

Resident Governance Handbook



## OUR GOVERNANCE

At Southern Housing we know the importance of living in a safe and secure environment and how this enables people to flourish. This can be achieved by staff and residents working together. By joining our resident governance structure, you've a voice in the way we're managed. You influence decisions that affect you, your home, and your local community.

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Dear Resident Governance Members,

Welcome to our Resident Governance Handbook! I am delighted to introduce this comprehensive guide designed to support and empower each of you in your vital roles.

Our Resident Governance Structure is there to ensure that every resident's voice is heard and valued. This handbook serves as a resource to help you navigate your responsibilities and contribute effectively to our collective goals.

Thank you for your dedication and commitment. I look forward to working with each of you to achieve our common objectives and make a positive impact on our community.

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**Samantha Fagg** Resident Scrutiny Manager



# RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT

Involving residents is more important now than ever.

We want to be the best in the sector and the way we can do that is by continually driving to improve our services and demonstrate we're listening to the resident voice and engaging in a meaningful way.





# RESIDENT SCRUTINY AND GOVERNANCE

Residents play a significant role in scrutinising and monitoring Southern Housings performance. Scrutiny is the assessment, analysis or critique of an existing process or service, rather than playing a part in design. This can be project based or longer term. Providing opportunities for resident scrutiny is a regulatory requirement.

- Monitors performance
- Holds Southern Housing to account
- Identifies trends
- Drives strategic direction
- Not involved in detail or delivery
- Commitment: Long term, regular meetings.



#### **MEET THE RESIDENT GOVERNANCE TEAM**



Welcome to our resident governance handbook. At Southern Housing we're pleased to have developed a reputation for being genuinely resident led. We're a landlord that actively involves our residents in key decision making, invests in supporting residents to hold us to account and ensures that residents have a meaningful role in our governance.

In this handbook you'll find useful information about Southern Housing, our leadership and how our resident governance is structured – i.e. the means by which residents can oversee our services, scrutinise our performance and influence the key decisions that affect residents lives. Should you be interested in becoming involved, we have a dedicated team of colleagues here to support you, help develop you and empower you to help make a difference to the lives of current and future residents.

I hope you find this handbook a useful and informative read.



**SAMANTHA FAGG**Resident Scrutiny Manager
sam.fagg@southernhousing.org.uk
0773 619 7327

I'm responsible for the Resident Strategy Group and the overall resident governance function, working closely with all members to foster a collaborative and transparent environment.



DEBBIE SAUNDERS

Resident Governance and Scrutiny Officer debbie.saunders@southernhousing.org.uk 07790 356285

Sussex Regional Residents' Panel Midlands Regional Residents' Panel Complaints Panel



**JOHANNA WINCH** 

Resident Governance and Scrutiny Officer johanna.winch@southernhousing.org.uk 07593021140

Kent and Essex Regional Residents' Panel Training Lead



**ELOISE GARTON** 

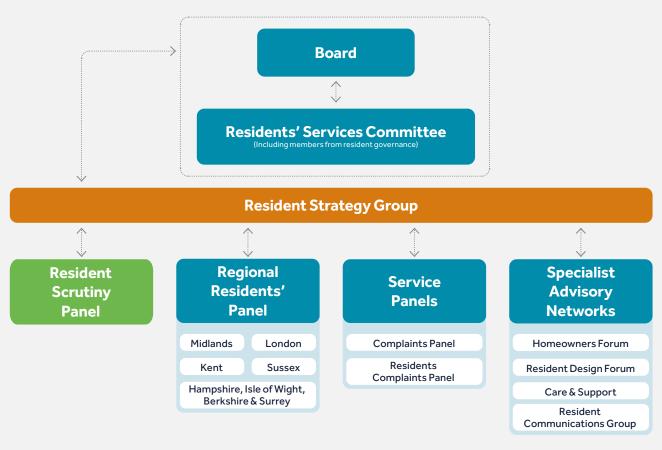
Resident Governance and Scrutiny Officer eloise.garton@southernhousing.org.uk 07856 279559

London Regional Residents' Panel Berkshire and Surrey, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Regional Residents' Panel Policy Panel

#### **OUR RESIDENT GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE**

The resident governance structure was designed with residents to strengthen resident voice and accountability, review what we're doing and seek improvements.

