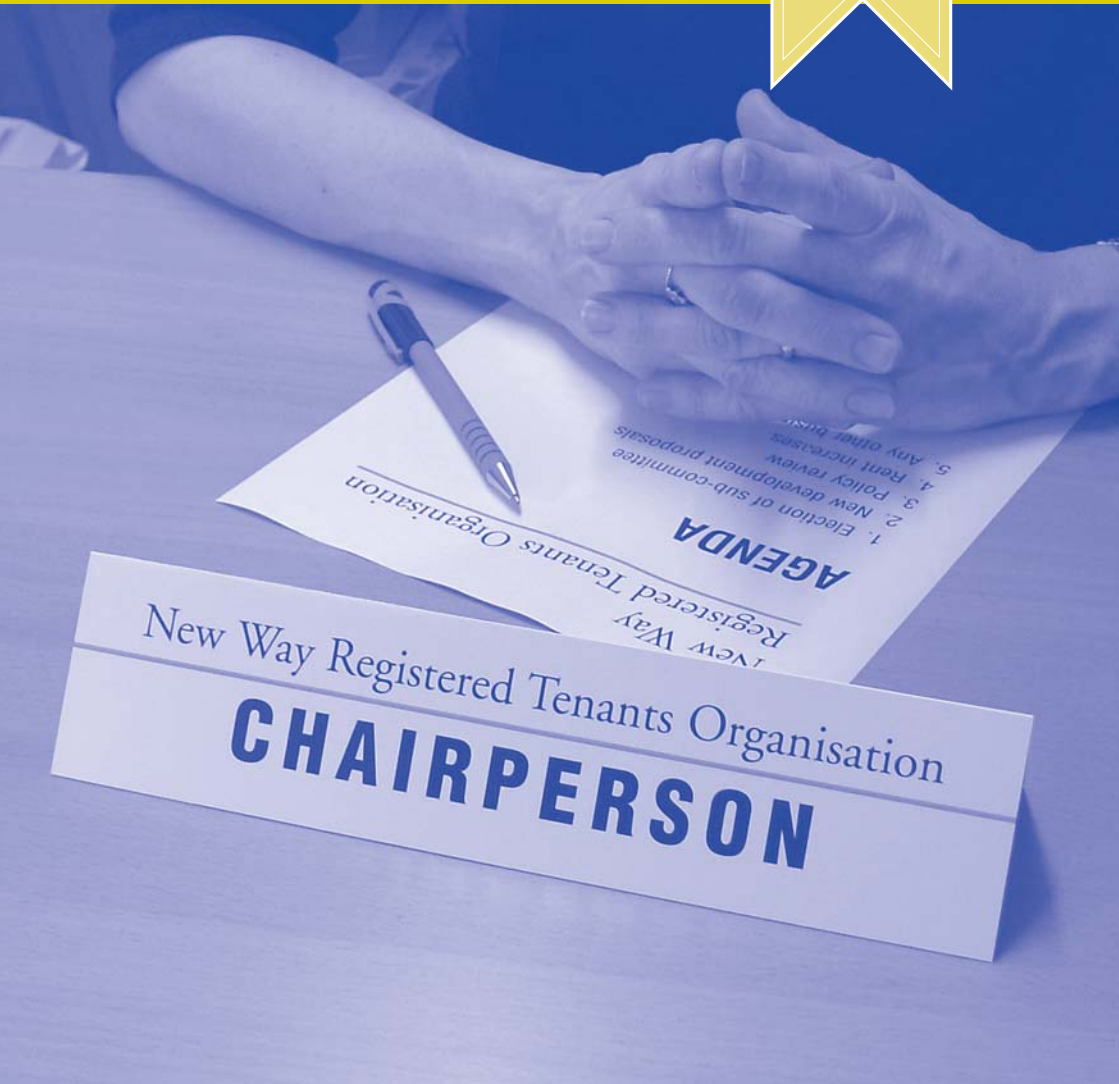


Setting up a Residents' Group



AGENDA
New Way
Registered Tenants Organisation

1. Election of sub-committee
2. New development proposals
3. Policy review
4. Rent increases
5. Any other business

New Way Registered Tenants Organisation

CHAIRPERSON



Setting up a Residents' Group

Why would I want to get involved in setting up a residents' group?

