Local Panels

Terms of Reference

1. Purpose

1.1. Local Panels have responsibility for linking the local involvement structures with the Group Panel. To ensure the local ‘voice’ is heard at a higher level with the opportunity for it to be raised up to Customer Services Committee.

1.2. They set local priorities, make decisions on local issues, monitor local service delivery, make recommendations and resolve issues at a local level.

2. Role

2.1. The Local Panel has responsibility for linking the local involvement structures with the Group Panel. Their responsibilities will include:

- Detailed scrutiny and monitoring of local service performance e.g. scrutiny of local service and performance such as estate services/ASB/income collection/void management.
- Monitoring actions to address under performance at a local level i.e. oversee the delivery of local service improvement plans
- Recommending to the Group Panel areas for group wide scrutiny e.g. Asset Management/Customer Service Centre
- Oversee the delivery of the local service improvement plan
- Hold service provider accountable by challenging poor performance, celebrating success and acting as a critical friend.
- Ensure the local provider is compliant with the consumer standards and report to the Group Panel where they are not. See appendix 1 for consumer standards
- Monitor issues which affect residents ability to sustain their tenancies such as welfare reform and/or employment provision
- Focus on annual priorities and outcomes
- Local maintenance and improvement budget responsibility
- Corporate social responsibility project choice and spending within overall funding limit.
- Act as co-regulation champions by shaping, monitoring and scrutinising local compliance with the consumer standards
- The resident consultative body for local matters

3. Membership

3.1. The make up of the panel will be:

- Up to 12 members made up of residents and independents which may include up to 2 Ward Councillors at the discretion of the local panel

3.2. The chair will be either a resident or independent elected by the panel.

3.3. Recruitment to Local Panels will be through a recruitment and selection process and the membership will reflect the resident base of the area.
3.4. Members will be expected to attend meetings and undertake an induction and training programme.

3.5. No person may become or remain a Local Panel member if he/she:
- Is not or ceases to be a resident of the relevant catchment area
- Is or becomes an employee of Network Homes
- Is under a court order relating to a breach of the terms of his/her tenancy or lease agreement or contract with Network Homes
- Is removed as a panel member under the terms of the Code of Conduct

3.6. Independent members will be selected by each Local Panel based on the skills needed and priorities of the panel.

3.7. Term of Office
- Local Panel members will initially be appointed for three years. They may stand for re-election for a further two terms.
- No appointee will be allowed to serve for more than a maximum of nine consecutive years.
- If a member who has served for nine years wishes to stand for election again in the future then they can do so after a three year break.

3.8. Chair and Vice-Chair
- The Local Panel will elect their own Chair and Vice Chair from the membership of the panel every two year.
- The Chair and Vice-Chair will hold these positions for a maximum of two years.
- The Vice Chair should be the chair in training. This will give one/two years of work shadowing and means they are ready to take over as chair.
- The Chair cannot stand for the position of Chair or Vice-Chair immediately after their two year term has ended, until there has been a break of two years.

3.9. Each Local Panel will elect two representatives to the Group Panel.

4.0 Meetings

4.1. Meetings will be held at least quarterly and will fit in with the cycle of Board meetings and Group Panel

4.2. Each operational team will be responsible for supporting the panel in their local area. Officer attendance at the meetings will be delegated by the respective Executive Director.

4.3. All papers for meetings will be sent to members at least 10 working days before a meeting

4.4. Apart from an emergency and with agreement of the Chair no additional papers will be tabled at meetings.

4.5. All Local Panel meetings will be open to all Network Homes residents living within the relevant catchment area.

4.6. All Local Panel meetings will comply with Health & Safety and equality and diversity requirements

4.7. All Local Panel members and members of the public can propose future agenda items direct to the Chair, at least six weeks prior to the next full Area Panel meeting. These will be included at the Chair’s discretion

4.8. Local Panels may request attendance at meetings by any senior member of staff or contractor as long as sufficient notice is given.
4.9. The quorum for the meeting is at least 4 members of the Local Panel to be present at the meeting. If there is less than this number then the meeting will be inquorate and decisions will not be taken

5. Conduct

- All Local Panel members will sign a copy of the Code of Conduct
Appendix 1

Consumer standards

These standards apply to all registered providers. Providers' boards and councillors are responsible for ensuring their organisation meets the consumer standards. The regulator's role is limited to setting the consumer standards and intervening only where failure of the standard could lead to risk of serious harm to tenants (the 'serious detriment test') as described in chapter five.

