

CONSULTATION DRAFT



Tenant Participation Strategy 2020



ELTRP Representatives on Scottish Housing Day 2019

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Spring into Action in East Lothian Event, March 2019

Welcome

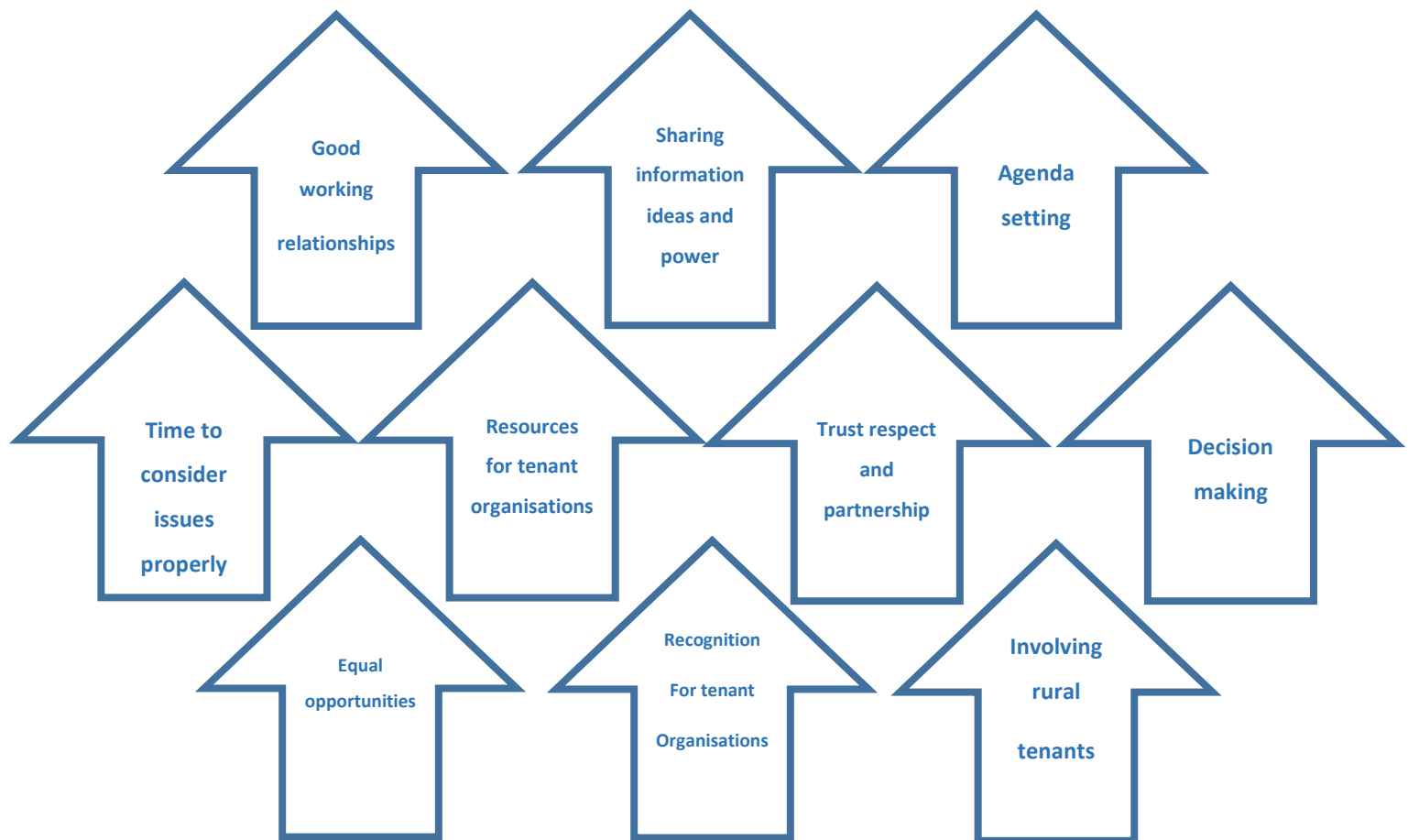
Welcome to East Lothian Council's fifth Tenant Participation Strategy which sets out how we plan to involve our tenants and make sure that they can influence and scrutinise the housing services that we deliver. We will continue to give tenants a menu of options to choose from so that they can get involved in a way that suits them.

