



# Bristol City Council Housing & Landlord Services Housing Scrutiny Panel Terms of Reference

## **Abbreviations:**

HSP	Housing Scrutiny Panel
BCC	Bristol City Council
H&LS	Housing and Landlord Services
HMB	Housing Management Board
H&LSLT	Housing and Landlord Services Leadership Team

## **Role of the Scrutiny Panel**

To take an independent and objective view of Bristol City Council Housing and Landlord Services (BCC H&LS). The Housing Scrutiny Panel (HSP) will consider all areas of service performance against agreed local and national standards, make comments and sometimes will investigate and make evidence-based recommendations, for ongoing service improvement. The panel supports a collaborative way of working and operates within the spirit of BCC Tenant Involvement policies.

## **Aim**

To operate in the interests of BCC tenants and leaseholders to review, assess and challenge ensuring that BCC H&LS provides tenant-centred Housing and Landlord Services of the highest standard.

## **Objectives**

- Give an independent and objective view of Housing and Landlord Services provided by BCC.
- To establish priorities for reviewing BCC H&LS performance and to undertake and oversee tenant led scrutiny activities as detailed in the HSP programme of work
- Make evidence-based recommendations from full reviews to the Housing Management Board (HMB) and the Housing and Landlord Services Leadership Team (H&LSLT).

- Make recommendations from task & finish scrutiny to the project lead or head of service.
- Review Tenant Satisfaction Measures performance data and identify issues that require scrutiny.
- To form an integral part of the overall governance of BCC H&LS through effective links with the HMB, including appointing members to other bodies as requested and as appropriate.

*(Note, this section is awaiting review, pending outcome of the review of the HMB 2023 /2024)*

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.
- Normal term of office will be 3 years; however, the Panel aims to achieve a balance of retaining skills and experiences for consistency whilst encouraging new membership. Members who step down at the end of their term of office may be re-selected but will be considered after any other suitable applicants at that time if there are more applicants than places.
- New applicants will be given an application pack with which to apply for a place. Successful applicants will be selected from those considered to best meet the role profile following informal discussions with the selection panel.
- In the event of the need to more applicants than places, 3 members (volunteers or drawn by lots) will be asked to step down after the initial 3 years. They may reapply the following year or if a place otherwise becomes available.
- The HSP may co-opt members with specific skills considered appropriate to assist the Panel in its duties. These co-options will normally be for renewable terms of 12 months
- A panel member, who fails to attend three consecutive meetings and to provide any apologies, will forfeit their membership of the panel. Planned absence, agreed with the

panel, will not be subject to forfeiture of membership.

## **1.2 Quorum**

- i. A quorum will be 50% of current number of members plus 1 e.g. if membership is 9, a quorum will be 5.
- ii. 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 2 years. 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 number of terms of office for either Chair or Vice-Chair will be subject to agreement by the panel.
- 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 / subgroups**

- 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. Training sessions may be required in addition to business sessions.
- iii. The HSP may establish Task and Finish Groups, which may include all Panel members to complete specific activities. Task and Finish Groups may include members of groups that are part of the formal BCC participation structure or external groups such as Tenant/Resident Associations or other community groups.
- iii. Where the whole Panel is not involved in a Task and Finish Group, the Group 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 with support of the Tenant Participation Team.
- ii. The HSP will also assume responsibility for any appeals from unsuccessful applicants regarding the recruitment process. Such appeals will be heard by members not directly involved in the recruitment process.
- iii. Recruitment and selection will be carried out in accordance with BCC Tenant Participation policies.

## **2. How we are supported**

### **2.1 Administrative support**

- i. HSP will undertake it's own administration, including the minuting of meetings, in liaison with a Tenant Participation Officer. The HSP will undertake necessary training to enable them to take greater responsibility for administration to further enhance their independence.

### **2.2 Resources**

- i. BCC H&LS's will provide administrative, training, meeting resources and access, care, and travel costs to support the panel in line with BCC Tenant Participation Policy.

### **2.3 Training**

- i. All new members will be provided with a handbook of key documents. This will be in accessible formats as required. New members will undertake an induction programme and initial training facilitated by the Tenant Participation Officer(s).
- ii. Capacity building requirements will be assessed annually by the Tenant Participation Officer after the work plan for the year has been developed. The Tenant Participation Officer will develop a training programme. They will deliver the programme once it has been agreed with the Panel.

## **2.4 Ongoing Support**

- i. BCC H&LS's will provide staff time to support the Panel and it's work.
- ii. Requests to fund the fixed term provision of an independent Mentor to provide specific advice and support to the HSP, will be considered by BCC H &LS's.
- iii. BCC H&LS's will support panel members to attend suitable ongoing learning and development events including and to engagement with other relevant organisations.

## **3. What we do**

### **3.1 Relationships with other tenant participation groups**

- i. The HSP with the support of Housing and Landlord Services will develop communication channels to support and enable links with tenant participation groups. Both internal groups and external groups and the panels of other landlords
- 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 and leaseholders 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 and table an annual programme of scrutiny work with support from the Tenant Participation Officer at the start of each year
- ii. The priority areas for review will be decided using feedback from all available sources of information, including:
  - a. Performance Indicators including Tenant Satisfaction data
  - b. Reports from Service Review Groups, Focus Groups, Service User Groups and Service-specific Working Groups
  - c. Tenant / Leaseholders Associations

- 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 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 Officer, in accordance with the agreed Access to Information protocol.

## **4. Accountability and evaluation**

### **4.1 Accountability to tenants and leaseholders**

- i. The HSP will ensure that reports and recommendations made by the group focus on improving BCC H&LS performance and services to tenants and leaseholders. These will be made widely available to tenants and leaseholders via the HSP page on the BCC website. The panel will also provide an annual report on their activities and outcomes on the webpage.
- ii. The HSP promotes equality in its recruitment, training, and activities. Panel membership is open to tenants and leaseholders of all backgrounds.
- iii. HSP members will be willing to respond to requests to speak to tenant/leaseholder groups

### **4.2 Accountability to/from the Housing Management Board (HMB) and Housing and Landlord Services Team. *(Note, this section is awaiting review, pending outcome of review of the HMB 2023/2024)***

- i. HMB and H&LSLT 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 H&LSLT's response, the following procedure will apply:
  1. Concerns will be raised with H&LS 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 H&LS 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 H&LS having concerns about HSP compliance with these Terms of Reference, representatives from the HMB and/or H&LS 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 a monitoring and evaluation programme once every three years. This will include a self-assessment exercise and if necessary, the support of an independent assessor. Outcomes of the evaluations will be reported to tenants and leaseholders and to H&LS and the HMB. (Note subject to review of HMB 2023/2024)

## 5. Reviewing the Terms of Reference

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

Approved:	27th September 2013
Reviewed:	August 2013 / 10 February 2015/8 <sup>th</sup> March 2016/ 14 March 2017/ 10 April 2018/09 <sup>th</sup> April 2019/ 13 <sup>th</sup> April 2021/ 13 <sup>th</sup> June 2023 (except sections highlighted in yellow i.e., the Objective referring to the HMB and sections 4.2 and 4.3)
Next review:	April 2024