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1. What is Tenant Participation?

Tenant Participation is a two way process involving the sharing of information, ideas and power. Its aim is to improve the standard of housing conditions and services.

We are committed to involving our tenants in making decisions about the services we deliver. We want to know what tenants think about housing conditions and services, where the gaps are and how services can be improved. Many tenants have already set up local Tenants’ Associations that allow tenants to meet regularly and tackle issues that affect their area.

These associations have a right to be consulted by us on housing and housing related matters as set out in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.

2. Getting started

Getting a Tenants and Resident Association started is not as hard as you may think. You only need a handful of people to start things off. Sometimes a common issue will bring people together, or seeing the success of other associations motivates people to start an association in their area.

The first step is normally to hold a public meeting to bring the community together, hear their views on local issues and see how much interest there is to establish an association.

Those who express an interest would normally then meet again at a later date to discuss the structure of the proposed association, the area to be covered and a draft constitution. The constitution would normally be based on the Council’s draft constitution.

A further public meeting (or inaugural meeting) would then be called at which the constitution would be adopted and the committee would be democratically elected. The Association would then be operational.

Where is plenty of help available from the Customer Liaison Officer, East Ayrshire Tenants and Residents Federation or the Tenants Information Service to get your association started. Please read on in this booklet for more information.

3. What’s the difference between a Tenants and Residents Association and Community Councils or Community Associations?

Tenants and Residents Associations

Tenants and Residents Associations are established primarily to deal with housing issues in social rented housing. The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 made it mandatory for landlords to consult their tenants and residents associations on housing and housing related issues.

Most tenants and residents associations do become involved in issues wider than housing which affect their communities, such as condition of roads, facilities for children and community activities.

Community Council

Community Council’s are governed by the Local Government etc. (Scotland) Act’s 1973 and 1994.
The general purpose of a Community Council is to act as a voice for their local area. Community Councils may also carry out other activities that are in the general interest of their community, such as community events.

Community Council areas and membership numbers are set by the Council. There are 35 Community Council areas in East Ayrshire – not all have an active Community Council.

**Community Association**
A Community Association’s traditional role is to manage community facilities on behalf of the Council or other body.

Community Associations in East Ayrshire manage some of our Community Centres and organise community events such as Gala days and Christmas lights.

Membership of Community Associations is open to ALL interested parties and tenants and residents groups should seek membership on their local community association’s committee.

**Partnership Working**
Where each of these types of organisation co-exist in an area, the Council will always promote joint working on community projects and will assist organisations to engage with each other and work together for the benefit of the community.

4. **The Constitution**

A constitution is a written document setting out the rules by which your group will operate, how the members will work together and what they are working towards.

Most funding bodies will only grant funds to groups that are constituted as your constitution will reassure them, and your members, that your group is being run properly and its money managed properly.

Your constitution should state:

- name of your association
- area your association will operate in
- aims and objectives of your association

It should include the following sections:

- **Membership** – who is eligible for membership and whether there are any fees
- **Committee** – how and when the committee is elected and which posts need to be filled e.g. Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer
- **Annual General Meeting (AGM)** – every year groups need to hold an AGM for all members where the committee is elected and annual report and accounts are presented
- **Other General Meetings** - The constitution should also state how many general meetings will be held each year and how other general meetings can be called
- **Changes to the Constitution** – instructions on how to propose and agree changes to the constitution
- **Finance** – rules on how the funds of the association will be managed
- **Dissolution** – the procedure for closing down the association
Adoption
Once the constitution has been written the association should arrange a general meeting, which should be minuted, where the committee members sign and date the constitution. The constitution is then officially adopted and becomes a legal document.

We will be happy to assist you in writing your constitution.

5. The Committee

A committee is elected by members of the association at an AGM each year. It is the role of the committee to carry out the business of association as informed by the members at open meetings. The committee has a responsibility to keep members informed and this can be done through open meetings and newsletters.

The committee will normally consist of a Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer and a number of committee members as determined by the association – too few and there might not be enough of you to carry out all the work but too many can lead to unruly meetings. Some associations also have a Vice-Chairperson and Minute Secretary.

