



Members Handbook

Issued October 2023

Regulatory Standards of Governance and Financial Management

1. The governing body leads and directs the RSL to achieve good outcomes for its tenants and other service users.
2. The RSL is open about and accountable for what it does. It understands and takes account of the needs and priorities of its tenants, service users and stakeholders. And its primary focus is the sustainable achievement of its priorities.
3. The RSL manages its resources to ensure its financial well-being, while maintaining rents at a level that tenants can afford to pay.
4. The governing body bases its decisions on good quality information and advice and identifies and mitigates risks to the organisation's purpose.
5. The RSL conducts its affairs with honesty and integrity.
6. The governing body and senior officers have the skills and knowledge they need to be effective.
7. The RSL ensures that any organisational changes or disposals it makes safeguard the interests of, and benefit, current and future tenants.

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Introduction

This manual is intended as a straightforward guide to assist Board members in contributing to Ayrshire Housing's governance. It also provides guidance on conduct and personal development.

By taking due account of the manual's contents, Board members should be confident of meeting the standards expected of them by the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) (see the insert within the front cover) and the Office of the Scottish Charities Regulator (OSCR).

The manual should be read alongside the Company Profile. The Profile provides detailed information on the objectives, operating environment and structure of Ayrshire Housing (the association). For each session, a handout is prepared outlining the calendar of meetings, meeting topic, and training events.

With regards to the conduct of meetings and office-bearers, the relevant sections of this manual have the effect of standing orders. The manual also includes the scheme of delegation to the Director.

Role of the Board

The Board has responsibility for managing and directing the association's business.

Members of the Board must be capable of complying with the requirements of companies (as company directors) and charities law (as charity trustees), and the association's own Code of Conduct.

In discharging its obligations to the association's members who chiefly are its tenants, the Board is responsible for:

- adopting a clear business strategy through adoption of a comprehensive Business Plan;
- ensuring that the objectives of the Business Plan are delivered efficiently and with the minimum of risk;
- compliance with funding conditions;
- ensuring services meet the Scottish Social Housing Charter and that tenants and other users have the opportunity to effectively scrutinise the association's performance;
- meeting the requirements of the Scottish Housing Regulator (SHR) and the Office of Scottish Charities Regulator (OSCR);

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- conducting its activities to the highest standards and in a manner which is open and accountable to the Members;
- making decisions which are always in the best interest of Ayrshire Housing, taking into account the views of the members, tenants and the wider community;
- demonstrating a clear commitment to equality and human rights for the whole community;
- ensuring policies for the effective management of the association are in place and regularly reviewed;
- ensuring that the structure and cycle of meetings is appropriate and that the remits of any (sub) committees or working groups are clearly defined;
- ensuring the appointment of good quality employees;
- seeking guidance from Employers in Voluntary Housing (EVH) on the procedure to recruit and select a new Director (Chief Executive Officer);
- challenging the performance of employees through effective scrutiny and audit;
- developing the membership base of the association;
- ensuring that the Board itself has the necessary skills by using training plans and the electoral process to develop and maintain its capacity;
- appointing the Secretary and any other office bearers;
- responding to matters concerning relationships with other agencies such as the local authorities and voluntary organisations;
- any matters referred to it by a general meeting.

The Board may delegate or refer business to (sub) committees or working groups (see below). It may also refer any matter to a general meeting of Ayrshire Housing's members; for example, a proposal to amend or change the Articles.

Policies

The Board has developed a comprehensive set of policies over many years. These provide reassurance to new and established Board members. With the support of staff these are regularly reviewed to ensure that they are always fit for purpose.

Board members have access to a comprehensive online policy manual (see the annex).

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Membership of Ayrshire Housing

A strong membership base is important for the development of Ayrshire Housing both in terms of its management and its engagement with its tenants and the wider community.

There are two categories of membership:

- **Tenant:** all Ayrshire Housing's tenants (including all joint tenants) are deemed to be members unless they decline membership.
- **Community:** Ayrshire residents with an interest in the work of the association and who may have skills to offer will be encouraged to join. Non-tenants residing in Ayrshire Housing properties and sharing owners are eligible to join this category.

As part of its annual effectiveness review, the Board will identify any gaps in representation or skills within the community and tenant membership categories.