We need residents to tell us whether we're doing things right, by asking questions and challenging us and monitoring our performance against our objectives. If we do this well, we'll be able to provide the best services to all our residents.







Most Panels within the resident governance structure have up to 12 resident members. The Resident Strategy Group has 14 resident members. The eligibility criteria for this can be found in the Terms of Reference.

A resident can be a member of up to two groups in the formal structure, except for the Resident Strategy Group Chair, its independent members, and Scrutiny Panel members.

Residents are recruited in line with the Resident Recruitment Policy.

#### **YOUR ROLE**

As a Resident Governance Member, you're there to support the panel to be effective and have an impact on services. Perform your role as a Resident Governance Member to the best of your ability. Prepare for and participate in meetings with the aim to scrutinise, challenge and influence service delivery.

To work constructively to influence how Southern Housing and its subsidiaries deliver services to residents ensuring the diverse needs of residents have been considered in accordance with the remit of the relevant group or panel(s).

Resident Governance Members should be objective and use the panels, forums, and network groups to make improvements to benefit all residents.



#### YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES AND ACCOUNTABILITIES:

- Do act as a critical friend to the organisation
- Do contribute to service improvement by scrutinising Southern Housing's work, challenging poor performance and contributing new ideas
- Do work with staff to fulfil the purpose and role of the relevant panels, forums, and network groups, according to its Terms of Reference
- Do read papers in advance of meetings and prepare questions / comments
- Do ensure residents have easy access to services and communications

- Do suggest key messages to be fed back to other resident governance groups
- Do make an annual declaration of interest in line with the Probity Policy. Additional declarations can also be made and on an ad-hoc basis
- Do promote the resident governance structure to other residents and support in recruiting new residents
- Do comply with the Probity Policy and Code of Conduct. This includes keeping items confidential, where required.



#### **TERMS**

Members will normally serve a maximum of two three-year terms (six years).

Where a member has served six years, but there is a clear business need for their continued involvement, their term may be extended annually for a further three years. Any extension is subject to the agreement of RSG and the Director of Governance and Regulation.

If a member leaves the structure before the end of their maximum term and re-joins within three years, their term will continue until a maximum of 9 years is reached.



## EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Equality, diversity and inclusion are at the heart of everything we do.

We aim to create an exceptional environment where everyone feels included and can be themselves.

We want to do more than just pay lip service to increasing the diversity. Inclusion and diversity is a fundamental part of our values and our culture.

We value difference and the contributions of all, we embrace diversity, knowing it makes us stronger and more successful and we aim to embed inclusion into our everyday ways of working.

We'll continue our focus on inclusion to ensure we're best represented by the communities we serve. We'll provide opportunities for all residents to develop and thrive. We want residents to feel Southern Housing is somewhere they belong and can be their best self.

#### **PROBITY AND CONDUCT**

Every Resident Governance Member must behave in line with the Probity Policy and Code of Conduct.

Southern Housing has adopted the National Housing Federation (NHF) Code of Conduct (2022) in its entirety. This Code sets standards appropriate for housing associations that are members of the NHF (as Southern Housing is). The four parts of the NHF Code of Conduct (2022) are:

- Acting in the best interests of the housing association and its residents
- 2. Behaving with integrity
- Conducting yourself professionally and treating others well
- 4. Protecting yourself, others and the environment.



#### WHAT THIS MEANS FOR YOU

When you join the Resident Governance structure, you'll need to complete an agreement. This says you'll comply with the Probity Policy and associated documents (this includes the Code of Conduct Policy).



If you do something that's considered a breach of the policy, this will be handled in line with the **policy breach procedure.** 

Each year you'll need to complete a declaration of interest. All residents should declare their tenancy with Southern Housing.

