TOWER HAMLETS HOMES

RESIDENTS’ PANEL

INFORMATION

FOR CANDIDATES

**INTRODUCTION**

This information pack is for tenants and leaseholders of Tower Hamlets Homes who are interested in applying to be part of the Tower Hamlets Homes Residents’ Panel. This pack provides information about:

1. About Tower Hamlets Homes
2. About the Residents’ Panel
3. Key responsibilities of the Residents’ Panel
4. Being a Residents’ Panel member & Competencies – Role Profile
5. Code of conduct
6. Recruitment process
7. Residents’ Panel application form

**1. About Tower Hamlets Homes**

Tower Hamlets Homes manages homes and communities owned by Tower Hamlets Council. We are responsible for the day-to-day running of the neighbourhoods - from collecting rent and service charges and carrying out repairs, to improving homes and communal areas.

Tower Hamlets Homes was set up by the Council as an arms length management organisation (or ALMO), part of a government plan to improve services for council tenants and leaseholders and to channel extra money into council housing.

Tower Hamlets Homes is a separate not-for-profit company owned by the Council and managed by a board of directors. The board is made up of thirteen members. They comprise of the following:

* Four councillors.
* Five residents.
* Four independent members.

Our Mission

Tower Hamlets Homes will work with the Council, our other strategic partners and our diverse communities to improve the quality of life for all our residents through providing excellent housing services and decent homes in decent neighbourhoods.

The Executive Management Team

Susmita Sen Chief Executive

Ann Otesanya Director of Neighbourhoods

Neil Isaac Interim Director of Finance and Customer Services

John Tunney Director of Asset Management

Paul Davey Director of Business Transformation

Housing Management

Tower Hamlets Homes is responsible for tenancy management including anti-social behaviour, estate management coordination of the re-letting of empty homes, income collection, home ownership, servicing and coordination of participation arrangements.

Continuous Improvement

Tower Hamlets Homes leads on the following: making sure that we listen to what residents tell us to help us get better, equality and diversity, resident involvement including client role for Tenant Management Organisations, performance management; business and service planning, business systems and intelligence, service improvement; change management and project management and quality assurance systems.

Property services

Decent homes, regeneration-linked activity, major works, planned and cyclical maintenance, responsive repairs including communal repairs and maintenance, gas servicing, repairs to empty homes, and estate service commissioning and monitoring.

Resources

Finance, value for money, company accounts, risk, internal audit, service level agreements with the council, procurement, health and safety, facilities, ICT, and people management.

THE TOWER HAMLETS CONTEXT

Tower Hamlets Homes manages housing on behalf of the council under the terms of a Management Agreement between us and the Council. The Council is responsible for making key decisions and policies, such as the setting of rent and service charges, developing policies and strategies and maintaining the Housing Register.

We work in partnership with the Council both to help it deliver its responsibilities and to contribute to the overall objectives of the Council for the Borough.

Tower Hamlets Homes manages these homes on behalf of the council under the terms of the Management Agreement.

*Areas of responsibility*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Tower Hamlets Homes**  Company direction and housing management | **Tower Hamlets Council**  Whole borough housing strategy and housing policy |
| Tenancy and estate services - area housing management teams and local service teams | Choice based lettings, transfers and allocations |
| Income collection | Rent setting, HRA and subsidies |
| Home ownership services including right to buy and re-sales | Homelessness, supply and demand, short life housing |
| Community engagement, support for Tenants & Residents Associations and local meetings | Servicing the LAPs. The borough has been divided into eight LAPs based on local wards Each one of the LAPs provide a platform for local residents to have their say on the improvements in their area, and to influence how the changes are carried out. |
| Tenant Management Organisation monitoring and support | Tenant Management Organisation management allowances |
| Major works and decent homes investment | Housing regeneration and affordable housing developments, housing associations |
| Planned maintenance and responsive repairs | Capital programme forward planning |
| Reporting performance to the client side | Clienting the ALMOs  Computer systems:   * Housing management system (SX3) system and core reports * Respond complaints system |

**2. ABOUT THE RESIDENTS’ PANEL**

Tower Hamlets Homes’ Residents’ Panel was established in 2010, are a group of volunteer residents, who help shape what we do and how we work. It’s a fresh way for residents to have their say about the homes and services we provide. Places are open to all Tower Hamlets Homes tenants or leaseholders.

