

# 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 member's 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. 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 the Scrutiny Panel.

It provides a voice for residents at senior management, Resident Services Committee and Board level within Newlon. The scope of the Forum's influence will be set out in the Consultation Agreement with 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 services 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 improvement plans for Scrutiny Panel recommendations.

## Resident Board Member and the Forum

The Newlon Board has a place for one resident member. The Resident Board member is selected by a process of recruitment and must also be a member of the Forum. Where the 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 member includes chairing the Forum. Their role as Forum Chair will cease when they step down from the Board and will be filled by the new Resident Board member.

If the 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; but may remain on the Forum.

## **Residents' Services Committee**

The 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; but 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. Although members are not expected to represent where they live they should ideally be drawn from the local authority areas and to the numbers suggested below. The Forum may review this guidance if there are substantial changes to the areas where residents live:

Hackney	6 members
Islington	5 members
Barnsbury Estate	1 member
Tower Hamlets	3 members
Camden	1 member
Haringey	3 members
Enfield	1 member
Waltham Forest	1 member

Representation from Barnsbury Estate should ideally be nominated by BELMO (the Barnsbury Estate Local Management Organisation). In the absence of a nominee from BELMO, prospective members from Barnsbury will be considered independently.

If membership is below 21, new members are automatically accepted if they are eligible unless a reasonable objection is noted by a Forum member. 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 year 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.

## Eligibility for the Forum

Every member of the Forum must be an adult (18 years of age and over) Newlon resident - who is renting; a 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 (e.g. for rent arrears) will not be accepted as 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 by either:

- a warning or a five minute time out;
- or for a serious breach, the member can be excluded and the breach referred to Newlon. Forum membership can be withdrawn if a serious breach is proven.

## Role description

Members have specific responsibilities which include being able to commit the time to attend Forum meetings and read the papers. They should also be active participants at meetings, attend training and declare any potential conflict of interest. The Role Description is a separate document available on request.

## 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 four quarterly Forum meetings and one planning and strategy meeting each year. These will be held at Newlon House and will usually last two and a half hours.

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, Quality Manager, Senior Resident Involvement Officer (SRIO) and other staff members, depending on the agenda shall attend meetings.

A Trust Board member should be invited to attend each meeting.

## 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 Senior Resident Involvement Officer at least 10 working days before the meeting.

The Agenda, minutes and papers for each meeting will be prepared and distributed by the SRIO 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 SRIO within five working days after the meeting to members and relevant staff. A summary of key points from meetings will be circulated to the Housing Directorate.

## **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 or 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:.....