

Moving Forward Together Our Tenant Participation Strategy 2011



Charter Housing Association Local Tenant Participation Strategy 2011

1 Introduction

Involving tenants and other customers such as leaseholders and those registered with us for housing, is the most important action a landlord can take. By consulting with customers and listening to what they have to say, we can make better business decisions, create excellent services, save money, find lasting solutions to problems and encourage customer loyalty and satisfaction, along with which comes long term stability. In recent years, the strategic and legal context has changed placing formal requirements on social landlords to involve tenants. However, Charter Housing Association has always valued the involvement of tenants and has had a tenant participation strategy in place since 1992. We remain committed to involving tenants and customers through this on-going strategy and feel we have taken our tenant involvement to another level following the introduction of the National Strategy.

Our approach has three important building blocks which underpin everything we do.

The first is ***building partnerships***. We strongly believe that services can only be improved where tenants and staff work together in equal partnership and share their different but equally valid experiences of delivering and receiving the service.

The second is ***building relationships***, the cornerstone of partnership working and the secret to involving tenants. Until we create good personal relationships between tenants and staff, built on honesty, openness, trust and a good sense of humour, we can't constructively engage tenants and move forward together.

The third is ***building skills and capacity*** to help people become involved. We believe that by giving our tenants and staff the knowledge, confidence and skills to get involved they are more likely to enjoy what they do, make a valuable contribution and be willing to help us time and time again.

2 Strategic Context and Legal and Regulatory Requirements

In March 2007, the Welsh Assembly Government published a National Tenant Participation Strategy (NTPS) requiring each landlord in Wales to develop their own Local Tenant Participation Strategy (LTPS) in line with the provisions of the National Strategy. The LTPS illustrates the strategic approach being taken by landlords to tenant participation and clearly set out in one document how landlords will be involving tenants. Each LTPS is accompanied by an action plan.

The NTPS defines Tenant Participation as occurring when 'social landlords and other relevant bodies share information, ideas and decision making with tenants and, where appropriate, other community members and relevant stakeholders, and work with them to agree:

- How their homes and local community should be managed
- What service improvements are needed,
- What their priorities are and

- How they will work together to achieve these.’

Our tenants also have a legal right to be consulted. Housing Associations in Wales are given guidance by *The Regulatory Code for Housing Associations in Wales* on key expectations for all their functions, including Tenant Participation. The Guarantee for Housing Association Residents in Wales (2004) gives tenants the right to have access to information, consultation and participation, including performance information, measuring tenant’s satisfaction and the active promotion of tenant organisations.

Leaseholders have the right to information, consultation and participation conferred contractually through their leases and through various acts of parliament.

3 How we reviewed our strategy

A key action from our last LTPS was to develop a partnership panel where staff and tenants could work together to implement and review the strategy. The successful development of our Forward Together Panel (FTP) in the last two years has enabled us to continually review the LTPS, including: identifying which involvement options are working well and which are not working so well; developing new opportunities; ensuring that tenant participation is making a difference and reviewing the action plan regularly to keep it current and fresh.

FTP consists of 15 tenant members and 15 staff members who work in equal partnership to deliver Charter’s LTPS. FTP have had 8 meetings since they formed in October 2010. Prior to this they had 7 training and induction sessions with a consultant. We have used the views, thoughts and ideas of the FTP members expressed throughout their training and meetings to feed into this new strategy. This strategy very much reflects the excellent work carried out by the Forward Together Panel and is the first strategy in which they have been fully involved.

Our approach is to always be thinking what we need to do and how we can do it better, rather than having a periodic review. However, we have carried out a few specific pieces of work.

In January 2011, FTP reviewed the original strategy action plan and put a new one in place to take us through to 2012.

In August 2011, we had a ‘one year on’ review of FTP, led by a consultant, to specifically look at whether the panel was meeting its aims and look at key actions for the next phase of their development.

In September 2011, we carried out a workshop at the Seren AGM to discuss and gain feedback on our approach to tenant participation with board members from across the group. Charter Board have regularly received reports on TP activities and on the strategy.

In October 2011, Charter Management Team discussed the LTPS and their views have been incorporated.

In October 2011 we held a session with FTP focussing on the aim and objectives of the strategy to see if they were still relevant, an overview of the involvement opportunities offered to tenants to assess what went well and what didn't go so well, and our methods of communication.

We have taken into account the views of tenants involved in all our activities through the evaluations we have carried out, at meetings and from groups, and where relevant, incorporated feedback given in our tenant suggestions scheme, from Contact Magazine and from our Tenant Assessors programme.

We have taken on board the positive feedback we have received from discussing our approach with other landlords through tenant participation and strategic forums, and with organisations such as TPAS Cymru and WTF who have invited us to talk about our approach at their conferences. We have exchanged good practice with other landlords through partnering on events and bringing our tenants together to share ideas. We continually research and seek out good practice by attending forums, conferences, training, reading publications and journals and using on-line resources such as the Housemark website. We have considered the TPAS assessment of the original strategy.

We have taken into account the views of tenants expressed in our last tenants survey (2009). However, we will be conducting a new survey in 2012 and will be analysing the affect of our first LTPS.

Finally, in reviewing the strategy, we had regard to other relevant strategies, including the Community Investment Strategy, Diversity Strategy, Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy, the Seren Big Plan and Charter's Company Plan.

Celebrating our Success: What went really well?

From our work over the last two years continuously reviewing our LTPS, these are some of the things we are proud of, the things that we want to keep at the centre of our strategy:

- We were proud to win the TPAS Roy Parry award for mainstreaming tenant participation in May 2011. We have worked hard to ensure that tenants influence all areas of our service and that all our staff are involved and aware of how to involve tenants. We know we are not perfect and will continue to place this as a high priority for us.
- Our Forward Together Panel has done an amazing job in its first year. We have developed excellent personal and working relationships between the staff and tenants on the panel. The panel is representative of the areas in which we work and of all the service areas, they have a range of ages on the panel from 21 to people in their 60s, disabled people, supported people and people from a BME background. They now have their own identity, with their own logo and merchandise. They are becoming very knowledgeable and starting to take strong ownership of the LTPS.
- We have developed the knowledge, confidence and skills of our tenants and staff through a range of opportunities such as training, attending conferences,

networks and forums, delivering workshops, giving presentations at Board, exchange visits with other landlords and our tenant assessors programme.

