

Terms of Reference for Maryhill Housing Association Tenants' Scrutiny Panel

Description

The Maryhill Housing Association (MHA) Tenants' Scrutiny Panel (the Panel) will be an independently tenant led group that will monitor MHA performance and will carry out formal and transparent assessment of any part of an existing or proposed housing service or function.

The Panel's work falls under the self-regulatory framework for Social Housing and is to ensure that service or function is delivered in line with this framework.

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2010 set out the requirement for a Scottish Social Housing Charter (SSHC) which came into effect in 2012. The Charter sets out sixteen (16) outcomes which measure performance, fourteen (14) of which are relevant to MHA. The panel will, as far as possible, monitor MHA performance against these outcomes.

The Panel may develop links to other tenant participation groups.

1. Aims and Objectives

- 1.1 The Panel will provide an external challenge to MHA and make recommendations aimed at:
 - a. Carrying out a formal, robust and transparent assessment of any part of an existing or proposed housing service or function;
 - b. Provision of independent checks and challenges to existing performance, satisfaction levels and processes;
 - c. Assurance that the service or function is delivering in line with the regulatory body's framework.
 - d. To make recommendations aimed at improving performance/ satisfaction/ services/functions through providing well researched advice and guidance.
- 1.2 The Panel will assess and make recommendations to the Board to influence performance level, service delivery and decision making.

2. Purpose

- 2.1 To scrutinise service delivery and performance, and to work with MHA to drive forward improvements.
- 2.2 To form an integral part of self-assessment by developing an effective working partnership with Maryhill Housing Association's Board, Senior Management, and staff.
- 2.3 To assess and make recommendations in accordance with SSHC outputs.

3. Role of the Panel

- 3.1 To act independently in the interests of tenants and other customers as covered by the SSHC and take an objective view of performance against proposed service or function that is under scrutiny.
- 3.2 To assess value for money efficiency and effectiveness of services.
- 3.3 To request and then examine data to enable the panel to review and evaluate services

- 3.4 To make meaningful recommendations to the Board and Senior Management Team (SMT) for continuous service improvement and discuss related resource and budget implications with the aim of ensuring improvement of MHA's overall business.
- 3.5 To act constructively as a "critical friend" and to recognise areas of good performance and success as well as negative aspects.
- 3.6 To set priorities for their own work plan, agenda, and timescales for action.
- 3.7 To monitor, record and evidence the impact of their recommendations by demonstrating improvements.
- 3.8 Benchmark with other organisations as and when required to assist MHA in improving service standards to compare MHA's standards with those of similar housing providers.
- 3.9 To promote the work of the panel and encourage others to become involved in scrutiny via existing RTOs among other groups and aim for the panel to be representative of the MHA tenant demographic profile, as far as possible.
- 3.10 To feed into the format and content of the Association's Annual Review, taking on Board feedback from other tenants, ensuring the format and content is accessible with plain and jargon free language.

4. Role Description for a Scrutiny Panel Member

- 4.1 Members of MHA's Scrutiny Panel are volunteers.

5. Selection and Membership of the Panel

- 5.1 The selection process is open to all MHA tenants and other customers as covered by the SSHC, however 'other customer' panel members will only take part in scrutiny of services which impact directly on them, so may be required to be granted leave of absence during non-relevant scrutiny work
- 5.2 The Panel will consider the impact of equality/diversity issues in all their work. It will do this by assessing support needs of members and make reasonable adjustments to remove any barriers to participation.
- 5.3 Only one person from a household can become a Panel member.
- 5.4 Carers can accompany a member but cannot participate in discussions within the meeting.
- 5.5 There will be up to 12 members (at least 70% of who must be Maryhill Housing Association tenants).
- 5.6 Board members may not form part of the Scrutiny Panel
- 5.7 There are no staff members.
- 5.8 Any Panel member elected or co-opted to the Board must resign from the Panel immediately, to ensure there is no conflict of interest and scrutiny remains independent.
- 5.9 Members do not represent registered tenant organisations or geographic areas, but act as individuals.
- 5.10 Tenants who have breached their tenancy may not eligible to apply for membership of the Panel.
- 5.11 Factored owners in dispute with the Association are not eligible to apply for membership of the Panel.
- 5.12 Where a member fails to attend a meeting for three consecutive months without apologies or explanation, they shall be deemed to have voluntarily resigned from the Panel.

