



**WOKINGHAM  
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

## **TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE COMMUNICATIONS GROUP**

### **1 Purpose**

- 1.1 The Communications Group purpose is to work with the Housing Service to provide up to date and tenant friendly information through any communication channels e.g. Housing Matters, Annual Report, letters, website and other publications.

### **2. Duties and responsibilities**

- 2.1 The Communications Group must work in accordance with all Tenant Involvement policies and procedures, the Communication Procedures set out for the group and all Wokingham Borough Council corporate communication procedures.

### **3. The specific remit of the Communications Group will be:**

- To provide Housing Matters on a quarterly basis, to be distributed to all Wokingham Borough Council tenants, leaseholders and license holders
- To review written communication e.g. letters, leaflets and publications which go out to Wokingham Borough Council tenants, leaseholders and license holders
- To be involved in the review of the housing pages of the Wokingham Borough Council website
- To be involved in the development of new communication methods with our tenants, leaseholders and license holders
- To actively promote effective communication principles
- To actively put forward ideas and suggestions to improve communication across the Housing service
- To apply customer focus and customer care principles in all areas of their work
- To ensure value money for tenants, leaseholders, license holders and Housing is achieved in the work that they carry out
- To work in partnership with the Housing Service to respond to any changes in local or national policy and governance in relation to communications

### **4. Meeting frequency**

- 4.1 The Communications Group will meet formally on a monthly basis. In addition to this, the group will also meet weekly (when required to) to work through specific projects.

## **5. Membership**

- 5.1 The Communications Group is free to select its own membership, however, the core group will be:
- Involved Tenants – these will be self-selecting based on an individual's interest in joining the group
  - Officers from Wokingham Borough Council to include the Service Manager for Involvement and Improvement and any other invited officers as required
- 5.2 The core group of Involved Tenants will be limited to 7.
- 5.3 At the Chairpersons discretion, a person or organisation may attend to observe the Communications Group. The meetings are not public meetings.
- 5.4 To ensure the efficiency of the meeting, if less than 50% of Involved Tenants are in attendance to any one formal meeting, then the meeting will not run. Where feasible the meeting will be rearranged but this will be at the Chairpersons discretion.
- 5.5 In the event of a position becoming available on the Communications Group, it must first be opened up to members of the Reading Panel (see section 15). Details of how they are elected on to the group are available in the Reading Panel processes, which is available on request.

## **6. Appointment of Chairperson and Vice Chairperson**

- 6.1 When required, the appointment of the Chairperson and Vice Chairperson will be held after the Annual General Meeting. The Chairperson and Vice Chairperson will be in position for a maximum of 3 years plus 3 months (this will ensure that there is a hand over period between the old and new Chairperson and / or Vice Chairperson). It is possible for an individual to be elected as Chairperson or Vice Chairperson more than once.
- 6.2 These posts are not open to staff.

## **7. The Communications Group Chairperson will:**

- Plan each meeting effectively, ensuring they are run in accordance with the Terms of Reference and that matters are dealt with in an orderly, efficient manner
  - Ensure all members of the group have an equal opportunity to participate
  - Ensure that minutes of any formal meeting are agreed and sent to the members of the Communications Group within ten working days of the end of the meeting
  - Ensure that the members of the group are updated (where appropriate) of matters which may affect them
- Be the main representation for the Communications Group at meetings, events, conferences etc.
- Take any urgent business if agreed outside of the meeting but should update the panel at the next available meeting
  - Be a member of the Tenant and Landlord Improvement Panel

**8. The Vice Chairperson will:**

- Act as Chairperson during periods of sickness, holiday or other unforeseen circumstances
- Represent the Communications Group at meetings if the Chairperson is unable to attend

**9. Election Process for the Chairperson – when election is due**

**9.1** The election process is:

- After the Annual General Meeting, Involved Tenants on the group will be invited to submit their self-nomination as Chairperson of the Communications Group
- The candidates will be asked by the Tenant and Leaseholder Involvement Team to submit some supporting details as to why they feel they would be a suitable candidate
- All nominations will be collated by the Tenant and Leaseholder Involvement Team
- If there is only one candidate, this person will be notified and will be elected into position at the next formal Communications Group. The formalities of this will be undertaken by a member of the Tenant and Leaseholder Involvement Team
- In the event of there being more than one candidate, an election will take place
- Ballot papers will be distributed to all members of the group for them to cast their vote
- All votes will be counted and verified by the Tenant and Leaseholder Involvement Team
- The winner will be notified and duly elected at the next Communications Group.

