



Bristol Housing Scrutiny Panel Terms of Reference

Please note: The term “Tenant” is used throughout this report as a generic term and includes both tenants and leaseholders.

Abbreviations:

HSP	Housing Scrutiny Panel
BCC	Bristol City Council
HS	Housing Services
HMB	Housing Management Board
HSMT	Housing Services Management Team

Role of the Scrutiny Panel

To take an independent and objective view of Bristol City Council Housing Services (BCC HS). The Housing Scrutiny Panel (HSP) will consider all areas of service performance against agreed local and national standards, will investigate and make evidence based recommendations for ongoing service improvement. The panel supports the principles of co-regulation and operates within the spirit of BCC Tenant Involvement policies.

Aim

To operate on behalf of all BCC tenants to review, assess and challenge ensuring that BCC provides tenant-centred housing services of the highest standard.

Objectives

- Give an independent and objective view of Housing Services provided by BCC as part of co-regulation.
- To establish priorities for reviewing BCC HS performance and to undertake and oversee tenant led scrutiny activities as detailed in the HSP programme of work
- Make evidence based recommendations to the Housing Management Board (HMB) and the Housing Services Management Team (HSMT).

- To form an integral part of the overall governance of BCC HS through effective links with the HMB, HSMT and the formal involvement structure.

The purpose of the HSP is to fulfil the aims and objectives set out above.

1. What we are

1.1 Membership

- A maximum of 12 places will be available for membership.
- All BCC tenants are eligible to apply with the exception of HMB members who may not be members of HSP and the HMB at the same time.
- Successful applicants will be selected from those considered to best meet the role profile following informal discussions with the selection panel.
- Normal term of office will be 3 years; however should turnover of membership during any given year be more than 30% of membership, that year to be discounted for the purpose of calculating term of office. The Panel aims to achieve a balance of retaining skills and experiences for consistency whilst encouraging new membership.
- 3 members (volunteers or drawn by lots) will be asked to step down after the initial 3 years and each subsequent year (subject to the above clause). Members who step down at the end of their term of office may be re-selected but will be considered alongside other suitable applicants.
- HSP may co-opt members with specific skills considered appropriate to assist the Panel in its duties.
- A panel member, who fails to attend three consecutive meetings and to provide any apologies, will forfeit their membership of the panel.

1.2 Quorum

- A quorum will be 50% of members plus 1 e.g. if membership is 12, a quorum will be 7.
- Inquorate meetings should be noted and recommendations ratified at the next quorate meeting.

1.3 Chairing meetings

- i. The HSP will elect a Chair and Vice-Chair by ballot. Any HSP member, willing to undertake relevant training, may put their name forward.
- ii. Terms of office for Chair and Vice-Chair will be 12 months. The Chair and Vice-Chair may stand for re-election at the end of their term of office but will be considered alongside other suitably trained HSP members wishing to be considered for office.
- iii. Maximum term of office for either Chair or Vice-Chair will be 3 years in total.
- iv. The Vice-Chair will deputise for the Chair in their absence.
- v. The Chair will liaise with officers and relevant others as necessary to plan for forthcoming meetings.

1.4 Frequency of Housing Scrutiny Panel meetings / sub groups

- i. The HSP will normally meet monthly then meet as required with a minimum of four quarterly meetings per year.
- ii. To meet the demands of projects and reviews the frequency of meetings may be increased.
- iii. The HSP may establish Task and Finish Groups to lead on specific activities. Task and Finish Groups could be internal tenant groups or external groups
- iv. Task and Finish Groups must report to the HSP at an agreed frequency.

1.5 Recruitment and succession

- i. The HSP will be responsible for succession planning and ongoing recruitment of new members.
- ii. The HSP will also assume responsibility for any appeals from unsuccessful applicants regarding the recruitment process.
- iii. Recruitment and selection will be carried out in accordance with the Tenant Involvement Partnership Agreement (July 2012).

2. How we are supported

2.1 Administrative support

- i. HSP will undertake independent administrative support in liaison with a Senior Tenant Participation Officer. The HSP will undertake the necessary training to enable them to take over the responsibility of administration activities to continue and enhance their independence.

2.2 Resources

- i. BCC HD will consult with the HSP and negotiate a budget to support the HSP to operate effectively. An annual budget will be agreed as part of HD's annual budgeting process and subject to organisational financial constraints.
- ii. In liaison with the HSP Treasurer, budget expenditure is recorded and six monthly budget reports made available to the HSP, until such time when the budget is independently managed by the elected treasurer.

