

Terms of Reference Scrutiny Group

(March 2020)

Purpose / role of the Scrutiny Group

The role of the Scrutiny Group is based upon a number of core objectives/standards. These are:

- To deliver independent scrutiny of housing services with the aim of making continuous improvements for our customers.
- To act as a critical friend, providing constructive, evidenced feedback to Bolton at Home (BH).
- To ensure housing services are accessible and meet the needs of all customers.
- To promote better value for money and identify areas of waste where possible.
- To inform and involve the wider tenant body in the activities of the group.
- To support the aims and objectives of BH.

How the Scrutiny Group will achieve its aims

The Scrutiny Group will:

- Identify and prioritise services for review, based on a wide range of data including performance reports and customer feedback.
- Complete independent reviews of services and seek improvements, giving recommendations from a customer's perspective.
- Develop and adhere to an operational approach to scrutiny reviews.
- Work positively and collaboratively with Bolton at Home and relevant customer groups, in the spirit of co-regulation.
- Adopt an evidence-based approach to all of their work.
- Monitor and use performance data and customer feedback.
- Commission research from residents and officers (e.g. satisfaction surveys, interviews, presentations, reports) to inform their work.
- Produce review reports with recommendations for improvement, to be discussed with management and presented to the Operations Committee for approval.
- Monitor the delivery of agreed actions and outcomes from previous scrutiny reviews, escalating any issues to the Ops Committee where necessary.
- Oversee recruitment and development of volunteers to the Scrutiny Group.
- Widely publicise reports and the outcomes of reviews.
- Carry out other activities to shape and scrutinise service delivery as agreed with Bolton at Home

- The Scrutiny Group will aim to undertake 1-2 service reviews each year (depending on scale and scope) and will adopt an evidence-based approach to the reviews and associated recommendations for improvements.
- The Group will consult management on the proposed areas for review and outcomes before updating the Operations Committee and making recommendations for approval.
- The Scrutiny Group will report to Operations committee at least once a year on its operations.
- The Scrutiny Group will report to the Board where the Operations Committee decides that there are budget implications beyond existing budget provisions.

Membership

The Scrutiny Group should consist of up to 10 but no fewer than 6 members. Tenants should always maintain the majority membership in the Scrutiny Group.

All appointments will be for up to a maximum of nine years from the date of appointment, which will comprise of two, three year fixed terms, followed by one year terms up to a maximum of three.

All service on BH governance counts towards the overall maximum term, and all appointments will be subject to an annual review.

The Scrutiny Group will have a Chair as voted for annually by all members of the group. If desired the group may also elect a Vice Chair.

The Chairs responsibilities include:

- Presenting (or nomination of a representative from the group to present), the progress and outcomes of any scrutiny reviews to the Operations Committee or Board as appropriate.
- Agreeing the agenda for all meetings, in advance of the meeting date.
- Chairing meetings.
- Having a casting vote when applicable.

Membership to the Scrutiny Group is only open to those who meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Current tenants of Bolton at Home; or
- Former tenants of Bolton Council or Bolton at Home who (in either case) have exercised the Right to Buy and still live in the property; or
- Current customers of Bolton at Home, i.e. are currently in receipt of, and pay for, regular or periodic ongoing services from Bolton at Home, e.g. leaseholder, careline etc.; or
- A household member (but not the tenant) for at least 2 years in a Bolton at Home property. In this case, the tenant of the property would also have to comply with the criteria in respect of not being in breach of their tenancy agreement.

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

- Members of staff within BH group entities; or
- Bolton at Home Boards or Committee members; or
- Customers in material or serious breach of their tenancy or lease agreements.
- Anyone under 18

All vacancies are publicised, and anyone who is interested can express an interest. There will be opportunities to find out more and support to complete an application form if required.

New members to the Scrutiny Group will be appointed through a selection process.

New members of the Group will participate in an induction-training programme to help them fulfil their role. They will also participate in further training as and when required to support them in their role.

Members will be expected to act as individuals and not represent any other interested group, area or political party.

New and continuing membership will be subject to an annual appraisal and personal development review 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 Scrutiny Group and/or Bolton at Home into disrepute will be suspended, pending investigation, and may be asked to resign.

If a group member wishes to resign, they should inform the Governance and Regulation Team in writing or by email.

All members must sign the code of conduct and any group member who breaches the code of conduct will be asked to leave the group.

