



MEMBERSHIP STRATEGY

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 As a mutual housing society, having an effective membership strategy which reflects the needs and views of members is essential. The current version was agreed in 2012 and now, five years after our mutual structures were put in place, RBH is clearer on the challenges and opportunities we can meet via our membership strategy.

2. Context

- 2.1 People know Rochdale for its proud heritage as the home of the Co-operative Movement. From the original 28 pioneers, co-operatives globally now account for 12% of the entire employed population of the G20 countries. Co-operatives contribute to resilient employment, a sustainable economy and the well-being of people at work, all brought about by working to a set of values and principles; democracy, equity, openness and honesty, education and co-operation amongst co-operatives, to name a few.
- 2.2 On 27th June 2013 RBH completed its transition to a mutual housing society, co-owned by tenants and employees - the first of its kind in the UK - and the elected tenant and employee representatives took on their full role as a Representative Body. The values of RBH became our mantra for the way in which we do business and our membership is what makes us special as, through our democratic structures, all our members can have a say and play a part in making decisions. RBH values are:

Responsibility – We take responsibility for, and answer for, our actions

Equity – We carry on our business in a way that is fair and unbiased

Democracy – We give our members a say in the way we run our business

Pioneering – We will seek to be a leader in the way we meet challenges and seek solutions

Openness & Honesty – We will share information, do what we say we will do and when we make a mistake we will own up to it

Caring – We will listen and respond to the needs of our members, tenants and employees

Championing – We will encourage members to take responsibility for our communities and work together to improve them.

2.3 From how we manage homes and deliver services to how we support our communities, we adhere to these values and, by working together, ensure we achieve so much more. We need an active membership base to make sure we are delivering the right things for the borough of Rochdale and meeting the needs of our communities.

Our first five years

2.4 The first Membership Strategy objectives were designed to ensure that we had enough members to start to build on our new mutual status and make democratic decisions which were representative of the views of our wider communities.

2.5 A communications plan was developed that included a joining pack, welcome pack, exclusive website area and a periodic member newsletter. It also involved all employees in member recruitment to ensure sufficient tenants and employees became members and stood for election for the Representative Body. Our target of having 80% of employees as members and 25% of tenants as members was achieved in June 2015; that number has continued to grow to this day and we celebrated having a total membership base of 5,000 in September 2016.

2.6 In addition to the right number of members, we needed to ensure our members were representative of our employee and tenant base. We did this successfully by working to engage the right mix of people which reflected key demographics of our communities and the RBH workforce.

2.7 The first Membership Strategy also sought to develop an initial member offer that provided members with meaningful opportunities to influence and make decisions about how we manage homes, deliver services and support communities. It also included a range of tangible benefits such as discounts on services and products from our partner organisations and local businesses.

2.8 A corporate strategy project then began to develop the tangible elements of the member offer further. As a housing provider, our offer to our members is different than that of, say, a retail mutual which can give financial incentives and a traditional dividend and we have had to be more creative in finding tangible benefits which can be easily communicated to, and valued by, our members.

2.9 A points-based system was developed that would have rewarded members for taking up opportunities to engage with us, with points having a monetary value. However, once approved, the system was a casualty of the budget reductions required in response to the implications of the Government's summer budget in 2015 which resulted in the need to identify £6m savings.

3. Methodology

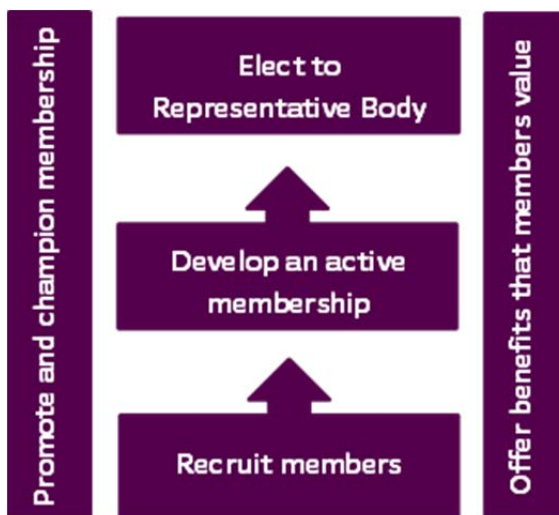
3.1 The Mutual Rules set out the specific functions of the Representative Body. These include the role to establish, maintain and monitor progress of the Membership Strategy.

