



POLICY CONSULTATION PANEL - TERMS OF REFERENCE

Purpose

These Terms of Reference (TOR) set out the role, rights and responsibilities of the Torus Policy Consultation Panel.

The Policy Consultation Panel was established to ensure that tenants have an opportunity to work in partnership with Torus colleagues to shape and influence new and existing customer facing policies or strategies making them fit for purpose before the Landlord Operations Committee (LOC) consider adopting and approving.

The Panel was also set up to ensure that Torus continue to create positive relationships with tenants and for tenants to hold Torus to account for the decisions that affect the quality of their homes and services.

Torus want the tenants' voice at the heart of everything they do and through this Panel, tenants' thoughts, opinions, and ideas can help shape all landlord policies and ultimately services that everyone can be proud of.

Role of the Panel

The role of the Panel will be:

- To obtain tenants' ideas, thoughts and views on any new customer facing policy or strategy proposed before it goes to Torus Bard for approval
- To work with the Torus Tenant Voice Team to scrutinise and review Torus' existing customer facing policies and strategies and when required providing valuable feedback with tenants' best interests in mind.
- To meet the requirements of the Housing Regulator's Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard that states:

Registered providers shall ensure that tenants are given a wide range of opportunities to influence and be involved in the formulation of their landlords housing-related policies and strategic priorities.

- To ensure that the National Housing Federations' Together with Tenants Charter commitment to seek and value the views of residents to inform decisions is delivered
 - To provide assurance to the Landlord operations Committee (LOC) that tenants have been able to influence and provide feedback on all customer facing policies and strategies
 - Ensuring equality, diversity and inclusion considerations are paramount when creating and reviewing customer facing policies and strategies
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Membership

The Policy Consultation Panel will comprise of a maximum of 12 tenants selected and recruited based on their skills. The Chair will be a Torus tenant representative if possible and if this is not possible, a Torus Tenant Voice team member. The Chair will receive additional appropriate training supported by the Tenant Voice Team and will be responsible for agreeing the meeting agendas, identifying any training needs and proposing discussion items.

The profile of the Panel should, where possible, reflect the tenant base of Torus and represent the 3 heartlands.

Membership will be for 3 years but can be extended. Where a member leaves the Panel before the end of the term, a recruitment process will be undertaken. All terms are subject to an annual review.

Membership of the Policy Consultation Panel is only open to those who meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Current tenants of Torus; or
- Current customers of Torus, ie, are currently in receipt of, and pay for, regular or periodic ongoing services from Torus, eg, leaseholder, or share owners

Exclusions apply to the following groups: whom may not be eligible to apply:

- Members of staff within Torus; or
- Customers in material or serious breach of their tenancy or lease agreements
- Anyone under 18

Other considerations:

- All vacancies are publicised, and anyone who is interested and eligible can express an interest
- New members to the Policy Consultation Panel will be appointed through a selection process
- New members of the Panel will participate in training when required
- Members will be expected to act as individuals and not represent any interested group, area or political party

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- New and continuing membership will be subject to an annual appraisal and personal development process, which will take account of attendance, contribution to reviews and how members work as part of a team
 - Any member who is in breach of their tenancy conditions or becomes involved in any activity which brings the name of the Repairs and Maintenance Panel and/or Torus into disrepute will be suspended, pending investigation, and may be asked to resign
 - If a group member wishes to resign, they should inform the Tenant Voice team in writing or by e-mail
 - All members must sign the code of conduct and confidentiality agreement. Any Group member who breaches the code of conduct will be asked to leave the Panel
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Meetings

The Group will meet no more than 6 times a year, additional meetings may be set to cover training and development.

Torus will provide reasonable travel expenses and electronic equipment in order for members to participate in meetings.

- Members of the Policy Consultation Panel should make every effort to attend meetings. If a member is unable to attend, apologies should be sent to the Tenant Voice team in advance of the meeting to avoid unnecessary costs
 - Any member missing a meeting without giving prior apologies may be contacted by the chair and/or a representative from the Tenant Voice Team
 - If a Repairs and Maintenance Panel member fails to attend three meetings in any rolling 12-month period without giving prior apologies, it will be assumed they no longer wish to be a member of the Panel and their membership will be terminated
 - Torus recognises that there may be exceptional circumstances preventing a Panel member from attending training and/or meetings eg ill health. Such circumstances will be discussed confidentially and an agreement regarding involvement will be reached by both parties
 - An attendance register is to be kept for all meetings (to include apologies and authorised absences) and Torus will provide support to ensure the effective running and smooth administration of the Panel
 - The Tenant Voice Team will support the Panel to obtain data, reports etc from internal teams in a timely manner to support repairs and maintenance function
 - The quorum of the Group will be 5 members plus the Chair
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Safeguards

Members must:

- Adopt and abide by the code of conduct; and
 - Attend appropriate training
 - Uphold Torus' high standards of conduct and probity by adhering to the code of conduct and respecting confidentiality of information; and
 - Remain objective and not bring personal issues into their work with the Policy Consultation Panel
 - Policy Consultation Panel members must not disclose confidential information to anyone else outside the group. Members who breach confidentiality will be removed from the Panel
 - The Policy Consultation Panel shall conduct an annual review of its work and effectiveness, with the support of a Tenant Voice team member. This annual review will include a review of the terms of reference.
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