TENANT PARTICIPATION STRATEGY (2014)

1.0   INTRODUCTION

1.1   As a Registered Social Landlord, Ochil View is required under the terms of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 to have a Tenant Participation Strategy which promotes the participation of tenants in the formulation of proposals in relation to the management of housing and related services, where these will affect tenants.

These requirements are set out in detail in Sections 53 and 54 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. In summary they are that we must:

- Notify tenants and Registered Tenant Organisations about proposals that will affect them
- Provide information to tenants and Registered Tenant Organisations about how the proposal will affect them
- Gather the views of tenants and Registered Tenant Organisations in response to proposals that will affect them and take account of these views in decision making
- Provide resources to enable participation and consultation to be carried out
- Maintain and publish a Register of Registered Tenant Organisations
- Add tenant organisations to the Register where they meet the criteria for registration as set out by the Scottish Government. We may remove Registered Tenant Organisations from the Register where they no longer meet the criteria for registration
- Have regard, in our decision making, to the views expressed by tenants and Registered Tenant Organisations in response to proposals

Proposals that will affect tenants and Registered Tenant Organisations are ones in relation to housing management or maintenance which will significantly affect the tenant, and proposals in relation to a standard of service.

1.2   The criteria for Registration as a Registered Tenant Organisation are set out in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 (Registration of Tenant Organisations) Order 2002.   The procedure for enabling Groups to apply for registration is set out at **Appendix One.**

Our budget for supporting tenant participation is at **Appendix Two**

Our Register of Registered Tenant Organisations is published on our website.

1.3   In addition to complying with the requirements set out above, the Association must comply with the Scottish Housing Charter that requires that registered social landlords achieve the following outcomes:

<u>Outcome 2: Communication</u>
Social landlords manage their businesses so that 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

<u>Outcome 3: Participation</u>
Social landlords manage their businesses so that 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 has decided that achievement of this outcome shall be assessed by the response of tenants in a survey to the following questions:

How good or poor do you feel Ochil View is at keeping you informed about their services and decisions?

How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with opportunities given to you to participate in Ochil View's decision making processes?

1.4 Ochil View's strategic objectives include:

To actively promote and support resident participation in the development, management and maintenance of their homes (SO3);

1.5 The Association's Risk Management Strategy identifies a number of risks related to tenant participation:

- Tenants views not taken into account by the Association
- Residents expectations of tenant participation are not able to be met
- Resident views expressed deemed non representative - some people hijack the agenda

2.0 <u>COMMUNICATION WITH TENANTS, REGISTERED TENANT ORGANISATIONS AND OTHER SERVICE USERS</u>

The Association will provide information to Tenants, Registered Tenant Organisations and other service users (as appropriate) about proposals that may affect them through:
- Our Website
- Our Newsletters
- Presentations to meetings of the Involved Residents Group
- Presentations to Registered Tenant Organisations
- Providing information to tenants who have given feedback on the service prior to the proposal to change
- Our Facebook Page

2.1 Providing general information to tenants and other service users
We will provide general information to tenants about the Association through
- Our Website
- Our Newsletters (circulated to tenants only)
- Our Annual Report (circulated to tenants and members of the Association)
- Our Tenant's Handbook (circulated to tenants only)

3.0 GATHERING THE VIEWS OF TENANTS, REGISTERED TENANT ORGANISATIONS AND OTHER SERVICE USERS

The Association will gather feedback on the views of Tenants, Registered Tenant Organisations and other service users as follows:

- Publicising proposals on our website and asking for feedback
- Publicising proposals on our Facebook page, and asking for feedback
- Reviewing tenant feedback as recorded in Complaints Register and including this feedback in the review of services
- Contacting tenants who have expressed views and given feedback and asking for their further comments on proposals
- Carrying out surveys and questionnaires
- Seeking the views of tenants at meetings of Registered Tenant Organisations and the Involved Residents group

4.0 TAKING ACCOUNT OF THE VIEWS OF TENANTS, REGISTERED TENANT ORGANISATIONS AND OTHER SERVICE USERS IN OUR DECISIONS

The Association will, when considering proposals in respect of housing management and maintenance services, include details of how tenants, Registered Tenant Organisations and other service users (as appropriate) have been informed and consulted and how their views have been taken into account

5.0 INVOLVING TENANTS AND OTHER SERVICE USERS IN CONSULTATION AND DECISION MAKING.

The Association aims to make easy for tenants and other service users to participate in and influence our decisions at a level they feel comfortable with.

