

AIMS OF PRIVATE RENTED FORUM

- To promote good practice in the Private Rented Sector
- To provide contact and channels of communication between private landlords/letting agents and council staff
- To work together to overcome problems in the Private Rented Sector
- To provide information on legislative changes and agree, as far as possible policies and approaches arising from them

MEMBERSHIP

Membership of the Forum consists of:

- Core PCC staff – Private Rented Team, Housing Advice Service, Housing Benefits, Anti Social Behaviour Team, Empty Homes Team
- Statutory Authorities – Rent Officer
- Other PCC/Statutory Authority staff to be asked to attend meetings as needed to deal with items on the Agenda.
- Landlords/Lettings agents/Landlords Associations representing a portfolio of at least 25 properties/landlords.
- University of Plymouth Accommodation Office
- Members of groups representing tenant's interests
- Requests for attendance in order to raise awareness of issues in the private rented sector will also be favourably considered.

In order to facilitate meaningful discussion, numbers of members will need to be limited. Initially the limit will be 25 people but this can be reviewed if it is felt that the meeting will still work with higher numbers. Access to the Forum in other forms will be provided through wide distribution of the minutes and the ability of non attending landlords/agents to place items on the agenda for discussion through members.

Members need to commit to regular attendance and failure to attend more than twice without apology or good reason may lead to a member being asked to give up their place by the chair if others are asking for membership.

CODE OF CONDUCT/CONDUCT OF MEETINGS

Members should at all times observe accepted practice while taking part in a meeting:

- To be courteous to each other and support and assist other members in seeking the best possible solution to problems being discussed.
- To allow each other the opportunity to speak and comment and respect each other's views

- To follow the guidance of the Chair in the conduct of the meetings
- To follow the agenda and keep to the point
- To remember that you are representing the views of others and are accountable to them.
- To remember that the purpose of the meeting is ultimately to benefit landlords and tenants and not specific individuals.
- To bear in mind the rights of individuals and the duties of PCC staff when proposing solutions to problems.
- Not to speak or write on behalf of the Forum without the prior agreement of the group. Any correspondence sent on behalf of the group should be made available to all members of the group.
- Not to use abusive or racist language

In general:

- The chair will welcome members and others to the meeting
- Only one member will speak at a time and there will be no cross talking
- Start and finish times will be met and the agenda followed.
- Later arrivals should enter quietly and not disrupt meeting
- Mobile phones should be switched off during the meeting
- If things are getting heated a five minute time out can be called for at the discretion of the chair.
- Wherever possible jargon should be avoided and where unavoidable a full explanation given
- It is the responsibility of each member to ensure that they are prepared for the meeting by reading all relevant papers and bringing them to the meeting.

Chair of Meeting

The Chair will be appointed by majority vote of those at the relevant meeting for a period of 12 months.

The role of the Chair is to:

- Agree the agenda with the secretary
- Prepare for the meeting thoroughly by reading all the information and discussing with the people who will be leading on items how the agenda items will be dealt with.
- Agree any last minutes changes to the agenda
- Keep the meeting in order and to time
- Ensure everyone has an opportunity to speak but so they overuse or abuse this
- Summarise discussions
- Ensure agreements are reached by consensus or voting if necessary
- Ensure everyone understands and agrees what is to be done, by whom and when

Secretary of the meeting

The secretary will be appointed by majority vote of those at the relevant meeting for a period of 12 months.

The role of the Secretary is to:

- Invite people to meetings
- Prepare, and distribute agendas and papers for meetings.
- Arrange rooms and refreshments
- Take and distribute the minutes

Discrimination

- No member will discriminate on any ground against any other member of the group of public. Discriminatory language will not be used in discussions.
- All those who attend meetings have the right to be treated with dignity and respect, regardless of their colour, race, ethnic or national origins, nationality, gender, marital status, age, sexuality, religion or any other matter which causes people to be treated with injustice.

Conflicts of Interest

Individual Members:

- Should disclose any interest, whether personal or on behalf of any group they represent, that they consider may affect or influence their approach to the matter under discussion.
- Must not expect to receive more or less favourable treatment by staff because of their membership of the Forum.

Confidentiality

- Members should respect all members confidentiality, whether present or not, and refrain from mentioning specific individual cases which may cause embarrassment or identification of an individual.
- Any information or items shared that is of a confidential nature must not be disclosed to anyone else apart from the members of the group in order to allow the business of the meeting to take place.

Breach of Code of Conduct

- If a member of the Forum does not abide by the code of conduct, the Chair will warn that if they break the code again they may be asked to leave the meeting

- The Chair may give the member one further warning (a maximum of two warnings in any one meeting and/or two consecutive meetings). No more than three warnings will be given in any period of 12 months.
- If the member continues to ignore the code or direction of the Chair then the Chair will ask the meeting to vote on whether the member should be asked to leave.