

COMMUNITY VOICE CONSTITUTION



Ongo Homes and its tenants working together to improve the quality of life for all Ongo housing and communities.

1. NAME

1.1 The group will be known as Community Voice.

2. AREA OF BENEFIT

2.1 Tenants and residents living within the geographical areas where Ongo Homes (OH), part of Ongo Partnership Ltd, operates.

3. ROLE

3.1 To be the main tenant umbrella group that represents the views, concerns and interests of all residents living within the Ongo Homes region on all matters relating to the planning, delivery and monitoring of housing and related support services.

4. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

4.1 To monitor, review, discuss and decide upon operational and customer facing issues relating to OH housing policy including service provision in order to influence improvements to housing and communities within the area that Ongo Homes operates.

4.2 To represent the views and act on behalf of the wider OH resident base through discussion and feedback on a range of community and environmental tenant-related housing issues.

4.3 To manage a devolved budget to pursue its stated objectives and to ensure that Value for Money remains at the forefront of all it does.

4.4 To ensure all members participate in learning and development opportunities.

4.5 To promote greater understanding of housing and community related issues to all residents within the OH area.

4.6 To forge links/networks locally and nationally with other tenant umbrella groups and lobby for any change, where required.

4.7 To actively promote the role and work of Community Voice to all residents where Ongo Homes operates.

5. MEMBERSHIP

5.1 The majority of the membership will be tenants of OH.

5.2 Membership shall be open to any OH Tenants and Leaseholders (including OH Tenant Shareholders).

5.3 If an additional family member residing in an OH tenanted property expresses an interest in attending, this can be considered (decision by CV Chair would be based on numbers of current membership).

5.4 Membership will be open to accommodate the diverse needs of all OH residents.

5.5 An annual audit will be carried out to ensure that the composition of the group reflects the diverse nature of the OH resident base.

6. COMMITTEE

6.1 All group members will be recognised as the Committee.

6.2 The composition of the Committee should consist of at least 70% tenants.

6.3 The four Officer positions shall be Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and Treasurer.

6.4 All Officers of the committee must be tenants of OH.

6.5 The four Community Voice Officers can apply for membership to the Communities Board.

6.6 The four Community Voice Officers cannot apply for membership to other Ongo Boards, e.g. Ongo Homes, Ongo Partnership.

6.7 The Officers of the committee will be elected annually at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) by the membership. Anyone wishing to nominate themselves for an Officer role at the AGM must have been a member of the group for a period of 12 months, prior to the AGM.

6.8 Officers shall stand down at the AGM but are eligible for re-election.

6.9 In addition the Chair and Vice Chair of Community Voice should not be a Chair or Vice Chair of any other OH customer engagement structure (excluding resident associations & community groups). If putting up for office at a the AGM they must understand that if they are elected into post

that they must relinquish any other Chair or Vice Chair positions already held in any other customer engagement structures.

6.10 A self nomination form will be provided to members prior to the AGM and will include a person specification for individuals who want to nominate themselves for the role of chair, vice chair, secretary or treasurer. This provides details of the responsibilities and main skills required for each officer role.

6.11 A proxy vote for the AGM can be made by members who have regularly attended meetings with approval given by members at the meeting.

7. DUTIES OF OFFICERS

7.1 **THE CHAIRPERSON** (or in his or her absence, the vice-chairperson) or another committee member shall conduct the meetings of the group. The Chairperson should influence agenda items and the scope of Community Voice meetings. The Chairperson will make sure that all members have the opportunity to contribute to meetings and that those in attendance adhere to the customer engagement volunteer code of conduct. In addition the Chairperson will attend other meetings and events in their capacity as the lead representative of Community Voice.

7.2 In the event of the Chairperson position becoming vacant during the term of office, then the Vice Chair will automatically take over the role until the next AGM meeting.

7.3 **THE VICE CHAIRPERSON** in the absence of the Chair, the Vice Chairperson shall conduct meetings of the group and attend other meetings and events as a representative of Community Voice. The Vice Chairperson will be involved with influencing agenda items and the information for Community Voice meetings. The Vice Chairperson will support the Chairperson in ensuring that all members have the opportunity to contribute to meetings and that those in attendance adhere to the customer engagement code of conduct.

7.4 **THE TREASURER** shall open and maintain a bank account in the name of Community Voice. The group shall appoint 3 signatories (one must be the Treasurer). Each of the signatories must live in a different household and must be a member of Community Voice. Any two of the signatories shall sign cheques for Community Voice. The Treasurer will keep a true and accurate record of all income and expenditure and will give a monthly update to Community Voice members in addition to an annual report at the AGM. The treasurer will also be responsible for the payment of legitimate expenses to Community Voice members and dealing with any arrangements and invoices for all Community Voice related supplies and services. OH Officers will

arrange an annual independent check of the accounts, subject to internal and external audit requirements. All financial records shall be open to scrutiny by OH Officers and Community Voice members

- 7.5 **THE SECRETARY** shall be responsible for taking the minutes of meetings. The minutes will be agreed with Officers of OH and the Chairperson and Vice Chairperson of Community Voice.
- 7.6 In the event of the positions of Vice Chair, treasurer and secretary becoming vacant during their term of office, then an election will be held at the next available Community Voice meeting to recruit a replacement.
- 7.7 Community Voice officers will be required to undertake regular training opportunities in relation to their specific role and in addition will be responsible for researching good practice ideas, planning and implementing an annual training programme for Community Voice members and arranging conference attendance for members.
- 7.8 As and when a need arises Community Voice officers will be required to make decisions on behalf of the group. They will discuss and agree on the specific issue at their officer meetings and then feedback information and updates to the wider group.

