

The Tenants Together (Scotland) Scottish Housing Regulator Liaison Group Terms of Reference

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1. Background

- 1.1 The Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) has a statutory duty to safeguard and promote the interests of tenants and other users, of Social Landlords in Scotland. In order to do this, it is important that SHR understands and considers their needs and priorities. SHR's Strategy for 2024 to 2027 includes the strategic priority to listen to tenants and service users, use their feedback to inform effective regulation, and empower them by publishing useful performance information about their landlord.
- 1.2 SHR actively includes tenants and other service users in its work, as set out in its published strategy. SHR engages with them to help make its work accountable, relevant and targeted.
- 1.3 The Tenants Together (Scotland) Scottish Housing Regulator Liaison Group (Liaison Group) aims to help achieve this objective; to ensure SHR meets regularly with representatives of Tenants Together (Scotland) (TTS), who represent social landlord tenants and service users across Scotland and their views are gathered and considered.

2. Purpose of the Liaison Group

- 2.1 The Liaison Group is a forum for SHR to listen to and discuss, record and consider the views of representatives from TTS.
- 2.2 These representatives provide SHR with the views of TTS, on issues that are important to them about SHR's work including how it delivers this work and its strategic and regulatory duties and plans.
- 2.3 The representatives of TTS can present and discuss matters with SHR at the Liaison Group meetings, which are within the remit of SHR.

3. Remit of the Liaison Group

- 3.1 The Liaison Group will meet once every quarter, but additional meetings or engagements can be convened or undertaken at the discretion of the Chair.
- 3.2 The Liaison Group will aim to meet in person once per year. The remaining meetings will be completed virtually, unless otherwise agreed.
- 3.3 The Liaison Group will discuss and present views on strategic and general matters which are within the remit of SHR.
- 3.4 SHR will discuss its work and its priorities with the Liaison Group to seek their views and opinions.

- 3.5 Liaison Group members will have open and honest discussions about each agenda item and the approved minutes of these meetings will be published on the SHR website.
- 3.6 The Co-ordinator can provide feedback and minutes on each Liaison Group meeting to the TTS committee.
- 3.7 The Co-ordinator may propose agenda items for discussion and Liaison Group attendees will contribute the views, ideas and opinions of TTS, to the agenda item discussions.

4. Group membership (Chair and secretariat)

- 4.1 Membership of the Liaison Group will consist of:
- Eight named representatives and one co-ordinator from TTS.
 - Up to two SHR Board members
 - two SHR staff members
- 4.2 The SHR Board Chair will nominate a SHR Board Member to act as the Liaison Group Chair. The SHR Board Chair will also nominate a second SHR Board Member who will be a member of the Liaison Group and will act as substitute Chair should the Chair be unavailable. In the unlikely event neither SHR Board member is present, it will be for the meeting to agree who should be the Chair for that meeting.
- 4.3 SHR staff will provide secretariat for the Liaison Group.
- 4.4 The Co-ordinator will be a member of the TTS committee. The Co-ordinator will be nominated by the TTS committee and agreed with SHR. The Co-ordinator role is to convey information between TTS and SHR.
- 4.5 Additional members of SHR staff and/or Board members, may attend at the invitation of the Liaison Group, or at their request. The Chair and Chief Executive of SHR will normally be invited to attend and participate in a discussion with the Liaison group at least once per year.
- 4.6 A quorum (the minimum number of members that must be present to make the meeting valid) for a Liaison Group meeting will be:
- four TTS representatives, and
 - two SHR representatives (made up of Board members and/or staff).

5. Roles and responsibilities of membership

- 5.1 The Chair will liaise with the SHR secretariat to prepare and arrange circulation of the agenda for each Liaison Group meeting not less than seven working days before each meeting.
- 5.2 Suggested agenda items should be sent to the secretariat by the Co-ordinator for consideration no later than ten working days prior to a meeting. Agenda items will only be accepted from the Co-ordinator.
- 5.3 Members should consider whether any agenda item will require them to declare an interest. Any declarations of interest should be made at the start of each meeting. If however, the requirement to make a declaration is not identified until discussion of an agenda item has started, the declaration must be made as soon as it is realised that one must be made.
- 5.4 A declaration of an interest may prevent the member in participating in the discussion of the agenda item and, if requested by the Chair, the member may be required to leave the meeting for the duration of the discussion on the agenda item.
- 5.5 Draft minutes will be produced within fourteen days of a meeting and provided to the Co-ordinator for circulation to each member of the Liaison Group, and any person approved, by the Chair, to receive the minutes, for comment.
- 5.6 The Co-ordinator should respond to the secretariat within seven working days, and either, provide suggested changes to the minutes, or inform the secretariat that TTS Liaison Group Members are content with the minutes.
- 5.7 If amendments are required to the draft minutes, these will be made within seven working days and the re-drafted minutes re-circulated to the Co-ordinator who should aim to reply within seven working days of receipt.
- 5.8 At the next quorate meeting, all representatives will agree the previous meeting minutes. Once approved, these will be published on the SHR website within ten working days.
- 5.9 The Co-ordinator will present the approved minutes of the Liaison Group meetings to the TTS Committee.
- 5.10 Representatives can feedback to the Liaison Group any comments or views from the TTS Committee, if they are asked to do so.

