

The Aims, Approach, Values and Culture of Furze

This is a living document that will change as we grow.

Date for next review: **August 2021**

How this document is intended used:

- As a summary of Furze as a project
- To be shown to members, partners and groups in the community who are or may be part of Furze (internal)
- To be shown to organisations, funders and groups outside of Furze (external), and may need adapting depending on audience
- To be an anchor point for the project as it grows and evolves

Aims

The aims of Furze Housing Cooperative are to:

1. **Build cooperatively owned, affordable eco-homes**
2. Build a long-term, multigenerational **community**
3. **Support others** to set up cooperative housing

Approach and Values

This section outlines Furze's approach and values needed to achieve the aims listed above.

1. Build secure eco-homes

Furze strives to build homes that are:

- **Secure:** through a co-operative structure with no private landlords and a financial model that works well for people with varying income and wealth levels.
- **Eco:** Low energy to build and keep warm, using materials that limit any negative impacts on the environment, and where possible benefits the environment.

2. Build a long-term, multigenerational community

We do not expect that all members will get on with each other all of the time, but are committed to being in a caring community together through:

- **Shared Food:**
 - Shared meals and cooking as a key part of community-building
 - Sourced from local/seasonal providers and businesses where possible

- o **Activities and events** which bring Furze members and the wider community together as a regular part of Furze life
- o **Living together and decision-making:**
 - **Placing children and elders at the heart of the community**
 - Respecting different life experiences, vulnerabilities and needs
 - Making decisions in a way that gives voice to all members, trying to always prioritise those most affected by any given decision.
 - Support each other's learning and self-awareness about relationships to power and privilege and welcoming wisdom often marginalised and excluded in society
 - Seeing people as part of the 'web of life', and aiming to reduce the long-term negative impact on the environment, making positive improvements wherever possible
 - Understanding that wealth is more than money; economics is more than consumption, spending and growth; and homes are more than bricks and mortar
- o **Supporting the wellbeing, physical and mental health of members** by having collective practices to:
 - Bring humour and joy
 - Support communication
 - Proactively address disagreements and conflicts
 - Support each other emotionally
 - Making space for individual and shared ways of living, including different emotional, physical and spiritual practices
- o **A structure that works well for members:**
 - **Transparent / fair / open** process for becoming a member
 - Having rent levels that account for different needs and situations, including supporting people going through periods of financial difficulty.
 - Ensuring members are able to leave well if and when that is wanted - by avoiding 'the rent trap' [add a sentence to explain this], and by enabling members to reclaim a portion of their rent contributions upon leaving (within the limits of what the coop can afford).
- o **Making a home that works for people throughout different life stages and relationship formats.** This could include:
 - single people,
 - couples living together or not
 - parents and children
 - family units including co-parenting, single parents, and fostering
 - older people,

- relationship formats including monogamy and polyamory,
- a range of sexual orientations and gender identities
- a range of house sizes including individuals and large house-shares

3. Support others to build cooperative housing

Furze strives to share learnings and proactively support others to build cooperative housing and other alternatives to mainstream models of home ownership, private rental or social housing through:

- **Openly sharing** the journey and insights of Furze with others
- **Developing skills** of Furze members and the wider community
- **Contributing time and money** to support the planning, designing and building of similar models of housing

As a summary, Furze values:

- universal respect,
- safety and security,
- humour and joy,
- growth and development
- environmental and personal prosperity.

Culture

Furze has been formed by a group of East Bristol residents who recognise that the culture and values established so far may not be right for everyone. Furze will actively work to welcome new members' ways of being, perspectives and cultures, and allow Furze to shift as its members do. However, Furze will not try to 'force diversity for diversity's sake'.

Furze recognises the ways that class, education, race, gender, religion, health status, disability, neurodiversity, age, migration 'status', financial stability, inherited wealth, and other factors may affect people's ability to participate with the project. Furze aims to actively work to remove the barriers related to these by striving to:

- Make space for the full range of perspectives and lived experience within the existing membership, recognising that there is never one culture and there is no one 'normal'
- Getting advice and guidance from a range of community groups.
- Make a financial model that works well for people with varying income and wealth levels.
- Support each other's learning and self-awareness about relationships to power and privilege

Creating a culture that feels safe and comfortable enough as a home may involve excluding some people who have clashing values or worldviews (e.g. homophobia, racism etc). Please see Furze membership policy for more detailed information around this.

Furze will also share time, resources, money and skills to support others to build cooperative housing and other alternatives to mainstream models of home ownership, private rental or social housing.

For More Information...

Please refer to other Furze documents for detail of systems and processes which uphold the approach and values outlined here. These include:

- Furze Membership Policy
- Furze Decision-making Policy
- Furze Rent setting Policy
- Furze Community Engagement Strategy
- Furze financial model
- Furze Procurement Policy