



Empowerment & Engagement Strategy 2008/11

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Contents

Section 1 Foreword	Page 4
Section 2 Our Empowerment and Engagement ethos	Page 5
Section 3 Striving for excellence	Page 6
Section 4 Strategy in context	Page 8
Section 5 Our Empowerment and Engagement approach	Page 11
Section 6 Empowerment	Page 13
Section 7 Engagement	Page 16
Section 8 Consultation strategy and feedback	Page 22
Section 9 Improving services for all	Page 23
Section 10 Implementation	Page 25
Section 11 Points of contact	Page 25

Appendices

Appendix 1 Policy consultation over 2005/07	Page 26
Appendix 2 Consultation methods	Page 27
Appendix 3 Registered Tenant Organisations	Page 28

As GHA Tenant Chair, I am delighted to introduce our Empowerment and Engagement Strategy which provides the framework for involving our tenants, customers, partners and stakeholders in shaping our direction and our services.

We have based the development of this strategy on over five years' experience of working with our customers and following extensive consultation, discussion and feedback, including independent assessment. We are confident that it builds on our strengths and reflects new approaches which will reinforce our commitment to putting customers at the heart of our organisation.

Like many of our tenants and homeowners, I am actively involved in shaping GHA's purpose and direction. The services we provide have also changed in response to the feedback from customers. Our aim is to more fully understand and reflect customers' needs in what we do and how we do it. We want to involve, empower and include more people in our decision-making and this strategy identifies ways of widening access and engaging with people in a way that suits them. We aim to be even better at listening to feedback and ensure we are responsive in the way we develop our services. We are determined to meet these aims fully, working in partnership with our customers and stakeholders.

There are many opportunities to get involved and influence how we move forward and these are outlined in this strategy. I encourage everyone interested in GHA to get involved and ensure we are in the right shape to meet future needs and deliver for our customers.



Sandra Forsythe
GHA Board Tenant Chair

This strategy highlights our key priorities and actions for 2008-11 and is central to delivering excellent customer service. It aims to put our tenants and customers at the heart of service provision and specifically to support the delivery of: *responsive services that meet people's needs and demonstrate we have listened and understood their demands and expectations.*

To deliver 'Better homes, better lives' we need to cast our engagement net across everyone with an interest, involvement or influence. The strategy provides a framework for proactively empowering and involving tenants, customers, partners and stakeholders in determining GHA's shape and direction, generating ideas and solutions and delivering for our customers. It embodies our principles for tenant participation and involvement (in compliance with the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001) and reflects the findings of the Scottish Housing Regulator Inspection Report (2007). As well as the crucial role of our Local Housing Organisations (LHOs), we recognise that engagement starts from within, through our staff and unions, and we will fully involve and empower them to improve performance and develop a customer-focused culture.

Here are our key outcomes:

- Empowerment principles that are clearly defined and integral to our business strategy and Empowerment model. These have been developed with tenants and homeowners and reflect their aspirations
- A vision that embraces the principles, aims and objectives set out in the strategy
- To have an in-depth understanding and awareness of customer needs which informs the way we shape services
- Ensure customers and staff are well-informed, know that they can make a difference and feel empowered to influence GHA's direction and services
- Deliver wider, more effective customer engagement and involvement, which leads to improved service provision and greater customer satisfaction
- Gain independent recognition for a quality approach to engagement and our ability to demonstrate value for money.



Taroub Zahran
Chief Executive

The principles, aims and objectives of this strategy have been informed and shaped by our greater understanding of our customers' aspirations for empowerment and engagement. Working in partnership with our key customers, including the Chairs' Forum and Registered Tenant Organisation (RTO) Federation, we have undertaken a review of GHA's purpose and future strategic direction. This has enabled us to jointly identify the fundamental priorities, structures and models for enhanced empowerment and engagement. The principles of this strategy provide a range of opportunities for influence and local control through to strategic involvement in driving forward our vision to put our customers at the heart of everything we do.

We strive to deliver high quality homes and improve the quality of community life for our customers. We are committed to involving and engaging them throughout the journey. This strategy explains how engagement can empower customers.

To enable us to do this we will continue to develop and improve our methods for empowerment, engagement, consultation and feedback through agreed structures at local, regional, strategic and corporate levels.

We have established a variety of forums and events for engagement and will test our customer opinion and satisfaction through:

- Independent surveys
- Our new customer complaint processes
- Working with LHO committees and Registered Tenant Organisations (RTOs).

Alongside this we aim to maintain effective working relationships with our partners to inform and influence how we work together in the interests of customers.

Through this strategy we will consolidate and build on the outcomes of the 2005-07 Tenant Participation Strategy. In particular we consider the series of 'Learning Journeys' which took place in 2007 have been instrumental in helping shape this policy. The Learning Journeys involved visits by tenants to other housing organisations in the UK and Sweden to learn from their experience and best practice. This new strategy provides a framework to support the delivery of customer excellence through wider, more effective engagement and empowerment. This will be built on experience, greater trust, respect and confidence.