We want to build on our recent achievements and continue to support tenants, working in partnership with them and East Lothian Tenants and Residents Panel (ELTRP). In the last few years we have achieved Tenants Information Service (TIS) Gold Scrutiny Accreditation, our Tenant Scrutiny Group won the TIS Scrutiny Excellence Award in 2018 and ELTRP won the Tenants Group of the Year Award in 2019.

We realise the importance of involving tenants when we are developing and reviewing our policies. We always strive to work together to provide excellent housing services. We value our tenant volunteers and the work that they do with us every day. We hope this strategy reflects how much more we want to achieve and the steps we will be taking to involve tenants in the next 3 years.

Versions of this leaflet can be supplied in Braille, large print, audiotape or in your own language. Please phone Customer Services if you require assistance on 01620 827199.

Our vision for tenant participation in East Lothian is to maximise our tenants' involvement in influencing and scrutinising our housing services. We share the same principles of tenant participation with our tenants, ELTRP and tenants and residents groups.



New build properties in North Berwick

The Background

to the strategy comes from the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 which introduced rights for tenants and placed duties on landlords. We have developed our strategy in partnership with East Lothian Tenants and Residents Panel. We carried out a list of actions to review our last strategy and help us to develop this one.



Legislation

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 gives tenants rights and sets out duties for landlords.

Tenants have rights to:

- Form independent representative associations
- Access information about housing policies
- Be consulted on issues that affect them
- Participate in decisions that affect the services tenants receive and have enough time to consider proposals.

The main landlord duties are to:

- Produce a tenant participation strategy
- Make sure that our tenant participation strategy complies with equal opportunities requirements
- Set up a register of tenant organisations in line with Scottish Government guidance
- Take into account representations made by individual tenants or tenants groups
- Inform tenants and registered tenant organisations (RTOs) of proposals for housing management, standards of service and the tenant participation strategy.



