

# A GUIDE TO SETTING UP AND RUNNING A RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

This guide is an introduction to residents' associations. It includes useful advice on forming a residents' association and making it successful.



# CONTENTS

What is a residents' association.....	3
Why start a residents' association.....	3
Where do I start?.....	4
Start-up and annual grants.....	5
Writing your constitution.....	5
Committee members and their roles.....	6
Setting the agenda.....	7
Minutes of meetings.....	7
Actions.....	7
Finances.....	8
Training.....	8
Advice.....	8
<b>Appendix 1:</b> Sample Constitution.....	9
<b>Appendix 2:</b> Sample Agenda.....	11
<b>Appendix 3:</b> Sample residents' association minutes.....	12
<b>Appendix 4:</b> Sample action plan template.....	13
<b>Appendix 5:</b> Sample equality and diversity policy.....	14
<b>Appendix 6:</b> Sample code of conduct.....	15



## WHAT IS A RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION?

A residents' association is a formal group of people who live in a neighbourhood and decide that they want to get together to deal with concerns that effect their local community. The group can include tenants, shared owners, leaseholders and homeowners.

## WHY START A RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION?

Groups of residents' might start a residents' association for the following reasons:

- To campaign for something positive e.g., a better play area;
- To improve services provided by Saxon Weald;
- To give the community a greater voice;
- To keep residents informed of what's happening in your neighbourhood



## WHERE DO I START?

### 1. Talk to your neighbours

Knock on peoples' doors. What are the main issues and concerns in your area? Do they think a residents' association would make a difference? What homes and areas will the residents' association cover? Don't be disappointed if people don't agree with you at first.



### 2. Get in contact with us

Contact your Housing/Scheme Manager and speak to them about forming a residents' association.

### 3. Arrange an initial meeting

Your Housing/Scheme Manager can advise you where to hold your meetings. Don't forget to be aware of cultural differences when planning your meetings and consider people with disabilities e.g., making sure the venue has wheelchair access.

### 4. Make sure everyone knows about the meeting

Saxon Weald can provide you with a template to create a simple letter to let people know about the date, time and place of the meeting. Make sure the letter mentions the issues that concern people the most in your area and that these will be discussed at the meeting. You should give everyone at least 10 days' notice of the meeting.

### 5. Hold the first meeting

Your Housing/Scheme Manager can attend your first meeting and can help you to draw up an agenda. The first meeting is a chance to talk about the issues which everyone is concerned about and to give Saxon Weald the opportunity to explain what setting up a residents' association involves.

After your first meeting, you will know if residents' want to set up a residents' association. If you do decide to go ahead, there are a number of things you will need to do. At the next few meetings, you will need to:

- ▶ choose a name for your group
- ▶ select committee members by process of a secret ballot
- ▶ formally agree a constitution for the group
- ▶ be representative of the neighbourhood or community you live in
- ▶ choose 2 or 3 key aims for your residents' association. (If you make visible changes quickly in the area you live, then other people will see that you are effective and will want to join)

It may take a few months or longer for your group to get organised. Don't worry if it takes a long time. It is best not to launch your residents' association before you're ready.



## START-UP AND ANNUAL GRANTS

Saxon Weald will provide funding to support local involvement with a start-up grant of £200. You will receive this after the Customer Engagement Manager has attended one of your meetings, received a copy of your signed constitution and you have been formally recognised by Saxon Weald as a residents' association.

You would use your grant money to pay for things such as;

- ▶ printing leaflets to advertise fundraising events
- ▶ printing posters to advertise meetings or events
- ▶ provide refreshments at meetings
- ▶ to buy items of stationary to organise paperwork for the residents' association

An annual maintenance grant of £200 is available each year. You will not be able to apply for this until 12 months after your residents' association has received its start-up grant.

Your grant will be monitored by the Regional Scheme/Housing Manager and only awarded after your residents' associations Annual General Meeting. To receive the grant, you will need to demonstrate the residents' associations successful operation in the last year.

You can find a copy of our 'Recognising and supporting residents' associations statement' in the Your Voice section on our website.

## WRITING YOUR CONSTITUTION

A constitution is a list of rules for your residents' association. It sets out the aims of your group and how it will work towards those aims.

(Please see our sample template in Appendix 1).



## COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND THEIR ROLES

The committee runs the residents' association on a day-to-day basis on behalf of the members. The members of the residents' association are Saxon Weald residents of the defined neighbourhood or area stated in your constitution.

The committee will organise meetings and will carry out any decisions made.

The membership of the committee should reflect the people it represents with regard to age, tenure, sex, ethnicity and disability wherever possible. (See appendix 5 for a sample Equality and Diversity Policy).

### Chair:

A Chair is elected to provide leadership, plan, call and chair meetings and to make sure that the committee works well together. A Chair should make sure that the residents' association keeps to its aims.

### Secretary:

A Secretary is responsible for administration and communication. They set the agenda with the Chair, take minutes of meetings, distribute the previous minutes and agendas for meetings coming up and occasionally write letters on behalf of the residents' association. Members of the residents' association can help the Secretary with their allocated tasks.

### Treasurer:

A Treasurer oversees the management of any money collected. They pay bills and keep accurate records of money received and spent. The Treasurer works with the committee to carry out financial planning for the year. They make sure that all expenditure is agreed at a minuted meeting. They should present a financial report and bank statements to the committee at every meeting. At the end of the year, they prepare the final account.

Committee members should make sure they;

- ▶ go to meetings regularly or let the Secretary know if they are not able to
- ▶ contribute to meetings
- ▶ follow the code of conduct set by the residents' association (**Appendix 6**)
- ▶ put items on the agenda
- ▶ report back when they have completed a task or gone to a meeting on behalf of the residents' association
- ▶ claim back any expenses from the Treasurer
- ▶ respect confidentiality of individuals
- ▶ don't let differences of opinion disrupt the workings of the group
- ▶ support the committee and accept majority decisions
- ▶ make sure they represent the views of members
- ▶ ask members for their views on important issues



## SETTING THE AGENDA

The Secretary and the Chair should set the agenda for each meeting, with committee members being given the opportunity to put forward topics for discussion.

Agendas make meetings more structured and effective.

A copy of the agenda with minutes of the previous meeting should be sent out at least 10 working days before meetings and should include the following;

- ▶ the name of the residents' association
- ▶ date, time and place of the meeting
- ▶ a brief description of each topic
- ▶ any other business
- ▶ minutes of the last meeting
- ▶ date, time and place of the next meeting

(Please see our sample template in Appendix 2).



## MINUTES OF MEETINGS

It is really important that the group keeps minutes of each meeting.

The Secretary is responsible for taking the minutes but someone else can take them if necessary.

The following should be taken into consideration;

- ▶ there is no need to say who said what and when, just what decisions have been made and who will carry out the action
- ▶ write up the minutes as soon as possible after the meeting whilst all details are still fresh in the memory
- ▶ keep notes until the minutes have been checked by the Chair
- ▶ circulate minutes as soon as possible after the meeting

(Please see our sample template in Appendix 3).

## ACTIONS

It's important that any actions from meetings are allocated to people and written down. This will help future meetings run more smoothly and that tasks are completed.

(Please see our sample template in Appendix 4).



## FINANCES

Although the Treasurer keeps the accounts in order, the groups' finances are the responsibility of the whole committee. There are a few basic rules when it comes to money. You must;

- ▶ keep one clear book-keeping system
- ▶ check the book-keeping on a regular basis. It's much easier to spot a mistake after a month than after a year
- ▶ keep everything in a safe place. Receipts, cheque books and records of transactions are just as important as cash
- ▶ open a suitable bank account in the name of the residents' association with three signatories
- ▶ pay any money received into the bank as soon as you get it. This means you have a record that the group actually received the money
- ▶ keep as little cash as possible and use the bank to make transactions whenever you can
- ▶ keep receipts for every amount spent, however small. If a receipt is lost or not provided, the person claiming the money back, must sign a petty cash slip which authorises the spending
- ▶ the accounts should be open and available to all members
- ▶ make sure you receive and keep bank statements monthly

## TRAINING

Saxon Weald will offer in-house training on how to set up a residents' association.

## ADVICE

TPAS are a useful place for independent advice.

Web: [www.tpas.org.uk](http://www.tpas.org.uk)

Email: [info@tpas.org.uk](mailto:info@tpas.org.uk)





# APPENDIX 1

## SAMPLE CONSTITUTION

### 1. Name

Here you state the name of your residents' association.

