



Cambridge City Council

Tenant and Leaseholder Representatives on the Housing Advisory Board

Description of the role

&

Frequently Asked Questions

Email:  resident-involvement@cambridge.gov.uk

Phone:  01223 458323

Website:  www.cambridge.gov.uk/resident-involvement

Role description

There are six Resident Representatives on the Housing Advisory Board. They are elected every four years in a ballot sent to all 7,500+ tenants and 1,000+ leaseholders. The Housing Advisory Board influences decision-making in the Council's housing services.

The resident role represents the interests of tenants and leaseholders in this process. They are key consultees in policy development, service reviews, building new council homes, and the procurement of housing contracts.

What Tenant and Leaseholder Representatives offer:

- They are 'experts by experience', through hands-on, everyday living in a council property, their home.
- They have experience of receiving a wide range of council services that impact on tenants / leaseholders.
- Representatives also look at what's happening in the wider context and ask the pertinent questions, e.g. around the government's welfare reforms, etc.
- They give the Council a unique opportunity to consult meaningfully with service users.
- They can also advise City Councillors.

What else do Tenant and Leaseholder Representatives do?

Representatives don't just sit on the Board. Typical other activities have included, for instance, helping to:

- advise on the Council's strategies for building new council homes.
- draft the wording of council policies on things like parking and hoarding.
- select a company to deliver the Council's resident satisfaction survey.

Inclusivity

Cambridge City Council is committed to creating an inclusive environment where everyone can contribute. If Representatives have difficulty completing any aspect of the role, we have facilities to support them. To discuss individual needs in confidence, please contact the Resident Engagement Manager.

Who is eligible?

The Tenant or Leaseholder Representative must hold a tenancy managed by Cambridge Council, or be a council leaseholder. Residents in breach of their tenancy or leaseholder agreement, or in arrears, are not eligible to become or remain as a Board Member.

You do not need any previous experience of being on a Board. We are looking for individuals who have lived experience of being a current council tenant or leaseholder and:

- are passionate about housing, and want to make a difference
- want to learn more about the national regulation of social housing services, and the impacts for residents
- want to work with the Council to improve homes and landlord services
- are happy to represent other residents and listen to their views
- are willing to contribute to discussions, ask challenging questions and offer suggestions and solutions

- are able to review complex data and detailed information, or willing to learn
- are willing to learn to use internet and email, if they don't use them already
- want to develop their skillset in being a Representative
- can be discreet, handling sensitive information confidentially
- believe in equality, diversity and inclusion
- are happy to sign up to a Code of Conduct and be visible as a Board Member

Elections

All council tenants and leaseholders can vote in the Housing Advisory Board's resident representative elections every four years, run by an independent organisation. There are elected positions for five tenants and one leaseholder. If there are vacant positions outside of the election period, tenant or leaseholder representatives can be co-opted onto the Board.

Remuneration

Resident representatives on the Board can each claim an annual allowance of up to £1,400, depending on the amount of time they give to the role.

Resident Engagement staff

The Council has a Resident Engagement Manager and part-time Assistant. They support resident representatives, identify resident priorities and embed resident feedback into delivery. They also deliver the Council's Resident Involvement Strategy, tracking resident satisfaction, managing communication, and bridging the gap between residents' views and council decision-making.

How to apply to be a resident representative

To find out more or apply to be a tenant or leaseholder representative, please email resident-involvement@cambridge.gov.uk or call 01223-458323.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is the Housing Advisory Board? (HAB)

A: The Executive Councillor for Housing makes all the Council's big housing decisions at Cabinet. The HAB supports the Cabinet's decision-making process and monitors performance of our housing services. As an advisory group, it can provide advice, recommendations, and critical feedback to inform policy development and improve services.

Q: Why do tenants and leaseholders sit on HAB?

A: The Housing Advisory Board is the main discussion forum between Cambridge City Council, its tenants, and its leaseholders for all matters relating to our social landlord function. Tenants and leaseholder representatives provide lived experience of our housing services and represent the voice of City Council residents to ensure their best interests are met on decisions which will impact them.

Q: How would I prepare for a HAB meeting, as a Resident Representative?

A: Representatives receive the agenda pack seven working days before the HAB meeting. Agendas will vary in size so it could take anywhere from 1 to 4 hours to read; this can be done at times which suit the individual, rather than all at one go.

Representatives can note down questions they would like to ask or comments they would like to make for the upcoming HAB meeting.

Q: What do Representatives do during HAB meetings?

A: During the meeting, all Councillors and Representatives sit around a large table, the Chair goes through the agenda, council officers join the table and present their reports. There is an opportunity for Councillors and Representatives to discuss and ask questions or raise any objections. There is no pressure for Representatives to speak if they do not want to.

Q: Why do Representatives have to sign a Code of Conduct?

A: The Tenant and Leaseholder Representative role is in public office so there is a standard of behaviour that is expected whilst they are carrying out the role. Representatives are privy to confidential housing information so part of the Code is a commitment to maintain this confidentiality. The Code also ensures that equality is adhered to.

Q: I don't have any experience / knowledge of technical housing issues; would I still be able to carry out the role?

A: Yes. The main requirement of the position is to represent residents' views and speak on their behalf in relation to decisions which will impact them. The role is not politically affiliated, and Representatives should not have a specific personal agenda: they are there to represent all Cambridge City Council tenants and leaseholders. All Representatives receive support throughout their role. Like with any new role, it takes time to learn so there is no expectation for the Representatives to know everything straight away. Learning at your own pace is the best approach.

Q: Do I have to claim the allowance?

A: No, you do not have to claim the allowance. If you choose not to, the Council will still cover the cost of your travel to the meetings and any other expenses incurred such as childcare or carer's costs, etc.

Q: If I choose to claim the allowance, how do I do this?

A: The allowance is claimed every six months by submitting a form to the Resident Engagement Manager. The form details all the work you have undertaken as a Resident Representative during the previous six months; this includes attending and travelling to meetings, and preparation like reading agendas. The allowance level is split into three separate amounts, rising in value relative to the number of hours you dedicated.

Q: There are approximately 12 meetings each year which Representatives are required to attend; what time of day are these likely to be at?

A: The 12 meetings include:

- 4 meetings of the Housing Advisory Board in-person. These usually begin at 5.30pm and do not have a definitive end time. They could last from 2 hours to 3 hours. The time of these meetings cannot be changed.
- 8 informal meetings between Resident Representatives and the Resident Engagement Manager, approximately every 6 weeks. These meetings enable Representatives to ask questions, raise concerns and provide an opportunity for them to be updated on forthcoming issues. These meetings usually last 1.5 hours and can take place either in the day or early evening, to suit availability. They usually take place online.

There are several other meetings, volunteering and learning opportunities for Representatives to take part in if they wish to, but these are not core requirements of the role.