

Handbook for Residents' Associations on Scheme



Contents

Introduction	<u>Page 3</u>
Getting Started	<u>Page 5</u>
The Committee	<u>Page 13</u>
Meetings	<u>Page 18</u>
Communication and Representation	<u>Page 23</u>
Model Constitution	<u>Page 27</u>
Additional Appendices	<u>Page 31</u>

Introduction

This handbook is intended as a guide for both residents and scheme managers whose scheme currently does not have a Residents' Association but wish to develop one. It can also be used by existing Residents' Associations as guidance on certain issues. This handbook is designed so that you can read those pages relevant to you rather than the whole document.

This handbook is to support the set up and running of a Residents' Association. If you are looking to set up a Social Committee, please refer to our helpful guide on running a successful social committee.

What is the difference between a Residents Association (RA) and a Social Committee?

An **RA** is a group of residents who come together to represent the shared interests of those living in a scheme. The members of an RA can include tenants, leaseholders, and shared owners.

The primary functions of a RA are.

- advocating for residents' concerns and needs.
- providing a platform for residents to voice their opinions and collaborate on issues on a scheme.
- Keeping residents informed about local happenings.
- Addressing community issues.

In addition, functions of Residents Associations can also include organising events and activities for those living at the scheme.

Residents Associations are subject to regulations and must have a signed constitution, audited accounts and elected representatives. They should also hold an AGM once a year.

A Social Committee focuses on organising and coordinating social and recreational activities within a community. Their responsibilities include planning events, gatherings, and activities that foster a sense of community and encourage interaction among residents. Unlike a RA, a social committee's primary focus is on enhancing social connections and creating a positive community atmosphere.

Examples of activities organized by a Social Committee:

- Community parties.
- Holiday celebrations.
- Sports events.
- Cultural programs.
- Visiting entertainers
- Raising money for things on scheme
- Coffee mornings/ fish and chip suppers etc

In summary, while both serve the community, an RA is concerned with representation and addressing broader issues, whereas a Social Committee focuses on fostering social bonds and organising events.

Why set up a Residents' Association?

There are several reasons why your scheme might want to set up a Residents' Association:

- To create a mechanism which brings residents together and represent their views, giving residents a greater voice.
- To be recognised by both Housing 21 and other external bodies (e.g., local council)
- To open up opportunities to apply for external funding (various grants are available, e.g. The Big Lottery Fund)
- To support the arrangement of social events

Relationship with the Scheme Manager

For a Residents' Association to be successful it is important for it to work in partnership with the Scheme Manager. The Scheme Manager's role is to run and manage the scheme on behalf of Housing 21, the Residents' Association's is to represent residents' views; it is important that each party respects each other and there is a positive working relationship. In a lot of cases the Scheme Manager will be able to help answer a lot of the Association's queries or will be able to help point the Association in the right direction for further advice, information, or support.

There are different ways in which Residents' Associations can include the Scheme Manager and it would be useful from the outset for the Residents' Association and Scheme Manager to discuss how they would like to work together.

Some ideas to consider:

- Some Residents' Associations have Scheme Manager update/feedback as a permanent item on the agenda.
- Some have the Scheme Manager as a Co-optee. This is a member of the Residents' Association but importantly cannot take part in deliberations, nor debate or vote on the election of officers or on matters relating to the Residents' Association.

Getting Started

Planning and Starting a Residents' Association

How to start setting up a Residents' Association?

Meet with other residents who have shown an interest in setting up an association. Talk about your ideas and ask people if they would be interested in meeting as a planning group.

...and Next?

Planning Group

Get all interested parties together and start thinking about what the group wishes to achieve. This will give you a starting point for gaining interest in forming a Residents' Association. You can also then start to think about a general residents' meeting to talk about having a Residents' Association on your scheme.

For the meeting to be productive it is useful to have someone take notes and for someone to take the lead in keeping people to the point. These notes can then be used as the basis for the General Residents' Meeting.

Areas to cover in planning group meeting

- Why does the scheme want / need a Residents' Association?
- How are you going to encourage people to come along and get involved?
- How will you make sure all residents have the opportunity to be involved?
- How many committee members are necessary?
- If there is agreement that the formation of a Residents' Association will be useful and positive for the residents of the scheme, then you need to arrange a general residents' meeting.

Important Tip

It is important to be sure at this stage that the interests of all residents is at the heart of why those involved want to set up a Residents' Association. This may sound obvious but forming a Residents' Association is an undertaking that the Residents' Association and **committee members in particular, will represent the views of all resident members**. It is very easy to confuse the views of those who 'shout loudest' with those of the majority of members who may have very different views but not openly express them.

Tips for a general Residents' meeting

How do you get people along?

