

# Croydon Housing Services Forum

## Constitution

### 1. Name

- 1.1 The group shall be known as the Croydon Housing Services Forum.

### 2. Geographic area represented

- 2.1 The forum shall represent all residents living in properties and on estates managed by Croydon Council and located in the borough of Croydon.

### 3. Aims

- 3.1 To enable members of the forum and other residents living in properties managed by the council, to make their views known to the council, about new proposals and existing housing management services in Croydon.
- 3.2 To promote and improve working relationships with residents and other partners from within Croydon, in order to work towards improving the local environment and general quality of life on housing estates managed by the council.
- 3.3 To consider issues raised by residents (other than those relating to individual residents) regarding housing management services and the local environment, to discuss proposals for improving services, or to suggest new ways of solving problems.
- 3.4 To receive and discuss reports such as performance reports on services and other information provided by housing management staff, and to make recommendations about these where appropriate.

### 4. Equalities

- 4.1 The forum shall positively promote equal opportunities and diversity within the community and will treat all people with dignity and respect, recognising the value of each individual. The forum shall work for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against persons on grounds of race, gender, marital status, age, sexuality, disability and religion.
- 4.2 Members of the forum are responsible for representing the best interests of all residents in their area/estate. They should try to reflect and understand the views of the local community, not just their own.

## **5. Attendance and membership of the forum**

- 5.1 To ensure transparency, the meetings of the forum are open to the public and therefore anyone is welcome to attend as an observer.
- 5.2 Residents living on estates or in properties managed by the council are encouraged to attend forum meetings, in order to share ideas and raise issues of common concern to residents.
- 5.3 As far as possible, meetings of the forum should be attended by proportions of tenants, leaseholders and freeholders that reflects the general tenure of properties managed by the council.
- 5.4 Three councillors (two majority & one minority) will be nominated by their respective parties to attend forum meetings as non-voting members.
- 5.5 In order to improve continuity and establish reliable links with local communities, attendees will be invited to commit themselves to becoming a member of the forum. Anyone who is interested in doing so, may become a member of the forum, provided they meet the criteria as shown in 5.6 below.
- 5.6 All members of the forum must be either
  - a tenant or leaseholder of Croydon Council or,
  - a freeholder who pays a service charge to Croydon Council.
- 5.7 Members will be expected to confirm their membership in writing by completing a simple membership form. Members wishing to do so, will be required to renew their membership each year, in a similar manner.
- 5.8 New members will be required to register their details on the housing involvement database. This system enables the council to provide involved residents with the information and support they require and allows the monitoring of resident involvement activity. Personal details are held securely and are not released to third parties. (for more information contact a member of the resident involvement team)
- 5.9 All members of the forum will be required to attend an introductory training session within three months of registering as a member, or show a good understanding of how the forum and the housing service works.
- 5.10 Members will sign an undertaking to abide by this Constitution and the Resident Involvement Code of Conduct (see also 12.1 below).
- 5.11 Any member who is absent from two consecutive meetings without good reason, will be deemed to have resigned, unless otherwise agreed by the members of the forum.

## **6. Meetings**

- 6.1 The forum will meet six times each year and the meetings will be arranged and administered by council officers, in partnership with members.
- 6.2 Council officers will agree times and locations of meetings with members of the forum but these must be convenient to the majority of resident members and venues must be fully accessible.
- 6.3 Officers and representatives from the council and other relevant service providers will be invited and expected to attend meetings to inform discussions and to respond to residents queries.
- 6.4 The forum may also invite speakers from external organisations to its meetings, as required and agreed by members.
- 6.5 Any item to be included on the agenda must be notified to the council or the Chair at least 15 working days before the date of the meeting. Additional agenda items may be included at a later date at the discretion of the Chair.
- 6.6 Agendas for each meeting will be distributed in writing, or via email, to members 10 working days in advance of the meeting by council officers. The agenda will also be displayed on the council website. General promotional materials will be displayed at suitable locations, in advance of meetings.
- 6.7 All those present will be reminded of their obligation to abide by the Resident Involvement Code of Conduct at the start of each meeting.
- 6.8 Only members of the forum may automatically take part in discussions at the meeting, or take part in any voting that takes place.
- 6.9 Those attending as observers may only speak when invited to do so by the Chair. However, the Chair must provide reasonable and appropriate opportunity for observers to speak, particularly if they wish to raise an issue that is relevant to the meeting or the general aims of the forum.
- 6.10 The Chair will ensure the business of the meeting is managed appropriately and run in an organised manner.
- 6.11 The Chair will have the power to require any one to leave a meeting who is using inappropriate language or behaviour, or otherwise being disruptive. Council officers will provide support in such instances.
- 6.12 Should the individual refuse to leave, the Chair is entitled to close the meeting, with the agreement of other members and the council officers present.

