



SOUTH DEVON RURAL
HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED

Board Members Handbook

Version 4

January 2017

It's not enough that we do our best; sometimes we have to do what's required.
Sir Winston Churchill (1874 – 1965)



**NATIONAL
HOUSING
FEDERATION**
member

Registered Office: South Devon House, Babbage Road, Totnes. TQ9 5JA.
T. (01803) 863550 F. (01803) 863685 An Exempt Charity and registered society
under the Cooperative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014 No 14949
and The Homes and Communities Agency No. LH0920.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

THE BOARD MEMBERS' HANDBOOK



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1A ABOUT THIS HANDBOOK



This handbook is for the support and guidance of all Board Members of South Devon Rural Housing Association Limited.

If you are a new recruit to the Association's Board then "*Welcome Aboard!*" You may be new to the world of social housing and may be wondering what you have let yourself in for. How will your background and experience fit in? The handbook is certainly designed to help with the induction of new Board Members.

More experienced Members of the Board will also find the contents a useful guide and reference as they shape the Association's contribution to meeting housing needs in and around South Devon.

No smoking policy

Smoking is prohibited in the offices of South Devon Rural Housing Association and Forder Lane House Care Home, and in all communal areas of the Care Home.

Smoking is permitted in the grounds of Forder Lane House. However, smokers should dispose of cigarette butts etc in a responsible manner.

1B INTRODUCTION FROM THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE



As the Chief Executive of South Devon Rural Housing Association, it is my job to share the leadership role with the Chairman of the Board, to lead in implementing strategy and manage the delivery of services. My role is described more fully later in this handbook in section 3A.

In respect of the delivery of services and the general running of the Association, it is my ambition to deliver customer focused services at a consistently high standard and quality, whilst providing real value for money. In some respects the Association is at a disadvantage, when trying to demonstrate its relative position as a Registered Provider (RP) to other organisations. For associations whose housing stock is more than 1000 units, The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) is responsible for inspecting and reporting upon the performance of the Association.

Outcomes of inspection place a grading on the performance of the organisation which is easily seen and recognised by customers and competitors alike. Whilst SDRHA is regulated by the HCA it is not reported upon, on a regular basis. Regulation is by desk top inspection and risk based assessment. It is therefore, my task to provide our stakeholders, customers and potential business partners, with a meaningful prospectus, which demonstrates the achievements of the Association and establishes a performance rating. To this end, I have committed, within the current Business Plan, to achieving PQASSO, a recognised customer related award, to support our already impressive performance indicators. These initiatives will perhaps bring an opportunity to implement a Business Excellence Model which will help to ensure the Association continues to improve.

1C ABOUT SOUTH DEVON RURAL HOUSING ASSOCIATION

A Brief History.

South Devon Rural Housing Association was established in 1958, (at that time was named Dartington Housing Association) under a joint initiative between the, then, Totnes Rural District Council and The Dartington Hall Trust. Its purpose at that time was to provide housing for staff retiring from work on the Trust's country estate.

The Association has evolved over the years into a strong, community based, organisation for South Devon. It has sound working links with the local communities, South Hams District Council, Social Services and other statutory and voluntary agencies. It has an enviable reputation in South Devon for the quality of its housing and services.

The Development of South Devon Rural Association.

South Devon Rural HA benefited for many years from the skills and experience of a Chartered Surveyor who ran the organisation on a part time basis. Following changes to the social housing sector in the late 1980's, and their senior employee's wish to retire, it was decided to appoint a full time manager.

Between 2005 and 2016 the Association increased its housing stock by over 100 units, owned or in management contracts. It has also, historically participated in a number of initiatives including the Tenants Incentive Scheme, local authority funded and joint funded projects and the purchase of existing satisfactory houses. South Devon Rural HA continued to strengthen its already well established relationships with South Hams District Council and Social Services and developed its work with Teignbridge District Council. The Association provided its first supported housing project for young single vulnerable people and a small community hall for local people at Cornwood.

Partnership Working.

The Association has experience of working with partners since the early 1990's. This has included development agreements with Westcountry HA, a joint housing development with Sovereign HA, a reciprocal arrangement with Devon & Cornwall HA for the management of properties at East Prawle and Bradworthy, and management agreements with other organisations (Camphill Devon Community and the Youth Advice Centre), and more recently with ROC (Robert Owen Communities) Totnes, working with people with learning disabilities.

SDRHA as a "Housing Association"; what does it mean?

South Devon Rural HA is one of more than 2000 housing associations of different types in England 98 of which are in the South West Region. As with the public sector, these not-for-profit organisations have social objectives at the heart of their work, while like the private sector at its best they are entrepreneurial and flexible. Whether they be in the core business of providing affordable rented or shared ownership homes, or one of the many forms of housing related support services, all share a system of values about service to tenants and other "customers", and to the community.

In formal terms, the "South Devon Rural Housing Association *Limited*" is *incorporated* under charitable rules and *is registered society under the Cooperative and Community Benefit Societies Act 2014*.

Section 1D of this Handbook considers South Devon Rural HA's specific Mission and Values.

Registered under the Cooperative and Community Benefit Societies Act mean an organisation conducting an industry, business or trade, either as a co-operative or for the benefit of the community, and must be registered with the Financial Conduct Authority under the Cooperative and Community Benenfit Societies Act 2014.

"Limited" – *this means that the personal liability of the Association's Members is limited to the amount of their unpaid share capital.*

"Incorporated" *Corporate body status means that, unless steps are taken to terminate its registration under the 1965 Act, the Association will continue to exist even if its membership changes. Also, the Association can act, sue and be sued and own property, land and other assets in its own name without the need for trustees. The objects of the Association are charitable, and as a registered industrial and provident society, it is an "exempt charity" and need not also register with the Charity Commission. Although not generally subject to regulation by the Charity Commission, an exempt charity is subject to the legal rules generally applicable to charities.*

1D SOUTH DEVON RURAL HOUSING ASSOCIATION MISSION AND VALUES



Our key objectives are:

- Through providing affordable housing, and where appropriate, care and support services, enable the Association's occupiers to be part of, and to contribute to the local communities within South Devon throughout their lifetime;
- By nurturing and developing the Association's features of uniqueness, its culture of continuous improvement, its attention to the needs and influence of the occupiers and its programme of business efficiencies, ensure that value for money is achieved in all its activities;
- Through a robust governance and management structure, maintain the Association's long-term viability whilst ensuring that the Association contributes to the local, rural economy;
- Ensure that in all its activities it is evident that people matter to the Association.

Our Values:

- **People matter**
- **Customer and beneficiary focused**
- **Striving for value and quality**
- **Continuously improving**
- **Promoting and valuing diversity and equality, balancing rights and responsibilities**
- **Governance based on openness, integrity and honesty**

1E WHERE WE ARE GOING

THE ONE PAGE BUSINESS PLAN

The Association aims to build on its distinct identity as an independent organisation focusing on the housing related needs of the community principally within South Devon.. The Association recognises that it can contribute and add value to communities by investing in a range of services as well as homes.

