

2021

Membership Strategy



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Introduction

Merthyr Valleys Homes is a mutual housing association, owned and directed by tenants and employees who have chosen to become members. Membership places power back into the hands of those members to make important business decisions, such as how MVH will work with other organisations to maximise opportunities for our communities over the next few years.

The members have an elected group called the Democratic Body, who work closely with the Board and Executive Teams. They ensure that all members have the opportunity to share their views and experience, when decisions are being made. Whilst challenging MVH to do more, by working together to deliver our vision for the future, through mutual values.

The Democratic Body set the strategy for MVH. The current strategy is called Gyda'n Gilydd and has four key areas of focus for MVH over a 3 year period.

- Communities - creating places where people can live well, feel safe, respected and valued whatever their circumstances may be.
- Organisation - being proud and passionate about the organisation we own and work for.
- Responsibility - playing our part to deliver homes and services people want and need.
- Financial strength - achieving our priorities through strong finance.

The strategy sets out some key areas such as:

- New homes
- Training, education and employment
- Tackling climate change
- Supporting Community Groups
- Strengthening opportunities to engage with MVH
- Making sure our homes are safe, warm and secure
- Providing advice and assistance for tenants who are struggling financially
- Working with other local and national social, mutual and cooperative businesses
- Helping to regenerate Merthyr Tydfil.

Democratic Body also play a key role in setting MVH policies such as our Living Rent Policy to ensure our homes remain affordable for all tenants.

This Membership Strategy has been developed by the Democratic Body. To see more about the work of DB please view our Annual Report to Members by clicking [here](#) or visiting our website www.mvhomes.org.uk

More about Membership and how it differs from being a tenant/employee?

You can become a tenant member of Merthyr Valleys Homes if you live in one of our properties and are over the age of 16.

If you work for MVH and have passed your probationary period then you can become an employee member.

As a member you can have a real say in the management of MVH and tell us the key issues we should focus on to provide great opportunities for our communities.

Membership is voluntary so people make a choice on whether they want to become a member in addition to being a tenant/employee.

As a tenant/employee you can get involved in helping MVH to improve services to tenants. As a member you also become able to steer the business and take part in some key decisions made by Board and Democratic Body.



**"Members
really do make
key decisions
and help steer
MVH"**

**Marcus Powell,
Chair of
Democratic Body**

Aims of this strategy:

There are 4 key aims of this strategy, all of which will ensure that we provide a wide range of opportunities to members to be able to provide their views and feedback to us, before key decisions are made by Board and Democratic Body. We will provide membership that is meaningful, enabling our members to see that their involvement has made a real difference to how we do things.

We will connect with our members on topics of interest to them and their families, and provide a range of member benefits and projects that have been identified by the members themselves.



01. Making membership meaningful

Our members have told us that the effects of austerity have impacted our communities, and that MVH needs to focus on services that help people in difficulty as well as provide homes and neighbourhoods where people feel safe and have some green space for community use. We will speak with you to build a clearer picture of the things that interest you and your family, and will feedback to you about how your involvement has made a difference to the work that we do. Our mutual approach means that we will take the lead from members and then look to deliver on the things that are important to them.

We will do this through regular contact with our membership, so that as priorities change for our members, the work we undertake will also change



02. Making it easy to have your say

We know our members' time is valuable and you may have other commitments, ill-health and well-being and/or other pressures that impact on how and when you will engage with MVH. Therefore, we will ensure that when we ask you for your time you can do so in a wide variety of ways, for example, by completing text surveys or joining one of our coffee mornings.

We will include ways that enable you speak to us, without leaving your home, within your community or through meetings at our office. We will work hard to ensure that our membership reflects the diversity of our communities, to ensure everyone feels able to play their part in our mutual.

We will do everything we can to make it as easy as possible for people to do this in ways that they feel comfortable with.

Aims of this strategy:



03. Telling our story

We want to spread the word about the incredible impact and potential our mutual has. We are the only Mutual Housing Association within the Welsh Housing Sector, who give members a genuine share of power to shape and run our business. Members are able to tell us what they want to see, and they appoint the Board Members and Chief Executive to deliver on their behalf. We want to encourage more tenants and employees to become members, and take the opportunity to change the services we receive/deliver. We also want to spread the word to other housing providers, to encourage them to do the same.



