



<b>TITLE</b>	<b>Customer Led Scrutiny Code of Conduct</b>
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This Policy relates the standards of behaviour required from members of the Customer Scrutiny Panel. It supports the groups strategic ambition of 'becoming excellent in involvement in the eyes of our customers within three years', as set out within its strategy approved by Board in September 2009. It further ensures that we comply with the requirements of the National Housing Standards.

### **1. Policy Statement**

- 1.1 This policy deals with the standards of behaviour required from members of the Customer Scrutiny Panel of cc.
- 1.2 The Scrutiny Panel has an important role within the organisation and it is essential that members are seen to act with integrity and comply with the agreed policies and procedures of Nexus and the WM Housing Group, (WM). This Code of Conduct sets out the expected standards of behaviour for Scrutiny Panel members in order to undertake their Scrutiny responsibilities.

### **2. Policy Purpose and Aims**

- 2.1 This policy provides a framework within which Customers Scrutiny Panel members will undertake their duties and will take into account national housing standards and expectations, WM values, business driven priorities, and understanding of the central focus and driver of its customer and community led needs.
- 2.2 The policy, in supporting the development of customer scrutiny contributes to the Groups vision of 'Creating Places Where People are Proud to Live and Work, and its values of:
  - Providing excellent service
  - Acting with integrity
  - Valuing people
  - Delivering creative solutions

### **3. Principles of the Code**

#### **3.1 Respect for Others**

Panel members must show respect and be courteous to each other and support and assist other members in seeking the best possible outcomes for Nexus customers. Panel members should show respect and be courteous to staff and Board members and to the wider customer base.

#### **3.2 Confidentiality**

Members must respect the confidentiality of customers, staff and the organisation and any data provided by the organisation. The business of the Panel may occasionally involve members in dealing with issues that may be sensitive or controversial and members must



exercise discretion and care in performing their duties and responsibilities. Breach of confidentiality will result in the panel member being required to step down.

### **3.3 Conflicts of interest**

Individual members should disclose any interest, whether personal, through a close relative or on behalf of any organisation of which they are a member, that they consider may affect or influence their approach to the matter under discussion.

### **3.4 Equality and Diversity**

No member will discriminate on any ground against any other member of the Panel, staff, Board member, customer or public. Discriminatory language will not be used in discussions.

Every contact has the right to be treated with dignity and respect, regardless of their age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion and belief, sex, sexual orientation or any other matter which causes people to be treated with injustice.

### **3.5 Personal Conduct**

The conduct of Panel members impacts on the integrity of the Scrutiny Panel and Panel members must be aware of the consequences of their behaviour at all times. Specifically, within meetings, Panel members should:

- Follow the agenda and help each other reach effective decisions
- Follow the guidance of the Chair in the conduct of the meeting
- Raise questions through the Chair
- Show due respect to the Chair and through the Chair to all other members.
- Show due respect to employees and board members
- Allow each other the opportunity to speak and comment
- Bear in mind the rights of individual customers and the duties of staff when proposing solutions and making recommendations
- Never attend meetings under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs/substances
- Never cause disruption to the meeting
- Not seek to use their membership of the panel to try and influence employees.

### **3.6 Team Work**

Panel members should work together to achieve the shared objectives of Scrutiny and dedicate their efforts to collective achievement.

### **3.7 Commitment and Reliability**

Members of the Panel should make every effort to attend meetings and to send apologies in advance of the meeting if they are unable to attend. Members missing more than 2 consecutive meetings will have their membership terminated unless the Panel accepts that there are exceptional circumstances e.g. serious illness.

### **3.8 Managing Differences of Opinion**

There will be occasions when the Panel is unable to reach agreement on decisions and Panel members should respect other members' opinions and work to find a consensus. Consensus is not 100% agreement but when everyone can fully support a team decision. It is a win-win solution in which everyone feels that the best solution has been reached and



no one had to give in on any strongly held conviction or needs. It often means finding a new solution that no one has thought of before.

### **3.9 Political affiliation**

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 Panel.

### **3.10 Personal Gains**

Panel members must not use their position to obtain any financial gain or advantage. Members should remember that the purpose of the Panel is to benefit customers and members of the community generally and not specific individuals.

### **3.11 Representing Scrutiny Panel**

Members must not speak or write on behalf of the Panel without the prior agreement of the Panel. Any correspondence sent on behalf of the Panel should be made available to all members of the Panel.

