



TENANT PARTICIPATION STRATEGY

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SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION

‘Tenant participation is about tenants taking part in decision making processes and influencing decisions about housing policies, housing conditions and housing (and related) services. It is a two way process which involves the sharing of information, ideas and power. Its aim is to improve the standard of housing conditions and service’ (1999),
The Scottish Office

Section 53 of the recent Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 places a statutory duty on every Registered Social Landlord to prepare a Tenant Participation Strategy by 31st March 2003.

Tenant Participation Strategies should promote the interests of tenants with either SSTs or SSSTs in the formulation of Linstone’s proposals for the management of its housing and housing related services.

Such strategies should show how landlords would:

- Obtain and take account of the views of Registered Tenants Organisations and tenants
- Notify Registered Tenants Organisations and tenants of the matters on which the landlord expects to be making proposals; and
- Provide information to Registered Tenants Organisations and tenants about proposals and their likely effect.

Linstone is committed to the development of good customer relations and resident participation. We actively support the citizenship model of Tenant Participation which focuses on people's rights and choices, empowering them to participate in the decision making process of the organisation.

We attempt to encourage tenants to have a real input and influence in decisions affecting their homes. As an organisation that is locally based and managed by a tenant-led management committee, Linstone recognises the importance of community involvement and participation in providing effective services which are more responsive to the local needs of an area.

Linstone believes that tenants and residents play an important role in the management, sustainability and regeneration of their neighbourhoods.

One of Linstone's key aims is to have a Housing Association that creates opportunities for tenants and residents to participate in the management of their houses.

Our organisational structure is designed to encourage tenants to participate at both Management Committee level and on an area or estate basis.

This strategy will highlight the aims and objectives Linstone intends to achieve through the implementation of this strategy and the process for monitoring and reviewing these aims and objectives. The organisation has also completed an estimated assessment of the resources required to implement and progress the strategy.

This strategy is an evolving document and has been produced after consultation with tenants, residents and service users of the organisation. The consultation methods may consistently change over time to reflect demographic trends within the area and any changes will be determined by the tenants and residents based within our neighbourhoods.

Although owner-occupiers are not covered in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 it is recognised that they are still a service user. As a social landlord operating within various we are also the feu superior to over 2500 owner-occupiers. Although this strategy is titled 'Tenant Participation Strategy' the mechanisms for consulting with owner-occupiers are similar. Over the following pages there will be references made to consultation methods used to facilitate the participation of owner-occupiers in the service we provide to them.

SECTION TWO

SUMMARY OF CURRENT TENANT PARTICIPATION ACTIVITY

We are keen to give high quality information and currently consult and inform our tenants and service users using the following methods:

- Newsletters - These newsletters are currently published quarterly and are sent to every tenant.
- Letters - Dependant on the information Linstone is providing to the service user letters are sometimes the most appropriate and effective forms of communication.
- Leaflets - Leaflets are often sent to residents to highlight specific changes in legislation, which may have a future impact on their circumstances. I.e. Scottish Secure Tenancy, Title Conditions Bill, Criminal Justice Bill, Feudal Reform.
- Tenants Handbook - Every tenant receives a copy of our regularly updated Tenant's Handbook. This handbook is also given to every new tenant when allocated a property.
- Annual Report - We publish an annual report each year, which is sent to all tenants.
- Website - Regularly updated website keeps tenants informed of ongoing work in the association.
- Public Meetings - These meetings are held when the association wishes to consult with its residents regarding various issues.
- Surveys - The association undertakes various surveys to ascertain our resident's views on our service. These surveys include:
 - Large Scale Customer Satisfaction Survey
 - Tenant Participation Consultation Questionnaire
 - Repairs Satisfaction Surveys
 - Development Satisfaction Surveys
 - Contract Satisfaction Surveys
 - Service User Surveys i.e. Allocations
- Association Membership is promoted to encourage each tenant and owner-occupier to take up membership of the Association.

