



## **Tenant Participation Compact**

**August 2007**

## **1. What is a Tenant Participation Compact?**

- 1.1 This Tenant Participation Compact is an agreement between tenants, leaseholders and Tarka Housing.
- 1.2 It sets out how all parties will work together to achieve the best possible housing service by involving all parties in major decisions on housing issues. The compact follows current government guidelines and 'Best Value' initiatives. It recognises the importance of involving everyone in the decision and policymaking process, which directly affects them and their communities.
- 1.3 This document sets out the commitment of the Tenants, leaseholders and Tarka to work in partnership to develop and monitor services to homes and neighbourhoods.
- 1.4 This document has been ratified by the Tenant Panel on behalf of tenants and leaseholders and by the Board of Tarka Housing.
- 1.5 Throughout this Compact, the word 'tenant' is intended to mean either a tenant or a leaseholder of Tarka Housing.

## **2. Review and Amendment of this Document**

This Compact is seen as a living document and will be reviewed annually by a review group comprising Officers of Tarka and representatives of the Tenant Panel. This will help to ensure that everyone has the most up to date information at their disposal.

## **3. Working Together**

This Compact is based on the following shared principles between the tenants and Tarka: -

- A commitment to equal opportunities
- Open, honest and regular communication between tenants and the Landlord.
- Developing and monitoring services in order to provide 'Value for Money' in terms of service delivery.
- Involving tenants and members of the community to work alongside Tarka to identify areas of concern and agree how they will be tackled.
- Challenging and comparing the ways in which tenants have traditionally been involved.
- Actively encouraging tenants to have their say on issues affecting their homes, neighbourhoods and environment.

- Tenants and Tarka should work closely together to make decisions about the housing service and monitor its performance.
- The Tenant Panel, user panels and/or any local tenants' groups should be involved early enough in the decision-making process for them to consult with their members.
- Enough training and information should be available for tenants and staff to understand the issues and make informed input to any consultation.

#### **4. Tenant Participation Policies**

- 4.1 Tarka will publish policies and strategies for tenant involvement and actively promote this through its housing service.
- 4.2 Communication shall be fully compliant with Tarka's Accessible Information policy and Communication strategy ensuring it is;
- Effective and accessible to all.
  - Clearly written without the use of racist or sexist language, jargon or any other biased language.
  - All information will be relevant to those to whom it is circulated.
  - Available in large print, Braille, audio version or translation if requested.

#### **5. Tenants' Rights**

- 5.1 Tenants of Tarka have a number of statutory legal rights, including:
- The right to be consulted about any significant changes in the management or ownership of their home.
  - The preserved right to buy/ right to acquire their property.
  - The right to mutual exchange.
  - The right to repair.
  - The right to security of tenure as defined by statute.
- 5.2 For more information on tenant's rights or to see a copy of your tenancy agreement, please contact the Tenant Participation Officer – details at the back of this document.
- 5.3 Leaseholders of Tarka have rights to information about their service charges, and should receive the services which are paid for by these charges. Under certain conditions, groups of leaseholders have the right collectively to take over the management of their building or to purchase the freehold.

## **6. Tarka's Housing Services**

This Compact expresses Tarka's commitment to involve and inform tenants in the following housing services and related issues

- Repairs and maintenance
- Improvement programmes and capital works
- Conditions of tenancy
- Housing Management
- Neighbourhood Issues
- Environmental issues
- Complaints Procedure
- Lettings/Exchanges
- Rent Collection
- Equal Opportunities
- Anti Social Behaviour
- Service Performance
- Sheltered Housing
- Budgets
- Housing Policies

The following sections explain how tenants can become involved and what Tarka will do to inform tenants and support involvement in different aspects of these services.

## **7. How can tenants get involved?**

7.1 Tenants should be able to get involved at the level that suits them and in ways that interest them. Therefore there is a range of opportunities for tenant involvement with Tarka. Tenant groups are encouraged to work with Tarka and other groups such as community groups, voluntary agencies and neighbourhood watch groups.

### **7.2 Opportunities for involvement**

- The Tenant Panel – this tenant-led organisation brings together all Tarka's tenants. It is an opportunity for tenants to work together with Tarka so that the tenant voice is heard clearly before decisions are made about any major issue. For more information about the Tenant Panel, see Appendix 1 and the Tenant Panel Code of Conduct, see Appendix 9.
- User Groups – these are regular consultative meetings dealing with specific areas of services including, housing management, property services, sheltered housing, communication and a youth forum. Representation on these groups will be sought in line with the specific terms of reference, see Appendix 2.

- One-off focus groups – these are consultative meetings designed to allow tenants to give their views about a particular part of the housing service – for example, the repairs service.
- Surveys – these allow individual tenants to give their views about aspects of the housing service without having to attend meetings. This will include a full status survey of tenants conducted every 3 years.
- Public information meetings – these are occasional meetings organised by Tarka to provide tenants with information about issues that may be of interest to them.
- Service reviews – when a service is reviewed every few years, tenants are encouraged to be a part of the review project, contributing their experience of receiving the service and their ideas about how it could be improved
- Training events, site visits seminars, conferences, and other opportunities to learn about housing, about running effective groups and about influencing public service providers.

### **7.3 Local tenants' groups and opportunities**

- Local tenant or community groups – groups of tenants or residents who choose to organise at a village level or in a particular locality will have the active support of Tarka, so long as they meet the criteria for accountability and democracy agreed by Tarka. For information about these criteria see Appendix 3.
- Sheltered and elderly housing schemes – residents in these schemes often meet together on a regular basis.
- Local surveys – these allow tenants to give their point of view about the local housing service
- Local service monitoring groups – Where a group of tenants wishes to participate in monitoring the quality of the housing or other services in their area staff will meet them to support this activity.
- Area Agreements – these are documents which set out the key issues in a local area and the ways in which service providers, residents and others have agreed they should be tackled, and how all the parties will monitor success in tackling them. Tarka would be happy to devise such an agreement where a group of tenants is interested in doing so.

### **7.4 Opportunities for individuals**

Apart from becoming involved in any of the activities described above, individuals can make their voices heard by

- responding to opinion surveys
- using the complaints and compliments system where appropriate
- by being a mystery shopper
- by being a tenant inspector.

## **8. How Tarka will support tenant involvement**

**8.1** Tarka will actively promote Tenant Participation through a Tenant Participation Officer, whose role is to encourage and support involvement and help tenants to Identify and meet their training and information needs to manage the Tenant Participation budget (see below at 8.3.2).

### **8.2 Other Housing staff support**

- Other staff also have a responsibility to support and assist tenant involvement through their work and by giving advice and information about their area of expertise.
- Repairs Service staff will work with tenants groups on improvement, maintenance and repair issues.
- Senior Housing staff will work with Tenants on strategic housing issues or core problems of service provision, and will attend local group meetings if requested and given reasonable notice.
- Other staff will work regularly with the Tenants and local tenants groups, attending their meetings when requested.
- Staff will also where appropriate, provide some administrative support to tenant involvement.

### **8.3 Financial support**

**8.3.1** The activities described above are paid for directly from the Tenant Participation budget, covering the hire of meeting places, publicity, stationery, postage, travel, etc.

#### **8.3.2 Managing the Tenant Participation Budget**

The Budget is set annually by the Board of Tarka and managed by the Tenant Participation Officer in conjunction with the Head of Customer Services. The Tenant Participation Officer will consult with the Tenant Panel prior to each financial year about the budget for the following year, will report to the Tenants on expenditure of the budget on a quarterly basis (and on any tenant group applications for grants).

#### **8.3.3 Start-up grants to local groups**

Tarka will make available start-up grants where tenants wish to organise at a very local (village or estate) level. For more detail about such grants see Appendix 4.

