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TENANT AND COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, for the first time, gives tenants the legal right to information consultation and participation on housing matters and gives landlords legal responsibilities in relation to tenant participation.
- 1.2. Prospect is run by a Management Committee, elected by members annually at our AGM. Most committee members live locally and a significant proportion are tenants of the Association. Although this undoubtedly helps Prospect gain an awareness of the issues that are important to tenants and the Wester Hailes community, we realise that we do not necessarily have all the information to make the best decisions, therefore, we have always had a commitment to ensuring that tenants should be given the opportunity to be as involved as they want to be in our work.
- 1.3. This policy document has been prepared taking into account published good practice guidance including Raising Standards, and the Communities Scotland/Scottish Executive publications 'How to gather views on service quality' and 'Guide to successful tenant participation'.
- 1.4. Prospect has always been committed to participation by tenants and the wider community because we believe it leads to:
 - better service delivery.
 - more effective decision making and priority setting by staff and committee.
 - increased tenant satisfaction.
 - enhanced community development.
 - greater accountability.
- 1.5. Prospect has sought to show this commitment by:
 - ensuring that tenants and others are given information they need
 - looking at the best ways of getting information on what the needs are and what people think about the services provided
 - establishing a range of ways to help those interested in becoming involved in its work
- 1.6. This commitment will continue and we intend that this policy document reflects our values. We will also produce an annual action plan. This action plan will ensure that the promotion of effective Tenant Participation is a function of the whole organisation.

- 1.7. This document is a 'Tenant and Community Participation Policy' instead of just a 'Tenant Participation Policy' because it is recognised that there is a long established and well developed arrangement for community participation in Wester Hailes through the network of neighbourhood councils. Prospect recognises that it's part of the community in the West Edinburgh area and its impact and interest is not just in its tenants, but also the wider community. The West Edinburgh Community Planning Partnership, and its associated working groups, also provides an opportunity for community engagement and participation in service delivery in the area. Prospect currently works with these groups and intends to build on these arrangements to encourage the widest possible involvement in its work.
- 1.8. This policy will describe what is currently happening and our proposed strategy for the future which will build on our commitment to participation. The strategy is not static but a flexible tool which will allow us to constantly review our performance and take on board the results of ongoing consultation and review our processes. It is not just a statement of Prospect's commitment to the principles of tenant participation but a living document which sets out the means by which we will seek to encourage and support tenants who wish to participate actively in all areas of our work. We are aware that participation should be a continuous process when information is shared, common understanding of problems strived for and a consensus for solutions is worked out.
- 1.9. A Tenant Participation Group has been set up comprising staff members from across the organisation. Its purpose is to co-ordinate strategies and to improve participation levels throughout Prospect's activities. It is the task of this group to mainstream and improve participation.
- 1.10. Participation can mean different things to different people. It can mean simply getting information needed in a way that can be understood. At the other end of the spectrum, it can mean becoming a member of the Management Committee and directly making decisions on the way the Association is run. Prospect's view is that all tenants should have a chance to participate at a level which interests them. This policy paper seeks to describe what is done at the moment and how we hope to develop this further. This will help individuals to decide how much, or how little, they want to be involved.

2. PROVISION OF INFORMATION

- 2.1. Providing information is the activity that underpins all aspects of participation and it is the first and basic requirement to enable tenants to participate. It is recognised that simply reading this information will be the limit of most tenant's involvement.
- 2.2. Prospect produces a wide range of information, for example, leaflets, newsletters and booklets. We work to ensure that it is:
 - accurate and regularly updated.
 - in plain English and easily understandable.
 - relevant to the needs of the tenants.
 - ensuring that tenants are told where and how to get further information.
- 2.3. A communications group, comprising director and depute director, staff from all department and Management Committee members has been operational since 2001. This group is responsible for the co-ordination of written material to ensure consistency and professionalism. The group has also agreed guidelines for non-written communications such as answering the telephone, use of voicemail messages etc.

2.4. Prospect aims to ensure that tenants receive information about the Association, our policies and procedures:

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| at the beginning of their tenancy | - | allocation visit
at the viewing
at the sign-up interview
at a post allocation visit |
| throughout their tenancy | - | quarterly newsletters and rent statements
series of leaflets available on display in the office
publication of targets and standards annually |

2.5. Over the next year we will seek to improve the quality and relevance of the information we produce by seeking views of tenants and community organisations on:

- the content of information booklets and leaflets produced at present.
- the need to produce information leaflets on other subjects.
- what information tenants and others would like to see in the newsletter.
- other ways to provide the information that tenants or the community need.

