

Housing Panel Constitution

Contents	1
1. General Information.....	2
2. Ensuring equality	4
3. Who can be a Panel Member?	7
4. Elections and Voting.....	8
5. Conditions of Membership	9
6. Running Panel Meetings.....	10
7. Council Support.....	13
8. Changes to Housing Panels	14

I. General Information

This section contains general information about the Housing Panel – our purpose and our powers.

We hold 4 meetings a year that are open to the public and cover 10 Geographical areas across the Borough.

Our Purpose

The Housing Panel provides a base for Council tenants, leaseholders and Greenwich Council to form a partnership to			
a. Work for the benefit of all tenants and leaseholders in our neighbourhood	b. Positively promote equal opportunities and work towards the elimination of discrimination against individuals or groups	c. Work for a strong community spirit and better quality of life for all tenants and leaseholders	d. Build partnerships with other agencies to benefit the neighbourhood

Our powers

The issue	What our Panel can do
e. Spending money	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate and support other sources of fundraising for community initiatives
f. Monitoring the Housing Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor progress on housing improvement and maintenance programmes in their area • Agree which key neighbourhood housing services to monitor • Monitor the effect of resident involvement in their area
g. Housing Panel Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draw up, publicise and monitor an annual Action Plan to address local needs • The Community Participation and Diversity Officer will work with the Panel to deliver the plan
h. Giving our views	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be consulted on proposed changes and improvements to the housing service • Receive and discuss issues or reports from local residents' groups • Actively promote opportunities for involvement • Feedback the Panel's view to the Council via the Borough Wide Housing Panel or other bodies as appropriate • Aim to ensure that the panel accurately reflects local residents' views
i. Publicity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicise the work of the panel to the community

2. Ensuring equality

This section seeks to make sure that all residents and partners are treated with respect. It sets out:

- a. the responsibilities of the Panel
- b. the responsibilities of the Panel Members
- c. how the Action Plan will be used to build equality

Ensuring Equalities

<p>a. Responsibility of the Panel</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To positively promote equal opportunities within the community • To treat people with dignity & respect, aiming to recognise the value of each individual • To work for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against people on the grounds of ethnicity, gender, age, sexuality, disability & religion. • To aim for its membership to reflect the make up of tenants and leaseholders in the neighbourhood (with regard to ethnic origin, gender, age etc).
<p>b. Responsibility of Panel members</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be accountable to all members of their community in carrying out their role • To receive and sign by a copy of the Equal Opportunities Objectives of Greenwich Council and to abide by this • To take part in associated training
<p>c. Using the Housing Panel Action Plan</p>	<p>The Housing Panel Action Plan will include a series of practical steps to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure that everyone in the community is represented and has an equal opportunity to get involved • Achieve a membership that reflects the make up of tenants and leaseholders in the neighbourhood

Sections 3, 4 and 5 Membership & Elections

The formal voting membership of the Housing Panel is made up of Council tenants, leaseholders and Councillors. Other residents can get involved as Shadow Reps (to support and deputise for the Panel Member).

The area our Panel covers is divided up so that all can be represented. These smaller areas are called constituencies.

The following 3 sections set out

3. Who can be a panel member
4. Who can vote and how elections will be carried out
5. The conditions of membership

3. Who can be a Panel Member?

a. Panel membership is made up of	Council tenants	One or two council tenants (if required) will represent each constituency. This person will live in the constituency they represent. The configuration of the constituencies should be determined by the Operations Manager in discussion with the Panel (i.e. to agree on what size and format best suits the neighbourhood).
	Leaseholders	A minimum of 1 council leaseholder will represent the neighbourhood (depending on the proportion of leaseholders living in the neighbourhood – i.e. one rep up to 15%, 2 reps for 15% – 30% etc). The Home Ownership Unit will be used as a source to provide these figures.
	Councillors	Councillor membership will be determined by the council (but with a maximum of 6 per panel)
b. How many Panel Members are there?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approximately 10 tenant Panel Members for each neighbourhood – to be locally agreed by the Panel • At least 1 council leaseholder Panel Member • Up to a maximum of 6 Councillors • Other than in very special circumstances the minimum age for a tenancy is 18. That should be the minimum age for being a rep too. • The Panel Membership will be reviewed every 2 years. 	
c. Who can be a Shadow (deputy) Representative?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each tenant and leaseholder Panel Member should have a Shadow Rep to support and deputise for them. They must also be a Council tenant or leaseholder living in the neighbourhood and part of the constituency. • • Voting restrictions will apply (see section on meetings and voting) 	
d. Exceptional Circumstances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ In the event of there being no representation of any area another Representative or shadow may cover the area without pay. 	

4. Elections and Voting

a. Electing Panel Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Panel Members will be elected by tenants living in their constituency and present at the meeting. • The leaseholder Panel Rep(s) will be elected by council leaseholders across the neighbourhood • a public meeting will be held every 2 years for elections
b. Filling vacancies for Panel Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a vacancy arises in between elections nominations will be called for and a new Panel Member will be elected by their constituency at a panel meeting
c. Shadows Representative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shadow Representatives will be elected by members of their constituency at the same meeting as Panel Members and the right to vote.
d. The Chair (who will be a tenant Panel Member)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenant , shadow representative and leaseholder Panel Members >will select a tenant chair from amongst themselves by blind ballot when two or more candidates are standing
e. Vice Chair (will be a Councillor)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillors will make their own arrangements to fill the Vice Chair position from the local ward.
f. Electing representative to the Borough Wide Housing Panel	<p>The Panel will select:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One Representative and one Shadow Representative for the Borough Wide Housing Panel however an additional Rep maybe nominated dependent on the numbers of properties covered by the Panel. These reps will be Panel Members who are Council tenants.
g. Leaseholder Forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One leaseholder Panel Member for the Leaseholder Forum.

