

Tenant and Leaseholder Scrutiny Group

Draft Terms of Reference

1. Name of Group

1.1 The Tenant and Leaseholder Scrutiny Group.

2. Background

2.1 Scrutiny a process for carrying out resident-led reviews of all housing services. It is stated in housing regulation and forms a large part of an organisational approach to welcoming in-depth examination.”

2.2 Under the regulatory framework for social housing, resident-led scrutiny is a key requirement for social housing landlords regarding the delivery of housing services.

2.3 Tenant scrutiny aims to give tenants more power in holding their landlord to account for their decisions, performance, and conduct

3. Purpose of the Group

3.1 To ensure that tenant and leaseholder scrutiny is delivered in line with the Tenant Engagement standards which are: -

3.2 All influence and scrutiny engagement are outcome focused. It is designed to improve services and communities as well as provide value for money and transparency.

3.3 Tenants, leaseholders, and communities can influence appropriate strategy, policy, standards, approaches and performance targets.

3.4 Customer insight information is used with engaged tenants, leaseholders, and communities to influence decisions and co design services and approaches.

3.5 There is engagement in performance monitoring, learning from performance information and improving performance through effective challenge.

- 3.6 Where appropriate there is engagement to build in area-based performance management and approaches that provide area-based accountability.
- 3.7 There is a framework for engagement that holds the organisation to account through collaborative, yet independent tenant led scrutiny approaches.
- 3.8 There is engagement in understanding, resolving, and learning from complaints.
- 3.9 There is clarity about the role of tenant influence and scrutiny within the organisation amongst members of the governing body and senior management team.
- 3.10 The Group can make recommendation for changes to Housing Policy to the Cabinet Member for Homes, and/or Service Delivery to the Director of Housing & Assets.

4. **Role of the Group**

- 4.1 To develop an annual work plan aligned to housing regulatory legislations specifically the Charter for Social Housing Residents and the Building and Fire Safety Bill.
- 4.2 Ensure residents are engaged in the housing service and good quality effective tenant led scrutiny is delivered across Sandwell.
- 4.3 Commission active projects and processes to consult residents on the housing service.
- 4.4 To examine performance information identifying improvement measures to ensure targets are being met
- 4.5 To challenge stigma and to celebrate the positive contribution of tenants and residents within the housing service and the wider community.
- 4.6 To ensure an effective communication strategy is in place to inform tenants of the outcomes of scrutiny and encourage wider involvement
- 4.6 To nominate a representative to the Safer Neighbourhoods and Active Communities Scrutiny Board
- 4.7 To contribute to the production of the Annual Report to Tenants ensuring it is published and widely available

5. Support for the Group

- 5.1 The Group will be supported by a designated officer who will be responsible for ensuring that the Group have all the information they need. This officer will also be responsible for ensuring services and staff work effectively with the Group to support the scrutiny process.
- 5.2 The group will adopt virtual meetings when necessary.
- 5.3 Group members will be provided with a training and development plan to ensure they have the confidence and skills to deliver their role.
- 5.4 All reasonable out of pocket expenses will be provided to Group members

6. Membership and Recruitment

- 6.1 The Group will have a membership of ten. Eight members will be tenants and two will be leaseholders.
- 6.2 One third of the Group must stand down each year. Members of the Group can serve for a maximum period of three years and cannot stand for re-election.
- 6.3 Members of the Group must be current tenants and leaseholders of the Council. Membership is open to anyone over the age of 18, however, there are a number of exceptions where tenants will be excluded from membership and although cases will be considered individually, they include: -
 - tenants who are in serious breach of the conditions set out in their tenancy agreement; the seriousness of the breach will be the decision of the Housing Service Manager
 - tenants who have previously breached confidentiality requirements through the involvement processes of the Council.
 - where a tenant ceases to be a tenant of Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council;
 - any employee of Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council;

All the above apply throughout the term of the office and not just at election.

6.4 Any resulting casual vacancy shall be filled as soon as possible in accordance with the recruitment process.

6.5 The Group will elect a Chair and Vice Chair for the group.

7. Meetings

7.1 The programme of meetings will be agreed annually by the Group, with the opportunity for virtual meetings as necessary.

7.2 Meetings will normally be held in a location that is accessible and acceptable to all members.

7.3 The meeting shall commence at the time and place stated in the notice of the meeting, subject to a quorum being present.

7.4 The quorum for meetings of the Group shall be 4

7.5 In the event of a quorum not being obtained at the commencement of or at any point during the meeting, the meeting may continue for the purposes of debating an item, but no formal decisions may be made.

7.6 Any member of the group can request items to be included on the agenda.

7.7 Meetings will be held at least four times per year.

7.8 Training and additional special meetings may be arranged dependent on the need.

7.9 The designated officer, in consultation with the Chair, will determine the content of any agenda

7.10 The designated officer will be responsible for the distribution of the agenda and any supporting papers for each meeting of the Group at least five working days before the meeting.

8. Conduct at Meetings

8.1 Group members will be required to adhere to an agreed code of conduct

8.2 Group members to allow up to 15 minutes at the start of the meeting for a quorum to be present

- 8.3 Any members of the Group must declare a conflict of interest as soon as it arises
- 8.4 The Group will reach decisions by consensus. If this is not possible members will vote on an issue by a show of hands; a majority of one will be required to agree a decision. In the event of a tie, the motion will not be carried, and the Chair will have a casting vote.
- 8.5 Members shall have regard where appropriate to the confidential or commercially sensitive nature of information presented at meetings of the Group and shall undertake not to disclose such information to third parties, unless required to do so by law.

9. **Equalities and Diversity**

- 9.1 The Group will recognise the existence and importance of the different ages, races, genders, abilities and lifestyles within the resident profile and will strive to ensure that no group or individual will be disadvantaged as a consequence of its activities. The Group will be committed to promoting equality of opportunity to all persons in every respect of activities carried out by it.