3.2 This strategy has been developed over 12 months. It was scoped by the Representative Body, developed by the Communications and Engagement Working Group (CEWG) and discussed by EMT and Board.

3.3 The structure of the Membership Strategy is based around the following principles:

- Membership at RBH means more than simply maintaining sufficient levels of membership to give confidence in our mutuality; it is about ensuring RBH is a better business and has better neighbourhoods because of our membership.
- Our membership base needs to be reflective of our tenant and employee base, and able to support our democratic structures.
- We must sustain our mutual status for the long-term by ensuring that membership is valued and relevant, with the benefits clear for all to see. We will promote and champion this effectively.
- We must put our members first and say thank you by providing a member offer that is valued.

3.4 Our approach to delivering these principles is summarised in the diagram below:



3.5 The research, consultation and projects which have informed the principle are set out below:

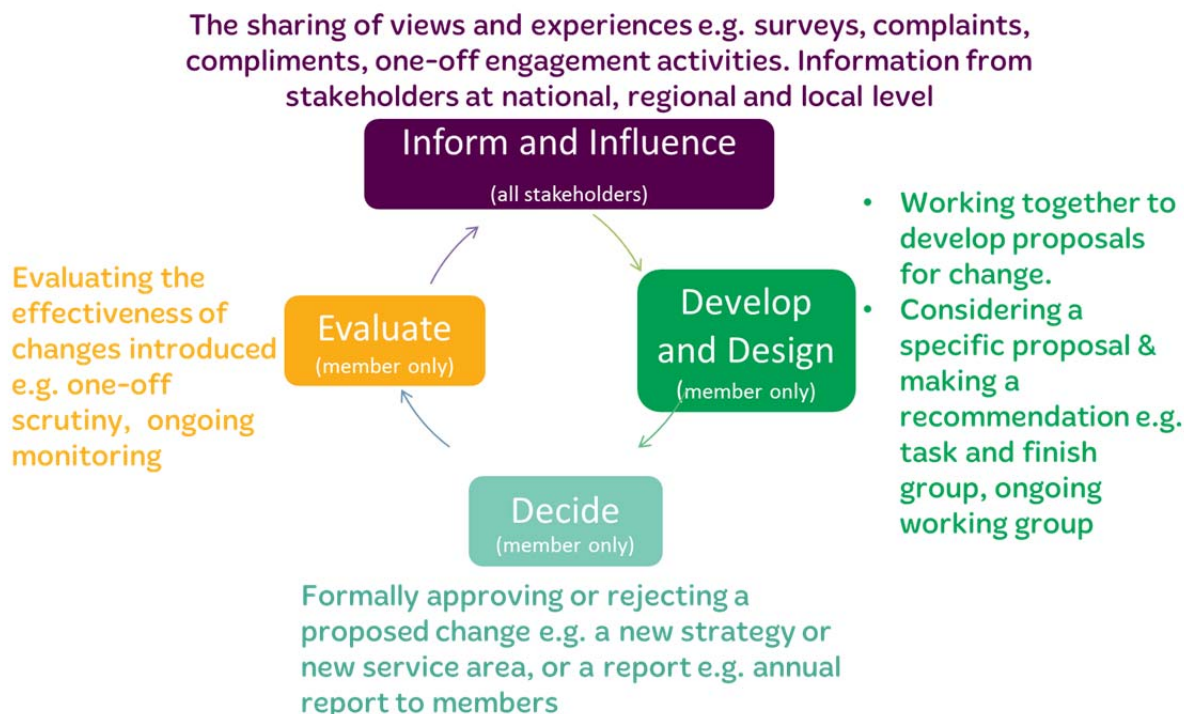
Recruit members

- 3.6 In December 2016, 5,127 tenants and employees were members. This equates to 30% of tenants and 82% of employees. All neighbourhoods now have at least 17.4% of tenants as members. The diversity of members on key diversity strands closely represents the tenant and employee base:
- Black and minority ethnic (BME) groups overall are not under-represented within membership, though some sub-groups such as Asian or Asian British are under-represented.
 - The average age of a tenant is 51 and the average age of a member is 50.
 - Disabled tenants are over-represented within membership.
 - Each division within RBH has at least 69% of employees as members.
 - Each team within RBH has at least 54% of employees as members. This low level is reflected in teams with casual and temporary employees such as homelessness and grounds maintenance.
- 3.7 The approach to recruiting members amongst new tenants has been very successful, with 71% of new tenants becoming members between October and December 2016. More work is needed through this strategy to mainstream member recruitment across the society to raise awareness and encourage recruitment amongst existing tenants and all RBH teams.

Develop an active membership base

- 3.8 The Membership Engagement and Representative Review (MERR) highlighted the need for a more engaged membership so that the Representative Body could be confident that their work and decisions reflect the views of members.
- 3.9 It is acknowledged that younger and BME members are less engaged.
- 3.10 The membership strategy focuses on encouraging more members to take advantage of engagement opportunities and ensuring that the profile of engaged members is more representative in terms of age and ethnicity.