5. Conditions of Membership

<p>a. The code of Conduct</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone taking part in the Housing Panel will be given a copy of the jointly agreed Code of Conduct to sign and abide by.
<p>b. When can't a Council tenant or leaseholder stand as a Panel Member?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council tenants/leaseholders are not eligible to stand as a panel member if <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Council is investigating a council tenant for any breach of tenancy condition, or if proceedings have commenced or been taken against the tenant in the preceding 2 years ○ The Council has started proceedings against a leaseholder for recovery of service charge arrears or any other breach of leasehold conditions ○ In order to avoid any potential conflict of interest any employee of the royal Borough of Greenwich will not be eligible to stand.
<p>c. Removal of Panel Members</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any Panel Member who fails to attend 2 meetings in a row without good reason or giving apologies will be contacted by the Community Participation and Diversity Officer to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Check they are still interested ○ Give them the opportunity to attend the next panel meeting – failing which they will be removed from the Panel • Existing Panel Members will have their membership suspended if the Council issues proceedings against them for rent or service charge arrears or other breaches of tenancy/lease conditions. • A Panel Member can be removed from the Panel or a position held on the panel if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the Panel pass a vote to do this at 2 meetings, of which one must be a special meeting ○ 7 days notice is given of the meetings, including reasons for the proposed removal ○ there are 14 days between each meeting ○ there is a specific item on the agenda ○ at least two thirds of the panel members attend each meeting ○ before any vote is held the person proposing the removal states the reasons why and the member concerned is given an opportunity to make a statement in reply

6. Running Panel Meetings

This section sets out how Panel meetings will be run. It covers:

- a. Running Panel meetings
- b. Running elections
- c. Holding special Panel meetings
- d. Publicising the Panel
- e. Voting at meetings
- f. Setting the agenda

Running Panel Meetings

a. Panel meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 meetings will be held each year. • Meetings will be open to the public. • Meetings will include time for Panel Members to give report back. • Meetings will include regular updates on the Action Plan. •
b. Elections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elections will be held every 2 years • 14 days' notice will be given to all tenants and leaseholders • Panel Members will stand down and the meeting will elect Panel Members for the coming 2 years. Leaseholders will elect their leaseholder member.
c. Special Panel meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These can be called either By the Council <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ By the Panel Chair to deal with urgent business or ○ If more than half the panel members request it • The Panel Members/Chair must give the Area Operations Manager enough notice for publicity to be distributed at least 2 weeks before the meeting. • In exceptional circumstances if the matter to be tackled is very urgent less notice can be given
d. Publicity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notice of Panel meetings will be <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Advertised in Greenwich Time listings ○ Displayed in other local community venues as decided by the Panel ○ Advertised in local newsletters where possible • Translations and interpreters will be provided on request • Minutes of meetings will be <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sent to representatives and shadow representatives Written up and mailed out 10 working days after the meeting and where possible displayed by the Panel members where they live.

<p>e. Voting</p> <p>Quorum (i.e. number of people needed at a meeting to make a valid decision)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally the Panel should aim to make decision by reaching a consensus • Only elected tenant and leaseholder panel members and designated councillor(s) will have voting rights • Where a decision needs to take place by a vote each Panel Member will have one vote • The Chair will have a second, or casting, vote in the event of a tie • Voting will be by a show of hands (unless more than 3 Panel Members request ballot forms) • One third of the tenant and leaseholder Panel Members must be at the meeting for a decision to be valid • If 2 consecutive meetings are inquorate a letter will go to all Panel Member and all ward Councillors explaining the situation. The next meeting will plan remedial action.
<p>f. Setting agendas</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chair, Vice Chair and Community Participation and Diversity Officer will meet in between Panel meetings to deal with outstanding matters and to agree on topics for the next agenda. • The Panel can agree to open the agenda-setting meeting to all Panel Members.

7. Council Support

This section sets out what support the Council will give to the Housing Panel.

What support will be given?	Who by?
a. A lead Council officer to attend Panel meetings	The Area Operations Manager (in a non-voting, advisory capacity)
b. Servicing the Panel	The Council
c. Supporting tenant and leaseholder involvement in the Panel	A named Community Participation and Diversity Officer
d. Monitoring complaints and grievances	The Community Participation and Diversity Team.
e. Dealing with specific complaints	Any specific complaints should be addressed to the Participation Manager.

8. Changes to Housing Panels

Housing Panels may not always be the best way to involve tenants and leaseholders. Changes may be needed in the future. This section sets out:

- a. How changes can be made to the Housing Panel constitution
- b. How Housing Panels could be changed or replaced

a. Changing the constitution	This will only happen <ul style="list-style-type: none">• After consultation with all Housing Panels and• Through the Borough Wide Housing Panel
b. Replacing the Housing Panel structure	This will only happen after extensive consultation with all the Housing Panels & the Borough Wide Housing Panel and in order to make way for a new tenant involvement structure.