In the Business Plan, the Association reviews its aims and objectives in order to meet external changes and address internal needs. The plan sets out the following strategic objectives for the Association, while detailed targets are set out in the Team Plans and Executive Action Plans.

- Through providing affordable housing, and where appropriate, care and support and other services to the community, enable the Association's occupiers to be part of, and to contribute to the local communities in South Devon;
- By nurturing and developing the Association's features of uniqueness, its culture of continuous improvement, its attention to the needs and influence of the occupiers and its programme of business efficiencies, ensure that all its activities represent value for money;
- Through a robust governance and management structure, maintain the Association's long term viability whilst ensuring that the Association contributes to the local, rural, economy;
- Ensure that in all its activities it is evident that people matter to the Association.

The current Business Plan was revised in 2016 and covers the period 2016 – 2021.

2A THE ROLE OF THE BOARD

The overriding function of the Board is to set the strategic direction and policies to ensure that South Devon Rural HA fulfils its objectives as set out in the Rules of the Association, and in its published "Mission Statement".

Setting the Association's aims and strategic direction

The objectives of South Devon Rural HA are only likely to be achieved if they are translated into clear plans and strategies. Working with the Chief Executive to develop and implement an annual corporate plan is thus essential

An outline of the Chief Executive's role is set out below at section 3a.

Maintaining financial control

The Board has a paramount responsibility for the Association's financial viability. This is achieved through effective budgeting, and through the monitoring of management accounts and performance through the year. The Board must also approve each year's accounts prior to publication.

Understanding and taking key business decisions

The Board should establish and oversee frameworks to identify and manage significant financial or other risks to the Association, and ensure regular reports are received on these. Other key issues reserved for the Board's decision should include:

- any expansion of the Association's operations into new activities, or to cease a significant part of the Association's operations;
- any changes to the structure of the Board or the approval of any Board committees;
- the appointment, and if necessary, removal in the Chair;
- approval of Association policies.

A word of caution: the Board should always be careful about getting involved in matters of operational detail for which responsibility is delegated to the Chief Executive and staff.

Appointing and working with the Chief Executive

Appointing (and, if necessary, dismissing) the Chief Executive, your senior paid manager, is one of the most important decisions that the Board must make. The Board must also approve the Chief Executive's salary, benefits and terms of employment. Maintaining an effective relationship with the Chief Executive is equally important. A partnership based on respect for each other's roles is essential.

Establishing and overseeing a framework for delegation to staff

The Board provides the Association with direction, but it does not manage its day-to-day work. This is delegated to staff through the policies, procedures and Standing Orders that the Board approves.

Standing Orders

The Association's Standing Orders outline how the Association will be controlled and managed. In particular they give detailed conventions for the conduct of meetings, quorums etc. The Financial Regulations, which form part of the Standing Orders, incorporate the financial policies, and cover the arrangements for supervision and control of the finances, assets, and other resources of the Association.

Monitoring the performance of the Association.

Having set the strategies, plans and delegation framework the Board must monitor whether objectives are being achieved. The Board must be clear as to what should be happening and deciding what reports it needs to carry out this key role, including customer feedback and comparison with similar organisations.

Ensuring the Association's affairs are conducted properly.

As an organisation, providing community services with the benefit of government funding South Devon Rural HA is in the public eye. The Board must therefore set and maintain appropriate standards for conducting its work and take steps to ensure that these apply throughout the Association.

This Handbook does not contain the full text of the Association's policies and procedures. An index of current policies is set out at section 3G.

The Standards for Conduct that South Devon Rural HA has adopted are identified at Section 4B of this Handbook.

2B YOUR ROLE AS A BOARD MEMBER

Being a Board Member is an opportunity to help meet housing based needs and make a valued social contribution. It may not always be easy but whatever the challenges it should be both interesting and worthwhile!

Your collective responsibilities as a Member of the Board are matched by a series of more personal expectations. Members will be expected to sign-up for all of the following:

Supporting the values, objectives and policies of the Association.

The Board is a team. Like any other team, it is only likely to be effective if all its members are pulling in the same direction. The Board has a right to expect that all its members will subscribe to the Association's values and uphold its objectives and policies once they have been agreed.

Contributing and sharing responsibility

The Board will only function effectively if each Member is contributing fully. Contributing is about using your skills, experience and time to help the Board reach good decisions, Any Board will seek to reach decisions by consensus but in sharing responsibility for decisions Members cannot pick and choose those with which they wish to be associated.

All Members are expected to act only in the interests of the organisation and not on behalf of any constituency or interest group. Board Members should put the interests of the organisation before their own interests.

Support for all of the Association's policies, in particular the Equalities and Diversity Policy.

Preparing and attending

Being a Board Member does require your commitment, not only in attending meetings but also in being prepared for the discussion that takes place. Attendance without reading the papers for the meeting is discourteous to colleagues and may inhibit your effectiveness as a Member.

You should also be ready to participate in reviews linked to your individual performance or that of the Board as a whole, and be willing to attend training events, to build and maintain this effectiveness.

Respecting the confidentiality of information

Board Members should uphold and respect the Association's Confidentiality Policy. While the Association is committed to accountability and openness, this must be balanced by the needs of confidentiality in certain circumstances. These include:

- Certain papers and minutes endorsed as confidential for commercial reasons,
- Personnel information concerning present or former Board Members, employees, or residents.

This is a complex area, and where there is any doubt Members should consult both the Chief Executive and the Association's full *Confidentiality Policy*.

Supporting and adhering to the Association's Standards for Conduct

Deep within the values of South Devon Rural HA is a belief in acting properly, and beyond this, of being seen to act properly. It is particularly important to declare any interests that might be relevant to the Association's work, and to avoid any situation where you could be seen as deriving a personal benefit from your Board role. To these ends, all Board Members are expected to comply to the Association's Standards for Conduct.

Members should aim to attend at least 75% of meetings. The annual strategy "awayday" is particularly important.

SDRHA's agreed Standards for Conduct are set out at Section 4B of this Handbook.

The liability of board members

A Board Member's potential liability is greater than the ordinary shareholder because he or she is, together with other Board Members, ultimately responsible for the acts and failures to act of the Association. If such actions or omissions result in losses then the individual Members could in some circumstances be personally liable. The National Housing Federation provides insurance cover for most of these liabilities. The association also carries professional indemnity insurance for officers and staff.

Civil or criminal fines or penalties imposed by law, punitive or exemplary damages are not covered by the policy. Effectively, uninsured Personal liability can only arise if the Board Member or Members:

- Act dishonestly or criminally resulting in loss to the Association.
- Allow the Association to operate when it is insolvent. That is if debts are incurred when the Board knows or ought to know that they cannot be met.

The risks of being held personally liable should not be exaggerated. The conscientious Board Member is unlikely to come close to such a possibility but should always be ready to seek advice if there are genuine grounds for concern.

