

BELGRAVE NEIGHBOURHOOD CO-OPERATIVE HOUSING ASSOCIATION ACTIVE MEMBERSHIP POLICY

Aims of the active membership policy

The following are aims of the active membership policy:

- To identify the purpose of membership in the co-op
- To set out how people become and remain members
- To ensure that the policy implements what is set out in the co-op's rules about membership
- To offer options for involvement and empowerment to all members in key aspects of the co-op
- To ensure compliance with the Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard

Delegated Authority

- 1 The Senior Community & Resident Engagement Lead is delegated to deliver the Active Membership Policy.
- 2 Authority is delegated to the Senior Housing Lead to carry out member profiling of the co-op's members.

Statement of policy approach

- 3 The co-op is a fully mutual membership organisation, which means that all members are tenants or prospective tenants are members of the co-op and all tenants are required to be members. In this co-op, membership is only granted to a member on the signing of a tenancy agreement and so there are no prospective tenants in membership.
- 4 The co-op charges a non-returnable membership fee to members of £1. Paying the membership fee means that members have rights and responsibilities to attend co-op General Meetings and actively participate in the co-op's decision-making. Members are also required to uphold the vision, values and principles of the co-op.

- 5 The co-op's management committee is legally accountable to the membership. The membership has rights to call general meetings of the co-op, to attend and vote at them, and to elect the committee.
- 6 The co-op's legal membership is intrinsic to the co-op, but membership of the co-op is also about:
 - the identity, ownership, guardianship and stewardship of the co-op. Co-op members are encouraged and supported to share the values and vision of the co-op.
 - compliance with the Involvement & Empowerment Standard, ensuring accountability to co-op members and that the co-op offers opportunities to all its members to be involved in decision making
 - enabling two-way dialogue on different levels taking into account that people engage in different ways
 - ensuring that the co-op makes best business use of the time, energy and knowledge of its members – building the co-op on the basis of good knowledge of what members want and aspire to
 - ensuring that members are offered opportunities to develop themselves personally.
- 7 The co-op particularly aims to encourage membership from all people who use the co-op's services. The co-op will operate its Active Membership Strategy in accordance with ways that promote equality and diversity.

General meetings

- 8 The co-op usually only calls one General Meeting each year – the Annual General Meeting. The committee may also call a General Meeting if required, and the membership may call a General Meeting if one tenth of the membership sign a written requisition for one.
- 9 All members shall be invited to attend General Meetings and they may attend and vote. One tenth of the total number of members shall form a quorum for a General Meeting.
- 10 The co-op shall have a system to enable members to vote at General Meetings by proxy.

Termination of membership

- 11 The co-op's rules set out that membership is terminated if a member dies, resigns, ceases to be a tenant or ceases to occupy their home, or is expelled.
- 12 A co-op member may be expelled from membership if, in the opinion of a General Meeting called to consider such an expulsion, they have conducted themselves in ways that are detrimental to the interests of the co-op. Examples of detrimental conduct are set out in the co-op's Code of Conduct. How a General Meeting to consider expulsion from membership will be conducted is set out in the co-op rules.
- 13 Removal of co-op membership also implies loss of the tenancy. If a co-op member is expelled by a General Meeting, the co-op will instruct the senior housing lead to take such legal action as necessary to recover the property.

An Active Membership Strategy

- 14 The co-op will have an Active Membership Strategy that aims to maximise membership activity and involvement. The strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis using the CCH's Active Membership Assessment framework.
- 15 The co-op will also particularly consider the diversity of those members who participate in the co-op and whether they reflect the membership of the co-op. The co-op will consider alternative approaches to active membership where imbalances are detected.
- 16 As part of the Active Membership Strategy, the co-op recognises and supports a range of active membership involvement methods including:
 - **over the garden fence involvement** – the co-op does not take active steps to support informal methods of active membership, but recognises that informal interaction between co-op members – good neighbourliness – forms a key part of how our active membership develops

- **member induction** – how the co-op brings new members into the co-op is critical for our active membership
- **community activity** – we will organise appropriate community activity to support the development of our community and active membership
- **understanding the wishes and needs of members** – we will take active steps to understand the wishes and needs of our members
- **communication and dialogue** – we will ensure that there are multiple methods by which we can ensure a two-way dialogue with and between our members
- **consultation with members** – we will consult with our members on key issues in the co-op
- **personal member development** – we will explore methods to help develop our members on an individual basis
- **encouragement to participate in governance** – we will ensure that all members are encouraged to put themselves forward for election to our committee and to attend General Meetings of the co-op

Member induction

17 The co-op will take active steps to encourage active membership amongst new members. It will:

- aim to ensure that a committee member or someone else appointed by the Chair attends all handovers to new members with a view to welcome them to the co-op and to give them information about how the co-op works
- an active membership survey is carried out for new members – giving them options for how they would like to be involved
- ensure that new members are linked to the Co-op's Administration officer to enable them to have access to help and support for them to be involved in the co-op; to encourage them to attend relevant

meetings; to provide information about the co-op and the local community

- carry out moving in and post moving in surveys to understand how new members felt about the induction process.