#### **8.3.4 Personal Expenses**

It is important that tenants are not out of pocket when they get involved. Provided that the Tenant Participation Officer has agreed in advance that they qualify for reimbursement, claims can be made for attendance at or work on:

- a. The Tenant Panel

- b. User Panels including Housing Management, Property Services, Sheltered, Communication and Youth Forum.
- c. Meetings at Tarka's request – e.g. one off focus groups
- d. Training and conferences
- e. Regional and national tenant participation meetings (where expenses are not met by another organisation).

For more detail about expenses, see Appendix 5.

#### **8.4 Other resources for recognised tenants and residents associations**

- Tarka will provide reasonable assistance with photocopying
- Free use of venues wherever reasonable and possible
- Access to the Resident Resource room at Tarka's offices

- 8.5 If you require more information with regard to support for tenant participation, please contact the Tenant Participation Officer - details at the back of this document.

### **9. Training and conferences**

Training and networking are an important part of tenant involvement. Within the constraints of the training budget, the following opportunities will be available to any tenant, whether they are part of a tenants' group or not:

- Group skills training – such as how to chair a meeting or write minutes
- District-wide events – the Tenant Participation Officer will consult with the Tenant Panel and/or local tenants' groups on the programme of training topics which will be arranged each year – these will be open to tenants and Tarka as a way to increase knowledge and skills and also to improve working relationships.
- External training and conferences – tenants can attend national training on housing and tenant participation related topics.
- National Certificate in Tenant Participation – tenants can apply to the Tenant Participation Officer to acquire this qualification subject to demand and funding.
- Officers and Board Members of Tarka will be encouraged to attend training events jointly with tenants

### **10. Housing Maintenance**

This section tells you what information tenants will receive about the maintenance service, and how Tarka and contractors will work with tenants to develop the service.

- 10.1 'Maintenance' in this section includes:

- **Day-to-day repairs** – those repairs carried out as and when needed, for instance a leaking water pipe or faulty heating system

- **Planned maintenance** – work that is planned in advance such as painting, double glazing and gas servicing
- **Capital works** – such as refurbishments, improvements and redevelopment projects

## 10.2 Taking joint responsibility

It is important that staff and contractors respect the fact that they may be entering someone's home in order to carry out work. The tenant also has responsibilities to allow repair work to take place. These joint responsibilities are set out in detail in Appendix 6 and 8.

## 10.3 Information

### 10.3.1 Tarka will provide all tenants with:

- **A repairs booklet** – given out when tenants begin their tenancy to highlight which repairs the tenant is responsible for and which are the responsibility of Tarka, and to explain how to report a repair and how to complain about a repair
- **Day-to-day repair acknowledgement** – this could either be by telephone or letter when a repair has been reported, stating what the repair is and other details such as an appointment time, if relevant.
- **Planned maintenance or capital works information letters** – to tell tenants about maintenance or capital works to their homes or neighbourhoods; a further letter is sent out once the contract has been awarded; and the contractor must contact tenants with a formal notification 14 days before the work begins with details of time and place and the name of a contact for the contract in case of problems - or if the work is going to be delayed; a letter will also go out to tenants if the contractor has changed or any other change has occurred.
- **An annual report** – sent to all tenants as part of the Tarka Times newsletter, setting out the maintenance performance and financial information for the past year.
- **Updated repairs service information** – any changes to the repairs service, or the contacts for repairs will be reported to the Property Services User Panel, and all tenants will be notified and advertised to the tenants by notices and in the Quarterly Tarka Times newsletter.

### 10.3.2 Tarka will provide information to the Property Services User Panel, Tenant Panel and local tenants' groups:

- **Regular information about repair standards and performance** – a Maintenance Officer will attend the Property Services User Panel meetings to give an update on the maintenance service, including service performance information, performance indicators and news about any forthcoming major contracts.
- **The Repairs and Maintenance Manager** will attend local tenants' group meetings when requested if given at least 4 weeks notice.

#### 10.4 Seeking tenants' opinions

Tarka will find out tenants' views through:

- **Continuous day-to-day repair satisfaction assessment** – through telephone calls to allow tenants to report their level of satisfaction with the repairs service and point out any faults with that individual repair.
- **Individual consultation** – to agree planned maintenance or capital works processes in their initial stages where possible – e.g. for choice in kitchens, bathrooms, decorating materials, secure doors.
- **Occasional district-wide surveys** – such as the Status Survey, Customer Satisfaction Survey and random telephone surveys, so that tenants can provide feedback to us about the maintenance service and express their priorities for the future.
- **Local surveys for capital projects** – where planned maintenance or improvement works are to be carried out that affects a street or estate, detailed consultation will be carried out with the tenants concerned.
- **Surveys following planned maintenance or capital works projects** – to all tenants who have received the work, to assess satisfaction with the work done.
- **Discussion with the Property Services User Panel, Tenant Panel and local tenants' groups**, or in some cases with specially recruited **Focus Groups** – as sounding boards for proposed changes to the repair service and other related issues; in particular setting priorities for repairs and the appointments systems, to allow staff to find out whether changes will really benefit tenants and whether these changes have been clearly explained.
- **Involving tenants actively when a service review is being conducted**, by consulting with either the Tenant Panel, local tenants' groups and through Focus Groups.

#### 10.5 Working together

Tarka will:

- **Work with the Property Services User Panel** – who will meet regularly to discuss budgets and contract monitoring and to make joint decisions about any major changes to the day-to-day service, in particular
  - the main maintenance contract
  - the customer care policies
  - the investment programme
  - future budgets.
  - Awarding of improvement contracts
  - Procurement issues
- **Work with the local tenants' groups** where they exist (and set up 'task and finish' groups where they do not) to discuss decisions major refurbishment or improvement programmes affecting their homes, to

influence the plans as they develop and to monitor the implementation of these plans.

## **11. Accessibility**

It is important that all tenants have good access to the services they need – as indicated in the Disability Discrimination Act. This section refers to the physical improvement of homes.

### **11.1 Information**

Tarka will provide information about disabled adaptations – through the housing service access points, through articles in the Tarka Times newsletter to tenants, and through local tenants' groups, including the tenant panel.

### **11.2 Seeking tenants' opinions**

Tarka will find out tenants' views through:

- **Surveys** – to find out tenant satisfaction with disabled adaptations and with access to housing services.
- **Detailed consultation** – with the aim of establishing a Disability Discussion Group to consider accessibility audits and how they might be organised.

### **11.3 Working together**

Tarka will

- **Work with the Property Service User Panel, Tenant Panel and local tenants' groups** to make services as accessible as possible
- **Work with individual tenants** - to agree how their home can be made more accessible to suit their individual needs.
- **Keep accurate records** of what adaptations have been made to which homes, to help ensure that allocations meet needs.
- **Work with other (voluntary and statutory) agencies** to improve standards

## **12. Housing Management**

This section sets out how Tarka will work with tenants on matters regarding the tenancy of their home and the management of the environment around it.

### **12.1 Taking joint responsibility**

It is important that staff and tenants recognise that they have a joint responsibility in the good running of their homes. Staff, have a duty to provide a prompt, courteous and appropriate service. The tenant also has a responsibility to treat staff with respect and to provide appropriate information to enable staff to do a good job. For more detail on these joint responsibilities see Appendix 6.

