

Tenant Participation Strategy

2023-2026

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Section 1: Introduction

This document is our three year Tenant Participation Strategy. It sets out our plans for effective tenant participation, underpinning our commitment to achieving our vision of Healthy Happy Homes, our values, key priorities set out in our Business Plan as well as the tenant participation outcomes and standards contained within the Scottish Social Housing Charter.

A lot of good work has been carried out since the last review of our Tenant Participation Strategy in 2019 despite a pandemic that spanned two years. Some of our successes include:

- Developing a Communication Strategy which sets out plans for effective communications, underpinning our commitment to achieving our vision of Healthy Happy Homes, our values, key priorities set out in our Business Plan as well as the outcome and standards for communication, contained within the Scottish Social Housing Charter. The Tenant Involvement Group (TIG) were involved in the development of this Strategy
- The TIG were also involved in reviewing our quarterly Complaints Analysis report, assisting staff in reviewing the frequency of the stair cleaning survey as well as reviewing the results of a number of satisfaction surveys and consultation exercises; and appointing the consultant for the most recent large tenant satisfaction survey
- Adapting during the pandemic to meeting 'digitally' with our TIG-Panel through Teams and taking the decision to offer this option long term, to make meetings as accessible as possible to tenants
- Further increasing response rates to our annual Rent Increase Consultation by substantially redesigning the consultation and developing a microsite on elha.com, designed for use on mobile phones and other digital devices, and information thereafter printed out for the minority of off-line tenants. In 2021 we achieved record breaking results with 29% of tenants responding compared to 24% the previous year.
- Worked with our TIG-Web to test and develop our new Rent Collector app. This took place over nine months, and over 80 tenants took part by using the app to pay their rent, reporting bugs, and completing several surveys on their experience of the app as they progressed from a new user to a regular payer. The tenant input was invaluable for producing a stable app on multiple devices and operating systems.
- Launching e-news in February 2020 for paper-free tenants which was timely and proved invaluable as we moved into Lockdown in March 2020. We were very quickly able to get information out to the majority of our tenants about services as we moved through the pandemic. This quickly developed into routine monthly e-news and e-newsflashes with the information continuing to be printed in 'Talkback' newsletters for those tenants who prefer not to use digital services.

- Consulting all our tenants and applicants on proposals to make significant changes to our Allocations Policy and to introducing a new Digital Lettings Service, These Homes
- Working closely with over 200 tenants on the stair and communal area cleaning contract to improve services which resulted in the early termination of a contract and a new stair cleaning contractor being appointed. And with tenants in a particular development regarding their heating which led to the development of e-factsheets; providing specific information about their heating systems and solar panels, the format which has been adopted to provide specific groups of tenants with information about their home

We aim to build on these successes during the next three years.

Tenant Participation – What it Means to Us

Tenant Participation is about tenants taking part in decision making and influencing decisions about:

- our policies that affect them
- housing conditions
- the services we provide
- issues that affect the wider community

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, policies, and services.

Our Commitment

We are committed to tenant participation. We aim to meet the needs and aspirations of tenants by providing opportunities for them to access all levels of the decision making process.

This strategy sets out our plans for involving our tenants in making decisions and influencing policies and procedures about the houses they live in and the services they receive over the next three years and is closely linked to our vision of healthy, happy homes. We are committed to provide:

- First class affordable rented homes
- Excellent customer care
- Expert maintenance services
- Support for independent living

Our services should always be provided in a professional, honest, reliable, and friendly manner.

This strategy outlines our commitment to working with our tenants to improve the services that we provide (including through scrutinising our work), encouraging them to influence decisions about their homes and their communities, and providing them with the means to do so. The strategy gives details of how we hope this process will

be developed, by whom, and how tenants will play a bigger part in our activities in the future.

We will review the progress of the strategy regularly to identify and examine the issues that matter to and affect our tenants, and to make sure that we manage and maintain the services we provide for our tenants to achieve high levels of satisfaction.

Together with our tenants we want to deliver a high quality, regularly reviewed tenant participation process that demonstrates that we are doing what we say we will do and allows our tenants to be involved at the heart of all of our work.

Scottish Social Housing Charter

The Scottish Social Housing Charter was introduced by the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 and came into force on 1 April 2012. The revised Charter, which took effect from 1 November 2022 sets out the standards and outcomes that all social landlords should aim to achieve when performing their housing activities and offers tenants a new way to get involved and participate with us.

Outcome 3 of the Scottish Social Housing Charter states that:

“Social landlords manage their businesses so that: tenants and other customers are offered a range of opportunities that make it easy for them to participate in, and influence their landlord’s decisions at a level they feel comfortable with.”

The Charter replaces the Performance Standards set out in the guidance issued under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 but it does not replace any legal duties under this Act.

The Scottish Housing Regulator is responsible for monitoring, assessing and reporting on how well landlords achieve the Charter outcomes. The results of their findings are reported in an Annual Report on the Charter (ARC). Our tenants are involved in our self assessment of our services, most notably through scrutiny projects, regular discussions on performance, and through having an input into what is reported in our monthly and annual reports, through Performance 365.

Benefits of Tenant Participation

We recognise the potential benefits of tenant participation in the delivery and development of our services. These include:

- Improving our services and achieving better value for money
- Improving overall tenant satisfaction with their home, community and the services that we provide
- Better communication between staff and tenants
- Chances for people to develop new knowledge and skills

We acknowledge that it may take time to achieve these benefits and different types of opportunities to become involved must be available to suit different tenants. We strongly believe that there is no ‘one size fits all’ approach to tenant participation and want to support interested tenants to participate in ways that work for them.

By involving tenants and supporting their involvement, we will continue to develop new and practical ways to improve the communities in which our tenants live.

Our Key Principles

We have adopted the following key principles:

- Successful tenant participation requires a culture of mutual trust, respect and partnership between tenants, committee members, and staff at all levels, working together towards a common goal of better housing conditions and housing services.
- Tenant participation in practice is a continuous process where information and ideas are shared, common understanding of problems is sought and solutions are achieved.
- Effective tenant participation allows all partners to contribute to the agenda. All participants must have the full and detailed information they need to consider issues properly; information must be clear, timely and accessible and take account of equal opportunities.
- How the decision making process works should be open, clear and accountable.
- Tenants must be given enough time to consider issues properly. If they want to, tenants should have the opportunity to meet, discuss and work out a common view in advance of meeting with us.
- Effective tenant participation requires us, as landlord, to recognise and respect the independence of tenants' organisations.
- Good working relationships evolve gradually and should be flexible to adapt to local circumstances.
- Tenant organisations need adequate resources for organisation, training and support.
- Tenant participation in rural areas must be tailored to suit the particular circumstances and needs of tenants in such communities.
- Tenant participation must meet the requirements of current housing legislation and best practice and should help to remove barriers caused by age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation.

