

SCRUTINY together

Flying the flag for improved services

THG Scrutiny 2020/2021

THG Scrutiny Team, August 2020

CV-19 and Together Housing

During the last 5 months, Together Housing has had to make some significant changes to the way they operate. Although it is important to note that this is an ever changing picture and adaptations to their approach are being made all the time. At the time of printing, these are the important messages:

- THG's key message is THG staff are to work from home unless they have a valid reason not to
- Only 3 offices/hubs are open (Halifax, Wakefield and Blackburn). These are only open to an extremely limited number of staff members who have been given permission to attend based on their job role or personal circumstances
- All staff who are attending these offices, must have management permission and must wear a face covering when entering/exiting and moving around the building

CV-19 and Together Housing

- Meeting and training rooms remain closed at this time
- Staff, committees and boards continue to utilise MS Teams as a method of meeting up – no face to face meetings or training sessions are permitted at present
- Many processes and procedures are being managed remotely rather than face to face, using phone, email, smart phone technology to submit photos, videos and other documents, where this is possible
- THG offices remain closed to the public, suppliers, board and committee members, contractors, and tenants
- Due to the geographical areas in which THG operate, local lockdown restrictions also apply which includes not meeting others indoors

Scrutiny and CV-19

- Significant disruption to key services over the last 5 months, including Scrutiny
- Scrutiny Neighbourhood Officer project temporarily suspended in March 2020
- All training cancelled and 'Face to Face' network activity replaced with MS Team sessions
- A collaborative project involving scrutiny advisors, scrutiny members and other THG insight teams looking at THG's CV-19 response from a customer perspective, set up in April 2020
- Microsoft Teams used as the main communication tool amongst a small group of members involved in the project with weekly meetings in place from April 2020
- Some members continued to be involved, but not via Teams, and so comments and observations were collated via email
- Scrutiny Advisors continue to receive mixed views, both positive and negative, on the suitability and effectiveness of using virtual meetings as a way of communicating and managing scrutiny in place of face to face meetings
- Customer Perceptions report now complete and to be shared with Ops Committee at the end of August
- **Safe CV-19 measure compliance remains THG's and the Scrutiny function's #1 priority**

What's Next?

It is clear that the Health & Safety risk posed by covid-19 is relentless and is not going away any time soon. With that in mind, we have little if any option but to recover the Scrutiny service but with adaptations so that we can continue to meet our scrutiny commitments, whilst ensuring we can keep our staff and members safe.

First things first, let's remind ourselves of our scrutiny objectives.

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Dave Pearce's Business Assurance Team Purpose

To manage risk and support compliance with relevant law and regulatory standards

Business Assurance Team Objective #1

Support Tenants to effectively scrutinise THG's performance

Scrutiny Objectives

1. Provide valuable tenant led insight to help improve THG services
2. Provide assurances against compliance with the Together With Tenants Charter, Consumer Standards and THG Service Standards, through the tenant lens
3. Support Tenants to learn, develop and collaborate effectively with others
4. Promote our offer and contributions so tenants, colleagues and committee members are clear on the value we add

what does this mean for scrutiny in a global pandemic where keeping a safe distance from others is a key priority?

- The fundamental objective of tenant led scrutiny is to scrutinise THG services and provide assurance that those services are working effectively and as tenants would expect, and that those services are compliant with the relevant housing standards and regulations; where there are areas for improvement, it is your job with Scrutiny Advisor support to recommend suitable solutions to improve THG's performance and standards and work with officers to make things better. You do this for and on behalf of other residents and for the benefit of all who rely on the communities in which you all live. By working together and bringing a collective perspective to our work, you avoid raising complaints or individual issues for personal satisfaction.
- In order to maintain our objective, it is important we can continue to have open, transparent discussions and working practices whilst adhering to THG's COVID 19 safety measures and protocols.
- On the next few slides is:
 1. a list of commitments;
 2. a list of scrutiny activities and details of how we can help you deliver these;
 3. details of the key CV-19 measures which are to be considered
- Combined together this is our *plan for the next 6 months and we believe this plan will ensure scrutiny can continue to be delivered in a safe, efficient and effective manner and ensure that we include as many of our existing members as possible and hopefully reach out to more who have previously been excluded from contributing due to other day to day commitments

*It is very important to note that due to the instability of the CV-19 risk to the UK and the ever changing landscape (local lockdowns for example) this plan is subject to continuous review and dependent on the effectiveness of the plan and any relevant changes to THG, Government or Local Authority safety measures or working practices, reviews and changes can and will be made in consultation with the SCG chair and scrutiny panel members