04. A great membership benefit scheme

In 2016, we launched a membership benefit scheme that offered incentives, for members who signed up to play their part in our mutual. As well as having the power to drive the work of MVH, members can receive a range of discounts and incentives through some local businesses. Not only do you get to help shape the future for you, your family, friends and community, you also help support local businesses, to ensure that they can continue to provide products and services within our Borough. We will work with members to identify those local businesses which can take part in the membership benefit scheme. We will explore how we can further support local and not for profit social businesses through promotion. You will hear us refer to this as 'buy local/buy social'. This will help those businesses to continue to thrive, and provide employment opportunities in our town.

Aim 1:

Making membership meaningful

Getting to know our members better

- All our employees will speak to and listen to members when they receive a service or visit from MVH
- To become more informed about why some members engage and some don't and address any barriers
- We will ask our members which topics interest them the most

Retain and recruit members

- Act quickly on referrals from teams across MVH from tenants who wish to learn more about membership
- Work with new employees and those that are not yet members, to provide more information
- Increase membership by 3% on the previous year
- Review our engagement opportunities to make sure they are fit for purpose and change them if they are not

Member projects

- Deliver projects that members have told us they want to take part in
- Support members to stand for Democratic Body elections and encourage all members to vote for their representatives
- Deliver the Brighter Futures Programme helping members gain skills related to employment, their home and their interests

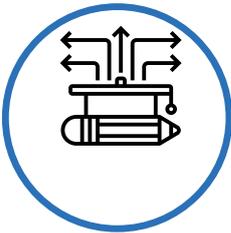
Aim 2:

Making it easy to have your say



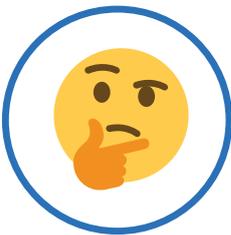
01. A diverse membership

- We will have a diversity in membership that reflects the diversity of our communities
- We will support members to feel comfortable to express their views
- We will encourage young people to play a part in our mutual so that they can shape housing of the future



02. Providing lots of options

- We will make it easier for all members to have their say
- Members can select local charities and causes to support through our Members' Charity each year.
- Members will vote for the representatives that stand for Democratic Body
- We will deliver opportunities that are member driven



03. Making it interesting

- We will provide a range of ways for you to give us feedback whilst taking part in activities that members tell us they are interested in, for example our 10 week cooking project.
- We will hold community based events and projects that members can participate in
- We will adapt our approach to meet changes in need and aspiration

Aim 3:

Telling our story

Promoting our mutual

- Spread the word to all our tenants and employees and encourage them to become members
- Share the impacts our membership have collectively had on how we run as a business to others in Welsh Government and the Housing Sector

Providing feedback to our members

- Ensure that we report back to all members on how they were able to influence decisions and what has changed as a result
- Provide a membership projects programme that has been identified by members and feedback on the outcomes of the projects.

Improve communication

- Explore a members only area on our website or social media channels
- Publicise a forward plan of when Board and Democratic Body will make key decisions, so that members can feed in their views
- Use new methods of communication including short videos that keep members informed

Aim 4:

A great membership benefits scheme



01. Membership discounts

We will advertise local businesses that offer our members discounts and incentives.

We will undertake projects that deliver environmental benefits by offering free paint to members through our 'A fresh approach' scheme



02. Buy local/buy social

We will actively promote local and social businesses in Merthyr Tydfil.

Where we offer an incentive for completing surveys, the prize will be purchased from a local/social business.



03. Links to engagement

We will explore a range of member benefits that link to members engagement

We will explore a members loyalty scheme approach with local businesses

How will we know we have succeeded?

There will be an action plan setting out how the Membership Team will deliver on this strategy. Democratic Body will regularly review the progress against the action plan. This will ensure MVH are delivering on what our membership tell us is important.

We will provide updates on the work we are undertaking, through our website, social media channels and our Membership Matters newsletter.

We will also provide an update in our Annual Report to Members in September each year.



If you would like to know more or have any questions, please get in touch.

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