

Corporate Policies & Procedures



Membership Policy

1.	Policy objective
1.1	<p>The purpose of this Policy is to set out the approach taken by Watford Community Housing (WCH) on membership. This Policy includes information on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The eligibility criteria for becoming a member; • The role and purpose of a member; and • The key elements of WCH's membership strategy.
1.2	<p>The Policy has been drafted having regard to WCH's agreed vision, values and Communities Strategy as well as relevant guidance and legislation. The Policy is underpinned by detailed operational procedures which are to be formulated and developed in full consultation with members, tenants and staff as appropriate.</p>
2.	Legislative or regulatory requirement
	Watford Community Housing Rules – B15 Tenant Involvement
3.	Scope and definitions
3.1	<p>The term 'tenant' has been used throughout this Policy. Unless otherwise specified, this is taken to mean those who are permitted to become full WCH members.</p>
4.	Policy statement
4.1	<p>WCH is a membership organisation. Our membership underpins everything we do and is a key part of our governance and operations. It is a primary element of our system of accountability, where the Group Board governs wherever possible on the basis of the views of the membership and seeks to take the membership with it on business decisions. The Group shall actively promote tenant and leaseholder membership and involvement.</p>
4.2	<p>We will seek actively to encourage all tenants and leaseholders to become members and to develop our membership:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to ensure that members understand and develop their sense of ownership of and identity with WCH with the intention that members take a shared responsibility for WCH and our long-term vision; • to enable members to shape the general direction of WCH and our key strategies, policies and plans; • to develop a relationship of trust and shared understanding between tenants, staff and Group Board members where all parties work together as equal partners in delivering high quality homes and services and neighbourhoods where people want to live and stay.

5.	Membership
5.1	Eligibility
5.1.1	Membership eligibility is set out in WCH Rules. All members are required to act in the interests of WCH.
5.1.2	<p>Full voting membership is open to those, including employees, aged over 16 years and who are WCH:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenants; • Leaseholders; or • Shared owners.
5.1.3	Joint tenants are entitled to separate and individual membership.
5.1.4	We will actively offer membership to all tenants through the means set out at section 5.2, and the Group Board will admit only those who fulfil the criteria at sections 5.1.5-5.1.10 below.
5.1.5	<p>Membership is not open to tenants whose tenancies have been demoted due to tenancy breaches. Associate non-voting membership is open to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • residents of WCH homes who are not tenants of WCH; and • residents living in Local Community Areas who are not tenants of WCH.
5.1.6	Membership will end once a member's eligibility for membership ceases as described in C15 of the WCH rules.
5.1.7	<p>A Member shall immediately cease to be a Member if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • C15.1 they die, or • C15.2 they are expelled under Rule C16, or • C15.3 they withdraw from the Association by giving notice to the Secretary, which shall be effective on receipt, unless they are one of the last three remaining Members, in which case they must provide at least one month's written notice of the withdrawal to the Secretary, or • C15.4 they cease to be eligible to be a Member under rule C9, or • C15.5 they become a local authority person and together with such other persons who are Members their number will be in excess of 33 1/3% of the total number of Members. In the event two or more Members become local authority persons at the same time, the Group Board shall decide at its absolute discretion which persons shall cease to be a Member; or, • C15.6 in the case of an Associate Member, they cease to meet the relevant qualification criteria for associate membership.
5.1.8	Membership will be a nominal 10p per member with this sum will being paid by WCH for full voting members. All members will be recorded in the Register of Members.
5.1.9	A member may be expelled by a special resolution agreed at a Special General Meeting of the membership in accordance with the WCH Rules.
5.1.10	Membership is personal to a member and cannot be transferred. There is no actual monetary value attached to a membership share, it cannot be exchanged for a cashable sum upon a member's death.

