

New Longsight Housing Cooperative

Membership Policy

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LONGSIGHT HOUSING CO-OPERATIVE

MEMBERSHIP POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

The Housing Co-operative membership is open to anyone who is either a tenant or prospective tenant aged 18 years or over as evidenced by the register (i.e. the co-op housing waiting list).

2. BECOMING A MEMBER

Obtaining membership is a 4 stage process as follows:

- i) A prospective member should submit a membership application to the co-op with the payment of £1.00.
- ii) The member application form will be assessed in accordance with the co-ops points based allocation policy.
- iii) The application, once assessed, will be considered by the management committee in the first or second committee meeting following the date of the original application.
- iv) New members will then be required to attend a minimum of two subsequent management committee meetings or sub group meetings, in an observational capacity, to show their commitment to the aims and objectives of the Co-operative. New members will also be expected to play a positive part in the running of the Housing Co-operative activities. It is expected that new members are required to 'participate' in the co-op business and failure to positively participate may mean that new members are not offered housing.

In the event that a membership application is not approved by the committee the payment of £1.00 will not be accepted and will be refunded to the applicant.

The Co-op Management Committee meets monthly to discuss all aspects of the Co-op's work.

3. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

New Longsight Housing Co-op is an equal opportunities co-operative which is committed to the equal treatment of all persons within the provision of our services. We actively promote equality and diversity and aim to eliminate discrimination in all areas of our co-op.

We comply in full with the obligations as set out in the Equality Act 2010.

4. KEY OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this policy is to foster a meaningful and active membership within New Longsight Housing Co-operative.

Within the Housing Co-operative there needs as a minimum to have active members who fulfil the following functions:

Business Need:

- Committee member - monthly commitment- minimum of 5 members – maximum of 12.
- Chairperson
- Treasurer - at least 4 times a year to review quarterly reports
- Secretary - overview of governance arrangements
- Sub committees named here????
- Attendance at Annual General Meetings and General Meetings

Social Level:

- Newsletter: 3 /4 times a year??
- Maintenance of the web site and social media accounts
- Social Group: trips / events??
- Other activities (eg litter picking, teaching, learning)

5. ACCESS TO THE MEMBERSHIP REGISTER

An application for membership will be assessed in accordance with the co-ops points based allocation policy. Applicants will be considered measured against the following criteria:

- Current security of tenure
- Interest in alternative property
- Overcrowding
- Property condition
- Medical needs
- Welfare needs
- Financial needs
- Social needs

The number of points an applicant is allocated will be based on the questions answered on the application form and information given during the introductory interview. Where necessary the co-op will make a home visit to validate the information provided on the member application form.

Applicants will receive feedback whether their membership application has been successful or not within 12 weeks of the date of application.

APPEALS

Should your application for membership be rejected you have the right to appeal to the Chairperson within 10 working days of receipt of your rejection.

Any appeal should set out the grounds for the appeal and must be submitted in writing.

6. POLICY STATEMENT

Through this membership policy we aim to:

- Ensure all existing and prospective members are treated equally and respectfully in accordance with our co-operatives values;
- foster a shared sense of identity between the Co-operative and its shareholder members’;
- ensure that member engagement is an inclusive and encompassing process from management committee membership at one end through to dedicated community activities at the other;
- increase the accountability of the management committee and our staff members and keep the committee in touch with the views of our shareholder members;
- enable members to elect a management committee;
- enable and encourage members to attend and vote at the Co-operative’s Annual General Meeting (AGM);
- enable and encourage members to call General Meetings and propose motions for the Co-operative’s Committee to consider and make a response to the members;
- enable members to become directly involved in the policy making processes of the co-operative.

7. KEY POLICY STANDARDS

7.1. Membership

Full membership of Co-operative will only be open to either tenants or prospective tenants whose membership has been accepted by the management committee. Joint shareholder tenant members will be entitled to separate membership.

The co-operative is allowed a maximum of five co-optees to be appointed to the management committee. These co-optees are not classed as members.

Membership will entitle a Member to the full range of rights, as set out in the rules, this policy and associated procedural documents.

A shareholding membership will terminate if the person:

- a) Dies
- b) Resigns from membership
- c) Is expelled from the membership
- d) Ceases to be a tenant
- e) Has seriously breached their tenancy agreement
- f) Ceases to occupy his/her tenancy as the principle home
- g) Is removed from the register (i.e. the waiting list)

7.2. Election of Management Committee Members

The electoral process at the Annual General Meeting will aim to ensure that:

- Any full member has the opportunity to be elected at the AGM. Those retired committee members may stand for re-election.
- There is the best possible representation among the Management Committee members elected, both in terms of geography and personal characteristics; and
- Management committee members are replaced in a timely and appropriate fashion.

