

Board Membership Roles and Policy

Introduction

The Board of the Housing Association requires some of its members to take on special roles to help the association function effectively. The four essential executive committee posts are Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and Treasurer. In some Housing Associations the posts of company secretary and senior official are combined. The elected officers generally have distinct responsibilities and roles in the effective running of an association. The roles while distinct are mutually supportive; officers should support their colleagues whenever possible. All honorary officers should be clear regarding the function of their role. Therefore, it is good practice to have written role descriptions.

Chairperson

The Chairperson has a strategic role to play in representing the vision and purpose of the Housing Association. The Chair should serve an agreed term in this position at which point it should be reviewed.

Key responsibilities

The Chairperson ensures that the Management Board functions properly including:-

- Planning and running meetings in accordance with the Memorandum and Articles e.g. AGM
- Ensure matters are dealt with in an orderly, efficient manner e.g. filing annual returns
- Review governance performance
- Bringing impartiality and objectivity to meetings

The Chairperson ensures the Housing Association is managed effectively

- Liaise with the Chief Executive (where in place) to keep an overview of the affairs of the Housing Association
- To facilitate change and address conflict within the organisation
- To co-ordinate the Board to ensure responsibilities for particular aspects of management are met and specialist expertise is sought where required e.g. personnel matters or financial control)

The Chairperson represents the Housing Association and:-

- Communicates the vision, objectives and purpose of the Housing Association;
- Advocates and represents the organisation at external meetings e.g. Local Authority and ICSH meetings; and
- Is aware of current issues that might affect the Housing Association.

The role of a Chairperson can be time consuming, involving work between meetings, external representation of the organisation, and work with staff. The Chairperson usually takes on direct management responsibility for the most senior staff member (the chief officer). Chairing a Housing Association requires clear diplomatic and leadership skills.

Vice-chair

The Vice-Chair acts for the Chair when s/he is not available and undertakes assignments at the request of the Chair. To ensure continuity every Housing Association should ensure that the chair has a deputy who can assume their responsibility and is familiar with their duties as outlined above.

Role of the Company Secretary

Voluntary Housing Associations are legally incorporated under the Companies Acts and must have a Secretary. This person may be one of the Directors or may be a person appointed or employed who is not a member of the Board of Directors. In smaller Housing Associations the Secretary may be a voluntary member of the Board who has agreed to undertake the functions outlined below. Sharing of the Board's responsibilities by the members may be necessary to achieve effective operations. Larger Housing Associations may employ a part time or full time secretary if the resources are available.

The company is required to notify CRO of the name and residential address of the secretary (as it is for all directors).

Key responsibilities

- Provide advice and guidance to Directors on their obligations under the Companies Articles of Association, company law and other relevant laws and regulations
- Act as principal legal and compliance officer
- Preparation of reports and minutes of the meetings
- Issuing of correspondence to other persons and agencies (including statutory authorities) as directed by the Board
- Keeping of the Housing Association's records, including the financial accounts including the income and expenditure accounts, all bank account records, invoices and receipts. The Secretary will usually carry out this function in conjunction with the Treasurer

- Collaboration with the Chairperson, other Officers and Board members in the preparation of agendas and reports for meetings
- Facilitation of the preparation of the Annual Audit of Accounts by the Housing Association's professional auditor, including the supply of all financial and other records.

Role of Treasurer

The overall role of the Treasurer is to maintain an overview of the organisation's financial status and to ensure that proper financial records and procedures are maintained. In small AHBs without paid staff the Treasurer may take a greater role in the day-to-day finances of the organisation. It is important to note that final responsibility for financial matters rests with the Management Board as a whole.

Key responsibilities

- Ensure that proper financial records and procedures are maintained.
- Looking after the Association finances
- Recording income and expenditure
- Maintain the association accounts
- Ensure that all bills are paid
- Keep the committee informed as to the associations finances
- Oversee the appointment of auditors
- Help prepare the Association accounts for auditing and the AGM

Policy Title:	Board Membership Policy
Date policy discussed and agreed by Board:	
Review Date:	
Signed by Chairperson on behalf of the Board:	

The following are the guidelines that _____ Housing Association will follow when selecting board members and renewing the board periodically.

Board members will be invited on to the board based on a number of criteria, including:

- Interest in and empathy with the work of the Association
- Knowledge of the work and direction of the Association
- Expertise in an area such as finance/ legal depending on the needs of the board at that point
- Experience in previous similar roles
- Enthusiasm to contribute to the future role and strategic direction of the Association

Board Members

Each member should:

- Uphold and support the ethos, culture and traditions of the Association
- Be aware of his/her collective and individual responsibilities
- Have a specific role/function in the management of the Association
- Support new members in understanding the functions of the board, and the relationship between the board and other stakeholders
- Attend regular board meetings and the Annual General Meeting

Rotation of Offices

- It is the policy of the board that the key offices of chairperson, treasurer and secretary should be rotated periodically among all members of the board. This will ensure a relatively equal burden of responsibility is placed on all members of the board, allowing each member to contribute meaningfully to the work of the Association.
- Membership of sub-committees should also be reviewed and renewed on a periodic basis, allowing for additional skills and expertise to be introduced.