

Housing Disability Panel Constitution December 2004

1. Aim

- 1.1 To improve communication and build a partnership between Croydon Council tenants and leaseholders with disabilities and the Council. To enable tenants and leaseholders with disabilities to express their views on the provision of housing services which are of specific concern to residents with disabilities.

2 Terms of Reference

- 2.1 To consider housing management policies and procedures (other than those relating to individual residents) and to discuss proposals for improving housing services, or to suggest new ways of solving problems.
- 2.2 To consider the provision, design, adaptation and allocation of accessible accommodation in Croydon.
- 2.3 To promote and improve working partnerships between Council departments, social housing providers and other agencies in order to work towards improving the local environment and general quality of life for residents with disabilities who live on Croydon's Council estates.
- 2.4 To receive and discuss reports and other information provided by Housing Management staff, where they are of specific concern to residents with disabilities, and to make recommendations about these where appropriate.
- 2.5 To ensure that Council employees, councillors, contractors and other agencies who provide housing services are aware of the needs of residents with disabilities and are complying with legal requirements.
- 2.6 To ensure that communications from the Housing Department are available in a range of formats which meet the needs of residents with disabilities.
- 2.7 To receive and discuss performance reports on housing services, where they are of specific concern to residents with disabilities, and to make recommendations where appropriate.

3. Equalities

- 3.1 The Panel shall positively promote equal opportunities and diversity within the community and will treat all people with dignity and respect, recognising the value of each individual. The Panel shall work for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against persons on grounds of race, gender, age, sexuality, disability and religion.
- 3.2 Panel members are responsible for representing the best interests of residents in their area/estate. They should try to reflect and understand the views of the community.

4. Membership of the Panel

- 4.1 Anyone can become a resident member of the Panel who is either
- a Croydon Council tenant or leaseholder or a freeholder who pays a service charge to Croydon Council and considers they have a disability or has a member of their household with a disability.
 - a carer of a Croydon Council tenant or leaseholder person with a disability. Applications from carers who do not reside with the disabled person will be considered by the Council.
- 4.2 Any Croydon Council tenant or leaseholder who is not able to attend meetings of the Panel may register as an associate member. These members will be sent copies of the agendas and minutes and will be able to suggest agenda items and submit questions to the Panel.
- 4.3 Three councillors (two majority & one minority) will be nominated by their respective parties to attend Panel meetings as non-voting members.
- 4.4 Council Officers will be invited to and expected to attend Panel meetings as non-voting members.

5. Resident representatives

- 5.1 Resident representatives will be asked to commit themselves to acting as Panel members for a minimum period of one year. Members will be required to sign an undertaking to abide by this Constitution and Code of Conduct (see Appendix A).
- 5.2 All resident members will be required to attend an introduction session within three months of registering as a Panel member.

6. Chairing of meetings

- 6.1 The Chair will guide the business of Panel meetings and set the agenda in conjunction with the officer(s) from the Council. In addition, the Chair

will also automatically become one of the representatives to the Tenant & Leaseholder Panel. The Tenant & Leaseholder Panel only considers issues relating to Croydon Council Housing department, therefore the Chair must be a tenant or leaseholder of, or a freeholder who pays service charges to, Croydon Housing.

- 6.2 The vice Chair will take over in the absence of the Chair. Where neither is available at a meeting, a resident member will be invited to Chair. If no resident comes forward, the meeting will be chaired by an officer.
- 6.3 Every year, the Panel members will appoint a Chair and Vice-Chair from the members of the Panel.

7. Meetings

- 7.1 The Panel will meet 3 times in each year and the meetings will be arranged by officers of the Council in partnership with the resident members and Chair. An additional meeting can be organised if agreed by the Panel and the Council.
- 7.2 Any resident member who is absent from 2 consecutive meetings without good reason, will be deemed to have resigned, unless otherwise agreed by the Panel.
- 7.3 Anyone may attend a meeting of the Panel, but only Panel members may take part in discussions at the meeting, unless specifically invited to speak by the Chair and the Chair will have the power to require any one to leave a meeting who is being disruptive.
- 7.4 The Panel may invite outside speakers to its meetings, as required.
- 7.5 Any item to be included on the agenda must be notified to the Council or the Chair at least 15 working days before the date of the meeting. Additional agenda items may be included at a later date at the discretion of the Chair.
- 7.6 The agenda for each meeting will be displayed at Taberner House and/or the District Housing Office, and at other suitable public locations within the Panel area, and will be distributed to Panel members 15 working days in advance of the meeting by Croydon Housing.
- 7.7 Minutes of the meeting and action plans will be prepared by the Council and will be circulated to Panel members within 10 working days, and displayed on the Council's web site and in any suitable public locations. Action plans will be made available in a range of accessible formats.

8. Quorum

- 8.1 Attendance by one third of the total number of resident members of the Panel will constitute a quorum, which is the minimum number of

members to enable voting to take place and resultant decisions to be recorded.

- 8.2 If the Panel meeting is not quorate, the meeting will proceed but no decisions can be made.

9. Representation of the views of the Housing Disability Panel

- 9.1 The Panel will appoint two representatives, one of which must be the Chair and all of whom must be either tenants or leaseholders of, or freeholders who pay service charges to, Croydon Housing, to sit on the Tenant and Leaseholder Panel and represent the views of the Panel on that body. It will also be the role of these representatives to feed back to the Panel regarding the activities and decisions of the Tenant and Leaseholder Panel.
- 9.2 The Panel will relate to the Croydon Disability Forum and Disability Croydon. To ensure an effective link between the Panel and these groups, the Panel will appoint representatives to attend these meetings to represent the views of the Panel on that body. It will also be the role of these representatives to feed back to the Panel regarding the activities and decisions of these groups.

10. Voting

- 10.1 When a decision is required by a vote, each resident member, including the Chair, will have one vote, and in the event of a tie, the Chair will have a second, or casting vote.
- 10.2 If required, voting by secret ballot can be arranged and administered by the officers from the Council.

11. Election of Panel officers

- 11.1 Every year, the Chair, Vice Chair and elected representatives, will stand down and voting will take place to select to these appointments for the next year.
- 11.2 Where a position is contested, voting will be carried out by a secret ballot, which will be administered by the officers from the Council.

12. Code of Conduct

12.1 All members of the Panel will abide by the Code of Conduct (Appendix A).

13. Alterations to the Constitution

13.1 Amendments to this Constitution must receive the approval of a minimum of two-third of all Panel members, and must receive the endorsement of the Tenant & Leaseholder Panel before it can take effect.