Tenants and service users can:
- Give feedback on services that they receive
- Attend meetings of the Involved Residents' Group
- Attend a Registered Tenant Organisation if there is one in their local area
- Establish a Registered Tenant Organisation in their local area
- Respond to surveys and questionnaires
- Attend the Annual General Meeting
- Become a member of the Association
- Become a member of the Management Committee (by election, and subject to the Associations Rules).

6.0 REPORTING OUR PERFORMANCE TO TENANTS AND OTHER SERVICE USERS

From summer 2014 onwards we will report our performance in achieving or progressing towards the Social Housing Charter outcomes and standards to tenants and other service users who use our services. We will aim to do this as soon as practicable and reasonable, and no later than October of each year. Our performance report will include:

- An assessment of performance in delivering each of the Charter outcomes and standards which are relevant to our operations
- Relevant comparisons – including our own historical performance and with other landlords and with national performance

Our report will be in a reporting style and format that is accessible for tenants and other service users and will use   plain and jargon-free language. The Report will be in our Summer Newsletter and on our website. Tenants and other service users will be invited to comment and if sufficient people wish to attend we will hold a meeting to discuss the Report and areas for improvement.

The Association discussed Charter Indictors with the Involved Residents Group and it was agreed that the following should be included in the Performance Report:

- % tenants satisfied with overall service provided by their landlord
- % of tenants who feel their landlord is good at keeping them informed about services and decisions
- % of complaints responded to and resolved
- % of tenants satisfied with the opportunities to participate in the landlords decision making processes
- % of stock meeting Scottish Housing Quality Standard
- % of properties at or above the appropriate Home Energy Rating or SAP rating
- % of tenants satisfied with the standard of their home when moving in
- % of existing tenants satisfied with the quality of their home
- Average length of time taken to complete emergency repairs
- Average length of time to complete non-emergency repairs
- % if reactive repairs carried out in the last year completed right first time
- % of repairs appointments kept
- % of properties that require a gas safety record which had a gas safety check and completed by the anniversary date
- % of tenants who have had repairs or maintenance carried out in last 12 months satisfied with the repairs/maintenance service
- % of tenants satisfied with the management of the neighbourhood they live in
- % of anti-social behaviour cases reported in the last year which were resolved within locally agreed targets
- % of approved applications for medical adaptations completed during the reporting year and average to complete
- % of court actions initiated which resulted in eviction and the reasons for eviction
- % if tenants who feel that the rent for their property represents good value for money
- Rent collected as percentage of total rent due in the year
- Gross rent arrears as a percentage of rent due
- % of rent due lost through properties being empty during the year
- Average length of time taken to re-let properties in the last year

7.0   OCHIL VIEW SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

Our Social Media Policy sets out our guiding principles for the use of the Ochil View's social media pages and is complemented by the following documents:
- Email Policy
- IT system Code of Conduct

- Tenant Participation Strategy
- Unacceptable Actions Policy

7.1 Why Ochil View requires a Social Media Strategy

Our Social Media Strategy acknowledges the importance of developing a social media platform in order to build on and broaden the range of tools we have to provide information to, communicate with and receive feedback from tenants and other service users.

7.2 Aims of the social media strategy

Through activity in social media and social network websites, we aim to achieve the following:
- Improve customer service for current customers and service users
- Direct traffic to the Ochil View website
- Build new audiences through communicating in a relevant way
- Increase awareness of the Ochil View's work and messages
- Encourage participation and comment either informally, or by linking to Survey monkey.

7.3 Ochil View's use of Social Media

The chosen platform for Ochil View is initially Facebook. This will be reviewed in December 2014 consider how effective it has been.