- One to One Contact - The internal and external staff of Linstone actively encourage residents giving their views on the service. Many tenants do not wish to become involved in the bureaucracy of meetings and should not be excluded from the participation process.
- New Tenant Visits - A new tenant visit is completed by the Housing Officer within two months of the tenant being allocated the property. This allows the tenant to give their views on various issues and provides customer care and inclusion to the tenant.
- Information Displays - Within the offices of Linstone there are posters and computer displays that highlight various information to service users of the organisation.
- Focus Groups - For specific purposes the use of short life focus groups has been utilised. Examples of this include the recent reviews of our Caretaking and Sheltered Warden Service.
- Open Days - These are held sporadically when promoting a specific issue i.e. SST.
- Complaints Procedure - Linstone has a complaints policy which provides service users who may feel dissatisfied with Linstone's service delivery or with Linstone in general with processes to highlight their concern.
- Owners' Newsletter - Newsletters are sent to our owner-occupiers every six months with information relevant to the neighbourhood and owner-occupiers included within it.

Tenants & Residents Associations

Linstone uses most of the same methods described above when information/ consulting with our local Tenants and Residents Associations or Registered Tenants Organisations.

We ensure that if letters; leaflets; newsletters; public meeting invitations, etc. are sent to residents within any Registered Tenant Organisations geographical area of operation then a copy is also sent to them.

In addition staff regularly attend their committee and/or public meetings to discuss items of mutual interest.

In particular the Registered Tenant Organisations and Tenants and Residents Associations are involved when Linstone is carrying out any policy review work.

Linstone currently consults and interacts with a number of community bodies within our neighbourhoods in order to provide the best quality service for our tenants and residents. The represented groups attends on a regular basis are listed below.

Represented Groups

Farrier Court Tenants Association
Corseford Tenants and Residents Association
Johnstone Castle Tenants and Residents Association
Kintyre Avenue Focus Group
Kirklandneuk Tenants and Residents Association
Sandyflats Tenants and Residents Association
Spateston Tenants and Residents Association
Johnstone West Forum for Action
Linwood Community Council

SECTION THREE

HOW THIS STRATEGY WAS DEVELOPED

This section of the strategy highlights the preparatory work Linstone has undertaken in developing this strategy.

- Newsletter - An initial newsletter was sent to all tenants in May 2002 advising of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and the Scottish Secure Tenancy agreement. This outlined the main points of the SSST agreement and highlighted open days Linstone was holding during June 2002.
- Leaflet - Tenant Participation leaflet was sent to all tenants with the Tenant Participation Consultation Questionnaire in July 2002. This leaflet contained details of two open days Linstone were holding in August for residents to give their views.
- Website - The website has contained information in Tenant Participation to allow residents to give their views on the strategy.

Tenant Participation Consultation Questionnaire

Our starting point was a consultation exercise involving all tenants (and a small percentage of owner-occupiers) which seeks to obtain their feedback on a number of issues:

- how well they think we currently consult
- how do they want to be consulted?
- what do they want to be consulted about?
- establish possible interest in training/tenant groups

The questionnaire (APP1) was sent in July 2002 to all tenants and a selection of our owner occupiers in an attempt collate information that would eventually form the basis of our Tenant Participation Strategy.

In total approximately 2000 questionnaires were sent out with 1740 of these being current Linstone Tenants. The remaining 265 were owner-occupiers living within our estates.

Of the 2005 questionnaires sent out we had 345 returned. This meant that we received a return from 17.2% of all residents sent this questionnaire.

From the questionnaire the main points to note are:

- 83% of resident's felt that Linstone were either very good or fairly good at keeping them informed about housing matters or things happening in their area that may affect them.
- 62% of resident's felt that Linstone were either very good or fairly good at taking account of their views when making any decisions although 13% felt that Linstone were either fairly or very poor at this practice.

- 95% of resident's advised that they read either most or a few of the newsletters Linstone send them. Only 3% advised that they never read it.
- 91% of resident's felt that these newsletters provided most information they require about what Linstone is doing.
- There was a question about what residents' felt Linstone should consult them about there were relatively large variances. These were:
 - 72% felt they should be consulted about improvements to their property
 - 61% felt they should be consulted about any planned maintenance
 - 52% felt they should be consulted about any rent increases
 - 40% felt they should be consulted about any changes to the service
 - 38% felt they should be consulted about any policy changes
 - 29% felt they should be consulted about performance issues
- For this Tenant Participation Strategy the following question about what way they would prefer to be consulted about the above issues was an important question. The answers to this question provided us with a starting point in creating the strategy.
 - 78% would prefer to be consulted by letter
 - 57% would prefer to be consulted by newsletter
 - 14% would prefer to be consulted by public meetings
 - 12% would prefer to be consulted through Tenant's and Residents Associations
 - 10% would prefer to be consulted by local newspaper
 - 7% would prefer to be consulted by notices placed in our office
 - 2% would prefer to be consulted by local radio

The results of this question show that large majority of residents who returned their questionnaire would prefer to be consulted by letter or newsletter.

