

Governance Team to populate Report number: Report Number: SWT */20

Report Version No:	1
REPORT SIGNED OFF BY?	Date: 14th July 2020
1) Service Manager – Stephen Boland	Yes
2) Legal	N/a
3) Finance/s151	N/a
4) Governance Team	N/a
5) SMT	N/a
6) Informal Executive	N/a
7) Governance Team	N/a

Somerset West and Taunton Council

Tenants' Strategic Group – 20th July 2020

Terms of Reference for the Tenants' Strategic Group

This matter is the responsibility of Executive Councillor Member for Housing, Councillor Francesca Smith

Report Author: (Stephen Boland – Housing Landlord Specialist)

1. Purpose of the Report

To present to the Tenants' Strategic Group Terms of Reference.

2. Recommendations

Members are invited to consider and support the following recommendation:

- To approve the Terms of Reference for the Tenants' Strategic Group.

3. Risk Assessment (if appropriate)

There are no specific risk management issues.

4. Background and Full details of the Report

The proposed Terms of Reference describe the role, aims, objectives and expected conduct of the Tenants' Strategic Group and are to be adopted at the start of the Tenants' Strategic Group's formal existence.

The Terms of Reference state that all tenant representatives will be appointed to the Group following election by all direct tenants of the Council. It is proposed that the election process will be carried out during the period from July 2020 and ending with the appointment of a new group in January 2021.

5. Links to Corporate Strategy

There are no specific links to corporate aims.

6. Finance / Resource Implications

There are no financial comments in relation to this report.

7. Legal Implications (if any)

There are no specific legal comments.

8. Climate and Sustainability Implications (if any)

There are no specific climate or sustainability implications.

9. Safeguarding and/or Community Safety Implications (if any)

There are no specific safeguarding and or community safety implications.

10. Equality and Diversity Implications (if any)

Reference is made within the Terms of Reference that the Tenants' Strategic Group has a collective responsibility to uphold the best possible standards in term of equality.

11. Social Value Implications (if any)

None for the purposes of this report.

12. Partnership Implications (if any)

There are no specific partnership implications.

13. Health and Wellbeing Implications (if any)

None for the purposes of this report.

14. Asset Management Implications (if any)

None for the purposes of this report.

15. Data Protection Implications (if any)

None for the purposes of this report.

16. Consultation Implications (if any)

Existing members of the Tenants' Strategic Group held a workshop session on the 15th January 2020 and their comments and feedback has informed the development of what is proposed.

17. Scrutiny/Executive Comments / Recommendation(s) (if any)

None for the purposes of this report.

Democratic Path:

- **Scrutiny / Corporate Governance or Audit Committees – No**
- **Cabinet/Executive – No**
- **Full Council – No**

Reporting Frequency: **Once only** (Terms of Reference to be reviewed every two years).

List of Appendices (delete if not applicable)

Contact Officers

Name	Stephen Boland
Direct Dial	01823 219503
Email	s.boland@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk

(IF YOU HAVE ANY QUERIES REGARDING THIS TEMPLATE PLEASE CONTACT THE GOVERNANCE TEAM governance@somersetwestandtaunton.gov.uk)

Appendix A

Tenants' Strategic Group

Terms of Reference

2020

1. Membership and meeting arrangements

- 1.1 The membership of the Tenants' Strategic Group will comprise of up to 12 members (including 10 direct tenants of Somerset West and Taunton Council and two Councillors).
- 1.2 Each elected Councillor, one from each of the two main groups at the Council, will be selected by his or her political group.
- 1.3 The Housing Portfolio holder and Shadow Portfolio holder will attend ex officio; other members able to attend as observers.
- 1.4 The Chair of the Group will be one of the tenants and will be elected at each Annual General Meeting. The Group may elect a vice-chair (preferably a tenant representative).
- 1.5 Tenant representatives will be appointed to the Group following election by all direct tenants of the Council.
- 1.6 If there are equal number of candidates for available Group positions and the candidates meet the eligibility criteria they may be deemed as elected unopposed and no election is necessary.
- 1.7 Group members will be expected to maintain close links with other elements of the tenant engagement structure at the Council.
- 1.8 Tenant members will stand for a period of up to 3 year, with an eligibility of reappointment after two years.
- 1.9 This structure shall be reviewed every two years and will also take into account the need for all sections of the community to be represented, in order to ensure membership of the Group is representative of tenants as a whole.
- 1.10 Tenants are not eligible to be elected or serve as a tenant representative on the Group if:
 - They are not a tenant or partner or spouse of at least five year's standing of a tenant living at the same household;
 - They are under 18 years old;
 - They are in serious breach of their obligations as a tenant;

- They become incapable due to a mental disorder;
- They do not have a good rent payment and tenancy history;
- They are a Councillor of Somerset West and Taunton;
- They are a member of staff in Somerset West and Taunton's housing service; or
- One of their family members or household is a current member of the Group.

