



TOWER HAMLETS COMMUNITY HOUSING

LEASEHOLDER STEERING GROUP

CONSTITUTION

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CONSTITUTION

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1. Name

- 1.1 The Group shall be known as the Leaseholder Steering Group. Its short name shall be the LSG.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 THCH places resident participation at the centre of its service delivery and ethos.
- 2.2 This constitution is for agreement between the Leaseholder Steering Group and the Board of Tower Hamlets Community Housing (THCH).
- 2.3 The Leaseholder Steering Group has been established in order to represent the interests of leaseholders on all the estates of THCH.

3. Aims and Objectives of LSG

- 3.1 To represent leaseholders' interests on all matters relating to housing services, policies and practices to the extent that apply to leaseholders.
- 3.2 To consider and respond to matters referred to it by leaseholders and their representatives, and making recommendations to the Board.
- 3.3 To specify and monitor performance targets on aspects of service delivery relating to leaseholders and to suggest and promote ideas for improving service delivery to leaseholders.
- 3.4 To encourage the formation and continuity of the LSG and to promote resident participation in this group.
- 3.5 To consider policies and make recommendations for their adoption to the Board.
- 3.6 To initiate policies and make recommendations for their adoption to the Board.
- 3.7 To ensure that there is participation by LSG members in training and education programmes which promote greater understanding of housing, major refurbishment programme and related matters amongst all leaseholders on the estates.

4. Membership of LSG

THCH- Policy and Procedure Manual- LSG Constitution - Policy
Issue date: 01.10.07
LSG approval: 17.04.07
THCH Board approval: 14.06.07

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- 4.1 There will be a maximum of 12 members of the LSG (known as 'full members'), plus up to 2 non-resident co-opted members, who must be elected by a simple majority of full members.
- 4.2 All leaseholders of THCH are eligible to become elected members of the LSG, with re-elections being held every 3 years from amongst all leaseholders of THCH.
- 4.3 Selection to LSG will be with the aid of a predetermined Role Profile of an LSG member.
- 4.4 Membership of the LSG will aspire to reflect the numbers of leaseholders and the ethnicity of leaseholders within THCH.
- 4.5 In the event of a vacancy arising amongst elected LSG members, the LSG may co-opt a leaseholder, ideally from the same area, in their place to serve for the remainder of the term of office of the original member with full voting rights.
- 4.6 Non-resident co-opted members will not have the right to vote.
- 4.7 The LSG reserves the right to remove elected members should they not attend three consecutive meetings without apologies.
- 4.8 In the case of an individual leaseholder or property company owning more than one lease, they will count only as one member.

5. Election of the LSG Officers

- 5.1 The officers of the LSG are the Chair and Vice Chair.
- 5.2 Selection of LSG Officers will be with the aid of a predetermined Role Profile of each office.
- 5.3 Election of Officers to be by a poll of voting members of the LSG at the Annual General Meeting of the LSG.
- 5.4 Officers of the LSG shall serve for 3 years and may offer themselves for re-election at the end of their term of office up to a maximum of 3 terms.
- 5.5 In the event of an officer resigning before their term of office is complete, the LSG shall elect a replacement at their next Meeting.
- 5.6 In the case of an individual leaseholder or property company owning more than one lease, they will be entitled to one vote only.

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6. Election of Leaseholder Resident Board Member

- 6.1 The LSG will elect two Board members.
- 6.2 The period of office shall be three years.

7. LSG Working Groups

- 7.1 The LSG may set up one or more Working Groups to deal with specific issues of concern to leaseholders; these Working Groups would meet as necessary.
- 7.2 The terms of reference and remit for each Working Group shall be drawn up when a working group is commissioned.
- 7.3 Membership of each Working Group will be determined by the LSG.
- 7.4 There is no requirement for an elected LSG member to attend meetings of a Working Group. Working Groups may comprise members other than members of the LSG.
- 7.5 The Working Groups would report progress at LSG meetings, and any major decisions of the Working Group would need to be brought back to the LSG for ratification.
- 7.6 All Working Groups will be serviced by the appropriate THCH officer(s).

8. Meetings of LSG

- 8.1 Meetings of the LSG shall be held at such times as the LSG shall determine, but shall take place not less than 4 times a year.
- 8.2 Members of the LSG shall be given at least 5 clear working days' notice in writing of every Meeting, which will include the agenda, supporting papers, and a copy of the minutes of the last meeting.
- 8.3 The business of these meetings shall be conducted by the Chair to the publicised agenda and in accordance with the LSG Code of Conduct.
- 8.4 Every full member present at a Meeting, including the Chair, shall have one vote and every question where appropriate shall be decided by a majority of votes.

