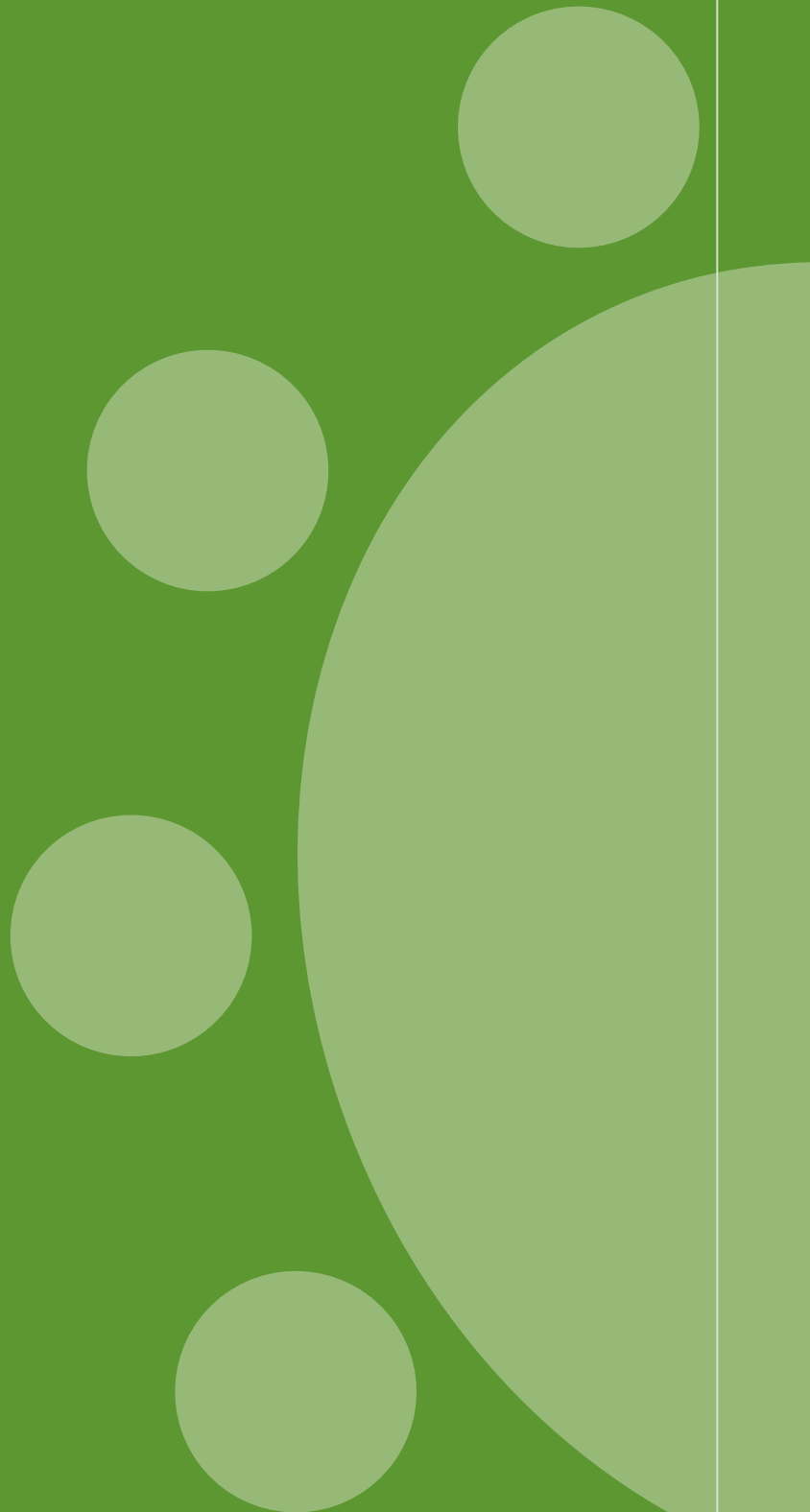


Assessing Competence

A Framework for Board Members of
Housing, Neighbourhood and Community Organisations

Third, expanded edition



The Partners

Castle Vale Community Housing Association

CVCHA manages 2,400 homes in Castle Vale, Birmingham. As well as its own resident-led board, CVCHA hosts the Castle Vale Neighbourhood Partnership Board and has a charitable subsidiary, Castle Vale Community Regeneration Services. In 2005 it was awarded Guide Neighbourhoods status. CVCHA also provides support to other community and neighbourhood management organisations.



