

*The CT proposes the below amendment to Appendix A of our Cohousing Agreement, where yellow highlighted text refers to additions, and purple highlighted text is to be deleted (because of redundancy).*

# Cohousing Group Decision-Making Process

## Communication Guidelines

- I will use “I” statements and speak for myself, not others
- I will speak succinctly (short and to the point)
- I will take responsibility for owning and naming my own feelings
- I will respect others’ rights to speak without interruption
- I undertake to respect others’ privacy by not discussing outside the Group other people’s personal issues which may arise within the Group process
- I undertake to keep relationships within the Group clear by dealing with any problematic issues directly with the persons concerned
- I recognise that we work best together when we remember to have fun!

## Meeting Guidelines

1. **We table items in time** e.g. before noon when meeting at 7:30pm, but preferably with one day’s notice. The more complex or contentious an item, the more time the whole group should be given to consider it before the meeting.
2. While anyone can table items, ideally, they come from **Work Groups**. These Work Groups should have prepared the item and bring to the meeting a recommendation along with an explanation why they believe it is the best recommendation. For particularly complex or contentious issues, Work Groups should make available a written summary of the discussion that has led to their recommendation.
3. For discussions and decision-making, we use the **Communication Guidelines** set out above, and the **Coloured-Card Agreement Process** set out below.
4. When the meeting deems a decision to be important, it is always **minuted**. Meeting notes highlight these minutes and include a summary of the discussion that led to them. **Draft meeting notes** are circulated via email as soon as practicable.
5. By default, we observe a **cooling-off period**, to allow all members, in particular those absent from a meeting, to reflect on the decision and discussion. This means no irreversible action is taken until 72 hours after the draft minutes have been circulated via email, unless agreed otherwise. Any member is **free to object to a minute** after it was agreed and is also free to withdraw their objection. If at any time after the cooling-off period there are no objections, we can action the decision.
6. If at the start of a meeting there is any objection to a minute that had been agreed in the previous meeting, it is tabled to be **resolved**. We also **revisit** any past decisions if more than 50% of members present support this.

## Coloured-Card Agreement Process

We use a particular consensus-building procedure to reach agreement that has been adopted by many cohousing groups, as follows:

[Each person should have a set of coloured cards – green, blue, orange, yellow, red and black.]

## The Process for Discussions

The cards can be helpful in preliminary discussions, particularly if the Group is large. Before being called on to speak on an issue, participants must first put up a coloured card according to the following guidelines:

- **Black** I have an interpersonal difficulty and can't proceed
- **Red** I have a process observation, i.e. we are off topic or over time.
- **Yellow** I have a question or need clarification
- **Orange** I wish to acknowledge someone or something (often a thank-you)
- **Green** I can provide clarification or information
- **Blue** I have a comment or opinion

The facilitator/chair calls first on anyone holding a black card. The Group then decides what happens next.

The red cards are then dealt with. The red "stop-the-process" card can be raised at any time. It is used to point out a breach in the way we have agreed to proceed.

People raising yellow cards to indicate questions receive the next attention.

After a question has been asked, people holding green cards are called on to provide clarification.

After all questions have been answered, the facilitator/chair calls on people holding the blue cards to speak.

## The Process to Reach Agreement is Through Consensus

When deciding an issue, the minute-taker and/or facilitator/chair writes the minute and reads it out to the Group for any further amendments, additions, corrections or discussion. The whole Group is responsible for the wording of the minute. The facilitator/chair then calls for a show of cards and each person raises one of the cards:

- **Green** I agree with the proposal
- **Blue** I am neutral about the proposal or for it with some slight reservation
- **Yellow** I have a question concerning the proposal which must be answered before I can make a decision
- **Orange** I have some serious reservations about the proposal but am not willing to block consensus
- **Red** I am entirely against the proposal and will block consensus

If not all cards raised are green, those people with reservations should voice their concerns if they have not already done so.

The process requires everyone to participate in decision making. Dominant personalities will find it harder to push their ideas through at the expense of the less vocal, and softly spoken members must take responsibility for voicing their concerns.

Decisions made in a member's absence can be revisited only at the next meeting, unless the revisit is supported by more than 50% of members present.