A Shareholding member of the Association has the benefit of limited liability.

2C THE ROLE OF THE CHAIR

The Chair and Chief Executive share a leadership role in the Association. The Chair's role is to lead the Board, ensuring it makes an effective contribution to the direction of the Association. The Chief Executive's is to lead in implementing strategy and managing the delivery of services.

Core responsibilities of the Chair

- Ensuring the efficient conduct of the business at Board meetings and at General Meetings,
- Establishing a constructive working relationship with the Chief Executive and being a source of advice and support,
- Building constructive relationships with and between other Board Members,
- Ensuring the Board delegates sufficient authority to enable the business of the Association to be carried out effectively, and that delegated actions are properly monitored,
- Ensuring that the Board receives professional advice when necessary,
- Ensuring that the views of all Board Members are sought and recorded before important decisions are taken,
- Representing the Association as appropriate,
- Ensuring proper arrangements are made for appraising the performance of the Chief Executive,
- Ensuring proper arrangements are made for reviewing the composition of the Board and the skills and experience of its Members including the Chair's own appraisal,
- Establishing and ensuring the implementation of a succession plan for Board Membership.

Note: The Association's Standing Orders state that "No Board Member shall serve in the role of Chairman for more than two consecutive terms of three years."

Clarity in these roles is essential. It is important that all Board Members are aware what they should be able to expect from their Chair and Chief Executive, and what they should be able to expect of each other.

2D TENANT BOARD MEMBERS

South Devon Rural HA recognises the value of customer involvement in the design and management of all its services. In seeking to involve those who use its services, the Association aims to:

- Improve its services and housing stock; and
- Enhance accountability to its customers; and
- Contribute to the local community.

The Association adopts a wide spectrum of customer involvement and provides specifically for the involvement of tenants in the governance of the Association at Board of Management level. The Rules of the Association provide for up to one-third of the Board's membership to be *Tenant Board Members* and for one third of Board Members to retire from office at each Annual General Meeting.

Tenant Board Members bring a valuable service user perspective to the work of the Board; although rather than representing the interests of their fellow tenants Tenant Members must act for the interests of the organisation as a whole.

Prospective new Tenant Board Members are asked to a "Briefing Session" to ensure that those who put their names forward:

- are aware of the responsibilities of a Board Member;
- understand the time commitment that would be expected of them;
- are sympathetic to the values and objectives of the Association;
- have no potential conflicts of interest or disqualifications which might debar them from joining the Board, and

Continued over

A summary of the Association's Resident Involvement Strategy is set out at Section 3E of this Handbook.

- understand and accept the principle that, as Members of the Board, they must work for the interests of the organisation and not as a delegate or representative of tenants' interests,

If there are more candidates than Tenant Member vacancies, there is a postal ballot of all tenants.

An experienced existing Member of the Board will act as "Buddy" to the New Tenant Board Member and will provide information, guidance, advice and support while briefing on current issues before the Board.

Full details of the Association's procedures for the briefing, election and induction of Tenant Board Members will be set out in the Tenant Board Members Policy and Procedure currently in preparation.

2E RENEWING THE BOARD

Board renewal is important for good governance. While the contribution of experienced Members is vital, the Board also needs new members who can provide an independent challenge to long-standing practices and thinking. With this in mind, the Association recognises the importance of the planned renewal of Board skills and experience over a period of time, and of succession planning arrangements.

The Chair and Chief Executive carry out an annual review of the Boards' performance. If this identifies a gap in the Board's skills and diversity profile, (or if the Board's membership falls below five Members), they prepare a skills and experience specification for potential new Members. Wide ranging and open methods of identifying suitable people who may be interested in joining the Board are then put in train.

The recruitment process aims to give potential recruits a balanced and realistic picture of what being a Member of the Board entails.

- The first step is to provide full background information and to hold an informal interview which looks at the skills and expertise that the prospective new Member has to offer, and ensures that he or she understands the responsibilities and time commitment of a Board Member;
- This may be followed by a trial period when the prospective Member is invited to attend meetings of the Board as an "Observer".

The Board then has the opportunity to vote on whether to invite the prospective new Member to join the Board as a co-optee. In accepting co-option, the new Member is asked to sign up to formal Terms of Appointment setting out the role.

An experienced existing Member of the Board acts as "Buddy" to a new Board Member and provides information, guidance, advice and support while briefing on current issues before the Board, while the Chief Executive designs a thorough induction programme tailored to their needs.

The Association's Rules provide for co-optees to have all the powers of a Board Member except they may not take part in discussions and votes on the election of officers, or matters directly affecting shareholders.

2F ASSOCIATION CALENDAR TEMPLATE

Board meetings will normally start at 5.00pm and the main business should last no more that two hours.

January	Q2 Management Accounts Approve Draft of the Budget Rent statements and Newsletter
February	
March	Training or strategy day
April	<i>Rent statements</i> <i>Staff and tenant newsletter</i>
May	Q1 Management Accounts, Draft Annual Accounts
June	Away Day Annual external audit
July	Approve Annual Accounts Rent statements Newsletter
September	Annual General Meeting Board Meeting Staff Newsletter Annual Report to Tenants
October	Rent statements Newsletter
December	Full Staff Meeting <i>Winter Tenants' Newsletter</i> <i>Annual service charge satisfaction survey</i> <i>'What do you want' survey</i>