### **12.2 Information**

12.2.1 Tarka will make available to all tenants

- Leaflets – covering important matters tenants may wish to know about, for example Tenancy conditions, Repairs, Applying for Accommodation, Tenant participation, Rents, Housing Benefits, Complaints, criticisms and compliments.
- Information about how to contact and make best use of the housing service – through the Tarka Times newsletter to tenants, at service access points, and via local tenants’ groups, Housing Management User Panel and the Tenant Panel. This information will include:
  - Housing service addresses and contact details
  - Times when the housing service is staffed
  - What to do out of hours if there is an emergency
  - The areas covered by each member of staff
  - Where and when housing surgeries will take place
  - Where and when estate or area inspections will take place
  - How to contact the tenant representatives
- An Annual report – including performance statistics, financial information and Best Value performance indicators about customer care and estate management. This will enable tenants to assess the performance of the services they receive.

12.2.2 Tarka will provide the Housing Management User Panel, Tenant Panel and local tenants’ groups with

- **Information about current and on-going issues** – through officer’s presences at each local tenant’s group, Housing Management User Panel and Tenant Panel meeting.
- **Information** about staff changes or proposed changes in how services will be managed or organised.
- **Regular standards and performance information** – such as customer care standards, complaints statistics, and local and national performance comparisons with other similar landlord bodies.
- **Information about the annual Business Plan and half yearly summary budget reports**
- **Guidance about non-Housing issues** – tenants and staff realise that many of the issues that arise are often not housing problems, and tenants need information and support in tackling these, including information about who to approach to do so.
- **Information given about proposals for changes to rent or service charges in line with statutory requirements.**

### 12.2.3 Seeking tenants’ opinions

Tarka will find out tenants’ views through:

- **District wide surveys** – such as a Status Survey and more specific surveys to find out tenant satisfaction with particular services e.g. a survey of new tenants, or when conducting service reviews
- **Local meetings** – to find out tenant views on current local issues, projects and the local housing service

- **Regular Focus groups** – widely advertised to recruit those who are not normally actively involved and make sure their views are noted when services or policies are being reviewed.
- **Consultation with local tenants' groups** – to find out tenants' views on policy, on local issues such as housing service, and other subjects
- **Consultation**, using the above range of methods, before decisions are made about proposals for changes to service charges, or when reviewing the information leaflets referred to above.

#### 12.2.4 Working together

Tarka will

- **Work together with individual tenants** – to discuss and seek agreement about practical solutions for issues such as rent arrears, neighbour nuisance, transfers, etc
- **Conduct regular Estate or Area Inspections** together with local tenants – for more information about these inspections, see Appendix 7
- **Meet with tenants at local level when required** to agree solutions to local problems, and to ensure that the area housing service is one that meets their needs
- **Develop local Estate or Area Agreements where requested** – as a way of finding practical solutions to local issues which may require the co-operation of other agencies such as the Police, Environmental Services, Social Services the Youth Service, or voluntary sector agencies
- **Work positively with any group of tenants wishing to explore Tenant Management** for their estate or area. With Tenant Management, tenants set up their own organisation to take direct responsibility for housing services in their area, and control the budget for any service they take responsibility for. In exchange for the responsibility they shoulder, tenants gain control over their services.

### 13. Sheltered Housing

Tenants in sheltered housing need opportunities to be involved in decisions about the Sheltered Housing Service and the provision of sheltered housing.

#### 13.1 Information

13.1.1 Tarka will provide sheltered housing tenants with:

- **A sheltered housing handbook** – to be given to all tenants when they sign up, which explains all about the Scheme Managers, and contains information about sources of care, location of sheltered schemes, contact details.
- **Individual sheltered scheme leaflets** – giving the details of each particular scheme – e.g. the facilities available, the role and work hours of the warden, information about the local area and key services within the area, and key contact details

- **Information about complementary services** – through leaflets on scheme notice boards and in newsletters to tenants, and in other places such as doctor's surgeries, giving information about other services which might be accessed by the tenants of sheltered housing to meet their own particular support needs.
- **Information at informal coffee mornings** – including details about major works contracts to individual schemes, and proposed changes to the housing service.
- **Information to individual tenants** – via newsletters or personal letters, with details of imminent works and how they might affect the tenant, including contact numbers for more information.
- **Annual service charge notification letters**
- **Information about the Sheltered Housing User Panel, Tenant Panel and any local tenants' groups**, including the arrangements for their meetings and contact details.

13.1.2 Tarka will provide information to the Sheltered Housing User Panel, Tenant Panel and local tenants' groups about:

- **The forthcoming year's service charges**
- **Proposed changes to policies, procedures or maintenance contracts**
- **Service performance statistics**

### 13.3 Seeking tenants' opinions

Tarka will find out tenants' views through:

- **District wide surveys** – to find out tenants views about the Sheltered Housing service and their priorities for the future
- **Local consultation** – about local issues and proposed changes to policies, procedures and maintenance contracts
- **Focus Groups** – and other means of active tenant involvement in any review of the sheltered housing service, including knocking on doors in each scheme to learn the views of those who cannot or will not attend meetings, respond to postal surveys, etc.

## 14. Housing Benefit

The smooth operation of the Housing Benefit system can be vital for the health and well-being of those who depend upon it. Tarka will work hard to ensure that it does work effectively, and to create a constructive working relationship with Housing Benefit to ensure that any problems are resolved speedily and that good, clear information is easily available about how the system works and what tenants need to do to access it. All information will be in line with the Data Protection Act and treated in a confidential manner.

### 14.1 Information

14.1.1 Tarka will make available to all tenants

- **Leaflets** – including information about the right to apply for housing benefit and how to do so, what other benefits are available for those on low incomes, and how they can find out more detailed information

- **Advice** – relevant housing staff will be trained to ensure that they are able to give confidential advice to tenants about the housing benefit system
- **Information via the Tarka Times newsletter to tenants** – including details of any changes in housing benefit, or in policies or procedures, about the benefits available and how to apply for them, about where to turn for further advice about rights, benefits, tax credits, etc, and the results of the annual customer satisfaction survey.

#### **14.2 Seeking tenants' opinions**

Tarka will find out tenants' views through:

- **Surveys** - with existing or past customers to find out their level of satisfaction with the service.
- **Consultation** – with the Housing Management User Panel and the Tenant Panel, to find out tenants' views on the existing service and proposed changes.

#### **14.3 Working together**

Tarka will work with the Tenants to address any systematic failures in the housing benefits service. It will seek to ensure that the housing benefits administrators are represented at meetings to discuss any such failures and to improve the information made available to tenants about the benefits system.

### **15. Housing: The Big Picture**

This section outlines how tenants can influence the future of the Housing Service, through influencing strategies such as

- **Business Plan** – this is a 30-year plan setting out the future business decisions of Tarka Housing.
- **Service Reviews** – this is a requirement for Tarka to assess its own performance and put in place measures to ensure continuous improvement in services and value for money.
- **Service Improvement Plans** – this is drawn up following a best Value review and sets out the planned service improvements over a five-year period.
- **Tenant Participation Compact**
- **Changes to Housing Policies** – these include tenancy conditions, rent collection, empty property management, responding to anti-social behaviour, debt recovery, allocations and lettings, equality and diversity policies (such as those for racial harassment and accessibility), customer care, tenant information, consultation and participation, and complaints.
- **Other strategies and Government initiatives** – such as the current Rent Restructuring policy, the Supporting People policy, etc.

#### **15.1 Information**

Tarka will provide information about these strategic issues through

- Articles in the Tarka Times newsletter,
- A summary of the strategy document which emerges from the review will also be published in the Tarka Times newsletter.
- Full copies of Strategy Documents will be made available to tenants on request.
- Information about current housing service policies will be available at Tarka's offices and on our website.
- Encouraging all tenants to participate in any Service Review, whether through a survey, a focus group, a service review group or any other mechanism.
- Summarising the Service Improvement Plan will be in a newsletter so that all tenants can know what the proposed improvements are and when they are expected.
- Attendance at Tenant Panel, user panels and/or local tenants' groups' meetings to discuss strategies and policies, provide background information and progress updates, and supply copies of final documents on request.

