



T U R N I N G   H O U S E S   I N T O   H O M E S

# **Area Housing Panels**

**Terms of Reference  
& Guidance Sheets**

**2008/9**

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## **Interpretations**

- AHP – Area Housing Panel
- ANIMs – Assistant Neighbourhood and Involvement Managers
- NM – Neighbourhood Manager
- NC – Neighbourhood Champion
- NHO – Neighbourhood Housing Officer
- HRA – Housing Revenue Account
- Panel Members – volunteer tenant representatives
- Staff – 2010 Rotherham Ltd appointed staff members with main responsibility of AHP operations
- TARAs – Tenants and Residents Associations
- 2010 – 2010 Rotherham Ltd
- RMBC – Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council
- Rotherfed – Tenants and Residents Federation

# **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

## **Introduction**

The main purpose of Area Housing Panels is to contribute toward creating better neighbourhoods and communities in a defined area that reflect the wishes of tenants and residents in that area. They make decisions in consultation with all relevant parties on how the delegated environmental budget will be spent. As the funds come from the HRA, the moneys are earmarked for the benefit of council estates and council tenants. In the case of mixed tenure estates, project ideas must prove the benefit to council tenants.

## **1 Objectives**

### **1.1 Environmental Improvements budget**

The Panel will be given a delegated budget each year from the HRA to spend on environmental improvements in their area. The projects must fit the criteria listed on the AHP Project Guidance Notes and Application Form. Such improvements must benefit Council tenants but may also include other residents. The panel will need to consider and agree priority schemes for environmental improvements in their areas. They will do this using a number of methods for example, consultation with interested parties, estate tours, surveys, meetings in the area of benefit.

### **1.2 Performance Management and Review**

Regular performance reports in relation to Housing and Repairs Service should be submitted by 2010 Staff to the Panel to update them on the level of service provided. Any issues brought up about service standards and performance management are to be forwarded to the 2010 Service Improvements Team. Feedback should always be brought back to the AHP meeting and picked up in the minutes. Customer Care should be a main priority. The 2010 Performance Reports should contain the following information:

- Voids Turnaround
- Rents Arrears
- Repairs and Maintenance
- Allocations
- Decent Homes
- Neighbourhood Management Monthly Reports

- Anti-Social Behaviour
- Any other information which may be interest to local AHPs

### **1.3 General Estate Management**

Issues concerning the general management of the area should be raised at AHP meetings and these issues, concerns and/or suggestions are to be forwarded to the Neighbourhood Manager. Feedback should always be brought back to the AHP meeting and picked up in the minutes.

### **1.4 Communications and Promotion**

To promote the work of the AHPs and encourage involvement by other members of the community particularly in areas where there is not a registered Tenants Group. AHPs should give regular feedback/reports to the local TARAs to keep the tenants informed of the work of the panels with help from 2010 Neighbourhood staff.

## **2 Membership**

### **2.1 Eligible Members of AHPs**

- Council Tenants
- Leaseholders
- Other Residents, but not more that 20% of the full membership.

Voting rights:

- Voting rights on financial matters (Housing Revenue Account) will only be given to tenants who are members of the AHPs.
- Voting rights on non-financial matters will be given to all members of the AHPs

Please note AHPs value the contribution of all its residents

- Co-optees – can include councillors or any other individuals with specific experience or knowledge can be invited on the agreement of the Panel members but no voting rights will be given to them
- Nominated 2010 staff from each neighbourhood office
- Other 2010 and RMBC Officers on an ad-hoc basis

### **2.2 Name Badges**

Name badges can only be given to new members when they have been attending on a regular basis (3 consecutive meetings). 2010 staff will make arrangements for new name badges.

