

Cheshire West & Chester Council

Council Housing Management Board

Terms of Reference



1. Overview

The Council Housing Management Board is an Advisory Body to the Council's Executive providing:

- a. a strategic overview of the management of the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) business and associated strategies and policies, including quality & performance.
- b. ensure that the regulatory framework set out in the Social Housing Regulations Act 2023 is met and that tenant's views and feedback are taken into account at all times.
- c. a key consultation mechanism and voice between the Council's Executive and Tenant/Leaseholder engagement structure on all HRA management matters including, but not exclusive to, rent setting, capital programme, service levels, repairs, customer satisfaction and complaints.
- d. put forward any key recommendations to the Council's Executive as required.

It will also influence/inform/advise how some of the budgets within the HRA will be spent, for example, the Area Estate Improvements budgets. These delegated decisions will be made in the context of the Council's Financial Regulations.

2. Council Housing Management Board/Committee Structure

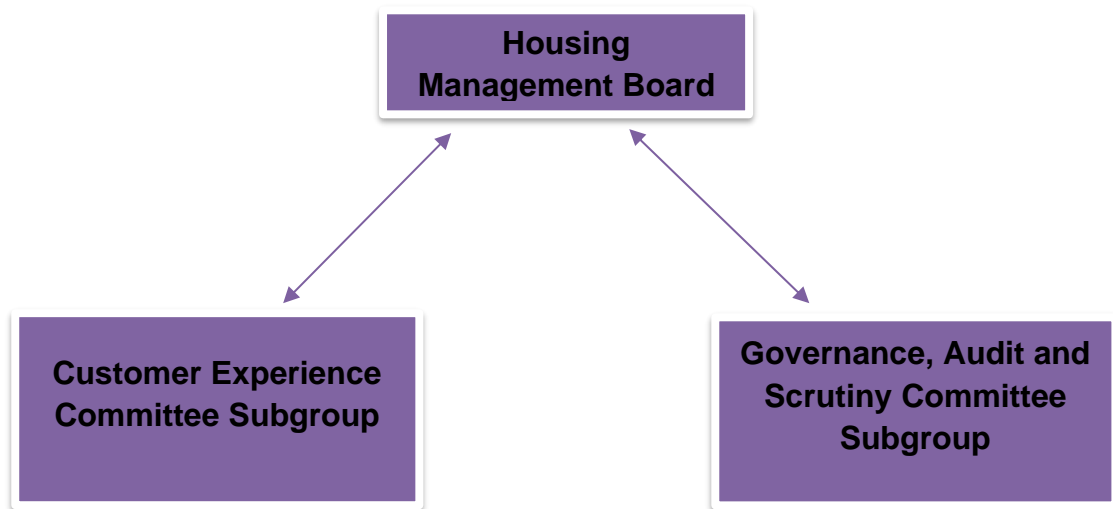
The Council Housing Management Board is to ensure that the Council's housing stock (managed by ForHousing) meet all the requirements set out in the regulatory framework for Social Housing and is to perform a monitoring and challenge role on behalf of all tenants. To assist in the day-to-day monitoring and scrutiny role, the following committee subgroups may be established:

Customer Experience Committee Subgroup – This committee ensures that the Regulator of Social Housing Consumer Standards of tenancy, tenant involvement & empowerment, neighbourhood & community and homes are being met whilst also supporting the development of innovative customer facing strategies based on customer insight. It oversees and monitors key performance indicators and action plans that deliver the customer and asset management corporate strategy objectives and escalate any concerns to the Board.

Governance, Audit and Scrutiny Management Committee Subgroup – This committee provides assurance to the Board that the required standards of governance, including audit and scrutiny required by legal/regulatory requirements and relevant established best practice are met. It reviews financial plans and reports, and comments on them or makes recommendations prior to review by the Council's Cabinet.

Should the need arise, the Council Housing Management Board can establish further committee subgroups to lead on specific areas of work but given the Council Housing Management Boards strategic focus, there will not be a requirement to consult with the Board on every decision relating to the Council's housing management function.

2.1 Structure flowchart



3. Membership

In line with the Council's commitment to inclusive working and to meet the proposals set out in the Social Housing Regulations Act 2023, the Council Housing Management Board will be a joint forum comprising of:

- Four Councillors;
- Senior officers of the Council;
- Senior officers of ForHousing;
- Four tenant/leaseholder representatives and
- Two independents.

Councillor representation will consist of:

- Cabinet Member for Homes, Planning and Safer Communities;
- Shadow Cabinet Member for Homes, Planning and Safer Communities;
- Councillor Keith Millar – Neston Ward Member and
- Councillor Katie Kendrick – Netherpool Ward Member.

Senior officers of the Council representation will consist of:

- Head of Housing;
- Senior Housing Policy Officer and
- Appointed Contracts Officer.

Senior officers of ForHousing representation will consist of:

- Head of Housing Management Contract and
- Performance Lead Officer.

