



Rules for How We Work Together

About this document

This document sets out how members of the London Renters Union work together to build the power we need to transform the housing system. It details the rules governing how the London Renters Union operates. This document has the legal status of being a set of 'secondary rules'.

Changes to these rules can only be passed at an all-member assembly or through an online vote open to all full members.

Our legal status and our constitution

The London Renters Union is legally incorporated as a non-profit company limited by guarantee, with a constitution that establishes the union as a co-operative consortia. This means that the union is a non-profit co-operative company that is owned jointly and equally by its members. As well as this document, we also have a constitution. This Rules for How We Work Together document has been drafted so that nearly all of the relevant information from the constitution about how the union is run is included here.

Our constitution defines the aims of the London Renters Union as a co-operative as follows:

- Establish and develop a powerful, city-wide collective body of renters capable of struggling effectively for the transformation of our housing system.
- Harness the power we have when we come together to support each other with the problems that we face with regards to housing and being renters.

- Fight for improvements for renters of all backgrounds and in all sectors of the rental market lacking representation.
- Carrying out any other activity or advancing any other objective determined by the democratic structures of the union, in accordance with our stated values.

Our values

The London Renters Union has a set of values that it seeks to uphold and promote in all of its work. These values are:

Taking action, building power

We use different types of collective action to build our power as renters and win.

The union belongs to its members

We are controlled by every one of our members. Every single member has a say and we take decisions collectively and democratically. Every member is encouraged to bring new ideas and suggestions.

We are a community

We support and stand up for each other in our housing struggles and look after one another as people. We value everyone's contribution, from the people making the tea to the people on the picket line.

No one kept down

We recognise the forces like racism, sexism and homophobia that some of us are harmed by and some of us benefit from. We want to create a community that recognises and challenges this oppression and exploitation. We take responsibility for how we behave towards one another and support one another to challenge discrimination and treat each other better.

The power is in our hands

We have power when we come together. We support one another and share our skills, knowledge and time to find solutions to the problems we face.

Always listening, always learning

We all have something to learn. We all have something to teach. We listen and learn from one another to build our power and take control of our lives. We aim to create a kind, understanding community where members feel able to express themselves and and raise questions or concerns in a supportive atmosphere.

1. Membership

Eligibility

The union is primarily aimed at those renting accommodation from private landlords in London. While most members are expected to pay membership fees, if you can't afford it you can still become a member.

The following are also encouraged to join the union as full members:

- People who are squatting or homeless or the precariously housed.
- People who live on boats without permanent residential moorings.
- Those living in a relative or friend's house who wish to be renters
- Those aged 16+ who live in rented property but are not on the contract themselves
- Social housing tenants
- Renters outside London who plan or hope to move to London
- People who are in temporary accommodation.

Those who wish to contribute to the union and are not excluded by the criteria below may join as a solidarity member, without voting rights. This includes homeowners who do not rent out rooms or properties themselves.

The following may not join the union:

- Landlords, including those who rent rooms to lodgers.
- People who own or manage estate agents.
- People whose jobs involve them carrying out evictions.

The Coordinating Group may also deny membership to any person whose presence in the union they consider likely to be detrimental to the values, culture or aims of the union. They should provide their reasons for any such action and the individual concerned will have the right of appeal to the branch they intend to join.

Membership rights

- Each member has a right to an equal vote with other members as laid down in the rules on voting.
- Each member will be assigned to a branch or receive support to set one up in their area.

Termination

- Any member may withdraw their membership of the union at any time.
- Membership will be considered to have lapsed where subscriptions have been unpaid for 3 months and the member has not responded to attempts to make contact from the branch or Coordinating Group.
- Conflicts will generally be expected to be dealt with through the conflict resolution policy. In the case of serious breaches of the values and culture of the union, and where conflict resolution is inappropriate or has not worked, the options of exclusion and/or expulsion may be considered. .

Liability

No member shall be liable for more than £1 in the event of the union being wound up.

2. Making decisions together

We are controlled by every one of our members. Every member has a say and we take decisions collectively and democratically. Every member is encouraged to bring new ideas and suggestions.

