



Tenant Participation Strategy



'In touch with tenants' needs'

2008 - 2010



Certificate No 1570/97

Contents

1. Foreword	4
2. Introduction	5
3. Our aims for tenant participation	6
4. How our objectives will be achieved.....	6
5 Cross cutting issues	9
6. Resources for Tenant Participation	10
7. How things work.....	11
8. Evaluation and Review	15

1. Foreword



by Margaret Pritchard, Chairman of Tenants' Committee

Welcome to this, our first tenant participation strategy, which aims to explain how we are going to fulfil the promises made in our Agreement and describes how things will work.

I have been Chairman of the Tenants' Committee for a short time, but have participated for a number of years as a Tenants' Committee member. The last twelve months has been a busy time for Tenants' Committee and staff of South Lakes Housing. In summer 2007 we carried out a wide programme of consultation about the review of the Agreement with our Independent Advisor, Marianne Hood, and finally signed the completed document in December 2007. This led to the setting up of the Tenant Involvement Club (TIC) which we hope will lead to many more people from our communities getting involved, even if it is in a small way.

The Decent Homes programme is still rolling along well and I am sure that everyone that has had the work done is very pleased and satisfied with the improvements to their property.

We are also very pleased with the Audit Commission Inspection report that awarded us a 'good, 2 star service' with 'excellent prospects' for improvement.

In closing I would like to give a vote of thanks to all of the staff of South Lakeland District Council, South Lakes Housing and to all Tenants' Committee members; we have proved that working together in partnership enables us to achieve a better future for all our tenants and leaseholders.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M Pritchard', written over a horizontal dashed line.

Margaret Pritchard
Chairman
Tenants' Committee
June 2008

2. Introduction

This Strategy outlines what South Lakes Housing is planning to put in place to achieve its aims and objectives for resident involvement over the next two years. South Lakes Housing works hard to ensure that all its decisions are made in partnership with tenants and leaseholders.

Please note that when the term 'tenant' is used we mean Council tenants, including sheltered housing tenants, and leaseholders. Where the term 'resident' is used this means anyone who lives on an estate managed by South Lakes Housing.

The District-wide Tenant Participation Agreement (also known as a Compact) was thoroughly reviewed and updated in 2007 by tenants and their Independent Advisor following wide consultation before being agreed by South Lakes Housing and South Lakeland District Council. The Agreement contains:-

- The Aims and Objectives of the above partners with regard to tenant participation
- A list of the ways that tenants can be involved
- A list of the services and other topics that tenants can be involved in
- Standards for resources, meetings, tenant representatives, involving the community, and monitoring and measuring performance
- Roles and responsibilities
- Resolving disputes
- Key and local performance indicators,
- Service standards for participation
- A comprehensive action plan to capture all the tasks that are required to achieve the Aims and Objectives

This Strategy seeks to:

- Describe how the objectives will be achieved
- Set out how priorities such as achieving equality are to be approached
- Summarise resources for participation
- Explain how things work including links to the Council and other partners such as the Police
- Describe how the Agreement, Neighbourhood Agreements, issue-based Agreements and this Strategy are to be evaluated and reviewed

This Strategy also helps South Lakes Housing achieve Our Vision:

- 'to be an independent and accountable organisation working within the community for the community'
- and Our Mission:
- 'to deliver a high quality efficient and cost effective housing service to meet the needs of current and future tenants and leaseholders of South Lakeland District Council'
 - achieved by
 - 'using imaginative and innovative solutions with the active involvement of tenants and other community representatives',
 - and 'improving the quality of life in our neighbourhoods and estates through proactive and supportive partnership working'.

In the South Lakes Housing Business Plan, the summary of strategic objectives for resident involvement states:

- 'to ensure tenants and leaseholders are at the heart of decisions taken in planning, delivering and monitoring our services.'

In addition this Strategy links to South Lakeland District Council's Value of 'communicating and engaging effectively' and its Vision of 'improving the quality of life in South Lakeland' and helps it achieve its overall objectives.

