



Terms of Reference – Harden Customer Scrutiny Group

1. Vision and Purpose for Customer Led Scrutiny

- To develop and establish Customer led scrutiny that is owned by Harden, customers' and, which is fully supported by the organisation and, the WM Housing Group, (WMHG), to bring about improved outcomes for Harden customers and through sharing of outcomes, customers of other partner associations of the WM Group.
- To contribute to ensuring that Harden is a well managed, organisation which places customers at the heart of its business delivery through customer led scrutiny.
- That the approach develops as one of partnership between the Board and the Customer Scrutiny Panel to achieve the mutual aim of continuous improvement.

2. Objectives of the Scrutiny Panel

To achieve its vision and purpose the panel will:

- Work on behalf of customers ensuring that Harden provides customer centred services of the highest standard, within the resources available to it.
- Provide an independent check and, if needed challenge, to services, processes and performance of the organisation
- Oversee customer led scrutiny activities, commissioning evidence collection to establish evidence-based priorities for reviewing activities, processes and performance
- Assess delivery and performance against Harden agreed objectives, standards and, best practice, both nationally and locally
- Report findings to the Board and Senior Management Team and make evidence-based recommendations where performance falls below National Standards or additional higher standards that Harden has offered
- Agree action plans with the Board, the Assistant Director and WM Senior Management Team to effect change and monitor the progress of those action plans

3. Scope and Powers of the Scrutiny Role

3.1 The Board delegates responsibility to the Scrutiny Panel to scrutinise and review decisions made or actions taken in connection with the:

- **Services:** including frontline services, operational performance, use of contractors, specifications
- **Business:** the decisions of the Harden Board



4. Membership of the Scrutiny Panel

4.1 Eligibility

- Up to 12 places will be available for membership
- All tenants and leaseholders are eligible to apply, subject to no more than xx% (local decision), being leaseholder, with the exception of:
 - Customer Board Members, who may not be members of the Scrutiny Panel and the Board at the same time.
 - Any tenant or leaseholder who is the subject of a current Notice of Intention to Seek Possession, Court Order, or have been defined as a persistent, unreasonable or vexatious Complainants under the Comments, Compliments and Complaints Policy
 - Customers who have failed to adhere to the code of conduct of any other group in which they may be involved
 - Customers who are employees of WM Housing Group
- Scrutiny Panel may invite independent expert support on a subject under scrutiny where specific skills are needed to assist the Panel in its duties.
- In the event of any future mergers or acquisitions which significantly increase the numbers of properties in management then the Panel can review its level of membership, increase the numbers and/or recommend to Board a review of the Terms of Reference of the panel, subject to the recruitment policy.

4.2 Expenses

Expenses will be paid in accordance with the Customer Involvement Expenses Policy.

4.3 Period of Appointment

- Term of office will be 3 years.
- A process will be agreed whereby a third of the members step down after their three year term and, each subsequent year
- Members who step down at the end of their term of office may be re-selected but will be considered alongside other suitable applicants
- Maximum term of membership will be 6 years with a 2 year break at the end of that period before eligibility to re-apply
- Members may give written notice to resign from the panel at any time.

4.4 Quorum

- A quorum will be more than 50% of members e.g. if membership is 12, a quorum will be 7.
- Meetings which are not quorate should be noted and decisions ratified at next quorate meeting.



4.5 Recruitment and Succession

The Scrutiny Panel will comply with the Customer Scrutiny Recruitment and Selection Policy.

5. Scrutiny Panel Meetings

5.1 Frequency of Meetings

The Panel will normally meet at least quarterly for general scrutiny business management, with a minimum of 4 meetings per year.

5.2 Working Groups/Task and Finish Groups

The Panel may establish Working Groups or Task and Finish Groups to lead on specific activities, which would meet between main panel meetings.

5.3 Chairing Meetings

The chairing of the meeting will be undertaken on a rotational basis, in the first year of operation.

Panels should decide after the first year whether to progress to the appointment of a Chair and Vice Chair. In this event the Chair and Vice Chair will stand down at the subsequent AGMs of the Panel and may stand for re selection subject to a maximum of two successive years in office. The Vice Chair may stand as chair where two successive years completed in that role.

6.0 Access to Information

6.1 The Scrutiny Panel may request reports and information from Harden to carry out its scrutiny activities and may commission reports (appropriate in scale and content to the scrutiny being undertaken). The Panel may also invite officers and relevant customer groups to meet with the Panel to provide evidence. All requests for information and documentary evidence must be made in accordance with the Access to Information Protocol.

7. Safeguards

A range of measures are in place to protect the integrity of Customer Led Scrutiny and to ensure the accountability of the Scrutiny Panel. These are as follows:

7.1 Code of Conduct

All Panel members will sign the Code of Conduct

7.2 Confidentiality Policy

All Panel members will sign the Confidentiality Policy.

7.3 Data Protection Policy

All Scrutiny Panel members will receive training on and be asked to sign up to the organisation's Data Protection Policy.



7.4 Access to Information Protocol

The Scrutiny Panel Access to Information Protocol sets out agreed standards.