The views of a wide range of stakeholders have been canvassed in preparing this strategy, including LHO Chairs, tenants and their representatives, RTOs, the RTO Federation, homeowners, GHA staff and LHOs. It includes the following key elements:

1. A customer profile together with the methods we use to understand who our customers are and their needs. An outline of our key stakeholders and partners.
2. Our key objectives, developed from our learning experience through the review of outcomes from the 2005-07 strategy .
3. A description of the different ways and levels of empowerment and engagement. This sets the framework for involvement, influence and control through tenant and homeowner led initiatives and for wider community ownership. It includes the introduction of strategic monitoring groups and customer service review teams.
4. How we will consult and communicate with tenants and homeowners and how we will try to engage with a wider customer base, including those who have proved harder to reach. It outlines how we will widen involvement and develop skills to enable effective community engagement in regeneration areas.
5. Our plans for keeping people informed – to enable full participation and show accountability. In particular, we highlight our commitment to demonstrate that engagement does influence decision-making and service provision.
6. Methods for monitoring and reviewing the quality of what we do, including independent assessment – supporting our aim to deliver excellent services.
7. The resources we will employ to deliver our Empowerment and Engagement Strategy together with how we will demonstrate value for money.

The Empowerment and Engagement Strategy has been shaped by a number of factors. External factors include legislation, national policy and guidance. Internal factors reflect GHA's purpose and future strategic direction, at the heart of which is our commitment to the provision of excellent services that are informed and respond to the needs and aspirations of our customers.

Brief details of the main factors provide a context to the strategy.

National and local legislation and policy context

4.1

4.1.1 Legislation and performance standards

The Scottish Government Guidance on the tenant participation provisions of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 sets out the general principles on tenant participation, information and consultation. These principles are embraced throughout the strategy and are reflected in our key commitment to work in partnership with our customers in a culture of mutual trust and respect towards a common goal of better housing conditions and housing services.

The National Standards for Community Engagement are intended to be a practical tool to help improve the experience of all participants involved in community engagement to achieve the highest quality of process and results. The ethos of the national standards is incorporated within this strategy.

The strategy will be assessed as part of the regulatory inspection process in accordance with the Scottish Housing Regulator's Tenant Participation Performance Standards including the following:

- Guiding Standard 2.2 "We have published and are implementing a sound strategy for encouraging and supporting tenants, residents and service users to participate actively in all areas of our work. We support tenants who take an active interest in managing their homes."
- Guiding Standard 3.1 "We place the people who use our service at the heart of our work. We treat people with respect and are responsive to their views and priorities."

4.2.1 GHA's purpose and direction/customer excellence

The outcomes of the Learning Journeys in 2007 by LHO Chairs to housing organisations in Scotland, England and Sweden have informed and influenced the fundamental review of GHA's purpose and business strategy and the development of this strategy.

Key themes that emerged from the visits included the recommendation to get back to basics with:

- Good housing management services
- An excellent repairs service
- Properties in good condition
- Putting the customer first
- Being a landlord, partner and employer of first choice.

Our customer service and value for money strategies embrace these principles and set key objectives for the provision of excellent value for money services. These objectives are both influenced by and set the scene for empowerment and engagement of customers. They ensure that we deliver in a way that meets their needs and aspirations. Enhanced empowerment and engagement activities will drive and influence the development of a new organisational model for GHA. This will enable us to engage directly with customers who aspire to influence our long-term strategy and allows us to deliver our Second Stage Transfer enabling role, with its particular emphasis on statutory consultation of affected tenants.

4.2.2 Community regeneration

We are committed to the transformation of housing in Glasgow and our Regeneration Strategy provides the framework for how we will work in partnership to ensure lasting positive change and improved wellbeing for customers and communities and the creation of safe, sustainable neighbourhoods.

The Empowerment and Engagement Strategy sets out the principles, structures and mechanisms that enable our tenants and customers to be effective partners. It also shows how they can contribute and influence the outcomes of our regeneration programme and the delivery of our vision.

4.2.3 Customer satisfaction

In addition to face-to-face opportunities for engaging our customers, we collect feedback through surveys and monitoring all other customer contact with the organisation. We measure the levels of satisfaction with our services and obtain information on what is working well and where there is need for improvement. This feeds into and informs our objectives for empowerment and engagement and our business strategies.

A key element of our customer satisfaction measurement is the programme of satisfaction surveys with a baseline survey conducted in 2004. A follow-up citywide survey was completed in early 2007, allowing us to benchmark progress in service improvements. This latest survey shows that 72% of tenants are happy with the service we provide, a rise of five percentage points from the baseline figure of 67% and seven out of 10 tenants think that we listen to them.

As part of our commitment to increase the number of opportunities to gain customer feedback, we will undertake annual citywide tenant satisfaction surveys from summer 2009.

We have also introduced monthly customer feedback through benchmarking surveys on key service areas including allocations, investment, repairs and complaints. Our aim is to learn from customer feedback and continue to improve and increase customer satisfaction levels. The introduction of our Customer Service Centre will provide valuable insight of ongoing customer satisfaction levels.

4.2.4 Partnership working

We are committed to working in partnership with our customers, partners and stakeholders and this is both reflected in and supported by this strategy. Partnership working involves developing relationships that are built on mutual respect and understanding and we aim to deliver this through a programme of proactive communications that encourage dialogue and regular feedback. Our key partners and stakeholders include the Scottish Government, the Scottish Housing Regulator, Glasgow City Council, and other Registered Social Landlords within the city.