3. TENANT CONSULTATION

3.1. Providing information is the first step but Prospect also wants to ensure that the tenant's views and opinions are sought and used to inform the decision making process and shape service delivery.

Prospect will seek to further expand circumstances where tenants are consulted, and ensure that information gathered is utilised.

3.2. Tenant Surveys

A major tenant satisfaction survey was published in February 2006. Following on from that survey, an action plan was developed. This was approved by Management Committee.

3.3. Tenant Consultation and Participation on Policy Review and Development

Prospect will consult with tenants and/or tenant groups when reviewing the following policies:

- Maintenance Policy
- Tenant and Community Participation Policy
- Antisocial Behaviour Policy
- Tenant and Neighbourhood Reward Policy

The nature of the consultation and participation will vary depending on the scale of review and what policy is being reviewed.

3.4. Housing Development

The local community and individual tenants have in the past participated in the planning of new housing developments or the upgrading of existing properties in various ways:

- through membership of the local Development Groups which are set up to discuss the plans for particular areas;
- through the local residents who are members of the Association's Committee

- where tenanted properties are being upgraded, through the tenants being involved in making choices on details for the flat or house;
- after each project is completed, through the tenants giving their views on the work carried out as part of a “scheme appraisal”.

Prospect will seek to build on these arrangements for involving the community and tenants in future plans through:

- working closely with Neighbourhood Councils and any other specific groups;
- involving interested tenants in working groups;
- Committee members being involved in the detailed planning of each project;
- providing information to all who need it in plain language and using models, drawing etc., to explain the plans;
- using Architects who have a good record of and commitment to community participation in design;
- whenever possible offering a range of choices to tenants, while taking into account costs, the need to plan for future maintenance and legal responsibilities;
- giving tenants of a new project the opportunity to give their views on the design etc. by taking part in a “scheme appraisal”.

4. PROMOTION OF TENANTS GROUPS

4.1. The 2001 Act introduces the concept of Registered Tenants Organisations (RTO’s). An RTO is an independent organisation set up primarily to represent tenant’s housing and related interests. The RSL must keep a register of all RTO’s operational in its area. Appendix 1 outlines the registration criteria and procedures for registration.

The aim is to give RTO’s a recognised role in the tenant participation process.

The landlord is required to consult with the RTO as well as individual tenants on:

- i) policies relating to the provision of housing management and maintenance services.
- ii) standard of service
- iii) its tenant participation strategy.

4.2. Existing Groups

Prospect has an ongoing commitment to liaison with the Neighbourhood Councils:

- providing regular information on service targets and performance
- providing opportunities to comment on policies
- staff attendance at regular meetings
- regular programme of scheme walkabouts with representatives from neighbourhood councils
- invitations to each neighbourhood council to send representatives to focus groups and working groups.

The Neighbourhood Councils will be invited to register as RTO’s. However if they choose not to register, Prospect will continue to consult with them because it is our view that the Neighbourhood Council network acts as an effective means for collectively voicing tenants views.

4.3. New Groups

Prospect will ensure that tenants are aware of concept of RTO's and that there is clear information available about the eligibility registration criteria for tenants groups. Prospect will welcome registration of any new groups of tenants who meet the eligibility criteria and seek to provide appropriate support and assistance in the process.

5. RESOURCES

5.1. The Act states that it is necessary to identify and access the full range of costs involved in implementing this policy and ensuring the organisation fully embraces the concept for Tenant Participation.

Such cost include:

- printing and posting of newsletter, flyers;
- staff time in preparing leaflet, newsletters, etc;
- staff time in attending tenants meetings and supporting groups;
- support to Neighbourhood Councils through the TENNER scheme.

5.2 Prospect will set aside a budget each year to help RTO's to meet their core costs. The budget will be split between the RTO's based on the number of Prospect properties that are in the area they cover. If an RTO does not spend their budget for the year, they may have it reduced the following year. However, RTO's who do spend their budget will not be penalised if others do not spend theirs.