Section 2 : Encouraging Involvement

The involvement and approval of all of our customers- but primarily our tenants- has always been important to us and so the additional legal requirements to provide opportunities for customers to become involved in our work resulting from the

Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 only served to reinforce much of what we had been doing for years.

At the start of this strategy period, tenant participation is well established within ELHA and all of the processes, policies and resources are in place to enable effective customer involvement. However, we continue to strive to improve levels of participation and have found that we have achieved most significant gains through our efforts to promote digital involvement during the last three years.

In our TIG Panel we have a core of dedicated tenants without whom we would struggle to meet our legal obligations. We do, however, struggle to recruit new members prepared to give up their time to participate in the more traditional ways, principally by attending meetings. In saying that, accessibility to meetings has improved in recent years through the introduction of hybrid meetings, where tenants can attend in person or from their home by using Teams. It is hoped that in time this will further encourage tenants to join meetings. Our staff continue to promote membership of the TIG-Panel and we have agreed targets for member recruitment with staff.

This coupled with other changes within the social housing environment, particularly Welfare Reform, has prompted us to look at how we encourage and enable tenants to become involved. Over the three year strategy period, in addition to the work outlined in the remainder of this document, we will:

- Continue to develop the potential of My Home to enable tenants to voice their opinions and influence decisions in the most convenient ways
- Consider ways to promote Gold level membership of the Key Tenant Scheme to assist in encouraging digital engagement
- Continue to re-organise the workload within our Housing team to enable frontline staff to spend more time encouraging tenants to become involved
- Aim to better demonstrate the direct advantages of becoming involved in issues that affect whole communities by prioritising estate management expenditure to community led projects
- Instigate visits to tenants we don't normally see to garner their views and encourage them to get involved
- Continue to seek to increase the number of tenants using My Home and paper free services where submitting comments and opinions can be done easily at any time
- Promote services like Praise or Grumble, Facebook, 5 minute surveys and so on to get occasional snapshot views from our tenants
- Continue to work on developing our social media presence to promote tenant participation and encourage engagement
- Hone the skills of the designated Tenant Participation Champion to ensure every opportunity for colleagues and tenants alike to work together to improve services is maximised
- Ensure the resources needed for effective Tenant Involvement are available
- Involve the whole staff team in working with tenants to achieve improvements within our developments
- Record praise with the same consistency that we record complaints so that we benefit from positive feedback as well as acting on negative feedback

Section 3: Our Management Committee, Membership and the Tenant Involvement Group

Our Management Committee

We are run by a voluntary Management Committee which is elected by our members at each Annual General Meeting (AGM). Management Committee members can be tenants or other people with a real interest in housing. We have strong community representation on our Management Committee and this helps us to know what issues are important to tenants and others in the communities we work in.

Our Management Committee is made up of 15 members, of whom up to 5 may be co-opted members. They control our business by:

- Setting the policies to be followed by staff
- Making sure that staff are carrying out our legal and financial responsibilities
- Giving authority to staff to carry out the decisions of the Management Committee and to attend to the day to day business

Management Committee members must work within our Rules. They are also accountable to the Scottish Housing Regulator.

Becoming a Member

The most direct way of participating in our work is to become a Member of the Association. Membership costs only £1.00 and is for life. We provide full details of how to become a member of the Association to all of our tenants. An information leaflet and application form is available from our office and on elha.com. Our members may attend the AGM and vote for, or be elected to, our Management Committee.

We believe that promoting membership of the Association, encouraging tenants to become members and attend our Annual General Meetings or other organised meetings is an important aspect of tenant participation.

For those Members who are elected onto the Management Committee, we will ensure that appropriate training is provided to support them in their role.

Our Tenant Involvement Group (TIG)

We have a Tenant Involvement Group (TIG) made up of tenants who have indicated an interest in getting involved in a variety of ways, for example, focus groups, surveys, via social media or My Home or being part of the TIG Panel.

The TIG Panel is responsible for reviewing and implementing our Tenant Participation Strategy, scrutinising our performance in relation to the Scottish Social Housing Charter outcomes and for working with us to increase tenant participation in all areas of our work. The Panel generally meets six times each year and works with our staff to develop and review the Tenant Participation Action Plan each year. The remit of the TIG Panel is attached at **Appendix 1**.

Section 4 : Tenant Involvement in Performance Assessment

Legal and Regulatory Framework

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 sets out the foundations for the regulatory system that formally takes account of tenant's views and in April 2012 the Scottish Social Housing Charter (the Charter) was launched. Social landlords in Scotland are responsible for meeting the Charter standards and outcomes and gathering evidence to demonstrate that they are doing so.

The role of the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) is to monitor, report and assess how well social landlords are achieving the Charter standards and outcomes. The SHR is not prescriptive about how tenants can be involved but do require landlords to:

- Agree their approach to self assessment with tenants
- Ensure that it is effective and meaningful
- Publicise the approach to tenants
- Demonstrate their approach is being implemented
- Provide a statement of how they will involve service users, customers, homeless people, homeowners and hard to reach groups in their self-assessment activities.

Tenant Scrutiny

Tenant scrutiny aims to give tenants more power in holding their landlord to account for their decisions, performance and conduct. It is the name given to tenants being involved in agreeing the landlord's self assessment process then independently scrutinising the landlord's results in relation to the Charter Outcomes.

Scrutiny in Practice

The Tenant Involvement Group's Scrutiny sub-group is responsible for scrutinising our performance to ensure that the outcomes in relation to the Charter are met. The TIG-Scrutiny Group have been successful in working with the Association to improve practices, including investigating out of target repairs which led to an overhaul of repair monitoring processes and monthly repair performance analysis.

A procedure detailing how tenant scrutiny is implemented within ELHA can be found at **Appendix 2**. The process continues to evolve as the tenants involved gain experience and confidence.

Section 5: Information, Consultation and Research

Provision of Information

Individual tenants, Tenants Groups and Registered Tenant Organisations (RTOs) need accurate and accessible information if they are to make informed choices. We always aim to provide good, clear information, in Plain English, so that tenants,

Tenants Groups and RTOs know what is happening. If it is not possible to provide any information requested, we will explain why.