- **Word of Mouth** is the greatest tool a Residents' Association has – let people know when you see them in the communal lounge, walking down the hall or at the shops. Encourage residents with your enthusiasm – if you think it's a good idea then why shouldn't they?
- **Poster** – use the notice boards on scheme to display when and where the meeting is being held. Also put them in the laundry room as this can be another place residents' frequent!
- **Flyers** – through each resident's letter box.
- It can help to encourage people if you were to combine the meeting with a **coffee morning/afternoon**.

General Residents' Meeting

Before the meeting - Send a reminder to all residents at least 5 days before the meeting along with details of the agenda. Established Residents' Associations have a variety of methods they use to remind residents about meetings – leaflets through everyone's letter box, reminders on Scheme Notice Boards, reminders in prominent parts of the scheme. If possible, some planning groups put flyers through residents' doors on the day of the meeting. Some residents' have asked their Scheme Manager to remind people via the daily call they make on the day of the meeting or by adding including it in the scheme newsletter.

Something to consider...

Ideally, you want as many residents to attend as possible so hold the meeting at a time when most residents are available to attend. At a scheme where a lot of residents' work, this might be in the evening. If there is a number of residents who are unable to attend the meeting but are interested, then it might be worth sending a ballot paper to those people ahead of the meeting.

At the meeting - The planning group should already have decided the person to take the lead. That person can then introduce the reason why the meeting is being held etc. until the residents decide how many committee members they want and elect them.

Suggestions for inclusion in the Agenda

- Introduction – Why a residents’ association
- Ensure there is agreement for a residents’ association – ballot.
- Results of ballot
- Elections of committee members (if ballot is ‘yes’)
- Constitution

Introduction - why a Residents’ Association - The reason for the meeting should be explained and details of the benefits of being a Residents’ Association should be given.

Ballot - A ballot needs to take place and a constitution needs to be signed. The Scheme Manager can act as adjudicator for the ballot – where there is no Scheme Manager then the planning group should arrange for another scheme manager to attend the meeting. The ballot should be a secret one; one vote per tenancy agreement (one vote per household).

To achieve a result in the ballot, the following stipulations must be met:

- 51% of people eligible to vote, take part.
- 66% or above of those voting must be in favour of the motion.
- No more than a quarter vote against the motion.

This is to ensure that there is a clear democratic mandate for the motion being voted on.

For example, if more than a quarter of residents vote against the motion, then there will be a very sizeable minority who will be unhappy if it is passed. It is recognised that these are challenging guidelines, but they are designed to encourage cooperation and compromise, ensuring that everyone can have their say.

If the Residents’ Association is not successful in the ballot the scheme can still go ahead with the formation of a residents’ group. However, a constitution is recommended anyway as this gives some structure to what the Residents’ Group does.

Elections - Residents should now elect members to lead the Residents’ Association. In the past these have tended to be quite formal with Chair, Secretary and Treasurer. Your scheme may want to stick to this however if there are people who are willing to co-ordinate meetings and lead residents through the business of each meeting then these can be elected as committee members / lead members of the Residents’ Association.

Even though residents are not called Chair, Secretary etc. they would still have to take on board the responsibility of taking the lead etc., but other residents should offer support as well.

Any resident elected to a position must not be in breach of their tenancy i.e., substantial arrears or under investigation for Anti-Social Behaviour etc.

Once elections have taken place and a Chair has been appointed then the Chair will lead the rest of the meeting. It is important that all residents have the opportunity to put themselves forward to be elected on to the committee, even if they are unable to attend the initial meeting.

Rest of the Meeting - You will need to sort out the Constitution (a model constitution is included as an appendix). Next, you could look at what the Residents' Association wants to achieve. It can help to split these goals into:

- **Short Term** – achievable 'quick wins' that shows the Residents' Association is effective.
- **Medium Term** – issues the Residents' Association would like resolved and can work with the Scheme Manager in achieving. Some Residents' Associations have worked with their local bus company to have bus stops moved, others to have dog bins installed on local paths etc.
- **Long Term** – Aspirations. There may be an improvement to the scheme that you would like to see but know that this will be difficult giving budgetary constraints etc. This is something to work towards.

End the meeting - End the meeting with a date for the next general Residents' Association meeting so members are aware when it will be.

The Constitution

Once elections have taken place then the rules of the Residents' Association can be laid out - this is known as the Constitution. A model Constitution can be found as an appendix, which is recognised by Housing 21 and used by other Residents' Associations.

The Constitution is a set of rules concerning the purpose of the Residents' Association, what the members are agreeing to do and how they are going to do it. It is an agreement entered into so that all members know where they stand and so that committee members know what they can and cannot do in the name of the group.

