



Tenant & Community Engagement Strategy 2017 – 2020

We aim to put our Tenants at the heart of all we do

This Strategy is available in other formats including Braille, large print, audio and other languages upon request by contacting:

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SECTION 1

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Scottish Borders Housing Association (SBHA) is committed to placing our Tenants and customers at the heart of decision making and service delivery. We believe it is essential to consider the views of our Tenants in the services we provide and that by listening to and taking on board Tenant's views, we can ensure that policies and services are more responsive to changing needs and rising aspirations.
- 1.2 The purpose of this Strategy is to set out SBHA's plans for increasing Tenant involvement to ensure our services meet the needs of our customers and to support them in making a difference to the quality of service SBHA provides. This Strategy offers a range of involvement methods to meet the diverse needs of Tenants and communities, providing the opportunity for Tenants to get involved at a level that best suits them.
- 1.3 The Tenant & Community Engagement Strategy describes our vision for engaging with Tenants and communities over the next 3 years and provides an overview of the actions we plan to undertake to achieve this.

2 ABOUT SBHA

- 2.1 Scottish Borders Housing Association (SBHA) is a Registered Social Landlord (RSL) which operates within the Scottish Borders area. The Association is a Scottish Charity and is registered under the Co-operative & Community Benefit Societies Act, 2014. SBHA is governed by a Board of Management which is made up of 4 Tenant elected members, 4 non-tenant elected members and 4 appointed members.
- 2.2 SBHA became fully operational in 2003 when it completed a stock transfer and took over ownership of 6,728 properties formerly owned by Scottish Borders Council. We currently have 5,641 homes and have an Annual Turnover of over £20.4million, providing homes in 49 settlements. Our main concentrations of stock are in Hawick, Galashiels, Peebles, Selkirk, Kelso and Jedburgh.

3 DEVELOPMENT OF THE STRATEGY

- 3.1 This Tenant & Community Engagement Strategy has been developed in partnership with Tenants and communities, and builds on the progress made on the Tenant Participation Strategy implemented from 2012.
- 3.2 In developing this Strategy, we worked in partnership with Tenants and other customers using a variety of methods to establish how well we are involving and consulting with Tenants and to identify areas that could be strengthened. We featured a 'Tear off and Tell' section in our Tenants Newsletter and on our website inviting feedback on our current practice. We also carried out a programme of workshops and focus groups independently facilitated by the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) with Tenants, Staff and local communities – SBTO Tenant Summer Roadshow 2017.
- 3.3 Feedback, comments and suggestions received during this consultation process has helped to influence this Strategy. Key priorities identified were the need to modernise our approach to Tenant engagement; to improve communication and feedback to Tenants on how they have influenced decisions; and to expand the opportunities to get involved at a local level.
- 3.4 A detailed Action Plan has subsequently been developed to take forward this Strategy and a customer facing leaflet version of the Strategy will also be developed and made widely available.

4 PURPOSE AND CONTEXT OF THE STRATEGY

4.1 This Tenant & Community Engagement Strategy provides a framework for how SBHA will involve Tenants and customers in shaping and influencing decisions on service delivery over the next 3 next years. It is the principal planning document for consultation, involving and engaging Tenants, putting them at the heart of our services.

4.2 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 introduced a legal requirement for landlords to actively develop and support tenant participation and we are required to consult with Tenants on a range of housing and related issues which may affect them, including:

- our Tenant Participation Strategy
- changes to rent and service charges
- changes to housing related policies which may have a significant impact on tenants, residents and service users
- our standards of service in housing management, repairs and maintenance.

4.3 The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 introduced the Scottish Social Housing Charter which sets out the standards and outcomes that all social landlords should aim to achieve whilst performing their housing services. The Charter was revised in 2017 and sets out three main outcomes relevant to customer engagement which landlords should achieve:

Outcome 1 – Equalities Every Tenant and other customer has their individual needs recognised, is treated fairly and with respect, and receives fair access to housing and housing services.

Outcome 2 – Communication Tenants and other customers find it easy to communicate with their landlord and get the information they need about their landlord, how and why it makes decisions and the services it provides.

Outcome 3 – Participation Tenants and other customers find it easy to participate in and influence their landlord’s decisions at a level they feel comfortable with.