7.4 What will appear on our Facebook Page?
- News Stories – as well as the stories that we already put out to media outlets, including our own newsletter, social media will be an opportunity to share smaller stories and more localised events.
- Consultation and Participation – social media gives our audiences the ability to have their say and get a response to it. Including rent review proposals
- Job Opportunities
- Links to other stories and information that may be useful to our tenants such as community services and other non-profit organisations that tenants might use e.g. council and community events.
- Homehunt properties
- Service interruptions and weather events.
- Gallery of photos from events.
- Promote Ochil View with Good news.
- Link to documents, annual report and newsletters.
- Performance information
- Publicise estate visits and inspections.
- Welfare reform.
- Links to "Survey monkey" surveys

7.5 Moderating the Facebook Page

There is a small risk that the Facebook page will be used inappropriately. To limit this risk, the page will carry "house rules" that set standards for use. These rules will prohibit:
- Swearing (automatic "profanity" filters will block posts using swearing)
- Naming of individuals - for example alleging responsibility for anti-social behaviour (posts including personal information will be removed)

- Allegations against members of staff (as above)

The Association cannot however expect to remain entirely free from criticism, however criticism handled properly can demonstrate a responsive organisation. Staff managing the page should make service delivery staff aware of critical posts and the service user will be contacted offline to resolve the matter. When a satisfactory conclusion is reached, they should be asked to post that their concerns have been addressed.

Persons who persistently use the site inappropriately and in breach of the House Rules will be blocked.

The page will indicate that it is not constantly monitored and that a response to a direct enquiry relating to services may not be for some hours (longer at evenings or weekends).

7.6 What are the objectives of our Social Media strategy?
- Improve customer service for current customers and service users: to be assessed by the number of users of the Facebook page assessing the page as helpful, useful and informative
- Direct traffic to the Ochil View website: to be assessed by increasing the number of visits as measured on the Association's website
- Build new audiences through communicating in a relevant way: to be assessed by increasing the number of tenants participating in consultation exercises and reaching a demographic that more accurately represents the tenant population as a whole
- Increase awareness of the Ochil View's work and messages: to be assessed by the number of "likes" and "shares"

8.0   REVIEW OF STRATEGY

- The Social Media Strategy will be reviewed after 12 months
- The Tenant Participation Strategy will be reviewed after 3 years

Policy review Consultation Process

Presented to Management Team	5th February 2014
Discussion at Involved Resident's Group and Registered Tenant Organisations	IRG 24th July 2013
Recommended by Customer Services Committee	12th February 2014
APPROVED BY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE	**27th February 2014**
Date of Next Review	**February 2017**

Ochil View Housing Association
Guidance Notes: Registration of Tenant Organisations

Introduction

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 introduced the right to participate for tenants. Part of this legislation is the requirement that all local authorities and other social landlords introduce a system for setting up and maintaining a Register of tenant organisations. Tenant groups need to apply to become registered and must meet certain criteria to qualify. The criteria for registration have been set out by the Scottish Government and cover a number of points. Groups who do become **RTOs** are entitled to certain rights and the landlord has a duty to inform and consult with them on housing matters.

What is a Registered Tenant Organisation-RTO?

A Registered Tenant Organisation-RTO is a group who has applied to become registered with a landlord and meets certain conditions which have been set down in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.

Becoming an Registered Tenant Organisation

What does a group need to do to become registered?

A group must apply in writing to become registered. To help, Ochil View has an application form which asks for all the information we need. Part of this application includes the need to provide certain information.

What information does a group need to provide?

All groups wanting to become registered must provide:

- a copy of their constitution
- a list of their office bearers and committee members
- a contact address for correspondence which can be made public
- a description of the area in which the group operates
- details of any other landlords the group is registered with or applying to become registered with
- A completed registration application form

What criteria do groups have to meet?

There are a range of criteria.

