation Team/ Registered Tenants Associations	Increased tenant representation in decision making about Tenant Participation activities
Encourage RTO representatives to set agenda for Tenants' Forum meetings	April 2009 and ongoing	Tenants forum representatives/ Tenant Participation Team/ senior Management Team	Forum meeting regularly with senior staff and Housing Convenor
Develop mechanisms for tenant representatives to check service standards and service delivery	April 2009	Tenant Involvement Group/ Tenant Participation Team/ Senior Management Team	Tenants involved in service inspection and development of service standards and service improvements
Identify training needs for tenant representatives and encourage take-up of internal and external training and awareness sessions	Ongoing	Tenant Participation Team/ Neighbourhood Offices	Tenant representatives develop skills and knowledge to take part in decision making processes



Aim 3 Make sure the strategy is responsive to changing needs and issues

Action	Timescale	Participants	Outcome
Regularly monitor progress towards objectives	May and November each year	Tenant Involvement Group	Strategy evolving to meet tenant and service requirements
Develop a calendar of participation and consultation opportunities jointly with tenants and tenants and residents associations	Publish in May and November issues of tenants newsletter	Tenants Forum / Tenant Involvement Group/ Senior Management Team	Participation topics agreed, timescales set, training and support needs identified Feedback provided via tenants newsletter
Agree levels of support and resources for each RTO including signposting to internal and external funding opportunities	Annual review following each Annual general Meeting	Tenant Participation Team / Neighbourhood offices	Resources meet individual needs of each association Increased awareness of funding opportunities

Aim 4 Continually develop and improve Tenant Participation practice throughout the local authority and across the whole range of housing and housing related services

Action	Timescale	Participants	Outcome
Include Tenant Participation as a standing agenda item at Senior Management Team meetings, Neighbourhood Managers meetings and Neighbourhood Office meetings	From April 2009	Senior Management Team/ Senior Neighbourhood Managers/ Neighbourhood Managers	Increased awareness of Tenant Participation activity and requirements Tenant Participation implications considered for all policy, procedural and service developments
Include Tenant Participation awareness in staff induction process and joint staff/tenant training & information sessions	From April 2009	Tenant Participation Team	Training delivered and evaluated; appreciation of tenant participation at local and national levels

Tenant Participation Strategy

Aim 5 Recognise that people may wish different forms of involvement and allow for the development of mechanisms to facilitate these

Action	Timescale	Participants	Outcome
Encourage membership of the Consultation Register	ongoing	Tenant Participation Team/Neighbourhood Offices	Involve individual tenants in surveys and consultation
Seek views from tenants about suitable participation mechanisms	ongoing	Tenant Participation Team	Suitable mechanisms developed to encourage more participation
Provide information about opportunities for participation	ongoing	Tenant Participation Team/Neighbourhood Offices	Increased awareness and take-up of tenant participation opportunities
Host an annual tenants event	September 2009	Tenant Involvement Group / Corporate & Neighbourhood services and related services and agencies	Increased awareness of services and consultation opportunities



REGISTERED TENANTS ORGANISATION PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

Name of Association:

What is the Partnership Agreement?

The agreement is a document which details how the Service will communicate with your Association, what service you can expect from us, what we expect from your Association and what arrangements we have agreed with you to carry out an annual review of the Association.

HOW TO CONTACT US

Offices

Headquarters: Suite 5, The Forum, Callendar Business Park, Falkirk, FK1 1TX

Telephone 01324 590780

Neighbourhood Office:

Enter appropriate details

Email:

Tenant Participation Team: Based at The Forum

Email: Tenant.Participation@falkirk.gov.uk

Coordinator: Marie Dunbar: 01324 590823/ 07921942184

Assistant: Laurie McGarva: 01324 590824/ 07872828968

HOW WE WILL CONTACT YOU

Address & Telephone Contacts

Chairperson

Secretary

Treasurer

Correspondence address:

E-mail addresses:

SERVICE STANDARDS – WORKING WITH YOU

When working with you, our aim is to provide high quality housing and estate management services. We will work in partnership with your Association and include you in all activities we undertake in your area. We welcome diversity within our local communities and acknowledge the wide range of needs and aspirations of all customers. We will actively promote social inclusion.

What you can expect from us

We will treat all members of the Association in a polite and helpful manner

We will provide information in plain English

We will respond to your correspondence within 5 working days

We will return telephone calls or e-mails within 24 hours

What we expect from your Association

We expect you to adhere to the terms of your Constitution

Tenant Participation Strategy

We ask that you raise issues as soon as they occur with the Neighbourhood Office or the Tenant Participation Co-ordinator to make sure there is an open exchange of information

Wherever possible, we expect you to send representatives to our consultation sessions, training courses and seminars.

ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS

Committee meetings

The Neighbourhood Officer and / or Senior Neighbourhood Officer will attend committee meetings on the request of the committee. At least two weeks notice should be given by the Association. The Neighbourhood Manager will also attend if requested to do so.

Public Meetings

The Neighbourhood Manager, or a representative, will attend all public meetings if requested. At least two weeks notice should be given by the Association.