You can also declare anything else you think may be a conflict of interest. Here are some examples of things we'd expect you to declare:

- You're related to a Southern Housing staff member
- You work for a company that's paid by Southern Housing to provide a service
- You sit on a Board of another housing association
- ✓ A personal or local issue.

You can also declare an interest at the start of a meeting if you think something on the agenda may be a conflict of interest.

Declarations of interest will be reviewed by the Governance Team. A member of the team will speak to you if further information or action is needed.





#### **OUR REPUTATION**

By being a Resident Governance Member, it's important to be mindful that anything you say in public can have an impact on our reputation. We'd love you to engage with us on social media but remember anything you type is public for everyone to see.

If you're ever approached by the press or other external companies about promoting Southern Housing or you, as a Resident Governance member, please speak to the Communications Team about it first.

You can contact them through email: comms@southernhousing.org.uk



#### **TRAINING AND SUPPORT**

As a member of our Resident Governance Structure, you'll be offered training and guidance, to support you in your role.



#### **DATA PROTECTION**

As a Resident Governance Member, you may be provided with, or hear, personal or sensitive information relating to Southern Housing residents or other third parties. You may also be provided with information which is commercially confidential to Southern Housing e.g. financial documents.

We work hard to ensure our resident and company information is handled safely and securely. We'll expect you to follow our Data Protection Policy.

#### This means:

- You must treat the information you hear and discuss in meetings and training sessions as confidential
- You'll agree not to pass to the press or media or any other external recipient(s) information or materials relating to your role as a Resident Governance Member
- You will ensure any documents you receive are disposed of securely (e.g. by shredding). You can bring documents into any Southern Housing office to dispose of in the confidential waste bins, or request pre paid envelopes to post them back.

#### 1:1 SUPPORT

Each member will be offered a personal development review at least once a year. This is your chance to gain feedback and ask your lead Officer any questions you have about the role. You can also use it to tell us what training you'd like to do.

We can make reasonable adjustments to enable all to be involved. Please speak to us if you need any other support to carry out your role.



#### **EXPENSES**

The Resident Involvement expenses policy outlines the 'out of pocket' expenses Resident Governance members can claim and how residents will be supported to carry out their role.

### **HOW IT WORKS:**



Expense claims must be made within three months of the date the expense was incurred via **The Governance Hub** 

#### **INCENTIVES**

Resident Governance members can claim an incentive for participating in meetings.

Involved residents are responsible for declaring work (including voluntary) to the Department of Work and Pensions if claiming welfare benefits. This includes:

- How many hours a day/week you will be volunteering for
- Whether you will be volunteering for the same hours and days each week, or whether they change
- What you will do in your volunteer role
- Whether you will get any expenses
- About any money you get on top of expenses
- Anything else you are given this may not be money.

Incentive payments will be made at the following rates to residents who are members of the resident governance structure:

- Resident Strategy Group members (excluding the chair\*) - £75 per meeting, up to a maximum of £375 per annum
- Resident Scrutiny Panel chair £200 per scrutiny project, up to a maximum of £400 per annum. All other members £150 per scrutiny project, up to a maximum of £300 per annum
- Regional Residents' Panels and Service Panels members – chairs £50 per meeting up to a maximum of £250 per annum. All other members £40 per meeting, up to a maximum of £200 per annum

These incentives are honoraria payments, which will be paid quarterly in arrears. Residents who do not wish to be receive an honorarium can decline payment or opt to receive a personal development opportunity of equivalent value.



Incentive claims to be made via **The Governance Hub** 





#### **MEETINGS**

Video conferencing will be used to promote inclusion by reducing travel cost and time commitment.

The agenda for each group and panel will at a minimum include:

- Apologies for absence
- Declarations of Interest
- Minutes of last meeting
- Action list including matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda
- Any other business
- Date of next meeting.