The key issues that the Constitution should include are:

- What do we intend to do?
- How are we going to do it?
- How are we going to organise ourselves?

Changes can be made to this model constitution at either Annual General Meetings or Special General Meetings called for that purpose. It is also important to note that all residents on scheme are automatically members of the Residents' Association.

Where a Residents' Association has not got the Agreement of the majority of the Scheme

Don't give up - If you don't get the required majority then this may just mean residents don't understand what's meant by it or that they think that it requires them to be actively involved and they don't want to be.

Even if you cannot get a majority vote of support for a formal Residents' Association then you can still have a Residents' Group to liaise with the Scheme Manager and deal with issues locally. However, it will not be recognised formally by Housing 21.

The reason for this is if Housing 21 are to take on board views from a Residents' Association we have to be sure that such views represent the majority of residents on that scheme.

It should be remembered that even when you do not have a Residents' Association there are still opportunities to have your say through Scheme Meetings and meetings with your Scheme Manager. Or if you would like to have an input into the organisation on a wider scale, then you can contact the Strategic Operations Team – StrategicOperationsTeam@housing21.org.uk.

Keep on trying - Some Residents' Associations have taken two or three votes to achieve the majority needed. This is often due to residents not really knowing what a 'Residents' Association means and what the purpose of the Residents' Association is. If enough people want a Residents' Association, then you can work on letting other residents know why a Residents' Association is such a good idea.

This can be achieved through canvassing residents on scheme, arranging coffee mornings to promote the benefits of a Residents' Association, invite the Chair of an established Residents' Association to talk about the benefits of having one. It should also be remembered that if a scheme has new residents, then after a period of time residents on scheme may wish to consider the setting up of a Residents' Association again.

How can our Residents' Association be formally recognised by Housing 21?

Criteria for recognition as a residents' association

- The proposed residents' association should relate to a single scheme that has its own service charge.
- That the proposed RA satisfies the definition of an RA and is not e.g. a social group
- Evidence that a ballot on whether to have an RA has been taken and should follow H21 requirements:

- 51% of people eligible to vote, take part.
- 66% or above of those voting must be in favour of the motion.
- No more than a quarter vote against the motion.
- The residents' association must be properly organised, ideally using Housing 21 model constitution. **If the Housing 21 model constitution has not been used the panel will need to make additional checks below.**
- No two officers of the residents' association should live in the same household.
- The manager should ask for a signed list of Committee Members before recognition, not simply a list of names.
- Residents' associations should follow an equal opportunity policy.
- Accounting procedures should be in place for monies which may come into possession of the residents' association.
- Membership of the residents' association should be voluntary.
- The scheme manager should not be a member or accept an executive appointment in a residents' association.
- If recognition is granted the manager should agree when and how often the manager will meet representatives of the residents' association at the scheme.
- Managers should require that residents' association seek annual renewal of recognition and require a list of officers and a signed list of members each year.

When your scheme has met all the criteria to form a Residents' Association and has a signed constitution, you can apply to be formally recognized by Housing 21. To do this, you need to give your Scheme Manager a copy of the signed constitution, confirmation of ballot (see appendix 2) and resident association contact details (see appendix 3). Your Scheme Manager will then send this information through to the Strategic Operations Team via an online survey form (see Housing Toolkit). Once your Residents Association has been formally recognized by Housing 21, you will be sent a letter and a certificate, signed by your Head of Service, to confirm this.

You now have a formally recognised Residents' Association

So, your scheme now has a Residents' Association. Day to day running of the Residents' Association should be in line with the details set out in your constitution.

As a Residents' Association you now have a responsibility to ensure that you become a channel for information and feedback. Residents' Association active members have a commitment to ensure that any views residents have, or thoughts / concerns are fed through to Housing 21 so matters can be dealt with.

Early Days - The first few months of a Residents' Association's life are crucial. Once an Association is formed members often think that things will change or improve overnight and that a committee member should be able to solve their problem quickly. It is important from the start to manage these expectations. Not to do so will make the job of a Committee Member very difficult and could jeopardise the Association's credibility.

Keeping the Residents' Association Going

It is important to remember that things may not always go according to plan right from the beginning. Any new group needs time to gel and establish itself. People are often keen and enthusiastic at first but when setbacks occur, they can drift away.

Here are some golden rules to keep things on track:

- Make sure everyone knows what is going on and that people are clear about the aims and objectives of the group.
- Encourage the involvement of everyone on the committee so everyone feels able to give their view and feels respected.
- Be clear about roles and responsibilities so people know what is expected of them.

Try to make the general meetings as interesting as possible. You may wish to invite guest speakers from Housing 21 or the local community. Some schemes often follow their meetings with a coffee morning or afternoon so residents can socialize after the formal business has been completed.

