

Housing and Building Services
Tenant Participation Strategy
2008 - 2012



Tenant Participation

Getting Involved

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Council

'Getting Involved' in tenant participation in West Lothian

Thank you for taking the time to read West Lothian Council's Tenant Participation Strategy. The strategy sets out what we plan to do, in co-operation with individual council tenants, tenant representatives and local communities. Our aim is to encourage and support tenant participation over the next four years.

For tenant participation to work effectively, it requires mutual trust, respect and partnership working between those who use our services, staff and elected members - all working together towards a common aim of better housing conditions and housing related services.

Whilst acknowledging the achievements and progress made so far, we recognise that there are still improvements to be made. With the enthusiasm of all those involved, we look forward to seeing tenant participation in West Lothian continue to flourish, so that we can work together in partnership to achieve all of the aims and objectives set out in the following pages.

Ann Gee,
Head of Housing and Building Services



Welcome to the new Tenant Participation Strategy for 2008 –2012. It is with great pleasure that I wholly endorse this document, which emphasises the strength of commitment of the council towards improving and encouraging effective tenant participation throughout West Lothian.

The aim of the strategy is to provide opportunities for tenants and service users to be involved and influence decisions, at the highest possible level, made in relation to the development of housing services.

I believe that this strategy offers a wide range of ways for every tenant to become involved. We want to encourage and assist as many tenants as possible to have their say and influence the decisions that affect them in their home and community. I believe that this strategy, is one of the best throughout the country.

This document has been worked on, discussed and written by various groups of tenant representatives and staff, with input from TPAS. I would like to thank them all for the tremendous work and dedication they have put in to help produce this strategy document.

Frank Anderson,
Executive Councillor for
Services for The Community



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Introduction



West Lothian Council is pleased to present the new version of our Tenant Participation Strategy pack, called '**Getting Involved**'. This document sets out the way in which those who receive services from Housing and Building Services can play an active role in shaping and improving the services they receive.

The aim of this document is to build on the achievements made over the past decade. It has been agreed by council tenants, staff and service users working together with the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS). This strategy is intended to be a living, working document, which sets out the way in which we will continue to develop and improve tenant participation throughout West Lothian.

Tenant participation is about two way communication, consultation and participation. More importantly, taking on board service users views and opinions and using them to influence decisions that will shape the services they receive from us.

West Lothian Council is committed to working with communities and this means that non-council tenants have a crucial role to play.

However, for this strategy to be effective, there are some fundamental issues such as rents, housing repairs and internal home improvements on which only council tenants can have a say.

West Lothian Council has a legal duty to have a tenant participation strategy, and council tenants have rights under the Housing Scotland (2001) Act to be consulted on a range of major housing issues that affect them. These include:

- housing policy (changes to policies and procedures)
- housing conditions
- housing and other related services e.g. anti-social behaviour, environmental issues

How to use this pack

We have developed the new tenant participation strategy as an information pack. In this pack you will find the strategy document and separate information sheets on the different ways you can become involved in tenant participation.

The strategy document provides information on:

- housing policy (changes to policies and procedures)
- housing conditions
- what tenant participation is all about
- how it will be put into practice
- how you can get involved

The information sheets contain all you need to know about:

- the different ways you can choose to get involved
- how it works
- the support that we can offer

As an example, if you are interested in joining a group, then you can take a look at the Registered Tenant Organisation information sheet, which explains everything you need to know about how this works.

What can you expect from our strategy?

The Housing Scotland (2001) Act states that all landlords must have a Tenant Participation Strategy. Here are some of the things you can expect from our strategy:

- details of the different ways you can get involved either as an individual or as part of a group
- clear aims and objectives for tenant participation
- commitment to provide financial and administrative support and resources for individuals and groups
- provision of tailored training to suit the needs of individuals and groups to enable and encourage participation
- details of how to set up and register a tenants group with the council
- introduction of new measures to fully support existing groups, and develop new Registered Tenant Organisations throughout West Lothian e.g. Annual Work Plan
- clear methods of communicating, consulting and participating
- continual improvement of our strategy to ensure it is effective and offers the right amount of support to our service users
- equal opportunities for all
- local factors taken into account to allow for ongoing change and improvement
- empowering all those involved to shape the services they receive
- involvement in decision making
- partnership working with other council services
- regular performance, monitoring & review of the strategy

How will we deliver the strategy?