- 5.13 A member may request a leave of absence from the Panel and return to the Panel at a mutually agreeable time. The Corporate Services Manager would reach out to support as appropriate during any leave of absence
- 5.14 MHA will support the Panel through regular publicising the Panel and seeking new recruits
- 5.15 Anyone who ceases to be a tenant or other form of customer of MHA will be deemed to have resigned their position on the panel.
- 5.16 Any Panel member who has been served a legal notice by the Association will be suspended from their membership of the Panel until such time as their dispute is resolved; failing which they will be deemed to have resigned their position on the Panel

6. Accountability

- 6.1 The scrutiny panel may consider a request to carry out any particular scrutiny project directly from MHA's Board of Management.
- 6.2 The panel can request additional evidence if and when required to help with scrutiny projects.
- 6.3 Staff may be invited to attend panel meetings to present evidence / information.
- 6.4 Initially the panel will present a draft report to the SMT for their comments. The final report will however be presented to The Board.
- 6.5 The findings of the scrutiny panel will be published on MHAs website and in the Maryhill newsletter;
- 6.6 In the event of the SMT and or Board having concerns about the panels' compliance with its Terms of Reference, representatives from the Board or SMT will attend the next programmed meeting of the panel to raise and discuss these concerns. The panel will respond in an agreed timescale.

7. Work Plan & Meetings

- 7.1 The Panel will establish an annual plan of activities, to be reviewed regularly.
- 7.2 The Panel will consider a summer recess which is usually a one-month break.
- 7.3 Facilitation and administrative support are provided by the tenant participation service provider appointed by MHA and the relevant service manager.
- 7.4 The Panel accept collective responsibility for meetings, decisions and working practices. When a decision has been taken, all members must support it.

8. Quorum

- 8.1 The meeting is quorate at least 2 active members are present. Inquorate meetings are recorded as such, and decisions approved by e-mail or at the next quorate meeting.

9. Programme of scrutiny work

- 9.1 The remit of the Panel will be to consider all areas of service performance in accordance with the Scottish Social Housing Charter. A programme of scrutiny work will be agreed each year by the Panel with the priority areas for review being decided upon using information from the following sources:
 - a. Information from Key Performance Indicators (KPI)
 - b. Performance reports,
 - c. Complaints

- d. Satisfaction surveys
 - e. Any other MHA reports, meetings or questionnaires regarding service delivery
 - f. Annual Report on the charter
 - g. Maryhill Housing Association Board Papers
 - h. Senior Management Group
 - i. Maryhill Housing Association staff
 - j. Tenant and Community Organisations
 - k. Tenant and community feedback and complaints
 - l. Scottish Housing Regulator
 - m. Benchmarking with other similar organisations
- 9.2 There should be reasonable grounds for anticipating a successful investigation when selecting a topic.
- 9.3 The Panel will develop communication and feedback methods to keep tenants informed of activity, to promote and raise the profile of the Panel's work.
- 9.4 The Panel will consider the optimum timing for scrutiny activity and consider performance improvement activities that Maryhill Housing Association may already be carrying out.

10. Reporting, governance and fit to performance management structure.

- 10.1 All relevant stakeholders will be identified at the start of the scrutiny process
- 10.2 Staff will be informed of the planned scrutiny by the CEO.
- 10.3 The Panel approves the scrutiny report and MHA supports the Panel to present its report in line with Board paper submission procedures. The report and action plan are submitted to the Board to request formal approval of the recommendations and action plan.
- 10.4 If recommendations are not accepted and cannot be implemented an explanation must be given to the Panel.
- 10.5 The panel will monitor the action plan. The Corporate Services manager will provide feedback to panel on what has been progressed and implemented
- 10.6 If the Panel disagrees with the Managers responses, they may escalate concerns to the MHA Board chair and Chief Executive Officer.