You may also wish to raise funds for something the scheme could benefit from or decide to apply for a grant. All these things will help to emphasize the work of the Residents' Association on your scheme. Here are some websites which may be useful:

- fundingcentral.org.uk
- lotterygoodcauses.org.uk/funding
- comicroelief.com
- communityfoundations.org.uk
- fundingforall.org.uk
- governmentfunding.org.uk/Default.aspx
- grantnet.com

There are also often local grants available, so it is worth doing some research.

The Committee

The Committee - A team effort

A committee is a group of people who are working together towards common objectives. Being a Committee Member does come with a responsibility to ensure that you attend Committee Meetings and contribute both in terms of ideas and in sharing the workload – such as distribution of leaflets etc.

On average existing Residents' Associations have a Chair, Secretary and Treasurer plus three other Committee Members. As stated earlier it is up to each individual Residents Association as to how the Committee is made up. As stated before, you need not have a 'Chair', 'Secretary' or 'Treasurer' in the true sense of the word. Housing 21 recognise that although residents may want to get involved, they don't necessarily want to take it all on themselves. You can therefore 'job share' roles between two residents or some associations have tried rotating the role of Chair at each meeting (this is not always effective as the group can lack direction when not having one or two people leading it forward).

Although not provided here some Residents' Associations have 'codes of conduct' for its committee members such as 'no swearing', 'no talking over others' etc. This would be down to the committee as a whole to decide and introduce.

Can residents from the same household sit on the Residents' Association Committee?

No. Every resident can be a member but e.g. husband and wife, or two people from the same household cannot both be members of the committee. All members of a household are entitled to one vote each.

A restriction is when, for example, a husband and wife cannot both be signatories for the Residents' Association bank account.

If you do decide to have formal positions on your committee then the following guidelines may help.

Role of the Chair

People are often wary of taking on the role of Chair because they think it will involve lots of work. The important element of the Chair's role is to make sure things get done; not to do everything. This is an important distinction and is why good leadership skills are needed for this role so that you do not become the person that does everything but instead co-ordinates and delegates tasks.

There are two main tasks that the Chair must do:

1. Guide the association to achieve its aims.
2. Chair the meetings of the association.

Primarily, the Chair guides those present through the agenda and as such should more often assist and encourage discussion rather than lead it.

As well as this, the following may help the Chair in their role:

- Be aware of the activities and representations being made in the name of the Residents' Association and familiarise yourself with the group's constitution.
- Consult with other committee members to ensure that they are carrying out the tasks being asked of them.
- Consult with the secretary to arrange meetings and prepare an agenda.
- Conduct the business of the meeting in line with the agenda.
- Control discussion in the meeting to the item on the agenda under review and make sure that a suitable conclusion is made and all present are clear about it before moving onto the next item.
- Ensure discussion is fair and that everyone is given an opportunity to speak.
- Ensure from the outset of every meeting that residents are aware that abusive or offensive comments or behaviour will not be tolerated.
- Make sure that a record is kept of all decisions made and let all committee members know what is expected of them before the next meeting.
- Always try and set the date and time of the next meeting whilst everyone is present as this can assist in attendance levels.
- Make sure that any decisions made by the Association are representative of the views of the majority of residents.

This list is not exhaustive, neither does it mean that all these tasks need be carried out by the Chair, but the basic principles should be followed.

The role of the Chair in voting should be decided by the Committee at the formation of the Residents' Association. Namely whether the Chair holds a vote of their own and a casting vote in the event of a tie, or whether the Chair only has a vote in the event of a tie etc.

Role of the Secretary

Again, this is another role that is often seen as involving quite a lot of work. Some Residents' Associations split down some of the functions the Secretary has to spread the workload either by having a vice secretary on the Committee or having a minutes secretary who will take the minutes and distribute them afterwards. Therefore, it doesn't need be a time consuming a role.

In general, the Secretary's duties include:

- Arranging meetings – time, date, place etc.

- Consulting with the Chair in putting together the agenda* (Please see setting the agenda on page 16) and circulating it.
- Preparing all papers for the meeting including minutes of the previous meeting and all correspondence dealt with since the last meeting.
- Making a note of those present and any apologies for absence.
- Taking notes of the meeting
- Preparing formal minutes from these notes, having them agreed by the Chair and circulating to all members present or in accordance with the arrangements set out in the Residents' Associations Constitution.

* Practice on this varies

The Chair in some schemes sets the agenda, at others it's the Chair and Secretary and in some cases when it involves a Scheme meeting then the Scheme Manager is involved.

