

# COMMUNITY VOICE CONSTITUTION



**Ongo and its tenants working together to improve the quality of life for all Ongo tenants and communities**

## **1. NAME**

1.1 The group is known as Community Voice

## **2. AREA OF BENEFIT**

2.1 Tenants and residents living within the geographical areas where Ongo Homes operates.

## **3. ROLE**

3.1 To be the main tenant body representing the views, concerns and interests of Ongo tenants on all matters relating to the planning, delivery and monitoring of housing and related support services.

3.2 For Community Voice Members to formally approve new and fully reviewed Ongo Homes customer facing, operational policies.

## **4. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

4.1 To monitor, review, discuss and decide on operational and customer facing issues, influencing Ongo Homes housing policy. To include service provision to influence improvements to housing and communities within the areas that Ongo operates.

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

4.3 To enable true customer voice via Ongo Homes Board delegated decision making to Community Voice on customer facing operational policies.

4.4 To promote greater understanding of housing and community related issues to all residents within the Ongo areas of operation.

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

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

## **5. MEMBERSHIP**

- 5.1 The majority of the membership will be Ongo tenants.
- 5.2 Membership will be open to accommodate the diverse needs of all Ongo Homes residents.
- 5.3 Membership shall be open to any Ongo Tenant (including joint tenancies) or Leaseholder (unless a breach to the volunteer's code of conduct applies).
- 5.4 If an additional family member residing in an Ongo tenanted property expresses an interest in attending, this can be considered (decision by Community Voice Chair based on numbers of current membership).
- 5.5 Community Voice tenant and leaseholder members can apply to be an Ongo Tenant Shareholder.

## **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 All group members will be required to participate in learning and development opportunities.
- 6.4 Community Voice (CV) Officer positions shall be Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and Treasurer
- 6.5 All Officers of the committee must be tenants of Ongo.
- 6.6 The four Officers will influence future agenda items and meet on a monthly basis to prepare for each CV meeting.
- 6.7 The four CV Officers can apply for membership to the Communities Board.
- 6.8 The Chair & Vice Chair of CV cannot apply for membership to the Ongo Homes Board.
- 6.9 The Officers will be elected annually at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) by the membership. Anyone wishing to nominate themselves for an Officer role must have been a member of the group for a period of six months prior to the AGM.

For those who have not been a member for six months, are interested in an Officer role and have the skills required, they can nominate themselves as an Acting Officer (note - those who have been members of the group for six months and have the relevant skills, will take priority).

The Officers can serve for a maximum period of four years and be re-elected at each AGM during that time if they wish to do so. This can be extended for a

further three years if no other members wish to take on the officer role/s. Should a time arise when all four officers are due to step down at the same time due to meeting their four-year term, Customer Engagement will decide which two of the four officer roles will be extended for a further one year term.

- 6.10 Officers shall stand down at the AGM and will be eligible for re-election unless they have served a period of four years as an Officer (or a period of five, six or seven years should special discretion have been granted by Customer Engagement).
- 6.11 In addition, the Chair & Vice Chair of CV should not be a Chair or Vice Chair of any other Ongo customer engagement structure (excluding resident associations & community groups). When putting up for an Officer position at the AGM, they must understand that if they are elected to the position that they must relinquish any other Chair or Vice Chair positions already held in any other customer engagement structures.
- 6.12 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 and a closing date for submitting nominations.
- 6.13 A proxy vote for the AGM can be put forward by CV members who regularly attend 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 CV meetings. The Chairperson will make sure that all members can 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 CV.
- 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, shall conduct meetings of the group and attend other meetings and events as a representative of CV. The Vice Chairperson will be involved with influencing agenda items and the information for CV meetings. The Vice Chairperson will support the Chairperson in ensuring that all members can contribute to meetings and that those in attendance adhere to the customer engagement code of conduct.
- 7.4 **THE TREASURER** will manage a devolved budget to pursue CVs stated objectives and ensuring that Value for Money remains at the forefront of all it

does. The treasurer will open and maintain a bank account in the name of CV and 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 CV Officer. The Treasurer will have use of a bank card to make withdrawals or payments on behalf of the group.

The Treasurer must not disclose any financial information to the CV Officers or to the wider members of CV in relation to the bank details, e.g., pin numbers or passwords for the account.

For payments made by cheque, either of the two signatories shall sign cheques on behalf of CV.

Arrangements for Online banking will be made available.

The Treasurer will keep a true and accurate record of all income and expenditure and will give a monthly update to CV meetings in addition to an annual report to the CV AGM. The Treasurer will also be responsible for the payment of legitimate expenses to CV members and dealing with any arrangements and invoices for all CV related supplies and services.

The CV Officers will have full responsibility to discuss and agree on all future spends to be made from the CV budget, that are in addition to the normal expenses for members.

The Customer Engagement Team will arrange for an annual independent check of the CV accounts, subject to internal and external audit requirements. All financial records shall be open to scrutiny by Ongo and CV members.