## **15.2 Seeking tenants' opinions**

Tarka will find out tenants' views through regular:

- District-wide surveys, including the Status Survey
- Talking to the Tenant Panel, User Panels and the local tenants' groups
- Focus Groups about specific service reviews.

## **15.3 Working together**

Tarka will involve tenants in decisions about strategies, service reviews, policies, business plans etc, by:

- Working with the Tenant Panel, user panels and/or the local tenants' groups
- Discussing policies before documents are finalised so that tenants' views can shape the outcome.
- Providing the Tenant Panel, user panels and all other tenants' group members with draft documents to allow them to comment
- Working days and in-house or external joint training for staff and tenants when Reviews are being conducted

## **16. Best Value**

16.1 Best Value is a central government requirement, which monitors the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of the Tarka's services. One of the services assessed under Best Value is the communication between Tenants and Tarka and Tenant Participation Agreement.

16.2 This Compact is designed to help in that assessment by stating how tenants will be involved in the development and monitoring of housing policies and services.

- 16.3 Please contact Tarka if you would like a copy of the Best Value Performance Plan.

## **17. Monitoring and Measuring Tenant Participation Performance**

- 17.1 Policies and performance will be monitored on a regular basis, after consultation with tenants and Tarka. Where possible changes to policy will be included in the annual report. Performance targets will be in the annual report.

- 17.2 Tarka and Tenants will work together to
- Assess the benefits of the Tenant Participation Compact.
  - Investigate and find remedies if service standards and targets are not met.
  - Set clear service standards and targets for involvement.
  - Review policies, practise and performance on regular intervals.
  - Monitor tenants representatives and groups to ensure they work effectively.
  - Assess the performance against similar Landlords using government statistics.
  - Monitor equality of opportunity and levels of involvement within all groups.
  - Monitor and evaluate different approaches to tenant participation to ensure it remains effective and efficient.

- 17.3 In conjunction with Tarka, the Tenant Panel will agree performance measures on an annual basis for the following: -
- Tenant satisfaction with involvement.
  - Informing tenants
  - Taking tenants' views into account for decision –making.
  - How tenants see value for money with regards to the housing services.
  - How satisfied tenants are with the areas in which they live.

## **APPENDIX 1**

### **The Tenant Panel**

1. The Tenant Panel is the formally recognised body representing tenants and leaseholders of Tarka Housing and Membership is open to all Tenants and Leaseholders.
2. The Tenant Panel will ensure that it operates in an open and inclusive manner and that it is accountable to all tenants. The Tenant Panel's meetings will be open and publicised. The Tenant Panel will agree a constitution and code of conduct, which makes it clear how people can become involved in its work and the behaviour expected of its members.
3. Tarka will be represented by a member of the Senior Management Team and the Tenant Participation Officer at meetings of the Tenant Panel and other specialist officers of Tarka if requested. The Tenant Panel will be represented within Tarka's organisation. All tenant representation within Tarka's activities will not necessarily be restricted to members of the Tenant Panel to allow for equality and diversity issues.
4. The Tenant Panel meets regularly with an Annual General Meeting.

## APPENDIX 2A

# Tarka Housing Housing Management User Panel

## TERMS OF REFERENCE

### PURPOSE

The purpose of the Housing Management User Panel will be to ensure that residents are involved in the management of existing tenancies / properties and the design and specification of services, calling on their knowledge as residents who have day to day experience of our services, and also to be involved in assessing the service performance of Tarka throughout the year.

Specifically the Housing Management User Panel will:

1. Give an early assessment of any tenancy management service level change/ improvement proposed for residents and their homes
2. To review existing policies relating to tenancy management including specifically;
  - Allocations
  - Anti Social Behaviour
  - Community Cohesion
  - Customer Care
  - Debt Recovery
  - Estate Inspections
  - Garages
  - Service Charges
3. Ensure Tarka's adherence to Key Performance Indicator targets for Housing Management
4. To monitor best practice and bring forward proposals to develop such practices within Tarka
5. To report to the Tenant Panel and the main Board of Tarka

### 2. MEMBERSHIP

- 2.1 Resident and Board representation on the Housing Management Services User Panel will be on a three-year term.
- 2.2 The Housing Management Services User Panel shall comprise of:

- Four resident representatives from the Tenant Panel. Representatives will be elected at AGMs along with a deputy on a three-year cycle or when a vacancy arises. The deputy is to attend on behalf of the representative if they cannot be present at a meeting.
- Four non-Tenant Panel resident representatives. Representatives will be selected through a recruitment process. The posts will be advertised in *Tarka Times* on a three-year cycle or when a vacancy arises. Selection will be on the basis of representation and the Group will be responsible for selecting representatives.
- Two staff representatives to include the Head of Customer and Community Services and Tenancy Service Manager.

## **MEETING PROCEDURES**

Staff will be responsible for facilitating Housing Management User Panel Meetings including collating and circulating papers and circulating and co-ordinating comments and amendments to proofs.

The Panel will meet bi-monthly and annually the tenants will elect a chair of the panel with whom, Officers will agree the agenda in advance.

Papers will be sent to each Housing Management User Panel member at least 5 working days prior to the meeting.

The Housing Management Panel will nominate members to sit on interview panels for the selection of contractors to undertake service contracts (non improvement or property maintenance).

In exceptional circumstances, additional meetings may be called if the Panel feels it necessary.

Decisions taken by the Housing Management User Panel will be decided by majority consensus whenever possible or by majority vote if consensus cannot be reached.

All members of the Housing Management User Panel must agree to comply with the Code of Conduct contained within the Tenant Compact failure to do so may result in suspension from the Housing Management User Panel.

## **REVIEW ARRANGEMENTS**

The arrangements provided for in these Terms of Reference will be reviewed from time to time in consultation with the Tenants Panel and the Tarka Board and revised as appropriate.

## APPENDIX 2B

# Tarka Housing Property Services User Panel

## TERMS OF REFERENCE

### PURPOSE

The purpose of the Property Services User Panel will be to ensure that residents are involved in the repair, maintenance, improvement of existing properties and design and specification of new development projects, calling on their knowledge of housing association homes as residents who have day to day experience of our 'product', and also to be involved in assessing the service level achievements of Tarka throughout the year.

Specifically the Property Services User Panel will:

6. Oversee the implementation of the Investment Plan.
7. Oversee Tarka's development and progress in the implementation of an Asset Management Strategy
8. Give an early assessment of any maintenance service level change/ improvement proposed for residents and their homes
9. To comment on and form an assessment of the quality of the design and specification of any new homes developed by Tarka or by the Westward Group within the area of Tarka's operation
10. Ensure Tarka's adherence to Key Performance Indicator targets for property services
11. Engage with Advantage South West, nominating a member of the Property Services User Panel to represent Tarka to that group
12. Engage with a number of sub committees of Westward Housing Group including the New Business Development Group, Procurement Group and the Quality Standard Group nominating a member of the Property Services User Panel to represent Tarka to those groups
13. To report to the Tenant Panel and the main Board of Tarka

### 3. MEMBERSHIP

- 3.1 Resident and Board representation on the Property Services User Panel will be on a three-year term.

3.2 The Property Services User Panel shall comprise of:

- Four resident representatives from the Tenant Panel. Representatives will be elected at AGMs along with a deputy on a three-year cycle or when a vacancy arises. The deputy is to attend on behalf of the representative if they cannot be present at a meeting.
- Four non-Tenant Panel resident representatives. Representatives will be selected through a recruitment process. The posts will be advertised in *Tarka Times* on a three-year cycle or when a vacancy arises. Selection will be on the basis of representation and the Group will be responsible for selecting representatives.
- Three staff representatives to include the Head of Property Services, Contracts Manager and Responsive Repairs and Building Manager.