#### **HOW OFTEN YOU SHOULD MEET?**

- Resident Governance groups will meet quarterly
- Resident Strategy Group and Board will meet together annually, (usually January)
- The Scrutiny Panel will decide how often it needs to meet at the start of each review
- Chairs and Vice Chairs will meet with staff in advance of quarterly meetings, to set agendas and prepare for chairing the meeting (this can be done via Teams, email or phone).



#### **ATTENDANCE**

#### **NOT ABLE TO ATTEND ONE MEETING?**

You may not be able to attend every meeting. Please send your apologies in advance of the meeting.

#### **NO LONGER ABLE TO COMMIT?**

Please just let us know that you need to step down.

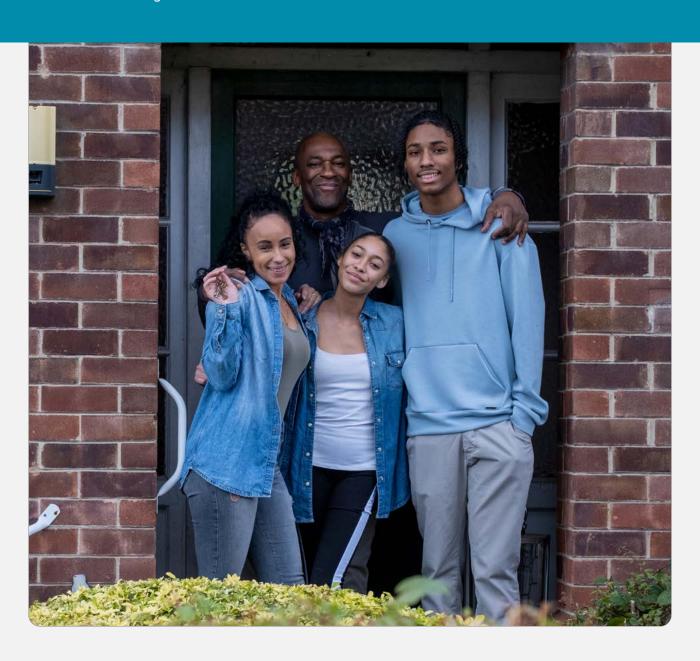
# **SCRUTINY**

#### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

### WHAT IS SCRUTINY?

- Critical/constructive friend
- Decisions can be improved
- Prevent mistakes being made or repeated
- Forward thinking

- Making positive change
- Impartiality
- Focuses on the priorities for all residents
- Improved services.







### **QUESTIONING**

WHY questions are your Beliefs, values
WHAT and HOW questions are your ideas, opinions
WHO, WHEN and WHERE are establishing the facts

#### WHY:

- Why are we doing this?
- Why is this the best option?
- Why has this situation occurred?
- Why do we measure this performance?

#### WHAT:

- What is the timescale?
- What is the objective ...?
- What do you hope to achieve by ...?
- What are the benefits to ...?
- What are the plans
- What other alternatives have been looked at to address this?
- What has been achieved?
- What hasn't been achieved and how will these be addressed?
- What has been learned from this?
- What reassurance can you give us ...?
- What are the outcomes you are seeking by this?
- What actions are being taken to ...?

- What are the implications to residents?
- What progress has been made ...?
- What feedback has been received?
- What are the challenges and how will they be addressed?
- What do you want from us as Panel members?
- What happens if ...?
- What do other housing associations do?
- What could prevent us from achieving this?
- What are the priorities ...?
- What is the biggest risk/ challenge ...?
- What evidence have you got to support this?
- What are the key issues?
- What is the effect on resources?
- What happened to make performance this good or had?
- What are you doing or going to do about it?
- What actions have we taken to improve performance?

- What else are we planning to do?
- What else we can do to improve things?
- Think about this when things are going well. What are we doing to make sure we keep performance good?

#### HOW:

- How will you achieve …?
- How will you measure its success?
- How much will it cost?
- How will you communicate ...?
- How do you plan to implement it?
- How is this in line with ...?
- How have the problems been addressed?
- How could this affect ... residents ...?
- How can we ensure that ...?
- How is this affecting ...?
- How will the increase/ decrease affect ...?
- How are the changes being communicated to ...?
- How do we know these are effective?

