

# **Tenant Membership Policy**

Landlord Assurance Board

## **1. Introduction**

Central Bedfordshire Council is the landlord to circa 5500 households and is committed to providing effective services to its tenants and in increasing the availability of decent, affordable accommodation. The Council has a strong track record of delivering new affordable homes as well as optimising the use of the existing supply of accommodation to benefit local people.

The Council has been effective in managing housing demand and has implemented services and policies that reflect local priorities and needs. However, there has been limited tenant involvement in the creation and monitoring of the housing services provided by the Council.

The Tenant Involvement Strategy 2025 outlines how the Council wants to involve tenants in the decision-making process. The creation of the Landlord Assurance Board takes that one step further and is to involve tenants in the governance of all landlord services. The Council is dedicated to hearing our tenants, working together, and making choices about the provision of services available to them.

## **2. Aims and Objectives**

The objective of this policy is to set out the membership requirements for the Landlord Assurance Board which will operate in accordance with the Terms of Reference to improve and complement the existing governance of Central Bedfordshire Council's Housing Service and to ensure transparency in its services and performance. Tenants must have the opportunity to influence how services are provided to them, set the standards for those services, and be able to hold the Council to account when service provision falls below the expected standard.

The LAB will produce an annual report for consideration by the Social Care, Health and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee (SCHH OSC), as well as Executive. This annual report will also form part of the Council's overall governance and assurance arrangements, forming part of the Local Code of Corporate Governance. The purpose of this annual report is to connect the Housing Landlord perspective directly to the wider Housing agenda that is within the remit and oversight of the SCHH OSC, as well as the Executive.

The aim of the tenant membership policy is to achieve a wide-ranging, diverse and representative membership made up of tenants who wish to participate in the governance of the Council's Housing services. Members of the Board are there to serve and represent the requirements of all tenants of Central Bedfordshire Council as fully as possible.

### **3. Membership Criteria**

To be a Tenant Board member;

- Tenants must be 18 years or older to be considered for membership of the Board.
- The reference to 'tenants' throughout this Policy shall be understood to also mean: leaseholders, shared owners; persons holding an Introductory Tenancy; and also persons who are licensees (e.g. persons living in council accommodation, or persons residing on a transitional basis within a council managed scheme).
- Must be a named tenant of Central Bedfordshire Council (named on a tenancy/license) and having resided within their home for a minimum period of 12 months

### **3.1 Composition of the board**

The Landlord Assurance Board will be comprised the following core membership:

- Up to 5 Central Bedfordshire Councillors to be appointed on a politically proportionate basis as voting members (one of which must be the relevant Executive Member).
- Up to 5 tenants/or leaseholders of Central Bedfordshire Council.
- The Chair of LAB shall be elected from either the Councillor or the tenant membership of the LAB, on the basis that election shall be undertaken by the full membership of the LAB.
- The Vice-Chair of LAB shall be elected by the full membership of the LAB and, depending on whether the chair is a councillor or a tenant, the Vice Chair shall be a person who is not from the same grouping as the Chair (i.e. tenant or Councillor)

### **3.2 Tenant Incentives and Expenses Incurred in Performing Board Duties**

Incentives and expenses will be covered for tenant board members up to a maximum of £1000 per annum. This will be in the form of;

- a) Transport costs covered either taxis' public transport or reimbursement for car mileage/petrol - All mileage claims are paid at the current HM Revenues & Customs (HMRC) mileage rates in line with government guidelines.
- b) Love to shop vouchers given monthly (£50 per meeting attended) + (£30 per task completed)

- c) Home broadband paid for as a one-off payment for the year to enable digital engagement
- d) Purchase of IT software or equipment ie keyboards/mouse/provision of CBC ipad which shall be returned to the Council at such time as a LAB member ceases to be a member
- e) Training courses to develop member skills

This list is not exhaustive and other expense cost will be considered.

## **4. Member Responsibilities**

Board Membership requires a very significant commitment and time input. This is likely to be attractive to a relatively small proportion of the potential tenant membership and it is important that there are other meaningful and accessible opportunities for tenants and members to become involved. For all tenants, we have set out a range of available levels of involvement within the Council's Tenant Involvement Strategy.

The main role of Tenant Board Members is to advance good governance and to ensure that the Councils Housing Service is accountable for its acts or omissions. Members' powers will be exercised at Board meetings mainly by scrutinising Compliance obligations as well as Performance, Service Outcomes, Housing Policies, Service Costs and the development of the service in terms of mainly quality and access.

In addition the Board will be responsible for the election of the Tenant Members of the Board, and the application process for new tenant

members such that the long term viability of LAB is sustained (i.e. succession planning).

## **5. Application Process**

### **5.1 Recruitment to the board**

The Council seeks to establish a wide and active membership by recruiting individuals with an interest in the work of the Housing Landlord Service and therefore will aim to have a mix of skills, experience and views within its membership.

Initial application to the Landlord Assurance Board will be managed through an independent organisation on the behalf of Central Bedfordshire Council. It is then intended that the Board shall devise arrangements for recruitment of future tenants (or their advocates) to the Board and specifically to improve this Membership Policy that conforms to the principles of the Boards Terms of Reference.

The Council seek to have a balanced representative membership, with no particular group having an undue influence. The membership shall comprise persons who have, in a personal or professional capacity, the requisite knowledge, skills and experience or a community of interest in housing and the support of people with housing needs.