## **MEETING PROCEDURES**

Staff will be responsible for facilitating Property Service User Panel Meetings including collating and circulating papers and circulating and co-ordinating comments and amendments to proofs.

The Panel will meet bi- monthly and annually the tenants will elect a chair of the panel with whom, Officers will agree the agenda in advance.

Papers will be sent to each Property Services User Panel member at least 5 working days prior to the meeting.

The Property Services Panel will nominate members to sit on interview panels for the selection of contractors to undertake works.

In exceptional circumstances, additional meetings may be called if the Panel feels it necessary.

Decisions taken by the Property Services User Panel will be decided by majority consensus whenever possible or by majority vote if consensus cannot be reached.

All members of the Property Services User Panel must agree to comply with the Code of Conduct contained within the Tenant Compact failure to do so may result in suspension from the Property Services User Panel.

## **REVIEW ARRANGEMENTS**

The arrangements provided for in these Terms of Reference will be reviewed from time to time in consultation with the Tenants Panel and the Tarka Board and revised as appropriate.

## APPENDIX 2C

# Tarka Housing Communications Group

## TERMS OF REFERENCE

### PURPOSE

The Group's purpose is to oversee the content and presentation of *Tarka Times*. The Group aims to offer a balanced and representative view and to promote equal opportunities for all.

*Tarka Times* is produced by Tarka Housing residents, staff and Board members and aims to share news and information and to provide a voice for residents.

Four seasonal issues of *Tarka Times* will be published each year.

The group will also review all other publications produced by Tarka Housing that are issued to residents to ensure they are consistent, in plain English and meet the organisations Accessible information policy.

### 4. MEMBERSHIP

4.1 Resident and Board representation on the Communications Group will be on a three-year term.

4.2 The Communication Group shall comprise of:

- Two resident representatives from the Tenant Panel. Representatives will be elected at AGMs along with a deputy on a three-year cycle or when a vacancy arises. The deputy is to attend on behalf of the representative if they cannot be present at a meeting.
- Two non-Tenant Panel resident representatives and one Sheltered Housing resident representative. Representatives will be selected through a recruitment process. The posts will be advertised in *Tarka Times* on a three-year cycle or when a vacancy arises. Selection will be on the basis of representation and the Group will be responsible for selecting representatives.
- One Board member. Board representatives will be elected at the Board AGM on a three-year cycle or at a Board Meeting when a vacancy arises.

- Three staff representatives to include the Communications Manager, Resident Participation Worker and a member of the senior management team of Tarka Housing.

## **MEETING PROCEDURES**

Staff will be responsible for facilitating Communication Group Meetings including collating and circulating papers and circulating and co-ordinating comments and amendments to proofs.

For every issue of *Tarka Times*, the Communications Group will meet once to discuss and agree the content and presentation of the newspaper.

Proofs will be sent to each Communication Group member. Members should inform the Communications Manager of any amendments or comments. The Communications Manager will then be responsible for co-ordinating any changes and communicating these to the designer. Final approval will be given by the Communications Manager before printing.

In exceptional circumstances, a second meeting may be called if the Group feels it necessary.

Decisions taken by the Communications Group will be decided by majority consensus whenever possible or by majority vote if consensus cannot be reached.

All members of the Communication Group must agree to comply with the Code of Conduct contained within the Tenant Compact failure to do so may result in suspension from the Communications Group.

## **REVIEW ARRANGEMENTS**

The arrangements provided for in these Terms of Reference plus decisions associated with the design and print of *Tarka Times* will be reviewed from time to time in consultation with the Tenants Panel and revised as appropriate.

## APPENDIX 2D

# Tarka Housing Sheltered Housing User Panel

## TERMS OF REFERENCE

### PURPOSE

The purpose of the Sheltered Housing User Panel will be to ensure that residents are involved in the repair, maintenance, improvement of existing properties and design and specification of new development projects, calling on their knowledge of housing association homes as residents who have day to day experience of our 'product', and also to be involved in assessing the service level achievements of Tarka throughout the year.

Specifically the Sheltered Housing User Panel will:

14. Oversee the implementation of the Sheltered Housing elements of the Investment Plan.
15. Oversee Tarka's development and progress in the implementation of an Sheltered Housing Strategy
16. Give an early assessment of any support service level change/ improvement proposed for residents and their homes
17. To comment on and form an assessment of the quality of the design and specification of the Support Services developed and delivered by Tarka in particular those that relate to the Quality Assessment Framework
18. Ensure Tarka's adherence to Key Performance Indicator targets for Supporting People
19. To report to the Tenant Panel and the main Board of Tarka

### 5. MEMBERSHIP

- 5.1 Resident and Board representation on the Sheltered Housing User Panel will be on a three-year term.
- 5.2 The Sheltered Housing User Panel shall comprise of:
  - Two resident representatives from the Tenant Panel. Representatives will be elected at AGMs along with a deputy on a three-year cycle or when a vacancy arises. The deputy is to attend

on behalf of the representative if they cannot be present at a meeting.

- A Sheltered Housing resident representative from each Sheltered Housing Scheme. Representatives will be selected through a recruitment process. The posts will be advertised in *Tarka Times* on a three-year cycle or when a vacancy arises. Selection will be on the basis of representation and the Group will be responsible for selecting representatives.
- Three staff representatives to include the Head of Customer and Community Services and the Supported Services Managers.

## **MEETING PROCEDURES**

Staff will be responsible for facilitating Sheltered Housing User Panel Meetings including collating and circulating papers.

The Panel will meet quarterly and annually the tenants will elect a chair of the panel with whom, Officers will agree the agenda in advance.

Papers will be sent to each Sheltered Housing User Panel member at least 5 working days prior to the meeting.

The Sheltered Housing User Panel will nominate members to sit on interview panels for the selection of Scheme Managers.

In exceptional circumstances, additional meetings may be called if the Panel feels it necessary.

Decisions taken by the Sheltered Housing User Panel will be decided by majority consensus whenever possible or by majority vote if consensus cannot be reached.

All members of the Sheltered Housing User Panel must agree to comply with the Code of Conduct contained within the Tenant Compact failure to do so may result in suspension from the Sheltered Housing User Panel.

## **REVIEW ARRANGEMENTS**

The arrangements provided for in these Terms of Reference will be reviewed from time to time in consultation with the Tenants Panel and the Tarka Board and revised as appropriate.

## APPENDIX 2E

# Tarka Housing Youth Forum

## TERMS OF REFERENCE

### PURPOSE

The purpose of the Youth Forum will be to ensure that young people are afforded the opportunity to comment on the services provided by Tarka and assist in the development of services specifically to meet the needs of young people, calling on their knowledge as individuals who have day to day experience of our services, and also to be involved in assessing the service level achievements of Tarka throughout the year.

Specifically the Youth Forum will:

20. Oversee Tarka's development and progress in the implementation of a Play Strategy
21. Give an early assessment of any service level change/ improvement proposed for young people
22. To comment on and form an assessment of the quality of the services developed by Tarka specifically that effect young people
23. To report to the Tenant Panel and the main Board of Tarka

### 6. MEMBERSHIP

- 6.1 Representation on the Youth Forum will be on a three-year term or until the young person becomes eighteen years of age whichever is the earlier.
- 6.2 The Youth Forum shall comprise of:
  - Eight young people who reside in properties owned by Tarka Housing. Representatives will be selected through a recruitment process. The posts will be advertised in *Tarka Times* on a three-year cycle or when a vacancy arises. Selection will be on the basis of representation and the Group will be responsible for selecting representatives.
  - Two staff representatives to include the Head of Customer and Community Services and the Tenant Participation Officer.

