**Terms of reference**

1. **Background and purpose**

The Scrutiny Team has been created to show Longhurst Group’s commitment to meet the Tenant Involvement and Empowerment standard within the regulatory framework for social housing in England and the new Social Housing White Paper. Longhurst Group are committed to ensuring customers have their voices heard and know how the Group are performing.

Our Scrutiny Team is a customer group that holds Longhurst Group to account to ensure continuous service improvement.

The Scrutiny Team will:

* Complete in-depth reviews of our services.
* Make valuable recommendations for service improvements.
* Challenge why services may not be performing well.

1. **Aims and objectives**

The aims and objectives of the Scrutiny Team are:

* To focus on service quality and performance.
* To drive continuous service improvement.
* To ensure that residents views and priorities are at the heart of service improvement.
* To add value to Longhurst Group by creating valuable, relevant and proactive recommendations.

1. **Recruitment and training**

All Longhurst Group tenants, leaseholders and shared owners are welcome to apply to take part in scrutiny. This applies to the family members of a Longhurst Group tenant, leaseholder or shared owner who lives at the property. You will not be eligible if:

* Longhurst Group has commenced legal action against you or a member of your household. This means you are not eligible if you have breached your tenancy and have a current Notice of Seeking Possession served against you, or a court order for breach of tenancy. This includes a possession order (or in breach of a suspended possession order) or court order (ASB order or injunction, demoted tenancy or closure order) or any other judicial order which has an equivalent effect.
* You are a staff member of Longhurst Group.
* Longhurst Group has a court order for recovery of money against you.
* You are in a legal dispute with Longhurst Group.

For all applicants there will be an informal interview process with the Customer Engagement Team and a member of our Customer Forum.

Priority will be given to achieve a range of panel members that is as diverse as possible.

Only one person from each household can be a member.

Members will be recruited based on their skills in line with the person specification.

Members will need to agree to our code of conduct and confidentiality agreement.

There will be a three-month trial period for team members.

Team members will have a review with the Customer Engagement Team after every review.

Members will be supported by the Customer Engagement Team in meetings with providing necessary information and administrative tasks.

Members will receive training from the Customer Engagement Team prior to their first review.

1. **Membership**

* We will have up to eight members of the Scrutiny Team.
* There will be no Chair of the meeting, but members can take on roles fitting with their skill set e.g., Presenter, Interviewer, Researcher etc.

1. **Functions**

**Choosing areas to review**

The Scrutiny Team will be advised of areas for review from the Longhurst Group Customer Forum.

The Customer Forum will determine which areas they would like to review based on performance information, complaints and customer feedback using a scoring matrix.

Longhurst Group can also suggest areas to review or focus on, but the Customer Forum can decide if they wish to accept the suggestion.

**Access to information**

The Scrutiny Team will be able to:

* Request access to relevant information on performance, benchmarking, complaints, customer feedback and other resident involved groups.
* Use resident involvement groups and our online platform, The Hub, to gather information e.g., surveys and mystery shopping.
* Request useful documents such as policies, leaflets, letters etc.
* Request to speak to relevant staff.

1. **Conflict resolution**

The Scrutiny Team and Longhurst Group should work in partnership in a positive way. Should there be an unresolvable dispute, the issue shall be raised to the Chair and/or Vice Chair of the Customer Forum to resolve.

1. **Financial matters**

Scrutiny Team members will be reimbursed for any travel expenses incurred.

1. **Values**

The Scrutiny Team will work in line with the following values:

* Members of the Scrutiny Team must act with openness, honesty and integrity
* They must add value to the business
* All Scrutiny Team members must keep in mind it’s focus and responsibilities
* The Scrutiny Team must take into account value for money and resources in their recommendations
* The Scrutiny Team’s reports, recommendations or presentations must be balanced, evidence-based and take into account regulatory standards and good practice
* The Team must have respect for final decisions made by Longhurst Group, Longhurst Group Customer Forum and the Board.

These values will be the foundation for evaluation at the end of each review.

1. **Reporting**

The Scrutiny Team will be required to:

* Report on their findings and recommendations explaining the reasons for the service review, methods used, evidence how they came to their recommendations and the outcome of their recommendations.
* Report on their activities so that this can be used in customer communications, annual reports etc.
* They will be asked to present to the relevant colleagues within the department that they have completed the review for and the Longhurst Group Customer Forum.

1. **Monitoring and reviewing**

There is a process in place to routinely monitor progress of the recommendations put forward and share this with the Customer Forum.

Members should allow a fair timescale for recommendations to be reviewed and any changes to be put into practice.

The Scrutiny Team will be given feedback on all recommendations detailing how they will be put into practice or advising why if they cannot be accepted.

1. **Frequency of meetings and timescales**

The frequency of meetings will depend on the review taking place and how much time is required. The Scrutiny Team will determine how much time they need and agree how often they would like to meet. However, the Scrutiny Team should try to complete reviews within a timely manner.

At the start of a review a plan will be made of what actions will be taken to complete the review, this will give an estimated timescale for completion.

Member’s work, family and other commitments must be taken into consideration and meetings need to be agreed with the majority of the Team.

1. **Quorum**

The meeting quorum (number of people needed to make decisions) will be half of the current membership.

1. **Safeguarding**

* Skills based recruitment process
* An enforceable code of conduct and confidentiality agreement
* Support available from the Customer Engagement Team
* Three-month probation period and reviews with customers after each review
* The ability for an independent review of the Scrutiny Team
  1. **Equality and diversity**

Longhurst Group encourage fair and equal treatment for all, regardless of race, colour, ethnic or national origin, religion, gender, physical or mental disability, appearance, political affiliation, sexuality, age or class.

Longhurst Group will identify obstacles that may prevent customers from contributing and will endeavour to find solutions to enable customers to contribute to its work.