Our main objectives are to:

- remove barriers to effective participation arising from ethnicity, geographic location, special needs, language difficulties, learning difficulties, age, sexual orientation, disability or religious belief
- gather the views of council tenants and other service users and use these to shape and improve services
- identify how council tenants and other service users views have improved services and make sure we let them know how they have made a difference
- support existing and new groups to enable them to represent their local community
- support Housing Networks, who will gather council tenants' views across the whole of West Lothian on Housing & Building Service issues, and be represented on the Services for the Community, Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel
- help the Tenants' Panel to monitor, evaluate and review the full range of services delivered by Housing and Building Services.
- increase the opportunities for getting involved (see section 6, page 11, on all the different ways of participating)
- share the information we collect from surveys and service users' feedback
- develop service users knowledge and skills to help them improve and influence the services that they receive
- provide appropriate resources for tenant participation, such as training and funding for those involved
- improve communication and consultation to meet service users needs
- support staff to promote and encourage tenant participation in their area
- work together with Housing & Building Services and other council services and partners
- ensure council tenants are linked into the council's wider consultative activities

Our main aims are to:

provide opportunities to increase the number of council tenants and other service users getting involved

ensure the opportunities for getting involved meet our service users needs and expectations

Supporting, Informing & Consulting

The strategy's key task is to show how West Lothian Council's Housing and Building Services will meet its statutory responsibility to consult with its tenants and other service users. The council aim to go beyond its statutory responsibilities and show it is committed to communicating and participating with all its' tenants and other service users, collecting and using their views to improve services. **Tenant participation involves a two way process including the sharing of information, ideas and knowledge.**

We will do this by ensuring:

- all literature is written in plain language and can be made available in different formats and languages as requested
- physical and other barriers will be identified and minimised so that we can offer all service users in the community the opportunity to get involved
- activities will be undertaken to encourage traditionally under represented groups of service users i.e. young people, people with disabilities, people from ethnic minority communities to participate
- learning and development opportunities are available to all service users and staff involved in tenant participation
- service users are given training to gain the knowledge and skills they need to understand what Housing & Building Services do

What skills and training will we offer?

Learning opportunities will be provided, in a way that suits you, the service user, by making the best use of council and other resources.

An Annual Learning Programme will be drawn up in consultation with service users and staff and will be advertised in Tenants News and the local press.

This list shows some of the types of training that we can provide:

- workshops e.g. Tenant Led Inspections, Report Writing, Microsoft Word, Excel, Powerpoint
- advice and training from an independent source e.g. Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS)
- attend internal and external conferences
- Chartered Institute of Housing (recognised qualification in housing)
- equalities and diversity training
- any specific training requirements as identified by individuals or as agreed in the Annual Work Plan completed by registered tenant organisations, such as:
 - committee skills
 - making meetings work
 - training on council services
 - training on council policies and procedures
 - producing newsletters
 - negotiation skills
 - the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001
 - tenant participation

How will consultation take place?

A range of methods will be offered to ensure that everyone has a chance to have their say. The normal time allowed for consultation is a minimum of two months.

You will be able to choose:

- how, when and where you are consulted

The council will:

- provide information on the consultation process and the likely effects of the proposals
- advise why the proposals are being made
- how the proposals will affect service users
- how you can comment on the proposals and when the final decisions will be taken
- ensure your comments will be taken into account when decisions are made

Issues for consultation include:

- changes to policies and procedures relating to housing management and related services, including rent setting, repairs service, allocations, estate management, anti-social behaviour and tenancy management
- changes to service standards relating to housing management, repairs and maintenance
- Capital Works Programme (improvements to your home)
- Local Service Plans (changes to your communities)
- changes to the Tenant Participation Strategy
- any proposals to change landlords
- Housing Revenue Account budget
- new build development
- housing strategy and development

What will we do with the feedback you give us:

- views will be reported to senior managers and elected members and taken into account when producing final documents
- any changes made to proposals as a result of consultation will be communicated by letter to the service users making the comments and we will also publicise via Tenants News and information screens in Council Information Service Centres
- send information to Registered Tenant Organisations and Housing Networks
- provide outcomes of any consultation to Tenants Panel

How will communication take place?

It is vitally important that communication flows both ways between the council, our tenants and other service users. Good communication gives us the chance to listen to your comments and for you to influence any changes to ensure that our services meet your needs.

Ways of communication:

- in person or by phone, letter, email or internet at a Council Information Service Centre or to your local housing office
- completing a response slip or 'Your Opinion Counts' form during a home visit
- through your local Registered Tenant Organisation or Housing Network
- council officers attending Registered Tenant Organisations or Housing Networks
- surveys and questionnaires
- roadshows
- public meetings, conferences & information days
- publishing information through newsletters (Tenants News, Applicants News and Homelessness Newsletter) and local media
- through adverts, posters, leaflets

How can you influence change?

Housing and Building Services recognise that you should be involved in the planning and provision of the services we provide. It is important that you, our tenants and service users, are given an opportunity to be genuinely involved in influencing the decision making process.