- Our tenant assessors programme has given us a comprehensive tool for involving tenants in reviewing our services in partnership with staff. It enables tenants to work alongside specific teams for a long period, seeing the service as its delivered by staff, listening to tenants views as they receive the service and giving them a full understanding about the context in which the service is delivered. We have developed a full programme of service reviews for the next 18 months.
- Our Adaptability Group, for people with a disability or long term ill health problem has gone from strength to strength with a mailing list of 122 people. The group have developed links with Disability Wales, attending their conference and becoming members, they have become founder members of the South Wales Disability Open Network (SWDON) and have members attending the TPAS disability network. The group has enabled us to target information and exchange views on issues affecting disabled tenants.
- We have developed some successful 'short courses' and 'knowing me, knowing you' activities which are designed around tenants interests and skills development rather than the consultation needs of Charter. Although they are not formally about consultation, we do receive feedback on Charter's services at these events. Examples include, cookery courses, managing your money, energy awareness, IT skills, ASB workshops. Tenants have found these informative and fun and they have proved a great way to develop our relationships with tenants and encourage them to get involved in other things. For example, a young person who attended our Come Dine with Charter healthy cooking sessions has now joined FTP. We will develop more informal activities like this next year.
- We have involved our tenants much more in producing our tenant magazine, Contact, which has improved greatly. Tenants contribute articles, give us ideas for content or are prepared to share stories about their lives.
- We have developed activities around our hot topic themes which has helped focus our resources on issues that are the greatest priority to tenants. For example, Cash for Clothes events on our estates.
- We've expanded our use of technology to communicate with our tenants, including a successful pilot using SMS texting which will now be rolled out across all our services, and developing a Digital TV site via Looking Local. Tenants were involved in filming a DVD about Charter's services.
- We've improved the connection between tenants and the Board and senior managers, with tenants attending Board to give presentations and board members attending FTP and our fun day. FTP members contributed to the selection process for two new tenant board members. FTP members have attended strategic planning events such as the business partner event, AGM and Seren planning day. Our Corporate Director, Directors and Chief Executive of the Seren Group regularly attend tenant events and meetings and have helped deliver training.
- We have helped tenants get recognition for their involvement by enrolling them in the Chartered Institute of Housing Active Learning for Residents Programme and training 3 staff members to become mentors and recognisers for this qualification. We want to develop a similar accreditation for our tenant assessors programme.

- We ran a successful project involving 16 – 25 year olds who were either in supported housing awaiting their first social housing tenancy or in the early stages of their first tenancy, called Mi Pad. Seven young people finished the project which was designed to teach them some life skills and help them sustain their tenancy. As part of the project they were able to give us valuable feedback on how we can approach services to young people and how we can improve the course when we run it again.
- We have promoted our tenant participation activities well, using the web-site, the internal Charter Hub, Contact magazine and Digi TV to advertise them and to give feedback on what was achieved.

Below are some comments from our tenants about the activities they have been involved in:

“It was very enjoyable and it encouraged me to learn more.”

“It was very informative and helpful – more of the same, please!”

“It was great – I learned lots and want to learn more.”

“Very interesting. Gained knowledge. Instruction very good.”

“Learnt more than I thought I had.”

“The staff at the training sessions are brilliant and is a pleasure to attend.”

Learning and Refocusing: What didn’t go so well?

Here are some of the things we either didn’t achieve, or didn’t work so well, that we have learned valuable lessons from:

- We began a time-banking pilot project in partnership with SPICE and Monmouthshire Housing in Monmouth. Although we completed the feasibility, the project wasn’t fully implemented. The lessons we learned were that we need to pilot time banking in an area where there are already some established activities and involved tenants, so we have a good head start. We also learned it takes up a lot of time and resources in the early stages and that if we are working in partnership with someone else, we need to have clearer shared outcomes to aim for from the start. We are still committed to time-banking and have made a lottery bid to fund a worker to help us focus resources in this area. We have chosen new pilot areas where we already have some active tenants and will also pilot it with our FTP. Developing time-banking will be a key action for this strategy.
- We had hoped to have developed social media options for interacting with our tenants, such as Facebook and Twitter. We have tried this in a small way but without much success. We have learned that we need a clearer strategy for doing this, a dedicated staff member who understands social media to take it forward and to ensure all staff understand how it works. This will be a key action for this strategy.
- We have put in place a customer suggestion scheme and trained all staff to understand and promote it. Although this sometimes works and has brought us some good suggestions which we have acted upon, we need to focus more on this to ensure that this element of our active listening approach is working well.

- We tried to set up a youth forum or develop some way of regularly hearing the views of young people who live in Charter's homes. Although we have had some success with the Mi Pad project and attracting 2 young people onto the FTP, we have learned that traditional or structured methods of involvement are not the answer. We are looking to social media and activities around interests and sport to help us with this in future, including forming links with a local rugby team and arranging activities around media and the Olympics.
- We are much better at monitoring and evaluating TP activities in terms of their cost and impact, but we still need to do more and do it consistently. We need to ensure we capture every aspect of tenant involvement at a central point so we have a good overview of what's going on and can demonstrate how tenants are influencing services. FTP recognise that the central point should be them. We have learned that this is one of the consequences of achieving greater mainstreaming of tenant participation, the more staff and tenants are involved the harder it is to keep track of it all and identify the outcomes. This is an area we will work hard on this year.

4 The Scope of Tenant Participation

Charter Housing Association and our tenants see tenant participation as a partnership to achieve the mutual aim of providing the best possible service to our tenants. To this end, tenant participation has a high level of corporate commitment. Key objectives of the Seren Big Plan are to understand our customers and learn from what they are telling us, to create opportunities for them to have real influence and to work with them to promote vibrant, inclusive and diverse communities. Our strategy considers the services provided to tenants and leaseholders across the Seren Group.

We recognise that not all tenants want to participate and we respect their choice. However, we are committed to ensuring that there are avenues for all tenants to participate at a time and level that suits them. Options for involvement range from high level opportunities such as becoming a Board Member and sitting on FTP, to day to day opportunities for tenants to have their say and be listened to.

This strategy enables our tenants to continue to influence our strategic plans, policies and procedures, service reviews and performance. The scope of our commitment to consultation and information is contained in our existing Information and Consultation policy.

