

## **Stonewater Scrutiny Panel**

### **Introduction:**

Our Scrutiny Panel works in partnership with Stonewater to achieve our shared mission to deliver good quality, affordable homes to people who need them most. We're passionate champions for social housing and we come together as a Scrutiny Panel to help Stonewater be the very best housing provider it can be.

By working together collaboratively, the Scrutiny Panel, Stonewater customers and Stonewater Board, will make sure the views, voices and priorities of customers are at the heart of Stonewater's performance and service improvement framework. We believe in co-regulation, and we want to play our part in supporting Stonewater to deliver brilliant customer engagement.

### **Our Mission**

We'll support Stonewater to deliver the customer promise by making objective recommendations to improve Stonewater's services, working hand in hand with the Stonewater team to understand the issues which matter to customers.

### **Terms of Reference**

- 1. The role of the Scrutiny Panel is to** (referred to from this point on as "The Panel" or "We"):
  - 1.1. Act as a customer<sup>1</sup>-led group, which works in partnership with Stonewater, to support Stonewater to deliver people-centred housing services.
  - 1.2. Be a critical friend and encourage continuous improvement through independent scrutiny of Stonewater housing services.
  - 1.3. Form part of Stonewater's governance, making links with the Board and Stonewater's management team.
  
- 2. To do this, we will:**
  - 2.1. Develop positive and constructive relationships with Stonewater colleagues and customers.
  - 2.2. Carry out in-depth, detailed service reviews using a range of methods such as surveys, interviews, focus groups, mystery shopping and desktop analysis.
  - 2.3. Use all available performance information, customer insight and feedback to identify areas for review.
  - 2.4. Produce impartial, evidence-based recommendations.
  - 2.5. Act positively, constructively and within the rules set out in the Code of Conduct
  
- 3. Membership**
  - 3.1. All customers of Stonewater aged 16 or above are eligible to apply.
  - 3.2. The panel will have a maximum of 14 members.
  - 3.3. We will aim for a balanced membership representative of Stonewater's customers, and proactively promote membership to customers with diverse backgrounds, knowledge, skills, and experience.
  - 3.4. The Panel may co-opt up to three extra members to provide expert advice or specific skills to support their work. Co-opted members will have no voting rights.

- 
- <sup>1</sup> 'Customer' refers to individuals and households with whom we have a relationship through residency of a Stonewater home and provision of related services

- 3.5. The Panel may also co-opt a member(s) of the Customer Experience Challenge and Assurance Panel (CXCAP). That member will have no voting rights.
- 3.6. Members can serve 2 x 3-year terms on the panel. To ensure confidentiality and impartiality panel members will sign the Code of Conduct, a Confidentiality Agreement, and declare any conflict of interest during their membership.
- 3.7. Members are expected to work together for the collective benefit of all Stonewater customers.

#### **4. Who can't be members?**

- 4.1. Stonewater board members, colleagues<sup>2</sup>, suppliers or contracting partners.
- 4.2. Customers with a significant breach of their tenancy agreement, such as high levels of arrears where customers are not in dialogue with Stonewater and a history of committing anti-social behaviour. Significant breaches will be determined on a case-by-case basis by the Chair and Stonewater.
- 4.3. Customers who could bring the Panel and Stonewater into disrepute in line with our Code of Conduct.

#### **5. Recruitment to the Panel**

- 5.1. The Panel, alongside Stonewater, will be responsible for recruitment and succession planning.
- 5.2. All vacancies will be widely publicised to make sure customers have the opportunity to apply.
- 5.3. Members will be appointed via a supportive and inclusive recruitment process that respects a range of skills and experience.
- 5.4. Any applicants not selected will receive feedback, and information on other Stonewater engagement opportunities.

#### **6. Panel Management**

- 6.1. We will elect a Chair and Vice Chair to serve a 2-year term to ensure the smooth running of the Panel. Chairs will not serve two consecutive terms.
- 6.2. Members are expected to serve a minimum of 12 months on the panel before they can put themselves forward for the role of Chair or Vice Chair
- 6.3. In some circumstances, extensions for up to a further year may be agreed to make sure there is continuity of leadership and/or the availability of the necessary skills/experience to enable to smooth running of the panel. This will be decided jointly by the Chair and Stonewater.
- 6.4. To elect the Chair and Vice Chair, all panel members (not co-opted) will be given a vote. The member with the most votes will be appointed. For full details on the election process, please refer to the voting procedure.
- 6.5. Members wanting to resign must do so in writing by email or post to Stonewater's Customer Engagement team.

