



Homes & Enterprise

Supporting BME Communities  
and Multi-Cultural Neighbourhoods



Providing Choice



Addressing Inequalities



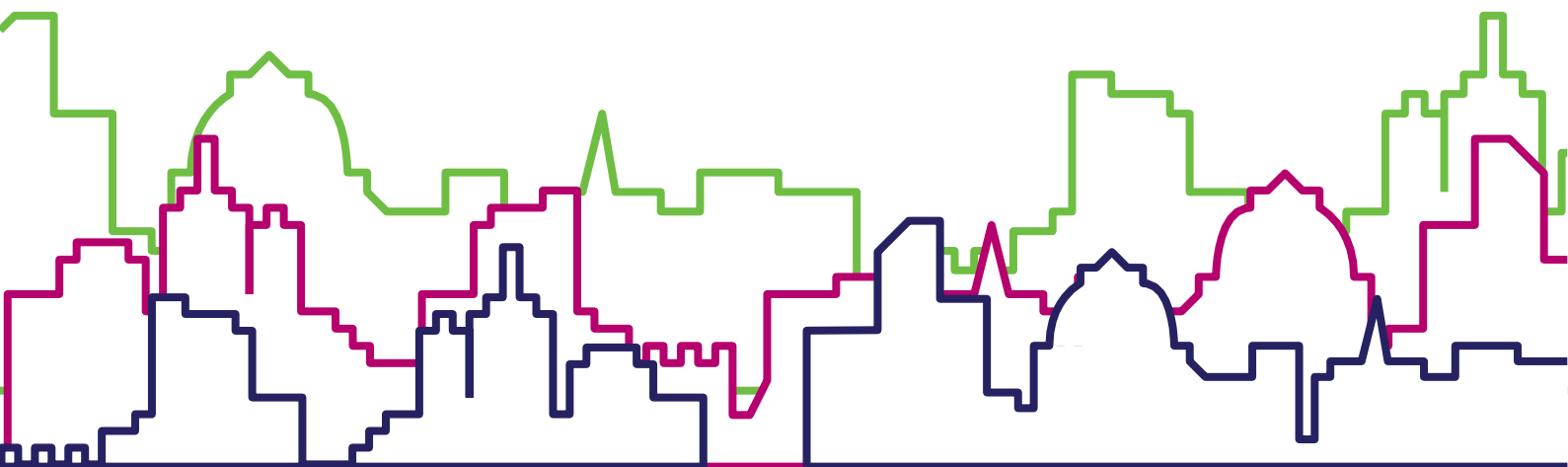
Improving Life Opportunities



## Board Recruitment Policy

2017

Unity is committed to delivering high quality, affordable housing and related services which promote sustainable neighbourhoods, choice and the wellbeing of Black & Minority Ethnic communities in Leeds



# Board Recruitment Policy

## Introduction

Unity Housing Association is an organisation committed to building strong, sustainable neighbourhoods through the provision of high quality housing and social and employment opportunities. We are a modern, successful and visionary organisation that understands and represents the needs of all tenants of all ethnic backgrounds.

Unity was formed in 1987 with the aim of building a strong, BME-led, community housing association to meet the housing needs of black and minority ethnic communities throughout Leeds. Three decades have since passed and Unity continues to be the lead BME housing association in Leeds delivering a range of housing and regeneration services as well as playing an important strategic role in the city.

For the past 30 years Unity has been providing choice, improving life opportunities and addressing inequalities in Leeds. Our initial focus was in the Chapeltown area, however we have since spread into neighbouring areas of Leeds and further afield into Kirklees.

In 2000 the Association established a subsidiary company, now called Unity Enterprise, offering local business tenants good quality, affordable office and workspace with additional administrative and support facilities.

Unity has added over 1200 affordable homes to local housing stock and continues to be involved in regeneration and encourage enterprise to fuel the local economy. In 2016 Unity Housing Development Services Ltd was registered to undertake the development activity for Unity.

For further information about Unity Housing Association and its board please visit our website [www.unityha.co.uk](http://www.unityha.co.uk).

Unity Housing Association aspires to have 9 BME board members out of the 13 places on the board. Up to a third of the board (4 members) may be tenants of the Association.

This document sets out our policy and procedure for the recruitment of members to the board. We aim to recruit in an open and transparent way, selecting board members whose skills and abilities meet our requirements at the time of recruitment, following a fair and accessible recruitment and selection process.