Annual General Meeting (AGM)

Two months before your AGM is due, the Tenant Participation Co-ordinator will formally remind the committee of its requirement to hold an Annual General Meeting.

The Neighbourhood Manager will nominate a member of staff to attend the AGM. The Tenant Participation Co-ordinator will also attend, depending on availability. The Neighbourhood Manager will meet the committee at their first meeting after the AGM and ensure the new office bearers sign a copy of the Association's constitution and make arrangements for any changes required to signatories for the Association's bank account(s). The date for the annual review (see section 7) will be set at this meeting.

Other meeting arrangements

The Neighbourhood Housing Manager, Senior Neighbourhood Officer and Neighbourhood Officer will agree a programme, in advance, of meetings with the Association. These should take place at a suitable venue agreed by each party at the first committee meeting after the AGM.

AGENDAS AND MINUTES OF MEETINGS

Copies of the Agenda for any meeting should be supplied to any members of staff invited to the meeting at least one week in advance of that meeting.

Minutes of any meeting called by the Association and attended by staff should be supplied to the relevant officer(s) within one month from the date of the meeting.

Minutes of meetings hosted by the Neighbourhood office will be

supplied to the Association not later than 7 working days from the date of the meeting.

Please also see section (7) for annual review arrangements.

TRAINING COURSES AND INFORMATION SESSIONS

The TP Team will keep your association informed about training and development opportunities, conferences and information sessions relevant to the aims of the Association.

As part of the annual review, your association will be asked to complete training and development needs audit.

Training will be offered on committee skills, preparing newsletters, book keeping skills, housing management issues, service structures, new legislative proposals and other relevant housing related matters.

RESOURCE AND SUPPORT

Financial support

For the financial year 2008-09, the arrangements for provision of an annual grant of £300.00 will continue. This may change in subsequent years. The grant should be applied for at the first committee meeting after the AGM.

The Neighbourhood Manager will make arrangements, on request, for advice and assistance for any other funding applications being considered by the Association.

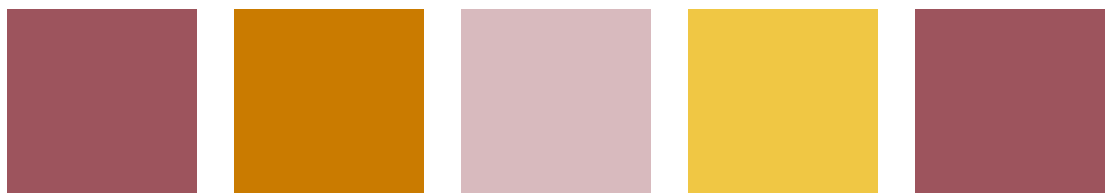
Photocopying and printing

The Neighbourhood Office, on request, will arrange photocopying of relevant documents – minutes, agendas, income & expenditure statements, constitutions, newsletters and all other information directly relevant to the administration of the Association. At least 5 working days notice should be given by the Association for up to 100 copies and 10 working days for copies in excess of that amount.

Where a situation arises and there is an urgent need for photocopying, the Association should contact the Tenant Participation Team in the first instance.

Preparation of newsletters

The Neighbourhood Manager will arrange for assistance with the preparation and production of local Association newsletters on request, up to 4 newsletters a year can be produced. The size and content of newsletters will be discussed and agreed at the annual review stage.



ANNUAL REVIEW AND REGISTERED TENANTS' ORGANISATION (RTO) STATUS REVIEW

The date for the annual review will be agreed at the first committee meeting after the AGM. The purpose of the review is to discuss how the Association is managing, any assistance it needs from officers and to identify any training needs.

In compliance with the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, there will be a further review every 3 years to ensure that the Association continues to meet the criteria for RTO registration.

PROCEDURES FOR PROBLEM SOLVING

Stage 1

If an issue arises between the Neighbourhood Office and the Association it is usually quicker and easier to try to resolve this in the first instance directly between the Committee and the Neighbourhood Manager. Issues should be raised at the earliest opportunity. If a resolution can be found, the agreement should be recorded by the Neighbourhood Manager and a letter confirming the outcome sent to the Association within 7 working days of the issue being resolved

Stage 2

If the issue cannot be resolved at stage 1, the matter should be referred to the Head of service, who will delegate a Service Manager to carry out an independent review. If appropriate, the Council may decide to involve an independent tenants support organisation (eg.TPAS, TIS)

Stage 3

The processes outlined above do not exclude the Association from making a formal complaint. This can be done through the Council's complaints procedure (information leaflets are available from One-Stop-Shops and the Council Website)

Signed (for Association)

(designation)

Signed (for Housing & Services)

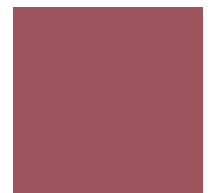
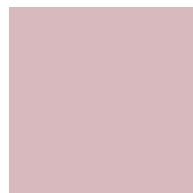
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Date