7.3. General Meetings

All Members will be invited to attend the Housing Co-operative's AGM which should be held within 6 months of the end of the financial year.

On the requisition of the number of Members stated in the Rules of the Co-operative, Members will be able to place an item on the agenda of an Ordinary General Meeting.

Members will be able to call, attend and vote at General Meetings The number of Members needed to call a General Meeting is set out in the Rules of the Co-operative as 10%.

7.4. Policy Development

All Members will be able to be involved in the drawing up of Housing Co-operatives policies. The process for involving and consulting Members on policy development will be agreed by the Management Committee.

7.5. Rule Changes

Full Members will be able to propose and vote for amendments to the Rules of the Co-operative as set out in the Rules.

7.6. Support of the Membership

The Housing Co-operative will actively support all its Members, singly or collectively, in their development and engagement with co-operatives activities.

The Housing Co-operative will provide resources, in the form of staff support, finances, office/venue use and others, as is appropriate, to ensure an empowered and engaged membership.

The membership activities will be reported as part of the Annual Report to members.

8. Monitoring, Review and Accountability

The Housing Co-operative will monitor performance on its Membership Policy in a number of ways, in compliance with its Performance Management Framework:

- Reports to the Social Housing Regulator.
- Publication of performance on the Membership Policy within the Annual Report.
- Reports to the Management committee on performance against any agreed membership targets, measures and indicators.
- Reports to Management Committee on the equality and diversity makeup of the membership and performance against agreed targets.

Committee Succession Policy

1. Introduction

1.1 New Longsight Housing Co-operative relies on unusual reserves of passion and commitment from its members and this makes us particularly vulnerable to the sudden departure of key people. Having a succession and recruitment policy ensures that we have plans and procedures in place to manage this risk.

1.2 The Housing Co-operative recognises that the importance of encouraging younger people to be involved is critical to the sustainability of our organisation. Succession planning is about reflecting our own current and future needs. Ensuring we have a robust approach to succession planning enables the committee to continually have the knowledge and expertise to carry out their role effectively. It is about putting a system in place to ensure that when someone leaves the co-operative committee, we are not left with a knowledge gap – and that there is someone in the wings ready to step into the role.

1.3 The Housing Co-operative recognises that our committee members are a vital resource which need to be valued, but also, the committee members are volunteers and there are times when they cannot continue to act as committee members. So, committee recruitment and succession are also vital to ensure the natural changes at committee level do not interfere with the vision, values and objectives of the co-operative.

1.4 the Housing Co-operative recognises that committees with a good mix of age, experience and backgrounds who reflect the community they serve tend to foster better debate and decision-making. It is also recognised that if the committee is not refreshed over a period of time, the co-operative will become less effective.

1.5 The committee recognises the importance of committee member recruitment and succession planning.

2. Committee Review and Self-Assessment

One of the ways in which we acknowledge that our committee can contribute to our own evolution, is through the thoughtful use of self-assessment against a list of key skills. This is a way of addressing the suitability of new committee members as well as long standing members.

The co-operative will:

- agree a job description and skills matrix for the role of committee members
- carry out a committee member self-assessment annually against those roles and skill requirements.

This will aim to identify skills gaps, not only for self-development purposes, but to focus the search for new committee members.

The annual committee member evaluation exercise will take place between April and June of each year. This will allow the full committee to review its composition and discuss the expertise it will need through both the full membership and co-optees for the future needs of the co-operative in accordance with our Rules and the agreed Business Plan.

How do we advertise for new committee members?

The Co-operative commits to advertise opportunities for new committee members through:

- Newsletters, facebook, whatsapp
- Web site
- Public meetings take out?
- Annual General Meetings and other General Meetings
- Notice Boards
- Sign up of new tenants Change to When people apply to the co-op, when they are signed up as members and when they sign up as tenants

How do we introduce new committee members to the organisation?

1. The committee will arrange introductory meetings for prospective casual and elected committee members and offer a copy of the following documents:

- a. Committee member job description
- b. Annual committee meeting planner
- c. Code of Conduct & Confidentiality policy
- d. Business Plan
- e. Annual Budget

During these introductory meetings, prospective committee members will find out more about the co-operative and in particular principles of good governance, principles of conflict of interest, its management agreements and its relationships with its staff and contractors.

2. Prospective committee members will be required to positively participate in the organisation's activities and will be given the option to attend committee meetings as observers before becoming full members.

3. Prospective committee members will be asked to complete a Training Needs Assessment and be offered expert training, advice, support and encouragement. This is essential for ensuring they know what is expected from them, and what rewards they can expect in return.

