Terms of Reference

Purpose

KRiSP is an autonomous panel of council tenants and leaseholders set up by Kingston Council, in conjunction with the Kingston Federation of Residents. Its role is to investigate and review the Council’s housing services (including some services involving third party service delivery, such as estate services and repairs) and to propose improvements that will be of benefit to all residents. KRiSP is central to the Council’s resident involvement framework and commitment to co-regulation.

Key Objectives

- Provide an opportunity for residents to scrutinise the Council’s delivery of its housing services, performance and policies and challenge the provision and management of the service.
- Ensure that the Council’s housing services meet residents’ current needs and their mid to long-term aspirations for the quality of housing services, and are delivered to a good standard.
- Make recommendations to senior managers and elected members on how and where housing services should be improved.
- Provide an opportunity for greater ownership and involvement in the housing service by tenants and leaseholders.
- Drive continuous improvement in the delivery of quality housing services.
- Support the drive for improved value for money.

Key Tasks

- Create and publicise an annual work-plan of scrutiny investigations.
- Undertake at least three scrutiny investigations per annum.
- Report the findings of each scrutiny investigation and make recommendations for service and/or policy improvements.
- In conjunction with the Federation of Residents, represent the views of the wider tenant and leaseholder community and communicate the outcomes of KRiSP to all stakeholders (including residents).
Membership

Membership is open to all Kingston Council tenants and leaseholders over the age of 18 with the exception of:

- Staff members and members of their household who are council tenants or leaseholders (given the potential for conflict of interest and influence on the rest of the panel).

- Tenants in arrears for three or more consecutive months. (Members who may have already been accepted on to the panel may have their membership revoked in these circumstances, but arrears caused solely by the late payment or processing of housing benefits will be ignored).

KRiSP will consist of up to 20 tenants and leaseholders. Membership will be through an application process, with those applicants assessed as meeting the job and person specifications informally interviewed by existing panel members. The panel will aim to ensure that membership reflects the community that it serves. All panel members must be prepared to participate in an induction and on-going training programme.

Panel members are expected to commit to serving on KRiSP for a minimum of two years and participate in at least one scrutiny investigation per year.

Panel members are required to abide by the Code of Conduct and to sign and adhere to a confidentiality and information sharing agreement.

Membership of KRiSP is unpaid and undertaken voluntarily. However, the Council, in recognition and appreciation of the time and commitment of panel members, may gift up to £400 of shopping vouchers to panel members for each year they serve, to thank them for their contribution. Members will receive a £25 per voucher for each bi-monthly KRiSP meeting they attend and £100 for each completed scrutiny review in which they have participated – or £150 if they lead the review, up to a maximum of £400 of vouchers per annum. Vouchers are not ‘earned’ for attendance at training or events. Acceptance of these vouchers is at the personal discretion of each individual member of the scrutiny panel.

Meeting attendance and administration

KRiSP will meet every other month. Meetings to support each scrutiny investigation will be held as per the agreed timetable.

Panel members may not send representatives in their place. If they are unable to attend a meeting they must advise the Chair with as much advance notice as possible. Failure to attend meetings on a regular basis will result in termination of the panel member’s appointment.
The Chair and Vice Chair will be elected annually by the panel. They may both stand for re-appointment each year. The meeting will be considered quorate if at least 50% of the current membership are in attendance. Inquorate meetings should be noted and decisions ratified at the next quorate meeting. However, where it is considered necessary, the Chair may take appropriate action(s) under delegated powers of his/her position.

Guests and/or speakers may be invited to attend KRiSP meetings, where appropriate. These guests and/or speakers may include council staff, elected members and representatives from external organisations.

The Council will provide a named support officer for KRiSP. S/he will be responsible for meeting arrangements, documentation, note taking and assisting with the organisation of any task associated with conducting a scrutiny investigation, including report writing, desk-based research, fact-finding (by telephone, email and internet) and obtaining all relevant third party documents requested by a panel.

Meetings will usually be held at Kingston Council premises within the Guildhall complex, Refreshments appropriate to the time of day will be provided.

Any expenses incurred by panel members in carrying out their KRiSP role will be fully reimbursed on production of receipts.

Notes of meetings and the outcomes from scrutiny investigations will be publicised through the Council’s and Federation’s websites and through the HomeLife and Home Truths publications. They will also be made available to any resident or Residents’ Association on request.

