

# Tenants First Housing Co-operative

## Wider Role Policy

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## **1. Introduction**

Tenants First Housing Co-operative (the Co-operative) recognises that as well as good quality housing, its members want to live in strong and stable communities. Because this is about thinking more widely than just the housing we provide, we call it Wider Role. Our Wider Role Policy sets out how we plan to achieve this. We recognise that the people who know best what a community needs are the people who live in it. We will work alongside communities and support them in taking the lead in this process.

## **2. Policy Aim**

The aim of the Policy is to improve the communities and environments where members of the Co-operative live.

The key principles of our Policy are:

- We are committed to making Wider Role part of our core business;
- We believe that our members know best what their communities need and we will work alongside them to support them in taking the lead in this;
- We are committed to supporting and helping individuals and groups to gain the skills, experience and confidence they need to play a leading role in our Wider Role work;
- We are committed to making sure that our Wider Role work and benefits it brings are open to all our members and their communities;
- We are committed to working in partnership with other organisations where this is the best way to carry out our Wider Role work;

## **3. Objectives**

The Policy links in with the following strategic objectives in the Co-operative's Business Plan:

### ***Objective 2***

As a fully mutual co operative, to maximise the involvement of members and promote Co-operative benefits and principles

### ***Objective 3***

To promote sustainable inclusive Communities

## **4. Key Themes**

We believe that the key to successful wider role activity is the empowerment of our members and their communities. Our work with individuals will focus on activities which will provide opportunities for increased financial security; better employment prospects; and personal development through increased skills, confidence and experience. In our work within communities our focus will be on the development of environmentally, socially and economically sustainable communities.

#### **4.1 Member support**

We are committed to giving our members the advice and assistance they need. We will work with members to make sure they understand their rights and responsibilities, and to make sure they have the support they need to make their tenancies successful and to play a full role in their communities. We will work alone and in partnership with other organisation to develop projects which help to achieve this. Our current priorities for these are:

- money and budgeting advice;
- income maximisation;
- access to affordable credit;
- support for very vulnerable members;
- provision of affordable furniture;

#### **4.2 Development of Sustainable Environments**

We recognise that for our members their local environment is very important and can greatly affect how they enjoy their homes. We are committed to making sure that our activities contribute to the development of attractive and sustainable environments which meet the needs and aspirations of our members.

We will ensure that this is a key consideration in all our development activities. As well as planning the housing to be provided we will look at the wider environment we are aiming to create. In doing this we will focus on the following:

- creating attractive, safe and user-friendly open spaces;
- developing imaginative and stimulating play areas;
- developing Home Zones where people and vehicles share the road space safely and on equal terms;
- identifying how the arts and arts activities can contribute to place-making and the creation of strong and sustainable communities.

#### **4.3 Sustainable use of Energy**

The Scottish Government has recognised that emissions of greenhouse gases are having a detrimental impact on the global atmosphere and that there is a need to address this issue. In Changing Our Ways: Scotland's Climate Change Programme, the government has set targets for the generation of electricity from renewable sources and the reduction of carbon emissions. The Co-operative is committed to making an effective contribution towards this.

We will work in partnership with local communities to develop energy generating projects from renewable sources. We will ensure that such projects are supported by local communities, sensitively designed and financially sustainable.

#### **4.4 Social Enterprise**

Social enterprises are businesses driven by a social or environmental purpose. They are often community based and any profits they make are not distributed to share holders, but are used to achieve their social or environmental aims. Tenants First is a good

example of a successful social enterprise and we are committed to supporting the development of others.

We believe that good social enterprises can offer a wide range of benefits to people and communities. Being involved in the running of a Social Enterprise is a good way for people to increase their skills, experience and confidence. A Social Enterprise also offers training and employment opportunities and can help improve the local economy. A Social Enterprise can therefore bring real benefits to a community and help to make it stronger and more effective.

We will work in partnership with local communities to develop effective and sustainable social enterprises.

Where we are developing wider role projects which have the potential to generate income, we will seek to deliver these through social enterprise.

Our development of social enterprises will be based on the following key principles:

- They will be run as businesses, trading and generating income, and where possible, profits;
- Local communities will play a central role in their development and management
- They must be financially sustainable without a long term dependence on grant funding

#### **4.5 Equalities**

The Co-operative is committed to ensuring that everyone has an equal opportunity to access the services we provide and to play a full role within their community. We will develop projects and work in partnership with other organisations to achieve this. We aim to be proactive in directly engaging with equalities groups and will work with them to identify areas of activity where we can make a positive contribution to tackling the issues they face.