3. Our aims for tenant participation

1. To increase tenant and leaseholder influence over decisions taken by South Lakes Housing, and decisions taken by the Council that affect tenants and leaseholders, to ensure that both SLH and SLDC are accountable to Council tenants and leaseholders
2. To consult and involve tenants of all ages, backgrounds and abilities to ensure that South Lakes Housing delivers an excellent, high quality, efficient and cost effective housing service to meet the needs of current and future tenants and leaseholders of South Lakeland District Council
3. To reach and involve any traditionally excluded or under-involved Council tenants and leaseholders in our community including tenants in remote rural areas, young people, frail elderly people, people from Black and Minority Ethnic communities, people with support needs, and people with care responsibilities and to be sensitive to diversity in our communities and promote understanding between people who have different backgrounds, needs, experiences, and preferences
4. To increase levels of Council tenant and leaseholder representation and involvement in all aspects of the development of South Lakes Housing and its services to tenants and leaseholders and to create increased opportunity and choice for tenants and leaseholders of all ages, abilities, cultures and backgrounds to get involved in ways and at levels that meet their needs and wishes
5. To promote and develop safe and secure neighbourhoods, to deliver sustainable communities, and to continually improve the quality of life for all residents

4. How our objectives will be achieved

Objective 1

To enable as many Council tenants and leaseholders as possible to get involved in improving their local neighbourhood and the overall environment surrounding their homes

We will:

- Hold local events and Area Discussion Groups to encourage local involvement and get local views
- Support Residents Associations to agreed standards
- Publish a programme of estate walkabouts and roadshows throughout the area
- Work with our partners on their initiatives eg South Lakeland's Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership's (SLCDRP) Streetsafe

- Implement a robust Anti-Social Behaviour Policy in partnership with tenants to promote safe neighbourhoods
- Provide a grant scheme for groups of tenants to apply for funding to improve their locality or hold social events to promote community cohesion
- Involve tenants in identifying and agreeing a programme of Sustainability Works through Decent Homes
- We will elect a Member of the South Lakes Housing Board as Champion of 'Tenants and Involvement' to make sure tenants' views are always taken into account.

Objective 2

To develop a wide range of mechanisms to make it possible for tenants living in remote rural areas, tenants with support needs, and traditionally excluded or under-involved sections of our community including younger tenants, frail elderly tenants and tenants from Black and Minority Ethnic communities to put their views forward and get involved

South Lakeland is a large area and tenants' homes are scattered across the district. We record tenants' details so that we can measure how successful we are at delivering the service equally to all members of our community

We will:

- Continue to gather and update tenants' details on our database
- Promote and monitor the Tenant Involvement Club (TIC) the database of tenants who have agreed to be involved at a level which suits them
- Provide a ladder of opportunities for participation for all tenants to be informed, consulted and involved
- Remove barriers to participation by providing transport, expenses, child and other care allowances, translation services, and access for those with disabilities
- Involve whole communities in events and consultation to ensure we reach everyone
- Publish a code of conduct to make sure everyone understands what is acceptable behaviour at an event or meeting
- Ensure all our staff receive training about equality issues
- Publish a Sheltered Housing Agreement

Objective 3

To continually improve relevant information, feedback and communication between the Council and SLH and Council tenants and leaseholders

We recognise that not all tenants will want to be involved in our formal participation structures, so we will make sure that there is a wide range of ways for good quality, timely information to be provided to everyone.

We will:

- Publish South Lakes Housing News, at least four times a year
- Publish a Consultation Calendar showing the dates of participation and other events
- Make relevant information available on the South Lakes Housing website
- Help tenants to publish their own district-wide or local newsletters

- Make available a comprehensive up to date Tenants' Handbook
- Publish a selection of information leaflets
- Support the Tenant Reader Panel, that ensures all our information is clear, easy to read and understand
- Arrange for tenants to carry out a programme of 'mystery shops' and audits
- Make our information available in other formats and in large print

Objective 4

To make sure that tenants and leaseholders are involved in setting, monitoring, and reviewing our service and performance standards and, where necessary, agreeing improvement and remedial action.