3A THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

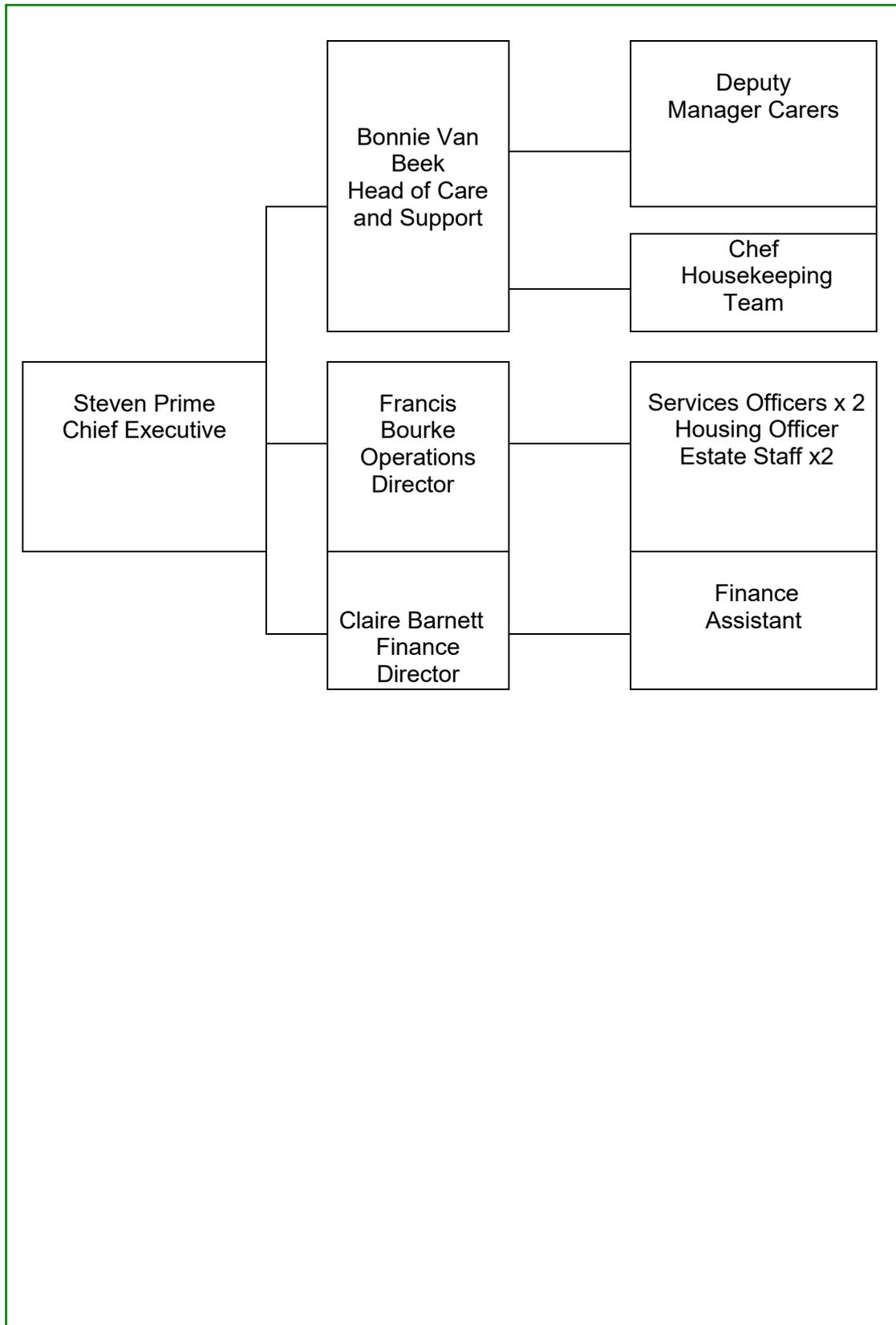
Core Responsibilities of the Chief Executive

- Managing the affairs of the Association in accordance with its values and objectives, and with the general policies and specific decisions of the Board,
- Helping the Board determine policies and strategies,
- Ensuring that the Board receives advice on matters relating to the Association's Rules, legal issues and the need to remain financially solvent,
- Drawing the Board's attention to matters it should consider and decide,
- Ensuring the Board is given the information necessary to perform its duties,
- Leading and managing the Association's staff,
- Ensuring proper systems of control and of risk assessment and management are maintained,
- Supervising the preparation of papers for the consideration of the Board,
- Generally representing the Association.

As the senior member of Association, staff the Chief Executive has a written contract of employment. This covers

- *the general duties of the post and key issues such as how performance is monitored,*
- *how remuneration determined;*
- *how complaints and disciplinary matters are dealt with, and*
- *notice periods.*

3B THE STAFFING STRUCTURE



3D FORDER LANE HOUSE RESIDENTIAL CARE HOME



“A small 25 room residential care home with level access, homely atmosphere with a committed caring staff. Set in the beautiful South Hams at South Devon Rural not far from the Cider Press Centre...25 En-suite rooms, all needs catered for. Long stay, respite or short term care.”

South Devon Rural HA and Forder Lane House (FLH) enjoy excellent reputations as care providers in the area and a very positive Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection result.

The aesthetics of the building and the quality of the interior, fixtures and fittings, so important to the inspectors, are also vital in attracting residents. During 2012 and 2013 Forder Lane House was extended and underwent a full refurbishment to create a contemporary non institutional care home with many enhanced features.

Many Forder Lane House residents are, by choice, privately funded although social services also make referrals supported by ‘gross contracts’.

The Association must ensure that FLH remains a viable business and continues to attract a variety of customers. It must ensure that FLH is homely, non-institutionalised and fitted out to a good standard. Above all, we must recognise that FLH is home to 25 residents.

The Care Team

Name	Job Title	Brief Role Description
Bonnie Van Beek	Head of Care and Support and Care Manager	Overall responsibility for the day to day running of the care home and associated services
Jonathan Cowen	Deputy Manager	Responsible for providing support to the Care Manager and assumes the role of manager person in the absence of the Care Manager
Paul Lake	Care Assistant	Delivering personal care to service users
Alison Garner	Cook	Providing nutritious meals to service users
Sam Gifford	Night Carer	Delivering personal care to service users
Diane Lowden	Night Carer	Delivering personal care to service users
Carol Joyce	Night Carer	Delivering personal care to service users
Gemma Crockford	Night Carer	Delivering personal care to service users
Louise Lloyd	Night Carer	Delivering personal care to service users
Racheal Young	Night Carer	Delivering personal care to service users
Becky Squires	Carer	Delivering personal care to service users
Bozena Mackowiak	Carer	Delivering personal care to service users
Kathy Griffiths	Carer	Delivering personal care to service users
Brenda Grills	Carer	Delivering personal care to service users
Julian Mingo	Carer	Delivering personal care to service users
Janet Setter	Cook	Providing nutritious meals to service
Dawn Rowe	Housekeeper	Keeping the home clean and hygienic
Chris Laffan	Housekeeper	Keeping the home clean and hygienic
Rebecca Setter	Housekeeper	Keeping the home clean and hygienic
Michael Binmore-May	Carer	Delivering personal care to service users

3E THE RESIDENT INVOLVEMENT STRATEGY

TheCustomer@SouthDevonRuralHA

South Devon Rural HA is clear as to the purpose of adopting a strategy for resident involvement. It does so, not because it has a “belief” in resident participation in itself, but because it intends that the strategy should contribute to achieving the following objectives:

- **Service Improvement**

The resident involvement strategy should help us in continuously improving the quality of the services we provide.

- **Enhancing Accountability**

People in rural areas such as ours often have few housing choices in the way that other consumers do. As a significant provider of homes in the local area, SDRHA wishes to be accountable to local people.

- **Contributing to local community capacity**

The Association aims to be a community-based organisation. Its activities will have an impact on, and should make a positive contribution to, the local community.

TheCustomer@Sout DevonRuralHA has five practical strands.

- **Engagement** will focus on developing plans to increase involvement both geographically and in terms of subject areas.
- **Customer Involvement** aims to involve residents in formal structures.
- The **Information Programme** is designed to provide relevant information to residents through meetings, publications and electronic communication systems.
- **Customer Consultation** is a continuous programme which will review our main policies, procedures and strategies with our customers.
- The **Communities Programme** will help tenants and residents to become more involved in their local community and neighbourhood.