Our Customer Champions Group have evolved into our FTP staff members who are representative of every team which has helped mainstream tenant participation throughout Charter and develop a culture where staff place tenant participation at the core of what they do. All staff have responsibility for tenant participation in their job descriptions.

We ensure tenant participation is comprehensive, with tenants being involved in governance and improving information and service delivery for our landlord functions, but also in improving the communities in which they live. We recognise that some issues affecting our tenants are not directly under our control as landlords, such as the environment, financial inclusion and health and well being. We will

continue to work with other landlords, local authorities, voluntary and statutory agencies, community organisations and the wider community in which our tenants live, to tackle the social and environmental issues of interest to our tenants. We will create opportunities for our tenants to engage in wider community networks and help find solutions for them and their communities. Our Community Investment Strategy, details our commitment to involving tenants in improving their communities.

Our strategy aims to ensure equal access to tenant participation for all tenants, regardless of their personal circumstances. In reviewing the strategy we identified the need to do more to involve tenants from 'hard to engage' groups such as single parents, employed tenants, supported tenants, BME tenants and young people. Although we have had some success in doing this, we will do more to engage hard to reach groups through creating strong links between community development projects and tenant participation aims.

We want to ensure that our tenant participation methods are sustainable and we will therefore continually review the effectiveness of this strategy via our FTP. We will ensure that tenants are aware of what they can expect by wide publicity of this strategy. We will feedback to tenants the result of every participation experience in which they were involved or will affect them, so that we can demonstrate that we listen and that their involvement makes a difference. We will promote real change as a result of tenant participation activities as a way of encouraging further involvement.

5 Aim and Objectives of the Strategy

The key aim of the Strategy is:

We will make sure that all Charter tenants and staff work together and have the ability to be involved in decisions that make a positive difference to homes and services.

Key Objectives are:

We will actively listen to and observe our tenants as they use our services and act on what they say and what we see.

We will increase the involvement of tenants at all levels, in ways that suit them, and work in partnership with them to improve the quality and delivery of services.

We will provide clear, accessible information to all tenants about our services and policies.

We will involve tenants both individually and collectively in tackling social, economic and environmental issues for themselves and their communities.

We will continually monitor and review the effectiveness of tenant participation and demonstrate its value.

We will develop an organisational culture where staff involve tenants in all aspects of service delivery and review

We will develop tenants skills, knowledge and capacity to enable them to become more influential.

6 Tenant Participation Options

Our strategy retains some of the successful participation options developed over previous years and valued by tenants. We have also learnt lessons from some of the options we have trialled and have used this learning to shape new options for involvement.

We recognise that many tenants do not wish to be involved in formal structures and we have developed a range of options and communication methods which will meet the needs of every tenant. An important element of this strategy is to recognise the success of our 'knowing me, knowing you' activities which are aimed at getting to know tenants in a fun and engaging way. We have found that these activities have helped to identify tenants interests and strengths which has meant we can more successfully feed them into our more formal involvement activities. We aim to develop more 'knowing me, knowing you' activities over the next few years.

Underpinning all these options are a range of communication methods. Information can be provided in different formats where tenants require it, including different languages, Braille, spoken on CD or visually interpreted. Communication or engagement in any of these opportunities will be by a variety of different methods to suit tenants. These include, meetings, panels, focus groups, telephone surveys, e-mail, texting, one to one discussions, letters, postal surveys, completing a satisfaction card, via the web site (including face book pages and blogs) and good practice visits to other landlords.

A summary of our main participation options is below, divided into the key areas of Information, consultation and involvement. However, we recognise that some activities will involve all three types of involvement.

7 Information

- **Tenants Handbook, DVD, Service leaflets and Tenancy Agreement**



We have produced clear information for tenants on all our services, developed with their input. More recently we have involved tenants in the procurement, filming and production of our new tenant sign up DVD. Our documents and the tenancy agreement are available in a range of formats including on CD, in Braille and in some community languages. Due to feedback received from tenants during the last year we aim to replace our tenants handbook with an annual publication which will highlight any changes in services or contact details. This will ensure the information remains relevant and accurate and will be in an easy to read format.

- **Newsletters**



We have a main tenants' newsletter, Contact Magazine, which is issued to all tenants three times a year. We have received good feedback on the magazine and improved the content provided by tenants by developing an editorial group. In our last tenant survey, 86% read Contact Magazine. The magazine is used to provide a wide range of landlord information and also gives advice on topics such as community information, the environment, health and safety and financial awareness. The Window magazine, for older tenants, is funded by Charter but edited and produced by an editorial group of older tenants, working with our Community Initiatives Team. The Window has recently been reviewed by tenants and we are working with them to make positive changes.

- **Web-site**



Each company within the Seren Group has a web site. However, our tenants have told us that the Charter website needs review. We will improve the website in consultation with a Tenants-on- Line group and by utilising the experiences of a temporary Communications Manager post within Charter.

- **Standard Letters**

We use a number of standard letters to communicate with tenants on various topics. We want to ensure these are understandable and in clear plain English and will review these in consultation with tenant assessors during our service reviews.

8 Consultation

- **Complaints and Compliments**

We have a centralised system for receiving, monitoring and addressing complaints and learning from our mistakes. We will continue to encourage tenants to tell us when we get things wrong or when they are pleased with the service and use these to make changes to our service where appropriate. Our Forward Together Panel monitor complaints/compliments handling.

- **Neighbourhood Appraisals**

Where we have issues on our estates, we carry out Neighbourhood Appraisals which involve a community audit, a door step survey of all tenants in the area and an action plan of improvements for their community based on their input. We regularly feedback to tenants on the actions taken as a result of their involvement.

- **Customer Champions**

Due to the establishment of our Forward Together Panel our customer champions no longer meet but now sit on the Panel. They still co-ordinate and promote all customer involvement activities within the Group and ensure that tenant participation is mainstreamed. They work on specific projects with

tenants such as the organisation of fun days and undertake joint training with tenants.

- **Involve a Customer Days**

These are one off consultations about a particular topic, where staff are involved in using the opportunity presented by day to day contact with tenants to ask their views.

- **Tenants Survey**

A full tenants survey is carried out by consultants every three years and the information given by tenants is used to prioritise service developments and make improvements. The survey is also used for feedback on tenant participation options. We are planning to carry this survey out more frequently.

- **One-off surveys and focus groups**

Tenant surveys, by post, telephone or face to face are held to gather information on specific issues or services. Focus groups or meetings are also held for the same reason.

