



A Guide to starting a Residents' Group

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Introduction

The purpose of this guide is to help you through the practical steps to setting up and running an effective residents' group for your community.

Getting a residents' group going can be hard work but it is worth the effort and Thames Valley Housing Association will support you with practical help and advice.

We hope to keep this guide as up-to-date and as useful as possible. If after using it you can identify any additional information needed or changes please let us know.

Remember: Have fun while you are doing it!

Why a Residents' Group?

There are lots of reasons why people get together in a local area to form a residents' group. If you think that your estate, village or area could benefit from a residents' group the first thing you should do is find out what other local people, your potential members, see as priorities that the group should tackle. These could include:

- Campaigning for something, somewhere for the children to play or a better bus service.
- Campaigning against something, the closure of a local hospital or shop for instance.
- To increase the community feeling and for neighbours to get to know each other.
- To be more involved in the decisions taken by Thames Valley Housing Association, which affects the services that tenants, leaseholders and homeowners receive.
- To arrange for social events for local residents.

Residents' groups can be a powerful means to achieving change. Groups all over the country have succeeded in winning many achievements and have also given the area in which they live a greater sense of community.

First Steps

Below is a basic outline of the steps you can follow to get a residents' group started in your area. You may of course want to adapt it to suit your own situation.

- Get together with some neighbours who are interested and contact your Neighbourhood Services Officer (NSO) or Leasehold Officer (LSO) for support and advice.
- Decide on what issues are important to local people.
- Arrange a public meeting and publicise it to all residents. (You may want to invite your NSO or LSO).
- Hold the meeting and get volunteers to form a steering group to get the residents' group going.
- Steering group meets to work out the aims of the residents' group and to work on its constitution.
- Hold a second public meeting to agree constitution and elect committee for the group.
- Recognition will come from Thames Valley Housing Association when the constitution is adopted.
- Committee undertakes the work of the residents' group and reports back to members.

The Constitution

Your residents' group will need to have a constitution (a statement of purpose and a set of rules) so that everybody knows what its aims and objectives are and how it is going to achieve them. A model constitution is provided which you can adapt for your own use (see appendix). Changes will need to be agreed with the TVH's Resident Involvement Officer.

For your group to be recognised by Thames Valley Housing Association you will need to make sure that you include in your constitution:

- 1. Membership open to all residents in the area of your group.**
- 2. A clear statement on the groups' commitment to equal opportunities in its memberships and work.**
- 3. Your group must hold an Annual General meeting (AGM) to which all residents are invited.**
- 4. Provision for a committee to be elected at the AGM.**
- 5. A proper system of accounting must be maintained (if you start a bank account)**

If you would like more help and advice on drawing up your constitution please let us know.

Your Committee

The committee of a residents' group is responsible for steering the group, doing the day-to-day work between meetings and for making sure that its' aims are followed.

The committee will need to hold its own meetings to organise work; this is usually done on a monthly basis between general meetings. Minutes of committee meetings will need to be taken.

Here are some of the keys to a successful committee:

- Work together as a group
- Listen to each other
- Support each other
- Do what you say you will
- Abide by decisions made
- Report progress to members of the group
- Listen to what members of the group want
- Share the load with each other
- Be as representative of your membership as possible
- **Enjoy yourselves!**

A committee will usually consist of a Chairperson, a Secretary and a Treasurer. In some cases a group chooses to have other officers, which may include a Vice-Chair, a Vice-Secretary, a Press and Publicity Officer and a Fundraiser. The committee can also have a number of places for general members.

Your residents' group needs to decide which officers and how many committee members you will need; if you decide at a future date that you need more officers then you can amend your constitution accordingly.

The Chairperson

The Chairperson is the one who pulls everything together by:

- Guiding the group to make sure it achieves its aims.
- Chairing meetings of the group and committee.
- Representing residents at meetings in the community.

The Chairperson needs to:

- Know about all of the activities carried out by the group.
- Ensure that other officers are carrying out their tasks.
- Make sure that everybody had a chance to take part in the discussion at meetings.
- Prepare agenda for meetings with the secretary.
- Make sure that decisions made are clearly recorded and reported to the membership.

Chairing a meeting

One of the main roles of the Chairperson is the chairing of meetings of the group. Good chairing is the key to a successful meeting and a good meeting is one that achieves its purpose. Meetings should be conducted in a calm, fair and friendly manner.