We will review membership of the board annually and identify any gaps in the skills and experience required, we will also take account of any planned retirements from the board and the requirement to stand down from the board following serving 9 years.

The board is elected by our shareholding membership.

The board is able to appoint co-optees if there are less than 13 elected board members. Co-optees are normally appointed until the next AGM. They may then apply to become shareholders and stand for election or the co-option may be renewed by the board after the AGM.

Board members are paid. Payment for reasonable expenses as covered by the expenses policy for board members.

## Tenants

We will advertise this in our regular tenants' newsletter and invite tenants to apply. We may also make direct approaches to tenants who have told us that they are interested in becoming board members in response to other contacts we have had with them.

As with all potential board members, tenants must provide a CV and a letter of application which highlights their experience and skills which are relevant to the role of board member. The CV and letter will need to take into account the role profile and role specification and board competencies attached as an appendix to this document.

A tenant invited for interview will meet with a panel of board members (including the Chair) to discuss his/her application, their understanding of what constitutes good governance, the way in which they would strengthen the board, contribute to the effective operation of the Association and bring a tenant perspective to the governance of the Association. Dependent on experience, the tenant may be invited to join Unity Enterprise board in the first instance.

Where there are more suitable candidates than places available on the board, we may conduct a ballot of our tenants to select the preferred candidate(s)

## Independents

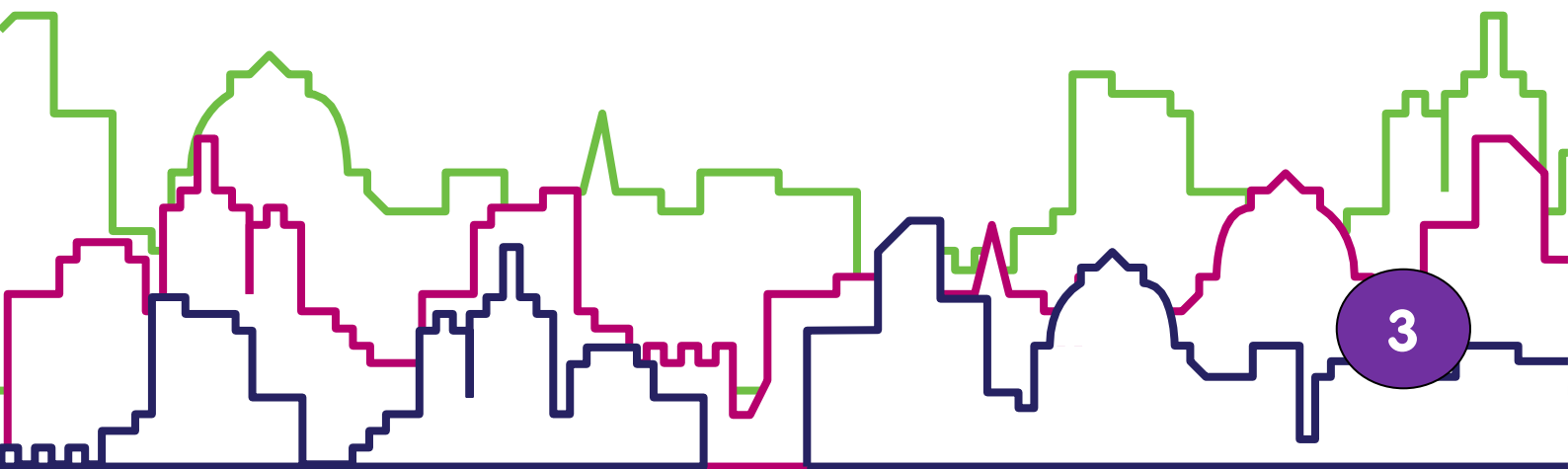
People who are not shareholders or tenants of the Association can stand for election to the Board by responding to one of the Association's board recruitment campaigns.

We want to attract a wide range of candidates for board membership and for this reason our recruitment campaigns will include a range of techniques which may include:

- Advertising in the local and regional press (print and web-based)
- Advertising in relevant professional trade press, dependent on the skills we are seeking (print and web-based)
- Advertising on the Unity web site
- Direct approach to relevant bodies, dependent on the skills we are seeking (eg universities, solicitors, other housing associations, local and regional trade groups, cultural and faith groups)
- Notices in community, cultural and faith venues
- Standard mailing group
- Registered interest
- NHF Get on Board

An information pack will be provided to anyone who expresses an interest in board membership. This pack will include information about the organisation including the most recent Annual Report, the role profile, role specification and competencies and other material. The pack will also be made available via the Unity website.