Self-organisation and coordination

Members of the union are encouraged to take the initiative and make decisions together about ways to advance the aims, values and aspirations of the union. This can happen both within branch and working group meetings and outside of them.

The overall strategy of the union is determined by the membership at all member assemblies and member forums. All parts of the union are responsible for implementing this strategy, which is overseen by the coordinating group. Branches, working groups and ad hoc groups of members should feel empowered to take decisions about the work they are doing.

If a decision by a branch, working group or ad hoc group would significantly impact other members or parts of the union, they should consult with other relevant parties in the union. Examples of things where it'd be important to consult more widely include:

- plans to spend union funds that go beyond agreed budgets
- activities that could impact the reputation of the union or its relationships with other organisations
- activities that would impact or change the strategic direction of the union

It's great if working groups and branches of the union make requests and suggestions to other people in the union, but no part of the union can decide what other members or parts of the union should do.

Working group and branch meetings

Preparation

- The meeting agenda should be circulated in advance of a meeting with sufficient time for participants to prepare for the meeting
- It is good practice to assign roles in advance of the meeting, such as facilitator and note taker

Aiming for consensus

We aim for consensus decision making. A key role of the facilitator is to bring out the full diversity of views in the room and help to develop a consensus position encompassing as many views as possible. In the Coordinating Group the views of non-voting members are also important to hear, although their dissent does not break the consensus.

If a consensus seems difficult to achieve at a first discussion, the usual process is for the proposal to go to the following meeting, and be worked on in the meantime to take account of the ideas and views raised.

Where a decision is time-sensitive, or a proposal has come back to meetings for discussion a minimum of three times with consensus still apparently unobtainable, a decision may instead be made by a minimum two-thirds (66.6%) majority of those present.

The decision to move to a two-thirds majority vote is to be made by those present in the meeting and will itself be made by a two-thirds majority vote. Anyone may call for such a vote, either on the basis of time sensitivity or because after at least three iterations of the proposal being brought to meetings they believe further discussion will not advance the consensus.

Facilitation

Meetings should be facilitated by one or more designated facilitators. Facilitators have the following responsibilities:

- Taking the meeting through the agenda, facilitating contributions from those present and managing the timing of the meeting
- Overseeing the process of decision-making and ensuring clarity about what decisions have been made
- Ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to participate and that the meeting is not dominated by particular individuals or groups.
- Ensuring that support for proposals is *actively expressed*. If a person does not express disagreement with a proposal, this should not be taken as support for the proposal.

When facilitating, it is good practice to:

- Periodically ‘take the temperature’ of the meeting to get a sense of how close the meeting is to consensus
- Encourage the use of hand signals, and ensure everyone understands them
- Re-state proposals prior to testing for consensus, in order to ensure that everyone knows what they are making a decision about

Recording decisions

Decisions and action points agreed in meetings must be recorded and made available to everyone in the relevant group.

Branches and working groups must keep a record of past decisions and action points that is available to all members of that group.

How many people are needed to take a decision

The baseline rules for branch and working group meetings are as follows:

- Branch meetings can take decisions when either 5 members or 2% of members are present.
- Working group meetings can take decisions when 10% of the members are present.
- Co-ordinating group may take decisions with at least 50% of voting members present

However, branches and working groups are free to create a new rule about the number of people needed for a decision to be made. The coordinating group must be informed of any such decision.

Whatever rules apply in a given branch or working group, it is the responsibility of the meeting to determine whether or not it is in the spirit of the union’s democratic ethos to make particular decisions. A meeting with a very low turnout would not normally be expected to make decisions which significantly affect the direction of the working group or branch.

Making decisions online

Common sense should be used when it comes to deciding whether or not a decision can be made online. If it feels like an important decision, or if someone requests that the decision is deferred to a meeting, then the decision should be taken in a meeting rather than made online. Decisions taken online can be reviewed in a meeting.

If a decision needs to be taken online, it should follow the spirit of the process outlined above. Consensus has only been reached if enough people are showing active support. Silence or a lack of discussion cannot be taken to mean that a decision has been made. We should aim to have a clear decision making process that is appropriate for the online platform being used.

