



**NORTH STAR**

Creating homes, building futures

# **Board Member Candidate Pack**



September 2021

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**Please note that if any web link in this document does not open when clicked, copying and pasting the link into the address bar in your web browser will work as an alternative.**

September 2021

## Board Membership

Thank you for requesting an information pack for Board membership at North Star. I hope you like what you read and that it encourages you to apply. We have tried to anticipate the information you might want at this stage, and the pack tells you who to ask and where to go for more.

All North Star Board members share a real passion for the business, which continually motivates and inspires us. In common with Board members across housing and other sectors, we have serious responsibilities. It matters to all of us that we are leading and directing such a special organisation. This has never been as important than over the past 18 months.

Working in social housing is never dull. There are always new challenges and opportunities arising from changing demand and Government policy. In the current economic climate this is especially true, and it is also the case that the need for affordable high quality housing, and efficient and effective services is greater than ever. Full details about North Star can be found here: [North Star](#)

As an organisation we are ambitious, known to 'punch above our weight' and we excel in finding solutions to difficult problems. We retain a strong regional focus, with considerable knowledge and understanding of, and a deep commitment to, our local communities. In addition, we believe our culture is special with a very strong focus on people and relationships.

As a Board we are committed to the highest standards of governance. This includes a programme of review and development with rigorous and robust Board member appraisals. We also regularly review competencies and skills mix (and identify current gaps) and agree recruitment priorities as part of a Board succession plan. We usually spend time together twice a year off site to develop our relationships and agree ways of working.

I do hope that you are excited and motivated by our achievements and that you would like to help us fulfill our future ambitions. I would unreservedly recommend North Star Board membership. I find my involvement extremely rewarding in many ways, and I am sure you would too.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

**Peter Waugh**  
**Chair**



# North Star Housing Stockton-on-Tees Board Members

North Star is a not-for-profit Housing Association operating mainly in Teesside and South West Durham, providing affordable housing for a range of people.

We are seeking to recruit two Board Members who have current or recent strategic senior level experience, ideally at Executive level. It is essential that the successful candidates have strong links and connections in the North East, and ideally lives in the region.

Being a Board Member at North Star is a very rewarding experience, providing the opportunity to shape and influence the organisation at a strategic level. Board Members are provided with focused support and training and in return they get to give something back to the communities because they are driven by a strong social purpose. As part of their role, Board Members may be required to join committees, task and finish groups and attend external events.

We particularly welcome applications from people from ethnic minority backgrounds and women as they are currently underrepresented on our Board.

The commitment is up to 2 days per month and the post attracts £4,364 per annum plus expenses.

For further information and details of how to apply please contact:  
Jim Allcroft at Dixon Walter on jim@dixonwalter.co.uk or 07388642631

Closing date for applications is 5pm on Thursday 7th October 2021



## Candidate Information

### 1. What does being a Board member involve?

Being a Board member is a big responsibility – you are a non-executive director of the business. In summary, the purpose of the role is to add value to North Star’s business by contributing experience, expertise and insight to determine strategy, direction and control in the interests of tenants, other customers/service users and the wider community.

The Board has ultimate responsibility for the governance of North Star. The Board’s central role is to direct and control North Star’s work: that is, to determine strategic direction and policies to establish and oversee control and risk management frameworks that will ensure that North Star achieves its vision and corporate objectives.

Boards have to demonstrate they are “in charge” of the business through high standards of governance. In this context the North Star Board has committed to develop into a creative one (generative) recognising that the highly complex world we operate in requires much more than previously. Old ways of operating no longer work, the speed and pace of change require Boards to be increasingly fleet of foot, agile, responsive and resilient. Board has embarked on a development process to create the types of relationships needed to be even more creative than current. This commitment is ongoing, and any new Board member would need to understand the level of personal focus and time this requires. The Board appraisal process is robust and thorough and usually undertaken by the Chair with support from an external consultant. The approach is aligned to “shared leadership” that prevails across the staff team.

All Board members share responsibility for decisions. Each Board member should act only in the interests of North Star and not on behalf of any constituency or interest group. Board members should put the interests of the Association before their own interests. There is a comprehensive Code of Conduct that we expect everyone to comply with.

Much of the Board’s business is done at formal meetings but the role of a Board member involves on-going responsibilities and input. Each Board member contributes, and adds value, in and out of Board and Committee meetings. As such, Board members must regularly attend Board meetings. Generally, it is expected that Board members attend two (off-site) residentials a year.

North Star has Directors’ and Officers’ Insurance which covers professional indemnity; libel and slander; employment practices liability; outside directorships; regulatory investigation defence costs; and corporate manslaughter defence costs. Additionally, North Star’s public liability insurance policy also covers many aspects of professional indemnity.