Central Consultancy and Training Ltd

Birmingham-based Central Consultancy and Training is a long-established training and consultancy provider specialising in people and organisational development for the social housing, health and social care sectors. Developing good governance is one of its key areas of expertise, and Central was responsible for the first two editions of the Competence Framework for Board members.



Kirklees Neighbourhood Housing

An Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) based in Huddersfield, KNH manages 24,000 homes. Awarded a three-star rating by the Audit Commission, KNH has worked with Central to develop its own governance Excellence Framework.



The author

Stephanie Gaunt

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Edited by Patricia McCabe and Peter Richmond

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Contents

Introduction Pages 4-9

Why you need the Framework	4
Background	4
Expanding the scope of the Framework	5
Recent Trends in Governance	5
A stronger focus on competence	6
A stronger focus on accountability to communities	6
Using a Competence-based approach	7
How do we define a competent board member?	7
Assessment and scoring	8
A tool for organisational learning	8
The structure of the Framework	9
About the Good Practice Guidance	9

Good Practice Guidance Pages 10-19

Best practice in board member recruitment and selection	10
Planning for board recruitment	10
'Selling' the benefits of board membership	11
Specifying the skills and knowledge you need on the Board	11
Recruiting independent members	13
Recruiting community representative members	13
Council nominee board members	15
Building competence - the initial months on the Board	16
On-going board member review and development	18

Board Group Assessment Summary Grids Pages 20-22

Assessing Group Competence - Summary Grid	20
Assessing Group Competence - Histogram Grid	22

The Competence Assessment Questionnaire

Included as a separate document in the pocket at the back of the book.

Introduction

Time passes, but the principles of good governance are unchanging.

This new publication is the third, expanded edition of a tested, trusted competence framework for reviewing and assessing the skills and knowledge of board members, first published in 2000. It includes associated good practice guidance for the development of effective boards.

As in previous editions, the framework is presented in a questionnaire format - the Board Member Competence Assessment Questionnaire.

Although the framework may appear daunting at first glance, users can be confident that it includes everything a competent board member should know and be able to do in order to govern an organisation effectively.

Why you need the Framework

The framework assesses commitment, contribution, knowledge and skills. You can use it:

- To assess individual board member competence and identify learning needs
- To support board review, appraisal and development
- When completed by all members, to produce a skills and knowledge profile of the board to help plan for board succession and recruitment
- As a governance health check, and a tool for organisational learning.

Background

In 2000 Birmingham-based Central Consultancy and Training produced the original Competence Framework for Board Members of Registered Social Landlords, with Housing Corporation support. The first edition sold out rapidly, and a second edition was issued in 2001. So far, over 400 boards have used the Framework.

Although the content of the Framework has remained remarkably robust, the new publication:

- provides a simplified, user-friendly Competence Assessment Questionnaire and scoring system
- moves beyond self-assessment. The questionnaire can be completed with a colleague, a board mentor, or the Chair
- can be used by the boards of all types of social landlord, neighbourhood management and community development organisations, and national and regional voluntary organisations.
- includes guidance to assist organisations with recruiting board members and building their effectiveness to the point where their competence can be realistically assessed.

As with previous editions, the Framework applies to members who have been on the board for a sufficient time to be able to make a full contribution - normally between six months and one year.

To ensure maximum credibility with those who will use it, the new publication has been produced by a partnership of three organisations, Central Consultancy and Training, Castle Vale Community Housing Association (a community-based resident-led housing association), and Kirklees Neighbourhood Housing, (a successful ALMO). Board members from both Castle Vale and Kirklees have helped us to pilot the Competence Framework Assessment Questionnaire.

A significant portion of the funding for the new publication has come from the Guide Neighbourhoods Fund, with the aim of enhancing the effectiveness of community board members.

