



Tenant Participation Strategy

March 2026

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1. Foreword

Orkney Islands Council recognises the importance of listening to local people and working together with local communities. We are committed to providing high-quality services to our tenants, and tenant participation is a vital part of that process. It is important that we understand our tenants' views on the housing services they experience, so that we can aim to improve their experience of that service. In order to achieve this, we are committed to encouraging and supporting tenants to become involved in decisions that affect them.

The challenges of encouraging tenant participation in a rural and island area are significant. In order to address this, we have developed a strategy that aims to encourage tenants to engage in a way that works for them, and opportunities to participate include a range of methods to allow flexibility around the amount of time tenants are able to give.

With this in mind, we have carried out a consultation with our service users on our existing Tenant Participation Strategy and used the feedback to develop a new one. Our new Tenant Participation Strategy and aims to ensure that tenant participation in Orkney delivers benefits for our tenants as well as the Council.

Our new Tenant Participation Strategy will set out how, over the next five years, we will look to further improve our relationships with tenants and provide modern approaches to tenant engagement.

Councillor Gwenda Shearer.

Chair of Education, Communities and Housing Committee.

2. Glossary of terms

The Council is generally referred to as 'we' or 'us' in this Strategy. Tenants and residents are normally referred to as 'you', 'your' or 'they'.

3. Introduction

3.1. What is tenant participation?

The *National Strategy for Tenant Participation – Partners in Participation (1999)* explains that “effective participation gives tenants an opportunity to influence decisions about the housing services they receive, and it helps landlords deliver better services that focus on tenant priorities. Effective participation is, therefore, an important component of meeting the expectation to continuously improve landlord performance”.

Tenant participation is underpinned by:

- The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 which requires all social landlords to actively develop and support tenant participation and have a tenant participation strategy.
- The Scottish Social Housing Charter which sets out the standards and outcomes social landlords should be delivering to all tenants, regardless of where they live.

4. Background

We understand the challenges of encouraging and delivering effective tenant participation in a rural and island area. To ensure that the opportunities we provided allowed as many of our tenants and service users to participate as possible, we carried out consultation using a variety of methods and engagement opportunities. This also helped us meet our service user's various needs and overcome barriers. The consultation opportunities offered consisted of feedback sessions, both online and in person, along with surveys to gather feedback on our Tenant Participation Strategy 2021-2026. These surveys were provided both online, and as paper surveys with freepost return envelopes. Feedback from the consultation sessions and the survey has been included in this updated version of the strategy.

5. Aims and objectives

We believe that tenants have an essential role to play in delivering high-quality services, and this Strategy aims to:

- Provide tenants with a variety of opportunities to participate and influence the delivery of our housing services in a way that suits your needs.
- Overcome any barriers tenants could face regarding participation, including financial and geographic
- Encourage and support participation from traditionally 'hard to reach' tenants, including young people, migrants, Black and minority ethnic groups,

Gypsy/Travellers, disabled people, LGBT+, homeless service users, and the digitally excluded.

6. Strategy principles

Over the course of this Strategy, we will improve your opportunities to be informed of, engaged in, and consulted on services, influence decisions and raise our performance. We will do this by:

- Making our participation more inclusive.
- Using our day-to-day contact with you to engage with you and seek your views.
- Expanding membership of our Residents' Panel, Armchair Panel and Residents' Groups.
- Planning consultation through our Consultation Calendar.
- Providing information on service standards, performance, and costs when consulting.

We will involve you in deciding what information is produced and how it is presented.

We will engage with you in a way that is based on mutual trust and through opportunities you enjoy taking part in.

Our information will be useful and appealing to you and will be:

- Shared in a variety of ways (website, social media, on paper, etc.) and sources (email, text, newsletter, information displays). Information may also be shared with you through one off events, either online or in person.
- Plain and simple language.
- Well designed.
- In the languages and formats that our tenants and service users require.

We will consult you on strategic plans, policy reviews and service standards and targets, annual rent setting and performance in a variety of suitable ways to gather views and ideas that will shape decisions.

We will develop a culture of participation in our service and respond to your changing needs. We will do this by:

- All staff will receive training on our participation aims and their roles.
- Our Tenant Participation Officer will set out a plan of anticipated areas to be reviewed over the course of this Strategy.

We will inform, engage, consult, and use what you tell us when making decisions. We will work to empower you to shape what is important to you, share your feedback and show how you are making a difference.

We seek greater value for money (VFM) – effective, economic, and efficient services – and higher satisfaction with our services and the place you live and see tenant participation as a vital part of achieving this.