<p>5.2</p> <p>5.2.1</p> <p>5.2.2</p>	<p>Maximising Memberships</p> <p>Becoming a WCH member is made as simple and straightforward as possible through completion of an easy to read membership form (available online and in different formats with support available for those with sight impairments or reading or writing difficulties).</p> <p>WCH will use the following activities to maximise full voting membership:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Membership is offered through our Involvement Menu, when there are any changes to tenancies and during tenancy checks; • Membership is promoted in newsletters and publicity; • Membership is encouraged and promoted as part of the new tenant welcome and settle procedure; • Membership events are open and publicised to all tenants and leaseholders and attending non-members will be encouraged to become members at these events. At formal membership meetings only full members will be eligible to vote; and • All staff who are tenants of WCH are encouraged to be a full member. <p>We pay particular regard to eliminating barriers to encourage membership amongst the vulnerable, the elderly, those with learning difficulties and those from minority and under-represented groups.</p>
<p>5.3</p> <p>5.3.1</p> <p>5.3.2</p>	<p>Features of Membership</p> <p>Full membership of WCH entails the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members will be invited to and may attend and vote at all General Meetings; • Members will be invited to the Annual General Meeting (AGM) where WCH's Annual Report is presented for approval by the membership; • Proposed changes to the Rules are considered at the AGM, or if called a Special General Meeting (SGM) and presented for approval; • Members may call a Special General Meeting in accordance with the WCH Rules which require that 25 members sign an order calling such a meeting; • Members are entitled to stand for the Gateway Membership Team (GMT) and/or Group Board and if applicable, to vote in elections; • Members, in conjunction with the Group Board, may also vote to remove a Group Board member by a three-quarter majority at an SGM called for that purpose; • Members have a duty to ensure that the Rules are fit for purpose and in the interest of tenants and the Group. The membership must vote in favour of a rule change at the AGM or an SGM for it to take effect; • Members may submit membership proposals on strategic and policy issues to the Group Board through GMT in accordance with section 7 below; • Members will be invited to participate in discussions about key strategies, policies and plans through a variety of means. Policies will be developed in accordance with agreed processes, which will include reference to the membership over key policy decisions; and • Any other member benefits developed by WCH. <p>We will aim to develop a range of interesting and innovative methods to engage with our membership and review the effectiveness of these methods of engagement both in terms of numbers of members engaging and in terms of quality of engagement and the impact derived.</p>

6.	Gateway Membership Team (GMT)
6.1	We recognise GMT as the representative body of the membership and of all tenants and leaseholders.
6.2	The Group Board works in close partnership with the GMT to fulfil WCH's objectives. GMT has a particular role and responsibility in relation to ensuring the implementation of the Communities Strategy.
6.3	The remit and terms of reference of GMT are set out in the <i>Gateway Committee Standing Orders</i> .
7.	Member Proposals
7.1	All member proposals received, and actions taken in relation to them will be recorded and available for inspection by members.
7.2	GMT will submit member proposals to the Group Board if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • they relate to strategic or policy issues; or • proposals of a comparable nature have not been previously submitted to the Group Board.
7.3	GMT may choose to recommend that the Group Board supports or rejects a member proposal.
7.4	If the Group Board rejects a member proposal its reasons for doing so will be recorded and communicated to GMT and the member who made the proposal.
8.	Responsibilities
8.1	The Chief Executive Officer has overall responsibility for ensuring the effectiveness of the Communities Strategy including the empowerment of the WCH membership. The Director of Operations , reporting to the Chief Executive Officer, will supervise the delivery of the Communities Strategy.
8.2	The Head of Customer Relationships , reporting to the Director of Operations, and working in partnership with the GMT, will work to develop the membership and implement this Policy.
8.3	The Company Secretary will be responsible for the legal administration of membership functions, liaising with the Head of Customer Relationships and Senior Community Engagement Officer in carrying out these functions.
8.4	The Group Board is responsible for approving this Policy, and any changes thereto, once every three years, or earlier in relation to any substantive changes, following consultation with the GMT .
8.5	All employees, tenants, leaseholders, members and Group Board members are informed that WCH is a membership organisation and of the importance of membership to WCH.
8.6	We pay particular attention to ensuring that all full members and potential full members are aware of the advantages, rights and responsibilities of membership.
8.7	All Directors, Heads of Service and Managers are responsible for ensuring that those they manage are aware of WCH membership functions.

8.8	Membership is actively promoted.
9.	Monitoring and Review
9.1	In partnership with the GMT and as part of its review of the Communities Strategy, WCH will annually review its approach to membership particularly considering: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The numbers of potential members becoming members, paying particular regard to the numbers of members from traditionally under-represented groups; • The quality of engagement with the membership and the outcomes and impact arising from that engagement; • The relationship between the developing membership and other aspects of the Communities Strategy; and • Compliance with statutory regulations.
9.2	The GMT will be consulted on any substantive changes to this Policy during its regular review or otherwise.
10.	Related Documents
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WCH Rules • Communities Strategy • Register of Members • Gateway Committee Standing Orders
11.	Approval
Approved by	GMT 15 April 2020 Group Board 18 May 2020
Date of approval:	May 2020
Review date:	May 2023
Policy owner:	Company Secretary