

**Item:** TERMS OF REFERENCE

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## KIRKLEES COUNCIL TENANT ADVISORY AND GRANTS PANEL

### PURPOSE

The Tenant Advisory and Grants Panel ('the Panel') ensures the voice of tenants and leaseholders ('Tenants') is heard and influences the development and delivery of council housing services.

The Panel monitors how well the landlord (Kirklees Council) delivers on the consumer outcome-based standards for social housing. The Consumer Standards are:

- Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard – provide choice and effective communication to customers, including complaint handling
- Tenancy Standard – letting homes in a fair and transparent way
- Home Standard – ensure homes are safe, decent and in a good state of repair
- Neighbourhood and Community Standard – keeping the wider area clean, safe, promote wellbeing and tackling anti-social behaviour

The effectiveness of the Panel will be reviewed 12 months on from the transition of council housing services to Kirklees Council on 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 and, at least every three years thereafter

### ROLE

#### Responsibilities:

The Panel is made up of 12 members who are current tenants or leaseholders and living in a council property of Kirklees Council. Panel members are expected to:

- Ensure the voice of tenants and leaseholders is heard, understood, and helps to influence housing services
- Help to develop tenant strategies, policies, and procedures and, monitor action plans
- Drive improvements in service delivery by contributing to service planning and monitoring of key performance data
- Receive recommendations from the Service Improvement and Challenge Panel (SIC)

(provides tenant scrutiny function)

- Sense checks tenant facing correspondence e.g. rent and fire safety communications
- Approve small grants from the Social Investment Fund for tenant involvement activities
- Works closely with Tenant and Resident Associations (TRAs) to ensure these groups remain connected to decision-making e.g. sharing good practice, report back to TRAs on how any comments they provide as part of any engagement or community activity has been used to help inform decision making e.g. a policy change
- Approve the dissolution of TRAs as a last resort
- Support the Council to make tenant focussed decisions
- Receive recommendations from the Service Improvement and Challenge Panel (SIC) (tenant scrutiny function) and by agreement, commission the SIC to review service areas
- Report on activities and achievements each year to all tenants and leaseholders to show how the tenant voice has contributed to policy, service delivery and improvements

## Conduct

- Uphold the Council's Values and Behaviours
- Uphold the Council's Code of Conduct and any other relevant standards
- Work in partnership to support the Council's Senior Teams, Managers and Staff
- Prepare for and attend meetings, training or development sessions and other events as required
- Be focused on the 'we' and not on the 'I'
- Be respectful and considerate to your colleagues, staff, and other stakeholders
- Treat everyone fairly
- Act within the law

## TOP 10 SKILLS

1. Is proud to be a tenant or leaseholder of Kirklees
2. Has the best interest of all tenants and leaseholders
3. Listens to others
4. Is confident and able to ask questions
5. Treats everyone fairly and respectfully
6. Is fair, honest, and friendly
7. Understands that people and communities are different and have different needs
8. Makes decisions based on facts
9. Wants to improve and change housing services for the better
10. Commits to attend meetings and to support other Panel members

## TERMS

- Panel members are voluntary, however travelling and out of pocket expenses will be paid
- Panel members will meet at least bi-monthly
- Panel members should prepare to commit around 2-3 days in between meetings. This includes travel, reading papers and preparing for the meeting
- The normal term of membership will run from 1st April – 31<sup>st</sup> March each year
- The term of office is 3 years. By exception, this can be extended by a further 1, 2 or 3 years maximum e.g. if insufficient new members or to ensure fair representation on the Panel
- Important Note: for transferring Tenant members from the KNH Board or Tenant and Leaseholder Panel, the expectation is that at least two thirds will stand down at the end of term 1 (3 years).

## TACKLING INEQUALITIES

- Tenants who reflect unrepresented communities or people with protected characteristics will be targeted to join the Panel so that the membership reflects the Kirklees tenant community. This includes people from Black, Asian and Ethnic Minority (BAME) groups, Young People (under 30 years) and people living with a learning or physical difficulty or disability etc.
- Tenant representatives, if possible, will also reflect North and South Kirklees and the four areas across the district, Huddersfield, Rurals, Batley and Spen and Dewsbury and Mirfield.