Table 1: Scrutiny Commitments

Commitment	What does this mean?
COVID 19 compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We will comply with all current guidance to ensure safety of customers and staff.• We will carry out COVID 19 risk assessments for all activities, excluding online.• <i>Table 3 of this documents sets out the main COVID considerations for planning and delivery of scrutiny activities</i>
Robust Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Existing Terms of Reference, Code of Conduct and compliance with GDPR and confidentiality agreements still apply.• Adherence to COVID 19 guidance will remain our key priority
Effective Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• We will facilitate meetings virtually using Microsoft Teams (Microsoft video conferencing software)• We will provide a laptop to members where required, with capability to utilise Microsoft Teams and other applications and software to enable members to take part in all scrutiny activities and review relevant data and documents. (<i>Table 2 of this document sets out the current meeting schedule</i>)• We will plan our meetings in advance. This means that papers and presentations should be prepared and shared with members at least 1 week in advance of any meeting• In line with GDPR, personal data or confidential information will be kept secure and only shared within MS Team meetings where necessary and may not be made available for comment before meetings. (Scrutiny Advisors will determine what can be shared and how)• Papers and background materials should be studied by all attendees before a meeting• Decisions will be made using democratic processes at the meetings, members who cannot attend the meeting will have opportunity to comment prior to the meeting taking place• We all have a responsibility to make sure that any contributions to meetings, whether these are oral or written, are relevant to the subject

Table 1: Scrutiny Commitments

Commitment	What does this mean?
<p>Providing opportunities for everyone</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Those who do not wish to participate in virtual methods will receive an agenda and relevant papers and presentations by email (in exceptional circumstances e.g. where existing members are not on-line, papers will be sent by post) • Members will be required to send any comments, no later than 48hours before the meeting, to be included for discussion. • Following the meeting Scrutiny Advisors will collate and share meeting minutes, which will include an accurate summary of discussion and decisions made. These will be sent no later than a week after the meeting or sooner if possible or where there is a need to bring an urgent issue to the attention of non-attendees • In line with GDPR, personal data or confidential information will be kept secure and only shared within MS Team meetings where necessary and may not be made available for comment before meetings. (Scrutiny Advisors will determine what can be shared and how) • Where possible, Scrutiny Advisors will provide members with a summary of the information to be provided at the meeting, so they have as much information as possible to raise questions or contribute to the virtual meeting, via email or telephone.
<p>Open and transparent communications</p>	<p>We will continue to communicate with members using:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telephone, and will ensure all members have scrutiny staff individual mobile phones numbers • Email, and will ensure all members have scrutiny staff email address and those of scrutiny group members • Video calls, using MS Teams • Out of Office memos – Scrutiny Advisors will ensure out of office and voicemail messages are up-to-date and include a return to work date. Scrutiny Advisors will ensure these are used when they are away from work so members have visibility of staff availability • All communication methods will be open so that members can share comments and feedback to ensure everyone has the opportunity to contribute to meetings in advance, if they are not able to, or choose not to join MS Teams meetings

Table 2: Scrutiny Activities

Group	How	Considerations	Purpose	CV-19 Measures	Expected Date
Scrutiny AGM <i>Annually (Nov/Dec)</i>	MS Teams Face to face where and when safe to do so	<p>On-line: Provision of laptops with relevant applications i.e. Microsoft Teams, Word, Excel, Outlook etc. (licence required)</p> <p>TH office: Use nearest THG meeting rooms to reduce travel and virtual meeting facilities (this will be subject to the ability to comply with THG covid-19 safety measures and availability of a suitable venue)</p> <p>External Venue: This could be facilitated in an external venue so members can attend in person (this will be subject to the ability to comply with THG covid-19 safety measures and availability of a suitable venue)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Review of Scrutiny • Any necessary elections • 12-month plan 	TH Risk Assessments and Safe Working Practices External venue guidance	Nov 2020
SCG <i>3 per annum (Jan, May, Sept)</i>	MS Teams Face to Face where and when safe to do so	<p>See AGM above</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree projects, methods, membership of project groups • Updates from TH • Recruitment/Succession • SCG Chair/Co-ordinator election 	See AGM above	Sept 2020
Regular Scrutiny Panel meeting <i>Monthly (except Jan, May, Sept)</i>	MS Teams Face to Face where and when safe to do so	<p>See AGM above</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keeping in Touch, • Individual Project progress • Co-ordinate Scrutiny projects • Areas of concern • New project proposals • Updates from key members of staff 	See AGM above	Oct 2020

