

Croydon Housing Scrutiny Panel

Terms of Reference

Aims and Objectives

- To operate on behalf of tenants and leaseholders, to ensure that the council provides housing services that meet residents' needs and are of the highest standard.
- To continually review and improve housing services.
- To provide an opportunity for tenants to examine housing service performance and procedures and challenge and question staff who manage & deliver the service.
- Make recommendations to senior managers and councillors on how housing services can be improved.

The Role of the Scrutiny Panel

- Prioritise and oversee tenant led scrutiny activities
- Collect evidence to enable housing services to be scrutinised
- Examine the evidence, make recommendations for service improvements
- Report recommendations to senior management or councillors
- Monitor and review agreed action plans
- Tell other tenants what the panel is doing and encourage them to get involved

Membership

- Up to 12 places will be available for membership
- All Croydon Housing tenants and leaseholders will be eligible to apply
- One place will be reserved for an independent 'expert' to be agreed by the panel members
- One place will be reserved for a tenant representative from another housing provider to be agreed by panel members
- Successful applicants will be selected from those considered to best meet the role profile following informal discussions with the selection panel

Equalities & Diversity

The Scrutiny Panel will recognise the existence and importance of the different ages, races, genders, abilities and lifestyles within the resident profile and will strive to ensure that no group or individual will be disadvantaged as a consequence of its activities.

The Panel will be committed to promoting equality of opportunity to all persons in every respect of activities carried out by it. Members must sign and abide by the Code of Conduct and Breach of Code of Conduct procedures which undertake to deal firmly and promptly with any cases of discrimination or harassment. All members must undertake mandatory Equality and Diversity training. The work of the panel will have regard to the respective Equality Impact Assessment and action plan.

Frequency of Meetings

The Panel will normally meet monthly with a minimum of 10 meetings per year.

Scrutiny Panel may establish Task and Finish Groups to lead on specific activities. Task and Finish Groups must report to the Scrutiny Panel at an agreed frequency.

Quorum

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

Officer Support

The Scrutiny Panel will be self servicing (i.e. arrange their own meetings, take minutes and prepare their reports). They will be provided with officer to act as a liaison officer with the council to co-ordinate scrutiny activities and attendance at officer meetings.

Facilitation of meetings

The facilitation of meetings will be undertaken on a rotational basis. Any Scrutiny Panel member may put their name forward to the rota for facilitating meetings and may add or remove their name at any time. At the end of each meeting Scrutiny Panel will agree the facilitator for the following meeting. The same arrangement shall apply for the taking of minutes, publicity and booking of meeting rooms.

Area of Business

The remit of the Scrutiny Panel will be to consider all areas of housing service performance.

Programme of Work

The Scrutiny Panel will develop an initial programme of scrutiny work and review this each subsequent year. The priority areas for review will be decided using feedback from all available information, including:

- Performance reports
- Reports from Service Review Groups, Tenant Inspectors, Mystery Shoppers, Focus
- Groups, Special Interest Panels, Neighbourhood Voices, Estate inspections
- Resident Associations & Community housing panels
- Resident surveys
- Complaints
- Benchmarking

Accountability to Tenants

Scrutiny Panel will refer to a wide range of formal and informal sources to inform its work programme and priorities. One formal route for tenants is to bring matters to the attention of the Scrutiny Panel by raising a 'Tenant Trigger' (process and parameters to be agreed). The Scrutiny Panel should consider if an existing programme of work should be revised to take account of any such tenant trigger.

The minutes and all reports of panel will be made available on the council's web site and to any tenant on request.

Accountability to/from the Tenant & Leaseholder Panel and Departmental Management Team

All recommendations of the Scrutiny panel will be presented to either the Departmental or Senior Management Team who will agree an action plan. A summary of the report and action plan will be reported to the Tenant & Leaseholder Panel and published on the council's web site.

In urgent or exceptional circumstances the Scrutiny panel may request that the Cabinet Member for Housing, Executive Director or Director to attend their meeting.

In the event of the Scrutiny Panel being dissatisfied with the Management Team's response, the Scrutiny Panel may write to the Executive Director setting out its concerns. The Executive Director will take account of the concerns and meet with the Scrutiny Panel at a mutually convenient date within 21 days where they will provide Scrutiny Panel with a response. If the Scrutiny Panel remains dissatisfied it may take its concerns to the Regulator (Tenant Services Authority or successor).

In the event of the council having concerns about Scrutiny Panel compliance with these Terms of Reference, representatives from the council will meet with the Scrutiny Panel at the Scrutiny Panel'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 Scrutiny Panel complies with these Terms of Reference.

Budget

The council will consult with the Scrutiny Panel and negotiate a budget to support the Scrutiny Panel to operate effectively. An annual budget will be agreed and quarterly budget reports made available to the Scrutiny Panel.

Training

All new members will undertake an induction programme and training and capacity building requirements will be assessed. A training programme will be developed, delivered and regularly reviewed. A budget for training will be incorporated into the annual Scrutiny Panel budget as per paragraph (above).

Evaluation of Scrutiny Panel Activities

The work of the Scrutiny Panel will be subject to an annual impact assessment and its findings will be reported to the Tenant & Leaseholder Panel.

Recruitment and Succession

Scrutiny Panel members will be recruited via an advertisement to all tenants and will be asked to self assess themselves against an agreed person specification. They will then be selected by an independent interview panel. Training will be provided and there will be a code of conduct.

Panel members must commit themselves to a minimum 2 years service. At the end of the two years members will stand down. Members who step down at the end of their term of office may be re-selected but will be considered alongside other suitable applicants through the selection and interview process.

In the event of a panel member failing to attend 3 consecutive meetings without good reason, they will be deemed to have resigned, unless otherwise agreed by the panel. Their place will be filled via the recruitment process.