7. Benefits of tenant participation

Tenant participation has many benefits for both tenants and the Council, including:

- Allowing tenants and service users to have a say on decisions that affect their homes and communities.
- Strengthening communication between landlord and tenants/service users.
- Helping to increase value for money due to feedback from tenants and service users.
- Delivering better services that reflect tenants' needs.
- Helping to develop and increase tenants' skills through participation opportunities.
- Increasing both tenant and service user satisfaction with the Council's services.

8. The legal framework for tenant participation

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 established a statutory right to participation and required us to:

- Provide a range of information to you.
- Have a Tenant Participation Strategy.
- Have a registration scheme for tenant organisations to register with us and keep a publicly available register of Registered Tenant Organisations.
- Consult you and Registered Tenant Organisations on a range of housing and related services that affect you and take account of your views within a reasonable timescale.

2002 Regulations set out the process and roles of landlords and Registered Tenant Organisations.

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 established the:

- Scottish Social Housing Charter (the Charter) which sets out what you can expect from us.
- Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) which regulates, monitors and reports on Council housing services and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to ensure the Charter is delivered.

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 extended our requirement to consult and consider the views of applicants for housing and homeless persons on allocations, transfers, and homelessness services.

Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 empowered community bodies through the ownership or control of land and buildings and strengthened community voices in decisions about public services.

9. National Context: Regulation and Performance Management

The Scottish Social Housing Charter standards and outcomes that are most relevant to this Strategy are:

Equalities

Social landlords perform all aspects of their housing services so that:

- Every tenant and other customer has their individual needs recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housing services.

Communication

Social landlords manage their businesses so that:

- Tenants and other customers find it easy to communicate with their landlord and get the information they need about their landlord, how and why it makes decisions and the services it provides.

Participation

Social landlords manage their businesses so that:

- Tenants and other customers find it easy to participate in and influence their landlord's decisions at a level they feel comfortable with.

(From Scottish Social Housing Charter, 2017).

The Charter makes it clear that the outcomes on equalities, communication and participation should be reflected across all our activities. When these outcomes are achieved, our performance is better.

Annual Report on the Charter (ARC) our performance is monitored and reported annually to the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR). The SHR reports on landlords' performance in achieving the outcomes and standards in the Charter, including tenant participation and acts to assist landlords to achieve the required standards and outcomes. Tenant satisfaction data, including communication and participation data in the ARC is taken from a robust Tenant Satisfaction Survey (TSS), conducted at least once every three years. We choose to conduct the Tenant Satisfaction Survey once every two years to ensure that the service remains current with tenant's views on the service.

The Council's Housing Service Annual Report is made public each year to advise tenants of our annual performance by the end of October. This is our Annual Performance Report to Tenants.

10. Local Context

The Orkney Community Planning Partnership brings together the main public sector organisations with the voluntary and business sectors to solve problems no single agency could resolve themselves.

Orkney Partnership's Community Engagement Strategy is guided by its Strategy for Communication and Community Engagement and Community Consultation and Engagement Guide. We have adopted the consultation and engagement guidelines developed by the Orkney Partnership. The guidelines are regularly updated to reflect new learning and best practice.

This Tenant Participation Strategy has been developed to ensure working with tenants and customers remains a core part of our business. It underpins the approach to customer involvement throughout Orkney Islands Council.

11. Scrutiny and Performance Management

Since the Charter was established, there is an increasing awareness of our performance and its use to benefit customers. Across Scotland, tenants are increasingly taking up opportunities to analyse and challenge performance and decision making through tenant scrutiny, and we want you to have opportunities to learn about, discuss and use our performance to improve what is important to you. We will work with you decide if formal tenant-led scrutiny is of interest to you.

12. How We Will Engage and Inform You

12.1. How will we engage you?

- Tenants and service users can engage through your routine contact with our staff, or focus groups.
- Council House tenants of Orkney Islands Council may engage by joining the Armchair Panel or the Residents' Panel.
- Both tenants and residents of local areas may form either a registered or unregistered Residents' Association. These groups may be engaged with on matters relating to the Service or their local area.
- Tenants and service users may be engaged with through organised events, either online or in-person.
- Some engagement opportunities will be formal and others informal, some will be arranged by us while others will be instigated by you, residents' and other community groups, and organisations.

We will:

- Assist with reasonable expenses for care, meals and transport incurred to engage with us (if agreed in advance) and act to minimise barriers to you engaging.
- Expand, use, and support our Residents' Panel. The Panel will offer a variety of ways to engage, including surveys, focus groups, local events, etc., and some will be carried out online.

- Expand use and support our Armchair Panel. The Armchair Panel will offer tenants the opportunity to join in engagement opportunities from the comfort of their own home, in a way that suits them.
- Encourage and support residents' groups and help them become Registered Tenant Organisations, if they wish, and assist them to address their local issues.
- Engage with you on issues that are important to you that relate to our services and aid you to engage with others if we are not directly involved in delivering the service.

