

REPORT

To: HOUSING AND TECHNICAL SERVICES COMMITTEE		Subject: Developing a North Lanarkshire Council Tenant Participation Strategy
From: DIRECTOR OF HOUSING AND PROPERTY SERVICES		
Date: 9 October 2001	Ref: TMcK/CR	

1. Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Committee approval for the development of a tenant participation strategy that will ensure that all North Lanarkshire Council Tenants have the opportunity to be consulted on issues affecting their tenancies, and meet the requirements placed on the Council by the new Housing (Scotland) Act.

2. Background

2.1 Provision has been made within the new Housing (Scotland) Act requiring local authorities and Registered Social Landlords to put in place tenant participation strategies, to review existing resources for tenant participation and to maintain a register of tenant groups meeting certain criteria. The Act introduces this new provision to enable both individual tenants and registered tenants groups to be consulted on a number of issues which affect their tenancies and to have the right to information on these issues. To enable the effective development of tenant participation strategies the Executive has earmarked resources of £4.5m to be made available to landlords over the next three years.

2.2 The Department has been undertaking an option appraisal exercise, which considers the future ownership and management of the Council's housing stock. As part of this process a consultation strategy has been developed and implemented which consulted widely with tenants, tenants groups and other key stakeholders. A range of mechanisms have been used to ensure that all tenants had opportunities to become involved. These have included surveys and questionnaires, focus groups, newsletters, roadshows and the setting up and supporting of an Options Appraisal Tenants Panel. Developing a tenant participation strategy will be able to build on this, to incorporate effective participation and consultation methods and ensure that opportunities for future tenant involvement continue to be maximised.

3. Development of North Lanarkshire's Tenant Participation Strategy

3.1 To progress the development of a tenant participation strategy a tenant participation sub group has been set up as part of the overall Steering Group responsible for implementing the implications of the new Housing Act. It is intended that this subgroup be comprised of officers and representatives from tenant and residents groups where appropriate. The sub group will be responsible for developing a strategy in extensive consultation with the wider tenant population.

- 3.2 The development of the Participation Strategy will be expected to incorporate the following key principles. The strategy must be inclusive at all levels and take account of the particular needs of all tenants. It should offer choice and accessibility in opportunities to participate and be able to demonstrate that the needs and aspirations of our tenants are central to the participation process. It should build on the extensive consultation that has taken place as part of the Options Appraisal and create sustainable mechanisms for consultation, participation and access to information, both for individual tenants and tenant and resident groups. It should link into the wider strategic objectives of the Council and contribute to the provision of high quality customer focused services that have been developed in partnership with our tenants.
- 3.3 A number of issues will have to be considered as part of the strategy. These will include:
- the level of training and support necessary for tenant and resident groups
 - the level of resources necessary to implement an effective strategy
 - the range of information on which the Department will have a duty to inform tenants
 - identifying the structures and mechanisms which will be necessary and effective in offering a range of opportunities for tenants participation
 - incorporating the issues highlighted by the Options Appraisal into the strategy development
- 3.4 In order to monitor and evaluate the development of the strategy a number of key milestones have been identified. These include identifying the key principles of tenant participation, auditing current arrangements and support for participation, identifying resources necessary to implement the strategy, consulting with tenants on the strategy development and reviewing existing levels of support for tenant and resident groups.

4. Corporate Considerations

- 4.1 The development of the tenant participation strategy will help achieve the Councils Corporate priorities to promote social inclusion and develop and empower communities. It is anticipated that other departments, particularly Community Services will be involved in the development of the strategy.

5. Recommendations

- 5.1 It is recommended the Committee:
- a) agree to the approach outlined in section 3 to develop an effective tenant participation strategy, in line with further guidance from the Scottish Executive and incorporating the implications of the Housing Act
 - b) note that further reports will be submitted to Committee including the proposed use of resources from the Scottish executive.

6. Background Information

Available within the Housing and Property Services Department



Thomas McKenzie
Director of Housing & Property Services