

# Prospect Tenant and Community Participation Strategy 2022-25



## Summary

Prospect's Tenant and Community Participation Strategy outlines our commitment to participation with our tenants and the wider community in west Edinburgh. Developed by tenants and staff, the strategy defines how we interpret tenant participation and the impact we intend it to have on the service delivered by Prospect from 2022-25. The objective of the strategy is to outline how, over the next 3 years, we will:

- Make it easy for our tenants and customers to communicate with us,
- Offer the information our tenants need about us including why we make the decisions and provide the services we do,
- Take an approach to participation which reflects our wide range of tenants, their backgrounds, and interests,

This strategy was developed by tenants and staff before gaining committee approval.

### 1. Introduction

As a community-based housing association, Prospect is committed to ensuring tenants' views continue to be at the heart of what we do and influence the way we deliver our services. Our vision is,

*Providing homes and building communities together.*

One of our Business Plan objectives is

*Improving services through customer involvement*

We are 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.

As a housing association, we are regulated by the Scottish Housing Regulator. They assess our services against the standards and outcomes of the Scottish Social Housing Charter. The relevant standards and outcomes of the Social Housing Charter for the Tenant and Community Participation Strategy are:

#### *Outcome 2: Communication*

Social landlords manage their business 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.

#### Outcome 3: Participation

Social landlords manage their business 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.

## **2. Aim of this Strategy**

This strategy outlines our commitment to tenant and community participation. It also sets out how we will seek to encourage and support tenants who wish to participate actively in all areas of our work. Prospect tenants are individuals with individual needs. We aim to treat all our tenants fairly and with respect when delivering our services, including encouraging participation.

With our tenants, we will also produce an action plan that accompanies this strategy. This action plan will ensure that the aims of the strategy are met, and that the promotion of effective Tenant Participation is a function of the whole organisation.

This document is a 'Tenant and Community Participation Strategy' because it is recognised that there is a long established and well-developed arrangement for community participation in Wester Hailes. We recognise that we are part of the community in the west Edinburgh area and our impact and interest is not just on our tenants, but also the wider community.

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 Prospect is run. Our view is that all tenants should have a chance to participate at a level which interests them. This strategy seeks to describe what is done now and how we hope to develop this further. This will help individuals to decide how much, or how little, they want to be involved.

## **3. Our Engagement Approach**

### **a) Our overall approach to information**

Providing information is the activity that underpins all aspects of participation. It is recognised that simply reading this information will be the limit of some tenants' involvement whereas for others it will stimulate further participation.

We produce a wide range of information through various approaches, and we work to ensure that it is:

- Accurate and regularly updated.
- In plain English and easily understandable.
- Relevant to the needs of specific tenants, for example we will translate documents, provide an interpreter if required or provide it in a different format such as large print.
- Developed and/or co-produced with tenants where possible and appropriate.
- Offered at various stages throughout the tenancy, starting as soon as we meet a prospective tenant and regularly throughout the tenancy.
- Reflective of the diversity of our tenants.

We offer a variety of methods to respond to surveys and requests for information to maximise the potential for tenants and residents to have their say. To ensure we are doing this in the most effective way we aim to consider individual communication preferences and will continue to expand the options available to us in this area.

### **b) Surveys**

Every three years we carry out a large-scale formal satisfaction survey to find out what our tenants' views are on our services. This survey will next happen in 2022, once again, we will

develop the survey questions with input from our Tenants Forum. Following each survey, we produce an action plan with our tenants, this is then approved by our Management Committee. We use this plan to ensure we listen to and learn from the feedback from our tenants.

We also carry out regular surveys to ask for feedback on subjects, such as our repairs service. We use a variety of formats such as written surveys, phone, text or via web-based solutions such as Microsoft Forms. This helps to ensure the widest range of tenants have an opportunity to respond to our surveys. Tenants' responses to the surveys help us to change and improve services.

#### c) Face to face contact

Current and potential tenants can visit our office, located in the middle of Wester Hailes, both for pre-arranged interviews and to speak to our staff. We offer meetings with tenants at a time and location which suits them to make it as easy as possible for our tenants to attend. We use a language translation service to support any of our tenants for whom English is not their first language.

#### d) Walkabouts

We undertake quarterly walkabouts in each of our areas. This gives tenants the opportunity to meet with Housing and Property Services staff to discuss any estate management or other issues they may have. At least one Manager is present, so it is a way for senior staff to be accessible and visible to tenants.

#### e) Prospectus

We publish a quarterly newsletter called Prospectus and distribute it to all our tenants as well as publishing it on our website. In the newsletter we include articles on tenant participation matters such as updates from the Tenants' Forum, information on complaints, and the areas in which we have made changes to services because of tenants' feedback.

#### f) Prospect E-bulletin

For those who have subscribed, our Prospect News email bulletin drops into an email inbox every month. This gives a brief roundup of Prospect news and local events of interest with links to other website articles for more information. This was a particularly effective and popular way to communicate during the Covid-19 pandemic.

