

Gravesham' Landlords Focus Group

Terms of Reference

1.0 Purpose

- 1.1. The primary aim of the Gravesham Landlords' Focus Group ("**the Focus Group**") is to increase the level of communication between Gravesham Borough Council ("**the Council**") and local private sector landlords and managing agents.
- 1.2. The four primary objectives of the Focus Group are:
 - 1.2.1. To bring to the attention of the Council matters which are of importance to local private sector landlords and managing agents
 - 1.2.2. To be a route through which all local private sector landlords and managing agents can raise relevant issues for discussion
 - 1.2.3. To be a consultative body for policy changes proposed by the Council that could affect the private rented sector
 - 1.2.4. To take the lead in determining the nature and content of the Council's Landlord Forums.

2.0 Structure

- 2.1. The Focus Group will comprise voting members and non-voting Council officers.
- 2.2. The Focus Group will be restricted to 15 voting members.
- 2.3. The number of Council officers attending each meeting will depend on the needs of the Focus Group. At least one officer representing the Private Sector Housing Team will attend every meeting.
- 2.4. The Focus Group will elect a Chair and a Deputy Chair on an annual basis. Council Officers are not eligible for election.

3.0 Membership

- 3.1. Local private sector landlords and managing agents wishing to become members of the Focus Group must make an application for membership on a form provided by the Council for that purpose.
- 3.2. Prospective members must own or manage privately rented property within the Council area or, be a representative of a professional association or, group recognised at a national or regional level which, represents local landlords or managing agents. Representatives of any such professional association or group may be required to prove that their organisation has a reasonable body of membership in the Gravesham area. Any prospective member must state on their application whether they are representing any such group, either officially or unofficially.

- 3.3. All prospective members of the Focus Group must be fit and proper persons. A prospective member will not be a fit and proper person if they have:
 - 3.3.1. Committed any offence involving fraud or other dishonesty, or violence or drugs, or any offence listed in Schedule 3 to the Sexual Offences Act 2003
 - 3.3.2. Been found guilty of practising unlawful discrimination on grounds of sex, colour, race, ethnic or national origins or disability in, or in connection with, the carrying on of any business
 - 3.3.3. Committed any offence relating to housing or landlord and tenant law.
- 3.4. Elections, in a format agreed by the Focus Group, will take place every two years. There is no limit to the number of terms a member may serve; however, all members with a continuing interest must stand at every election.
- 3.5. All applicants will be required to provide a brief personal statement outlining their reasons for wanting to join the Focus Group. The statement will be made available to eligible voters at election time.
- 3.6. Members may resign from the Focus Group at any time.
- 3.7. If a Focus Group member resigns their place, or a place becomes otherwise available, it will be offered to the next qualifying person having regard to the results of the previous election.
- 3.8. Only voting members and Council officers are entitled to attend Focus Group meetings. Members may not send substitutes.
- 3.9. Any member who fails to attend two out of three consecutive meetings without reasonable excuse may have their membership terminated by the Focus Group.

4.0 Membership Preferences

- 4.1. While all prospective members must stand for election, in the event that only five or fewer representatives of professional associations or groups stand for election, they shall be elected to the Focus Group automatically. In the event that more than five such representatives stand for election, only the first five, having regard to the election results, will be elected.
- 4.2. All remaining places will be offered, having regard to the election results.

5.0 Administration

- 5.1. The Council will administer the Focus Group.
- 5.2. Ordinary meetings will be held three times a year at dates set by the Council. Additional meetings may be held at the discretion of the Council.
- 5.3. All meetings will be held in the main Council offices during normal working hours.
- 5.4. The Council will provide administrative support for the Focus Group, which will include the taking of minutes and the production of agendas.

- 5.5. Communications so far as is reasonably practicable will be by electronic means.
- 5.6. The Council will operate a dedicated email address for Focus Group purposes; namely:
hmo@gravesham.gov.uk
- 5.7. The Council will publish on its website a webpage dedicated to the Focus Group. The webpage will include an overview of the Focus Group and the names of its members. Copies of the meeting agendas and minutes will also be available on the webpage.

6.0 Landlord Events

- 6.1. The Focus Group will help the council deliver at least one landlord forum each year, which will usually be funded by the Council. However, the Council reserves the right to charge a small fee for attendance in years when the available budget does not meet the cost of running the event.
- 6.2. The landlord forum may take place during normal working hours, taking into consideration landlords' daytime commitments, where an evening session may be seen beneficial.
- 6.3. The Council will provide Continuing Professional Development ("CPD") certificates for pre-booked attendees of Landlord Forums

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