

# KIRKLEES COUNCIL TENANT VOICE PANEL

**Item:** **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

**Issued:** **TBC**

**Review Due:**

**Version:** **DRAFT 1**

## 1. Purpose

1.1 The Homes and Neighbourhoods Tenant Voice Panel ('the Panel') ensures Kirklees Council have the appropriate arrangements in place to meet its regulatory obligations for tenants to have a wider range of opportunities to influence and be involved in:

- formulation of the Homes and Neighbourhoods (H&N) housing-related policies and strategic priorities
- influencing decisions about how housing-related services are delivered, including the setting of service standards
- scrutiny of H&N's performance and the making recommendations to H&N about how performance might be improved
- influencing how their homes and tenancies are managed, where applicable
- how the repair and maintenance services are managed or , commissioned, and
- agreeing local offers for service delivery.

1.2 The Panel sits within the Council's overall governance and decision-making structures and supports the Cabinet with its overall responsibility as the Registered Provider. The Panel's primary purpose is to ensure the tenants voice shapes H&N's service delivery and in particular the panel will:

- Approve and monitor the delivery of the tenant engagement strategy
- Undertake a service self-assessment against the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) Tenant Involvement & Empowerment Standard (as amended from time to time)
- Review outcomes against the RSH Tenant Satisfaction Measures
- Ensure that the tenant's perspective flows into the decision making at the Housing Improvement Board and Cabinet

1.3 The operation of the Panel will be reviewed after its first year of operation (2023/24) and, subject to its continuation, the effectiveness of the Panel will be reviewed every 3 years thereafter.

## **2. Role**

- 2.1 To provide Kirklees Council's Cabinet with the tenant's perspective on how the housing management and maintenance functions delivered to tenants and leaseholders by the H&N Service are performing.
- 2.2 To provide the tenants perspective on how service delivery complies with the RSH Consumer Standards:
  - 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
- 2.3 To approve and oversee the delivery of the services tenant engagement strategy.
- 2.4 Monitor service delivery against key tenant satisfaction measures to improve satisfaction with H&N services.
- 2.5 The Panel will, inform and advising the H&N Improvement Board and Cabinet on the following key areas:
  - Council strategies that impact on council housing, neighbourhoods and environmental services that have a link to the quality of life experienced by the councils' tenants are being delivered
  - How well the tenants voice is informing decision making
  - How the service is meeting its regulatory obligations from the tenant's perspective
  - Whether service improvements are affecting satisfaction levels

## **3. Membership**

- 3.1 The Panel will have a maximum membership of 9 including the Chairperson.

### **Eligibility**

- 3.1.1 Only current Council tenants or leaseholders who meet the eligibility criteria can be members of the panel.

### **Chairing**

- 3.1.3 The panel shall elect one of their members to be the Chair of the Panel. This member will also serve on the H&N Improvement Board and will have a full role within that Board.

### **Council Officers**

- 3.1.2 Council officers may be invited to attend the Panel by agreement with the Chair, in an advisory capacity. Council officers do not have voting rights on the Panel.

#### **4. Meetings**

- 4.1 The quorum for the transaction of the business of the Panel is 3 members in attendance in person or virtually.
- 4.2 The Panel will meet a minimum of 4 times per year at approximately equal intervals.
- 4.3 Council officers in attendance at the Panel do not account towards a quorum.
- 4.4 Decisions arising at a Panel meeting are generally made by consensus. Where it is necessary to vote (when agreed by the Panel) this will be decided by the majority vote. Each member present in person (including at virtual meetings) is entitled to one vote. In the event of an equality of votes, the Chair has the casting vote.
- 4.5 Any Panel member who has an interest in any item tabled at the meeting, will disclose that interest to the Chair before the item is discussed. Where necessary, the Panel member will not remain present during the discussion or take part in any related decision, unless agreed by the Chair. If the declaration of interest is by the Chair, the decision will be taken collectively by the Panel members present.
- 4.6 All decisions made by the Panel at a meeting or, by a Panel member or council officer acting on behalf of the Panel will stand. The exception being if it transpires that there was a defect in the appointment of that Panel member (s) that would disqualify the person from holding that position.

#### **5. Requirements of Members**

- 5.1 Members will be expected to:
- Be prepared to review documentation and to provide their views on the matters covered in the agenda of the Panel
  - Be committed to thinking inclusively about the H&N service in relation to the wider tenants of Kirklees
  - Be able to see the bigger Kirklees picture and understand that places and communities are diverse and that needs are different
  - Adopt an approach that is fair, honest, and friendly
  - Have good communication skills in terms of listening to others and the confidence to participate in discussions
  - An ability to make effective decisions or provide opinions based on the facts presented
  - A desire to improve and change housing services for the better
  - A commitment to be present, prepared and to support other Panel members
- 5.2 The following persons are not able to join the Panel:
- Council Officers
  - Contractors/Consultants of the council who are directly involved with housing activity
  - A person who lives in the same household as an existing member of the Panel

- A person who is bankrupt or has an outstanding County Court Judgement or, is forbidden from being a Company Director
- A person who has failed to attend three meetings in a row without reasonable excuse or a leave of absence

### 5.3 Any person who is considered 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 at the Panel
- Have brought about any action that has brought the Panel or Kirklees Council into serious disrepute

## 6. Management of Meetings

### 6.1 A Council Lead Officer will also be identified to oversee administration of Panel meetings. The officer will:

- ensure that an agenda is produced for each meeting
- agree the agenda with the Chair of the Panel in advance of each meeting
- oversee the follow up of actions from Panel meetings
- ensure papers are circulated at least 1 week in advance of the meeting
- ensure that Minutes are formally recorded for each meeting
- ensure the Chair receives a copy of the draft Minutes within 1 week (excluding public holidays) for review before formal approval by the Panel

## 7. Recruitment of Panel Members

### 7.1 Vacancies on the Panel will be widely advertised throughout the tenants and leaseholders of the Council with an application and selection process being determined by the Panel in conjunction with the Housing Improvement Board.

## 8. Payment

### 8.1 Panel members will not be remunerated for their services.

### 8.2 The reimbursement of reasonable travel and other expenses will apply to all Panel members (e.g., childcare, travel out of pocket expenses etc.) in accordance with the Council's standard arrangements.

## 9. Terms of Office and Termination of Membership

### 9.1 The term of office of appointment for a Panel member is normally for 3 years. However, membership can be extended for an additional period of 1, 2, or 3 years formally by the Panel to enable the business of the Panel to continue to be delivered effectively but should not exceed 6 years continuously or cumulatively for any member.

### 9.2 Panel members may have their membership terminated if they are absent for more than 3 consecutive meetings without the permission of the Panel or, attend less than 60% of the meetings of the Panel during a 12-month period

## **10. Support and Development**

- 10.1 Panel members are expected to attend appropriate training in relation to their role.
- 10.2 Panel members will have access to Council officer support e.g., responsible for circulation of report packs, responding to Panel member enquiries relating to packs, attending meetings, dealing with expense claims etc.
- 10.3 Induction and relevant training will be made available to all Panel members and will include (but is not limited to):
  - personal development opportunities (internal and external) such as shadowing, mentoring, and undertaking relevant training or qualifications as resources allow.
  - Panel members will be able to access IT equipment as required to carry out their role e.g., PC's, tablets, chrome books etc and, if appropriate, can book council meeting space to support their work and enable full participation in meetings and Panel activities