Tenant/leaseholder representation will consist of:

- Tenant
- Tenant
- Tenant
- Tenant

Independent x 2

3.1 Selection of Council Housing Management Board members

Members of the Council Housing Management Board will be selected every three years via a recruitment process with applicants shortlisted and assessed. A range of bespoke paperwork to assist in the recruitment process has been developed.

3.2 Member attendance

Where a member is unable to attend a meeting, an alternative representative may be nominated to attend on their behalf. The Council Housing Management Board reserves the right to invite/co-opt other relevant people to assist with activities as appropriate. The Housing Board will be chaired by the Cabinet Member for Homes, Planning and Safer Communities with an elected tenant/leaseholder as vice chair.

Quorum will be four members to include at least one councillor and one tenant & leaseholder representative. Membership of the Committee Subgroup structure will be determined by the Council Housing Management Board.

4. Main duties of the Council Housing Management Board

The Council Housing Management Board will act as an advisory body to the Council's Executive with a key role in the development and management of the HRA Business Plan and review of the Council's housing management objectives and performance.

The Council Housing Management Board will provide a channel of communication between tenants and leaseholders, officers and Executive Members of the Council. Whilst the Council Housing Management Board is without executive function its membership affords it the capacity to advise on the strategic direction that is central to facilitating an inclusive approach to service delivery.

The Housing Management Board is responsible for the following functions:

- a) Ensure that the regulatory framework set out in the Social Housing Regulations Act is met and that tenant's views and feedback are taken into account at all times.
- b) Monitoring housing service quality & performance.
- c) Providing a strategic overview on delivery of the Council's HRA Business Plan.
- d) Commenting and advising on:
 - development of housing policy, the setting of housing rents and service charges;
 - the Council's 30-year HRA Business Plan and Asset Management Strategy.
- e) Requesting and reviewing reports on activity associated with the delivery of the business objectives.
- f) Providing reports and making recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Homes, Planning and Safer Communities and the Shadow Cabinet Member for

Homes, Planning and Safer Communities in relation to policy issues, consultation or areas identified in relation to performance or service development.

g) Facilitating and developing effective communication and engagement with tenants and leaseholders. This to include considering reports and issues referred from both Committee subgroups as well as other tenant/leaseholder cohorts e.g. resident associations.

The Council Housing Management Board will delegate the following functions to the aforementioned Committee Subgroups, which will be required to provide updates to the Council Housing Management Board on a regular basis:

Customer Experience Committee Subgroup

- Tenant engagement/accountability – ensure that the Regulator of Social Housing Consumer Standards of Tenancy, Tenant Involvement & Empowerment, Neighbourhood & Community and Homes are being met.
- Performance – to receive updates on housing service performance against KPIs and reports on current activity associated with the business.
- Policy Development & Review (HRA Subgroup) – to assist in shaping development of the Council's Housing Strategies and Policies.

Governance, Audit and Scrutiny Management Committee Subgroup

- Governance – that the required checks and balances are in place that allow tenants views and opinions to shape services and encourages tenant-focused services to be delivered.
- Audit and Scrutiny – to audit and scrutinise the HRA Business Plan, consider the annual budget, rent-setting and service charge proposals and ensure that the HRA Business Plan remains achievable and on target.

5. Operation of the Board

5.1 Frequency of meetings

The Board will meet at least four times a year. Subgroups will meet at a frequency to be determined by the Groups themselves, but at least once per year.

5.2 Administration

Agendas and papers for meetings will be produced and circulated by the Council five working days prior to each meeting. A “meeting summary” detailing action points from each Council Housing Management Board meeting will be recorded and circulated to all members of the Council Housing Management Board within ten days of the meeting date. These documents will be reviewed at the beginning of each meeting. Any meetings relating to the two Committee Subgroups will be organised and minutes of meetings taken by ForHousing.

5.3 Accountability

The Board will ensure they provide an update of their year's activity as part of the Annual Report to be sent out to all tenants and leaseholders. The agenda and minutes of all Board meetings will be available on the ForHousing and Council websites.

Board Member appointment:

The term of office is for three years but is subject to annual review by Full Council. In accordance with the National Housing Federation's Code of Governance, Board members are not permitted to serve for longer than two consecutive terms of office (6 years) without a break in service equivalent to three years.

Time commitment:

All Board Members will also be asked to join at least one of the two Committees in alignment to their skills, experience and interest. There are typically four full Board meetings each year. Subgroups will meet at a frequency to be determined by the Groups themselves, but at least once per year. There is also an annual strategy day and there are likely to be ad hoc events, training sessions and working groups. We estimate that the time commitment for the role is around 1-2 days per quarter. This is likely to feel busier at the beginning with induction.

Board Member continuous professional development

Being a Board Member can be challenging but very rewarding, to support Board Members, regular training will be provided by the Council via the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS). All new Board Members will receive formal TPAS training which will cover the responsibilities required as a Board Member.

6. Equal opportunities

The Board as an advisory body to the Council's Executive will ensure that it meets the public sector equality duty namely: that the Board take account of equality as part of its work and will consider the impact of any policies on tenants who share protected characteristics.

7. Review

The Board will review its operation and terms of reference after the first year and thereafter every three years.