

Housing Engagement Code of Conduct High Level Engagement Groups

Introduction

Broxtowe Borough Council recognises the valuable contribution that customers can make to Housing Services. Engaged customers choose to accept certain responsibilities which require them to behave in an appropriate manner at all times.

This Code of Conduct applies to both customers and officers who attend meetings or participate in events where views are sought by the Housing Department at a strategic level. The code also applies to engaged customers who are invited to represent the Council at external events and/or in their appointment to external bodies.

Whilst the code is reasonably comprehensive, it is not possible to address every possible circumstance and simply because a particular action may not be addressed within the code this does not condone that action by omission.

Through their participation members of decision making involvement Groups are agreeing to adhere to all standards set out in this document.

Purpose

The purpose of the code is to contribute towards a constructive and pleasant atmosphere for all customers, officers and guests to ensure that everyone understands what behaviour is expected from them and what they have a right to expect from others attending meetings or participating in events.

The code sets out acceptable standards of behaviour for participants in the highest level of involvement activities. It enables inappropriate and disruptive behaviour to be efficiently addressed to ensure the effective continuation of involvement.

Personal Conduct

All those participating in high level engagement activities agree to:

- Make positive and constructive contributions to determine the best possible solution for the issue being discussed.
- Always treat customers, officers and guests fairly, courteously and with respect.
- Allow all attendees reasonable opportunity to speak without interruption or barracking.
- Welcome contributions from all participants, old and new, or where circumstances make them less active in the group, so that the group is not exclusively dictated to by the few.
- Understand that all views are important even if they are not the same as their own.
- Not use offensive language or discriminatory remarks.
- Not accuse or criticise individuals.

- Respect the confidentiality of other volunteers whether present or not and refrain from mentioning specific individual cases which may cause embarrassment or identification of an individual.
- Ensure that personal or individual enquiries are raised outside of the meeting.
- Represent the Council and its customers in a positive manner externally.
- Follow all procedures set out for the Health and Safety of visitors to council buildings and external venues.

Working Together

Customer Engagement is a co-operative process and all parties must be committed to work together to achieve the aims and objectives of engagement activities. Customer Engagement will not work without the mutual respect and recognition of the validity of different viewpoints of everyone involved. All those participating in any engagement activity agree to:

- Work together effectively to ensure aims and objectives are achieved.
- Establish and maintain a constructive and supportive relationship between customers, officers and elected members at all levels.
- Acknowledge that everyone has a right to enjoy their involvement without unreasonable demands being made of their time or patience.
- Behave appropriately and not cause distress to other participants or members of staff.
- Discuss differences of opinion and accept and support majority decisions made following discussions.
- Not damage the reputation of others, customers or officers, by giving personal opinions as to capabilities.

Conduct of Meetings

All those participating in high level customer engagement activities agree to:

- Adhere to any prescribed ground rules for meetings, which must be available and highlighted at all meetings.
- Follow the guidance of the Chairperson and lead officer in the conduct of the meeting.
- Follow the agenda to ensure effective decisions are made.
- Consider the purpose of the meeting and ensure that contributions are productive to the nature of the issue being discussed.
- Conduct meetings in accordance with Broxtowe Borough Council's Equal Opportunities Policy and ensure that equal opportunities are promoted irrespective of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (including ethnic or national origins, colour and nationality), religion or belief (including lack of belief), sex, sexual orientation and pronouns.
- Ensure meetings comply with governing documents relating to the engagement activity.
- Avoid the use of jargon where possible and if it is used provide a full explanation.
- Understand that if they fail to adhere to the code of conduct they will receive a warning from the Chairperson or lead officer and dependent on the nature and/or seriousness of the incident may be asked to leave the meeting if they continue to breach the code.

Representation and Attendance at External Events

Resident representatives invited to attend external events and/or appointed to external organisations will:

- Be required to report to the relevant engagement group on their attendance at such events.
- Ensure they represent the collective views of the relevant engagement group and not their individual views.
- Refrain from committing or inferring any course of action or obligation or favouritism regarding their dealings with the Council or on behalf of the Council or group involved with; without first obtaining approval from the said bodies beforehand.
- Remain bound by the relevant engagement governing documents in their representation on such bodies and may be subject to debarment should their behaviour or conduct cause concern or a negative impression of the engagement group they are representing and/or the Council.

Conflict of Interests

- Under no circumstances will any involved customer be permitted to use their position to bypass procedures set out by the Housing Department for personal gain.
- Any personal and /or prejudicial interests must be declared.
- Where a declaration has been made the individual may not be able to speak or may be asked to leave the meeting while such discussions take place.
- Where a declaration has been made the individual may be excluded from voting.
- Engaged customers must not expect to receive more or less favourable treatment by the Council because of their involvement.
- Normal procedures must be used to resolve personal or individual enquiries.

Political Affiliation

- Individuals may be affiliated to or be members of a political party but they are not permitted to promote their own 'agenda' in any engagement activity.

Breaches of the Code

- Issues regarding the conduct or performance of individuals must be raised within two weeks of the incident taking place.
- Any member of the group can raise issues about the conduct or performance of an individual.
- Issues must be raised with the lead officer for the engagement activity, either verbally or in writing.
- Breaches of the code will be considered by the lead officer and the Chair of the group.
- If, for any reason, there is a conflict of interest and the lead officer is unable to consider the breach, another lead officer will undertake this role.
- If, for any reason, there is a conflict of interest and the Chair is unable to consider the breach another member of the group will undertake this role.

- A meeting will be arranged between the lead officer, Chair and the individual to discuss the breach.
- The individual may request that the Engagement Manager attends the meeting to ensure guidelines are adhered to.
- The Engagement Manager will act as an impartial advisor for all parties.
- The lead officer and Chair will make a decision on how the breach will be dealt with.
- The lead officer will inform the individual of the decision no later than 14 days after the issue was formally raised.
- The individual will not be permitted to attend further engagement activities until a decision has been given.
- Where the breach is minor in its nature the individual will:
 - Be supported to change their behaviour for their first breach
 - Receive a written letter for their second breach
 - Be barred from involvement activities for a specified period for their third breach
- Where the breach is considered to be of a serious nature and no reason or reassurances have been given by the individual they will be barred from engagement activities.
- Where an individual has been barred from engagement activities and wishes to resume their engagement a meeting will be arranged between the lead officer, Chair and the individual to consider their re-instatement.

Right of Appeal

- In the case of debarment, the right of appeal will exist providing such appeal is made in writing to the Head of Housing no later than 28 days after the event.
- The Head of Housing will assign a service area lead officer to consider the appeal, who is not involved in the engagement activity the breach relates to
- The lead officer will investigate the appeal to ensure the correct procedure was followed to reach the decision and may wish to discuss this with all parties involved.
- A decision on an appeal will be given no later than 28 days after the appeal has been received.

Review of the Code of Conduct

This code of conduct can be reviewed at any time and any proposed changes will be agreed by the Tenant Panel.