### **3.12 Communications**

Panel members should agree the preferred method of communication between members and respect each other's personal information such as personal address, telephone number and e-mail address. Any requests for reports, data and information from Nexus should be made in line with the agreed scrutiny plan and the Access to Information Protocol.

## **4. Breaches of the Code**

### **4.1 Observing Breaches of the Code**

Panel members observing a minor breach of the Code, if they feel able to do so, may raise the breach privately with the member concerned, in a polite and non-threatening manner. Where Panel members do not feel confident in raising the matter directly or if the discussion with the member concerned is not successful, Panel members should raise the matter with the Scrutiny Support Officer or Mentor.

Serious or persistent breaches of the Code should in all instances be reported to the Scrutiny Support Officer or Mentor.

### **4.2 Dealing with Minor Breaches of the Code**

Following a report or observation of a minor breach of the Code, the Assistant Director or nominee will arrange a private meeting with the member concerned to discuss the breach. The members will be reminded of the obligations within the Code and asked to agree not to cause further breaches in the future. Training will be offered if this is deemed appropriate. The outcome of the discussion will be confirmed in writing within 3 days of the meeting.

Should further minor breaches of the Code occur, the Assistant Director or nominee will arrange a further private meeting with the member concerned to discuss the breaches. The member will be reminded of the obligations within the Code and given a formal warning advising that further breaches may result in membership of the Panel being terminated. Training will be offered and if this is refused, the Panel will be asked to consider issuing a final warning or exclusion from the Panel. The outcome will be advised in writing within 3 days of the decision.



#### **4.3 Dealing with Serious Breaches of the Code**

Examples of serious breaches of the code are (but not exclusively):

- Acting in a discriminatory manner
- Appearing under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs/substances
- Irregular or improper behaviour
- Persistent disregard of a ruling of the Chair
- Obstruction to Scrutiny business

Should any of the above, in opinion of the Chair, occur during a meeting, the member will be immediately asked to leave the meeting.

Following a report or observation of a serious breach of the Code, the Assistant Director or nominee will arrange a private meeting with the member concerned to discuss the breach. The matter will be investigated and if the serious breach is confirmed, the Panel will be asked to consider if the member concerned should be issued with a final warning or be permanently excluded from the Panel. The final warning and/or exclusion from the Panel will be confirmed in writing within 3 days of the decision.

#### **4.4 Appeals to Exclusions from the Panel**

Any member excluded from the Panel may appeal against the decision. To do so they should raise their appeal with the Head of Customer and Community Involvement or deputising officer in their absence, within 7 days of formal notice of the exclusion.

The Head of Customer and Community Involvement or deputising officer in their absence, will consider the appeal within 7 days and feedback with a decision, in writing within a further 7 days. Scrutiny Panel members who remain dissatisfied may at any point use the formal Customer Complaints process.

### **5. Equality Impact Assessment**

- 5.1 We will ensure that our services reflect the diverse communities that we work with and are in line with our policies on equality and diversity. WM Housing Group carries out Equality Impact Assessments to understand the impact that our policies may have on groups of people or individuals. These impacts may be positive or negative. We will review our policy to ensure that it meets wider policies on equality and diversity

### **6. Application and Enforcement of the Code**

- 6.1 The behaviour of Scrutiny Panel members is a reflection of the Panel, other Panel member colleagues and Nexus. Panel members must, therefore, abide by this code at all times. Any reported breach of the code, whether observed by other Panel members, staff, Board members or other customers will be investigated and could result in membership of the Panel being terminated.
- 6.2 Details of the procedures for reporting and dealing with breaches of this code are set out in section 4, above. The application and enforcement of the Code of Conduct will be monitored by the Scrutiny Support Officer, overseen by the Assistant Director.



## **7. Monitoring and Review**

- 7.1 This Code of Conduct will be reviewed every 3 years by the Panel and the Board and any revisions jointly agreed. In the event of certain elements proving unworkable between regular reviews, the Panel will make recommendations to the Board for early review.

## **8. Responsibility**

- 8.1 The effective implementation of this policy is the responsibility of the Director of Housing Strategy.

## **9. Associated Documents/Policies**

- 9.1 Customer Led Scrutiny Terms of Reference  
Customer Led Scrutiny Code of Conduct  
Equality and Diversity Policy  
Access to Information Protocol  
Data Protection Policy