



# **Community Involvement Team Tenant Participation Strategy 2009 – 2012**

# 1. Introduction

**This is the first Tenant Participation Strategy of Cartrefi Conwy, produced in partnership with tenants, tenants groups, leaseholders, staff of Cartrefi Conwy and other stakeholders. It reflects our commitment to developing and implementing real and effective participation and consultation.**

**This Strategy describes a series of actions that Cartrefi Conwy intends to implement to ensure our strategic aims and objectives are met. It;**

- Describes a series of aims, objectives and actions for the period 2009 – 2012.
- Outlines the resources available to support tenant participation.
- Provides a focus for individual tenants and tenants groups who want to play an active part in improving services.
- Will show how Cartrefi Conwy will assess, evaluate and monitor the impact of the strategy.

## **Strategy Appendices**

The appendices to this strategy provide information and guidance notes on Tenants and Residents Associations, the area offices, information on customer complaints and a listing of additional sources of information and support.

## **How can you have your say on the strategy?**

You can write with your comments to:

Community Involvement Team  
Cartrefi Conwy  
Bryn Eirias  
Heritage Gate  
Abergele Road  
Colwyn Bay LL29 8BY  
Phone: 01492 805529  
Email: [phil.jones@cartreficonwy.org](mailto:phil.jones@cartreficonwy.org)

## **Is the strategy available in other formats?**

This strategy and its appendices can also be made available in large print, audio, Braille, electronic copies and other languages, upon request. Please use the above contact details for more information or copies.

### **Other relevant publications**

This Strategy will link in with Cartrefi Conwy's Tenant Involvement/Consultation Policy, Equality and Diversity Policy, and the Welsh Language Scheme as well as being used in the development of other strategies in the future.

Additionally, the strategy has benefited from and has been produced with due reference to guidance supplied by the National Assembly for Wales<sup>1</sup> and the Welsh Assembly Government<sup>2</sup>.

## **2. What is our Vision?**

The overarching Mission Statement of Cartrefi Conwy is:

**“To provide sustainable affordable homes for local communities, actively encouraging the participation of everyone and respecting the needs of all.”**

In relation to Tenant Participation our vision is to ensure that:

“The first Tenant Participation Strategy of Cartrefi Conwy reflects a **culture of change**, trust and shared vision between our organisation and our service users and aims to deliver the **tenant promises** set out at the creation of Cartrefi Conwy. Our strategy will also ensure that all of our service users have the opportunity and resources to play a worthwhile and valued part in continually improving our service to tenants, leaseholders and local communities.”

## **3. What are our Principles?**

Our principles reflect the recent changes Cartrefi Conwy has undergone and the opportunities and responsibilities these changes have presented to our organisation and our service users. Our principles also acknowledge and reflect the guidance set out in the **Regulatory Code for Registered Housing Associations in Wales** as well as **The Guarantee for Housing Association Residents**. Our driving themes will be to;

- Repay the **faith** shown in Cartrefi Conwy by our tenants.

---

<sup>1</sup> Regulatory Code for Housing Associations in Wales - National Assembly for Wales (2006) [www.wales.gov.uk/housing](http://www.wales.gov.uk/housing)

<sup>2</sup>The Guarantee for Housing Association Tenants - Welsh Assembly Government (2004) [www.wales.gov.uk/housing](http://www.wales.gov.uk/housing)

- Ensure that we **deliver the promises** set out in the Offer Document that forms the foundation of Cartrefi Conwy.
- Utilise the unique opportunity we now have to effect a **culture change** within our organisation in the way we deliver our services
- Ensure that our service users are fully involved in **decision making** at all levels within Cartrefi Conwy and are at the heart of everything we try to achieve
- Engender a working relationship between Cartrefi Conwy and our service users based on **mutual respect, trust and partnership.**
- Provide the **opportunity and the resources** to our tenants and staff so they can play a full and meaningful part in delivering our strategic aims and objectives
- Embrace the ethos of tenant participation and **community involvement** and ensure that it is an integral part of the role of all staff within Cartrefi Conwy
- Ensure that Cartrefi Conwy meets its responsibilities in relation to tenant participation as set out in **legislation** while delivering a strategy that is in harmony with all of Cartrefi Conwy's strategic policies
- Be acknowledged and recognised as a beacon of best practice and a leader in the delivery of meaningful and effective tenant participation.
- Encourage **community development** initiatives while recognising our role as a community enabler
- Provide meaningful and timely **feedback** to show how tenant involvement has shaped and influenced our decision making process
- Ensure that we **challenge inequalities** and target the formal and informal inclusion of **under represented groups** within our tenant network

