

# East Kent Housing Board Recruitment Pack

For a Resident Board Member

**This recruitment pack includes:**

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[www.eastkenthousing.org.uk](http://www.eastkenthousing.org.uk)

2019



## Welcome from the Chief Executive:

At East Kent Housing (EKH), we have been on an exciting and unique journey establishing the country's first 'super' ALMO, providing housing services across Canterbury, Dover, Folkestone and Hythe, and Thanet councils.

We are still a young organisation, eight years into a thirty year management agreement. The last eight years has been exciting and challenging, setting up a new organisation, effecting a four way merger, developing our own culture and ways of doing things and establishing effective relationships with four different councils. During this time we have not only delivered year on year savings to the councils but have maintained and improved performance.

EKH is delivering their vision and sets of priorities to take the organisation forward. We welcomed our new Chair of the Board in 2016 and we are looking to appoint three Resident Board members to work as part of a 12-strong Board taking EKH to the next level.

For the Resident Board member, we are looking for tenants from Dover, Folkestone and Hythe, and Canterbury who will join our Resident Board member already representing residents in Thanet. A Resident Board member information

event will be held to explain what the role includes and what support will be offered to residents who join the Board.

Our partnerships with our four stakeholder councils are fundamental to our continued success. Our councils are facing significant financial constraints and there is an expectation that EKH will continue to improve efficiency and make further cost reductions in the years ahead.

We remain ambitious about our role and what we can go on to achieve, and we are confident that this adds up to an exciting opportunity for talented and motivated new Board members. We look forward to receiving your application and getting to know you better in the selection process.



**Deborah Upton**  
Chief Executive  
East Kent Housing



## What East Kent Housing is:

- ✓ An organisation set up and owned by the four local councils to run its council housing services.
- ✓ Run by an independent management board, which includes tenants, independent members and councillors, but remains accountable through a contract with the four councils.
- ✓ According to the government's watchdog the Audit Commission, this is the best approach to managing housing services.

## What East Kent Housing is not:

- ✗ A private company, as it is still owned by the four councils in Canterbury, Dover, Folkestone and Hythe, and Thanet.
- ✗ A landlord. The councils are still the landlord and our tenants have the same legal rights as always.
- ✗ A profit making organisation, neither does it have shareholders. All savings must, by law, be used to improve services.
- ✗ A housing association, all the council homes are still owned by the councils.

# What we do:

East Kent Housing (EKH) was established in April 2011 as the first multi council ALMO in the country on behalf of Canterbury, Dover, Folkestone and Hythe, and Thanet councils.

## Here's a summary of what we do:

- We manage over 16,000 council homes and garages on behalf of the four local councils in east Kent. This includes sheltered housing schemes for older people.
- We are governed by a Board made up of four resident, four council and four independent members. They meet regularly throughout the year to discuss and keep an eye on how East Kent Housing is performing. They will respond to and look at information provided from the Residents' Panel as well as receive regular reports about repairs, complaints and spending.
- We manage the repairs services and planned maintenance programme to ensure quality homes and estates across Canterbury, Dover, Folkestone and Hythe, and Thanet.
- We collect the rent for homes and garages, provide help with money matters, manage the leasehold service and Right to Buy Applications.
- Our staff help deliver our housing services and wider engaged residents helping us improve housing services.

The organisation was set up with the aim to be a shared service that could deliver better services for tenants, greater resilience and capacity within the service and improved efficiencies associated with cost reductions. Over the last eight years there has been a period of significant change for EKH, including establishing the new organisation with sound governance and management systems and integrating staff teams from four different councils into a single team with a common purpose.

During that time we have invested millions into local homes and estates, and become one of the south east's lowest-costing housing organisations. We have also achieved significant improvements in rent collection and improving the time taken to re-let properties.

## Governance

EKH is a company limited by guarantee, owned jointly by the four councils. A strong and effective Board has been established comprising four council nominees, four resident representatives and four independent members. The Board sets the strategic direction of the organisation, monitors performance and progress in delivering the commitments to the councils and tenants. The Board is responsible for ensuring that the organisation is well run and has the appropriate controls and management systems in place.

Local accountability to tenants, leaseholders and councillors is provided by local resident groups in each of the four council areas. The service and relationship with each council is defined by a management agreement. The management agreement runs for 30 years and is a reflection of the long term commitment of all four councils to East Kent Housing.



## Our Priorities

We have three priorities that we will focus on:

### 1. Places People Want to Live

#### **Provide good quality homes and estates**

- Ensure the delivery of a reliable repairs service
- Maintain clean, well looked-after estates
- Develop and deliver investment plans to ensure residents' homes are maintained based on a **good understanding of stock condition**
- Be strong on health and safety

### 2. Working In Partnership with the Councils

#### **Build and maintain the confidence of the Councils**

- Deliver and demonstrate value for money
- Plan for the retendering of the repairs service
- Review, define and agree 'core services'
- Deliver high levels of performance with agreed funding
- Develop a more strategically focused relationship with the Councils

#### **Understand, support and influence the Councils' strategic aspirations**

- Improve procurement processes to maximise efficiency and value for money
- Be the Councils' partner of choice for housing, and develop tailored additional services when required
- Anticipate the Councils' future priorities and be ready to deliver them through effective long-term planning

### 3. Valuing and Enabling Staff and Residents

#### **Be a place where people want to work**

- Support staff in making the most of their career opportunities
- Promote the well-being of staff, helping them to maintain a good work life balance with agile working, and deal effectively with work pressures.
- Consult staff on areas they think we could improve as an employer.



## **Our commitments to our residents**

We carried out a survey of our residents and 3,341 people gave feedback and ideas about what was important to them. We took this feedback to our engaged residents' conference and through a series of workshops drafted a set of new commitments to residents, which focus on four key areas:

### **1. We will make it easier for residents to contact us:**

- We will have one telephone number staffed with people trained to deal with enquiries
- We will create opportunities for residents to request and use services on-line
- We will make appointments when visiting residents' homes and will remind them of the date and time of the appointment

### **2. We will continue to improve the appearance of our estates**

- We will look to improve the way in which we manage the storage and disposal of waste
- We will monitor the performance of contractors more effectively to ensure that estates are well maintained, with effective grass cutting and weeding of communal areas

### **3. We will work with contractors to continue to improve the repairs service**

- We will seek to improve the way we record and monitor satisfaction with the repairs service
- We will work with contractors to record, monitor and increase the level of jobs done "right first time" and in one visit
- We will make it clear what standards residents can expect from our repair service

### **4. We will continue to invest in improving residents' homes**

- We share with residents our long term plans to upgrade the facilities and amenities in their homes and give as much notice as possible when improvement works are due in their homes
- We will review how we can improve the security of the homes of residents living in flats, if car parking can be improved on estates and explore with the councils potential funding options of these improvements



# Our Governance framework - a summary

## 1. Purpose, role and responsibilities of the main Board

The board has ultimate responsibility for the governance of the organisation. Its key role is to:

- Determine strategy and direction of the organisation
- Set out the values, vision, and mission for the organisation
- Monitor performance to ensure that the organisation achieves its aims and objectives and delivers its plans and budgets
- Seek assurance of the integrity of financial information, approving the annual budget, the business plan, and annual accounts
- Oversee systems of internal controls including establishing and reviewing a scheme of delegation
- Establishing a framework for the management of risk to safeguard the assets and reputation of the organisation
- Satisfy itself that the organisation's affairs are conducted lawfully with appropriate standards of probity
- Regularly review the code of governance and agree a statement of compliance/non-compliance in the annual accounts
- Review annually the governance of the organisation and assess the performance of the Board and its sub groups and committees
- Ensure that the organisation meets standards set by the appropriate regulatory bodies
- Ensure that the organisation fulfils its obligations to the four local authorities and fosters good relationships with each council
- Ensure that there is effective communication with and feedback from tenants/leaseholders and other stakeholders, including regulators
- Adopt and monitor strategies to meet the needs of the diverse communities served by the organisation and champion the cause of equalities within the organisation
- Promote an ethos of openness, transparency, and accountability to all stakeholders
- Agree a schedule of reserved items that must be agreed by the Board and cannot be delegated to officers or Sub-Committees
- Foster a good working relationship with the Chief Executive and other senior staff
- Appoint/dismiss the Chief Executive and approve his/her salary, benefits and terms of employment

## 2. Role description and responsibilities of Board members

All Board members are required to sign a formal agreement upon appointment acknowledging their role and responsibilities - which will be provided once an appointment has been made.

### General principles for all Board members:

- share the same legal status and have equal responsibility for decisions taken by the Board
- must act only in the interests of the organisation and not on behalf of any constituency or interest group.
- must ensure that the interests of the organisation are placed before any personal interests
- should uphold the values, objectives and policies of the organisation
- should adhere to the code of conduct for Board members
- must uphold the highest standards of probity and integrity at all times
- must adhere to the standing orders and financial regulations of the organisation

### Supporting the main functions of the Board:

- All Board members are expected to participate in and contribute to:
- the Board's role in setting the strategic direction and key objectives of the organisation

- monitor the organisation's performance to ensure that it meets its objectives and provides the best possible service to the councils and their tenants
- ensuring that the Board has appropriate systems of control to maintain the financial integrity of the organisation and to manage risk effectively

### **Board members are expected to:**

- attend Board meetings having done the appropriate preparation (reading agenda papers)
- participate in and contribute to discussions and decisions at Board meetings
- participate as required in Sub-Committees of the Board
- represent the Board on local groups and Residents' Panel as required
- take steps to become familiar with the organisation and its activities
- participate in training provided for Board members
- declare any interests that might conflict or be seen to conflict with decisions of the organisation
- attend meetings, training sessions and other events
- attend and participate in meetings to review individual performance
- respect confidentiality of information

### **Basic skills and aptitude required of all Board members**

An ability to participate in and contribute positively to meetings

Open minded and impartial

An ability to work as part of a team

An ability to represent the organisation in a professional manner

An ability to respect the confidentiality of information

An understanding of the constitutional and legislative framework that applies to the organisation

An understanding of equalities and diversity issues

### **Knowledge and experience of Board members**

Each Board member will be able to use their specialist knowledge or experience to contribute to the work and decisions of the Board. No board member will have knowledge or experience in all the areas outlined below. In recruiting new members, the Board should be mindful of the need to have a balanced and complementary range of knowledge and experience to ensure that the Board can effectively steer and manage the organisation. Set out below are some of the experience/knowledge that will contribute to the effective running of the business.

- Financial management and accountancy
- Business management
- Legal, especially housing, commercial, property or employment law
- Media, communications and marketing
- Housing management
- Property maintenance
- Human resources/Personnel
- Information technology
- Knowledge and understanding of needs and aspirations of tenants and leaseholders served by the organisation
- Equality and diversity
- Community development and engagement
- Social policy and welfare

## **Review**

The Board will review from time to time the skills required by individual Board members and by the Board as a whole. Where appropriate, training will be arranged for individual Board members or for the Board as a whole. Recruitment of new Board members should take into account any gaps in the Board's set of skills.

## **Our Board Members**

Our Board is made up of 12 members, including four independents, four council representatives and four tenant or leaseholders.

Members will be recruited through advertisements in the local press and where appropriate, trade journals (dependent on which skills and experience the board seeks to attract at the time). A selection panel will be set up, comprising of residents and EKH manager(s). The Chief Executive will support the recruitment process.

The application form will require candidates to identify the skills and experience that they can offer the Board and will ask them to demonstrate how they meet the competencies for Board members. The panel will short list suitable candidates and invite them for interview. The successful candidate will take up their position at the Board AGM on 22 July 2019. Potential candidates that have become known to the Board outside the formal recruitment process will be invited to apply for the position and will be evaluated along with other candidates.

## **Induction for new Board members**

All new Board members will be given a Board members pack which will include:

- The constitution, standing orders and similar documents relating to the governance of the organisation;
- The members code of conduct;
- The latest annual report and accounts;
- The current business plan;
- The equal opportunities and diversity policy;
- Details of the organisation's staffing structure;
- The meeting timetable; and
- The management agreement between the ALMO and the four councils.

New Board members will have:

- a familiarisation meeting with the chair and the Chief Executive and members of the senior management team;
- a tour of some of the offices and estates managed by the ALMO; and
- a mentor/coach from one of the existing board members to provide informal support and guidance.

## **The role of Chair and Vice Chair of the Board**

The responsibilities and role of the Chair (and Vice Chair when acting as Chair) is as follows:

- To ensure the efficient and proper conduct of the Board and its committees, ensuring that all Board members have an opportunity to express their views before important decisions are made;
- To ensure that the Board is clear about what decisions it is being asked to make and to ensure that Board members are clear about what decisions have been reached;
- To ensure that there are clear delegations to officers and Sub-Committees;
- To establish a constructive relationship between the Board and senior officers of the organisation and provide support to the Chief Executive and other senior staff;
- To ensure that there are adequate arrangements for the review of the Chief Executive performance and remuneration, appointment and dismissal;
- To ensure that the performance of Board members is appraised annually;
- To keep under review the skills profile of the Board;
- To make decisions delegated to the Chair, including matters under the organisation's urgency procedures;

- To ensure that the Board seeks and obtains independent professional advice when required;
- To ensure that the principles of good governance and probity are upheld by the Board and its members;
- To ensure that Board members abide by the organisation's code of conduct;
- To ensure that the Board's business is properly and accurately recorded in the minutes of meetings;
- To represent at external events the organisation when required; and
- To assist the management team build and develop relationships with key stakeholders.

## **Code of Conduct and Declaration of Interests**

Board members represent and must therefore be accountable to East Kent ALMO. This Code sets out the standards of behaviour expected from members when they are acting on behalf of the Board and the action that will be taken when a member falls below the standard set by the Code. The Code is designed to help Board members to recognise, declare and manage situations where their personal interests (or those of their immediate family) may come into conflict with their duties as a board member. Every member of the Board is required to sign a Code of Conduct and the Declaration of Interests

### **Board members' behaviour**

The following behaviour is expected from Board members:

- When representing the Board, members are expected to dress and conduct themselves in a manner that reflects the duty or function they are carrying out;
- Avoid giving and receiving gifts and hospitality connected to their role as Board members or in anyway linked to the activities of the organisation, (explained in more detail below);
- Do not seek to obtain any personal benefit or advantage, or expect to receive more favourable treatment by staff, because of membership of the Board;
- Do not speak or write on behalf of the Board without the prior agreement of the group. Make any correspondence sent on behalf of the Board available to all members;
- Do not share confidential or sensitive information, gained through the role as a Board member, with anyone outside the board or use the information to the detriment of other individual(s);
- Act in a non-political manner and ensure that personal political activities are kept separate from the business of the ALMO; and
- To respect and abide by the Constitution of the East Kent ALMO.

### **Conduct of Board members at meetings**

Members and visitors attending meetings are expected to:

- Support and respect the Chair;
- Accept the Chair's ruling on who may or may not speak and on other 'points of order' as being final;
- Request to speak through the Chair;
- Behave in a reasonable and courteous manner to all present;
- Make contributions that are courteous, constructive, brief, and to the point;
- Refrain from speaking when someone else is already talking;
- Follow the agenda and keep to time;
- Listen to each other, respect other peoples' views and allow open discussion;
- Place mobile phones on a silent setting;
- Not to use electronic communications devices;
- Refrain from cross talking or side conversations;
- Disclose any potential conflicts of information and adhere to procedures to help manage conflicts of interest (see Section 5 below); and
- Not to share confidential or sensitive information, gained through the role as a Board member, with anyone outside the Board or used to the detriment of other individual(s).