Our Aims

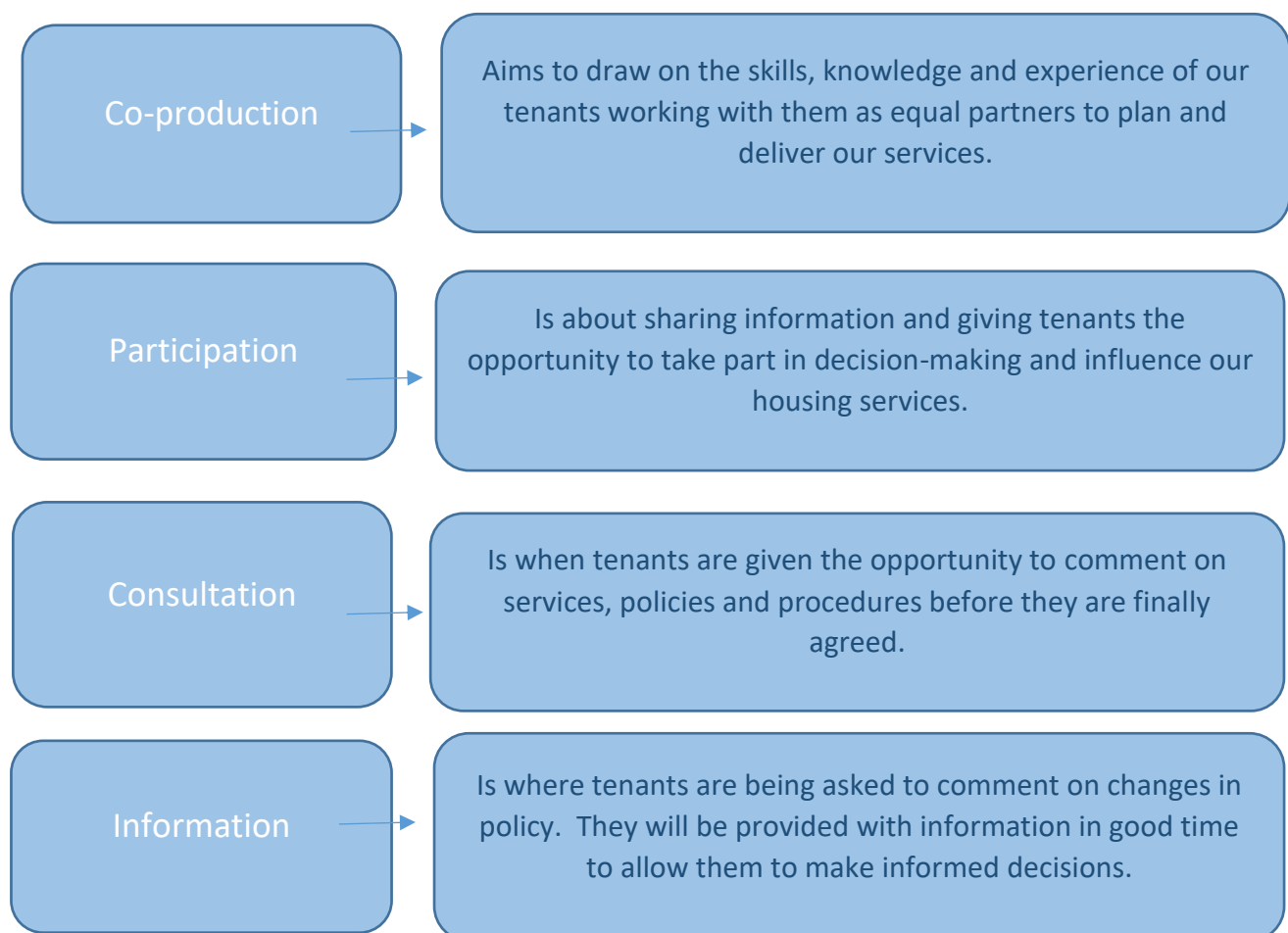
We aim to encourage as many tenants as possible to get involved with us and give them a range of options. We want tenants to get involved in a way that suits them. We will make sure our tenant participation activities are accessible to all and will be responsive to tenants individual needs. We will provide tenants with access to the services and resources they need to allow them to become fully involved.

We value all forms of tenant participation equally and will make sure that support is available to encourage participation.

Some of the ways that tenants can get involved are;

- as an individual tenant
- through a tenants and residents group
- by getting involved with East Lothian Tenants and Residents Panel

We will involve tenants at different stages of our work:



Social Housing Charter

The Charter was introduced by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 and sets out the standards and outcomes that social landlords should aim to achieve whilst performing their housing services.

The Charter has 16 outcomes:

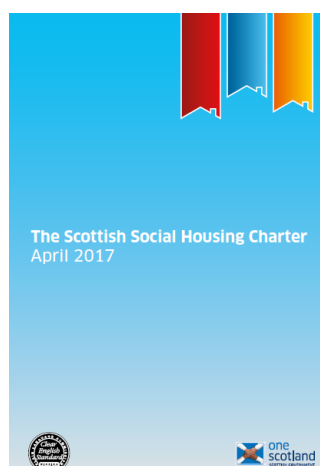
The Customer / Landlord Relationship 1. Equalities 2. Communication 3. Participation	Access to Housing and Support 7. 8 and 9 Housing Options 10. Access to social housing 11. Tenancy sustainment 12. Homeless People
Housing Quality and Maintenance 4. Quality of Housing 5. Repairs, maintenance and improvements	Getting Good Value from Rents and Service Charges 13. Value for money 14. and 15 Rent and service charges
Neighbourhood and Community 6. Estate Management, antisocial behaviour, neighbour nuisance and tenancy disputes	Other Customers 16. Gypsy / Travellers

Annual Return on the Charter

The purpose of the Charter is to help improve the quality and value of the services that social landlords provide. We are required by the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) to submit an Annual Return on the Charter by the end of May each year. We then need to produce by October a Landlords Report to explain to our tenants how we are performing as a service.