We will:

- Publish an annual report to tenants detailing South Lakes Housing's performance
- Hold an annual tenants' conference where service standards will be reviewed
- Ensure performance reports, Action Plans are reported to Tenants' Committee quarterly
- Enable Tenants' Committee to make reports to the Board where standards are not met
- Ensure Service Improvement Groups (SIGs) have an overview of performance standards for their area of the service and can recommend improvements to the service

Objective 5

To ensure that, at local levels, tenants and leaseholders play a full part in identifying and discussing the issues that are most relevant to them and in making sure that local priorities are met

We will:

- Provide Residents' Associations with advice and support
- Hold Area Discussion Groups around the district
- Hold additional local meetings on request
- Help residents develop Neighbourhood Agreements
- Ensure tenants are involved in the delivery of South Lakeland District Council services for example grounds maintenance
- Train and support a team of tenant inspectors to report on their local area
- Involve a range of partners to help us achieve our goals

Objective 6

To improve access to support and training for all Council tenants and leaseholders and to continually develop resources to support Council tenant and leaseholder participation in delivery of their housing services and the development of sustainable communities

We will:

- Develop and publish an annual programme of training based on a Training Needs Analysis

- Advertise the training programme in South Lakes Housing News and on the website
- Work in partnership with the Cumbria Tenants Forum and the Cumbria Housing Training Group to provide training and achieve Value for Money
- Provide joint training for tenants, Board Members and staff
- Provide training for tenants in our Tenants' Resource Centre, where there are computers to train tenant representatives in IT

Objective 7

To continually improve levels of tenant and leaseholder satisfaction with services from South Lakes Housing and with arrangements for communication, consultation and involvement

We will:

- Carry out satisfaction surveys on all our services
- Learn from the results of the surveys
- Enable the Service Improvement Groups to monitor satisfaction for their area of the service and recommend any necessary improvements
- We will carry out an annual survey of tenant and leaseholder satisfaction with arrangements for consultation and involvement as part of the Agreement review

5 Cross cutting issues

Access and customer focus

Using the results and feedback from public consultation and surveys and in agreement with tenant representatives the following key objectives related to customer access were agreed in 2007:

- To provide a friendly, easy to access service where the needs of the customer are put first
- To respect diversity and promote equality of opportunity in relation to all of the ways in which SLH is run and delivers its services
- To develop and utilise information technology in order to deliver our business more efficiently and improve communication and convenient access to services

Equality & Diversity

Conclusions from profiling

The small numbers of people from ethnic minorities must not lead us to ignore their needs. South Lakes Housing may have few such tenants but we must ensure we are giving fair access to our services. We can also play a part in promoting social harmony and reducing hate crime.

The high proportion of elderly people and those with disabilities make these equality 'strands' of great importance both in the District and for South Lakes Housing, for they already make up a large part of our core customers. It is relevant to how South Lakes Housing manages resources and assets to support these groups and give them easy access to services.

The needs of young people are another prominent issue, especially in relation to the shortage of affordable housing, and future asset management by South Lakes Housing. Young people's needs are in danger of being overlooked if they are only seen as a problem in estate management.

Gender is significant for South Lakes Housing as we have many tenants who are single parent families (predominantly a female parent) and elderly women on their own. Nearly two thirds of our tenants are female.

Faith and sexuality issues are not well understood and we must work harder here to understand their relevance to our activities.

All of our activities in these areas of work contribute to our commitment to our Comprehensive Equality Policy.

Value for money

South Lakes Housing tenants already have a clear and influential role that includes making decisions on the best use of all resources. On value for money it means tenants specifying where 'money' efficiencies are made and spent and what outputs can be improved through the allocation of limited resources.