Recommended good practice would be for the Chair to invite submissions from members for the next meeting and these then be incorporated in an agenda set by the Committee at their next Committee meeting or by the Chair and Secretary. Close working with the Scheme Manager is encouraged and it may be that you could have Scheme Manager feedback/news as a permanent agenda item.

Role of the Treasurer

The treasurer has overall responsibility for the monies received and spent by the Residents' Association. The amount of work varies according to the size and activity of the Association.

Records of income and expenditure should be kept and maintained. Generally, duties include:

- Opening a bank account in the name of the Residents' Association and paying all money received into that account.
- Keeping a record of all money received and issuing receipts.
- Paying bills as agreed by the Committee and keeping a record of all expenditure.
- Maintaining an account book detailing income and expenditure and preparing at least an annual statement to the Residents' Associations AGM.
- Arranging for accounts to be verified yearly prior to the AGM. *
- Giving a financial statement about the years financial position at the AGM

People are often reluctant to stand for the role of treasurer however the work entailed is minimal and rarely requires more budgetary skill than dealing with your own household accounts. The only difference is the need to record the income and expenditure and monitor the balance of the account. In the main, most Residents' Associations on schemes do have bank accounts. They are used though mainly for small items such as stamps, tea, and coffee at meetings etc. so accounting should be relatively straightforward. Signatories – All Residents' Associations should have 3 signatories for any bank account it holds. This should be the treasurer and 2 others (none of whom should be related or reside in the same household)

* Verified Accounts

As per the constitution Housing 21 requires recognised Residents' Associations to have their accounts independently reviewed annually. The reason for this requirement is to ensure that there are mechanisms in place for accountability and is simply a precaution. In the main the verification of accounts by a person independent of the Residents' Association, the scheme and Housing 21 is sufficient.

The verifier should check the books and then indicate at the foot of the accounts that they have examined the records for the year ended 2023/4 and can confirm that the above accounts are in accordance with the records."

The accounts should then be copied and displayed on the Notice Board prior to each AGM.

Meetings

How to run effective meetings

Meetings

Please note the following is a guide for those conducting Residents' Association business. It is recognised that all Residents' Associations have their own particular methods etc. for the types of meetings held and when. Whilst this is encouraged Committee members should work on ensuring that where practice differs from that given here that it is still fair, just, and equitable and does not prevent others from being involved.

As a Residents' Association there are generally three types of meetings that you would hold:

- **Annual General Meetings (AGM)** – This should be held on the anniversary, or as near as possible to that date, of the Residents' Association's creation. Residents must be given at least 14 days' notice of an AGM.
- **Committee Meetings** – comprising of those elected at the AGM who deal with the day-to-day business of the Residents' Association.
- **General Residents' Association Meetings** – These would be open to all members of the Residents' Association, should be well publicised and be set at a time and date that will mean most residents can attend. Residents must be given at least 5 days' notice of a General Meeting.
- Occasionally you may also need to hold **Special General Meetings** – This is for those occasions where something arises which cannot wait for a general Residents' Association meeting and is of such importance to warrant a specific meeting. Residents must be given 14 days notice or as much as possible if urgent.

NOTE: Any votes on specific matters should only be taken at General Residents' Associations (or Special General Meetings where all residents must be invited to attend.)

Annual General Meetings

All Residents' Association Constitutions should have a clause stating when (a stated month is okay) the AGM will be held. The AGM is the opportunity for general members to express their feelings about the Residents' Associations performance and activities for the preceding year. It is also the time at which new Committee Officers can be elected or re-elected for the following year and where plans can be made for the Residents' Association work over the coming year.

Nomination for the Committee should be called for in the notice advertising the AGM and should be given to the Secretary no less than seven days prior to the AGM. It is up to each Residents' Association how the elections take place. However, the ballot itself should be secret. The constitution document should be reviewed and renewed and sent to the Strategic Operations Team at StrategicOperationsTeam@housing21.org.uk or addressed to the Strategic Operations Team at Tricorn House.

Example of a typical agenda for an AGM:

- | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Welcome and Introductions | 5. Secretary's Report |
| 2. Minutes of the last meeting | 6. Treasurers report |
| 3. Matters arising | 7. Election of Officers and Committee |
| 4. Chairs report | |

Reports from Committee members

The Chair, Secretary and Treasurer should give a short statement on what has been done in the previous year. In particular, the Treasurer should give an account of the finances of the group. This should cover how much money was received, what it was spent on and how much is left.

Committee Meetings

These should be held at regular intervals to ensure that all members are happy and to keep communication flowing. You should document in the constitution how frequently these meetings will take place. It is important to keep the momentum of the Residents' Association going.

