

## **Scrutiny Panel: DRAFT Terms of Reference**

### **1. Background**

The Scrutiny Panel has been created in response to the commitment of Haringey Council and Homes for Haringey to meet the Homes and Communities Agency's (HCA) Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England which requires landlords to ensure that tenants are given 'a wide range of opportunities to influence and be involved in the scrutiny of their landlord's performance and the making of recommendations to their landlord about how performance might be improved'.

A Scrutiny Working Group was set up to oversee the creation and development of the Scrutiny Panel, as well as recruitment and training.

### **2. Principles**

The Scrutiny Panel will operate under the following basic principles:

- Achieving full access to internal performance data, comparative benchmarking data and resident feedback.
- Ability to commission independent evidence gathering activities through the utilisation of other resident involvement activities of Homes for Haringey.
- Ability to commit financial resources up to the amount agreed in the annual budget process.
- Ability to gather information and speak to members of staff and tenants and leaseholders on request
- Ability to escalate concerns to the regulator if Haringey Council and Homes for Haringey are not taking into account concerns raised by the Scrutiny Panel.
- Requirement to report on activities and account for methods and recommendations.
- Having due regard to:
  - national standards and accepted good practice
  - external pressures

### **3. Purpose**

The Scrutiny Panel is the borough-wide resident-led body that will hold Haringey Council (Housing Strategy and Services) and Homes for Haringey to account through scrutiny and challenge, to ensure continuous improvement in service delivery for residents, subject to financial and regulatory constraints. The Scrutiny Panel will be independent and report to the Board.

#### **4. Responsibilities**

- To ensure that tenants' and leaseholders' views, aspirations and priorities are central to Haringey Council's (Housing Strategy and Services) and Homes for Haringey's frameworks for improving their delivery and performance.
- To hold the organisation to account to its residents.
- To act as a driver for continuous improvement in performance and excellence through the process of resident-led self-regulation (RLSR)<sup>1</sup>.
- To strengthen the links between resident involvement and the board, to ensure that tenants and leaseholders are able to influence the organisations' decision-making processes in the interests of delivering improvements in services.

#### **5. Functions**

##### **Role and remit**

The Scrutiny Panel operates outside of the Resident Involvement structure so as to be independent and avoid any potential conflict of interest

The Scrutiny Panel's remit as regards Haringey Council (Housing Strategy and Services) and Homes for Haringey will be unrestricted and extend to all areas of the business, including:

- Service quality and performance
- Business direction
- Governance

The Scrutiny Panel's activities will initially focus on service quality and performance. The panel's remit will then escalate to other areas of the business at a point when it is determined that the panel's collective competence and capacity has reached an appropriate level.

##### **Scheduling activities**

The service areas to be reviewed by the Scrutiny Panel will be informed through resident feedback or performance information.

The Scrutiny Panel will develop an annual scrutiny review work programme and present it to the board for information.

In addition to the annual core schedule of activities, the Scrutiny Panel may identify ad hoc areas of weakness or failure for investigation dependent on time and resource availability.

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<sup>1</sup> Resident-led self-regulation is an approach where housing organisations' frameworks for directing, accounting for, monitoring, assessing and modifying their own behaviour and performance are based on residents' priorities, views, and engagement with relevant processes. (Chartered Institute of Housing)

## **Values**

The Scrutiny Panel will be governed by the following core values:

- Recommendations must be proportionate, evidence-based, and reflect the operating context.
- Respecting the remit of the board in making final decisions.
- Accountability to tenants and leaseholders of Haringey Council/Homes for Haringey.
- Acting with honesty, integrity and transparency.
- Adding value to the business.

## **Accountability**

The key objective of the Scrutiny Panel is to ensure it achieves a high degree of accountability to the tenants and leaseholders of Haringey Council/Homes for Haringey. This is facilitated by adoption of the following measures:

- Formally involved residents receiving findings and recommendations for endorsement prior to board approval.
- A requirement that the Scrutiny Panel publishes outcomes from its scrutiny activities.
- A quarterly report of the Scrutiny Panel's activities to the board.
- A requirement that the Scrutiny Panel publishes its findings in Homes for Haringey's annual report.

## **6. Safeguards**

These include:

- The development of a person specification and set of standard competencies.
- Adoption of an enforceable code of conduct and confidentiality agreement.
- A requirement for members to commit to undergoing an ongoing training programme.
- Use of a suitably qualified independent mentor to assist the Scrutiny Panel's operations and assess collective competence.
- A requirement that each quarter the Scrutiny Panel publishes its scrutiny activities along with an explanation for the choice of service review in Homes for Haringey's Homes Zone and on Homes for Haringey's website.
- A six month probationary period for each Scrutiny Panel member.
- The development of a comprehensive annual appraisal system for members of the Scrutiny Panel. The aim of the system is to identify training and development needs; ultimately however it may result in members being asked to stand down from the panel.
- An annual impact assessment carried out by the scrutiny link officer to evaluate the outcomes and performance of the Scrutiny Panel as a whole.
- Ability for the board to initiate a full external scrutiny of the Scrutiny Panel.
- In cases of conflict between the Scrutiny Panel and the board either party may initiate the dispute resolution protocol.

## **7. Membership**

It is vital that the Scrutiny Panel is collectively competent. Measures that ensure that this is achieved include:

- Priority given to achieving a composition that, as far as possible, reflects the customer profile of Homes for Haringey.
- Restricting membership to 10 places (excluding the mentor), made up of tenants and leaseholders of Haringey Council/Homes for Haringey.
- Membership to be restricted to one resident per household/family – otherwise it would be seen as having an advantage over other members of the Scrutiny Panel.
- Members cannot be employed by Haringey Council or Homes for Haringey; a board member of Homes for Haringey; a councillor of Haringey Council; a business partner or a potential business partner of Haringey Council or Homes for Haringey.
- Membership to the Scrutiny Panel will be for a 3 year term, after which the member must step down but is eligible to reapply for membership through the same recruitment process open to tenants and leaseholders of Haringey Council/Homes for Haringey (however, no one may serve for more than three successive 3 year terms - 9 years).

## **8. Frequency of meetings**

The Scrutiny Panel will meet a minimum of 4 times a year to align with the provision of quarterly performance information. Additional time commitment will be required from members involved in training and specific service reviews, agreed with the chair of the Scrutiny Panel.

## **9. Quorum**

The quorum of the Scrutiny Panel shall be 5 members or half of the current membership (whichever is the lower).

## **10. Chair**

The chair and vice chair will be appointed through a secret ballot process for a term of one year.

## **11. Staffing arrangements**

The Homes for Haringey scrutiny link officer will be the link between the Scrutiny Panel and Homes for Haringey but will not have an influencing role. The scrutiny link officer is there to provide access to information and to support the chair.

No Homes for Haringey staff will attend meetings unless they are invited to answer specific questions or provide evidence.