

# Residents' Forum Constitution

## Introduction

This Constitution sets out the principles and rules of the Newlon Residents' Forum, including its purpose, membership, how it is organised, and members' responsibilities.

The 'Residents' Forum will be called 'the Forum' throughout this document. The word 'resident' is used to mean all those that Newlon house and who live in Newlon homes – those renting; shared owners; 100% leaseholders; and the people who live with them. Where we use 'Newlon', this refers only to Newlon Housing Trust.

## Aims of the Forum

The Forum is the primary resident consultative group at Newlon. The Forum is part of Newlon's governance structure. Its main aims are to influence and be involved in general housing decisions taken by Newlon. It may also monitor Newlon's performance, including recommending performance issues or topics to appropriate scrutiny channels.

It provides a voice for residents at senior management, Resident Services Committee and Board level within Newlon.

The work of the Forum will help drive continuous improvement in how Newlon design and deliver their services and in how they run themselves.

## Achieving the Forum's aims

To help drive continuous improvement in service at Newlon, the Forum will:

- Represent the views of residents on housing issues.
- Work in partnership, in a collaborative manner, with residents, Newlon staff, the Residents' Services Committee and Board.
- Constructively challenge Newlon where appropriate.
- Be a representative group of all Newlon's residents.
- Champion and support resident involvement elsewhere in Newlon, according to residents' needs and wishes.
- Monitor the Resident Engagement Strategy and any recommendations for improvement of services emerging from scrutiny channels.

## **Resident Board Member and the Forum**

The Newlon Board has places for resident members. The resident Board members are selected by a process of recruitment and must also be a member of the Forum. Where a resident Board member ceases to be a member of the Forum for any reason, they will also cease to be a member of the Newlon Board.

The role of resident Board members includes chairing the Forum. Their role as Forum Chair will cease when they step down from the Board and will be filled by another resident Board member. If a resident Board member is absent from three consecutive Board meetings, without special leave of absence from the Board Chair, they will be deemed to have resigned from Board membership; they may remain on the Forum.

## **Residents' Services Committee**

A Resident Board member may also be required to sit on the Residents' Services Committee. A resident Committee member who is absent from three consecutive Committee meetings, without special leave of absence from the Committee Chair, will be deemed to have stepped down from the Committee; they may remain on the Forum.

## **Forum membership**

There will be a maximum of 21 Forum members.

Members should aim to be representative of the diversity, tenure and local authority areas where Newlon's residents live. Where this is not the case, new members should be sought through targeted recruitment to fill the gaps identified.

Members should be encouraged to join through Residents' Associations, other local residents' groups and by direct advertising or appeals to all residents.

If membership is below 21, prospective members are invited to attend a meeting as an observer. If they then wish to become a Forum member, they will then serve a probationary term of two meetings. New members must meet the skills criteria and, after assessment, are eligible unless a reasonable objection is made. In which case, membership is then put to a vote of members present if the meeting is quorate.

The Forum shall elect a Vice-Chair from amongst their members. The Vice-Chair will serve for no more than a three-year term before being subject to re-election.

To be elected, the Vice-Chair shall be nominated by one proposer and seconder followed by a secret ballot at a quorate meeting. This post will need to gain a majority of the vote of members present to be elected.

The Vice-Chair shall chair any meetings where the Chair is not present. If neither are present then the Forum can propose a member to act as Chair for that meeting.

New members may serve a three-year term and one further term, consecutively or non-consecutively.

## **Legacy members**

All current members of the Forum, as of the May 2021 edition of the Constitution, are legacy members.

Legacy members may serve three consecutive three-year terms. The terms start at the date of the edition of the Constitution on 1st May 2021.

Legacy members may leave during term one or two and return as a new member for one more term.

## **Eligibility for the Forum**

Every member of the Forum must be an adult (18 years of age and over) Newlon resident – who is renting; shared owner; 100% leaseholder of Newlon or an adult who lives in a Newlon household.

Members must keep to the rules of their tenancy or lease with Newlon. Residents and existing members with legal proceedings being taken against them by Newlon will not be accepted as new Forum members.

## **Code of conduct**

Each Forum member must keep to the agreed Code of Conduct. This Code sets the standards for how Forum members should behave towards each other, Newlon staff, contractors and other residents in carrying out their work. The Code is a separate document available on request. Any member breaching the code will be dealt with by either:

- A warning or a five minute timeout;
- Exclusion from the meeting for a serious breach.

Forum membership can be withdrawn if a serious breach is proven.

## **Forum meetings**

At all meetings of the Forum, decisions shall be taken by a simple majority of those members present and the Chair of the meeting will hold the casting vote in the event that equal votes are cast for and against.

There will be quarterly Forum meetings each year, four in total. These will usually be held at Newlon House and will usually last two hours. There may be a fifth joint meeting with the Board.

Any Forum member who is absent from three consecutive meetings, without special leave of absence from the Chair, will be deemed to have resigned.

The Trust's Director of Housing Services, Head of Service Improvement, Resident Involvement Manager, Resident Involvement Officer and other staff members, depending on the agenda, shall attend meetings.

A Trust Board member should be invited to attend meetings at regular intervals on rotation.

### **Quorum**

For Forum meetings to be quorate, there must be six or more members present.

### **Notice of meetings**

At least five working days' notice will be given to every member and person attending the Forum. At the last meeting of each year, meeting dates will be agreed for the next year. This is dependent on the meeting dates having already been agreed for the Board and Residents' Services Committee.

### **Agenda, minutes and action points**

Any item to be included on the agenda must be notified in writing to the Resident Involvement Manager at least 10 working days before the meeting.

The Agenda, minutes and papers for each meeting will be prepared and distributed by the Resident Involvement Manager at least five working days before the meeting. Late items may be dealt with under any other business.

Action points will be circulated by the Resident Involvement Manager within five working days after the meeting to members and relevant staff. A summary of key points from meetings will be circulated to relevant teams and departments.

### **Equal opportunities**

The Forum and its members will keep to Newlon's equal opportunities statement that no individual or group shall be treated less favourably than another individual or group because of race, colour, ethnic or national origin, religion, beliefs, age, sex, sexuality, medical condition, physical and mental disability, marital status or responsibility for dependents.

This document is adopted as the Constitution of the Newlon Residents 'Forum.

Signed by the Chair: .....

Dated: .....

Signed by the Vice-Chair: .....

Dated: .....