Setting up a Tenants Association

To set up a tenants association you will need to consider a number of important steps:

- Identify the aims and objectives of the group and how they will achieve them.
- Confirm the area or locality you want to represent.
- How you will gain support and views from the residents you wish to represent.
- Adopt a suitable 'constitution' with appropriate equal opportunities information.
- Elect a committee and define the committee roles.
- Identify funding and finances to achieve your aims.

Aims and objectives

The group will have to decide the aims and objectives of the association. It is important to set realistic goals, keep regular track of your progress and celebrate when these goals are achieved. It will show the community they represent they are making a real difference.

Tenant associations must be accountable to those they represent. It is a priority to understand the feelings, wishes and opinions of the membership and act upon these in the appropriate manner.

Communication is vital; there must be a two-way communication system in place. The association must keep residents informed about what they are doing in general. This can be done through meetings, flyers or newsletters.
The constitution

A constitution is a written document setting out the aims and objectives of the association. It should include membership details, the area, scope of the association and an equal opportunities statement.

It is an agreement of the rules and regulations that members sign up to and states how the association should conduct itself as an independent self-governing organisation.

E lecting a committee – a committee is elected by the members of the association to carry out the aims and objectives of the group. They are the driving force behind the association and are responsible for organising general residents meetings, committee meetings and the annual general meeting. The committee must work together to carry out the decisions made at these meetings, whilst representing the views and interests of its members.

Committee Role – the key roles include the chair, vice chair, secretary and treasurer. Other committee members could include social secretary, fundraiser, neighbourhood watch co-ordinator, or press/information officer - it is important to encourage everyone to participate.

Chair’s role and responsibilities – the role of a chairperson is to:

- Act as spokesperson on behalf of the association / committee.
- Guide the association to achieve its aim and objectives.
- Chair resident and committee meetings confidently and fairly, encouraging every view to be heard.
- Be aware of the activities of the association.
- Ensure tasks are carried out by other officers.
- Assist in the preparation of agendas with the secretary.

Secretary’s role and responsibilities – the secretary is responsible for all the paperwork and making sure all group members are aware of what is happening and includes:

- Organising meetings – time, date and venues.
- Ensuring all members are aware of meetings in advance.
- Taking minutes – written record of the meeting, decisions made and actions agreed.
- Help prepare and distribute the agenda to attendees in advance of meetings.
- Writing and replying to letters on behalf of the association.
- Keeping the committee up to date on correspondence.
- Keeping a record of information relating to the association in accordance with General Data Protection Regulations – membership and important contact details.
- Keeping safe the important documents – such as correspondence, constitution etc.
- Assisting the chairperson to follow up work in between meetings.

Treasurer’s role and responsibilities – the treasurer deals with the associations finance and funding. They are responsible for managing the money the group has, keeping records up to date and accounting for money spent. Other responsibilities may include:

- Opening a bank account for the group.
- Issuing payments into and out of the account on behalf of the group.
Keeping an accounts book – recording income and expenditure.

Preparing regular statements for the committee about the financial position of the group.

Keeping petty cash and a petty cash account book for day to day expenses.

Keeping a filing system of receipts and bills paid.

Preparing a statement for the Annual General Meeting.

Opening a bank account – the association has responsibility for any monies it receives from fundraising events, the council or grants from other agencies or charities. The association will need to open either a bank, credit union or building society account to take care of these funds. The account must be held in the name of the association. Funds are made payable to the association directly.

Other information available

Funding for associations – as a constituted group you may be able to apply for funds from various agencies for specific projects you want to undertake. East Riding council offers some funding to tenant associations to assist with room hire, stationary and IT equipment. More information can be found on East Riding of Yorkshire Council’s website - www.eastriding.gov.uk

There is a variety of funders, most of whom have added their details on the internet.

You can find a number of useful tenant-related documents on the East Riding Council’s website. These include:

- A model constitution.
- Association grant applications for running costs and IT equipment.
- List of council groups and associations across the East Riding.
- The Tenant Partnership Agreement.