**10. Election Process for Vice Chairperson – when election is due**

**10.1** The election process is:

- Members of the Communications Group will be invited to submit their selfnomination as Vice Chairperson
- The candidates will be asked by the Tenant and Leaseholder Involvement Team to submit some supporting details as to why they feel they would be a suitable candidate
- All nominations will be collated by the Tenant and Leaseholder Involvement Team
- If there is only one candidate, this person will be notified and will be elected into position at the next formal Communications Group. The formalities of this will be undertaken by a Chairperson of the Communications Group
- In the event of there being more than one candidate, an election will take place
- Ballot papers will be distributed to all members of the group for them to cast their vote
- All votes will be counted and verified by the Tenant and Leaseholder Involvement Team
- The winner will be notified and duly elected at the next Communications Group

**10.2** In the event of the Chairperson stepping down, the Vice Chairperson will carry out the position on an interim basis until a new Chairperson is elected. If there is no Vice Chairperson, the Communications Group is free to nominate an interim Chairperson from its current membership, until a new Chairperson is elected.

**11. Election Process for Chair and Vice Chairperson – if no candidates come forward from the Communications Group**

11.1 If there are no self-nominations from the Communications Group during the election process for the Chairperson or Vice Chairperson position, then the following process will be followed:

- Members of the Reading Panel and all other Involved Tenants will be invited to submit their self-nomination for the Chairperson/Vice Chairperson position
- The candidates will be asked by the Tenant and Leaseholder Involvement Team to submit some supporting details as to why they feel they would be a suitable candidate
- All candidates and the Communications Group have an opportunity to meet with one another should they wish to
- All nominations will be collated by the Tenant and Leaseholder Involvement Team
- If there is only one candidate, this person will be notified and will be elected into position at the next formal Communications Group.
- In the event of there being more than one candidate, an election will take place
- Ballot papers will be distributed to all members of the Communications Group only for them to cast their vote
- All votes will be counted and verified by the Tenant and Leaseholder Involvement Team
- The winner will be notified and duly elected at the next Communications Group

**12. Responsibilities of the Communications Group members**

12.1 Each member of the group is responsible for:

- Adhering to the Terms of Reference of the Communications Group
- Keeping any protected information or material received whilst attending a Communications Group meeting confidential. This information may be from other group members, Involved Tenants or be contained within reports or minutes of meetings
- Ensuring all members of the group are treated fairly and with respect
- Providing feedback on any action they have been given by the Chairperson of the Communication Group
- To promote the work of the Communications Group and be proactive in encouraging new members to join Tenant Involvement

**13. Administration and support**

13.1 Administration and support of the Communications Group will be undertaken by the Tenant and Leaseholder Involvement Team.

**14. Circulation of minutes and other documents**

14.1 Any papers for a meeting will be circulated to all members of the Communications Group at least 5 working days in advance of meetings.

14.2 Any formal minutes will be publicised on the Wokingham Borough Council website.

## **15. Training and Development**

- 15.1 Members of the Communication Group will be offered and encouraged to take part in training on a regular basis to ensure that they are sufficiently capable of carrying out the work required of them.
- 15.2 The Chair of the Tenant and Landlord Improvement Panel and the Service Manager for Involvement and Improvement also offer 1-2-1 with each member of the Communications Group. The purpose of these meetings is:
- An informal discussion between the Chair of the Tenant and Landlord Improvement, a group member and the Service Manager for Involvement and Improvement
  - An opportunity to highlight and praise any successes
  - An opportunity to discuss current and future work priorities
  - An opportunity to identify any support, advice or guidance
  - An opportunity to identify any additional training
  - To identify any continuous improvement opportunities

## **16. Reading Panel**

- 16.1 The Reading Panel will sit alongside the Communications Group to provide additional proof reading support and feedback on larger publications such as Housing Matters and the Annual Report.
- 16.2 The Communications Group is free to decide what documents are sent to the Reading Panel.
- 16.3 The Reading Panel will work from home and can provide their feedback via email, by phone or in writing.
- 16.4 There is a set process that the Communications Group will follow when sending out documents to the Reading Panel, which is available on request.

## **17. Review of the Terms of Reference**

- 17.1 A review of the Terms of Reference will be conducted on an annual basis following the Annual General Meeting