Community Membership will be expanded through, for example:

- Emphasising the opportunity to join through publicity events and materials;
- Encouraging membership through contacts with other community organisations;
- Targeting individuals with relevant skills and interests.

In doing this, the Board will seek to demonstrate its commitment to equal opportunities.

The Board

Membership

The Board consists of up to twelve individuals: six each elected from the community and tenant constituencies. The role is described in detail in a separate Board member profile and role description (see Board Effectiveness Policy). In seeking election or appointment, candidates are asked to demonstrate their qualities with respect to the profile. The profile also provides guidance to the Members casting their vote in Board member elections.

Each year, the longest serving two members in the community and tenant sections retire but may seek re-election (subject to serving at least two years). If there are voluntary retirements, these will count towards the retirement number of two per section. At the same time as the retirements are identified, the Board will confirm whether it wishes the current Chair to continue in post after the AGM. If not, the outgoing Chair may be subject to selection for retirement.

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Each will be expected to produce a candidate's statement demonstrating their continued contribution to the Board. This should be provided irrespective of whether there is competition for places. The Board will confirm whether retiring members are seeking re-election and have the support of the Board and give details of their attendance record. Long-serving (for example, of nine or more years) Board members should be mindful that there is a continued obligation to demonstrate their effectiveness and value as Board members. Further details can be found in the Board Effectiveness Policy.

At the first Board meeting after an AGM, the members will review the composition of the Board and appoint interested individuals to "casual vacancies" (Article 47) if all the places have not been filled at the AGM.

New members

Potential candidates for Board membership will make a declaration that they will abide by the Code of Conduct and are eligible to be a company director before being considered for election or appointment. They will also acknowledge that their names and images may be made publicly available for regulatory and promotional purposes. Before attending their first meeting, new members will be expected to have attended a meeting with the Chair and Director to review the contents of their induction pack. They must also complete a declaration of interest, the Companies House declaration and signed the Code of Conduct.

Chair

At the first Board meeting after each AGM, the Board shall appoint a Chair and up to two Vice-Chairs. In the event, of the Chair's absence from a meeting, the Board members present will appoint an acting chairperson (a Vice-Chair in the first instance) for that meeting.

The Board may appoint the Chair for a term of up to three years subject to satisfactory annual reviews. If so appointed, the Chair is excused from any requirement under the above procedure to retire from the Board.

The Board will have a minimum of one Vice-Chair but will always endeavour to have two – preferably one from the tenant section and one from the community section.

The role of the Chair and Vice-Chair are described in detail in profile and role descriptions (see Board Effectiveness Policy). The Vice-Chair(s) will only act in lieu of the Chair with the authority of the Chair in the Chair's absence or with the specific authority of the Board.

Candidates for Chair and Vice-Chair(s) should make short written statements of why they should be appointed or re-appointed. These are required even if there is no competition.

A Board member will not serve as Chair or Vice-Chair(s) for more than five continuous sessions.

Leave of Absence

The Board recognises that its members give their time without payment. It wishes to provide support to allow its members to still participate if their circumstances change.

The Board will respond positively to requests for leave of absence if an absence is likely to be more than one meeting. Leave may be granted in the following circumstances:

- Ill health.
- To fulfil caring responsibilities.
- To attend other bodies on behalf of the Board where this routinely clashes with Board meetings.
- To carryout training and other personal development of benefit to the Board.

Company Secretary

This role is fulfilled by the Head of Finance and Corporate Services.

Board Meetings

The Board normally meet 9 times per year, excluding the AGM. Its meetings will ensure that the association's plans and objectives are implemented fully, and that its statutory and other obligations are discharged. It will consider and approve policy and practice to advance the objectives of the association. The meetings may be held physically, online or a combination of the two.

For each meeting, the Board will receive reports as necessary covering all the association's key areas of activity, for example on:

- Housing management;
- Property management;
- Business development (including community engagement and property development);
- Financial matters; and
- Operational matters.

The Board will also receive, on a quarterly basis, management accounts, a performance digest, and a report on Business Plan delivery. These will ensure that trends in budgeting and performance are clearly identified.

