

South Cambridgeshire District Council (SCDC)

Terms of Reference for the Housing Engagement Board (HEB)

Please note: The term “Tenant” is used throughout this report as a generic term and includes both council tenants and council leaseholders.

1. Purpose

The purpose of HEB is to represent tenant and leaseholders’ interest in relationship to the development and performance of the Housing Services (HS). The HEB will work at a strategic level to scrutinise and be consulted on key issues that affect the HS. Feedback from the HEB will be considered as part of the decision-making process in line with the Council's constitution.

2. Objectives of the HEB is to scrutinise and make recommendations for improvement for the housing service on behalf of all service users

- To be a critical friend, recommending improvements for the HS.
- To ensure the Council delivers a high standard HS.
- That the HS is fair, equitable and tenant friendly.
- That tenants’ priorities are represented, and their views are an integral part of the decision process.
- HS service ambitions are achievable, within budget and resources.
- HS service offers value for money.
- HS meets government regulatory standards.
- HS reflects the Council’s business plan’s objectives.

3. The Role of the HEB

- To ensure strategic decisions are in line with HEB objectives.
- To review housing policy and finance issues, and make recommendations where appropriate.
- To scrutinise the housing service’s plans and policies
- Input into the setting and monitoring of targets and performance indicators for housing.

- To feed into the development of the annual service plan and the Annual Report for tenants.
- Work with other tenant groups, including task and finish groups, to improve services and help review objectives and aspirations.
- Represent SCDC tenants to outside persons and organisations.
- Elected tenant board members to act as the Chairperson for their Area-based tenant Forum.

In doing the above the HEB will ensure that consideration is given to value for money, available resources and the corporate objectives of SCDC.

4. Membership

4.1 The HEB will consist of:

- the Cabinet Lead Member for Housing (or a nominated substitute in their absence).
- two councillors nominated by the two main political parties of the Council.
- the Head of Housing (a non-voting member) (or a nominated substitute in their absence).
- six elected tenant representatives (one of which to be a leaseholder) made up of two from the North Area, two from the East Area and two from the West Area.

4.2 Tenant Representatives to the HEB will be elected every 4 years by the tenants.

4.3 Tenant Representatives will be tenants or leaseholders of SCDC or their recognised spouse / partner (as per SCDC). Tenants in breach of their tenancy conditions will not be eligible to be or remain as a Board Member.

4.4 The Head of Housing and the Lead Cabinet Member for Housing at SCDC will be permanent members of the HEB.

4.5 The normal term of office for tenant representatives will be 4 years; however, should a tenant representative leave before the end of term, a new tenant representative co-opted from the same area will be seconded until the end of the term. Resident involvement will advertise the board opening and accept applications for suitable replacements to be co-opted onto the board and present them to the HEB who will select which candidate should be appointed. See the Co-option Policy document for the procedure to follow.

4.6 HEB members, except for the Head of Housing and the Lead Member for Housing, who fail to attend two meetings and fail to provide any apologies will forfeit their membership of the Board.

- 4.7 HEB members agree to use digital communications including video conference, shared facilities which may include MS Teams or a central document library. Meetings will be held either online or face to face.
- 4.8 HEB members agree to make available contact details with colleagues to facilitate work between meetings.
- 4.9 HEB members will attend training sessions where appropriate and where possible.
- 4.10 HEB members will be compliant with SCDC's equality and GDPR policies.
- 4.11 All members agree to abide by the Code of Conduct.

5. Quorum

- 5.1 A quorum will be at least 50% of the board, for example, if membership is 7, a minimum of members 4 would be required and must include either the Head of Housing or a Councillor.
- 5.2 Inquorate meetings should be noted, and recommendations ratified at the next quorate meeting.

6. Chairing Meetings

- 6.1 The Chair will normally be the Lead Cabinet Member for Housing.
- 6.2 The Vice-Chair will be an elected tenant representative unless none are available. Any HEB member, willing to undertake relevant training, may put their name forward.
- 6.3 Terms of office for the Vice-Chair will be 12 months. The Vice-Chair may stand for re-election at the end of their term of office but will be considered alongside other suitably trained HEB members wishing to be considered for office.
- 6.4 The Chair and Vice-Chair will be elected every 12 months.
- 6.5 Maximum term of office for Vice-Chair will be 4 years in total.
- 6.6 The Vice-Chair will deputise for the Chair in their absence.

7. Frequency of HEB Meetings

- 7.1 The HEB will meet quarterly with a minimum of four quarterly meetings per year.
- 7.2 The Resident Involvement Team will provide secretariat support for the HEB.
- 7.3 The Resident Involvement Team will liaise with officers and relevant others as necessary to plan for forthcoming meetings. Any member can request to add additional items to the agenda. These should be submitted at least 4 weeks before the meeting.

- 7.4 The HEB will be provided with supporting documents a minimum of one week prior to each meeting.
- 7.5 HEB members will read any material provided prior to attending the meeting.
- 7.6 Minutes of the HEB meetings will be made available within four weeks of the meeting.
- 7.7 To meet the demands of projects and reviews, one off meetings may be called at short notice, if deemed necessary.
- 7.8 Board members are expected to attend every meeting, however, they must attend a minimum of three Board meetings per annum unless there are extenuating circumstances that have been agreed to by the Board.
- 7.9 The HEB may establish Task and Finish Groups to lead on specific activities.
 - 7.9.1 Task and Finish Groups could be internal tenant groups or external groups
 - 7.9.2 Task and Finish Groups must report to the HEB at an agreed frequency

8. Code of Conduct
 - 8.1 HEB members will be compliant with SCDC's Equality and GDPR policies.
 - 8.2 HEB members agree to abide by the Code of Conduct.
 - 8.3 HEB members will be required to sign the Code of Conduct.

9. HEB Elections
 - 9.1 Elections will be held every four years.
 - 9.2 Elections will be administered by an independent organisation.
 - 9.3 Any current tenant or leaseholder, meeting candidate criteria, can run for election.

10. HEB Support
 - 10.1 Administrative support for the HEB will be provided by the Resident Involvement Team.
 - 10.3 All new members will be provided with a handbook of key documents and undertake an induction programme and training.
 - 10.4 Training requirements will be assessed and relevant training will be provided as and when needed in line with current regulation.
 - 10.5 All tenant and leaseholder representatives will be eligible for an annual allowance of £400 for sundries, plus an additional amount for expenses such as travelling costs and additional support for baby-sitting / carers costs. The allowance can be claimed twice a year six months in arrears. The additional expenses should be claimed monthly.

11. Access to Information

- 11.1 HEB can request additional data, reports and information to carry out their activities.
- 11.2 Where appropriate information is not readily available, the HEB may request information reports (appropriate in scale and content of the performance review and subject to available resources) and / or invite officers or managers to meet with the HEB to provide additional information or insight.
- 11.3 All requests for information and evidence must be made via the Resident Involvement Team.

12. Accountability

- 12.1 The HEB meetings will be publicised on the website.
- 12.2 Minutes, meeting papers will be made available to the public on the SCDC website.
- 12.3 The HEB will provide an annual report for tenants.
- 12.4 Tenants will be able to ask questions to their tenant representatives via the SCDC website.

13.0 Reviewing the Terms of Reference

- 13.1 These Terms of Reference were approved by John Batchelor, Lead Member for Housing, and Peter Campbell, Head of Housing for SCDC, and ratified at a meeting of the HEB held on the:

Approved: 23 June 2021

Reviewed: 28 September 2023

- 13.2 The Board will review the terms of reference regularly to ensure they reflect the duties and responsibilities of the Board.

Next review: September 2026