The name of the residents association shall be ..... residents' association.

### 2. Area

The neighbourhood areas the residents' association will cover.

..... residents' association will cover the areas of ..... and

.....

### 3. Aims

Here you list what you want your group to do e.g.

- 3.1 To promote the interests of all residents in the area and maintain good relations within the community.
- 3.2 To promote all residents' rights.
- 3.3 To promote the maintenance and improvements of housing conditions.
- 3.4 To work with Saxon Weald and other organisations for the benefit of residents.

### 4. Membership

- 4.1 Membership will be open to all Saxon Weald residents' in the community.
- 4.2 All members will have an equal vote.
- 4.3 All members should actively seek to represent the various needs of the area and must not discriminate on the grounds of nationality, political opinions, race, religious belief, gender, age, sexuality or disability.
- 4.4 Members should conduct themselves in a reasonable manner when attending meetings or any functions linked to the residents' associations.
- 4.5 Only one member per household will have a right to vote.

### 5. The committee

It's up to you to decide how many committee members you want and how often they meet but you must make sure they are fairly elected. Whatever you decide, it needs to be stated in the constitution. E.g.

- 5.1 A committee will be elected to carry out the business of the residents' association.



- 5.2 The committee will be made up of a Chair, Secretary, Treasurer and three general members.
- 5.3 There should only be one member per household.
- 5.4 The committee will be elected at the Annual General Meeting.
- 5.5 Committee members will carry out the duties given to them at the general meeting.
- 5.6 The committee will meet once a month and no less than 10 times a year.
- 5.7 Minutes of all meetings shall be made available to all members.
- 5.8 If any vacancies arise throughout the year, they can be filled by an election at the next general meeting.

## **6. Conflicts of interest**

- 6.1 Members should not expect to receive more or less favourable treatment by Saxon Weald staff because of their membership of the residents' association.
- 6.2 Members should continue to use Saxon Wealds' normal procedures for reporting repairs or making complaints.
- 6.3 Members should always disclose any personal interest that may affect or influence their approach to matters under discussion at meetings.

## **7. Confidentiality**

- 7.1 Members should respect the confidentiality of all individual residents, whether present or not and should not mention specific individual cases, which may cause embarrassment or identification of an individual.



## APPENDIX 2

### SAMPLE AGENDA

Proposed agenda for .....(Name of association)..... residents' association meeting to be held on  
.....(date)..... at .....(time)..... at .....(venue).....

#### Agenda

1. Welcome and apologies
2. Apologies for absence
3. Reasons for forming a residents' association
4. Choice of name
5. Nomination and election of committee members
  - Chair
  - Secretary
  - Treasurer
  - Other committee members
6. Adoption of a constitution
7. Identification of issues, interests or concerns
8. Any other business
9. Date of next meeting



## APPENDIX 3

### SAMPLE RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION MINUTES

Minutes of meeting held at ..... *6pm (time)* ..... on ..... *7 April 2022 (date)* ..... at ..... *Local Community Centre (venue)* .....

**Present:**

- |                       |                                       |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|
| • Mrs J      Chair    | • Mrs D      Member                   |
| • Mr L      Secretary | • Miss H     Member                   |
| • Miss A    Treasurer | • Mr C      Member                    |
| • Mr S      Member    | • Miss K     Regional Housing Manager |

**Apologies:** None

Agenda item	Key points	Action
1. Welcome and introductions	Miss A was nominated to chair the meeting. All agreed.	
2. Information about residents' associations	Miss K informed the meeting about the types of support the association would receive from Saxon Weald, providing that the guidance provided to the group was met.	
3. Constitution	Mrs J circulated copies of the constitution provided an overview and invited questions. Miss S proposed that the constitution be accepted. Miss Hales seconded the proposal. All members attending the meeting voted in favour of adopting the constitution.	All to note.
4. Election of committee	Miss K had received the following nominations: Mrs J – member Mrs L – member Ms S – member All were duly elected to become members of the association committee, with each receiving 8 votes. There were no abstentions.	
5. Final questions	There were no final questions.	
6. Next meeting	To be held at 6pm on 28th May 2022.	Mrs L to arrange a venue, notify committee members and publicise the arrangements for the next meeting.
The meeting closed at 7pm.		



