

Agenda

www.oxford.gov.uk



Housing and Homelessness Panel (Panel of the Scrutiny Committee)

This meeting will be held on:

Date: **Thursday 6 October 2022**

Time: **6.00 pm**

Place: **Zoom - Remote meeting**

For further information please contact:

Richard Doney, Scrutiny Officer

☎ 01865 252955

✉ DemocraticServices@oxford.gov.uk

Members of the public can attend to observe this meeting and.

- may register in advance to speak to the committee in accordance with the [committee's rules](#)
- may record all or part of the meeting in accordance with the Council's [protocol](#)

Information about speaking and recording is set out in the agenda and on the [website](#)

Please contact the Committee Services Officer to register to speak; to discuss recording the meeting; or with any other queries.

*View or subscribe to updates for agendas, reports and minutes at
mycouncil.oxford.gov.uk.*

All public papers are available from the calendar link to this meeting once published

Committee Membership

Councillor Paula Dunne (Chair)

Councillor Lizzy Diggins

Councillor Laurence Fouweather

Councillor Jabu Nala-Hartley

Councillor Rosie Rawle

Councillor Jo Sandelson

Apologies received before the publication are shown under *Apologies for absence* in the agenda. Those sent after publication will be reported at the meeting.

Agenda

	Pages
1 Apologies	
2 Declarations of interest	
3 Housing and Homelessness Panel Work Plan The Panel is asked to note the work plan and to agree any amendments.	7 - 8
4 Notes of previous meeting The Panel is asked to agree the notes of the meeting held on 22 March 2022 as an accurate record, having made any necessary amendments.	9 - 12
5 Draft Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy Cllr Linda Smith, Cabinet Member for Housing, and Nerys Parry, Head of Housing Services, have been invited to present the Draft Housing, Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy which will be considered by Cabinet on 19 October. The Panel is asked to consider the report and to agree any recommendation it wishes to make to Cabinet. The report will follow as a supplement.	
6 Co-option of Tenant Ambassador The Panel is asked to consider the report and to agree arrangements to recommend to the Scrutiny Committee.	13 - 14
7 Dates of future meetings Meetings are scheduled for 03 November 2022; 02 March 2023; 24 April 2023. The Panel is asked to note these and to decide if they will all be remote meetings.	

Information for those attending

Recording and reporting on meetings held in public

Members of public and press can record, or report in other ways, the parts of the meeting open to the public. You are not required to indicate in advance but it helps if you notify the Committee Services Officer prior to the meeting so that they can inform the Chair and direct you to the best place to record.

The Council asks those recording the meeting:

- To follow the protocol which can be found on the Council's [website](#)
- Not to disturb or disrupt the meeting
- Not to edit the recording in a way that could lead to misinterpretation of the proceedings. This includes not editing an image or views expressed in a way that may ridicule or show a lack of respect towards those being recorded.
- To avoid recording members of the public present, even inadvertently, unless they are addressing the meeting.

Please be aware that you may be recorded during your speech and any follow-up. If you are attending please be aware that recording may take place and that you may be inadvertently included in these.

The Chair of the meeting has absolute discretion to suspend or terminate any activities that in his or her opinion are disruptive.

Councillors declaring interests

General duty

You must declare any disclosable pecuniary interests when the meeting reaches the item on the agenda headed "Declarations of Interest" or as soon as it becomes apparent to you.

What is a disclosable pecuniary interest?

Disclosable pecuniary interests relate to your* employment; sponsorship (ie payment for expenses incurred by you in carrying out your duties as a councillor or towards your election expenses); contracts; land in the Council's area; licenses for land in the Council's area; corporate tenancies; and securities. These declarations must be recorded in each councillor's Register of Interests which is publicly available on the Council's website.

Declaring an interest

Where any matter disclosed in your Register of Interests is being considered at a meeting, you must declare that you have an interest. You should also disclose the nature as well as the existence of the interest. If you have a disclosable pecuniary interest, after having declared it at the meeting you must not participate in discussion or voting on the item and must withdraw from the meeting whilst the matter is discussed.

Members' Code of Conduct and public perception

Even if you do not have a disclosable pecuniary interest in a matter, the Members' Code of Conduct says that a member "must serve only the public interest and must never improperly confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person including yourself" and that "you must not place yourself in situations where your honesty and integrity may be questioned". The matter of interests must be viewed within the context of the Code as a whole and regard should continue to be paid to the perception of the public.