12.2. How will we inform you?

We will provide various options to keep you informed and tailor these to your preferences. These options will include, but are not limited to:

- Day-to-day interactions with you, both in-person and by phone.
- Housing News is published three times per year and is available in print and digital formats – tenants are given the option to receive the Newsletter as a paper copy via post, or as a digital version online.
- Council website.
- Social media channels which, at present, are Facebook.
- Formal and informal online and in-person events.
- Text messaging.
- Via letters and emails.
- Tenant Handbook.
- Information leaflets.

13. What We Will Consult You on, How and Two-way Feedback

13.1. What we will consult you on

We will consult you on housing services, policies, procedures, and performance. The main areas are housing service standards and targets and policies, including:

- Allocations and homelessness.
- Rent setting and collection.
- Tenancy management.
- Anti-social behaviour.
- Housing repairs and maintenance service.
- Capital works programme.
- Communal area maintenance.
- Tenant participation.
- Strategic development, including the Local Housing Strategy.

We will consult on Council and community partnership priorities, including (but not limited to):

- Refuse collection and recycling.
- Community safety and policing.

- Environmental improvement.
- Fuel efficiency.
- Life-long learning and employment.
- Income and benefits.
- Transport.
- Health improvement.
- Equality.

The above lists are not exhaustive. If an issue is important to you, we will help you to be informed, engaged, and consulted.

13.2. How we will consult you

We will consult you in a variety of ways giving you a greater choice. This includes as an individual, via our Residents' Panel, Armchair Panel and through residents' associations and other community groups.

We will link our service information (standards and targets), performance and costs in our newsletter when undertaking consultation, so you can have a complete picture when engaging with us and responding to consultations.

We will:

- Provide information, so you are well informed about our service standards and targets, performance, and costs.
- Advertise consultation opportunities widely and offer ways to respond that meet your needs.
- Give adequate time for you to consider your views and respond. There will be a minimum of four weeks from when information and consultation questions are made public to when responses need to reach us.
- Agree an annual Consultation Calendar to give notice and not overburdened you with requests. The dates and subjects will take into consideration:
 - o Set requirements (i.e. annual rent setting).
 - o When a contract is to be renewed, or the law changed, or we are reviewing policy and procedures.
 - o Service performance raised by the Annual Return against the Charter, the Tenant Satisfaction Survey or other indicators.

We will develop a range of consultation methods which may include

- Online, phone, and in-person surveys.
- Focus groups.
- Tenants' forums.
- Conferences and other events.

13.3. How we will feedback

We will:

- Build your trust by being open and honest and publish your views and how you have influenced decisions and strengthened your community via our website, newsletter and social media.
- Publish a consultation's outputs and how they influenced decision making on our website, newsletter and social media.

13.4. How you can give us feedback

You can feedback your views on issues that aren't covered by formal consultation etc. by:

- Emailing housing@orkney.gov.uk
- Phoning 01856 873535.
- Writing to: Housing Services, Orkney Islands Council, School Place, Kirkwall, KW15 1NY.
- Our compliments and complaints procedure.

14. Working with the Residents' Panel, Tenants' and Residents' Groups Registered Residents' Associations and the Armchair Panel

14.1. The Residents' Panel

The Residents' Panel is shared with Orkney Housing Association Limited. Our Residents' Panel will be advertised at every opportunity and will be the primary method of engaging with and consulting our tenants. We will not include non-tenants on consultation activities that are specifically a tenant issue such as the annual rent setting.

All our tenants can become Panel members by completing a membership form on our website, with staff, at any event or via a survey.

Once you have joined, you will be advised of all engagement and consultation opportunities and the results of activities.

You will remain on the Panel, unless you ask to be removed or are no longer a tenant.

Residents' Panel members will adhere to the Code of Conduct.

14.2. Registered Resident's Associations (sometimes known as Registered Tenant Organisations)

We refer to our Groups as Residents' Associations as they contain members of different tenures, including homeowners, Council tenants and tenants who rent privately. We will assist residents' associations that wish to become registered. This assistance may include:

- Providing practical support, help with letters, leaflets and newsletters, and meeting arrangements.

- Providing a start-up grant and ongoing financial assistance to enable committee members to enhance their skills and enable effective participation.
- Providing Associations with support in completing the application for the annual grant which may be used towards the running costs associated with their group.
- Referring Associations to external bodies that may be able to provide further help with setting up their association, constitutional matters and the general running of their group.
- Providing staff assistance in response to specific requests and on routine, constitutional and record keeping matters.

We will also work with any unregistered groups and support them in their work. Support to these groups could include staff time or practical assistance such as producing a newsletter etc.