There are a lot of reasons why people living in an area join together to form a residents' group. Sometimes it is simply because they want to come together socially as a community. Other groups have been set up to campaign for improvements to their houses and/or the area they live in.

For a number of years many of these residents' groups have worked effectively with their landlord and other organisations to change and improve their area.

What is a residents' group?

Most resident groups are made up of people that live in a defined area such as a street, estate or block of housing. Residents' groups are there to represent everyone living in that area and meet and work with the landlord to discuss and organise changes within that community for the benefit of everyone that lives there. Residents' groups are also a way to get involved with how your landlord manages your area and a way to influence the decision making process within the organisation.

In the past many residents' groups were informally structured but now, under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 they have a legal right to be constituted and registered with their landlord. Once registered the landlord has a duty to consult with the group on any matters that directly affect the residents, their tenancy or the immediate environment. This includes consultation on new and reviewed policies, maintenance programmes, regeneration of the area and any plans for stock transfers.

Resident groups are operated and administered by their own members on a voluntary basis although Wishaw and District Housing Association is committed to supporting groups and can offer some financial assistance, advice and guidance as well as practical help.

How would I set up a residents' group?

If you are interested in setting up a residents' group and registering it with the Association, you need to know if there are other people in your area that will become involved and be willing to give some of their time, so talk to your neighbours. You won't need a lot of people to start with but you will need to know that there will be enough interested people to form a committee and be representative of the area.

The first step is to meet and agree what it is you want the group to do and how you want it to be organised and run. The Association can help you do this and give advice on how the group can participate in the running of the Association and the decision making process.

Getting support for a new residents' group

You will also need to plan how you are going to promote the residents group to let everyone in the area know it exists. You will also need to ensure that the group is representative of all residents and that everyone in the area agrees with the group's aims. The best way of doing this is to hold a public meeting for everyone in the area. Again the Association can help you organise the meeting, print and distribute letters and information flyers, advertise in local newspapers and/or put up publicity material such as posters in key areas.

Organising a public meeting

You will want to make sure that as many people from the area as possible can get along to the meeting so you must make sure that it is held on the most convenient date and time as well as ensuring the venue is accessible to everyone. You should also consider providing transport for the elderly or disabled residents and/or a crèche or entertainment for younger children. To make the meeting more attractive to people you may even want to organise refreshments or some form of enticement such as a prize raffle or game of bingo! Again, the Association can assist you with arranging and financing these.

The Association can also arrange for independent advice and support agencies to come along to the meeting to explain the purpose of residents' groups and what they can achieve.

What would we discuss at the public meeting?

First and foremost you need to be sure that people in your area are agreeable to a residents' group being formed to represent them and talk on their behalf in discussions with the Association. This is especially important if your group wants to be formally registered with the Association as one of the criteria for registration is that the group must be able to show that it represents its members and that decisions are made democratically.

In order to ensure that the residents' group is properly organised a committee should be elected and the terms of the group's constitution agreed. You may also want to determine if the meeting wants the group to apply for registration with the Association.

What is a committee and what does it do?

A committee is made up of people elected annually by the membership at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) or co-opted in between general meetings and every effort should be made to ensure that the committee is representative of the area. Usually a committee is made up of around 10 members but there is no set number of people that must be on the committee. However there should be enough committee members to share the workload.

The committee is overseen by the office bearers who are:

- The Chairperson or Convenor
- The Secretary
- The Treasurer

It is the job of the committee to carry out the work of the group and the committee will have delegated authority to make decisions on behalf of its membership although it should make sure that these decisions are reported back to everyone in the area on a regular basis. The committee will also have the responsibility for:

- Organising committee meetings.
- Agreeing the Constitution.
- Setting the rules for the group.
- Managing the finances of the group.
- Arranging future public meetings, especially the Annual

General Meeting which must be held every year.

- Keeping accurate minutes of all meetings.

Guidance on the role of committee members and office bearers is available from the office and the Association can arrange for training for all committee members on running the group and how to make decisions on behalf of its membership.

What is a constitution?

The Constitution is a very important document as it sets out:

- The group's main objectives and its defined geographical area of operation.
- The rules for membership and procedures for applying for membership.
- The way the Committee will operate, including how committee members are elected.
- How the business of the group will be carried out.
- How decisions will be made.
- How funds will be managed.
- How public meetings will be organised including the Annual General Meeting.
- How changes can be made to the constitution.
- The group's commitment to equal opportunities.