We will take account of your views and comments before any decision is taken that affects the provision, maintenance and management of the housing stock.

How will we inform you?

We will:

- give adequate time to allow for meaningful consultation and discussion
- provide relevant information at the earliest stage to allow full understanding of any proposals
- provide advance notice of how and when decisions will be taken which affect the provision, management and maintenance of the housing stock

Who will be involved in the decision making process?

- all council tenants
- all applicants on the housing list
- Registered Tenant Groups
- Tenants Voices
- Housing Networks
- Tenants' Panel

West Lothian Council is committed to working with communities and this means that non-council tenants have a crucial role to play. However, for this strategy to be effective, there are some fundamental issues such as rents, repairs and internal home improvements on which only council tenants can have a say and vote if required.

Ways of 'Getting Involved'

The council is keen to increase the number of council tenants and service users getting involved in improving the services they receive. We have developed a range of options to allow you to choose the way you can get involved in tenant participation. These have been split into formal and informal ways, to make it easier for you to choose what suits you.

Informal Ways of 'Getting Involved'

We understand that not all our tenants and service users will have the time to commit to more formal ways of getting involved, such as attending registered tenant organisations. With this in mind we have come up with some more informal ways, so that you can let us know what you think about our services. Please have a look and see if any of these options interest you:

● Individual Service Users

As an individual, who receives services from Housing and Building Services, you can be involved in Tenant Participation and in helping to shape and improve the services you receive.

● Register of Interested Tenants (ROIT)

As a West Lothian Council tenant, you can have your name added to our register. This register is a list of tenants who have told us that they would like to be consulted on service issues that interest them. (Any personal details held on the register are confidential and will be kept in accordance with the data protection act).

● Surveys and Questionnaires

At various times surveys and questionnaires will be sent out to service users so that they have the opportunity to give their comments and views on the services that they receive.

● Focus Groups

Groups of service users are invited to attend a single or a small number of meetings to discuss specific service delivery issues. A participation incentive will be paid to cover any out-of-pocket expenses to those attending.

● Public Meetings

When appropriate, to consult service users.

● Annual Conferences

Allow council tenants and service users the opportunity to comment on issues in their locality and be given information on any future service changes.

● Housing Surgeries

These are held by our staff in some local communities on a regular basis. Housing surgeries allow you the chance to discuss any housing issues you may have and express views on the services you receive from us. Contact your local housing office to find out about surgeries in your area.

● Tenant Participation Road Shows

To provide information and encourage participation in the communities where service users live.

● Editorial Panel

An Editorial Panel made up of tenants and residents can get involved in choosing, producing and editing articles for the newsletters that Housing and Building Services send out on a regular basis.

● Local Service Delivery

Local Service planning happens on an annual basis with all the staff throughout the service contributing. This process is important for identifying local priorities on the use of resources, including working with partners, the housing capital programme and revenue spending. Analysis of customer feedback, local performance trends and service demands are all part of this process.

● Community Days

This process allows local staff, council tenants and other service users the chance to set priorities for service initiatives, local action plans and performance issues for the coming year.

● Estate Walkabouts

The local housing office staff, council tenants, other service users and elected members can regularly have estate walkabouts to find out what work is required in the area.

Once the walkabout has taken place an action plan will be drawn up and proposals put forward for consideration. A date to revisit the area inspected will be agreed to ensure the action plan has been successful.

The estate walkabouts can be carried out at regular intervals, as set out in the local registered tenant organisations annual work plan, or on an ad-hoc basis if the need arises.

Formal Ways of 'Getting Involved'

Whilst some people like more informal ways of being involved, there are other council tenants and service users who are dedicated to tenant participation and enjoy being involved in more formal ways, such as Tenant Led Inspections, Registered Tenant Organisations or Working Groups. If you think that you might be interested in becoming involved in a more formal way, then please have a look and see if any of these options interest you:

● Registered Tenants Organisations (RTOs)

An RTO is a group who has applied to become registered with West Lothian Council. There are a number of Registered Tenant Organisations in West Lothian. To become registered your group must meet certain criteria, for example, be democratically elected, have a defined area of operation and an appropriate constitution.

(See the separate information sheet for more details).

To find out if there is a group in your area, contact your Tenant Participation team, local Housing Office, Council Information Service Centres or by logging onto www.westlothian.gov.uk. Then by following the links: Housing/Council Housing/Tenant Participation – (downloadable documents) 'Tenants and Residents Groups in Your Area'.