4.2.5 Equality and diversity

GHA Board members and senior staff are committed to the promotion of equality and diversity throughout the organisation, including the commitment to barrier-free customer empowerment, participation and engagement.

We aim to ensure that we promote the opportunities available for participation in every activity we undertake, and that those opportunities reflect the diverse needs of our customers.

4.2.6 Links to other policies, strategies and services

One of our key objectives is to ensure opportunities exist for our customers to influence the development and review of GHA policies and services. We also aim to get our customers involved in wider community engagement activities and influence the decisions on wider action as well as community planning, neighbourhood renewal and regeneration programmes.

This strategy sets out the basic principles, standards and approaches that enable these objectives to be met.

They also provide mechanisms to ensure that our customers and stakeholders have the opportunity to shape outcomes in a way that meets local needs and provides them with a level of ownership on issues that are important to them.

The overall aim of the strategy is to empower tenants, customers and stakeholders by providing real opportunities for them to become involved and influence service provision including our future business strategy.

This strategy provides the framework for the implementation of our core aims and objectives at a strategic and local level.

- The key commitments and objectives set out in the strategy will be translated into our local tenant participation action plans, our day to day activities, governance, contracts and contact with customers.
- We will ensure that our customers are informed of the full range of opportunities to empower them and enable effective engagement. We will encourage everyone to get involved in a way and at a time that suits their needs and circumstances.
- We recognise that our customers' involvement is entirely voluntary and it is our responsibility to ensure that our structures, models and methods enable their meaningful involvement and that we respond in appropriate ways by listening, taking account of their views and providing feedback.
- We will involve our customers in action planning for the delivery of key objectives at both a strategic and local level that will enable our customers to monitor our performance and hold us accountable for the delivery of the strategy. This will be further supported by an internal ethos and commitment to the empowerment and engagement of our managers and staff to work effectively with our customers.
- Our ambition is to be a landlord, employer and partner of choice, able to engender trust, respect and satisfaction across all business areas. To achieve this, our aspiration is that our customers will be: 'in the know, in the lead, in touch, involved and informed' and this is reflected in our key commitments:
- Our structures for empowerment and engagement provide a range of options for our customers to become involved and have influence at a variety of levels and they are innovative and flexible enough to meet changing customer and organisational needs.
- Our customers, LHO Chairs, RTOs and other key stakeholders are encouraged to express their views, have the assurance that they will be taken into account, and receive feedback on how their views have influenced decisions, policies and the future direction of the organisation.
- We will encourage and support everyone to participate. Their contribution and commitment can be recognised in many ways including a "Recognise and Reward" scheme and formal recognition through the Chartered Institute of Housing's (CIH) Active Learning for Residents (ALfR) initiative of the skills, knowledge and experience they have developed.
- Tenant and resident groups are encouraged and supported to become RTOs, which gives them formal status and rights to consultation and involvement in key proposals. We will work in partnership with RTOs to ensure their influence in the decisions that affect them, their homes and their communities.
- We will extend the opportunities for our customers to be actively involved in monitoring and driving up customer service standards through the implementation of Strategic Monitoring Groups and Customer Review Teams.
- We will continuously develop ways of improving information, communication, consultation and feedback methods to meet the needs of our customers.
- We will promote and support equality of opportunity to ensure that no one is disadvantaged in the participation process on the grounds of sex, marital status, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, language, social origin or any other personal attributes, including beliefs or opinions.
- We will regularly monitor the delivery of the strategy through detailed action planning and evaluation of outcomes to ensure that our engagement and empowerment objectives are achieved and that we are continuously improving in response to changing customer needs and expectations.
- We will use a wide range of mechanisms including satisfaction surveys, focus groups, consultation activity events and forums to encourage, listen and respond to customer views and opinions and assess customer insight.
- We will approach and conduct research with the 'silent' majority for their views, which are essential to shape direction and services and policy.

Our Empowerment and Engagement approach (continued)

Understanding our customers and their needs

The term 'customer' encompasses our tenants and homeowners. Our strong survey and research focus ensures we fully understand what is important to our customers and that our strategies and services reflect the opinions and feedback from our customers. A standard feature of our survey and research work includes customer profiling and measuring satisfaction across our key business areas.

This information enables us to correctly identify our customers' interest and address particular needs. It also ensures that we are in a strong position to work with and influence our partners at policy-making level, including government, business, regulators and other RSLs within the city.

The varied ways in which we obtain and take account of the views of our customers includes inviting comment, suggestions and feedback on every aspect of our services, providing valuable insight into what we do well, and where we could do better.

Our staff are also key customers and we will ensure that the opportunities for them to influence decisions and identify their needs are "staff-led" and that they are adequately resourced and supported to ensure the effective implementation of the strategy.

What matters to our customers

Working in partnership with LHO Chairs, we have identified a number of empowerment principles that embrace our determination and commitment. These ensure that the ability of tenants and other customers to influence and direct local priorities remain at local level.

