

MERTON COMMUNITY PANEL: TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Background

1.1 Circle Thirty Three Housing Trust (known as Circle Housing) is a charitable registered provider of social housing, regulated by the Homes and Communities Agency. It is part of the Clarion Housing Group (“the Group”).

1.2 Circle Housing’s fundamental charitable purpose is the provision of housing and associated services for those in need, in particular the provision of social and affordable housing for rent and for sale to those unable to access market housing.

1.3 Stock within Merton was transferred in 2010 by the London Borough of Merton (“LBM”) to Merton Priory Homes which on [] transferred its engagements to Circle Housing.

2. Statement of Purpose

2.1 The Merton Community Panel is a consultative panel established to provide a local voice and to support Circle Housing in monitoring the following activity in Merton:

2.1.1 regeneration activity,

2.1.2 delivery of the housing and estates services,

2.1.3 development and delivery of the Group’s Community Investment strategy.

2.2 The Panel will be a source of intelligence for shaping and informing Circle Housing’s activities in Merton and act as a two way communication conduit between locally based Panel Members and the Circle Housing Board.

3. Key Areas of Activity

- Monitoring the role of Circle Housing in managing successful neighbourhoods in Merton, and, in partnership with the Regional Housing Director, advising on the operation of the local neighbourhood budget (covering issues not provided for under existing repairs and maintenance or neighbourhood management budgets);
- Overseeing the neighbourhood planning model; ensuring local issues are understood and addressed through service and asset management plans;
- Scrutinising landlord services, focussing on effective delivery and value for money, and including matters such as charges to tenants and leaseholders. In doing so, the Panel will maintain an effective dialogue with the Circle Housing Board, the Service Improvement Panel, and the Regional Panel
- Providing local engagement in helping to shape regeneration activity;
- Support Circle Housing in understanding local markets and opportunities for growth and in informing plans for investment in new affordable homes in the area;
- Promoting excellent local partnership working;
- Determining priorities for the allocation of the community investment budget in Merton, in line with the priorities set by the Clarion Foundation Trustees.

4. Duration and Meetings

4.1 The Panel shall continue for a period of 10 years or such shorter period as Circle Housing, with the consent of LBM, might reasonably determine having regard to the Panel’s effectiveness. There will be a review at the end of each period of 2 years to consider the effectiveness, terms of

reference, activities and membership. Any changes arising from such reviews shall be with the consent of LBM, where such consent will not be unreasonably refused.

4.2 It is anticipated that the focus of the Panel's activities will shift over time to concentrate primarily on regeneration activity within Merton.

4.3 It is expected that the Panel shall meet four times each year, with any changes being agreed by the Panel with Circle Housing.

5. Membership

5.1 The Panel shall consist of between 8 and 12 members, ideally (at full membership) 6 residents, 4 independents and 2 nominees from LBM. Employees shall not be members. The Chair shall be an independent member appointed by Circle Housing. The Panel may co-opt up to 3 (non-voting) co-optees, to fill temporary vacancies or to meet a skill gap on the Panel

5.2 All resident members must be tenants or leaseholders of Circle Housing and should live in the Merton area. It is intended that all independent members will either reside in or work in the Merton area, although it may be desirable to appoint independent members from outside in the area in some circumstances. It is intended that resident panel members will come from a representative range of areas and tenure types.

5.3 Panel members will be recruited and selected in accordance with the Group's policies, having regard to the skills, knowledge and experience required.

6. Membership Requirements

6.1 Resident members must not be in breach of their tenancy/lease nor be in legal dispute with Circle Housing for a period of 12 months prior to appointment and during their membership (and may be removed on written notice from the Company Secretary if they are). Membership is limited to one member per household at any one time.

6.2 Circle Housing will provide LBM with a statement of skills and experience necessary for its nominees. LBM shall use reasonable endeavours to nominate persons with the required skills and experience. Circle Housing shall be entitled, acting reasonably, to decline a nomination should the nominee not meet the required skills

6.3 Panel members shall be expected to comply with the Group's Code of Conduct and any other relevant policies, regulations or guidance. Circle Housing shall be entitled to remove a member after consultation with the Chair of the Panel should the member be in breach of such Code, policies, regulations or guidance.

7. Liaison and Escalation

7.1 The Panel shall be supported by the Regional Housing Director on operational issues and shall have an Executive Director sponsor who will lead on strategic issues.

7.2 Should the Panel consider that there is a significant service failure it can request that the matter be examined by the Circle Housing Board, which shall report back to the Panel in a timely fashion having regard to the nature of the issue referred.