- **Neighbourhood Agreements**

Where we have Neighbourhood Agreements in place these will continue to be monitored and reviewed with the involvement of tenants and community representatives. New neighbourhood agreements will be developed where appropriate.

- **Estate Inspections**

Tenants are invited to join the Neighbourhood Manager and Surveyor on estate inspections four times a year.

- **Sheltered Housing Meetings**

Sheltered and extra care tenants have regular meetings with the Scheme Managers to talk about and give feedback on issues affecting the scheme. They also have specific consultation meetings on their service charges and the gardening service. In our extra care scheme, consultation meetings are also held about the cleaning and catering service. Sheltered housing tenants have recently been consulted on a comprehensive review of their service.

- **Satisfaction Monitoring**

Satisfaction with specific services is monitored by postal questionnaire or telephone survey and the results used to improve services. Our method of gathering tenant satisfaction with a service, involves telephoning approximately 100 tenants each month who have accessed the service. They are asked to rate the service from 1 (poor) to 10 (excellent) and if they give a score under 10 are asked to say what we could have done better. Their responses are used to identify themes where the service may be letting customers down so that improvements can be quickly put in place.

9 Involvement and Participation in decision making

- **Tenant Board Members**

We have 3 Tenant Board Members. Currently, two of our tenant board members are also members of our Forward Together Panel. Tenants will remain involved in considering which tenants are recommended for Board membership after their review of the policy earlier this year. Board members receive regular training and familiarisation sessions. A place is available at Board for a tenant to observe at each meeting if they want to.

- **Share Membership**

Tenant Board Members are share members of the Association.

- **Forward Together Panel**



We have developed a very successful Panel, made up of staff, tenants and Board Members. The Panel take an overview of all customer involvement activities, monitor the implementation of the strategy, action plan and budget and effectiveness of involvement activities. The panel are consulted on key strategies and policies.

- **Adapt-ability**



This is a group already established as a specific interest group for disabled people and those with long term ill health problems. We are working with 5 other Housing Associations to develop a South Wales network giving our tenants the opportunity to widen their support network, share experiences, information and good practice. We will consult with this group on how our policies meet their needs and improve them as a result.

- **Charter Seniors**



A long established interest group for our older tenants. We support local authority older person's days during the year and facilitate our Charter Seniors to attend. We will consult with this group on how our policies meet their needs and improve them as a result. Sheltered housing schemes have active social groups which are supported by Scheme Managers to organise social activities at the schemes.

- **Tenant and Resident Groups**

Where these are established we will continue to support them and encourage new groups where tenants show an interest.

- **Leaseholders**

Leasehold schemes managed by Fairlake already receive regular consultation on individual issues, planned maintenance, services and service charges. Older persons leasehold schemes have regular meetings with the scheme manager and have a newsletter providing information. Annual surveys are conducted to obtain general views. To improve information to older people in

our leasehold schemes, we will invite them to events organised for our older Charter tenants.

- **Our hot topics**



In recognition of the lessons we have learnt we no longer have hot topic groups but ensure that all of our tenant involvement activities fit into one or more of our hot topics. The hot topics include the environment, health and wellbeing, community safety, financial inclusion and diversity issues. Our FTP have recently helped us to reassess our hot topics by prioritising them and adding a new topic around social media. They felt the priority for 2012 should be financial inclusion because of the challenges faced by tenants in the current economic climate, impending benefit reforms and increasing energy costs.

- **Supported Housing**



Our review recognised that we need to improve our engagement with supported tenants. Reach and Solas have both developed involvement strategies for their customers. Charter staff will use the mechanisms already in place or being developed, such as the Reach Big Meeting and Reach Area Panels to engage with supported tenants. Reach and Solas have created dedicated involvement posts which will create opportunities for clear lines of communication and the sharing of information across the three companies. Charter has put in place a Supported Housing Officer which has improved our engagement with supported housing providers and tenants.

- **Community Initiatives**



Our Community Initiatives Team develops a number of projects involving tenants and the wider community. These are often targeted to include 'hard to engage' groups such as BME people and young people and are successful in achieving their involvement. Community projects involve tenants in improving their communities and the capacity and skills of individuals. We use these opportunities to consult with tenants and the wider community on issues that affect them. We have a community events calendar to advertise opportunities for engaging with tenants through community events.

- **Tenant Assessors**



We have launched our new Tenant Assessors Programme. Tenants are invited to shadow and spend time with service area teams to help us objectively assess and advise on improvements to our services. Our tenant Assessors have already made recommendations on our Nuisance Prevention, Homes and Communities Team and Rents and Financial Solutions Team. This forms part of a Listen and Learn Approach.

- **Listen and Learn**



During our lean systems reviews, thousands of customers are involved in the review as consultants and staff listen to, or observe, their experience of using a service. The key themes and patterns identified are divided into valued experience and negative experience, with the latter being used to recommend the redesign of the service. Listen and Learn sessions identify key themes and patterns in how customers use the service and help us target improvements. We have a regular programme of active Listen and Learn sessions involving customer champions and tenant assessors.

- **Capturing Customer Comments**

We have a system in place for capturing customer comments called 'why don't you' which involves staff actively listening to what tenants are telling them everyday about the services we provide. After a review of the system we realised that staff also had great suggestions on how we could improve our services and have developed a system for capturing staff comments called 'why don't we.' We will regularly review this process to ensure it is consistently used and integrated into our listen and learn approach.

- **Tenants On-Line**



During our strategy review, tenants told us that our web-site needed improvement and helped us develop a wish list of improvements. Utilising the resource of a temporary Communications Manager post within Charter we will be developing on-line services for tenants, making the web site more interactive and having specific tenant involvement web pages. In addition, we will be exploring the wide range of involvement opportunities presented by on-line blogs, chat rooms and forums and 'face book' style sites, developing specific interactive pages for each service area, managed by Customer Champions. Successful projects have been developed by other landlords and we aim to learn from their experience.

- **Fun Days and Information Days**



We will organise fun days and information days targeted at specific groups, such as families, young people and older people.

- **Youth Panel**



We aim to develop a Charter wide youth panel utilising our 'knowing me, knowing you' activities. We aim to work with the panel and our youth workers to promote positive images of young people who make a valuable contribution to their community.

