1. **Dominant individuals**

The purpose of the group is to undertake their volunteering in such a way as to represent other tenants. It is about everyone having an equal say and thinking about the needs of a diverse tenant base. Challenge everyone to consider everyone’s needs and not those who shout the loudest. The Group needs to be seen to be open and fair to all to attract more help. Continuous support on open recruitment can help here from staff too.

1. **Good Meeting Practice**

Limiting comments to those on the matter at hand – it is not a party political broadcast! Keeping comments succinct and drawing out the wonderful things that our quieter members have to say. Individual support from staff for the Chair might help to do this.

1. **Dominance – it’s good and bad**

Having a big personality keeps the groups going, sometimes they lighten the load – they are funny or “sunny” in their personality - you always have a volunteer to attend events or undertake work.

Bits it is not all good - the BIG personality who disagrees with you – are they legitimate in their aim for the Group?

If they are, it’s just about toning down their enthusiasm, explaining their impact or giving them work which they are interested and capable in delivering on the point of interest/motivation.

If not – that’s a different problem - is their role on the group misplaced?

Think about and have a conversation with them - can you support their interest without isolating their enthusiasm? This does not need to be formal and it can come from a friend and supporter in the group as well as the chair or staff.

1. **Independence v being independently minded**

This is an old chestnut. Scrutiny and involvement is about influencing services, but you can’t do this without the partnership of involvement staff and the leadership of the organisation. Some groups feel it is ok to be rude to those who support them – it is not and it damages the reputation of everything you deliver.

Use your code of conduct and act on it! When did you last review it?

The Group needs support in meeting space, transport, a reporting mechanism and data to consider before they can undertake their volunteering role.

In return, if the group, having considered all this still feels that improvements can be justified and deliver value for tenants and the landlord – you have the opportunity to weigh out the strengths and areas for improvement in such a way that you give your independent opinion and recommendations for improvement as a group of tenants about the services you receive. Dot just shout about the negatives – everyone likes a positive stroke and your will be pleased with how far that gets you

1. **Interpersonal behaviour**

You could have a code of conduct for dealing with eachother inside the group and another one with those who the group come into contacts with – Board, Visitors and Staff. Within this, or a review of this, you might want to change some lines about dominant individuals, sticking to the point and how volunteers give their views – being clear when you are speaking for the group – or an individual

1. **Intergroup behaviour**

If you have a BIG personality and it causes you problems in delivering your work – or turns others away from becoming involved – do you pick that up and does this information get minuted or collected for appraisals?

What actions do you have for code of conducts – what happens for a breach and how many breaches do you allow before you act, the quicker you pick up issues (out of meetings), the more effective they are.

How is that individual at other Groups – is it you or them that is the problem here? How does this impact on the group?

1. **Elitism**

When staff introduce changes – the Group often think they are being punished.

Sometimes staff do this because they have no other route to deal with BIG personalities. This is wrong, but it might still happen.

So - make sure that no member or the group as a whole does not behave in such a way as their independence is the only thing they deliver

1. **Staff support and Change**

I do like a bit of naval gazing – why are we here; are we successful in what we want to achieve? When did we last review our purpose and delivery successes?

Involvement is value for money in terms of free support for service improvement, but if it’s a meeting that does not deliver – it becomes expensive and money is tight – so have a think about the recorded outcomes of meetings with staff – could you do better – what support would help you do this?

Change allows us to remind ourselves of what we want to achieve; consider how others have been successful; see the big picture; consider outcomes and our success

1. **SWOT and PESTLE – the big picture**

**Strengths, Weaknesses Opportunities and Threats**

**Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal and Environmental factors.**

It is time sometimes to stop concentrating on small issues, but to think about the impact of wider housing and social policy on housing. There are lots of changes around. This BIG picture – can deflect the BIG personality and it can help you to bring back to the table the wondering mind and reminder of what lese – besides their issue – is a factor in the delivery of improved services to tenants

1. **Appraisals**

Individual appraisals can address training needs, personal development, performance, motivation and behaviours. This includes: Is this the right group for you? How can we improve the work of the Group? What issues hold us back? It can lead to individual or group training and development. It’s a positive thing and allows you to stand back and reflect at least once a year – though a mini group appraisal by completing an evaluation of what we did is a good idea on conclusion of all projects we deliver

**Some extras**

**What if the Big Personality is the Chair?**

This can be a problem if they are to dominate the meeting (**make sure you also read the hints and tips for leadership and chairing meetings**). The role of the chair is as a facilitator of discussion,that means you discuss, they summarise what has been agreed – they don’t do all the talking.

Speak to staff about getting some 121 training for the Chair. staff will help you as they don’t want to see a group fail.

Make sure the Secretary or note taker records everyone’s views and make sure you review the minutes or notes at the next meeting.

if it is does not work – can it be tackled in another way – see the other notes - The Chair should be subject to an annual appraisal, inviting views from you all.

They are not elected forever – have a look at your constitution – make sure you have a secret ballot annually or bi annually – whatever the term is – Get someone else you trust to stand and support them to feel confident that they can deliver in that role.

**What if the BIG personality is a Councillor and they dominate the meeting?**

Much will depend on the constitution/terms of reference for your meeting.

The Councillor is in democratically elected to be in charge of the Council. If your landlord is an ALMO or a Local Authority (and not a housing association) and if Councillor attendance at the meetings is agreed in the constitution for the meeting (even if they are not a resident), you can’t prevent attendance.

Then - You would need to go back to basics with your involvement team and asking gently for a review of the constitution to make it work for you. If it is an area forum, it might be a councillor and a resident meeting – and that has its own purpose – but it does not stop you from having a Tenant Association or a Scrutiny Group which is newly set up to achieve what you think is important – speak to involvement staff about this.

If the councillor is there in their own right as a local resident (who just happens to also be a local councillor), then you need to use your code of conduct, or refresh it, or get one if you don’t have one already which makes sure that – one person cannot dominate, that you have rules on political statement or those which are not to the point of the meeting and where other discussions occur in coffee break and after the meeting but do not dominate the reason you came along that day.

No resident or neighbourhood meeting can be successful without resident being there – it is time to have a chat with the involvement team or the Director of Housing in your locality and explain your problem - make sure you have some alternatives to purpose – you can go to mean – it might make you feel better – but that’s a short term action. make sure you have asked others who attend the meeting about their views and go along as a group of people with a proposal for an alternative way to achieve the same aims that will energise you to be more involved. Be open and honest and do not exaggerate – think of the good and bad things - make sure you sound as if you have made a balanced judgement – of its how you fee, you have done your homework on other structure and you have the high moral ground – you can’t possibly be wrong

Remember having a big personality will take you so far, but the popular vote is not always a great leader or team player.

Good Luck