Expanding the scope of the Framework

New forms of housing organisations have emerged such as arms-length management organisations (ALMOs), Community Mutuals and differing types of tenant management organisations. Housing providers increasingly contribute to neighbourhood regeneration, adopting a 'place shaping' role.

Governance across all sectors has a higher profile. A number of reviews of governance over recent years, including the Higgs review of the role of the non executive director (2003), culminated in the revised Combined Code on corporate governance (June 2006). Other developments include the 2006 Companies Act, and an increased emphasis on accountability to local communities and service users as reflected for example in the 2007 Cave review of governance in social housing.

The Neighbourhood Management and regeneration agenda has led to a growth in community-based (and often community-led) neighbourhood management and community development organisations and social enterprises. These may be independent, or be subsidiaries of larger organisations.

This new publication reflects all these changes.

Recent trends in governance

These reviews of corporate governance have contributed to a shift from 'holding the executive to account' to effectiveness as the key focus of board attention. This reflected a recognition that the pendulum had swung too far towards boards supervising management, as opposed to 'constructive engagement' and working in partnership with management.

The board's key role is to drive performance improvement and there has therefore been a corresponding focus on board appraisal, with the contribution and competence of individual board members being assessed alongside collective board performance.

Particularly in the third sector where there are not powerful shareholders, boards need to be able to guarantee high standards of conduct and probity through adherence to high standards. Transparent Board appraisal and review systems provide quality assurance for stakeholders.

A stronger focus on competence

At the centre of all these developments in corporate governance is an increasing stress on the personal competencies of board members, directors and charity trustees. Board members must possess, and demonstrate, appropriate skills and knowledge if they are to be able to fulfil their duties effectively and be protected from liability. For example:

- The 2004 Good Governance Standard for Public Services requires governors to have the skills, knowledge and experience they need to perform well, develop their capability and evaluate their performance as individuals and as a group.
- The 2006 Companies Act codifies the common law duty on board directors to exercise reasonable care, skill and diligence. The test here is two fold:
- The duty to exercise the same degree of care and skill as would reasonably be expected from a person of his/her knowledge and experience i.e. a "sensible and careful business person dealing with his or her own affairs"
- The duty to exercise the same degree of skill and knowledge as would be reasonably expected of someone with the director's own knowledge and experience. In addition, the new duty to exercise independent judgement means that directors must exercise their own judgement in deciding whether to follow advice or the judgement of others.
- The revised (2006) Combined Code on Corporate Governance outlines the seven main principles for directors and provides guidance on the liability of non-executive directors in terms of the levels of knowledge, skill and experience which may reasonably be expected. It advises that "non-executive directors should themselves undertake appropriate induction and regularly update and refresh their skills, knowledge and familiarity with the company."
- A general desire to raise the baseline competence of directors across all sectors can be detected in the tougher approach being adopted to the enforcement of existing legislation such as the Insolvency Acts and director disqualifications.

A stronger focus on accountability to communities

Third sector boards face additional challenges as the Government has focused on 'democracy' and strengthening the role of 'community representatives.' New, community owned organisational models focus on direct accountability to citizens. A key theme of Professor Cave's review of regulation in the social housing sector - a theme reflected in other similar sectors - is to use consumer empowerment and increasing choice in particular to shape the market and improve services.

People from local communities or service users who serve on boards have a difficult balancing act to achieve. All board members must recognise that the board's key role is to drive organisational performance. Board members who are community members or service users need to be able to contribute their expertise from a community or service users' perspective while acting in the interests of the organisation and promoting its success.



Using a competence-based approach

A 'competency' is a clear, unambiguous statement defining the nature and level of knowledge and skill that applies to a particular element of a job role, or describes a specific behaviour applicable to that element.

A 'Competence Framework' is a set of competencies describing all the skills, knowledge and attributes necessary for effective performance in a job role.

Competencies do not relate to personal characteristics. They specify skills and behaviours that can be developed through learning and experience. Therefore, assessment of competence does not involve judgements around success and failure.

A competency-based approach is particularly useful for managing the performance of third-sector board members, most of whom are volunteers.

How do we define a 'competent board member'?