## EXCLUSIONS

The following persons cannot sit on the Tenant Advisory and Grants Panel:

- Councillors
- Officers of Kirklees Council
- Contractors/Consultants of the Council who are directly involved with housing activity
- Person who lives in the same household as an existing member of the Panel
  
- Any Person who found to:
  - Be in serious breach of their tenancy agreement e.g. rent arrears with no agreed payment plan, involved in Anti-Social Behaviour etc
  - Have demonstrated any serious inappropriate behaviour as a tenant and/or at Panel meetings
  - Have brought, by any alleged action, the Panel or the Council into serious disrepute
  
- You cease to have the right to be on the Panel if:
  - You no longer live in a house that is owned or leasehold to you by the council
  - Are a Person who is bankrupt or has an outstanding County Court Judgement or, is forbidden from being a Company Director
  - Are a Person who has failed to attend three meetings in a row without reasonable excuse

## MEETINGS

### Quorate

- At least half of the members of the Panel must be present for a meeting to be quorate
- The Chair/Vice Chair has the casting vote in the event of an even split of votes
- Meetings are held at a council building or another venue agreed by the Panel. For the foreseeable future, it is expected that all meetings will be held remotely
- Panel members must let the Chair/Vice Chair know of any conflicts of interest on an agenda item before the item is discussed. The Panel member will not take part in any related decision, unless agreed by the Chair/Vice Chair

### Co-Optees

- The Panel may co-opt up to a maximum of 3 persons who are not Tenants to provide unpaid independent advice, support or assistance on a particular topic. Co-optees can

join for a period of up to 1 year only. The Panel may at any time, revoke such co-option by way of formal written notice to the co-optee(s).

- Co-optees do not have voting rights, and do not count towards meeting quorate.

### Ward Councillors

- Ward Councillors can attend meetings if agreed with the Chair/Vice Chair. However, the attendance of Councillors cannot be unreasonably denied. Councillors do not have voting rights.

### Council Officers

- A Council Lead Officer and a Support Officer will be appointed to support the Panel. Both Officers have a right to attend formal meetings but do not have the right to vote, or count in any quorate (see also Support below).
- Other Council Officers can attend at the request of the Chair/Vice Chair

## REPORTING ARRANGEMENTS

### Housing Advisory Board

- The Panel supports the Kirklees Council's Housing Advisory Board chaired by the Cabinet Member for Housing and Democracy. This Board supports tenant focussed decisions by ensuring the voice of tenants and leaseholders ('Tenants') is aligned to strategic decision making in relation to the delivery, management and growth of council housing services in Kirklees.
- Up to 3 Tenant representatives appointed to the Housing Advisory Board can be invited to join the Tenant Advisory and Grants Panel (by the Chair of the Panel and, if the maximum membership on the Panel (12) has not being reached).
- The Panel receives a copy of the Housing Advisory Board's Forward Plan. This enables members to feed directly into the main discussions at the Board.
- Formal minutes of the Panel meetings are shared with the Housing Advisory Board.

### Disputes

- Any disputes on the Panel will be investigated by the Council Lead Officer. If the dispute is not resolved or so serious, this can be escalated to the Chair of the Housing Advisory Board (or their delegate). The decision of the Chair of the Board or, their delegate will be final.

## SUPPORT

### Council Support

- Members of the Panel receive Council officer support. The Council Lead Officer will:
  - ensure that Agendas are agreed with the Chair/Vice Chair and produced timely for each meeting
  - in advance of meetings, review items for discussion with the Chair/Vice Chair
  - follow up actions and ensure actions are reviewed and signed off at future meetings
- The Support Officer will ensure minutes are formally recorded for each meeting to be signed by the Chair/Vice Chair

## **Equipment and Costs**

- Panel members can access IT equipment as required to do the role e.g. tablets, chrome books, book Council meeting space etc
- Reasonable costs including child-care and travel will also be reimbursed on presentation of receipts

## **SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT**

### **Induction and Training**

- Induction and relevant training are available to all Panel members and will include (but is not limited to), personal development opportunities such as shadowing, mentoring, informal and formal training and undertaking relevant qualifications as resources allow