7.5 The **SECRETARY** shall be responsible for taking the minutes of meetings. The minutes will be agreed with Officers of Ongo and the Chairperson and Vice Chairperson of CV.

#### 7.6 **CV OFFICERS - Miscellaneous**

In the event of the positions of Vice Chair, Treasurer and Secretary becoming vacant during their term of office, members would be asked for their interest, an election would then be held at the next available CV meeting to recruit a replacement.

7.7 CV Officers will be required to undertake regular training opportunities in relation to their specific role. And in addition, they will be responsible for researching good practice ideas, conferences and arranging training for CV members.

7.8 As and when the need arises, CV Officers will be required to take decisions on behalf of the group. They will discuss and agree on the specific issue at their Officer meetings and then will feedback information and updates to the wider CV group.

## 8. **SUB/WORKING GROUPS**

- 8.1 At various times it will be necessary for CV to convene working groups for a particular purpose. The majority of these will be short term of a task and finish nature. The method used for holding these meetings will be agreed on a case-by-case basis, e.g., face to face or virtual.
- 8.2 CV working groups can either include invitations to members only, or can be a combination of CV members, tenants from other customer engagement structures or tenants from the wider customer base. This will be dependent on the purpose of the group and will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.
- 8.3 Ongo's Customer Engagement team and CV 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 customer engagement structures or from the wider customer base will be considered.
- 8.4 The establishment and purpose of any working group will be agreed on and recorded at a CV meeting. CV will elect members to sit on working groups.
- 8.5 On behalf of CV, 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 A representative from each working group will give feedback to CV for information purposes periodically or when considered necessary.

## **9. MEETINGS**

- 9.1 Meetings will be arranged by mutual agreement between Ongo and CV. They will be arranged considering the most suitable method at the appropriate time, e.g. face to face, virtual or a combination of both.
- 9.2 Meetings will be held on a regular basis but no less than six times per year.
- 9.3 CV members can request the attendance of an Ongo 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 Ongo 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 Ongo.
- 9.6 Minutes or notes shall be taken at all meetings and made available to Ongo Officers and CV members.
- 9.7 Invited guests may attend meetings in an advisory capacity or as observers. Ongo Homes' customer engagement team and CV Officers will agree on invited guests.
- 9.8 Approved minutes will be published on the Ongo website.

9.9 CV Officers will contact CV members who haven't attended or submitted apologies to three consecutive CV meetings, to find out if they still want to be a member of the group and encourage them to attend future meetings (unless there are valid reasons to prevent them from doing so).

## **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 CV members and Ongo will determine the date of the AGM together. A minimum of 21 days' notice in writing or via digital communication of the date 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 CV 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 CV shall be applied to furthering its aims and objectives.

12.2 The Treasurer shall keep proper account of finances.

12.3 CV will adhere to any relevant financial regulations.

12.4 The CV Officer group will meet on a regular basis to agree and monitor expenditure against the CV budget.

12.5 Ongo funding to CV will include monies for items such as travel, training, administration, ICT (Information Communication Technology), hospitality and payment for venues.

12.6 CV Officers 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 in accordance with the Customer Engagement Volunteer's Code of Conduct. Members must adhere to the code both inside and outside of meetings. In addition, all members will work to relevant Ongo Homes (OH) policies where appropriate.

13.2 Membership to CV may be withdrawn by the Customer Engagement team to individuals that breach the OH Volunteers Code of Conduct.

### **14. EQUALITY, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION**

14.1 The group recognises the value of diversity in its membership.

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 Membership shall be open, irrespective of age, disability, gender re-assignment, marriage/civil partnership, race, religion/belief, sex, sexual orientation and pregnancy/maternity.

14.4 An annual audit will be carried out to ensure that the composition of the group reflects the diverse nature of the OH resident base. Where any areas of under-representation are identified, actions will be put in place to encourage membership take up in those areas.

14.5 Members of the group will demonstrate a commitment to creating an environment that is free from harassment and other discrimination.

14.6 All CV Officers and members will agree to undertake mandatory equality, diversity and inclusion training on an annual basis.

14.7 All new CV officers will complete mandatory coaching/mentoring training during their first year of office. This training will also be offered to four experienced members of the group who can then help to mentor any new members who join.

### **15. CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION**

15.1 Any proposed amendments to this constitution will be discussed and agreed by Ongo Homes and CV Officers before being put to a CV meeting for consideration or will be discussed at a specific CV Constitution Review Workshop.

15.2 Any amendment shall require the approval of a majority of members present and voting at the CV meeting.

### **16. DISSOLUTION**

16.1 If the committee decides there are grounds to dissolve CV, it will propose this to Ongo.

- 16.2 Ongo 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 CV is dissolved, then after the satisfaction of all debts and liabilities, any remaining assets will be returned to Ongo.