

Digital Inclusion – Supporting our Committee Members

Reviewed: Sep 2022
Next Review: Sep 2025



1. Introduction and Purpose

- 1.1 We recognise that the wider environment in which we do business and operate within has changed significantly in the last few years with the advancements in digital technology.
- 1.2 One of our key aims is to operate as efficiently and effectively as possible. As such we are committed to ensuring that the systems we use contribute to the delivery of this aim.
- 1.3 As part of this, we need to ensure our people have access to appropriate IT and devices and have the skills to use them effectively. Our people includes our staff and Committee, with the focus of this Policy relating to our Committee.

2. Local Context

- 2.1 Rosehill is a fully mutual housing co-operative, which means all our members are tenants and vice versa. This means that our pool of Committee Members is from our tenants.
- 2.2 The characteristics of our tenants vary in terms of gender, age, economic status, ethnicity, and disability, etc and with this comes a diverse range of needs.
- 2.3 We recognise that from the onset of the Digital Age, which continues to evolve at a fairly rapid pace, some of our tenants are at risk of being digitally excluded. We have developed our own Digital Inclusion Strategy to set out how we plan to support digital inclusion across our tenants.
- 2.4 This Policy covers how we will support our Committee Members to ensure that digital technology is not a barrier to any of our tenants joining our Management Committee and being active members of it.

3. Our Values

- 3.1 The delivery of our Vision and Strategic Objectives is underpinned by our Core Values:

We will

- Invest and Support

We will be

- Engaged and Responsive

- Accountable and Compliant
- Fair and Approachable
- Efficient and Responsible
- Excellent and Committed

3.2 The existence and implementation of this Policy is a good example of our Values in practice with particular reference to our commitment to invest and support and, to be accountable and compliant.

4. Associated Policies

4.1 This is not a standalone Policy and interlinks with other relevant Policies and documents including:

- Committee Members Code of Conduct
- Committee and Staff Expenses Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- ICT: Acceptable Use Policy
- Digital Inclusion Strategy

5. Supporting our Committee Members

5.1 Rosehill began its digitalisation of its Committee processes in 2019 when it moved from paper-based meeting processes to a web-based Board Portal (Decision Time). To facilitate this all Committee Members were issued with tablets and were set up with Rosehill email addresses.

5.2 Committee Members received training on the Portal. Any new Committee Members will receive training by the Director on how to navigate and use the Portal. All Committee Members can access tutorials on the Portal for further support.

5.3 Typically meetings are held in our Committee Room with members accessing the board portal using Rosehill's guest wi-fi. However, due to the onset of Covid-19, arrangements had to be made for Committee meetings to be held remotely using a suitable video conferencing tool. It also meant that all training had to be undertaken remotely.

5.4 This change highlighted the need to continue to develop Committee Members digital skills and, the need for a steady, reliable wi-fi connection for Committee i.e. generally the need to have broadband in their homes.

5.5 Under our Covid-19 recovery plan, we operate a blended model of round table and remote meetings. This provides Committee Members with greater choice and flexibility on how they attend and participate in meetings.

5.6 To enable existing and future Committee Members to engage on a more digital basis and to ensure that this does not form a barrier to anyone joining the Management Committee we have two aims:

- Digital literacy
- Digitally enabled

Digital literacy

5.7 All Committee Members will have access to suitable training to develop or enhance their digital skills. Rosehill will source training from various sources including: training organisations; colleges and locally based projects.

Digitally enabled

5.8 All Committee Members are issued with a tablet which they will use for the duration of their appointment. Members must sign a statement about using the tablet and Rosehill email address, in accordance with Rosehill's ICT Acceptable Use Policy.

5.9 Whilst it is anticipated that a significant number of households are likely to have broadband at home, we recognise that not everyone will have. There may be different reasons for this e.g. lack of digital skills but it is acknowledged that financial reasons may be one of the main reasons. Our Committee and Staff Expenses Policy states nobody should be excluded from playing a full part as a committee member because of their income.

5.10 We recognise that committee members who do not have personal access to broadband are able to make use of community digital facilities (such as libraries). Although this resource enables committee members to access reports via the board portal, it is not a suitable means of participating in committee meetings or training. Rosehill has, therefore, agreed that it is necessary for all committee members to have personal digital access in order to fulfil their responsibilities. We are confident that the demands placed on committee members will have very limited impact on their overall digital use and will not require existing broadband packages to be upgraded or changed. We do realise, however, that there may be very limited exceptions to this general situation.

5.11 To this end, Committee Members who, for financial reasons, don't have broadband at home, will be supported by Rosehill as follows:

- We will utilise external digital funding where we are eligible to do so, to deliver our digital aims for supporting our Committee Members.

This funding may support the delivery of training and ongoing support as well as being used, where appropriate, to support the provision of home broadband.