The Residents' Panel is a group of tenants & leaseholders that look closely at THH performance and makes sure we are doing what we say we are. They scrutinise our service and performance and recommend to the Board what they think needs to improve. To date the RESIDENTS’ panel have reviewed a range of service, including our ASB Service and Engagement Service, Complaints Process, Decent Homes Complaints and Communications Process, all of which were sent to the board for discussion and consideration.

The Residents Panel does not manage Tower Hamlets Homes or its staff. Day to day operations is the responsibility of the Chief Executive and the Executive Management Team.

The Panel will be made up of 11 residents consisting of Tenants & Leaseholders and covering the demographic makeup of the borough.

The panel will meet six times per year.

The panel will make recommendations to the board, who will make the ultimate decisions.

This is a big challenge, so expect to commit around one day equivalent per month to this important and exciting role.

Residents’ Panel members are not paid, but we’ll meet all travel and other expenses. You’ll also get to meet new people, learn valuable new skills and be a vital part of something big – building a better, brighter Tower Hamlets for everyone.

The term of office for each member will be two years. Those members stepping down can re-apply to join the panel if they so wish, for another two year term.

We want to hear from you if you:

* Are a Tower Hamlets Homes tenant or leaseholder
* Think local housing services and neighbourhoods can be improved
* Have some spare time, the energy and ideas to improve services.

**3. KEY RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE RESIDENTS’ PANEL**

**RESIDENTS’ PANEL TERMS OF REFERENCE**

**2017**

**1.0 Background**

1.1 The Residents’ Panel of THH was established to ensure effective and strategic resident scrutiny of the ALMO’s services.

**2.0 Role & Purpose**

2.1 The Panel’s role is to ensure that the resident voice – in terms of needs, concerns and aspirations – is listened to, heard and acted upon by THH.

The Panel will execute this role through the following means:

* 1. Reviewing and monitoring a range of performance indicators relating to customer service (whether service standards or other measures of tenant and leaseholder satisfaction or local offers or a combination of some or all of these elements)

1. **Powers of the panel**

3.1 Challenging THH and further exploring at panel meetings the reasons for any areas of under-performance, and identifying areas for improvement;

- Have the power to commission/request the following;

* Request service managers to report and attend panel meetings.
* Request for more data from service areas.
* Commission focus groups with key resident groups
* Request visit’s to high performing organisations
* Request expert advice
* Commission mystery shopping
* Commission surveys

3.2 Making recommendations based on consideration of the evidence submitted by the above scrutiny activity.

3.3 The resident’s panel will work closely with the service development groups (SDP) to share information and work-plans.

3.4 To agree, on an annual basis, the performance indicators to be presented to its meetings.

3.6 Present its findings to the Tower Hamlets Board, who makes the ultimate decisions.

3.7 All decisions made by the panel will be with overall majority vote.

**4.0 Powers of Tower Hamlets Homes:**

4.1 THH reserves the right to accept or reject the recommendations made by the panel.

* 1. THH reserves the right to change the way scrutiny functions are structured.

**5.0 Membership, recruitment, servicing**

5.1 The Panel will comprise a maximum of 11 members.

5.2 The membership will be the following:

* Five Residents
* Four leaseholders
* Two tenants of leaseholders

5.3 Where possible, the composition of the Panel will aim to reflect the diversity of the resident profile, whether tenure (the balance between tenants and leaseholders) or demography, ethnicity, and other diversity strands.

5.4 Recruitment and retention of the residents will be primary role of the resident engagement team.

5.5 Resident panel members cannot be members of any other formal body within the THH engagement structure, other than be a representative, from the Residents Panel, on a SDG, or members of their own Residents Association.

5.6 Appointments to the Panel will be competency-based. As and when vacancies on the Panel arise, an assessment will be made of skills gaps on the Panel and how these are best filled through a recruitment and selection process

5.7 The Chief Executive of THH will attend meetings of the panel by invitation only. A THH Board member will attend meetings of the panel also by invitation only.

**6.0 Role of Members**

6.1 Panel members will need to be committed to the aims and framework of the working group, and to show goodwill, understanding and a measure of patience.