*Disclosable pecuniary interests that must be declared are not only those of the member her or himself but also those member's spouse, civil partner or person they are living with as husband or wife or as if they were civil partners.

This page is intentionally left blank

Housing and Homelessness Panel Work Plan

NB This work plan is provisional and is subject to change, usually relating to changes on the Cabinet Forward Plan. Changes made outside meetings are agreed between the Scrutiny Officer and the Chair.

Cabinet items beyond two months in advance are not included on the work plan owing to the greater potential they they will move or that alternative items of higher priority will arise in the meantime.

03 November 2022

7

Agenda item	Cabinet item	Description	Cabinet portfolio	Lead officer
Housing Performance Report	No	Housing Performance monitoring update.	Housing	Nerys Parry, Head of Housing Services

This page is intentionally left blank

Minutes of a meeting of the Housing and Homelessness Panel (Panel of the Scrutiny Committee) on Tuesday 22 March 2022

www.oxford.gov.uk



Committee members present:

Councillor Bely-Summers

Councillor Diggins

Councillor Fouweather

Councillor Jarvis

Councillor Linda Smith (Chair)

Councillor Wade

Officers present for all or part of the meeting:

Tom Hudson, Scrutiny Officer

Bill Graves, Landlord Services Manager

Ian Wright, Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety

Simon Warde, Tenant Involvement Team Manager

Wendy Hind, Tenant Involvement Team Officer

40. Apologies

No apologies were received from Panel members, but Councillor Diko Walcott, Stephen Clarke and Stephen Gabriel all passed on their apologies.

Councillors Liz Wade and Laurence Fouweather raised that they would need to leave the meeting early.

41. Declarations of interest

None

42. Housing and Homelessness Panel Work Plan

The Panel **NOTED** that the work plan for the forthcoming civic year would be agreed by Scrutiny at its first meeting.

43. Notes of previous meeting

The notes of the meeting held on 02 February 2022 were **AGREED** as an accurate record.

44. DSS Motion Progress Update

Ian Wright, Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety presented an update report to the Panel on the progress made regarding a motion passed by full Council in July 2021 on measures against DSS discrimination.

The motion had mandated five actions:

- 1) To ensure that Council-accredited agents and landlords did not pursue DSS-discriminatory practices. The OLCAS code of conduct had been updated to include this, making it clear that such behaviour could mean being removed from the scheme. To date, no complaints about these agents had been received.
- 2) To ensure that the Welfare Reform team followed up on reports of DSS discrimination. When contacted, this team had not received complaints about DSS discrimination but would remain vigilant.
- 3) To provide training and guidance to duty housing officers, which had been undertaken.
- 4) To establish a forum comprising of stakeholders representing tenants from Council and private rented sector housing, which would feed into the Housing and Homelessness Panel. Press and social media releases had gone out, with the expectation that the first meeting would likely be held in the next month.
- 5) To undertake public communications to raise awareness of the issue. The Council's website had been updated to show how to recognise and report the issue, as well as press coverage provided. This coverage had brought about national interest, with national landlord groups, charities, other local authorities and national press all taking interest.

Issues that the Panel raised in discussion included:

- The response from landlords. Generally this was fairly muted; the initiative was generally focused more on tenants' experience.
- Whether the outreach on this issue had been direct, or whether it had included third party organisations who would come into contact with the issue, such as advice centres and other charities. This had not been undertaken to date, but was a practicable and valuable suggestion.
- Future monitoring. No report back to Council was planned, but it was open to the Panel to request an update report to be commissioned.
- Whether the issues and remedies available to private tenants and social tenants were sufficiently similar to warrant being put together in one forum. The overall consensus was that there were very different issues, which could pose difficulties for the forum. Although Council had agreed to put the two together, it should be closely monitored as to whether this arrangement was being successful.
- Resourcing the forum. The idea was that the Council would provide the resources to get the forum up and running, but it was expected to become self-servicing in the medium term.
- Whether the emphasis on working with the Housing and Homelessness Panel was correct in light of the fact that the Panel, nor any part of Scrutiny, is not a decision-making body. The point was made that the greatest return would come from tenants having the ability to work with Cabinet members and senior officers to develop policy at an early stage, and that Scrutiny should act as oversight to ensure this was happening.

It was **AGREED** to make the following recommendations to Cabinet:

- 1) That the Council contacts relevant third party agencies such as advice centres, unions and community groups, to make them aware of the support available to those who have faced DSS discrimination.
- 2) That the Council asks forum members whether they believe the forum should seek to cover private rented sector and social tenants simultaneously.

