

UNITY HOUSING ASSOCIATION - Board Member

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Introduction

Unity Housing Association expects all Board members to ensure that the Association complies with the 9 principles of good governance set out in the Excellence in Governance produced by the National Housing Federation and which are reproduced below. We are working to support and uphold the Code and believe that the foundation of good governance is a talented diverse and effective Board working as a team in partnership with the Chair of the Board.

The principles of good governance are:

Ethics

It operates according to high ethical standards, explicit values and the Federation's codes of governance and conduct.

Accountability

There is proper accountability to, and involvement of, all the organisation's stakeholders, primarily its residents.

Customer First

Organisations should put the needs of their existing and potential service users at the heart of business decisions and strategy.

Openness

There is a spirit of openness, making full disclosure of governance matters and other information.

Diversity and inclusion

There is fairness and equality of opportunity and a recognition of diversity in all aspects of the organisation's governance.

Review and renewal

There are formal and open processes for the periodic review of the board's own performance, and to ensure its renewal on an ongoing basis.

Clarity

There is clarity of roles and responsibilities between the organisation's board members, paid staff and shareholders.

Control

There are effective systems for internal delegation, audit, risk management and control. The board receives adequate and timely reports and advice to inform its decisions. The board has an effective relationship with internal auditors, external auditors and regulators.

Structures

There are effective staffing and committee structures to support the board's work.

Board Member - Role Profile

Each Board member has:

- a general duty to act in the interests of Unity Housing Association and its subsidiaries, being committed to the corporate objectives and core values.
- a duty to ensure that Unity Housing Association and its subsidiaries observes the Rules of the organisation.
- a duty to govern Unity Housing Association and its subsidiaries with proper skill and care, contributing to, abiding by and assuming collective responsibility for board decisions.

In addition, there are essential functions laid out in the NHF Code of Governance (2015). A copy of the Code will be provided for all board members and a briefing on any changes will be provided as and when such changes occur.

Leadership

Share accountability for the direction and control of the Association within the agreed strategy, policy and planning framework, reviewing that framework as necessary.

Ensure that obligations to stakeholders are understood and reflected in strategy and implementation.

Establish a strong and positive working relationship between the board, the Chief Executive and other senior staff.

Support the Chair in his/her role of providing strategic leadership and creating positive board climate.

In conjunction with the board as a whole, appoint and if necessary, dismiss/remove the Chief Executive and/or the Chair of the Board.

Strategy

Set objectives for the Association in the context of the Association's aims, strategy and policy and determine the strategic aims and outcomes required.

Review and evaluate current and future external opportunities, threats and risks together with current and future internal strengths and weaknesses to ensure effective decision making.

In conjunction with the board as a whole, be accountable for the quality and effectiveness of the Business Plan in contributing to delivering long term sustainability for the Association.

Performance monitoring

Ensure there are agreed budgets for both revenue and capital expenditure that drive the outcomes set in the Business Plan.

Review and monitor the performance of the Association against the Business Plan and ensure that the management information provided to the Board is of the nature and quality required.

Monitor the Association's performance in the light of customer feedback and the performance of comparable associations.

Risk

Ensure that there are systems in place to identify, manage and report risk to safeguard the Association's assets.

Agree policies and take decisions on all matters that might create significant financial or other risk to the Association.

Ensure the climate is monitored and appropriate actions taken to deliver a positive climate for staff and board members.

Governance

Ensure that the Association complies with all legal and statutory obligations and that all regulatory requirements are met.

In conjunction with the board as a whole, establish and review a Code of Conduct for all board and committee members and staff.

Assess how the Association follows the recommendations of the NHF Code of Governance (2015) and state compliance or non-compliance in the Association's annual review and accounts.

Personal Development

Be both well informed (undertake appropriate background reading, develop and maintain an appreciation of the key challenges faced by the Association) and contribute specialist knowledge, expertise and/or experience to the board.

Contribute to creating and sustaining the "learning board" by participating in or leading board induction and development activities.

Representation

Promote the reputation and image of the Association by representing the Association as an ambassador at key events and interlaces with tenants, stakeholders, staff etc, both internally and externally.