We have a Value for Money Service Improvement Group which brings together managers, staff and tenants to review our progress against value for money. Other Service Improvement Groups also review value for money in their specific area.

Developing the efficiency agenda at South Lakes Housing is, therefore, not the result of an isolated and unrelated consultation exercise; rather it brings together a number of previously consulted and agreed themes including the prioritisation process for budgets and the process for measuring quality.

Tenants are informed about value for money savings and spend through features in the Newsletter and via the website. The website also enables tenants to order a range of housing services and make a complaint. We will continue to confirm that tenants remain satisfied with South Lakes Housing in regard to value for money.

Impact of involvement

Our aims and objectives show that we are clear about the purpose of involving tenants in all areas of the service. Tenant involvement leads to real improvements, and the service being delivered to meet tenants needs and requirements. This Strategy will be evaluated against our objectives – that means we will measure all the things we have promised to do and make sure they are the right things. We will also publish a series of 'You said – we did' in South Lakes Housing News to show how we continue to learn from tenant input.

6. Resources for Tenant Participation

South Lakes Housing's overall spending on participation, including staff time, amounts to around 10% of our total budgets.

The Tenant Participation budget pays for tenant expenses, training and newsletters, along with a grant to Tenants' Committee, who have their own budget to pay for expenses and training. The Tenant Participation budget has been increased to

£30,000 for 2008/09 to keep up with what the best performing landlords are allocating to participation services.

Tenants' Committee budget is not the only budget spent by tenants; for many years we have agreed with our tenants a budget to be spent on local priorities and estate improvements and this will continue with the new Grant Approval Group. The estate improvement budget for 2008/09 will be £20,000. Members of Tenants' Committee will be working on bringing in funding and equipment from other sources and have been on training courses to help them continue with this work.

Tenants' Committee will continue to be involved in the setting of the management fee; the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan development; and use their budget to engage an Independent Adviser for Finance to explain these complicated topics and advise on best practice from the best landlords.

7. How things work

The District wide Agreement shows a framework for involvement for participation. Here are the agreed processes for tenant input to Board decisions (fig 1), the leaseholder involvement framework (fig 2).

FIGURE 1

Flow chart showing tenant input to the management and governance of South Lakes Housing.