2.3 Training

- i. All new members will be provided with a handbook of key documents and undertake an induction programme and training.
- ii. Capacity building requirements will be assessed and a training programme will be developed, delivered and regularly reviewed.
- iii. A budget for training will be incorporated into the annual HSP budget.

2.4 Mentoring

- i. BCC HD will fund the provision of an independent Mentor to provide ongoing advice and support to the HSP. This to be negotiated with the HSP and will be subject to budget availability.
- ii. The HSP will agree a programme for the Mentor to work to.

3. What we do

3.1 Relationships with other tenant participation groups

- i. The HSP with the support of Housing Services will develop communication channels to support and enable links with tenant participation groups. Both internal groups and external groups and other panels
- ii. The HSP will refer to a wide range of formal and informal sources of intelligence to inform its work programme and priorities. One formal route for tenants is to bring matters to the attention of the Scrutiny panel by pre agreed protocols. The HSP will consider if an existing programme of work should be revised to take account of any such tenant trigger.

3.2 Programme of work

- i. The HSP will develop an initial programme of scrutiny work and review this each subsequent (financial) year.
- ii. The priority areas for review will be decided using feedback from all available sources of information, including:
 - a. Performance Indicators
 - b. Reports from Service Review Groups, Tenant Inspectors, Focus Groups, Service User Groups and Service-specific Working Groups
 - c. Tenant / Leaseholders Associations (TAs)
 - d. Local Panels /Groups and Community Forums
 - e. Satisfaction Surveys
 - f. Complaints analysis reports
 - g. Annual self-assessment
 - h. Annual reports

3.3 Access to information

- i. The HSP will be enabled to request reports and information from BCC HS to carry out its scrutiny activities. Where appropriate information is not readily available, the HSP may request information reports (appropriate in scale and content to the scrutiny being undertaken and subject to available budget) and/or invite officers or managers to meet with the HSP to provide evidence.

- ii. All requests for information and evidence must be made via the Tenant Participation Project Officer, in accordance with the agreed Access to Information protocol.

4. Accountability and evaluation

4.1 Accountability to tenants

- i. The HSP will ensure that reports and recommendations made by the group focus on improving BCC HS performance and services to tenants, these will be made widely available to tenants via the HSP website. The panel will also provide an annual report on their activities and outcomes via Housing News.
- ii. The HSP promotes equality in its recruitment, training and activities. Panel membership is open to tenants of all backgrounds.

4.2 Accountability to/from the Housing Management Board and Housing Services Team

- i. HMB and HsMT will consider all reports of the HSP and where the HSP has concerns regarding performance or other agreed reports, the HSP will make a formal request for a response to its recommendations.
- ii. At least one member of HSP should be in attendance to present the report. The HMB will review the report at the next scheduled meeting of the board (subject to being given 14 days' notice in advance of the meeting of the HMB).
- iii. The HMB will provide an initial response within 14 days from the date of the above meeting and will advise when a full response that includes agreement of an action plan to bring about improvements will be available.
- iv. In the event of the HSP being dissatisfied with HSMT's response, the following procedure will apply:
 - 1. Concerns will be raised with HS Service Directors in the first instance

2. The HSP may serve a formal 'Notice of Intent' to the Board setting out its concerns. The Board will take account of the 'Notice of Intent' and arrange for a Board member and a member of the Housing Delivery Team to meet with the HSP at a mutually convenient date within 21 days where they will provide Scrutiny Panel with a response.
 3. HSP and HS together will seek independent advice e.g. from another scrutiny body
 4. If the HSP remains dissatisfied it may take its concerns to the Regulator (Homes & Communities Agency / HCA).
- v. In the event of the HMB and/or HS having concerns about HSP compliance with these Terms of Reference, representatives from the HMB and/or HS will meet with the HSP at the HSP's next scheduled meeting (subject to 14 days' notice in advance of the meeting) to raise these concerns and establish a joint agreement to ensure that the HSP complies with these Terms of Reference.

4.3 Evaluation of Scrutiny Panel activities

- i. The work of the HSP will be subject to an annual monitoring and evaluation programme, led by an independent Assessor as required. Outcomes of the evaluations will be reported to the HSP, HS and the HMB.

5. Reviewing the Terms of Reference

These Terms of Reference were developed at a meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Panel held on the 19th August 2013.

Approved: 10th September 2013
Reviewed: August 2013 / 10 February 2015/8th March 2016/
March 2017
Next review: March 2018