## **MEETING PROCEDURES**

Staff will be responsible for facilitating Youth Forum Meetings including collating and circulating papers

The Panel will meet six monthly and will elect a chair of the Forum with whom, Officers will agree the agenda in advance.

Papers will be sent to each Youth Forum member at least 5 working days prior to the meeting.

In exceptional circumstances, additional meetings may be called if the Panel feels it necessary.

Decisions taken by the Youth Forum will be decided by majority consensus whenever possible or by majority vote if consensus cannot be reached.

All members of the Youth Forum must agree to comply with the Code of Conduct contained within the Tenant Compact failure to do so may result in suspension from the Youth Forum.

## **REVIEW ARRANGEMENTS**

The arrangements provided for in these Terms of Reference will be reviewed from time to time in consultation with the Tenants Panel and the Tarka Board and revised as appropriate.

## APPENDIX 3

### Standards and criteria for tenants' groups

It is important that the tenants' groups who speak on behalf of other tenants are open, democratic and actively representative. The criteria and good practice set out below ensure that tenants' groups are accountable in this way.

#### 1. **Criteria for recognising tenants and residents associations**

Recognised tenants' and residents' groups can make decisions on behalf of their membership, and apply for a financial grant and other resources as set out in Appendix 3

In order to become recognised, a tenants' and residents' group needs to:

- **Have a written constitution** - based on an agreed model
- **Annually elect a committee**
- **Have open financial records** – available on request by members or the landlord
- **Operate an equal opportunities policy** – including giving people a fair chance to have their say and actively encouraging new members to join
- **Have a majority of tenant member households**
- **Have a Disputes Procedure and Code of Conduct**
- **Regularly seek the views of association members and the local community** – for instance through public meetings or mini-surveys
- **Regularly feed back to association members and the local community** – for instance through public meetings or newsletters
- Complete an **annual Information Form of Tenant Panel Officers and Members.**
- Have as its main aim to **represent the views, concerns, and interests of tenants and residents** on housing related issues.
- **Offer membership to all members of households over the age of 16 within the area covered by the Association**
- **Maintain membership records** and to comply with the Data Protection Act.

#### 2. **Good practice for tenants' and residents' groups**

It is also recommended that groups:

- Include a mixture of tenants and residents on their committee – so that all voices in the community can be heard
- Hold at least two public meetings per year
- Carry out at least one survey of their members per year
- Agree what they want to achieve each year at their AGM – setting practical goals based on the results of a member survey, to help the group achieve its aims.
- Send out at least one newsletter per year

- Write a 'Welcome' leaflet – to be sent to all new tenants in their area (the Tenant Participation Officer can help with this)
- Encourage members to attend meetings of the Tenants' Panel
- Take up opportunities for training – particularly those which provide skills for running effective groups
- Organise social events.
- Hold meetings at suitable times

### **3. Good practice for tenants' and residents' groups in sheltered schemes**

It is recommended that:

- Scheme managers should be co-opted onto the group's committee – but without voting rights and they should not be appointed as chair, vice chair or secretary.
- The scheme manager should not be expected to comment on their own role or the performance of their duties – if tenants wish to discuss this, they should invite senior staff to their meeting.

### **4. Standards for tenant meetings, including the Tenants' Panel** Tenants' groups should

- Hold meetings that are publicised effectively, accessible, and held at suitable times
- Provide information in a way that is accessible to everyone – this may involve providing notes or minutes on tape or in a different language
- Chair meetings in a fair and democratic way
- Allow tenants to give their honest and open opinions – about the housing or other services, or other matters – but not allow personal criticism of individual members of staff or other organisation, or of other tenants
- Work towards developing a clear action plan to deal with matters arising
- Agree arrangements for reporting back the outcome by those who took part – including an explanation if action has been delayed or cannot be carried out.
- Actively seek the views of those who cannot attend meetings – it is recognised that it is difficult for voluntary groups to be 'statistically representative': however, tenants' groups should actively find out the views of those who cannot attend meetings.
- Have a clear action plan to deal with matters arising.
- Ensure that a true record is made of each meeting and that this is approved by the next meeting.
- Ensure that each meeting has an agenda with clear objectives and that this agenda is followed.

## APPENDIX 4

### Start-up and other grants for tenants groups.

2. Tenants and Residents Associations which meet the criteria for recognition can apply for a start-up or annual grant to be spent on the following costs
  - a. The hire of meeting space
  - b. Stationery
  - c. Photocopying
  - d. Producing newsletters
  - e. Publicity
  - f. Training for association members
  - g. Travel expenses
  - h. Telephone expenses
  - i. Caring expenses (e.g. childcare)
  - j. Facilitating fund-raising
  - k. Social activities (no more than 25% of grant)
  - l. Purchase of publications
  
3. **Start-up grant**  
£75 + £2 per tenant household member (using the number stated in the Annual Information form) available after the public launch meeting for the association (cost for up to four 'starting up' meetings prior to this event will be paid directly from the Tenant Participation budget)
  
4. **Annual Grant**  
This is £2 per tenant household member (using the number stated in the Annual Information form). Associations may apply for further funds during the year if they feel they need it. Must have majority of Tenants to qualify for grant (from Appendix 2)

## APPENDIX 5

### Personal Expenses

1. Personal expenses claims will be met in accordance with the provisions set out below
  - a. All claims should have prior agreement from the Tenant Participation Officer.
  - b. All claims (except mileage) should be supported by tickets or receipts as proof of payment.
  - c. Car mileage allowances
    - A special mileage rate is applied where the claimant is attending a study course which involves regular attendance over a period of time (e.g. National Certificate at the Exeter University)
    - When claiming for return journeys of more than 100 mile, the driver will be paid the relevant rail fare (for the driver and one additional passenger only) and taxi fare, or the mileage - whichever is the cheaper.
    - An additional rate of 1p per mile can be claimed by the driver for each passenger (up to six) attending the same event or meeting.
  - d. Car parking – parking charges will be paid for the length of the meeting or event, plus half an hour on either side
  - e. Train journeys – 2<sup>nd</sup> class fares can be claimed back or the Tenant Participation Officer can provide a rail warrant before travel.
  - f. Taxi journeys – fares can be claimed back, or a taxi can be arranged by the Tenant Participation Officer.
  - g. Caring responsibilities – reasonable childcare costs, or costs of cover for other caring responsibilities, may be paid where tenants might not otherwise be able to attend a meeting or event
  - h. Telephone – costs can be claimed back for tenant participation related calls where an itemised telephone bill is provided
  - i. Food expenses – costs can be claimed back when attending training or conferences where no suitable meal is provided and to provide receipts.
  - j. Stationery and postage – costs can be claimed back for stationery and postage used for tenant participation business, receipts will be required.

