



Customer Participation Strategy

March 2020 – Feb 2023

Contents

Introduction / Foreword

Govanhill Housing Association policy statement

Tenant Participation Strategy

Key commitments

Links with other policies

Legislative background

Equalities

Communication

Participation

How we developed the tenant participation strategy

Consultation on policy reviews

Registered Tenants' Organisations

Resources and training

Current participation structures and activities

Monitoring and review

Appendix 1: Review of previous strategy

Appendix 2: TP action plan 20/21

Govanhill Housing Association tenant participation strategy 2020 - 2023

1. Introduction / Foreword

- 1.1 Welcome to Govanhill Housing Association's latest tenant participation strategy. Thank you to all the tenants and other residents who have contributed their views and ideas. We look forward to working with you all over the coming years. Your influence drives our performance.

2. Govanhill Housing Association Tenant Participation Policy Statement

- 2.1 Govanhill Housing Association is a community controlled, registered social landlord with charitable status. We are fully committed to working in partnership with tenants and other residents, and we value participation in all aspects of the Association's operation.
- 2.2 This commitment stems from the Association's understanding that the opportunity for consultation and engagement is a basic right of all our tenants, enshrined in legislation and through the individual tenancy agreement. It is beneficial to everyone involved and, at a wider level, to the local community as a whole. If tenants and other residents have a meaningful role in making decisions and understand the processes involved, a better working relationship between us can develop.
- 2.3 The aims of this policy are to ensure that the Association gives tenants and other residents every opportunity to become involved in influencing the decision-making of the Association and the services it provides, at a level that suits them, and in a manner which fully complies with relevant legislation and good practice.
- 2.4 Govanhill Housing Association recognises that tenant and other resident participation:
- Is a spectrum of activities / levels of involvement – from receiving information to joint decision making and ownership
 - Is a two way dialogue between landlord and tenants / other residents, in which landlords are open to influence, and tenants have the capacity to influence
 - Requires trust, respect and the shared aim of improving our housing conditions and related services
 - Can be continually improved to ensure that our services remain responsive to tenants and other residents.
- 2.5 There are benefits for both the Housing Association and the individual participants:
- building better links between the community and the Housing Association

- helping to build community spirit
- working towards improving satisfaction with our services and value for money
- developing new experiences, knowledge and skills.

3. Govanhill Housing Association Tenant Participation Strategy

Key commitments to the Tenant Participation Strategy

3.1 Our commitment to provide information about the availability of opportunities to participate:

Information will be available

- In reception
- At the settling in visit
- In the newsletter
- On the website
- On Facebook
- In community outlets
- At events
- On request from the TP worker

3.2 Our commitment to tenants and factored owners to encourage their participation:

- We will hold quarterly 'Welcome to Govanhill' meetings with new tenants
- We will respond to requests for support to develop back court / neighbour / block initiatives / residents' groups
- We will co-ordinate the Factored Owners Forum
- We will invite interested tenants to take part in focus groups and other forms of consultation on specific areas of service improvement or policy
- We will hold monthly drop ins with tenants to support their engagement with the Housing Association and each other

3.3 Our commitment to Registered Tenants' Organisations to support their participation:

- Planning for and delivery of Annual action planning session and training needs analysis
- Support with and attendance at AGM and committee meetings
- Annual funding to help with running costs and engagement activities
- Involvement in any Housing Association policy reviews / consultations
- Feedback and analysis on our ARC performance
- Make links between the HA management committee and RTOs

3.4 Our commitment to engage with tenants and factored owners on day to day repairs & maintenance services:

- We will communicate by text and email with tenants if appropriate
- We will carry out regular post work satisfaction surveys
- We will provide PDF copies of letters via email
- We will translate key standard letters into other languages
- We will work with tenants to ensure our service is efficient and provides value for money

