



Aberdeenshire *housing partnership*

Tenant Consultation Policy

JUNE 2005

AHP commits to ensuring that tenants have a meaningful role in the development and operation of services provided now and in the future. Tenants' views will be considered along with other stakeholders when decisions are taken in relation to AHP's strategic development, its policies and operational services.

AHP will provide feedback to tenants through regular newsletters and other means to explain the outcome of consultation exercises.

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1. Policy Statement

1.1 AHP commits to ensuring that tenants have a meaningful role in the development and operation of services provided now and in the future. Tenants' views will be considered along with other stakeholders when decisions are taken in relation to AHP's strategic development, its policies and operational services.

1.2 AHP will provide feedback to tenants through regular newsletters and other means to explain the outcome of consultation exercises.

2. Scope of Policy

2.1 AHP has a direct legislative responsibility arising from the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 to consult tenants on a wide range of its activities including those relating to housing management and rent setting. Regulatory expectations are also defined in published Performance Standards.

2.2 AHP's draft Strategic Plan includes a number of targets relating to our objective to become "one of the best social landlords in the north east". The involvement of tenants in the development of services is clearly integral to AHP's achievement of its objectives.

3. Principles of Consultation

3.1 The engagement of tenants, as key stakeholders, is critical to the success of the organisation. As outlined above AHP has a statutory duty to consult tenants on many areas of our activity, however it is important to recognise that:

- Tenants are one of many stakeholders – others include: private funders, Communities Scotland (as both regulator and funder), strategic housing partner(s), other housing associations and contractors, to name but a few.
- The Board has responsibilities in respect of the organisation's status as a limited company and charity.

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- The Board and staff bring a range of expertise and experience to the organisation.

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4. Tenant Preferences on Consultation

- 4.1 In formulating this policy the views of tenants of their preferences on both the frequency and methods of consultations were sought, as part of the Tenant Satisfaction Survey.
- 4.2 Key results from the Tenant Satisfaction Survey, included:
- 98% of tenants felt AHP were very / fairly good at keeping them informed.
 - 74% felt that the use of Newsletters, including their frequency was good.
 - 87% of tenants felt that AHP was very / fairly good at taking account of their views.
 - Letters (78%), staff visits (50%) and surveys (44%) were the most popular methods for consultation.
 - A majority (55%) did not want to receive more information about AHP and its services.
 - 70% would like to be consulted on repairs and maintenance and 43% on Housing policies.
- 4.3 Tenants were also given the opportunity to express an interest in consultation in particular aspects of AHP's work through the Tenant's Newsletter. Tenants were asked for their preferences in respect of subject matter and how they would like to be consulted.

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4.4 The feedback from both these exercises has influenced the construction of this policy.

5. Methods of Consultation

5.1 The need for consultation with tenants is clear, the challenge facing AHP is how to consult effectively - ie in a way that meets both tenants and the organisations' requirements. A balance will be struck that enables tenants to be consulted in a way that is both meaningful and not over burdensome to them and is capable of being managed by the organisation (both in respect of financial and staff resources). Whilst there is no current groundswell for the establishment of traditional tenant groups AHP would continue to offer support to such groups if there is a demand in the future.

5.2 The following methods of Consultation have been adopted:

5.2.1 Step 1 (January to June 2005)

A number of policies have been developed over the past six months which it has not been possible to consult with tenants on, these include: anti social behaviour, compensation, arrears etc. In order to rectify this position a Newsletter is to be produced which identifies those policies that have been (or will be) established for the period January to June 2005 and tenants will be asked for any comment on these. A short introduction will be included in relation to each policy and tenants can be provided with a copy of the relevant documents on request. A tenant feedback report would then be considered at the next relevant Committee or Board meeting and recommended policy amendments made, in the light of this feedback.

5.2.2 Step 2 (July 2005 onward)

From July 2005 the following policy development cycle will be established:

- Draft policies considered by relevant Committee / Board.
- Draft policy consulted upon with tenants (see below).
- Committee / Board reviews feedback and agrees finalised policy.
- Outcomes reported in next Tenants' Newsletter.

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5.3 In addition to the steps noted above it is further proposed that two main avenues for consultation are adopted; these are:

5.3.1 Tenants Panels

- Through the establishment of three theme based tenant panels. It is envisaged that three panels are set up covering repairs and maintenance, finance including rent setting etc and housing management. These panels would comprise tenants who have expressed an interest in the particular subjects identified and would be encouraged and supported in their role. It is anticipated that these groups would meet throughout the year and would have a longer term involvement with AHP.

In addition it is suggested that the Annual Tenants Event is developed with the involvement of the Panels.

5.3.2 Policy Survey Forms

- Through Newsletters / surveys. To support this approach and to establish an effective and well understood mechanism for consultation it is proposed to use a “model” policy consultation form, a draft of which is attached (**Appendix 1**). The model form will be tailored according to each policy and will be issued automatically by AHP.

5.4 Looking ahead new forms of consultation will be developed particularly as we plan to establish an Internet web site. The processes identified above are however intended to provide a useful platform from which to build and are in addition to the existing feedback we get from tenants in respect of the day to day repair service, the survey of tenants of new developments and the three yearly Tenant Satisfaction Survey.

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6. Resources

- 6.1 Staff will be required to support tenant panels, each of the three panels will be facilitated by a member of the Management Team with support from other staff as necessary. Staff will be entitled to Time off in Lieu or paid overtime in accordance with the existing Terms and Conditions.
- 6.2 Other resources eg stationery, postage etc will be met from existing budgets.

7. Equality & Diversity Matters

- 7.1 Individual requirements particularly in the use of meeting rooms etc for tenant panel meetings will be taken into account to ensure that all tenants' views are capable of being heard.
- 7.2 Information will be produced in different formats as required to meet individual needs.

8. Review

- 8.1 This Policy will be reviewed every three years, or in the light of any legislative changes, or Communities Scotland regulatory requirements.