



North West Leicestershire District Council **Tenant Scrutiny Panel - Terms of Reference**

1. Aims

- Improve Housing services funded by the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) at North West Leicestershire District Council.
- Put tenants at the heart of the Housing service.
- Fulfil the legislative requirement for a Tenant Scrutiny Panel.
- Build the capacity of individual Panel Members

2. Objectives

- Improve outcomes for the Housing service.
- Improve outcomes for tenants and leaseholders.
- Create efficiencies and value for money savings for the Housing service.

3. Role

The Panel will work collaboratively to:

- Scrutinise landlord information and services.
- Provide constructive challenge to the Housing service.
- Make recommendations for improvement independently.

4. Membership

- The Panel will consist of a maximum of eight tenants or leaseholders of North West Leicestershire District Council.

- The day to day management of the panel will be the responsibility of the Chairperson, Treasurer and Secretary all of whom will be appointed or re-appointed by the Panel at the Annual General Meeting by majority vote.
- The Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Housing will be a Panel Member with no voting power.
- A senior officer in the Housing service will be the tenant's advocate on the Panel with no voting power.
- The Shadow Portfolio Holder for Housing can attend Panel meetings as an observer.
- Tenant Scrutiny Panel Members will be independent to any other forum/working group. Panel Members will be able to attend working groups as observers. Where a tenant is the Chair of a Tenants and Residents Association, they may raise issues at the Tenants and Leaseholders Consultation Forum through the Chair.
- In the event that any proposition results in a tied vote, the Chair will have a second, or casting vote.
- A quorum of three voting members will be required for meetings to go ahead.
- Panel Members will be required to give up the Membership on the Panel if they miss four Panel meetings in a row without submitting apologies.
- Members of the Scrutiny Panel will be appointed to serve for a term of 2 years At the end of their 2nd year members will be eligible to re-apply and if successfully re-appointed may serve for a further term of two years

5. Recruitment of Panel Members

- Volunteers will be sought for Panel Members through expressions of interest.
- Membership to the Panel will be sought through adverts in HRA funded publications, press release, via the Tenants and Resident Associations, other Housing resident involvement activities, and social media.
- Ideally the Panel should be representative of the tenant populous but the priority is to appoint Panel Members who are enthusiastic and interested in being a Panel Member.
- Panel Members must not be in serious breach of the Conditions of Tenancy.
- All volunteers will go through a selection process in the form of a recruitment panel consisting of representatives from the Tenant Scrutiny Panel and an officer as an advisor.

6. How the Panel will meet its aims and objectives

- The Panel will have the ability to commission reports.
- The Panel will have the ability to set up task and finish groups.
- The Panel will make recommendations to and submit reports to the Council's Cabinet.

- A Senior Officer in the Housing Service will consider recommendations and implement them where deemed suitable.
- Working with a training provider the Panel will develop an annual work plan.

7. Support for the Panel

As part of its promise to tenants and leaseholders and its commitment to Tenant Scrutiny, the Housing Service will ensure that where reasonable:

- The needs of the Panel are met in relation to support and resources including training.
- The needs of the Panel are met in relation to access to staff, equipment and meeting rooms.
- Staff time is made available to support the Panel.
- Good quality information is made readily available to the Panel.

8. Accountability to stakeholders

- Ultimately the Panel is accountable to the Council.
- The Panel will work with the Tenants and Leaseholders Consultation Forum and all other resident involvement groups.

9. Budget

- The Panel will have a budget to cover training costs and to access independent expert advice / guidance. The budget requirement will be reviewed on an annual basis.
- Officers will submit regular reports to the Panel so the budget can be monitored.

10. Expenses

- Neither the Chair or panel members will be paid.
- Reasonable expenses will be paid to enable Panel Members to attend Panel meetings and associated activities. These expenses may include but are not limited to:
 - Transport and travel/parking costs incurred (which can be arranged through the Council's Resident Involvement Team)
 - Help with childcare costs/carer costs
- All panel members claiming for mileage expenses will be required to give full details of the postcode where the journey began, the postcode of the destination,

and the postcode the member is returning to along with actual mileage. Claims for out of pocket expenses must be accompanied by a valid receipt.

- All expense claims must be authorised by the Chair before submission to the council for payment.

11. How the Panels' impact will be assessed

A simple annual impact self - assessment will be completed by the Panel and shared with the Housing Service and other resident involvement groups. The assessment will be submitted to the Council as part of the Housing Service's annual performance reporting arrangements. The self – assessment procedure will be reviewed by the Panel.

12. How often the Panel will meet

- The panel will meet on a monthly basis, possibly more frequently as required.
- The meeting times will be set based on the availability of the Panel Members.
- Working meetings will be held as and when decided.

13. Confidentiality and transparency

- The formal meetings of the Scrutiny Panel will be open to the public and press by prior arrangement to observe with an ability to have some items as confidential if they contain personal, financial or commercially sensitive information.
- The investigatory meetings of the Scrutiny Panel will be held in private.

14. Conduct of the Panel

- The Panel will be non-political.
- The Panel's work will be around those issues that are of general concern to tenants.

15. Conduct of Panel Members

Disciplinary action will result where members are proven to have behaved inappropriately in respect of the guidance contained herein.

Disclosure of interests

Individuals or their close relatives should not receive a personal benefit as a consequence of their activities or involvement in the business of the Tenant Scrutiny Panel.

Values

Members are expected to respect issues in regards to confidentiality, equal opportunities and aims and values of the group or meeting.

Ground Rules

The list of “ground rules” describes how members are expected to carry out their duties and conduct themselves at meetings and whilst carrying out the duties of the panel:-

- It is not acceptable to interrupt another speaker;
- It is not acceptable to talk when someone else is speaking;
- It is not acceptable to make abusive or personal remarks;
- It is not acceptable to shout or behave in an aggressive manner;
- Any person wishing to speak must wait for the Chairperson/Facilitator’s permission;
- Each person’s opinion is of equal importance;
- Everybody is entitled to be heard;
- Show respect to other members, including those visiting;
- Once an issue has been decided by a vote it should be accepted by all present;
- Bad language will not be tolerated;
- No personal issues are to be discussed during the meeting;
- The Chairperson/Facilitator’s decision is final.
- Mobile phones should be switched off or set to ‘silent’ during meetings
- Any item that belongs to the panel ultimately belongs to the council and must be returned upon resignation or at the end of the term of office.

Confidentiality

Some items for discussion may contain confidential information about tenants, officers, members or the Council’s business and that confidentiality must be respected:

- Members must treat specific agenda items as confidential;
- Information concerning tenants, residents, leaseholders, staff etc., and those matters of the Council’s business, which are defined as confidential are subject to the confidentiality agreement signed by every member;

- Members should ensure that they do not breach Data Protection.

Equal opportunities

It is important for members to address equality and diversity issues and to comply with current legislation and good practice. By appreciating diversity and implementing equality policies, we aim to eliminate barriers to equal treatment for all groups and meetings.

16. Terms of Reference development

The Terms of Reference will be reviewed by the appointed Panel Members at the Annual General Meeting.