



Independent Customer-Led Scrutiny

Terms of Reference

At Homes in Sedgemoor (HIS), Sedgemoor Tenants Assurance Committee (STAC) have a clear role in commissioning independent scrutiny of services and will trigger the coming together of a customer-led scrutiny panel.

1. Aim

- 1.1 Customer led scrutiny will be the mechanism used by the Sedgemoor Tenants Assurance Committee (STAC) to commission an independent review of the services provided by HIS and where needed challenge the delivery of services, the performance of the landlord, and the value for money for residents; to provide assurance and to make recommendations for improvements in service delivery, performance and resident satisfaction.

2. The Role of Customer Led Scrutiny

- 2.1 The role of the Scrutiny Panel is:

- To take an independent view of HIS's performance.
- To ensure customers influence the priority for internal service-based reviews and contribute customer experience evidence within a context of co-regulation.
- To ensure other customers can contribute through a range of evidence gathering activities.
- To hold the Senior Management Team (SMT) and Board to account where performance fails to meet agreed and published standards and in areas that are excelled in.
- To utilise best practice from other organisations as part of the scrutiny review to ensure HIS delivers excellent sector-leading services.
- To make recommendations for improving performance and customer service
- To consider Value for Money and Social Value gains and savings in all aspects of its activities.
- To ensure the panel consists of no fewer than four members

3. Programme of work

- 3.1 The Sedgemoor Tenants Assurance Committee solely, or in conjunction with the customer improvement groups will develop a programme of



work that will reflect the priorities of all residents and compliment the existing self-regulation and service improvement aspirations of HIS.

- 3.2 All involvement Groups will consider priorities for scrutiny through their performance monitoring activities, which will include consideration of:
- Customer Satisfaction data
 - Complaints data
 - Performance against key indicators
 - Comparing performance against that of the best performing comparable registered providers.

and recommend an annual programme of activity which will be agreed through a meeting of the Sedgemoor Tenants Assurance Committee Chair & Group Chairs.

- 3.3 Involvement Groups will maintain an overview of overall performance and can undertake additional discreet pieces of work (outside of the agreed programme) where services are:
- Identified as displaying evidence of weakness or failure against the Regulator of Social Housing's National Standards Framework
 - Subject to collective requests for scrutiny by Committee or improvement group members.
 - Subject to requests for scrutiny by the Senior Management Team or Board of Management.
 - Considered by the Committee as requiring a 'light-touch' review.

4. The Scrutiny Process

- 4.1 Scrutiny at HIS will operate on a 'task and finish' basis, meaning that the Committee will agree the scope of the review. The Community Enabler team will be responsible for recruiting to the scrutiny panel from the wider customer base. Members can be recruited from:
- Any of the Customer Involvement Groups but not those who have been involved in the development of a particular service that is being reviewed
 - Members of any other involvement groups recognised and supported by HIS
 - The wider resident population

Only one member of the Sedgemoor Tenants Assurance Committee can participate in a scrutiny panel at any one time.

- 4.2 All residents engaging in scrutiny must have undertaken initial training as detailed in 8.4 of this document.



4.3 A typical full scrutiny review will include:

- 1) Agreeing the objective and scope of the review (including what falls inside and outside of the review).
- 2) Developing a draft project plan and submitting a request for written information to the Community Enabler Team Leader as the specific point of contact and information co-ordinator.
- 3) Undertaking a desktop review of the written information received and establishing lines of enquiry for further investigation.
- 4) Testing findings of the desktop review and investigating lines of enquiry through a range of reality checks and inspection methods (including, but not limited to interviews, focus groups, site visits, mystery shopping, surveys).
- 5) Considering all evidence gathered and compiling a written report with evidence-based recommendations.
- 6) Provision of a draft copy to Sedgemoor Tenants Assurance Committee for approval and to relevant staff and Senior Management Team members for consideration and management response.
- 7) Any clarification required prior to staff drafting an improvement plan which fully responds to the recommendations.
- 8) The preparation of the final report and recommendations to STAC.
- 9) Receipt of the improvement plan and on-going monitoring of its delivery by the committee.
- 10) Publicising the review outcomes and Improvement Plan.

4.4 A typical light-touch review will include steps 1, 3 and 5 and aspects of 4, 6, 7 and 8 as appropriate and proportionate to nature of review.

5. Reporting & Escalation

5.1 Following the agreement of the report, the relevant staff members, and senior management team (SMT) members will receive a copy to enable the production of an Improvement Plan.

5.2 The Panel will then prepare its formal report, along with the agreed improvement plan and submit it to STAC.

5.3 If the findings raise concerns of a serious nature, these will be reported to STAC by the Chair of the Panel.

5.4 The STAC has the power to escalate on the following basis:

- If the Panel remains dissatisfied with SMT response, it can set out its concerns to STAC.
- If the STAC still remains dissatisfied it may seek independent mediation.



