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| **Pioneer Group Board Observation Policy** | | | **Version: 1** | | **Ref:** | |
| **Lead Officer:** | Governance Manager | **Issue Date:** | | May 2023 | |
| **Approved by:** | Executive Leadership Team | **Approval Date:** | | May 2023 | |
| **Supersedes:** | N/A | **Review Date:** | | May 2026 | |

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| **1.** | **GENERAL INTRODUCTION**  The Pioneer Group values engagement and accountability to stakeholders including staff and the local community which is why Board Meetings are open for attendance.  The purpose of this policy is to provide a set of guidelines for those, who are not Board Members or Executive Members, who want to observe the Pioneer Group Board meetings. |
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| **1.1** | The Pioneer Group is committed to being transparent and supporting tenants, members of the local community and others who are interested in the Group’s activities and the decisions made by the Board. |
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| **1.2** | Definition  An observer is anyone who attends a Board meeting other than:   1. A member of that Board; 2. A member of the Executive Leadership Team; and 3. A member of the Governance Team appointed as minute taker. |
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| **1.3** | Observers may include:   1. Tenants; 2. Members of the local community; 3. Professional advisors; 4. Auditors – Internal or External; 5. Regulators; and 6. Members of staff. |
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| **2** | **Scope of Policy**  This policy applies to any observers attending a Board or Committee meeting of the Pioneer Group. |
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| **3** | **Process**  Potential observes must contact the Governance Manager seven days in advance of the meeting with a request to observe a meeting. Where possible the Pioneer Group will seek to accommodate observers subject to business needs and capacity. |
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| **3.1** | The maximum observers allowed to attend any one meeting is three. Places for Board observation are allocated on a first come first served basis. |
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| **3.2** | If observers wish to raise any comments or questions on agenda items, they may do so in advance of the Board or Committee meeting by emailing the Governance Manager. The Governance Manager and/or Company Secretary will consider whether the comment/question is appropriate for inclusion in the Board or Committee meeting proceedings. |
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| **3.3** | Questions / comments that are accepted will be collated and presented at the start of the Board meeting, after the meeting has been opened, attendees welcomed and introduced, and any apologies or declarations from Board members noted. If the individual that has raised the question or comment is observing the meeting, they may be invited to read out their comment or question noting to which item on the agenda the matter relates. If they are not in attendance, the question/comment will be read out on their behalf referencing who has asked it and any other relevant information. |
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| **3.4** | The Pioneer Group may refuse an application to observe if it can reasonably be shown that the purpose of anyone applying to attend is to disrupt, undermine or otherwise interfere with the proper decision making and processes of the Pioneer Group. Similarly, any attendee refusing to introduce themselves, disclose an interest, or provide a valid reason for wanting to attend may also be refused.  Observers appearing under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs/substances, causing disruption or obstructing the conduct of business, will be asked to leave the meeting immediately and will not be permitted to attend another |
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| **4.** | **Confidentiality**  Some agenda items may be commercially sensitive or subject to data protection. Where a meeting is being observed, report authors will be asked to identify items which should be restricted. The Chair may then ask during those restricted agenda items for the observers to leave for the duration of the item. |
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| **4.1** | The agenda structure for Boards and Committees are determined by the needs of the business. This may mean that observers are asked to leave more than once during a meeting. |
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| **5** | **Conduct of observers**  Observers will:   1. Have been accepted and had their attendance as an observer confirmed in order to join the meeting; 2. If the meeting is held virtually, have their full name showing when they join and throughout the meeting so we can be assured that only those who have been invited are attending; 3. Have access to the agenda but no other papers necessarily considered by the Board Members; 4. Give their apologies if they become unable to attend the meeting with at least two working days’ notice, where possible; 5. Arrive on time. Any observer arriving late will not be permitted to join the meeting; 6. Only address the meeting when specifically asked to do so by the Chair. No observer will be able to vote on any matter during the meeting. 7. Act in accordance at all times with the Pioneer Group values – Respect, Community, Empower and Bettertogether*;* 8. Treat everyone with consideration and respect their contributions to meetings; and 9. Agree to leave the meeting during confidential items should they be asked to do so by the Chair. |
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| **5.1** | Any observers that do not follow this framework may be asked to leave by the Chair. |
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| **5.2** | Observers are reminded that they should not raise issues relating to their personal circumstances at meetings and should follow the usual channels to raise matters of concern. |
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| **6** | **Equality and Diversity**  Observers must be fully committed to the principles of equality and diversity and agree to:   * Accept that the Board works for the benefit of all its stakeholders regardless of location, gender, race and ethnicity, nationality, disability, age, sexuality, their lifestyle choices, or tenure type. * Understand the duties and responsibilities of the Pioneer Group Board as a collective and its duty to monitor and tackle inequality and promote diversity. * Be aware of their individual responsibility for ensuring that the principles of equality and diversity are evident in their behaviour when observing panel meetings. |
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| **6.1** | No observer will discriminate on any grounds against any member of the Board, Pioneer Group staff, or public nor use discriminatory language, derogatory or personal remarks |