The framework applies to individuals who have been through the induction processes their organisation arrange for them, and have been board members long enough to understand the board's cycle of activity - for at least six months and up to one year.

It applies to individuals who sit on the main board of group structure organisations, and also members of boards of subsidiary companies within a group.

The range and levels of skills and knowledge specified apply to ALL members, irrespective of their backgrounds. Specialist skills such as financial or legal expertise, or chairing skills are not covered in this Framework.

A competent member contributes to board discussions and decision-making on all areas of the board's work. Contributions are at the appropriate level of detail, and include questioning staff on all relevant issues.

Competent members are able to take on additional work outside meetings, for example joining working parties or participating in appraisal and recruitment exercises for the most senior staff. They take steps to keep their skills and knowledge up-to date.



Assessment and scoring

The Competence Assessment Questionnaire is designed for self-assessment, or self-assessment and work with a partner - a board colleague, a mentor, or the Board Chair. We do not recommend that self-assessment is used alone, and if the second rating scale is not used, board members should discuss their individual ratings as part of their board review or appraisal process. Higgs recommended the involvement of an independent person in the board appraisal process; an adviser, facilitator or process observer can provide an additional, external perspective.

We use a four-point rating ranging from 'fully competent' through to 'not yet competent'. A full explanation of the ratings appears at the start of the questionnaire.

We have included tools for analysing and presenting the results:

- an individual board member results grid and development plan
- a whole board summary grid, to produce a group profile, and a histogram or bar-chart grid, to provide an at-a-glance picture of the results which does not identify individuals.

Unit 1: Commitment is not rated. However, you will need statistics on board and committee attendance to help members assess their performance in this area.

A tool for organisational learning

As well as developing board competence, the Framework also provides a valuable tool for organisational learning and development. In many cases board members will not be able to give themselves a high score against an area because the organisation does not provide the information for them. Use of the Framework will provide a health check on the range of information that a board needs in order to govern effectively.

In some cases, the knowledge may not exist within the organisation. For example, a risk-mapping exercise may not have been undertaken, or the organisation may not be benchmarking its performance with others. Where these gaps become apparent, board and staff can plan together how to fill them.

The structure of the Competence Framework

The Competence Assessment Questionnaire is arranged as follows:

Unit	Element
1 Commitment	Preparation Attendance
2 Contribution	Developing Skills and Knowledge Effective Meeting Behaviours Problem Solving and Decision making Demonstrating Leadership
3 Governance	The Legal and Regulatory framework Conduct and Probity Openness and Accountability Internal Control
4 Strategy	Developing Strategy Implementing Strategy Putting Strategy into Context Organisational Development
5 Delivering the Business	Business Development - Generating and Appraising Options Business Development - Implementing Projects Delivering Quality Services Asset Management
6 Strategic Resource Management	Human Resources Management Monitoring Human Resources Financial Management Monitoring Financial Performance

The good practice guidance

We have given practical guidance based on what works. The partner organisations have provided real-life examples and case studies - where these have not been available we have drawn on Central Consultancy and Training's experience with a range of client organisations.

Good Practice Guidance

In order to develop competent board members organisations must, firstly, recruit new members with the necessary commitment, capacity, skills and knowledge and secondly, ensure that appropriate development opportunities are made available to them.

This section contains practical advice about the recruitment of board members, their development when they first join the board, and how to incorporate the Competence Framework into on-going board review and appraisal activities.

Best practice in Board member recruitment and selection

Board member recruitment should be driven by the same principles that underpin effective staff recruitment:

- being clear about the role, (role profile or job description) and the skills, knowledge and attributes required to perform at a satisfactory level (person specification)
- advertising vacancies widely to attract the best possible pool of applicants
- ensuring that the selection process is transparent, fair, rigorous and consistent
- selecting the most appropriately skilled and knowledgeable applicants
- ensuring that applicants from under-represented groups are encouraged and welcomed
- ensuring that the composition of boards reflects the communities the organisation works with, and includes the service user perspective.

In practice, board member recruitment has become more systematic relatively recently and many organisations will now be doing some, if not all, of the activities recommended below.