Housing and Building Services will:

- continue to work together with existing and new local groups to support and encourage them in the excellent work they do for their local communities
- keep groups up to date on issues affecting their area
- arrange performance meetings between local groups and local housing offices
- work with each registered group to produce an Annual Work Plan (AWP). The annual work plan will set out the work of the group for the coming year and will identify:
 - any support needed by the group and who will provide that support
 - the level of funding needed by the group for the coming year
 - individual and group training needs of those involved in the group

● Non-Registered Tenants Organisations (Non-RTOs)

If a group does not meet the criteria to become a registered group, Housing and Building Services will continue to consult with them. However, we will advise such groups that registration strengthens their rights to information and to be consulted on proposals relating to issues that affect them.

● Working Groups/Quality Improvement Teams (QIT's)

These are groups that can be made up council tenants, other service users and council officers, who will meet over a short period of time to review an existing service or develop a new service.

● Tenants' Voice

In small communities, who do not have a registered tenant organisation, an individual council tenant can be nominated by other council tenants in their community to become a Tenants' Voice. *(See the separate information sheet for more details).*

People interested in this option would be fully supported by the tenant participation team.

As a Tenants' Voice you:

- must be nominated by council tenants in your area
- must be seen to represent the views of the council tenants in your locality, and not just your own views
- can speak for other council tenants in your area on any issues regarding housing and other related services
- can represent a small defined geographical area, list of streets/ addresses or community of interest i.e. sheltered housing complex.

As a Tenants' Voice you would be able to:

- participate in consultation, share in training and development and get involved in your local Housing Network
- receive support from Housing and Building Services Tenant Participation Team to ensure good communication between yourself and your area, and others involved in tenant participation in West Lothian, such as Housing Networks.

● Housing Networks

In West Lothian we have Housing Networks who cover different communities within the entire West Lothian area.

(See the separate information sheet for more details).

The Housing Networks meet monthly and all council tenants and other service users in West Lothian can attend and take part in discussions, along with Housing and Building Service staff and elected members.

For more information on where and when the Housing Networks meet, please contact your local Council Information Service Centre or log onto www.westlothian.gov.uk then follow the links: Housing/ Council Housing/Tenant Participation.

How do they work?

The Networks are made up of members of Registered Tenant Organisations, Individual Service Users, Tenants' Voices and members of the Register of Interested Tenants.

The Networks:

- gather and present the views of service users in their area
- can carry out consultation activities in their area e.g. mystery shopping, surveys
- will be advised of all consultative activities being carried out in their area and the outcomes
- can nominate up to a maximum of six tenant representatives to attend the Tenants Panel
- can nominate up to a maximum of four council tenants, to attend the Council's Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel (PDSP) for Services for the Community and any other Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel that tenants may be requested to participate in.
- will be responsible for arranging to meet together at least twice a year to discuss good practice and common issues
- will each be responsible for organising their meetings so that both Networks meet on the same week of every month
- will each have identical constitutions
- will be supported by Housing and Building Services to request information from other council services, if appropriate to the work of the Housing Network

The Housing Networks reflect the multi member ward system and cover the following wards:

Linlithgow

Broxburn, Uphall & Winchburgh

Livingston North

Livingston South

East Livingston & East Calder

Fauldhouse & the Breich Valley

Whitburn & Blackburn

Bathgate

Armadale & Blackridge

● Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel (PDSP)

(see the separate information sheet for more details)

West Lothian Council have nine Policy Development and Scrutiny Panels (PDSP) and each is responsible for certain services provided by the council. Housing and Building Services comes under the 'Services for the Community' Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel.

Up to a maximum of four West Lothian Council tenants (from the Housing Networks) can be nominated to attend the Services for the Community PDSP.

(Meetings of the PDSP are generally open to the public to attend and watch, even if not specifically invited to attend, or nominated to attend through the Housing Networks).

The PDSP will:

- meet roughly every six weeks
- develop new policies and review existing policies, and make recommendations for their adoption by the council
- work through items of business from their own workplans or from full council, executive committee or other council committees
- scrutinise the work of the service.

The tenant members will:

- have the opportunity to take the views and opinions of their Housing Network to meetings
- be expected to report back on the business of the PDSP to their Housing Network
- participate fully within the PDSP

● Tenant Led Inspections (TLI's)

(see the separate information sheet for more details)

Tenant Led Inspections are carried out by a team of informed council tenants and other service users. They will closely examine a particular area of Housing & Building Services to identify strengths and recommend areas for improvement in the service.

A Tenant Led Inspection will be carried out following the procedures set out in the document 'Framework and Ground Rules of Tenant Led Inspections'. This is available from your Tenant Participation team, Customer Information Service Centres or by logging onto www.westlothian.gov.uk. Then by following the links: Housing/ Council Housing/Tenant Participation – (downloadable documents) 'Tenant Led Inspections Guidelines'.

