

co-op H O M E S

part of RHP Group



Board Member

Candidate Information Pack

April 2024

New board members: April 2024

Co-op Homes (CHS) is a housing association which owns some 300 properties across London and the South East. We're also a managing agent for 30 other community housing organisations and housing co-ops, providing services to over 2,000 residents.

The CHS Board of Management provides leadership and oversight to ensure that we achieve our business objectives and deliver our co-operative ethos. We are looking for new board members to help develop and oversee our strategy as we build an outward facing business that is growing its client base and helping co-ops with increased regulation, whilst also providing a great service to the residents who live in the social housing we own.

We have an active board which currently has five paid members, each with a variety of skills and backgrounds. Our Chair has been in the role since 2021 and we appointed a new Managing Director within the last year.

We are now looking to recruit two new board members. One who can bring strategic finance expertise and another with building asset management experience.

- **Strategic finance:** as a provider, we offer a unique set of services that have particular challenges, and we are looking for an experienced senior finance professional to help us balance the risks and benefits involved in relation to our portfolio and scrutinise our finances strategically for the longer term.
- **Building asset management:** we are looking for expertise in property management. This will include repairs and maintenance, health and safety legislation and regulations, strategic asset management and decarbonisation.

We would very much welcome applications from people who combine relevant expertise with lived experience of social housing or experience of living in a housing co-operative, as we know you would bring a unique insight to the role. For the same reason we would also welcome applications from minority groups.

As a board member at CHS, you'll have the satisfaction of joining a dynamic organisation passionate about making a lasting difference to lives and communities. We are looking for people who share our vision and values. Previous board experience is not required.

About us

Co-op Homes (South) Ltd was established in 1986 by a collective of housing co-operatives. We are a not-for-profit organisation with charitable status providing two distinct services. One is acting as a Registered Provider of Social Housing to customers living in around 300 homes that we own and manage. The other is a business-to-business service offering management services to around 30 housing co-ops. Our unique proposition lies in our ability to provide expert housing management services to housing co-operatives and other small, resident-led housing organisations, enabling them to maintain their autonomy.

The Co-op Homes Board operates within a group structure. We are part of Richmond Housing Partnership (RHP) Group which owns and manages some 9,000 properties in South West London. Being part of the Group allows us to leverage in-house specialist support and operational efficiencies in areas such as IT and controls, while operating independently and delivering a personalised service and maintaining our grassroots involvement.

We work with multiple stakeholders including the group parent, our customers and client co-ops to manage risk and the flow of risk between entities. Our central challenges include responding to changing regulatory and statutory requirements, mitigating effects of the cost of living crisis, and rising to the challenges of decarbonisation. We have ambitions to grow across the Greater London and Thames Valley areas by supporting more housing co-ops and other community housing organisations and by building new homes.

Our Board of Management determines and ensures compliance with our vision, values, organisational culture and strategy. It also leads, directs and controls the organisation's affairs, and scrutinises performance. RHP Group Board oversees the work of CHS with tight oversight in some areas, such as our business plan, treasury strategy and financial statements, and loose oversight in other areas. We have a complex mix of stakeholders, and part of the role of the CHS Board is to navigate the risks and relationships involved.

Our values

Our purpose is to work with a co-operative ethos to help people and their communities flourish.

We believe that the co-operative model of housing brings the benefits of good social housing to its residents, including security of tenure, relative affordability and better health, education and economic outcomes, but with the added benefit of allowing people to flourish through autonomy, agency and community.

We support this and similar tenures through strong partnerships with our clients to whom we offer comprehensive services and through developing and managing our own homes in ways that give residents meaningful opportunities to influence outcomes.

Everything we do is supported by our values, which link directly back to our vision above.

Our values: what we live by at 

		
WE CARE	WE DELIVER	WE LEARN
By building empathy, being open, ethical, inclusive and supportive, we show compassion and help each other, our residents and coops flourish.	By taking responsibility and ownership we commit to our promises, ensuring high performance, quality and safety for everyone.	By listening, having humility, being open to ideas, collaborating and taking on board evidence we are able to improve on everything we do.

At Co-op homes, how we think, how we behave and how we work is driven by our ethos; it's what we refer to as the co-op ethos. It's supported by our values: *we care*, *we deliver*, *we learn*.

At the heart of this is the desire to listen and then act. We believe that this leads to better outcomes for everyone.

In practice this means that we operate on the principle that no one person has all the answers and that it is necessary to create the conditions that allow for open dialogue in an environment that is non-threatening, respectful and acknowledges expertise and experience where it is relevant.

