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Policy Name	Communications Strategy
Policy Author	Housing Officer
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West Whitlawburn Housing Co-operative will provide this policy on request at no cost, in larger print, in Braille, in audio or other non-written format, and in a variety of languages. Please contact the office.

Registered with the Scottish Housing Regulator No. 203
Registered Charity No. SCO38737, VAT Registration No. 180223636
Registered society under the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014



1. Introduction

West Whitlawburn Housing Co-operative (WWHC) is a Registered Social Landlord (RSL), set up in 1989 with 644 properties. The Co-operative is a fully mutual housing co-operative with charitable status. WWHC is fully controlled by the members and only members can be tenants of the Co-operative. The Communication Strategy details the commitment to keeping both internal and external communications timely, helpful and accurate.

WWHC's aim is to provide information in a range of formats which are useful, clear, user-friendly and will avoid jargon or technical language wherever possible.

All information produce by WWHC will be DDA compliant and can be translated or presented in a different format if required.

Both staff and committee follow a Communication Code, see appendix 1

2. Regulatory Framework

WWHC, as a Registered Social Landlord (RSL), is regulated by the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR).

The Regulatory Standards of Governance and Financial Management set out by SHR must be met. One of these Regulatory Standards set out our specific requirements in relation to customer engagement:

Regulatory Standard 2

The RSL is open and accountable for what it does. It understands and takes account of the needs and priorities of its tenants, service users and stakeholders. And its primary focus is the sustainable achievement of these priorities.

2.1 The RSL gives tenants, service users and other stakeholder's information that meets their needs about the RSL, its services, its performance and its future plans.

2.2 The governing body recognises it is accountable to its tenants, and has a wider public accountability to the taxpayer as a recipient of public funds, and actively manages its accountabilities.

2.4 The RSL seeks out the needs, priorities, views and aspirations of tenants, service users and stakeholders. The governing body takes account of this information in its strategies, plans and decisions.

3. The Scottish Social Housing Charter

The Scottish Social Housing Charter aims to improve the quality and value of service which social landlords deliver to customers. This strategy focuses upon the two Charter outcomes linked to Customer engagement.

Communication

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

Participation

- Tenants and other customers find it easy to participate in and influence their landlord's decisions at a level they feel comfortable with.

This strategy details our commitment to the Scottish Social Housing Charter and the outcomes which are reported to the Scottish Housing Regulator through the Annual Return on the Charter (ARC).

4. Other Links

This strategy seeks to comply with all relevant legislation and regulatory standards as well as relevant best practice. Communication is key to how WWHC works therefore links across a range of policies, strategies and procedures such as:

- Equality and Diversity
- Freedom Of Information Scotland Act (FOISA)
- Privacy Policy
- Tenant Participation

5. Strategy Aims

5.1 Meeting tenant and member's needs

We will communicate effectively with our customers and provide accessible information. Our communication channels include quarterly newsletters, website, leaflets, posters, correspondence, annual general meetings, member meetings and open days. We offer information in additional formats where needed such as audio, large print or translations.

5.2 Open, understandable and transparent

We will ensure all communication with customers is open, understandable and transparent and always of a high standard. This will include:

- Up to date, easy to understand and jargon free information
- Involvement of our Tenant Participation Scrutiny Panel to review our materials.

5.3 Meeting Future Needs

We will keep our tenants up-to-date with the various communication options available and commit to increase and develop innovative methods in the future. We will use visits and tenant surveys to find out which options our tenants prefer and where we need to improve.

5.4 Listening and Learning

We will ensure we have a robust method of consultation and feedback, which tenants can access. We will collect feedback and comments using tenant satisfaction surveys, repair satisfaction surveys, tenant scrutiny panel and complaints.. A report will go to Management Committee with the feedback from the tenant scrutiny panel, a version of this report will be included in our newsletter.