The principles are the basic building blocks for empowerment and will be embedded in our governance structure. They will also feed into our governance review. The principles include:

- Local identity
- Influence, involvement and power to identify, recommend and negotiate on local priorities and aspirations
- Constitutional framework
- Binding agreement between LHO committees and GHA on scope and function
- Aligned senior officer support within any new organisational form
- Building capacity and confidence to ensure effective current and long term empowerment and engagement of tenants and customers
- Monitoring the delivery of local investment budgets, assurance and quality standards
- Enhanced contribution and influence in community regeneration to support a collective vision that delivers the right housing outcomes and vibrant, sustainable communities that our customers take pride in. Our Regeneration Strategy reflects our vision to ensure that better homes create better lives.

In addition, and where appropriate, the empowerment principles facilitate the delivery of our Second Stage Transfer enabling role with particular emphasis on statutory consultation.

The principles are reflected through our proposals for local, regional and strategic structures and mechanisms. Building on the empowerment principles and in response to LHO Chairs' aspirations, we have developed empowerment and engagement structures and mechanisms to inform and influence our Board and Group. Our governance arrangements will empower the tenant members of our Board and Group and through proposed delegated authority, the tenant and resident members of our regional committees.

Empowerment (continued)

GHA Board and Group

The GHA Board and Group will continue to embrace tenant membership as a key commitment as part of our empowerment and engagement strategy. The Board will be responsible for the:

- Overall governance
- Corporate business planning
- Financial stewardship
- Corporate risk, compliance and business assurance
- Strategic partnerships
- National housing policy
- Reputation
- Growing and developing wider GHA assets
- Empowerment and engagement structures – governance
- Empowerment and engagement mechanisms which advise and influence GHA Board and Group.

Regional committees

Regional committees will be part of GHA's governance structure with a scheme of delegated authority to govern decision-making powers and assure GHA compliance with regulatory activity. Membership will be through LHO committees and representatives from GHA Board with a remit to take forward area strategy and planning including investment, social enterprise and wider action.

Empowered to: Operational performance monitoring

Planning and decision-making on regional priorities linked to investment, social enterprise and wider action

Reporting / accountability:

Reporting links to GHA Board or committee. Must demonstrate how LHO committee representation has influenced decisions and direction including key priorities on investment, neighbourhood and environmental improvements, service delivery and performance impacts.

Regional committees will take account of outcomes from citywide empowerment and engagement structures and mechanisms, including the Chairs' Forum, strategic monitoring groups and customer review team action planning

Successful outcomes:

LHO committees are empowered to effectively contribute and influence the overall citywide strategy, regional and local priorities and plans for improvements and service delivery.

Regional plans are agreed and local and regional priorities are reflected in service delivery and strategy.

LHO committees

LHO committees are made up of local tenants and homeowners and have a remit to represent the interests of the people who live in their community. LHO committees are part of the building blocks to empowerment, engagement and leadership throughout the organisation.

The scope and function of the LHO committee is determined by the agreed empowerment principles which include:

- Structures for influence, involvement and power to identify, recommend and negotiate on local priorities including investment
- Ensuring commitment to long term engagement of tenants and residents now and in the future, building capacity and confidence
- Binding agreement on the principles, scope and function of the relationship between GHA and the LHO committee
- Maintained local identity
- Constitutional framework for operation of LHO committee
- Aligned GHA senior officer support
- Monitor performance of local housing and customer services: lettings, voids, arrears, repairs, neighbour relations and complaint handling
- Monitor local investment budget, performance and delivery
- Quality assurance standards
- Contribute to and influence the local strategic agenda, including:
 - identifying local priorities
 - environmental and neighbourhood quality
 - security, safety, management and improvements
 - neighbourhood renewal and wider action
 - contribute to raising design standards including energy and fuel poverty in regeneration
 - highlight and elevate areas for improvement or concern.

Empowered to: Make recommendations on wider strategic agenda, decide local priorities, monitor, influence and scrutinise performance

Reporting / accountability: Local community

Successful outcomes: Evidence of LHO committee influence demonstrated and reflected in local and regional plans and service development and delivery.

Effective, accountable and representative committees working in partnership with GHA, recognised and valued by local tenants and homeowners.

GHA has developed a range of recognised structures and mechanisms for empowerment and engagement.

From research and feedback we know that our tenants and customers value different types and levels of empowerment and engagement, which are dependent on their personal circumstances, commitments and interests. Customers have also told us that they want to ensure that their involvement is of real value and makes a difference. We aim to meet their expectations and encourage greater participation by providing wide-ranging opportunities, which produce successful outcomes. Through a flexible approach and highlighting the impact and benefits of involvement, we believe that our customer experience can be both positive and rewarding and encourage wider interest.

The following is a summary of our key mechanisms and partnerships for engagement:

Chairs' Forum

The Chairs' Forum is a key empowerment mechanism through which GHA Board is influenced on the strategic direction of the organisation, policy and customer service development.

We are committed to working with the Chairs' Forum to build capacity for empowerment and engagement that delivers tangible outcomes which can be demonstrated and measured. We will ensure that the Chairs' involvement continues to influence and inform GHA on the issues that are important to LHO committees and customers.

The Chairs' Forum constitutional position will evolve in line with the new Empowerment Model.

Empowered to: Shape and influence GHA's strategic direction including the development of the empowerment model and organisational form.

Represent the interests of LHO committees and influence strategic direction, policy and service development.

Shape and influence service specifications and standards in partnership with GHA.

Reporting / accountability: LHO committees

Successful outcomes: Strengthened and developed strategic role.