See our [Policy and Procedure for Registering Tenants' Organisations](#) for further information.

14.3. The Armchair Panel

The Armchair Panel was created to facilitate engagement and participation with harder to reach groups. The Armchair Panel provides tenant members with the opportunity to engage in consultation opportunities from the comfort of their own home. Members can choose a method of engagement to suit them, including paper, telephone and online methods.

All our tenants can become a member of the Armchair Panel by completing the relevant membership form. This form is available on our website, or a paper copy is available by directing a request to our Tenant Participation Officer.

During the sign-up process, you will be required to indicate your preferred method of engagement, along with your preferred method of contact.

Once members have joined, they will be required to sign a 'Code of conduct' form and adhere to its requirements.

All members will be notified of consultation and engagement opportunities in advance and will be offered the chance to take part. Members must notify our Tenant Participation Officer if they wish to take part in a particular opportunity.

You will remain a member of the Panel unless:

- You indicate to us that you no longer wish to be a member.
- You are removed from the Panel due to misconduct or some other reason in line with the relevant procedure.
- You are no longer a tenant of Orkney Islands Council.

15. Resourcing Tenant Participation

We currently resource tenant participation by funding the part-time employment of a Tenant Participation Officer. An action plan will be developed in order to maximise

their impact as well as involve a greater number of staff in tenant participation, as appropriate, through their existing roles.

In addition, the following costs may apply:

- Training (for tenants, staff and elected members).
- Hiring meeting rooms.
- Cost of tea/coffee etc.
- Cost of crèche/care facilities.
- Out of pocket expenses.
- Consultation costs.
- Travel expenses for tenants attending meetings.
- Printing and posting newsletters and other information.
- Grants to help new and established tenant organisations.
- Access to IT and support networks.
- Staff time.
- Attendance at conferences/seminars.

We will aim to provide a start-up grant and ongoing funding to recognised residents' groups.

A separate budget exists for the purposes of resourcing our Tenant Participation Services. Funding arrangements sit within our Financial Regulations and the overall budget available for Tenant Participation.

Separate policies and procedures exist in respect of funding available for residents' groups.

We recognise that to ensure the successful implementation of our Strategy, sufficient resources need to be made available. We will review our budget annually and the level of funding required to effectively implement the Tenant Participation Strategy.

Annually, the resources available to deliver our Strategy will be reviewed.

16. Training

We will invest in training to ensure that staff can facilitate tenant participation. We will also invest in training to ensure tenants can participate.

17. Equal Opportunities to Participate

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 introduced responsibilities relating to equal opportunities and tenant participation/customer involvement. Specifically, we are required to:

- Consider the needs of equalities groups, to involve under-represented groups.
- Ensure that any barriers to participation are minimised.
- Ensure that Registered Tenant Organisations promote equal opportunities, and criteria for registration makes it accessible to all tenants (see Policy and Procedure for Registering Tenants' Organisations).

- Registered Tenant Organisations must promote equal opportunities in their communities and act to involve excluded groups.

We are committed to treating people respectfully, fairly, and equally across all our services, and tackling discrimination and harassment in all our activities. Inclusive involvement underpins our Strategy's aims, objectives, and actions, and we prioritise engaging with hard-to-reach groups.

Involving all customers is our aim.

Some groups of tenants and other customers are hard to reach and often are under-represented in community involvement, including:

- Young people.
- Migrants.
- Black and minority ethnic groups.
- Gypsy/Travellers.
- Disabled people.
- LGBT+.
- Homeless service users.
- The digitally excluded.

We will offer all tenants the opportunity to become involved and are committed to removing barriers and we will do this by:

- Holding meetings:
 - o In venues that are accessible, convenient, and secure for you.
 - o At times that take account of your preferences.
- Assisting with reasonable costs of creche or care facilities on request.
- Assisting with reasonable travel costs for customers to attend events we host on request.
- Providing learning opportunities, so you have appropriate knowledge and skills and providing specialist assistance as required.
- Offering contact numbers charged at local rates, email addresses, and freepost returns on surveys.
- Ensuring you can access written and statistical materials.
- Making interpreting facilities available, when requested/known to be needed, and induction loops available in all our offices.
- Using translation services (including online options) to assist in communication at meetings, when writing if you request it or we know you find reading English difficult, and during service requests/visits.
- Using braille and large print on request/when we know someone has sight difficulties.
- Ensuring adequate funds are provided to develop the key issues agreed with customers.
- Giving all our tenants the option to receive the Housing Newsletter in a way that suits them, either digitally via email, or as a paper copy via post.

We aim to build on our approach in involving under-represented groups to gain their views on services. The core group of tenants who actively participate regularly have

an older age profile. Diversity in the age of involved tenants will give us a better understanding of needs and aspirations.