General Residents' Association Meetings

Again, consideration should be given to how often the Association as a whole will meet and this can be added into your Constitution to ensure everyone is aware of what has been pledged. Members of the Residents' Association must have the opportunity to raise items for discussion at General Residents' Association meetings and the Committee must ensure that all Members are able to have their say. The Committee must be willing to vote on any matters raised by the members should it be needed.

Special General Meetings

Special General Meetings (SGM) – Sometimes also known as Extraordinary General Meetings (EGM). This type of meeting should only be called when there is a matter of importance that cannot wait for a general meeting or the AGM. Changes to the Constitution for example can only be made at the SGM or the AGM. The Constitution of the Residents' Association should give provision for how a Special General Meeting can be requested and this should be referred to prior to arranging any such meeting.

Agenda

It is often difficult to know what should be covered within a meeting. The guidance below gives some suggestions to ensure that you cover what needs to be dealt with. These guidance notes can be used for any type of meeting and adjusted accordingly.

The agenda sets out what is to be discussed and what order. If utilised it should include all items of importance. The agenda is often set by the Chair and Secretary, but this need not be the case.

Why have an agenda?

- It reminds people when and where the meeting will take place.
- It tells people what is to be discussed.
- It allows people to look up information before the meeting.
- It puts things to be discussed in a logical order.

An item can be put on the agenda for any of the following reasons:

- To give information
- To collect information
- To create a discussion
- To solve a problem / issue
- To decide on a course of action

Although a slot for **“Any Other Business”** should be given at the end of the meeting members should be encouraged to ensure that any items requiring information or feedback is given in beforehand. These can then be included as agenda items to give the committee an opportunity to find out the information and to ensure the meeting is useful.

In general, a standard agenda should take a similar form to:

Agenda	(Time)
1. Minutes of the last meeting	2.00
2. Matters Arising	2.10
3. 1st Agenda Item	2.15
4. 2nd Agenda Item	2.40
5. 3rd Agenda Item	3.00

Minutes

People often get confused over how minutes should be taken, i.e., should it be note form or word for word what was said at the meeting?

Below is a checklist, which will ensure that the minutes cover all necessary items:

- Give the full name of the Residents' Association, date, time, and place of the meeting.
- Include a list of apologies for non-attendance.
- Include a list of those who attended.
- Use concise, short, and easy to read sentences.
- Include all decisions made and the main arguments / discussion points that led to those decisions being made.
- Have a column for action which states who needs to take issues forward and action them.
- State date, time and place of next meeting.
- Try and get minutes written up and displayed as soon as possible after the meeting.
- The secretary should keep a full set of minutes on record for future reference.

Dissolution of Residents' Associations

It would be hoped that once the Residents' Association on your scheme is up and running there is no need to look at dissolving it. However, there are situations that occur where having a Residents' Association is no longer viable. For instance, there may no longer be residents of the scheme willing to act as a committee and run the Residents' Association or members of the Association may wish to no longer be represented by a formal Residents' Association. Members of the Association can make their views known to the Committee or, if necessary, the Scheme Manager. The Scheme Manager can then support those residents by speaking to the committee on their behalf. This is particularly important if a resident or residents feel that they cannot approach the Committee themselves. If it is felt that members wish to dissolve the association, then a meeting of all residents must be convened.

A Residents' Association should be dissolved in line with their constitution. Arrangements should be made for the Residents' Association's bank account to be closed and the monies distributed as set out in your constitution. As a method of good practice, it is recommended that monies from the Residents' Association's account either go towards an item for the benefit of all residents on scheme, be used towards a social activity for all residents on scheme or are donated to a charity of residents' choice. This should be subject to a vote of all residents.

Communication and Representation

Communication - The key to success

Communication between Committee Members and members of the Residents' Association in general is imperative to the success of the group. This ensures that you know what members think and they get feedback on what the Committee has done for them, in what way you have represented their views etc. There is an assortment of ways this can be achieved:

Open Meetings – should be held regularly. Existing Residents' Associations vary on how often general residents' meetings are held but on average quarterly appear to be favoured.

Newsletters – can be a useful way of letting members know what is going on. Housing 21 has a newsletter template for all Scheme Managers to use to produce a scheme newsletter; a number of Residents' Associations either have a section in this newsletter to feedback news or write their own.

Notice Board – All Residents' Associations should have access to a notice board which can be used for displaying notice and information. This should be kept up to date and include minutes of meetings. In addition, it is useful to have a list of committee members with contact details on it (particularly for larger schemes).

Posters – let people know when and where meetings are taking place, items of importance that they should know about. You could also adapt the poster idea slightly to have a Poster type bulletin with recent news.

One to Ones - People may be more willing to express a view or opinion when talking to a committee member one on one rather than in a Residents' Association meeting. It is therefore useful to make yourself available at times for other residents to approach you with questions, queries, or views.