- **Knowing me, knowing you activities**



We use a variety of fun and engaging activities to get to know tenants. Some of the activities we have developed so far and are successful include Come Dine with Charter (healthy eating cookery courses), MiPAD (supporting young people in their first tenancies), digital storytelling, youth engagement through sport, parent and toddler groups, gardening clubs. We are currently developing slimming and zumba classes and Strictly Charter (exercise and dance classes).

- **Staff Recruitment.** Tenants will continue to be involved in the recruitment of key posts

10 Control

We are open to working with our tenants where they are interested in taking over aspects of management of the service or delivering the service on our behalf. We aim to involve tenants in running and moderating web-site forums on behalf of Charter. We will look towards devolving environmental improvement budgets to tenants in future and are investigating participatory budgeting.

11 Encouraging and Supporting Tenants to Participate

- **Time Banking.** We are working with consultants Spice to develop a pilot time banking project. Rewards will be given to tenants for their involvement in tenant participation activities in the form of vouchers which can then be exchanged for services or entertainment in their community. For example, an hour attending a meeting could be converted into an hour's free swim at a local leisure centre or two hours could be converted into free entry to watch Newport Dragon's. We also hope to develop rewards that support tenants to gain experience and skills, such as work placements within the Seren Group.
- **Vouchers and Prizes.** We offer high street vouchers and prize draws as incentives for involvement in a participation activity.
- **Training Opportunities.** We publicise and fund training opportunities for tenants and also include tenants in relevant staff training, to help them understand our services. We support tenants to undertake the Chartered Institute of Housing Active Learning For Residents Certificate. We help tenants to assess their training needs and develop the skills they need to participate at a high level, for example, to join FTP.
- **Expenses.** Tenant expenses incurred as a result of being involved are refunded, including travel, meal and child care expenses. We have a Tenant Incentive policy.
- **Grants to Tenants Associations.** We provide start up grants to Tenants Associations and an annual grant to help cover their running costs.

13 Resources

The Tenant Participation Budget for 2011/12 is £60,000 and is anticipated to be the same or more in subsequent years. Charter Housing is committed to providing considerable investment in tenant participation in future years. The budget will fund a range of Tenant Participation expenses including; the running of groups and panels, tenant expenses, training, membership of advisory bodies such as TPAS Cymru, tenant incentives and rewards, running costs for community venues and projects aimed at increasing tenant participation.

We will continue to seek external funding for specific projects such as Lottery funding and Tenant Empowerment Grants.

We have a permanent Tenant Participation Manager who is responsible for developing the menu of options for tenant participation, implementing the strategy and monitoring the effectiveness of participation within Charter. To supplement this role, until April 2012 we have employed a temporary Tenant Communications Manager to develop key tenant communication options such as social media, our web site and a new tenants handbook.

In addition to these resources, the Customer Champions Team will continue to develop under the leadership of the Tenant Participation Manager. They will continue to encourage and support the mainstreaming of tenant participation across all Charters teams and help implement the strategy through their involvement in FTP. Training will be provided for all staff involved in tenant participation. From April 2012 onwards all staff will give a minimum number of hours to tenant participation activities each year and we will develop systems to record the additional costs of supporting our TP activity such as core salary costs.

The Seren Group has a number of resources which support tenant participation including the Web Site Controller, Reach and Solas Inclusion Officers, Communications Manager, Community Projects and Partnership Manager and Financial Solutions Manager. We have appointed a temporary Tenant Communications Manager to focus on specific projects. They are all committed to working with the Tenant Participation Manager to improve information and communication with tenants, maximise funding and develop projects which offer opportunities for tenants to be involved tackling social, economic and environmental issues for themselves and their communities. A new post to be in place in early 2012, Tenant Insight Manager, will support tenant participation by ensuring our customer profiling information is up to date and helping us to target tenant involvement to specific groups and to track tenant involvement and trends in customer experience.

We remain keen to work with other landlords locally and will continue to work in partnership to share resources, good practice and develop projects for the benefit of our tenants. We will use the strong partnerships we have already established with other agencies to bring additional resources to our communities.

14 Monitoring and Review of the Strategy

A report on the implementation of the strategy will be provided to Board every six months. The FTP will monitor each tenant participation event and consider its effectiveness, using the monitoring tool developed during their induction and training. This looks at the cost, resources, impact and outcomes of each TP activity. The FTP will recommend changes to the strategy based on their knowledge of its implementation and assessment of its effectiveness for influencing and improving services and communities.

The Tenant Participation Manager will continue to develop a range of indicators to monitor the effectiveness of each tenant participation mechanism, including evidence of how the results of consultation or involvement have made a real change to services and communities. Records will be kept to enable accurate reporting. Our FTP recognise that we need to be better at monitoring what we do and recording the influence of tenants on our services, they have made this a priority for their work next year.

Action Plan

Our Strategy Action Plan reflects the changes we need make in order to continuously improve our tenant participation. This plan incorporates actions set by FTP in January 2011 and includes new actions set by FTP in September 2011.

Tenant Participation Continuous Improvement Action Plan 2011-2012

Aim: We will make sure that all Charter tenants and staff work together and have the ability to be involved in decisions that make a positive difference to homes and services.

Objective 1. We will actively listen to and observe our tenants as they use our services and act on what they say and what we see.				
Action	Lead Person(s)	Target Completion Date	Intended Outcomes	Measured By
Develop a tenant profiling strategy.	Director of Housing	June 2012	<p>We know our tenants well and understand their aspirations and behaviours so we can tailor services to their needs.</p> <p>We can target Tenant Participation activities to specific groups.</p>	<p>Strategy in place.</p> <p>Tenant data base re-designed.</p> <p>Tenant census designed and collection of data underway. Target – 60% complete by end of June 2012.</p>
<p>Develop a rolling programme of tenant led service reviews in line with Board service review programme.</p> <p>See Agreed Review Schedule in Appendix 1.</p>	Charter Corporate Director.	December 2011	<p>Tenants will be involved in continuously reviewing our services in partnership with staff and will develop expertise in service areas to encourage an on-going relationship.</p> <p>Tenants will be at the heart of making positive changes to our services and will contribute to our</p>	<p>Programme in place agreed by FTP.</p> <p>8 reviews to have taken place by Dec 2012.</p> <p>Clear action plans in place following each review, monitored by Performance Management Group.</p>