During the life of this Strategy, we will encourage engagement with young people and younger households, applicants for housing and new tenants and refugee and migrant communities.

We will do this by:

- Supporting our residents' groups to embrace under-represented groups, helping to integrate them into local communities and offering them opportunities for involvement.
- Inviting all new tenants to take part in our various forms of tenant participation, including the Armchair Panel, Residents' Panel and Residents' Associations.
- Increasing digital opportunities, including social media, to inform, engage, consult, and use our services.
- Offering flexible times to attend events and activities to better fit your household's responsibilities.
- Actively seeking out opportunities to engage 'where you are' and activities targeted at you.
- Accompanying you or, where possible, arranging experienced tenants to accompany you to your initial Registered Residents' Association meetings, consultation activities and events.
- Working with schools and colleges to provide appropriate information on housing options, law, services, tenants' responsibilities and work experience with the Service and career opportunities.
- Inviting applicants for housing and new tenants to join our Residents' Panel.
- Making our Tenant Participation leaflet, and other publications, available to those applying for housing with us using digital opportunities, including social media, to reduce language barriers and using Google Translate to translate letters as well as at interviews and meetings, when seeking translation and interpretation services could be a barrier.
- Making our Tenant Participation leaflet, and other publications, available in your language and other alternative formats, on request.
- Engaging and consulting with refugee and migrant community groups and institutions.

We have embedded the Equality Act 2010 in our service delivery, and an equality impact assessment has been completed for this Strategy. No adverse impact or affect was identified on particular group(s) or people.

18. Developing the Strategy

The draft Tenant Participation Strategy was considered by the Committee in June 2021. A consultation was undertaken following this which included:

- Consultation via the newsletter and Council website explaining the draft Strategy and encouraging interest in the Residents' Panel.
- Gathered responses to the draft Strategy via:

- o Staff's conversations with customers.
- o An online and paper survey.
- o Electronic/In person events.

All responses will be available on our website.

Following the consultation process this finalised revised Tenant Participation Strategy will be presented to our Education, Communities and Housing Committee in March 2026.

The final Tenant Participation Strategy 2026 to 2031 will be publicly launched and made available via our website.

19. Consultation Plan, Calendar and Timings

Each January, we will set out our Consultation Plan and publish a Consultation Calendar on our website. This will establish subjects and timing for issuing information, methods, and invitations.

We consult our tenants on rent setting every three years and we consult with all our new tenants on an annual basis. We will also seek feedback on our Annual Report to Tenants. It is anticipated that there will be opportunities to consider communal areas and maintenance during the spring/summer to allow estate walkabouts in certain areas.

Consultations will be timed to allow our newsletter to include:

- Advertising of activities.
- Information (including standards, targets, performance, and costs) relating to the topic.
- Armchair consultation opportunities (with staff and by phone, post and online).
- Local activities/events.
- Feedback on consultations undertaken.

Our staff will be given information so they can:

- Answer questions or direct you accordingly.
- Gather views as they go about their day-to-day duties.
- Encourage you to engage in tenant participation, attend any events and respond to surveys etc.

The mix of activities/methods will depend on the subject but will include opportunities to respond:

- Through housing staff members.
- By post or email.
- To attend local drop-in sessions or meetings.

Registered Residents' Associations /other tenant/resident groups will be invited to respond to relevant consultations.

Appropriate additional advertising of surveys, drop-in sessions and meetings will be undertaken via our website, local groups, social media, community notice boards, newsletters and press.

Local Registered Residents' Associations, community groups, partner organisations and other Council services will be invited to attend local drop-in sessions or meetings and to speak to local people.

Every opportunity will be taken to gather members for our Residents' Panel and Armchair Panel, and to promote our Tenant Participation Strategy.

20. Strategic Action Plan

With input from tenants, an annual Strategic Action Plan will be developed in order to deliver this Strategy's aim and objectives.

The Strategic Action Plan will link to a planned calendar of participation activities, as well as the Consultation Calendar and plan. It will also contain actions, including, but not limited to, to:

- Improving information about tenant participation.
- Improving how we communicate about participation opportunities.
- Ensuring participation methods meet tenants' needs.
- Establishing consultation processes.

21. How We Will Develop Services with You and Exploring Formal Tenant-led Scrutiny

21.1. How we will develop services with you

We will develop services with you by:

- Linking existing and proposed services with information on costs, performance, service standards and targets.
- Short-life working groups will be established from Resident Panel members to shape services, standards, and targets.
- These working groups will use the experience of Residents' Panel members, outputs of consultation, performance data, results from tenant satisfaction surveys, questionnaire results, comments, compliments and complaints and staff experience to develop services.