## 4. What are our main Aims and Objectives?

We fully recognise and support the principles of tenant involvement at all levels within our organisation. Our **commitment** is to ensure the mainstreaming of those principles into existing corporate practices. Cartrefi Conwy will consult with and

involve tenants on the comprehensive range of issues that affect their homes and communities. We will strive to ensure that our tenants are at the **heart of policy development, implementation and review**.

Our overall aim is to ensure that all of our tenants, whether part of formal groups or not, have the **opportunity, resources and support** to play an effective part in the decision making process of Cartrefi Conwy, thereby helping us deliver continuous service improvement to our tenants.

Our six main aims, as set out in the Action Plan, are a direct reflection of the issues raised by tenants in the comprehensive consultation exercise which formed the basis for the strategy.

They are to:

1. Provide a wide range of options, both formally and informally, to ensure that an effective two way flow of information is agreed and implemented. Develop and improve current lines of **communication** between Cartrefi Conwy and service users while investigating new and more innovative methods of **consultation**.
2. Ensure that all of our service users have the opportunity to play an active and participative part in the delivery of our services. While adopting current good practice, the Action Plan sets out a range of options in which tenants can **participate**, from being a lone tenant voice via the Tenants Forum through the range of mechanisms of Street Representative, Tenants and Residents groups, Area Panels, the Sounding Board, the Tenants Forum and its Working Groups and Board membership of Cartrefi Conwy.
3. Provide the **training, support and resources** to ensure that all tenants and staff can work in partnership to deliver this Strategy's aims and objectives. This Strategy will outline current resources while ensuring that all tenants and staff are fully aware of how the strategy is funded and resourced in the future – both financially and in tenant/staff time and commitment.
4. Ensure that the planning and implementation of our **improvement programme** is delivered as set out in the stock transfer Offer Document and in real partnership with our service users. This unprecedented investment in our housing stock will give tenants the opportunity to shape and influence the improvement programme, from involvement in selecting contractors to delivery and monitoring of the service.
5. Encourage all service users to access both the £771,000 per annum **Environmental Fund** and the £50,000 per annum **Community Chest** for the first five years. These unprecedented initiatives give us the opportunity

to provide tenants with the knowledge, support, guidance and expertise to manage and administer both funding streams in order to encourage community empowerment on a local level.

6. Develop positive **working networks** with other service providers in Conwy. Cartrefi Conwy and our tenants' network will forge formal and informal links with local support groups in the voluntary and statutory sectors as well as tenants of other social landlords within our area of operation. This will enable Cartrefi Conwy to liaise more effectively with the more conventionally hard to reach groups and sections of our communities which are currently **under represented** within our tenant network. The aim of developing working relationships and networks with potential partner organisations runs throughout the strategy and Action Plan and is a fundamental element of the other five aims

Within these six broad aims, and to help deliver them, there are a number of more specific 'year on year' objectives. These objectives are in turn delivered by a number of more specific Action Points as set out in the Action Plan. **Overviews of our strategic objectives are to:**

1. Ensure that our communication and consultation methods result in an effective two way flow of information and that tenants have the opportunity to **talk face to face with staff - at all levels - within their own communities.**
2. Ensure information to tenants is in plain language and all relevant formats while promoting the use of **tenant and community led newsletters and flyers.** Examine the use of tenant developed and led Information Technology including the production of community web sites.
3. Examine ways in which tenants and staff can work together in making **formal and informal** methods of participation worthwhile and effective.
4. Continually **monitor** and review the methods by which tenants can play an active part in the delivery of our services.
5. Review and monitor the **role of the Tenants Forum** to reflect the increased opportunities and responsibilities available via the new Working Groups.
6. Ensure that the **increased resources** available to the tenant network, in terms of staffing and finance, are used effectively and provide value for money.
7. Ensure that training and capacity building is available to the wider tenant network while examining the best way to implement the **Tenants Resource Centre.**

8. Plan and implement an **Improvement Programme Monitoring and Review Group** to scrutinize progress and ensure that an effective communication plan is in place to deliver the programme.
9. Establish **tenant led mechanisms for distribution of both the Environmental Fund and Community Chest** while ensuring specific training on budget control and management.
10. Utilise the expertise of **support groups** and partner agencies within our communities to enable a more active input from sections of the communities that are under represented within our tenant network.

