

Housing Services Tenants' Scrutiny Panel Policy

Department	Housing Services
Responsible Person	Director of Housing
Last Reviewed	25 May 2026
Next Review	24 May 2028

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The London Borough of Barking and Dagenham (the Council) is committed to placing tenants at the centre of housing service delivery. The Council recognises that tenants play a vital role in shaping, challenging, and improving housing services and that meaningful resident involvement contributes to better outcomes, increased accountability, and stronger relationships between tenants and the Council.
- 1.2 The Tenant Scrutiny Panel has been established to provide an independent resident-led approach to reviewing Housing Services. Through scrutiny activity, tenants can examine how services are delivered, assess performance, and make recommendations for improvement based on evidence and resident experience.
- 1.3 This policy sets out the purpose, structure, and operation of the Tenant Scrutiny Panel and explains how scrutiny reviews will be conducted within Housing Services.

2. Purpose of the Tenant Scrutiny Panel

- 2.1 The Tenant Scrutiny Panel exists to provide constructive challenge and independent oversight of Housing Services from a resident perspective. The Panel supports the Council's commitment to transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement by enabling tenants to review services and influence decision-making.
- 2.2 The Panel's work focuses on improving service quality and customer experience across housing management functions. Reviews may examine areas such as repairs and maintenance, complaints handling, anti-social behaviour, estate services, resident communication, damp and mould response, allocations, and building safety.
- 2.3 The Panel will be consulted as part of all Housing Services policy reviews and be involved in setting the performance framework for Housing Services.
- 2.4 The Panel will also contribute to Housing Services' annual report, as well as jointly sign it off.

- 2.5 The role of the Panel is not to investigate individual complaints or replace the Council's formal governance arrangements. Instead, the Panel considers broader service themes, patterns, and performance issues to identify opportunities for improvement that benefit all tenants.

3. Scope

- 3.1 This policy applies to all Council housing management services delivered by the Council, including services provided directly by the Council or on its behalf through contractors or partner organisations.
- 3.2 The Tenant Scrutiny Panel may review any housing-related service where there is evidence that scrutiny could support improvement, increase resident satisfaction, or strengthen accountability. The Panel will work collaboratively with Council officers while maintaining independence in its findings and recommendations.

4. Principles of Scrutiny

- 4.1 The Council and the Tenants' Scrutiny Panel will operate according to several core principles. Scrutiny activity must be evidence-based, fair, transparent, and focused on improving outcomes for tenants. Members are expected to approach reviews objectively and constructively, recognising both strengths and areas requiring improvement.
- 4.2 The Council is committed to ensuring that scrutiny is meaningful and that recommendations made by the Panel are carefully considered. In return, the Panel is expected to conduct reviews professionally and respectfully, using evidence and resident feedback to support its conclusions.
- 4.3 The Council also recognises the importance of equality, diversity, and inclusion in resident engagement. Every effort will be made to ensure that the Panel reflects the diverse communities of Barking and Dagenham and that participation opportunities are accessible to all tenants.

5. Governance and Accountability

- 5.1 The Tenant Scrutiny Panel operates as an independent advisory group supported by the Council. Although the Panel does not hold formal decision-making powers, its findings and recommendations form an important part of the Council's approach to service improvement and resident accountability.

- 5.2 The Panel will report its findings to senior housing management and, where appropriate, to elected members or relevant Council committees. The Council will provide formal responses to scrutiny recommendations and will set out how agreed actions will be implemented and monitored.
- 5.3 The Council acknowledges that effective scrutiny depends on openness and transparency. Officers will therefore provide access to relevant performance information, policies, procedures, and service data to support the Panel's work, subject to legal and confidentiality requirements.

6. Membership

- 6.1 Membership of the Tenant Scrutiny Panel is open to Council tenants where applicable. The Council aims to recruit a broad and representative group of tenants who reflect the diversity of their communities and who are committed to improving housing services for all tenants.
- 6.2 Applicants must be named signatory on the tenancy agreement and be at least 18 years old and willing to work collaboratively and professionally as part of the Panel. No previous experience is required, as the Council will provide training and support.
- 6.3 The Tenant Scrutiny Panel will not only consist of tenant representatives that reflect the Borough's demographic profile of age, gender and religion but it will also have tenant representation from every Ward and from each tenancy type, such as General Needs and Sheltered Housing along with tenants that live in a mixture of property types such as houses, bungalows and flatted accommodation. This is to ensure that the Council capture input and scrutiny based upon the experiences of tenants from across the whole of the Council's diverse housing portfolio.
- 6.4 Members will normally be appointed following an application and informal discussion process. Appointments are intended to ensure that members understand the purpose of scrutiny and can commit to participating regularly in meetings and review activity.
- 6.5 Membership terms will normally last for two years, although members may reapply or continue by agreement subject to attendance, participation, and conduct.