All new tenants are provided with a menu of options for getting involved with our work and we provide information on how people can get involved before their tenancy starts. Our 'My New Home' process allows applicants to make decisions on how they'd like us to communicate with them once they become a tenant and think before they even get their keys about what sort of ways that may suit them to get involved.

One of the options available to all of our tenants is joining our Tenant Involvement Group to ensure that they are consulted in the way that they want to be (by post, internet, face to face etc.), and can nominate specific topics in which they have a particular interest. On request, and where it is reasonable to do so, we will take practical steps, such as arranging interpreting and translation (we are members of Happy to Translate), information on CD, in larger print, and in languages other than English, if this is easier for tenants.

We provide tenants with a range of information either by post, in our office or through elha.com and My Home including:

- A written tenancy agreement
- A regular Newsletter
- Information about our Complaints Procedure
- Information about Right to Repair
- All Policies relating to tenants
- Detailed information about their rent account, repair history and tenant documents held in our systems
- Our Tenant Participation Strategy
- Non-confidential Management Committee papers and Minutes of meetings

and on request we will supply:

- Information about how decisions are made
- Full printed reports on the 3 yearly Tenant Satisfaction Survey

Following feedback from tenants about our annual report, we replaced it with our Performance 365 microsite on elha.com, which communicates up to date performance information for tenants and other interested parties. This allows us to update tenants monthly in addition to annually. We also produce a Performance Summary leaflet for digitally excluded tenants, with top line statistics and Income & Expenditure details.

We will use a variety of communication methods to ensure a style and format that promotes accessibility for everyone, and all our communication will be instantly recognisable and corporately branded.

Tenant Consultation

We consult with our tenants to give them the opportunity to comment on services, policies and procedures before they are finally agreed. Proposals for tenants to consider will have been developed before reaching this stage.

We will consult tenants en masse, individually, in informal groups, as part of a Registered Tenants Organisation (RTO) or a Focus Group, on the following:

- If we want to make changes to policy or service standards relating to housing management or repairs and maintenance, and the change would have a significant impact on tenants
- Before introducing new services
- Our Tenant Participation Strategy
- Our rent increase proposals
- If we were to sell any of our properties that have tenants in them which would result in a change of Landlord or owner
- Local issues such as waste management

We will use a variety of ways to consult tenants in the way that suits them best. For example:

- Through My Home
- Individual letters to tenants with survey/consultation forms and return envelopes
- Through our print and e-newsletters
- Door to door surveys
- As part of an RTO or tenant group
- Through a 3rd party, e.g., a market research consultant

We have set a minimum standard for all consultations with tenants. Every year we will:

- Advise tenants about the topics we propose to consult them on for the following year
- Provide a timetable of main events including time for responses by the tenants
- Explain what information we will make available to individual tenants to help them take an informed and effective part in the consultation

At the time of consultation, we will provide the following details:

- How the proposal may affect tenants
- A clear indication of what can be changed and clear information about what tenants can expect to see happen as a result of any survey How and within what timescale tenants can make their views known to us
- How and when a final decision will be taken
- Details of how tenants will be informed of the results of consultation.
- The staff members dealing with the matter
- Information on how and where to complain if the need arises.

Appendix 3 sets out our procedure for consultation and research.

Community Consultation

There will be times when we will need to consult with the wider community on issues that affect them. For example, we will consult applicants who are registered with us for housing if we want to make changes to our Allocations policy or, if carrying out major work in a mixed tenure estate, we will consult those who may be affected by the work. In these circumstances we will follow the same procedure set out at **Appendix 3**.

Satisfaction Surveys

We will always seek comments from tenants on our maintenance services, through feedback on routine repairs and surveys on maintenance projects such as window, door or kitchen renewals. Tenants will also be given opportunities to comment on the range and standard of all services through regular satisfaction surveys.

Every three years we will carry out a comprehensive, large scale Tenant Satisfaction Survey, and will employ an independent consultant to carry out this work.

The results of surveys will be monitored by the TIG Panel and our Management Committee and will be reported to tenants in our Newsletters.

Online Housing Office

All of our housing services are accessible via elha.com and My Home (the only exception being where we need a person's signature). Tenants can apply for an available property, order and schedule repairs, view their rent account, pay rent, read our policies or information leaflets, obtain energy advice and make complaints. Every page has a praise or grumble feature which allows tenants to provide us with feedback, good or bad.

Tenants who have registered with My Home can sign up for our paper-free service. We strongly encourage tenants to so go paper free, and incentivise this through the Key Tenant Scheme. Tenants can change their preferences on My Home at any time.

elha.com and My Home are designed to be as accessible as possible, set up to be easily navigated by tenants using screen readers or tabbed browsing, and are Browsealoud enabled. Every page of elha.com includes the option to translate the page into over 100 languages.

The Live Help service is essentially a phone call for people who cannot, or prefer not to, use the phone. The service is open Monday to Friday when tenants and other

Customers have instant access to an on-line advisor who can provide them with a range of information and advice.

Our expansion into social media (Facebook) has had a positive impact on tenant participation. We are now reaching tenants who do not normally engage in

traditional tenant participation activities, and we expect this to continue to grow. The Communication Strategy lays out standards and plans for this growth.

These online tools are beneficial to both the Association and our customers and serve to enhance traditional methods of communication and engagement and not to replace them. Every tenant who uses the online services saves us time and money meaning more resources are available to engage with people through traditional methods of communication who prefer this option. It is also worth noting that working electronically reduces our carbon footprint.

Section 6: Working with RTOs and Tenant Groups

Developing a Tenant Participation Strategy committed to tenants is part of a process that aims to take people from being informed and consulted on options through to making decisions and acting together to make their voices heard. Meaningful and effective participation leads to liaising with, and including, other agencies and groups for wider action projects in our communities, where this is needed and wanted.

Many tenants may be satisfied with the quality of services provided by us but, in trying to further improve our performance, we want to build tenants confidence and skills so that they can decide and act on the things that affect their daily lives.

Working with Registered Tenants' Organisations

A Registered Tenants' Organisation (RTO) is an independent organisation set up by tenants to represent their housing and related interests. It will normally have elected office bearers and a formal constitution. These RTOs can represent the views of people from defined, specific areas or about a specific issue. The RTOs will also have a recognised role in the tenant participation process.