## 5. How was this Strategy produced?

### Information Gathering

In producing this strategy Cartrefi Conwy facilitated a wide and comprehensive consultation programme throughout the county to gather the views of as many tenants and leaseholders as possible. Targeted community events included a Tenant Information Tour, attended by Cartrefi Conwy board members and staff of Cartrefi Conwy, as well as tenants. These events took place throughout May and June 2008 and were held at different times of the day and evening to ensure maximum input from tenants. A total of 78 tenants attended the sessions which took place at the following venues:

- Llansannan
- Abergele
- Cerrigydrudion
- Llanrwst
- Llandudno - Trinity Centre
- Llandudno - Ty Hapus
- Colwyn Bay
- Old Colwyn
- Rhos on Sea
- Penmaenmawr
- Kinmel Bay
- Mochdre
- Llanfairfechan
- Llandudno Junction
- Peulwys

On completion of the Tenant Information Tour in June, Cartrefi Conwy hosted an Information Day on 10 June. This was attended by 64 tenants and over 30 staff and board members.

Cartrefi Conwy also facilitated 3 staff awareness and participation sessions to ensure that staff at all levels within the organisation could play a positive part in the formation of the strategy. These sessions took place in April 2008 at;

- Llandudno Area office
- Colwyn Bay Area Office
- Building Maintenance in Conwy Business Centre

The Tenants Forum continued to meet monthly and discussed progress of the Strategy.

A key driver and early motivation for this strategy came about through the comprehensive stock transfer consultation exercise and the resultant 'Offer Document' – 'Your Home – Your Choice.'

Two tenant conferences took place in 2004 and 2006. Although in main, the conferences focused on the local authority's proposals to transfer the housing stock, they provided important information on tenants' aspirations.

### **Information Dissemination**

When all of the views and issues were collected, a Tenant / Staff Strategy Group was set up to filter the information into a number of service delivery areas. This group also ensured that all of the issues and views of those who played a part in the information gathering sessions were taken into account in shaping the Strategy. The group consisted of 7 tenants and 6 staff - from both management and maintenance service areas - and met twice in August 2008.

Once the Tenant/Staff Strategy Group had completed its task, a smaller Strategy Working Group, made up of 3 tenants and 2 staff, focused in on the specific service delivery areas. The group met throughout September, October and November 2008, shaping the text of the Strategy as well as its aims, objectives, driving principles and action plan. The Strategy Working Group continued to meet up until the point when the Strategy was complete.

The draft Strategy was presented to and discussed by the Tenants Forum in October 2008. Forum members had one month to comment on the content of the strategy before reporting back to the next scheduled Forum meeting in November. This provided valuable feedback and comment on the content and priorities within the document.



Also in October 2008 the first draft of the Strategy was presented to and discussed in detail with the Executive Management Team of Cartrefi Conwy, which gave its full support and backing to its principles, aims and objectives. A meeting of the Heads of Services management team then took place where, again, the draft strategy was discussed.

This was followed by three meetings with staff of Cartrefi Conwy, one with the warden service, one with the Building Maintenance staff and one with the remaining staff from the housing offices and the Head Office. These meetings gave all staff members the opportunity to positively influence the strategy by contributing to and making comment on the content and delivery of the strategy.

This was followed by a consultation exercise with local support organisations and external agencies in order to get their views and comments on the strategy. A number of responses were received and their comments were incorporated into the strategy where applicable and direct feedback given to the respondents.

