



Area Panel Constitution, Code of Conduct and Terms of Reference

Approved at STAR Board Meeting March 2014

NAME

- 1.1 There will be 2 area Panels, These will be called: North Area Panel and South Area Panel.

AIMS & OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 The Area Panels are a link between the communities they represent and The Board and should act as such.
- 2.2 To support and uphold the governance arrangements of ST&R Housing
- 2.3 Improve communities
- 2.4 Challenge services
- 2.5 Raise issues for local improvements
- 2.6 Seek out local issues – funding and services
- 2.7 Sign posting for residents
- 2.8 Investigate and recommend resolution for tenant and leaseholder complaints when they reach stage 3.

ROLE OF AREA PANEL MEMBERS

- 3.1 To promote Resident Involvement within communities.
- 3.2 Encourage involvement from younger residents, and generally from all social groups living within communities.
- 3.3 Area Panel representative/s to attend Board Meetings where an agenda item is being heard.
- 3.4 Establish a connection with any existing groups (neighbourhood watch, residents groups etc.) and invite to report to Area Panels. Also, attend their meetings from time to time
- 3.5 Capture community feedback re services provided by ST and R Housing
- 3.6 Produce reports for board (with a specific coloured paper relating to each panel)
- 3.7 Provide a 'local' focussed perspective on issues raised by the board or residents
- 3.8 Delegated financial power to approve community chest applications
- 3.9 To hear complaints at stage 3 and escalate up to Housing Ombudsman if appropriate, or suggest alternative way to resolve complaint

EQUALITIES

- 4.1 The Panels will 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 Panels will work for the elimination of all forms of discrimination against persons on grounds of race, gender, age, sexuality, disability and religion, in line with Shropshire Towns and Rural Housing's Equality and Diversity Strategy.

MEMBERSHIP OF AREA PANELS

- 5.1 Maximum of 7 members per panel with a quorum of 4.
- 5.2 A maximum membership of 9 years, which is made up of 3 x 3 year cycles.
- 5.3 Must be a tenant or a leaseholder of Shropshire Council, managed by Shropshire Towns and Rural Housing Ltd
- 5.4 You must not be (in the reasonable opinion of a majority of area panel members) in serious breach of your obligations as a tenant
- 5.5 Maximum of 1 leaseholder per panel
- 5.6 Aim for no more than 1 area panel member for each Parish (South) and 3 area panel members for each Parish (North) due to spread of housing stock. This can be over-ridden by The Board
- 5.7 Maximum of one person from recognised tenant group can join each area panel. This can be over-ridden by the Board
- 5.8 Councillors (county, town and parish) can contribute to area panel meetings but will not have a vote
- 5.9 An AGM to be held annually to review membership and re-elect as appropriate.
- 5.10 A chair and Vice Chair will need to be appointed for each area panel. Elected as part of a formal meeting in April, once delegated budget has been allocated
- 5.11 Chair and Vice Chair can serve for 1 year term at a time. Voted in by Area Panel members and can serve for no-more than 3 consecutive terms
- 5.12 Treasurer and secretary services will be provided by ST & R Housing. RI officers to facilitate meetings (room hire, refreshments and transport)
- 5.13 Finance and Resources Director and Finance Manager to attend quarterly meetings
- 5.14 There will be a representative from the Neighbourhoods Team at each Area Panel meeting
- 5.15 Cannot be an employee of Shropshire Towns and Rural Housing

MEETINGS

- 6.1 Once both panels are set up by April 2014 meetings will be held every quarter
- 6.2 1st hour of the meeting will be closed for decisions relating to Community Chest Applications
- 6.3 2nd hour of the meeting will be open to the public
- 6.4 Venues of meetings will not be fixed and will move around the areas that they represent
- 6.5 Additional meetings can be arranged if necessary by agreement of the Area Panels
- 6.6 One joint meeting of both Area Panels will be held per year
- 6.7 An AGM for each Area Panel will be held annually to review membership and re-elect as appropriate

CODE OF CONDUCT

- 7.1 Members should not represent their own agenda.
- 7.2 Members must represent the views of their local area.

- 7.3 Members must not seek personal gain through their membership.
- 7.4 Members must treat all with respect and courtesy.
- 7.5 Members must treat all information provided to them as confidential unless told otherwise by ST&R Housing.
- 7.6 Members must adhere to the ST&R Housing's Data Protection Policy.
- 7.7 Area Panel members must declare an interest in a matter where appropriate and withdraw from a part of the meeting where the Area Panel is discussing a matter which specifically affects them or a relative/friend/organisation with which they are involved.
- 7.8 Area Panel members must make panel aware if action is being taken against them in relation to their tenancy.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

- 8.1 Purpose
The Area Panels are a link between the communities they represent and The Board and should act as such, bringing any areas of concern with service provision to the attention of The Board and/or the relevant service manager. They also have a role in promoting the Community Chest within their communities.
- 8.2 Membership
Members of the Area Panels are volunteers, who are a tenant or leaseholder of Shropshire Council, managed by ST&R Housing. The initial Area Panel membership will be approved by The Board, and will then follow an application process of an application form and informal interview by a panel. Membership of the Area Panels may be over-ridden by a majority vote of The Board.
- 8.3 Meetings
Meetings will be held at least once a quarter, with the 1st half being closed for applications to be considered and the 2nd half will be open to the public. Extra meetings may be held with agreement by the rest of the Area Panel
- 8.4 Finance
Each panel will have a delegated annual budget, which will be agreed by Board and will run 1st April-31st March, split in to equal quarters. The funding can roll over to the next quarter if unspent, but not in to the next financial year.