



*Would you like to join the Board of a housing association that provides homes for families and single people in need in Southeast London?*

# Board Members - CHISEL

## Candidate information pack

### March 2023

## A welcome from our Chair



Hello to all prospective board members. I have been the Chair of the Board of CHISEL Trustees since May 2019. During this time, I have led the board and the organisation through significant change.

We have now reached a point in 2023, where the board will be defining CHISEL's future as a caring social landlord that provides the quality service our residents expect and deserve. In this current regulatory, economic, and social landscape this is no small or easy task.

In joining CHISEL Board, you can expect in-depth reports to analyse and question, healthy debate on managing risk and discussions on strategic planning. At present the Board has four committees whose role is to scrutinise the details of the business. Board members attend one or two of the committees, each of which report back to the full Board meetings. Board members are responsible for developing an expertise in one or two areas of social housing assisted by bi-annual appraisal interviews with myself in my role as the chair of the board.

The CHISEL Board team has worked hard to attain a high level of governance, we refer to the rules and the 2020 Code of Governance (National Housing of Federation) to guide us. The Board understands fully its responsibility to work as a collective decision-making body. We take time to discuss and debate business in meetings and come to collaborative agreement. All decisions are taken at Board meetings and only after serious discussion that considers all factors and potential consequences.

CHISEL is a provider of social housing and is registered with the Regulator of Social Housing. A registered provider is responsible for all compliance, fire risk and health and safety. There are complex compliance rules and regulations that all at Board level should be fully conversant in.

I joined the Board as a tenant Board member in 2018; I am proud to lead a harmonious Board, which has worked through difficult times, each member having displayed a high level of commitment to meeting their obligations to the housing association. We are a strong team very much looking outwards to welcome new members to share the complex

responsibilities of steering this small unique housing association through the challenges that face the sector in the 2020s. Have you the skills and experience we are looking for, if so please do apply and I look forward to meeting you at interview.

**Louise Owen**



## About us

CHISEL is a neighbourhood housing association based in the southeast of England, the majority of which are in southeast London. CHISEL provides a range of homes for people in housing need and on low incomes. We manage 250 homes in Brighton, Colchester and London.

Our homes are both self-contained and shared housing, all at a social rent. We have a unique housing stock comprising a mixture of single-unit street properties, and a number of shared houses with a third of the stock being self-build rented timber-framed houses.

CHISEL is committed to remaining an independent association and is dedicated to encouraging tenant participation in both the management and the strategic development of the organisation. We are registered with the Regulator of Social Housing which monitors our work to ensure we are meeting the regulatory standards for housing associations.

## Vision

Our vision is to provide good quality housing for families and single people, where residents can if they wish take an active role in planning for their communities.

## Values

- Focus on what really matters to residents
- Treat everybody as we would like to be treated
- Value people as individuals with different needs
- Being well governed, accountable, independent and financially strong
- Working collaboratively
- Striving constantly towards a better service

# Board member opportunities

We are seeking up to six Board members to lead the association confidently through the next year and beyond. We are looking for people who are first, passionate about social housing and resident participation and second, enthusiastically optimistic with the ability to bring extensive experience and skills to work with our committed colleagues and Board teams.

In particular, CHISEL requires Board members who between them or in combination will provide the following:

- **Strategic finance and risk expertise** – we have a unique set of properties that have particular challenges and we are looking for experienced senior finance professionals to help us balance the risk and benefits involved in relation to our portfolio and to help us to plan our finances strategically for the longer term.
- **Asset management/development expertise in the housing sector** – our portfolio is very scattered, and we need experienced senior housing professionals to support us as we balance our strategy in terms of decisions regarding investing in, maintaining and upgrading our properties while ensuring we remain true to the needs and aspirations of our residents.
- **Change management in a small to medium housing association** – we are at a crossroads and are facing challenges in terms of our long-term viability, not least due to the current economic landscape. We would welcome senior people with significant cultural and structural change management experience to support us as we ensure the organisation is both structured appropriately and viable financially.

# Role description - Board members

## Key Information

**Location and time commitment**

Board meetings are held four times a year for two hours in the evenings in their office in the London Borough of Lewisham. There are also up to three committee meetings per year (remote) and two away days.

London Borough of Lewisham, Hybrid. You will be expected to be available for formal and informal conversation with fellow Board members and with the staff team between these meetings, as required based on the needs of the organisation.

The overall time commitment is approx. one-two days per month.

**Remuneration**

These are unremunerated Board roles. All reasonable expenses are paid.

**Tenure**

Three years with a possibility of renewal to another three years

**No. of opportunities**

Up to six Board members

The overall purpose of the Board is to run CHISEL innovatively within a framework of continuous improvement and effective control, which enables risks to be properly assessed and managed.