Planning for board recruitment

Most organisations have a constitutional requirement for a certain number of members to stand down each year. Others have set limits on the number of terms of office a board member can serve. However, members may also retire from the board at other times and for other reasons and in practice it can be hard to forecast likely changes in board membership.

Ideally, have a 'pool' of potential board members ready to fill vacancies. They may act as co-optees on the board, or on sub-committees. Remember, though, always to use your agreed recruitment process. Co-optees will need an initial screening to assess their suitability, and will need to meet all of the requirements of the recruitment process before becoming full board members.

Board size is an issue - most organisations now recognise that a smaller board is more effective. However, this means that new members will need to bring more than one area of skill and knowledge. Many Boards develop a 'statement of preferred composition' or similar specification of the range of skills and experience they require to inform recruitment.



'Selling' the benefits of board membership

All board members, whatever their background or stage of life, will value different aspects of board membership, and it is important to promote the benefits to individuals as part of board recruitment exercises. Board members most frequently report that they value the following:

- learning about new things, practising new skills and building confidence
- widening experience through being involved in interesting new situations and solving different sorts of problems
- gaining experience of working at a strategic level
- meeting new people from different walks of life
- the opportunity to contribute and 'make a difference' to something they consider to be worthwhile.

Specifying the skills and knowledge you need on the Board

Generic 'entry-level' skills and attributes

The Framework specifies the skills and knowledge a competent board member will demonstrate after their induction or 'settling-in' period. In order to be able to achieve this standard, all newcomers to the Board must:

- be able to work within the expected time commitment and framework of meetings
- possess the willingness and capacity to learn
- have a genuine interest in the work of the organisation
- demonstrate a set of basic attributes and skills to enable them to operate within a board context. Because these attributes relate to fundamental attitudes and beliefs, as well as basic skill capacities, it is hard to bring about change or development after recruitment.

Although many organisations have now developed a board member 'person specification', those using the Competence Framework will find the following matrix helpful.

This matrix has been drawn up using the Framework, the 'entry-level' requirements from the KNH Excellence Framework for Board Members and the CVCHA Board Member Skills and Knowledge Matrix.

Unit	Element
Commitment	Ability to attend meetings as required and to devote sufficient time to board work
Contribution	Ability to read, and understand, large amounts of written material including tables and statistics Willingness and ability to learn Ability to work collaboratively as part of a group Ability to listen and to acknowledge the contribution of others Ability to contribute to group discussion Willingness to be flexible and support collective decisions
Governance	Willingness to uphold the organisation's core values Willingness and ability to act professionally, with integrity and in the best interests of the organisation Ability to maintain confidentiality Commitment to the promotion of equality and diversity Commitment to involving and consulting service users
Strategy	Genuine interest in the business and its service sector Ability to think beyond own concerns and see the bigger picture

Specifying the required specialist skills/knowledge

In addition to the above, new board members are expected to bring one or more relevant specialist areas of expertise.

These relate to identified experience, skills or knowledge gaps in the board as a whole. Some of these will be relevant to all organisations: understanding governance, strategic and business skills, customer service, community or service user perspective, human resources or finance expertise. Others will be specific to the organisation, for example housing management or development, regeneration, health promotion or community development.

You will need to produce a list of these specialist areas (your specification of requirements or statement of preferred composition), monitor the current composition of the board against it, and target recruitment exercises accordingly. Remember that for crucial areas like finance, it is not enough to rely on just one 'expert'.

Both KNH and CVCHA have specified the specialist skill areas needed on their boards as part of their board review frameworks.

Recruiting independent board members

Cast your net as widely as possible in order to ensure a good 'pool' of applicants.

Advertising is the obvious route, but also approach trade and professional bodies, universities and local business forums in search of prospective members. KNH has reported that targeted mailing to likely sources of independent members has brought good results for them.

Use a professional recruitment process - provide an application pack with good quality information, ensure people complete an application, and then interview short listed candidates against your person specification.

Convene an appropriate interview panel - normally this would consist of the Board Chair plus at least one other appropriate board member and the Chief Executive. In addition, best practice guidance recommends the involvement of an independent person on recruitment panels. Remember that you are looking for evidence that, in addition to bringing the appropriate specialist skill-set, candidates can demonstrate that they possess the entry-level skills and attributes specified above.

