

MEMBERSHIP POLICY

The purpose of this document is to detail ARK Housing Association's Policy and Procedures for recruiting Shareholding Members.

Date Issued: August 2006

Next Review Date: August 2009

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 ARK Housing Association Ltd is a membership organisation and seeks to recruit as members, individuals with an interest in the work of the organisation and to make effective use of their skills, views and experience. Members of the Association are entitled to vote at General Meetings of the Association, to seek election to the Management Committee and to vote in such elections. The formal requirements and procedures associated with membership are set out in our Rules, paragraphs 7-12.
- 1.2 Members of the Association are those individuals who hold a share in the Association and whose names are entered in the Register of Members.
- 1.3 No member can hold more than one share in the Association.
- 1.4 Membership is open to organisations as well as to individuals. An organisation which is a member is free to appoint any person it considers suitable to act as its representative. A representative of an organisation cannot also be an individual member of the Association.
- 1.5 A person cannot apply for membership if he/she is under the age of 18, unless he/she is already a tenant, in which case he/she can apply for membership from the age of 16.

2.0 Policy

- 2.1 As a matter of policy, we will seek to ensure that the Association has a broad-based membership which reflects its constitution and the communities it serves. Our membership is an important means of enhancing and demonstrating our accountability to the local communities where we operate. We will actively promote membership through appropriate channels as a way of providing opportunities for interested parties to play an active part in the affairs of the organisation. We will seek to ensure that no individual or group is debarred from access to membership in fulfilment of our equality objectives.

We will attempt to ensure a wide representation in our membership from the communities we serve. We will particularly welcome applications from Tenants, Service Users, or community groups and other residents of towns and villages in which the Association is active.

2.2 We will seek to ensure that all sections of the community are represented in the membership, particularly those which are currently under represented. We will therefore particularly welcome applications from:

- Tenants and Service Users
- Individuals with direct or indirect experience of disability
- Members of ethnic minority communities

2.3 We will promote membership with particular reference to the priority groups referred to in paragraphs 2.2 and 2.3 by:

- Providing information on membership to tenants and service users through our Newsletter
- Providing information on membership on our website
- Promoting membership through public meetings in which we are involved
- Publishing a leaflet to explain the benefits of shareholding membership and the application process, and making information available within our office to all those who enquire about membership
- Make reference to membership when re-letting a vacant property (although we will make it clear that membership is not a condition of receiving a tenancy)

2.4 We will not only encourage wide membership but also an active, informed and participative membership. We will therefore:

- Publicise general meetings at least 14 days before the day of the meeting
- Circulate information to members so they can make informed decisions at general meetings
- Make every effort to hold general meetings at times and at locations suitable for the membership
- Keep members informed on all major developments affecting our business and our services
- Make a copy of our Annual Report and our audited accounts available to all our members
- Provide information, support and training to tenant members who are interested in becoming more actively involved in decision making, in accordance with our Tenant Participation Policy.
- Promote the opportunities for members to seek election to the Association's Management Committee, in line with our Policy and Procedure on Recruitment of Management Committee Members.

3.0 Procedures

3.1 Any enquiry about membership of the Association received at any time, whether in response to the promotions referred to in paragraph 2.4 or otherwise, will be answered by issuing the leaflet which explains the benefits of membership, and an application form, together with details of how a membership application will be processed.

- 3.2 An applicant for membership will be asked to forward, together with the application, the sum of £1.00 (which shall be returned to the applicant if the application is not approved). An application will be considered by the Committee at its next meeting after the application is made, or as soon thereafter as it is practicable. However, an application will not be considered within a 14 day period preceding the date of a general meeting.
- 3.3 If the application is approved, membership will take effect immediately, and within seven working days, the name of the applicant will be entered in the Register of Members. The applicant will be issued with a copy of the Rules of the Association and a share certificate.
- 3.4 If the application is refused, the applicant will be informed about the reasons for refusal within 7 days of the decision, and of their right to appeal the decision. An appeal will be heard by the Association's Committee of Management, whose decision will be final.
- 3.5 A copy of the Register of Members must be available for inspection by any member or person with an interest in the Association.
- 3.6 Any member who changes his/her main residence is required to advise the Association in writing as soon as possible thereafter, unless he/she is a tenant who has moved home as a result of a transfer of tenancy or a mutual exchange.
- 3.7 Any member can end his/her membership by giving one month's notice in writing. Membership can be terminated if the Committee is satisfied that a member has failed to notify us of a change of address. Membership can, under exceptional circumstances, also be terminated where a member's behaviour is deemed to harm the interests of the organisation, subject to the procedures and safeguards set out in paragraph 16 of our Rules.
- 3.8 Information on members will be held in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and other relevant legislation.
- 3.9 We will monitor membership in terms of the following characteristics:
- Membership categories (individual, group)
 - Tenant, resident, other connection to the Association
 - Place of residence
 - Age, gender, ethnicity, disability
 - Equal opportunities
- and will use this information to assess the extent to which our membership is representative of the communities we serve. The information will be reported annually to the Management Committee, with recommendations for any action.

4.0 Review of Policy

- 4.1 The Chief Executive will make sure that this policy is reviewed every three years in the light of the experience of operating this policy and developments in legislation and best practice. Any amendments required or recommended will be submitted to the Management Committee for consideration and approval.

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