The purpose of the reports is to show progress and any corrective actions against the objectives, targets and work plans set out in the Business Plan. The reports will also demonstrate compliance with key statutory obligations, for example with regard to health and safety, and gas safety.

The Director and departmental heads will normally be in attendance to present the reports and answer questions.

Calendar of Meetings

The Board will agree a calendar of meetings at the beginning of each session. The Board will normally meet on the last Wednesday of every month save for July and December. Except in the case of an emergency, seven days' notice will be given of any alternatively dated meetings.

Agendas and Papers

Agendas and papers will be dispatched by post or electronically to members at least seven days before the date of a Board meeting.

Agendas will be drawn up by the Director in consultation with the Chair. Requests for additional items should be addressed to the Chair or to the Director before the above deadline. Requests for items to be addressed under "any other business" will be considered at the discretion of the Chair.

Duration of Meetings

Meetings will last for no more than 2 hours unless agreed otherwise by the members present.

Quorum

A quorum consists of four members provided that one member from each of the constituencies is present.

A meeting will not cease to be quorate because a member who has had to declare an interest has had to withdraw.

A member participating in a meeting through a remote open communication medium will count towards a quorum.

Openness

All meetings of the Board will be open to other members of the association, tenants and the general public (including the press). Non-Board members will only be able to speak with the express permission of the meeting's chair. Confidential items will normally be

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scheduled for the latter part of meetings. Visitors will be required to withdraw whilst such items are dealt with.

Board papers and minutes are available for public inspection at the company's office and on the website in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Environmental Information Policy and the Guide to Information.

Minutes

The primary purpose of the minutes is to provide a succinct record of:

- Reports received and noted;
- Decisions taken;
- Action required by the Board, Committees or staff.

The following guidelines for drafting will be followed:

- Wherever practicable, a member of staff will be in attendance in addition to the person servicing the meeting whose primary purpose will be to take the minute. This does not preclude the second member of staff speaking to specific reports.
- At the conclusion of each section of the meeting, the Chair will note the decisions taken and any actions for staff or Board members.
- Within seven days of the meeting, a draft minute will be sent to the meeting's chair for comment. Alternatively, the Chair may agree that the draft is simply sent to all the members for comment.
- Subject to any amendments by the Chair, the draft will then be sent to those who attended the meeting. They will have seven days to comment.
- At the end of the seven-day period, the draft minute will be further amended, if necessary, in consultation with the meeting's Chair.
- The finalised draft will then be circulated with the agenda of the next meeting of the Board, Committee, Sub-Committee or working group for approval with or without amendment.
- If the approved minute is of a Committee, Sub-Committee or working group, the minute will then be formally endorsed by the Board at the first meeting thereafter. The Chair of the Board meeting will sign the minute with or without adjustment.
- Action points from the draft minute will be transferred to the tracking report prepared before each Board meeting to expedite consideration of matters arising from the

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minutes and to allow, where an approved minute is not available, a report from a sub-ordinate meeting.

Voting

Voting is normally by a show of hands. A secret ballot may however be requested by one third of the members present who are entitled to vote. Each member in attendance has one vote. There is no facility for proxy voting.

Any member may without giving reasons ask that their dissent from any resolution be recorded in the minutes.

All motions or amendments must be relevant to the subject under discussion. The chair of the meeting can rule out of order any motion or amendment which is in his or her opinion, irrelevant or incompetent. A proposer and seconder are required to any motion or amendment.

Once a decision has been made and minuted the Board will not review the decision for a period of at least six months unless two-thirds of the Board members present at a meeting agree otherwise and prior notice of the proposed vote has been given in the agenda.

Urgent Decisions

Occasionally, situations arise where a decision may need to be taken outwith the meetings' cycle and the seven-day notice period to call an additional meeting.

In the case of a topic requiring a decision by the Board, the Chair (or failing that the Vice-Chair or one other member) will be asked to determine the matter. Their decision must be reported to the next meeting of the Board. If the Board member consulted feels unable to make a decision and the matter remains pressing, then a meeting of the Board will be called.

Notifiable Events

The Board members should be aware that they are required to inform the Scottish Housing Regulator of events which may have a significant impact on the association. Examples include the resignation of the Chair or Director, a significant loss of service to tenants, and health and safety breaches. Board members should refer to the Regulator's statutory guidance. It is not obligatory to inform the Office of the Scottish Charities Regulator (OSCR) of such incidents, but it is considered good practice to do so. Again, Board members should be familiar with the OSCR guidance on notifiable events. Notifications are reported to each Board meeting.

Standing Committees

The Board has created a small number of committees to oversee areas of interest which require special attention.

Each of these will operate on the same basis as the Board with the following exceptions:

Quorums: this will be two members who may be from one constituency.

Agendas and Papers: these will be sent out at least four days before the meeting.

Chairs: each Committee will appoint a Chair (who may not be the Board Chair) on an annual basis whose role will be to:

- agree the agenda with the relevant lead staff member;
- chair the meeting on the same basis as a Board meeting;
- report to the Board Chair and Board on any matters requiring their attention.

The committees and sub-committees may come to a decision by telephone or other communication means rather than through a meeting by common agreement.

Reports of the work of the above committees and sub-committees will be provided to the monthly Board meetings.

The Board will ensure a spread of representation across the standing Committees.

Audit Committee

An Audit Committee will meet four times a year to supervise the external and internal audit programmes in accordance with the Audit Policy. It will consist of at least three Board members all of whom should have or obtain some relevant financial, governance or audit experience or training.

Community Engagement Committee

The Community Engagement Committee will meet as required but not less than once a year. Its remit is to oversee the association's community engagement including grant awards, the use of "The Local" and community membership scheme.

Development Committee

The Development Committee will meet up to six times a year. Its remit is to oversee the progress of the development programme within the parameters agreed in the Business Plan and the annual review of the Financial Plan.

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Health and Safety Committee

The Health and Safety Committee will meet as required but no less than once a year. It will receive reports on the implementation of measures following the annual risk assessment and health and safety audits. It will also ensure that the association's health and safety manuals are up to date and being applied.

Human Resources Committee

The Human Resources Committee will meet as required but no less than once a year. It will also have a specific remit to consider the association's pension arrangements on a regular basis. It will also deal with staffing issues in accordance with the conditions of service and the grading scheme, the recruitment of staff at or above department head, and staff development and performance including succession planning. In addition, a panel of three consisting to the Chair, the Vice-Chairs or ordinary Board members will meet quarterly with the Director to review his or her performance.

Tenancy Matters

The Tenancy Matters Committee will meet at least once a year to ensure that it can discharge its responsibilities regarding tenancy issues. It will also meet as and when required to consider individual tenancy cases in accordance with the association's policies.

Community Membership

A sub-committee of the Chair and Secretary determines applications which are then reported to the Board.

Dealing with Issues Requiring Wider Discussion

At times, the Board may wish to ensure more in-depth discussion of certain issues of policy and practice. It may wish to involve others with expertise in the field whether or not they are members of the association and, of course, tenants.

The Board has the flexibility to establish sub-groups based on the following options:

- Sub-committees consisting of both Board members and others, including members of staff;
- Committees consisting solely of Board members;
- Working groups consisting of both Board members and others, including members of staff.

The first two may have delegated authority to make decisions within their specific remits. The latter will have only advisory roles.

The choice of approach would be determined by:

- The need to arrive at decisions outwith the cycle of Board meetings;
- The need to give due time to the topic;
- The importance of involving others in the discussion of the particular topic.

Examples are:

- The involvement of a wider range of tenant viewpoints in matters that concern them;
- Giving opportunities for community members to contribute to issues in which they have an expertise or interest;
- Allowing other community representatives, possible end-users and our partners to contribute to our work.

Any group formed by the Board will operate within a clearly defined remit and have a fixed life span. The Board will also define the appropriate communication arrangements (e.g., discussion and decision-making via meetings, by conference calls, or through correspondence and web-based communication).

Delegation to the Chief Executive Officer

The Board appoints a chief executive officer (styled “the Director”) who is responsible for implementing the policies of the Board and advising them on all matters.

The Director is authorised to take all steps necessary for the effective day-to-day running of Ayrshire Housing subject to the policies and regulations adopted by the Board. The following lists provide for powers to be delegated to the Director who may in turn delegate to other members of staff.