3.5 Our commitment to engage with tenants on development & regeneration services:

- We will consult tenants and private owners on any proposed Major Repairs or Planned Maintenance works affecting their properties
- We will consult with tenants on the priorities for Major Repairs/Planned Maintenance Works within the budgets available on an annual basis
- We will advise private owners on the availability of Repair Grants for Common Works and facilitate maximum grant awards to minimise costs and obtain agreement
- We will offer choices of finishes to tenants when replacing kitchens and bathrooms within a planned programme of works
- We will seek feedback on satisfaction levels from tenants who have received major component replacement works
- We will consult with neighbouring tenants, owners and the wider community when developing proposals for new housing or other capital projects

3.6 Our commitment to engage with tenants on housing management services:

- Throughout the application, sign up and settling in period of a tenancy we will engage with new tenants
- We will engage with tenants to prevent and resolve estate management and anti-social behaviour issues
- We will hold estate walk-about inspections with interested tenants on a regular basis
- We will always have a member of staff on duty to discuss your tenancy and your rent account
- We will support tenants to apply for Housing Benefit and Universal Credit

3.7 Our commitment to the wider community:

- Support to GOCA (Govanhill Community Action) from GCDT (Govanhill Community Development Trust)
- Support for back court and environmental projects from GCDT
- Support for integration activities e.g. ESOL classes and café, employability initiatives from GCDT, community shop in Allison Street

- Support for promotion of volunteering opportunities by GCDT
- GCDT will develop our engagement with local people from different communities on issues around the Locality Plan for Govanhill and Thriving Places.

4. Links with Other HA Policies

4.1 The tenant participation strategy links directly with the equal opportunities policy, communication strategy and procurement strategy. It is important that it also informs any development of service standards throughout the organisation. It also links to the vision and priorities of our business plan:

‘Everyone living in Govanhill and Merrylee should:

- Enjoy good quality, warm, safe and affordable housing that contributes to their health and wellbeing and to community pride
- Live in a neighbourhood that is clean and well cared for, with excellent neighbourhood services and opportunities for all

To help achieve this vision, the Business Plan sets the following priorities:

- Service improvement and investment for our existing homes and tenants
- Meeting household need in our communities
- Managing our assets and resources well, for the benefit of our tenants
- Improving opportunities and the quality of life for local people
- Working closely with Glasgow City Council and other bodies that have the lead responsibility for many key services in our communities’.

5. Legislative Background

5.1 **The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001** introduced a **legal framework for tenant participation**. The Act introduced new rights for tenants and placed new duties on landlords.

Social landlords are required to:

- provide a range of information for tenants
- have a Tenant Participation Strategy in place
- have a registration scheme for tenant organisations
- keep a publicly available register of these registered tenant organisations
- consult with tenants and registered tenant organisations on a range of housing and related services

5.2 **The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010** included provision for a **Scottish Social Housing Charter**; setting out what tenants and other customers can expect from social landlords. This was updated and reissued in April 2017. The Act also placed a duty on social landlords to report annually on outcomes to the Scottish Housing Regulator

5.3 The Charter is important to tenants and other residents because:

- it helps tenants have a clear understanding of what can be expected from the landlord
- it gives those who need to be housed an understanding of what they can expect from a prospective landlord
- it gives landlords clarity and certainty around what they should be achieving for their tenants and other service users by meeting their statutory duties on tenant participation.

5.4 Among the Charter outcomes and standards are:

“Equalities

Social landlords perform all aspects of their housing service so that: every tenant and other customer has their individual needs recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housing services.”

Govanhill Housing Association strives to achieve equality of opportunity and treatment in all that we do, and to work in a way that values and respects tenants and other residents in the community. We aim to remove barriers to effective participation, whether they are attitudinal, physical or geographical, cultural or financial. We recognise that everyone is an individual and aim to meet their needs accordingly.

In line with the Equality Act 2010 we are committed to eliminating unlawful discrimination, advancing equality of opportunity and fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who don't. We have produced an Equalities Action Plan to enable us to prioritise and implement our commitments.

“Communication

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.”