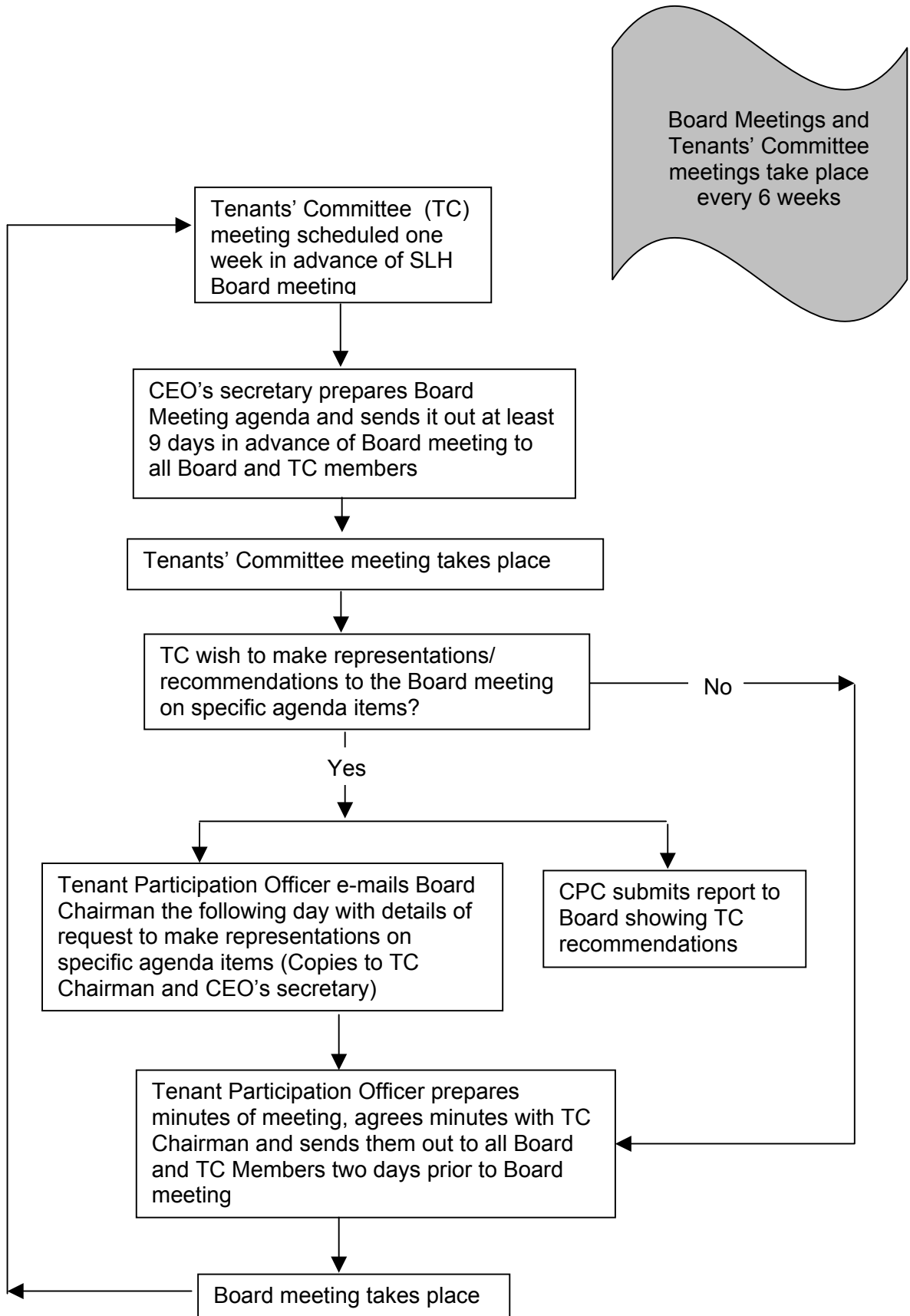
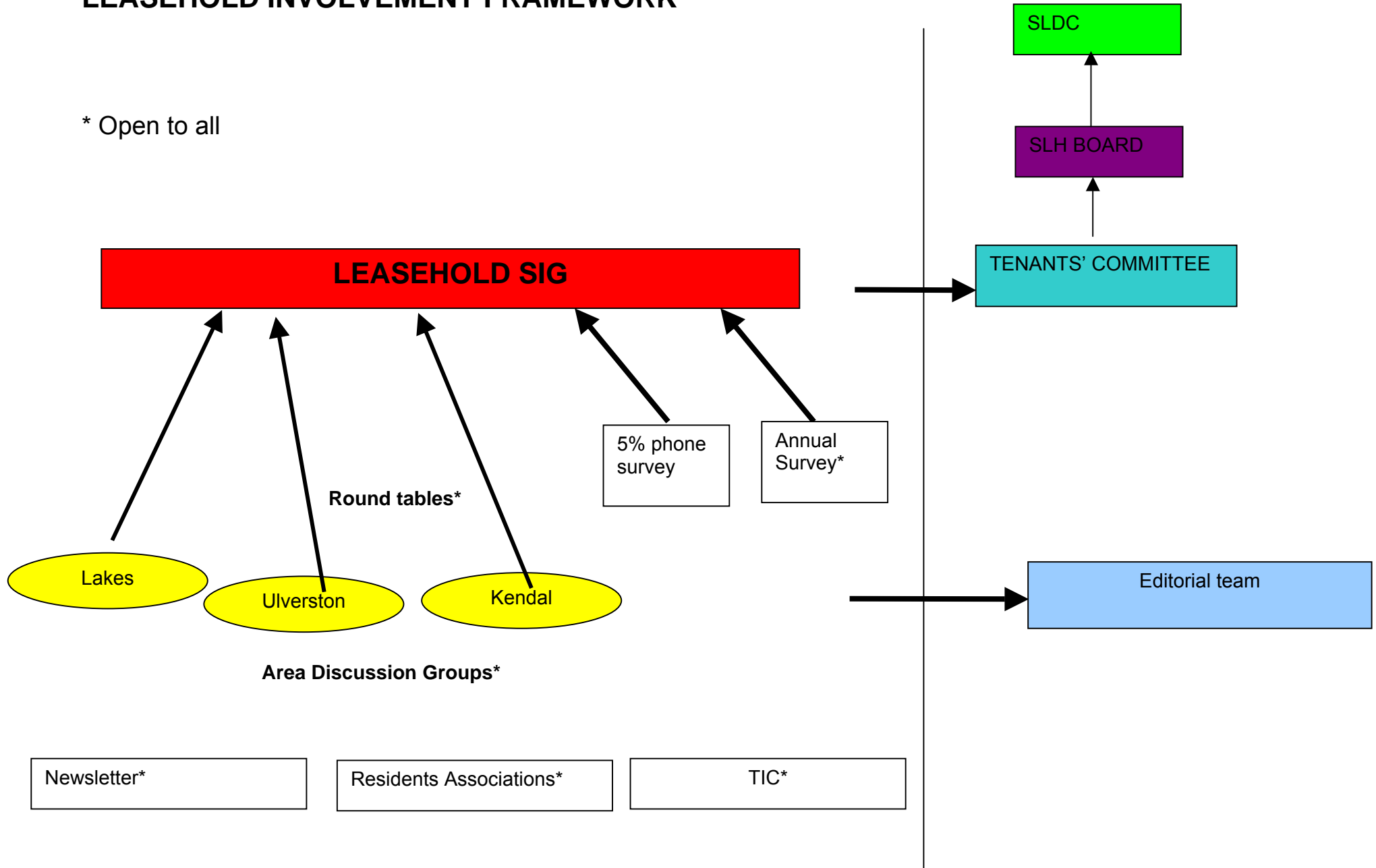


