

WESLO HOUSING MANAGEMENT Tenant Participation

Date	May 2015
Author	Housing Manager
Approved by	Operations Director
Review date	May 2017

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

Background

- (i) Weslo's Board 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 our services. For example Weslo's maintenance workforce carries out over 9,000 repairs annually and all tenants are offered the opportunity to complete a satisfaction survey on the repair they received. 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. Satisfaction Kiosks are installed at our offices; allowing anyone to provide feedback on their experience. The potential for posting feedback is also available on our website.
- (iii) As well as a bi-annual newsletter sent to each household, which typically offers news and views we also carry out 3 yearly tenant satisfaction surveys. We have also set up an electronic focus group with over 1,000 tenants. The objective is to use this group as commentators on Weslo services, new policies, proposed rent increases and initiatives. We also have a long established Tenant Participation Committee (TPC) which is formally constituted and comprises around 12 tenants and 3 Weslo staff. It is open to all Weslo tenants to join and it seeks to represent all groups within the communities which Weslo serves. It is conduit 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 households and the process is 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 the decision making process and have the opportunity to influence decisions about:
 - a) housing policies and practices
 - b) rent Increase
 - c) housing conditions
 - d) 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 TPC 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 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. The process of decision making should be open, clear and fully accountable.
 - d) Adequate time should be given to tenants to consider issues fully.
 - e) Good tenant participation requires Weslo to recognise the independence of a tenant organisation.
 - f) Good working relationships evolve gradually and should be flexible enough to adapt to local circumstances.
 - g) A tenant organisation requires adequate resources for 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 a properly constituted tenant organisation 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 TPC 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.