- Where external funding is not available, Rosehill will cover up to 100% of the cost of a basic broadband package only (including costs relating to initial installation). For the avoidance of doubt, if a Committee Member chooses to have an enhanced package or upgrades their broadband package at any time, Rosehill will not pay the additional costs. The Committee Member will be responsible for these extra costs/charges. The typical costs for a basic broadband package will be checked at the time a request is received to ensure the allowance paid reflects current costs.

5.12 The above arrangement is subject to the following conditions and processes:

- There is no broadband in the home currently. If necessary a verification visit can be carried out.
- The Committee Member must organise the broadband installation and the associated account must be in their name. This is to ensure that, in the event they cease to be a Committee Member, Rosehill will not be responsible for the ongoing payment of the broadband contract;
- The Committee Member will be required to get the best deal for a basic broadband package. Rosehill will verify this by checking comparison websites for average costs;
- The arrangement will run for no longer than a year before a review is carried out. The purpose of the review is to establish if the support from Rosehill is still needed either fully or partially;
- The Committee Member must provide a copy of the paperwork for the purchase of the broadband package for audit purposes;
- Rosehill will set up a monthly payment to the Committee Member's bank account; the payment will be made 2 working days before the Committee Member's direct debit is due.

5.13 All requests for such assistance will be dealt with and authorised by the Director. Committee Members will be required to sign an agreement (see Appendix 1) covering the basis of the financial assistance provided.

6. Published Information

6.1 As part of the information we publish on our website, showing Committee and Senior Staff expenses for the year, we will publish the number of committee members who receive any broadband provision and the costs involved.

7. Risk

- 7.1 In all key areas of our business we need to consider any risks which may arise. To this end we have in place a robust Risk Management Policy and from this flows our Risk Registers. We have identified our Strategic Risk Register which is regularly monitored by our Management Team and Audit Sub-Committee.
- 7.2 With the advances in digital technology there is the risk of people being digitally excluded with a particular barrier being related to financial reasons. Our tenants as members are our pool for membership to the Management Committee. We must ensure that how we manage and operate our committee processes does not present a barrier to tenant/members being able to join the Management Committee and actively participate. The purpose of this Policy is to ensure that Committee Members are not digitally excluded by being given the necessary digital support e.g. provision of tablets, access to training and having access to financial assistance where necessary for the provision of broadband.

8. Data Protection

- 8.1 On the 25th May 2018 the legislation governing data protection changed with the introduction of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Following the UK's exit from the EU, and the end of the transition period which followed, the GDPR formed part of the retained EU law and became the UK GDPR which together with the Data Protection Act 2018 constitute the UK's data protection legislation.

9. Equality and Diversity

- 9.1 We will ensure that we meet the Equality Act 2010 by being committed to equal and fair treatment for all and opposed to any form of unlawful discrimination. In implementing this Policy, we will provide a fair and equal service to all people. No-one will be treated differently or less favourably than others because of any of the protected characteristics as listed in the Equality Act 2010:

- age
- disability
- gender reassignment
- marriage and civil partnership
- pregnancy and maternity
- race
- religion or belief

- sex
- sexual orientation.

9.2 We are committed to removing any barriers to communication. Therefore, if required, this Policy can be produced in another format e.g. Braille, large print, etc or another language.

10 Policy Review

10.1 As a minimum this Policy will be reviewed as set out below. However, if necessary, it may be reviewed sooner if there are any material changes to relevant regulatory requirements, our practice or current thinking.

Review Cycle	Next Review Date
3 yearly	Sep 2025

Appendix 1

Agreement for financial assistance for home broadband provision

Rosehill will only pay the agreed amount for the basic broadband charges for the duration of the person's membership of the Management Committee, where this remains necessary to do so. Rosehill's contribution will stop as soon as the Committee Member's resignation takes effect. This means the Committee Member will immediately become responsible for the ongoing costs. In the event the ex-Committee Member terminates his/her contract with the broadband provider, Rosehill will not be liable for any early termination charges.

In the event a Committee Member requires a leave of absence, Rosehill will continue to pay the agreed costs for up to 3 months; if the Management Committee approve a further extension of a leave of absence the costs will continue to be paid for the extended period up to a maximum of 6 months. If after the 6 month period, a Committee Member needs a further extension to their leave of absence, they will become responsible for the full broadband costs.

All Committee Members are bound by our ICT – Acceptable Use Policy and the Code of Conduct for Committee Members. In the event that it is found there has been any improper usage of the broadband facility, Rosehill may stop its contributions to the broadband costs.

The arrangements for the basic home broadband provision will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure they remain appropriate.

If a Committee Member's financial situation should change at any point, which means they are able to pay the full or part of the basic broadband costs they must notify Rosehill to ensure the agreed contribution from Rosehill is adjusted accordingly.

The agreed cost that Rosehill will pay is £ per month for the next year, after which the arrangement will be reviewed annually to establish if the assistance is still required. If my financial circumstances should change before then I must notify Rosehill who will adjust the contribution rate accordingly.

I confirm that I have read, understood and agree to the terms of the agreement for financial assistance for home broadband provision.

Name:

Signature:

Date: