



THE MORAY COUNCIL

TENANT PARTICIPATION STRATEGY

2008-2012



Foreword: The Moray Council

“As joint Chair of the Policy Committee it gives me great pleasure to introduce The Moray Council’s second Tenant Participation Strategy to cover the period from 2008 to 2012.

The Moray Council has been committed to tenant participation for many years and recognises that tenants are at the heart of its Housing Services. Since our first Tenant Participation Strategy was published in 2003, we believe that we can evidence significant advances in the promotion of, and support to, tenant participation. The Council’s commitment to Tenant Participation is demonstrated by its decision in 2007 to establish a Housing Sub-Committee, which includes six tenant representatives. As far as we are aware, we are the only Council in Scotland to have taken this step. However, we recognise that this is an ongoing process. We have, therefore, welcomed the opportunity to review, with our tenants, our achievements since 2003, and to identify areas we can work together to further improve over the next four years.

We welcome the contribution that tenants make to the development of a strategy that can make a real difference to the way that the Council involves, consults, and informs tenants of key issues that affect people’s lives.”

Councillor Eric McGillivray
Chair of Policy Committee: Communities

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

Tenant participation can range from informing tenants of decisions that are made about their housing, to seeking their active involvement in these decisions. The Council recognises that as our customers, our tenants are crucial in helping us design and deliver quality 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 services.

The Council has long recognised the importance of tenant participation in the design and delivery of its Housing Services. A tenant participation structure has been in place since 1999. This structure enabled local tenants to form groups (Area Housing Forums) supported by Area Housing Teams and to nominate 3 representatives from each local forum to the Moray Council Tenants' Core Group. The Tenants' Core Group has been constituted since July 2002, which reflects the registration process outlined in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.

Our first Tenant Participation Strategy covered the period 2003 until 2006. This document is a revised Strategy to cover the period 2008 to 2012. The draft strategy was developed with input from staff and representatives from the Moray Tenants' Core Group, and circulated for comment in September 2007. This strategy has been amended to reflect comments received and the results of a recent Tenants' Survey.

Although we only produce this sort of document every few years, tenant participation is a continuous process which we regularly review. Tenants have been fully involved in many important decisions about the Housing Service. Councillors and staff are impressed by the ability and commitment of tenants who work with us.

The key part of the Strategy is the actions that we are going to take as a result of it, and an Action Plan is attached as **Appendix 1**.

Background to the 2003-2006 Strategy

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 required all landlords to produce a Tenant Participation Strategy. As part of the process of developing the Tenant Participation Strategy 2003-2006, the Council worked with the Moray Tenants' Core Group and Area Tenant Forums. Together with Council Officers, a consultative draft was produced. The Strategy agreed for 2003 to 2006 recognised that:

“The Tenant Participation Strategy is intended to be a “living document”, which all stakeholders continuously review, and one which continuously develops and grows, as their relationship develops. The strategy is a framework enabling all those involved in both the delivery of the Housing Service and its associated services, together with those who are the recipients or future recipients of the Housing Service, to work towards continuous improvement in the Housing Service”.

A number of principles influenced the development of the 2003 to 2006 Strategy. These were:

- Tenant participation requires a culture of mutual trust, respect and partnership between tenants, elected and committee/board members, and Housing Officers at all levels, working together towards a common goal of better housing conditions and Housing Services.
- Tenant participation practice should be seen as a continuous process where information, ideas and power are shared, common understandings of problems are strived for and a consensus on solutions is worked out.
- Good tenant participation allows all parties to contribute to the agenda. All participants need to have all the information necessary to consider issues properly; that information requires to be clear, timely and accessible and to take account of equal opportunities concerns.
- Good tenant participation requires the landlord to recognise the independence of tenants' organisations.
- Tenant participation must meet the requirements of the legislation surrounding equal opportunities. Good practice in participation removes barriers to effective participation arising from ethnicity, geographic location, special needs, language difficulties, learning difficulties, age, sexual orientation, disability, gender or belief.

Consultation of this revised draft Strategy confirms that these principles remain relevant and will, therefore, continue to underpin our revised strategy.