The Panel also asked that the point that there needed to be meaningful engagement with Cabinet members and senior officers also be made, if not in a recommendation.

45. Reports for Sign Off

Simon Warde, Tenant Involvement Team Manager, and Wendy Hind, Tenant Involvement Team Officer, provided a verbal briefing on the practical issues around supporting tenant involvement.

The growth in interaction between landlords and their tenants as required by the Social Housing white paper would mean a significant increase in the number of tenant ambassadors. The process of publicising opportunities and identifying suitable individuals was one which takes time and planning. Likewise, matching to suitable opportunities and providing training and equipment was also a practical challenge. A large number of the groups require specialist knowledge, for example on fire safety, or procurement, and volunteers need to be brought up to speed. Equally, at times it has been necessary to pay for basic broadband or find spare hardware to lend to ambassadors. This provision was, however, rather ad hoc and inconsistent, and it was suggested that having an external company provide a standard 'offer' would be preferable.

The possibility of incentivisation for volunteers was explored. A big issue was their inclusion within benefit calculations, which made it complicated. Many did not necessarily want to be ambassadors for financial gain or reward. However, the Panel did feel it was necessary that people's work should be recognised as opposed to remunerated. Ideas included free leisure centre access, or invitations to the Lord Mayor's reception, a specific event on their behalf, or long-service recognition.

Tenant ambassador, Dave Simons, felt that his involvement as a tenant ambassador over the past three years had been exceptionally rewarding, an experience shared across the tenant ambassadors. Digital support was valuable as it coincided with his private life. Civic recognition, such as the Mayor's Ball, would be welcomed.

46. Arrangements for Next Year

It was **AGREED** that the Panel would defer decisions on future working arrangements to the new Scrutiny Committee and Panel membership. However, it was suggested that there had been significant interest in membership of the Housing and Homelessness Panel and that a bigger membership should be explored.

47. Dates of next meetings

The Panel **AGREED** that the date of the first meeting of the Panel in the next municipal year, in August, would likely be difficult for those with school age children and should therefore be moved to July.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 7.10 pm

Chair
2022

Date: Thursday 6 October

When decisions take effect:

Cabinet: after the call-in and review period has expired

Planning Committees: after the call-in and review period has expired and the formal decision notice is issued

All other committees: immediately.

Details are in the Council's Constitution.

To: Housing and Homelessness Panel
Date: 06 October 2022
Report of: Head of Law and Governance
Title of Report: Co-option of Tenant Ambassador(s)

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To agree arrangements for Tenant Ambassador co-option and contribution to the Housing and Homelessness Panel
Key decision:	No
Corporate Priority:	All
Policy Framework:	Council Strategy 2020-24
Recommendation(s): That the Housing and Homelessness Panel:	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Agrees the arrangements for Tenant Ambassador co-option for the 2022/23 municipal year, including the number of Tenant Ambassador co-optees and how contributions to Panel meetings will be managed and facilitated. 2. Recommends proposed arrangements for Tenant Ambassador co-option for the 2022/23 municipal year to the Scrutiny Committee for approval. 	

Introduction and Background

1. At its last meeting of the 2021/22 municipal year, on 22 March 2022, the Housing and Homelessness Panel agreed that the Panel would defer decisions on future working arrangements to the new Scrutiny Committee and Panel membership.
2. Scrutiny Committee, on 08 June 2022, approved the Scrutiny Operating Principles which set out that there would be six members of the Panel. Tenant Ambassadors have previously attended meetings of the Housing and Homelessness Panel and have made a valuable contribution.

Co-option

3. The Scrutiny Operating Principles for the 2022/23 municipal year describe that “at the discretion of the Committee, residents and other specialists may be co-opted as non-voting members of the Committee, Standing Panels and Review Groups, as the subject matter dictates for a period ending no later than the day of the first meeting of the next council year. The Committee may discontinue an appointment at any time.”

4. Officers recommend that at least one Tenant Ambassador be formally co-opted to the Panel as a member of it. The Tenant Ambassador would not have voting rights but this formal co-optee status would enable the Tenant Ambassador to question and probe in the same way as elected members of the Panel. This would demonstrate the Council's commitment to taking account of the insights of tenants.

Report author	Richard Doney
Job title	Scrutiny Officer
Service area or department	Law and Governance
Telephone	01865 252955
e-mail	rdoney@oxford.gov.uk