Board members taking part in the recruitment and selection process should have received good practice training or briefing depending on their previous experience of selection.

Recruiting board members from the local community

The recruitment challenge

Community based third-sector organisations often work with disadvantaged or socially excluded groups in deprived neighbourhoods. We know that community leadership is a key ingredient in ensuring the success of the work of these agencies. However, there can be a gap between the skills immediately available in the community and the skills required for strategic leadership of a multi-million pound organisation. Potential board members may lack confidence, and organisations may fail to harness the potential in their communities.

This does not mean that local people do not have the capacity to develop the skills and knowledge required. They may need specific training and development to become effective board members.

The most important aspect of recruiting community board members is to look for the entry-level requirements as specified above. This provides a basis for future development, and avoids the recruitment of 'token' members.

Advertising and promoting board membership

- 'Sell' the benefits of board membership, in particular, the learning and practising of transferable skills, and the training, development and confidence building offered to members. Use real-life examples: members who have benefited from their board membership either personally or in their working lives.
- Advertise and promote vacancies widely, using all possible community links. Ensure all staff, and existing members, promote board membership.

- Make it clear what sort of people you are looking for and emphasise the entry-level requirements. It is motivating for people to know they are selected, and chosen, against specific criteria.
- Remember, whilst an ability to bring a community perspective is an essential criterion, it is not sufficient for selection. Community members can and should bring some level of another relevant skill area from their work or life experience.

This could be, for example finance or small business skills or experience, community work (paid or unpaid), customer service or selling skills.

Capacity building for potential members

If the organisation can sustain this, consider offering some capacity-building events to develop skills and confidence for individuals who may be considering board membership, or are newcomers to board work. Smaller organisations can group together to deliver this. Plan carefully - organise sessions at times when people are more likely to attend, use attractive and accessible venues, and again, sell the benefits of board membership. Many people will have no prior experience to draw on about what a board does. Make the sessions enjoyable as well as informative.

The challenge of democracy

Many organisations, including, for example, stock-transfer housing organisations, will have board members elected from the local community either an open electorate, or from 'constituency' groups. Elections are often fraught with community politics. The challenge here is to keep the democratic voice of service users while recruiting members with the commitment and capacity to govern effectively.

What can we do?

- Inform the electorate about the challenges the organisation faces and the sort of people you need. A published recruitment policy will help promote the need to elect (and nominate) members according to organisational requirements. However, in heavily politicised neighbourhoods the electorate may ignore this.
 - 'Pre-screen' nominees and offer 'approved' candidates to the electorate. This may require negotiation and constitutional change, but it is useful to remember that this is also the accepted model for how our democracy works at the highest - parliamentary - level.
 - Introduce a policy whereby all new members are recruited onto the board on a 'probationary' basis for a specified time-period. At the end of the time period new members undergo a review (the Competence Framework is ideal for this) and the confirmation of their membership is dependent on the results of the review.
 - Amend governance structures to allow community members to do what motivates the - concentrate on issues facing their own community. Many community members will happily tackle the wider strategic challenges facing a large organisation but others will, understandably, prefer to focus on local issues and may contribute more at e.g. committee or working group levels.
-

Recruiting community representative board members at Castle Vale.

Castle Vale needs community representatives to staff the boards of the resident-led housing association, its subsidiary community regeneration company, and the Neighbourhood Partnership Board. Like many similar areas, it has a relatively small group of resident activists who tend to be heavily involved in a wide range of activities.

CVCHA has policies to promote and widen board membership, and has recently funded 'Aiming For the Top', a capacity-building programme for potential board members facilitated by a resident 'Guide Neighbourhoods' consultant. It is too early as yet to assess the impact of this, but not surprisingly, we have already learned that the key challenge is to make the sessions sufficiently attractive to tempt people to attend.

Prospective members are invited to observe board meetings - we have learned to approach this with caution because if newcomers happen to observe a meeting that gets bogged down in dull, complex issues the experience can be off-putting rather than encouraging.

