

Becoming a Board Member



Working together in partnership to improve services & achieve real value for money

Welcome

Thank you for expressing an interest in joining the WATMOS Board. Our organisation is going through an exciting time in its development, and aims to become a role model for other resident-led and Association housing organisations. We are committed to improving the quality of life of our tenants through major housing investment and local tenant management. We are also keen to work closely with other like-minded organisations both in the local area, regionally and nationally.

About the Organisation

Our Board is made up of experienced tenant members and independent people who bring specific skills and experience to the organisation. You may wish to join our Board as a full Board Member or as a Co-Optee. A full Board Member may remain on the Board for up to three years before being required to be re-elected and re-appointed, whereas a Co-Optee Board Member has to be re-appointed every twelve months. The obligations of all Board Members including Co-Optees are the same. All our Board Members are volunteers and only receive out of pocket expenses incurred in attending our meetings. They apply their time, skills and experience for the benefit of the community and are committed to making sure that WATMOS is a successful Registered Social Landlord.

WATMOS Community Homes is an Industrial and Provident Society registered with the Financial Services Authority and a not-for-profit Registered Social Landlord regulated by the Housing Corporation which is a body set up by the Government.

Board members are the non-executive directors of the organisation. As such they are responsible for all the affairs of the organisation but their personal liabilities are limited. In addition WATMOS carries a variety of insurances to cover the potential risks associated with its work.

The work of a Board Member

The Board meets regularly to determine the general direction of the organisation, agree its strategies and policies, monitoring its performance in delivering services and keeping to strict financial procedures and rules. The frequency of Meetings varies from time to time but the Board usually meets once a month.

A full description of the work of the Board is shown below.

- Define and ensure compliance with the values and objectives of the organisation.
- Establish a business plan to achieve those objectives.
- Approve each year's budget and accounts prior to publication.

- Establish & oversee an appropriate framework of delegation and systems of control.
- Take key decisions on matters that will, or might, create significant risk for the Co-operative.
- Monitor the organisation's performance in relation to these plans, budgets and decisions
- Appoint and, if necessary, dismiss the Senior Officers.
- Satisfy itself that the organisation's affairs are conducted lawfully and in accordance with generally accepted standards of performance and propriety.

The role of a Board Member is one of being a custodian of the organisation and helping to ensure that the organisation is performing well and has financial stability and strength.

The role of a Board Member

- Board Members will act in the best interests of WATMOS and work collectively with the Board to manage the Association's overall and strategic effectiveness and performance, and support the Code of Governance.
- Board Members will be responsible to the Chair of the Board.

- Board Members have a duty to positively support and promote WATMOS. They are responsible for the performance of the Board, the performance and affairs of the Association and upholding the WATMOS Code of Governance and Governance arrangements including the Board Members Code of Conduct.

The main duties and responsibilities of a Board Member are:

- To assist the Board to achieve its aims
- To take part in decision making
- To ensure that the Board meets its legal, financial and other requirements.
- Ensure good governance of the Board.
- Ensure participation of Board Members.
- To work as part of a team.
- Represent the interests of the organisation.
- Be accountable.
- Take responsibility for Board decisions.
- Pass on information to the rest of the Board.
- Monitor the working of the Board
- Ensure confidentiality.
- Avoid discrimination.
- Support new Board Members.
- Avoid conflicts of interest.
- Act responsibly and within the Co-operative's Code of Conduct.
- Avoid activities that might bring

WATMOS into disrepute.

- Ensure the organisation acts within its powers and rules.
- Attend meetings regularly.

Knowledge and Experience

A Board member will require as many of the following as possible (but full training will be given to new Board Members).

- Aims and objectives of the organisation.
- How to work as a team.
- The organisation's legal and other requirements.
- What makes good governance.
- The structure of the Board.
- The Board Member's role.
- How to communicate.
- Equal Opportunities issues.
- The organisation's policy framework.
- How to monitor performance.

... And at least one of the following:

- Local community knowledge.
- Housing management issues.
- Business skills.
- Finance skills.
- Legal skills.
- Computer and I.T. skills
- Human resources and personnel expertise.
- Construction and maintenance knowledge.

Skills

- Team working.
- Communication skills.
- Listening.
- Supporting other people.
- Assertiveness.
- Decision making
- Ability to be flexible.
- Dealing with difficult situations.
- Ability to understand reports, tables, and statistics.

Attitudes

- Commitment to the organisation and its objectives.
- Commitment to tenant management.
- Commitment to effective Governance.
- Commitment to diversity and equality.
- Non-judgemental.
- Balanced, fair approach.
- Awareness of accountability to the Board, to the organisation and to external organisations.
- Desire to increase skills and knowledge.
- Importance of value for money.
- Importance of good performance.

Board Members bring their skills to the Board for the benefit of the WATMOS and its work. These may be from work with tenant, resident, community or voluntary groups, work with people with special needs, and housing, or

other areas such as surveying, finance, law etc. The Board comprises a wide mix of skills and backgrounds but all Board Members are committed to help make WATMOS ever more successful. We are keen to encourage the involvement and representation of every section of our community. The Housing Corporation specifies the skills it expects within a Board, and full Board Member development and training activities are provided. To help us provide a balance and mix of skills within the Board you will see in the application form at the end of this leaflet that we ask you to briefly tell us the main areas of skills and experience you have.

Who can't become a Board Member

There are a few categories of people who are unable to become Board Members. These are described below.

- A Tenant of WATMOS who is in serious breach of their obligations as a tenant.
- Someone who is (or becomes) an undischarged bankrupt or who makes voluntary arrangements with creditors.
- Someone convicted of an indictable offence within the last 5 years.
- Someone who is not a shareholder or a representative of a shareholder.
- Someone who has failed to attend four consecutive meetings of the

Board without special leave of absence.