Preparing the 2008 to 2012 Strategy

The Strategy has been under regular review since it was agreed in 2003. It was finally reviewed in a report to Community Services Committee in October 2006. Tenants, Councillors and staff have been involved in these regular reviews and the outcomes of the reviews have influenced this strategy.

Joint working between tenants and officers of the Council has ensured that the majority of the objectives set down in 2003 were achieved. However, there are two areas that have not been taken forward:

- Service Level Agreements between tenant groups and the Moray Council -

Tenant representatives felt that, due to the continued on-going strong working relationships between local forums and area housing teams, it was not necessary to develop a formal Service Level Agreement.

- Identifying barriers for under-represented groups -

This is still an area that requires some work from the Housing Service and tenant groups. Work has started on this, with the Tenant Participation Working Group actively seeking representation from service users who are young or old or physically disabled or those from a black or ethnic minority background.

In September 2006, the Council engaged the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) to consider our strategy, in the context of the Scottish Executive's 2005 Guide to Successful Tenant Participation and best practice elsewhere. TPAS facilitated a workshop at the Annual Tenants' Conference in October 2006. The purpose of the workshop was to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the strategy and to inform revisions to the strategy.

The TPAS report found that "Moray Council has a clear and robust tenant participation strategy". However, it did identify areas where the strategy could be strengthened in relation to the number and diversity of tenants that participate. Its recommendations are largely reflected in this revised Strategy.

Strategic Aims – 2008-2012

The overall aim of the Council's Tenant Participation Strategy continues to be:

“to work with tenants to ensure the provision of a quality Housing Service in Moray”

In its first Strategy document, the Council sought to achieve this aim through six specific objectives. These objectives were supported by a detailed Action Plan, which formed the basis of the monitoring and evaluation of progress achieved.

Consultation on the draft strategy for 2008-2012 indicated continued support for these objectives. They are therefore reflected in this revised Strategy.

Objective 1: To support the growth of existing and new tenant groups in Moray.

Formal tenants groups remain an important part of the Council's Tenant Participation Strategy. The Council will continue to provide grants to registered tenant organisations to assist in funding the administration costs of these groups. More information on the current tenant groups is included in **Appendix 4**.

The Council welcomes and recognises the rights of both individual tenants and unregistered tenant groups to be part of consultation processes. The provision of support and encouragement is vital to the development of new groups and will continue to be provided by the Council outwith the statutory provisions contained in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001.

Objective 2: To develop and promote the role of tenants in the process of policy formulation, service review, etc.

The Council recognises that tenants have a key role in determining the future direction of the Council's Housing Services

The Council has already established a Housing Sub-Committee, to consider policies and issues arising from its landlord role. It intends to review the operation of the Housing Sub-Committee after one year (November 2008).

Objective 3: To enhance and improve the range and detail of information available to tenants and tenant groups across Moray.

The Council is legally obliged to explain how tenants will be kept informed. This Strategy recognises that some tenants will actively join Local Forums and participate collectively in the development of Housing Services in Moray. However, before tenants decide how they wish to be involved they need good quality information, which is accurate, up-to-date and easily understood. The Tenant Survey 2007 indicated that tenants wanted more frequent and more comprehensive information. Some tenants may prefer to have the opportunity to comment on the quality of service by responding to questionnaires.

Information will be available in different formats and languages on request to ensure it is accessible to all.

Objective 4: To develop training opportunities for Elected Members, staff and tenants across a range of housing activities.

Keeping up-to-date is essential for staff, Councillors and tenants. While some training specifically for tenants is appropriate, wherever possible joint training will be encouraged.

An annual training plan for tenants is part of the strategy. Where appropriate, tenant representatives can attend staff training courses. A joint training session for staff, tenants and Elected Members was held as part of the process of establishing the Housing Sub-Committee. The Annual Tenants' Conference provides a further opportunity for interaction between tenants, Elected Members and staff.

Objective 5: To ensure that tenant participation activities in Moray reflect the principles of equal opportunity and are accessible.