## **2.3 Compliance**

All members must comply with the AHP Code of Conduct, Equal Opportunities Policy and the Declaration at all times. All breaches of must be dealt with using the 'Dealing with Breaches of Panel Conduct' procedures. (See appendix for copies of the above)

## **2.4 Representation at other meetings**

**2.4.1** AHPs are eligible for membership to Rother Fed and as such are able to nominate 1 AHP member to sit on the Rother Fed board for a period of one year at a time. This should be done just prior to the Rother Fed AGM, usually held around March each year. As soon as each AHP receives notification from Rother Fed with regards to the AGM, they should ask for nomination for the coming year and hold a vote should more than one person express an interest. This appointed person should provide feedback to the rest of the AHP members on a monthly basis. This can be done verbally or by written report.

**2.4.2** Should requests be made for AHP members to attend other meetings (i.e. Area Assembly meetings, other 2010 meetings etc) and represent their panel at these meeting they are to communicate feedback from that meeting at the next AHP meeting.

**2.4.3** AHP members should never claim to be acting on behalf of their panel unless it was agreed by the panel before hand.

## **3 Officers**

### **3.1 Chair and Vice Chair**

The AHP Chair's role (and Vice Chair when Chair is absent) is to:

- Agree the agenda with 2010 staff
- Keep the meeting in order and to time
- Ensure everyone has an opportunity to speak but not so they overuse or abuse this
- Summarise discussions
- Ensure agreements are reached by consensus or voting if necessary
- Ensure everyone understands and agrees what is to be done, by whom and by when

### **3.2 Voting for Officer Positions**

The positions of the Chair and Vice Chair should be revised every April/May.

If more than one person for each position expresses an interest, they should be given an opportunity to explain what they would bring to

that position before leaving the room for the rest of the members to vote. The ANIM for each area should be present to oversee the any voting processes. The results should be clearly noted in the minutes.

## **4 Meetings**

### **4.1 Frequency of Meetings**

Meetings should be held every 4 to 6 weeks in a venue agreed by panel members. It is good practice to move the meetings around the area of benefit so members have a meeting taking place in their area at least once per year. It will be left to each AHP to decide and agree the best course of action.

### **4.2 Servicing of Meetings**

The administration of the meetings will be the responsibility of the appointed Neighbourhood Champions. A full description of what this entails is listed in the Roles and Responsibilities listed in the next section. The role of the ANIMs must include overseeing the AHP work, meetings and the AHP projects. The overall responsibility of ensuring the budgets are effectively spent will be with Neighbourhood managers. However, the overall control will remain with the Customer Services and Engagement Manager.

### **4.3 Quorum – minimum present for decision making**

Each AHP must consist of at least 5 Panel Members who attend meetings regularly for any project or financial decision making to take place. This number does not include staff.

### **4.4 Attendance –** A regular check will be made to go through the membership of the AHP to ensure the panels have a list of members who attend meetings regularly. However, if members of the AHP have not attended 3 meetings in succession then action will be taken by the Panel chair and the NC/ANIM to investigate the reasons why they have not attended the AHP and remove them from the Panel unless there are good reasons given by the representative such as long term sickness, family matters, care issues or travelling abroad.

## **5 Review of Terms of Reference**

These Terms of Reference and the Roles and Responsibilities should be reviewed every three years (or earlier if necessary) and led by the 2010 Customer Services and Involvement Manager, in conjunction with all AHPs members and the Neighbourhood staff.

# **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

## **Panel Members & 2010 Staff**

1. Attend Area Housing Panel meetings.
2. Make decisions on AHP Budget spend using the Project Selection Form.
3. Carry out relevant consultation or surveys in conjunction with 2010 and RMBC.
4. To liaise with other interested groups in the area such as TARAs, Community Partnerships, Streetpride & other Council Departments, Local Parent and Toddler Groups, Older Persons Group and other such community group, prior to making decisions affecting the area.
5. Undertake estate tours and walkabouts in conjunction with 2010, RMBC and other relevant agencies to source potential projects ideas.
6. Carry out project inspections after completion, to ensure moneys were spent appropriately and project completed to satisfaction.
7. Produce promotional materials and reports in conjunction with 2010 to inform individuals, communities, tenant groups and other agencies of AHP work, projects and budget spend.
8. To ensure that the whole range of stakeholder interests are taken into account.
9. Participate and assist in wider consultation exercises for 2010 and RMBC.
10. Encourage and recruit new panel members.
11. Comply with the AHP Code of Conduct, Equal Opportunities Policy and Panel Members' Declaration at all times.