- 6.13 A record of meetings will be prepared by council officers and will be circulated to members in writing, or via email, within 10 working days of a meeting and displayed on the council website.

## **7. Voting**

- 7.1 In order to be eligible to vote, residents must be bona fide members of the forum, in accordance with paragraph 5.7 above. New members must have previously attended one full meeting and existing members must not have allowed their membership to lapse, as detailed in paragraph 5.11 above.
- 7.2 When a decision is required by a vote, each resident member present at the meeting, including the Chair, will have one vote. Voting by proxy will not be accepted.
- 7.3 In the event of a tie, the Chair will not have a second, or casting vote and the forum will need to carry out a second vote or find agreement in another way, such as through a consensus decision.
- 7.4 Where voting is taking place for the selection of individuals to take up any of the positions of office, (e.g. Chair or representatives to other bodies) the nominees are also entitled to cast a vote.
- 7.5 If required, voting by secret ballot can be arranged and administered by the officers from the council.

## **8. The role of Chair and Vice Chair**

- 8.1 The person appointed as Chair will set the agenda for the forthcoming meeting, in conjunction with the officer(s) from the council. The Chair will guide the business of meetings of the forum.
- 8.2 Should the Chair be unable to attend a meeting, that meeting will be chaired by the Vice Chair.
- 8.3 The position of Chair or Vice Chair may not be held by the same individual for more than three consecutive years. After three years, the individual must stand down and not put themselves forward for re-election to the same position for a period of one year.

## **9. Representation of the views of the forum**

- 9.1 Every year, members of the forum may also select representatives to sit on other bodies or organisations to represent the views of the forum on that body. These representatives will also be responsible for feeding back to the forum about the activities and decisions of that body.

- 9.2 In order to be eligible for such positions, the individuals must be eligible to vote, as detailed in 7.1 above and be present at the meeting at which selection takes place.

## **10. Election of officers of the forum**

- 10.1 Every year, the Chair, Vice Chair and elected representatives to other bodies, will stand down and voting will take place to select to these appointments for the next year, as detailed in section 7 of this constitution.
- 10.2 Members of the forum will approve the selection of individuals who will take on the roles of Chair, Vice Chair and representatives to any other bodies as may be relevant. In order to be eligible for any of these positions the individual must be eligible to vote, as detailed in 7.1 above and be present at the meeting at which voting takes place.
- 10.3 Members who wish to stand for these positions may not nominate themselves but must be nominated by another member of the forum.
- 10.4 Where a position is contested, voting will be carried out by a secret ballot, which will be administered by officers from the Council.

## **11. Quorum**

- 11.1 Attendance by one third of the total number of members or 10 members of the forum (whichever is smaller) will constitute a quorum. This is the minimum number of members required to enable voting to take place and resultant decisions to be recorded.
- 11.2 If the meeting of the forum is not quorate, the meeting may proceed but no decisions can be made.

## **12. Code of Conduct**

- 12.1 All members of the forum should familiarise themselves with and will abide by, the Resident Involvement Code of Conduct. (this is available separately from the resident involvement team)

## **13. Alterations to the Constitution**

- 13.1 Amendments to this Constitution must receive the approval of a minimum of two-thirds of all members of the forum, and must also receive the endorsement of the Tenants' & Leaseholders' Panel before it can take effect.