New Longsight Housing Co-operative

Member Engagement Strategy, Action Plan, and Induction Checklist

Introduction

Engaging with tenant members is a pre-requisite for a housing co-operative. The Committee recognise that not everyone has the time to attend meetings, and may not want to, so we have set out a number of ways in which our members can be connected to and influence the activity of the co-operative.

1. Our mission and values

These are determined by the membership and will be reviewed each year at the Annual General Meeting. Members can influence this by

- Attending the Annual General Meeting when these are discussed each year
- Emailing the co-operative at committee@nlhcoop.org
- Writing to the Committee via New Longsight Housing Co-operative Office
- Speaking to Committee Members informally
- Start conversations in our newsletter and on our social media

2. Keeping members informed

Co-ops continually need to communicate to their members what they get by virtue of being a housing co-op, and what would happen if the co-op ceased to exist. The co-operative uses the following methods to share information with members.

- All members are issued with a copy of the Members Handbook which outlines how the co-op is run along with some key policies such as rent collection and repairs
- An annual report on the Co-operative's activities is produced for the Annual General Meeting
- Members are invited to attend General Meetings. The number of these is decided by the membership at the AGM. The committee can call additional general meetings and one sixth of the membership can also call a general meeting.
- Our website contains basic information about the Co-operative

- A newsletter is produced at least quarterly to update members on committee business, service updates and anything else that may be of interest to them
- Minutes of our meetings are available to all members online or are sent to everyone who requests them

The Co-operative recognises that it needs to do more and so we will be improving on this over the next 12 months.

Plans for the future include

- Setting up a social media account so that members can receive updates and give feedback informally
- Opening up Committee Meetings to all members to aid transparency and inclusivity
- Asking members for feedback on what sort of information they would like from us and at what frequency
- Getting a better understanding of what information is needed in different formats/languages and then providing that information to members
- Supporting members with digital resources so that they can participate
- Overhauling the website
- Establishing a platform where information can be shared with members

3. Involving members in decision making

Members need to know that they can raise issues with the co-op and that the issues they raise will be taken seriously and either addressed or responded to with an explanation as to why something can't be done. The co-operative involves members in decision making in a number of ways

- All members are encouraged to stand for election to the Committee.
- Committee business is organised around the needs and availability of current committee members and this is reviewed when new committee members join.
- Members can influence the setting of the Annual Budget and Rent Increases by attending the December General Meeting when these are discussed. Views are also sought from members who are unable to attend.

- General Meetings which are open to all members are held regularly throughout the year.
- Members are invited to suggest items for discussion at these General Meetings.
- Any changes to tenant-facing policies are discussed with the broader membership prior to being adopted by the Committee.
- Member feedback on service performance is considered by the Committee each quarter. This is used to influence service delivery, service standards and policy development.
- Complaints are reviewed by the Committee each quarter and this is used to influence service delivery, service standards and policy development.

The Co-operative recognises that it needs to do more and so we will be improving on this over the next 12 months.

Plans for the future include

- Sharing more of our information, such as committee and sub-group papers, online to aid transparency.
- Identifying more ways to be inclusive to encourage more active members, including
 - Rotating the days and times of meetings to allow more members to participate
 - Regularly reviewing the dates and times of meetings to remain inclusive to all who wish to participate
 - Giving adequate notice for meetings
 - Publishing meeting dates in advance
 - Sharing agendas in advance
 - Limiting the length of regular meetings to two hours.

4. New Tenant Members

The Co-operative recognise that new members need to understand what opportunities exist for them to get involved. We will build this in from the start and through to our sign-up process as follows

- When we open our Waiting List our publicity material will contain information on the co-op, who we are, how we operate etc

- New prospective members (non-housed members) are given an Induction at the point they are accepted onto the waiting list.
- New members will be given an Induction as part of the sign-up interview. This will be based on the CCH Checklist. Co-op members will take responsibility for giving the new member an overview of the Co-op and the Worker will take responsibility for the legal and administrative elements of the sign up.
- New members will be provided with a copy of the Members Handbook.
- New members will be offered the opportunity to be introduced to their immediate co-op neighbours.
- General meetings will be presented to new members as the normal and not an optional extra.

5. Training and personal development

The co-operative recognises the importance of providing training for members to enable them to participate fully in the running of the co-op, plus training for committee members to enable them to fulfil their committee roles and responsibilities effectively. We do this by

- Allocating a training budget so that Committee and Sub-Group members can access external training such as that provided by the CCH.
- Supporting new members to become confident and skilled committee members through shadowing and mentoring.
- Sharing the expertise of existing committee members by working within sub-groups and job sharing.
- Working collaboratively on tasks so expertise and learning is shared.
- Ensuring there is clarity over what roles are/involve
- Facilitating job sharing and the splitting of roles to enable members to learn on the job and gain skills and confidence

6. Informal activity

The co-operative recognises that not everyone has the time, confidence, or skills to participate in the day to day running of the co-op. Health issues and the accessibility of the Co-op's office can also be a barrier. Informal activity can be a way to engage with these members.

Whilst our social activities are hampered by Covid at present we aim to use the information contained within our member database to identify areas of interest and bring people together around any shared interests.

7. Supporting the wider community

The Co-operative wants to be viewed as a positive influence within the local area and members are already involved in a number of local projects including

- Community Energy Scheme
- Keep Manchester Tidy Scheme
- Be Longsight
- Let's Keep Growing

Plans for the future include

- Establishing better links between the Co-op and these groups to understand how we can be of mutual assistance.
- Raising the profile of this work by including it in the information we share with members.
- Encouraging more members to get involved.

8. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Considerations

The co-operative will make changes to the way it works or will create alternative options for members in order to be inclusive. The co-operative relies on members making us aware of any issues. Issues already identified are

- Accessibility - the Co-op's office is not fully accessible – what provision is/can be made to ensure members aren't excluded by this?
- Visual Impairment
 - The co-operative will endeavour to use software and file sharing systems etc that are compatible with screen readers.
 - Where this is not possible paperwork will be emailed directly instead.
- Digital Exclusion

- Paper copies of co-op correspondence and mailouts etc are available on request. The committee will keep a list of members preference to be contacted be mail rather than digitally.
- The co-operative will consider requests from committee members for the loan of equipment to allow members to fully participate.

9. Delivering the Strategy

- We have agreed a lead member to make sure this strategy and the improvements we have suggested are implemented.
- We have agreed the attached action plan to assist us in allocating leads for each task and monitoring progress.
- This will be reviewed every quarter by the committee.

Appendix 1 – Member Engagement Action Plan

Task	Progress to date/any blockages	Who will do this?	Date Completed
1. Mission and Values			
Annual Review to take place at the AGM each year.	Completed		June 2021
To be reinforced and evidenced through NLHC comms and newsletters.			
2. Keeping Members Informed			
Members Handbook issued to all members.			
Annual Report produced for AGM.			
Website is kept up to date including copies of meeting minutes.			
Quarterly newsletter produced.			
Consider use of social media for more dynamic ways to share information with members and get instant feedback.			
Committee to consider opening up committee meetings to non-member observers to aid transparency.			
Committee to consult membership on what information they would like from the co-op and in what format.			
Committee to consider upgrading the website along with options for using other platforms as a way to share information with members.			
3. Involving Members in Decision Making			
Committee dates and times are reviewed as and when the committee make-up changes to remain inclusive.			

Committee members are given adequate notice of meetings, agendas and other papers are shared in advance and meetings are limited to two hours to remain inclusive.			
Members are invited to suggest items for discussion at General Meetings.			
The Annual Budget and Rent Increases are discussed with the membership at the December General Meeting prior to any final decisions being made.			
Changes to tenant-facing policies are discussed with the broader membership prior to being adopted by the Committee			
Member feedback on service performance is considered by the Committee each quarter.	Committee to consider the format and content for a quarterly performance report that would cover this.		
Complaints are reviewed by the Committee each quarter.	Committee to consider the format and content for a quarterly performance report that would cover this.		
4. New Tenant Members			
Adverts for co-op properties will contain information about the co-op, who we are, how we operate, the benefits etc.			
New members to be given a full induction using the checklist attached at Appendix 2.			
5. Training and Personal Development			
Annual Training budget allocated to meet the needs of current and potential committee members.			
Committee to carry out skills audit to identify who has skills/expertise in which areas and then suggest ways for committee members to share skills to ensure that all areas have adequate cover both now and for the future.			

Job descriptions are provided for each Officer and Sub-Group lead role and these are reviewed regularly.			
Terms of Reference are agreed for each sub-group and these are reviewed regularly.			
6. Informal Activity			
7. Supporting the wider community			
Committee to better understand the links between members and existing community groups with a view to formalising the link between these and the co-op where these are of benefit to the wider membership, and to raise the profile of the co-op as a force for good in the local area			
Committee to share information on local community groups in the newsletter and encourage members to get involved.			
8. Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Considerations			
Committee to consider the accessibility issues with the office and agree what alternative provision can be made to ensure members aren't excluded			
Committee to ensure that information shared with members and committee members is in an accessible format.			
Committee to identify which members prefer to be contacted by mail rather than digitally.			
Committee to consider loaning devices to committee members to enable them to participate fully, where a lack of a suitable device is a barrier.			