As a result, we encourage participation from all groups, including residents, partners, contractors and colleagues.

The outcome should be that people who work for or with us, or receive services from us, have a sense of agency and feel that their voice matters. They also understand that in coming together, we aim to deliver outcomes that benefit the wider community.

Examples of how we work which support this ethos (which is always a work in progress):

- Designing services to meet the needs identified by talking to customers
- Residents being able to vote for or against proposals and policies
- Workshops with clients aimed at creating shared expectations of the service
- Working through decisions on local investment with residents in that community
- Colleagues collaborating on service principles based on user research findings
- Working co-operatively with volunteers of autonomous self-run housing co-ops



Being a board member

Every not-for-profit organisation has a board that works to ensure that the organisation is effective in carrying out its purpose. At CHS, board members are responsible for the organisation's governance, strategic direction and for overseeing CHS's work, ensuring it is delivering on its regulatory requirements, and that it is financially stable, well-run, and fulfilling its vision and mission. The board ensures that it is clear on the difference between the role of the board and that of the executives, and fosters good relationships between both.

What we can offer you

Becoming a board member is a fantastic and fascinating way to engage in the social housing sector. It's a role that will give back just as much as you put in and often more. Though often challenging, a board role will reward you with a wealth of personal and professional skills that are valuable for both work and personal life while giving you a sense of contribution to a wider purpose.

Contributing to a great cause

Being a board member is a powerful way to contribute to your local community or to a cause you care about. As a board member at CHS, you will play an integral part in good governance, not only ensuring the organisation remains viable and sustainable but also adhering closely to its mission and co-operative ethos, satisfies its customers and works in the interests of its beneficiaries.

Strategic experience

Strategic experience can be hard to come by. It can often take decades to find yourself in a role which requires strategic oversight. A board role is a fantastic way of getting a head start on this, at once giving you the opportunity to develop and hone your critical thinking, problem-solving and analytical skills as well as developing vital strategic sensibilities and team working skills. The strategic experience which can be gained through a board role can

have an immediate and powerful impact upon your career, opening doors to new responsibilities and more senior job prospects.

Equally for those who have already had some strategic responsibilities, a board role provides an opportunity to use those skills in a different context.

Continued personal development

Joining a board offers personal development, not least because it allows you to adapt and apply everything you have learnt to date into a new context. Through a board role you can gain a clearer idea of your own professional strengths and weaknesses whilst simultaneously learning 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 challenging you to push the boundaries of your expertise.

Teamworking

As a member of our board you are part of a team of non-executives and executives and will have the opportunity to apply your unique skills and experience while 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 and to constructively challenge the ideas of fellow board members as well as those of the executive team. This is essential to ensure the board's strategic decisions are scrutinised and tested before being implemented. Negotiating, empathising, listening and clearly communicating ideas and concerns are huge factors in this process and help to set the tone and culture of our board meetings.

Board member roles

Key Information

Location Quarterly board meetings are held, usually in March, June, September and December. They are usually held on Thursday afternoons, 4.00-6.30 pm, at CHS offices in Teddington. There are also one or two board away days and the AGM (September).

You will be expected to be available for formal and informal conversations with fellow board members and the staff team between these meetings, as required based on the organisation's needs, and you will be asked to join sub-committees when relevant.

Remuneration £3000 per annum, and all reasonable expenses are paid.

The term of appointment is three years, with the possibility of renewal for another three-year term.

Board members are required to sign an agreement for services that formalises the role and outlines the level of remuneration.

Who we are looking for

Following a recent skills audit of the current board we are recruiting for two particular skills sets - strategic finance expertise and building asset management expertise.

- Strategic finance: as a provider, we offer a unique set of services that have particular challenges, and we are looking for an experienced senior finance professional to help us balance the risks and benefits involved in relation to our portfolio and scrutinise our finances strategically for the longer term.
- Building asset management: we are looking for expertise in property management. This will include repairs and maintenance, health and safety legislation and regulations, strategic asset management and decarbonisation.

All Board members should bring:

- A contribution to our board's cognitive diversity

- An understanding of finance and risk
- An understanding of customer-led services
- An understanding of co-operative principles and a commitment to social housing, and empathy with the charitable aims, objectives and values of CHS
- A high degree of probity and integrity
- A commitment to diversity, equal opportunities and access in employment and service provision
- The ability to work effectively in a team with other board members and the Executive Team
- The ability to read, understand, and analyse electronically presented written and numerical reports and to draw out pertinent points for discussion
- The ability to express views succinctly and effectively in a formal Board/Committee meeting environment making reasoned and thought through contributions
- The ability to consider the long term implications and have a broader view of issues, spotting opportunities, identifying risks and the means of mitigating them

Please see the appendix for a detailed job description. Additional information about Co-op Homes, including its board and executive team, is available on our website

<https://www.coophomes.coop>.