6.2 The panel and its members is an advisory body, and do not have powers on operational running of the organisation.

6.3 Members need to engage constructively with service providers by:

6.4 Taking a wider view of what is best for residents, beyond their immediate personal interests

6.5 In order to fulfil their duties successfully Panel Members must take part in an annual assessment of their training and development needs and then participate in actively in the annual training programme.

6.6 Members must attend meetings in good time having fully prepared themselves by reading their meeting papers and being ready to participate

6.7 Members must not send instructions to THH officers outside of the meeting and must communicate with the chair.

6.8 Members must not bring THH into disrepute when undertaking their duties and maintain confidentiality

**7.0 Chair of Body**

7.1 The panel will have a dedicated chair for the period of one year. The chair will be elected each year at the Panels annual away day or ordinary Residents Panel meeting

7.2 The chair will be responsible for finalising the agenda for any meetings s/he will chair with the resident scrutiny co-ordinator.

7.3 The chair is only entitled to speak for and on behalf of the panel at non-panel meetings with its prior consent.

7.4 The chair may only sign off documents on behalf of the Panel with the Panels expressed consent.

7.5 The chair will agree to, and comply within the duties and responsibilities set out in the Chair’s role description.

**8.0 Eligibility**

8.1 Tenants, Leaseholders and tenants of leaseholders will be eligible for selection as Panel members.

8.2 Any tenants or residents who are the subject of serious complaints, or have any previous or current history of anti-social behaviour, will not be eligible.

8.3 Any tenant or resident who have serious rent or leasehold charge arrears will not be eligible.

8.2 Finally, it should be noted that Tower Hamlets Homes has the power to remove any members who are in breach of the Code of Conduct.

**9.0 Structure of relationships**

***9.1 Tower Hamlets Board***

9.2 The Panel will feed insights, concerns and scrutiny recommendations to the THH Board, and will have a right of response from the Board.

***9.3 Resident Population***

9.4 The Panel will identify needs of the residents through the following means:

* 1. Resident Satisfaction data
  2. Complaints information
  3. Commissioning qualitative and quantitative resident research projects (focus groups/surveys)
  4. Taking account of feedback received from residents and their representative organisations

**10.0 Communication and Marketing**

10.1 The Panel will undertake to communicate regularly with other residents through:

* the *Open Door* publication;
* liaison with other parts of the resident involvement framework;
* having a dedicated section in the Annual Report; and
* Any other communications deemed appropriate.

**11.0 Annual Work Plan**

11.1 The panel will have an annual work plan. The work plan will be agreed in quarter four of the previous year or at the annual away day.

11.2 The responsibility of development of the work plan is the Resident Feedback & Complaints Manager.

**12.0 Role of lead members of staff**

12.1 The Panel and its annual action plan will be serviced by THH’s Resident Feedback & Complaints Team.

**13.0 Role of the independent/expert advice**

13.1 The panels may occasionally buy-in independent advice.

13.2 The panel members will need to agree beforehand what specific advice they would like to buy, this will form part of the brief which will be used in the tendering process.

**14.0 Frequency of meeting**

14.1 The Panel will generally meet every two months. The minimum number of meetings will be six per year.

**15.0 Length of Service**

15.1 Members will serve for a maximum of 2 years after which they must stand down. Thereafter they can apply to serve for a second 2 year term.

15.2 After 4 consecutive years of service a Panel member must stand down. This member will then have to wait for one year before becoming eligible to reapply to re-join the Panel.

**16.0 Code of Conduct**

16.1 All members of the group will sign up to and adhere to the code of conduct.

**17.0 Incentives**

17.1 All members will receive travel and childcare costs set out in the “travel and expenses policy”.

* 1. Members of the Residents Panel will also receive a flat payment of a £10 voucher for every meeting they attend. The vouchers will be given out annually and members will need to attend 50% of meetings for the year to qualify.

1. **Quorum**

18.1 The Quorum for Resident Panel Members is a minimum of 4 members.

**The Role of Chairperson**

The chairperson is the formal 'voice' of the Residents’ Panel.