7. Roles and Responsibilities

- 7.1 The Tenant Scrutiny Panel will appoint a Chair and Vice Chair from among its members. These roles are important in ensuring that the Panel operates effectively, remains focused on its objectives, and maintains constructive working relationships with Council officers and tenants.
- 7.2 The Chair is responsible for providing leadership to the Panel and ensuring that meetings are conducted in a fair, professional, and inclusive manner. The Chair will work with supporting officers to agree agendas, prioritise scrutiny activity, and ensure that reviews remain focused on improving housing services for tenants. During meetings, the Chair will encourage participation from all members, manage discussions appropriately, and ensure that decisions and recommendations are reached collectively and transparently.
- 7.3 The Chair also acts as the main representative of the Tenant Scrutiny Panel and may attend meetings with senior officers, elected members, or other resident groups where appropriate. In conducting this role, the Chair is expected to represent the views of the Panel fairly and objectively and to promote positive and constructive working relationships between tenants and the Council.
- 7.4 The Chair will have a section in each Housing Services Newsletter to report on the progress of the Tenant Scrutiny Panel and to seek suggestions for new areas to scrutinise.
- 7.5 The Vice Chair supports the Chair in all aspects of the role and will deputise in the Chair's absence where necessary. The Vice Chair is expected to work closely with the Chair to help coordinate scrutiny activity, support effective communication within the Panel, and contribute to the smooth running of meetings and reviews. The role also provides continuity and additional leadership capacity for the Panel.
- 7.6 Panel members are expected to attend meetings regularly, prepare for scrutiny activity, review information provided, and contribute constructively to discussions and recommendations. Members should approach scrutiny objectively and focus on improving services for the benefit of all tenants rather than individual interests. Members are also expected to uphold the

standards set out within the Code of Conduct as defined and agreed by the Tenancy Scrutiny Panel and maintain confidentiality where required.

- 7.7 Council officers will provide administrative and professional support to the Panel. This includes arranging meetings, preparing agendas and minutes, coordinating training, providing access to relevant information and performance data, and supporting the monitoring of agreed actions arising from scrutiny reviews.

8. Meetings

- 8.1 The Tenant Scrutiny Panel will normally meet on a monthly or bi-monthly basis depending on the level of scrutiny activity being undertaken. Additional working groups or review sessions may also be arranged where necessary.
- 8.2 Meeting agendas and relevant papers will usually be circulated at least five working days in advance to allow members sufficient time to prepare. Minutes and agreed actions will be recorded and shared following each meeting.
- 8.3 A meeting will normally require a minimum of five resident members to be present to be considered quorate.
- 8.4 The Council is committed to ensuring meetings are accessible and inclusive. Reasonable adjustments and support will be provided where required to enable tenants to participate fully.

9. Scrutiny Review Process

- 9.1 The Tenant Scrutiny Panel will agree its work programme based on issues that are important to tenants, service performance concerns, regulatory requirements, complaints trends, or emerging risks within housing services.
- 9.2 Once a review topic has been identified, the Panel will develop a clear scope outlining the purpose of the review, the questions to be explored, the evidence required, and the timescale for completion.
- 9.3 Evidence gathering may involve reviewing performance data, analysing complaints trends, interviewing officers, or tenants, conducting surveys or focus groups, benchmarking against other landlords, or undertaking mystery

shopping exercises. The Panel may also review policies, procedures, and service standards where relevant.

- 9.4 Following evidence gathering, the Panel will analyse its findings and identify themes, strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement. Recommendations must be evidence-based, realistic, and capable of improving service delivery or resident experience.
- 9.5 The outcome of each review will be documented in a formal scrutiny report. Reports will include a summary of findings, evidence considered, recommendations, and proposed actions. The Council will provide a formal response outlining whether recommendations are accepted and how implementation will be monitored.
- 9.6 The Panel will continue to monitor progress against agreed actions to ensure improvements are delivered effectively.

10. Conduct and Confidentiality

- 10.1 Members of the Tenant Scrutiny Panel are expected to always conduct themselves professionally and respectfully. All participants must treat others with dignity and courtesy and contribute to discussions in a constructive and inclusive manner.
- 10.2 Panel members must maintain confidentiality where sensitive information is shared as part of scrutiny activity. Any confidential documents or information must not be disclosed outside Panel meetings unless authorised by the Council.
- 10.3 Members are also required to declare any conflicts of interest that may affect their participation in a review or decision-making process.
- 10.4 Where standards of conduct are not met, the Council may take appropriate action, including suspension or removal from the Panel.

11. Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

- 11.1 The Council is committed to ensuring that resident engagement opportunities are fair, inclusive, and accessible. The Council recognises that effective scrutiny depends on hearing a wide range of resident voices and experiences.

- 11.2 The Council will seek to remove barriers to participation and provide reasonable adjustments where required. Information will be made available in accessible formats upon request, and support will be offered to tenants who may require assistance to participate fully in scrutiny activities.

12. Training and Support

- 12.1 The Council will provide induction and ongoing training to support members in conducting their scrutiny role effectively. Training may include understanding housing services, interpreting performance data, scrutiny techniques, report writing, customer service standards, and regulatory requirements.
- 12.2 Administrative and practical support will also be provided to enable participation. This may include assistance with technology, meeting access arrangements, or reimbursement of agreed reasonable expenses in line with Council policy.

13. Monitoring and Review of the Policy

- 13.1 This policy will be reviewed every two years or earlier if required due to changes in legislation, regulation, or operational requirements.
- 13.2 The review process will involve consultation with Tenant Scrutiny Panel members, tenants, and relevant Council officers to ensure the policy remains effective, relevant, and reflective of best practice.

14. Related Documents

- 14.1 This policy should be read alongside other relevant Council policies and strategies, including the Housing Resident Engagement Strategy, Complaints Policy, Equality and Diversity Policy, Data Protection Policy, and housing service standards.