Personnel Matters

Taking decisions related to the following matters unless determined otherwise by the Board:

- appointments, including authorisation to pay the location expenses, and accommodation and travelling allowances;
- sick pay entitlement;

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- operation of a Board approved performance appraisal scheme;
- temporary appointments to cover exceptional staffing requirements;
- determination of rates of pay for casual employment;
- application of terms and conditions to individual employees, including disciplinary and grievance issues;
- informal and formal communication, consultation and negotiations with employees, representatives and trade unions;
- staff training, including authorisation of attendance at courses and payment of courses fees and incidental expenses where within affected budgets.

Finance and Administration Matters

- day-to-day management of the financial affairs of the association in conjunction with senior staff as determined by the Financial Regulations;
- legal action in connection with matters concerning the association's property or finance;
- approval of all budgeted expenditure subject to the Financial Regulations of the association;
- action to protect the association's good name.

Housing Development and Wider Role Matters

- applications for planning permissions, invitation and acceptance of tenders for house building, and improvement and repair schemes in accordance with the Financial Regulations, procurement policies, the Business Plan and the approved budgets;
- carrying out negotiations to agree the acquisition of development land in accordance with the Financial Regulations, procurement policies, the Business Plan and the approved budgets;
- making decisions regarding the use of land, which is to be held for housing development, but which is not immediately required;
- developing new activities and seeking funding in furtherance of Ayrshire Housing's wider community interests as defined in the Business Plan.

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Housing Services Matters

- selection of tenants, letting of housing accommodation, garages and other buildings in accordance with approved allocations schemes;
- the determination of tenancies, including all legally required notices to determine tenancies and licenses for possession, actions to recover the rent and license fees and other proceedings in accordance with agreed policies;
- approval of tenant's requests under tenancy conditions relating to lodgers, sub-tenants, change of use, alterations and erections of structure;
- approval of contracts for maintenance of equipment, services, fittings and structures;
- assessment and determination of applications for minor adjustments to boundaries involving disposal of land held for housing purposes subject to all parties concerned being in agreement;
- administration of all aspects of the sale of dwellings under any other home ownership initiatives;
- legal action for enforcement of property conditions or to grant consent in the case of residential properties over which the association retains an amount of control.

Repairs and Maintenance

- drawing up contractor documentation and letting of contracts for plant and cyclical maintenance within agreed budget levels and procurement policies, in accordance with the Board's agreed programme;
- implementation of minor service agreements with other agencies for the supply of a repairs and maintenance service;
- specification and letting of capital works programme within an existing budget of approved programmes;
- approval of tenants' requests for compensation for property improvements within an existing budget of approved programmes;
- approval of tenants' requests for compensation for property improvements within agreed policy and amounts.

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Miscellaneous Matters

- maintenance and alteration of the office accommodation, within agreed capital remits;
- ensuring the provision of office and other support services within agreed budgets;
- authority to take emergency action on any other matter expedient to Ayrshire Housing's interest subject to consultation with the appropriate Board members in urgent situations;
- making comment to the press as required;
- representation of external bodies.

Code of Conduct

The Board has adopted a Code based on a model drafted by the SFHA in consultation with the Scottish Housing Regulator. All new members of the Board must read and signed the Code prior to attending their first meeting.

There is a separate Code of Conduct for employees.

Adherence to the Code should guarantee the association's reputation. Keeping to the Code will also protect Board members from any personal liability for their individual and collective actions.

The Code will allow Board members to demonstrate adherence to the following principles based on the *Nolan Principles in Public Life*:

- Selflessness;
- Openness;
- Honesty;
- Objectivity;
- Integrity;
- Accountability;
- Leadership.

The Code reminds members of their responsibility not to be seen to use their positions to take or offer bribes. You are also under an obligation to bring any suspicion of corrupt conduct by others to the attention of the association. Please also refer to the section below on whistleblowing.

As well as the Code of Conduct, members are also expected to have read the OSCR Guidance for Charities Trustees.

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The following summary guidance is offered:

Conflicts of Interest

Any Board member faced with a possible conflict of interest should declare this to the relevant meeting or beforehand to the Chair or Director. The declaration will be recorded in the minutes of the relevant meeting and, if required, in a separate disclosures register open to public scrutiny.