● Tenants' Panel

(see the separate information sheet for more details)

The Tenants' Panel is made up of six nominated council tenants (from the Housing Networks), together with Senior Housing and Building Service Managers. Elected Members are also invited. The Panel will meet:

- **one month with elected Tenant Representatives only (or their substitute if the elected Tenant Member is unable to attend) to monitor performance and any other issues arising**
- **the next month with elected Tenant Representatives and the Head of Housing & Building Services and Senior Managers (to discuss their findings and ask any relevant questions) - this meeting will be chaired by a tenant member.**

The main responsibilities of the Panel are to:

- monitor and review the delivery and performance of services provided by Housing and Building Services
- monitor Capital Programme and Tenant Participation budgets
- plan consultation, consider feedback, monitor the effectiveness and evaluate the outcomes of the consultation process
- record and publicise the benefit of participation on services
- consult fully with Registered Tenant Organisations and Housing Network members by ensuring that Tenant Members
 - report on the workings of the Panel to their groups/Housing Network
 - report back to the Panel on the views and opinions of their groups/Housing Network
 - have Tenants' Panel as an item on the Agenda at each Housing Network and make available copies of Minutes from all meetings held
- get commitment from senior Housing and Building Services staff to:
 - attend meetings
 - carry out any actions from meetings
 - follow the correct procedures for consultation and feedback
 - provide tenant members with the necessary information and resources required by them to carry out their role and fulfil their responsibilities
- issue the 'Tenant Approved' stamp to publications that meet the agreed standard
- ensure that approved Minutes of previous meetings are published on the council website
- monitor and set appropriate Tenant Participation Performance Indicators

Getting your Community involved

If we are to have an effective Tenant Participation Strategy, it is important to encourage the involvement of all members of a community.

Tenant Participation is central to the principles of the Community Planning agenda, introduced by the Scottish Government. This aims to promote inclusive, sustainable developments and build stronger and safer communities.

Local communities have been involved in many initiatives relating to their communities. Such as community learning, community safety, drug/alcohol awareness, poverty awareness, help with employment and anti-social behavior issues. All these initiatives have a positive impact on housing services and compliment the Tenant Participation Strategy's commitment to tenant and community involvement.

Involving Elected Members

Becoming involved in tenant participation gives elected members an additional opportunity to work with council tenants and other service users in their local communities.

Elected members can:

- attend local Registered Tenant Organisations in their area
- attend the Housing Networks in their area
- engage with tenants on estate walkabouts
- attend events such as Tenants Information Days and Community Days

Local Area Committees

There are nine Local Area Committees (LAC's) set up in each of the multi member wards throughout West Lothian. The LAC's work in partnership with representatives of their communities including Registered Tenant Organisations, Housing Networks and Tenants' Voices. They will take onboard the views and opinions of service users on housing and other related services.

The Local Area Committees will:

- ensure Registered Tenant Organisations, Housing Networks and Tenants' Voices can communicate with the Chair or Lead Officer
- where relevant, invite representatives from Registered Tenant Organisations, Housing Networks and Tenants' Voices to the LAC meetings, to ensure local opinion is being shared

Resources

The strategy recognises the importance of providing sufficient staffing, financial and physical resources to ensure Tenant Participation is developed throughout West Lothian.

Housing and Building Services will agree a Tenant Participation budget on an annual basis with the Tenants' Panel and seek council agreement through the Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel.

The annual budget will ensure that all Housing Networks, Registered Tenant Organisations and Tenants' Voices will have sufficient support, funding and resources to carry out the work they have set out in their Annual Work Plan. It is understood that anyone participating should not be out of pocket and will be recompensed for any outlay incurred during Tenant Participation activities.

A dedicated Tenant Participation team will help support the work of tenants and staff to meet the strategy's aims. Independent advice will also be made available to assist with the development of Tenant Participation, offering advice and support to all involved.

The full cost of implementing the Tenant Participation Strategy includes the following costs:

- Tenants News and Applicants News (printing and postage)
- tenant satisfaction questionnaires (printing and postage)
- funding of Tenant Led Inspections
- consultation with Individual Service Users, Focus Groups and Working Groups
- public meetings and conferences (venue hire, publicity, hospitality)
- Learning and Development Programme
- Tenant Resource Centres
- transport to and from events
- administration (photocopying, posters etc.)
- visits to and from other relevant organisations involved in Tenant Participation
- Editorial Panel to produce Newsletters for Housing and Building Services
- funding an Annual Work Plan for each Registered Tenant Organisation and Housing Network
- participation incentives, care, travel and any out of pocket expenses

Clear guidance on applying for funding, use of funds and who can make decisions on how funds can be spent will be given as part of the Annual Work Plan (more details are contained in the individual sheets on Registered Tenant Organisations and Housing Networks).