- 71% of resident's advised that they did not require any training to allow them to participate effectively.
- There appeared to be issues regarding resident's knowing whether Tenant's and Residents Associations exist in their area. 51% of residents stated that they did not know if there was an association in their area.
- Of the 15% of residents who stated that there was not a Tenant's and Resident's Association in their area, 87% of them advised that they would **NOT** be interested in working with Linstone to form a group.
- Of the 34% of residents who stated that there was a Tenant's and Resident's Association in their area, 37% of them advised that they were currently members of it.

- Of the members of Tenants and Residents Associations, 65% advised that they do not attend meetings regularly. Their reasons for this varied with the main ones being either no opinion (38%) or happy with service (32%).

Residents Satisfaction Survey

In late 2001 Linstone carried out a large-scale Resident Customer Satisfaction Survey. This survey was analysed and we have also taken account of the relevant questions in the questionnaire.

- 86% of tenants believed that Linstone were good at keeping them informed.
- 74% of residents preferred to be kept informed in writing rather than 'in person'.
 - 74% said by individual letter
 - 50% said by newsletter

Current Tenants & Residents Associations

Letters were sent to all Tenant's and Resident's Associations within our geographical area advising them that we would like to attend a meeting to discuss the registration of their group as a Registered Tenant's Organisation and to ascertain their views on the most appropriate ways for Linstone to consult.

There were responses from only two of the groups and we attended meetings to explain the changes in legislation. In their opinion it was felt that newsletters and attendance at Tenants' and Registered Tenants Organisations were the most suitable ways to consult with residents.

Further work will be undertaken during the forthcoming financial year in explaining the benefits of becoming Registered Tenants Organisations for each of our represented groups.

We have reviewed our current performance using the TIS Tenant Participation Health Check and incorporated our findings into this strategy.

SECTION 4

DUTY TO CONSULT

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 obliges Linstone Housing Association to provide the following:

- a written Tenancy Agreement
- (before a tenancy begins) details about the tenants entitlement to Right to Buy, and the obligations likely to be incurred should they exercise that right
- Information about our complaints procedure

At the request of the tenant we must also provide information relating to:

- the terms of their tenancy
- our policy on setting rent and service charges
- our policy and rules about
 - applying to the housing list
 - allocations
 - transfer of tenancies
 - exchanges of houses between tenants (including where one party is the tenant of another landlord)
 - repairs and maintenance
- Whether there is a Right to Buy and if so, on what terms
- The consequences of exercising Right to Buy
- Our Tenant Participation Strategy
- Our arrangements for taking decisions about housing management and services

Consultation Requirements

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001, Part 2, Section 25 states “where the landlord under a Scottish Secure Tenancy proposes to increase the rents or any other charges payable by all, or any class of, its tenants it must, before giving notice under subsection (1):

- a) consult those of its tenants who would be affected by the proposal, and
- b) have regard to the views expressed by those consulted

Section 54 places further responsibilities in terms of consultation. Linstone must involve tenants and any Registered Tenants Organisation in policy proposals relating to:

- Housing Management
- Repairs and Maintenance
- Tenant Participation
- Service Standards
- Change of Landlord

We must clearly explain the likely effects and consequences of any proposals and have due regard to any representations made.

In addition to the above, Linstone will be seeking tenants views on any additional areas of our business into which they may wish input. These could include performance standards, daily management of their estates, overall work priorities/ programme of works and the timetables and timescales for any consultation exercises.

SECTION 5

HOW WE WILL CONSULT

As with all forms of communication dependent on the issue different forms of consultation may be required. We will continue to use all the consultation methods highlighted in Section 3 in an attempt to reach as wide an audience as is possible and use any new forms of communication that are appropriate to the issue i.e. Radio, Television advertising.

