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LOCAL TENANT PARTICIPATION STRATEGY



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1. INTRODUCTION

Tenant Participation and Community Development has always been at the heart of Cymdeithas Tai Clwyd's (CTC) work and we are very proud to introduce our first Tenant Participation Strategy which has been developed by the Tenant Participation Working Group (TPWG) whose members include tenants, staff and Board Members from the Association.

At all levels CTC recognise the benefits that TP can bring to the whole association and to the tenants and communities we serve. Through involving our tenants in all aspects of the Association's work we can achieve tenant focus service improvement, develop the capacity of individuals and communities and become more accountable to our tenants.

The development of this strategy will help us build on the success of previous TP activities and it gives us a clear vision for the future. In addition this strategy will play an important part in supporting our wider community development activities. We recognise that this is a working document that will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that we continue to work in partnership with our tenants in order to provide the best service possible.

2. HOW THE STRATEGY HAS BEEN DEVELOPED ?

The TPWG was established in February 2007 and members of the group include tenants, Board Members and staff from each department within the Association. The first task for the group has been to work on developing the Local Tenant Participation Strategy (LTPS) with support and training from TPAS Cymru. During training the group looked at current Tenant Participation activities and structures, how the Association currently monitors and reviews its activities, what resources are available, and how mainstreamed Tenant Participation is throughout the Association. Although the group used the Welsh Assembly Government's National Strategy as a guideline we focused mostly on the needs of our tenants and the communities we serve. The TPWG have now completed the draft LTPS and Action Plan and consultation with staff and tenants took place between May and August 2008 and the results have been incorporated into the Action Plan.

Statement from Mr Leslie McDavid, a tenant member of the TPWG:

"Working with staff to develop the LTPS gave us an excellent chance to have a real sense of partnership working, and to go some way towards breaking down the 'them and us' barriers and work together as part of a team".



3. WHAT ARE OUR MAIN AIMS AND OBJECTIVES?

Cymdeithas Tai Clwyd's Corporate vision is to:

'Assist, in partnership with statutory and voluntary agencies and local business, in sustaining and enhancing the local communities of North Wales by the provision of high quality homes and services. Provide support and assistance to residents and encourage participation in our work'.

The LTPS strategy supports this corporate statement and our vision is:

'to improve both the quality and delivery of the services we provide and the communities we serve by working in partnership with our tenants and residents through a range of involvement opportunities'.

To help us achieve this vision we have identified the following objectives:

- ◆ To improve all services within the Association through greater involvement of tenants.
- ◆ To increase the involvement of all our tenants to include under represented groups by ensuring appropriate opportunities and support for involvement.
- ◆ To develop a culture of involvement across the whole organisation so that planning, decision making and review processes are open to genuine tenant input.
- ◆ To support and encourage projects that will improve the quality of life for the wider community by working in partnership with tenants, residents and other agencies.
- ◆ To further enable tenants to have the skills and confidence to get involved through the provision of appropriate training, capacity building and resources both financial and non-financial.
- ◆ To increase effective monitoring, and evaluation of tenant involvement activities and provide feedback on the outcomes of these to our tenants.
- ◆ To promote tenant participation amongst tenants who receive support to live in their own homes in order to improve the service we provide, to both tenant and service provider.

4. SCOPE OF PARTICIPATION

Cymdeithas Tai Clwyd is committed to making sure that there are ongoing opportunities for all tenants to participate in the design and delivery of their housing services. To ensure consultation and participation is maximised a range of methods will be used and developed. This flexible approach will offer tenants a choice and will enable them to participate at a level and a time that suits them best. The scope of our tenant participation services is framed by the following:-

Tenants Needs and Wishes

CTC will regularly survey tenants to identify their preferred method of involvement with the association and develop structures to ensure that these preferred methods are met. The TPWG will also regularly review the effectiveness of these methods to identify positive practices and ensure that they continue to meet the needs and wishes of our tenants.

Mainstreaming Participation

Participation activities that we undertake are integrated with all our landlord functions and help identify and drive forward service improvements. The TPWG has Board Members and staff from each department within the organisation who currently act as Tenant Participation representatives within their own departments.

Responsive

There are a number of ways that you can participate which have been developed to suit your needs and aspirations, involving formal and less formal mechanisms.

Involvement by all groups of tenants

Existing participation methods make it possible for all tenants to get involved, including those identified as being hard to reach. Additional support will be provided for tenants whose individual circumstance make participation difficult.

Community

Our participation activities will extend further than those of our landlord function, and work in partnership with organisations to support tenants and residents to engage in wider issues within their community and environment.



Sustainability in the future

The Tenant Participation Strategy will be regularly reviewed by the TPWG to ensure that its aims and objectives continue to be relevant and to ensure that the resources dedicated to tenant participation are efficiently and effectively used.

5. PARTICIPATION OPTIONS - HOW CAN TENANTS GET INVOLVED?

5A) DIFFERENT LEVELS OF PARTICIPATION

To ensure participation and consultation is maximised a range of methods will be used. This will offer choice to tenants and enable them to participate at a time, level and in a form that suits them best.

These methods include:

⇒ Keeping Tenants Informed

CTC will provide information on all relevant issues and developments in the service in a clear, high quality format.