GHA's strategic direction and agreed strategies deliver the right outcomes for tenants, customers and communities.

Service improvement and effective policy development

Effective channel of engagement and communication

Owners' Forum

The Owners' Forum provides a strategic overview of the issues affecting factored homeowners in partnership with GHA's factoring subsidiary GHA Management (GHAM)

Empowered to: Represent the views of homeowners, ensuring that their needs and priorities are reflected in service provision and policies. Develop service standards with GHAM and GHA.

Reporting / accountability: Glasgow Housing Association (Management) Board, LHO committees.

Successful outcomes: Increased satisfaction of homeowners with services provided.

SST Statutory Consultation

GHA has a statutory obligation to formally consult tenants on proposals from RSLs on second stage transfer.

Empowered to: Fulfil the statutory obligation and to ensure that tenants are informed of the detail of any proposal and how this will affect them and their tenancy rights before a formal ballot for transfer.

Reporting / accountability: GHA Board, Business Transformation Committee and The Scottish Housing Regulator.

Successful outcomes: Tenants properly consulted and informed of details of the transfer before ballot.

Engagement (continued)

Registered Tenant Organisation (RTO) Federation

The RTO Federation represents and promotes the interests of RTOs and enables their influence on policies and services at a strategic level. There is a statutory requirement on landlords to demonstrate how they have involved and consulted RTOs on proposals and issues affecting tenants.

Empowered to: Set standards for GHA's engagement with RTOs.

Raise strategic issues with GHA senior managers, influence policies and service provision.

Reporting / accountability: Individual RTOs.

Successful outcomes: Greater RTO membership, participation and influence on decision-making and services.

RTOs

These represent the priorities identified by local tenants and residents within a locally defined area. They are a key tenant participation structure that enables participation and consultation on the issues that affect local communities.

Empowered to: Inform and influence the development of LHO tenant participation action plans, decision-making, and service delivery.

Reporting / accountability: Wider membership, compliance with GHA approved registration criteria.

Successful outcomes: Greater participation leading to improvements delivered

Development groups

These comprise tenants and homeowners from a defined geographical area with a remit to work with GHA to build capacity and skills to reach RTO status.

Empowered to: Work with GHA to establish an RTO to represent their members' needs and priorities within a locally defined area.

Reporting / accountability: Wider membership.

Successful outcomes: Registered Tenant Organisation status achieved.

Strategic Monitoring Groups

These were established to provide an input and influence from representatives from our key empowerment structures in our approach to and development of service strategies, setting standards, service specification, procurement and tender evaluation.

Empowered to: Influence and provide feedback based on customer experience and expectation.

Work with senior officers, identify strengths and weakness and make recommendations.

Reporting / accountability: GHA Board and committees, Chairs' Forum, Owners' Forum and RTO Federation.

Successful outcomes: Greater involvement of customers in key processes and evidenced improvements as a result.

Customer Review Teams

The GHA Customer Review Teams (CRT) test the consistency of service delivery, standards and customer experience. CRTs involve tenants and homeowners who are not part of our empowerment and engagement structures with the remit to review and assess service provision from a customer perspective.

Empowered to: Identify strengths and weaknesses of service delivery.

Make recommendations for improvement and highlight best practice.

Review service to assess that improvements have been made.

Reporting/ accountability: Produce a report and area for action by GHA and LHOs.

Successful outcomes: Improvement in customer services is evidenced.

Community Engagement in regeneration areas

A key challenge for GHA, in conjunction with LHO committees, is to effectively engage and consult our tenants, RTOs and the wider community in the development of proposals and options for regeneration.

Engagement objective: Partnership working and active engagement to enable our customers, RTOs and the wider community to influence the development of regeneration projects.

Successful outcomes: Positive housing outcomes that reflect the needs and aspirations of our tenants, customers and communities.

Customer contact, comment and complaint

GHA has a comprehensive Complaints Policy and procedure with an emphasis on welcoming customer complaints as positive feedback on services and standards. This allows us to identify opportunities for improvement and address issues, using customer feedback to influence services.

Satisfaction surveys

From 2008 we will increase the frequency of our citywide tenant satisfaction surveys and will now undertake these on an annual basis. The citywide surveys allow customers to express views about their satisfaction with GHA as their landlord and provide their opinion and experience of key services.

In addition, we also carry out surveys of factored homeowners on a regular basis.

A key objective of the satisfaction surveys is to gain a greater knowledge and awareness of our customers and use their feedback to enable continuous improvement in service provision and increase future satisfaction levels.

Tenant and homeowner panels

This is a mechanism through which GHA can test ideas, areas for development and explore emerging themes and trends.

These panels include tenants and homeowners who are not involved in other groups or activities and who are interested in having a direct input to 'one-off' activities usually undertaken through small group discussion, focus groups or questionnaires.

Events/activities

Events are a key mechanism of our empowerment and engagement approach. We have established a programme of annual citywide events and activities including:

- Two tenant participation events
- An RTO event
- A tenant conference
- Wider action programmes.

The purpose of these events and activities is to inform, empower, engage, learn from others and provide opportunities for influence and wider participation, especially by those not previously or regularly involved.

