

Tenant Participation Strategy **2026-2031**

Consultative Draft



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Foreword

This document is our five-year Tenant Participation Strategy, covering the years 2026-31. This document sets out our plans for effective tenant participation, underpinning our three corporate outcomes with our commitments of being a Great Place to Work, delivering Great Customer Service and Contributing to a Safe and Sustainable Community.

We aim to meet the needs and aspirations of tenants by providing opportunities for them to access all levels of the decision-making process.

This strategy sets out our plans for involving our tenants in making decisions and influencing policies and procedures about the houses they live in and the services they receive over the next five years.



1. Introduction

- 1.1 Orkney Housing Association (OHA) is committed to working in partnership with tenants, not just delivering services to you, but involving you in shaping how these services work. This strategy sets out how we'll strengthen tenant involvement across the organisation over the next 5 years.
- 1.2 Our Mission is to 'provide good quality affordable homes and services for the benefit of the people and community of Orkney'. We recognise the vital role our tenants play in achieving this, and we aim to provide opportunities for all tenants to have a say in the management of their homes and the delivery of services.
- 1.3 We have over 40 years' experience in delivering affordable homes and services to communities across Orkney. We currently manage 834 rented properties and 292 low cost home ownership units.
- 1.4 The Housing (Scotland) Acts 2001 & 2010 place a legal duty on the Association to have a Tenant Participation Strategy and that we consult with you on matters that directly affect the services you receive. This includes consulting on rent and service charge increases and policies or standards of service relating to housing management and repairs and maintenance.
- 1.5 We will incorporate the views and responses we receive through the consultation on this draft into our final strategy and action plan for the year ahead.

2. Aims and Objectives

- 2.1 The aims of this strategy are:
 - To provide a wide range of involvement opportunities (both formal and informal) ensuring tenants are at the centre of everything we do.
 - To encourage and expand tenant involvement and participation across all services and create opportunities for tenants to influence and shape the services we deliver.
 - To make sure staff promote the widest levels of involvement and engagement.
 - To involve all sections of the community and develop ways to attract groups that are traditionally under-represented.
 - To demonstrate our commitment to consultation, involvement and engagement by continuing to provide training, resources, support and seek good housing practices and examples from across the sector.
 - To provide information to support, raise awareness and encourage participation and provide good quality information that enables tenants to get involved in a meaningful way.
 - To regularly monitor and review all tenant engagement activities in terms of cost, impact and effectiveness.
 - To involve tenants in creating and reviewing existing policies that affect them.
- 2.2 The Tenant Participation Strategy will support our Business Plan Outcomes:
 - **Great Place to Work** – by increasing engagement between tenants and staff,

creating a better relationship and understanding, and increasing job satisfaction.

- **Great Customer Service** – Ensuring our services are customer focused; delivering efficiencies and value for money.
- **A Great Contribution to our Communities & Society** – by developing thriving neighbourhoods in which tenants are encouraged to take active roles.

3. What is Tenant Participation?

- 3.1 Tenant Participation is about you, our tenants, taking part and getting involved in the decision-making processes that shape the services you receive from us.
- 3.2 Effective participation gives tenants the opportunity to influence decisions about the housing services they receive, and it gives landlords better links to communities and opportunities to work with others.
- 3.3 We need to know what you want from us. Similarly, the more you know about how we operate the easier it will be for you to know what is possible and to influence how things that affect you are done.
- 3.4 The Scottish Housing Social Charter aims to improve the quality and values of services that we provide as your landlord. There are clear outcomes that we should be meeting and which you, as tenants can hold us accountable for.

This Strategy reaches the following Outcomes:

- Outcome 2, we must ensure 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, we must manage our business so that *'tenants and other customers find it easy to participate in and influence their landlord's decision at a level they feel comfortable with'*. This covers how we will gather and take account of your views and priorities; how we shape our services to reflect these views; and how we help you and other customers to become more capable of involvement.
 - Outcomes 14 & 15 rents and service charges are set in consultation with tenants and other customers.
- 3.5 Successful tenant participation holds benefits for both our tenants and the Association:
 - Improves relationships between tenants and staff.
 - Higher customer satisfaction because we design services to reflect customer priorities.
 - Informs improvements to services received.
 - Fewer customer complaints because we listen and learn from feedback.
 - Increased satisfaction with home/neighbourhood
 - Higher quality services because customers can hold us to account.
 - Improved performance through tenant insight, scrutiny etc.
 - Higher staff satisfaction because we get quality feedback from

- customers.
- Help tenants to build confidence/skills.

4. Ways to Get Involved

- 4.1 We want to make sure that tenants are offered a variety of ways to be involved with our decision-making processes. How you engage with us, and at what level, is entirely up to you and this can vary from speaking to your Housing Officer to being a member of the Tenants Panel and undertaking a scrutiny exercise. We recognise that every engagement we have with you is equally important and that all tenants voices are heard.