## 2010 Rotherham Ltd Staff

1. The Customer Services and Involvement Manager will contact the HRA Account Manager at the beginning of each financial year to find out what budget has been allocated to AHPs and disseminate this information to the ANIMS by during April, the beginning of the financial year. The dissemination of the information is dependant upon when the information is received from RMBC.
2. Staff have a statutory duty to ensure the AHP Budget is spent in accordance with RMBC Standing Orders, of copy of which can be found under the 'Your Council' section of the RMBC website - [www.rotherham.gov.uk](http://www.rotherham.gov.uk)
3. At lease one appointed Staff member must be present at all meetings to oversee that the project selection process is carried out in accordance to these Terms of Reference and Project Selection Procedures.
4. Should there be a disagreement between the appointed Staff member and any of the panel members with regards to budget spend and project selection, the decision will be deferred until the following meeting where the Assistant Neighbourhood & Involvement Manager will attend, who will hear all sides of the argument and make the final decision.
5. 2010 Staff are responsible for all secretariat work including:
  - taking of minutes
  - sending out paperwork **at least** 7 days prior to meetings
  - booking meeting venues and ensuring venues are appropriate and DDA compliant
  - proper and legal maintenance of all paperwork concerning the work of the AHP
  - arrangements and bookings of other AHP activities such as bus tours
  - provision of name badges for new Panel Members
  - acquire quotes from the In House Service Provider and / or the Council's Procurement team for work to be completed
  - commission and liaise with the In House Service Provider the work to be completed, once agreed by the panel

6. Provide the Panel with a monthly report of 2010 and Neighbourhood Management activities and information about performance.
7. In their day to day contact with tenants, community groups, the SNT and other agencies working in the area, 2010 Staff may become aware of possible project ideas that fit the project criteria. They have a right to put these project ideas forward for consideration using the Project Application Form.
8. To take responsibility in ensuring that there is an effective communication system in place.

# **CODE OF CONDUCT**

## **Joint code**

The Code of Conduct requires staff to respect the status of Tenant or Residents representatives as volunteers who have the right to help decide policy. Equally, it requires representatives to understand and respect the professional responsibilities of the Staff.

## **Staff code**

1. Staff should treat Representatives with courtesy and respect at all times.
2. Staff must remember that all Representatives have the right of access to 2010 Rotherham Staff at all reasonable times.
3. Representatives have the right to chair all Panel Meetings. Staff must ensure that an appropriate venue is booked.
4. Representatives have a right of access to all relevant general information including data for estate, area and borough initiatives.
5. Staff will remember that whilst Representatives can advise staff on general and local policy matters, they are not to be drawn into the management of individual tenancies.
6. Staff must not provide or discuss details of the personal circumstances of individual tenants to Representatives.
7. Staff must keep requests for Representatives to attend meetings to a reasonable level.

## Tenant and Resident Representative Code

1. Representatives will address Staff in a professional manner at all times.
2. Representatives will not ask Staff for their personal views about the management of 2010 or the Council, its Chief Officers or Board Members / Councillors.
3. Representatives will not give Staff direct instructions on the day to day performance of their duties.
4. Representatives should remember that although Staff will attempt to be available at short notice and carry out their requests, their ability to do so may be restricted by the demands of other parts of their work.
5. Staff will try to attend all meetings outside normal hours which are relevant to the running of the Area Panel. However, Representatives should appreciate that such availability will sometimes be restricted by family and private commitments.
6. Representatives have the right of direct access to Staff but they must use this right with discretion. Access will not be unreasonably restricted, but Representatives should try and make an appointment if possible. If this is not possible, they should make their presence known at an accepted reception point. Representatives should not enter offices unannounced.
7. Representatives should be aware that 2010 and the Council has a no-smoking policy. Any meetings that require the attendance of staff will be deemed no smoking.
8. Representatives may acquire and have access to confidential information and information which has not yet been made public. This information **must not be disclosed** to other people under any circumstances; or used to the advantage of an individual; or to discredit 2010 or the Council.
9. Representatives must not ask for information or to try to discuss details of the personal circumstances of individual tenants or tenancies.
10. Tenants and Residents must treat other members of the AHPs, staff and any guests invited to the meetings, with respect and civility at all times

# EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY

## 1. General

We are committed to the principles and practices that support Equal Opportunities. We will endeavour to implement all aspects of such a policy in our work and in the way we operate.

We will ensure that we do not discriminate against any person on the grounds of:

- Gender
- Race, Nationality or Colour
- Age
- Disability
- Sexual orientation
- Responsibility for dependants
- Marital status
- Religion/Faith
- Being HIV positive
- Asylum Seekers or Refugees

We recognise that our policies and practices will have a direct impact on the communities we serve and the organisations we work with. We will tackle discrimination as it arises and work in a way that will provide a positive influence to those with whom we work.

We will review our policies and practice from time to time to ensure that they are effective.

## 2. Work specifications

We will ensure that our equal opportunities policy is reflected in **our approach to all areas of work and that we recognise and respond to issues of equal opportunities as and when they arise**

## 3. Dealing with discrimination

We will attend training agreed with 2010, Rotherfed and RMBC to ensure that our members and staff are aware of discrimination, abuse and harassment and are able to deal with these problems effectively.

#### **4. Actions speak louder than words**

We recognise that any Equal Opportunities Policy Statement on its own is insufficient to ensure real equality of opportunity. To achieve this, it is essential that we are all committed to taking positive steps through our day to day work to make Equal Opportunities effective.

#### **5. Monitoring**

Responsibility for the implementation and monitoring of this policy lies with the 2010 Customer Services and Engagement Manager and the NMs/ANIMS as part of the 2010 Neighbourhood Management teams.

# **DEALING WITH BREACHES OF PANEL CONDUCT**

## **Introduction**

This procedure is to ensure that any breaches of Panel conduct is dealt with in a fair and transparent manner.

Breaches of conduct will relate to the following documents only:

1. Equal Opportunities Policy
2. Code of Conduct

## **Dealing with a misconduct charge**

### **Stage 1**

The problem must be put in writing to the relevant Neighbourhood Manager/Assistant Neighbourhood Involvement Managers (ANIMs). This letter must be signed. Anonymous allegations will not be considered. The letter must show the grounds on which the problem is being brought. This ground must relate specifically to a breach of one of the two areas as listed above. Charges that do not relate specifically to these areas will not be considered.

### **Stage 2**

The person, who is allegedly in breach of one of the two areas, will be notified and asked to respond in writing to the Neighbourhood Manager/ANIMs.

### **Stage 3**

A Panel will be convened to examine the issue. The panel will be made up of the Neighbourhood Manager, the Customer Engagement Manager, Tenant or resident representatives and may also include a 2010 Staff from another panel. This panel can also select an independent person to chair the meeting. The Panel can call in witnesses, and question the individuals concerned face to face. The Panel will decide what action needs to be taken. Their decision is final.

# Area Housing Panel Declaration

Neighbourhood: \_\_\_\_\_

## I agree to:

- ✓ Represent the interests of all tenants and residents within the whole of my Panel/Area
- ✓ Abide by the Code of Conduct and Equal Opportunities policy
- ✓ Carry out the roles set down in the Role Description
- ✓ Attend appropriate Panel meetings, TARA meetings, consultation sessions and training courses when ever possible
- ✓ To maintain confidentiality of the AHP business

Signed ..... (AHP Rep)

Name ..... (AHP Rep)

Received by: ..... (AHP Chair)

Date .....