4.4 This Tenant & Community Engagement Strategy links to other SBHA plans and policies, including:

- Business & Strategic Plan 2016-2021
- People Strategy 2017
- IT Strategy 2017
- Empty Homes Strategy 2017

5 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THIS STRATEGY

5.1 SBHA’s purpose is defined by its 2016 mission statement:

Mission - “Created by Tenants for Tenants, our mission is to deliver the best housing choices, solutions and services. We will maximise our ability to invest in the quality of our homes and communities, partnerships and people.”

5.2 To support the delivery of this, SBHA has identified five “Strategic Objectives” (agreed in 2013) which drive the business strategy and culture of SBHA:



5.3 Underpinning the delivery of these objectives are SBHA's values:



5.4 We believe that to achieve these Strategic Objectives, Tenants must be at the heart of decisions about their services and the future of their homes. We are committed to working in partnership with Tenants to ensure they have the opportunity to influence decisions about the management of their homes and the area they live and ensure the services they receive achieve value for money.

5.5 This Tenant & Community Engagement Strategy actions are therefore built around these objectives with a specific emphasis on Objectives 1 & 2, 'Listening to Tenants and their Communities to Innovate and Improve' and 'Create Great Places to Live'.

5.6 Based on feedback received during the consultation process in developing this Strategy, the following aims have been developed:

- ✓ To ensure that Tenants, customers and communities are able to influence the delivery of services at all levels by enabling them to have an input into strategic decisions and decisions at a local community level;
- ✓ To ensure involvement leads to real impact in service delivery and provide feedback to Tenants on how their input has influenced decisions;
- ✓ To effectively engage with all our Tenants and communities in a way that suits them by offering a 'menu of options' to get involved, either as an individual or as part of a group;
- ✓ To promote equality and diversity and develop links with all under-represented groups;
- ✓ To provide support to tenants and communities to build their capacity to be more effectively involved;
- ✓ To actively encourage a culture of participation across all services to achieve the wider aspirations of tenants and other customers for their communities and environments.

6 WHAT IS TENANT PARTICIPATION?

6.1 Tenant participation is an evolving two way process of communication between Tenants and their landlord, whereby:

- Tenants are given a voice to help improve the services provided by SBHA;
- Information and ideas are shared between Tenants and SBHA; and
- The quality of services provided are improved and the level of customer satisfaction increased.

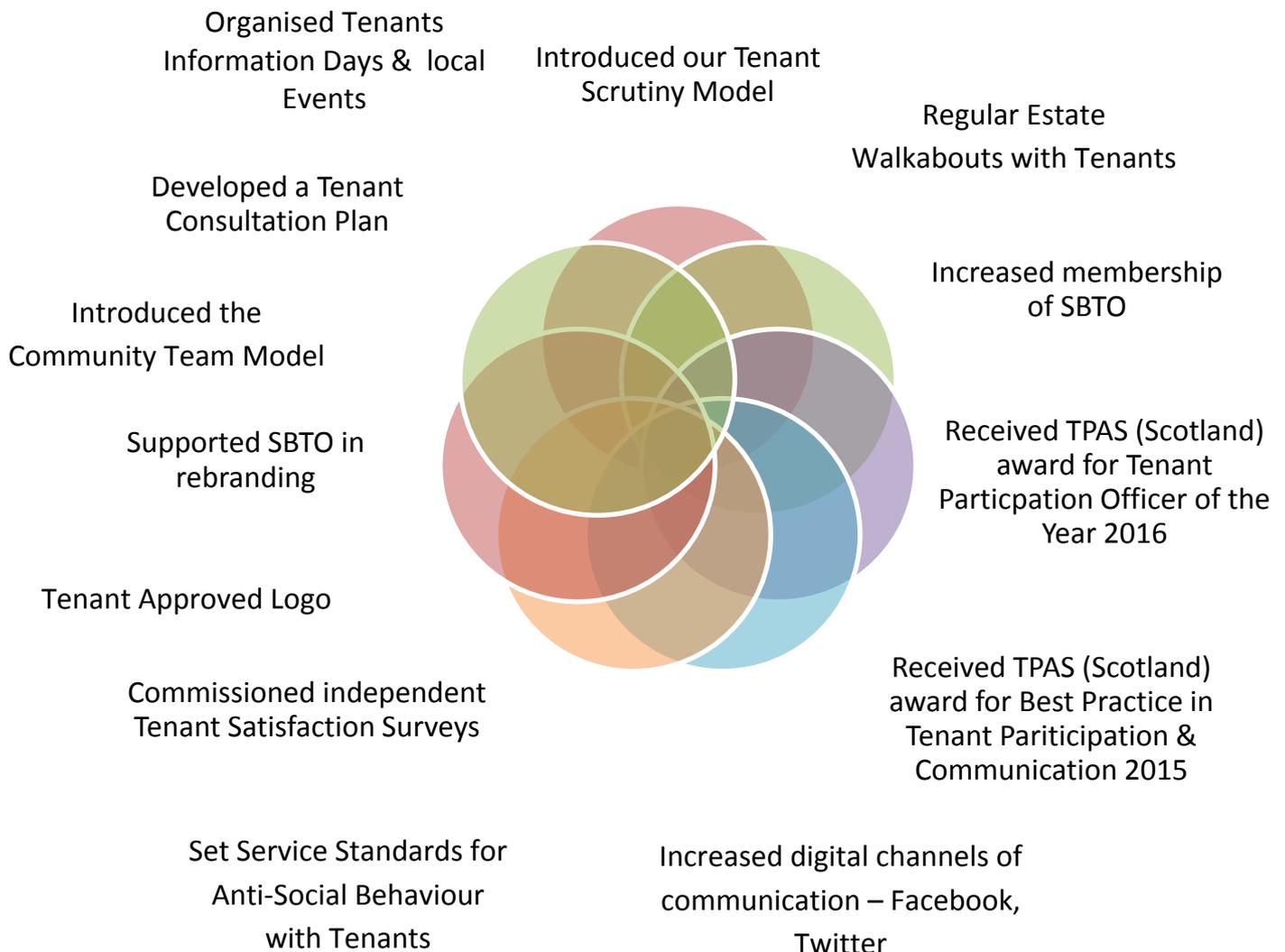
6.2 The benefits of effective tenant participation for everyone include:

- better service delivery and improved value for money;
- improved communication between staff and tenants;
- stronger links between the community and landlords
- increased tenant satisfaction with their home and neighbourhood;
- opportunities to develop new knowledge and skills;
- informed and knowledgeable tenants who have the skills and confidence to influence decisions;
- staff and Tenants being more aware of each other’s perspectives and organisational and financial limitations;
- building mutual respect and understanding between Tenants and landlords
- increased job satisfaction for staff.

6.3 The benefits of tenant participation and improvements in service delivery will not happen overnight and will evolve over time as effective information, communication and participation structures strengthen.

7 KEY ACHIEVEMENTS SINCE 2012

7.1 As we continue to strive to **Deliver Excellence Together**, we are proud to report many positive achievements since the 2012 Tenant Participation Strategy, including:



8 GETTING INVOLVED – MENU OF INVOLVEMENT

A key aim of this Strategy is that everyone will have a chance to get involved in a way that suits them.

There are many different ways in which Tenants and communities can become more involved and feel empowered and we have developed a 'Menu of Involvement' grouped into three levels of customer involvement for ease of reference:

1. Involvement in the **decision making** process
2. Involvement in **scrutinising and monitoring** the service
3. **Providing views and opinions** of services.

These options will allow us to continue to work with and listen to our Tenants and other customers in order to improve services and monitor and review our progress.

8.1 Decision Making (Route 1)

Participation is about Tenants and other customers taking part in the decision making process and influencing decisions made. We offer a range of ways for Tenants and other customers to get involved in the decision making process.

Board of Management

The Board of Management leads and directs the Association to achieve good outcomes for its Tenants and other service users, setting the Association's strategic direction. Shareholding Members of SBHA are elected and/or appointed to serve on the Board in accordance with the Association's Rules.

Customer Board

The Customer Board oversees the joined-up customer experience provided by SBHA. Actively promote and monitor the delivery of good customer care and tenant satisfaction in all areas of service delivery. This can include the Standard of SBHA's homes and open spaces, for example, in terms of Planned Maintenance, repairs and estate management. Vacancies are recruited to as these arise.

Scottish Borders Tenants Organisation (SBTO)

Tenants can become a member of the SBTO which is the constituted Tenants Group and independent of SBHA. The Group's remit is to seek, represent and take forward Tenants' views in relation to SBHA's Policies and procedures and to ensure that Tenants get the best possible service.

Shareholding Membership

Tenants can become a Shareholding Member of SBHA by completing a Shareholder Application form for consideration by the Board of Management and paying a small fee of £1. As a Member you will receive a copy of the Associations Rules, Annual Report and Accounts. You will be invited to the Annual General Meeting and shall be able to vote or seek election to the Board of Management or appointment to the Customer Board.

