



GROUP MEMBERSHIP POLICY

POLICY IMPLEMENTATION CHECKLIST	
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Author:	Integration Director
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Diversity compliant:	Yes
Equality Impact Assessment required:	Yes
Data Protection compliant:	Yes
Health & Safety compliant:	Yes
Procedure implemented:	Yes
QL system changes made:	N/A
KPIs / reporting arrangements implemented:	Yes
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Group, including Caledonia and Cordale Housing Associations, seeks as broad and as representative a membership across each Association's area of operations as it can secure. Tenants and other local people in the area with an interest in our work are encouraged to become members. Local community groups and organisations also have a role to play as members. The contribution of local people is invaluable in terms of their skills and local knowledge. The Group will publicise separately other informal mechanisms for the involvement and participation of local people in the management and work of its Associations.
- 1.2 This policy sets out how applications for membership of the Associations in the Group will be dealt with and criteria for approval by the Group's relevant governing bodies. It aims to ensure the Group operates in line with the Rules and associated legal and regulatory expectations of each of its Associations.

2. Membership

- 2.1 Those people entitled to join the Associations operating in the Group are detailed in this section. Membership of the governing bodies of the Associations operating in the Group is covered by a separate Governing Body Membership Policy.
- 2.2 This membership policy is governed by the provisions of the Rules of each of the Group's Associations. For the avoidance of doubt, in cases of conflict, the Rules and legal and regulatory requirements take precedence over any provision within this policy. In promoting open membership, the Group places few restrictions on those eligible to join each of its Associations. As a general criteria however, prospective members should have a genuine interest in the relevant Association's work. This may include people whose only or principal home is within the area of operation of one of the Group's Associations.
- 2.3 There are two main restrictions attached to membership:
 - (a) In accordance with the Rules individuals representing an organisation which is a member of the Group may not be individual members in their own right. Representatives of organisations who are already individual members will have their individual membership suspended whilst they represent that organisation
 - (b) Members or representatives of member organisations should be 16 years of age or over.

3. Promotion of Membership

- 3.1 The Group will aim to promote membership to people and organisations in the following ways:
 - a) Encouraging new tenants to join at the point when they sign their tenancy agreement.
 - b) Producing leaflets about the organisation that encourage membership.
 - c) Liaising with tenants and residents' organisations, where an Association in the Group has an interest, to encourage membership.
 - d) Promoting membership in the organisation's regular Newsletter and on its website.

- e) Promoting the Group and its Associations in the local media.
- f) Appealing to or inviting applications from individuals with specific occupational skills/backgrounds to meet skill gaps. For example, (but not exclusively) we would welcome applications from those with skills or experience in:

- Financial Management
- Housing Management
- Building and Maintenance
- Community Care Issues
- Working in the Local Community
- Business strategy or management skills
- Legal expertise
- Human Resources
- Press/Media or public relations

- 3.2 Whilst encouraging potential tenants to become members, the Group and its Associations will however make it explicit that membership is not a condition of being allocated a tenancy.

4. Equality of Opportunity

- 4.1 The Group is committed to promoting diversity and ensuring equality of opportunity. As such, we will strive to ensure our membership reflects the communities we serve. We will have in place arrangements for monitoring the composition of our membership to enable periodic assessment of the extent to which it is representative.
- 4.2 Membership will be open to all those entitled to join regardless of their personal characteristics or circumstances. This includes their colour, race, nationality, ethnic or national origins; gender, age, sexuality, disability; religion or beliefs; and marital, pregnancy, maternity and family status.

5. Procedure for Applying for Membership

- 5.1 Individuals or organisations should apply to join as members using the relevant Association's Membership Application form, which should be completed and returned to the registered office, accompanied by the sum of £1.00.
- 5.2 Applications for membership will be considered by the Governing Body and each application will be considered on its own merits. Applications submitted will be considered at the next scheduled meeting of the Governing Body following receipt. If an application is received less than seven days before the next scheduled Governing Body meeting, it will be up to the Governing Body to decide whether they consider the application at that meeting. If it is not considered, the application will be considered at the next subsequent meeting.
- 5.3 No applications for membership will be considered within the 14 days preceding the date of a general meeting of the organisation.

6. Grounds for Refusing Membership

- 6.1 Whilst it remains the relevant Governing Body's prerogative to decide upon each application for membership, there is a general presumption that applications will be accepted and it is only in exceptional circumstances that an application will be refused.

6.2 Whilst it would be inappropriate to be prescriptive, grounds for refusal can be summarised thus:

a) Conflicting Interest

Certain aspects of the relevant Association's work must remain confidential. This is particularly the case in development activity where prior knowledge of a potential bid could jeopardise the relevant Association's interests, or the interests of another Association in the Group.

It is considered that this ground for refusing membership would extend to individuals with an occupational or financial interest in property development. It may for instance be inappropriate for a property speculator to be admitted to membership. Similarly, it may be inappropriate for an employee of another housing association with a competing interest to be admitted. This in certain circumstances may also apply to Governing Body members of another association.

The relevant Governing Body may however wish to extend membership to such individuals but with the stipulation that it would be inappropriate for such persons to seek nomination and be appointed to the Governing Body.

b) Overt Groupings

Where it is evident to the relevant Governing Body that overt groupings are forming whose interests are considered not to be in accord with those of the relevant Association, the Governing Body may consider refusing membership.