- 3.11 The way in which we engage with our members, tenants and employees is set out in the Engagement Strategy, which was developed alongside this one and approved by the Representative Body in March 2017.
- 3.12 The engagement and membership strategies work in tandem, with the engagement strategy clarifying the role of members by setting out the principle of engagement.

3.13 The principle, set out in the following diagram, supports our mutuality, by ensuring all stakeholders have the chance to inform us of their views and experiences to influence how we shape our services, but only our members have the ability to develop and design these further, decide on proposals and evaluate the results.



Elect to the Representative Body

- 3.14 The Engagement Strategy also supports the membership strategy by seeking to actively identify members with the right abilities and willingness to progress to higher level of engagement and then provide relevant support to enable them to achieve this.
- 3.15 The Membership Strategy will build on these relationships with active members to encourage and support them to stand for election to the Representative Body.
- 3.16 As at April 2017 none of the Tenant Representatives are black and minority ethnic and only one is under 55 years of age. The Membership Strategy, therefore, seeks to identify and address any barriers to active members progressing to the Representative Body to encourage more diversity amongst Representatives.
- 3.17 Through the membership strategy we will work with Representatives to ensure they are able to effectively fulfil their role and ensure the mutual values of RBH are upheld.

Promote and champion membership

- 3.18 Promoting and championing membership is a pillar that supports delivery of the three key objectives of recruitment, active membership and election to the Representative Body as set out in the diagram at 3.4. Effective communication is essential to ensure that the wider tenant and employee base are aware and informed about membership and the opportunities and benefits it offers.
- 3.19 The way in which we communicate with our members will be set out in the Corporate Communications Strategy.
- 3.20 The focus of the membership strategy is to develop and deliver a plan to promote and champion the benefits of membership and achievements of members. It also aims to learn from best practice in membership from other co-operative member organisations, in order to boost membership, increase the level of active members and support our democratic structures.
- 3.21 A vibrant membership is essential to support the development of a business case for mutuality. The work to develop and promote the business case is being considered for inclusion in the corporate strategy 2018-21.