Following on from our consultation exercises regarding the Tenant Participation Strategy we will endeavour to provide consultation that tenants find most suitable to their needs. In order to do this we will:

- Tenants appear to prefer being consulted about issues by newsletter. Over 90% of consultation questionnaires stated that they read the newsletter and that it provided most of the information they required. In order to create a more localised service we will investigate the viability of Housing Officers producing neighbourhood newsletters to provide information on issue that may be more relevant to the tenants.
- Alongside newsletters the tenants overwhelmingly indicated that they preferred to be consulted by written communication. We will investigate our writing style to ascertain whether it meets the 'Plain English Campaign' and make changes where necessary.
- We will, as appropriate, ensure that meetings for tenants are held in accessible locations and at times convenient for those wishing to attend.
- We will provide any information we produce in different languages or formats at the request of the service user or when Linstone is aware of the service users needs.
- The Act obliges Landlords to have due regard to representations made by tenants or tenants groups within reasonable timescales in accordance with our Complaints Policy and Customer Care Policy.
- The association also aims to encourage Equal Opportunities and eliminate any forms of discrimination. We attempt to ensure that tenants, residents and service users are not excluded from actively participating on the grounds of sex or marital status, race, ethnic origin, disability, sexual orientation, age, or any other personal attributes, including beliefs and opinions, such as religious beliefs or political opinions.
- We will involve tenants, residents or service users before formulating any policy in order for consultation to start with a "blank" agenda. This will alleviate any concerns that the landlord is guiding the participation to meet its own agenda.
- The basic standards for consultation have been agreed with tenants and Tenant's and Residents Groups and published via this Tenant Participation Strategy. Linstone will continue to make relevant information available to help tenants take an informed and effective part in the consultation and participation process.

SECTION 6

REGISTERED TENANTS ORGANISATIONS

The concept of Registered Tenants Organisations (RTOs) is central to the entire Tenant Participation process. The aim is to give Tenants Associations a recognised role in the Tenant Participation process.

Linstone is obliged to hold a register of all RTOs which must be a public document and available for inspection at reasonable time. As a minimum the document will contain:

- Name of the Group
- Area of Operation
- A Contact Address (this may be a box number if the group wishes)
- Other Information, such as meeting timetable, web site address, etc.

RTOs must be made aware that this information will be publicly available.

Linstone proposes to put these details on our website; to hold a hard copy at our office and advertise its existence on our front counter display; to promote the groups in our newsletters/handbooks.

Criteria for Registration

The Scottish Ministers have set out the criteria for registration of an RTO. These criteria aim to balance the interests of the RTO with those of the landlord and to ensure that RTOs are accountable to members.

- The organisation must have a publicly available written constitution, which sets out:
 - its objectives and area of operation
 - how people can become members
 - the way the committee will operate
 - how the business of the organisation will be conducted
 - how decisions will be reached democratically
 - how funds will be managed
 - arrangements for public meetings
 - arrangement for an AGM
 - how changes can be made to the constitution

- The organisation must have a committee that:
 - (after the first year) is elected at an AGM
 - has at least 5 members
 - can co-opt others onto the committee during the course of the year
 - has elected office bearers
 - holds meetings that are open to any member of the organisation
 - can demonstrate that decisions are reached democratically
 - promotes equal opportunities

- The organisation must operate within:
 - a defined geographical area
 - an area which includes housing stock owned by Linstone
 - a local community (or at a national level if the Landlord operates across Scotland)
- For mixed groups there should be a mechanism in place within the Registered Tenant Organisation for the views of the tenant to be sought, for example, through tenant only surveys or tenant sub-committees.
- Membership of the organisation and participation in its activities must be open to all eligible tenants within its defined area of operation.
- The organisation must have appropriate accounting records and present an annual financial statement to the AGM.
- The organisation must demonstrate that it is committed to representing the interests of its members and that, when consulted by the Landlord, it can represent the views of the Landlords tenants in its defined area of operation.

Mechanism for Registration

To register with Linstone as an RTO the group will require to provide:

- a written constitution
- names and contact addresses of committee members
- identity of committee office bearers
- a map and description of the area of operation
- a statement setting out how the organisation plans to engage with its members and how it will represent their views

Initially groups who are interested in registration should contact their Housing Officer or the Service Development Manager for advice and an application form.

Linstone will provide a copy of the 'Mechanism for the Registration of Tenants Organisations' document which covers the criteria for registration together with a model constitution covering the basic requirements (should this be required). We will also assist with membership policies and advice on equalities.