The golden rules for a meeting are:

- **Know what you are there for, have a clear agenda.**
- **Make sure that the agenda is followed, decisions are made and a good atmosphere is maintained.**
- **Make them interesting.**
- **Make them accessible to everyone.**

As chair you will:

- **Introduce and summarise the purpose of the meeting.**
- **Introduce each agenda item with the necessary background information.**
- **Summarise the points made in discussions and encourage decision making**
- **Keep people to the point and stop them talking too long (but don't become a bully!)**
- **Give people the opportunity to participate.**

Here are some practical suggestions to help achieve success:

- **Start your meetings on time**
- **Keep to the agenda**
- **Be positive and look for solutions to problems**
- **Make sure items to be discussed are prepared properly; do you have all the information you need?**
- **Make sure decisions are clearly taken and agreed**

- **Make sure everybody has an opportunity to put their views**
- **Don't let a few people dominate**
- **Move the discussion on if people are repeating themselves**
- **Be polite and encouraging**
- **Don't put people down**
- **Don't allow people to make personal criticisms of each other**

Ground rules

If you are having a meeting when the topics to be discussed are likely to produce a conflict of views the Chair should ask the meeting to agree a set of rules at the beginning.

These could include:

- The Chairperson is the one who will be in control
- Only one person speak at a time
- Everybody agreeing to let people have their say without interruption
- No personal criticisms to be allowed
- Respect each others views
- A time limit on speakers

This is quite a formal approach but it can help to keep things calm. Remember if a meeting gets out of hand you cannot make decisions and people will not want to come again.

All committee members have a responsibility to support the Chairperson's role by abiding by the rules themselves and encouraging others to do so.

There is more information about meetings in a later section.

The Secretary

Being a secretary of a residents' group does not mean that you have to take shorthand, type or have access to specialised office equipment! Anyone who has organisational skills can be a successful secretary.

The secretary:

- Arranges meetings venues
- Lets people know when meetings are being held

- Makes written decisions made at meetings (minutes)
- Keeps copies of minutes
- Helps the Chairperson set agendas for meetings
- Receives and writes letters for the group
- Keeps a record of who has joined the residents' group

It is likely that from time to time that the secretary will need access to typing and photocopying facilities. Other members of your committee or general membership may be able to help, or alternatively Thames Valley Housing can provide the necessary support.

Some committees will have more than one Secretary where just one person cannot do the tasks involved.

The Secretary should organise the tasks not necessarily carry them all out.

Meetings

(Arranging meetings is something a Secretary becomes an expert at fairly quickly!)

Types of meetings:

As a residents' group you will usually hold the following meetings:

Committee Meetings: Attended by elected committee members to carry out the work of the group. These should be held regularly.

General Meetings: These meetings are open to all members of the group and may be open to non-members at the discretion of the committee. The committee reports to members on its work and discusses and decides on future activity.

Annual General Meeting: Held once a year and open to all residents covered by the group's area. At this meeting the Chair and Treasurer give their annual report to members and the annual committee elections are held.

Special General Meetings: These are held at the request of a minimum number of members, specified in your constitution. They are to discuss a specific issue of concern to members. All members of the group are invited to attend.

Arranging meetings

Here are some practical things to think about when you arrange a meeting:

Venue: Where are you going to hold your meeting? Is it close enough for everybody to get to? Do they know where it is? If there really is nowhere close by you will have to make arrangements to get people to a venue and provide details on its location.

Is the room or hall big enough for the amount of people that you are expecting? Check this with the person you are hiring the venue from.

Check also that they have public liability insurance cover, if they don't you may have to arrange some.

Are some of your members disabled? If so is the venue suitable? Watch out for steps at entrances and doors that are not wide enough to allow wheelchair access. It is best to visit a venue before the meeting to find out what it is like and to meet the person who will be letting you in. Try to get a telephone number for them so that you can find out what is happening if they don't turn up.

Layout: Think about how you want the chairs laid out. Rows of chairs facing a table at the front can be very formal although for a large number of people it may be the most suitable. Putting chairs in a circle or around tables can be less formal.

Think about access to the seats for the disabled and wheelchair users. Don't assume that they will be happy sitting at the back!