For more information and a copy of the Charter please go to:

www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-social-housing-charter-april-2017



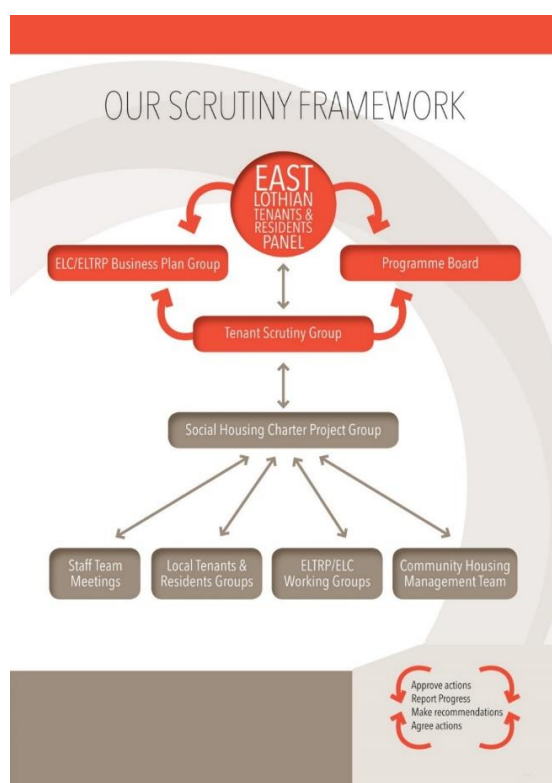
Annual Assurance Statement

In October each year, we are also required to submit an *Annual Assurance Statement* to the SHR. www.housingregulator.gov.scot The council needs to confirm to the SHR that it is complying with all regulatory requirements and standards. If it is not meeting these requirements, ELC must advise the SHR and say what it is doing to address the issues. The Council gathers evidence from various sources to assess overall compliance and this is monitored on an ongoing basis. A report is submitted to the Council's *Audit and Governance Committee* for approval. Once it's been approved, the *Statement* is signed and submitted to the SHR and then made available publicly on the council's website. www.eastlothian.gov.uk

We continue to monitor our compliance throughout the year and should there be any issues where we are failing, we will inform the SHR and develop an action plan to address the issues.

Tenant Scrutiny

Tenant scrutiny is a form of self-assessment which involves tenants working in partnership with their landlord. We have a Scrutiny Framework in place to make sure that the work we are doing is agreed by management and feeds into our group structure.



The framework ensures that communication flows freely, recommendations for improvement are taken on board and progress is made to make sure we improve our services. We continue to develop tenant scrutiny in partnership with ELTRP and carry out scrutiny activities with volunteers which are tenant-led.



Resources for tenant participation

We recognise that tenants need time and proper resources to consider proposals and to fully participate. The council and ELTRP work in partnership to make sure there are adequate resources in place to support tenants, tenants groups and ELTRP. The council has employed the Tenants Information Service (TIS) to provide independent support to ELTRP, tenants and local tenants and residents groups. The East Lothian Development Support Project employs three members of staff to provide a range of support, resources and training to help continue with the development of the tenants movement in East Lothian.

East Lothian Tenants and Residents Panel (ELTRP) offer tenants and local groups the opportunity to get involved with them. ELTRP is the umbrella organisation for local tenants and residents groups throughout East Lothian and is run by an Executive Committee. The Committee regularly consults with its members on relevant topics like, rent levels and policy reviews. They organise events and support and encourage the development of tenant participation in East Lothian. For more information about the Panel visit www.eltrp.co.uk



ELTRP Voids Consultation Meeting

We provide a budget for our tenant participation activities and shown in the table below is a list of some of the key items of expenditure.

The Tenant Participation Budget for 2018/19 was £269,130.00.