The group will be given details of a named staff member who will provide advice, assistance, and support in relation to all parts of the registration process.

On receipt of an application for registration and the necessary supporting documentation, the request will be presented to the Housing Management Sub Committee for approval.

If successful registration will apply for a period of up to 3 years with a re-registration at or around 1st April. Re-registration may also be required outwith this should there be significant change in constitution, membership or area of operation.

Appeals

A tenant organisation may appeal against Linstone's decision to:

- not register the organisation; or
- remove the organisation from the Register; or
- not remove the organisation from the Register.

Initially the request to reconsider any decision will be dealt with in line with Linstone's complaints procedure, i.e to Housing Services Manager, then Director then full Committee.

However, should the group still feel dissatisfied there is an ultimate right of appeal to the Regulation and Inspection Division of Communities Scotland who are operating on behalf of the Scottish Ministers.

Removal from the Register

Removal from the RTO register can be instigated by either Linstone or the group themselves.

Clearly the procedure will vary depending on reasons or circumstances surrounding why removal is being considered, e.g if group is disbanding then the procedure and timescales will be different from a situation where Linstone requires removal due to non compliance with constitution. In the latter case Linstone will give guidance and assistance to help the group avoid removal if possible, together with timescales for implementing any necessary change. At the time of registration Linstone will clarify with the group the various circumstances under which they or the Association can seek removal from the register.

An Association can be removed from the Register for the following reasons:

- The Association no longer fulfils the registration criteria; or
- The Association ceases to exist; or
- There is a mutual agreement between Linstone and the Association

Linstone will notify an Association 28 days in advance of them being removed from the Register of Tenant's Organisations

Amendments to the Register

If the Association's constitution, office bearers, membership or area of operation changes they are required to inform Linstone. Providing that these changes do not affect the Association meeting the registration criteria, the Register of Tenants Organisations will be amended accordingly.

Existing Groups

It is possible that existing Tenant and Resident associations may choose not to register as an RTO – preferring a more informal approach.

Linstone will however ensure that each of our current groups are aware of how to register. This will be done in two main ways:

1. A copy of the leaflet covering the new Tenant Participation rights under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 will be sent to each group.
2. A Linstone staff member will attend either a public or committee meeting of each group to explain the registration process and timescales.

Where groups choose not to proceed individual tenant members will still have their right to be consulted. Linstone may also decide, where appropriate, to consult with non registered groups but this would be outwith the statutory provisions of the Act.

We will continue to consult with existing Tenants' and Residents Groups who do not wish to become Registered Tenants Organisations. For funding purposes if a non-registered group meets the registration criteria, but declines to be registered then Linstone will provide the same financial support and assistance that Registered Groups receive.

Any non-registered groups who do not meet the registration criteria will still be offered support and assistance from Linstone staff to allow them to participate, although no financial grants will be provided unless there is a valid one-off reason agreed at the discretion of the Operations Director. We will continue to encourage any existing groups to participate with a view to becoming a Registered Tenants Organisation at a later date.

Tenancy Management Agreements

Section 55 of the Housing (Scotland) Act sets out arrangements for a Tenant Management Co-operative to enter into agreement with Linstone to manage their housing stock. Either all or some of the Associations housing functions can be subject to a Tenancy Management Agreement and transferred to the Tenant Management Co-operative.

Scottish Ministers must approve tenant Management Co-operatives (as well as terms of agreement between Linstone and co-operative) before it can proceed. Where the Association refuses to make such agreement, the Tenant Management Co-operative has a right of appeal to ministers.

SECTION 7

ASSESSMENT OF RESOURCES REQUIRED

It is difficult to assess what resource requirements there may be to provide effective participation, however, below is we have estimated the main costs to the Association for the financial year 2003/04.

As this is an evolving process the cost of participation are likely to change over time. We will make amendments and develop aspects of this strategy based on our experiences during the forthcoming year.

Within our financial budget for the forthcoming year there are the following elements included that are classified as Tenant Participation.

Tenant Participation	£1,000
Newsletters	£9,000
Tenants Handbook	£3,500
Tenants Association Grant	£2,700
Tenant Satisfaction Survey	£4,000
Website Costs	£3,000
Postage	£2,000
Contact Points	£9,000
Annual Report	£3,500
Total	<u>£37,700</u>

The largest single expense to the Association is likely to be staff time, which is impossible to quantify effectively. We have estimated that the overall cost of providing effective Tenant Participation, including the above figures and staff time, to be in the region of £60,000 for the financial year 2003/04.