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- 8.5 The Chair may use his/her vote but will not have an extra casting vote. In the event of a vote being tied the matter will be deferred to the next LSG meeting for further discussion.
- 8.6 A quorum at the Meeting shall consist of at least 4 LSG members.
- 8.7 All meetings will be open to all leaseholders to attend. Non-members may only address the meeting at the discretion of the Chair but they may not vote.
- 8.8 The LSG may resolve, on a simple majority vote, to deal with any item on a confidential basis, whereby non-members shall be excluded.
- 8.9 Minutes of all Meetings shall be made available on request to residents, and posted on the website. The LSG Administrator will be the contact point for any minutes requests.
- 8.10 THCH Board members and officers of THCH may attend all Meetings of the LSG.
- 8.11 The LSG may request a closed session of the LSG, whereby officers of THCH and any other non-members may be asked to leave the meeting.
- 8.12 The Chair of LSG will have the power to require THCH staff and request consultants and contractors to attend LSG when necessary.
- 8.13 Invitations to external organisations and individuals to attend Meetings of the LSG shall be extended at the LSG's discretion in consultation with THCH staff.
- 8.14 All those attending a meeting of the LSG shall act in compliance with the LSG Code of Conduct.
- 8.15 The LSG standard meeting agenda is attached as **Appendix 1** to this Constitution. This is for guidance only.

9. Annual General Meeting of LSG

- 9.1 The Annual General Meeting of the LSG shall be open to all leaseholders of THCH and shall be held at least one month prior to the Annual General Meeting of THCH.
- 9.2 Amendments to the LSG constitution can only be made at the AGM subject to the conditions below.

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- 9.3 Fourteen days prior notice must be given to the Chair or Vice Chair of the LSG for any amendments to the LSG constitution. Any amendments must be approved by a two-thirds majority of voting members present at the Annual General Meeting. Any amendment shall not take effect until it has the approval of the THCH Board.

10. The Chair of LSG

- 10.1 The main responsibilities of the Chair will be as follows:

10.1.1 To ensure the efficient conduct of the LSG business and AGM.

10.1.2 To ensure that all LSG members are given the opportunity to express their views before any important decision is taken by the LSG.

10.1.3 To ensure that the LSG receives professional advice when it is needed, either from THCH staff or external sources.

10.1.4 To establish a constructive working relationship with THCH staff and senior executives.

10.1.5 To ensure the LSG has the appropriate composition of members to carry out its aims and objectives.

10.1.6 To take any decisions that have been delegated to him/her by LSG.

10.1.7 To ensure that LSG complies with its Code of Conduct.

- 10.2 The Chair will have the power to:

10.2.1 Adjourn any meeting of the LSG whenever he/she judges it necessary.

10.2.2 Request the attendance of specific THCH staff at any meeting of the LSG.

10.2.3 Determine the agenda of each meeting including approval of requests by members or staff to add to the standard LSG standard agenda.

10.2.4 Determine, where there is ambiguity, what constitutes a conflict of interest and his/her decision will be final.

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10.2.5 Determine, where there is ambiguity, what constitutes a breach of the LSG Code of Conduct and his/her decision will be final.

10.3 Where the chair is out of order, he or she will step aside at the point of the meeting that a point of order has been raised against the Chair and the Vice Chair will preside until the point of order is resolved.

11 Conflicts of Interest

11.1 Members of the LSG, THCH Board members, or any officers from THCH must disclose any interest that may affect any comments on the matter under discussion, keeping in mind Schedule 1 of the 1996 Housing Association Act, as appropriate.

11.2 The declaration of interest shall be so stated prior to commencement of the agenda item and no vote shall be accepted from a member declaring an interest.

12 LSG Code of Conduct

12.1 LSG members shall abide by the LSG Code of Conduct.

12.2 Members shall treat as confidential all matters discussed, or which come to their attention, relating to individual residents; issues of more general interest discussed at meetings are not confidential, except where agreed by members.

12.3 Leaseholder representatives on the THCH Board may discuss freely at meetings all matters except those identified as 'Confidential' in THCH Board papers.

12.4 The LSG Code of Conduct is attached as **Appendix 2** to this constitution.

13. Equal Opportunities and Race & Cultural Diversity

13.1 The LSG opposes discrimination and will endeavour, at all times, to promote awareness of equal opportunity issues and good practice in resident participation initiatives.

13.2 The LSG agrees to formally adopt and abide by THCH's policy on Equal Opportunities.

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- 13.3 The LSG agrees that BME communities should be fairly represented at all levels within THCH, and that they should be equally valued, supported and respected.
- 13.4 The LSG agrees that it will support its representatives to ensure that THCH must demonstrate, when carrying out its functions, its commitment to equal opportunity, and that THCH must work towards the elimination of discrimination and demonstrate an equitable approach to the rights and responsibilities of all individuals.
- 13.5 The LSG agrees to promote good relations between people of different racial groups.