- 5.11 SHR representatives will circulate the approved minutes to SHR Board Members and designated officers within SHR, for comment and will feedback any comments received at the next Liaison Group meeting, as required.

6. Presentation and retention of information

- 6.1 The Chair of the Liaison Group will select the agenda items for each meeting.
- 6.2 The Chair will consider any item for inclusion as an agenda item, if it is submitted to the secretariat by the Co-ordinator, and the subject matter falls within the remit of the Liaison Group to discuss (See Section 3.7).
- 6.3 There may be times when Liaison Group members will be asked to discuss documents and other information of an Official nature, which has not been made public and is not intended to be made public.
- 6.4 Any information which members have been given privileged access to by SHR, either orally or in writing should not be disclosed. Liaison Group members should ensure all information and documents provided by SHR, which are discussed at the Liaison Group meetings are not made available to outside bodies or individuals unless formally agreed by the Chair and secretariat, or are already in the public domain, and should never be used for the purpose of personal or financial gain, or used in such a way as to bring SHR into disrepute.
- 6.5 SHR can be required to provide copies of Liaison Group documents, if requested to do so. Therefore, members must ensure that documents do not contain any material that may be deemed inappropriate.

7. Budget and expenses

- 7.1 SHR will meet the cost of Liaison Group members' travel to and from in-person meetings with the SHR and for any catering and other reasonable expenses that are required for attendance at these in-person meetings.
- 7.2 Liaison Group members should present a claim for their expenses to SHR, as soon as possible after the cost has been incurred, using the appropriate Expenses Claim Form (available from SHR).
- 7.3 If travel is by:
- Public transport: a receipt, or the travel ticket (which records the cost of the ticket) must be presented with the expenses claim.

- Motor car: the cost of mileage is paid at £0.45 per mile; £0.05 per mile for each passenger and a receipt must be produced if a claim is presented for car parking costs.
- 7.4 If travel is by any other means, or a member expects to incur other travel costs in attending a Liaison Group meeting, they should discuss this with SHR prior to (the booking of) travel, if it is their wish to seek reimbursement of the cost from SHR.
- 7.5 SHR will meet the cost of any overnight accommodation and related expenses, if this has been approved in writing by SHR, prior to a booking being made and the expense being incurred.
- 7.6 SHR will not make any payment for a member's travel time to and from a meeting nor for attendance time at a meeting.

8. Members' code of conduct

- 8.1 All Liaison Group members will act in a polite and courteous manner and treat with respect the views and opinions of their fellow members.
- 8.2 In the event that there is concern expressed that a member has not acted in accordance with the remit and roles and responsibilities of the Liaison Group, the Chair can ask the other members of the Liaison Group to vote on the imposition of a sanction, as listed at 8.4, on that member.
- 8.3 The subject of the vote will be informed of the concerns of the Group and may speak to the Group prior to the vote. The subject of the vote may not cast a vote and will be required to leave the meeting for the duration of the vote.
- 8.4 In the event of an even split of votes, the Chair will cast the deciding vote. If authorised by a majority vote, the Chair will impose one of the following sanctions on a Liaison Group member:
- Censure – the Chair may reprimand the member and/or remove them from all, or part, of a Liaison Group meeting, but otherwise take no further action against them;
 - Suspend – the Chair may remove the member from the remaining part of a Liaison Group meeting and suspend the member from attending one or more future meetings; or
 - Disqualify – the Chair may remove the member from the remaining part of a Liaison Group meeting and remove the member from membership of the SHR Liaison Group.

- 8.5 Where a member is suspended or disqualified from the Liaison Group, the secretariat will notify the TTS Office Bearers and the Scottish Government Tenant Participation team and inform them of the reason for the suspension or disqualification. TTS will be invited to appoint a new representative to join the Liaison Group, either for the period of the suspension, or as a permanent placement.