21.2. Exploring formal tenant-led scrutiny

Formal tenant-led scrutiny aims to improve organisational performance and the quality and standard of services that we provide for tenants. A tenant scrutiny group could:

- Agree what tenants will be consulted on, when, what methods will be used and the purpose of the consultation.

- Share what resources they believe are needed for successful tenant participation.
- Review the Strategic Action Plan annually and review priorities.
- Develop a framework for measuring value for money.

Over the course of this Strategy, we will work with you to explore formal tenant-led scrutiny. We believe that by producing performance information along with service standards, target and costs within engagement and consultation opportunities and in short-life working groups, the basis of tenant-led scrutiny can best be established.

22. Tenant Participation Strategy Monitoring and Review

Monitoring and reviewing this Strategy will ensure that it achieves its aims and delivers better opportunities to inform, engage and consult with service users to develop services. This Strategy informs and drives our work and is flexible, so we can adapt to any change.

Responsibility for the monitoring and review of this Strategy lies with the Service Manager (Housing, Homelessness and Schoolcare Accommodation).

Our management team will review progress on the Strategic Action Plan annually and communicate this to tenants and service users as relevant.

We will monitor the resources and support needed to deliver our Tenant Participation Strategy annually.

The Strategy and Strategic Action Plan will be responsive to local circumstances and adapt to meet local needs.

We will develop formal performance indicators to monitor this Strategy's success and report on these annually.

To show levels of diversity, we will monitor Residents' Panel members against the nine protected characteristics as outlined in the Equality Act 2010:

- Age.
- Disability.
- Gender re-assignment.
- Marriage and civil partnership.
- Pregnancy and maternity.
- Race.
- Religion or belief.
- Sex.
- Sexual orientation.

In addition, we will determine whether they are:

- Homeless service users.
- A Council tenant.
- An owner occupier living within a former Council scheme.

To show any increase in tenants'/residents' groups, we will record the number of Registered Tenant Organisations, other tenants/residents' groups and other community groups we engage with.

To evidence an increase in engagement and consultation opportunities along with interest in them, we will monitor the number:

- Of activities we undertake.
- Participation by activity types.

To show satisfaction with our engagement and consultation activities, we will undertake feedback surveys at activities and an annual survey (online and by post) of Residents' Panel members.

Appendix 1: Registered Tenant Organisations' Process



Policy and Procedure for Registering Tenants' Organisations and Residents' Associations

Draft for Orkney Islands Council

March 2026

1. Introduction

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 provides rights for tenants and duties for landlords. These include:

- Every Local Authority and Registered Social Landlord must have a tenant participation strategy for 'promoting participation of tenants....in relation to management of housing and related services'.
- As a result of this legislation, Tenants' organisations can now formally register with their landlord and have a right to be consulted on issues that affect tenants.

We recognise the importance of active tenants and residents and the positive influence that this can have on the services delivered by the Council.

This document will outline the:

- Background.
- Process for registering a Tenants' Organisation (or Residents' Association).
- Criteria for registering a Tenants' Organisation (or Residents' Association).
- Removal from the register.
- Process for appeals.
- Groups that do not want to register.
- Complaints.

2. Background

What is a Registered Tenants' Organisation?

Registered Tenants' Organisations (RTOs) are independent groups, set up mainly to represent tenants' interests in relation to housing and services. A Tenants' Organisation is comprised of members who are [Council house] tenants.

What is a Residents' Association?

A Residents' Association is a group formed by volunteer members of a local community. The group is referred to as a 'Residents' Association (RA), because it may contain members of different tenures, including, Council tenants, individuals who rent their home privately and private homeowners. This differs from a Tenants' Organisation who is comprised of tenant members only. Members of a Residents' Association and RTO are likely to:

- Focus on issues affecting to their local community.
- Represent tenant interests in relation to housing and other related services.
- Work to improve areas of the community they live in.
- Engage with us on matters that might affect their local area.
- Be consulted with on matters affecting or are likely to affect their local community.

Residents' Associations may also be referred to as 'Residents' Groups'. Registered Tenant Organisations are tenant groups that have formally registered themselves with us in line with the relevant procedure.

Why have a Registration Process?

Registration will give such tenants and residents' groups rights to be properly recognised by us. It ensures that we ask for, and pay attention to, the views of tenants and residents' groups, especially in relation to housing policies, housing conditions and housing related services.

This is a right for tenants and residents' groups. Groups do not have to register but it is beneficial to do so.

Registration also gives tenants and residents' groups the opportunity to show that they are open, democratic and accountable.

What are the Benefits of Registration for RTOs and RAs?