Registered Tenant Organisations (RTO's)

Tenants can set up a local group and apply to become a Registered Tenant Organisation with SBHA to deal with local issues. The Group will need to meet certain conditions set out in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 and further information is attached at the back of this Strategy (see Appendix C).

8.2 **Scrutinising and Monitoring (Route 2)**

We want to involve our Tenants and customers in scrutinising the services we provide to ensure that not only do we keep our promises and standards of services but continually strive to improve our performance in all service areas. We currently have a number of ways that people can get involved:

Scrutiny: Customer Audit Teams (CAT)

In 2015, SBHA and SBTO introduced the Scrutiny Panel - known as the Customer Audit Team (CAT) - to give Tenants and customers more power to hold SBHA to account for their decisions and services provided.

This Team checks that the service standards are being met and provides a report to the SBTO and SBHA's Customer Board on their findings, as well as making recommendations for improvement.

Tenant Representatives

We encourage Tenants to become a "Tenant Representative" for their street or local area when we are carrying out home improvement work i.e. new kitchens, bathrooms and heating etc. This allows Tenants, SBHA and Contractors to work together during the works being carried out to ensure that Tenants receive a good quality standard of service.

Estate Walkabouts

Tenants and residents are invited to take part in Estate Walkabouts in their area with the local Community Team. This provides an opportunity to walk through areas to look at the overall appearance of the estate and identify common concerns and agree action and priorities for improvement.

8.3 **Providing Views and Opinions (Route 3)**

We have developed a range of ways for Tenants and other customers to provide their views and opinions on the services they receive:

Customer Compliments, Complaints and Feedback

If Tenant customers have a comment, compliment or complaint about any service we provide, an easy to understand leaflet outlines the process and is available at most Offices and online

Questionnaires and Satisfaction Surveys

Tenants are invited to take part in service consultations by returning surveys and questionnaires. This includes an annual independent Tenant Satisfaction Survey.

Reading Panel

Tenants can participate from the comfort of their own home by reading a revised policy on services or any other correspondence and providing us with their feedback. Just submit your details to us and we will contact you when we would like to hear your views.

Focus Groups

We run Focus Groups, which are short one-off meetings which you can take part in. Our Focus Groups allow us the opportunity to discuss a specific topic that may be of interest at a particular point in time.

Tenant Information Days

Tenant Information Days are organised to give Tenants the opportunity to meet housing services and other community services to help and support living in your home and within your community.

Tear Off and Tell

SBHA produce 3 Newsletters annually providing information on services and performance. The Newsletters give the opportunity for Tenants to give their feedback on 'Tear-off and Tell-us' forms which always feature on the back page of our Newsletters.

Local Events and Fun Days

Our Teams will, where possible, attend Local Events or Fun Days to engage with our Tenants. We currently work with existing local groups and charities that work with Tenants and our communities. We are keen to continue developing these links by attending local community events.

with SBHA Teams and other Agencies on an informal basis, to get advice on

Digital & Social Media

SBTO and SBHA's websites are kept up to date with information and minutes from meetings so they are available to any tenant at a time that suits them and to encourage involvement.

We also have a Facebook page and Twitter Account which tenants can use to obtain information and provide comment. SBTO also has its own Facebook page used to promote consultations and provide information about local events and issues which may be more attractive to our younger tenants.

Public computer kiosks have been installed in each of the offices to provide useful information and access to services

9 INFORMATION, COMMUNICATION & FEEDBACK

9.1 We aim to provide Tenants and customers with good quality information that is relevant, up-to-date, informative and easy to understand. We use a range of methods to provide information including and communicate with Tenants, including:

- In writing to Tenants
- Information leaflets and packs such as the New Tenancy Packs
- Phone calls
- Home visits including tenancy sign up meetings and subsequent follow-up visits
- Email
- Text messaging service
- Social media such as Facebook and twitter to provide regular updates to Tenants
- Tenant Newsletter detailing services and local news stories
- Website.