It is important that we can share and exchange information about policy and service provision. Tenants and other residents can communicate with Govanhill Housing Association in the following ways:

- Telephone: 0141 636 3636
- Email: checkin@govanhillha.org
- Contribute to our newsletters (3 per year)
- Via Facebook / social media
- Request a home visit
- Via tenants' / residents' groups
- Attend meetings
- Website: www.govanhillha.org

- Write to: Samaritan House, 79 Coplaw Street, Glasgow G42 7JG
- Come into the office at the above address or our office at 53 Ashmore Road in Merrylee

Govanhill Housing Association aims to ensure that tenants and other service users have access to information on our services and policies using the following methods:

Tenants handbook	Website
Regular newsletter	One off leaflets
Mail shots	Meetings
Tenants conference	Subscribing to Happy to
Facebook	Translate
LCD screen at reception in Samaritan House	Regular liaison with tenants' and residents' groups

- We can provide information in different formats and other languages on request.
- We will develop opportunities for tenants to develop skills and knowledge to take best advantage of the Association's new website and tenant / factored owner portal.

“Participation

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.”

There are many ways for tenants and other residents to be involved in Govanhill Housing Association, as individuals or in groups, for example:

- Become a shareholder in Govanhill Housing Association - you can become a member for just £1, vote at AGMs and stand for election to the management committee
- Come to our monthly tenants' drop in
- Take part in a one off focus group – chaired by a member of staff or independent consultant to look at a service or policy review. The information gathered from these meetings plays an important role in influencing the decisions made and how we go about implementing any changes or improvements.
- Join a short life working group (with staff) – as above but more in depth, and more than one meeting is involved.
- Join a tenants' / residents' group – a more formal way to engage with the Housing Association. A tenants' association is independent, representing local people, with elected leaders. Staff will attend if invited.

- Respond to a survey or questionnaire – e.g. our independent tenant satisfaction survey, or our recent rent restructuring survey. These provide vital feedback from a wide range of tenants and help us identify what areas of service need to be improved.
- Join an estate walkabout – tenants can meet with staff to inspect local communal areas and work together to resolve any problems. This is normally done at the request of tenants.
- Join in our social activities – for example in our community garden, or as part of the work we do with registered tenants’ organisations (RTOs)
- Attend events or public meetings – for example a tenants’ conference, our summer sessions or open days
- Serve on the management committee of Govanhill Housing Association – as a member you may want to be involved in the governance of the Housing Association. We can offer advice and training on what this involves.

5.5 Also relevant to this strategy is:

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, which has a specific focus on promoting effective engagement and participation to help communities achieve greater control and influence in the decisions and circumstances that affect their lives;

The National Standards for Community Engagement, which are good-practice principles designed to support and inform the process of community engagement, and improve what happens as a result;

The Scottish Housing Regulator’s (SHR) new regulatory and governance requirements, introduced in 2019, that require landlords to publish an Annual Assurance Statement for tenants.

6. How we developed the Strategy

- 6.1 In order to develop this strategy we first reviewed our previous one (2017 – 2019), including how we responded to what tenants had told us, and how we delivered our action plan.
- 6.2 We encouraged feedback from a wide range of tenants and residents on how we further develop tenant participation opportunities over the next 3 years. We invited involvement through articles in the newsletter; on the website, where we posted the current strategy for comment; a tenant participation survey emailed to 30 tenants; discussions with the 4 registered tenants’ organisations (RTOs); 2 tenants’ events involving almost 60 tenants, and informal chats with 18 tenants visiting our office.
- 6.3 Issues raised during consultation highlighted the difficulties people present with as barriers to participation: serious personal health problems; caring

responsibilities; work and study pressures. People are most likely to agree to focus group or survey involvement. Issues of interest expressed are: affordability, maintenance / contractors roles and responsibilities. Social activities requested are community clean ups, film nights and kids' activities.