11. Support, expenses, and training resources

- 11.1 The Corporate Services Manager or other nominated staff member will provide support and will act as the link between the panel and MHA.
- 11.2 The Panel will be provided with the relevant resources to operate effectively.
- 11.3 Administration and facilitation support includes: meeting room, minute taking, issuing meeting papers, catering, travel expenses, booking events, drafting reports, when requested, and training.
- 11.4 Development support includes accessing and interpreting performance information, evidence gathering, liaison and organisation of staff input, support to plan and carry out scrutiny, for example agreeing appropriate scrutiny methods and designing surveys, interviews, case studies and guidance on report writing.
- 11.5 Panel members may claim travel and childcare expenses and are provided in accordance with MHA's existing policy for Board Members with refreshments or lunch depending on meeting duration.
- 11.6 All new Panel members will undertake an induction training programme.

- 11.7 An annual review of training and development needs will be carried out in January, and this will be linked to the identified Programme of Work for the coming year to support Panel members to develop their knowledge of the areas for scrutiny.
- 11.8 The Corporate Support Manager will develop an annual training programme with the Panel and assist in ensuring this is delivered.
- 11.9 The Panel will have access to independent training and support to deliver its work and can make reasonable training requests to the Association.
- 11.10 As volunteers, Group members are covered by Maryhill Housing Association's liability insurance when carrying out their activities.

12. Openness, transparency, and access to information.

- 12.1 The Panel may request reports and information from MHA to plan and carry out scrutiny. Where information is not readily available, the Panel may request that reports are commissioned, and / or invite officers to the Panel to present information.
- 12.2 Information requested should be in place no later than 10 working days after the request is received by MHA. If out-with this timescale, reasons, and new deadlines are to be agreed with the Panel.
- 12.3 Use of personal information will be kept within the terms of the Data Protection act 2018. GDPR

13. Evaluation and Review

- 13.1 The activities and operations of the Group will be reviewed after each activity has been completed. (Minimum annually)
- 13.2 The draft Terms of Reference will be reviewed after the Panel's initial investigation and subsequently reviewed every 3 years.

14. Panel members induction and Responsibilities of scrutiny panel members

- 14.1 Induction will cover the following:
 - a. Identifying specific training needs.
 - b. Maryhill Housing Association's structure and function.
 - c. How services are delivered
 - d. The Charter
 - e. Legal information
 - f. Stock information
 - g. Costs
 - h. Training materials on Scrutiny
- 14.2 Responsibilities of panel member:
 - a. To understand the basic principles of the Scottish Social Housing Charter and MHA's own standards
 - b. To understand the duties of a Scrutiny Panel member
 - c. To abide by the code of conduct for a Scrutiny Panel member.
 - d. To observe confidentiality whilst working on the panel in line with the code of conduct.
 - e. To remain impartial and objective.
 - f. To carry out the duties of a panel member with a high standard of behaviour and to treat everyone with respect.
 - g. To act and behave in a manner that ensures the safety of yourself and others.

Appendix 1

Person Profile

Below is a list of the qualities and skills that are needed to be able to fulfil the role of Panel Member. Training will be provided. Members must show an ability and willingness to develop their skills.

Commitment and motivation

- They must be willing and able to participate in induction and training sessions.
- Time commitment for this role is approximately 10 meetings per year plus preparation time e.g., reading meeting papers.
- Have an ability and willingness to participate and make appropriate contributions and able to act independently.
- Focus on the interests of all customers, not personal interests.

Understanding and analysis of information

- Able to analyse and question (or develop the skills to do so) various types of information.
- Have the ability to interpret information and challenge (or develop the skills to) information.
- Be willing to learn to interpret and understand statistical information.
- Be able to act independently and objectively when considering performance information.

Panel competencies

- Good listening skills.
- Respect the views of others.
- Show and communicate enthusiasm for the purpose of the Panel.
- Good communication skills.

General Skills

- Be able to work as part of a team.
- Adhere to the Code of Conduct.
- Have integrity and an open and honest approach.
- Group competencies will be developed in training – key things for the group to work effectively with each other and with staff. Able to use computer or will be willing to learn.