## APPENDIX 4

### SAMPLE ACTION PLAN TEMPLATE

Action plan for ..... residents' association.

Year starting: .....

<b>Objectives</b>	Example: Seek to improve the local environment
<b>Activities</b>	Estate clean-up day: 19th July 2022
<b>Resources required (funding, time etc.)</b>	Leaflets to publicise (100 leaflets at a cost of £xxx) Hire of 3 skips (cost £xxx) Refreshments for volunteers (cost £xxx)
<b>Action</b>	Mrs S / Mr H
<b>Target date</b>	May 2022
<b>Expected results/ benefits</b>	Bringing at least 29 members of the community together. Engage young people so that we can seek their views about activities they want us to provide for their age group. Tidy garage area and adjacent land.



## APPENDIX 5

### SAMPLE EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY

(Name of association)

#### Equality and diversity policy

1. We aim to make our neighbourhood a better place for everyone who lives here. That means we need to listen to what people are saying in our neighbourhood. When we work with our landlord or other agencies to change things, we want to make sure we are speaking for everyone. That's why we strive to make everyone feel welcome and safe in our residents' association regardless of:

- age
- disability
- gender re-assignment
- marriage or civil partnership
- pregnancy or maternity
- race
- religion
- sex
- sexual orientation

2. We will make efforts to ensure everybody can get involved by:

- publicising all meetings
- making sure that publicity is displayed where people can see or hear it and that it comes in a format and language that they understand
- choosing meeting places carefully so that as many people as possible can get in and feel comfortable and safe to go there
- helping people to overcome obstacles to involvement, such as childcare or transport issues
- standing up against any behaviour or language that may upset or insult people or create an unwelcoming atmosphere

3. We class the following as offensive behaviour and language:

- making jokes about people because of their race, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, marital status or religion
- making assumptions or generalisations about people based on their characteristics
- describing people in a way that may be seen as an insult or a threat

4. How we will deal with offensive behaviour and language:

- we will tell the person in question that we found their behaviour or language unacceptable
- no person will be laughed at or made fun of or victimised for speaking out about language or behaviour that offends them; so that they can feel confident to challenge offensive comments and behaviour, knowing that they have the committee's and associations' support
- we will expect the person in question to apologise immediately for any offence caused
- if the person in question continues to behave in that way and does not apologise, they will be asked to leave the meeting.



# APPENDIX 6

## SAMPLE CODE OF CONDUCT

### Code of conduct for ..... residents' association.

#### 1. Information and communication

- I will take appropriate measures to keep confidential information safe
- I will not use social media or any other form of media to pass on information I read or hear in my role as a committee member
- any communication with members or the local community will be planned by the associations' committee as a whole and date and times agreed by everyone.

#### 2. Dealing with members, residents and Saxon Weald staff

I will always show consideration to other people by:

- being courteous and polite at all times
- listening to and respecting other peoples' opinions
- treating everybody fairly and equally, regardless of race, gender, Disability, cultural and religious beliefs, age and sex
- working in partnership with others, always striving for effective working relationships
- acting in an open minded, non-judgemental way.

#### 3. Conduct in meetings

Whenever attending residents' association meetings or other meetings in connection to my role as a committee member, I will:

- help to ensure that meetings run smoothly by keeping to the agenda
- attend meetings regularly and fulfil tasks assigned to me in a timely manner. If I am unable to attend meetings or deadlines I have agreed to, I will inform the Chair in advance
- not talk over other people in meetings or act in a way that undermines anyone
- try to resolve any differences of opinion I have by being open and honest.

#### 4. Conduct in carrying out the resident association's activities

- if a conflict of interest or potential conflict of interest arises, I will raise this immediately with the Chair of the committee so that a decision can be taken about my continued involvement in that particular task or project
- I will not use my position to raise personal issues
- I will be responsible for my own conduct at all times
- I will attend all training that is necessary and compulsory to my role as a committee member
- I will raise any issues that I'm unclear about, upset me or give me cause for concern with the Chair or an independent person as appropriate.

Signed: ..... Date: .....





Saxon Weald is a charitable community benefit society (reg no. 7971) and is regulated by the Regulator for Social Housing.

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