FIGURE 2

LEASEHOLD INVOLVEMENT FRAMEWORK

* Open to all



Tenants are involved in all the processes we have put in place to deliver our Decent Homes programme of improvement works. There are tenant representatives on the various Task Teams, the Core Group, and Project Board. In practical terms this has meant:

- Tenants help choose construction partners
- Tenants make overall product choices
- Roadshows display product choices
- Open/display events for each area
- Tenants' product choice for own home
- Tenants have monitored Health and Safety and Diversity issues throughout the programme
- Tenants help decide spend of sustainability funding
- Satisfaction results monitored by tenants
- Tenants involved in development of all documents and guides

All these opportunities are enshrined in the Major Works Agreement.

We will work with our many partners and some are mentioned here.

South Lakeland District Council owns the housing stock and provides South Lakes Housing with a management fee to manage the housing service. The Council also supports the **South Lakeland Crime and Disorder Partnership (SLCDRP)** and welcomes tenants to sit on Overview and Scrutiny Committees, with full voting rights. Tenants will also be working with South Lakeland District Council to select the Grounds Maintenance Contractors and with South Lakes Housing to monitor how well the Contractor performs in keeping estates clean and tidy.

The Police will help us to create safe neighbourhoods by working with us on Neighbourhood Agreements, Anti-Social Behaviour Orders and Acceptable Behaviour Contracts, Estate Walkabouts and welcome us to join their 'Streetsafe' operations. All this helps us to deliver on the RESPECT agenda which the Government supports and describes as 'putting the law-abiding majority back in charge of their communities'.