Guidance will also be given on how any under-spend in any budget, for example Housing Networks' budgets, will be dealt with. As a general rule, 'use it or lose it' will apply.

Performance Monitoring and Review

All aspects of the Tenant Participation Strategy will be monitored and reviewed in a variety of ways to ensure we are continually improving the effectiveness of the strategy and to examine whether we are meeting the needs of our service users by taking on board their views and comments.

We will monitor using a variety of Tenant Participation Performance Indicators (TPPIs), which will be reported to the Services for the Community PDSP every six months:

The following indicators will be taken from the Annual Tenants Satisfaction Survey:

1. Monitor percentage of tenants expressing a positive view on the usefulness of the information provided by West Lothian Council on tenant services
2. Monitor percentage of tenants expressing satisfaction with the range of consultative opportunities provided by West Lothian Council

The following indicators will be taken from the Tenants Satisfaction Visit:

3. Monitor percentage of tenants stating they are aware of the work carried out by the Housing Networks
4. Monitor percentage of tenants stating they know how to contact the Registered Tenant Organisation in their area.

The following indicators will be gathered by other means:

5. Monitor annual increase in the number of tenants attending a consultative event (Information Day, Focus Group, RTO, public meetings etc), as measured by records of attendance.
6. Monitor annual increase in the membership of West Lothian Council's Register of Interested Tenants (ROIT)
7. Monitor increase in the number of Tenants' Voices as measured by West Lothian Council list of Tenants' Voices
8. Evidence of tenants views being considered in council decisions on rent setting, changes to repairs, investment programmes and tenant participation.

The following indicators will be taken from the Tenant Led Inspection process:

9. Identify changes proposed by Tenant Led Inspection process
10. Identify changes implemented as a result of the Tenant Led Inspection process

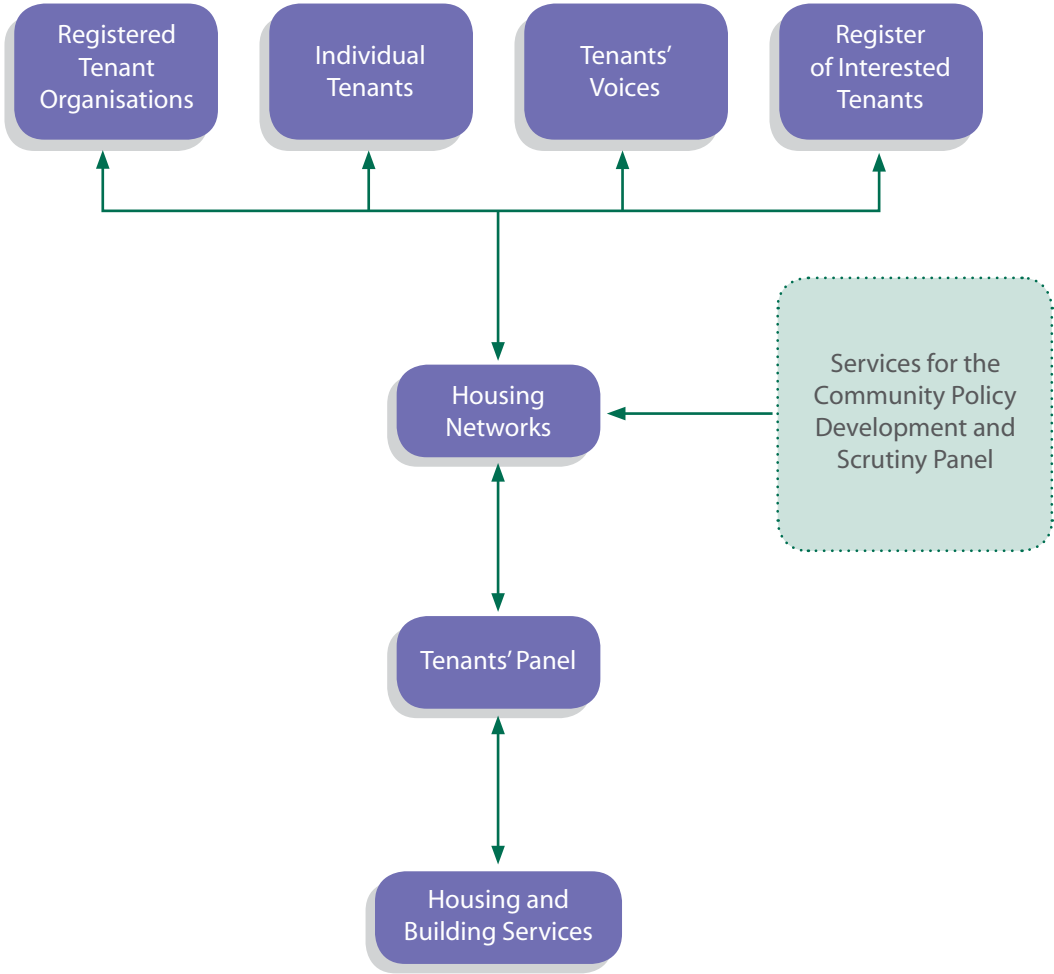
Conclusion

We hope you have enjoyed reading West Lothian Council's Tenant Participation Strategy, and that at least one of our formal or informal methods of 'Getting Involved' suit you.