Possible conflicts of interest include:

- Where a personal benefit may result from the course of action being discussed.
- The association entering into any contracts (including tenancies) with an individual or organisation with whom the member is connected by birth, friendship, association, business or employment.
- Being involved in any decision which will affect the progress or operation of another organisation with which the association is involved.
- A personal relationship with a member of staff or other Board member.

The above list is not exhaustive. If there is any concern about a possible conflict of interest, then it should be raised.

The association has adopted EVH's model policy on "Personal Relationships at Work". A copy of which is available to all Board members and employees.

If a conflict of interest is recognised, the member will withdraw from the business of the meeting at the request of the Chair. He or she may also be asked to vacate the meeting room whilst the matter is considered.

If there are frequent conflicts of interest, it may be appropriate for the member to resign from the Board.

Payments and Benefits to Board Members and Others

It is policy not to make payments or grant benefits to the following (except in limited circumstances described below):

- A) a Board member, officer or employee (except as part of their employment contract);
- B) a person who has held such a position in the previous 12 months;
- C) a close relative or close acquaintance of a person within (A) or (B) above; or
- D) an organisation of which a person falling within (A), (B) or (C) above has significant control.

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The Board may grant tenancies to Board members, employees or their relatives subject to certain conditions. Any decision to grant a benefit must be done in accordance with the standing policies of the company and be recorded both in the Minutes and a register of interests open to public scrutiny.

Board members should be familiar with the Entitlements, Payments and Benefits Policy.

Out of Pocket Expenses

It is the association's policy not to reimburse Board members for any loss of earnings due to attendance on association business.

Out of pocket expenses may be reimbursed as follows:

Travel: Members may reclaim for travel expenses incurred in connection with association business (including Board and Committee meetings) on the same basis as the employees (i.e., with reference to the EVH Conditions of Service). Wherever possible, assistance will be given with the advance purchase of tickets.

Subsistence: Members attending a meeting or conference (other than one hosted by the association) may claim an allowance to cover incidental expenses at the same rates and conditions as apply to employees. This may be paid in advance to assist with budgeting.

Where a disabled member requires to be accompanied by a driver or assistant, the above allowances may also be claimed on behalf of that person by the member.

Payments will be recorded in the register of interests.

The Board may allow reasonable expenses for child minding or the care of a dependent relative subject to their agreement in advance. Payments will not however be made in respect of care provided by another member of the Board member's household.

Insurance cover

Board members have the benefit of personal injury cover whilst on official duties. Further details can be obtained from the Head of Finance.

Gifts and Hospitality

The association will only offer gifts and hospitality where these are of modest value and related to a genuine business activity. This principle also applies to gifts and hospitality to Board members and employees which in addition will require to be recorded in the register of interests.

Board members and employees will refuse gifts or hospitality with an actual or estimated value of £60. Some discretion may be exercised to avoid embarrassment. In all cases

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though Board members and employees should act with caution. Hospitality offered by the association should be likewise modest.

All gifts and hospitality accepted from external parties will be recorded in the register of interests irrespective of value.

Retirement and long-service awards to employees will only be made as provided for by the conditions of service and EVH/Unite wage agreement. The association has a separate long-service scheme for serving Board members and employees of ten and twenty years respectively which conforms with the Entitlements, Payments and Benefits Policy. The Board may also make fitting token presentations with a value of no more than £25 to retiring Board members or Chairs.

The Entitlements, Payments and Benefits Policy has details of the arrangements for approving attendance at awards events where the hospitality given or received is likely to be more than £60.

Board members must bring any suspicions of attempted bribery and the seeking of undue influence to the attention of the Chair or the Director.

Use of Consultants, Contractors and Other Suppliers

To maintain the association's excellent reputation, where possible Board members should avoid using the association's consultants, contractors and suppliers for their own personal purposes. A list is available in the Entitlements, Payments and Benefits Policy. This list may not be exhaustive. If there is any doubt, a Board member should ask about the status of a firm they are considering doing business with.

It is recognised that there can be certain circumstances where it might not be possible to avoid the use of a contractor and supplier such as where market conditions in the local area make it difficult to obtain a reasonable selection of potential contractors or suppliers. Under such circumstances, it is permitted to use one of these contractors and suppliers provided the Board member can demonstrate that they have received no preferential treatment in terms of price, quality or any other aspect of service delivery due to their involvement with the association.