On a lighter note remember the light plastic chairs favoured by schools? They are extremely uncomfortable after a short period. This should help keep your meeting short and to the point!

Timing: When arranging a meeting choose a day and a time that suits as many people as possible. It might be appropriate to fix a regular day and time so that members get used to it.

Children: Some people may find it difficult to come to your meeting because they have children. Consider if you can include older children (they are after all your potential future members) or see if other members can run a crèche or activity centre at the same venue as your meeting.

Publicise your arrangements for children when advertising your meetings.

Thee Agenda

All meetings should have an agenda to make sure those attending know what is going to be discussed and to make sure that you get through the business you need to.

An example of an agenda could be:

The Park Residents' Group

Lismore Park Community Hall

27 January 2000

7.00pm to 8.30pm

Type of meeting:

General Meeting

---Agenda Topics---

- 1. Welcome**
- 2. Apologies for absence**
- 3. Minutes of the last meeting**
- 4. Matters arising**
- 5. Summer fete**
- 6. Plans for new play area**
- 7. Parking**
- 8. Any other business**
- 9. Date and time of next meeting**

Special Notes

By including the start and finish time you will be letting people know how long they will be away from home. You will need to balance the amount of items you have on your agenda against the length of time people can be at a meeting.

Think about the approximate amount of time each item should take. Items of information, which are quick, should be dealt with first and those requiring discussion and decision should come later.

Attendance Lists

By asking everyone attending your meeting to fill in an attendance list you can make sure that you do not leave anyone out when you write your up minutes and that you spell their name correctly.

An example of an attendance list is shown below:

The Tree's Residents' Group

Attendance List

Meeting: Annual General Meeting

Date & Time: 27 January 2000 – 7.00pm

Venue: Oakwood Lane Community Hall

Please add your name and address to the attendance list. It is used for two purposes. Firstly for safety reasons – we need to know who is in the building if there is any kind of emergency. Secondly it is used to ensure that everybody present is given a copy of the minutes from the meeting and any other follow up information.

Thank you

(Please print)

Name	Address

Minutes

It is the Secretary's responsibility to take minutes of all meetings. If the Secretary is unable to attend arrangements can be made for another member to take the minutes. Minutes should be an accurate impartial record of the decisions made at a meeting not a record of everything said.

Here are some handy hints for taking minutes:

- Make sure that you have a copy of the agenda so that you know what items are coming up.
- Make sure an attendance list is completed so that you know who was present at the meeting.
- Ask people to give their names before they speak if you do not know everyone there.
- Take notes during the meeting.
- If you are unsure of a decision taken ask the Chairperson to confirm it to you.
- As soon as possible after the meeting draw up your notes. By doing this your memory will still be fresh and you will be able to understand your notes.
- Write down the facts not your personal feelings.

It is easier to follow the same style for minutes as this acts as a prompt when writing them up. Below is an example of how to lay out minutes.

Minutes of The Tree's Residents' Group	ACTION
<p>General Meeting</p>	
<p>Oakwood Lane Community Hall</p>	
<p>Held 27 January 2000 – 7.00pm</p>	
<p><u>Present:</u></p>	
<p>Mrs Beech Chairperson</p>	
<p>Mr Ash Treasurer</p>	
<p>Ms Pine Secretary</p>	
<p>Mr Conifer Committee member</p>	
<p>Mrs Elm Committee member</p>	
<p>Mrs Housing Neighbourhood Co-ordinator, Thames Valley Housing</p>	
<p>PC Bobby Community Police Officer</p>	
<p>Mrs Holly Tree Road</p>	
<p>Mr Cedar Oakwood Lane</p>	
<p>1. Welcome</p>	
<p>Mrs Beech, Chair, welcomed members to the meeting and introduced Mrs Housing from Thames Valley Housing and PC Bobby the local police beat officer.</p>	
<p>2. Apologies for absence</p>	
<p>Apologies for absence were received from Mrs Spruce, Oakwood Lane</p>	
<p>3. Minutes of the last meeting</p>	
<p>Mrs beech proposed that the minutes of the last meeting be agreed as a true record and this was agreed by the meeting.</p>	
<p>4. Matters arising</p>	
<p>Refuse collection – Mr Conifer confirmed that he had contacted the council and the problem had been resolved.</p>	
<p>5. Summer Fair</p>	
<p>It was agreed that the summer fair would be held on 1 August at Conker School. Ms Pine would phone the school to make the booking. It was agreed to invite the police, fire brigade, St. John's Ambulance, Boy Scouts and Girl Guides.</p>	
<p>7. Any other Business</p>	<p>Ms. Pine</p>
<p>Mr Cedar asked if members knew when Thames Valley Housing would be clearing the communal back yards' as they needed weed spraying and the rubbish collecting. It was agreed that the group would contact the association, as they had not been informed when this would be carried out.</p>	<p>Mrs Beech</p>