Staff responsible for Tenant Participation

We recognise that participation is an important aspect for all staff within Linstone and that it is necessary that they take account of service users' views in completing their day to day work.

The Directors of each department are responsible within their own department for maintaining that the Tenant Participation principles are complied with.

Overall responsibility for ensuring that effective participation occurs is directed by the Operations Manager via the Housing Services Manager and Service Development Manager. This department will take the lead role in monitoring and reviewing our performance in meeting our participation objectives.

SECTION 8

OBJECTIVES OF TENANT PARTICIPATION STRATEGY

Linstone is of the opinion that participation will benefit the Association, its tenants and residents and the wider community. Our strategy seeks to meet the following objectives: -

Objective 1 - Statutory Objectives

- Provide all new tenants with a Tenancy Agreement.
- Before their tenancy begins provide the tenants details about their entitlement to Right to Buy, and the obligations likely to be incurred should they exercise that right.
- Provide New Tenants with copy of our Complaints Procedure.
- Provide all tenants with summarised version of our initial Tenant Participation Strategy.
- Provide to all tenants, on request, information about:
 - The terms of their tenancy
 - Rent and Service Charge Policy
 - Our policy and rules about
 - ❖ Applying for housing
 - ❖ Allocation of houses
 - ❖ Repairs and maintenance
 - ❖ Our arrangements for taking decisions about housing management and services
 - ❖ Our Tenant Participation Strategy
 - ❖ Whether there is a Right to Buy and if so, on what terms and the consequences of exercising Right to Buy

Objective 2 - Provide Service Users with Regular Correspondence

- Publish an **Annual Report** and send to all tenants
- Continue to produce good quality up-to-date Tenants Handbook and produce Owners Handbook.
- To promote membership of the Association.
- To have tenant representation on the Management Committee of the Association that creates opportunities for tenants to participate and provide input into how the services are provided.
- Ensure all written correspondence is available in appropriate formats and meets 'Plain English Campaign'.
- Publish various newsletters and make available in variety of formats on request.
i.e.Braille Large Print, tape or different languages.
 - Send out organisation newsletter on every four months covering issues, which are relevant to tenants and the community.
 - Send out owners' newsletter with their accounts on a twice-yearly basis.
 - Implement the creation of neighbourhood newsletters to provide more localised form of communication to tenants.
 - Investigate the implementation of an applicants newsletter / information leaflets / questionnaires to advise of allocation issues.
- Regularly keep website up to date with relevant information and offer opportunity for consultation within website.

- Update any computerised information displays and literature / notices in office on monthly basis.
- Provide all tenants with a summarised version of our appropriate policies, including Tenant Participation Strategy.

Objective 3 - Registered Tenants Organisations and other groups

- Establish a ‘Register of Tenants Organisations’ within our geographical areas of operation.
- Offer “set up” grant funding to any new groups that meet the registration criteria.
- Offer annual grant funding to all Registered Tenant Organisations
- Offer ‘one-off’ grants to Registered Tenant Organisations where appropriate.
- Assist in the publicising the Registered Tenant Organisations to their geographical area.
- Provide support and assistance to members of the Registered Tenant Organisations.
- Support and encourage the development of new Registered Tenant Organisations.
- Housing Officers will attend, where appropriate, meetings which may involve service users of the organisation.
- Housing Officers will attend any Registered Tenants Organisations or Tenant and Resident Associations in their designated area, unless there is no tenant involvement.
- Where appropriate arrange focus groups, public meetings, open days or Resident Conferences to discuss particular issues.

Objective 4 - Continuous Improvement

- As continuous improvement is one of the five key objectives of our Internal Management Plan Linstone will allocate appropriate resources will be accessed as required to meet this objective.
- To have a Housing Association that creates opportunities for tenants and residents to participate in the management of their houses.
- Carry out regular tenant and service user satisfaction surveys on all aspects of housing and housing related services.
- To promote greater tenant and staff satisfaction and maximise relations between tenants and staff
- To encourage a culture where staff and tenants are seen as “equal partners” by learning from and sharing each other’s experience before reaching appropriate decisions.
- Regularly benchmark our performance in Tenant Participation with other similar Housing Associations.
- Develop a set of performance indicators for tenant participation within Linstone.
- Provide basic training on participation to all staff within the organisation and more specialised training to the relevant staff members who have participation as a primary function within their job remit.
- Undertake a yearly assessment of the resources required facilitating Tenant Participation and incorporating these assessments into financial budgets.
- Encourage participation to lead to an improved service delivery through more effective and efficient housing management and housing related services.