With your help and with the enthusiasm of those already involved, we look forward to seeing tenant participation in West Lothian continue to flourish.

The council would like to thank all those involved in contributing to the development and writing of this strategy. We hope you will agree that this strategy gives you a range of opportunities to get involved in a way that suits you.

Housing and Building Services Tenant Participation Structure



Tenant Participation - A Guide to Good Working Relationships

This is a guide to anyone involved in Tenant Participation, and it's aim is to seek good working relationships between all interested parties.

To achieve this all parties will be expected to deal with each other with dignity, respect and courtesy. In the interests of being honest, open, transparent and accountable this guide sets out some basic guidelines on how this can be achieved. It also states what you can do if you believe the guidelines have been broken by any party, and what will happen when an allegation has been made and what the outcome may be.

Standards of Behaviour

All service users and council officers whether acting as an individual or as part of a group, will abide by the following guidelines when engaging in consultation and participation.

They will be expected to:

- keep any issues confidential when relating to individuals and discussions, where this has been agreed
- declare any interests that may conflict, or be perceived to conflict with their role, to both the Chair of their organisation and West Lothian Council's Tenant Participation team
- when acting, or seen to be acting, in the name of their group, Housing Network, Tenants' Panel or as a Tenants' Voice, they will not:
 - damage their organisation's interests
 - criticise the organisation or its members where the criticism can be used against the interests of their local organisation, and any comments, written or spoken, will not be derogatory, offensive or unfair
 - be intoxicated or offensive in any way

At all times each individual will be expected to:

- respect all council employees and the role they play, and treat them with courtesy at all times. It is expected that council employees will show the same consideration in return
- allow others' to have their say and try to understand and value their point of view and opinions
- be polite and not criticise others – treat others as you would like to be treated yourself
- not be involved in any type of violent behaviour, including for example:
 - threatening gestures
 - shouting
 - verbal abuse
 - bullying
 - swearing
 - any type of physical assault

- conduct themselves in a reasonable manner at meetings and will not make racist, sexist, ageist, homophobic, sectarian or other abusive or offensive remarks
- be aware that what they say and the way in which it is said, can sometimes be misinterpreted or misconstrued by others
- all parties are expected to adhere to these guidelines at all times
- you will be expected to seek agreement from the council or the group (whichever is appropriate) before incurring any expenses. You must keep accurate records and proof of expenses (tickets, receipts, etc.) for any out of pocket expenses that are to be reclaimed during tenant participation activities

Failing to comply with these guidelines

Anyone believing that these guidelines have not been complied with should report alleged breaches to the Head of Housing and Building Services, whether they are directly involved or not. If requested, anyone making an allegation can do so anonymously.

1. Council officers

If any council officer fails to comply with the standards set, they should be reported to the Head of Housing and Building Services, investigated and responded to as set out in their code of conduct.

2. Individual Service Users

If an individual's behavior while attending a consultative event fails to comply with these guidelines then they will be asked to leave by the most senior council officer in attendance. If they fail to do so the police will be called and asked to remove the individual.

All such incidents will be reported to the Tenants' Panel who will investigate and decide on the most appropriate course of action in line with the actions set out below.

3. Active Service Users

If members of a Registered Tenant Organisation, Housing Network, Tenants' Panel or a Tenants' Voice do not comply with the guidelines at a meeting or consultative event they will be told to leave by either the Chair or two thirds of those present. If the event has been organised by the council, the most senior council officer present will ask the individual to leave. If they fail to do so the police will be called and asked to remove the individual.

Any alleged failures by members of a Registered Tenant Organisation, Housing Network, Tenants' Panel or a Tenants' Voice will be investigated and the following steps taken:

- their conduct will be considered by their group's office bearers (who are not involved in the alleged failure) in the first instance. If not a member of a Registered Tenant Organisation, the alleged failure will be investigated by their Housing Networks' office bearers (who are not involved in the alleged failure).
- if the issue cannot be resolved it can be referred to the Tenants' Panel.

- alleged failure to comply with the above will result in the service user being barred from all activities of their organisation during any investigation of a complaint.
- service users and council employees who believe there has been a failure to meet the guidelines should report the problem to the Head of Housing and Building Services as soon as possible. The Head of Housing and Building Services will liaise with the Chair of the Housing Network or members of the Tenants' Panel, to investigate and take actions as required.

