

# **Freebridge Community Housing**

## **Tenant Panel**

### **Terms of Reference**

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of the Tenant Panel is to look at key areas of Freebridge's work and to identify any improvements that could be made.

- To operate as an independent group, reflective of Freebridge's tenants and residents, ensuring that Freebridge Community Housing provide tenant centred services of the highest possible standard
- To form an integral part of the governance and co-regulation structure of Freebridge through effective links with the Board and Management Team.

#### **Role of the Panel**

- To review different projects that impact on tenants and to look at ways of improving key areas of work. This will be conducted by referring to a wide range of formal and informal sources of tenant and resident feedback to inform its work programme and priorities that Freebridge provides.
- To provide engagement and feedback on the different improvement activities including complaints and compliments.
- To agree a plan of topic areas for review annually based on the current Business Plan project activities, to be endorsed by the Board.
- To request evidence to enable Freebridge services to be reviewed
- To consider changes in national policy, Freebridge customer service standards, review housing related procedures and policy statements where significant changes are proposed.
- To identify and challenge the Board and Management Team where performance falls below National Standards or any additional higher standards that Freebridge has offered.

#### **What will the Panel do?**

- Be supported by an Independent Facilitator, jointly appointed by Freebridge and the Panel.

- Provide a written report to the Freebridge Board (or a nominated sub-committee) on the Panel's activities on a quarterly basis.
- Provide recommendations to the Board or Management Team as appropriate, on the outcomes of any reviews carried out.
- Openly publicise its minutes to other tenants and Freebridge, subject to the need to maintain confidentiality around certain issues, via the Freebridge website
- Be able to request accurate, up to date and reliable reports and information from Freebridge to carry out its activities. Where appropriate, the Tenant Panel may invite officers and managers to meet with them. All requests for information and evidence should be submitted to Freebridge via the Governance Coordinator.
- Provide membership of one to the Complaints Panel which represents the second stage of the Freebridge Complaints Procedure, when required to do so.
- Attend as many as practicable, Freebridge events held during the year where an invitation is directly made, to include the Annual General Meeting and any Special General Meetings.
- Provide involvement in Resident Liaison where requested from partners who provide contracted works to tenants.
- Attend any training and development organised during the year.
- Refer to a wide range of formal and informal sources of tenant and resident feedback to inform its work programme and priorities.

### **What Freebridge will do?**

- Freebridge will consider all feedback and recommendations from the Tenant Panel and provide feedback.
- In the event of the Tenant Panel being dissatisfied with a response from Freebridge, the Tenant Panel can request a face-to-face meeting with a Director of the relevant service area. If they remain dissatisfied after this, they may appeal to the Board setting out their concerns. The Board will take account of the appeal and arrange for a Board Member to meet with the Tenant Panel at the Tenant Panel meeting which follows, unless urgent in which case a date will be arranged within 21 days. The Board Member will report back to the Board, and the Board will make a decision on the issue at its next meeting. If the Tenant Panel remains dissatisfied, the matter will be referred to an independent arbitrator for final consideration.

In the event that Freebridge has concerns about Tenant Panel compliance with these Terms of Reference, representatives from the Management Team will meet with the Tenant Panel at the Tenant Panel's next scheduled meeting to raise these concerns and establish a joint agreement to ensure that the Tenant Panel complies with these Terms of Reference.

## **Membership**

- Membership will be of up to 12 tenants, who will come from a wide range of backgrounds, and from the different communities, that Freebridge serves – details of the key skills and knowledge we look for in Tenant Panel members, in addition to our requirements of interested individuals, can be found at Appendix 1.
- Former Tenant Board Members can be appointed as Tenant Panel Members six months after their board membership has ended.
- Members will be appointed for a term of three years after an open and fair recruitment process. Members who step down at the end of their term of office, may be reselected for a further term of three years without the need for another recruitment process, provided that their performance has been judged to be of a satisfactory standard through the annual appraisal process. Reselection decisions will be made by the Communications Business Partner in consultation with the Tenant Panel Facilitator. No one may serve on the Panel for more than nine years.
- Recruitment of new members is conducted by following the terms of the Recruitment and Succession Procedure. This can be provided on request by the Governance Coordinator.
- Close relatives will not be permitted to serve together on the Panel. This is because of concerns around independence of judgement, conflicts of interest (actual and perceived) and diversity of representation. Should a situation occur whereby the relationship between two existing Panel Members changes to the extent that it falls within the definition of “close relatives”, one of them would be expected to step down from the Panel. The term “close relatives” refers to spouse, partner, parents, grandparents, children, grandchildren, brothers, sisters, and similar relations by marriage or civil partnership, but not including estranged relatives where there has been no contact for a number of years

## **Meetings**

- The Tenant Panel will normally meet monthly for a minimum of 8 meetings per year. Minutes of the meetings will be kept.
- The quorum for the Tenant Panel will be five members. In quorate meetings should be noted and decisions ratified at the next quorate meeting.

## **Tenant Panel Member Code of Conduct and Confidentiality**

- Each Tenant Panel Member will be required to sign up to the Tenant Panel Code of Conduct at the first point of joining, and this should be considered alongside this document.
- Each Panel member will be supplied with a copy of the Code of Conduct and any subsequent amended versions, as agreed with the Panel and the Board.

## **Development and Financial Support**

- The Tenant Panel will have an annual appraisal to assess group and individual performance. The appraisal will be an opportunity to review training and development needs.
- Freebridge will provide a budget to pay for the Facilitator, relevant Panel expenses and ongoing support to enable capacity building and to develop skills within the Panel.
- Reasonable expenses incurred by the Panel members for attending meetings and when carrying out activities will be fully reimbursed.

## Appendix 1

### Key Skills and Knowledge we look for in prospective Tenant Panel members:

Area	We will expect you to:
<b>Mission, Vision and Values</b>	Demonstrate a commitment to Freebridge Community Housing's, mission, vision and values.
<b>Equality and diversity</b>	Respect and value difference, while making sure people have fair and equal chances, in all aspects of your and Freebridge Community Housing's work.
<b>Working Together</b>	Work effectively with others to achieve Freebridge Community Housing's business aims.
<b>Empowerment</b>	Prepare for meetings by reading and understanding documents. While attending meetings, be prepared to question and challenge information/speakers in a positive and constructive manner.
<b>Enthusiasm</b>	Help create and evaluate new ideas, solutions, methods or opportunities for improving Freebridge Community Housing's performance and to actively monitor on-going changes and solutions.
<b>Integrity</b>	Contribute effectively using the business information provided to check that Freebridge Community Housing is achieving its objectives and suggest taking corrective action where necessary. During the continuous improvement process with Panel members both written and verbal information shared, can be of a sensitive nature so it must be treated confidential at all times.
<b>Customer Focus</b>	Reflect the view of the customer experience.

### What Freebridge will require you to commit to as a Tenant Panel member:

Area	What we will expect from you:
<b>Panel meetings</b>	You should attend all scheduled meetings of the Panel, unless you have a good reason not to attend. If you miss four meetings in a row without good

	reason you can be removed from the panel. You may be required to attend extra meetings not originally scheduled.
<b>Training and events</b>	You will be invited to attend an away day, informal meetings and other events during the year including training sessions.
<b>Preparation time</b>	You need to allocate time for reading reports and preparing for Panel meetings.
<b>Overall time commitment</b>	You will need to be able to spend about one day per month on meetings and other work for Freebridge Community Housing. This will sometimes be spread over the month and will be more in some weeks and less in others. Some work is likely to be in the daytime and on rare occasions in the evening, but we will be as flexible as possible around other arrangements such as childcare commitments.