## **6. What are our resources?**

**Current resources which will continue to be available to our tenant network include:**

- One dedicated, full time member of staff.
- One part time member of staff with specific responsibility to manage the Peulwys Community House.
- Continued funding for the Peulwys Community House which provides a targeted resource for the Peulwys estate as well as the neighbouring estates- covering approximately 600 properties. The Community Facility acts as a hub for support agencies, Cartrefi Conwy Estate officers, and the local community.
- Regular provision of general housing information to tenants on tenant database.
- The provision of area road shows as required.
- Practical and financial support in the administration of the Tenants' Forum. This includes help with mailing of minutes and newsletters, payment for room hire for meetings, refreshments and sundry items.
- The provision of Tenants' conferences as required.

- Financial support for tenant groups, including start-up grants for new groups and annual grants to support the activities of existing groups.
- Practical support for tenant groups where required, including help with photocopying, posting of minutes and newsletters, payment for room hire for meetings and so on.
- Advice, information and community development support for tenant groups and the Conwy Tenant Forum.
- Training or access to information on training for tenant representatives, including joint training with Cartrefi Conwy staff.
- Reducing any barriers to tenants taking part including travel expenses and childcare.
- Developing new approaches to encouraging tenants to become involved and stay involved, including the involvement of young people.

In addition to the current resources outlined above, there will be an immediate increase in staffing levels for Tenant Participation specific roles with two additional officers being added to the team. This equates to approximately £58,000 of increased staff input which underlines the commitment Cartrefi Conwy will give to tenant participation.

Through the capital investment into the Improvement Programme there has been an additional post created of Senior Tenant Engagement Officer, whose responsibility will be to ensure that there are excellent opportunities for tenant consultation and involvement. This additional resource will ensure that tenant involvement is central to the Improvement programme while providing an essential link with the Community Involvement Team.

Additionally, Tenant Resource Facilities will allow for more focused sites for tenant engagement, empowerment and capacity building.

Cartrefi Conwy will also be providing £50,000 per annum for a Community Chest for the first 5 years. This fund as well as being of benefit to established groups will also be a huge benefit to small groups, individuals and communities who may not have been able to access funding in other ways.

Additionally, the increase in financial resources available to deliver this Strategy will be evident in the review of the tenant/resident group grants, the delivery of an annual conference, consistent and regular capacity building, proactive targeting of underrepresented groups, and the promotion of participation opportunities

available to tenants.

Cartrefi Conwy will approach the funding of tenant participation in a totally different manner from how it was done under the Local Authority. Whereas under the Local Authority, all tenant participation initiatives were funded from the tenant participation section, there will be increased emphasis within Cartrefi Conwy for tenant participation activities to come from all sections (Human Resources, Communications, Landlord Services) of the organisation. This shared responsibility will ensure that tenant participation is mainstreamed throughout the organisation.

Therefore, quantifying the exact amount available to spend on the entire Tenant Participation Strategy will not become apparent until year two of the strategy. A financial review after the initial year of operation will allow Cartrefi Conwy to be more specific on the financial input element of the strategy.

## **7. What Services and Standards can tenants expect?**

Cartrefi Conwy currently has a number of core standards that tenants can expect in the delivery of effective and meaningful Tenant Participation. We see these standards as an absolute minimum, providing a base on which to continually improve our consultation and participation methods. These minimum standards include:

- Clear structures in place for tenants to be involved.
- The production of regular newsletters, leaflets, the Tenants' Handbook, the Annual Report in clear jargon-free Welsh and English which will be available in different formats.
- Enabling tenants' to play a part in tenant participation activities including local events, surveys, roadshows, surgeries, fun days, the annual conference, local meetings, the Tenants Forum, as well as having open access to the housing offices.
- Hosting meetings at appropriate times of the day and ensuring those meetings are welcoming, relevant and encourage positive input from those attending.
- A recognition that the majority of tenants would prefer to have their say in ways other than through formal tenant participation structures. We will

use a variety of creative, inclusive consultation methods to gather tenants' views.

- Ensuring that tenants are provided with feedback on the way their views have influenced service delivery.
- Ensuring that the Tenant Involvement Budget is allocated and developed in consultation with tenants.
- Ensuring all staff are informed, trained and resourced to deliver effective and worthwhile tenant participation.
- Ensuring that support and training is made available to groups and individuals as and when required.
- Working to remove any obstacles, such as child care, transport, and access that might hinder any tenant from getting involved.
- Seeking active input from tenants from under-represented groups within the tenant network including younger tenants and tenants from rural areas.