Offer benefits that members value

- 3.22 Offering benefits that members value is a pillar that supports delivery of the three key objectives of recruitment, active membership and election to the Representative Body as set out in the diagram at 3.4
- 3.23 The Member survey carried out in June 2015 indicated that:
- 68% said they would recommend becoming a member to family and friend.
 - The main expectations of membership are to be informed, listened to and have a voice.
 - 60% feel there is a positive benefit to them of being a member of RBH.
- 3.24 Consultation carried out as part of developing the points-based scheme has been extremely useful in gaining an understanding of the type of benefits that members value and the member offer will be further developed as part of this strategy.
- 3.25 Moving forward the emphasis on tangible benefits will be to develop benefits which are mutually beneficial to both RBH and members. These will focus on supporting delivery of the corporate strategy whilst benefiting individual

members. The member handyperson scheme seeks to improve health and wellbeing and 2017 will see the launch of a pilot to provide one-to-one mentoring to support members into employment. Both of these schemes will be provided through employee volunteering.

4. Aims and Objectives

4.1 The objectives and measures of success are:

4.2 **Objective 1: Increase the membership of RBH and ensure it reflects the diversity of our tenants and employees.**

- Measure of Success – 40% of tenants and 90% of employees to be members by the end of year three (April 2020).
- Measure of Success – For tenant members to reflect the average age, ethnicity and neighbourhood spread of all tenants each year.
- Measure of Success – For every team to have 90% of employee members by April 2020.

4.3 **Objective 2: Develop an active membership base by providing members with opportunities to develop/design, decide upon and evaluate service changes as set out in the Engagement Strategy. To ensure the diversity of active members reflects that of the total membership.**

- Measure of Success – For the diversity of active members to be reflective of all members by June 2020.
- Measure of Success – 10% of members to have completed the ‘ways to get involved’ questionnaire by March 2019.
- Measure of Success – 30% of members to have taken part in one or more member activities in the year by April 2018.
- Measure of Success – A minimum of 30% of tenants and 70% of employees to vote in the Representative Body elections each year, compared with 17.5% of tenants and 57.6% of employees in 2016.

4.4 **Objective 3: Build relationships with people who may be interested in becoming a Representative and encourage and support them to stand for election. Work together with Representatives to ensure they are able to effectively fulfil their role and ensure the mutual values of RBH are upheld.**

- Measure of Success – A contested election each year.

- Measure of Success – Each year, the diversity of candidates with regards to age and ethnicity to be reflective of all members.
- Measure of Success – All Representatives state that they are able to effectively fulfil their role, during an annual review process.

4.5 Objective 4: Continue to develop a package of member benefits, which are valued by our members and support both individuals and communities.

- Measure of Success - 75% of members stating they would recommend Membership to family and friends in the 2019 Member Survey, compared to 68% in June 2015.
- Measure of Success – 70% of tenant members and 70% of employee members stating they feel there is a positive benefit to them of being a member of RBH in the 2019 Member Survey, compared to 60% of all members in 2015.
- Measure of Success – For the outputs in a social value matrix to exceed the inputs by April 2020.

4.6 Objective 5: Promote and champion membership of RBH

- Measure of Success – Develop and deliver a plan to promote and champion the benefits of membership and achievements of members, to a range of stakeholders using a variety of channels. To be developed by September 2017 and delivered by June 2020.
- Measure of success – Research and implement best practice in membership from other co-operative member organisations, in order to boost membership, increase the level of active members and support our democratic structures. Research to be completed by March 2018 and implemented by March 2019.

5. Scope

5.1 The following are outside the scope of this strategy:

- Activity relating to engagement with members, tenants and employee is set out in the Engagement Strategy
- Activity relating to communicating with our members will be set out in the Communications Strategy
- Activity relating to improving demographic data held about members is set out in the Customer Insight Strategy.

