

WESLO HOUSING MANAGEMENT Tenant Participation

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The purpose of this Policy Procedure Note is to provide guidance on our Tenant Participation Policy.

1. Background

- (i) The Board of Weslo Housing Management has endorsed the undernoted statement which underpins our philosophy with regard to tenant participation.

"Weslo is committed to improving the service that tenants receive by giving tenants a greater say and influence on decisions affecting their homes".

- (ii) Weslo employs a variety of methods to involve and solicit the views of tenants on services. For example Weslo's maintenance workforce issues pre-paid satisfaction cards to tenants after repairs are carried out (approx. 8,000 p.a.) which affords tenants the opportunity to deliver opinions on our reactive maintenance service. Similarly tenants included in our planned maintenance programme are given satisfaction cards to tell us about their experience of the work e.g. timing, tidiness, contractor performance etc. The potential for posting feedback to a forum on our website is also under consideration.
- (iii) As well as a bi-annual newsletter posted to each household, which typically offers news and views we also carry out regular in-depth tenant satisfaction surveys. We have also set up an electronic focus group with over 100 tenants. The objective is to establish this group as commentators on Weslo services, new policies and initiatives. The views of this group will be referred to the Tenant Participation Committee for consideration. This Committee is formally constituted with elected office bearers and comprises 12 tenants and 3 Weslo staff. It is open to all Weslo tenants to join and therefore it seeks to represent all groups within the communities which Weslo serves. It is the gateway to the Board for all matters on which Weslo requires tenant input. The Board itself includes 4 Tenant Directors elected to their positions by independent elections involving all householders and managed for Weslo by the Electoral Reform Society.

2. Policy for Tenant Participation

- (i) As illustrated above Weslo strives to ensure that tenants participate in the delivery of high quality housing services across its area of operation.
- (ii) Weslo aims to ensure that tenants play their part in decision making processes and have the opportunity to influence decisions about:
 - a) Housing policies and practices;
 - b) housing conditions; and
 - c) the standard of housing (and related) services.
- (iii) Weslo recognises that tenant participation is a two way process which involves the sharing of information, ideas and power. Decision-making rests with Weslo's Board of 12 which includes 4 Tenant Directors.

3. Key Principals for Good Tenant Participation

- (i) The following key principles have been endorsed by Weslo and the Weslo Tenant Participation Committee promoting a consensus about good tenant participation practice:
 - a) Tenant participation requires mutual trust, respect and partnership between tenants, elected members and housing staff at all levels, working together towards a common goal of better housing conditions and housing services.
 - b) Tenant participation practice should be seen as a continuous process where information, ideas and power are shared and common understandings of problems are sought, including consensus on solutions.
 - c) Good tenant participation allows all parties to contribute to the agenda. All participants require to have the information needed to consider issues properly; that information requires to be clear, timely and accessible and to ensure equal opportunities. Tenants need to be kept informed about Weslo's policies and practices so that they are better placed to enter realistic and reasoned discussion on housing issues. Processes of decision making should be open, clear and fully accountable.
 - d) Adequate time should be given to tenant representatives to consider issues fully.
 - e) Good tenant participation requires Weslo to recognise the independence of tenants' organisations.
 - f) Good working relationships evolve gradually and should be flexible enough to adapt to local circumstances.
 - g) Tenant's organisations require adequate resources for organisation, training and support.
 - h) Tenant participation must comply with legislation surrounding equal opportunities. Good practice in participation removes barriers to effective participation arising from ethnicity, religion, geographic location, special needs, language differences, learning difficulties, sexual orientation, or disability

4. **Statements of Intent**

- (i) Weslo's Tenant Participation Policy relies upon the shared commitment of both Weslo and its tenants.
- (ii) Weslo will:
 - a) Involve tenants as partners in considering matters affecting their communities and whilst taking into account the views of each of its tenants, recognise the collective concerns of tenants.
 - b) Encourage and support the development of effective, representative and geographically viable tenants' organisations and agree recognition criteria with them.
 - c) Keep under review the level and source of resources that are available to sustain and promote tenant participation, keeping tenants informed of budgetary issues affecting the availability of these resources.
 - d) Commit resources to promote good tenant participation.
 - e) Recognise the importance of independent advice to tenants.
 - f) Recognise and respect the rights of properly constituted tenants' organisations to be independent of Weslo.
 - g) Ensure that staff are provided with adequate information and training to work in partnership with tenants on housing service issues.
 - h) Provide clear information on its housing services to all tenants.
- (iii) The Weslo Tenant Participation Committee has agreed to:
 - a) Work as partners with Weslo on matters affecting their communities.
 - b) Recognise and respect the statutory, regulatory and financial frameworks within which Weslo is required to conduct its operations.
 - c) Safeguard and promote the interests of tenants on matters concerning housing and the environment.
 - d) Offer Tenant Directors the opportunity to listen to the views and opinions of other tenants thereby enabling them to represent these views where appropriate at Board Meetings.