## APPENDIX 6

### Joint responsibilities of staff and tenants

#### A. Housing Maintenance

**If you are a member of staff or a contractor carrying out an inspection or repair work you should:**

- Always wear your identification badge
- Use the job number which should be known to the tenant
- Ask the tenants' permission before entering their home or garden to carry out work (unless it is an emergency where the landlord has the right to enter the home without notice – see \*\*\*\* of the Tenancy Conditions)
- Be friendly and courteous
- Carryout work to a high quality standard
- Ensure the home is left in the same condition as it was before the work was carried out
- Inform the tenant if there is a delay in starting or completing the work, and give any revised dates, particularly if an appointment has been made.
- Follow further guidelines given in the Customer Care Code of Practice for Works' Contractors', (see Appendix D)

**If you are a tenant you should:**

- Respond to all communications (if required) from staff regarding maintenance work
- Always allow staff access to carry out essential maintenance work, such as gas servicing or fitting fire alarms which would help save your life.
- Make sure that you remain at home if you have arranged an appointment for your repair.
- Treat the repair contractor with politeness and respect
- Not behave aggressively towards housing staff and contractors
- Send back your repair reply slip or respond to telephone survey – this information is valuable in helping staff to improve the day-to-day repair service, and if you have a particular problem it can be put right.
- Ask to see an identification badge if the member of staff or the contractor does not have theirs visible

#### B. Housing Management

**If you are a member of staff you should:**

- Be friendly and courteous to customers
- Treat people as individuals
- Be responsive to customer needs
- Listen carefully to the customer and agree an appropriate course of action

- Not make promise that cannot be kept
- Tell tenants if your actions will take time to complete
- Keep appointments, or inform tenants of any unavoidable changes to them
- Follow the guidelines in the customer Care Policy
- Keep tenants informed about progress on any issue which they have raised

**If you are a tenant you should:**

- Provide the information needed so that staff can help you
- Treat staff with respect
- Not behave aggressively towards staff

## **APPENDIX 7**

### **Joint Estate or Area Inspections**

1. The purpose of Estate Inspections is to ensure that there is a formal process to record estate visits and allow residents to know and see their housing officer, should they wish to on a regular basis. Where a Housing Officer is on leave or training etc, it is their responsibility to arrange with another Housing Officer to carry out these inspections in their absence. This will also allow planned booked appointment for residents when the Housing Officer is on site and for new residents to have a follow up visit within 1 month of their tenancy starting. This will set the standard of Tarka's expectations of and service to our residents.
2. An estate inspection will include gardens where visible and is an opportunity for residents to show housing staff and other service providers any local problems by walking around their area together, and to explore local issues and concerns.
3. All schemes will be visited on a monthly basis and will have a set date and time for that visit allowing residents to get used to when you will be available on site. E.g. Marlborough Court will be visited between 10 & 12 every 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday.
4. Any interested tenant in the area to be inspected may attend, and inspections will be advertised quarterly in the Tarka Times.
5. The Housing Officer carrying out the inspection will let those tenants who attended know what was noted, what was agreed, and what action has been taken about any issue which has been identified during the inspection, including information about the contact person responsible for ensuring that the action is carried out.
6. Issues that are not the responsibility of the housing service will be passed on to the relevant responsible body.
7. This information will also be displayed at housing service access points (except where it refers to any individual tenant).

## APPENDIX 8

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| <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>TARKA HOUSING</u></b></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>CODE OF CONDUCT</u></b></p> |
|---|

This Code of Conduct has been prepared to assist contractors and trade operatives in their working procedures and to ensure that all concerned are aware of the standards which are required. It is expected that all contractors dealing with Tarka properties will ensure their operatives are familiar with this code.

### **1.0 Access**

- 1.1 Times - visits should be made at reasonable times, except in emergencies. Working hours are to be between 8.00 am and 6.00 pm Monday to Friday and no weekend work will be permitted without the authorisation of the Client Officer and the agreement of the occupier where internal works are involved. No major works should be undertaken or left incomplete over the Christmas period.
- 1.2 Access Arrangements - calls to carry out repairs should comply with any access instructions given.
- 1.3 Identity Cards - all contractors are to issue all members of their work force, including sub-contractors, with identity cards. These should be shown to tenants whether requested or not (this is to encourage awareness of the possibility of 'confidence tricksters'). The identity cards should be heat-sealed with clear plastic to eliminate tampering and they should contain the contractor's name, telephone number and Director's signature, as well as a clear passport type photograph of the user with his/her name.
- 1.4 Notice - where the work is likely to cause major disruption for the tenant then at least 24 hours notice should be given to the tenant before commencing work.
- 1.5 Broken Promises - having made arrangements, these must be kept, since this item is a major source of complaint. If a broken appointment is unavoidable then the contractor should: -
  - firstly, apologise to the tenant as quickly as possible,
  - secondly, explain the reason for the failure,

- thirdly, make a new arrangement.
- 1.6 Parking - vehicles should be parked in accordance with the Highway Code recommendations. Secondary and local accesses, footpaths, gateways, etc., should also not be obstructed. Any 'No Parking' signs should be observed. Vehicles should not be parked on, or be driven over; District or County Council landscaped areas unless this is essential for the purpose of the work to be undertaken. Special care should be taken in respect of the blind or partially sighted. Objects overhanging vehicles, such as ladders, are undetectable by a white cane and can cause serious injury. Health and Safety Regulations are common sense and contractors are expected to comply with them.

## **2.0 Appointments**

- 2.1 The contractor shall be responsible for arranging suitable times and dates with the Client's tenants for pre-contract inspections and for works to be carried out. The contractor should give fourteen days written notice of his intention to attend the dwelling, clearly stating the proposed time, date and purpose of the visit. The contractor should enclose a prepaid addressed card (with the contractor's address and telephone number on it), along with the written notice to enable the tenant to propose alternative dates and times of access if the tenant is unavailable on the original time/date proposed.
- 2.2 If an agreed appointment time cannot be reached between the contractor and the tenant within the previously mentioned fourteen days, the contractor should contact the Client Officer to advise him of the problem. The Client Officer will then decide upon the appropriate course of action and notify the contractor.
- 2.3 Where an appointment has been agreed between the contractor and the tenant, or the Client Officer and the tenant, and access is denied or unavailable to the contractor, or other access problems occur, the contractor will be responsible for rearranging access times with the tenant. An 'Abortive Call' card should be left at the dwelling on each occasion on which access cannot be obtained and/or where a pre-arranged appointment was made by the tenant, but not kept by the tenant. The card should state when the contractor called (time and date) and should ask the tenant to contact the contractor within three days to arrange a further appointment.
- 2.4 If the contractor is unable to agree a further appointment, which allows his contract programme to proceed as agreed with the Client Officer, he is to contact the Client Officer giving at least seven days notice of his preferred date of access. The Client

Officer shall take such action as he considers appropriate and will notify the contractor.

- 2.5 If the contractor fails to attend any appointment with the tenant at the agreed time and date, then the contractor should consider reimbursing the tenant for any provable financial loss, such as loss of earnings. The contractor will make the Client Officer aware of any such claims.
- 2.6 The Client Officer will refer to the contractor any claims for loss or damage received from the tenant which, in the opinion of the Client Officer, are reasonable claims. The contractor will be liable and make payment of any such claims, such payments being in accordance with the Client Officer's instructions.
- 2.7 Where a tenant has made arrangements for the contractor to call, but has left only a child in the dwelling, the contractor may exercise his discretion not to enter the premises. Should the contractor feel it is unwise to enter the premises where no adult is present, he should leave an 'Abortive Call Card'.

### **3.0 Behaviour**

- 3.1 Conduct to Avoid - it is essential that the following is avoided: -
  - a) rudeness and swearing;
  - b) excessive noise, including the use of radios (although the operative may seek the permission of the tenant to use a radio which should be kept at a reasonable volume);
  - c) over familiarity;
  - d) arguments.
- 3.2 Home Standards - for a variety of reasons people's home standards vary. It is vital that the quality of workmanship remains high, irrespective of the general state of the property.
- 3.3 Use of the Property - unless the tenant gives instructions to the contrary, permission should be sought when visiting to come into the property (including the garden).
- 3.4 Draughts - doors and windows should not be left open unnecessarily.
- 3.5 Smoking - the contractor and his sub-contractors should not smoke inside any dwelling unless specifically invited to by the tenant. It is the tenant's home and should not be abused in any way. It is not sufficient to simply ask the tenant if it is OK to smoke as the tenant may not feel that he/she has the power to refuse.