			self assessment.	
Establish a group of tenants to become Tenant Assessors for each service area to take part in the tenant assessors service review programme. Provide induction and training.	TP Manager.	January 2012	Tenants will understand their role in service reviews and have the skills to contribute.	Trained Tenant Assessors in place and evidence that they have taken a full part in service reviews. Feedback from tenants involved.
Report the Why don't we and why don't you customer and staff suggestions to every FTP, CMT meeting and Contact Magazine.	TP Manager	Various dates in 2011-2012	Tenants will know that we listen to their comments and that they make a difference	Evidence that tenants comments lead to changes in our services -database records and copies of Contact, FTP meeting minutes, CMT minutes
Objective 2: We will increase the participation of tenants at all levels, in ways that suit them, and work in partnership with them to improve the quality and delivery of services.				
Increase membership of the Forward Together Panel to 15 representative tenant members and 15 representative staff members.	TP Manager and FTP Members	March 2012	The panel will be representative of tenants from all areas in which we work and will reflect the diversity of our tenants. Staff will be representative of all service areas.	15 tenants and 15 staff will complete the induction training and will regularly attend meetings. Evidenced by minutes of meetings and training records.
Implement induction training for all new FTP members.	TP Manager	March 2012	Tenants and staff will have a thorough understanding of the FTP and will have the skills and confidence to	Feedback from those involved in the training and continued involvement of trained panel members. Evidence: Training records.

			be fully involved in the panel. Panel members will develop good personal and working relationships.	
Develop a clear link between FTP and Board to demonstrate the influence of tenants on our services.	Homes and Communities Manager	March 2012	FTP will become part of the governance structure of the organisation. Tenants' views will be regularly heard at Board.	Evidence: FTP Minutes Board Reports and Minutes.
Establish a group of young people to regularly consult with, utilising existing youth groups and different ways of communication e.g social media.	TP Manager and Youth Worker	August 2012	The views of young people, who are a traditionally under represented group in TP, will be included in all our TP activities.	Evidence that people under 25 are involved in TP activities and that their views are sought and listened to. Evidence: Profiled TP database/comments and suggestions database.
DIVERSITY THEME				
Further develop the MiPad Project following successful pilot.	Tenancy Solutions Managers and Youth Worker	March 2012	An increase in the number of tenancies for U25s that are sustained. New young tenants receive information and advice that is specially relevant to them. Charter staff have a better understanding of the issues facing young people in their first tenancy.	Records of the meetings and feedback from tenants and staff involved. Information medium in place. Length of tenancy monitoring information for the under 25s involved. Evidence that young tenants are feeding into wider TP activities.
Work with other landlords	TP Manager,	August 2012	Charter's disabled tenants	Evidence: Minutes of meetings and

<p>to launch SWDON, a group to benefit disabled tenants across SE Wales*.</p> <p>*Specific action from Adaptability Group</p> <p>DIVERSITY THEME</p>	<p>members of SWDON</p>		<p>will be linked into a strong support network across SE Wales, giving them access to information, advice, training, support and social activities. Tenants will have an opportunity to raise the specific needs of disabled tenants with their landlords and share and develop good practice with each other.</p>	<p>records of events. Feedback from Charter tenants involved. Promotional material. Evidence that SWDON is feeding good practice into Charter's services for disabled people.</p>
<p>Develop strong links with the BME Housing Forum in Newport, join as an organisation and encourage Charter tenants to join.</p> <p>DIVERSITY THEME</p>	<p>Homes and Communities Manager</p>	<p>March 2012</p>	<p>We will be able to contribute to the development of the forum and help our BME tenants access information and services tailored to their needs.</p>	<p>Number of Charter tenants who are members. Evidence of involvement in the Forum is feeding good practice into Charter's services to the BME community.</p>
<p>Launch the time banking project across all our stock and pilot with FTP* *specific action from FTP.</p>	<p>TP Manager</p>	<p>March 2012</p>	<p>We will have an incentive and reward scheme to encourage tenant involvement across all our stock. More tenants will be involved.</p>	<p>Records from the time banking database, hours given by tenants. N.B. this action is dependant on a lottery funding bid. If this is not given, we will run a much smaller project.</p>
<p>Support Older Person's Days in 4 Local Authority Areas.</p> <p>DIVERSITY THEME</p>	<p>Retirement Living Manager</p>	<p>Various dates through 2011/2012</p>	<p>Older Tenants will be aware of the wider services available to them in their Local Authority. Valuable information can be brought back to each sheltered housing scheme.</p>	<p>Evidence of Charter's attendance at 4 events. Feedback from tenants who attend. Follow up assessment of the impact on the tenants attending.</p>

			Links will be made between sheltered schemes and relevant agencies.	
Involve FTP members in annual Board planning, strategic planning events and the Seren Business Partnership event.	Corporate Director.	Various dates through 2011/2012	Tenants will be involved at the heart of Seren Group and Charter strategic planning.	Evidence of invitations issued to FTP members and their attendance. Feedback from FTP members on their involvement and contribution.
Trial Participatory Budgeting	TP Manager	September 2012	Tenants will be involved in accessing funding for events or improvements in their area. Tenants will be involved in deciding where this money is spent.	Process in place, agreed with FTP. Trial event taken place and evaluated. Feedback from tenants involved.
Develop more 'Knowing Me - Knowing You' activities e.g Strictly Charter and a talent competition and continue to run successful activities e.g Come Dine with Charter*. *all ideas from FTP	TP Manager	Various dates through 2011/2012	We will encourage a range of tenants to become involved on an informal basis for the first time. We can build positive relationships with tenants and encourage them to engage in more formal TP activities. More tenants will become involved.	Programme of events in the events calendar. Feedback from Tenants. Evidence to show new tenants involved and how they have fed into other activities as a result.
Work with other landlords to develop activities based around the Olympics	TP Manager and Community Regeneration Team	August 2012	We will encourage a range of tenants to become involved on an informal basis for the first time. We can build positive relationships with tenants and encourage them to	Programme of events in the events calendar. Feedback from Tenants. Evidence to show new tenants involved and how they have fed into other activities as a result. Profiling of those involved to show

			engage in more formal TP activities. More tenants will become involved, specifically young tenants and families.	success of events in involving young people.
Objective 3: To provide clear accessible information to all tenants about our services and policies.				
Include performance information in every Contact Magazine	TP Manager	Various dates through 2011/2012	We will be accountable to our tenants and be open about our performance.	All issues for 2011/2012 will include performance information
Develop partnership with Newport Communities First to access community GIS system and community web site.	Homes and Communities Manager	Aug 2012	We will have a tool to help us monitor TP. We will be able to advertise TP activities on the community web site. We will be able to use the web site as a two way communication tool with tenants.	SLA agreed Access to the GIS system via web link in place. Information being mapped and used.
Involve tenants in improving content on Charter's web-site for all services and develop better tenant involvement pages, including specific FTP pages*. *Action from FTP	Seren Web Site Controller and Communications Manager.	March 2012	Tenants will find our website informative and a useful means of communication.	Comments made by FTP, tenants on-line and other tenant groups and changes made as a result. Statistics for 'hits' on the web site pages.
Involve tenants in	TP Manager	Oct 2011	New tenants will have a	DVD in place and issued in every