We must tackle the challenges to participation that arise from our small size and rural location. Getting residents involved on general housing issues has often been a problem. Attendance at meetings in particular has often been small and involving young people has proved difficult. We recognise that it is essential to develop proactive and innovative ways to get residents involved.

3F EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

A belief in equality and recognition of diversity in our community is central to the values of South Devon Rural HA.

The issues raised are integral elements of everything the Association does, and a strategy of “mainstreaming” equality and diversity, of addressing it within the corporate planning process, setting of policy objectives, service delivery and performance review has therefore been adopted. It feeds into all aspects of continuous improvement, and thus applies to all aspects of the Association’s work.

The Association’s approach to achieving equality and diversity objectives is set out in a considered and detailed policy document. That policy lays down the following statement of principles:

- 1.1. *South Devon Rural Housing Association believes that all people should be treated fairly and with dignity and respect. We are working towards the elimination of discrimination and aiming to demonstrate a fair and equitable approach to the rights and responsibilities of all individuals, groups, communities and organisations. We promote equality of opportunity and respect for diversity, so that all people have equal access to our services, employment and tendering opportunities.*
- 1.2. *The Association is therefore committed to the equal treatment of all without discrimination or prejudice on the grounds of race, colour, creed, religion, gender, marital status, disability, sexual orientation, age, ethnic origin, nationality, class, cultural background, caring responsibilities, HIV status, appearance, political belief, trade union membership, or criminal convictions (where these have no relation to an individual’s ability and potential to do the job), or any other condition not justified in law.*

- 1.3. *The Association recognises the diversity of the population in terms of needs, cultures, and backgrounds. This understanding enables the Association to make reasonable adjustments with the aim of ensuring that its commitment to equality of opportunity is a genuine standard that can be attained.*
- 1.4. *The Association aims to be proactive, welcoming the benefits of diversity. It recognises and values the diverse characteristics, skills, knowledge and experience in all parts of society. It believes that harnessing this will make it a better place to live, work and volunteer. Employing and serving people from diverse communities will benefit the Association and enable it to progress its' objectives.*
- 1.5. *The Association recognises the particular needs of individuals and groups and will aim to meet these wherever possible and viable, recognising that not all members of particular groups will share the same aspirations.*
- 1.6. *The Association believes that equality and diversity are key to delivering good performance. Achieving the highest standard is important because of our responsibility to work to and encourage a just and tolerant society, and the legal and regulatory framework in which we work.*

4B STANDARDS FOR BOARD MEMBERS' CONDUCT

The Association's Standards for Board Members' Conduct are based on three groups of principles:

1. The Association's Mission, Objectives and Values;
2. The South Devon Rural HA Code of Conduct for employees;
3. The Seven Principles of Public Life as set out by the Nolan Committee.

Section 1D of this Handbook sets out the Association's Mission, Objectives and Values.

The Standards for Conduct form part of the Terms of Appointment for Members of the Board and you are expected to adhere to them at all times.

Breaches of the Standards for Conduct could lead to removal from the Board in accordance with the Rules of the Association.

Customer Care

Board Members are expected to treat customers with courtesy, respect and dignity at all times. The meaning of customer in this context means anyone you meet in the course of your duties as a Board Member. It can mean tenants, residents, visitors, contractors other housing or care staff or anyone else. The list is not exhaustive.

It is acknowledged that the Association must deal with difficult customers on occasions. In such circumstances, you should maintain the highest standards of professionalism and fairness. Rudeness is not acceptable under any circumstances.

Your actions and demeanour while acting as a Board Member should be such as to present the Association in a positive way as a professional and effective organisation.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality should be maintained at all times according to the policies and procedures of the Association. The Association abides by the Data Protection Act.

Equality and Diversity

You are required to comply with the spirit and letter of the Association's policies on Equality and Diversity at all times. You should familiarise yourself with these policies and procedures.

Harassment

The harassment of members of staff, residents, tenants or any other customers, in whatever form for whatever reason, is considered a serious breach of the Standards for Conduct. In investigating allegations of this nature, the Association will take into consideration how the victim was affected by the alleged harassment. You should not display material that others may find offensive or use language that may be considered by others as offensive.

Policy and Procedure

You should ensure that you are aware of all the relevant policies, procedures, financial and standing orders relevant to your position in the Association. If you feel any improvements should be made please discuss these with the Chief Executive.

Health and Safety

You should abide by the Health and Safety procedures employed by the association and bring any risk or perceived risk to the attention of the Health and Safety Officer or Chief Executive.

The Association's Assets and Property

Board Members are expected to take reasonable measures to protect the Association's assets from theft, damage or misuse.

Corruption and Fraud

You should be aware that it is a serious criminal and disciplinary offence to receive corruptly any gift, loan, fee, reward or other advantage in return for doing, or not doing, anything or showing favours to any person or organisation.

Gifts and Hospitality

Board Members who receive gifts and/or hospitality should not place themselves under an obligation that might influence or be perceived to influence their future decisions or conduct. You should not accept gifts with a significant monetary value under any circumstances. If such a gift is given and the circumstances are such that refusal would cause offence to the person(s) giving the gift, the Chief Executive must be informed as soon as is possible. The gift will either be returned or sold and the proceeds given to charity. Board Members should be cautious when accepting hospitality, ensuring that it is not too lavish. As a rule, you should not accept hospitality, which the Association would not reciprocate in similar circumstances. You must not purchase goods or services at a discount from a firm connected with the Association unless the discount is generally available to the public. If in any doubt, refer to the Chief Executive.

Interests and conduct outside the Association

The Association does not wish to place restrictions on, or interfere with a Board Member's private life. However, there may be circumstances when a Board Member's external interests affect their position within the Association.

A Board Member's employment should not interfere in any way with the interests of the Association. The same applies to voluntary work of any nature including membership of the committee of a local or voluntary agency with which the Association has contact. All Board Members should complete an annual written declaration of interests. You should declare any other potential or actual conflict of interests as they occur.

Housing Act 1996 Schedule 1 (*whilst this no longer applies the association is expected to adhere to the principles*)

A registered housing association shall not make a payment or grant a benefit to-

- (a) a Member, officer or employee of the association.*
- (b) a person who at any time within the preceding twelve months has been a person within paragraph (a), or*
- (c) a close relative of a person within paragraph (a) or (b), or*
- (d) a business trading for profit of which a person falling within paragraph (a), (b) or (c) is directly concerned,*

except that the following are permitted-

- (a) payments made or benefits granted to an officer or employee of the association under a contract of employment with the association;*
- (b) the payment of expenses to member of the Association who does not have a contract of employment with the association*
- (e) where a tenancy of a house has been granted to, or to a close relative of, a person who later became a Member or employee, the grant to that tenant of a new tenancy whether of the same or another house;*

Whistleblowing

The Association has a policy on Whistleblowing and Board Members should be aware of this. All Board Members have a duty to bring to the attention of the Chief Executive any concerns they may have in respect of:

- Any breaches of the Board Members' Standards for Conduct or the staff Code of Conduct;
- Any actions which might question the integrity of the Association;
- Any fraud or misuse of the Association's assets.