9.2 In order to continually improve our services, we recognise that we need to regularly collect and use feedback from customers. We use this feedback to improve service delivery. It is also important that we feedback to those who have participated, so that they know that their views have been listened to and are being acted on. We may do this by:

- letter to the customer making the comments;
- publicise the outcome of the consultation exercise in “You said – We did” sections of our newsletter and on our website;
- report what consultation has been carried out and what changes in service delivery have taken place after Tenants views have been taken into consideration.
- continue to produce an Annual Report providing information on SBHA’s performance and its investment programme and accounts for that year in accordance with SBHA’s Business Plan and Strategic Plan.
- submit an Annual Return on the Charter to the Housing Regulator and publish our Annual Landlord Performance Report “How are we Doing?” on our progress in achieving the Scottish Social Housing Charter outcomes and standards

10 RESOURCES FOR TENANT & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

10.1 We recognise that for Tenant Participation to be meaningful it must be properly resourced financially and supported with the time of our people. The Tenant Participation budget is reviewed annually with the SBTO, and funding is provided to support the following activities:-

Funding

- SBTO annual budget to carry out their Tenant Participation activities which includes funding Registered Tenants Organisations (RTO’s)
- A separate project fund (SBTO General Reserve) available to SBTO to provide the opportunity for a post-graduate Student Internship (June-September) to carry out specific scrutiny projects working with volunteers.
- Payment of expenses for Tenants and representatives to attend meetings and training which may include travel, child minding costs, carer costs and expenses.

Support

- Employment of a Tenant Participation Manager and SBTO Office
- Operational and Strategic support from SBHA's Communications Officer, Corporate Manager and senior managers
- Employment of a Student Intern (annually June-September)
- Administrative support for local groups i.e. meeting venues and photocopying services
- Promote increased Tenant Membership of the Association, encourage and support Tenant Members to stand for election to the Board of Management and Customer Board.
- Community Team

Independent Advice

- Resource independent advice e.g. Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) and the Tenants Information Service (TIS).

Training, Self-Development and Skills

- Training and development, attendance at external consultation events and Tenant conferences.

Information

- Promotional Information and Materials including SBTO Website, Facebook, Newsletters and Leaflets.
- Tenants Calendar (produced annually to inform of SBHA services).
- *How Are We Doing?* - Tenants Landlord (Annual Return of the Charter) report on performance of SBHA and Annual Report.

11 INCLUSION, EQUALITIES AND OVERCOMING BARRIERS TO INVOLVEMENT

11.1 We are committed to treating people equally, respectfully and fairly, tackling discrimination and harassment and ensuring our services are accessible for all and in line with all relevant legislation. We will not discriminate against anyone on the grounds of their: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership; pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex; sexual orientation.

11.2 We seek to ensure that all groups and individuals have equal access and opportunity to engage in activities and we welcome participation from all. Examples of some of the barriers to participation are listed below along with our commitments to help deal with these.

- Family Responsibilities People may be unable to attend meetings because of family responsibilities. We may provide crèche facilities during meeting hours free of charge, or make available child minding allowances to enable people to attend participation meetings. We will help and assist wherever we can.
- Transport: People may be unable to attend meetings due to unavailability of transport. Where appropriate, we will provide transport for customers to attend events hosted by SBHA.
- Location of Meetings: Meeting places may not be suitable, for example some office accommodation may be unsuitable for wheelchair users. We will hold meetings in venues used by the community that are accessible, convenient and secure for everyone.

- Times of Meetings: Meeting times may not be convenient for everyone to attend. We will establish meeting times to take account of the needs and preferences of local communities.

11.3 We aware that there are groups of tenants and other customers that are often under-represented in community involvement. We will develop effective ways to identify groups which are under-represented and, through consultation with them, actively encourage them to become involved throughout the period of this Strategy.

SECTION 2

12 FUTURE – CREATING MORE WAYS TO GET INVOLVED

- 12.1 Since 2012, Tenant participation and engagement has grown significantly and some key improvements in Tenant participation have been made, for example the introduction of the annual Tenant Satisfaction Survey; developing the Scrutiny Model; supporting localised activities such as walkabouts; and reviewing areas of concern to Tenants e.g. anti-social behaviour and the lettable standard. Although satisfaction with opportunities to participate is relatively low at 62%, only 1 in 3 Tenants indicate that they are interested in participation. A key aim of this Strategy is that everyone can get involved in a way that suits them.
- 12.2 We will develop new forms of involvement for Tenants as we look to continue to meet Tenants' needs. This will include:

Mystery Shopping

Mystery Shopping is a well-established method of quality control within housing associations, providing our customers with the opportunity to evaluate the services we provide. Exercises are structured around specific parts of the service to allow results to be collated and analysed. It allows Tenants to take part in service reviews from their own home, and at a time that is suitable to them and their commitments. Specialist training and support will be provided to enable those involved to develop their organisational and interview skills.