Producing a DVD version of the tenant's handbook (sign-up DVD)			useful visual resource for commonly asked questions and key tenancy information.	lettings pack. Videos available on web site. Feedback from new tenants.
Involve tenants in producing an annual handbook version of Contact Magazine* *Action from tenant assessor review	Homes and Communities Manager	April 2012	Tenants will have up to date information about services in an accessible format.	Handbook will be sent to all tenants in Spring 2012. Feedback from tenants.
Introduce a Charter involved tenants' calendar, developed by FTP. Incorporate photos of TP events*. * action from FTP	TP Manager and FTP	December 2011	The calendar will promote TP activities to staff and tenants.	Calendar printed and made available to involved tenants and staff.
Develop interactive AP via Digi TV site on Looking Local.	Digital Inclusion Manager.	March 2012	Tenants will be able to access a range of information about our services and report issues 24 hours a day.	Site in place. Stats showing the number of people using the site. Environmental reporting AP being used. N.B. This is dependant on costs which are currently being assessed.
Train front line staff in basic sign language* *Action from FTP DIVERSITY THEME	Relevant Service Area Managers.	May 2012	Staff will be able to give basic greetings and information to deaf people.	Training records showing training of front line staff.
Create web-based communication mechanisms such as face book sites for each	TP Manager, Web-site Controller, Community	March 2012	We will involve harder to engage people, particularly younger people or those who are working or time	Strategy in place. Social Media sites in place and being monitored.

service area and chat rooms. Pilot approaches through FTP and other established groups* *Action from FTP SOCIAL MEDIA THEME.	Projects and Partnership Manager.		poor. We will be able to receive and make information available 24 hours a day.	Evidence of engagement with a cross section of our tenant profile.
Develop the use of texting software as a communication and consultation tool.	Charter Systems Officer and IT Team.	March 2012	We will be able to contact tenants by text for a range of issues and use this as a consultation and satisfaction monitoring tool. Feedback will be more immediate.	By monitoring the use of texting and level of response from tenants.
Objective 4: We will involve tenants both individually and collectively in tackling social, economic and environmental issues for themselves and their communities				
Carry out amnesty/skip days on our estates and consult with tenants about having regular skips paid for through their service charge. ENVIRONMENT THEME	Homes and Communities Team	Various dates through 2012	Tenants will be more aware of the impact of fly tipping on the environment and the cost of clearing up rubbish. Aim to have 4 events in the year.	Evidence of events taking place and associated costs. Results of consultations.
Include regular articles on the all Hot topics In Contact Magazine ALL THEMES	TP Manager.	Various dates through 2011-2012	Tenants will have information about our hot topics (the environment, managing your money, health and wellbeing, diversity, community safety, social media)	Examples of Contact Magazine articles throughout the year.
Trail a 'swap shop' at Mariner's Quay ENVIRONMENT THEME	Mariner's Quay Concierges	December 2012	Tenants will be encouraged to recycle their unwanted	Evidence of swap shops taking place. Feedback from tenants.

			clothes/goods.	
Run 'managing your money' information days for tenants MANAGING YOUR MONEY THEME	Financial Inclusion Manager.	Various dates through 2011-2012	Tenants will have information about how to manage their money better and access benefits they may be entitled to.	Evidence of events taking place. Feedback from tenants as to how they have benefitted from the information days.
Encourage and support tenants to set up health and wellbeing activity groups on estates or in local community venues e.g walking or slimming clubs HEALTH AND WELLBEING THEME	TP Manager	March 2012	Communities will be encouraged to come together. Tenants will have opportunities to improve their health and well being. Aim to set up 5 groups over the year.	Number of groups set up. Feedback from tenants about their achievements.
Regularly provide information about the police/bobby van scheme/community safety wardens/neighbourhood watch and other initiatives in Contact Magazine* *action from FTP COMMUNITY SAFETY THEME	TP Manager	Various dates through 2011-2012	Tenants will be aware of community safety schemes and advice that can help them improve safety in their neighbourhoods.	Examples of articles in Contact Magazine. Feedback from tenants.
Deliver an anti-social behaviour workshop for tenants and develop a programme of workshops throughout the year.	John Priday, Nuisance Prevention Team Manager	Dec 2012	Tenants will understand their role and responsibility in preventing and dealing with ASB and how Charter can deal with ASB. Tenants will feedback on	4 workshops undertaken in 2012. Number of tenants attending. Feedback from tenants attending the workshop.

COMMUNITY SAFETY THEME			the service and contribute ideas as to how we could improve.	
Work in partnership with United Welsh HA to develop an energy awareness project involving tenants.	TP Manager	Dec 2012	Tenants will learn energy awareness skills to pass on to other tenants in their community.	Number of tenants trained. Project will monitor how training is used. Feedback from tenants involved.
ENVIRONMENT THEME				
Objective 5: We will continuously monitor and review the effectiveness of tenant participation and demonstrate its value.				
Report to Board on the implementation of the strategy, including a TP impact report and the achievements of FTP. FTP members to attend to deliver the report.	Homes and Communities Manager	Every 6 months.	Board will have information about tenants views to take into account in decision making. There will be a strong link between FTP and Board.	Board reports and minutes.
Tenant Participation Strategy to be reviewed and updated annually by Forward Together Partnership Panel.	TP Manager and FTP	Next review Date September 2012	To ensure the strategy is responsive to changes in the external environment, meets WG requirements, is relevant and making a difference.	FTP minutes and copy of reviewed strategy.
Evaluate and establish the effectiveness ,impact and cost of every TP activity at FTP.	TP Manager and FTP	Various Dates at every FTP in 2011/2012.	To ensure every TP activity is Value for money, inclusive, meets specific aims and objectives and makes a difference.	FTP minutes and copies of activity review reports. Evidence that changes have been made as a result of reviews.
Objective 7: We will develop an organisational culture where staff involve tenants in all aspects of service delivery and review.				
Detailed plans to meet the	Service Area	April 2012	TP will be central to the	Each Team plan to be agreed by

