

Tenants First Housing Co-operative Getting Involved

What is this fact sheet about?

This fact sheet aims to give you a brief outline of the Co-operative's Participation Strategy which is about our commitment to involving Co-operative members in both running of the Co-operative and their local community. Full details of the policy are available on our website www.tenantsfirst.com or from our offices in Aberdeen and Peterhead.

What is a Fully Mutual Housing Co-operative and why get involved?

A fully mutual Housing Co-operative is owned and managed by its members for the benefit of its members. Fully Mutual means that only tenants or prospective tenants may be members of the co-operative and only members of the co-operative may hold a tenancy. This means that decisions are made by and on behalf of the people who are affected by them.

Tenants First is a non profit making organisations which provides housing at affordable rent levels for its members.

To ensure the co-operative is run in a way which benefits members and their communities we need your input. We need to know what you think of the services we provide, the quality of the accommodation you live in, and other concerns you may have. We are also interested to hear from you about areas where we provide a good service. Member participation and control lies at the heart of Tenants First and is fundamental to the way we do business.

How Can You Get Involved in the Running of the Co-operative?

At Tenants First we have a range of opportunities which allow members to participate at a level which best suits them. All of them are voluntary although expenses for example for travel and care arrangements are paid. Some of them involve attending meetings in the Aberdeen office, some in other localities and for some you don't even have to leave your own home.

Co-operative Committee Structure

As a member of the Co-operative, you are entitled to stand for election to the Committee of Management. Elections to the Committee of Management are held annually at the Co-operative's Annual General Meetings but vacancies can also be filled during the year.

The Committee of Management controls the Co-operative. It is responsible for the strategic direction and overall running of the Co-operative and employs all the staff of the Co-operative.

Some operational issues are delegated to Sub committees whose members are also elected at the Annual General Meeting. Currently the Co-operative has five sub committees, Audit, Customer Relations and Staffing, Finance and Corporate Services, Housing Management and Property Management and Development.

Involvement in the Committee of Management or its Sub committees is a good option for members who want to play a central role in the management and decision making of the Co-operative and who are prepared to commit themselves to participation in evening meetings. Each Committee meets on average eight times a year.

Residents Associations

The Co-operative believes that local Residents Associations can bring benefits to members and their communities. Residents Associations can help deal with local issues of concern and issues relating to the services you receive from the Co-operative. The Co-operative support Residents Associations in a range of ways including, providing staff time, arranging meetings, publicity and training. Financial assistance may also be made available.

We encourage Residents Associations to become Registered Tenant Organisations (RTO's) with the Co-operative. This gives you the right to be consulted by us in advance of any proposed changes to our policies or services.

Joining a Residents Association would suit members who are interested in issues which affect their local community as well as the Co-operative. Again you would have to commit to being on a committee and attending meetings but these meetings are held locally at a convenient place for the RTO e.g. a Sheltered Housing Complex.

Tenant Panel

The Tenant Panel is a list of members who have volunteered to be consulted from time to time by the Co-operative on how we develop our policies and procedures. Volunteering to serve on the Co-operative's Tenant Panel allows members to have their say without having to leave the comfort of their own home.

Consultations are usually carried out by post with the very occasional phone consultation. Topics sent to the Tenant Panel for their views recently have included the Allocation Policy and a DVD for new members.

Being a member of the Tenant Panel is a good option for members who wish to have a say on the Co-operative's policies and services but do not wish or cannot commit to regularly attending meetings.

Focus Groups

The Co-operative will set up a Focus Group when it wants to consult with members on a particular issue. Focus Groups may meet only once, or a few times but they are time limited and the Focus Group is wound up at the end of the specific consultation.

Taking part in a Focus Group would suit members who want to be involved in specific issues but don't want to or are unable to make a long term commitment.

Newsletter Editorial Panel

The Co-operative's Newsletter Editorial Panel is made up of a small group of members who review articles and decide what goes into the Co-operative's newsletter "Your Voice". On average we produce 3 newsletters each year, a Spring, Summer and Winter edition.

The panel members normally meet two or three times before each edition to discuss and decide which articles will be included. The editorial panel is supported by Tenants First Staff who will liaise with the publisher to organise the printing and delivery of the final copy.

Members who wish to join the panel just need to have an interest in what goes into their newsletter.

How do I get more information?

If you want to find out more, please contact Angela Reilly, Community Development Officer on 01224 628400 or email areilly@tenantsfirst.com