Residents must feel that they are represented by their association and the association must be confident that they have the support and backing of the majority of residents to go about their business.

Representation

Being a Residents' Association and having a constitution is not enough. If Committee Members are to represent residents and work on improving things, then as a Residents' Association you need to know what your members think.

The list below gives you some ideas as to how this can be done:

- Hold regular Residents' Association meetings.
- Go and knock on doors and ask people for their views – you are in a unique position, living on a scheme. Not only are you more likely to know the majority of people you

need to talk to, but they are often only a stone's throw away from your own home!

- Carry out a survey – if there is a matter of importance for which you would like to have evidence to back up your views then this is a good way of achieving this. A survey can then be collated so that you can give figures as to how many agree / disagree etc.
- Chat informally with neighbours, people in the communal lounge or at the shops.
- Start a petition – if this is something all members' feels strongly about then this can be shown by providing a petition. It should be stressed that this should be a tool of last resort. Why? Because often a lot more is achieved by working together and in partnership than from opposite sides. However, if there are situations where everything has been tried and nothing has been done then a petition can prompt action.

Disputes

Members of Residents' Associations should adhere to the Constitution and follow guidelines set out in this Handbook. In particular, it is important that they work in partnership with their Scheme Manager and not against them and represent all residents on scheme.

Residents must recognise that Scheme Managers are responsible for the effective running and management of the scheme. Residents should work with the Scheme Manager to achieve the shared aim of improving the well-being of residents and scheme life. Scheme Managers must recognise that residents will have views on the way in which the scheme is run and that most policies & procedures should be applied flexibly to ensure that the correct decisions are made for a specific issue and locality and that it is important to listen to the views of residents.

Equal Opportunities

It is good practice for a Residents' Association to be open to all residents who live at that scheme and residents become members automatically when they move onto a scheme. If a Residents' Association does not have this as part of their constitution, they will not be recognised by Housing 21.

Residents' Association Membership

Where there is a Residents' Associations all residents on the scheme are members. Where paid subscriptions are asked for, these should be voluntary so that it prevents anyone from being excluded because they cannot afford the subscription. If more funds are needed Housing 21 recommend fundraising.

Extra Care Schemes

On our Extra Care schemes, it can be more difficult to fill all the positions and carry out all the duties of a Residents' Association. The roles can be quite demanding and can ask too much of residents with greater support needs. You can reduce the number of positions or have the more active members take on joint positions. The Chair or Treasurer may be able to take on the tasks of the Secretary, however, please note that the position of Chair and Treasurer should always be separate from each other.

You may wish to run it more informally and focus more on social objectives (in 2011 the Model Constitution was updated to include the facilitation of social activities as an optional objective). You may find that the Model Constitution is too prescriptive and that you would prefer to create your own simpler version, tailored to the situation on your scheme. If so, you need to submit this to your Scheme Manager who will send it on to the relevant person to be approved.

You will need to ensure that the Constitution ensures fairness and promotes the effective working of the Residents' Association otherwise it will not be approved, and your group will not be recognised by Housing 21. It must also be primarily a Residents' Association, i.e., a representative body for consultation and organisation; social objectives may be part of its remit. If you require further advice and support, please contact the Strategic Operations Team at StrategicOperationsTeam@housing21.org.uk.

CONSTITUTION OF

.....

RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

1. TITLE

The Association shall be known as “.....Resident Association.”

2. OBJECTIVE

To promote the wellbeing of the Scheme known as.....by the following means:

- i. By the establishment of a group whose views may be made known to Housing 21, local authorities and other bodies.
- ii. To work in partnership with the Scheme Manager and Housing 21 to improve the well-being of residents.
- iii. To facilitate communication between Housing 21 and residents of
- iv. To provide a means of distributing information to the residents concerning matters affecting them.
- v. To secure improvements wherever possible to amenities and facilities on the scheme.
- vi. Agreeing and arranging Social Activities for the benefit of residents on the scheme (optional, delete as appropriate)
- vii. To engage in other activities which the association may from time to time consider to be in the best interest of its members.

3. ELIGIBILITY

The Residents' Association will comply with Housing 21's equal opportunities policy and the Respect and Inclusion Charter. Membership is open to all residents of the Scheme regardless of racial origin, colour, religion, gender, marital status, sexuality, age, or disability.

Each member of the Residents' Association is entitled to a vote.

4. MEMBERSHIP

- i. Membership of the Residents' Association shall be open to all residents of the scheme and a resident shall automatically become a member of the Association upon joining a scheme.

