

Tenant & Leaseholder Forum Meeting

Terms of reference

Introduction

The Voice of the Resident (VoR) forum is established to strengthen residents' role in holding St Albans City and District Council accountable through collaborative and independent, resident-led scrutiny of the services we provide and the performance we deliver.

Forum members use their firsthand experiences and grassroots knowledge to balance and validate performance results. As advocates for all residents, they provide constructive challenges and questioning that lead to recommendations, driving positive change and improvements that put residents first.

Purpose of the VoR Forum

The VoR forum aims to actively amplify the resident voice by:

- **Focusing on What Matters:** Addressing the most important issues to residents.
- **Listening to Residents' Needs:** Understanding what residents want from the council.
- **Exploring New Opportunities:** Identifying where the council can add value or achieve cost savings.
- **Bringing Different Viewpoints:** Incorporating diverse perspectives from various resident groups.
- **Hearing Our Communities:** Gaining insights into broader community challenges and bringing 'silent' voices to the table.
- **Building Trust:** Advocating for all residents to hold the council accountable when service levels fall below expected standards.
- **Celebrating Achievements and Positive Outcomes:** Learning about what has worked well for residents and communities.

In Return, the Council Will:

- **Ensure Formal Recognition:** Provide the forum with identity, pride, and a sense of ownership.
- **Be Transparent and Honest:** Maintain openness in all communications and interactions.
- **Ensure Accountability and Results:** Achieve tangible outcomes based on the forum's input.
- **Listen, Act, and Provide Assurance:** Take appropriate actions and provide updates on progress and outcomes.
- **Communicate Clearly:** Inform the forum about which recommendations can be implemented and, with full explanations, which cannot.
- **Follow Up:** Address all matters raised by the forum.

Key Areas of Focus for 2024/2025

- **Critical Examination of Performance Data**
- **Assessing Service Delivery:** Evaluating how well the council meets the outcomes and expectations of the Consumer Standards and delivers for residents.
- **Holding the Council Accountable:** Ensuring the council meets performance targets in its annual delivery plan for 2024/2025.
- **Reflecting Values and Behaviours:** Ensuring the council provides services that align with our values and behaviours.

Independent Reviews

- **Recommending Further Scrutiny:** Identifying areas that require more in-depth investigation or clarification.
- **Raising Areas of Concern:** Communicating concerns to relevant council groups and committees.
- **Identifying Opportunities:** Highlighting where the council can bring value to local communities.
- **Providing Evidence-Based Recommendations:** Offering suggestions for improvements based on data and resident feedback.

Accountability

To Residents:

- Providing updates when the forum feels it is appropriate to inform on ongoing projects or implemented recommendations.
- Including a statement from the forum in the council's annual report to residents.

To the Council:

- Through quarterly updates to relevant council committees.
- Providing assurance to oversight forums on how the voice of the resident is being heard.
- Serving as ambassadors for the council in their communities.
- Advocating for the council's values and behaviours.

Measuring Success and Effectiveness

- **Monitoring Progress:** Tracking the implementation of recommendations.
- **Increasing Awareness:** Raising awareness among staff and residents about the forum's purpose, objectives, and successes.
- **Annual Impact Statement:** Preparing a statement that outlines the forum's achievements each year.

Membership and Meetings

Meetings: Frequency and Content

- There will be a minimum of six meetings across the year.
- VoR meetings will be a mix of face-to-face and online sessions.
- The engagement team will chair meetings until a resident chair is appointed.
- The agenda and any associated papers will be circulated at least five days prior to the meeting.
- The forum may request the attendance of service leads at relevant meetings; this should be requested at least one month before a meeting.
- Information and resources shared at meetings should be kept confidential as appropriate.

Membership

- The VoR aims for a membership of 12–14 members.
- A minimum of six members must be present for a meeting to take place.
- Members are expected to attend at least three face-to-face meetings during the year 2024/2025.
- Membership is reserved for residents, shared owners, and leaseholders within the council's jurisdiction.
- Membership will be reviewed every two years. After this time, members should step down and may reapply through the VoR recruitment and selection process, commencing from May 2024.

Changes to Terms of Reference

- The Terms of Reference will be reviewed annually with residents.

Equality and Diversity

- The forum will strive to be inclusive and diverse, providing all members with equal opportunities for involvement.

Golden Rules

1. The VoR will work in line with the council's values: **CUSTOMER DRIVEN**, we **CARE**, we **WORK TOGETHER**, we are **CONFIDENT** and **TRUSTED**.
2. The VoR must act on behalf of all residents and not in self-interest.
3. Additional guidelines will be set by forum members.

Remuneration

- All reasonable expenses incurred to attend meetings or other VoR business will be reimbursed in line with the council's expense policy. These should be agreed upon with the council prior to being incurred.
- The chair and forum members may receive additional remuneration as determined by the council's policies.