## **Gifts and hospitality**

Gifts and hospitality can be seen to influence our judgement and Board members should always try to avoid giving or receiving gifts or hospitality. It is the policy of this Code that members should not accept gifts of significant value from residents, contractors, or outside bodies. Board members might find it difficult to refuse gifts and hospitality from residents, particularly where refusal could cause offence. In such cases small gifts, such as diaries, calendars or items of stationery, and occasional and modest hospitality may be acceptable. Any hospitality or gifts should be recorded in the Register of Gifts and Hospitality.

Board members should avoid using the organisation's approved contractors or suppliers and it is necessary to do so, this should be reported first to the Company Secretary, along with the circumstances in which it is proposed to use the contractors. Under no circumstances should Board members accept gifts of cash.

## **Declaration and management of conflicts of interest**

The organisation must at all times maintain the highest standards of probity and integrity. The ways in which actual, potential and perceived conflicts of interests are declared and managed are important in protecting the reputation of the organisation.

Board members are expected to:

- Make an annual disclosure to the Company Secretary of any relevant external interests
- Consider any potential conflicts of interests in matters being discussed by the Board and make sure that this is known to the Board at the time
- Be mindful at all times while undertaking their duties on the Board of potential conflicts of interest either real or perceived, and to consider how conflicts of interests can also extend to decisions and activities involving family members

### **Common interests include;**

- Employment, ownership or significant shareholding in a company that provides products or services to the organisation
- Being an official or elected member of a statutory body including councils
- Being an occupant of a property managed by the organisation

Members declaring an interest in a matter considered by the Board (unless that interest is being a councillor or tenants or linked to a subsidiary of the ALMO) will be expected to leave the meeting for that part of the meeting. The Board may request that the member stays in which case they should not vote on the matter in question.

## **Relationships with residents**

Board members and staff should not allow any personal relationship with residents served by the organisation, to impact on their decisions and conduct. Board members should not seek to bring undue influence on behalf of residents.

## **Equality & Diversity**

Board members are expected to uphold the principles of equality and diversity in their actions as a Board member, when representing the organisation or Board and when making decisions as part of the Board. Board members are expected to be familiar with the organisations policies to promote equality and recognise diversity.

## **Disciplinary procedures for Board members**

Where a Board member fails to follow the code, disciplinary action may be taken against them.

In the case of a minor breach, the Chair or Vice Chair (whose discretion is final) may decide to

- issue a verbal warning;
- ask the member to leave the meeting or function.

In cases where the Chair or Vice Chair considers the failure to follow the Code a serious breach, the matter will be investigated by a 'disciplinary panel' to be convened by and including either the chair or vice chair and two board members. The panel will take make a recommendation to the Board which if the Board considers appropriate can pass a resolution or notice to remove the Board member from office. Any such resolution or notice needs to be approved by at least three quarters of the remaining board members.

**Our Governance framework is available from our website or on request.**

## **Want to know more?**

A Resident Board Member information event is being held on 15 May 2019 6pm to 8pm to explain what the role includes and what support will be offered to tenants who join the Board. To attend or to find out more about the Resident Board Member positions email [getinvolved@eastkenthousing.org.uk](mailto:getinvolved@eastkenthousing.org.uk) or call 01227 868 530.

## **How to apply:**

Download our Resident Board Member application form from our website or call 01227 868 530 to request a form. Complete and return your application form by email to [getinvolved@eastkenthousing.org.uk](mailto:getinvolved@eastkenthousing.org.uk) or by post to: Resident Board Member Applications, East Kent Housing, Garrity House, Miners Way, Aylesham, CT3 3BF. The application deadline for the Resident Board Member positions is Friday 17 May 2019.

**For more information about East Kent Housing  
and the role of our Board visit:  
[www.eastkenthousing.org.uk](http://www.eastkenthousing.org.uk)**



East Kent  
Housing