TP Strategy Actions to be included in all Team Service Improvement Plans.	Managers.		work of each team.	relevant Director.
Specific objectives relating to the TP strategy to be included in all Team Manager and Customer Champions PDPs.	Service Area Managers.	May 2012	TP will be central to the work of each team.	Examples of PDPs.
Run short TP awareness sessions for all staff as part of Charter's core training.	TP Manager	Oct 2012	Staff will be aware of the TP strategy, its aims, objectives and options for tenants to be involved. Staff will be better equipped to encourage tenants they meet day to day to get involved. More tenants will be involved.	Evidence of courses taking place. Staff training records.
All staff to have a commitment to 7 hours involvement in TP or community based activities each year.	Service Area Managers	April 2012	TP will be central to the work of each team. Resources to deliver TP and community activities will be increased.	Commitment in all PDPs. Central database to monitor time given by all staff.
Place regular bulletins on the Hub and web site to promote success of TP activities.	TP Manager	Various Dates in 2011/2012.	The Group will be aware of TP activities.	Examples of articles on the hub and web site.
Objective 7: We will develop tenants' skills, knowledge and capacity to enable them to become more influential.				
Support and mentor 5	Homes and	Oct 2012	Five tenants will achieve a	Number of tenants achieving the

FTP tenants through the Chartered Institute of Housing Active Learning for Residents(ALFR) programme	Communities Manager		qualification recognising the TP work that they do.	Qualification. Feedback from those tenants.
FTP members to attend Board and observe*. *action from FTP	Charter Corporate Director	Various dates throughout 2011/2012.	FTP members will develop their understanding of the role of Board in the Governance of the Organisation.	Feedback from tenants attending Board.
Run an IT training course for involved tenants*. *action from FTP	TP Manager and Digital Inclusion Manager.	Dec 2011	Involved tenants will have improved IT skills to enable them to communicate with each other and Charter via e-mail, access TP resources on the internet and contribute to our digital inclusion agenda.	Number of tenants trained. Feedback from tenants on the course to assess the increase in their IT skills and the benefit to TP activities.
Repeat Meeting skills training to include facilitators training for all involved tenants.	TP Manager	March 2012.	Involved tenants will have greater confidence to attend meetings and conferences and take on the facilitator's role.	Training records. Trained FTP members will have facilitated a meeting.
Develop an accreditation for the Tenant Assessors Programme*. *action requested by our Tenant Assessors.	Homes and Communities Team Manager	May 2012	Tenant Assessors will have a recognised qualification to help them move into further training or employment.	Accreditation in place. N.B. Dependent on partnership with an awarding body such as CIH.
Run short skills training courses for tenants e.g face painting*, food	TP Manager	May 2012	Tenants will help run events in their own community or for Charter.	Training records for tenants. Evidence of tenants running events.

hygiene, photography, health and safety. *Tenant suggestion from the fun day				
Support the setting up of 'IT clubs'	TP Manager	October 2012	Tenants will develop excellent IT skills to support communication with Charter and help in the personal lives.	3 IT clubs up and running. Feedback from tenants on the impact of the clubs on their knowledge, communication with Charter, and personal lives.
Support Tenants to attend TPAS Cymru TPN and Disability network and other conferences and networks.	TP Manager	Various Dates in 2011/2012	Tenants will develop wide networks to exchange good practice and debate issues affecting tenants. Tenants will feed their knowledge and experience back into Charter services. Tenants will have increased confidence and skills.	Minutes of meetings and feedback to other tenants groups such as FTP. Evidence that good practice ideas have influenced Charter services. Feedback from tenants involved.
Facilitate tenant exchange visits with other landlords.	TP Manager	Various Dates in 2011/2012	Tenants will develop wide networks to exchange good practice and debate issues affecting tenants. Tenants will feed their knowledge and experience back into Charter services. Tenants will have increased confidence and skills.	Minutes of meetings and feedback to other tenants groups such as FTP. Evidence that good practice ideas have influenced Charter services. Feedback from tenants involved.

Appendix 1: Service Review Schedule

Service Area	What will be covered by the review	Date	Board Report Date (papers sent)
Adaptations/Housing disabled people	Adaptations Process How we let adapted properties and house disabled people	October – December 2011	23 rd Jan (12 th Jan) 2012
Customer Services	Review of the telephony and reception services and maintenance scheduling	January – March 2012	12 th March 2012 (1 st March)

	Involvement in the internal audit		
Prevention by Intervention/Sustaining Tenancies	PBI work Links with support agencies Tenancy Support / Reach and Solas etc	March – April 2012	21 st May 2012 (10 th May)
Lettings and Void management	Involvement in the lean systems review.	April – July 2012	16 th July 2012 (5 th July)
Estate Management	Review of the grass cutting/litter picking/flower, shrub and tree maintenance service. How we deal with common estate management problems – dog fouling, graffiti, fly tipping. A review of the communal cleaning service.	May – July 2012	16 th July (5 th July)
Community Regeneration	Strategy and projects Youth work Funding options	June – August 2012	10 th September 2012 (30 th Aug)
Planned Maintenance /Asset Management	WHQS review Affordable warmth projects/PVs etc.	July –September 2012	5 th November 2012 (25 th Oct)
Service Charges	Review to feed into next year's charges. What we charge to tenants via service charges and the process involved.	August – October 2012	5 th November 2012 (25 th Oct)
Supported Housing	Review of how we manage supported housing within the group and with external partners.	October – December 2012	2013
Responsive Repairs	Day to day repairs and maintenance	November – January 2013	2013
Sheltered Housing	Review of the changes put in place 2011/12	March – April 2013.	2013
Options for moving	Charter options Bond Scheme	April – July 2013	2013

	Exchanges New developments Transfers Low cost home ownership		
Start Again with :			
Tenancy Management			2013
Nuisance Prevention			2013
Rent and Financial Solutions (break down?)			2013

