**Text for UKCN Newsletter January 16th 2019**

**Why we want to change the Articles of Association.**

We have been discussing the need to amend the Articles of Association for some time now – and these changes have been given broad support from the membership and the Board. The changes are required to reflect the objectives and definition of cohousing following the creation of the UK Cohousing Trust and to encourage greater participation in the network by our many established and forming groups.

The changes to the Objectives (Section 3) are comparatively minor:

Bringing in these,

* 1. Raising awareness of cohousing developments with the general public, government and housing professionals
  2. Developing and promoting policies that are favourable to cohousing
  3. Providing advice and other consultancy services

To replace

* 1. Providing advice to planners, registered social landlords and other housing professionals to raise the profile of cohousing developments.
  2. Raising awareness of cohousing developments with government and housing professionals through lobbying and media campaigns.

The other change in this section is to include the new definition of Cohousing – as submitted to the Government and the Law Commission. This part now reads:

For the purposes of these Articles ‘cohousing’ shall mean:

1. A cohousing community will comprise residential units, together with communal and ancillary facilities, collectively created  by members of that community, and with an objective of fostering the social and environmental wellbeing of all its members, as well as contributing to the wellbeing of the wider area in which the cohousing community is located.
2. The management of a cohousing community is shared by all its members, who shall also be members of the body corporate owning the freehold or head leasehold interest in the relevant land. All member households occupy their residential unit on terms that ensure that the cohousing community’s objectives are achieved.
3. The terms of membership and the role of members in decision-making will be determined as appropriate by each cohousing community to ensure accountability to all the members. Members may also include, say, a housing association as the immediate landlord of any social/affordable rented homes.

The major change to the Articles concerns the definition of a ‘Member’. Our existing Articles have two types – ‘member groups’ and ‘individual members’. Both have equal voting power – my vote as an individual member would count equally with the vote of a whole cohousing group. The Articles protect against this abuse by requiring that there must be more ‘member groups’ present than ‘individual members’ if a meeting is to make decision. This, rather crazily, requires us to activity discourage individual members from participating unless we can be sure there is going to be a majority of member groups.

We are therefore proposing to amend the Articles so that the only voting members of the UKCN are the representatives of cohousing groups – established or forming. Other individuals can join as Associates – but they will not have voting rights. The Board will be made up of ‘up to nine members’ (group representatives) and ‘up to three’ co-opted (probably Associates).

We want every cohousing group to be actively represented within the network. We also want to enable all members of cohousing groups to have access to the ‘members area’ of the UKCN Website. This is currently an underused resource and we want to encourage as many people as possible to use this facility.

Our vision is to have meetings of the UKCN as a parliament of cohousing groups and to have a Board that reflects those interests and enacts the agreed policy.

I hope you will feel able to support this important change.

*Phil McGeevor, Deputy Chair of UKCN (and member of Cannock Mill Cohousing, Colchester)*