6. Equality & Diversity

6.1 The *Services for All Panel* reality checked the Equalities Impact Assessment in December 2016.

7. Monitoring

7.1 Maintaining and monitoring the Membership Strategy is one of the Representative Body's functions as set out in the rules (RBH's constitution). The Representative Body will receive quarterly performance reports. Additionally, as set out in the Mutual Rules, an annual report will be presented to members at the Annual Members Meeting which shall include the following:

- the steps which the Society has taken to secure that taken as a whole the actual membership of the Society is representative of those eligible for membership; and
- progress in implementing the Membership Strategy; and
- any changes to the Membership Strategy

8. Review

8.1 A refresh will be carried out in June 2018 to ensure the membership strategy aligns with the corporate strategy 2018-2021.

8.2 A full review will take place in June 2020.

9. Thematic Links with other SPSS Documents

9.1 This strategy links to the Corporate Communications Strategy, the Customer Insight Strategy, the Engagement Strategy, the equality and diversity strategy and the work and skills strategy.

10. Action Plan

MEMBERSHIP STRATEGY ACTION PLAN					
Ref No.	Obj	Action	Outcome	Lead	Deadline
1	All	Carry out a refresh of the membership strategy to ensure it aligns with the corporate strategy 2018-2021	Membership Strategy supports delivery of the corporate strategy	Head of Community Investment	30 th June 2018
2	1	Develop and deliver a member recruitment plan that ensures different message/mechanisms are used for different groups and utilises advocates to champion membership with traditionally 'hard to reach' groups. The plan will maximise opportunities to mainstream member recruitment across the Society and to ensure that written communications are accessible e.g. online communications are screen-reader friendly.	A growing membership that reflects the diversity of those eligible to join	Membership Manager	30 th June 2020
Ref No.	Obj	Action	Outcome	Lead	Deadline
3	2 and 3	Mechanisms in place to identify people with the right abilities and willingness to progress to the Representative Body.	Increase in the number and quality of active members. Increase in the number, ability and quality of candidates to stand for election to the Representative Body	Membership Manager / Involvement Manager	30 th April May 2018
4	2 and 3	Develop a flexible package of training and support to build skills and confidence to enable members to progress to the highest level of democratic involvement.	Increase in the number and quality of active members. Increase in the number, ability and quality of candidates standing for election to the Representative Body	Involvement Manager / Governance Manager	30 th April 2018

5	2 and 3	Identify and address barriers to active members progressing to the Representative Body	Increase in the number of candidates standing for election	Involvement Manager / Governance Manager	Barriers identified by 31 st Dec 2017. Actions in place for 31 st March 2018
6	2 and 3	Analyse data on the engagement levels of members	Establish a baseline	Membership Manager / Involvement Manager	30 th June 2017
7	3	Establish a process to regularly gather feedback from Representatives on satisfaction with their role and the support provided to enable them to fulfil it.	Representatives who enjoy the role and would recommend it to others Increase in the number of people interested in becoming a Representative	Membership Manager / Involvement Manager	Annual process established and baseline data collected by 30 th Sept 2017 Outcomes achieved by 31 st Dec 2019
Ref No.	Obj	Action	Outcome	Lead	Deadline
8	4	Implement member benefits in line with the Work and Skills strategy – link to volunteer placements, apprenticeships, training opportunities, work experience placements and employment opportunities	Increase in the number of member offers available. Member benefits which benefit individuals and communities	Head of Community Investment	31 st March 2018 (Target set out within work and skills strategy)
9	4	Research ways for leaders to develop member offers whenever they are making service improvements or setting up new projects	Increase in the number of member offers available. Member benefits that benefit individuals and communities	Membership Manager	31 st March 2018

Membership Strategy

10	5	Develop and deliver a plan to promote and champion membership	Boost membership, increase the level of active members and support our democratic structures	Membership Manager	Develop by 30 th Sept 2017 Deliver by 30 th June 2020
11	5	Research and implement best practice in membership with regards to recruitment, communication, retention and engagement, within housing and private sector	Boost membership, increase the level of active members and support our democratic structures	Membership Manager	Research – 31 st March 2018 Implement – 31 st March 2019