

# Housing Services Group (working title)

## Constitution

### 1. Name

- 1.1 .North / South..... Housing Services Group

### 2. Geographic area represented

- 2.1 That covering .....wards, Croydon.

### 3. Aims

- 3.1 To enable members of the group and other residents living in properties managed by Croydon Council in the local area, to make their views known to the council, about new proposals and existing housing management services in Croydon.
- 3.2 To promote and improve working relationships with residents and other partners from within the affected area, in order to work towards improving the local environment and general quality of life on housing estates managed by Croydon Council.
- 3.3 To consider issues raised by residents (other than those relating to individual residents) regarding housing management services and the local environment, to discuss proposals for improving services within the area, or to suggest new ways of solving problems.
- 3.4 To receive and discuss reports such as performance reports on local services and other information provided by housing management staff, and to make recommendations about these where appropriate.

### 4. Equalities

- 4.1 The group shall positively promote equal opportunities and diversity within the community and will treat all people with dignity and respect, recognising the value of each individual. The group shall work for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against persons on grounds of race, gender, marital status, age, sexuality, disability and religion.
- 4.2 Members of the group are responsible for representing the best interests of all residents in their area/estate. They should try to reflect and understand the views of the local community, not just their own.

## 5. Attendance and membership of the group

- 5.1 To ensure transparency, the meetings of the group are open to the public and therefore anyone is welcome to attend as an observer.
- 5.2 Residents living in council managed properties in the area covered by the group (as detailed in 2.1), are particularly encouraged to attend meetings of the group, in order to share ideas and raise issues of common concern to residents in that area.
- 5.3 As far as possible, the group should be made up of proportions of tenants, leaseholders and freeholders that reflects the general tenure of properties managed by the council within the area of the group.
- 5.4 Local ward councillors will be invited to attend meetings of the group as non-voting members.
- 5.5 In order to improve continuity and establish reliable links with the local community, attendees will be invited to commit themselves to becoming a member of the group. Anyone who is interested in doing so, can become a member of the group provided they meet the criteria as shown in 5.6 below.
- 5.6 All members of the group must be either
  - a tenant or leaseholder of Croydon Council
  - a freeholder who pays a service charge to Croydon Council

**and** live in the relevant geographic area, covered by this group, as detailed in 2.1.
- 5.7 Members will be expected to confirm their membership in writing by completing a simple membership form. Members wishing to do so, will be required to renew their membership each year, in a similar manner.
- 5.8 New members will be required to register their details on the housing involvement registration database. This system enables the council to provide residents with the information and support they require and allows the monitoring of resident involvement activity. Personal details are held securely and are not released to third parties. (for more information contact a member of the resident involvement team)
- 5.9 All members of the group will be required to attend an introductory training session within three months of registering as a member, or show a good understanding of how the group and the housing service works.
- 5.10 Members will sign an undertaking to abide by this Constitution and the Resident Involvement Code of Conduct (see also 12.1 below).
- 5.11 Any member who is absent from two consecutive meetings without good reason, will be deemed to have resigned, unless otherwise agreed by the members of the group.

## **6. Meetings**

- 6.1 The group will meet four times each year and the meetings will be arranged and administered by council officers, in partnership with members.
- 6.2 Council officers will agree times and locations of meetings with members of the group but these must be convenient to the majority of affected residents and venues must be fully accessible.
- 6.3 Officers and representatives from the council and other relevant service providers will be invited and expected to attend meetings to inform discussions and to respond to residents queries.
- 6.4 The group may also invite speakers from external organisations to its meetings, as required and agreed by members.
- 6.5 Any item to be included on the agenda must be notified to the council or the Chair at least 15 working days before the date of the meeting. Additional agenda items may be included at a later date at the discretion of the Chair.
- 6.6 The agenda for each meeting will be displayed in council offices and on the council website, and at other suitable public locations within the relevant area. Agendas will also be distributed in writing, or via email, to members 10 working days in advance of the meeting by council officers.
- 6.7 All those present will be reminded of their obligation to abide by the Resident Involvement Code of Conduct at the start of each meeting.
- 6.8 Only members of the group may automatically take part in discussions at the meeting, or take part in any voting that takes place.
- 6.9 Those attending as observers may only speak when invited to do so by the Chair. However, the Chair must provide reasonable and appropriate opportunity for observers to speak, particularly if they wish to raise an issue that is relevant to the meeting or the general aims of the group.
- 6.10 The Chair will ensure the business of the meeting is managed appropriately and run in an organised manner.
- 6.11 The Chair will have the power to require any one to leave a meeting who is using inappropriate language or behaviour, or otherwise being disruptive. Council officers will provide support in such instances.
- 6.12 Should the individual refuse to leave, the Chair is entitled to close the meeting, with the agreement of other members and the council officers present.
- 6.13 A record of meetings will be prepared by council officers and will be circulated to members in writing, or via email, within 10 working days of a meeting and displayed in council offices and on the council website.