'Interested Tenant' Register

We recognise that not all Tenants often are able to or want to be involved in formal forums, groups or meetings, so we plan set up an Interested Tenant register for consultation exercises. Every Tenant will be invited to be included on this register so they can be contacted when their specific area of interest arises. This allows people with a genuine interest in a topic to be involved and provides a database of interested people for us to use in the future.

Customer Excellence Working Group

We will invite Tenants to join our new Customer Excellence Working Group to help review our key working practices and processes to improve Tenants and customer experience when accessing the services we offer.

Digital

We will work with Tenants and other customers to develop our communication methods so that it is easy for Tenants to keep in touch and get information. We will continue to look at how we can use information technology to engage in the future. In 2018 we will move towards offering on line access to services through the "Customer Portal". We will continue to build on the benefits of Social Media, adopting new methods as they arise as we recognise that for some this will be a preferred method of access. We will also develop Community Team blogs called "The Blether" – this will involve residents and our teams working together to make this a place where people can discuss problems, joys or just the weather. Over the period of the strategy we will also work with partners to support tenants without digital skills who want to develop those skills and increase their access to social media and digital services.

13 FUTURE – ENHANCING LOCAL APPROACH TO ENGAGEMENT

Road Shows

The 2017 Summer Road Show highlighted the value of holding events for local people to focus on the issues that matter to them and we will build on this practice over the life of the Strategy. The 12 Community Teams will work within their neighbourhoods to focus on meeting local needs and aspirations and build relationships at a local level. We will explore opportunities to introduce Community Budgeting and encourage Tenants to get involved in local activities and other related community activities. We will share the outcomes of walkabouts and tie this in with the 6- Year invest Plan

Community Plans

These will be developed by the Community Teams to improve local services and strengthen and sustain local communities. They help Tenants to decide how they wish to be involved in influencing and shaping the decisions on housing issues and services in a way that meets their needs and priorities and will provide an opportunity for local engagement on local issues and interests. Their aim is to help develop a shared vision for their area, planning what they want to see changed or improved and agreeing how it will be done and to connect this with broader community planning practices.

Estate Champions

The Estate Champions project will empower Tenants in their communities – the Champions will work closely with us to strengthen links between SBHA and their communities, meet the needs of their area and influence future service delivery across SBHA. Where no Residents Group exists, the role of Estate Champion will be promoted. This provides a point of contact for local housing staff. Champions will represent tenants on issues and services that affect them, helping us to improve and maintain service standards.

Accreditation

As part of our commitment to Always Improving, we commissioned an audit of our Tenant participation practices from the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS). Both Tenants and our Teams were consulted as part of this audit to seek accreditation and formally recognise good practices in Tenant Participation activities and the quality of information that is provided to our Tenants. We will seek to build on the early accreditation over the life of this strategy.

14 MONITORING, EVALUATING AND REVIEWING THE STRATEGY

- 14.1 This Tenant & Community Engagement Strategy is an evolving document and will be subject to continuous review. The Strategy is supported by the Action Plan, developed to ensure that we are meeting the Strategy aims and objectives.
- 14.2 We will report how well we are achieving these outcomes as well as measuring what we spend the Tenant Participation Budget on, what we produce as a result and the outcomes for Tenants. This will be reported to both the SBTO and SBHA's Board on an annual basis in the Annual Report and Landlord Report to Tenants.

14.3 The Action Plan will be reviewed annually and performance is published annually in Newsletters and on our website. Listed below are some of the areas of participation that will be monitored to see if more Tenants are becoming involved:-

- Number of Tenants and Residents Associations being formed;
- Scrutiny (Customer Audit Teams (CAT)) involvement;
- The number of tenants involved in the different types of participation on offer;
- Questionnaire/survey returns across a range of service areas;
- Involvement and support of Estate Walkabouts;
- New Members to the SBTO;
- Nominations to become Board or Customer Board Members.

14.4 It is key that SBHA continues **Delivering Excellence Together**, so our Strategy will be reviewed in three years to ensure that it is up-to-date and working effectively.

15 FEEDBACK AND CONTACTING US

15.1 If you have any comments or queries about this Tenant & Engagement Strategy, accompanying Action Plan or want some advice on how to get involved, please contact:

Alison Notman, Tenant Participation Manager – 01750 724444 or enquiries@sbha.org.uk

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