As we continue to develop tenant participation, we make the following commitments:

- We will provide RTOs with advance notice of how and when decisions will be taken, which affect the management and maintenance of the housing stock. We will make sure that enough time is given to allow for meaningful participation and proper consideration of the tenant's views
- We will speak to RTOs about how they can be involved in our decision-making processes
- We will provide RTOs with a chance to make representations to our Management Committee, either in writing or in person
- Our policies and procedures will, where appropriate, reflect how we involve tenants and RTOs in the decision-making process
- We will allow flexibility for tenants' representatives to state their views on issues they would like to take forward so that they are not just dealing with issues that we want them to consider

- We will involve RTOs in agreeing on ways for collecting wider tenant opinion
- We will involve RTOs in the development and review of our Tenant Participation Strategy
- We will also normally work with informal groups of tenants who have either not yet registered as a tenants' organisation or choose not to go down this route

We have agreed a joint policy with East Lothian Council and Homes for Life Housing Partnership for Registering Tenants Organisations which is reviewed every five years. This means that the registration process is the same for any tenants group in East Lothian, regardless of who their landlord is. To avoid bombarding tenants with information, which is of no relevance to them, we consult only with the RTO's that represent areas in which we own properties.

Section 7: Improving Housing and Wider Action

New Developments and Improvements

We have regularly involved the local community and individual tenants in the planning of new housing developments or the upgrading of existing properties in the following ways:

- Through local councillors and officials involved in determining the overall housing strategy for East Lothian
- Through membership of our Management Committee
- Consultation with our tenants on our delivery plan for the Scottish Housing Quality Standard (SHQS) and the Energy Efficiency Standard for Social Housing (EESH).
- Where properties are being upgraded, through our tenants being involved in making choices on details for their home
- Meeting with incoming tenants as a group when their new development is near to completion to provide information on their properties, the area, and the Association, encouraging community spirit and tenant involvement
- After each project is completed, through our tenants giving their views on the work carried out as a part of a Tenant Feedback Survey

We will continue to build on these arrangements for involving tenants, prospective tenants and the wider community in future plans through:

- Providing information to all who need it in clear language and using models, drawings, etc. to help explain our plans
- Whenever possible continuing to offer a range of choices to tenants, while taking into account costs, the need to plan for future maintenance, and our legal responsibilities
- Further development of our online services allowing tenants to participate at times to suit them

Wider Action

Involvement with wider community groups (for example, Community Councils, Area Committees, Neighbourhood Watch Schemes, etc) will also be developed on request and where we can contribute to the enhancement of community life.

Section 8: Funding and Resources

Resource provision (including training)

We recognise the need to provide training for both staff and tenants involved in tenant participation. We will provide resources for individual tenants or groups of tenants who get involved to encourage their further participation. This training commitment will be provided by us or by other bodies specialising in training, empowering and assisting the development of tenants (for example groups such as the Tenant Information Service (TIS) or the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS)).

Where Registered Tenant Organisations (RTOs) or informal tenants groups are formed, we will, if necessary, provide training for the tenants involved (for example, in running meetings, minute taking, keeping financial records etc). We have links with organisations that provide advice, information and training to tenants groups and will work with these organisations to help develop tailored training to meet the needs that tenants identify.

Appropriate training will be provided to our Management Committee members, staff and tenants to ensure that they have the necessary information, skills and self confidence to contribute effectively. This training may be in-house or provided by external agencies. The full costs of any agreed training will be paid for by the Association.

As well as helping to identify training needs and funding courses for tenants, we will provide funding where possible for printing newsletters and other information. Our staff will help arrange and organise meetings and provide administrative support for groups seeking to form tenants' associations or evolving into RTOs. Administrative support could include typing, photocopying and posting, computer access and support and help in setting up filing and storage systems. Direct support will also be provided by our Housing Officers.

Importantly, we will make sure that tenants are able to attend meetings at times convenient to them and at an appropriate venue (e.g. arranging a meeting for residents of a particular development as close as possible to their homes). Meetings with staff will be arranged at times that take account of the needs of the majority of tenants. We will also provide travel and childcare costs where these are relevant to attending training courses, meetings, etc.

Where required, our staff will be available to assist tenants in developing Forums, Panels, etc to maintain tenant involvement in monitoring and reviewing how our services are provided.

Funding Tenant Groups

As RTOs and Tenants Groups develop, they will need funding to allow them to achieve their aims and to meet the requirements of registration.

Our properties are often in areas of mixed tenure and so we will pay grants proportionate to the number of tenancies we have in the area that a group covers. Grants payable at the start of this strategy are:

Start Up Grant: £235.00 thereafter

Annual Grant: £90.00 plus £1.50 per tenancy

These amounts are reviewed at the same time as our strategy.

Annual grants will be payable to any group meeting registration conditions set out in our joint policy with ELC & HfLHP on Registering Tenants Organisations. These will be paid into the bank account of the group within one month of a claim being submitted and annually thereafter providing the group remains registered and continues to satisfy the registration criteria.

For any group in the process of getting started, legitimate expenses will be met by us from the start up grant, with any balance being paid into the bank account of the group once it has registered. Each RTO that receives a grant will be required to maintain annual accounts and show their accounts to us each year before an annual grant will be paid.

Tenants groups that choose not to register may still apply for funding and will have to specify how much money they need, what it will be used for, and how it will be protected for the use of the group. Such applications will be considered by the TIG Panel who will make a recommendation to the Management Committee as to whether the grant should be paid and any conditions that should be applied.

Section 9 : Partnership Working

We recognise the importance of working in partnership with other agencies that provide and deliver services which affect the communities our tenants live in.

We have developed close working relationships with East Lothian Council and other Registered Social Landlords in East Lothian through the East Lothian TP Liaison Group. We will continue to improve working relations by exploring opportunities for joint working and sharing new ideas and good practice.

We will also continue to network with other Registered Social Landlords, agencies and tenant participation workers outwith East Lothian to promote tenant participation, share good practice and learn from their experiences.

Section 10: Monitoring and Review

This Strategy sets out how we will encourage and develop tenant participation during the next three years. We regularly review the progress of our Tenant Participation Strategy as required by law and the Scottish Housing Regulator with our tenants to ensure that our Tenant Participation activity is working well and having a positive impact.

The TIG Panel sets a three year action plan and an annual calendar of activity for implementing the strategy which details the work to be carried out to encourage effective participation. The Panel is also involved in setting the Tenant Participation budget each year to maximise tenant involvement in our activities.

Every three years, we engage independent consultants to complete a tenant satisfaction survey in partnership with our TIG-Panel. This survey provides a large amount of base line information to identify our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and training needs. Having direction and information relating to the services we provide allows us to target what areas we need to consider and invite tenants to engage with us to prioritise these. The TIG Panel will agree and oversee the implementation of an action plan to bring about any improvements.