8. SUB/WORKING GROUPS

- 8.1 At various times it will be necessary for Community Voice to convene working groups for a particular purpose. The majority of these will be of a task and finish nature.
- 8.2 Community Voice Working Groups can either include invitations to members only or a combination of Community Voice and Menu of Options representatives. This is dependent on the purpose of the group and will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.
- 8.3 OH Customer Engagement team and Community Voice shall agree the sub/working groups, size and composition of membership and method of invitations. To ensure a fair balance of representation, the level of interest from the Menu of Options will be taken into account.
- 8.4 The establishment and purpose of any working group must be agreed and minuted at a Community Voice meeting. Community Voice will elect members to sit on working groups.
- 8.5 On behalf of Community Voice, each working group will have delegated decision making powers if this is within the terms of reference for the group or specific project.

8.6 Each working group will give feedback to Community Voice for information purposes periodically or when considered necessary.

9. MEETINGS

- 9.1 Meetings will be arranged by mutual agreement between OH and Community Voice. They will be held at appropriate venues and appropriate times.
- 9.2 Meetings will be held on a regular basis but no less than six times per year.
- 9.3 Community Voice members can request the attendance of an OH staff representative to respond to questions on a certain issue.
- 9.4 Meetings will last for no more than three hours, unless prior agreement has been made with OH Officers.
- 9.5 A group meeting will only be deemed to be quorate if at least 10 members are present (including the CV officers). The majority of those present must be tenants of OH.
- 9.6 Minutes or notes shall be taken at all meetings and made available to OH Officers and Community Voice members.
- 9.7 Invited guests may attend meetings in an advisory capacity or as observers. Notice shall be given to OH customer engagement team of proposed invited guests. Requests to attend shall be given to the Customer Engagement Section who will log names and devise a rota of attendance. Decisions on observer attendance will be at the discretion of the Chair of Community Voice.
- 9.8 Approved minutes will be published on the OH website.
- 9.9 Community Voice will write to individuals from its membership where no representatives have been in attendance and no apologies have been received, at three consecutive Community Voice meetings.

10. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETINGS (AGM)

- 10.1 An AGM must be held once every calendar year, at intervals of no more than 18 months.
- 10.2 Community Voice members will collectively determine the date of the AGM. A minimum of 21 days notice in writing of the date of the AGM will be provided to all members. The AGM shall consider the accounts, balance sheets and the reports of the committee and auditors.
- 10.3 Officers of Community Voice will be elected annually at the AGM.

11. VOTING RIGHTS

- 11.1 The committee will take decisions by consensus.
- 11.2 Usually the vote will be by a show of hands, or in very exceptional circumstances a ballot may be requested. The minutes will include details of the votes: for, against and abstains.
- 11.3 Each member will have one vote (including the chair).
- 11.4 In the case of a tied vote, the chair will have an additional casting vote.
- 11.5 On tenant issues, only tenants can vote.

12. FINANCE

- 12.1 All monies granted or raised by Community Voice shall be applied to furthering its aims and objectives.
- 12.2 The Treasurer shall keep proper account of finances.
- 12.3 Community Voice will adhere to any relevant financial regulations.
- 12.4 The Community Voice officer group will meet on a regular basis to agree and monitor expenditure against the Community Voice budget.
- 12.5 OH funding to Community Voice will include expenditure for items such as travel, training, administration, ICT (Information Communication Technology), hospitality and payment for venues.
- 12.6 Community Voice will ensure that Value for Money remains at the forefront when making any decisions on spends from their budget.

13. CODE OF CONDUCT

- 13.1 All members shall sign up to and conduct themselves with acceptable behaviour at all meetings in accordance with the Customer Engagement volunteer's code of conduct. In addition, all members will work to relevant OH policies where appropriate.
- 13.2 Membership to Community Voice may be withdrawn by the Customer Engagement team to individuals that breach the OH Volunteers Code of Conduct.

14. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

- 14.1 Membership shall be open, irrespective of age, race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, religious or political beliefs, gender, sexuality, transgender or disability.
- 14.2 The group will actively encourage membership from all diverse sections of the community to ensure that its make-up is reflective of the neighbourhoods that it serves.
- 14.3 The group recognises the value of diversity in its membership.
- 14.4 Members of the group will demonstrate a commitment to creating an environment that is free from harassment and other discrimination.
- 14.5 All Community Voice Officers will agree to undertake mandatory equality and diversity training on an annual basis.

15. CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION

- 15.1 Any proposed amendments to this constitution shall be put to a Community Voice meeting for consideration or will be discussed at a specific Community Voice Constitution Review Workshop.
- 15.2 If the meeting has agreed to the proposed amendment, the proposal shall then be forwarded to OH Executive Management team (EMT). If approval is granted, the proposed amended constitution should then be circulated to all members at least 10 days prior to the meeting at which it will be considered for adoption.
- 15.3 Any amendment shall require the approval of a majority of members present and voting.

16. DISSOLUTION

- 16.1 If the committee decides there are grounds to dissolve Community Voice, it will propose this to OH EMT.
- 16.2 EMT shall be able to take or propose action to remedy the situation and can choose to continue the group, either in the same manner or in any other format/structure which is appropriate to meeting the needs of the organisation.
- 16.3 If Community Voice be dissolved, then after the satisfaction of all debts and liabilities, any remaining assets will be donated to an organisation with similar aims – this will be decided at a specific meeting.