



Housing Scrutiny Panel Annual Report 2020/2021

Foreword by Peter Edwards (HSP Chair)

I know that Covid 19 has caused problems for everybody this year but we as a Scrutiny Panel have learnt to adapt. With the help of the Tenant Participation Team we were able to move our meetings online and though we prefer to meet face to face we managed to cope with the changes.

In a year of so many tragedies it is with great sadness that we on the Scrutiny Panel heard of the passing of our friend and member Irene Smith. I think I speak for the entire panel when I say we will miss her cheerfulness, common-sense and friendship. She also kept us supplied with plenty of cakes and jam for our tea breaks. She will be sadly missed. Our sympathy goes to her family and friends.

Though we haven't unfortunately been able to get our teeth into any major projects this year we have been working with Bristol City Council on a number of smaller pieces of work and have been actively looking on how we operate especially in light of the new Housing White Paper. We look forward to meeting everybody in person soon and we hope you enjoy this report.

Peter Edwards (Chair)

Background

This report summaries the main activities and projects undertaken by the Housing Scrutiny Panel during 2020 / 2021.

Meetings

Due to the effects of lockdown in the early part of 2020 the panel wasn't able to meet till much later in the year.

We have however since then been able to meet once a month online to look at issues affecting tenants and leaseholders, be presented with work to scrutinise and make recommendations for service improvements.

We have held;

- 7 Business meetings
- 2 online training events
- Revised our terms of reference
- Finished previous annual report online
- Supported Housing Forums
- Agreed a training plan for panel members
- Developed a yearly project plan
- Drafting a staff guide to working with the Scrutiny Panel.

Projects and activities

Despite the logistical challenges faced by all of us we have continued to work with the council to help develop the housing service to tenants and leaseholders. The panel has been involved with a number of activities and projects throughout the year including;

- Working with the Policy and Practice Team on preparation for changes to the Housing Ombudsman Service.
- Engaged with an Asset Management Team consultation on changes to policy on the use of housing stock and provided feedback.
- Received a briefing on the new Housing White Paper and are using that to help draft changes in our working practices.

Training

- Zoom training to enable us to operate online
- Scrutiny refresher training

Plans for 2020/2021

Reviews

We are hopeful that we will slowly be returning to business as usual towards the end of the year and look forward to continuing to work with our council colleagues to monitor and improve services.

Training

With the support of the Tenant Participation Team we have agreed a series of training events for the year these will include.

- Communication Skills
- Working in a team
- Chairing and Facilitating Online Meetings

Recruitment

We are always keen to encourage new members and have 3 Scrutiny Taster Sessions scheduled to take place throughout the year.