We have produced a performance monitoring framework (a list of indicators and outputs is detailed at **Appendix 4**) which will help us to record the quantitative and qualitative measures. Regular reports are provided to the TIG Panel and the Audit and Assurance Committee who monitor tenant participation activity such as, (but not limited to):

- Tenant and staff training
- Meetings with Tenant Groups, RTO's, Focus or Community Groups
- Consultations
- Tenant satisfaction
- Use of elha.com and My Home
- Information and advice provided to tenants
- Contacts with external agencies (e.g East Lothian TP Liaison Group)

An annual Tenant Participation report is also provided to our Management Committee.

We will provide tenants with regular information about progress against our Strategy, principally through our regular e-news and printed newsletters.

Appendix 1 – Tenant Involvement Group Remit

1 . Introduction

Overall responsibility for ensuring that tenants are involved with the work of East Lothian Housing Association in accordance with law and good practice rests with the Management Committee. The Management Committee delegates some of its powers to the Audit and Assurance Committee as laid out in Standing Orders which also allow for Working Groups to be formed to address particular areas of work. The Tenant Involvement Group Panel (TIG-Panel) is one such group.

For ease of monitoring, the Tenant Involvement Group functions are divided into TIG-Panel, who oversee TP activities and implement the TP Strategy and Action Plan, TIG-Scrutiny, who scrutinise our services, TIG-Web, an informal group who assist in the development of digital services, TIG-Focus, for tenants who only want to get involved at a local level or for a specific issue, and TIG-Other, for tenants who may be involved in some other aspect of TP.

The Tenant Involvement Group is a permanent Working Group set up to operate on behalf of, and be driven by, tenants and other customers, to ensure that ELHA

- provides housing services that meet customers' needs
- ensures services are delivered to the highest standard
- works to continually review and improve housing services
- involves customers in the self-assessment of ELHA performance against the Scottish Social Housing Charter outcomes

2. Aims and Objectives of the Tenant Involvement Group

- To raise awareness of tenant participation and the role of scrutiny within the organisation resulting in an increased number of tenants becoming involved in the scrutiny of ELHA performance.
- To make recommendations to senior managers, ELHA Management and Sub-Committees and Local Authority Elected Members (if appropriate) on how housing services can be improved.
- To ensure that the ELHA Management Committee and staff demonstrate accountability to tenants and residents.
- To provide an opportunity for tenants to examine housing service performance and procedures, and challenge and question staff who manage and deliver the service.

3. The Remit of the Tenant Involvement Group Panel

- To develop and implement ELHA's Tenant Participation Strategy
- To oversee the Tenant Satisfaction Survey, including approval of the brief and appointment of a Consultant, considering the results, recommending an action plan to Management Committee for approval
- To develop appropriate policies relating to tenant participation for approval by the Management Committee
- In liaison with ELHA, to agree the scrutiny priorities and approaches to tenant led scrutiny
- To act as a link between ELHA customers (tenants, residents, sharing owners, those receiving factoring service, and applicants) and staff / Management Committee in order to drive forward performance improvement
- To request and review information and statistics on agreed priorities to enable housing services to be scrutinised
- To examine the evidence and make recommendations for service improvements
- To report recommendations to the Management Committee
- To monitor and review agreed action plans
- To share the work of TIG with other customers and encourage involvement
- To play an active role in developing and encouraging digital tenant participation

4. Membership of the Tenant Involvement Group Panel

- Up to 12 places will be available for membership.
- Members should reflect the geographical and demographic nature of the housing stock, where possible.
- Residents of ELHA properties will be eligible for membership.
- ELHA staff and other relevant people will be invited to attend TIG meetings to present information or provide support as required by the Panel.

5. Tenant Involvement Group Recruitment and Succession.

- TIG members will be recruited through a rolling recruitment process via an advertisement to all tenants. The article will be advertised on elha.com, Facebook, newsletters, in our office and through face to face contact between ELHA staff and customers
- TIG members or ELHA staff will meet with interested customers to explain the role of TIG. Thereafter new TIG members will be mentored or have a buddy (existing TIG member) to ensure they understand their role and responsibilities as a TIG member

6. Tenant Involvement Group Panel Meetings

- The TIG Panel will:
- - Meet every two months at a time and place to suit the membership. Pre meetings may be required by members before attendance of staff at meetings
 - recognise that to ensure maximum participation within the meetings, the times of meeting may need to be varied and flexible
 - keep meetings to no longer than 2 hours
- The TIG- Panel will form and consider the role of sub groups when required
- A quorum will be more than 50% of members. Inquorate meetings will be noted and decisions ratified at the next quorate meeting.
- The Tenant Involvement Group will be supported and advised by staff in respect of the activities described in this remit
- The Tenant Involvement Group will have access to staff and Management Committee members to enable the terms of this remit to be fulfilled
- The Convenor and Vice-Convenor of TIG will be an appropriate person and will be agreed by the Group following the ELHA AGM

7. TIG-Panel Programme of Work

- In partnership with ELHA, TIG will develop a programme of scrutiny work and review this each year. The priority areas will be decided using feedback from all available sources including:
 - Performance reports
 - Reports from Service Review Groups, Tenant Inspectors, Mystery Shoppers, Focus Groups, estate inspections
 - Tenants and Residents Associations
 - Residents surveys
 - Complaints
 - Benchmarking

8. Tenant Involvement Group Panel Accountability to Tenants, Customers and ELHA

- The TIG will refer to a wide range of formal and informal sources to inform its work programme and priorities
- TIG will gather the views of customers through elha.com and My Home, Facebook, customer comment cards and “Talk to the TIG” sessions
- The TIG will consider if an existing programme of work should be revised to take account of any trigger or issue arising from customer feedback
- The TIG minutes and all reports will be made available on My Homesite and to any customer on request

9. Tenant Involvement Group Resources

- The TIG will receive administrative support and services from ELHA staff
- ELHA has made a commitment through the Tenant Participation Budget to support the development of TIG and associated scrutiny activities. This commitment will be reviewed annually
- ELHA will ensure that new members of TIG are provided with an opportunity to take part in a TIG induction programme
- The training and capacity building requirements of all TIG members will be assessed on a regular basis

- A training programme will be developed, delivered and regularly reviewed. A budget for training will be incorporated into the TIG resource and support requirements
- TIG and ELHA may negotiate independent development support and training from external tenant support organisations as required.

