



## CHISEL POLICY AND PROCEDURES **COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY**

### **1 Aims and Purpose**

1.1 It is CHISEL's aim to:-

- Maintain excellent two-way communication with its tenants and the other individuals and organisations with which we work.
- Ensure that our communications are honest, clear and precise and meet the information needs of our diverse audiences.

1.2 By achieving the above we hope to:-

- Encourage and maintain strong relationships with our tenants and other partners
- Promote a positive image of CHISEL and the work that it does
- Encourage involvement by tenants, managing agents, committed individuals, local communities, co-ops and self-help groups in our work.

1.3 To recognise any special needs of those we are communicating with and to endeavour to accommodate these needs.

### **2 Communication Methods**

2.1 We will communicate using a range of different methods including:-

- Information Sheets and Leaflets
- Newsletters
- Annual Reports
- Annual General Meeting
- CHISEL Website
- Individual Letters
- Email and text
- Telephone
- Tenant Meetings and Forums such as the CHISEL Tenant Sounding Board
- Tenants Handbook

2.2 We will upload the written information we produce wherever possible on to the CHISEL website so that it is always available to tenants and others.

2.3 We will be happy to receive information from tenants and others by whichever method they find most convenient and choose to use.

### **3 What we will communicate to whom and how we will encourage feedback**

#### **3.1 Tenants**

##### **3.1.1 We will provide tenants with information on:-**

- CHISEL and how to influence and become involved in what we do
- Their rights and responsibilities as a tenant
- CHISEL's Policies and Procedures
- Who to contact and how to do this if they have a problem
- Our service standards
- Our performance in meeting our service standards and as a landlord
- How we have responded to things that tenants have told us
- Any other information that tenants are likely to find interesting or helpful.

##### **3.1.2 We will produce an Annual Report for Tenants, which meets the requirements of the Tenant Services Authority's Regulatory Framework and provides tenants with information on:-**

- How we are working with tenants to improve our services
- The standards and local offers we have agreed with tenants
- How well we are meeting the standards we have agreed and the promises we have made
- Comparative information on our performance.

##### **3.1.3 As a small housing association our staff have a good knowledge of the special needs of our tenants in terms of which of our tenants do not have English as their first language or who have reading or other difficulties in understanding standard written information. However, we recognise that as a small organisation we cannot hope to produce as much information in as wide a variety of formats as we might like to do and therefore we will aim to:-**

- Maximize the utility of the information we do produce by making sure it is suitable for as wide an audience as possible
- Provide individually tailored verbal, electronic or written explanations of our published communications to meet the needs of specific individuals or groups.

##### **3.1.4 We will encourage tenants to tell us what they think of our services and encourage them to become actively involved in improving them by:-**

- Listening to tenants when they contact us and being open to their views and concerns; whenever possible we will seek to address these concerns but when this is not possible we will explain clearly why we cannot do so.
- Offering a range of involvement opportunities that recognises the different ways that tenants may wish to get involved and the time input that they are willing and able to give including:-
  - Becoming a member of CHISEL
  - Attending CHISEL's AGM
  - Becoming a member of CHISEL's Board of Management or its Finance Committee. CHISEL's rules require that between one third and two-thirds of CHISEL's Board members should be residents.

- Participating in resident meetings and events
- Working in the co-op to which they belong or joining with other tenants in their neighbourhood to set one up with our help
- Participating in the CHISEL Tenant Sounding Board
- Taking part in CHISEL consultation exercises and surveys
- Reading and giving views on draft CHISEL policies
- Seeking to develop further involvement opportunities especially:-
  - Establishing a body of Tenant Inspectors / Scrutineers
  - Developing a web based discussion forum.
- Conducting surveys and consultation exercises as appropriate to gather information on particular aspects of our services or of our services generally.

3.1.5 We will acknowledge and/or respond to all individual responses we receive when we consult tenants; we will take note of all responses and endeavour to learn from them. We will provide feedback to tenants on the outcome of all consultations.

### 3.2 *Members*

3.2.1 CHISEL has an open membership policy. Any individual over 18 and any organisations that are committed to the work and success of CHISEL are welcome to become members of the association subject to approval by CHISEL's Board of Management. CHISEL actively encourages tenants to become members. Members are expected to attend CHISEL's Annual General Meeting and any other general meetings of the association that might take place at which they can raise issues that concern them, participate in discussions and vote on proposals.

3.2.2 We will provide members with the following information:-

- Annual Report
- Annual Accounts and Financial Statement
- Any other information that members are likely to find interesting or helpful.

### 3.3 *Partner organisations*

3.3.1 CHISEL works with a range of partner organisations including but not limited to managing agents and co-ops, the Tenant Services Authority, the Financial Services Authority, the Homes and Communities Agency, funders, bankers, local authorities, consultants and contractors. We will provide partner agents and others with information as appropriate to their connection and involvements with us. This may include information on:-

- CHISEL's Policies and Procedures
- Who to contact and how to do this
- CHISEL and how to become involved in what we do
- Our service standards
- Our performance as a landlord and in meeting our standards
- Our financial performance
- Any other information about CHISEL that they are likely to find interesting or helpful.

### 3.4 Staff

3.4.1 CHISEL has a small staff team lead by a director. We recognise that CHISEL can only succeed in meeting its objectives and ambitions if it has a motivated, skilled, engaged and informed staff team.

3.4.2 We encourage staff to be involved in helping set the objectives and direction of the organisation. Staff are actively involved in drafting CHISEL's Annual Operational Plan each year and participate in CHISEL's Planning Days which are held each year and attended by both staff and Board members.

3.4.2 All staff have full access to all CHISEL's information documents, policies and procedures, Board papers and minutes (excepting confidential items). Full staff team meetings are held regularly and all staff can request items to be included on the agenda of these meetings.

## 4. Outcomes

4.1 It is expected that successful implementation of this strategy will help ensure: CHISEL members, Board members and staff hold shared values and a common vision as to the purpose and aims of CHISEL.

- There is a clear understanding amongst tenants, staff and external partners about what CHISEL does and what we aim to do.
- Board members and staff understand and are committed to CHISEL's strategic aims and objectives and are motivated to achieve these.
- Tenants have high levels of satisfaction with the services provided by CHISEL and appreciate the constraints faced by an organisation of our size.
- Tenants and partners feel engaged with the organisation and feel able to get involved and contribute to our work.
- There is a willingness amongst staff and Board members to recognise our weaknesses and learn from our mistakes but also to enjoy and celebrate our successes.
- CHISEL maximises the value of each and every communication that it has.
- CHISEL is recognised in the areas that it operates as a successful and well run housing association which is good to do business with and is a partner of choice.
- CHISEL is recognised in the areas that it operates in as a housing association with well maintained homes and satisfied tenants, and one which has a special commitment to supporting co-ops and meaningful and innovative forms of tenant involvement.

## 5. Policy Review

5.1 CHISEL aims to review all its policies on a regular basis. This strategy will be due for review in 2015 or earlier if the environment in which CHISEL operates changes significantly.

Agreed by CHISEL Board of Management 24 June 2010