

COMMUNICATION POLICY

May 2017

Approved by MC: May 2017

Review date: May 2019

1. OBJECTIVE OF THIS POLICY

1.1 QBTC aims to conduct its affairs in an open and transparent manner and make information publicly available unless there are justifiable reasons for withholding it.

1.2 The purpose of this policy is to:

- Ensure all internal and external communications are effective
- Ensure and encourage effective two way communication
- Develop and sustain positive relationships amongst members and external organisations
- Provide guidance to members on methods and styles of communication when working on QBTC's behalf.

2. COMMUNICATION PRINCIPLES

2.1 QBTC is committed to the following clear communication principles for all members. All communication should:

- Be accessible to all in line with the co-op's commitment to equality legislation, including the provision of material in alternative formats and languages on request
- Reflect a commitment to using plain English
- Be open, honest and respectful
- Be relevant, accurate, sensitive and timely
- Enable meaningful engagement with members
- Reflect the principles of data protection, code of conduct and confidentiality

2.2 Constructive criticism (that which will improve business by clarifying or instructing) will be welcomed when delivered with respect and tact.

2.3 Destructive criticism (that which is designed to harm business or another person) is not to be practiced or encouraged.

2.4 Inappropriate remarks will not be tolerated. This includes comments based on:

- race
- religion
- ethnic origin
- sexual orientation
- physical attributes
- mental or physical disability
- marital status
- pregnancy
- medical conditions(s)
- citizenship
- age

3. RESPONSIBILITIES

3.1 Management Committee members have a responsibility to ensure that with regard to internal and external communication:

- The communication policy is implemented in full

- There is timely and efficient dissemination of pertinent information (working with the managing agent)
- The professional identity of the co-op is maintained and promoted at all times.

3.2 All members have a crucial role to play in ensuring effective communication internally and externally. It is each member's responsibility to:

- communicate effectively
- Be mindful that communication is a two way process and to ensure that appropriate information is shared and understood
- Act professionally with courtesy and regard for others
- Not act in a manner which could bring the reputation of the co-op into disrepute.

3.3 General Meetings

- There is a responsibility upon the co-op to ensure that all members have an opportunity to participate in general meetings.
- There is a responsibility upon each member to attend and participate in these meetings.
- Requests for agenda items must be sent to the Secretary or Chair for consideration in advance of meetings.
- General meetings should provide the following:
 - An update about co-op business (including managing agent reports)
 - New or revised policies and procedures to be discussed and understood.
 - An opportunity for members to respond and provide feedback.

4. ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATION

4.1 All communications to the wider QBTC membership should be sent electronically where possible. If this not possible, or not in the best interest of members, paper correspondence will be used. Members may request to receive communications in their preferred format by advising the Managing Agent.

4.2 Emails from external sources, and those sent confidentially to MC members, should not be forwarded without the permission of the original source.

4.3 Copies of emails containing information about members must be treated in line with the data protection policy

4.4 Communication between the MC and members:

- Members should correspond through the Secretary or Chair with regards to QBTC business unless it refers to matters within a sub-committee.
- Members should expect a reply to an email from the MC within 5 working days. Members are asked to be aware of this and set realistic deadlines for responses
- Members are asked that their emails are clear and concise, highlighting important information and summarising key issues.
- Members are asked to make it clear if a response or action is required. For example, if a reply is expected, include 'for action' or 'action required'. If a reply is not expected, include 'for information only'
- Members should consider how their message could be interpreted by the receiver in the absence of body language and facial expression. Members should also avoid using capital letters which can be construed as shouting.

4.5 Members are encouraged to use email for the following:

- Communicate specific ideas
- Short, concise messages

- Handle essential business
- Send information to a list of individuals
- Reduce meeting times by sending information in advance
- Distribute non-confidential messages

4.6 QBTC considers it inappropriate to use email for the following:

- Lengthy expressions/exchanges of opinion
- Sensitive issues such as delivering bad news or giving negative feedback
- Communicating with people who are not familiar with the use of email
- Communicating in anger or with a sarcastic tone
- Matters that need immediate action

5. CONFIDENTIALITY AND ACCESS

- 5.1 All data must be managed and retained according to the data protection policy. The MC is responsible for offering guidance to members on Data Protection issues
- 5.2 No individual acting on behalf of QBTC may use data, mailing lists or other information for personal gain or to defame, harm or harass any other QBTC member or any other individual.
- 5.3 All internal MC communications must be treated as confidential unless specifically marked otherwise. The Chair or Secretary can give permission to share communications outside of the MC by prior approval only. This permission will not be reasonably withheld unless there is any potential breach of data protection and/or client confidentiality. Any dispute over such approval will be referred to the MC. If the MC is unable to resolve a query, the QBTC complaints procedure may be activated in order to seek resolution
- 5.4 Members are minded that all correspondence can be accessed through a subject access request and can be used in court proceedings.