This budget can be used to cover costs relating to:

Insurance
Photocopying
Venue for meetings (including availability of Prospect's office)
Transport costs relating to meetings
Childcare
Stationery
Postage
AGM expenses
Training
Book keeping

6. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

6.1. The Act states that landlords must have responded to the needs of **all** their tenants, including those from ethnic minority, people with disabilities, older people and other minority groups. This includes the implementation of the Tenant Participation provisions of the Act which state that the landlord is required to consult with and make assessment of the specific needs of equalities groups.

6.2. Prospect believes that equal opportunities should be build into this strategy as we aim to do in all areas of our service provision. We have in place an Equal Opportunities policy which is regularly reviewed to ensuring equal access to housing and services.

Prospect will strengthen its understanding of the needs of BME tenants through a close relationship with West Edinburgh Multicultural Organisation.

7. MONITORING AND REVIEW

7.1. An annual action plan will be produced, which will set out the proposed areas for consultation and participation with tenants and RTO's.

7.2. The Management Committee will review this policy every 3 years

Reviewed by Housing Management Sub-Committee on 21 March 2007

Review approved by Management Committee on 28 March 2007

Signed.....Date.....
(Chairperson)

application for registration of tenant organisations guidance



Question 1

Organisational Details

Please fill in the details of your organisation and the elected Chairperson or Main Contact's details (we will respond to this person to advise of the progression of the application).

Please note that tenants organisations registered with Prospect Community Housing are held on a public register which is available to view, on request, by any member of the public within office hours at Prospect Community Housing's office premises. Chairperson's names will be held c/o Prospect Community Housing's address on this register.

Question 2

Members of the Organisation

Please notify us of all members of the organisation their addresses and their position's held on the organisation. (e.g. Chairperson, Treasurer etc.)

Your organisation must have a Committee, of at least three members, that are elected (after the first year). You must also have elected office-bearers and be able to co-opt others onto the Committee during the course of the year.

Question 3

Area of Operation

Please describe the geographical area that your organisation covers i.e. estate(s), boundary streets, landmarks.

Question 4

Constitution

It is a legislative requirement of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 that groups have a publicly available, written constitution. Much of the information we require to formally register your group will be found in your constitution. This should include a requirement to have appropriate accounting records and present an annual financial statement to your organisation's AGM – This allows the organisation to offer a democratic and accountable structure that allows for election of office bearers, gives opportunities for members to express their views and ensures that elected officers report to their members.

If you do not have a constitution, we will offer assistance to your group to draft one.

Equal Opportunities

Your organisation should be able to demonstrate that you promote the principles of equal opportunities. Adoption of an Equal Opportunities Policy demonstrates compliance of this requirement. If you do not have an Equal Opportunities Policy, Prospect can offer assistance to your group to draft one.

Removal from the Register

Please note that a registered tenants organisation can be removed from the Register in any of the following circumstances:

- The tenant organisation no longer meets the criteria; or
- The tenant organisation ceases to exist or does not operate; or
- The tenant organisation applies to the Council to remove it from the Register.

Prospect will carry out reviews of the register to ensure that information held is up-to-date.

Appeals

In the unlikely event that your group is refused registration, we will notify you in writing giving the reasons why and informing you of your right to appeal. You would have the right to appeal to Prospect's Director and ultimately Prospect's Management Committee.

Assistance from Prospect

Prospect recognise that the legislative requirements of registering your organisation may appear laborious. We are keen to make the registration process as simple as possible and will attempt to provide any support that you need to meet the registration requirements.

application for registration of tenants organisation

Please refer to the Guidance for Registration of Tenants Organisations summary when completing this application.

If you require any assistance or have any queries regarding the application process, please do not hesitate to contact Brendan Fowler, Housing Manager at Prospect Community Housing on ☎ 0131-458-5480.

1 ORGANISATIONAL DETAILS

Name of Organisation _____

Chairperson or Main Contact _____

Address _____

Tel No _____ email contact address _____

2 MEMBERS OF ORGANISATION

Members of organisation (name, address and position held within organisation)

3 AREA OF OPERATION

Defined geographical area of operation

4 CONSTITUTION

Does your group have a written, publicly available constitution (please tick)

YES - please attach this with your application.

NO

Please describe briefly the objectives of the Organisation

Signed on behalf of(organisation's name)

Date

Please submit application to :

**Brendan Fowler
Housing Manager
Prospect Community Housing
6 Westburn Avenue
Wester Hailes
Edinburgh
EH14 2TH**

Your application will be responded to within 20 working days.