

London Borough of Waltham Forest

Terms of reference – Resident Influence and Accountability Panel (The Panel)

1. Aims

The aims of the Resident Influence and Accountability Panel (the Panel) is:

- 1.1 To work with Waltham Forest Housing (WFH) Senior Managers to ensure that housing services are well-run, meet the needs of residents and provide value for money.
- 1.2 To ensure residents' priorities and views are at the heart of all that WFH does, advising and informing senior managers on key issues affecting residents and ensuring that the interests of residents are fully considered in all aspects of strategic decision making.
- 1.3 To operate on behalf of residents to ensure that the services which WFH provides meet residents' needs, holding service leads and contractors to account and challenging them to deliver to the highest standards.
- 1.4 As far as it is possible; to bring a service user perspective to discussions with the interests of the Waltham Forest resident community in mind. Facilitate close links with other involvement groups to ensure effective engagement and consultation of residents and co-production in policy and service design and improvement.
- 1.5 To co-ordinate and commission independent resident-led scrutiny of services, performance and value for money.

2. The role of the Resident Influence and Accountability Panel

The role of the Panel is:

- 2.1 To take part in discussion and decision making about housing services. For example, how we deliver estate and housing services, how we arrange for major works to our homes and estates, how we develop our plans and approaches to meeting housing needs within the Borough.
- 2.2 To contribute to the overall performance management of WFH services, including receiving and reviewing performance information and benchmarking WFH's performance against similar landlords; holding senior managers to account where performance fails to meet agreed standards.
- 2.3 To be accountable to all WFH residents, reporting back to other involvement groups within the engagement framework and to the wider resident community through various means of communication including Residents News and the LBWF website.
- 2.4 To champion our approach to resident engagement and jointly own WFH's resident engagement framework. Monitor its effectiveness against agreed

London Borough of Waltham Forest

Terms of reference – Resident Influence and Accountability Panel (The Panel)

outcomes.

- 2.5 To work closely with Resident Scrutineers, to identify areas for scrutiny and to monitor the implementation of agreed improvement plans.
- 2.6 To receive and review reports from other involvement groups within the engagement framework.
- 2.7 To work with WFH to ensure that value for money is embedded in all aspects of service delivery, the way in which we buy goods and services and management decision-making.

3. Membership and support

- 3.1 Membership of the Panel will consist of up to 12 residents, reflecting as closely as possible the tenant and leaseholder ratio. Two places will be ring-fenced for nomination by each of the Tenant Management Organisations managing housing stock on behalf of London Borough of Waltham Forest.
- 3.2 Given its role, importance and profile, the Panel requires the highest standards and members will be supported in achieving these standards through the development of a clear job description and set of standard competencies, along with a selection process which focuses on key skills and commitment.
 - 3.2.1 Successful applicants will adopt the terms of reference, expectations of membership, any required confidentiality agreements, and commitment to undergo training and development (including Equality & Diversity) as part of their role.
 - 3.2.2 Successful applicants will be selected from those considered to best meet the role profile and person specification following the recruitment & selection process. Those not successful or who do not meet the necessary requirements will be offered training, support and encouragement to build their capacity and confidence to get involved.
- 3.3 Members will serve for up to three years, standing down at the end of this term and becoming eligible for reselection after a period of 12 months.
 - 3.3.1 4 members will stand down annually and a new selection process will be undertaken to fill the vacancies.
 - 3.3.2 Vacancies occurring outside of the usual cycle can be filled from a talent pool of former members and those who have been through the recruitment and selection process and participated in introductory training.

London Borough of Waltham Forest

Terms of reference – Resident Influence and Accountability Panel (The Panel)

- 3.4 The Panel can give consideration to the inclusion of independent/co-opted members in order to achieve greater balance and/or competence or to bridge identified skills gaps.
- 3.5 A preferred composition will be developed, with priority given to achieving a composition that, as far as possible, reflects the make-up of the Borough's residents. A clear succession planning strategy/protocol will be developed.
- 3.6 STAR will be chaired by a resident member selected by the Panel through a show of hands or anonymous paper-based ballot. The same process will be followed to select a vice-chair.
- 3.7 WFH will allocate and make available:
 - A member of the Engagement Team who will provide administrative and advisory support, ensuring that governance and agreed standards are maintained.
 - A senior sponsor (Director or Assistant Director) to champion the Panel and ensure the strength of strategic and operational relationship between WFH and the Panel.
 - Access to appropriate equipment and meeting room facilities.
 - A budget for reasonable expenses, training and development, commissioning additional research and independent mentoring support.
 - Clear routes of access to the business, its staff, contractors and elected members.

4 Conflict of interest

- 4.1 Members are expected to declare any conflicts of interest. If a conflict of interests arises, they must promptly advise the Chair. Potential conflicts of interest that may arise include being elected to serve as a Councillor and gaining employment with WFH. A conflict may also arise if employment is obtained with a major contractor of WFH.
- 4.2 In some circumstances an interest should be declared. This would not stop an individual from participating but should be noted in the interests of transparency. This might be for example, where a member is involved in an ongoing complaint about a service that is being scrutinised. It is important that individual issues are not raised to be resolved at meetings.