The chair is responsible for:

* Chairing meetings
* Signing documents on behalf of the Residents’ Panel
* Ensuring all relevant information is made available to resident panel members.
* Ensuring the Residents’ Panel is run according to its terms of reference and code of conduct. Resolving disputes and grievances.
* Representing the Residents’ Panel at external meetings and events
* In the chairperson’s absence, the vice-chairperson can represent the group and preside over meetings

**4. BEING A RESIDENTS’ PANEL MEMBER – what’s expected of you**

**PANEL MEMBER ROLE PROFILE**

The role of a Residents’ Panel member is to add value to our business by helping to monitor strategy and direction in the interests of residents, other service users and the wider community. Each Panel member should act in the interests of all residents and not necessarily any one area, or group of tenants, leaseholders or others. This is not always easy but it will ensure that the Panel is working for the benefit of all tenants and leaseholders.

Panel members who will be selected will not all be at the same level of experience and competency, so we will assess the training needs and provide necessary training to ensure that they are effective in their roles.

Some of the desired skills and experience might include some of the following:

* Committee skills
* Assessing strategy
* Representing
* Analysing and scrutinising
* Team working
* Group decision making

Tenants and leaseholders have lots of valuable experience and skills that they can bring to the Residents’ Panel. They can also learn more about Tower Hamlets Homes through training and information sessions, seminars and conferences.

Panel members must also be willing to learn about a variety of issues such as:

* Housing issues
* Improving and monitoring housing services
* How the organisation is governed
* Working as part of a team
* Finance and budgets

The role of each Panel member is to add value to our work by contributing experience and insight to help strategy and direction in the interests of residents, other service users and the wider community. Panel members should be committed to the following:

* The principles and practices of collective responsibility and decision-making.
* The principles of resident involvement.
* Providing the best possible services, within the resources available, for residents and other service users

**COMPETENCIES**

Here are some examples of competencies:

* Committee skills
  + Ensure all Panel members have an opportunity to contribute.
  + Able to participate in discussions and decisions so that all participants are aware of the reasons for decisions reached and the action to be taken next.
* Leadership and motivation
  + Demonstrate commitment to the aims and purposes of Tower Hamlet Homes.
  + Develop and maintain good relationships with people.
* Analysing and scrutinising
  + Analyse information and reports to determine key issues.
  + Spot omissions from presented information.
  + Examine various aspects of a problem or issues.
* Team working
  + Respects the roles and feelings of others.
  + Respects the feelings of others.
  + Compromise when appropriate.
  + Does not let personal relationships or interests interfere with fulfilling the Residents’ Panel purpose.
* Group decision making
  + Influence others through persuasive discussion.
  + Allows others to contribute; does not dominate the discussion.
  + Listens: sees the views of others.

**5. THE CODE OF CONDUCT**

**Introduction**

This Code of Conduct outlines the role and behaviours expected of members of the Residents’ Panel at Tower Hamlets Homes (THH). It also sets out the spirit of partnership in which members of the Panel and THH members of staff should conduct their business.

1. All panel members and any other attendees at Residents’ Panel meetings are required to act in a courteous manner and contribute actively to a relationship of mutual respect.
2. The Residents’ Panel is committed to encouraging open and tolerant exchanges of views on all issues.
3. Members of the Panel are expected not to bring the organisation into disrepute.

**Members are encouraged to:**

1. Treat one another with courtesy and respect.
2. Arrive on time for the start of meetings.
3. Ensure that the details or personal circumstances of any individual resident is not discussed in meetings without the express permission of that resident
4. Not use Residents’ Panel meetings to report repairs, neighbour disputes or any other matter related to their own tenancy or home ownership.
5. Adhere to this Code of Conduct.
6. Attend all meetings. Non-attendance at 2 consecutive Residents’ Panel meetings may result in a ‘2 strike’ rule, whereby membership of the Residents’ Panel might be forfeited.
7. In the event that a meeting cannot be attended, apologies will be offered in advance to the Chair of the Panel.
8. Attend resident HUB meetings (and any other meetings identified by the Panel as necessary) and update fellow tenants and leaseholders on the progress and work of the Panel.
9. Give members of staff at least 2 weeks’ notice of requests to attend Panel meetings.

**Conduct at meetings**

Members of the Residents’ Panel should at all times observe the following points while taking part in meetings.