Asking for opinions online

It can be useful to ask for people’s opinions about something online (e.g. what do people think about this plan? Do people like this banner we made?). If the issue that is being

discussed significantly impacts a working group or branch or the union as a whole, then it is still useful and important to take an active decision during a meeting.

Forums and all member meetings

Additional rules for decision-making in members' forums and all members' meetings are set out in sections 3 and 4, respectively.

3. All-member assemblies

Renters union all-member assemblies are the highest-level decision-making body in the union. For legal purposes, they serve as the General Meeting of the union. There will be at least one all-member assembly per year, and, when possible, there will be more than one. The purpose of the all-member assembly is:

- to allow members of the union from different areas, branches and working groups to come together to discuss, learn from each other, share food, listen to music, enjoy being together and celebrate the community we are building.
- allow members to participate in discussions and decisions on the main issues of the union, including its campaigns and demands as well as its structure,
- to determine the attitude of the union to any developments impacting the interests of those in the private rental sector or the housing system as a whole,
- discuss publicly, and if necessary to overturn, any decisions that have been made by the coordinating group concerning the activities of the union and the use of its resources.

All members of the union are entitled to attend assemblies, and all full members are entitled to vote on proposals on a one-member, one-vote basis. Assemblies must be facilitated, and the role of the facilitator should correspond to the greatest possible extent to the definition given under 'Making Decisions Together'. In cases where a proposal is not unanimously agreed, the facilitator will put the proposal to a vote. Every effort should be made to ensure that all-member assemblies are conducted in accordance with the principle of a member-led organization.

It is the responsibility of the Coordinating Group to organise all-member assemblies. The coordinating group may ask other members for their support in organising all-member assemblies. It is important that all-member assemblies are organised in a way that maximises opportunities for participation and engagement.

Proposals can be introduced to an assembly if the proposal:

- is agreed by the Coordinating Group. The Coordinating Group is able to decide the first two items of the agenda of any all-member assembly.
- is agreed at a meeting of a union branch or working group.
- is supported by individual members of the union amounting to 2% of the total membership or 25 members (whichever is greater).
- has been agreed at a member forum and the member forum asked for the proposal to be discussed at an assembly.

If a branch, working group or group of individual members of the union wishes to introduce a proposal to an assembly, it must do so in writing at least two weeks before the assembly

is due to take place. The coordinating group has the right to select two proposals for discussion. If there are more proposals introduced than can be reasonably discussed at an assembly, the Coordinating Group may organise an online vote or a vote at the start of the assembly to decide which proposals are to be discussed.

If a proposal is agreed at an all-member assembly, then it becomes official union policy, and the coordinating group is obliged to act on it.

All-member assemblies can be called:

- by the Coordinating Group. The Coordinating Group is obliged to schedule at least one all-member assembly per year
- by a petition supported by at least 50 members of the union or 5% of the membership (whichever is greater).
- by common agreement of five or more branches or working groups.

Assemblies must be called with at least six weeks' notice. The agenda for the assembly should be circulated to branches and working groups using official union communication channels no later than two weeks before the assembly. An all member assembly cannot be called until a month has passed from the last all member assembly.

For decisions at an all-member assembly to be binding, it must be attended by at least 50 people or 2% of the membership (whichever is greater).

4. Member forums

Member forums are the second form of all-member meeting within the union. They allow union members to come together to share updates, learn from each other's organising, discuss the work of the union and any relevant political developments.

Member forums may be called at shorter notice than all-member assemblies, require the support of fewer members in order to be called, and have different decision-making powers. However, like all-member assemblies, their purpose is to allow the largest possible number of union members to participate in union life. The organisers of a member forum should ensure that the meeting is facilitated in the same way as all-member assemblies and that, wherever possible, meetings include a social element (shared food, music, time for socializing, etc.).

A member forum is different to an all member assembly in that:

- Proposals agreed at a member forum are not necessarily binding on the coordinating group. However, a member forum can request that a proposal is put to

an online vote or the next all-member assembly, which can make the decision binding for the coordinating group.

- It is easier to call a member forum. A member forum can be called by the coordinating group or a petition of 25 members of the union or 1% of the membership, or by common agreement of three or more branches or working groups. Member forums can be called with two weeks' notice rather than six weeks'.
- For decisions at a member forum to count, the forum must be attended by 25 people or 1% of the membership, whichever is greater.