The Moray Council's equal opportunities policy underpins tenant participation. The Council is committed to taking all steps within its power to eliminate discrimination and to promote equal opportunities and good relationships amongst all communities.

The Council promotes equal opportunities for all service users irrespective of:

sex, gender identity, race, disability, religious belief, marital or civil partnership status, age, language, social origin, employment status, sexual orientation, political belief, responsibility for dependants.

All tenant groups have equalities statements in their constitutions, are against all forms of discrimination and seek to engage with minority groups. The Council and all our tenants groups recognise the value of all members of the community and equalities training will form part of the ongoing training for staff and tenants.

Many of the documents of the Council are available in a range of different formats and the Council uses the Happy to Translate initiative. The Council Housing Service maintains a register of tenants who require information in alternative formats e.g. large print.

All venues that are to be used for tenant participation should be checked for accessibility for people with mobility difficulties, including people in wheelchairs.

Objective 6: To monitor and review progress in achieving the aim and objectives of the strategy, jointly with tenants.

Tenant Participation is a continuous process that should be regularly reviewed. As a result we will ensure that mechanisms are in place to keep the Strategy under regular review and to formally review it annually. The outcome of this review will be publicised in the Tenants Voice and be accessible on the Council website.

The Tenant Participation Working Group will monitor the Strategy. This group consists of Officers and Tenants from the Core Group. It meets every 6 weeks to oversee the implementation of the Strategy. The Group links with the Tenants' Core Group and Housing Managers' meetings who regularly discuss how the Strategy is progressing

Every quarter a report outlining tenant participation activity over the 3-month period will be submitted to the Housing Sub-Committee.

Once a year, a formal review of the Strategy will be presented to the Housing Sub-Committee. The annual review will be a public document.

Updates on the Strategy and information on the annual review will be provided in Tenants Voice.

Objective 7: To encourage greater involvement of tenants that are not currently represented by registered tenant organisations or other tenant organisations.

Both the Council and the Tenants' Core Group are committed to undertake further work to increase the range and number of tenants who participate. The Council and our tenant representatives recognise that most tenants who attend forum meetings tend to be of similar ages and from similar backgrounds. There is an under-representation from people at both ends of the age spectrum and people from a minority ethnic background.

The Tenant Survey 2007 showed that only a minority of tenants would "definitely" be interested in getting more involved giving their views. We also recognise that a lot of these tenants will not attend Forums but would like to give their views to the Council on an occasional basis on a range of issues. To allow this to happen we intend to set up a tenant consultation register.

The Tenant Survey showed that the majority of tenants who wanted to get involved wanted this on a more informal ad hoc basis. We also intend using a range of different mechanisms to seek tenant views and encourage participation. Staff involved in housing improvements and repairs intend piloting a roadshow with members of the Core Group. The aim will be to talk to tenants about repairs and improvements and tenant participation. If this is successful then it will be rolled out to other parts of Moray.

Objective 8: To encourage the involvement of younger tenants

Younger tenants have not become involved in tenant participation and it is recognised that traditional methods of engagement will not work well with them. Staff and tenants' representatives intend arranging an informal evening event for younger tenants to ask how they would like to be involved and what sort of information they would like. Experience elsewhere has shown this to be an effective way of getting younger tenants involved.

After the discussions with the younger tenants we will plan how to involve younger tenants in the future.

Resources

It is a requirement of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 that the Tenant Participation Strategy details the resources required to support tenant participation. These resources are set out below. However, in addition to this funding the Council also devotes other money to Tenant Participation. This is difficult to quantify as many of the costs are met out of mainstream budgets. Examples of this are the cost of tenants attending Housing Sub-Committee and office administrative costs.

The Moray Council took the decision that tenant participation was a part of the normal duties of all officers in the Council Housing Service, rather than something done by specific tenant participation officers. Although we believe this is the best way to work, it does mean the time devoted by staff to tenant participation is not easily quantifiable.

Tenants also use offices for meetings and other services.

The Council has a Tenant Participation budget, which for 2008/09 is £25,100. This money is used to pay for the core costs of tenant participation including meetings, training and the publication of the Tenants' Voice newsletter. In addition, the Council's training budget has £1,000 specifically set aside to provide training for tenants.

