

Protocol on Estate Meetings and Drop-ins

1. Introduction

- The City of London Housing Service believes that holding regular meetings and drop-ins, open to all residents on an estate can be an effective means of building relationships, sharing information and answering resident questions.
- Estate meetings and drop-ins are organised by the Housing Service four times a year on our larger estates and at least twice a year on our smaller estates. They are held in the afternoon and evening and are open to all residents to attend.

2. Purpose of meetings and drop-ins

- The purpose of the meetings and drop-ins is to discuss matters which relate specifically to the City of London's function as landlord. They allow officers to share information with residents and to enable residents to raise issues with and ask questions of their landlord.
- Other matters may be discussed if they relate directly to residents on the estate. Officers from other departments or agencies may be invited to discuss these matters. Examples would be; the local police attending to discuss crime or security on an estate; inviting a contractor to tell residents about some work they are carrying out; asking someone to come and talk about changes in welfare benefits which might affect the ability of residents to pay rent or service charges.
- The meetings and drop-ins are not to be used for the discussion of matters which are not Housing-related or to discuss political issues.

3. Organising and publicising meetings and drop-ins

- Meetings and drop-ins are organised by the Estate Manager, who advertises the time, date, venue and main items for discussion in advance. Allocated Members and Ward Members are notified of the meeting or drop-in as early as possible to allow them to attend if they wish.
- Residents will be invited to suggest discussion items and to submit questions in writing in advance. Residents submitting questions may ask to remain anonymous if they wish.

4. Management of meetings and Drop-ins

The City of London, as landlord, has no obligation to hold open meetings or drop-ins on our estates; we do so because we wish to build positive, ongoing relationships with residents. If at any stage officers feel that the meetings or drop-ins on any estate are being consistently disrupted and/or are being used to generate conflict, the Assistant Director, Housing & Neighbourhoods has the right to cancel one or more meetings or drop-ins, or discontinue them for the foreseeable future.

- If the event is a meeting, it will be chaired by a senior Housing Manager or, on occasion, by an Allocated Member.

- The Chair will manage the meeting, ensuring that any agreed ground rules are observed, that speakers are kept to time and that residents are given a fair chance to ask questions and make comments, as appropriate.
- If any attendee behaves in a way which is disruptive or disregards the agreed ground rules, the Chair may ask them to leave the meeting. If they refuse to do so, it is the Chair's right to close the meeting.
- The meetings are not minuted, but the Estate Manager takes notes of issues raised and any actions agreed. Information updates are then published in the newsletter which follows each meeting or via other channels to the whole estate.
- If the event is a drop-in, there is no Chair or formal agenda, however, a number of matters will be brought to the drop-in and staff members from relevant teams will be present.

5. Recording of meetings

- The City can arrange for a meeting to be either filmed or audio recorded if residents express a wish for this to take place.
- Requests for recording to take place should be made to the Estate Manager at least one week before the meeting to allow equipment and staff to be organised.
- Any camera used will be focused on the speakers only. Any member of staff not wishing to be filmed can speak from the side of the room.
- The Chair will draw to residents' attention that recording is taking place at the start of the meeting. Arrangements will be made for any resident not wishing to be recorded to ask questions via a member of staff.
- If there are objections raised to the filming or recording, attendees will be asked to vote on whether or not to continue with it. If a majority of residents object to the filming, it will not take place.
- If at any stage the view of the Chair is that recording is, in some way proving detrimental to the good conduct of the meeting, it is his/her right to discontinue it.
- A link to the recording will be placed on the estate pages of the City's website within one week of the meeting so that residents not able to attend can view it. These will remain online for a minimum of three years.
- If the event is a drop-in, it is not possible to record it, owing to the fact multiple discussions will be taking place at the same time.