6. Internal Communications

6.1 Staff Communications

Staff have access to internal communications including:

- Relevant agenda, reports and action points for meetings
- Copies of Management Committee minutes unless there are strictly private and confidential.
- Information circulated by the Director or Senior Management Team
- Information relating to staff vacancies, general and public holidays, health and safety and Union information.
- A local drive which gives access to all policies, terms and conditions, Health and Safety Manual
- Appropriate external resources
- Monthly staff meetings which include a summary report from each section detailing work activities and priorities
- Monthly senior management team meetings
- Information circulation
- Organisational conferences
- Concierge team meetings
- Section team meetings

6.2 Management Committee

The key components of committee communication are as follows;

- Regular attendance at and participation in Management Committee meetings and Sub-committee meetings to discuss key current issues and ongoing development, performance monitoring and assurance
- Attendance at the Annual General Meetings and biannual tenant meetings
- Attendance at any joint committee / staff events
- Attendance at training events
- Attendance at organisational conference events
- Participation in working parties and policy review groups

7. Methods of Communication

7.1 Internal

Methods of communications used within the workplace include;

- Email
- Phone calls
- Meetings
- Posters/signs
- Text messages
- Whatsapp
- Face to face

8. Stakeholder Communications

The Co-operative recognises that in order to inform and gain feedback to its tenants, service users, partners and wider community it has to communicate effectively.

We have developed a positive and inclusive Tenant Participation Policy which outlines the way in which the Co-operative communicates with its tenants and encourages the exchange of information and a variety of mechanisms are employed in relation to this. These include:

- Tenant scrutiny panel
- Tenant newsletters
- Annual report on performance against the charter
- Regular tenant surveys
- Tenant handbook
- Annual Report
- Website
- Email

- Text Messaging
- Whatsapp
- Foyer and common area display posters
- Estate walkabouts
- Home visits / face to face
- Access to local committee members
- Social Media

The Co-operative tailors the communication method to suits tenants needs and preferences.

8.1 Communications Team

The Co-operative has a communications team which meets on a monthly basis. The team is made up of a representative from across every section of the organisation and it's objective is to co-ordinate production of the content across the Co-operative's various publications including newsletters, annual reports, website, and social media.

The Co-operative believes that regular and open communication with its tenants will assist the Co-operative in the development of a more participative and inclusive Co-operative.

To ensure effective communication we will do the following:

- Ensure the views of tenants shape communication content and method of delivery at all times.
- Promote and encourage feedback to allow tenants and customers to regularly give their views on communication and also to provide content.
- Produce newsletters that readers find relevant, meaningful and engaging
- Use our website and social media to highlight achievements and promote a range of services offered to tenants.
- Ensure tenants and customers can access the website to pay rent and report repairs
- Operate a comprehensive complaint handling procedure which is published on the website and will report on complaint outcomes
- Maintain a guide to information and publish all required by the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act
- Ensure all communications are easy to understand, accessible for all and adhere to the Equalities Act 2010.

8.2 Tenant Feedback

It's important that we inform tenant and members about what is going on within the Co-operative but it is equally important to listen to our

tenants/members wants and needs in order to shape services. We use the following ways to let tenants have their say:

- Consultations
- Annual General Meetings
- Scrutiny panels
- Tenant and member meetings
- Surveys – such as Tenant Satisfaction Surveys, repair surveys etc
- Informal feedback from tenants during office appointments, house visits or telephone calls.

8.3 Scottish Housing Regulator

The Co-operative communicates with the Scottish Housing Regulator mainly through the submission of information including:

- Annual Financial statements
- Audit Management letter and response
- Annual Return on the Charter (ARC) submission
- Notifiable events
- Loan portfolio returns
- EESSH return
- Annual assurance statement
- Notifiable events

We have a schedule of external submissions in place which is monitored monthly and updated annually.

8.4 Lenders and Regulators

The Co-operative formally communicates with its lenders and other regulators at regular intervals during the year, this involves the submission of the following information:

- Quarterly Management Accounts
- Annual Accounts
- 5 year financial projections
- Covenant report

8.5. Media Relations

The Co-operative will use the media to communicate to a wider local audience on matters of interest such as:

- New development proposals and completions
- Strategic plans e.g. rent reviews
- Annual Report
- AGM

- General “Good News” Stories – which is agreed by the Co-operative’s Director and Management Committee

8.6 Community Donations

Committee have a small discretionary budget where they can donate to whatever charity they see fit. Details of these donations are published in the newsletter to comply with rule 75.2.

9. Review

This policy will be subject to annual evaluation by the Communications Team and will be reviewed formally at least every 3 years.

Policy Implementation Checklist

Equality and Diversity Compliant	Yes
Equality Impact Assessment required	Yes
Data Protection (GDPR) compliant	Yes
Health & Safety compliant	Yes
Training requirements	Refresher training required
Regulatory Framework Assurance Information Bank Updated	GS 2.1 GS 2.2 GS 2.4 CH5
Policy Implementation	
Reporting arrangements Management Committee	
Policy register updated	
Published on Website	
Publicity material issued	N/A
Related Policies	All areas of operation