## **7. Voting**

- 7.1 In order to be eligible to vote, residents must be bona fide members of the group, in accordance with paragraph 5.7 above. New members must have attended one full meeting of the group and existing members must not have allowed their membership to lapse, as detailed in paragraph 5.11 above.
- 7.2 When a decision is required by a vote, each resident member present at the meeting, including the Chair, will have one vote. Voting by proxy will not be accepted.
- 7.3 In the event of a tie, the Chair will not have a second, or casting vote and the group will need to carry out a second vote or find agreement in another way, such as through a consensus decision.
- 7.4 Where voting is taking place for the selection of individuals to take up any of the positions of office, (e.g. Chair or representatives to other bodies) the nominees are entitled to cast a vote.
- 7.5 If required, voting by secret ballot can be arranged and administered by the officers from the council.

## **8. The selection and role of Chair and Vice Chair**

- 8.1 Every year, the members of the group will approve the selection of two members of the group who will take on the role of Chair and Vice Chair. In order to be eligible for either of these positions the individual must be eligible to vote, as detailed in 7.1 above and be present at the meeting at which voting takes place.
- 8.2 The position of Chair or Vice Chair may not be held by the same individual for more than three consecutive years. After three years, the individual must stand down and not put themselves forward for re-election to the same position for a period of one year.
- 8.3 The person appointed as Chair will set the agenda for the forthcoming meeting, in conjunction with the officer(s) from the council. The Chair will guide the business of meetings of the group.
- 8.4 Should the Chair be unable to attend a meeting, that meeting will be chaired by the Vice Chair.
- 8.5 The Chair and Vice Chair will automatically become one of the representatives to the Tenant & Leaseholder Panel.

## **9. Quorum**

- 9.1 Attendance by one third of the total number of members or 10 members of the group (whichever is smaller) will constitute a quorum. This is the minimum number of members required to enable voting to take place and resultant decisions to be recorded.
- 9.2 If the meeting of the group is not quorate, the meeting may proceed but no decisions can be made.

## **10. Representation of the views of the Housing Services Group**

- 10.1 Every year, members of the group will appoint four representatives, as well as the Chair and Vice Chair, to sit on the Tenant and Leaseholder Panel to represent the views of the group on that body. These representatives will also be responsible for feeding back to the group about the activities and decisions of the Tenant and Leaseholder Panel.
- 10.2 In order to be eligible for these positions the individuals must be eligible to vote, as detailed in 7.1 above and be present at the meeting at which selection takes place.
- 10.3 Where possible, representatives should be sought from across the geographic area covered by the group.

## **11. Election of officers of the group**

- 11.1 Every year, the Chair, Vice Chair and elected representatives to the Tenant and Leaseholder Panel, will stand down and voting will take place to select to these appointments for the next year, as detailed in section 7 of this constitution.
- 11.2 Where a position is contested, voting will be carried out by a secret ballot, which will be administered by officers from the Council.

## **12. Code of Conduct**

- 12.1 All members of the group should familiarise themselves with and will abide by, the Resident Involvement Code of Conduct. (this is available separately from the resident involvement team)

## **13. Alterations to the Constitution**

- 13.1 Amendments to this Constitution must receive the approval of a minimum of two-thirds of all members of the group, and must also receive the endorsement of the Tenants' & Leaseholders' Panel before it can take effect.