****

**Code of Conduct**

**1. Why we need a Code of Conduct?**

The purpose of the Code of Conduct is to ensure that members of the Panel understand the standards of behaviour expected of them.

 The conduct of Panel members will give confidence to Southway, Board, staff and customers, that Panel members will show professionalism and integrity, and their actions will be accountable and transparent.

We aim as Panel members to act in the interests of Southway residents.

This Code of Conduct has been developed in line with the National Housing Federation Code of Conduct of Governance, which is based on the 7 principles of public life, but this code goes beyond this.

The seven principles of public life identified by the Nolan Committee (1997) in its first report guide the content of this Code of Conduct.

1. **Selflessness**: to take decisions solely in terms of Southway values and mission. We should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for ourselves, our family and friends
2. **Integrity**: to not place ourselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might influence us in the performance of our duties
3. **Objectivity**: to ensure that in the delivery of services, we demonstrate impartiality and that choices are made on merit alone
4. **Accountability**: to accept accountability for our decisions and actions to our residents, the providers of public funds and other stakeholders, and submit ourselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate
5. **Openness**: to be as open as possible about all decisions and actions that we take. We should give reasons for our decisions and restrict information only when individual or commercial confidentiality clearly so demand
6. **Honesty**: to declare any private interests relating to our duties and take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that is lawful, and protect Southway reputation, values and mission
7. **Leadership**: to promote and support these principles by leadership and example

**2. Personal Conduct**

Panel members will demonstrate the following behaviours and attitudes at all times:

1. Courtesy to other members, the Board and staff at Southway
2. Be welcoming and friendly
3. Act with integrity, honesty and openness
4. Remember that their involvement is to benefit the community, not to pursue personal aims
5. Not to speak or write to the press, Southway or any external body, relating to the Southway Scrutiny Panel without prior agreement of Southway and the Panel
6. Behave appropriately and not be under the influence of drugs or alcohol
7. Treat all paperwork, discussions and personal information about customers as confidential and sign a Confidentiality Agreement to adhere to the data protection act.
8. Embrace equality and diversity
9. Not use offensive, intimidating, threatening, abusive, patronising or demeaning language or behaviour and understand and respect that people will have different tolerances of such language or behaviours
10. Leave political views at home
11. Adhere to their tenancy agreement
12. Be especially careful of relationships with customers, Board, staff and contractors and aim to never allow any personal relationship to conflict with the Panel and Southway interest
13. Avoid gifts from external parties except in the very limited circumstances as allowed by Southway’s Gifts & Hospitality Policy, which must be adhered to if gifts are offered/received
14. Avoid jargon
15. Arrive on time for meetings
16. Aim to make positive progress at meetings and , be action orientated
17. Communicate positively, have clarity with each other and share the work out
18. Understand and build on Panel members strengths

**3. Rent Arrears and Anti Social Behaviour**

Panel members must accept that at the beginning of each scrutiny review the Governance Manager will review their rent account and tenancy file.

If at any time a Panel member becomes more than £1000 in rent arrears and is not adhering to a repayment plan they will be asked to step down from the Scrutiny Panel.

If an existing Panel member receives a legal order due to breach of tenancy or anti-social behaviour they should declare this to the Chair of the Panel and Governance Manager and resign from the Panel. If a Panel member fails to report such action against them they will be asked to step down by Southway.

Depending on the circumstances and at the discretion of the Chair of the Panel and the Governance Manager the Panel member may be accepted back onto the Panel when the matter is resolved. If the Chair is the Panel member who has stood down, the Deputy Chair and Governance Manager will make the decision.