All allegations under this policy will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. If any member of the Board has a concern about a senior manager, they should talk to the Chairman of the Association.

The Seven Principles of Public Life

Selflessness

Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other material benefits for themselves, their family, or their friends.

Integrity

Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.

Objectivity

In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.

Accountability

Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.

Openness

Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.

Honesty

Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.

Leadership

Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

The then Prime Minister established the Committee on Standards in Public Life in October 1994, under the Chairmanship of Lord Nolan, to consider standards of conduct in various areas of public life, and to make recommendations.

4C ACCOUNTABILITY AND STAKEHOLDERS

Why accountability?

Accountability is an organisation's readiness or preparedness to give an explanation or justification to stakeholders for its judgments, intentions, acts and omissions when appropriately called upon to do so. As a social landlord South Devon Rural Housing Association has many reasons to be accountable and open. The Association has received substantial public funding, and provides a key community service to people who have relatively little freedom of choice.

Who are the Association's Stakeholders?

A definition of a Stakeholder: An individual or group with an interest in the success of the Association in delivering its objectives and maintaining the viability of its services. Examples include representatives of key interest groups, including those groups that represent the Association's customers and interested members of the public.

Accountability for public funds

Accountability here is mainly exercised through the overall regulation of the Housing Corporation and the detailed procedures for obtaining grant. Accountability to the wider public requires openness of information and a willingness to admit and correct mistakes when they arise. The board must set the tone for this openness and encourage it at all levels.

Accountability to Tenants

While SDRHA may think of its tenants as customers who deserve a responsive and cost effective service, we should be aware that few tenants can take their custom elsewhere. Accountability to tenants requires that we ensure tenants are consulted about the way SDRHA provides its services, and that their voice is heard on the issues that concern them.

Tenant Board Members ensure the Board is aware of the impact of its decisions on tenants and contribute to open decision-making.

Accountability to the local authority

South Hams DC as the local authority has statutory housing responsibilities as well as a designated enabling role for housing provision. They derive their accountability from direct election. SDRHA's allocations and lettings policies are clearly of interest to the Council and it is important that consultation arrangements are in place when our policies are being formulated.

Accountability to shareholding members

The Association's shareholding members elect the SDRHA Board. Accountability in this sense is limited as SDRHA has few members and it is the Board that decides who can become a member. The Association must therefore keep its membership policy under review.

Accountability to the local community

As a significant landlord within our localised area SDRHA's work has an impact on the local community. The Association must therefore be alive to the views of local people.

Accountability to other stakeholders

Many other groups and individuals have an interest in the work SDRHA does. These include:

Our contractors,
Our Bankers,
Local Businesses,
Local churches,
Local health care providers,
Other RSLs and voluntary bodies working in the area,
And not forgetting the Members of our Board!

4D SDRHA'S EXTERNAL ACCREDITATION

Investors in People

South Devon Rural Housing believes that its people are the key to its success. We have been accredited as an "Investor in People" since 2002.

Our Care Home, Forder Lane House became accredited in its own right in 2015.

iN business for neighbourhoods

iN business for neighbourhoods is a national alliance of housing associations within the National Housing Federation. *iN business for neighbourhoods* is a long-term change programme for the housing association sector and its representative body, the National Housing Federation. Its goal is to unify the sector, enabling us to create successful neighbourhoods where people want to live and challenge negative perceptions of housing associations and their customers.

Supporting People Accredited Service Supplier

The criteria South Devon Rural Housing achieved to become an accredited by Supporting People are as follows:

- Providers must have competent administrative procedures;
- Providers must effective employment policies to cover staff development, health and safety, etc.
- Providers must have robust management procedures;
- Providers must be able to demonstrate that they are competent to deliver services.

Housing Ombudsman Service

The Association is a member of the statutory Housing Ombudsman Service. The HOS considers complaints against member organisations, and deals with other housing disputes. To date the no complaints against South Devon Rural HA have been referred to the Housing Ombudsman.

Care Quality Commission

The Association's Registered Care Home, Forder Lane House, underwent an unannounced key inspection in June 2013. The inspector found that Forder Lane House was meeting the required standard and awarded 5 green ticks.

Positive about Disabled People

South Devon Rural is an accredited user of the 'two ticks' symbol, given by Jobcentre Plus in recognition of employers who have agreed to make certain positive commitments regarding the employment, retention, training and career development of disabled people.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



business for neighbourhoods



5A TECHNICAL JARGON

Accountability

The responsibility to account for resources or actions. Local authorities are accountable to their electorate through the ballot box. Housing associations and their RSLs are accountable in various ways. They have a direct accountability to the Homes and Communities Agency and other funders. They are also accountable to the local authorities in whose areas they work, to their tenants and in a more general way to the wider community.

Affordable Housing

Housing of a reasonable standard and size that is affordable by people in the area living on low incomes.,

“Affordable housing is non-market housing provided to those whose needs are not met by the market. It can include social-rented and intermediate housing, for example shared equity, and should normally meet the needs of current and future eligible households,” Affordable Rural Housing Commission.

Annual General Meeting (AGM)

Meeting of the shareholding membership of an organisation at which the annual accounts are presented and the Board is elected.

Assured tenancy

A form of tenancy introduced by the Housing Act 1988 which is now the norm for new lettings by RSLs and the private sector. Landlords are free to set market rents but RSLs are expected to set affordable rent and give additional contractual rights to tenants. An assured tenancy cannot be ended by a landlord's notice to quit. The landlord must serve a notice of seeking possession and go to court. Schedule 2 of the Housing Act 1988 sets out the grounds on which the courts can, or in some cases must, grant possession.

Audit

(See *Internal audit* and *External audit*).

Business Plan

A document that sets out an organisation's plans for its future operations. May be used to demonstrate to stakeholders that the association has clear aims and objectives and sound financial strategies.

Charter Mark

An award for excellence in delivering a public service; granted by the Citizen's Charter scheme.

Control Procedures

Procedures operating as part of the Financial Regulations that management has established to provide reasonable assurance that the

Cyclical Maintenance

Maintenance planned in advance and carried out at intervals e.g. redecoration

Property Components

Accounting terms for items in the property which require depreciating and replacing such as kitchens and bathrooms.

Debt Profile

Overall impact of an organisation's borrowing over the full life of all loans; usually part of the business plan.

Decanting

Moving a tenant from his/ her home while improvements are carried out. May be to a temporary or permanent alternative home.

Decent Homes Standard

In order to be decent a home should be warm, weatherproof and have reasonably modern facilities. i.e.

- a) It meets the current statutory minimum standard for housing
- b) It is in a reasonable state of repair
- c) It has reasonably modern facilities and services
 - a reasonably modern kitchen (20 years old or less);
 - a kitchen with adequate space and layout;
 - a reasonably modern bathroom (30 years old or less);
 - an appropriately located bathroom and WC;
 - adequate insulation against external noise (where external noise is a problem); and
 - adequate size and layout of common areas for blocks of flats.
- d) It provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort.