An applicant invited for interview will meet with a panel of board members (including the Chair of the board) to discuss his/her application, their understanding of what constitutes good governance, the way in which they would strengthen the board and contribute to the effective operation of the Association.



If the applicant is proposed for election to the board they will be offered a shareholding membership (to be a board member they will be required to be a shareholder). If the recruitment campaign takes place after the AGM, the candidate will be invited to join the board as a co-optee until the next AGM when they will be offered for election.

## Co-optees

The board can appoint co-optees and remove co-optees. A co-optee is, to all intents and purposes, a board member, but they cannot take part in discussions about or vote on the election of officers to the Association or any matter directly affecting shareholders (eg amending the obligations of shareholders).

## Terms of Office

Unity applies fixed terms of office, in line with the National Housing Federation's Excellence in Governance. Board members will be appointed for three-year terms and we hope that board members will serve the full term for which they are appointed. A board member may be elected to serve up to 3 three-year terms (a total of 9 years), although it is better for board renewal and succession planning if board members serve only 2 three-year terms (a total of 6 years). After 9 years continuous service board members will be ineligible for re-election and will be required to resign at the AGM.

The three-year term is calculated from the date on which a person is either elected or co-opted to the board.

## Time Commitment

The board meets 4 times a year with committee meetings on a quarterly cycle. In addition to reading, preparation for and attendance at these meetings, other time commitments include:

Annual General Meeting and any Special General Meetings

- Appropriate working groups and occasional panels
- Annual strategic planning away events (may be evenings and/or weekends)

Board members are expected to attend scheduled meetings and events regularly and persistent non-attendance (as defined by the rules) will result in removal as a board member.

The expectation is that board members will attend at least 80% of all meetings (which is in line with the expectations of the NHF). The Chair and Chief Executive will include in reports on governance attendance at meetings.

## Code of Conduct

All board members will be required to comply with the Code of Conduct.

## Induction, Training & Appraisal

As soon as possible after joining the board a tailored induction programme will be offered to new members, the existing board members will be invited to attend to support and offer advice to new members. This initial induction will be linked with ongoing board training. A member board pack will be provided to all new members within 1 month of being elected to the board.

The board appraisal process combines individual board member appraisal with collective appraisal of the performance of the board as a whole. The purpose of appraisal is to ensure that board members and the board as a whole have the appropriate skills and abilities to operate effectively and ensure that we provide the best possible service to our tenants and service users.

## Training & Development

A training and development plan will be developed annually following the appraisal process and board members will be expected to undertake training and development identified to enable them to carry out their board membership role.

## Eligibility

Under our rules, people who come under any of the following categories are not allowed to become, or remain as board members or co-optees:

- They are disqualified from acting as a director of a company for any reason; or
- They have been convicted of an indictable offence which is not, or cannot be, spent; or
- A composition is made with that person's creditors generally in satisfaction of that person's debts; or
- They are not a shareholder (unless they are a co-optee or employee of the Association or anybody whose accounts must be consolidated with those of the Association); or
- They have absented themselves from 3 consecutive meetings of the board in one rolling twelve-month period without special leave of absence from the board; or
- A registered medical practitioner who is treating that person gives a written opinion to the Association stating that that person has become physically or mentally incapable of acting as a board member and may remain so for more than 3 months; or

- They are an employee and their contract of employment is terminated; or
- They are a resident and are in material or serious breach of their tenancy agreement or lease and fail to rectify the breach within a reasonable timeframe as agreed with the Association, or are subject to any of the following types of court order: anti-social behaviour order; anti-social behaviour injunction, demoted tenancy, or closure order;
- They are a specifically elected or appointed resident board member and cease to be a resident;

## Statement of Obligation

Each board member will be required to complete a statement of their obligations as a board member.

## Diversity and Inclusion

Unity recognises that there is no place for discrimination or harassment within its business. We are eager to promote an understanding of the importance of equality and diversity amongst our staff and board members and encourage good practice from our partner organisations. The commitments in our equality framework reflect our key aim of operating in a fair, open and accountable manner. We are working to foster a culture of respect based on understanding the equal value and worth of individuals so they can fulfil their potential. We have also made a commitment to ensure that our services are equally accessible to all of our customers, and that all of our customers have an opportunity to put their views forward.

## Review

We will review this policy at least every two years or when there are new codes of governance published by the NHF.

Review Date: **April 2017**

Next date of review: **April 2019**