Office Bearers
The committee will elect a Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer as its office bearers.

Chairperson - the role of the Chairperson is to chair meetings and keep the association focused on its aims. The Chairperson should ensure the committee operates within the constitution, ensure everyone has the opportunity to be heard during meetings, keep order and stick to the agenda and act as a spokesperson for the association.

Secretary – the Secretary is responsible for all of the administration tasks of the association such as arranging a venue for meetings, preparing the agenda with the Chairperson, keeping an accurate minute of each meeting including a record of who was in attendance, circulating agendas and minutes to the committee, inviting guests to meetings, publicising open meetings and the work of the association through newsletters and dealing with all correspondence for the association. A draft agenda and minutes are appended.

Treasurer – the Treasurer is appointed to manage the finances of the association. They should keep a clear and accurate set of accounts showing all the income and expenditure of the association. They should provide a financial report at each committee meeting and an audited financial statement to the AGM each year. A draft accounts ledger is appended.

Committee members – committee members should attend committee meetings and work as a team to further the aims and objectives of the association. Tasks, such as fund raising, community events and promoting the association should be shared equally and not left solely for the office bearers.

The Tenants Information Service can provide a booklet outlining in detail the roles and responsibilities of each office bearer.

Committee Meetings
The committee normally meet once a month to conduct the business of the Association. Meetings usually take place in a public building such as community centre, school or church hall. The Customer Liaison Officer can help you to find an appropriate meeting place. Most committees miss a meeting during the summer and Christmas holidays.
6. Funding your group

You can apply to Housing Services for a start up grant of £150 and an annual administration grant of £100 to cover expenses such as meeting room hire, stationary and postage. Just ask the Customer Liaison Officer for a grant application form.

There are a huge number of funding sources for projects which your group might want to develop. We employ an external funding officer who can help you to identify the right source of funding for your project. You can contact our funding officer at the Council on 01563 503230.

East Ayrshire 4 Community
If you have access to the internet and e-mail you can also sign up to East Ayrshire 4 Community. You will receive regular grant alerts and funding news and can search for funding for your project from a variety of sources. To sign up just visit the funding pages of the Council's website at www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk

7. Participation methods

Once your group is up and running you will meet regularly to discuss local issues and will be able to invite relevant Council officers and officers from other agencies to speak and answer questions at your meeting.

You will also be asked to participate in strategic consultations, that is to discuss policies and legislation which could have an impact on all tenants in East Ayrshire or Scotland. You do not have to take part at this level if you don’t want to but sometimes to have a local impact a national policy has to change so it can be very beneficial and rewarding.

Written consultations
From time to time your group will be asked to comment on a document or answer a questionnaire. This is known as written consultation.

Working groups
Members of your group will be invited to join working groups to help us review services or plan events. Recent working groups have reviewed the Council’s Allocations Policy, Rent Structures and helped us to write the tenants newsletter.

Conferences and Seminars
You will be invited to attend conferences organised by the Council, East Ayrshire Tenants and Residents Federation, Scottish Government and other national organisations. You do not need to attend but you can learn lots and meet other like minded people at such events.

Tenant Led Inspections
You might be invited to take part in mystery shopping or inspections of our services. This is something new we are developing with East Ayrshire Tenants and Residents Federation and we will issue guidance and provide training for anyone wishing to take part.

Estate Walkabouts
You will be invited to attend estate walkabouts with your local housing officer and other Council staff. These walkabouts provide an opportunity for your group to highlight local issues of concern and discuss solutions. We will also ask you to identify any environmental improvements you would like for the area.
Registered Tenant Organisation Forum

These meetings are held quarterly with the Divisional Manager. A couple of members from each tenants group attend so it is a good opportunity to meet members of other groups and hear about their achievements. At the meetings the manager will provide feedback from estate walkabouts, discuss local performance such as housing improvements, allocations and void levels.

You will also be given the opportunity to prioritise environmental improvements for the area. The list of suggested improvements from the estate walkabouts will be considered and agreement reached as to which jobs are to be carried out.