6. Access to Information

- 6.1 Scrutiny panels established for the purpose of delivering a full scrutiny review will have authority, including but not limited to:
- Calling on any member of staff to attend its meetings to present evidence, subject to provision of a minimum of **10 working days'** notice.
 - Access to information and reports to carry out its scrutiny activities, within agreed timescales. Service leads have a duty to provide requested information within **10 working days of receipt** of the formal request (subject to conditions of confidentiality and data protection).
- 6.2 STAC will have a range of duties, including but not limited to the customer scrutiny panel Terms of Reference, including:
- A response to the agreed recommendations, triggering a formal duty on SMT to respond within **28 days** by way of an improvement plan including actions to be completed, lead staff member and anticipated timescale for completion.
 - Signing-off the improvement plan as addressing all recommendations or returning it to SMT for further improvement, within **10 days** of receipt.
 - Presenting the final and agreed Improvement plan to the Board.
 - Monitoring progress of the improvement plan and presenting progress reports to the Board and residents as appropriate.

7. Confidentiality and Data Protection

- 7.1 All information acquired for the purposes of scrutiny activity is confidential to HIS. Panel members should be aware that during a scrutiny they may recognise the details of people that they know.
- 7.2 Scrutiny panel members must not release information, either during their appointment or following termination (by whatever means), to third parties without the express clearance from the Company Secretary. Members are required to sign a confidentiality agreement prior to being given access to confidential information.
- 7.3 Scrutiny panel members will be bound by the provisions of the Data Protection Act. At times, access to information will be restricted if it contains personal or personally sensitive data, where the provision of that data would breach Data Protection legislation.
- 7.4 Scrutiny panel members will read and sign Homes in Sedgemoor confidentiality agreement.



8. Team Membership & Support

- 8.1 Scrutiny panels will be established as detailed in 4.1 to deliver a specific, programmed review on a 'task and finish basis'.
- 8.2 Panel membership will be developed, with priority given to achieving a composition that, as far as possible, reflects the customer demographic.
- 8.3 There will be a minimum of 4 and a maximum number of 12 residents required for a scrutiny panel, though if too few people are recruited, consideration should be given to whether the review can take place. In such circumstances, HIS will use their best endeavours to recruit additional members to ensure the viability of the review.
- 8.4 Scrutiny panel members will be supported by the development of a clear role profile and through a programme of training and support including, but not limited to:
 - Introduction to Scrutiny & Planning a Review
 - Understanding Housing Management Performance Information
- 8.5 HIS will allocate and make available:–
 - A member of the staff who will provide administrative support and a link with HIS.
 - Access to appropriate equipment and meeting room facilities.
 - A budget for reasonable expenses, training and development, commissioning additional research and independent mentoring support.
 - Clear routes of access to the business, its staff, contractors and Board
- 8.6 Scrutiny panels can consider the inclusion of independent/or co-opted members in order to achieve greater balance and/or competence or bridge identified skills gaps.

9. Conflicts of interest

- 9.1 Scrutiny panel members are expected to declare any conflicts of interest. If a conflict of interest arises, they must promptly advise the Chair. Potential conflicts of interest that may arise include:
 - Board membership or employment with HIS.
 - Employment with a major contractor of HIS.

Receipt of a service from HIS does not generally constitute a conflict of interest.



9.2 A declared interest may not preclude an individual from participating in a scrutiny review but should be noted in the interests of transparency. This might be for example, where a panel member is involved in an ongoing complaint about a service that is being scrutinised. It is important that individual issues are not raised to be resolved at meetings.

10. Frequency of meetings

10.1 Generally, a full scrutiny review will require a minimum of **4** meetings and a light-touch review a minimum of **2** meetings.

10.2 Additional activities may be required. These could include, but are not limited to:

- Meeting preparation including reading reports/information
- Individual research/benchmarking
- Reality checking activities
- Visits to and hosting of other Customer Scrutiny Teams

11. Expectations of membership

11.1 Customer and staff panel members agree to:

- Work together as a team
- Understand and respect the views and rights of all members
- Listen to each other
- Allow others to express their views and be sensitive to their needs
- Support each other and treat each other as equals
- Do what they say they will
- Abide by decisions made and adhere to the principles of collective responsibility
- Listen to what residents want (through performance information and involved residents groups)
- Share the workload
- Recognise the abilities and shortcomings of others, rather than labelling them
- Not discuss or divulge any sensitive or confidential information that is raised during meetings

Any person who:

- Fails to meet the above expectations; or
- Acts in an aggressive or offensive manner

will have their membership withdrawn.



Aggressive or offensive behaviour could include (but is not limited to):

- Interrupting
- Dominating conversations
- Not listening to others
- Apportioning blame
- Using racist, sexist, ageist, homophobic or other offensive language

Should it become necessary for HIS to take action to impose the terms of tenancy of a member, that member will be required to stand down for any period of that action.

Customer Led Scrutiny – Flow chart