CVCHA has also amended its Board Membership Policy to introduce a six-month probationary or 'Introduction' period for all new members. At the end of the six-month period members go through the standard board member appraisal process. Residents, have, so far, been comfortable with this approach.

It is hardest to recruit residents to the main board of the housing association - it can be seen as more daunting, professional-dominated and time-consuming than the other organisations. Resident members also want Castle Vale to remain the main focus of their attention - a challenge for an organisation that needs to expand its activities and look outwards to survive. It is likely that the organisation will need to develop its way of operating to enable the residents to keep a clearer focus on managing the housing within their own community.

Council nominee board members

This section only applies to organisations who have council nominees (usually elected members) on their boards as part of their constitutional arrangements, such as stock-transfer housing associations and arms-length management organisations (ALMOs).

In these cases, the local authority chooses and nominates the councillor members. Organisations, at best, are able to influence the choice of nominee, and the level of influence is entirely dependent on the nature of the relationship with the local authority. In every case, the relationship will be different. Clearly, in order to nominate elected members who will be effective board members, the local authority needs to be aware of the skills and knowledge required, and the challenges involved in running the business.

Many local authorities have been through massive governance changes themselves, and are now familiar with the concepts of member competence and effectiveness.

Councillor nominees - the Kirklees Neighbourhood Housing perspective

As an ALMO, KNH has councillor nominees on its board. The level of relationship to have a positive influence on nominations already exists, and is building up over time. However, the Council have made it clear that they reserve the right to decide who is nominated.

KNH has sent copies of its 'Board Excellence Framework' to the local authority and this has helped build awareness of the skills and knowledge a board member needs to run the business. The role of board members as company directors is emphasised, in terms of the directors' legal responsibilities and liabilities.

It is also reported that making the local authority aware of Audit Commission governance requirements can be a useful influencing tool.

Some well-established organisations have a mature relationship with the nominating local authority that enables prospective councillor board members to go through an interview process like other members. Once again, it must be emphasised that developing this level of relationship depends on a gradual build up of influence and trust over time.

Building competence - initial months on the Board

This section describes what needs to happen if a new member is to achieve the standard of competence specified in the Framework within a suitable time period - normally around six months.

The basics

All new board members need to sign up to a letter of appointment or service agreement. This sets out their duties, obligations and minimum level of commitment, and also what members can expect from the organisation.

New members need an initial pack of documentation. At a minimum, this should include:

- information about the organisation and its services
- current strategic or business plan, or management agreement
- most recent accounts
- board and sub-committee terms of reference
- constitution or rules of the organisation
- staff structure chart and key contact details
- board Code of Conduct
- key policies
- timetable of board and committee meetings

You will need an agreed Board induction policy and procedure, and a designated member of staff who has delegated authority to ensure that the induction process actually happens. This individual needs to have sufficient influence to make sure that both senior staff and other board members work to support the newcomer.

Using board mentors

Many organisations now designate an experienced board member to be a peer mentor or

'buddy' for a new member. The mentor can help the new member to:

- access the support and resources they need
- learn about meeting protocols, practices and processes
- address any areas of concern/confusion
- monitor induction progress
- tackle any issues that might arise, for example, lack of confidence to contribute at meetings.

Other options are to seek a mentor from a partner organisation's board or provide an external coach.

When choosing board mentors, make sure they:

- are competent members themselves. You need someone who will model good practice
- have the time
- have the necessary interpersonal skills
- understand the mentor role.

Arranging induction activities

You will need a plan of induction activities, and a structured discussion with new members to identify training and development needs.

A successful board induction programme will:

- Be flexible. This means that activities can be arranged to suit the individual's time commitment and life circumstances. Keep sessions to short and focused briefings. Break areas up into manageable chunks - for example, finance may need several short sessions to avoid members becoming overwhelmed.
- Tailored to individual needs. There will be some compulsory elements, for example familiarisation with the Board Code of Conduct, but other activities will depend on people's background and experience.
- Be interesting and motivating. Senior staff will usually deliver induction briefings, and it is important to ensure that the staff concerned prepare for the activity and have time to undertake it. If staff are not in a position to deliver these briefings, commission an external consultant who knows the organisation well. New members appreciate a 'question and answer' approach, rather than formal presentations. Encourage 'trainers' to adopt an open, partnering approach - share hopes (and fears) for the future, explore challenges.
- Enable the new member to 'hit the ground running' as quickly as possible
- Allow the new member to see services 'in action'.
- Ensure that all areas included in the Competence Framework are covered
- Include meetings with the Board Chair, to explain how the board works, and the Chief Executive or Managing Director, to explore the strategic challenges facing the business.
- Tackle any issues that arise, for example lack of contribution to board discussion.