In 1997 there were 2,100,000 houses owned by local authorities and housing associations that did not meet the decent homes standard. Local authorities had a £19 billion backlog of repairs and improvements.

Enabling role

The local authority role of securing housing strategies are implemented by others rather than being providing directly itself.

External audit

An independent examination of the financial statements of an organisation. There are legal requirements that an independent firm of approved auditors should carry out an annual audit for RSLs. The shareholders at the Annual General Meeting appoint auditors.

Fair Rent

A rent assessed by the Rent Officer under the Rent Act 1977. Applies only to tenants of Housing Associations who have been tenants since before January 1989.

General Consent

Consent covering a class of cases. In particular the general consent granted by the Tenant Services Authority to certain types of land disposals.

Get on Board

Initiative run by the National Housing Federation seeking to match interested individuals with member organisations looking for potential Board members.

Homes and Communities Agency

The national Government agency that funds new affordable housing and regulates housing associations in England.

- *Investing*. Helps develop and implement regional and national housing strategies, using public subsidy to procure affordable housing
- *Regulating*. The statutory regulator for housing associations. Aims to drive improvements in housing association efficiency and performance, and ensure that associations continue to attract private finance at competitive rates to build and improve affordable homes.
- *Influencing*. Helps shape housing, community and regeneration policy nationally, regionally and locally.

Housing Ombudsman Service

Considers complaints against registered social landlords, including complaints about shortcomings in the way homes are managed, as long as made by the resident affected or an authorised representative. Complainant must complete the internal complaints procedure of the landlord before the Ombudsman can intervene.

iN business for neighbourhoods.

An alliance of housing associations within the National Housing Federation working to create good neighbourhoods in cities, towns and villages across England. The campaign aims to correct the perception that housing associations only provide poor quality homes for the poor, the deprived and the vulnerable - and little else.

Cooperative and Community Benefit Society

See Section 1C.

Internal Audit

Internal audit examines evaluates and reports on the adequacy of internal financial control as a contribution to the proper economic, efficient and effective use of resources.

LsvT

Large Scale Voluntary Transfer of ownership a local authority's housing to an RSL.

Licencee

A resident of a housing scheme who does not have a legal interest in the property and thus does not have the rights associated with being a tenant. Includes residents of residential care homes.

Major repairs

Repairs which are too substantial to be covered by normal maintenance provision. Generally related to a building's structure or services. May also be called capital repairs or more recently, components for replacement.

Management Agreement

The legal contract defining the responsibilities of the parties when an RSL devolves the responsibility for managing a development to another organisation.

Mutual Exchange

Voluntary exchange of tenancy by one tenant with another, Such exchanges involving RSL tenants require the approval of th RSLs concerned.

National Housing Federation (Nat Fed)

Represents housing associations in England and aims to support and promote the work that housing associations do and campaign for better housing and neighbourhoods. The Federation is funded by membership fees and commercial services such as conferences, training and publications.

Nomination Rights

Arrangement for a proportion on RSL homes to be allocated to applicants put forward by another body, usually the local authority, but may also be voluntary agencies.

Choice Based Lettings (CBL)

A common housing register where prospective tenants can bid for vacant properties.

PPS3 / PPG3

Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing: (formerly Planning Policy Guidance) sets out the national planning policy framework for delivering the Government's housing objectives.

Priority Need

Categories of 'statutory homeless' households for which a local authority must provide accommodation if they are not intentionally homeless.

Quorum

The minimum number of members of an organisation who must be present to make that body legally competent to transact business. Specified in the Rules and Standing Orders of an RSL.

RASA

RP

Registered Provider. Concept introduced by the Housing Act 1996 applying to housing organisations registered with the Tenant Services Authority, (now the HCA).

Rehab

Extensive repair and improvement of a building for longer life.

Rent Officer

Statutory official whose duties include setting Fair Rents under Rent Act 1977, including those of housing Association tenants whose tenancies began before April 1989. Local authorities must also refer housing benefit claims from private sector assured tenants to determine whether rents are reasonable.

Right to Acquire

Right of some RP tenants to buy the property in which they live.

Risk Management

Active process of seeking to contain and limit the business risks to which RP's are exposed.

Shared ownership

Tenure under which occupier and RP share the equity in a property. The occupier purchases a property at a proportion of its value, typically by taking a mortgage. The occupier may pay a rent to the RP on the equity retained. Given the high value of properties in many rural areas, schemes that do not feature a rental payment are being trialled.

Shareholding member

See Cooperative and Community Benefit Society at Section 1C.

Supporting People

The *Supporting People* programme is aimed at providing a better quality of life for vulnerable people to enable them to live more independently and maintain their tenancies. The programme provides housing related support to develop and sustain an individual's capacity to live independently in their accommodation.

The Housing Finance Corporation (THFC)

Independent intermediary body set up to raise private finance for RPs.

Void

A dwelling without an occupier. Void losses refers to the loss of rent while a property is empty, e.g. between one tenant leaving and another occupying the property.

5C BOARD MEMBERS' EXPENSES

These guidelines apply to all Board Members carrying out official duties in relation to the Association's business, including attendance at conferences, courses and seminars (residential and non-residential) on behalf of the Association.

Board Members are not entitled to make any claim for attendance allowance or out-of-pocket expenses to any local authority or any other body in respect of official duties on behalf of the Association and when submitting a claim to the Association for such expenses shall make a declaration to that effect.

Travel would normally be by standard class rail or bus or by private car or taxi where suitable public transport is not available. If a private car is used a mileage allowance will be paid in accordance with the casual user mileage allowances determined by the Association from time to time.

Where public transport is used, the following information should be submitted with the claim:

- (a) the type of transport used;
- (b) the time of departure and return;
- (c) the stations of departure and arrival;
- (d) the cost incurred.

Where a private car is used, the following information should be submitted:

- (e) the total number of miles claimed;

In circumstances where, due to a Board Member's disability or particularly difficulties in travelling, travel by public transport or the Board Member's own private car is not practicable, the Association will consider claims for the use of a private hire car or taxi. Please consult the Chief Executive in advance regarding such situations.

The Association will meet claims for car parking fees in circumstances where adequate free parking is not available.

The payment of subsistence claims and out-of-pocket expenses for attendance at residential courses and conferences will be in accordance with the rates determined by the Association from time to time. Receipts will be required to support these claims and should be submitted with the appropriate form.

The Association will consider claims for reimbursement of the cost of telephone calls necessary in connection with the Association's business. Please consult the Chief Executive in advance regarding such circumstances.

All claims for Board Members' expenses under this policy should be made on the form overleaf and submitted to the Chief Executive, whose decision on the payment of such claims shall be final.