- How is this being measured to understand if it has been a success?
- How can we improve …?
- How does this add value to ...?
- How successful are ...?
- How does this link to ...?
- How do you monitor ...?
- How did we get here?
- How long has it taken to get here?
- How does this compare with the rest of the year?
- How was performance this time last year?
- How have these actions had any impact so far?
- How do you ensure you won't start slipping?

#### WHO:

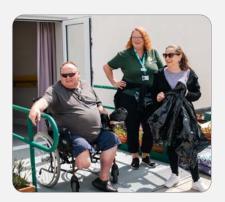
- Who is responsible?
- Who will evaluate the results?
- Who will undertake to ...?
- Who will come back to us with the answer?
- Who should be involved?
- Who will make the decision to ...?
- Who is organising this?
- Who will review ...?

#### WHEN:

- When is the end date?
- When will we see an improvement ...?
- When will we get an answer?
- When will it be implemented?
- When will I see it improve?
- When will performance start getting better?
- When will it be back on target?
- When will we back on target?

#### WHERE:

- Where are we with ...?
- Where does this fit into ...?
- Where will the information be available?
- Where will it be used?









#### **GETTING THE BEST FROM YOUR PANEL MEETINGS:**

- Make the person being questioned feel comfortable to respond
- Build rapport
- Use their name
- Use plain English
- Allow them time to respond

- Use positive body language
- Use open questions
- Listen
- Show respect
- Be focussed
- Be assertive.

#### **CHAIRS AND VICE CHAIRS**

Each group will elect a Chair and Vice Chair every three years. The only exception to this is the Resident Strategy Group Chair, who is appointed through a selection process.

#### **YOUR ROLE**

- Do provide direction and support to your panel and members
- Do ensure your group complies with its Terms of Reference
- Do create an annual agenda work plan and set agendas
- Do ensure members fully participate at meetings, make sure all agenda items are discussed, and effective decisions are made
- Do give feedback to members and support individual member development through personal development reviews.

#### SIX KEY PRINCIPLES

- 1. Create a warm and welcoming atmosphere
- 2. Support members to feel included in the meeting
- 3. Chair meetings with clear purpose and varied agenda to impact on Southern Housing's service
- 4. Take development and training opportunities to support your personal development
- 5. Encourage the participation of all members in discussions.

# HOW TO GET THE BEST OF YOUR PANEL:

Go to each member at the end of an agenda item and ask if they've any questions or comments. This allows every member to have a voice.

To help, you could use a question grid. An example can be found at the end of this document in Appendix 2.

#### **BEFORE THE MEETING**

- Prepare before the panel meeting, read papers in advance and familiarise yourself with the agenda
- Attend an agenda setting meeting 6 weeks in advance of the panel meeting, to have your input on the agenda and how you'd like the agenda to flow
- Attend a pre-meet 15 to 30 minutes before the panel meeting with your Resident Governance Officer and Head of Region to discuss the panel meeting and any changes.





#### **DURING THE MEETING**

- Be friendly and be yourself
- Your Resident Governance Officer is there to support you, you can always refer to them if you're unsure or ask them to step in
- Encourage all members to have their cameras on, but to keep microphones on mute until invited to speak
- Be mindful of the time to avoid over running
  - when introducing an agenda item, clearly communicate the items start and finish time
  - give a 5-minute warning of the finish time
- Try to keep contributions focused on each agenda topic
- Ask for members to raise their hands for questions to avoid interruptions
- Refer members raising any personal issue to contact the Resident Governance Officer outside the meeting to discuss
- Don't be afraid to step in when you think you need to
- Encourage participation from each member
  - allow every member with their hand up a chance to talk
  - if many members want to speak, keep a list of whose turn is next, Teams will do this for you
  - stop members from talking for too long, be firm and consistent. If someone is talking for a long time, interrupt them and say something like 'thank you, you've raised some good points but I'm going to stop you there for now so others can comment.'
  - give preference to members who haven't yet spoken. Say something like, 'I know you've got your hand up, Ted, but I'm going to take Beth first as she hasn't spoken yet.'