## **8. How will this Strategy be delivered? (The Action Plan)**

The proposed methods of delivering this strategy are set out in the attached Action Plan. The overall strategy will be reviewed at least every three years while the Action Plan element of the strategy will be reviewed by the relevant Tenants' Forum Working Group every three months with reports going to the Board's Customers and Partnerships Committee. An annual review of the Action Plan by the Forum's Working Group will suggest amendments which will then be brought before the Customers and Partnerships Committee for authorisation.

## **9. Our commitment to equality of Opportunity**

Our commitment to equality in the shaping and delivery of this Strategy reflects the principles set out in our Equalities and Diversity Policy. It is to ensure that Cartrefi Conwy is committed to providing equal treatment to all existing and potential staff,

members, tenants and customers and equality of service to the community in which it operates. Cartrefi Conwy is committed to developing a culture in which Equality and Diversity is embraced within all its activities.

In practice we acknowledge and recognise that there are sections of our communities that do not play as active a part in conventional tenant participation activities as we would like. As an organisation, Cartrefi Conwy will ensure that tenants living in more rural areas, young people within our communities and tenants living in our sheltered schemes have the opportunity to play an active part if they so choose and we will do all in our power to remove any barriers to tenant participation.

Our Action Plan outlines how we plan to work with other agencies to ensure that those of our tenants who have specific support needs are made aware of tenant involvement and participation and given every opportunity to play an active part.

## **10. Monitoring and Evaluation of Strategy**

This strategy will undergo a fundamental review in 2012 with the Action Plan element being reviewed and amended every 12 months. This 12 month review will inform the Actions for the coming year. The Strategy Monitoring and Review Working Group will deliver reports to the Tenants' Forum as well as the Board's Customers and Partnerships Committee, the Executive Team, as well as staff on progress made on the Action Plan points thus ensuring continuous review. Recommendations from the Working Group will be presented to the Customers and Partnerships Committee for final ratification. The Working Group shall make the decision on how often it meets to review the strategy - it is planned initially to meet every three months in the first year.

One of the implications of delivering the strategy is the increased activity from tenants, mainly through the establishing of the various Working Groups. Success of the strategy depends on input and commitment from tenants. Monitoring of tenants' input as a primary resource and ensuring tenants have the capacity and support will be crucial in delivering the strategy. Part of the Strategy Monitoring and Review Working Group's role will be to examine other methods of monitoring the strategy, including the use of tenant inspectors and mystery shoppers.

The Strategy is not exhaustive in that tenant participation ideas and initiatives will continually develop over time. These issues will become incorporated into the strategy as they arise. Nor is the strategy a rigid set of ideas as this can obstruct rather than facilitate progress. Some of the action points may be optimistic in their timescale or achieve a different outcome than is stated in the Action Plan. It is therefore important that flexibility is inbuilt via the quarterly and annual reviews where changes can be acknowledged and implemented.

In focusing in on the specific objectives and actions within the strategy, the Working Group will report on:

- the effectiveness of the actions in achieving objectives
- whether actions are delivered on schedule,
- who is responsible for delivery of actions
- effectiveness on achieving outcomes
- whether resources/support were adequate
- evaluating methods of involving tenants - are they effective
- tenant input and its influence at Board level

Feedback of information will form the basis on which the strategy can be evaluated. This will include gathering information on estate based events such as the planned estate walkabouts. All estate based events will include recording of information. For example community meetings will record who attends, how many attended and what was discussed. Estate Walkabouts will be followed by the completion of evaluation sheets to record the issues discussed and intended outcomes. The comprehensive tenants' survey, planned for the first year of the strategy, should have a positive impact on the Action Plan by identifying new issues and providing a base satisfaction level which can form the basis for Action Plan review. The feedback of this information will take place via consultation with all formal elements of the tenant network.

All training and information sessions will be monitored via evaluation sheets to ensure that tenants and staff are receiving appropriate support and value for money.