#### **7. Panel meetings**

- 7.1. We will meet regularly throughout the year. The number of meetings will increase during a review. At all other times, meetings will be held at least every other month.
- 7.2. Most meetings will take place online with some face-to-face meetings if necessary.
- 7.3. Stonewater will share information such as meeting notes, associated paperwork, and anything relevant to the project in inclusive formats securely online.
- 7.4. In order for the panel to make decisions in a meeting, 50% of the panel + 1 member must be in attendance. This is known as "quorum". If there aren't enough members present, the meeting can continue, but any decisions or recommendations will carry over to the next quorate meeting.

#### **8. Panel Activity**

---

<sup>2</sup> 'Colleague' refers to anyone employed by Stonewater (or a contracting partner) in any capacity, including customers in full-time, part-time, permanent and temporary roles for the duration that they are in Stonewater's employment.

- 8.1. We will agree topics for review based on performance information, customer priorities and Stonewater forward plans. We'll consider if the topic reflects the concerns of customers and if it can have an impact and enhance the service for everyone.
- 8.2. Stonewater colleagues may suggest areas for review, which we will consider. The final decision on the topics for review will remain with the Panel.
- 8.3. We will gather views and network with other engagement groups, colleagues and Stonewater customers during reviews.
- 8.4. We will use a range of methods to extend the reach of the panel, which could include setting up meetings, focus groups, sub-groups, customer surveys, shadowing Stonewater colleagues, and benchmarking against other organisations.
- 8.5. We will monitor channels for insight and trends including social media to inform and promote their work.

## **9. Accountability**

- 9.1. All reviews will be agreed with relevant Stonewater colleagues prior to submission to the Stonewater Board for approval.
- 9.2. If we're unhappy with the response or support from Stonewater colleagues or Board, we can request formal feedback or a meeting to discuss their concerns.
- 9.3. Reviews will be widely publicised to Stonewater customers through their communication channels such as the website, newsletters, and social media.
- 9.4. We will jointly create an annual report with Stonewater, detailing the activity and outcomes of the Panel's work.
- 9.5. Panel members are expected to ensure the Panel operates as intended, and any concerns should be raised through the process detailed in the Code of Conduct.
- 9.6. Stonewater colleagues will work with the panel to ensure that it meets its objectives and delivers scrutiny that adds value for Stonewater customers. If there are any concerns that the panel is not working within the parameters set by the terms of reference and code of conduct, an independent review of the Panel may take place.
- 9.7. Members will be expected to attend 75% of meetings. If a member misses three consecutive meetings without notifying Stonewater or other Panel members of their absence, they may be asked to step down from the panel. We may agree to a long-term absence based on a member's individual circumstances.

## **10. Stonewater will provide support & resources:**

- 10.1. Ensure we have the right information and resources to meet their aims
- 10.2. Respond to requests for information in a reasonable and timely manner
- 10.3. Provide members with an induction and any necessary or identified training
- 10.4. Respond to any agreed recommendations we make with a formal action plan.
- 10.5. Cover all reasonable out of pocket expenses to help us carry out our duties.
- 10.6. Arrange periodic meetings with us to support us to deliver our objectives.
- 10.7. Provide administrative support for meetings with Stonewater colleagues and Board such as minutes, note taking, recruitment and agendas.
- 10.8. Provide members access to technology and software to carry out their role.

## **11. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**

- 11.1. We will proactively champion Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, as defined in the Equality Act 2010, in everything we do as a Panel.
- 11.2. Stonewater colleagues will support us to do Equality Impact Assessments of our work
- 11.3. We will actively work to include people from all walks of life and challenge discrimination if we see it.
- 11.4. Stonewater will provide training on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion for all Panel Members, and create opportunities for the panel to meet with the Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, alongside Stonewater's inclusion group leads at least annually.

11.5.The Panel is encouraged to escalate any concerns about discrimination to the Customer Engagement team who will consult Stonewater’s Head of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion and take appropriate action.

## 12. Review

- 12.1.We will conduct an annual review of our work and effectiveness. This will include a feedback session with Stonewater’s directors to review together our progress, partnership and ways of working.
- 12.2.We will review of the terms of reference annually to ensure it is up to date and relevant to the Panel’s activity.
- 12.3.Annual appraisals for Panel members will be carried out by the Chair and Stonewater colleagues to identify any additional training needs and to ensure members are supported to carry out their role.

## Author & Version

Author	Michael Hill (TPAS), Stonewater Scrutiny Panel 2022, Kim Avantaggiato, Jade Bradford
Approved by:	Governance and People CAP
Date approved	02 August 2022