SECTION 9

TRAINING

We have recently undertaken a staffing structure review in an effort to improve the Associations service delivery. Following on from this a Training / Skills Gap audit will shortly be carried out. When this audit is completed a training plan will be produced for all staff individually and the Association collectively for the new financial year.

The office is closed one afternoon per month for regular staff training and development. Specific training issues identified from the audit will be targeted on these training days. Staff also attend various courses / seminars delivered by external consultants / trainers in an effort to keep up to date with changes in policy and practice and improve their skills.

Linstone is committed to the personal development and encourages staff to uptake appropriate further education courses by providing financial contributions and day release.

We regularly provide in-house and external training to Management Committee to facilitate their participation and decision making in deciding on the policies of the Association. The Management Committee are subject to a Skills / Training audit to assess their skills and prepare an appropriate training plan to reduce any gaps.

As stated earlier in this document Linstone staff will continue to liase with service user groups to identify, encourage and support them to establish appropriate training requirements. The various options regarding types of training will be open to consultation with tenants and may be changed over time.

SECTION 10

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The production of this Tenant Participation Strategy is the start of the process to develop ongoing participation. This strategy will be subject to ongoing review in consultation with staff and service users. These reviews will identify how well tenant participation is working in Linstone, identify any gaps within our strategy and make proposals to review strategy.

We will initially monitor our strategy against Communities Scotland's Performance standards detailed below. Also we will monitor our tenant participation performance against the objectives detailed in Section 8 of this strategy. By undertaking our performance monitoring in this way we will be able to provide Linstone with a robust form of self-assessment criteria.

Communities' Scotland's Performance Standards

Guiding Standard 2.2

We have published and are implementing a sound strategy for encouraging and supporting tenants, residents and service users to participate actively in all areas of our work. We support tenants who take an active interest in managing their homes.

Communities Scotland Self Assessment Criteria

Detailed below is a list of self assessment questions Communities Scotland provides on their website that landlords should be asking when attempting to deliver effective participation to our service users. These self-assessment questions will be used, together with our previously stated objectives to ensure that we are assessing our achievements in meeting effective participation.

The following self-assessment questions are about the outcomes from participation:

- Can we demonstrate that outcomes from tenant and service user participation influence the way we deliver services?
- What are the views of tenants, tenants' organisations and other service users on the level and range of opportunities available to participate in both strategic and operational aspects of our housing services?
- How well do we perform against our own targets for tenant and service user participation?

The following self-assessment questions are about the management and support systems, which aid the delivery of tenant and service user participation:

- Are there opportunities for all service users (i.e. tenants and other service users) to participate?
- Do we consider equalities issues in our approach to participation?
- Do we operate in accordance with legislative requirements and statutory guidance, particularly in relation to:
 - our tenant participation strategy;
 - our approach to consulting on specific proposals; and
 - our approach to registered tenants' organisations?
- Is our approach consistent with the principles outlined in the Scottish Executive's Tenant Participation Codes of Practice?
- Does our participation strategy articulate clearly our aims, objectives and targets for tenant participation?
- Has our strategy been developed in full consultation with tenants, tenants' organisations and other service users?
- Do we ensure tenants and other service users have access to information to enable them to decide what level(s) and type(s) of participation suit them best?
- Do we make available an appropriate level and range of resources to support tenant and service user participation, and are decisions on resourcing made following consultation with local tenants and taking into account local circumstances?
- Do we utilise a range of participation, consultation and information techniques appropriate to our operating context, and do we employ them methodically and systematically?
- Is a genuine commitment to participation evident throughout our organisation's policies, procedures and actions, from the governing body or elected members and senior management through to front line staff?
- Are there clear staff responsibilities for participation?
- Do we have effective working relationships with tenants, tenants' organisations and other service users?
- Where disputes occur, do we handle them openly and constructively?
- Is our monitoring, evaluation and review framework robust, and does it cover processes, structures, outcomes and resources?