## **2. What do Board members get out of it?**

Board members have the opportunity to work together, and with the staff, as a highly motivated and committed team, to make a real difference to current and future tenants' and service users' lives. There are always so many more people who need our help and so much more that we want to do. The challenge is to be ever more efficient, innovative and resourceful in meeting these needs.

On a personal level we provide an opportunity for Board members to extend their horizons and develop their skills. Being a North Star Board member is enormously rewarding.

Board members receive remuneration, based on sector guidelines: for 2021 this is £4,364 per annum and is reviewed regularly. Board remuneration is taxable and subject to Class 1 National Insurance contributions. It is not pensionable.

Applicants are advised that appointment to the Board and entitlement to remuneration (whether accepted or not) may affect entitlement to housing and other welfare benefits. This depends on individual circumstances and the type of benefit received. Individuals should seek advice from the department that pays the benefit.

Board members are also entitled to claim reimbursement of reasonable expenses, such as IT usage (iPads provided for North Star business use) and travel costs, incurred in the course of their duties as Board members, up to maximum rates set out in the Association's policies.

## **3. Board membership**

The Board has agreed that ten members is an optimum Board size and we currently have 11 members; however, three Board members are retiring over the next six months. Board members serve an initial three-year term which is reviewed annually, up to a maximum of two terms. We have a detailed succession plan that is updated annually, along with a skills audit through the Board appraisal process.

Details of current Board members can be found here:

<https://www.northstarhg.co.uk/about-north-star/north-star-structure-and-history/board-members/>

We are looking to appoint two Board members from this process.

## **4. Board Diversity Programme**

Earlier this year, in collaboration with the Housing Diversity Network and three other Housing Associations in the North East, we launched a regional Board Diversity Programme.

This two-year training programme, funded by the Housing Associations is aimed at those people under represented on Boards. The well supported programme, which is set within a robust framework, aims to prepare people to apply for Board places. North Star has funded four places and has focused on young people and those from minority-ethnic backgrounds. In total there will be up to twelve "trainees" in the North East on this programme which is designed to fit around work and home

commitments. This is new and exciting for North Star and we are fully committed to making it a success. Diversity of thought around the Board table is of critical importance as it leads to better decisions and this is one creative method of trying to increase this diversity.

## **5. Who are we looking for to join our Board?**

It is probably a statement of the obvious, but it is very important that all Board members empathise with, and demonstrate commitment to, North Star's vision and values, as well as the principles and practices of collective Board responsibility and decision making.

Appendix 1 sets out the Statement of Board Member Responsibilities for Board members. We may also request Board members to join a Committee.

We are keen to appoint members who have current or recent strategic senior level experience ideally at Executive level.

The Board aims to have members with the following essential attitudes:

- Has social purpose
- Is questioning, curious, challenging
- Will be committed to the North Star approach
- Open to learning and development
- Strategic
- Willing to work
- Entrepreneurial
- Collaborative
- Thinking collectively

If you have other skills, knowledge and experience which you believe would add real value to our Board, do tell us about these in your application. We expect applicants to have executive or senior management experience, but previous non-executive experience or housing knowledge is not a pre-requisite. We will provide a full induction programme for all new Board members.

As a regional organisation, it is essential that the successful candidates have strong links and connections in the North East and ideally live in the region. We are also sensitive to real or perceived conflicts of interest, and the need to protect both the individual and the organisation. In this context we would not appoint someone who is an employee or Board member of a North East Housing Association.

We are keen to reflect the communities we serve and would welcome applicants from a broad range of backgrounds and experience. We particularly welcome applications from people from ethnic minority backgrounds and women as they are currently under represented on our Board.

## **6. What is the commitment?**

The Board currently meets up to ten times a year, including:

- Up to seven Board meetings
- Single agenda item meetings (as and when required)
- Board residentials

- Plus, there may be four Committee meetings (if appointed to one)

There are also occasional project-specific, time-limited task and finish groups. Further, Board members are expected to:

- Attend various stakeholder events and activities.
- Participate in collective and individual Board appraisals.
- Participate in collective and personal training and development.
- Complete an induction programme within six months of appointment.

For Board members this (excluding the front-loaded induction) is expected to require the equivalent of approximately 24 days per annum, including preparation for meetings and attendance at Board residential development days. However, other than formal meetings and events, much of this time is fairly flexible and most Board members fulfill their commitment in 'bite-size' chunks within their other work, domestic and personal commitments.