The Fire Service regularly advertise fire safety in the home in our newsletters, and will be attending our roadshows this coming year. They carry out Fire Home Safety visits to our tenants, free of charge.

Age Concern is our partner in Telecare and will help us to carry out and analyse the results of our annual survey of sheltered housing tenants, offering a confidential form-filling service during the survey.

Citizens Advice Bureau advertise their welfare rights advice service and positions for volunteers in South Lakes Housing News. We will work closely with the Bureau staff to provide a comprehensive money advice service for tenants.

Connexions is the County Council service for services for young people and we will work together on our estates to help provide things for our young people to do.

Resolve Mediation Services will help tenants to try a first step in resolving low-level complaints of anti-social behaviour or neighbour nuisance including; noise, children's behaviour, pets and untidy gardens.

Hallgarth Young People's Organisation (HYPO) promotes youth activities and includes; Cumbria County Council, Young Cumbria, Registered Social Landlords, South Lakeland District Council and community volunteers.

8. Evaluation and Review

Evaluation means to look at the service we are providing and see if it meets our objectives and is good value for money. We will be doing a satisfaction survey about the tenant participation service as part of the annual review of the District-wide Agreement and will use the results to shape the service for the future.

Neighbourhood Agreements will be reviewed annually with the tenants and residents who have signed up to them, along with our partners.

The Sheltered Housing Agreement will be relaunched in summer 2008 and will be reviewed and evaluated each year.

The Leaseholder Agreement is new and has been sent out to all Leaseholders for comment with a planned launch in summer 2008. This Agreement will also be reviewed annually.

The Major Works Agreement sets out how tenants will be involved in any major works or home improvement programmes, and will be updated annually by the Customer Focus Task Team.

This Tenant Participation Strategy will be reviewed in just a few months time, along with the District-wide Agreement, and annually after that.

The District-wide Agreement Action Plan, performance indicators, service standards and evaluation will be reported quarterly to Tenants' Committee and the Board. Key performance indicators will be reported in the Annual Report to Tenants. The results of all the reviews, evaluations and surveys will also be reported to Tenants' Committee and the Board in the year-end Involvement Report.

Alternative formats

This Strategy is available by email. Ask at any housing office about your special requirements. The document is intended to be clear, easy to read and understand; to ensure this, our Tenant Reader Panel has approved the text.

If you want to make any comment about the Strategy please contact:

Suzy Duffy
Community Participation Co-ordinator
South Lakes Housing
Little Aynam House
Little Aynam
Kendal
LA9 7AH
01539 717717
s.duffy@southlakeshousing.co.uk

You can get a copy of this document in different formats such as large print, Braille, audio, or in a different language by calling **0845 057 0080**.

Pode obter uma cópia deste documento em vários formatos, como por exemplo em Braille, áudio, ou numa outra língua. Para tal ligue para o 0845 057 0080.

如果您想获取该文件的不同版本，如：大字体印刷、盲文、音频或不同语言版本，请致电：**0845 057 0080**。

Paskambinę telefonu **0845 057 0080**, galite užsisakyti šio dokumento kopiją įvairiais formatais, pavyzdžiui, atspausdintą dideliu šriftu, Brailio raštu, užsisakyti garso įrašą arba gauti dokumentą, išverstą į norimą kalbą.

Aby otrzymać kopię tego dokumentu w innych formatach, takich jak duży druk, druk Braille'm, audio, lub w innym języku proszę dzwonić pod numer **0845 057 0080**.

0845 057 0080 'u arayarak, bu dokümanın bir kopyasını büyük puntolu, körler için kabartmalı, ses dosyası gibi değişik formatlarda veya farklı bir dilde edinebilirsiniz.

আপনি **0845 057 0080** -এই নম্বর ফোন করে, বিভিন্ন ফরম্যাট যেমন বড় প্রিন্ট, ব্রেইল, অডিও বা একটি ভিন্ন ভাষাতে এই নথিটির একটি কপি পেতে পারেন।