Again, the Association can provide guidance and assistance in drawing up a constitution.

The constitution has to be formally accepted by the membership and, if applying to the Association for registration, must be presented as part of the application.

What does registering with the association mean?

Residents' groups have a statutory right to formally register with their landlord and become a Registered Tenants Organisation (RTO). As an RTO your group will have a recognised role in the participation process and the Association has a legal obligation to:

- Invite the RTO to identify what services it feels the Association should be considering changing or improving.

- Have arrangements for obtaining and taking into account the views of the RTO.
- Notify the RTO of its intention to review or develop policies that affect the RTO's members.
- Provide the RTO with information on any proposals under consideration that affect its members.
- Provide the RTO with information on proposals about housing services, housing standards, the resident participation strategy and stock transfers.
- Give the RTO reasonable time to offer views about the proposals and consider any views submitted.
- Provide the RTO with copies of the Communities Scotland reports following the Association's inspection.

The Association will also provide administrative and financial assistance to registered groups.

By law the Association must keep a register of all residents groups formally registered with the Association which must be made publicly available.

How does a residents' group become an RTO?

The group must apply in writing to the Association to become registered and must provide a list of the office bearers and committee members and a contact name and address for the group (N.B. If the application is approved these details will be kept in a public register). You will also need to provide a copy of the group's Constitution.

The Association has a short application form to help you ensure that you have provided all the information required to allow the Association to fully consider your application. This is available from the office on request. The Association will also help your group with the registration process or will provide independent help and advice.

Does the residents' group have to be registered with the Association?

No. It will be entirely the decision of the group if it wishes to apply for registration with the Association. However becoming a Registered Tenants' Organisation (RTO) means that the group has a legal right to be consulted by the Association on issues that affects the members of the group.

Can the Association refuse to register a residents' group?

Yes, but only if the group does not meet all the criteria for registration laid out by the Scottish Executive and in particular if the group ceases to represent the interests of its membership.

If your application is refused by the Association we will inform you in writing why the application was rejected and what the group has to do meet the criteria. The Association will also offer support and assistance to the group to help it in meeting the criteria and help ensure that any future application for registration is successful.

Where the Association refuses to register a group or where it removes a group from the register the group can appeal the decision.

Where can we get more help to set up a residents' group?

The Association has a comprehensive guide to setting up a residents' group and the registration process giving advice and information on, amongst other things, arranging meetings, the role of committee members and office bearers, running a group and accessing funding. Staff at the Association are also there to provide practical help and support to anyone interested in setting up a group and will be happy to come along to meetings at your invitation.

However, there are also a number of independent organisations that can provide you with help and advice and the contact details for some these are given below:

Tenants Information Service (TIS)

Suite 335, Baltic Chambers, 50 Wellington Street

Glasgow G2 6HJ

Tel: 0141 248 1242 • Fax: 0141 221 1911

Email: enquiries@tis.org.uk

Website: www.tis.org.uk

Tenants Participation Advisory Service (TPAS)

74/78 Saltmarket, Glasgow G1 5LD

Tel: 0141 552 3633 • Fax: 0141 552 0073

Email: enquiries@tpasscotland.org.uk

Website: www.tpasscotland.org.uk

Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO)

3rd Floor, Centrum Building, Glasgow G1 3DX

Tel: 0141 221 0030 • Fax: 0141 248 8066

Email: enquiries@scvo.org.uk

Website: www.scvo.org.uk

CAVOC

112/114 Windmillhill Street, Motherwell ML1 1TA

Tel: 01698 275469 • Fax: 01698 253937

Email: cavoc@scvo.org.uk

Website: www.cavoc.org.uk

Further information

Wishaw & District Housing Association Limited

55 Kirk Road, Wishaw ML2 7BL

Tel: 01698 377200/372776 • Fax: 01698 358712

E-mail: assoc@wishawdha.org.uk

Web: www.wishawdha.org.uk



Open: Monday – Thursday: 9.00am – 4.30pm and

Friday: 9.00am – 4.00pm

Closed for lunch: 12.30pm – 1.30pm