

# **ECHO**

## **Eden Community Homes and Organisations**

***“Make your voice heard and get answers”***

### CONSTITUTION

ECHO has been constituted on the principle that residents who have an interest<sup>1</sup> in the work of the Association also have the right to participate in the decision-making affecting their homes and environments.

ECHO exists to serve Tenants and Residents and other customers of Eden Housing Association (EHA). It seeks to form an effective partnership of all those people and agencies that wish to continuously improve the service delivery of EHA. Meetings of ECHO are to facilitate the sharing of views and opinions, and will be conducted on an equitable basis.

## **1 MEMBERSHIP**

Membership of ECHO is set as being:

- Residents who have an interest<sup>1</sup> (see below for definition of this term)
- Those living in property that formerly belonged to EHA/Eden District Council (EDC)
- All EHA Tenant Board Members and Chair of Board or a representative in their absence.
- EDC’s Housing Enabling Officer
- All EHA staff
- All visitors are welcome to attend ECHO meetings but only those within “voting rights” can vote

## **2 ECHO’s AIMS**

ECHO’s primary aim is to promote tenant and resident involvement at every level with EHA.

In addition, ECHO aim’s

- To influence the development of EHA policies and procedures
- To monitor EHA performance, providing feedback to the Association

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<sup>1</sup> “Residents who have an interest” is defined as being

- Current tenants and shared owners of EHA,
  - Those who occupy a property that formerly belonged to EHA or its predecessor Eden District,
  - Those living amongst or immediately adjacent to EHA properties,
- For the purpose of clarity, the term “Residents” used throughout this document refers to both tenants and residents in this context.

- To disseminate information to all tenants and residents
- To provide training and development opportunities for tenants and residents
- To provide support to affiliated Tenants and Residents Associations and Community Groups

### **3 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY**

ECHO is committed to ensuring equality of opportunity for all tenants, residents and other customers using its services and in the conduct of its business.

No one applying for assistance, or requesting our services will be treated less favourably than anyone else on the grounds of their age, gender, marital status, parental status, ethnic origin, nationality, lifestyle, sexual orientation, colour, disability, religion, belief or geographical location.

Any reports of racial, sexual or other harassment will be investigated promptly and every step taken to ensure that such activities are stopped as quickly as possible.

### **4 VOTING RIGHTS**

The prime voting right of ECHO members is to elect Tenant Board Members. Only those tenants elected by ECHO may serve as Tenant Board Members.

Voting rights are based on households and not groups.

- Only those residents who have an interest<sup>1</sup> carry voting rights
- To ensure equality, a system of one vote per household<sup>2</sup> represented will be adopted
- Where issues being voted upon concern only Tenants of EHA (such as rent increases etc) the Chair will indicate that the vote will be open to Tenant households only
- The Chair of ECHO will have the casting vote.

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<sup>2</sup> Household – one person living alone, or a group of people (not necessarily related) living at the same address.

## **5 Quorum**

- ECHO can take no decisions unless at least eight households are represented. There must be at least two Community Representatives, Tenants & Residents Associations or Community Groups represented.
- Where issues being voted upon concern only Tenants of EHA there must be at least 6 Tenants present.

## **6 OFFICERS**

ECHO will operate with the following Executive Officers

- Chair
- Vice-Chair
- Secretary
- Treasurer

In addition a Publicity Officer will also be appointed, and each Sub-Group will have a Chair.

- Any resident who has an interest in the work of EHA is eligible to stand for executive office of ECHO.
- Eden wide representation of Executive Officers will be encouraged
- Officers must stand down at each Annual General Meeting and their positions will become vacant.
- Officers will be encouraged to stand down after three consecutive years in office where their position is contested although they remain eligible to stand if they wish and are nominated to do so.
- In the event of a contest a secret ballot will be held, presided over by an officer of EHA.

## **7 MEETINGS AND SUB-GROUPS**

ECHO will meet at least six times a year with an Annual General Meeting being held in February of each year. (The Chair of ECHO has the power to call extra meetings at their discretion).

ECHO will support Sub-Groups in the following categories:

- Viewpoint Editorial Team
- Sheltered Housing
- Repairs and Asset Management
- Housing Management and Community Development
- And others as need arises

ECHO delegate's responsibility for influencing policy development in each of these areas to the relevant Sub-Group.

Each Sub-Group will have a Chair appointed who will be responsible for reporting back to the main ECHO meeting if required.

Each Sub-Group will meet at least once a year, and as and when required in addition to this. Meetings will be arranged by the Chair or their deputy in conjunction with EHA staff.

Sub-Group membership is open to all tenants and residents, including those holding office for ECHO.

## **8 MEETING ADMINISTRATION**

ECHO's Secretary (with support from EHA) will produce the agendas and the minutes of the meetings.

Meeting paperwork is eligible for distribution free of charge via the Residents Resource Centre.

All those registering on ECHO's mailing list will receive copies of the agenda 14 days before meetings are due to take place.

All minutes will be circulated 14 days after meetings have taken place.

## **9 ECHO BUDGET**

An annual budget will be set by the Association's Board and administered by members of ECHO.

ECHO's authorised areas of expenditure include:

- Costs of ECHO's operation
- Defined support to Tenants & Residents Associations
- The publication of Viewpoint and other ECHO bulletins
- Attendance at training events
- A bi-annual residents conference
- Community projects grant scheme

Expenditure over £500 must be agreed at ECHO meetings. Delegated responsibility for expenditure under £500 lies with EHA's Resident Involvement and Community Development staff in partnership with the Chair of ECHO.

Applications for Grants provided by ECHO from groups not normally represented at ECHO meetings will be considered by a minimum of three ECHO members who have no interest in the area for which the grant has been submitted. EHA Resident Involvement and Community Development staff may be invited to provide guidance to members. The recommendations should then be authorised by ECHO.

Control of the budget and preparation of ECHO's accounts will be the responsibility of the Treasurer (with support from EHA staff).

EHA will conduct an annual audit of ECHO's accounts.

## **10 CHANGES TO THE CONSTITUTION**

ECHO's constitution may be changed at any meeting providing:

- Notice of a proposed change is given at least one meeting before a decision is made
- The change will not affect EHA's structure, financial operation or service delivery. If such a change is proposed it will be subject to the approval of EHA's Board
- The same article of the constitution cannot be changed more than 2 times within a 12 month period
- A vote on proposed changes must be taken, with 2/3 of those attending the meeting approving the changes in order for them to be made
- Proposed changes must be included with the Agenda for the meeting where they will be discussed.

**This constitution should be read in conjunction with the 'Agreed Operating Standards' attached at Appendix One.**