10. Tenant Involvement Group – Monitoring and Evaluation

- TIG will monitor and evaluate its activities at an annual review session. A report on the impact of TIG activities will be presented to the ELHA Management Committee and senior staff. The report will also be available to customers on elha.com
- The assessment may be facilitated by an independent organisation. This could be an organisation with similar business to ELHA or an independent tenant support organisation

Appendix 2

ELHA PROCEDURE

Date Issued	February 2014
Department	Corporate
Title	Tenant Involvement in Performance Assessment
Objective	To ensure that tenant involvement in monitoring service delivery and performance is incorporated into our working practices and supported appropriately.
Responsible	Housing Manager
Date Reviewed:	November 2022
Next Review Date	November 2025

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In terms of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 social landlords are expected to work together with their tenants to monitor performance and service delivery and to ensure that this results in improvements to services.
- 1.2 We have built upon the existing structures in place to deliver effective Tenant Participation and have agreed a new remit with our Tenant Involvement Group (TIG) enabling the TIG Panel to scrutinise our services and self- assessment processes and report their findings to our Management Committee.
- 1.3 This procedure describes how the process will work to ensure that the TIG Panel is appropriately supported in carrying out this important function whilst at the same time ensuring that Scrutiny activities are embedded into routine Group work plans.
- 1.4 It is the responsibility of the Senior Management Team to ensure that appropriate staff resources are made available to the TIG Panel to enable effective Tenant Scrutiny within ELHA.

2.0 PLANNING

- 2.1 The TIG Panel will plan scrutiny activities for the forthcoming year using all of the information available to it including, but not limited to;
 - The three yearly Tenant Satisfaction Survey (TSS)
 - Ad hoc Tenant Consultations

- Complaints data
- The Annual Return on the Charter (ARC)
- Self-Assessment Exercises against the Scottish Social Housing Charter outcomes
- Performance Reports
- Relevant internal audit reports
- Reports from Tenant Inspectors, Mystery Shopping. Focus groups and Estate Inspections
- Information from Tenant & Resident Associations

2.2 A proposed timetable including an estimate of how much time the audit will require and suggested dates will be passed to the Senior Management Team for consideration and inclusion in our work plans for the forthcoming year (See table 1 **Appendix 1**).

2.3 Wherever possible the plan will be approved but if there are any clashes e.g with other planned work or planned staff leave suggested revisions will be negotiated and agreed with the TIG Panel.

2.4 Once agreed the audit plan will be incorporated into the Group Business plan which is submitted to our Management Committee for approval in March each year.

2.5 The plan will also be a standing item on TIG meeting agendas so that the TIG Panel can monitor progress.

3.0 PREPARING FOR THE AUDIT

3.1 Once the annual plan is approved, individual audits will be considered by the TIG Panel. The Panel will consider the specific issues they want to look at, questions they would like to have answered, background information they will need, which staff need to be involved and how the audit will be conducted (review of policies/procedures; interviews with staff; shadowing; mystery shopping etc). ELHA staff will *assist* in this process.

3.2 This information will be pulled together into an audit action plan (template attached at **Appendix 1**) and passed to the relevant staff in advance of the audit allowing sufficient time for staff to provide the required information and plan any required activities.

3.3 If any of the information requested or planned activities cannot be accommodated (for example because it doesn't exist or because of other staff commitments) a full explanation will be offered and, wherever possible, an alternative will be suggested.

4.0 DURING THE AUDIT

- 4.1 All staff involved in the audit will be briefed beforehand.
- 4.2 The audit will be conducted in an open and transparent manner. The tenant auditors will be given access to any information they require unless there is very good reason why they can't when a full explanation will be offered.
- 4.3 If staff have any concerns about the sensitivity or confidentiality of information requested this will be referred immediately to a Manager/Director for a decision.

5.0 AFTER THE AUDIT

- 5.1 On completion of the audit a report will be compiled giving a brief description of how the audit was conducted, highlighting areas that the auditors felt demonstrated good practice or were particularly good and areas that the auditors felt required attention or improvement. A list of suggested actions will be compiled.
- 5.2 The completed audit report will be passed to the Senior Management Team for consideration and response.
- 5.3 The staff response, including agreed actions with timescales and the Manager responsible for ensuring the action is taken will be passed back to the TIG Panel for agreement. If necessary, an explanation of why suggested actions cannot be implemented will be provided wherever possible with an alternative suggestion for improvement.
- 5.4 The TIG report will be made available on elha.com and to any customer on request.

6.0 ONGOING MONITORING AND REPORTING

- 6.1 Once agreed with TIG, approved actions will be incorporated into the Group Action Plans and progress will be monitored monthly at Business Management meetings along with other business priorities.
- 6.2 Progress will also be reported back to TIG as a regular agenda item.
- 6.3 The Chief Executive will include action agreed as a result of Tenant Scrutiny in the annual Group Business Action plan report submitted to the Management Committee in May each year.
- 6.4 The TIG will report to tenants on their activities and findings through the newsletter and on elha.com.

7.0 PROCEDURE REVIEW

7.1 At a minimum, the Housing Manager will ensure that the procedure is reviewed along with the Tenant Participation Strategy of which it forms part.

Appendix 1

TENANT SCRUTINY WORKPLAN (date to date)

Service Area to be Audited	Audit Dates	Time "On site"	Staff involved	Charter Outcome	Comments

AUDIT PLAN

	Finding	Recommendation	Management Comments	Implementation Timetable (dd/mm/yy)	Responsible Officer

Approved by Management Committee 26/11/22

Strategy Document

AUDIT REPORT

Tenant Involvement Group Scrutiny Panel		Date of Report
Subject	Scope	
Information/Documentation Reviewed	Staff Interviewed	
Summary		

DEPARTMENT	Corporate
TITLE	Corporate Consultation Procedure
OBJECTIVE	To provide consistency in the consultation process
Date Issued:	December 2009
Review date:	November 2022
Responsible:	Digital Services Officer
Next Review Date:	November 2025

Introduction

This procedure should be read in conjunction with our Tenant Participation Strategy and sets out the procedure for staff to follow when carrying out a consultation exercise. Appendix 1 to this procedure is a consultation table and provides details of the most common consultations exercises carried out in ELHA.

