

Terms of reference for the Ethnic Minority Action Group

1.0 Aims

1.1

The group will provide an opportunity for Croydon Council officers to discuss matters related to housing and housing provision, with a core group of residents from ethnic minorities. This is both in order to improve mutual understanding specifically about how these matters may impact on residents from ethnic minority communities and to identify solutions or opportunities for improvement. In particular:

1.2

To identify strategies, to improve the delivery of services to residents living in council managed properties and ensure those services meet the needs of all residents.

1.3

To look at current housing related issues and proposals and ensure the needs, views and aspirations of ethnic minority residents are considered.

1.4

To consider proposed changes to procedures, policies and working practices and ensure the needs of residents from ethnic minorities are considered and accommodated as far as possible.

1.5

To develop information sharing strategies, that maximise opportunities for ethnic minority residents to be accurately informed about housing related issues, in a way that suits their needs.

2.0 Membership

2.1

Membership is open to any resident of the borough of Croydon, who is aged 18 or over, is from an ethnic minority community and who is interested in furthering the aims of the group.

2.2

The majority of members will be tenants or leaseholders of, or freeholders who pay service charges to, Croydon Council. However, up to 2 other interested Croydon residents may be entitled to become members. (also see clause 2.3 below)

2.3

The EMAG is a working, or focus group, and resident membership should not exceed 12, in order to ensure meetings of the group do not become unmanageable.

2.4

Should the level of interest in becoming a member of the group, exceed this number, (12) current members will work with officers to undertake a selection process based on commitment, skills and abilities of applicants, using a written form of application.

2.5

In addition, two councillors will be invited to become non voting members of the group, one from the majority group and the other from the shadow group.

2.6

Members will be required to sign a written declaration upon joining, by which they will undertake to attend meetings as regularly as practicable and actively participate in the business of the group.

3.0 Equalities

3.1

Due to the nature of the group, membership is to be targeted towards those sections of the community the group is established to serve, i.e. from ethnic minorities. Otherwise, any individual who satisfies the membership criteria (above) will be entitled to apply to become a member of the group.

3.2

Members of the group shall positively promote equality of opportunity, acknowledge diversity within the general community and will treat all people with dignity and respect, recognising the value of each individual. The group will work towards the elimination of all forms of discrimination against persons on grounds of race, gender, age, sexuality, disability and religious belief, etc.

3.3

Members of the group will work in partnership with officers and external organisations to meet the aims of the group.

3.4

Members are responsible for representing the best interests of all ethnic minority residents living in Croydon and should try to reflect and understand the views of all ethnic minority communities. They should not allow their personal views and / or beliefs to impact on their decision making.

4.0 Management of meetings

4.1

Meetings of the group will be called by joint agreement between officers and members, as and when relevant issues or topics arise. Officers may suggest to members that a meeting be called to discuss a new policy and members agreement should be provided before the

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meeting is convened. Conversely, if an issue arises that a member (or a number of members) wishes to discuss at this group, agreement of other members and officers will be required before a meeting is convened.

4.2

The agenda will similarly be produced through joint agreement between members and officers. The group will invite relevant guest speakers and appropriate representatives to meetings, in order that informed and open discussions take place. This could include representatives from other Council departments, contractors, other statutory services such as the Police, or local community organisations.

4.3

Officers are responsible for booking a suitable, accessible venue and inviting members and guests to the forthcoming meeting, providing a minimum of 10 working days advance notice wherever possible. If an issue arises that requires immediate action, this clause may be over-ridden.

4.4

As far as practicable, any background information, reports etc., will be sent in advance of the meeting in order that members can acquaint themselves with such information.

4.5

Meetings will be facilitated by a council officer but members are encouraged to participate in the meeting, including raising points of order and helping to ensure the meetings remain orderly and productive.

4.6

Full minutes will not be kept but brief notes and particularly action points from all meetings will be recorded and maintained by council officers. These notes and action points will be distributed to members and relevant guests within 15 working days of the meeting.

4.7

Two resident members will be selected annually, at a meeting of the EMAG, to represent the group on the tenant and leaseholder panel (TLP). Where the position is contested, voting will be carried out by a secret ballot of members present, which will be administered by officers from the Council.

4.8

In particular, representatives (as at 4.7) should ensure that discussions at the TLP include consideration of the needs and views of ethnic minority residents. These representatives will also be asked to feed back information from the TLP to the EMAG.

4.9

Any resident member who is absent from 2 consecutive meetings without good reason, will be deemed to have resigned, unless otherwise agreed by the group.

4.10

All members and officers participating in the group shall act in accordance with the councils agreed code of conduct.

5.0 Finance

5.1

The EMAG will not hold or be responsible for a budget and is therefore not able to directly fund events and activities. However, the group can direct potential funding from external sources, towards known or identified areas of need. The EMAG will be encouraged to participate in existing events and activities provided by others to promote the work of the group, or use such events to conduct consultation, promote services, schemes, etc.

5.2

Resident members will be entitled to claim from the council, for out of pocket expenses incurred as a result of their membership of the group, such as parking and travel costs, cost of telephone calls, etc. These can only be claimed upon submission of a completed claim form.

Dec 2011

Ends