7.5 Evaluation of Scrutiny Panel Activities

The work of the Scrutiny Panel will be subject to annual monitoring and evaluation programme, in year one led by a Scrutiny Champion from the Board and the Head of Customer and Community Involvement and thereafter through peer review or other independent appraisal and assessment.

8. Scrutiny Panel Accountability to/from Customers and Board

8.1 Community Call for Action

The wider customer base may influence the scrutiny programme both through the expression of their views via involvement and feedback channels and through a Community Call for Action, where in limited circumstances set out in procedures, the Panel may consider a petition when prioritising their scrutiny programme.

8.2 The Panel will consider 'Request for Scrutiny' from the Senior Management Team and the Board.

8.3 Reporting Scrutiny Findings and Recommendations to the Board

On completion of a Scrutiny Project, the Panel will make a formal request to the Board to accept the report and provide a response. The panel shall have offered the opportunity for the Assistant Director or other relevant Head of Service, to comment on the draft and discuss any possible misconceptions/errors in advance of this. A member of the panel will attend the Board meeting to present the report.

8.4 The Board Responding to Scrutiny Recommendations

The Board will present its comments and proposed action plan to the panel within 28 days of the Board meeting. It will track progress and achievement from the implementation of the action plan through the Assistant Directors report.

8.5 Scrutiny Panel Dissatisfaction with the Response from the Board

See 'Disputes' (11.2 below)

8.6 Board Concerns with Scrutiny Panel Compliance with the Terms of Reference

See 'Disputes' (11.1 below).

9. Programming and Undertaking Scrutiny

9.1 The Scrutiny Panel will undertake an initial Test Case Scrutiny as a pilot exercise. On completion and following a review of the process, the Panel will develop a programme of scrutiny work and review this each subsequent year.



The priority areas for review will be decided using performance data, customer satisfaction information and feedback from customer groups.

9.2 The Panel should satisfy itself in so far as reasonably practical that evidence presented on customers views and community calls for action is representative of groups whose views are traditionally under represented to the association.

9.3 The Panel will undertake each scrutiny activity in accordance with the process set out in procedures.

10. Support and Resources

10.1 Harden will provide support and resources, subject to financial constraints and practical considerations , to ensure the effective operation of the Panel.

10.2 Training

All new members will undertake an induction programme and individual skills analysis to assess training and capacity building requirements. A training programme will be developed, delivered and regularly reviewed. A budget for training will be incorporated into the annual Scrutiny Panel budget.

10.3 Mentoring

Harden will fund the provision of an independent Mentor to provide advice and support to the Scrutiny Panel in its initial development period. This period to be negotiated with the Panel and will be subject to budget availability. The Panel will agree a protocol for the Mentor to work to.

11. Disputes

11.1 Board Concerns with Panel Compliance with the Terms of Reference

In the event of the Board and/or Senior Management Team having concerns about Panel compliance with these Terms of Reference, representatives from the Board and/or Senior Management Team will meet with the Panel at the Panel's next scheduled meeting (subject to 21 days notice) to raise these concerns and establish a joint agreement to ensure that Panel complies with these Terms of Reference.

11.2 Scrutiny Panel Dissatisfaction with the Response from the Board

In the event of the Scrutiny Panel being dissatisfied with the Board response, the Panel may raise this formally with the Board setting out its concerns. A Board member and the Assistant Director will meet with the Scrutiny Panel at a mutually convenient date within 21 days where they will provide the Panel with a response. If the Scrutiny Panel remains dissatisfied it may take its concerns to WM Group Board and thereafter the Regulator (Tenant Services Authority or successor), who will consider if it is a matter that represents 'serious detriment'.

11.3 Disputes Between the Scrutiny Panel and Officers of Harden,

Concerns should be brought to the attention of the Head of Customer and Community Involvement or deputising officer in their absence. Concerns



involving the Head of Customer and Community Involvement should be taken to the Director of Housing Strategy. The investigating officer will interview both parties within 7 days and feedback with a solution/decision within a further 7 days.

In the event that either party is dissatisfied with the response they may take the matter to the Board Scrutiny Champion or a deputising Board member if they are not available. The Board member will interview both parties within 14 days and feedback with a solution/decision within a further 7 days. Scrutiny Panel members who remain dissatisfied may at any point use the formal Customer Complaints process.

11.4 Disputes Between the Scrutiny Panel and Customers

Concerns should be brought to the attention of Head of Customer and Community Involvement or deputising officer in their absence. The investigating officer will interview both parties within 7 days and feedback with a solution/decision within a further 7 days.

In the event that either party is dissatisfied with the response they may take the matter to the Board Scrutiny Champion or a deputising Board member if they are not available. The Board member will interview both parties within 14 days and feedback with a solution/decision within a further 7 days. Scrutiny Panel members or customers who remain dissatisfied may at any point use the formal Customer Complaints process.

12. Measuring Success

12.1 Harden will agree a range of outcomes to measure success.

13. Review

13.1 These Terms of Reference will be reviewed every 3 years by the Panel and the Board and any revisions jointly agreed. In the event of certain elements proving unworkable, or other considerations arising between regular reviews, the Panel will make recommendations to the Board for early review.