



# Williamsburgh

## HOUSING ASSOCIATION

• Limited •

### Committee Membership Policy

Policy Title:	Committee Membership Policy		
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Committee Meeting/Date:	501 <sup>st</sup> Management Committee Meeting 2 <sup>nd</sup> October 2019	Review Date:	2 <sup>nd</sup> October 2020

This policy can be made available in different languages and other formats on request.

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## 1. Introduction

Williamsburgh Housing Association is a democratic organisation accountable to its members. The Association was formed and carries out its activities for the benefit of the communities we serve. The Association aims to encourage as wide a membership as possible amongst these communities, tackling any obstacles to membership and not itself creating any artificial barriers. As such, we have no quotas or restrictions to membership within the areas where we operate.

## 2. Aims and Objectives

We are committed to the establishment of communities that are socially inclusive, for example, through creating an environment where people live without fear of discrimination or harassment. Accordingly, we shall ensure that all applicants for membership will be treated equally, irrespective of their sex or marital status, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, language or social origin, or other social attributes, including beliefs or opinions such as religious beliefs or political opinions.

Every effort will be made to involve tenants, owners, ethnic minority groups and local special need community interests, in membership of the Association.

Williamsburgh Housing Association is committed to offering and acting on resident participation because we believe that this will contribute to the continuous improvement of services. As an organisation which is locally-based and which is run by local volunteers, the Association recognises the importance of community involvement in strengthening the community and providing a service which meets local needs.

A £1.00 share, secures life membership, enabling participation in the election of the Management Committee and/or candidacy for election to the Committee. While our Membership and Tenant Participation Policies set out how residents can increase their involvement in the business of the Association, the Management Committee must retain responsibility for governance, including important decisions regarding policy matters, direction, staffing etc. This policy, therefore, aims to maximise participation which is consistent with the Management Committee's legal responsibilities.

It is, however, extremely important to us that we have a large and active membership, in order to reflect the wishes of the communities in which we operate, and support the Management Committee in their efforts to secure improved living conditions in these areas.

## 2. Aims and Objectives Contd.

Williamsburgh Housing Association will operate in accordance with our constitution, which is based upon the SFHA's Charitable Rules (Scotland) 2013, as a registered social landlord, in appointing a governing body (the Management Committee) elected from our membership, at each Annual General Meeting. This policy adds to the provisions within the constitution, in order to clarify how we will seek to encourage members to join the Management Committee.

The role of the Management Committee and its members is outlined in our Code of Conduct for Governing Body Members. In addition, members of Williamsburgh Housing Association's Management Committee agree to adhere to the:

- Code of Conduct: Working Together
- Policy on Disclosure of Interest
- Policy on Committee Members Expenses
- Policy on Gifts and Hospitality
- Policy on Whistleblowing
- Procedures in respect of the Register of Fraud

At the first Management Committee meeting each year following the Association's Annual General Meeting, committee members will be invited to acknowledge the content of these policies. Every member must complete their declaration of interests and sign, as a condition of membership, a Letter of Appointment accepting the obligations and responsibilities of committee membership.

## 2. Aims and Objectives Contd.

In addition, the following documents will be reviewed and adopted by the Management Committee:

- Remit of Management Committee and Sub Committees, and
- Role of the Office Bearers.

Other important policies will be reviewed and adopted by the Management Committee on a regular basis (as per our policy review schedule). These will include, for example:

- Delegated Authority in respect of the Signing of Important Documents, and
- Equality & Diversity Policy.

### 3. Eligibility for Membership of the Management Committee

The Association will have a Committee of Management which will operate with a minimum of seven and a maximum (including co-optees) of fifteen members. Members will normally be elected to the Management Committee at the Annual General Meeting, but the Committee may appoint members to fill any casual vacancies which arise during the year or co-opt anyone suitable to become a committee member.

- Committee membership is restricted to members of the Association who are aged 18 or over. This includes any person appointed to fill a casual vacancy.

A person appointed as a co-optee or appointed by the Scottish Housing Regulator must be aged 18 or over but need not be a member.

- An employee of the Association, or a close relative of an employee, may not be a committee member.
- Co-opted members cannot make up more than one-third of the total number of the Management Committee or sub-committee members at any one time, and their attendance does not count towards the minimum number of committee members required to allow the meeting to take place (that is, four members for the Management Committee meeting and three members for sub-committee meetings).

### 3. Eligibility for Membership of the Management Committee Contd.

- Our rules dictate that individuals cannot become, or remain, or be re-elected, as a committee member if:
  - ◀ they are declared bankrupt under the Bankruptcy (Scotland) Act 1985;
  - ◀ they have made an arrangement with their creditors;
  - ◀ in the opinion of a qualified medical doctor, they are unable to go to committee meetings because of incapacity due to physical or mental illness;
  - ◀ they are sent to prison for a month or more or have been convicted of a crime of dishonesty for which the rehabilitation period in terms of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 has not expired, or for which rehabilitation is excluded in terms of the said Act;
  - ◀ they are party to any legal proceedings in any Court of Law by or against us;
  - ◀ they are or will be away for a period of 12 months and are thus unable to attend committee meetings;
  - ◀ they have been removed by the Scottish Housing Regulator from the Committee of another registered social landlord;
  - ◀ they have been removed from a charity under Section 7 of the Law Reform (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Scotland) Act 1990 (in connection with the power of a Court to remove or suspend any person who is concerned in the management or control of a charity); or

### 3. Eligibility for Membership of the Management Committee Contd.

- ◄ a Disqualification Order has been made against them under the Company Directors' Disqualification Act 1986 (which relates to the power of a Court to prevent someone from being a director, liquidator or administrator of a company or a receiver or manager of company property or being involved in the promotion, formation or management of a company).