8. Expenses

We do not want you to be out of pocket by participating and we will reimburse any reasonable expenses for travel, subsistence and care costs associated in attending meetings arranged by us. We will not pay you for your time, as a member of a tenants and residents group you are a volunteer.

If you are out of pocket through attending a meeting or event arranged by your Association, you should speak to your treasurer about claiming this money back from the Associations funds.

East Ayrshire Tenants and Residents Federation will pay expenses for any meetings organised by them.

9. Training

We can provide training to help you run your group effectively. This includes committee skills training and training on a whole variety of housing related topics to help you understand policies and legislation and be able to effectively participate.

Each year East Ayrshire Tenants and Residents Federation sends a training needs assessment to its members asking them about their training needs. A calendar of training events is then produced and you will be invited to participate in any sessions which are of interest to you.

10. Keeping going

Sometimes Tenants and Residents Associations set up to tackle a particular issue in their area such as a redevelopment or a spate of antisocial behaviour, and once the issue is resolved some of the members lose interest in the group. This often leads to meetings being inquorate and results in the group disbanding to the disappointment of the remaining members.

We want to encourage you to continue working with us even after you have dealt with your initial issue. There will always remain the opportunity to work with us to help shape the services we provide and become involved in influencing housing policy locally and nationally.

Many groups become involved in community activities which gives them the motivation to continue. Organising gala days and fun days in the area, arranging to take young people on a trip or developing community gardens are just some of the activities that tenants groups have become involved in. We would be happy to give you advice and assistance with any ideas you have for your area.
11. Who can help?

James McKee, Customer Liaison Officer has responsibility for tenant participation in East Ayrshire. James provides support to existing Tenants and Residents Groups and works alongside East Ayrshire Tenants and Residents Federation and the Tenants Information Service to encourage new groups to set up, and has responsibility for organising consultations and implementing the Tenant Participation Strategy.

James is available to help your group with a whole range of things from general enquiries and putting you in touch with the right person, to helping you to organise your meetings and events and assist you to attract funding.

**Address**: Housing Services, John Dickie Street, Kilmarnock, KA1 1HW  
**Tel**: 01563 554878  
**E-mail**: housing@east-ayrshire.gov.uk

Caroline Harte, Administration Officer provides administration to East Ayrshire Tenants and Residents Federation and the other tenants and residents groups in East Ayrshire. Caroline manages the Federation’s office at 19 Portland Road, Kilmarnock and can help you with typing, mailings, photocopying, access to the Federation’s resource room and meetings rooms.

**Address**: Administration Officer, East Ayrshire Tenants and Residents Federation, 19 Portland Road, Kilmarnock, KA1 2BT  
**Tel**: 01563 524073  
**E-mail**: eatrf@yahoo.co.uk

In addition to the above staff, all Housing Services staff are aware of their responsibility to support and encourage tenant participation and will attend meetings by invitation. Neighbourhood teams will provide basic administration support to their local groups such as small amounts of photocopying.
Tenants Information Service

The Tenants Information Service (TIS) is a national organisation which provides independent information, advice and training for tenants. The Council has been working in partnership with TIS since 2001 to support and encourage tenant participation throughout the authority area. We have a dedicated TIS Development Manager who works with us on a regular basis.

Sharon is responsible for the provision of independent development support, advice and training to tenants across Scotland. This includes assisting tenants influence landlord decisions on issues such as policy development and reviews, setting housing standards, stock transfer, options appraisals and housing service delivery.

Within East Ayrshire, Sharon provides independent development support, training and advice to East Ayrshire Tenants and Residents Federation and local tenants and residents groups to assist them to influence both local and national housing policy and decision making.

In addition, she also works closely with the Council to assist in the delivery and review of the Council’s Tenant Participation Strategy, including providing staff training and support and supporting the development of new tenants and residents groups.

East Ayrshire Tenants and Residents Federation

East Ayrshire Tenants and Residents Federation were established in 2007 as the umbrella group for all tenants and residents associations in East Ayrshire. They provide support to new and existing groups and encourage tenant participation through a variety of means including road shows, conferences and newsletters.