Staff empowerment and engagement

The ethos of our engagement and empowerment principles is built into the way we manage our business and work with our staff and is embedded within our People Strategy. The People Strategy sets out how we regularly encourage and invite the views and recommendations of staff through satisfaction surveys, focus groups, staff events, team meetings and the other channels that exist to inform our staff and empower them to get involved.

Positive and rewarding customer experience

Our empowerment and engagement structures are varied and provide significant opportunities for our customers to have their say, influence decisions and make a real difference. We will actively promote the ways in which our customers can get involved and regularly test that they are effective and deliver a positive customer experience.

Ensuring accessibility:

We recognise that traditional methods may not always be appropriate and will strive to develop new and innovative ways in which our customers, particularly those from under-represented groups, can get involved and make their views known. We will give particular consideration to the following:

- Location and timing of meetings/events
- Venues that are barrier free
- Particular needs including dietary, mobility, transport, childcare and translation/interpreting requirements
- Availability of information in plain English and other languages and formats where required.

Additional support:

- Use of GHA office accommodation for meetings, where appropriate
- Particular arrangements in response to individual needs
- Production of leaflets and posters
- Support of staff including attendance at meetings
- General administrative support
- Provision of interpreting services
- Feedback through specialist groups.

We are committed to providing funding, resources and support for the development of our empowerment and engagement activities:

- Annual grant to support the delivery of local customer engagement policies, action plans and activities
- Support to developing and existing RTOs including operation funding, top-up and development grants
- Travel and subsistence to facilitate participation and attendance at events, conferences and study tours
- Information and advice including publicity material to raise the profile of customer engagement and empowerment
- Funding, organisation and administrative support for events, forums, conferences and training sessions
- Costs associated with consultation, research, focus group and survey work
- Maintaining the Chairs' Forum and RTO Federation including administrative support.

Recognise and reward

Our customers engage with us on a voluntary basis and we acknowledge the time and commitment they give on behalf of their groups and communities. In recognition of this, and in addition to the support provided above, we will refocus our Glasgow Gold initiative and introduce a “Recognise and Reward” scheme that allows individuals to collect points for their involvement across the full range of our empowerment and engagement structures and activities. Points will be redeemed against a variety of rewards and we will consult widely to ensure that they reflect our customers’ interests and aspirations.

In many cases our customers have accumulated a wealth of experience, interest and knowledge of housing issues and legislation.

GHA supports the Active Learning for Residents (ALfR) initiative which has been designed by the Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) to give formal recognition to the knowledge and skills developed by tenants and residents through their active involvement in communities.

Participants have the opportunity to achieve CIH qualifications ranging from a Level 2 certificate in Community Action, to a Level 3 certificate in Tenant Participation and Neighbourhood Renewal and a new Level 4 award in Governance.

We will continue to support this initiative and will promote and support our customers who volunteer to participate, building on capacity, capability and developing transferable skills.

GHA’s customer engagement team provides a dedicated resource in support of effective customer relationships, empowerment and engagement.

Our Consultation Strategy sets out our commitment to consulting with our customers, collecting their views and using them to shape our services. It maps out who we will consult with, when and on what, including the consultation and feedback methods. These will be reviewed regularly to ensure they are appropriate for our audience and the subject suitable for consultation.

Principles for effective consultation and feedback

Our customers, RTOs and other key stakeholders have the opportunity to give their views. We will take these into account and provide feedback about how their views have influenced our decisions and policies and the future direction of the organisation.

Our customers have told us that they would like more feedback on how their involvement in consultation activities has influenced decisions and service provision and this is a key aim of this strategy.

In all our empowerment and engagement activities we aim to improve the level and quality of feedback to demonstrate impact or explain why views have not been taken on board.

GHA consults on a range of issues on an ongoing basis, including:

- Corporate strategy, including the Business Plan
- Policies in relation to housing management, repairs or maintenance
- Empowerment and engagement strategy
- Changes to the Tenancy Agreement
- Changes to rent and methods of collection and payment
- Changes in the provision of housing management service
- Customer service standards
- Investment, regeneration, sustainability and wider action strategies
- Second Stage Transfer proposals.

For each consultation activity we will inform our customers, RTOs and other stakeholders:

- How and when the final decision will be taken
- How the proposal will affect them
- How and within what timescales they can make their views known
- How they will receive feedback
- Who the contact officer dealing with the consultation is
- Information on how and where to complain.

Increasingly we aim to use a varied and flexible range of methods that reflect the issues for consultation and the needs of the target audience including those groups with particular needs.

We will use the full range of our engagement structures to provide feedback and report the findings of our activities to the participants of consultation and engagement. Our customers can expect information on the results of our consultation and engagement activities and also on the actions we will take as a result of the findings including how they have influenced decisions and services.

We are committed to a regular review of our consultation and feedback methods through our satisfaction surveys to ensure that they reflect the diverse and changing needs of tenants, RTOs and other stakeholders and maximise the opportunities for effective consultation.

Our processes for gathering, assessing and storing consultation feedback and comment comply with the requirements of the Data Protection Act 1998 and meet the spirit of the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Appendix 1 details the range of issues GHA has consulted on throughout 2005-07.

Appendix 2 details our range of methods used to consult.

Monitoring, review and continuous improvement

To ensure that we are delivering continuous improvement and value for money in our empowerment and engagement activities, we will build in methods for actively monitoring and reviewing their effectiveness.

