

KING STREET HOUSING SOCIETY

POLICY AND PRACTICE - Tenant Participation

Policy Statement

The Society is committed to:

- Involving tenants and other customers in its decision-making process
- Consulting tenants on matters which are likely to affect their quality of life
- Promoting tenant participation through the election of two tenant representatives onto the Committee of Management

The Society believes that effective communication between landlord and tenants is crucial to the success of these objectives.

Communication and Feedback

Effective communication between landlord and tenants is crucial to the success of the landlord/tenant relationship. The Society will seek to provide comprehensive information to tenants about our activities and to obtain feedback from tenants about our housing service. We adopt the following communication methods:

- Four newsletters each year
- Annual Performance Report to tenants showing how we have done and how we compare to other landlords
- Information sheets and leaflets produced as and when required
- A sample of 60 telephone surveys per year
- Exit surveys with all departing tenants to see where service delivery can be improved
- Full tenant survey every three years
- Repair feedback forms sent out with every repair order to test the level of satisfaction with repairs
- Ad-hoc surveys on specific issues
- Meetings to discuss specific issues

Copies of all policies and procedures are available in our office upon request.

During 2003 we intend to establish a web site and this will be used as an additional means of communication with the growing number of tenants who have Internet access.

Tenant Committee Members

Two tenant members are elected to the Committee of Management. These tenants are not elected as such, but the Society will seek to move towards elections in due course.

Tenant members participate in order to represent a “tenant view”. However, the input from the two tenant members has been extremely helpful to date.

Tenants wishing to sit on the Committee of Management fill in a standard application form and will be interviewed by the Chair and Chief Executive. They will be required to sign a statement upholding the values and objectives of the Society.

We will provide training and support for any tenant elected in order that they can fully participate in the committee process.

Consultation

Where we propose to introduce a new policy, such as a change to our management or maintenance approach, and this change is likely to affect all of our tenants, we will write to each tenant setting out the proposals and inviting written comments. When this process has been completed careful consideration will be given to all views received before any final decisions are made. The final decision will be communicated via a letter or in the next newsletter.

Where we propose to carry out a particular scheme or introduce a new policy likely to affect all tenants or a group of tenants in a particular area or scheme, we will actively consult with those tenants affected. Generally the method of consultation will be as follows:

- A letter will be sent to all tenants likely to be affected by the proposals, setting out the plans or options for change and inviting written comments on them.
- A local meeting, survey or surgery will be arranged to discuss the issue in detail.
- Where appropriate, individual tenants will be given the opportunity to discuss their individual circumstances in addition to taking part in the public consultation.
- We will take into account all views received before finalising any proposals, and once final decisions are reached these will be communicated to the tenants affected.

Tenants Groups

The Society recognises that tenant groups can provide a voice for a commonly held view and a forum for discussion. Where there is evidence that residents support the creation of a group we will provide support by:

- setting up initial public meetings
- providing administrative support
- providing training support
- publicising the work of the group and encouraging support from other tenants
- Providing up to £200 per year towards the running of the group

Where tenants groups do become established we will set up a formal communication system which will provide the group with access to relevant members of our staff.
Tenant Participation Policy 2002

Best Value and Future Strategy

The Society has a three year Best Value Programme. Generally, we aim to review three areas of service per year over the next three years. The tenant representatives on Committee will be encouraged to participate in these reviews. In 2002 we carried out a review of customer service and the resulting customer care standards have been circulated to all tenants for comment. Where policy or procedure changes are proposed these will be circulated to tenants for their views before any final decisions are made.

In terms of future work in this area we aim to:

- Report regularly to Committee on the results of surveys and benchmarking
- Carry out a full tenant survey in 2002
- Arrange for tenant representatives to the Committee to be elected by April 2004
- Consult tenants on a wider range of choices

Complaints

The Society has a three-stage complaint process. At each stage, the Society is free to offer compensation or other forms of redress if the complaint is justified. The procedure involves:

Stage 1 - "Front line" staff have authority to respond to complaints and seek a local resolution wherever possible.

Stage 2 – a formal complaint may be made and this will be passed to a manager who will respond promptly.

Stage 3 – The Chair of the Society will consider the complaint and consult with other committee members if necessary. A final response will be sent to the complainant. This is the final stage of the Society's internal complaint procedure. The next step would be for the complainant to go to the Independent Housing Ombudsman (IHOS). The IHOS cannot be approached until the Society's internal complaint procedure has been exhausted.