<p>8.Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>It was agreed that the next meeting would be on Thursday 1 April at 7.00pm at Oakwood Lane School.</p> <p>The meeting closed at 8.30pm</p>	<p>Ms Pine</p>
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Who should minutes go to?

After you have written up your minutes go through them with the chairperson and make any necessary changes. Once you have done this the final version of the minutes can be distributed.

Copies of the minutes are usually distributed as follows:

Committee Meetings:

- All committee members
- Resident Involvement Team
- Any others who attended or who need to take action following the meeting

Copies of committee meeting minutes should be available to all members of the residents’ group upon request.

General Meetings:

- All members of the group
- Resident Involvement Team TVHA
- Any others who attended or who need to take action following the meeting

Annual General Meetings:

- All members of the residents’ group
- Resident Involvement Team TVHA
- Any others who attended or who need to take action following the meeting

Special General Meetings:

- All members of the group

- Resident Involvement Team TVHA
- Any others who attended or who need to take action following the meeting

You can distribute your minutes in any way that is suitable for your group as long as your members agree to the method chosen.

A master copy of all the minutes should be kept by the Secretary in date order and must be made available to members to refer to upon request.

The Treasurer

To become a Treasurer you do not have to be a financial whiz kid. Keeping accounts for a residents' group can be very simple. However if you do have a financial whiz kid amongst your members make the most of them!

The Treasurer is responsible for keeping records of the finances of the group. The main duties include:

- Opening a bank, building society or post office account in the name of the group.
- Paying money received into the account.
- Drawing money or cheques from the account.
- Preparing statements for the committee and Annual General Meeting.
- Keeping petty cash for the group and a petty cash account book for the day-to-day expenditure.

It is important that the Treasurer remembers that it is their responsibility for keeping accounts and informing people of the groups' financial situation. It is the committee's responsibility to decide how the money is spent; however no money should be spent by the group without the knowledge of the Treasurer.

Opening a Bank Account

All Residents' Groups should have a bank, building society or post office account. The Treasurer should only keep a small amount of cash in a locked petty cash tin.

The Group will preferably need an account, which provides regular statements and a cheque book.

Some banks and building societies have special accounts for small community groups like residents' group. They will usually require two or three signatures on cheques. The signatories will be committee members, one of which should be the Treasurer.

Cheque signatories should not be relatives or members of the same household. It is good practice for committee members to be unrelated but if you do find that both partners in a couple are elected as members of your committee, make sure that only one can sign cheques (in this way the group can avoid accusations of dodgy dealings!).

Keeping Records

The finances of your Residents' Group are very important and you will need to make sure that all your financial transactions that you carry out are in accordance with the Constitution. All the money that is raised by the group must be used to further the aims of the group and so you will have to have an accounting system, which clearly shows where and how money has been received and spent.

Records of income and expenditure should be kept in a ledger book. This should be updated as soon as money has been received or spent.

From the ledger you will be able to check the transactions that have been carried out with your bank statement and prepare financial reports for your Committee and Annual General Meeting. On the following two pages there are some examples for laying out a payment and receipts ledger.

Financial reporting to members:

The Treasurer should report to the committee on the state of the group's funds. Each year at the Annual General Meeting the Treasurer is responsible for presenting audited accounts to the members. "Auditing" is when the records are formally checked to make sure that they are accurate. Somebody who is independent should carry this out.

Don't forget if you need help in setting up your books, Thames Valley Housing Association's Resident Involvement Team can advise you.