- encourage asking questions in the chat, some members may not feel comfortable speaking up at meetings
- if running out of time for all questions, ask questions are put in the chat, your Resident Governance Officer will pick these up following the meeting and communicate answers to the panel via a 'questions and answer sheet'
- Members will have different views, but these should all be respected.



#### **CHAIRS AGENDA**

We'll send you a chairs agenda for each meeting, to help you smoothly run the panel meeting. The chairs agenda will tell you:

- Panel members names
  - members who have confirmed attendance
  - members who have sent apologies
- Membership changes
  - members who have stepped down
  - new members
  - · resident observers
- What agenda items you are leading on and what you need to do
- Who to introduce for other agenda items
- How long each agenda item is, with a start and finish time
- Any useful prompts for you
- Space for your notes.





#### THE CHAIRS AGENDA IS FOR YOU!

If you'd like a different layout, more information included or any other changes please let us know, we'll tailor this to suit your needs. An example can be found at the end of this document in Appendix 1.

#### **ESSENTIAL QUALITIES**

- Good communication skills and being able to adapt your approach
- ✓ Decision making skills
- Mediation and conflict resolution skills, fostering a collaborative environment
- ✓ The ability to inspire and motivate members
- Create a positive team environment, promoting inclusivity, ensuring everyone's voices are heard and respected
- Networking and relationship building skills
- Willingness for ongoing learning and development and encouragement to members.









#### **TRAINING**

You'll be offered specialist Chairs Training; this is available in-person or virtually to suit your preference. We've had great feedback and we'd really encourage your attendance.

Chairs Meetings are arranged quarterly for Chairs to meet informally together virtually, it's an opportunity to share ideas, reflect on best practice and ask questions. These meetings are optional but a good way to get to know your fellow Chairs.

Observing other panel meeting is a great way to learn.

If you see any other training opportunities you think would be useful for chairing panel meetings, please get in contact with your Resident Governance Officer and we'll see what we can do to support you.

#### **OUR SOCIAL PURPOSE**

Southern Housing is a new housing association formed in December 2022. With around 80,000 homes across London, the Midlands and the Southeast of England. This includes over 30,000 homes in London. We're big and we're local. Residents are at the heart of our services, and we use our size to influence positive change in the areas where we operate.



#### **SOCIAL VALUE**

We seek to drive the most social impact in everything we do.



#### **NOT FOR PROFIT**

We reinvest surpluses into improving residents' homes, neighbourhoods, services, building new homes to reduce housing need.



#### **RESIDENT CENTRED**

We work with residents to shape services and we design services around residents



We work hard to reduce the climate impact in all our work and services



#### **INCLUSIVE**

We recognise diversity as a strength and seek to harness this, creating workplaces and communities where everyone can thrive.



#### **FAIR AND ETHICAL**

Value driven in the way the organisation works and what it expects from suppliers.







#### **OUR CULTURE**

Our culture is what makes us unique and make us stand out from other organisations. Our culture has a number of elements that are important to us:

- Our values
- Our focus on equality, diversity and inclusion
- The importance we place on having fun together and collaboration
- Our focus on work life balance and positive wellbeing
- Our passion to give amazing service to our customers and each other.

We have a constant focus on achieving amazing performance and ensuring our homes are sustainable.



#### **OUR HEART VALUES**

We have five important values at the HEART of all we do at Southern Housing. These are:

#### HONEST

We are authentic, open and transparent in our actions & words

#### **EFFICIENT**

We accomplish more together, work hard every day to improve services, efficiency and value for money.

#### \* ACCOUNTABLE

We own our actions and take responsibility for delivering excellence.

#### RESPECTFUL

We embrace difference, residents, colleagues and our partners are at the heart of all we do.