1. Be courteous to each other and help other members to find the best solution to issues being discussed.
2. Allow each other the opportunity to speak and comment.
3. Follow the Chair’s guidance in the conduct of the meeting.
4. Remember that they are representing the views of, and are accountable to, their fellow residents.
5. Remember that the purpose of the meeting is to benefit residents generally and not specific individuals.
6. Not to speak or write on behalf of the Panel without its prior agreement. Any correspondence to stakeholders should be
7. Approved by the Panel;
8. Written on its behalf; and
9. Made available to all members
10. The Chair has the right to ask any member of the Panel or invited guest to leave the meeting if s/he considers that individual to be in breach of the Code of Conduct.

### Equality and Diversity

Panel members should represent the views of the diverse community of THH residents and promote the involvement of all.

All who attend meetings have the right to be treated with dignity and respect regardless of their ethnicity, social standing, nationality, disability, gender, marital status, age, religion, or any other matter pertaining to their identity.

Offensive, disruptive, threatening or abusive behavior and language, including racist, sexist and homophobic views or actions, will not be tolerated and will constitute a breach of this Code.

The Panel reserves the right to ensure that any member who acts inappropriately in this respect may be barred from being a member of the Panel.

**Confidentiality**

From time to time, residents will acquire and have access to confidential information and information that has not yet been made public. When residents are advised that information is confidential, it must not be disclosed to other people under any circumstances. Residents may be asked to sign an agreement that such information will not be disclosed. Such information must not be used for personal gain.

## Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest arises when someone’s personal views or connections might influence or affect decisions on matters that are under discussion.

Individual members should therefore:

1. Disclose any interest, whether personal or on behalf of any group they represent, that they consider may affect or influence their approach to the matter under discussion.
2. Not expect to receive more or less favourable treatment by others because of their membership on the Panel.

##### Political Affiliation

Individual members may be affiliated to or be members of a political party but they may not represent a political party in their role as a member of the Panel.

**Breach of Code of Conduct**

Should there be a breach of this Code by any member, whether inside or outside a Panel meeting, the Chair may give a verbal warning to the individual. Any member of the Panel may also propose that another member be given a verbal or written warning if they believe them to be in breach of the Code.

If, despite a warning, a participant continues to breach this Code of Conduct, or otherwise seriously disrupts a meeting, they can be expelled or suspended from meetings by the Chair of the meeting.

If the Chair of the meeting fails to expel a participant who continues to breach this Code, officers will refer those present to this Code of Conduct but reserve the right to withdraw from the meeting.

If a participant feels they have been treated unfairly in relation to any breaches of the Code of Conduct, they are entitled to use the THH and Tower Hamlets Council formal Complaints Procedure.

### Complaints

It is our expectation that informal complaints can be dealt with through direct approaches to the individuals concerned.

Any formal complaints against members of the Panel should be made to the Chair of the Panel.

In the event that a formal complaint needs to be made against the Chair of the Panel, the complaint will be made in the first instance to the Chief Executive of THH, who will assign 2 Panel members to either mediate or investigate.

Members found in breach of this Code of Conduct may be removed from the Residents’ Panel.

**Panel Member’s undertaking to observe the Code of Conduct**

Panel Member Name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**6. THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS**

Residents will be recruited through a recruitment process via application and interview.

**STEP 1 – Advertising & Marketing**

In order to ensure that all residents are aware of this opportunity and to ensure a representative group of applicants we will put in adverts in Open Door, our regularly residents’ magazine, East End Life and local ethnic press. We will also produce posters and leaflets and have put them up in local notice boards, all our offices and in other key locations. We will also conduct outreach work to promote this opportunity to some of our hard-to-reach and under-represented groups to encourage them to apply.

**STEP 2 – Short listing & Interview**

Applications will be short listed based on how they meet the competencies and criteria listed above. Short listed applicants will be invited to an informal interview. The panel will consist of:

* One Resident Panel Member
* One Tower Hamlets Homes Board Member
* A member of the Strategic Management Team.

All unsuccessful candidates will be notified and we will encourage them to get involved in other ways, such as getting involved in estate inspections or joining one of our working groups.

The Panel’s independent mentor will advise and oversee the whole recruitment process and to insure that it is fair, transparent and meets the above recruitment process.

**STEP 3 – Induction & Development**

New members will then be requested to attend an induction days and also be supported with training needs.