Landlords must:

- Ask RTOs / RAs what issues they want to be consulted on.
- Make arrangement for obtaining and considering the views of RTOs.
- Notify RTOs / RAs of intent to make proposals or changes in relation to housing management, housing policy, housing conditions and related services.
- Give RTOs / RAs information about proposals under consideration.
- Allow RTOs / RAs time to consider draft proposals and put forward their views.

We will continue to include tenants from areas covered by RTOs and RAs in their engagement and consultation activities.

How often must groups register?

Registration lasts three years from the point of registration. Groups should let us know if any details change e.g. office bearers, boundary constitution or if the group becomes inactive during that three-year period.

3. Process for Registering a Residents' Association/Tenants' Organisation

Groups wishing to become registered should complete an application form ([Annex A](#)). Application forms are available on our website at www.orkney.gov.uk or from any member of staff.

Completed forms should be returned to the Tenant Participation Officer at housing@orkney.gov.uk

Once the application and all the necessary supporting information has been received, we will respond to the application within 20 working days.

The Register of a Residents' Association / Tenants' Organisations is a public document that will be on display in the public area of our offices and on our website. An RA or RTO may use our contact point as a public display to protect their members' privacy, and we will pass on any communications we receive.

4. Criteria for Registration of Tenant's Organisations / Residents' Associations

To register, a tenants' and/or residents' group must meet all the following criteria through a publicly available written constitution that sets out:

- Its objectives and area of operation.
- How to become members of the organisation.
- The way the committee will operate.
- How the business of the organisation will be conducted.
- How decisions will be reached democratically (a statement should be provided, setting out how the organisation plans to engage with its members and how it will represent their views).
- How funds will be managed and how any remaining funds will be distributed, if the group ends.
- Arrangements for member meetings (minimum of two open meetings per year, one of which can be an Annual General Meeting (AGM)).
- Arrangements for an AGM.
- How changes can be made to the constitution.
- Its commitments to equal opportunities.
- How the group can be dissolved.
- Its commitment to the promotion of the housing and housing related interests of the tenants of the Council.
- The group must have a committee that:
 - o After the first year, is elected at an AGM.
 - o Has at least three members.
 - o Can co-opt others on to the committee during the year.
 - o Has elected office bearers.
 - o Holds meetings that are open to any member of the tenants' groups.
 - o Can demonstrate that decisions are reached democratically.
 - o Acts to promote equal opportunities.

The tenants and/or residents' group must operate within an area, which includes housing stock owned and managed by us. If non-Council tenants are part of the group, it must seek to distinguish our tenants' views from other members views on issues specifically relating to tenancy matters.

5. Removal from the Register

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 states that an RTO can be removed from the register in any of the following circumstances:

- The Tenants' Organisation no longer meets the registration criteria; or
- The Tenants' Organisation ceases to exist or does not operate; or
- Tenants' Organisation no longer wishes to be registered.

If we wish to remove a group from the register, we will only do so after attempts are made to discuss the reasons for removal with representatives from the group. Support will be offered where requested to assist the group to meet its registration criteria.

If a group wishes to be removed from the register, they must submit this in writing with their reasons. We will take appropriate steps to ensure the group's members agree with being removed from the Register and advise the group whether removal has been agreed.

Removal from the register will take place 28 days following written notification to the group from the Council that explains:

- The reason for removal.
- Timescale for removal.
- Information on the appeal process.

We will keep a record of any RTOs that are removed from the register for five years.

6. Process for Appeals

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 states that a tenants' organisation may appeal against a landlord's decision:

- Not to register the organisation.
- To remove the organisation from the register.
- Not to remove the organisation from the register.

The process for appeals is:

The RTO should write (or email) us, explaining its reason for appeal. Letters should be marked for the attention of the Head of Strategic Housing, Housing Operations and Homelessness.

On receipt, the Head of Strategic Housing, Housing Operations and Homelessness will acknowledge the letter within three working days and then pass this onto the Chair of the Education, Communities and Housing Committee.

Three members of the Education, Communities and Housing Committee will consider and decide on the appeal within 20 working days and advise the outcome to the RTO.

If the appeal is successful, we will reinstate the group to the register and inform the RTO in writing.

The law provides for a right of appeal to Scottish Ministers. Such appeals should only be presented after the Council's own appeals procedures have been exhausted.

7. Groups That Do Not Want to Register

A group may not want to register with us. Where this is the case, individual group members, as individual tenants of the Council, will still have the right to be consulted.

We, whenever appropriate and as a matter of good practice, will consult with non-registered groups. Consultation with such a group would remain out with the statutory provisions of the Act.

We:

- Will ensure that all our tenants have opportunities to get involved in our engagement and consultation activities in a way that suits them.
- Recognise that a range of options needs to be available to enable involvement, and we will promote options where possible.
- Value all forms of tenant participation equally and will ensure that support is available to encourage tenants to get involved.

