



# St Luke's Housing Society Limited – Useful Information

## Tenant Participation

### What is Tenant Participation?

Tenant participation is a term that can be used to include:

- **Informing** Tenants – so that they are aware of decisions which may affect how their homes are managed.
- **Consulting** with Tenants – inviting comments to inform the Society's decision-making.
- **Involving** Tenants – treating Tenants as partners in decision-making.
- **Tenant Control** – where Tenants take over full responsibility for running an organisation or certain parts of it.

### Why is it important?

We have a *duty* to consult with Tenants on certain issues like changes to your tenancy agreement or significant changes in the service we provide. However, we think it is good practice to do more than the law requires of us. After all, McMaster House is your home. We want to be as open and inclusive as possible, working in partnership when it is practical, when our actions will directly impact Tenants. We have a variety of ways in which we try to do this.

### How can I participate?

There are multiple answers to this question, and this list covers some of the ways you can get involved or make your views known.

- Use the information that is supplied, both directly to you and on the noticeboard, to stay informed about what is happening.
- Speak or write to staff about your ideas and viewpoints at any time.
- Respond to direct invitations to express your view on specific matters.
- Join in regular Tenant meetings. If this is not possible, read the minutes and provide any feedback you might have.

### What about the Tenant Rep?

We invite Tenants to elect a 'Tenants' Rep' each year as an *additional* way for Tenants to be involved in the management of St Luke's Housing Society. The Tenants' Rep is invited to Board meetings (though not for confidential items). Their attendance provides 3 main functions:

- They are there to provide ‘scrutiny’ on behalf of Tenants (that is to see that business is conducted properly).
- They may be asked for their viewpoint on specific issues. They are expected to make it clear if they are expressing their personal viewpoint, or if they are relaying the views of another individual or group of people.
- They may raise an issue that has not been satisfactorily resolved by staff. However they should check if stage 1 of the formal complaints procedure has been used. When a response is still felt to be unsatisfactory, Board will consider a stage 2 complaint. As they have 21 days to do so, it is best if the complaint is submitted well before the Board meeting so that the necessary evidence is available to them.

Tenants may also ask the Tenant Rep to accompany them as a supporter, or express a viewpoint on their behalf if they don’t want to speak directly to staff about it themselves. They will also help a Tenant to direct their question/grievance/comment to the most appropriate person to help achieve a speedy response.

Staff will also sometimes ask the Tenants’ Rep for their viewpoint on a particular (non-confidential) issue, to help them determine the best way to proceed.

### **Does that mean that Tenants’ views will determine what is decided?**

No, the ultimate decision-making remains with the Board (and those to whom certain duties are delegated - committees, specific Board members and staff). The Board has a duty to lead and control the Society, to set its direction and act wholly in its best interests. They have to consider the ‘bigger picture’; not just respond to pressure from one side or another.

However, at all levels we will do our best to actively listen to all Tenant feedback, in whatever way it is received. We will also explain how decisions have been arrived at, especially when individual Tenants may be unhappy about them.

### **So what is the point of getting involved if you don’t do what I want?**

Just because the previous answer was that the Board (and those with delegated powers) will decide, that doesn’t mean that your views are ignored. Often something that you suggest or point out *will* affect what happens. The Board and staff all want to provide the best possible service, and safeguard the future of St Luke’s Housing Society. We recognise that your experience, as people who actually live here, is really important in helping us to do this.

### **And finally...**

Let us know if you have any practical suggestions on how we can improve our approach to Tenant participation at McMaster House.