First, we have identified a number of key actions, priorities and outcomes. Through empowerment and engagement action planning we will review our progress and demonstrate how we use the outcomes from these activities to inform the development of our services.

The monitoring and reviewing of progress will be done in consultation and partnership with our customers, including the RTO Federation, Chairs' Forum and the Scottish Housing Regulator's tenant participation team. Progress on the implementation of the strategy will be reported monthly to the GHA Board and will be included in performance information to the Chairs' Forum every six weeks.

We will also test customer satisfaction levels on the opportunities and mechanisms for empowerment and engagement through our satisfaction surveys.

In addition, our customers we will regularly invite our customers to comment on our provisions for engagement and empowerment through our events, forums, satisfaction surveys and the Key and Factoring Matters newsletters.

Measurable outcomes will include an assessment of the following:

- Are the tenant participation requirements of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 being met?
- Are the formal structures and activities for participation, empowerment and engagement achieving their objectives and have we increased representation from traditionally excluded groups?
- To what extent have customers had the opportunity to set the agenda for participation and have decision makers become more accessible and open to influence?
- Are our consultation methods effective, varied and responsive to needs?
- How are customer views represented in the outcome of any participation?
- How effective are our feedback mechanisms, and do they reflect the needs of our customers?
- Are sufficient resources being made available, used effectively and adequately accounted for?
- Has the number of active tenant and resident groups increased and how many have achieved registration with GHA in each year?
- Are the registration criteria working adequately and are they responsive to changing habits and expectations?
- Are the training, skills, and information needs of our customers being met?
- How satisfied are customers with the engagement process and the range of opportunities available to them?

Improving services for all (continued)

Quality assurance

In addition to the methods identified above, we will use the Customer Service Excellence Standard to facilitate continuous improvement.

This is a practical tool for driving customer focused change and aims to support the development of a culture, which puts the customer at the heart of what organisations do.

The standard is aimed at delivering benefits at three levels:

- As a driver of continuous improvement
- As a skills development tool
- As an independent validation of achievement through formal accreditation to the standard.

We will aim to achieve certification within the period of this strategy.

The Empowerment and Engagement Strategy is published on the GHA website. The strategy will be available in alternative formats on request in line with our commitment to accessible information.

A summary of the strategy will be available in leaflet form, our newsletters and other publications – providing quick, at a glance information on our key commitments and objectives, and the various ways in which our customers can get involved and the levels of empowerment and influence they will have.

An empowerment and engagement action plan will structure our delivery of the strategic aims and objectives and provide an evidence trail of our activities that links back to regulatory requirements, good practice guidance and accountability to our customers, partners and stakeholders.

Regular reports on progress and performance will be made to relevant forums and strategic committees as well as to the GHA Board. Feedback on our progress and the impact of our customer engagement and empowerment activities will be made available via our website, intranet, event reports, the Key and Factoring Matters newsletters.

Points of contact

We welcome your comments on this strategy and encourage all of our customers to take an active role in helping to shape housing services and the direction of the organisation. If you have any questions on the strategy or would like information on how to get involved then please contact us:

Customer Engagement Team

Granite House
177 Trongate
Glasgow
G1 5HF

Telephone:
0141 274 6309

Appendix 1

Policy consultation over 2005/07

2005

Adaptations
Housing information and Advice
Lets to Statutory and Voluntary Agencies
Garages Policy
Openness and Confidentiality Policy (LHOs, RTOs,
Board Members)
Sheltered Housing Service
Allocations Review – phase 2 Choice Based Letting
model
New Build Strategy
Housing Asylum Seekers and Refugees
Pay and Reward (internal)

2006

Housing and Community Care
Rent Review
Asset Management & Sustainability Strategy
Glasgow Gold
Concierge Policy
Unacceptable Actions
Sheltered & Very Sheltered Allocations Policy

2007

Management of Non-Housing Assets & Debt
Recovery Policy
Tenancy Sustainment Strategy
Wider Action Strategy
Repairs & Maintenance Policy
Housing Futures assessment Guidance
Rent increase questionnaire (The Key)
Customer Engagement & Empowerment Strategy

2008

Neighbour Relations Strategy

Appendix 2

Consultation methods

Methods	Individual affected tenant	All GHA tenants	RTOs	Local Housing Organisation Committees	Factored Home owners	Organisations representing 'hard to reach' groups	Statutory agencies
Letter/leaflet inviting response							
Information packs/policy summaries							
Information in Braille, large print, audio format and in other languages							
Individual face to face contact							
Public meetings							
Local surgeries							
Help line							
Road shows							
GHA newsletters – The Key & Factoring Matters							
Local Newsletters							
GHA website							
One off publications							
Advertising in local press							
Managers' Bulletin							
e-mail							
Intranet							
Meetings							
Customer Service Centre							
Forums (including Chairs' Forum, RTO Federation, Owners' Forum)							
Strategic Monitoring Groups							
Customer Review Teams							
Local open days, events							
Customer Engagement and RTO Events							
Customer surveys							
GHA Customer Panel							
Focus Groups							
Involvement in advisory/review groups							
Involvement in sub-committees							
Interactive Evaluation & Feedback cards							
Workshops							

Registered Tenant Organisations (RTOs)

As a Registered Social Landlord, GHA is obliged to have arrangements in place for RTOs. These include the publication of the criteria for registration, information on funding and resources available to RTOs, appeals procedures and a Public Register of Tenant Organisations.