Equalities & Diversity

Members will recognise the importance of being reflective of the needs of Kingston’s diverse community. KRiSP will adhere to Kingston’s Single Equality and Community Cohesion Plan and will ensure that its activities do not disadvantage any groups or individuals. Members must undertake mandatory equality and diversity training and sign and abide by the Code of Conduct.

The Council will reimburse travel, childcare and relief care costs. It will also provide panel members with the necessary tools to carry out their roles such as access to the internet and/or the loan of IT equipment and assistance to support any special needs, such as Braille, audio or translation.

The Scrutiny Process

The scrutiny process and timetable is set out diagrammatically at the end of this document for ease of reference. A scrutiny template is available to support the investigation process.
KRiSP will agree, develop and publicise, through the Council’s and Federation’s websites and HomeLife and Home Truths publications, an annual programme of scrutiny investigations, taking into account management issues and priorities, where appropriate and with due regard to the Regulatory Framework.

At least three scrutiny investigations will be conducted each year and they will be carried out by a team of five to six members of the main panel. The topics should be sufficiently specific to ensure that each scrutiny investigation takes no more than 18 weeks. A timetable will be drawn up setting out how the investigation will be undertaken and the timescales.

The housing service will nominate a lead officer to work with the investigative team and ensure they have access to all the necessary information and staff. The support officer will also help to facilitate this process and make any necessary meeting and visit arrangements.

The investigative team will provide a report and findings at the end of the scrutiny period, with the assistance of the support officer, which is clearly evidence based, setting out its recommendations.

KRiSP will provide its reports and recommendations in the first instance to the Housing Management Team and the Kingston Federation of Residents who will then have up to three weeks to comment.

Following the submission of KRiSP’s final reports (incorporating any additional comments from Housing Management and the Federation), the Housing Management Team will be required to draw up an implementation plan within three weeks. The implementation plan will be formally approved through the next meeting of the Housing Consultative Committee (HCC).

Recommendations and improvements that require a change in policy, or have a significant financial implication, must also be approved through the Place & Sustainability Committee.

The Housing Management Team will be responsible for monitoring the implementation plan and will report on progress to KRiSP, the Resident Participation Review Group (RPRG) and the HCC on a minimum six monthly basis.

The scrutiny investigation report and findings, along with the implementation plan, will be publicised through the communication channels noted earlier in this document.

**Dispute resolution**

If KRiSP believes any of their recommendations are rejected inappropriately, or that the agreed recommendations are not being implemented within agreed timescales, the panel will invite the Head of Housing to a meeting of the panel with the aim of resolving the issue/s.
Appendix 1

If the matter/s are not resolved, the panel will further raise its specific concerns with the Director of Place and the lead member for Better Homes.

In the event that matters still remain unresolved a special panel will be convened, comprising one councillor (not previously involved in the process), a member of a resident scrutiny panel from a neighbouring housing provider or local authority and a representative from a local community group, who will jointly consider the issues. The decision(s) of this special panel will be final.

Review

The work of KRiSP will be subject to an annual impact and value for money assessment by the Group Manager for Housing Strategy. This will be reported to the Place and Sustainability Committee and the Housing Consultative Committee.

In the event of the Council having concerns about KRiSP’s performance, value for money or compliance with these Terms of Reference, representatives from the Council will request a meeting with the panel to discuss the issues and to agree a resolution.
Resident Scrutiny Process

- Scrutiny Panel agree annual work-plan which will be updated twice a year
- Scrutiny investigation scoped at relevant bi-monthly meeting
- Task group appointed from panel to undertake the scrutiny investigation
- HMT agree lead service manager
- Scrutiny Investigation takes place
- Recommendations: report to HMT for comment (up to 3 weeks for response)
- Recommendations: report to the Federation for comment (up to 3 weeks for response)
- Scrutiny Panel meet to discuss recommendations with relevant HMT members and agree the basis of an implementation plan
- HMT prepare implementation plan (up to 3 weeks)
- Scrutiny Investigation report, recommendations and HMT implementation plan presented to HCC for approval.
- Scrutiny Investigation report, recommendations and HMT implementation plan presented to P&S Committee if a policy change required and/or significant budget implications
- Implementation plan actioned and monitored by HMT and RPRG with bi-annual updates to HCC and scrutiny panel
- Scrutiny Investigation outcomes reported in ‘Homelife’, ‘Home Truths’ and Housing Service Annual Report

Work plan agreed with appropriate consultation with residents and with due regard to the advice of the Housing Management Team (HMT)

Scrutiny Investigation - typically 16 weeks