1.11 Membership shall also cease if he or she:

- Resigns by written notice to the Chairperson.
- Misses three consecutive meetings (without reasonable excuse) when they will be deemed to have resigned. The member will be contacted to enquire about their absences.
- Brings the Group into disrepute.

1.12 If a member resigns or relinquishes their position the resulting vacancy will be filled as follows:

- A previously unsuccessful candidate who received the most votes will be asked to fill the vacancy.
- If the candidate is unavailable or unwilling to be co-opted, other candidates will be considered in the order of the number of votes received.
- Should the above provision fail to find a representative, Group members, with the Housing Specialist, will agree on a representative to be co-opted until the next election.

1.13 All members are volunteers. No payment will be received for any work done by them on behalf of the Group. However when attending training or meetings of the Group, members may claim travel, childcare or other carers expenses.

1.14 No substitute members shall be permitted.

1.15 All members must participate in training programmes and seminars aimed at enhancing Group members' roles.

1.16 The Group will be supported by the Housing Performance Team. Organisation and administration of the Group will be provided by the Council's Governance Team. The Director of Housing and other staff, as appropriate will attend and advise the Group.

1.17 There will be 6 meetings per year plus 'special' meetings as necessary. The dates, times and venues for the meetings will be agreed annually.

1.18 Minutes of previous meetings will be circulated within 7 days after the meeting and will include notice of the agenda items for the next meeting.

- 1.19 Agendas and supporting papers will aim to be made available at least one week prior to meetings of the Group. Late reports will be circulated as soon as possible and the Group will determine whether to consider them.
- 1.20 Members of the public will have the right to attend a Group meeting except where confidential or exempt information is likely to be disclosed, and the meeting, or part of it, is therefore held in private.
- 1.21 Members of the public can submit questions or make statements to the Group related to items on the agenda, so long as these are received one week in advance of the meeting.
- 1.22 Group meetings will be limited to 2 hours. Any issues not addressed in this time will be carried over, unless members agree otherwise.
- 1.23 Members of the Group are required to disclose the existence and nature of any personal interests which they have in any item of business to be considered at a Group meeting, ahead of its discussion.
- 1.24 The Group will not be involved with day to day operational matters or matters of detailed service delivery or performance.

2. Terms of Reference

- 2.1 The Tenants' Strategic Group will represent all direct tenants of the Council at a high level of the Council's decision making process to enable tenants to have their voices heard, making it easy to raise concerns to those in the Council who make the decisions and to influence and shape what the Council does. The Group is an integrated and integral part of the wider council governance and performance structure.
- 2.2 The role of the Tenants' Strategic Group is set out below:
 - To help run the housing function (landlord) by providing oversight, challenge, direction, and recommendations to help with decision making;
 - To work with officers to set the annual budget for housing and determine spending priorities, as well as monitoring spend throughout the year;
 - To be consulted on and advise on key changes to strategy, policies, significant service changes and development proposals;
 - To review overall service quality (including reviewing key performance indicators on a quarterly basis);
 - To maintain an overview of the development of tenant involvement and empowerment; and
 - To report to Council annually, and provide recommendations regarding the housing function.
- 2.3 Members will receive appropriate training in governance skills, housing, finance, legal requirements and policy areas (as necessary).

- 2.4 The Tenants' Action Group will provide feedback to the Tenants' Strategic Group from their meetings so that the Tenants' Strategic Group can consider whether issues arising should impact on strategic discussions and policy development. The Tenants' Strategic Group will also feed information back to the Tenants' Action Group so that its members develop a better understanding of how services are performing and gain greater transparency about any decisions made.

3. Code of Conduct

- 3.1 All members of the Group are expected to follow the good practice principles for effective meetings, as set out below:
- All questions should be directed through the Chairperson;
 - Everyone should be given equal respect and personal verbal attacks against members of the Group will not be tolerated;
 - The Chair's position should be respected at all times;
 - Any conflict of interest must be declared to the Group at the start of the meeting;
 - No member of the Group should behave in a way likely to bring the reputation of the Group into disrepute;
 - Members will be expected to read papers before the meeting;
 - All members are expected to take part in training where this is agreed;
 - All members of the Group are required to make their best efforts to attend meetings or to send their apologies; and
 - The Chairperson will have the authority to give a verbal warning to any member of the Group to leave the meeting.

4. Equal opportunities

- 4.1 All members are required to comply with equal opportunities statements of the Council.
- 4.2 Members of the Group using racist, sexist or other inappropriate language or behaviour will be subject to an agreed procedure and may be removed from the Group.

5. Annual review

- 5.1 These Terms of Reference will be reviewed every two years.