Any agenda item agreed at a member forum should be forwarded to the coordinating group, and, should it wish, the Coordinating Group can add this item to the agenda at the next all-member assembly, without affecting its right to choose agenda items on its own initiative.

5. Coordinating group

Responsibilities

The Coordinating Group has the following responsibilities:

- Support effective coordination between branches and working groups
- Uphold the values of the union, and ensure they are being upheld by branches, working groups and members
- Oversee the implementation of decisions of all member meetings
- Develop and oversee union strategies and policies in accordance with the values, objectives and democratic decisions of the union
- Support the development of new branches
- Ensure the sound management of the union's financial resources
- Ensure appropriate processes are in place for the management of union staff and the protection of personal information held by the union.

Powers of the Coordinating Group

- Approve or deny applications to form new branches
- Create union policies that are consistent with democratic decisions made by the membership in other fora
- Recommend to all working groups and branches that any member who is in serious breach of the union's values or culture be excluded from meetings, until their membership can be reviewed at an all-member assembly
- Dissolve a working group or branch in circumstances specified in this document
- Overall management of the funds of the union, subject to the democratic decisions of the union membership
- Create sub-committees with any of the powers listed in this section delegated to them

- Hire staff or contractors for the union

Composition

The Coordinating Group will be made up of representatives of working groups, branches and directly elected members. There will also be places reserved for representatives of liberation caucuses, should these form - which may include, but not be limited to, women, BAME, LGBT+ and disabled people.

The Coordinating Group will be composed of the following:

- Up to 2 representatives of each branch
- Up to 2 representatives of each working group
- 3 members directly elected by the membership
- Up to 6 places are reserved for representatives of liberation caucuses.

The process by which Coordinating Group members are elected is set out in section 10.

Only 1 representative of each branch or working group may be someone who identifies as white and a cis-gendered man.

Until the end of March 2019, the members of the steering group that existed prior to the formation of the Coordinating Group are temporary members of the Coordinating Group.

An online list of members of the Coordinating Group should be kept up to date.

Meetings

Meetings of the Coordinating Group are usually only open to Coordinating Group members, unless the Coordinating Group decides otherwise.

Clear, detailed minutes of meetings must be taken and circulated among all its members. A list of decisions made at Coordinating Group meetings should be kept up to date and made easily available to all union members.

Communication

The coordinating group must make itself available to communicate with members, branches and working groups. It must be possible for any member to communicate with the Coordinating Group via email to ask questions, raise concerns and share information and ideas.

Roles

The Coordinating Group has to elect a secretary from among the Coordinating Group members. The secretary has no additional powers except being responsible for ensuring that the union files the proper paperwork with the relevant authorities.

The Coordinating Group may elect a treasurer from among the Coordinating Group members. The exact role of the treasurer is defined by the Coordinating Group. A treasurer has no additional powers.

The Coordinating Group may choose to create or terminate other roles as it sees fit, to be elected by the Coordinating Group from among the Coordinating Group members.

Adding additional members to the coordinating group

The coordinating group may decide to invite either one or two members of the union to become members of the coordinating group for a 12 month period if they feel that it is necessary due to a lack of certain experience or technical skills (e.g. a treasurer). Members must be notified of this decision. These additional members do not have any voting rights within the coordinating group.

Inviting non-members to meetings

The Coordinating Group may, from time to time, invite other members of the union who are not also members of the Coordinating Group to attend Coordinating Group meetings, if they feel this is necessary. Those individuals do not have any voting rights within the Coordinating Group, and are not automatically entitled to attend future Coordinating Group meetings

Union independence

Branches or working groups that are considered to be controlled by external groups to the detriment of the union - particularly where such control makes other members feel unable to be full participants - may be dissolved by the Coordinating Group.

6. Branches and local groups

- Branches of the union will carry out union activity in different geographical areas of London.
- Branches must uphold the values of the union.
- Where members of the union live within the area covered by a given branch, they will automatically become members of that branch.