#### **4.0 Tenants' Effects**

- 4.1 Protection of Furniture, etc. - tenants' furniture and carpets should be protected by dust sheets. Trade operatives are expected to move large items of furniture, etc., but not to lift fitted carpets. If breakable items are present the tenant should be requested to move them to a safe place.
- 4.2 Gardens - damage to plants, trees, paths, etc., should be avoided as far as is possible. If some damage is inevitable, this should be discussed and agreed with the tenant before work starts.
- 4.3 Materials - any equipment or materials should not be left in a hazardous or inconvenient position within the property and agreement should be reached with the tenant on the placing of such items.
- 4.4 Tools - the trade operatives are expected to use their own equipment. If power is required then a generator should be used, or agreement reached with the tenant regarding electricity used and possible reimbursement of cost to the tenant.
- 4.5 Safety - if a hazard is created by the work, then the contractor must ensure that adequate warning is given. Obviously, particular attention needs to be given to young children and the elderly. Work must be carried out in accordance with the Health and Safety at Work Act and all other safety legislation. Contractors are expected to make all trade operatives and sub-contractors aware of such requirements.
- 4.6 Security - ladders should be removed from site overnight, or securely locked, to prevent misuse.

#### **5.0 Other Problems Which Can Occur**

- 5.01 Additional Jobs - tenants often require further works to be carried out whilst the operative is at the property. Emergency work that is discovered must be made safe, but in other circumstances the tenant should report the additional defects to Tarka's Offices in the normal manner. The trade operative should not volunteer to pass on a report on behalf of the tenant as this can lead to errors.
- 5.2 Parts - if parts are required for a job and these are not readily available, then the tenant should be advised that this is the case and given some indication of the likely timescale. An alternative access arrangement may also be required and should be arranged with the tenant.

5.3 Old materials and rubbish arising from the work should be cleared on a daily basis unless other arrangements are made with the tenant.

## **6.0 Leaving the Property**

6.1 Completed Work - once a job is completed make sure the tenant is satisfied with the work and check that all services which were involved are in working order.

6.2 Incomplete Work - if it is not possible to complete the work, the trade operatives are required to ensure that the property is safe and proper arrangements made with the tenant for completion of the work. The property must be left habitable overnight and at weekends.

## **7.0 Conclusion**

7.1 It may appear that all the obligations in this Code fall upon the contractor and trade operatives. It is, however, hoped that tenants will give similar courtesy and respect to anyone working in their homes. Our experience shows that, in general, people do respond to being treated properly and this can only be good for all concerned.

7.2 Your help in achieving the aims of a first class repairs and maintenance service would be appreciated.

7.3 Tarka Housing may amend or add to this Code at any time, but will ensure that contractors are advised of the changes.

August 2007

## **APPENDIX 9**

### **TARKA TENANT PANEL CODE OF CONDUCT**

The aim of the code is to ensure that the work of the Tenant Panel is conducted in an efficient, creative and positive way, and helps make the best use of people's time. The code applies to anyone who attends meetings and activities of the Tenant Panel.

#### **Tenant Panel meeting and events:**

- Membership of the Panel is open to any tenant or leaseholder of Tarka Housing over 18 years of age. A tenant under 18 years of age may participate in meetings of the Panel but may not vote.
- Every member shares the responsibility for helping develop a good, supportive environment.
- Every member should support the Chairperson in keeping the meeting to the agenda, preventing any individual from dominating the discussion, and ensuring that behaviour is consistent with this Code of Conduct.
- Only one person shall speak at a time and shall address the whole meeting – members shall not engage in 'side discussions' while others are speaking
- All speakers will be encouraged to keep to the agenda item under discussion and not wander from the point.
- The Chairperson will cut short discussions if they are not wholly relevant to the issue being discussed.
- Contributions will be welcomed from all participants, and everyone is entitled to have their say.
- No member shall speak more than once on any issue until every other member has had the opportunity to speak, and the Chairperson will encourage each member to have their say.
- Language and tone of voice should be moderate at all times.
- Decisions made by the Panel will be made amicably wherever possible. A vote may be used whenever appropriate. Any decision which requires a vote must be supported by the majority of tenants present and voting. In the event of a tied vote the Chairperson, who is entitled to participate in the vote, shall have a second (casting) vote.
- Members may not use their membership of the Panel for personal benefit.
- Members should not use the Tenant Logo for unauthorised purposes.
- Members should declare a conflict of interest if an item on the agenda affects themselves, relative, friend or neighbours at the time of discussion.

### **Equal Opportunities:**

- No member shall discriminate against another on grounds of ethnic origin, age, sexuality, class, disability, cultural allegiance, religion, appearance or any other matter which may cause a person to be treated with injustice.

Verbal or body language which is or which implies such discrimination will not be acceptable in the meetings or activities of the group.

### **Difference of Opinion:**

- The Panel expects each member to work for the benefit of all, but this does not mean that differences of opinion will not occur.
- Members should respect different views, and should treat each other with consideration showing regard for people's feelings and respect for their contributions. 'Put downs', intimidating or bullying language or manner are not acceptable. In argument, members should confine their comments to the issue, and not make remarks about the person or character of those they are arguing against.
- If a member starts to personalise an issue, or make offensive or discriminatory comments, the Chairperson should make them aware that this behaviour is not acceptable and will be considered a breach of the Code of Conduct, and other members of the Group should support the Chair in maintaining the Code.
- The aim of the Group is to encourage as many as possible to attend: people who are treated in a disrespectful way are unlikely to attend future meetings.

### **Confidentiality:**

- Participants at meetings should not share information they would not be happy having repeated in public – and the panel should resist an attempts on the part of any member to divulge personal or confidential information

### **Breaking the Code of Conduct:**

- A member who breaches this Code of Conduct and is unwilling to apologise and commit to future good behaviour may be required to leave the event or meeting, at the instigation either of the Chairperson or of any other member present, and only if a majority of those present and voting support the proposal for their 'exclusion'
- Where this happens, the meeting should decide whether the member should be excluded from future meetings or events, or whether the 'exclusion' should last only until the end of the meeting or event in question. The member must be given the right of reply and the opportunity to apologise.
- If the meeting decides that the member should be excluded from more than one event or meeting, the member should be informed at the

earliest opportunity, and shall have the right to appeal against the decision.

- The appeal will be heard by a committee composed of two members of the Council and two other persons of good standing not connected to the Council, and the appellant shall abide by the decisions of this panel.

## **Tarka Housing**

### **Office Opening Hours**

**Monday to Friday      9.00am to 5.00pm**

**Main Switchboard      01237 428080**

### **Repairs and Maintenance**

#### **Office Opening Hours**

**Monday to Friday      9.00am to 5.00pm**

**Telephone number      0800 107 8191**

### **Housing Management**

#### **Office Opening Hours**

**Monday to Friday      9.00am to 5.00pm**

**Telephone number      01237 428090**

### **Get in Touch**

If you would like any further information then please find contact details below of the Tenant Participation Officer for Tarka Housing and/or the Secretary of the Tenant Panel

Tenant Participation Officer for Tarka Housing

Lesley Robins 01237 428095

Write to:

Tenant Participation Officer  
Tarka Housing  
Gammaton Road  
East the Water  
Bideford  
Devon, EX39 4FG

E-Mail

Secretary to the Tenant Panel

Cheryl Russell-Cargill

Telephone 01805 624207

E-mail address [cherylsden@torri.wanadoo.co.uk](mailto:cherylsden@torri.wanadoo.co.uk)

### **Complaints**

Nothing in this Tenant Participation Compact affects the right of individual tenants to make a complaint about the housing service through the complaints procedure. This is published in the annual tenants report and is available, together with a complaint form upon request from Tarka Housing.

Should a dispute arise about the implementation of this Compact, tenants may ask the Tenant Panel to be involved, if they so wish, (contact details as above), in resolving the complaint.