This would be unlikely to apply to professional interests such as too many housing professionals or social workers, but could apply to for example, political groupings.

It should however be clear that an individual's personal affiliations should not be a bar to membership and the refusal should not be based solely upon the clear emergence of groupings whose concerns lay in their collective affiliations to a particular philosophy or interest rather than to the ethos of the Association.

7. Approval of Membership

7.1 If an application for membership has been approved by the Governing Body, the member will be informed in writing. Their name will be included in the Register of Members within seven working days of the meeting.

7.2 Upon having their membership approved, members will receive:

- A share certificate
- A copy of the relevant Association's Rules
- A letter highlighting Members' obligations to the organisation
- Details of how members may stand for the Governing Body
- A copy of the latest Annual Report
- A copy of the latest Newsletter, and any other material the organisation feels will be useful for a new member.

7.3 During the period of membership a member should expect to receive:

- Regular Newsletters
- The Annual Report
- The Annual Accounts
- Invitations to key events
- Invitations to the Annual General Meeting and any Special General Meetings, which will be sent in accordance with the Rules and at least 14 days in advance of the meeting.

7.4 Members attending Annual or Special General Meetings are entitled to vote in accordance with the procedures laid down in the relevant Association's Rules. Members are entitled to stand for election to the Governing Body and to nominate and vote in the election of Governing Body Members.

7.5 If an application for membership has been unsuccessful, the applicant will be informed in writing giving the reasons for the refusal and the money returned along with the application. This will be done within 10 working days of the decision being made. Membership will only be refused in exceptional circumstances, as long as the application is made in accordance with the organisation's Rules. The relevant Governing Body however, reserves the right to refuse membership should they consider it in the interests of their Association to do so. A full record will be kept of all occasions when membership has been refused.

7.6 Reasons for membership refusal might include where the relevant Association believes the applicant has a conflict of interest or where a person has acted and continues to act in a way that is contrary to the interests of the organisation.

8. Appeals

8.1 A person whose application for membership has been refused may appeal the decision.

8.2 Appeals should be made in writing and state if a personal hearing is being requested. Appeals should be made within 10 working days of the applicant being informed of the refusal of the application for membership.

8.3 If a personal appeals hearing is requested and granted, the appellant may be accompanied by an individual of choice. Such person will have the right to speak on behalf of the appellant. The appellant should state the reasons why the application for membership should be reconsidered. Appeals will be heard by a small panel of Governing Body Members from the relevant Association and their decision will be final.

8.4 Appellants will be informed of the outcome of the decision of the Appeals Panel in writing, within 14 working days of the appeal being heard.

8.5 If the appellant has been unsuccessful, no further application for membership from that person will be considered for a period of 12 months or other period of time as may be determined by the Governing Body. An applicant will be entitled to reapply at that time and the application will be considered afresh.

9. Register of Members

9.1 Each of the Group's Associations will maintain a register of members in accordance with its Rules. The register will list the name, address, date of membership approval, and membership number of each member.

- 9.2 A second copy of the register will be available for inspection by any member or person with an interest in the members of the organisation.
- 9.3 A request to inspect the register must be in writing sent to the Secretary, stating the reasons for inspection. The person requesting the inspection will be informed in writing if the request has been granted, and specifying the arrangements for the inspection. The inspection itself will take place in an appropriate nominated location of the relevant Association, at a mutually convenient time and date, with staff in attendance.

10. Ending Membership

- 10.1 In accordance with the relevant Association's Rules a member's membership of the Association may be brought to an end in the following ways:
- (a) Writing to the Secretary at the registered office giving 7 days' notice of intention to resign,
 - (b) The Governing Body being satisfied that a member has failed to inform the organisation of a change of address within three months of moving.
 - (c) If the member has failed to attend or submit apologies for five consecutive Annual General Meetings.
 - (d) If the member has ceased to fulfil the membership criteria
 - (e) If as a result of a complaint, two-thirds of the members vote at a Special General Meeting to expel the member
- 10.2 Expulsion under clauses (b) and (c) above will not be effective until the Governing Body has made all reasonable endeavours to trace the defaulting member and/or to ascertain the reason for their non-attendance at Annual General Meetings.
- 10.3 If the Governing Body is satisfied that the defaulting Member has failed to advise of a change of address or to attend or submit apologies for five Annual General Meetings for reasons considered by the Governing Body as excusable then the membership of the defaulting Member will not be brought to an end.
- 10.4 Examples of what might be "excusable" are:
- Failure of the relevant Association to serve notice at the correct address according to its records.
 - Failure of administration by the relevant Association in any way.
 - If the Governing Body is satisfied that the Member has not understood their obligations in regard to these matters.

This list is illustrative only and is not intended to be exhaustive.

11. Monitoring

- 11.1 Each of the Associations will analyse membership data annually to ascertain whether the membership is representative of the communities they serve and the route by which membership was requested. The Governing Body will be presented with and consider a report on the membership data and decide upon any action to increase membership and/or encourage representation from specific parts of the community.

12. Data Protection

- 12.1 Caledonia Group regards privacy as important and any personal information given to any of its Associations will be handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998.
- 12.2 Any information provided will only be used for the reasons specified, and it will not be shared with any third party without consent unless required by law.