Tenant Involvement and Empowerment standard

Required outcomes

1 Customer service, choice and complaints

Registered providers shall:

- provide choices, information and communication that is appropriate to the diverse needs of their tenants in the delivery of all standards
- have an approach to complaints that is clear, simple and accessible that ensures that complaints are resolved promptly, politely and fairly

2 Involvement and empowerment

Registered providers shall ensure that tenants are given a wide range of opportunities to influence and be involved in:

- the formulation of their landlord’s housing related policies and strategic priorities
- the making of decisions about how housing related services are delivered, including the setting of service standards
- the scrutiny of their landlord’s performance and the making of recommendations to their landlord about how performance might be improved
- the management of their homes, where applicable
- the management of repair and maintenance services, such as commissioning and undertaking a range of repair tasks, as agreed with landlords, and the sharing in savings made, and
- agreeing local offers for service delivery
3  Understanding and responding to the diverse needs of tenants

Registered providers shall:

- treat all tenants with fairness and respect
- demonstrate that they understand the different needs of their tenants, including in relation to the equality strands and tenants with additional support needs

Home standard

Required outcomes

1  Quality of accommodation

Registered providers shall:

- ensure that tenants’ homes meet the standard set out in section five of the Government’s Decent Homes Guidance14 and continue to maintain their homes to at least this standard
- meet the standards of design and quality that applied when the home was built, and were required as a condition of publicly funded financial assistance15, if these standards are higher than the Decent Homes Standard
- in agreeing a local offer, ensure that it is set at a level not less than these standards and have regard to section six of the Government’s Decent Homes Guidance

2  Repairs and maintenance

Registered providers shall:

- provide a cost-effective repairs and maintenance service to homes and communal areas that responds to the needs of, and offers choices to, tenants, and has the objective of completing repairs and improvements right first time
- meet all applicable statutory requirements that provide for the health and safety of the occupants in their homes
Tenancy standard

Required outcomes

1  **Allocations and mutual exchange**

1.1 Registered providers shall let their homes in a fair, transparent and efficient way. They shall take into account the housing needs and aspirations of tenants and potential tenants. They shall demonstrate how their lettings:

- make the best use of available housing
- are compatible with the purpose of the housing
- contribute to local authorities’ strategic housing function and sustainable communities

There should be clear application, decision-making and appeals processes.

1.2 Registered providers shall enable their tenants to gain access to opportunities to exchange their tenancy with that of another tenant, by way of internet-based mutual exchange services.

2  **Tenure**

2.1 Registered providers shall offer tenancies or terms of occupation which are compatible with the purpose of the accommodation, the needs of individual households, the sustainability of the community, and the efficient use of their housing stock.

2.2 They shall meet all applicable statutory and legal requirements in relation to the form and use of tenancy agreements or terms of occupation.

Neighbourhood and Community standard

Required outcomes

1  **Neighbourhood management**

Registered providers shall keep the neighbourhood and communal areas associated with the homes that they own clean and safe. They shall work in partnership with their tenants and other providers and public bodies where it is effective to do so.

2  **Local area co-operation**

Registered providers shall co-operate with relevant partners to help promote social, environmental and economic wellbeing in the areas where they own properties.

3  **Anti-social behaviour**
Registered providers shall work in partnership with other agencies to prevent and tackle anti-social behaviour in the neighbourhoods where they own homes.