The Council will make every effort to ensure applications and membership reflects the tenant profile within Central Bedfordshire, groups that are unrepresented will be encouraged to apply.

Applications will be welcome from tenants who have, in a personal or professional capacity, experience of or a personal interest in:

- housing, building and construction, health & safety

- social work or health
- finance, law, business; or
- community voluntary organisations

Appendix 1 to this provides further detail on the overall qualities, skills and experience required for the Board.

### **5.3 Application rejection**

The Council wants to encourage membership and tenant involvement, but retains discretion in deciding on applications for membership and the following shall constitute grounds for refusal of an application for membership:

- Where a conflict of interest may exist which, even allowing for the disclosure of such an interest, may adversely affect the work of the Council
- an applicant does not satisfy the “tenant” criteria of being a principal tenant of Central Bedfordshire Council and having resided within their home for a minimum period of 12 months
- Convictions and ASB

If an application is rejected, the tenant will be notified in writing,

## **6. Ending Your Membership**

It shall be the responsibility of Members to advise the Council when they no longer meet the membership criteria and will no longer be Members.

If you are a Tenant Member and cease to be a tenant you will automatically not meet the criteria for membership and therefore must step down from the Board.

The Council may also end your membership if;

- Complaints are received and upheld in relation to a Tenant Board Members behaviour.
- Member fails to attend 3 board meetings in a 12-month period
- Member breaches confidentiality or has a conflict of interest which prevents them from continuing as a board member or misuses the resources of the Council.

## **7. Policy Review**

### **7.1 Monitoring Board Membership**

All tenant members will have completed an initial application to the Board. On an annual basis tenant members will be asked to confirm

- a) that they continue to meet the tenant membership category;
- b) their profession, trade, interests etc. and involvement in any voluntary work;
- c) other skills and experience that could be of benefit to the Board;  
and
- d) age, gender, ethnicity and disability (for monitoring purposes only).



The information supplied will be collated and used to address skills gaps for Board membership, to assess the effectiveness of the promotion of membership and how representative the membership is of the Central Bedfordshire Councils, tenant profile base. An analysis of membership will be included within an Annual Governance Report.

## **7.2 Annual Policy Review**

The Tenant Membership Policy shall be reviewed every 12 months, or in accordance with any change to the Policy.

## **APPENDIX ONE**

### **Member Role Profile**

This Assurance Board provides an opportunity for collective ownership of one of the Council's most significant areas of responsibility and risk, where the obligation upon individual members of LAB is to demonstrate leadership in four key areas, to:

**Rebalance the relationship between the landlord and tenant** demonstrating fairness and respect to all tenants/leaseholders. This shall include a specific objective which is to ensure that complaints are used as an opportunity to learn, and to drive service improvement, whilst also being an opportunity to put things right when mistakes have been made or there are service failures.

**Fulfil an effective internal assurance function** and, where necessary, to obtain external assurance to ensure that the Council is fully compliant with the Consumer Standards and other relevant Health and Safety legislation. Where there are breaches of the Consumer Standards, or concerns about Health and Safety the LAB shall be central to the process of self-referral to the Regulator of Social Housing on the basis of self-assessment, ownership of the issue, and determination to respond appropriately. LAB members shall at all times embrace the principle of co-regulation.

**Members shall ensure that the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan remains viable**, aligned to the Housing Asset Management Strategy, as well as adopted council policies and procedures, as well as the approved Council HRA Budget and Investment Plans.

**Members shall ensure that the voice of tenants is being considered from an assurance perspective**, in terms of policy development or matters of investment planning or scrutiny of

performance. as well as those reports where the LAB is making recommendations to Executive. Where a tenant/ leaseholder perspective is clearly absent from a report (where it should reasonably be expected), or there is doubt about the credibility of the view being conveyed, it is the responsibility of LAB members to require further work to be undertaken to ensure that the voice of tenants is articulated credibly and is properly considered by LAB.

## **Individual and Collective Requirements for Board Members**

### **Personal qualities (all Board members)**

#### **Board members must:**

Be open, honest and trustworthy, with high levels of integrity

Uphold the values of the Council in everything they do

Set a positive culture

Treat others with respect

Work as a team player

Be independent and inquisitive

Have good communication skills

Contribute to Board discussions and decision-making

Provide constructive challenge

Come well prepared for Board meetings

Commit time and effort to do the role

## **Personal qualities (all Board members)**

### **Board members must:**

Be competent in the use of information and communication technology (ICT)

## **Skills (the Board collectively)**

### **The Board must:**

Understand and relate to the local community and to all stakeholders (e.g. tenants, residents, applicants for housing, nursery parents, the local authority, funders and partner agencies)

Focus on outcomes for tenants, nursery parents, communities and the Council

Demonstrate good governance and high standards of probity and business ethics

Think strategically and be able to establish policy and long-term strategy

Exercise critical reasoning and problem-solving skills

Understand and be able to interpret financial information

Understand and oversee the management of the risks that face the Council

Understand the role of technology in service delivery  
Come well prepared for Board meetings

## **Experience (the Board collectively)**

### **The Board must have experience of:**

Community influence and connections

Social housing issues and in particular the customer experience of tenants

Corporate governance in a regulated business sector

Housing and property management

Property development

Business management

# **Central Bedfordshire in contact**

**Find us online:** [www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](http://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

**Call:** 0300 300 8XXX

**Email:** [customers@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:customers@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk)

**Write to:** Central Bedfordshire Council, Priory House,  
Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford, Bedfordshire SG17 5TQ