They have an office in Kilmarnock where they have meeting rooms, information and IT equipment available for all tenant associations and interested tenants to use.

Address: 19 Portland Road, Kilmarnock, KA1 2BT
Tel: 01563 524073
E-mail: vicechair.eatrf@yahoo.co.uk
Website: www.eatrf.org.uk
Appendix 1

Agenda (example)

Anywhere Tenants and Residents Association
Committee Meeting
Anywhere Community Centre
10 January 2000 – 7.00pm

1. Welcome and apologies
   The Chair will welcome attendees and pass on any apologies.

2. Minute of previous meeting
   The chair will ask those present to inspect the minute for accuracy. Someone will propose the minute and another person will second that proposal for the minute to be accepted.

3. Matters arising
   An opportunity for those present to raise any matters for discussion.

4. Correspondence
   The Secretary will go through any correspondence received since the last meeting.

5. Treasurer’s report
   The treasurer will give an update on the association’s finances.

6. Any other business (AOCB)
   An opportunity to raise any issues.

7. Date of next meeting (DONM)
   Date and venue for next meeting agreed.
Appendix 2

Minute (example)

Anywhere Tenants and Residents Association
Minute of Committee Meeting
Anywhere Community Centre
10 January 2000 – 7.00pm

8. **Present**
   Mrs. White (Chair), Mrs. Black (Secretary), Mr. Green (Treasurer)
   Mr. Blue, Mr. Red, Mr. Purple, Mrs. Orange (committee members)

9. **Apologies**
   Mr. Yellow (Vice-Chair)

10. **Minute of previous meeting**
    The minute of the previous meeting on 10 December 1999 was agreed as accurate
    with Mr. Green proposing and Mr. Red seconding.

11. **Matters arising**
    Mr. Purple asked if an invitation had been received for the Tenants Conference. This
    will be discussed under item 5 – correspondence.

12. **Correspondence**
    a) Information on Engaging Nationally with the Scottish Executive received from
       Communities Scotland. Circulated at meeting. No action required.
    b) Invitation from East Ayrshire Council to attend annual tenant's conference at
       Park Hotel on 5 May 2000. Agreed that Mrs. White, Mrs. Black and Mr. Blue
       will attend.

13. **Treasurer’s report**
    Mr. Green produced bank statement dated 7 January 2000 advising that the
    association currently has £146.97 in the bank.

14. **Any other business (AOCB)**
    Mrs. Orange informed the meeting that fair-trade week was during February. It was
    agreed that the association would source fair-trade products for its meeting
    refreshments.

15. **Date of next meeting (DONM)**
    The next meeting will be held on 10 February 2000 at 7.00pm in Anywhere
    Community Centre
Appendix 3

Accounts (example)

We will provide your group with the stationary needed to keep a track of your money.

Here is an example of how to keep a ledger to show income and expenditure.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Cheque. No</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Expenditure</th>
<th>Balance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 April 2005</td>
<td></td>
<td>Council Grant</td>
<td>£250</td>
<td></td>
<td>£250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 April 2005</td>
<td>001</td>
<td>Stationary</td>
<td>£25</td>
<td></td>
<td>£225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 April 2005</td>
<td>002</td>
<td>Hall Hire</td>
<td>£20</td>
<td></td>
<td>£205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 April 2005</td>
<td>003</td>
<td>Catering</td>
<td>£10</td>
<td></td>
<td>£195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 April 2005</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bingo Money</td>
<td>£95</td>
<td></td>
<td>£290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 April 2005</td>
<td>004</td>
<td>Petty Cash</td>
<td>£4.50</td>
<td></td>
<td>£285.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>£345</td>
<td>£59.50</td>
<td>£285.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 May 2005</td>
<td></td>
<td>Balance Brought Forward</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>£285.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

You must keep all bank statements and receipts in a folder. At the end of the month you should check to make sure that your receipts and statements tally with your ledger.

We will audit your accounts when you apply for your annual operational grant.