GHA recognises the role of the Local Housing Organisation in the process, which is to:

- Display a list of RTOs within their area and provide information and contact details on request
- Actively consult, involve and support the RTOs as part of their local Tenant Participation Strategy and Action Plan
- Promote and encourage the set up of RTOs within their area and provide support and resources to assist the development process.

Register of Tenant Organisations

GHA has produced a Public Register of Tenant Organisations. This information is available on GHA's website (www.gha.org.uk) and on request. GHA maintains a register of non-registered groups.

To be recognised by GHA as an RTO and be eligible for direct grant funding, tenant organisations must fulfil the requirements of GHA's published criteria.

Registration Scheme

GHA operates an annual registration scheme, with RTOs invited to re-register 12 months after date of registration. Groups are funded through the re-registration period and remain on the public register throughout the process. We provide support to tenant and resident groups, both registered and non-registered, to achieve registration.

GHA will formally recognise and fund those tenant organisations that meet GHA's Criteria for Registration.

We also work with groups who are not registered, providing assistance and support, and where appropriate, consultation on relevant issues that may impact on their geographical area or membership.

Support may be in the form of staff time or services. Financial support will only be available to groups that can demonstrate clear objectives and whose activities satisfy GHA's commitment to promoting equal opportunities to all those who wish to be involved.

Suspension of Registration and Funding

We will respond to all requests for training and support from registered groups, however where there are issues that cannot be resolved within an agreed timescale, registration and funding may be suspended. Support will be continued to assist groups to overcome the difficulties and work towards meeting the registration criteria

Criteria for registration

Tenants groups can apply to become registered and must meet certain criteria to qualify. The criteria for registration have been set out by the Scottish Government and cover a number of points. Groups who become RTOs are entitled to certain rights and GHA has a duty to inform and consult with them on housing matters.

Groups applying for registration must have a publicly available written constitution based on the principles of GHA's model constitution. The constitution must set out:

- Clear objectives that are non-political, non-sectarian and demonstrate a commitment to the promotion of equal opportunities
- Membership must be open to all adults over 16 years living within the group's area of operation
- The group must have an awareness of the profile and needs of its members and be able to demonstrate how it tries to engage those members who have particular needs, for example, elderly and young people, black and ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, families with young children
- The group must be able to demonstrate how it represents its members' interests and views, in particular how members are consulted and receive feedback
- A commitment to the promotion of the housing and housing related interests of tenants
- The group's area of operation, including either a list of the streets or a map of the area covered
- The group must operate within a defined area that includes housing stock owned and managed by GHA
- Information on how people can become members of the group
- The way the committee will work including meetings, election to the committee and office bearer roles
- The committee must have at least seven members and be elected annually at the Annual General Meeting (AGM)
- Has elected office bearers
- How the group conducts its business, including how decisions are reached and the democratic process
- How funds will be managed
 - the group must keep a record of accounts and present an audited financial statement to the AGM
 - authorised signatories must be appointed for the operation of the accounts
- Arrangements for public meetings and an AGM
- The group is required to convene at least three public meetings and an AGM each year
- How changes can be made to the constitution

Registered Tenant Organisations (RTOs)

Direct Grant Funding

Tenant organisations that fulfil the requirements of GHA's criteria for registration are eligible for Direct Grant Funding. Funding will be paid on a quarterly basis and the grant will be reviewed annually in terms of inflation. In order to achieve full direct grant funding there must be a majority of tenants on the committee. Where homeowners are in the majority, funding will be paid proportionately.

Top-Up Grant Funding

This is available to RTOs for specific tenant participation activities. At the time of applying for funding, consideration will be given to the money held in account by the RTO, its running costs and its plans for expenditure.

Failure to meet the Criteria

If a group fails to meet the criteria, the application for registration and funding will be rejected. The reason for the rejection will be explained in writing, and where appropriate will include recommendations to assist the group meet the requirements of the criteria.

Removal from the register / Suspension of registration and funding

An RTO will be removed from the register in any of the following circumstances:

- The RTO does not apply for re-registration
- The RTO ceases to operate
- There is mutual agreement between GHA and the RTO
- The RTO no longer meets the registration criteria

In some cases, and with the agreement of the group, registration and funding will be suspended and support will be provided to assist the group achieve full registration.

Appeals

A group may appeal against a decision:

- Not to register
- Remove them from the register
- Not to remove them from the register.

An appeal should be made in writing to GHA in the first instance. The appeal procedure should be completed within three months of the appeal being made. Thereafter the group may appeal to the Regulation and Inspection Division of the Scottish Housing Regulator.

Would you like more information?

Freephone 0800 479 7979

or visit www.gha.org.uk

The Glasgow Housing Association Limited is a not-for-profit housing association registered under the Industrial and Provident Societies Act 1965, registered no. 2572R(S). It is also recognised by HM Revenue and Customs as a Scottish charity (SC034054) and is registered with The Scottish Housing Regulator under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 as a registered social landlord, no. 317. VAT Registration No. 796709466. Registered office: Granite House, 177 Trongate, Glasgow G1 5HF