#### g) Website

Our website offers a 24-hour reception in that via our tenant portal, tenants access a range of services including checking balance and making a rent payment, reporting repairs or antisocial behaviour, and giving us feedback. The website also offers a weekly news article about Prospect, videos and guidance on common queries and an interactive community map of local projects and facilities. Our website was developed with and for our tenants.

#### h) Social Media

We have a range of social media accounts to interact with a range of stakeholders, including Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. We can be found at @prospectch. We will continue to expand our use of Social media during this strategy.

#### i) Texts & Email

We use texts and emails to communicate effectively with our tenants. We also carry out surveys via text, offering a link to an online form to complete and submit.

#### j) Local events

When invited, we support and participate in a range of local community events. This allows us to strengthen our ties within our communities and allows us to offer information as well as receive feedback from our tenants and other community members. We also hold our own events to encourage and facilitate participation.

#### k) Prospect's Performance Report

Every year in October we produce the Prospect Performance Report including key information on our performance and present how we are meeting the outcomes of the Scottish Social Housing Charter. Our tenants influence the content of this report.

#### l) Compliments and Complaints

We welcome complaints and compliments from our tenants and handle them in accordance with the expectations of the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. We aim to learn from complaints and improve our practice accordingly. We report on trends and what we have done about it via our publications.

#### m) Informal Groups

We recognise that not everyone wants to become part of a formal group with a committee structure. For those tenants who are happy to tell us what they think about a subject, we will be happy to listen to them. We will offer this approach as well as more formal approaches when carrying out consultation exercises and remain flexible about how our tenants want to feedback their thoughts to us.

#### n) Tenants' Forum

For those who are able and willing to give of their time on a regular basis, we have a Tenants' Forum which meets quarterly. This is a constructive, collaborative group where Tenants' Forum members meet with Prospect staff to discuss and influence policy changes and other issues that affect tenants. The Forum met via Zoom on a couple of occasions during the Covid-19 pandemic and we will offer a hybrid approach going forward.

#### o) Prospect Scrutiny Group

The Prospect Scrutiny Group (PSG) formed in 2017 and, after completing a training course, undertake regular scrutiny exercises. They view themselves as a supportive critical friend to Prospect. Their reports and recommendations are heard by Prospect's Committee and implemented by Management team. The PSG was not able to meet during the Covid-19 pandemic due to restrictions, so we look forward to it reconvening again in 2022.

#### p) Annual General Meeting

We hold our Annual General Meeting in September every year. All our tenants are offered the opportunity to become members of Prospect Community Housing, and those who choose to do so are invited to this meeting. We held the AGM meeting via Zoom in 2020 and 2021 and we will explore a hybrid approach for future meetings.

#### q) Committee Membership

Prospect is run by a Management Committee, elected by members annually at our Annual General Meeting. All committee members have a connection to the local community and a significant proportion are Prospect tenants. This undoubtedly helps us gain an awareness of the issues that are important to tenants and the Wester Hailes community.

#### r) Wester Hailes Community Trust

The Wester Hailes Community Trust supports community led development in Wester Hailes and works to a set of priorities established through consultation with local residents. Prospect is a founding member of the Trust, and we make sure we are involved in issues and activities promoted by the Trust.

#### s) Local Networks

We share ideas and issues with other local agencies in the area via local networks including Living Well Wester Hailes and the Voluntary Sector Forum. This is one of the ways we listen to the wider community and work closely with agencies who provide services to our tenants and the wider community.

Finally, we have a style of approach as a community-based housing association which is important to our tenants and the success of this strategy. Our Tenants' Forum identified this as an important part of the delivery of this strategy, i.e., it's not just what you do, it's the way that you do it. Accordingly, in the delivery of this strategy we aim to be reliable, honest, efficient, and friendly with our tenants. We promote and encourage a sense of community and care about the individuals we work with.

### 4. Objectives for the Strategy

During the period of this Strategy, we have agreed with Tenants to work towards the following objectives.

- i) Develop our digital participation approach:
  - to encourage participation at the Tenants' Forum via zoom
  - to promote our social media platforms
  - explore use of Facebook live to interact
- ii) Carry out our Tenant Satisfaction Survey in 2022, develop an action plan with input from tenants and work towards these to improve services.
- iii) Invite the Prospect Scrutiny Group to scrutinise Prospect services, following a break in scrutiny due to the pandemic.

### 5. Resourcing this Strategy

Every year we agree an annual budget to support our participation and consultation activities. This budget will be used to resource all the approaches outlined above as well as financing:

- Training for tenants. We recognise that Tenant Participation can link to increased employability or be viewed as voluntary work.
- Transport, crèche, or childcare costs to allow any tenant to attend a participation event.

### 6. Monitoring and Review

All Prospect staff have a role to play in implementing this strategy. We will develop an Action Plan with feedback from tenants, committee members and staff to ensure the strategy aims are met.

We will review this Action Plan annually with the Tenants' Forum and we will provide regular reports to committee on our progress.

We will review this strategy in 2025.