Budget	£
Development Support Contract	112,000
Tenant Group Grants	850
TIS Annual Membership for Tenants and Residents Groups	120
Production of Tenants Newsletter (Homefront)	30,000
ELTRP Delegated Budget	22,000
ELTRP Office costs – i.e. rent, water rates	12,000
Spend per tenant per year	£30.80

We also provide some support and resources in-kind and they can include things like:

- Free access to council venues for meetings
- Reimbursement of travel expenses
- Training for tenants and tenants and residents groups
- Access to photocopying and stationery supplies
- Transport on request for specific events
- A dedicated council officer with responsibility for tenant participation.

We will provide other resources on request to assist tenants who may be traditionally excluded or have particular needs.

We will always make sure that we keep our tenants informed through regular communication and make sure that they have enough time to consider our proposals when we are consulting with them. Giving feedback to tenants after consultations is something we always do. The methods of communication we will use to do this will be through Homefront, our tenants newsletter, our website, social media, letters and we will provide information in other formats on request. (e.g. large print, Braille, in other languages)



Spring into Action in East Lothian Event

Working Together

We aim to work in partnership with our tenants, ELTRP, colleagues in other council departments and key organisations. It is very important that tenant participation links into other council policies and strategies, for example:

- East Lothian Council Plan 2017-2022
- East Lothian Plan 2017 – 2027
- Local Housing Strategy 2018 - 2023
- East Lothian Equality Plan 2017 – 2021
- Community Housing & Homelessness Service Plan 2020-21



We also work hard to make sure that our strategy for tenant participation feeds into other service improvement activities and groups like:

- How Good Is Our Service (HGIOS)
- Social Housing Charter Project Group
- Community Housing Communications Group.

How the strategy will be monitored and reviewed.

We will review our strategy every three years through our Tenant Participation Strategy Group. We will also regularly monitor and evaluate our tenant participation activities. We will do this in a number of different ways by gathering quantitative and qualitative information. This work may involve carrying out impact assessments to make sure that the work we are doing is effective and is working well. Impact assessments help us to show what some of the benefits of getting involved can be for example, increasing skills, knowledge and confidence. Measuring the impact will also allow us to see how our activities are having an impact on our communities.



Our successes

We are proud of our tenant participation structures and work hard to support them and have achieved a number of successes since our last strategy was written. We now want to continue to build on these and become even more successful.



Registered Tenant Organisations

A Registered Tenant Organisation (RTO) is an independent organisation which is set up to represent tenants interests on housing and related issues. The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 gives tenants groups a statutory right to register with their landlords as a RTO.

Some tenants groups may want to become registered and there is a criteria which requires the group to be democratically elected, have an appropriate constitution and a defined area. The benefits of being a registered tenant organisation can include:

- A right to be consulted over proposed changes to housing services
- It places a duty on the council to consult with RTOs on issues that affect them
- In addition, the council is required to take notice of representations made by RTOs within a reasonable timescale (these timescales will be agreed with tenants)
- An opportunity for RTOs to get involved in the regional networks which operate across Scotland.

East Lothian Council set up and maintain the register of RTOs in East Lothian on behalf of the council, East Lothian Housing Association and Homes for Life Housing Partnership. The council has a duty to provide and maintain the register and it is updated annually. The register is on public display in our offices. More information about registered tenant organisations and a copy of the register can be found on the council website

www.eastlothian.gov.uk



Action Plan

We have specific aims for tenant participation activities in East Lothian. The purpose of these aims is to make sure that tenant participation is inclusive and accessible. We will regularly look at the tasks we need to complete and the timescale for doing this will be for the life of this Strategy. The Action Plan will be monitored and reviewed by our Tenant Participation Strategy Group and will help us achieve our aims and plan for a successful future in tenant participation.



Service Development Team
East Lothian Council
Community Housing Services
Penston House
Macmerry
EH33 1EX
Tel: 0800 413 721
Email: tenantconsultation@eastlothian.gov.uk