Meetings

The Scrutiny Group will agree their own schedule and frequency of meetings, which will be determined by their work plan and associated activities. There should be no less than four core/formal meetings throughout the year.

Members of the Scrutiny Group should make every effort to attend meetings. If a member is unable to attend, apologies should be sent to the Governance and Regulation 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 BH.

If a Scrutiny Group 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 Group and their membership will be terminated.

Bolton at Home recognises that there may be exceptional circumstances preventing a Scrutiny Group member from attending training and/or meetings e.g. ill health. Such circumstances will be discussed confidentially and an agreement regarding involvement will be reached by both parties.

The quorum of any core/formal Scrutiny Group meeting shall be 50% of the group and two-thirds for any decision making.

An attendance register is to be kept for all meetings (to include apologies and absences).

Administrative support

Bolton at Home will provide support from a BH Officer who will be responsible for overseeing the effective running and smooth administration of the Group.

Safeguards

Members must:

- Adopt and abide by the code of conduct; and
- Agree to undergo a mandatory induction and training programme; and
- Uphold Bolton at Home's 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 Scrutiny Group.

Scrutiny Group members must not disclose confidential information to anyone else outside of the group. Members who breach confidentiality will be removed from the group.

The Scrutiny Group shall conduct an annual review of its work and effectiveness, with the support of a BH Officer. This review will include a review of the terms of reference.

Responsibilities of Bolton at Home

Bolton at Home agrees to:

- Support a minimum of two service reviews a year;
- Respond to requests for information as soon as possible, within 10 working days;
- Provide an induction and any necessary training for all members;
- Respond to any agreed recommendations made by the Scrutiny Group with a formal action plan as soon as possible;
- Allow the Scrutiny Group access to any relevant information requested, subject to GDPR and/or any other relevant legislation;
- Cover any reasonable out of pocket expenses such as stationery and travel costs, in line with Bolton at Home's Allowances for Operations Committee and Scrutiny Group members' policy';
- Deliver a training programme which will include mandatory training on GDPR and other governance related matters; and
- Provide ID badges for Scrutiny Group members.

Programme of work

The Scrutiny Group will develop a programme of scrutiny work and review this each year.

The priority areas for review will be decided, using feedback from all available sources of information as documented in the 'BH Service Review Process'.

The Operations Committee may also make recommendations to the Scrutiny Group for reviews. These will be communicated to the Scrutiny Group for consideration and inclusion in their work programme; however, the Scrutiny Group will make the final decision.

Reporting

The Scrutiny Group will consult fully throughout any scrutiny review and take account of management responses to findings.

Following service reviews, the Scrutiny Group will produce a report summarising the outcome of the review, including any recommendations, to the Operations Committee or any other committee/board if required.

The Scrutiny Group will feedback the contents of the report and any recommendations to the managers and staff involved in the service review.

The Scrutiny Group will report back to customers through all regularly used forms of communication, including the website and social media.

Access to information

The Scrutiny Group can request/review reports and information from Bolton at Home to carry out its scrutiny activities. They may also invite officers and relevant customer groups to meet with them and provide evidence.

All requests for information and evidence must be made in accordance with Bolton at Home's Data Protection Policy.

Equality and Diversity

The Scrutiny Group will recognise the existence and importance of the different ages, races, genders, abilities and lifestyles within the customer profile of Bolton at Home and will ensure that no group or individual will be disadvantaged as a consequence of its activities.

The Scrutiny Group will be committed to promoting equality of opportunity to all persons in every respect of activities carried out by it.

Probationary period

New members of the Customer Scrutiny Group will undergo a 12 month probationary period. The probationary period will be reviewed at month 6 and 12, via an appraisal and personal development review.

The probationary period is designed to allow an introductory period for all new members and to any identify training and development needs. Ultimately, however, it may result in members being asked to stand down from the Scrutiny Group particularly if the membership terms stated in section 3 of this document have been breached.

Disputes

In the event of the Scrutiny Group entering into any disputes, concerns should be brought to the attention of the Governance and Regulation Team. The investigating officer will interview both parties within 10 working days and feedback with a solution/decision within a further 10 working days.

In the event of a dispute between the Scrutiny Group and the Governance and Regulation Team, concerns should be brought to the attention of the Secretary. The Secretary will then agree next steps with both parties and agree the timescale for a final decision/response.