- 6.4 Our next large scale customer satisfaction survey is due to take place in late 2020. We will use a section of this survey to ask questions around the effectiveness of our engagement with tenants and factored owners and to encourage involvement in the work that we do.

7. Consultation on Policy Reviews

- 7.1 There will be a number of policies under review each year and Govanhill Housing Association will engage with a range of tenants, potential tenants, and other residents (as appropriate) in consultation activity – see action plan for specific areas of work.
- 7.2 As part of our procurement strategy, the Association is required to develop consultation and engagement prior to individual procurements, where relevant and proportionate, in order to allow the views of those affected to be expressed and taken into account. So we will be looking at close cleaning and close painting (see 2020 draft action plan for details).
- 7.3 In any consultation the Association will undertake to give feedback in a clear and honest manner on how tenant and other resident opinions have helped to shape a policy or service development, or if they have not, why this is the case

8. Registered Tenants Organisations

- 8.1 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 introduced the idea of registered tenants' organisations (RTOs). It means that any tenants' group can apply to become an RTO. Govanhill Housing Association must keep a register of such tenant organisations, which is open to inspection by the public at any time. Groups can appeal to the Scottish Government if they are refused registration.
- 8.2 **RTO status gives groups the statutory right to be provided with information and consulted about important decisions relating to our housing services.**
- 8.3 To be registered, Govanhill Housing Association requires that any tenants' group adopts a formal constitution, works in a fair, open and democratic manner and does not discriminate on such grounds as race, colour, gender, sexuality, disability, religion or culture. The Association also requires the tenants' group to keep tenants and other residents informed of its work on a regular basis.

- 8.4 Govanhill Housing Association must consult with RTOs before making or changing any policies that will have a significant impact on members of the group. Following any consultation Govanhill Housing Association must also demonstrate that it has taken account of any comments made by RTOs.
- 8.5 Registered Tenant Organisations are independent. They have their own written constitutions, their own management committees and records of their accounts that are available to the public.

9. Resources and Training

- 9.1 Govanhill Housing Association will ensure that sufficient funds to support our Tenant & Other Resident Participation Strategy are set aside within our annual budget. Tenants / residents should not be out of pocket for participating. We will provide assistance with the following:
- Development / organisational support to new and existing tenants' / residents' groups
 - Start up and top –up grants to constituted groups that meet specific criteria
 - Provide practical support e.g. stationery, photocopying, premises for meetings, publicity (newsletters, flyers etc)
 - Information about our structures, policies and procedures
 - Staff to attend meetings if requested
 - Use of our offices to hold meetings
 - Training
 - Events (e.g. Tenants conference)
 - Care costs, travel and subsistence (e.g. for focus group or training event)
- 9.2 Tenants' / residents' groups that are not registered as an RTO with us may be supported or funded at a reduced rate, at our discretion.
- 9.3 To build the skills and knowledge of our tenants and residents we will offer to arrange training on aspects of our organisation, any new development in housing law or practice, and will respond to requests where possible. A start up handbook for tenants' groups is available on request.

10. Current Participation Structures and Activity

- 10.1 In 2013 the Association employed a Tenant & Resident Participation Officer to develop resident involvement. Currently (at October 2019) the following groups and initiatives are supported by various staff:
- The Association's voluntary management committee and sub-committees
 - Jamieson Court Residents Group (RTO)
 - Merrylee Residents & Tenants Organisation (RTO)
 - MERGE welfare group (RTO)

- Govanhill Community Garden Residents & Tenants Association (RTO)
- Govanhill Festival Committee
- Factored Owners Forum
- New build design working group
- Various one off events
- GCDT activities (Community Conversations, volunteering and ESOL projects)

10.2 We will develop an action plan which will be reviewed and agreed on an annual basis. It will include:

- Supporting our governance arrangements
- Our work with the RTOs
- An examination of our performance against the Scottish Social Housing Charter (ARC)
- Involving tenants in the self- assessment process
- Involving tenants in the review of the TP action plan each year

11. Monitoring & Review

11.1 Tenant and other resident involvement is key to all of our activities, and so our management committee, which is made up of tenants and other shareholders who are elected by the Association's members, is responsible for the monitoring and review of the Tenant Participation Strategy. Reports are received and considered on a quarterly basis, or as required.