14 Finance

- 14.1 Travelling expenses for LSG representatives will be reimbursed for travel in connection with approved LSG business, in accordance with the THCH's mileage rate or at current public transport rates, depending on the method of travel used. Expenditure on other items (such as telephone calls on LSG business) would be by prior agreement with THCH.
- 14.2 All expenses must be supported by a valid receipt. If a receipt has not, or could not, be obtained there should be a written statement as to how the expenditure was incurred.
- 14.3 LSG member expenses will be presented to the LSG Administrator within three months of incurring the expense.

Appendix 1

LSG ORDINARY MEETING AGENDA

A. QUARTERLY MEETING AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Declarations of Interest
3. Minutes of the last meeting (for accuracy)
4. Matters Arising
5. Chair's Action
- Reports on Policies and other Issue Specific Reports
6. Refurbishment Programme Update
7. Outstanding Actions
8. Future Agenda Items
9. Articles For THCH Residents Newsletter
10. Any Other Business
11. Date of Next Meeting

B. CYCLE-SPECIFIC AGENDA ITEMS

1. Quarter 2 Meeting

The Agenda will, wherever possible, include an item on Complaints to update LSG of the previous year's complaints and any lessons drawn from them.

2. Quarter 4 Meeting

The Agenda will, wherever possible, include an item on the draft Planned Maintenance Budget for the forthcoming year for the LSG to comment on the annual planned maintenance programme relating to communal areas and to advise and make recommendations on the same.

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Appendix 2

LSG CODE OF CONDUCT

A. Conduct at meetings

- 1.1 Members should at all times observe accepted practice while taking part in a meeting:
 - 1.1.1 To be courteous to each other and support and assist other members in seeking the best possible solution to problems being discussed.
 - 1.1.2 To allow each other the opportunity to speak and comment.
 - 1.1.3 To follow the guidance of the Chair in the conduct of the meeting.
 - 1.1.4 Members must remember to follow the agenda, and to help each other to reach effective decisions.
 - 1.1.5 To remember that you are representing the views of, and are accountable to, fellow leaseholders in THCH.
 - 1.1.6 To remember that the purpose of the meeting is to benefit residents generally and not specific individuals.
 - 1.1.7 To bear in mind the rights of individual residents and the duties of staff when proposing solutions to problems.
- 1.2 Members should operate within the rules laid down in the Constitution.
- 1.3 The main task of the Chair is to chair the meeting. The Chair should generally avoid getting involved in debates at meetings.
- 1.4 Speakers should go through the Chair and keep to the subject being discussed.
- 1.5 Only one member should speak at a time and there should be no cross talking.
- 1.6 Meetings will start at the stated time and abide by the agenda; late arrivals should enter quietly and not disrupt the meeting with apologies.
- 1.7 If things are getting heated, a five to ten minute time out can be called for at the discretion of the Chair.
- 1.8 Wherever possible, jargon should be avoided. If it is used then a full explanation should be given.
- 1.9 It is the responsibility of each member to ensure that they are prepared for the meeting by reading all the relevant papers and bringing them to the meeting.

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B. Discrimination

- 1.1 All those who attend meetings have the right to be treated with dignity and respect, regardless of their race, colour, ethnic or national origins, nationality, gender, marital status, age, sexuality, religion, disability or any other matter, which causes people to be treated with injustice.
- 1.2 No member will discriminate on any ground against any other member of the group or public. Discriminatory language will not be used in discussions other than when discussing discriminatory language.

C. Constitution

- 1.1 All members should familiarise themselves with the Constitution of the group to ensure that they continue to meet the aims and objectives of the group.

D. Conflicts of interest

- 1.1 Individual members:
 - 1.1.1 should disclose any interest, whether personal or on behalf of any group they represent, that they consider may affect or influence their approach to the matter under discussion.
 - 1.1.2 must not expect to receive more or less favourable treatment by staff because of their membership of the group.
 - 1.1.3 must use the normal procedures for reporting repairs, complaints etc.

E. Confidentiality

- 1.1 Members should respect all individual tenants'/residents' confidentiality, whether present or not, and refrain from mentioning specific individual cases which may cause embarrassment or identification of an individual.
- 1.2 Any information or items shared with the landlord that is of a confidential nature must not be disclosed to anyone else apart from members of the group in order to allow the business of the meeting to take place.

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F. Political affiliation

- 1.1 Individual members may be affiliated to/or be members of a political party but they may not represent a political party in their role as a member of the group.

G. Breach of Code of Conduct

- 1.1 If anyone present (LSG member, or group, or individual member of the public) does not abide by the code of conduct, the Chair will warn that if they break the code again they may be asked to leave the meeting.
- 1.2 The Chair may give the LSG member, or group, or individual two further warnings (a maximum of three warnings in any one meeting and/or three consecutive meetings).
- 1.3 If the LSG member, or group, or individual continues to ignore the code, the Chair will ask the meeting to vote on whether the member should be asked to leave.