- New branches for given areas are formed through successful application to the Coordinating Group. A minimum of 10 members is necessary to make an application.
- Branches are entitled to representation on the coordinating group, according to the rules laid out in Section 10 below.
- Branches are automatically entitled to a certain portion of membership income, subject to a formula decided by the Coordinating Group.
- Branches must have the following roles: a minimum of one representative on the Coordinating Group, an outreach coordinator, a member support coordinator and a treasurer. These positions should be determined by an election open to all branch members. Branches are free to develop additional structures they find useful.
- Branches must seek to organise themselves democratically and in accordance with the union's values.
- If a branch violates the values of the union or becomes inactive, the Coordinating Group may decide to close that branch.

Local groups

Any group of London Renters Union members may form an informal local group based on a particular area or set of interests (e.g. parents of a particular school or people living in the same block of flats or neighbourhood). Local groups do not have a representative on the Coordinating Group. A group of people interested in setting up a branch of the London Renters Union may decide to first come together as a local group to start building towards the creation of a branch.

A group of London Renters Union members that have formed as a local group are encouraged to get in touch with the Coordinating Group and to liaise and work with any nearby branches. Local groups must abide by our values and are encouraged to work according to the spirit of this Rules for How We Work Together document.

If a local group violates the values of the union or becomes inactive, the coordinating group may decide to close it.

7. Working groups

Active working groups

Working groups exist to carry out a defined set of tasks and work on behalf of the London Renters Union.

The Coordinating Group must ensure that an up-to-date list of working groups is maintained on the union website.

Creation of new working groups

The creation of new working groups must be approved by the Coordinating Group. If the proposed new working group overlaps with an existing working group, it may be suggested that a new subgroup of an existing working group is created.

Proposals to form new working groups must be made jointly by at least four members of the union. If a proposal for a new working group is not approved by the Coordinating Group, then the proposal can be taken to an all-members assembly.

Once a new working group has been created, it must immediately select at least one working group coordinator, and one member to sit on the Coordinating Group.

Membership of working groups

Membership of working groups is open, and any member of the union is entitled to become a member of any of the working groups. Membership of a working group is loosely defined as regular attendance of meetings and the taking on of tasks arising from those meetings.

An individual may be a member of more than one working group at a time.

Working group coordinators

There is a minimum of one coordinator for each working group, and a maximum of two. The coordinators' responsibilities are as follows:

- To communicate with members, branches, working groups and staff, and ensure that the working group is contributing to the overall strategy and objectives of the union. To be the first point(s) of contact for that working group, i.e. for other working groups/members of the union/union staff
- To ensure that the working group has effective and accessible meetings run by designated facilitators. Agendas should be compiled and circulated in advance of meetings and minutes recorded and circulated afterwards.
- To help bring new people from the wider membership into the working group, and to ensure that new members have all the information they need to participate fully in the working group.
- To help maintain a list of working group members and outstanding action points.
- attend Coordinating Group meetings and act as a communication channel between the Coordinating Group and the working group, including ensuring that the views of a working group and its members are represented at coordinating group meetings.

Working group coordinators are expected to give an average of 1-2 hours a week to these responsibilities, in addition to attending meetings and carrying out other tasks/roles that they might take on as a member of the union. No one can be a coordinator of more than one working group.

Working group coordinators are selected according to the process set out below.

Sub-groups and working together

The fact that we have working groups shouldn't discourage members getting together in groups to organise or work together. Working groups may choose to set-up sub-groups. However, these other groups do not select representatives for the coordinating group.

8. Supporting organisations

The London Renters Union will ask other relevant organisations to become supporting organisations of the union and to make a public pledge of support for the union, its aims and its principles. Supporting organisations are not expected to pay subscriptions and do not have any formal representation within the structures of the London Renters Union.

Supporting organisations are asked to:

- Publicise their affiliation to the union and agree to be listed as supporting organisations on the union's website and other relevant communications.
- Support and publicise the union's actions and campaigns.
- Publicise the union to their members, and encourage individual membership of the union.
- Be invited to attend and participate in union meetings.

The London Renters Union works to provide equivalent support and publicity to its organisational supporters, including sharing information about those organisations with union members.