5 Training & Personal/Group Development

- 5.1 A training programme will be developed and delivered to support the learning and development of the Panel to fulfil its aims and objectives to a high standard. The training programme will be reviewed regularly to make sure it is fit for purpose and may be added to on an ad hoc basis should a specific training need be identified.

London Borough of Waltham Forest

Terms of reference – Resident Influence and Accountability Panel (The Panel)

- 5.2 All members will undergo an annual review to assess individual performance against the role profile and development needs. Appraisals will be conducted by the Engagement Team Manager and/or an independent expert, and the results will be used to develop individual training and development plans.
- 5.3 All new members will undertake an induction training programme and complete a training and development skills and needs self-assessment.

6 Accountability

- 6.1 A summary of the Panel's activities will be included as a section in the resident's annual report. In addition, regular updates will be provided on the WFH website and in the Engagement section within Residents' News (this section to be edited by Panel members).

7 Conduct of business

- 7.1 The officers shall be:
- Chair
 - Vice-Chair
- 7.2 If vacancies occur during the year, then the position can be filled from either previous applicants who were deemed to have the right skills, or through a new recruitment drive.
- 7.3 All decisions shall be made by a simple majority vote. In the event of a split decision, the Chair shall have a casting vote.
- 7.4 These terms of reference will be reviewed at least, but not limited to, once a year.
- 7.5 The quorum for all meetings shall be 50% of members or six people, whichever is the greater.
- 7.6 A provisional forward plan for key agenda items will be developed with the Chair, with detailed agendas being agreed prior to each meeting. Members can contribute to agenda development and items for the agenda must be received by the Chair at least 2 weeks before the following meeting.
- 7.7 The agenda, together with minutes of the previous meeting shall be circulated to all members, not less than a week before the next meeting.
- 7.8 Minutes of meetings shall be taken by a member of the Engagement Team.

London Borough of Waltham Forest

Terms of reference – Resident Influence and Accountability Panel (The Panel)

- 7.10 The Panel can establish sub-committees/working groups from time to time to assist in its decision-making and exploring specific issues.

8 Access to information and support

- 8.1 The Engagement Team will provide support to the Panel and will act as the link between the group and the Housing Service.
- 8.2 The Engagement Team will provide administrative support at Panel meetings as required.
- 8.3 The Engagement Team will administer expenses on behalf of the Panel. This will include support to get to and from meetings, e.g., taxis, mileage, child/carer costs.
- 8.4 The Engagement Team will be the initial point of contact for Panel members in respect of requests for information, and for WFH staff wishing to add items to the Panel meeting agenda.
- 8.5 Panel members should not expect to, nor will receive, more or less favourable treatment as a result of their membership. Panel members will, through their membership, gain a stronger understanding of the standards of service to expect, along with the means to ensure those standards are delivered for all residents.

9. Confidentiality and Data Protection

- 9.1 All information acquired for the conduct of Panel business is confidential to WFH.
- 9.2 Members must not release information, either during their appointment or following termination (by whatever means), to third parties without the express clearance from the Director of Housing. Members are required to sign a confidentiality agreement prior to being given access to confidential information.
- 9.3 Members will be bound by the provisions of the Data Protection Act. At times, access to information may be restricted if it contains personal or personally sensitive data, where the provision of that data to team members would breach Data Protection legislation.

10 Frequency of meetings

- 10.1 The Panel will meet quarterly, with a short pre and post main meeting session on line. Additional meetings being convened for specific matters when workload requires.

London Borough of Waltham Forest

Terms of reference – Resident Influence and Accountability Panel (The Panel)

10.2 Additional activities and meetings are required. These include, but are not limited to:

- Meeting preparation including reading reports/information
- Individual research/benchmarking
- Sub-committee/working group membership
- Representing the Panel at a range of internal and external meetings (by request), including partnership/management meetings with WFH and wider partners

This document will be reviewed annually.

London Borough of Waltham Forest

Terms of reference – Resident Influence and Accountability Panel (The Panel)

Expectations of membership

Influence and Accountability Panel members agree to:

- Work together as a team.
- Develop constructive working relationships with staff and Councillors, providing effective challenge in a positive way.
- Understand and respect the views and rights of all members.
- Listen to each other.
- Allow others to express their views and be sensitive to their needs.
- Support each other and treat each other as equals.
- Do what they say they will.
- Abide by decisions made and adhere to the principles of collective responsibility.
- Listen to what residents want (through performance information and involved residents groups).
- Share the workload.
- Recognise the abilities and shortcomings of others, rather than labelling them.
- Not discuss or divulge any sensitive or confidential information that is raised during meetings.

Any person who:

- Fails to meet the above expectations; or
- Acts in an aggressive or offensive manner

will have their membership withdrawn.

Aggressive or offensive behaviour could include (but is not limited to):

- Interrupting
- Dominating conversations
- Not listening to others
- Apportioning blame
- Using racist, sexist, ageist, homophobic or other offensive language

Should it become necessary for WFH to take action to enforce the terms of tenancy of a resident member, that member will be required to stand down for any period of that action.