

Tenant Experience Panel – Terms of Reference

Introduction

Runnymede Borough Council's Tenant Experience Panel works in partnership with the Council to achieve our shared mission to deliver good quality housing services. By working together collaboratively the Tenant Experience Panel, Council Officers and the Housing Committee will make sure the views, voices and priorities of tenants are at the heart of the Council's performance and service improvement framework. We believe in co-regulation, and we want to play our part in supporting the Council as our landlord to deliver excellent and respectful housing services.

Our Mission

We aim help deliver excellent and respectful housing services by working in partnership with Council Officers and the Housing Committee to understand the issues that matter to tenants and by making objective recommendations to improve the Council's housing services.

1. The role of the Tenant Experience Panel is to:

- act as a tenant-led group, working in partnership with the Council, to support its delivery of tenant-centred housing services,
- be a critical friend and encourage continuous improvement through independent scrutiny of the Council's housing services,
- influence and scrutinise the Council's housing strategies, policies and services.

2. To achieve our goal, we will:

- develop positive and constructive relationships with Council officers and customers,
- carry out in-depth, detailed service reviews using a range of methods such as surveys, interviews, focus groups, mystery shopping and desktop analysis,
- use all available performance information, customer insight and feedback to identify areas for review,
- produce impartial, evidence-based recommendations based on tenant feedback,
- act positively, constructively and within the rules set out in the Code of Conduct.

3. Membership

- Tenants and leaseholders of Runnymede Council, aged 16 years or above are eligible to apply to join the Panel,
- the Panel will have a maximum of 14 members,
- we will aim for a balanced membership representative of the Council's tenants and proactively promote membership to tenants with diverse backgrounds, knowledge, skills, and experience,
- the Panel may ask for expert advice or specific skills to support their work. Such experts will have no voting rights,
- members can serve 2 x 3-year terms on the Panel,
- to ensure confidentiality and impartiality Panel members will sign the Code of Conduct, a Confidentiality Agreement, and declare any conflict of interest during their membership.
- Members are expected to work collaboratively with other Panel members and with Council Officers in order to achieve the stated mission of the Panel.

4. Who can't be a member?

- elected Housing Committee members,
- employees of Council contractors or suppliers, without specific approval
- tenants with a significant breach of their tenancy agreement, such as high levels of rent arrears and tenants and leaseholders with a history of causing or permitting antisocial behaviour. Significant breaches will be determined on a case-by-case basis by the Council and the Chair of the Panel
- tenants who could bring the Panel and the Council into disrepute,
- two or more members of the same household.

5. Recruitment to the Panel

- The Panel, working with Council Officers, will be responsible for recruitment and succession planning,
- vacancies will be widely publicised to make sure customers have the opportunity to apply
- recruitment will be supportive and inclusive, respecting a range of skills and experience
- applicants not selected will receive feedback, and information on other engagement opportunities.

6. Panel Management

- We will elect a Chair and Vice Chair to serve a 2-year term to ensure the smooth running of the Panel. Chairs will not usually serve two consecutive terms
- To elect the Chair and Vice Chair, all Panel members will be given a vote for each role. The member with the most votes will be appointed.
- Members wanting to resign must do so in writing to the Chair of the Panel and the Council.

7. Panel meetings

We will meet regularly throughout the year as needed, with meetings held at least every other month.

Meetings will take place 'in person' with an online option available.

The Council will share information documents and information in inclusive formats securely online, with other options available as needed.

In order for the Panel to make decisions in a meeting, 50% of the panel members + 1 must be in attendance. This is known as a "quorum". If there aren't enough members present, the meeting can continue, but any decisions or recommendations will carry over to the next quorate meeting.

8. Panel Activity

We will agree topics for review based on performance information, tenant priorities and Council forward plans. We will consider if the topic reflects the concerns of tenants and leaseholders and its likely impact.

Council Officers will suggest areas for review, which we will consider. The final decision on the topics will remain with the Panel.

We will gather views and feedback from other sources including tenants' groups, surveys, performance data and Council Officers.

We will use a range of methods to extend the reach of the Panel, which could include setting up meetings, focus groups, sub-groups, tenant surveys, shadowing Council Officers and benchmarking against other organisations.

9. Accountability

Recommendations and the findings of reviews will be agreed with Council Officers before submission to the Housing Committee.

Reviews will be publicised to tenants and leaseholders through their methods including the Council's website, newsletters, and social media.

The Panel will co-produce an annual report with the Council, detailing the activity and outcomes of the Panel's work.

Panel members are expected to comply with the Code of Conduct.

Council Officers will work with the Panel to ensure that it meets its objectives and delivers scrutiny that adds value for tenants and leaseholders. If there are any concerns that the Panel is not working within the parameters set by the terms of reference and Code of Conduct, an independent review of the Panel may take place.

Members will be expected to attend 75% of meetings. If a member misses three consecutive meetings they may be asked to step down from the Panel. Necessary absences may be approved based on a member's individual circumstances.

If Panel members are not satisfied with the response or support from Council Officers we can request formal feedback or a meeting with the Corporate Head of Housing to discuss our concerns.

10. Runnymede Council commitment

The Council promises to:

- Provide support and the appropriate resources to help meet the aims of the Panel.
- Respond to requests for information in a reasonable and timely manner, at least 3 weeks before the Panel's next meeting.
- Provide members with an induction and any necessary training.
- Respond to any agreed recommendations with an action plan and timetable for delivery.
- Cover all reasonable expenses to help us carry out our duties.
- Arrange periodic meetings with us to support us to deliver our objectives.
- Provide administrative support for Panel meetings and reviews.
- Help members access technology and software as necessary to carry out their role.

11. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

We will proactively champion Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, as defined in the Equality Act 2010, in everything we do as a Panel.

Council Officers will support us to do Equality Impact Assessments of our work.

The Council will provide training on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion for all Panel Members.

We will actively work to include the views of tenants and leaseholders from diverse backgrounds and will challenge discrimination if we become aware of it.

Panel members should escalate any concerns about discrimination to the Engagement and Inclusion Officer.

12. Review

We will conduct an annual review of our work and effectiveness. This will include a feedback session with a senior Council Officer to review together our progress, partnership and ways of working.

We will review of the Terms of Reference annually to ensure it is up to date and relevant to the Panel's activity.

The Council will offer appropriate training to members where training needs are identified, to ensure members are supported to carry out their role.