### **5. Working in Partnership**

The Co-operative recognises the value of working in partnership with other organisation in order to achieve the aims of our Wider Role Policy. We will investigate and identify potential funders for any wider role activities we carry out. These may include:

- Registered Social Landlords;
- Local authorities;
- Voluntary sector organisations;
- Social enterprises;
- The private sector.

### **6. Funding of Wider Role Activities**

The Co-operative recognises the need to take a flexible and imaginative approach to funding wider role activities. This will involve exploring a range of funding options which may include:

### **6.1 Grant funding**

For all our wider role activities we will investigate and pursue potential funders with the aim of securing the maximum possible level of grant funding.

### **6.2 Private borrowing**

Where appropriate, and depending on the nature of the activity, the Co-operative will fund projects through private borrowing. Prior to raising funds in this way, all possible steps will be taken to maximise grant funding. We will only fund projects through private borrowing where they are financially sustainable.

### **6.3 Sponsorship and donations**

Where appropriate the Co-operative will seek sponsorship and donations from the business sector to support our wider role activities.

### **6.4 Income generating activities**

We will seek to develop activities which generate income, which can then be used to support our wider role activities.

### **6.5 Funding by the Co-operative**

In some circumstances the Co-operative may decide to fund wider role activity itself. This may include revenue or capital funding. It is likely that any Co-operative funding would be to top up grant funding or private borrowing.

The funding of all the Co-operative's wider role activities will be done in compliance with the Co-operative's Funding Policy.

## **7. Managing Risk in Wider Role Activities**

The Co-operative will ensure that any risk associated with our Wider Role activities is properly managed. We will carry out a risk assessment of any project we are considering undertaking and monitor this throughout the project. Our risk management process will include consideration of an exit strategy for project in the event of grant funding being discontinued.

## **8. Community Grant Fund**

The Co-operative is committed to supporting the communities in which it operates. For this reason we have set up our Community Grant to provide financial assistance to help with projects which will benefit our members and their communities. Grants of up to £250 may be awarded to projects which meet the funding criteria.

## **9. Training**

Tenants First is committed to ensuring that members and staff have the necessary skills to ensure that our Policy is effective and successful. Training sessions on member participation and on our Policy will be included in training programmes for staff and committee members.

As part of our commitment to personal development, we will maximise opportunities for our members to be involved in the development and management of our wider role

activities. We will work with members to help them identify and source training they would benefit from.

## **10. Equal Opportunities**

The Co-operative will ensure that in implementing this Policy it will not unfairly discriminate against any individual, household or group on the grounds of gender or gender identity, marital status, on race grounds, or on the grounds of disability, age, sexual orientation, language or social origin, other personal attributes, including beliefs or opinions such as religious beliefs or political opinions.

## **11. Monitoring and Reporting**

The Co-operative recognises that its Wider Role Policy is likely to change over time, depending on the needs and wishes of co-operative members and their communities. We are committed to seeking members' views on our Wider Role work.

The Policy will be linked to the Co-operative's Business Plan. Wider Role objectives in the Business Plan will be monitored and reviewed regularly.

Regular reports on Wider Role work will be provided to the Co-operative's Senior Management Team and Customer Relations and Staffing Sub Committee.

The Co-operative's wider role activities encompass a wide spectrum of activities and impact on a number of functions within the Co-operative. Monitoring, evaluation and reporting will be carried out within this context.

We will take a flexible approach to monitoring and evaluation and use an appropriate range of quantitative and qualitative indicators to measure our performance against targets and outcomes.

The Co-operative recognises that it needs to measure the impact and performance of its wider role activities against a range of social, environmental and economic objectives, targets and outcomes. We are committed to exploring, identifying and developing effective methods of Social Accounting and Audit to ensure we are able to do this.

Progress reports on the Co-operative's wider role activities will be prepared for the Senior Management Team and Customer Relations and Staffing Sub Committee twice a year.

Reports on specific projects will be produced for the relevant Sub Committee at an agreed frequency and in an agreed format.

## **12. Review**

This Policy will be approved by the Staffing and Customer Relations and Sub Committee. It will be reviewed every three years unless amendment is prompted by a change in legislation, or monitoring and reporting reveals that a change in Policy is required sooner.

## **13. Legal Framework**

The Co-operative will ensure that all of its development activities meet the contemporary legal and regulatory requirements.

#### **14. Related Policies and Documents**

- Participation
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Strategic Development and Funding Plan
- Development Policy
- Funding Policy
- Community Grant Fund Criteria and Conditions