Membership of a supporting organisation does not equal membership of the union. If members of that organisation wish to participate fully in the union – including voting in meetings and assemblies, and taking on named roles within the union – then they need to become full members of the union.

9. Affiliate branches

The coordinating group may decide to invite an existing housing group in London that is organising renters in a way that significantly overlaps with the union's values, culture and strategy to become an affiliate branch. This allows existing groups to become part of the London Renters Union while retaining their independence as a separate entity.

Affiliate branches:

- Are considered part of the London Renters Union community.
- Must uphold the values of the union.

- Are asked to participate in London Renters Union campaigns and are expected to ensure that they encourage their individual members to become members of the London Renters Union.
- May receive practical support and resources from the London Renters Union.
- Are invited to appoint one representative to the Coordinating Group. This representative must be also be a full member of the London Renters Union.

Membership of an affiliate branch does not equal membership of the union. If members of that organisation wish to participate fully in the union – including voting in meetings and assemblies, and taking on named roles within the union – then they need to become full members of the union.

10. Elections and voting

A returning officer who is responsible for overseeing elections may be elected by the membership either at an all-member meeting, a member forum or via an online vote. If there is no returning officer elected, then the staff of the union shall oversee any election.

Elections to the Coordinating Group

Anyone who has been a full member of the London Renters Union for more than 3 months is eligible to stand and vote in elections. If running to be a representative of a working group or branch, it is expected that the person standing for election will have attended at least 3 meetings of that working group or branch in the last 6 months, unless they have not been able to do so due to access related issues. Only 1 representative of each branch or working group may be someone who identifies as white and a cis-gendered man.

Working group coordinators and branch representatives to the Coordinating Group are selected every 6 months with the following process:

1. Nominations are open for a two week period. Each person standing must be nominated by at least one other member of that working group.
2. At the next meeting of that branch or working group , there is a discussion and each person standing for a position is given an equal opportunity to explain why they would like the role and what they feel they would bring to it.
3. Each candidate must be nominated by at least one other members of the union.
4. Voting takes place online over a one-week period. Any full member of a branch is able to take part in the elections for that branch. For working group elections, it is expected that a working group member will have attended at least 3 meetings of that working group or branch in the last 6 months in order to be eligible to vote.
5. The results are announced online.

Elections for the three members of the Coordinating Group that are directly elected by the membership take place once a year at an all-member assembly with the following process:

1. Nominations are open for a two week period.

2. Each candidate must be nominated by at least five other members of the union and is invited to submit 200 words about why they would like the role that will be published on the website of the union.
3. If time allows at the all-member assembly, each candidate is given an equal opportunity to explain why they would like the role and what they feel they would bring to it.
4. Online voting opens shortly after the candidates have spoken at the all-member assembly and takes place over a two week period. All members must be emailed with details of how to vote.
5. The results are announced online.

In the event of a tie and one candidate is a cis-gendered white male, the candidate who is not a cis-gendered white male is elected. If there is still a tie, then a run-off between the two candidates is carried out. If there is still a tie after the run-off, a coin is tossed.

Interim elections

When working group coordinators or branch representatives need to be elected outside of the bi-annual elections (for example, if the previous coordinator or representative has stood down), then that working group or branch may use the following process instead:

1. A meeting of the working group or branch agrees by consensus to use this alternative process.
2. During that meeting, nominations are made in the usual way (i.e. each candidate must be nominated by at least one other member of the union).
3. Nominations are announced to members of the working group online (e.g. email or Slack), and any additional nominations can be made online in the usual way.
4. Voting takes place at the next working group or branch meeting. Any full member of a branch is able to take part in the elections for that branch. For working group elections, it is expected that a working group member will have attended at least 3 meetings of that working group in the last 6 months in order to be eligible to vote.

If there is no consensus reached about using this alternative process, then the full election process must be used, if capacity exists to run it.

Any coordinator or representative elected during an interim election must stand again at the next bi-annual election if they want to remain in the role.