Date of Annual Review

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

<i>Action Plan</i>	A list of things to be done to meet the aims of the Tenant Participation Strategy.	<i>Housing (Scotland) Act 2001</i>	A legal document agreed by the Scottish Parliament that sets out the law affecting specific areas regarding housing.
<i>Affordable Housing</i>	Housing that is rented from the Council or from a Registered social Landlord (RSL) or Low Cost Home Ownership.	<i>Local authority</i>	A local council.
<i>Annual grant</i>	An amount of money that Falkirk Council pays to Registered Tenants Organisations (RTO's) to assist with running costs.	<i>Low Cost Home Ownership</i>	Houses built and sold at a cheaper price because they are subsidised.
<i>Budget</i>	An estimate of all income and spending over a set period.	<i>Monitoring and Evaluation</i>	The process of checking that the strategy is achieving what it says it will do and whether it is effective or needs improved.
<i>Capacity to Influence</i>	Tenants' representatives having the skill (such as public speaking or negotiation), information, ability, experience and confidence to influence decisions taken by the landlord.	<i>National Strategy for tenant participation</i>	A document produced by the Scottish executive that explains how tenant participation should work
<i>Committee Reports</i>	Reports to Council Committees (meeting of Councillors) so that councillors can make informed decisions.	<i>Partnership working</i>	Landlords, tenants and other agencies working together to reach a common goal.
<i>Consultation</i>	A landlord produces draft proposals, has a two way communication process with the people it affects and uses the feedback to help make decisions.	<i>Partnership Agreement</i>	A document which details how the Service will communicate with, and provide support to, RTO's
<i>Consultation register</i>	A list of tenants who are happy to be consulted, by post, e-mail or telephone, about council services or proposals.	<i>Registered Social Landlord</i>	A non-profit landlord registered and monitored by the Scottish Housing Regulator. (eg. a Housing Association)
<i>Elected members</i>	Councillors that have been elected in local government elections	<i>Register of Tenants Organisations</i>	A publicly available list of all tenants organisations who are registered with the landlord.
<i>Equal opportunities</i>	Not discriminating against anyone on the grounds of race, gender, disability, religion, sexual orientation, age etc. All landlords, and all tenants & residents associations, must comply with the law and have a commitment to equal opportunities.	<i>Registered Tenants Organisation Forum</i>	Meetings between council officers and registered tenant association representatives held at least quarterly to discuss service issues and proposals.
<i>Focus group</i>	A group of people who meet to consider issues that affect them, for example, the way that houses are allocated.	<i>Registered Tenants Organisation (RTO)</i>	A tenants and residents group that has registered with the landlord and can demonstrate that it is democratic and represents the views of tenants.
<i>Housing Investment Programme</i>	The programme of major works to achieve the Scottish Housing Quality Standard.(SHQS)	<i>Resources</i>	Money or services, such as free meeting rooms or photocopying, available to registered tenant organisations.
<i>Housing policies</i>	Documents about housing issues that specify how the council will deliver the service to tenants and other service users.	<i>Scottish Housing Quality Standard</i>	The standard that all council houses and RSL houses must meet by the year 2015.
<i>Housing Revenue Account (HRA)</i>	The local authority account that covers all the day to day income and spending on council housing.	<i>Service Standards</i>	Indicators set to reflect acceptable standards of customer service



RESOURCES FOR PARTICIPATION

To support and encourage tenant participation there are a range of resources available.

STAFF

Tenant Participation Team – this team is based within Neighbourhood Services at The Forum in Callendar Business Park and currently consists of a Tenant Participation Co-ordinator and a seconded post of Tenant Participation Assistant. Both posts are full-time. This team has the responsibility for implementing the Tenant Participation Strategy and working with Neighbourhood Offices to provide support to existing tenants and residents associations and encouraging new associations.

NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES STAFF

All staff are aware of their responsibility to support and encourage tenant participation and to attend meetings when required. Neighbourhood offices will provide assistance with booking meeting rooms and basic administrative support, such as photocopying, to new groups and to existing groups in accordance with their Partnership Agreement.

GRANTS AND EXPENSES

All Registered Tenants Associations can apply for an annual grant of £300

Costs of meeting rooms and publicity for meetings, photocopying, assistance with producing local newsletters are provided free of charge

Other resources required are discussed with each RTO and outlined within their Partnership Agreement.

RTO's can also apply to the council's funding unit for assistance and information about internal and external grants that may be available for specific purposes.

CONFERENCES

All RTO's will be asked to nominate representatives for relevant local and national conferences. Places may be limited due to costs of particular conferences.

TRAINING AND INFORMATION

The Tenant Participation Team will advise all RTO's about any relevant training, information or skills development sessions arranged by the council or by other agencies.

Information about new legislation, housing policies etc. will be circulated to all RTO's as it becomes available.

INDEPENDENT ADVICE AND ASSISTANCE

All RTO's are given contact details for the Tenants Information Services (TIS) and the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS), independent support agencies for tenants organisations throughout Scotland.

TENANT PARTICIPATION BUDGET

In 2008-2009 the Council budgeted to spend £50,000 on tenant participation. Staff costs were met from a separate budget.





Falkirk Council
Corporate & Neighbourhood Services