4.2 Low Involvement

- 4.2.1
- **Speaking to us**
We speak with many of you on a daily basis and all contact is viewed as an opportunity to help us understand your needs more. Our Housing Officers are able to feedback your comments and suggestions and are best placed to recognise trends or issues impacting on local communities.
- 4.2.2
- **General Communication**
All our communications with you give a clear route to engagement:
 - Tenancy Agreement and residents handbook offer information on the level of service you can expect from us.
 - Settling in Visits give you an opportunity to discuss any issues or information with your Housing Officer at the start of your tenancy.
 - Annual Reports and Newsletters to ensure we are including information that is interesting and relevant to our tenants.
- 4.2.3
- **Responding to Consultations or Surveys**
When we have a duty to consult you, we will write to you seeking your views. For other consultations we may put a notice on our website, Facebook page and in our twice-yearly newsletter. We will give you a date by which you must respond, provide feedback about the responses we have received, and take account of your views before making a final decision.
 - Every 2 years we carry out detailed satisfaction surveys with our tenants and with sharing owners/owners to whom we provide a service. The separate surveys are designed to gather views and satisfaction levels across a wide range of subjects with the responses then analysed to identify what is working well, where improvements can be made and helping to shape future service delivery.
- 4.2.4
- **Tenant Newsletter**
Our Rooftops newsletter is issued twice a year updating tenants on recent developments at the Association, current consultations, advice on managing your home & tenancy and where support is available.
- 4.2.5
- **Social Media**

We have dedicated staff monitoring our social media and are able to respond to tenants and applicants through Facebook messenger. We also use these channels to share important information on Association services, as well as local and national initiatives which may be of interest.

4.3 Medium Involvement

4.3.1 • Estate Walkabouts

You can join with a member of staff to carry out an estate walkabout and highlight anything that you think should be brought to our attention.

4.3.2 • Register of Interested Tenants

You can say tell us what subjects you are interested in and we will add your name to our growing Register of Interested Residents. When something comes up in which you have expressed an interest you will be contacted, and you can put forward your views.

4.3.3 • Tenant Day

We will provide information on local services and charities, plus have a line-up of interesting guest speakers throughout the day. The format is an informal drop-in event, allowing participants to stay for as short or long as they like. We aim to make these family friendly events with activities for all the family to enjoy.

4.3.4 • Virtual Engagement

The way we communicate changed significantly during 2020. The use of digital channels has helped us to reach and contact more tenants than we could previously; virtual viewings and inspections have become an additional tool to our services. We may offer engagement events using online platforms such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams, which allows you to join in from the comfort of your own home.

4.4 High Involvement

4.4.1 • Single Issue Scrutiny Session

From time to time, we will have a particular subject on which we want to seek your views, and it may not be appropriate to use any of the consultation methods previously mentioned. In this case we would invite residents who may have an interest in the subject to meetings where they would look in more detail at the subject matter along with us.

4.4.2 • Tenant Panel

We do not have a current Tenant's Panel but this is something we want to actively promote in year one of our strategy action plan. It would be a group made up of tenants that meets with the Association's Housing Managers a few times a year. The purpose of the panel is to share tenant priorities, give feedback on big decisions and to carry out scrutiny exercises of particular services, documents and procedures.

4.4.3 • Registered Tenants Organisations (RTOs)

These are formal tenant groups that usually represent tenants' housing and related interests in their area. To become a Registered Tenant Organisation a group has to meet certain statutory criteria and has to apply to us to become registered. We will assist tenants with this process, although the Registered Tenant Organisation is an independent organisation. We have a legal duty to consult with any Registered Tenant Organisation and must keep a register of these organisations for the Scottish Government.

We do not currently have any RTO's but will actively promote these to our tenants as an opportunity to engage and make a difference.

- 4.4.4 • **Membership of the Association and its Management Committee**
You can become a member of the Association by making a one-off payment of £1 for a share. This gives you a stake in the Association and an opportunity to say how it is run. Members are invited to the Annual General Meeting and have the right to vote on the election of Management Committee members. As a member, you would be eligible to stand for election to the Management Committee which has a key strategic role in the operation of the Association.

5. Monitoring & Evaluating

- 5.1 We have developed an Action Plan which will be reviewed and updated annually by staff and the Resident Panel, when established.
- 5.2 The Action Plan will support the Association's Business Plan objectives and ensure we are delivering our commitments. Our success will be measure by:
- Measurement against the Scottish Social Housing Charter Outcomes
 - Communication
 - Participation
 - Rent & Service Charges
 - Tenant satisfaction levels
 - Review by Resident's Panel
 - Leadership Team review
 - Management Committee review
- 5.3 This strategy will be reviewed every 5 years.

6. Equality & Diversity

- 6.1 We are committed to treating our tenants respectfully, fairly and equally, tackling discrimination and harassment and ensuring our services are accessible to all, irrespective of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.
- 6.2 • We will encourage and promote inclusion, actively trying to engage with all our tenants to ensure that representation is fully reflected.
- We will provide a range of opportunities and information and explore new ways of engaging with underrepresented groups who may be hard to reach.

We will identify and develop opportunities via partnership working with existing groups and networks.

7. Feedback

- 7.1 We recognise the importance of promoting and highlighting when tenant feedback has directly impacted or changed the way we do things. We will make sure that all feedback is considered before any decisions are made and that we provide appropriate feedback using a variety of methods such as:
- 7.2
- Rooftops Newsletter
 - Facebook and website
 - Annual Report to Tenants
 - Individual letter, email, or phone call
- 7.3 We also welcome all forms of feedback, positive or negative. These provide us with an opportunity to review the quality of service we provide by continually making improvements.

This document will be provided in different languages and formats on request.