- An Independent Board member who becomes a tenant or local authority person.
- They are a nominated board members and the nominating organisation serves one month's notice on the association.
- They are or become a local authority person and this gives the local authority more than four members on the Board.

Limitations on a Board Member and Co-Optee

The Housing Corporation have very clear guidelines which restricts Board Members (and Co-Optees), and their families gaining any personal benefit from their Board Membership or employment. These are described in Schedule 1 of the Housing Act 1996 and affects the following:-

- Board Members and Co-Optees
- Employees
- People who have been Board Members, Co-Optees, or employees in the previous 12 months.
- Close relatives of Board Members, Co-Optees, or employees, such as husband, wife, partner, parents, grandparents, grandchildren, children, brother, sister or similar arrangements by marriage.
- Any business of which a Board Member, Co-Optee, or employee, or one of their family is an owner, partner, significant shareholder, or is otherwise

directly involved in its management.

Schedule 1 generally prohibits the giving of any non-contractual benefit to the above categories of people. A non contractual benefit mainly includes an employment contract, a tenancy, lease or licence, any other kind of contract, the sale of property outside of the Right to Buy or Right to Acquire, although some other less common benefits are affected. There are however a number of general exemptions that ensure that the above people are fairly treated in comparison to the general public and special determinates are possible in individual cases.

The exemptions from this include:-

- It is possible to re-house Board members/Co-Optees or their relatives, provided that the person re-housed fully meets the WATMOS published lettings policy, and that the Board member/Co-Optee has absolutely no involvement in or influence over the decision-making process. The organisation must show that its procedures and decision-making are scrupulously fair.
- Board members/Co-Optees who are tenants of WATMOS can continue to benefit from Homebuy or Voluntary Purchase Grants provided they meet the published criteria.

If you are unsure how Schedule 1 may affect you, please contact the Chief Executive.

Board Members/Co-Optees are expected to inform the Chief Executive if circumstances arise in the future that may constitute a breach the requirements of Schedule 1.

Further Information

If you would like more information before applying to become a Board Member, or need help in interpreting the form at the end of this leaflet, please contact the Chief Executive of the Trust who will be pleased to advise you.

What to do next

To apply to become a full Board Member or Co-Optee please complete the form at the end of this leaflet and submit it to the Chief Executive who will then advise you of how your application will be considered. Many thanks for your interest in joining our Board.

STUART MASTERS
Chief Executive
WATMOS Community Homes Ltd

WATMOS COMMUNITY HOMES

Application to become a Board Member or Co-Optee incl. Application for Membership of the Organisation

Full name			
Address			
Postcode			
Home Telephone No.		Work Telephone No.	
Mobile No.		Email address	
Date of Birth		NINo	

Do you wish to become a full Board Member, Co-optee or either?

Full Board Member Co-optee Either

Are you a Councillor on Walsall Metropolitan Council (or have you been a Walsall Metropolitan Borough Councillor within the last 4 years)? Yes No

Are you an employer or an officer (i.e. a director) of a company controlled by Walsall Metropolitan Borough Council? Yes No

Are you a tenant of WATMOS Community Homes (or prior to transfer, the Council)? Yes No

Are you a leaseholder of WATMOS Community Homes (or prior to transfer, the Council)? Yes No

Have you read and understood the section of this leaflet which explains the work and the role of the Board and the role of Board Members? Do you agree to accept and fulfil the roles and responsibilities of a Board Member?

Yes No

Do any of the categories in “Who can’t be a Board member” apply to you?
Yes No

If yes, please state which one(s) and give further information:

Have you read and understood the section “Limitations on Board Members and Co-optees”?

Yes No

Do you have any personal interest, or business interest, or undertake any activity that may be affected by Schedule 1 of the Housing Act 1996 as outlined in the section “Limitation on Board Members and Co-optees”?

Yes No

If yes, please give further details:

What are your professional qualifications? What is your occupation (with dates) or if retired or not in employment, what is your work background (with dates)?

Qualifications	Date Obtained
Occupation	Dates

Broadly what are your areas of experience and skills? (Please tick)

Tenant or Community activity	<input type="checkbox"/>	Housing Management skills	<input type="checkbox"/>
Business skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	Community Group activity	<input type="checkbox"/>
Finance skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	Legal skills	<input type="checkbox"/>
Computer/IT skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	Property maintenance skills	<input type="checkbox"/>
HR/Personnel skills	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Do you carry out any other work, paid or voluntary? This may include being on the committee of a local voluntary group, a school governor, a regeneration body, or a Company Director for example.

Role	Organisation	Dates

Please list any activity of this or a similar nature:

Please tick which of the following apply to you:

White	British	<input type="checkbox"/>	Irish	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mixed	White and black Caribbean	<input type="checkbox"/>	White and black African	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	White and Asian	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Asian or Asian British	Indian	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pakistani	<input type="checkbox"/>	Bangladeshi	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Black or Black British	Caribbean	<input type="checkbox"/>	African	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>
Chinese or other ethnic group			Chinese	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

Do you have a disability? Yes No

If yes, do you have any special requirements to enable you to attend meetings?

Please supply the names and addresses of two referees (who are not family members) who may be contacted to support your application to become a Board Member.

Please list any other information which you think would be supportive of your application.

Name	
Address	
Tel. No	
Context of how you know the referee	

Name	
Address	
Tel. No	
Context of how you know the referee	

Additional Information to support your application:



APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

I hereby apply to become a Board Member / Co-optee of WATMOS Community Homes and fully accept the role and obligations of joining the Board.

I hereby apply to become a member of the Organisation and I hereby agree to be bound by its rules.

Signed: _____

Print name: _____

Date: _____