We currently keep tenants informed in a number of ways. Some examples include:

- ◆ Tenants newsletter 'Cadwyn'
- ◆ CTC Tenancy Agreement – all tenants are provided with a copy of their tenancy agreement which sets out the rights and responsibilities of tenants and CTC.
- ◆ Tenants Handbook
- ◆ CTC Annual Report
- ◆ Policy and Procedure documents which tenants can request (complaints procedure, allocation policy etc)
- ◆ Information leaflets – a range of literature on a number of housing related topics is on display in our offices.
- ◆ CTC website
- ◆ Meetings between officers and tenant and resident groups
- ◆ Tenant Visits

All our documents are available in both Welsh and English and can be made available in community languages, Braille, large print or audio on request.

⇒ Consultation

CTC will provide opportunities for tenants to express their views and be consulted on decisions and developments that effect them as tenants. We will consult with tenants as early as possible so that they have the chance to be involved in the policy-making stage rather than the policy implementation stage. Feedback from consultation will be recorded so that it can be fed back to tenants to highlight the impact the consultation process made on the final decision. Some examples of consultation at CTC include:

- ◆ Sounding Board Group (Tai Clwyd 50 Club)
- ◆ Consult with tenant and resident associations
- ◆ Consult with individual tenants
- ◆ Consult where appropriate with Community Groups
- ◆ Hold meetings on specific issues with individual tenants, residents and the wider community
- ◆ Home visits where requested
- ◆ Postal Surveys and Questionnaires
- ◆ Road Shows, Fun Days and Tenant Days
- ◆ Area Forums if appropriate
- ◆ Phone consultation

⇒ Participation

We will provide tenants with opportunities to influence developments and contribute to decision making. We believe that Tenant Participation can benefit the service tenants receive as well as the wider community. We also recognise and support local tenant and resident groups who are working to improve their quality of life within their own community.

⇒ Control

We will provide opportunities for tenants to be involved within the Governance structure of the Association and invest in and support that process. We will also provide opportunities for tenants to take control of CTC functions if they wish to, i.e. delegated control over specific budgets.



5B) RANGE OF DIFFERENT METHODS

Cymdeithas Tai Clwyd will employ a range of methods to involve and notify tenants of issues that affect them and to provide feedback. We will endeavour to provide opportunities across various levels of participation so there are higher level opportunities and not just information and consultation levels if that's what some tenants want.

Effective means of information, consultation and participation could include:

- ◆ Publishing information through tenant newsletters
- ◆ CTC website provides information on the associations activities
- ◆ Tenants Handbook
- ◆ Annual conference for tenants and partners/stakeholders
- ◆ Road Shows
- ◆ Support for tenant groups
- ◆ Providing training for tenants
- ◆ Consulting on policies through Tai Clwyd 50
- ◆ Undertaking best value review groups
- ◆ Member of TPWG
- ◆ Becoming a Tenant Board Member
- ◆ Questionnaires and surveys
- ◆ Becoming a Mystery Shopper

5C) RANGE OF FORMATS AND LANGUAGES

CTC will provide information in various formats and languages according to the needs of tenants and will enable participation in activities through support to meet disability or language needs.

6. WHAT RESOURCES WILL BE PROVIDED

The Association currently has three members of staff working within the Community Development Team, 2 full time and 1 part-time, dedicated to Tenant Participation and Community Development projects. In addition to staff we have a Community Development and Tenant Participation budget, (2008/2009: £33,000) which is reviewed annually. We can also provide non-financial support to tenant and resident and community groups, such as photocopying and translating facilities. The budget will be reviewed quarterly by the TPWG to ensure value for money .

7. TRAINING

We recognise in order for tenants to have a real influence, appropriate training and support needs to be available. We will offer a variety of training opportunities including the following:

- ⇒ Academic
- ⇒ Internal
- ⇒ Attendance at conferences seminars
- ⇒ Work shadowing
- ⇒ Exchange visits

Training on Tenant Participation will also be provided to all staff and Board members within the organisation to ensure that it is properly mainstreamed throughout the Association's work.

An annual training needs analysis will be implemented and will be reviewed by the TPWG annually to ensure value for money.

8. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION ACTIVITIES

The Community Development Team are committed to support tenants and residents to have a better influence within their community and encourage initiatives aimed at making their communities safer, more harmonious and generally nicer places to live. We will work with the whole community including young people to encourage projects that make a real difference to people's lives. We will endeavour to work in partnership with other organisations and groups on regeneration initiatives in order to support and increase the community's capacity and increase the services we provide.

9. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

CTC will ensure that all parts of its Tenant Participation Strategy will fully comply with CTC's Equality and Diversity Policy. All our participation activities will be planned on an inclusive basis to enable all our tenants to participate in them.



10. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

This strategy will be a working document subject to continuous review by the TPWG to ensure it is meeting objectives and achieving targets. An Annual Report will be presented to the Board of Management. These reviews will consider a range of information and feedback options exploring:

- ⇒ How participation took place?
- ⇒ What arrangements were made to encourage participation and maximise accessibility?
- ⇒ How were tenants views represented in the outcome of participation?
- ⇒ How were the results of participation fed back to participants?
- ⇒ What timescales were allowed for effective participation to take place?
- ⇒ The cost of developing effective tenant participation
- ⇒ Did tenants receive adequate information, support and resources to allow them to participate effectively?
- ⇒ How happy are tenants with the range of participation options available to them? How could this be improved?
- ⇒ Did tenants have the opportunity to get involved regardless of age, ethnic background, language, sexual orientation, particular needs or location?

The Action Plan will be used as a basis for measuring tenant involvement activities. By monitoring these key actions we will ensure that the strategy is implemented effectively.

The strategy will be externally evaluated by independent consultants every 3 years.