Investigation

Those investigating alleged failures to meet the standard, must not have been involved in the allegation or have any relationships that may conflict, or may be perceived to conflict, with their role.

Whoever is investigating any alleged failure to meet the required standard will seek evidence from all parties and offer the individual the opportunity to state their case.

All alleged breaches will be reported to the Head of Housing and Building Services who will liaise with those investigating the allegations.

- the Head of Housing and Building Services will keep records of all allegations, investigations and outcomes.
- the Head of Housing and Building Services will take any necessary steps to ensure the outcomes of investigations are acted upon.

Outcome

- After investigation, and if the complaint is not upheld, the individual will be advised in writing from the Head of Housing and Building Services that they will be able to participate in all tenant participation activities.
- After investigation, and if the complaint is upheld, any individual who is not at that time a member of a group or a Tenants' Voice or on the Register of Interested Tenants (ROIT), will not be entitled to stand for election to a Registered Tenant Organisation, or become a member of the ROIT or a Tenants' Voice or member of a Housing Network for any period of suspension or permanently.
- After investigation, and if the complaint is upheld, the individual can be:
 - suspended from any position held within the Group, Housing Network and / or Tenants' Panel for any period up to 3 years or barred permanently
 - suspended from being a Tenants' Voice for any period up to 3 years or barred permanently
 - suspended from the Register of Interested Tenants for any period up to 3 years or barred permanently.
- The individual will be advised in writing by the Chair of the group, Housing Network or Tenants' Panel of the outcome. When appropriate the letter will be copied to the individuals group and Housing Network.
- If the complaint is upheld, the individual concerned will have the right to appeal any decision to the Head of Housing and Building Services.

Text phones offer the opportunity for people with a hearing impairment to access the council.

**The Text Phone number is
18001 01506 464427**

A loop system is also available in all offices.

Information is available in Braille, on tape, in large print and community languages.
Please contact the Interpretation and Translation Service on 0131 242 8181.

هذه المعلومات متوفرة بلغة بريل وعلى شريط وبخط كبير وبلغات الجالية.
الرجاء الإتصال بخدمة الترجمة على الهاتف 0131 242 8181

এই তথ্য আপনি ব্রইল, টেপ, বড় অক্ষরে এবং কমিউনিটির বিভিন্ন ভাষাগুলিতেও পাবেন। অনুগ্রহ করে ইন্টারপ্রেটেশন অ্যান্ড ট্রান্সলেশন সার্ভিসের সঙ্গে যোগাযোগ করুন। টেলি: 0131 242 8181

這份資料是可以凸字、錄音帶、大字印刷及社區語言的式本提供。請聯絡傳譯及翻譯服務部，電話：0131 242 8181

ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ (ਬ੍ਰੇਲ) ਨੈਤੂਰੀਨ ਟੇਪ, ਵੱਡੇ ਫਿੰਟ ਅਤੇ ਸਮਾਜ ਦੀਆਂ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਉਪਲਬਧ ਹੈ। ਸਿੱਖਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਇੰਟਰਪ੍ਰੀਟੇਸ਼ਨ ਅਤੇ ਟਰਾਂਸਲੇਸ਼ਨ ਸਰਵਿਸ ਨੂੰ ਇਸ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ : 0131 242 8181

یہ معلومات بریل (اندھوں کے رسم الخط)، ٹیپ، بڑے حروف کی طباعت اور کمیونٹی میں بول جانے والی زبانوں میں دستیاب ہے۔
برائو مہربانی انٹریٹنگ اینڈ ٹرانسلیٹنگ سروس سے ٹیلیفون نمبر 0131 242 8181 پر رابطہ قائم کریں۔

Informacje te mogą być przełożone na język Braille'a, dostępne na taśmie magnetofonowej lub wydane dużym drukiem oraz przetłumaczone na języki mniejszości narodowych.
Prosimy o kontakt z Usługami Tłumaczeniowymi pod numerem 0131 242 8181.

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www.westlothian.gov.uk

If you have used the Council's complaints procedure, and you are still unhappy, you can pass your complaint, within a year, to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman,
4 Melville Street, Edinburgh EH3 7NS
Tel: 0870 011 5378

Email: enquiries@scottishombudsman.org.uk

Housing & Building Services Website

www.westlothian.gov.uk
and click on the link to 'Housing'

Online 24 hours a day

Log on and you can:

Pay your council tax,
rent, or fines online

Apply for a house

Report a repair to your home

Make an enquiry for information

Make a comment on any Council service

(Browsealoud enabled)

01506 775000

www.westlothian.gov.uk



West Lothian
Council