Statement on diversity

We are looking for people who can act as advocates for CHS and who will be committed to our mission and grassroots approach. Our approach to diversity supports everything else we are committed to do and we expect all our board members to demonstrate a personal commitment to diversity. We are looking to increase the diversity of our board as we aspire to be more diverse as a board. We also know that people from different backgrounds bring perspectives and skills that create fresh ideas, thinking and approaches which make the way work is undertaken more effective and efficient.

Candidates do not require previous experience as a board member, but all candidates should have a good understanding of the non-executive role. All new board members will be offered a full induction as part of the onboarding process.

We are an equal opportunities employer.

How to apply

[Eastside People](#) is supporting [Co-op Homes](#) in the recruitment for this role. Please [click here](#) to apply by submitting your CV and a cover letter, which should indicate why you are interested in applying for a Board member role and how you meet the role requirements.

If you would like a call to discuss the role in more detail, please email Bernice at bernice@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 make the application process work for you.

The closing date for applications is **Friday, 24 May**. Online shortlisting interviews will take place the next couple of weeks. Face-to-face interviews with the recruitment panel at CHS will take place on Thursday, 13 June 2024.

Appendix: Board member job description and duties

Purpose

The overall purpose of the board is to lead CHS within a framework of continuous improvement and effective control, which enables risks to be properly assessed and managed.

Provide input to the CHS Board and the parent organisation - RHP, acting within RHP's Governance Framework as a whole, ensuring capable and effective decision making that will underpin stability, growth and development.

Contribute actively to the CHS Board's role in determining and monitoring its strategic direction, setting overall policy and ensuring good corporate governance.

With other CHS board members, ensure a close working relationship with the executive team and provide them with advice, counsel and support.

Full statement of the duties of the Co-op Homes board:

Legal

- To ensure that Co-op Homes operates in accordance with all applicable laws, regulatory requirements and guidance, governing documents and corporate governance best practice
- To ensure that Co-op Homes pursues its charitable objects and provides public benefit
- To ensure that Co-op Home' uses its resources effectively and exclusively in pursuance of its charitable objects
- To uphold the fiduciary duty invested in the position, undertaking such duties in a way that adds to public confidence in Co-op Homes
- To act at all times in the best interest of, its beneficiaries and future beneficiaries

Strategy

- To contribute actively to the Co-op Homes' Board's role in determining Co-op Homes' strategic direction, setting overall policy, defining goals and objectives, evaluating opportunities and risks, and monitoring performance against agreed targets
- To keep under review Co-op Homes' long-term development in light of the political, economic and social environment within which it operates

Financial and Risk

- To ensure Co-op Homes' financial stability and viability
- To approve the annual budget
- To protect and manage Co-op Homes' assets and to ensure the proper investment of its funds
- To ensure a framework of prudent and effective controls, which enable risk to be identified, assessed and managed, in place

Other

- To ensure the effective and efficient administration of the business, striving for governance best practice
- To take appropriate professional advice on matters where there may be material risk to Co-op Homes
- To uphold and promote the vision, purpose, values and priorities of Co-op Homes, and role model the desired culture, values and behaviours, including its commitment to equal opportunities and diversity
- To avoid conflicts of interest
- To attend induction and training programmes and to contribute specialist expertise/knowledge relevant to the role of a Board member
- To maintain the confidentiality of all sensitive/confidential information received in the course of a Co-op Homes' Board Member's responsibilities

Operating in RHP's group structure

In addition to the above key responsibilities, each Co-op Homes Board Member shall liaise with the parent RHP and operate in accordance with the Group Governance Framework, which includes RHP's operating regulations, standing orders and delegated authorities.

Additional Duties to achieve the above

In addition to the above key responsibilities, each Co-op Homes Board Member should use their own specific skills, knowledge and experience to help the Co-op Homes' Board to reach sound decisions. This might involve:

- Scrutinising board papers and other reports
- Participating on board/committee or 'task and finish' / working groups
- Leading discussions

- Focussing on key issues
- Providing guidance on new initiatives
- Acting as an ambassador and representing Co-op Homes at external events
- Acting as a counter-signatory on legal and other documents
- Upholding collective responsibility for all Co-op Homes' Board decisions





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