

Appendix 1

Residents' Panel Terms of Reference

1. Role of the panel

- a. The main aim of the Residents' Panel is work in partnership with East Kent Housing (EKH) to influence policies and strategies and to scrutinise performance on behalf of all EKH residents
- b. The Residents' Panel will carry out the following activities in meeting the above aim:
 - Influence service delivery arrangements
 - Provide feedback and make recommendations regarding the EKH's housing related policies and strategies
 - Monitor performance data and make recommendations on how performance can be improved.
 - Monitor resident feedback, including satisfaction, compliments, complaints information and feedback from other groups of involved residents e.g. Local Groups and Task and Finish/Project Groups. Make recommendations for improvements.

2. Membership

a. Numbers and composition

The Panel will comprise twelve resident members, three from each of the four council areas. There will be a place for one leaseholder to be a member. However, if there are no expressions of interest from leaseholders, the leaseholder place will be taken up by a tenant, resulting in a Panel of twelve tenant members.

b. Membership criteria

Members of the Residents' Panel must be tenants or a leaseholder of one of the four councils. In addition, any member of the Residents' Panel can be a member of up to a maximum of two other groups (i.e. a local group and/or a Task and Finish/Project Group.)

c. Restrictions on membership

The following will not be eligible to be a member of the Residents' Panel:

- Home owners
- Tenants of other landlords
- Current EKH Board members
- Current councillors
- EKH or Council officers
- Any resident who is in breach of their tenancy agreement, where the breach has led to legal action being taken by EKH i.e. possession proceedings have commenced
- If a tenancy breach arises after a resident has joined the Panel, they will be removed from the Panel and a replacement member will be appointed (see section 3: Selection of members). A

member removed from the Panel because of a tenancy breach will be able to re-join the Panel twelve months after they have remedied the tenancy breach in question, if they are selected.

- Anyone who has an 'unspent' conviction (as defined in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974)
- Any resident who has committed a serious breach of the code of conduct for involved residents
- Anyone who is unreasonably persistent or a vexatious complainant, as defined by the Housing Ombudsman and set out in EKH's Vexatious Complaints Policy (March 2015).
- Anyone who is motivated to join the Panel to address their own personal grievances.

In addition, only one member of any household will be able to be a member of the Residents' Panel at any one time.

d. Resident Board Members

EKH's Board will appoint a Resident Board Member to attend the Residents' Panel meetings and act as a link person between the Panel and the Board and their role in relation to the Panel will include the following:

- To receive feedback from the Panel and report this information to the next available meeting of EKH's Board
- To provide feedback and updates from Board meetings

e. Length of membership

Members will serve for a period of three years. The maximum number of terms that a member can serve is three consecutive terms (i.e. a maximum of nine years in total).

3. Selection of members

- a. Each Local Group will select 3 residents to participate in the Residents' Panel. Anyone who is selected must commit to serving a three-year term.
- b. Anyone who is interested in joining the Panel must demonstrate, by completing a short expression of interest form, that they have (or have the potential to develop) the following abilities and experience:
 - Ability to question
 - Confident
 - Able to work as part of a team
 - Able to speak on behalf of all residents, instead of representing their own interests
 - Understand issues regarding social housing
 - Communicate effectively
 - Demonstrates a commitment to attending meetings and participating in the activities of the Panel

- c. Local group members and wider EKH residents can express an interest in joining the Panel. The Local Group will work with EKH's officers to carry out a selection process.
- d. At least one Local Group member per area will have a place on the Residents' Panel, to ensure there is a link between the Board, Residents' Panel and each Local Group.
- e. Each Local Group will also select a substitute Panel member who would be able to commit to attending Residents' Panel meetings, in the event that their selected Resident Panel member(s) can attend. This situation is likely to arise in the case of a personal emergency or other unavoidable commitment arising.
- f. If a resident cannot complete their 3-year term, the relevant Local Group will elect a replacement and the replacement member will complete the remainder of the retiring member's 3-year term.

4. Panel roles and selection

- a. The Residents' Panel will elect a chair and a vice chair each year.
- b. Only the voting members of the Residents' Panel will be able to participate in the election of a chair and vice chair.
- c. The candidate who polls the most votes will be elected as chair (and the same will apply to the election of vice chair).
- d. If the chair and vice chair cannot attend a meeting of the Residents' Panel, the members attending the meeting will elect a chair for that meeting.
- e. The election of chair and vice chair will be decided by a simple majority of members attending the meeting

5. Meetings

a. Agenda items

The following standard items will be considered at each meeting of the Residents' Panel:

- Consultation/information items from EKH
- EKH Performance information
- EKH Customer satisfaction, compliments and complaints data
- Feedback of key issues from Local Groups e.g. issues that have not been resolved at a local level despite repeated requests for responses; issues that may require intervention by other Groups or be escalated to Board
- Feedback from Task and Finish Groups/Project Groups, including Scrutiny Panel reports

b. Frequency and location

The Residents' Panel will meet quarterly. The timing of its meetings will be scheduled to fit in with EKH's Board meeting cycle, to ensure that feedback from Residents' Panel can be reported to the Board in a timely manner. The Panel's meetings will be held in a central location.

c. Pre – meetings

The tenant and leaseholder members of the Panel will hold a short pre-meeting, on the day of their quarterly meeting, without officers and Board members. However, the Panel members can choose to invite their support officer (from the Resident Involvement Team) to attend. The purpose of this meeting will be to prepare for the formal meeting.

d. Quorate

The Panel will be quorate when eight out of the twelve members are present. However, if the Panel is not quorate and there are no items requiring a decision, the meeting can proceed.

Wherever possible, the Panel should reach a consensus decision when making recommendations. If a vote is taken, a simple majority will suffice to reach a decision. If there is a tie, more information will be requested and additional time will be allowed for discussion and decision making. However, if there is no further information or if there is insufficient time available, the chair person will have the deciding vote.

e. Agenda and Minutes

EKH will provide secretarial support for the Panel. An officer will be nominated to work with the chair of the Panel to arrange the distribution of the agenda (once this has been agreed by the Chair), to take and circulate minutes of the Panel's meetings. The agenda, minutes from the Panel's previous meeting and reports to be considered at the meeting will be circulated to the Panel members, Resident Board Members, and the officers at least five working days in advance of the next meeting.

f. Absences

Any member of the Panel who misses two consecutive meetings, without giving apologies, will be contacted by the Chair or Vice Chair. If the Panel member misses a further two consecutive meetings, they will be asked to attend a meeting with the Chair of the Panel and the Resident Involvement Manager to discuss the reasons for their absence. As a result of this meeting, the Chair of the Panel will write to the Panel member advising of the agreed course of action e.g. Panel member will start attending meetings again, support will be provided or the member will step down from the Panel temporarily or permanently.

g. Substitutes

Each Local Group must be represented at each Panel meeting.

Therefore, at least one selected Local Group member of the Panel should attend each of the Residents' Panel's meetings. In the event that no selected Local Group member(s) is available to attend a Panel meeting, the Local Group can nominate a substitute member to cover the absence.

h. Officers

EKH Officers will be requested to attend Residents' Panel meetings to present information and to receive feedback and recommendations from the Panel members.

i. AGM

The Residents' Panel will hold an Annual General Meeting each year. The purpose of the meeting will be as follows:

- To elect the chair and vice chair
- To provide a report about the Panel's activities and outcomes in the previous year

Anyone will be able to attend the Residents' Panel's AGM. AGM's will be advertised. However, so that accessible and safe arrangements can be made, anyone who wants to attend should inform the Resident Involvement Team in advance.

Anyone who wants to attend the AGM will only be able to raise a question or make a comment if they submit these 14 working days in advance of the meeting (before the AGM papers are distributed) and if the chair allows the question/comment.

6. EKH support

- a. As mentioned in Section 5.e above, EKH will provide a nominated officer who will provide secretarial support for the Panel.
- b. In addition, the officer will work with the Panel to agree venues, dates and times for meetings.
- c. The officer will also arrange transport for Panel members, as required, and arrange for the payment of expenses, in line with EKH's Expenses and Incentives Policy.

7. Escalation protocol

A protocol for requesting information and escalating that request in the event of no response is shown in Appendix A.

8. Communications

- a. The Panel's minutes will be available online or on request.
- b. The Panel will write an article about what they have achieved each year, to be included in the Annual Report.
- c. A separate document is available showing the relationships between the Groups.

9. Dispute resolution

- a. The Residents' Panel will develop effective working relationships with EKH. However, there may be occasions when the Panel and EKH may not be able to reach an agreement regarding a particular issue.
- b. Should a dispute/disagreement arise between the Panel and an officer or team leader/manager, the Chair of the Panel will approach a senior manager and ask them to mediate. If the dispute occurs between the Panel and a senior manager, the Chair of the Panel will seek mediation by the Chair of the Board. It is proposed that all such disputes be dealt with in 10 working days; if longer is required, the timescale should be agreed by both parties.

- c. If the dispute is with the Board, the Residents' Panel and Board may seek an independent mediator. (The Panel and Board will come to a joint agreement about who will mediate). Any such dispute should be dealt with in no more than one month.
- d. Any disputes that arise within the Panel will be dealt with under the terms of the Code of Conduct.

10. Review process

The Residents' Panel's Terms of Reference will be reviewed 1 year after it is implemented and then at least every three years thereafter, by the Panel members and officers working together.

Date:

Date of next review:

Appendix A: Information request & escalation process