In addition, we have two formal Committees - Risk and Audit (RAC) meet four times a year, Remuneration and Employment Conditions Committee (RECC) meet a minimum of twice per annum.

We require every Board member to signify their commitment to North Star by signing a formal agreement for services with the association; this is based on a sector 'norm' and has been prepared by our lawyers.

Additionally, every Board member and member of staff is required to regularly complete a Declaration of Interests and Fit and Proper Persons questionnaire and sign our Code of Conduct.

## **7. When and where are meetings held?**

The pandemic has required all of our meetings over the last 18 months to be held virtually. This has been reviewed and all Board members want some meetings in person going forward. The current thinking is that we will do a 50/50 split of in person and virtual meetings, although all residential will be in person. Board and Committee meetings are held at our Stockton-on-Tees offices. Currently Board meetings start at 4:00pm (to about 6:30pm) on Monday evenings.

We have usually had two Board residentials a year starting at 12:00noon Friday to 12:30pm Saturday with an overnight stay. The residentials give new Board members an opportunity to immerse themselves in the business, and to work with and get to know their non-executive and executive colleagues, in a relatively informal setting.

## **8.How do I apply?**

Please email your CV and a supporting statement. (This should amount to no more than four A4 pages in total using standard font size and standard spacing) to Jim Allcroft, Dixon Walter at [jim@dixonwalter.co.uk](mailto:jim@dixonwalter.co.uk) or visit <https://www.dixonwalter.co.uk/opportunities/non-executive-directors-north-star/>

Closing date for applications is **5pm on Thursday 7 October 2021**. Interviews are likely to take place during November 2021.

There is lots of information about North Star on our website. The website is a good place to get an insight into what we do and how we do it. Please take a look: <http://www.northstarhg.co.uk/>

**We will make this information available in other languages, Braille, large print or other formats on request**

## STATEMENT OF BOARD MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

### **Board members are responsible for:**

Ensuring the management control, accountability and good conduct of the Association.

### **Role of Board members:**

- a) To establish and ensure compliance with the Association's business strategy and policies, covering all legal, regulatory and good practice requirements.
- b) To set and ensure compliance with the annual and longer-term strategy and objectives of the Association and to determine its values and philosophy.
- c) To enable and oversee the achievement of those objectives through the establishment of a framework of delegation and internal control, ensuring appropriate delegated authorities, operational procedures and the employment of staff with appropriate skills.
- d) To oversee a risk management framework in order to safeguard the assets and reputation of the Association.
- e) To measure and review the performance of the Association.
- f) To review the activities of the Association from time to time and decide on changes if appropriate or advisable in the interest of the Association.
- g) To exercise sound financial management and maintain financial viability whilst meeting the Association's objectives.
- h) To avoid financial risk and protect the public funds invested in the Association.
- i) To ensure that the interest and needs of the Association's tenants are considered in all matters.
- j) To ensure that the Association's properties are developed to a high standard and are kept in good repair.
- k) To be an excellent employer.
- l) To promote the accountability of the Association through openness and contact with communities, representative bodies and strategic authorities.
- m) To attend regularly and contribute to Board meetings and to review regularly the performance of the Board to ensure, the Association has the capacity and commitment to understand and control the activities of the Association.
- n) To ensure that Board meetings are suitably documented, held at reasonable intervals and are effective.
- o) From time to time to attend functions and other meetings in the interest of the Association.
- p) To attend appropriate training events.
- q) To be responsible for the recruitment and appointment of the Chief Executive.

- r) Board members must satisfy themselves that the Association's affairs are conducted lawfully and in accordance with generally accepted terms of performance and propriety.



## Appendix 2

### **Purpose of Board**

The main responsibilities of the Board is:

- *Setting its own objectives within Association Policies including setting operational frameworks for its activities (including housing management, property services and managing stock condition new build and acquisitions).*
- *Ensuring delivery of its business within the Business Plan.*
- *Ensuring that it operates within its budgets agreed pursuant to this Agreement.*
- *Monitoring key performance indicators.*
- *Compliance with all legislative, regulatory, constitutional and financial requirements.*
- *Ownership and (where relevant) management of stock.*

Matters Reserved for Board Decision:

- Any decision to cease a material part of the organisation's operations.
- Changes to corporate structure, including the setting up of Subsidiaries.
- Approval of resolutions put forward by the Board at a general meeting.
- Changes to the schedule of matters reserved for Board decisions.

Further information can be found in North Stars Standing Orders. If you would like a copy of these please contact Rebecca Grainger – PA to Executive Team at [rebecca.grainger@northstarhg.co.uk](mailto:rebecca.grainger@northstarhg.co.uk)