11.2 An annual review will consider:

- How are we meeting the tenant participation provisions of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001?
- Is the strategy helping us to meet the Charter outcomes in terms of tenant and resident participation?
- Is there evidence of success?
- Do tenants and residents have the opportunity to participate in a manner which suits them?
- How can we show that tenant participation is achieving tenant influence?
- Is the monitoring and review framework effective?

11.3 This strategy will be reviewed in three years time or earlier if good practice, feedback from customers or statute require.

Appendix 1

2017 – 2019 Tenant Participation Strategy Review

- 1.1 Tenant participation is ‘about tenants taking part in decision-making processes and influencing decisions about housing policies, housing conditions and housing services. It is a two way process that involves the sharing of information, ideas and power. Its aim is to improve the standard of housing conditions and service.’ (National Strategy for Tenant Participation – Partners in Participation, 1999)
- 1.2 A legal framework for tenant participation was introduced in the 2001 Housing (Scotland) Act, and the introduction of the Scottish Social Housing Charter in 2012 further empowered tenants to work in partnership with their landlords to monitor and challenge decisions and performance.
- 1.3 In 2015, 85% of tenants responding to our tenant satisfaction survey said they were satisfied with the opportunities to participate. By 2018 this had jumped to 95%, but we know we can still do better. In 2017 it was decided to make the TP (tenant participation) officer post permanent within the Housing Association (HA). This signalled a clear commitment from the management committee towards recognising the value of tenant involvement on all aspects of the business. It should still be emphasised that all staff have a role in promoting and supporting tenant engagement and participation.
- 1.4 For the 2017 – 2019 action plan, tenants suggested the following priority areas of service that could benefit from tenant involvement.

Tenants said: *‘Prioritise a shop unit that could be a drop in and meeting space’*

We did: the GCDT opened premises at 192 Allison Street to provide that service.

Tenants said: *‘Address environmental issues in back courts’*

We did: The HA is progressing the bin shelter replacement project and has employed a back court development worker in SW Govanhill

Tenants said: *‘We want repairs on appointment and a faster response to emergencies’*

We did: our new responsive repairs contract includes these improvements

Tenants said: *‘We want the happy stuff’ (socials / making connections)*

We did: see ‘Events’ below

Tenants said: *‘Prioritise dealing with anti-social behaviour’*

We did: consult tenants on locally agreed timescales to deal with ASB

Tenants said: *‘Customer service and value for money are important to us’*

We are constantly trying to improve the service and the value that we provide to tenants and other customers

This paper looks at the other key activities that took place over the period of the last TP action plan.

2. Awareness Raising

- 2.1 In 2017 we started a door knocking exercise aiming to call at every HA property, to raise awareness of TP opportunities in Govanhill and Merrylee. So far 20 streets have been covered, and over 100 tenants are now on our contact list – this is the list from which we draw participants for consultation sessions. Some individuals have taken up other opportunities, e.g. joining the MERGE group, taking up ESOL classes or becoming a shareholding member of the HA.
- 2.2 We have held monthly coffee evening drop ins (barring holidays), and while this does not attract a large number of tenants, it offers the chance for those who work 9 – 5 to pop in with any queries they may have. The TP worker also spends one half day per week in the community advice centre in Allison Street, building links with GCDT colleagues, and promoting TP opportunities to service users there.
- 2.3 As well as the newsletter, annual review and website, the Housing Association also has a Facebook page now that we use to raise awareness of TP opportunities and activities.
- 2.4 For the first time we also held a ‘Meet the Neighbours’ brunch for the Inglefield St new build residents, and this is something we will continue to do in future developments.

3. Consultations

Over this period we have consulted our RTOs and tenants on:

- our allocation policy (agreed move to points based system),
- the annual rent increase,
- the ARC report,
- anti-social behaviour policy (agreed 3 month local target),
- bin shelter essential repair (the project is currently underway),
- communications (ongoing).

Local residents’ groups have also responded to national consultations on legislation and regulation, the Scottish Social Housing Charter, and locally, on the Govanhill Locality Plan.

Preparation for the 2017/18 tenant satisfaction survey involved consulting with a small group of tenants to help us ensure the clarity of the survey and that questions were in plain language and easy to understand. 25 of the tenants who responded to the survey expressed an interest in finding out more about tenant participation opportunities, but unfortunately none responded to any that were offered.

4. Registered Tenants Organisations (RTOs)

4.1 We have supported the development of 4 RTOs who play a vital role in engaging with tenants and other residents in the wider community.

- Merrylee RTO engages via Facebook, weekly coffee mornings, environmental activities and an annual Open Day
- Jamieson Court Residents group engages largely through social activities and events for older people.
- The MERGE group (Minority Ethnic Residents Group) engages via WhatsApp, and the use of arts and crafts activities
- Govanhill Community Garden Residents & Tenants Association engages through garden related activity, which can include fund-raising, cooking, and events, as well as gardening, and they also encompass the Govanhill Community Remembrance Garden

Members also take part in wider training and learning opportunities as they arise, for example information sessions held by the Scottish Housing Regulator, an RTO Network meeting and training on the 2014 Housing Act. We have also held internal training / information sessions on tenancy changes; committee skills; team building; community benefit. All the RTOs can apply for funding annually from the HA for their engagement work. They produce annual actions plans and report on their activity each year to their members. They have also successfully bid for external funding e.g. from Glasgow City Council, Loretto Care and Age Scotland.

4.2 We also support groups that do not have RTO status:

- The Coplaw Community residents group
- Govanhill Festival Committee, (which enables us to support many of the events below)
- The Factored Owners Forum (brings factored owners together every 6 months)
- Community Conversations (more a process than a group, bringing the various communities in Govanhill together) in partnership with GCDT

5. Events

5.1 Through our RTO network and independently there's been:

- 'Getting To Know You' event (MERGE & ESOL class)
- International Women's Day event
- International Men's Day event
- Daffodil Tea (first of 3 events held for older people with Heriot Watt University researching 'Age friendly communities')
- Merrylee Open Day (annually)

- 'Meet the Neighbours' brunch (new build)
- Mini-conference / tenants' evening
- Garden and Good Neighbour competitions
- Activities as part of Govanhill International Festival
- Summer day trips
- Festive events
- Community Conversation ceilidhs

6. Bridging the Strategies

- 6.1 During the lifetime of the 2017 – 2019 strategy there were a number of issues that had an indirect impact on tenant participation work.
- 6.2 One particular blow was the withdrawal of council funding for the sheltered housing support worker service. The RTO committee have reported a drop in contact between residents that had been previously facilitated by the support worker. Unfortunately this happened at the same time as we celebrated the extension of the common room in the complex. In the new strategy we propose to work in partnership with the RTO and GCDT to seek possible funding for a temporary activities co-ordinator, to open up the common room to a wider group of older people.
- 6.3 Another issue that became apparent was the lack of safe access for disabled people to the community garden, and in particular to the portacabin. This caused the RTO to curtail any social activity in the garden, so it was much appreciated when the Development section was able to negotiate 'considerate contractor' and 'community benefit' works with on site contractors. The work was completed in autumn 2019 and so the garden and the portacabin can again be a vibrant site for engagement activities.
- 6.4 Thirdly: the introduction of a new IT system within the Housing Association. This has meant a lot of work for housing and maintenance staff, and the setting up of new systems for various procedures. TP has not been integrated into this yet, but the ability to access particular groups of tenants is being addressed for TP and this should enable work targeting e.g. new tenants and young people to progress more strategically in the new action plan.

