

Terms of Reference for VITAL- Voice of Involved Tenants Across Leeds

Oct 2015

What is VITAL?

VITAL is the strategic tenant body which drives tenant involvement in Leeds. It plays a vital role in overseeing all tenant and community involvement activity in the city, ensuring all tenant involvement groups and forums are empowered and equipped to achieve their goals.

What are the aims of VITAL?

The main aims of VITAL are:

- To support the development and oversee the implementation of the Tenant Involvement Strategy;
- To oversee consultations to avoid duplication or consultation fatigue;
- To ensure wide-spread feedback to tenants;
- To co-ordinate communications via a single communications plan;
- To enable communication between tenant forums to avoid duplication;
- To bring issues of concern to Housing Leeds for action;
- To review Tenant Involvement budgets for Value For Money and assess impact;
- To co-ordinate tenant training programmes and providers;
- To review representation within tenant involvement and co-ordinate approach to address any under-representation; and
- To co-ordinate tenant consultation on policy development/strategic direction.

Who makes up VITAL?

VITAL is made up of the Chairs and Vice Chairs of all the citywide groups, two representatives from the Repairs Focus Groups and the Chair of BITMO. When making decisions, there will only be one vote per group. VITAL can recruit up to 6 independent members in order to ensure a more representative balance from across the city, but only groups or individuals representing council tenants will have a vote on decisions about Housing Leeds policy or funding.

Chair and Vice Chair will be elected following expressions of interest and once voted in, will serve for two years.

Who can be a VITAL member?

You must be a tenant or resident of Leeds and already act as a representative of tenants of Leeds in some capacity. For example it could be that you are a member of

a Housing Leeds involvement group such as Rainbow Roofs or the Equal Access Group. Members of the Scrutiny Panel will not be eligible for membership of VITAL.

An ideal member will also:

- Be open minded;
- Be prepared to read papers and reports before a meeting;
- Be prepared to listen to different points of view;
- Ask questions if anything is unclear;
- Be prepared to contribute to meetings and any other panel activity;
- Draw conclusions based on evidence, not on individual opinion;
- Accept collective responsibility for decisions;
- Be committed to training and development;
- Maintain confidentiality and protect the reputation of VITAL and its members;
- Tell us any private or personal interests, financial or otherwise; and
- Be prepared to have a public profile.

What is expected of me?

VITAL members have the following responsibilities:

- To provide direction on the Housing Leeds tenant involvement strategy;
- To provide leadership to tenants that you represent in influencing the tenant involvement agenda;
- To play a proactive role in transforming the tenant and community involvement service into a 'centre of excellence';
- To influence decisions relating to housing at a strategic level;
- To adopt an inclusive and open customer focused approach to developing the tenant involvement and wider housing service;
- To ensure that the view of the tenants that they represent are being represented;
- To contribute to VITAL meetings, fully representing the views of the tenants and residents that you represent;
- To feedback to and regularly communicate with the tenants and residents that you represent the outcomes of VITAL meetings or projects; and
- To attend all meetings; a member will not be expected to miss more than three consecutive meetings.

How often will VITAL meet?

VITAL will meet monthly for the first six months at which point this will be reviewed. A meeting will be quorate with 50% of the current membership present (rounding up when this is an odd number e.g. 2.5 = 3).

Governance and Key relationships

VITAL will be accountable to the tenant groups it represents and to the Housing Advisory Board. Three VITAL members will sit on the HAB in line with the HAB Terms of Reference.

What else do you need to know?

The position is voluntary; however, we will pay all reasonable expenses – it's important that members are not out of pocket for the time they give.

We will make reasonable adjustments to help you to fulfil the role if you have any specific requirements.

We will support tenants, and offer training and development opportunities to help all members to work well in the role.

You must sign a code of conduct that sets out the behaviour expected of all panel members.

Declarations of interest must be disclosed prior to the meeting. The Chair reserves the right to ask any member who declares an interest in an item, to leave the meeting whilst this item is being discussed.

You can find more information about VITAL on the website or you can contact the Housing Leeds Tenant and Community Involvement Service on 0113 3783330 or email housinginvolvement@leeds.gov.uk