8. Complaints

Complaints by an RTO/RA about the Council

We endeavour to provide a quality service, but if a group would like to make a complaint, it should follow our complaint procedure which is on our website, or available as a paper copy from any member of staff. Information about our Complaints Handling Procedure is available on our website:

<https://www.orkney.gov.uk/Council/C/complaints-procedure.htm>

Complaints about RTOs (or RAs)

Complaints should be made, in the first instance, to the RA/RTO's committee. If the complaint is not resolved satisfactorily, the complainant can request the assistance of an independent party, as outlined in the RA/RTO's constitution, who will assist in trying to resolve the matter.

If a complaint is made about an RA/RTO's failure to comply with the registration criteria, we will investigate this.

The RA/RTO will be notified in writing that an investigation will be carried out. The investigation will take no longer than 20 working days (unless there are exceptional circumstances) and the findings will be shared with the group's Committee.

9. Further Information and Support

We will assist tenants' and residents' groups that wish to become registered. This assistance may include:

- Providing practical support, help with letters, leaflets and newsletters, and meeting arrangements.
- Providing a start-up grant and ongoing financial assistance to enable committee members to enhance their skills and enable effective participation.
- Providing staff assistance in response to specific requests and on routine, constitutional and record keeping matters.
- Referral to external bodies who can help with establishing the group, constitutional matters or anything relating to the above.

We will also work with any unregistered groups and support them in their work. Support to these groups could include staff time or practical assistance, such as producing a newsletter, etc.

If we are providing financial support to an RA/RTO, it must have proper procedures to ensure that there is proper accountability for the control and use of funds e.g. annual audit, designated signatories etc. We will assist any RA/RTO to maintain these proper procedures.

10. Data Protection and Freedom of Information

Under the terms of the Data Protection Act 2018 and the UK General Data Protection Regulation, the Council needs to provide information about how people's personal data will be stored and describe what it will be used for. The Data Controller is Orkney Islands Council.

Orkney Islands Council will hold the personal data that you provide only for the purposes of managing the Register of Residents' Groups and Tenants' Organisations. The Scottish Government will occasionally ask the Council to pass on information, from our Register of Tenant Organisations to them.

If the Council wishes to use this data for any other reason in the future, we will inform you and you may have the right to object.

Under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002, people have a right to ask for recorded information held by the Council. Some information may be covered by the exemptions listed in the Act. If the Council does not provide you with the information you have requested, it must give full reasons for not doing so, and you have the right to appeal to the Scottish Information Commissioner. If you would like to request information, please email foi@orkney.gov.uk or write to Freedom of Information, Orkney Islands Council, School Place, Kirkwall, KW15 1NY.

Under Data Protection law, you also have a right to ask the Council to provide any personal information we hold about you. Information about how the Council will process your information and your rights is available, including asking it to provide your information, is available here: <https://www.orkney.gov.uk/Online-Services/privacy.htm>

Annex A – Application to become a Registered Tenants' Organisation

Please read the policy and guidance before filling in this form.

1. Name of group.

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2. Contact details of group (You may ask to keep this confidential, as the Register is a publicly available document. You can also choose to register your group with the Council Office as a contact address).

Contact name:		Position:	
Contact address:		Telephone:	
Postcode:		Email:	

3. Do you have a written, publicly available constitution?

Yes. ☐ No. ☐

Please enclose a copy of your constitution with your application. We cannot register a group without a recognised constitution. We can assist you to create and get a constitution agreed by your members, if you wish. If you do not have a constitution, and would like assistance to develop one, then please contact us and we will be happy to assist.

4. Does your organisation have a committee of at least three members who have been elected at your Annual General Meeting (AGM)?

Yes. ☐ No. ☐

Please provide a copy of the minutes of your initial public meeting or last AGM with the application form.

5. Please provide your Office Bearers' contact details.

Name:	Position:	Address:

Name:	Position:	Address:

6. Is your organisation committed to representing the views of the tenants and residents in your area?

Yes. ☐ No. ☐

Please tell us briefly how you will represent your members' views, e.g., the number of public meetings you will hold, newsletters you produce and how you publicise your AGM.

7. Checklist

Please ensure that you have included the following:

- Application form with all sections completed.
- A copy of your constitution.
- A copy of minutes from your last AGM.

8. Confirming Information

Please complete the section below to confirm that you are the person who has completed this application form on behalf of the Group, and that all the information about your Group is correct.

Contact name:		Position:	
Contact address:		Telephone:	
Postcode:		Email:	

Please return the completed application and relevant documents to the Tenant Participation Officer at housing@orkney.gov.uk