Approval to use a contractor or supplier is at the discretion of the Director (or Chair in the case of the Director). For approval to be granted, the Board member must demonstrate that there is no reasonable alternative consultant, contractor or supplier providing the service required in their local area, and that it can be demonstrated that there will be no preferential treatment in terms of service or cost. A declaration must then be made in the register of interests.

Whistleblowing Policy

To demonstrate further its commitment to the highest standards of openness, probity and accountability, the association has adopted the model Whistleblowing Policy 21

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contained in the EVH Whistleblowing Policy and Procedures. Copies of this is made available to all Board members and employees. The Audit Committee will ensure compliance with this Policy.

Donations and Sponsorship

The association, with Board approval, may make donations not exceeding £1,000 to individual organisations which share complementary objectives or where there is another sound business reason (e.g. networking and public relations).

The association will discharge its responsibilities to support national and international housing charities which share its goals through annual donations to for example the Lintel Trust and Homeless International respectively.

Representative Bodies

The association is a member of a number of representatives and similar bodies such as:

The Energy Agency
Eydent – the Association of Ayrshire Housing Associations;
The Glasgow and West of Scotland Forum of Housing Associations (GWSF);
Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA);
Rural and Islands Housing Association Forum (RIHAF);
Employers in Voluntary Housing (EVH);
Positive Action in Housing (PAiH);
SHARE (learning and development);
Scotland's Housing Network (SHN).

Board members and employees are encouraged to participate actively in the above organisations.

The Board may agree to join other bodies where a business case can be made.

Membership of other Companies

The association may become a member of not for profit and charitable companies where there is a sound business case. With Board approval, a Board member or the Chief Executive Officer may participate in such organisation's Boards.

Staffing

Recruitment

The association is committed to open recruitment where possible whilst at the same time ensuring career opportunities for existing staff. Full details of the arrangements can be found in the Staff Remuneration, Recruitment and Selection Policy.

The Policy covers the arrangements for the appointment of the Director. In the event of the Director's absence or resignation, the Board will seek the early advice of EVH.

Terms and Conditions for staff including the Director

The association is a full member of EVH. As such it has adopted EVH's grading and salary schemes, conditions of service and standard policies. The association is required to implement these as a consequence of the collective bargaining agreement between EVH (on behalf of its employer members) and Unite the Union. The arrangements for the Director are consistent with the collective bargaining agreement.

The association benefits from the support of EVH across the whole range of employment matters including handling grievances and discipline issues.

The association is a member of the Scottish Housing Associations Pension Scheme (SHAPS) and the Strathclyde Pension Fund.

Further details can be found in the the Staff Remuneration, Recruitment and Selection Policy.

Personal Development

Board members are expected to take a pro-active approach to their training needs.

The association provides a number of opportunities:

- Circulation of relevant journals and briefing notes to members.
- Circulation of literature on training opportunities.
- Arranging in-house training sessions.
- Lending computer equipment for use in connection with Ayrshire Housing business and related activities.

Board members are encouraged to attend appropriate courses at the association's expense, e.g., evening classes or through SHARE and other training agencies. If there is

sufficient demand, in-house training will be organised. Through Eydent opportunities to meet and learn with colleagues from other Ayrshire associations will be available.

Each Board member is expected to demonstrate a commitment to personal development and to assist in the creation of a development and training plan for the Board. To comply with the Board Effectiveness Policy, each Board member is required to participate in an annual individual review meeting with the Chair.

Staying in touch

Members receive regular updates either through the post or via the web. This provides a means of keeping members informed of developments between meetings.

Many members of the Board prefer to stay in contact with the office and their colleagues through the internet. The association has a dedicated website which contains all the Board papers, key policies and performance reports. This includes an online policy manual. It also allows Board members themselves to initiate discussion on topics of interest or concern.

For those Board members who do not currently use the internet, the association will be able to offer the loan of equipment and training, and all papers and policies in paper form.

Privacy

How we handle your personal information is explained in our Privacy Policy. You should note that to comply with legal and regulatory expectations your name and photograph may be published on our website and those of our regulators.