#### TRUSTWORTHY

We do what we say we will and can be relied upon to keep our promises.

These values are embedded into all we do and should be demonstrated and feature every day as we do our jobs and communicate with colleagues, residents, and other stakeholders.



### **OUR EXECUTIVE TEAM**





TROY FRANCIS Executive Director of Operations



**KARIN STOCKERL** Executive Director of Assets & Sustainability



**RICHARD WHITE Executive Director of** Development



**YVETTE CARTER** Executive Director of **Contract Services** 



**WAM DAWSON Executive Director of** People & Culture



**TOM PAUL** Chief Financial Officer

#### **OUR BOARD MEMBERS**

#### **Janet Collier**

Vice-Chair of Southern Housing Board Chair of People Committee

#### **Paul Hackett CBE**

Chief Executive of Southern Housing

### **Daisy Armstrong**

**Resident Board Member** 

### **Phil Blume**

Resident Board Member

#### **Geanna Bray**

**Resident Board Member** 

#### **Billy Brown**

Chair of Resident Strategy Group

#### **Robert Clark**

Chair of Development and Assets Committee

#### **Michelle Dovey**

Chair of Treasury Committee

#### **Mark Everard**

Resident Board Member

#### **Damien Régent**

Chair of Audit & Risk Committee

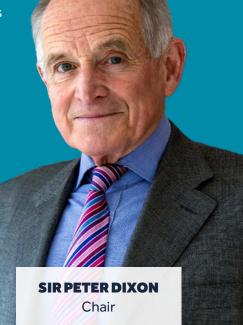
#### **Eugenie Turton CB**

Chair of Residents' Services Committee

#### **lan Wilson**

Resident Board Member







To find out more about the members of our Executive Team and our Board visit www.southernhousing.org.uk/about-us

## **APPENDIX 1, EXAMPLE OF A CHAIRS AGENDA**

# CHAIRS AGENDA REGIONAL RESIDENTS' PANEL

#### DATE

#### PANEL MEMBERS ATTENDANCE

Name A	Attending	Name G	Attending
Name B	Attending	Name H	Attending
Name C	Apologies	Name I	Attending
Name D	Apologies	Name J	Apologies
Name E	Attending	Name K	Attending
Name F	Attending	Name L	Apologies

AGENDA ITEM	wно	APPROVE/INFO	PAGE NUMBER	TIME
Welcome and Introductions		I		
Apologies for absence	Chair	1	Verbal	lt's 6.00pm
Declarations of interest		1		We have 5 minutes
Minutes of the last meeing held on Date	Resident Governance	A	5 to 12	to 6.05pm
Action Table and Key Messages	Officer		13 to 25	

#### NOTES

Name has stepped down as a member.

Welcome one new member to the meeting:

- Name

Welcome two observers to the meeting:

- Name
- Name

AGENDA ITEM	WHO	APPROVE/INFO	PAGE NUMBER	TIME
				lt's 6.05pm
Spotlight Session: Service Charges	Name	I	Verbal	We have 15 minutes
				to 6.20pm
Discussion with panel members	All	I	Verbal	It's 6.20pm We have 15 minutes
				to 6.35pm

#### NOTES

AGENDA ITEM	WHO	APPROVE/INFO	PAGE NUMBER	TIME
Contract Services Performance Update	Name	I	25 to 35	It's 6.35pm We have 10 minutes to 6.45pm
Discussion with panel members	All	1	Verbal	It's 6.45pm We have 10 minutes to 6.55pm

#### **NOTES**

## **QUESTIONING GRID**

To support encouragement for members and observers to ask questions. \\

To stop member dominance with questions.

NAME	AGENDA ITEM 1	AGENDA ITEM 2	AGENDA ITEM 3	AGENDA ITEM 4	AGENDA ITEM S
Member 1					
Member 2					
Member 3					
Member 4					
Member 5					
Member 6					
		OBSERV	VERS		
Observer 1					
Observer 2					
Observer 3					