SOUTH DEVON RURAL HOUSING ASSOCIATION

BOARD MEMBER APPRAISAL 20__

Introduction

The annual appraisal, by the Chairman of the Board, with individual Board Members is an opportunity to reflect on how the Board has operated as a team and as individuals over the previous year. It is a continuous improvement process, building on strengths and agreeing actions that will enable individual Board Members to optimise their contribution to the Association.

The Process

The process comprises three key elements; a self-appraisal of the Board's and the individual's performance; a discussion between the Chairman and the individual around the issues raised in the assessment; and an agreed action plan to address the issues.

The assessment to be completed by the individual Board Member will firstly reflect on the individual's perception on how the Board has operated over the year. It is equally important to comment on what has gone well and what has been less effective. The discussion on these issues will ensure that the teamwork aspect of the Board's activities will improve.

Secondly, individual Board Members are asked to self-assess their abilities across a wide range of issues that the Board has to consider. It is important to appreciate that not everyone can be an expert in every area. However, the Board's overall performance will improve if the individual Members' strengths are appreciated, and utilised, whilst also being aware of areas in which the Member's ability to contribute could be improved.

Finally, as an outcome of the discussion between the Chairman and the individual Board Member, there should be an agreed action plan that will benefit the individual Board Member's ability to contribute to, and enhance, the Board's overall performance. The plan can include actions that will involve the individual Board Member, but can also include items that will require actions by others. [Typically, an area in which the individual Board Member feels their contribution is constrained may be addressed through an improvement in how the relevant papers are presented to the Board]

Note on self-assessment

It can be very challenging to assess one's own capabilities or competences in particular areas. If this is the case, it is often helpful to consider how 'comfortable' you feel when discussing topics in each area as an appropriate yardstick.

Personal details	
Name of Board Member:	Date appointed to Board:
Special Board Interests:	Offices held:
Attendance record:	Training sessions attended:

General Review
What have been the Board's main successes over the last year?
What do you think the Board has not done so well?
How do you feel the Board's performance could be improved?

Personal Assessment

Please tick the level of competency that most closely describes your ability to contribute in each area

Area of competency	Level of competency				
	Expert/ Consultant	Informed involvement	Understand issues	Some awareness	Need support or training
The housing market and social housing					
The care of vulnerable client groups					
Chargeable Services for residents					
Residents' consultation and involvement					
Strategic management					
General or Operational management					
Financial expertise					
Legal expertise					
Human resource expertise					
Community relations and needs					
Working with local authorities					
Public relations and marketing					
Developing new properties					
Maintenance of properties					
Information Technology					
Risk Management					
Governance of Housing Associations					
Participating in meetings					

Personal review

How do you feel that you have been able to positively contribute to the Board's performance?

Have there been any constraints to your effective performance?

What do you think could be done to help you make the best possible contribution?

Since your last review, have you participated in any training or development? If so, how has this improved your ability to contribute?

Other Relevant Matters

Are there any other issues that you would like to discuss?

Agreed Actions		
Action	By Whom	By When

Signed as a true record		
Board member	/...../20
Board Chairman	/...../20.....

SOUTH DEVON RURAL HOUSING ASSOCIATION

Board Member Appraisal 20__

Personal Details

Name of Board Member:

Date of Appointment to the Board:

Special Board interests

Attendance Record (%) --

Training Attendance Record (%) –

General Review

How do you think the Board has performed since the last annual review?

What do you think we have done well?

And not so well?

Any additional skills or experience needed to make the Board more effective?

Personal Review

What do you like about being a Board Member of South Devon Rural HA?

Is there anything you do not like?

Have you faced pressures or constraints from your role since the last annual review?

What contributions have you made to the Board since the last annual review?

What difference would it make to South Devon Rural HA if you were not on the Board?

Do you see any weaknesses in your performance?
What could be done to assist you to make the best possible contribution?

Training and Development	
Record of Training undertaken last year	
Agreed at last appraisal	Other
Were training sessions/conferences/seminars useful?	
What training, skills enhancement or personal development would you wish to undertake during the coming year?	
Do you get sufficient support from South Devon Rural HA staff?	

Other Relevant Matters
Are there any other matters that you would like to discuss?

Signed as true record		
Board Member	 /...../20...
Board Chairman	 /...../20...

6B INDUCTION OF BOARD MEMBERS

When people first become Board Members, they need to understand what is involved, and are entitled to expect help with preparing themselves to do the job effectively. The Association cannot expect new recruits to come to terms with the demands of the job without access to basic information about the Association's activities, finances and objectives.

South Devon Rural HA's induction programme set out in the policy *Board Membership and Renewal* aims to both welcome the new Member into the organisation and provide him or her with the necessary skills, knowledge and expertise to be able to undertake fully the role of a Member of the Board.

The process of induction begins with the interview and briefing sessions that take place before the new Member joins the Board. The process extends over a period of months and the timescale will depend upon the prior experience and knowledge of the new Board Member. While delivery of the programme will be principally by the Chief Executive, an experienced Board Member should be identified as a "Buddy" for the new Member to provide support and assistance in the first few months.

Key issues addressed in the Induction period include:

- *Code of Conduct;*
- *Declarations of Interest;*
- *Media contacts.*

Not forgetting - providing the Board Member's Handbook!

6C BOARD MEMBER TRAINING

Well run Boards value training. It helps with the understanding of roles and responsibilities, in planning and in working together. It starts with the induction of the new Member and is a continuing process.

For a small organisation such as SDRHA training and development initiatives must be cost effective. It is therefore necessary to be clear about training needs and an assessment of collective and individual training needs comes out of the annual Board performance appraisal and Members' self appraisal processes. The Association may address training needs for Board Members in a number of ways:

Pre Board Briefings

These may consist of short, focussed briefings before a Board meeting on a topic which is directly linked to an important decision which needs to be taken. The session could be run by the Chief Executive or possibly by an external person with relevant expertise.

Away Days

By helping the Board feel more like a team, Away Days help them work together more effectively. They can take various forms; involving paid staff, funders or an outside speaker for all or part of the event. Topics could be strategic or forward planning, or reviewing the work of your organisation, or part of it.

Attendance at conferences and seminars

It may be useful for Members to attend housing conferences e.g. the CIH South West annual conference to learn about current housing policy and practice issues and to meet with Board Members from other housing organisations.

Section 6B of this Handbook considers New Member Induction issues.

Training courses

Courses for individuals with training needs may be arranged as needed. They can be invaluable, but it may be more cost effective to bring a training course to the Board if it addresses skill areas (strategic planning, working together as a team, effective meetings) because of the value of focus on the particular work of the committee and organisation.

Study visits to other RPs

Occasional visits to other organisations can be useful in gathering good practice ideas and enabling Members to meet their counterparts addressing similar issues.

Consultants

The Board has used consultants in the past. It is important to be clear about what is wanted by the Board and to draft a written brief. A good consultant may help identify problems and propose solutions although ultimately the Board must take the action and decisions.

After training events the Board will consider whether the training met needs and how, as a group, any changes or further action are to be made.

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