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**Customer Challenge Group**

**Terms of Reference**

1. **Background**

The Customer Challenge Group will play a critical role in ensuring that Herefordshire Housing’s services are delivered to the highest standards. These Terms of Reference will explain how the Challenge Group will work in partnership with Herefordshire Housing to scrutinise and challenge services to ensure continuous improvement.

1. **Objectives**

* To work on behalf of all Herefordshire Housing’s customers, ensuring that they receive resident-centred services of the highest standard
* To work in partnership with Herefordshire Housing, but to take an independent view of its performance
* To hold Herefordshire Housing’s Board and Senior Management Team to account where performance falls below expected standards
* To ensure Value for Money is embedded across Herefordshire Housing, ensuring excellent value in service delivery
* To decide and prioritise which services are to be reviewed and scrutinised
* To be a decision making body that will make recommendations to the Board after scrutinising a service
* To monitor internal performance data against expected standards and make recommendations to improve service delivery

1. **Methods**

The Customer Challenge Group will use a wide range of methods to carry out their scrutiny of Herefordshire Housing’s services:

* To request information, documents and evidence about specific services, including performance information
* To carry out interviews with Herefordshire Housing colleagues, managers and Directors during scrutiny reviews
* To commission Resident Inspectors to carry out reality checks on services
* To work with and commission other resident involvement groups/channels as and where appropriate
* To develop and carry out questionnaires and surveys for both customers and Herefordshire Housing colleagues
* To undertake job shadowing of colleagues and managers of HHL to observe service delivery
* To request managers to present information to the Challenge Group about their service or an aspect of their service
* To have the opportunity to develop sub-panels to focus on specific pieces of work
* To undertake desk top reviews and carry out file checks
* To research good practice in other organisations, including visiting other housing associations and other scrutiny panels where appropriate
* To research good practice in the private sector
* To hold focus groups of other customers to consult about specific services
* To carry out inspections of locations, estates and properties where relevant
* To use the In Vision newsletter to communicate with wider customers
* To use social networking sites to communicate with wider customers
* To set up a Customer Challenge Group email to help them communicate with each other and with Herefordshire Housing
* To use the Annual Report to communicate and report to customers and stakeholders
* To observe Board Meetings
* To write reports of their findings and recommendations
* To present reports and information to the Board
* For nominated representatives from the Challenge Group to hold regular meetings with a representative from the Board and Senior Management Team
* To have the opportunity for informal meetings with the Board and Senior Management Team
* To undertake training to build member’s skills, knowledge and increase their capacity to be able to carry out their role

1. **Conduct of Customer Challenge Group members**

* The Customer Challenge Group members will adopt an agreed Code of Conduct. The code will be reviewed and signed annually.
* The Customer Challenge Group members will sign and adhere to a Confidentiality Agreement under the Data Protection Act 1998. The agreement will be reviewed and signed annually.
* The Customer Challenge Group members will respect the governance of the Herefordshire Housing Board of Management
* The Customer Challenge Group will be accountable to the wider customer body and will act with transparency
* Any matters of disagreement between the Customer Challenge Group and Herefordshire Housing’s Board shall be resolved by negotiation and discussion between them, using their best endeavours to apply these Terms of Reference to reach a mutually acceptable outcome. If any matter cannot be resolved this way, an external and impartial arbitrator will be brought in to help both parties reach a solution.
* Customer Challenge Group members should recognise that failure to follow these Terms of Reference may damage Herefordshire Housing’s reputation and work. Breaches of the Terms of Reference will therefore be viewed as a serious matter.
* Any member of the Customer Challenge Group who suspects that they have uncovered serious wrongdoing such as fraud as part of their work will immediately advise the Customer Involvement Manager or the relevant Director.

1. **Membership**

Membership of the Customer Challenge Group must be collectively competent to carry out their work. In order to achieve this, the following will apply:

* Each member must be willing and able to commit time and enthusiasm to the Customer Challenge Group
* Each member must be willing to undergo comprehensive training to build their skills and knowledge of Herefordshire Housing services, wider housing issues and how to scrutinise services
* Each member must be willing to undertake further training, occasional attendance at housing events, conferences and visits to other organisations
* Where possible, membership will be representative of Herefordshire Housing’s customer demographic and places will be proportionate
* Challenge Group members will serve a minimum term of three years. At the end of the three years they will be able to reapply. The Challenge Group will not wish to lose the skills of trained members so they will adopt an approach where existing members will ensure that only one third of the group’s members will end their term at any one time.
* Recruitment of new members will be supported by Herefordshire Housing
* Membership of the Challenge Group will aim to avoid an over-representation of residents from any one customer involvement group

**Membership will consist of:**

* Current tenants and leaseholders of Herefordshire Housing
* Other service users may have representation on the Customer Challenge Group
* The Challenge Group will have a maximum of 20 members
* The Challenge Group will have a minimum of 6 members
* The core committee of the Customer Challenge Group will be 10 members
* Membership is restricted to one resident per household or immediate family

**Exclusions:**

The following will not be eligible for membership of the Customer Challenge Group

* Current Board Members
* Current employees of Herefordshire Housing
* Customers who have a current Court Order against them for breach of tenancy or lease agreement
* Customers who are being investigated for serious anti-social behaviour

1. **What is expected from Herefordshire Housing**

* Herefordshire Housing’s Board and Senior Management Team to ensure that managers and colleagues support the Customer Challenge Group and its work
* To provide effective resources and support for the Challenge Group to carry out its function
* To provide liaison between the Challenge Group and Herefordshire Housing
* To provide effective training to ensure members are confident and able to carry out their roles
* To provide information requested by the Challenge Group in a timely manner
* To support the Challenge Group in recruiting new members and to ensure that this is a transparent process
* To reimburse Customer Challenge Group members of reasonable expenses, including travel costs etc.