5. THE COMMITTEE

- i. A committee shall be elected to carry out the business of the Association.
- ii. The Committee shall be made up of a Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer and general members.
- iii. The Committee shall be elected at the Annual General Meeting. Vacancies arising through the year can be filled by elections by secret ballot at general meetings.
- iv. Officers shall carry out duties given to them at general meetings.
- v. The Committee shall meet once a month / quarter and no less than times a year.
- vi. Minutes of Committee meetings should be available to all members.
- vii. One third of the Committee present at meetings shall constitute a quorum.

6. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM)

- i. There shall be an Annual General Meeting held every 12 months, in the month of at which the committee will report on its work and present a statement of accounts.
- ii. The powers and duties of existing committee members and officers shall terminate at the AGM unless they are elected for a further year.
- iii. The AGM shall elect a new committee, vote on recommendations and any amendments to the constitution.
- iv. The Secretary shall notify all members of the date, time, and place not less than 14 days before the AGM.

7. OTHER GENERAL MEETINGS

- i. There will be a general meeting open to all members every six months.
- ii. A Special (Extraordinary) General Meeting (SGM) open to all members will be held if more than 50% of members submit in writing a request for such a meeting to the Secretary or it can be called at the instigation of the Committee.
- v. The Secretary shall publicise all General Meetings at least 5 days in advance.
- vi. At the AGM or Special General Meeting one third of members shall constitute a quorum.
- vii. Voting at all meetings shall be by secret ballot and a majority decision shall prevail.
- viii. The Chairperson shall have a second, or casting vote to be exercised only in the event of a tie.

8. SUBSCRIPTIONS

- i. It is optional as to whether Residents' Associations have subscriptions. Where it is agreed to have them, they should be set at a level low and be optional.
- ii. Subscriptions should be modest and should be fixed at such levels as the Committee from time to time determine. Should it be required, fundraising activities should supplement this income.

9. ACCOUNTS

- i. The finances of the association shall be properly managed, and the treasurer shall keep adequate records of transactions.
- ii. The treasurer and an independent person (who is not a Committee Member) should check and verify accounts each year and these shall be presented by the treasurer at AGM and posted on the scheme notice board.

10. CHANGES TO CONSTITUTION

- i. The Constitution can only be altered at an AGM or at a Special (Extraordinary) General Meeting (SGM)
- ii. Any suggested changes must be handed to the Secretary 14 days before the AGM or SGM.
- iii. Changes must be agreed by 66% of the members present at the AGM or SGM

11. DISSOLUTION

- i. The Association may only be dissolved at a Special General Meeting called for that purpose and must be advertised 14 days before the meeting.
- ii. A proposal to dissolve the Association shall take effect only if agreed by 66% of the members present at the meeting.
- iii. Funds and possessions will be disposed of according to the wishes at the meeting.

12. RECOGNITION

- i. Formal Recognition by Housing 21 is given to a Residents' Association where 51% or more of people who are eligible voted, and 66% of those voting are in favour of the motion. No more than a quarter vote against the motion.

13. OTHER EXPECTATIONS

- i. Housing 21 and its officers support and encourage the creation and continuation of the Residents' Association, however the responsibility for running the association is entirely the residents.
- ii. Housing 21 will consult formally with both the Residents' Association and wider resident group on any major changes taking place on the scheme.
- iii. Votes on issues which affect the scheme will be facilitated by Housing 21 in consultation with the Residents' Association.

.....Date.....

Chairperson of Residents' Association

..... Date:.....

Secretary of Residents' Association

..... Date:.....

Treasurer of Residents' Association

..... Date:.....

Scheme Manager

To request formal recognition from Housing 21 for your Residents' Association please send the following documents to StrategicOperationsTeam@housing21.org.uk

1. Signed copy of you constitution (App.1)
2. Confirmation of Ballot (App.2)
3. Residents Association Committee Members Contact Details (App.3)

Appendix 2

Confirmation of ballot

Scheme name	
Date of vote	
Number of residents living at the scheme	
Number of residents participating in the secret ballot	
Number of residents voting for a residents' association	
Number of residents voting against having a residents' association	

Appendix 3

Residents' Association contact details

Scheme Name	
Address	
Date	

Description	Name	Flat No.	Telephone Number/ or email	Signature
Chair				
Vice Chair (if applicable)				
Secretary				
Treasurer				

Notes/Comments:

Appendix 4

Changes to roles

Description	Name of former holder position	Name of new holder of position	New flat number	Signature of new holder
Chair				
Vice Chair (if applicable)				
Secretary				
Treasurer				

Description	New telephone number	New Email address
Chair		
Vice Chair (if applicable)		
Secretary		
Treasurer		

Notes/Comments:

Appendix 5

Dissolution of Residents' Associations

Date of dissolution	
Reasons for dissolution	