## The aims of Board members

- Monitor CHISEL's performance in relation to its strategies, plans, budget, controls, decisions, customer feedback and the performance of comparable organisations
- Establish and oversee a system of internal controls and a framework for the identification, management and reporting of risk
- Work with the CEO and other Board members to consider succession planning, changes to the structure and size of the Board, and other areas of governance
- Promote and develop CHISEL, its equality and diversity strategy, consultation and tenant-led ethos, and quality standards
- Define and ensure compliance with the values and strategic objectives of CHISEL, ensuring its long-term success
- Establish a framework for approving strategies, policies and plans to achieve those objectives
- Question intelligently, debate constructively, challenge rigorously and identify resolution on all matters presented to the Board
- Establish and comply with the code of conduct and expected behaviour for the Board and employees, ensuring CHISEL's affairs are conducted lawfully and in accordance with generally accepted standards of performance, probity, good practice and regulatory requirements

## Selection criteria

**Following a recent Board Appraisal CHISEL is seeking up to six Board members with specific experience in:**

- Strategic finance and risk in a regulated environment (though not necessarily a qualified accountant)

**and/or**

- Asset management/development expertise in the housing sector

**and/or**

- Cultural or structural change management in a small to medium housing association or in a regulated environment

**In addition to at least one of the above specialisms, you must have:**

- An understanding of tenant-led services
- Experience in understanding, and investigating electronically presented written and numerical reports and drawing out pertinent points for discussion
- Experience in expressing views succinctly and effectively in a formal Board/Committee meetings and in making reasoned and thought through contributions
- Demonstrable experience in considering the long-term implications and have a broader view of issues, spotting opportunities, identifying risks and the means of mitigating them
- A commitment to social housing, and empathy with the charitable aims, objectives and values of CHISEL
- A commitment to diversity, equal opportunities and access to employment and service provision



# What we can offer you

Becoming a Board member is an interesting and compelling way to engage within the housing sector. It is a role which will give back as much as you put in and often, much more. Though often challenging, a Board role will reward you with a wealth of personal and professional skills which are valuable for both work and personal life, whilst empowering you with a sense of contribution in the pursuit of a wider purpose.

## **Contributing to a great cause**

There is no doubt that being a Board member is one of the most powerful ways in which you can contribute to your local community or to a cause you really care about. As a Board member at CHISEL, you will play an integral part in good governance, not only ensuring the organisation remains viable and sustainable but that it also adheres closely to its mission and works in the interests of all its tenants and beneficiaries.

## **Continued personal development**

Joining a Board can be an absorbing experience, not least because it allows you to adapt and apply everything you have learned to date into an entirely new setting. Through a Board role you can gain a clearer idea of your professional strengths and weaknesses whilst simultaneously learning altogether new skills. Understanding how to adapt your professional knowledge to useful and impactful ends is a good reminder of your own versatility, giving you confidence in your existing abilities whilst encouraging you to push the boundaries of your expertise.

## **Teamworking**

As a member of our Board you are part of a team and will have the opportunity to apply your unique skills and experience whilst learning from others. Working closely with a passionate team of people who have different perspectives is often one of the most enjoyable aspects of the role. You will use your ability to collaborate effectively with others. You will also use your knowledge and understanding to constructively question the ideas of fellow Board members as well as those of the Executive Team. This is essential to ensure the Board's strategic choices are scrutinised and tested before being implemented. Negotiating, empathising, listening and clearly communicating ideas and concerns are huge factors in this process and often help to set the tone and culture of Board meetings.

## How to apply

Please click [here](#) to apply by submitting your CV and a covering letter which should indicate why you are interested in applying for a Board member role and how you meet the selection criteria.

If you would like a call to discuss the role in more detail, please email Renu Gundala, [renu@eastsidepeople.org](mailto:renu@eastsidepeople.org) to arrange a convenient time. Having a call of this kind will not influence the success or otherwise of your application.

We want you to have every opportunity to demonstrate your skills, ability and potential; please contact us if you require any assistance or adjustment so that we can help with making the application process work for you.

The closing date for applications is **Sunday 23 April 2023 at 10 pm** with shortlisting interviews taking place the week after with Eastside People. Interviews with CHISEL will take place **15 and 16 May 2023**.

## Our commitment to diversity

We are looking for people who can act as advocates for CHISEL and who will be committed to our mission and tenant-led approach. Our approach to diversity supports everything we are committed to do; we expect all our Board members to demonstrate a personal commitment to diversity in all its guises. We are looking for our Board to be as diverse as our colleagues and the people we serve. In addition, we believe that people from different backgrounds bring perspectives and skills that can create fresh ideas, thinking and approaches making the way work is undertaken more effective and efficient.

With plans for active tenant participation and consultation at the fore CHISEL is looking forward to welcoming change and new horizons. Come and join us and help to steer the organisation and shape CHISEL's future.



Eastside People  
Canopi  
7-14 Dover Street  
London  
SE1 4YR

0207 250 8334  
[eastsidepeople.org](http://eastsidepeople.org)

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