

Terms of Reference for the Resident Forum and Resident Panel

1. Purpose

The Resident Forum is for ongoing open engagement between WCC residents and the housing service. At the Resident Forum, residents get updates from the housing service and help shape the part of the service being discussed. They also hear from other Council departments and get an opportunity to speak directly with housing service leaders. It is not the place to report local issues, but to recognise common challenges and opportunities across everyone living in Westminster housing.

The Resident Panel is a group of up to 20 residents who provide strategic engagement and steer the Resident Forum. This group chairs the forum and helps set the agenda for future meetings.

2. Objectives

For the Resident Forum - To provide a regular opportunity for residents to engage with the housing service and for that engagement to be resident led, transparent, inclusive and accessible to all residents. To provide the housing service and the Council with a regular opportunity to share updates on its work with residents, learn from resident feedback, and to co-produce service improvement in collaboration with residents.

For the Resident Panel – to scrutinise housing performance, to represent the whole of Westminster. To provide strategic engagement and steer the Resident Forum.

3. Membership and Term

The Resident Forum is open to all. If you are a Westminster Housing resident, you can sign up to attend a Resident Forum meeting. To make sure that the meetings are manageable and do not exceed the safe capacity of the space available there is a maximum number of bookable places at each meeting. Residents will need to sign up in advance to attend or join online.

The Resident Panel represents all of Westminster, rather than individual estates and its members are recruited to reflect the diversity of Westminster residents. There is a rolling recruitment to the panel, to ensure that there are opportunities for new voices. Recruitment is through an application and interview with officers and residents. Resident Panel members have a maximum 2-year term. When that term ends the panel member must stand down. They can apply to rejoin if they wish.

4. Responsibilities

Everyone involved in the Resident Forum and the Resident Panel will follow and uphold the WCC Housing Service Code of Conduct. Everyone attending a forum meeting will avoid raising specific individual identifiable cases in conversations about service improvements.

Residents joining the Resident Forum will:

- a. Sign up in advance to attend a specific meeting in person or to join online.
- b. Hear updates from the Housing Service about key developments and performance.
- c. Ask questions, challenge, and constructively participate in the conversations about the topics on the agenda for that specific meeting.

Members of the Resident Panel will additionally :

- d. Scrutinise the housing service, monitor performance and help shape the wider engagement offer.
- e. Work with officer outside of Forum meetings to discuss and help shape the agenda for future meetings, and discuss possible topics for surveys or task & finish group reviews.
- f. Request information and explanations from relevant officers as necessary to carry out its functions.
- g. Collaborate with officers on the recruitment of new panel members when vacancies arise.
- h. Assist the chair to ensure the smooth running of meetings and to uphold the code of conduct.
- i. Attend most Resident Forum meetings and not miss more than 3 consecutive meetings without a significant reason,
- j. Decide which panel member will Chair each Resident Forum meeting.

The Resident Panel Chair will also:

- k. Lead on upholding the code of conduct and terms of reference. This will include working with other panel members and officers to take appropriate actions if the rules in those documents are not met.
- l. Ensure everyone has a chance to contribute at meetings.
- m. Ensure meetings stay focused on the agreed agenda and on common challenges and opportunities rather than individual or local issues.
- n. Ensure meetings run to time and end at the advertised time.
- o. Lead and facilitate the meetings and liaise with the Housing Resident Engagement Team on any matters to do with facilitation.

The Housing Resident Engagement Team will:

- p. Support individual residents as set out in section 7.
- q. Support the Resident Panel Chair as required in the facilitation of the meeting.
- r. Record and share a summary note on meeting outcomes.
- s. Make all necessary practical arrangements for the smooth running of meetings, for example by booking rooms, arranging hybrid meeting access, distributing papers, and sending invitations.

The Housing Service will:

- t. Provide information in advance or during each meeting so that attendees can understand the current state of the service area under discussion from an internal perspective.
- u. Answer any questions that arise during meetings where possible or note them so an answer can be provided later.
- v. Learn from conversations with residents as part of the Forum and report back on actions arising from the lessons learned.

5. External Communications

Communication on behalf of the Resident Forum or Resident Panel can only be undertaken with the prior agreement of a member of WCC staff.

6. Amendment of Terms of Reference

- a. WCC or the Resident Panel may propose a review of this document at any time in response to changing circumstances.
- b. Changes to the terms of reference will require the approval of WCC.

7. Support

- a. Residents will be assisted to participate by the Housing Resident Engagement Team. The support provided will take account of individual circumstances and characteristics to ensure everyone can fully participate in a way that works for them.
- b. Financial support will be provided in line with the WCC Rewards and Recognition Guidance.

8. Reporting

The summary notes from every Resident Forum meeting will be shared with relevant Directors and Cabinet Members, and will be uploaded to the WCC website for all residents to see.

Note: in this document “resident” means a tenant or leaseholder of Westminster City Council and members of their household.