



**LINK GROUP LIMITED**

**TENANT PARTICIPATION STRATEGY**  
**2007– 2010**

**APPROVED: DEC 2007**

**EFFECTIVE DATE: 12<sup>TH</sup> DEC 2007**

**REVIEW DATE: DEC 2010**

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Link Group ('Link')'s Tenant Participation Strategy 2007/10 has been produced in partnership with tenants who are keen to influence the services we deliver. Over the last 3 years we have:

- Established a Community Star award to recognise tenants who make important contributions to their local communities
- Reorganised our housing services so that housing officers and building inspectors can spend much more time visiting tenants at home and listening to what they want Link to do
- Issued a new tenants' handbook reflecting suggestions from tenants

We have set ourselves greater challenges for the next three years, reflecting our commitment to continuous improvement and increasing the scope for more people to have their say. We particularly want to hear what is important to young people and those who are generally feeling isolated or excluded. Our dedicated and experienced team will continue to support tenants groups and encourage new ones, formal or informal. We value tenants' views and opinions on what we do and how we do it and we want to make it as easy as possible for them to talk to us. Our aim is to enable all tenants to become involved at whatever level suits them.

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"Although I have been a Link tenant since 1991, I have just recently started to become involved in tenant participation (TP) activities with Link. I am very much enjoying being involved and it is satisfying to know that I am playing a role in shaping the way Link works. After reading the TP Strategy 2007/10, my enthusiasm for involvement has increased. I am looking forward to working in partnership with Link staff to ensure that the targets set out in the strategy are met, particularly the promotion of new ways for tenants to have a role in the governance of Link.

One important area outlined by the strategy is Link's approach to consulting tenants about planned maintenance. I believe tenants will welcome the opportunity to work with Link to agree on the type of improvements that will be made to their homes. I have already participated in the Planned Maintenance Tenants' Forum, giving my views on how tenants should be consulted, and I am really looking forward to participating in future forums.

I recently attended the Tenants Information Service (TIS) conference in Glasgow, where tenants of many different social landlords came together to discuss tenant participation – what they thought worked well and what didn't. I hope that, after reading this strategy, you too are impressed with Link's commitment to TP, and that like me, you will consider becoming more involved."



Lorna Ormiston, Edinburgh Tenant

## 2 BACKGROUND & OBJECTIVES

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 introduced a legal framework for tenant participation, and this Strategy is designed to ensure that Link complies with the requirements of the Act.

The requirements are that Link must:

- Provide a range of information to tenants;
- Have a tenant participation strategy;
- Allow tenant organisations to register and keep a publicly available register of these registered tenant organisations (RTOs);
- Consult with tenants and RTOs on a range of housing and related services, and to take account of their views within a reasonable timescale.

Link's Tenant Participation Strategy is designed to respond to the changing expectations of our tenants, whilst setting out over-arching aims which will be valid throughout the period 2007 – 2010 as follows:

- 1 Link will encourage tenants to contribute to the formulation of programmes of work across a range of housing management activities. Tenants will be able to contribute to the establishment and monitoring of partnership working between Link and other organisations.
- 2 Link will promote new groups of tenants with whom we work in partnership, targetting in particular younger tenants and tenants from a range of minority groups.
- 3 Link will enable tenants to utilise opportunities to train and learn a range of skills.
- 4 Link will ensure that tenants have the opportunity to directly influence decision-making at various levels within Link. In particular we shall seek input into the preparation of neighbourhood plans to reflect tenants' views on the most needed services and facilities for each locality.
- 5 Link will enable tenants take part in governance, with representations on the Boards of the Group and relevant subsidiaries. We shall actively investigate and promote new ways for tenants to have a role in the governance of Link.
- 6 Link seeks to encourage tenant participation within Link to become self-sustaining.

These general aims will be upheld and reinforced by a specific Action Plan devised by Link Housing Association.

Link's houses are located in many widely scattered places in Scotland, often in small groups. There are several residents' groups, some formally registered, which serve some of the larger concentrations of our houses. However we recognise that we have to take our services out to tenants at their homes because many tenants are remote from any of our offices. The field staff who make home visits, mainly our housing officers, building inspectors and planned maintenance officers, are therefore required to bring to individual tenants all the range of services which our larger offices could provide. This includes asking tenants to give their views about our services and encouraging them to take part in consultations and follow up activities where they can influence decision-making or join a decision-making group or board.

### **3 VALUES**

Tenant participation is the active, constructive and informed involvement of tenants leading to plans and decisions which will enable Link to provide services of a kind and quality which meet their changing expectations.

In order to reflect the particular circumstances in which we are working, the following statements summarise the values which Link attaches to tenant participation:

- Our vision is for Link and our tenants to become a partnership that will lead to sustainable improvement of our services and the environment of our properties
- We recognise that our tenants possess skills, knowledge and experience which are valuable and complementary to those of our staff and board
- We eliminate as far as possible barriers of all kinds which may discourage tenants from making active and constructive contributions to partnership working
- We make appropriate training and personal development opportunities accessible for staff, board members and interested tenants

### **4 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY**

Link will always operate this Strategy in accordance with Link Group's Policy on Equality & Diversity.

In particular, Link will:

- ensure barriers to participation such as language, accessibility, timing, costs for tenants and childcare have been considered;
- consider the needs of equalities groups and proactively involve traditionally excluded groups in the participation process; and
- ensure RTOs promote equal opportunities and are open and accessible to all tenants through the criteria for registration.

RTOs are also required to promote equal opportunities for those in the communities they represent and their commitment to do so should be included in their constitution. Link has a responsibility to ensure, through support and encouragement, that equal opportunities are at the centre of their activities. RTOs should proactively seek the participation of excluded groups in their own organisation.

## 5 PERFORMANCE STANDARDS, MONITORING AND REPORTING

Link will develop a range of performance indicators to measure success in meeting our objectives. The Tenant Liaison Officer reports regularly to the Board of Link Housing Association and the Director of Housing & Technical Services in turn reports to the Link Group Board. Newsletters provide regular updates on performance to our tenants. In addition an Annual Report will be published on all aspects of tenant participation. The first of these will describe the extent to which we meet our aims and objectives during 2007 – 08 and will be published by the end of June 2008.

Our first performance indicators will show:

- How many tenants have been visited in their own homes
- How many records of tenants' views and suggestions have been created, arising from
  - Home visits by staff
  - Telephone calls between tenants and Link
  - Joint estate inspections by tenants and staff
  - Other communications (letters, e-mail, formal complaints etc)
- How many tenants' associations have been active or new starts
- How many meetings of tenants' associations, to which Link has been invited, we have attended. It will be a priority to make appropriate representatives available whenever associations request our attendance.
- How many joint meetings of tenants and staff have taken place to review housing management policies and practice
- How many joint meetings of tenants and staff have taken place to plan for works taking place in tenants' homes
- How many tenants have attended training or personal development activities promoted by Link
- How many tenants have attended training or learning activities provided for tenants and staff together

## 6 STRATEGY REVIEW

Link undertakes to review this Strategy regularly with regard to:

- applicable legislation, rules, regulations and guidance
- changes in the organisation
- continued best practice.

| <b>Effective Date</b>     | <b>Review Due</b> | <b>Approved by</b> |
|---------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| 12 <sup>th</sup> Dec 2007 | Dec 2010          | Link Group Board   |