

# WHY WE NEED "ORDINARY MEMBERS"



**Affordable Rented Homes**

The death knell for any organisation is complacency. For a company to be active and performing well it needs vibrant participation at all levels. Everyone involved must be working in the best interests of the company (and therefore in the best interests of its customers) and looking to improve continuously.

Throughout the organisation there is a need for checks and balances. People must be given delegated power and authority to run the company, but be held to account for their performance.

Staff in junior positions are supervised by their managers. The managers are supervised by the Board. But who supervises the Board? And what happens if the relationship between Board and managers gets too easy?

The role of the Board is to direct the business of the organisation by setting objectives, and policies and plans to achieve those objectives. The Board must then monitor performance in relation to those plans, budget controls, and decisions taken. The role of the Board Member is to take an active part in this process, to question senior staff to ensure that the Board's objectives are met.

## **So, why do we need “ordinary members”?**

The Board is made up of two categories of members:

- tenant members (4 places)
- ordinary members (10 places)

Ordinary members are people from the community – people with an interest in rented housing and the work that SHAL does in the community – people who believe in the provision of affordable housing for those unable to buy – people prepared to support the not-for-profit ethos of a community based organisation.

People can apply to become a member by completing an application form and submitting it, with £1.00, to the Chief Executive.

Children and employees may not apply. Membership from SHAL tenants is restricted to one-third of the total. The application is considered by the Board, and, if accepted, a membership certificate is produced. The new member is also given a copy of the rules governing the company.

## And what do they do, these “ordinary members”?

As mentioned previously, members are people with an interest in SHAL and its work. By the very nature of things, members are expected to act as ambassadors for SHAL in the community, spreading the word about SHAL in normal life.

SHAL sends all members a Newsletter every two months, outlining current items of interest and news. Members are also invited to the Annual Seminar. This is an opportunity to raise interest in rented housing across the community as a whole.

And then there is the Annual General Meeting. Ah, the dreaded AGM. This is a legal requirement, usually seen as a tedious necessity. But, it does have an important role in the life of any company.

The AGM has a set format. The Board gives its annual report to the members, outlining the achievements of the previous year. This is the opportunity for the membership to act, and hold the Board to account.

Everyone connected with the company is expected to work in the best interests of the company. The members know what the company does, and how it is perceived in the community. The AGM is the opportunity to compare the Board’s version of events with the members’ perception of reality. It is an opportunity to question the Board on their performance. It is an opportunity to stand for election and replace “dead wood”!

The role of members is important, and not to be sidelined. The membership must take an active interest in the activity and performance of the Board and hold them to account.

## Can membership end?

The short answer is “yes”, if:-

- a member dies; or
- a member is expelled; or
- a member withdraws from SHAL by giving one month’s notice to the Secretary; or
- a member does not participate in any general meeting of SHAL from one Annual General Meeting to the next inclusive nor deliver written apologies in advance; or
- in the case of a body corporate, it ceases to be a body corporate; or
- in the case of the nominee of an unincorporated body, they transfer their share to another nominee of that body.

## Interested?

If you would like to know more about the role of the “ordinary member”, possibly with a view to taking up membership yourself, give the Chief Executive, John Thomson, a call on 01278 444344.

## Need help?

Look at our website [www.shal.org](http://www.shal.org)  
email [information@shal.org](mailto:information@shal.org), call us on 01278 444344 or  
visit our office at 2 King Square, Bridgwater TA6 3DG