The Council has agreed a budget of £180,000 for Area Forum identified environmental improvement works in 2008/09.

In addition to the finance provided by the Council, the Core Group has raised external funding to pay for the introduction of tenant internet sites, additional attendance at Conferences and the cost of the Tenants' Conference.

It is important that the Tenant Participation Strategy links with other plans and strategies and the key links are included in **Appendix 2**.

Action Plan

This Action Plan details the actions that are planned at the start of 2008. Tenants and staff will review these actions through the Tenant Participation Working Group. As a result, during the course of the strategies new actions will be agreed and some of the original actions stopped. The Housing Sub-Committee will be asked to formally review the Action Plan every year.

Ref	Action	Who Involved	Resources	Timescale	Desired outcome
Objective 1: To support the growth of existing and new tenants groups in Moray					
1.1	Offer support and guidance to tenants groups.	Housing Services	Housing Revenue Account budgets and TP budget	Ongoing	Tenant Groups operate effectively
1.2	Develop clear funding criteria for tenant groups including central funding for unusual expenses.	TP Working Group	TP Budget	Sept 08	Clear funding criteria exist.
1.3	Develop ways of working with tenants from RSLs	Region 2 tenant reps, Core Group, Service Development Team	To be identified	April 2009	An agenda for tenants in Moray.
Objective 2; to develop and promote the role of tenants in the process of policy formulation, service review etc.					
2.1	Tenant representatives on Housing Sub-Committee	The Moray Council, Forums	Within existing budgets	To be reviewed Autumn 08	6 Tenant representatives on Committee
2.2	Tenants to be involved in staff working groups, e.g. Housing Best Value	Housing Services, Core Group	No significant cost	Ongoing	Tenants influence Housing Service provision.
2.3	Tenants groups to be consulted during policy formation and service review	Service Development Team	No significant cost	Ongoing	Tenants influence Housing Service provision.

Ref	Action	Who Involved	Resources	Timescale	Desired outcome
2.4	Consult with tenants through newsletters and websites	Housing Service Core Group, Area Forums	Within existing budgets	Ongoing	Tenants are informed
2.5	Tenants Forums represented at Community Planning Area Forums	Tenants Forums	No significant cost	Ongoing	Tenants at the centre of local decision making
Objective 3: To enhance and improve the range and detail of information available to tenants and tenant groups.					
3.1	Develop tenant forum and core group websites	The Tenant Core Group	£10,000 grant from Communities Scotland to the Tenants Core Group.	Dec 08	Websites in place
3.2	Tenants' Voice newspaper to be produce twice annually. Local newsletters to be produced.	Service Development, Area Housing Teams	Tenant Participation Budget Housing Revenue Account.	Next Tenants' Voice (June 08), local newsletters by March 09	Tenants better informed
3.3	Consider enhancing information resources for tenants at area offices	Housing Service	HRA	Ongoing	Agreement on information to be displayed
Objective 4: To develop training opportunities for elected members, staff and tenants.					
4.1	Develop an Annual Training Plan for tenants	Core Group, TP working group, Service Development Team	No specific resources required	April each year	Tenants well trained.

Ref	Action	Who Involved	Resources	Timescale	Desired outcome
4.2	Facilitate joint staff/tenant training	Core Group, TP working group, Service Development Team, training group	Training Budget, TP Budget	Ongoing	Efficient use of training budgets. Better understanding of each others roles and responsibilities and how we can work together to improve Housing Services
Objective 5: To ensure tenant participation activities reflect equal opportunities and are accessible.					
5.1	Carry out an impact assessment on tenant participation	Service Development Team, Core Group	No specific resources required	Timescale to be set in April 08	Assessment complete with action plan which is reviewed to ensure we are meeting the equalities agenda
5.2	All tenants' groups to have equal opportunities statements within their constitutions	Core Group Forums	No specific resources required	Ongoing	Statements in place for all groups (currently achieved)
5.3	Venues used for Tenant Participation accessible.	Housing Service, Core Group, Forums	No specific resources required	Ongoing	Disabled tenants can attend all TP activities
5.4	Housing Services material to be available on request in different formats and languages	Housing Service	HRA	Ongoing	Tenants can understand information.
5.5	Develop profile of the communication needs of tenants	Housing Service	No specific resources required	Ongoing	Tenants can understand information
5.6	Equalities training for tenant representatives	Housing Service, Core Group	Training Budget	Ongoing	Tenants groups open to all minority groups.
Objective 6: To monitor and review progress, jointly with tenants					
6.1	TP Working Group to meet 6 weekly	Housing Service, Core Group	Within Service Development Budget	Ongoing	Regular review of Tenant Participation Strategy.
6.2	3-monthly activity reports to Housing Sub-Committee	Service Development	Within Service Development Budget	Ongoing	Committee aware of performance.

Ref	Action	Who Involved	Resources	Timescale	Desired outcome
		Team			
6.3	Produce annual report reviewing progress and revise strategy on annual basis	Service Development Team	Within Service Development Budget	Ongoing	Strategy evolves to meet identified needs.
Objective 7: To encourage greater involvement of tenants that are not currently represented by registered tenant organisations or other tenant organisation.					
7.1	Pilot joint roadshows with home improvements in areas that do not have forums	Core Group, Capital Programmes	HRA	June 08	New Forums or tenants who are interested in being consulted.
7.2	Set up a tenant consultation register	Service Development Team	No additional resources required	June 08	Method to consult other tenants.
7.3	Advertise the register in Tenants' Voice	Service Development Team	No additional resources required	June 08	Increased numbers on register.
7.4	Undertake a 3-yearly tenants' survey	Housing Services	HRA	2010	Housing Service aware of tenants views.
7.5	Undertake customer satisfaction surveys for repairs, new tenants and other areas where appropriate	Housing Services	HRA	Ongoing	Housing Service aware of tenants' views.
7.6	Hold an annual tenant conference	Core Group	HRA and external funding	Sept 08	More tenants involved.
7.7	Consider alternative ways of encouraging tenant involvement	Tenant Participation Working Group	No direct resources required	Ongoing	More tenants involved.
Objective 8: To encourage the involvement of younger tenants					
8.1	Organise informal evening meeting for younger tenants	TP Working Group, Core Group	Tenant Participation	Oct 08	Engagement with younger tenants

Ref	Action	Who Involved	Resources	Timescale	Desired outcome
8.2	In the light of consultation at the informal meeting decide on future methods of involving younger tenants.	TP Working Group, Core Group	Tenant Participation	Mar 09	Engagement with younger tenants

Links to Other Strategies

It is important that the Tenant Participation Strategy links in with other strategies of the Moray Council and partner agencies. The three most important links are mentioned below.

Community Plan

The Community Plan is the overarching plan that is produced between The Moray Council and partner agencies. The second Community Plan is in place which runs from 2006 to 2010.

The Community Plan is intended to help the process of delivering better services to the public through better collaboration between the service providers and by involving the public more effectively in our decision making. The overall aim of the Community Plan is:

"To increase the quality of life and develop the well-being of everyone in Moray".

The two main principles arising from the Community Plan are:

- making sure people and communities are genuinely engaged in decisions, which affect them; allied to
- a commitment from organisations to work together, not apart, in providing better public services.

As part of the Community Planning process, 8 Local Neighbourhood Forums have been set up to cover secondary school catchment areas. The Forums bring together representatives from community organisations and residents to address priority issues identified through local consultation. Tenant forums are represented in the Neighbourhood forums. Local Community Action Plans will be implemented and progress reported to the Steering Group.

Local Housing Strategy

The Moray Council produced its first Local Housing Strategy (LHS) in 2004. Its purpose is to set out how we intend to tackle housing problems within Moray. It is in place for five years from 2004-2009. An update to the LHS is published annually.

The strategy is a planning document. It sets out what needs to be done to alleviate the housing problems in Moray, the resources that are needed and the time in which the various tasks need to be completed.

The strategy is concerned with the whole of Moray and is relevant to all types of housing – not just Council housing. Although the Council has produced it, it is a result of working together with other housing providers, services within the Council, agencies such as NHS Grampian and the public.

Strategic Objective 12 of the Local Housing Strategy is: “to provide maximum opportunities for tenant participation and empowerment throughout the (social) rented sector”. The key action for this is the implementation of the tenant participation strategy.

Community Safety Strategy

The 2005-2008 Community Safety Strategy is the third Strategy the Moray Community Safety Partnership has produced. The strategy clearly sets out the Partnerships priorities under the Community Planning theme of “Achieving a Safer Community”. The Moray Council and our Community Planning partners are committed to improving the quality of life for everyone in Moray and recognise that improving community safety contributes greatly to that aim.

The Moray Council acts as the lead organisation for community safety. The Local Authority Liaison Officer, who has come to work with us from Grampian Police, continues to co-ordinate a strategy for a safer community and provide advice and support to the community safety partners.

To make sure that Moray continues to be a safe place to live, work and visit, the Strategy focuses on the three priorities from previous years. These are:

- tackling antisocial behaviour;
- reducing crime and the fear of crime; and
- reducing accidents in the community.

Wider Involvement

Since 2006, Core Group members have been becoming increasingly involved in tenant participation activities on a national level. These activities are:

TIGHRA

Two Core Group members are members of the Board of TIGHRA, one as a Director and one as Vice-Chairperson, and regularly attend meetings throughout the North of Scotland.

Communities Scotland National Engagement

Following consultation with tenant organisations in Scotland, Communities Scotland is in the process of establishing National Tenant Engagement, a scheme to support registered tenant organisations in setting up regional networks. These networks will enable tenant representatives to directly influence national housing and housing related policies. There are ten regions in Scotland, Moray is in Region 2 along with Angus, Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire, Orkney and Shetland Councils. Three Core Group members represent Moray tenants on the National Engagement Steering Group (Region 2). This has been named Northern Lights at the suggestion of Moray tenants and meets regularly in Aberdeen.

Communities Scotland, Regulation and Inspection

During 2006 a Core Group member became a Tenant Inspector for Communities Scotland's Regulation and Inspection function and has contributed to the recent inspection of Perth and Kinross Council.

Tenants Regulation Advisory Group (TRAG)

Two Core Group members have been invited, as individuals, to attend the Tenants Regulation Advisory Group led by Communities Scotland Regulation and Inspection Team and facilitated by the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS). Meetings are held in Communities Scotland's offices in Edinburgh. The group's remit is to advise on amendments to the regulations covering social landlords.

Inspection Advisory Group

Communities Scotland have invited a Core Group member to their Inspection Advisory Group, which will examine inspection reports and advise on amendments to the Inspection process. Other members include COSLA, SFHA, Scottish Housing Best Value Network and the Scottish Consumer Council.

Scottish Housing Best Value Network

Through Moray Council's membership of the Scottish Housing Best Value Network (SHBVN), Core Group members have become increasingly involved in its Peer Review activities throughout Scotland.

Scottish Executive Collaborative Forum

During 2006, 2 Core Group members were invited, as individuals, to attend the Scottish Executive Collaborative Forum which is Chaired by Dr Andrew Scott, Head of Social Housing, Scottish Executive. Other Collaborative Forum members include representatives from Communities Scotland, COSLA, SFHA, GHA, Association of Mortgage Lenders and the Association of Bankers. Recently, the Forum has been working on affordable rents and rent structures.

The Council is very pleased with the role our tenants are playing in regional and national bodies, and will continue to support these activities.

Tenants groups in Moray

Local forums and the Tenants' Core Group meet regularly and are supported by housing staff where necessary. The Tenants' Core Group has been encouraged to develop its role in supporting new and existing tenants groups. Members provided advice, guidance and assistance to other groups in relation to the strategy. The Moray Council has produced an information pack for tenants on organising a tenants group including a model constitution.

Tenants' Core Group

The Moray Tenants Core Group has been constituted since July 2002 . It consists of representatives from each Tenants Forum.

The Core Group meets regularly and is consulted on all major developments in the Housing Service. It elects tenants to represent it on various Council working groups. The Core Group has been successful in attracting external funding.