1. Groups must have a written constitution that is available for inspection and which details:

- their objectives
- the area in which they operate
- their membership process
- how the committee operates and is elected

- how business is conducted
- how funds are managed
- when they meet, including the Annual General Meeting
- how the constitution can be amended
- a commitment to equal opportunities
- how they intend to promote housing and housing related matters

2. Groups must have a committee that:

- is elected annually and committee members must be required to stand down after a certain period (this period should be included in the constitution)
- consists of at least three members who can co-opt other members
- reaches decisions democratically (the decision making process should be included in the constitution)

3. Groups must operate within a defined area that includes Ochil View housing stock and your group must be open to all tenants and residents within that area

4. Groups must have proper accounting records showing income and expenditure, and assets and liabilities. The constitution must require an annual audited financial statement to be presented at your AGM

5. Groups must be able to demonstrate how they plan to represent the views of their members and how they will kept informed

What happens next?

If a group meets the registration criteria we will place the group on the register and let the group know in writing that it have qualified and from what date.

If the group does not meet the registration criteria we will tell the group in writing of our decision not to place it on the register, the reasons why it doesn't meet the criteria and the group's right of appeal using the Association's Complaints Procedure and then to the Scottish Housing Regulator.

What happens if a group does not register?

If a group does not register we will still keep its details on file and include it in any consultation that we do. However it will not be classed as an RTO and will not have the statutory rights of an RTO.

What rights and benefits will we have as an RTO?

Registered Tenant Groups have a recognised role in the participation process. This is set out in our Action Plan. Registered Tenant's Organisations have the right to be consulted on issues that affect them and their members. They also have the right to have their opinions taken into account in any consultation.

Help to become registered

We can provide a model constitution that helps meet the registration criteria. We can also offer advice and training on the registration process. If a group needs help or advice on

equal opportunities policies we can supply this. We can provide access to independent help and advice. We also have access to information on tenant and residents groups in general.

Will the register be a public document?

We are required by law to make the Register publicly available. The Register must include contact details for groups, however if a group prefers you can use a post office box or "care of" address. The Register will be available at our office and on our website.

Can a group be removed from the register?

A group can be removed from the Register if it no longer meets the registration criteria. A group can also ask to be removed from the Register and it must apply in writing to do this. If a group ceases to exist it will also be removed.

Does a group have the right of appeal if it is removed from, or not admitted to, the Register?

A group has the right to appeal if you are refused registration, or re-registration A group also has the right to appeal against any decision to remove it from the Register or if we refuse to remove you on your request. Your appeal will first be considered by the Association in terms of our Complaints Handling Procedure and if you are dissatisfied with the outcome of the process, you can appeal to the Scottish Housing Regulator.

Can a group register with more than one landlord?

A group can register with any social landlord who has housing stock in the area it covers.

How long will registration last?

Registration will last for 3 years, after this period groups will have to reapply.

For more information or if you have any question then please contact the Head of Customer Services.

Registered Tenant Organisation Application Form

OCHIL VIEW Housing Association Ltd.	
Application for Registration of a Tenant Organisation	
Name of Group	
Geographic Area Covered	
Contact name and address including phone number and email (if available)	
Ochil View is required to make its Register of Tenant Organisations available to the public. Please tell us if you **do not** want your contact details to be available.	
Dates of regular meetings **e**.g. First Monday of the month	
On behalf of the above named group, I apply for registration with Ochil View HA as a Registered Tenant's Organisation as set out in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.	
Signed: Name: Position within the Organisation:	

Budget for tenant participation

Ochil View Housing Association has a dedicated budget for Tenant Participation.

- Quarterly meetings of the Involved Residents Group
- Funding for a Tenants Conference
- Annual funding for Registered Tenants Organisations
- Publication of two tenant newsletters
- Annual update of the tenant's handbook

No specific budget allocation is made but if required funds will be made available to:

- Pay a start-up grant of £150 to any newly registered RTO

- Provide annual grant funding to an RTO on the basis of a basic amount of £300 allocated for each group with up to 300 units, plus an additional £0.50 for each unit over and above 300.

- Training of RTO Office bearers

In addition, Ochil View will meet the following costs related to tenant participation from its general budget

- Maintenance of the Associations Website and Facebook page

- Commissioning of tenant surveys

- Administrative support is also provided by Ochil View Staff where required