Understanding the wishes and needs of members

- 18 The co-op will maintain a profile of its members. As well as ensuring that it provide services that meet members' needs, profiling will enable the co-op to adapt its involvement approach to match members' wishes and aspirations. The co-op will carry out a profiling survey of its members and will periodically update the survey. The survey will be managed and used in accordance with General Data Protection Regulations and solely used to assist in providing members a service aimed at meeting their needs.
- 19 As well as asking questions about statistical, diversity and service-related issues, the profile survey will include questions about how the member would like to be involved in the co-op:
 - how the member would like to be contacted and would like to contact the co-op
 - what consultation issues they might respond to
 - whether they would like to attend occasional or periodic meetings, and what barriers might prevent them from attending meetings
 - whether there are particular service-related issues they would like to be involved with
 - whether they want to participate in community activities
 - whether they might like to participate in training and development sessions
 - whether they would like to attend a session about being a committee member.
- 20 The co-op will use its best endeavours to ensure that it collects profile information from members with learning difficulties or visual impairments who may not be able to complete a survey.

- 21 Written information to co-op members will be attractively produced, member friendly and not containing jargon or information that members may not understand. The co-op will use its best endeavours to assist members who are not able to read or understand written communications and will be aware of members who need of such assistance.
- 22 The co-op will use the following communication and dialogue methods:
- **Information provided in the initial sign up/induction of new members** – various information will be provided as detailed in the co-op's handover checklist
 - The member handbook – will include:
 - a) Information about the co-op – its vision and values
 - b) How to contact the co-op
 - c) Information about the co-op's staff
 - d) Information about the co-op's democratic structure – including General Meetings, standing for the committee and how members can participate in other ways
 - e) How members can get copies of co-op policies
 - f) Key points from the equality and diversity policy
 - g) Information about how to report repairs and what members should expect when they report a repair
 - h) Information about services paid for in service charges
 - i) Information about how to pay rent, benefits and what happens if a member is having difficulties paying rent
 - j) Information about transfers and exchanges
 - k) Information about making complaints – management complaints, anti-social behaviour or harassment, resident disputes and domestic abuse
 - l) Fire safety information/other health and safety issues
 - m) A summary of the co-op's Pets policy
 - **periodic newsletters or one-off information sheets** – including an annual report to members

- **letters and information sent out relating to services** – letters will be written appropriately, using member friendly wording, explaining anything that might be complicated and giving clear reasons for anything negative
- **notice boards** will be used to get some general information across. Notices are particularly be required for fire safety information.
- **digital communications** – the co-op will provide some information through its website. The co-op will explore other methods to communicate digitally with its members, such as co-op wide and/or local Facebook groups.
- **methods members have of raising service issues specific to them** – members are likely to raise service and other issues relating to their co-op membership and housing services in a variety of ways. The co-op will design systems that capture as many comments made by co-op members as possible to ensure that comments made inform how the co-op is run.
- **complaints about services** are a means by which members communicate and have dialogue with the co-op. The co-op will respond with respect, positively and appropriately and in accordance with the co-op's Complaints Procedure. Issues raised in complaints will be carefully considered and will inform how the co-op is run.
- **satisfaction returns** – the co-op will provide means by which members can express satisfaction or otherwise in relation to repairs that have been done and in relation to the handling of complaints. The co-op will ensure that issues raised are identified and considered.

Consultation

- 23 The co-op will carry out general surveys of all members at least once every three years. Consideration will be given to how best to get the best possible return from surveys, including whether paying for face to face surveys would enable more members to participate.

- 24 The co-op will carry out consultation with its members about any proposed major changes, such as changing the rules, building new homes or other major issues. The results of such consultations will be fed into General Meetings where decisions about major changes are made.
- 25 The co-op will consider how best to consult with members regarding ongoing policy reviews.
- 26 When carrying out consultation, the co-op will ensure that it provides feedback to members to ensure that it demonstrates that the co-op is listening and acting on members' views.

Personal member development

- 27 It is a co-operative principle to provide member education and development. The co-op will support its active committee members in ways that are akin to supporting staff in an organisation, using a training budget to assist them with their personal development – helping to build their skills, confidence and potential.
- 28 The chair will ensure that annual appraisals are carried out by someone trained to carry out appraisals for each committee member to:
 - help each governing body member discuss with the appraiser how well they feel they are performing in their role
 - identify what would help them perform better in the role
 - discuss how their governing body membership is helping them or could help them with their personal development.
- 29 Following annual appraisals, the committee will consider how best to provide support identified, which may involve providing training or paying for committee members to attend conferences or events which may be of benefit to the co-op.
- 30 The co-op will particularly consider how to support its younger residents (either young co-op members or the children of co-op members), developing exciting methods to engage and attract involvement of young residents in co-op activities.

- 31 In carrying out its annual review of its Active Membership Strategy, the co-op will also particularly consider the lengths of time that members have served on the committee and whether there are sufficient numbers of new members coming onto the committee.

Risks to be avoided:

- The co-op does not have sufficient methods of membership involvement that are attractive to the membership and involvement only take place through the committee
- There is insufficient methods of succession at committee level and not enough members attending General Meetings
- The co-op is not clear about what membership and active membership means; how people can become members; and what powers members are given
- The co-op ceases to function effectively as a membership organisation and does not get the benefits of being a co-op