A note on terminology

Ayrshire Housing is a housing association in terms of recognised legal definitions. Under Companies House rules though it cannot describe itself as such in its registered name; hence “Ayrshire Housing” rather than “Ayrshire Housing Association”. This is because it is not governed on a simple one member – one vote basis like housing associations incorporated under (as is more common) the Co-operative and Community Benefit Societies Act. Our articles provide for 50:50 block voting by the tenant and community constituencies at general meetings.

As a charity, the registered name does not need to include “limited” so we have registered as “Ayrshire Housing” and not “Ayrshire Housing Limited”.

To provide some guidance to staff, we expect them to refer to Ayrshire Housing as an “association” in letters to tenants and the general public. Describing Ayrshire Housing as a “housing association” is appropriate though when making comparisons with or

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references to other housing associations or the housing association movement generally. It is suggested that the term “company” is restricted to situations where reference is being made to Ayrshire Housing’s specific legal status or form of governance. Hence, its occasional usage in this manual.

It is recommended that the term “registered social landlord” is avoided in communications to the tenants and public, although it may be required in communications with the Scottish Housing Regulator and other official bodies. Similarly, “affordable housing” or “affordable rented housing” is preferred to “social housing” in general communications.

Annex - Key policies

Listed below are key policies. See the online policy manual for the full and up to date list.

Governance

- The Board Member's Handbook. Covers the standing orders for the Board and detailed background information for Board Members;
- Memorandum and Articles of Association – Ayrshire Housing's "rule book";
- Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator's (OSCR's) Guidance for Charity Trustees. The provides information on charities law, notifiable events and the role of the Board as members as charities trustees;
- Scottish Housing Regulator's Regulatory Framework;
- The Scottish Social Housing Charter;
- The Business Plan;
- Annual Accounts;
- Scottish Housing Regulator's guidance on notifiable events. This provides a list of occurrences where the Scottish Housing Regulator must be informed;
- OSCR guidance on notifiable events;
- SFHA Code of Conduct for Board Members;
- EVH glossaries of technical terms;
- Entitlements, Payments and Benefits Policy;
- Board Effectiveness Policy;

General Policies

- Accessibility Policy;
- Equalities and Human Rights Policy;
- Complaints Handling Policy;
- Freedom of Information and Environmental Information Policy;
- Privacy Policy;
- Whistleblowing Policy;
- Procurement Strategy;
- Sustainability Policy.

Housing Management Policies

- Aids and Adaptations Policy;
- Allocations Policy;
- Mutual Exchange Policy;
- Succession Policy;
- Rent and Service Charge Policy;
- Arrears Policy;
- Void Management Policy;

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- Estate Management Policy;
- Abandoned Tenancies Policy;
- Neighbour Disputes and Anti-Social Behaviour Policy;
- Asset Management Plan;
- Gas Safety and Inspection Policy;
- Repairs and Maintenance Policy;
- Tenant Participation Strategy.

Development Policies

- Design Guide. This sets out what we expect from our designers and contractors.

Risk Management and Finance Policies

- Risk Management Policy;
- Audit Policy;
- Financial Procedures and Regulations;
- Treasury Management Policy.

Personnel Policies

- Staff Remuneration, Recruitment and Selection Policy
- Staff Performance and Development Policy. This sets out the arrangements for staff personal development and support;
- Staff Handbook. General guidance to employees.

Ayrshire Housing is a member of Employers in Voluntary Housing (EVH) and is thus party to a national collective bargaining arrangement with Unite the Union. This covers staff pay and conditions and the following policies which have been adapted as needs be for local use:

- Statement of Terms and Conditions of Employment;
- Personal Relationship at Work Policy and guidelines;
- Health and Safety Policy;
- Dignity at Work Policy;
- Alcohol and Substance Misuse Policy;
- Code of Conduct for Staff;
- Model Recruitment and Selection Guide;
- Retirement Policy;
- Flexible Working Policy;
- Attendance Management Policy;
- Shared Parental Leave Policy;
- Smoke Free Policy;
- Lone Working Policy;

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- Sabbatical Leave Policy;
- Staff Performance Management;
- Training and Development Policy;
- Stress Policy;
- Remote Working Policy;
- Disciplinary Policy;
- Grievance Policy.

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