#### 4. Encouraging Management Committee Membership

We appreciate that not all members of the Association will wish to exercise their right to stand for election to the governing body, but the Association will publicise how and when members can stand for election and will encourage all members to participate in the election of their Management Committee. In addition to highlighting methods of publicity, the Association's Tenant Participation Strategy seeks to facilitate participation in the running of the Association by our members and tenants, at a range of available levels of involvement.

## 5. Achieving a Balance of Skills and Expertise

In addition to tenants and local residents, the Association will actively seek to encourage membership from those who have had an affinity with the Association and who may have lived, or worked in our areas either currently, or in the past.

Similarly, membership will be encouraged from anyone who is interested in supporting and further developing, the aims and objectives of the Association.

People with the following skills or experience combined with appropriate training, are likely to be able to undertake the responsibilities of governing body members:

- Knowledge of the area.
- Previous committee work experience.
- Voluntary sector experience.
- Knowledge of housing need and ways of meeting it.
- Knowledge of building construction or maintenance.
- Interest in employment and personnel matters.
- Experience of organisational management.
- Experience as a carer or in raising a family.
- Financial expertise.
- Awareness of social exclusion issues.
- Awareness of regeneration strategies and partnership working between agencies.

## 5. Achieving a Balance of Skills and Expertise Contd.

- Awareness or experience of disability, discrimination and other equality of opportunity issues.
- Tenants issues and concerns.

We will aim to have a range of skills and experience within our Management Committee, but an apparent lack of relevant skill should not discourage people interested in standing for election. The main criteria sought, is a knowledge of our area, an interest in contributing and a willingness to undertake the training made available to committee members.

## 6. Induction and Training

New committee members will be encouraged and supported with an induction programme and pack. This will provide information on the Association and the respective roles of Committee, Office Bearers and Staff. It will also make arrangements for familiarisation with the housing stock, staff and policies, over a six month period. It will include any introductory training required, whether provided in-house or through SFHA/SHARE/FLAIR/EVH etc.

It is acknowledged, however, that all committee members require ongoing training to widen their skills and to ensure that they are kept up to date with new legislation and good practice. A skills audit/training needs analysis of the whole committee is undertaken each year after the Annual General Meeting. The needs identified are covered in a subsequent training and development plan. Committee members are encouraged to participate in in-house committee training events and any training identified for them individually in respect of the skill audit.

## 7. Selection Process for Committee Vacancies

Members of the Association can be elected onto the Management Committee at the Annual General Meeting in accordance with our rules. In advertising the Annual General Meeting, the Association will highlight any skills and experience sought, using the most recent skills audit/training needs analysis, alongside the criteria as identified in Section 5.

When filling a casual vacancy arising during the year, the Management Committee will have regard to:

- any members nominated for election at the Annual General Meeting but not elected, due to surplus of nominations, taking account of the number of votes received;
- any members of the Association eligible for election, but currently serving as co-opted members of the Committee;
- any member who has shown an interest. In particular, anyone who has illustrated their commitment by, say, attending committee meetings as an observer, for a period of time;
- any members responding to advertisements seeking members for the Committee, according to the skills and experience they can offer, in accordance with Section 5;
- any members they deem it appropriate to approach because of the skills or experience they have, in accordance with Section 5.

## 8. Selection of Co-opted Committee Members

Our constitution restricts co-optees to one-third of the total number of the Committee, i.e. a maximum of five co-options in a Committee of fifteen.

The Association seeks to encourage our members to stand for election. As such, we will only make co-options, if all fifteen places available for elected members, are not filled at the Annual General Meeting.

When there is an opportunity to co-opt members, it will be used either:

- to provide experience and training to persons eligible for election to the Committee, whose interest has emerged during the year, or
- to bring special expertise to the Committee on a subject of current importance, e.g. performance, legal or governance matters.

Co-optees do not need to be members of the Association but they can only serve as co-optees on the Committee until the next Annual General Meeting or until removed by the Committee. A co-optee, eligible for election to the Committee, will be expected to stand for election at the Annual General Meeting. An individual co-opted for their particular expertise, will be co-opted for the period their expertise is required. This will be reviewed on an annual basis.

## 9. Evaluation and Monitoring

While Williamsburgh Housing Association offers residents a number of ways to exercise participation, it is clearly essential, both for the organisation's well-being and to reflect the wishes of the communities we serve, to have an active, representative, knowledgeable Management Committee. As such, having identified how we wish to promote committee membership of Williamsburgh Housing Association, we would suggest that our target should be a full complement of fifteen committee members each year. Given the inevitable departure of members, attaining this target, on an annual basis, would suggest that our strategy was being effective.

A report will be prepared for the Management Committee's consideration, on an annual basis, to monitor whether the target is being met, whether it needs adjustment or whether more effective measures require to be introduced.

Details on committee membership will be incorporated within our performance indicators and presented to our residents/members annually.

## 10. Review

The Management Committee will have regard to this policy each year following the Annual General Meeting, in order that it can be applied to the filling of vacancies (or during the year, should vacancies arise). Any revisions deemed necessary can be considered at that time, otherwise the policy will be reviewed by the Management Committee every three years to ensure that it responds to any changing circumstances.