**3. Conduct at meetings**

Panel members will:

1. Stick to the Plan made for each service scrutiny and review the planner at each meeting to ensure progress
2. Be properly prepared, having completed any pre reading sent out with reasonable notice ahead of the meeting date
3. Give apologies in advance of the meeting to the Customer Involvement Team, if they are unable to attend and if possible inform one of the members they are working with during that meeting
4. Switch off mobile phones, or refrain from using unless prior agreement has been given by Panel at a meeting
5. Show respect and not talk over others
6. Not discuss personal issues and keep to the agenda
7. Leave the meetings as friends and not gossip about each other
8. Be sure not to undermine the Panel in public or in the offices of Southway
9. Make sure we are presentable and professional in our dress and our attitude
10. Carry an ID badge and display this when working on behalf of the panel
11. Follow the agenda at meetings and help each other reach informed and effective decisions
12. Members should prepare properly for each meeting by reading all the relevant papers and bring these to the meeting
13. Speakers at meetings should go through the elected chair for that meeting
14. Respect each-others views and make any points of disagreement after the point has been made by another member
15. Any other business will only be used for urgent items and will be agreed at the beginning of the meeting
16. Remember that working in a group means that Panel members might not like each decision, but agree to accept majority decisions, reached by consensus
17. Show respect and courtesy in all dealings with others for the purpose of improving services for all customers

**4. Confidentiality**

The Panel may deal with sensitive and controversial issues. They will exercise discretion and care in performing their duties and responsibilities. If confidential information is discussed it must not be passed on to anyone who is not a member unless otherwise agreed at the meeting.

Any information which is no longer required by the Panel will be disposed of through the Customer Involvement Team at Southway where it will be shredded. Panel members should return all papers at the end of each review.

Southway will provide a cupboard where the Panel may keep confidential data.

All Panel members will sign a separate Confidentiality Agreement.

**5. Conflict of Interest**

Panel members will be responsible for their own conduct and will review their own conflict of interest. They will:

1. Ensure their private or personal interests do not influence their decisions and they do not use their position to obtain personal benefit
2. Disclose any interest, whether personal or on behalf of any group they represent that they consider may affect any matter under discussion
3. Declare any interest in an item and leave the meeting if requested to do so
4. Use the normal procedures for reporting or dealing with any aspects of their tenancy, for example reporting of repairs and not use meeting time for this.
5. Not consider their own circumstances during scrutiny and ask Southway to remove their own personal data from service review material (wherever possible)

**6. Dealing with breaches of this code**

**During a meeting**

If anyone does not abide by this Code of Conduct during a meeting the following action may be taken:

1. The member will be made aware of the breach by a Panel member or Southway staff member who may warn them that they may be asked to leave the meeting
2. If the member continues to ignore the Code of Conduct and the Panel/staff member’s request, members present will be asked to vote on whether or not that member should leave the meeting.

**In the case of continuous or more serious breaches:**

The Chair will make a member aware if they breach the Code of Conduct and/or bring the Panel into disrepute.

1. The Southway Governance Manager and the Chair may then warn them verbally that if they break the code again, they may be asked to leave the Panel on a permanent basis.

If the breach is by the Chair, then this will be administered by the Deputy Chair and the Southway Governance Manager.

If, despite a warning, a member of the Panel continues to breach this Code, or, in the case of a first and very serious breach, a Panel member will be suspended or removed from future work.

The matter will be investigated by the Chair and the Southway Governance Manager and the outcome will be confirmed in writing.

Examples of serious breaches include, but are not confined to, the following:

1. Misusing or disclosing tenant feedback or other tenant information obtained for the purpose of conducting a service review
2. Acting in a manner that causes offence to another person (customer, Board member or officer) – e.g. displays of prejudice or aggression which may be verbal and non-verbal
3. Rent arrears exceeding £1000 with no repayment plan in place or being adhered to
4. A legal order due to breach of tenancy or anti social behaviour

A final right of appeal may be made in writing to the Southway Chief Executive, or a senior manager who is chosen to act on her behalf.

All breaches will be considered within ten days and the result will be communicated within three days to the Panel member.

***In signing this Code of Conduct, I agree to abide by all requirements set out above:***

Signed by\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Southway Scrutiny Panel Member

Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

***In return, Southway agrees to provide training, support (including travel and other expenses) for Panel Members to conduct scrutiny or to act on their behalf at other meetings:***

Signed by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

On behalf of Southway

Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_