The Core Group elected 2 tenant members annually, as non-voting members of the Community Services Committee which dealt with housing matters. The Core Group now identifies tenant representation on the Housing Sub committee constituted by the Council in September 2007.

Local Area Forums

Currently, there are six constituted local area forums. These are:

Buckie Area Housing Team	Spey Coast Tenants' Forum
Elgin Area Housing Team	Bilbohall Estate Forum Lossiemouth Tenants' Forum Rothes Tenants' Association New Elgin Tenants' Forum
Forres Area Housing Team	Forres Area Tenants Forum

Local Area Housing Teams and the Tenants' Core Group actively encourage tenants to form neighbourhood groups to develop into Local Area Forums. Since 2002, the Council has devolved resources to local tenant forums, who work with the local Area Housing Office to identify housing-related environmental projects. The budget for the financial year 2007/2008 is £180,000. This money is normally spent on improving the area through provision of such things as fencing or parking facilities.

The Housing Service recognises that it must talk to and listen to the customers. The complex nature of running a service for nearly 6,000 households mean that

the best way of doing this is in face-to-face discussion with recognised groups and their representatives.

Now, with 6 tenants sitting on the Housing Sub-Committee, the tenants are involved at the centre of the decision making process.

The Core Group and the Forums are consulted on policies, strategies, service reviews, service standards and consultation processes. Tenants are involved in working groups with officers.

The Core Group elect 2 tenant representatives to be members of the Housing Best Value Working Group, through which tenants can directly influence the Housing Service's activities in its objective of ensuring best value. This includes our 3-yearly Tenants Survey.

Information and Consultation

Consulting with tenants

The Moray Council is committed to tenant consultation and uses a variety of different methods of doing this.

There is consultation through our formal tenant participation structure. We regularly ask for views through the Tenants' Voice Newspaper and on occasions write to tenants. All consultation documents are available on the Council's Internet site. There is also the opportunity for tenants to make their views known to individual members of staff. The Council also carries out a tenants survey every 3 years.

For the last 4 years the Core Group have held an annual Tenants' Conference each autumn. This is a Conference for tenants run by tenants. The Core Group intends to build on their increasing organisational autonomy and success year-on-year by continuing to hold a Tenants' Conference annually.

The Council will continue to consult with tenants and tenants organisations on areas such as:

- Policies on how the Council manages, repairs and maintains homes
- Information about the Council's standard of housing management and performance
- Setting rent and service charge levels
- The Council's Tenant Participation Strategy

Informing tenants

To play a full role in contributing to the direction of the Housing Service, tenants need to have a full range of information. Detailed information is provided to tenant representatives. Elected tenant representatives are actively involved in deciding the content of the Tenants' Voice newsletter and provide information for it.

The Council seeks to improve the range and quality of the information available to tenants through the Council website and other means. At the end of 2007, the Tenants Core Group successfully applied for a grant to set up internet sites for themselves and all the Forums. These sites, which will be run by the tenants, will become operational during 2008.

The Council will provide to all tenants:

- The Tenants' Voice newspaper;
- A Tenants Handbook;
- Information leaflets and guides;

- The Housing Service web pages;
- Individual letters;
- Personal visits;
- Tenancy Agreement;
- Regular reports, including copies of performance management information.

If individual tenants, or registered tenant organisations, ask the Moray Council Housing Service it will provide information about:

- Setting rent and service charges;
- Applying to the housing list and how houses are let;
- Exchanging homes between tenants;
- Transferring tenancies;
- Repairs and maintenance;
- Arrangements for taking decisions about managing homes and the Housing Service;
- Budgetary information and performance of the Housing Service to agreed targets and priorities;
- The Tenant Participation Strategy

If you need this document to be translated into your language, large print, Braille or cassette then contact:

**Housing Programmes Manager
The Moray Council
Council Office
High Street
Elgin IV30 1BX**

**Telephone: 01343 563517
Email: ian.terry@moray.gov.uk**

OR

**Housing Policy Officer
The Moray Council
Council Office
High Street
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Telephone: 01343563588