Table 2: Scrutiny Activities

Group	How	Considerations	Purpose	CV-19 Measures	Expected Date
Individual Project Groups <i>as required</i>	MS Teams Face to face where and when safe to do so	<p>See AGM above</p> <p><i>NB may only be required where members are undertaking separate projects. Where all members are involved in the same review, these meetings may not be necessary and progress updates could take place during monthly panel meeting.</i></p> <p>Some individual research/fieldwork may be required, i.e Inspections/shadowing as and when government guidance permits</p>	Deliver scrutiny projects	See AGM Where fieldwork is needed, an advisor will undertake a specific risk assessment and follow THG Safe Working Practices depending on activity	October 2020
Tenant Training <i>as required</i>	MS Teams	<p>Online: All training to be conducted online where possible using digital products.</p> <p>TH Office/External Venue No face to face training is being delivered at present and it is not envisaged that F2F tenant training is prioritised at present. This will be continuously reviewed.</p>	Improve members knowledge and understanding	TH On-line TH Offices/ External venues	As required
Networking and Events <i>as required</i>	MS Teams	<p>Online: All networking and events to be conducted/attended online</p> <p>TH Office/External Venue No face to face networking is being undertaken at present. This will be continuously reviewed.</p>	Networking opportunities, peer learning, increasing wider knowledge	On-line TH Offices/ External venues	As required

Table 3: Covid-19 Measures

Venue	Measures
TH Office	<p>Key Measures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• All staff are being encouraged to work from home where they can and only those with permission based on a specific need to visit the office eg ICT support role dependent, personal circumstances are permitted to attend those offices which are open• Anyone with CV-19 symptoms, has had a positive test outcome in the last 14 days, or is awaiting test results cannot attend THG offices• Consideration to be given to those where shielding guidance remains in place – ie any member who is shielding should consider whether it is appropriate and safe to attend THG offices• Keep meeting times as short as possible• Attendees to provide their own face covering for when entering/exiting the building and/or moving around communal areas• Catering will not be provided – members will need to bring their own lunch, drinks, snacks• THG will continue to pay travel expenses as per current policy• Shared transport will be supported if in-line with current Government guidance or individual risk assessment <p>Current TH office protocols</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Office currently closed to customers• Meeting rooms are closed to staff• Coat cupboards are not in use• Everyone must follow the one-way systems in place• Respect Social distancing at all times• Wash hands and/or use hand sanitiser frequently• No equipment provided i.e. pens, paper etc.• Only essential items to be brought to meeting• Waste bin bags for use by attendees• Wear face coverings when they are utilising shared/enclosed communal spaces such as entrances, corridors, toilets and kitchens• One person at a time in lift, maintain social distancing when queuing• Lifts in some offices are being used to support one-way systems – make sure you can access floors without use of lift• One person at a time in toilets/washrooms• Use foot pump hand sanitiser on entry and exit of toilets• No refreshments – members can bring their own• Use own crockery and cutlery and take home to wash• Only one person per table in communal kitchens• Wash/sanitise hand before and after use

Table 3: Covid-19 Measures

Venue	Measures
TH On-line	N/A - all members to remain compliant with GDPR legislation and THG confidentiality agreements at all times
Other Venues	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Venue guidance to be adhered to e.g. provision of refreshments, social distancing, shared equipment, hygiene• Follow current government guidance regarding national and local restrictions• THG will continue to pay travel expenses as per current <i>policy</i>• Shared transport will be supported if in-line with current Government guidance or individual risk assessment• Anyone with symptoms/positive test outcome in the last 14 days, or awaiting test results, cannot attend• Keep meeting times as short as possible• Members to provide own face covering if a face-covering is a requirement

Offer: Pros and Cons



- ✓ Lack of face to face contact
- ✓ Reduction in opportunities to carryout extensive fieldwork and shadowing THG officers to understand processes and roles in more detail
- ✓ Those who are not digitally connected are unable to attend meetings



- ✓ **Meeting flexibility** - Enables members to meet more frequently and with less notice and provides more opportunities to meet with officers
- ✓ **More Opportunities for others** - Opens the panel to more members who previously couldn't commit to travelling or attending all day meetings
- ✓ **Expenses** - Reduction in day to day expenses which can be invested elsewhere, such as training or ICT support
- ✓ **Virus** - Enables THG and Scrutiny members to contribute to reducing the spread of the virus and helps to protect members and staff

Summary

- All members will be provided with a laptop (unless you specifically tell us you don't need one)
- Members will not be permitted to attend THG Offices until further notice
- All meetings will take place using MS Teams
- Members not wanting to attend, will be able to provide their comments ahead of meetings, via traditional methods such as email
- This plan continues to be subject to change in line with changes to Government, Local Authority & THG policy and will be continuously reviewed

Next Steps

Once you have read and digested the content of the slides and read the Q&A document, these are the next steps to follow:

- Attend a Q&A session with your Scrutiny Advisors on 27th August 2020
- If you cannot attend or would prefer not to, please submit any questions via email or request a personal phone consultation (you can request this by emailing or phoning one of the team)
- Complete the preference form, sign, date and return it in the pre-paid envelope or scan and email it back to one of the team no later than 4th September 2020
- We will then gather all of your preferences and write to you to confirm the outcome with more specific details of a proposed meeting schedule for the AGM and the next SCG and start to scope out some project work. This will include a review of the Neighbourhood Officer Project scope.
- In line with the existing election protocols and timetable we will review our approach to recruiting new members, and the SCG chair/co-ordinator role election