Board Member - Role Specification

The Board should possess the qualities required to lead the Association and its subsidiaries and control their affairs. Through annual individual and collective appraisal, the board will ensure that members have relevant skills and experience to lead the Association.

Knowledge

Understanding of current issues in affordable/social housing

Understanding of the social, economic and/or political context in which the Association operates.

Understanding of the regulatory and compliance framework within which the Association operates.

Knowledge of residents' needs and concerns and of the wider communities served by the Association.

Experience

Experience of working with or for not for profit, public sector, private sector and/or social enterprise bodies.

Experience of customer care and service delivery.

Experience of operating in a climate of significant change and challenge.

Experience of working as part of a team.

Abilities

Ability to make a constructive contribution to meetings through preparation and understanding

Ability to understand complex issues, including financial information Ability to take an active part in collective debate and decision-making Ability to attend Board meetings, training and development events and other corporate activities which may be held in the evening and at weekends

Skills

Good interpersonal and communication skills

Committee/meeting skills

Good problem solving skills

Personal Qualities

Commitment to the vision and values of Unity Housing Association

Commitment to equality and diversity in employment and service delivery

High standards of personal and professional integrity

From time to time the Board will require members with specific expertise in the following areas:

Accountancy, financial management and treasury management

Legal knowledge relevant to housing

Asset management, development and procurement

Procurement, partnering and contracts

PR, media and communications

Human resource management

Social exclusion, worklessness and community investment

Board Member - Competencies

Introduction

Unity Housing Association has reviewed the competencies needed by board members to ensure that the Association is effectively governed. The following list the competencies expected of each board member.

Leadership

Inspires confidence in key stakeholders, the Association's executive team and staff members.

Leads by example and inspires loyalty and commitment to the Association's success.

Demonstrates commitment to the Association's values.

Creates an expectation of high performance against high standards.

Delegates responsibility appropriately.

Strategy

Ensures all the business implications are researched and taken into account when considering plans or actions.

Understands the Association's wider operating environment and emerging trends across the social housing domain.

Recognises the need to balance obligations to residents, staff and the wider communities within which the Association operates.

Takes into account the longer term needs of the Association and identifies risks and opportunities that arise.

Performance monitoring

Keeps a strong focus on performance against the Business Plan, scrutinising, monitoring and providing feedback on performance against financial and nonfinancial measures.

Challenges underlying evidence, information and assumptions before drawing conclusions

Offers appropriate and relevant comparisons or parallels.

Ensures the customer perspective is taken into account in assessing performance against targets.

Keeps to the required (strategic) level of detail.

Risk

Demonstrates clarity of thought and objectivity in actively evaluating risks to the Association

Ensures that identified risks are managed in a focused and cost-effective manner

Demonstrates perceptiveness and intuition, focusing on the essentials and how they may impact on different aspects of the Association's business

Identifies when external, independent professional advice is required

Governance

Adheres to relevant financial, legal and domain regulation

Ensures highest standards of probity and integrity are maintained throughout the Association.

Demonstrates and supports renewal and succession planning for the board

Demonstrates a sound understanding of individual and collective responsibility for decision making.

Personal development

Carries out relevant reading and preparatory work to ensure effective participation in board and other meetings.

Participates in regular board development and training sessions.

Maintains an understanding of the wider political, environmental, social and technological environments in which the Association operates.

Applies specialist knowledge appropriately in arrange of contexts and ensures that the knowledge base is maintained and remains current.

Representation

Acts as an ambassador for the Association, seeking opportunities to influence external agencies or individuals who can contribute to the Association's success.

Makes the most of opportunities to advance the Association's interests, promote its activities and enhance its image.

Effectively lobbies key people in the interests of the Association.

Time Commitment

The Board meets six 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)
- Training and development as identified by the annual appraisal process
- Additional duties required of chairs, deputy chairs and board champions.
- Team building

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

Equality and Diversity

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 fulfill 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.

Annual Appraisals of Board Members

Board Members will be appraised in relation to the

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Review

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

April 2017

Next date of review: April 2019