Review progress against the plan at the end of the induction period.

On-going board member review, appraisal and development

All boards need to have a planned process to review both their collective performance, and the performance of individual members. There is plenty of existing good practice guidance on board appraisal and review - this section gives some practical pointers and shows how the Competence Framework fits in to these processes.

Using the Framework as a part of whole board review.

If all members complete the Competence Assessment Questionnaire at the same time, a Board Assessment Summary can be produced using the form provided in the publication pack. This summary will enable you to:

- see the pattern of skills and knowledge across the board, and identify any gaps. These gaps can then be filled by board development activities, or recruitment.
- identify areas where the board lacks information, or need action by the organisation to develop good governance practice.

However, remember that this exercise is only part of whole board review - other activities will need to include:

- an assessment of how effectively the board performs its key governance tasks, and how it 'adds value' to the work of the organisation.
- how effectively the board works together as a group
- relationships with staff, in particular, the Chief Executive, Company Secretary and other senior staff who work closely with the board
- governance structure and processes.

The outcome of the board review process will be a Governance Improvement and Board Development Plan that specifies actions to be taken to:

- enhance collective competence
- develop board reporting or governance practice
- develop performance of key governance tasks
- enhance group working and relationships

Individual board member review and appraisal

Individual members can complete the Questionnaire at the end of their induction period, or as part of an on-going annual board member review process. Their results can be presented using the Individual Summary and Plan included at the end of the Questionnaire booklet.

Self-assessment on its own is an unreliable method of assessment and best practice guidance recommends the use of additional source(s) of evidence including an independent person. The second rating scale can be used when working with a partner, and/or the self-assessment ratings can be discussed as part of a board member appraisal meeting. The Summary can be used to record the agreed 'final' score. Experienced, competent board members do not need to complete the full Competence Assessment Questionnaire every year.

To carry out effective individual board member reviews, you will need the following:

- board members to sign up to a policy and procedure
- someone within the organisation with enough influence to ensure the policy and procedure is implemented.
- Someone appropriate to provide practical assistance to the chair in writing up, capturing the outcomes of discussions and formalising plans
- follow-up and follow-through of issues identified during the review process, training activities arranged etc.
- a process that is positive and seen as valuable.

It is strongly recommended that you incorporate a face-to-face meeting as part of the process. Although board members are expected to work collectively, like anyone else, they value individual time and attention. Even the most experienced members appreciate hearing that their contribution is valued. The face-to-face meeting needs to include the Board Chair, working alone, with another appropriate board member, or with an outside person..

The outcome of individual board member review is an individual development plan, specifying activities which the member will need to undertake during the coming year.

On-going board development

It is important to be clear from the outset that participating in board development activities is a requirement of board membership. Nevertheless organisations typically arrange events for board members who are then reluctant to attend. Try to keep specially arranged group events to a minimum and keep them short and focused. Where possible, incorporate learning as a 'board briefing' in an existing meeting. For more substantial needs, many boards use their regular away days or weekends to address learning needs, undertake board appraisal etc. and these can usefully be scheduled into the programme of board events once or twice a year.

Focus on the individual learning plans as a driver for development. Allow board members to specify their own preferred type of learning activity, working individually or in small groups with designated staff.

Encourage board members to see services in action. Consider the use of board member 'shadowing' or 'experience days' where they can experience the practical realities of service delivery.

Encourage members to attend external events and work with colleagues from other organisations.

Assessing Group Competence

Summary Grid	Unit 1 Commitment				Unit 2 Contribution			
	Element One	Element Two	Element Three	Element Four	Element One	Element Two	Element Three	Element Four
Board Members Name								
Total Score								
Average Score								