Union votes

In addition to voting in elections, the Coordinating Group or an all-member assembly may decide to put a proposal to an online vote. In line with our decision-making principles, any proposal must:

- be made available online for at least two weeks before voting is closed, and with no votes being taken in the first week, to give time for discussion
- be open for voting at least one week

- receive 66% of the votes cast in order to be adopted

11. Data access and privacy

The London Renters Union will never sell or share sensitive personal information about its members to any external organisation, government or company. Every effort will be made to keep information safe and secure. We will actively resist any attempt by any government to force us to disclose any information.

The coordinating group is responsible for ensuring that information about members is held in accordance with data protection legislation and with the values of the union. The coordinating group must ensure that a privacy and data protection policy is kept up to date and implemented.

Any member of staff or union member who is entrusted with personal information of fellow members so as to go about their role within the union must handle this data in accordance with our privacy and data protection policy.

12. Staff

The coordinating group must ensure that any contractors or staff employed by the London Renters Union are adequately supervised and employed on fair and decent terms and conditions. The London Renters Union encourages its staff to join a trade union.

Staff have a responsibility to uphold the values and culture of the London Renters Union and to carry out their duties and responsibilities in accordance with the management processes set out by the coordinating group.

Staff may be members of the London Renters Union and participate in decision-making processes, but may not vote in elections.

13. Changing these secondary rules

Our commitment to co-operative values and the principle of member control is included in our constitution. These are 'entrenched' because we imagine that they will be central to the union for so long as it exists.

By contrast, these secondary rules of the union are primarily procedural. This means that they are open to democratic modification, should the members wish for them to be altered.

Any rule in the secondary rules can be removed or modified where either:

- (a) consensus is sought at all-member assembly, before moving to a vote;

(b) an online vote is held on the basis of a proposal moved by a majority vote at a member forum or a coordinating group meeting.

Branches and working groups can submit motions to all-member assemblies concerning rule changes.

14. Conduct/violation of values/conflict

Our values are set out at the beginning of this document. All members of the union, including all holders of any positions within the union, are expected to treat one another as members of a community, to listen to one another, and to make sure that no one is kept down. This includes a total rejection of any form of discrimination or intimidation. It is vital that we maintain a culture in which all members are valued and feel able to contribute.

We recognise that formal disciplinary proceedings are often not the best response to conflicts within the organisation. In accordance with our values we encourage and will seek to support our members in challenging oppressive behaviour or attitudes. Likewise, we encourage those challenged to respond with good will and a willingness to reflect and learn. We believe in the ability of people to change and transform their attitudes and behaviour, and strive to foster a culture where this is supported and enabled within the union.

Where members of a branch or working group are in conflict with each other, the branch or group coordinator should seek to mediate in the first instance. Where a complaint has been made by one member against another, and one or both parties do not wish to discuss it, the branch or group coordinator will speak to the two parties separately.

Where a conflict cannot be resolved between two people or within a branch or other group, it can be raised to the Coordinating Group, who may offer help with mediation. Initially the mediator may be from within the union but if it seems necessary the union will offer an outside, independent mediator.

However, in the event that an individual or group of individuals is deemed to be violating the values or rules of the union, it may be necessary to take further steps to address the situation.

Individual branches or working groups have the right to choose by a 66% vote to exclude temporarily any individual or group of individuals who are deemed to be acting in contravention of union values. In the event of exclusion, notice must be presented to the Coordinating Group containing the reasons for this exclusion. If the Coordinating Group upholds the complaint, the persons concerned may be excluded or expelled from the union. In the event that the complaint is deemed unjust, they may continue to be a member of the union and can join other branches or working groups. However, they may not rejoin the working group or branch from which they were removed, unless the members of this working group or branch elect to reverse their earlier decision.

The coordinating group may also decide to exclude someone from the activities of the union as a result of a complaint or conflict reported to them directly. The individual or group of individuals excluded have the right to appeal a decision made by the Coordinating Group. The Coordinating Group will consider their appeal and can withdraw its own earlier decision. It cannot however force a branch or working group to include a member that that branch or working group has decided to exclude by a 66% vote.

If the excluded member wishes to challenge this further, their appeal will be heard at the next all member assembly.

In the event that the Coordinating Group considers that a branch or a working group is abusing its right to expel members on the basis of conflicts that do not involve a violation of union values, it may increase the threshold for expulsion from that branch or working group to a 90% vote.