1.0 Planning a Consultation

- 1.1 Planning should be undertaken **at least one month before the consultation is due to start**. This is to ensure that resources and critical staff will be available during the consultation period.
- 1.2 Ensure the tenant group is identified within SDM, e.g. through the use of extended data or built in filters like paper free.
- 1.3 Check the SDM extended database for tenants with any problems which may prevent them from taking part (eg: language barriers, disabilities), and assess the best way to consult with them.
- 1.4 Record the questions you want to ask, and how you want people to answer those questions, (eg: yes/no, limited options or free text).
- 1.5 Decide which methods you will use to consult (eg: letters, web forms, phone calls, interviews, etc) and ensure that you are able to carry them out.
- 1.6 Create draft letters and surveys/consultation forms, etc to be approved by the department manager or head of department. Ensure to create letters suitable for both print and paper free tenants.
- 1.7 Pass the approved survey/consultation form and any relevant documentation to the Digital Services Officer so the paper-free version can be built and the URL

for paper-free letters provided.

- 1.8 Pass the approved drafts to the relevant member of staff to put in place in the SDMLetters folder.
- 1.9 Set a realistic timeframe for the consultation period, eg: 10-14 days from mailing to consultation close for paper/electronic surveys, 14-30 days for face-to-face surveys.
- 1.10 If the survey is to be required for Platinum Key tenants, the survey must be scheduled between the 29th and the 28th of the following month, e.g., letters out on the 2nd of the month and scheduled to close on the 28th of the month
- 1.11 Check available resources:
 - is there enough stationery?
 - inform Admin of the mailing in advance, including details of the SDM settings required and the deadline for postage
 - if a Royal Mail pick-up is required, let Admin know at least a week in advance the exact day it will be needed.
 - if additional staff are needed to stuff envelopes/make home visits/etc, check that they will be available when needed.
 - if information is required from a third-party source, ensure that you have the information before proceeding.
- 1.12 Set up a result record – usually an Excel spreadsheet. Unless otherwise stated, all survey and consultations will be recorded through My Home. On receipt of a paper form, Admin staff will log into the tenant's My Home account and log the responses on the digital form.
- 1.13 Make a note of which edition of e-Talk or Talkback the feedback will be included in, and put a placeholder file, (eg: a Word document named 'xxx consultation article') in the relevant folder in Corporate Publications.

2.0 Consulting

- 2.1 Carry out the consultation as planned above at 1.0 and record responses and any issues that arise during the consultation period.
- 2.2 Any consultation forms which have been returned with comments or complaints which require a response should be responded to within customer care timescales.

3.0 Review

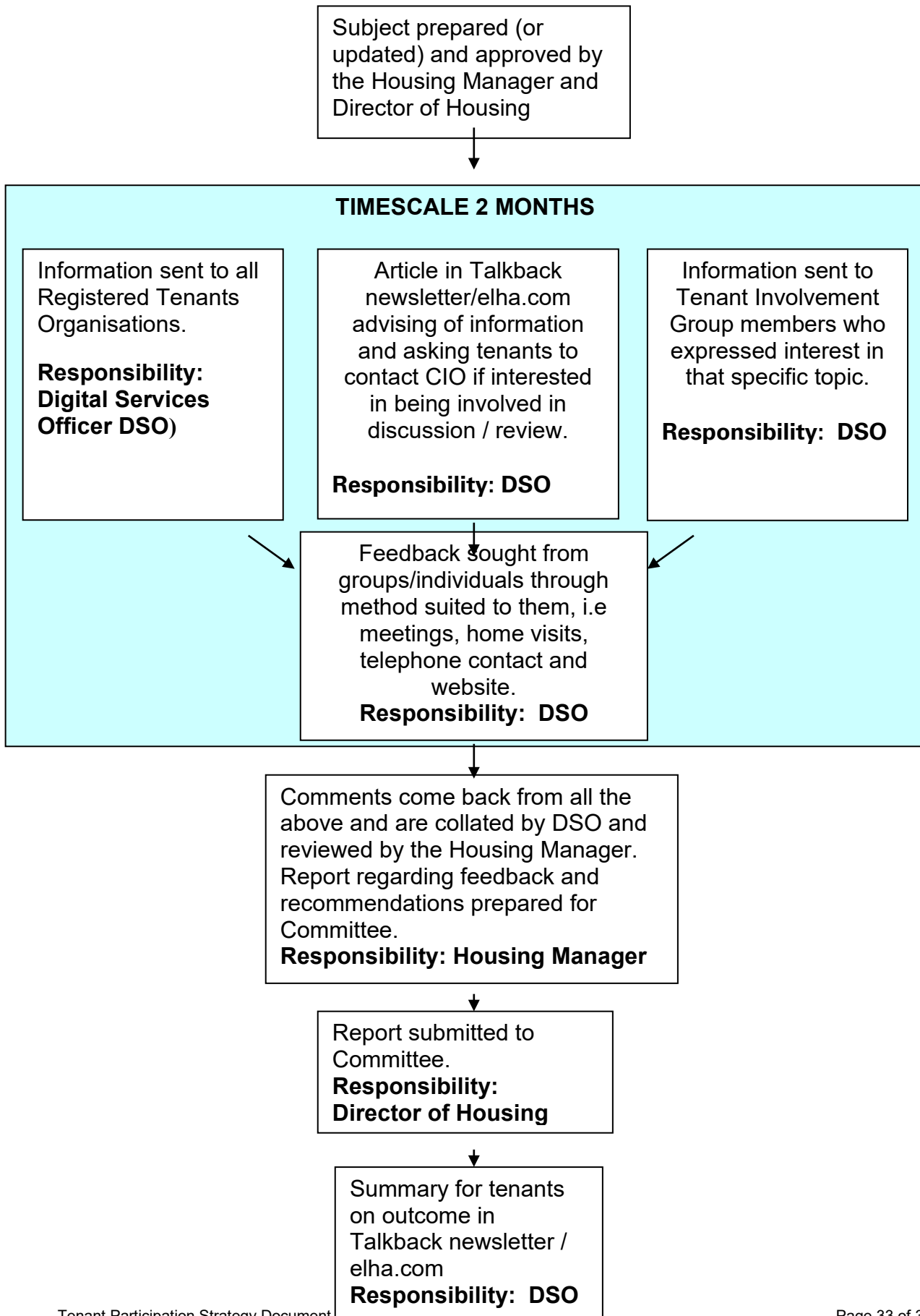
- 3.1 Analyse the data received as planned above at 1.0.
- 3.2 Write a report summarising the results received:

- Record the reason for consulting, (eg: legal requirement, checking customer satisfaction, seeking opinions on possible future projects).
- Record who you consulted with, and how many people responded.
- if the consultation was undertaken to gauge customer preference for a possible future project, include the findings and recommend a course of action.
- Include appendices with statistical data, graphs, comments, etc.

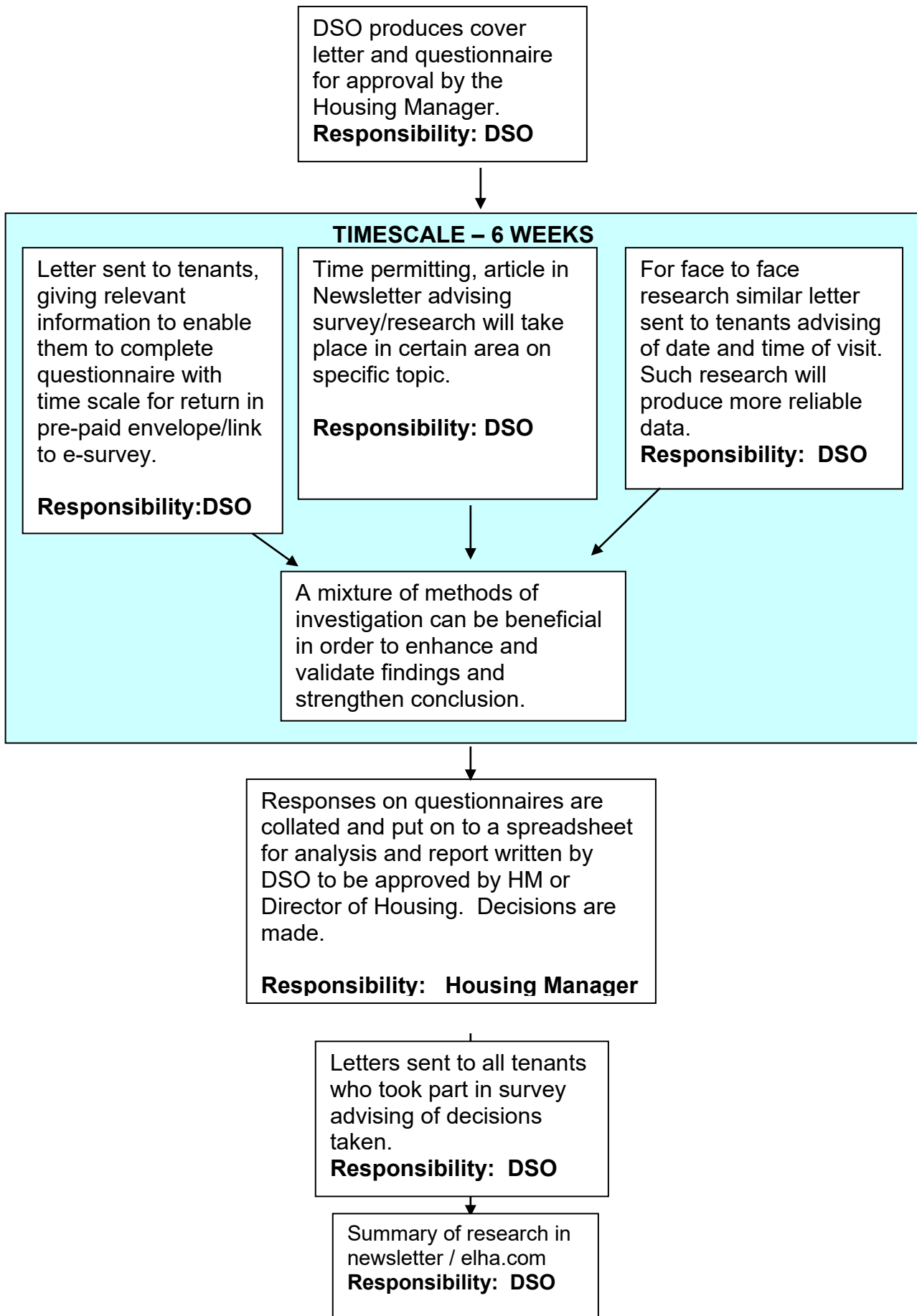
4.0 Feedback & Reporting

- 4.1 The prepared report may go to the next appropriate TIG and/or Audit & Assurance Committee meeting. If so, the report should be saved to the relevant folder in Meetings, and appropriate headers and footers applied.
- 4.2 Feedback to tenants is normally via e-Talk or Talkback, the tenant newsletter. An article based on a plain English version of the consultation report should be prepared and saved to the next issue folder in Corporate Publications. This should include any charts, but not individual tenant feedback.
- 4.3 Letters may also be sent out to interested parties. This should have already been scheduled in the planning stages, and any resources or staff time allocated.
- 4.4 If the consultation is for internal use only, the report (if required) should be passed to the relevant member of staff.

Appendix 3 – Consultation Flow Chart



Research Flow Chart



Appendix 4 – Tenant Participation Performance Indicators

Indicator

Tenants & Tenant Groups

- No. of formal/informal groups formed
- No. of groups dissolved
- No. of RTO's and % of tenants this represents
- No. of tenants in the TIG
- No. of new tenants signed up to TIG
- Amount of grant funding paid to tenants organisations

Meetings

- No. of TIG Panel meetings held during the year
- No. of tenant group meetings attended during the year
- No. of TP liaison group/network meetings attended during the year and any joint work carried out
- No. of estate inspections during the year and % of tenant representation
- Outcomes from the estate inspections
- No. of tenant events and % tenants attending during the year
- Facilities offered to encourage participation and maximise accessibility

Consultation & Information

- No. of consultations carried out during the year
- No. of RTO's consulted during the year
- Methods used for consultation and to maximise accessibility
- Methods used to encourage participation (e.g. Prize draws)
- No. of tenant surveys issued during the year
- Response rate to surveys
- How the results of surveys were fed back to tenants
- No. of newsletters issued during year
- No. of information leaflets introduced during year
- Level of tenant influence

TP Training and Awareness

- Staff attendance at training/awareness sessions
- Tenant/Panel member attendance at training/awareness sessions
- No. of training/information sessions provided by Association staff
- Membership of external bodies e.g. TIS or TPAS

Budget

- Amount budgeted for TP and actual amount spent during the year

Outputs

- TIG Panel Report to the AGM
- Annual Tenant Participation report to Management Committee
- Quarterly reports to Audit & Assurance Committee
- Quarterly TIG Panel Minutes
- Tenant Participation Strategy Action Plan
- Consultation & Survey Reports
- Joint RTO Register
- Talkback Newsletter
- Performance 365