The Tree's Resident's Group		
Income and Expenditure Account		
For the period 1 January to 31 December 2005		
Income	£	£
Grant received T.V.H.A		150.00
Fund raising income		130.00
Total		280.00
Expenditure		
Photocopying		4.00
Postage		2.00
Travel		6.00
		12.00
Excess of income over expenditure		268.00

The Tree's Residents' Group

Balance Sheet

As at 31 December 2005

Current Assets

Cash at building society 250.00

Amounts owed to the group 10.00

Petty Cash 8.00

268.00

Less: amounts owed by the Group 12.00

Total 256.00

Represented by

Surplus 256.00

General Members

The number of general members of a committee is set in the constitution of the group and will depend on the overall numbers of members. General members are vital to the success of the committee.

The role of the general member is to:

- Attend committee meetings and participate in decisions
- Support officers of the committee and their work
- Take on specific tasks on behalf of the committee, for example publicity and fundraising

By sharing the workload amongst all of its members more can be achieved and nobody feels like they are doing everything themselves. If you are a general member don't forget to volunteer to help, sometimes others don't like asking directly!

Representing your community

Every resident's group is only as strong as its members. It is important to get as many members as possible from the area you represent and from the different groups of people you represent. This means working to encourage younger people, older people, families and people from different ethnic groups to join in your tenants' group.

Getting people involved is hard work but it is worth it!

A residents' group represent the views of its community not just those of its committee or a small number of members. Thames Valley Housing Association recognises that to be successful in their communities their members should not be limited to just tenants and leaseholders of the housing association but be open to all residents in an area.

To make sure that you are representing your community you will need to ask members for their views on a regular basis, you can do this through:

- General and Annual General Meetings
- A residents newsletter
- Surveys

It is important that members have an opportunity to set the priorities for the group at the AGM each year and that the committee keeps them informed of the progress made through meetings or newsletters.

Your group is open to everybody to join in but how easy is it for them to get involved? It is easy to fall into the trap of excluding people unintentionally. Here are some things to consider when reviewing if your group will represent the views of your community:

- Are your meeting times and venues suitable for all members?
- Do you always have time for new members who may not know as much as you?
- Find out about your members needs; transport, childcare, access and sight/hearing.
- Make sure that everyone is able to understand the information that you send out (do you need to arrange for information to be translated into languages other than English, or do you need to make taped or Braille information available?).

Getting your group on the local map

A representative residents' group is a valuable resource for local councillors, community police etc. Make sure that they know about your group and that you listen to and represent your community. If appropriate invite them to your general or committee meetings or send them copies of your newsletter to keep them informed about your work.

Building positive relationships and networks in your local area can help with the success of your group.

Newsletters

Newsletters enable you to tell your members what you have been doing and invite responses, for example through a letters page. A newsletter can also be used to give out information that you think your members will find interesting or useful.

When planning your newsletter make sure that different people from your group are involved in contributing ideas and articles

Your group should decide how often you would like to produce a newsletter, how you will get it copied and distributed, roughly how long it will be and how much it will cost. **Thames Valley Housing Association will be able to help you with some of these practicalities.**

Here are some useful tips for writing articles for your newsletter:

- Keep your articles short, simple and to the point.
- Don't use jargon.
- Don't say things that will offend people.
- Imagine who you are writing the article for.
- Write the article as though you were speaking to someone, this will make it sound friendlier.
- Read your article out loud when you have finished, this will help you to check that you have written it correctly.

Once you have enough articles, you will need to lay out the newsletter. This involves deciding what goes where, depending on important each article is, the amount of space you have and where illustrations and cartoons will go.

Some useful tips for laying out newsletters are:

- Write articles in columns, like a newspaper.
- Draw a thin line between columns.
- Use different sizes of print to add interest.
- Break up the text with headings, sub-headings and cartoons.
- Don't cram your newsletter so full of text and pictures that it looks fussy.

Recognition of Residents' Groups

Thames Valley Housing Association values and supports the work of recognised residents' groups.

In order to ensure recognition Thames Valley Housing Association asks that resident groups:

- Are open to all their residents of their area to join.
- Are able to demonstrate that they have encouraged membership from all residents in their area.
- Have a committee elected annually by its members.
- Have a constitution that conforms in essence to the model constitution provided by Thames Valley Housing Association.
- Are able to demonstrate a commitment to equal opportunities through its work.
- Keep and up-to-date membership list.
- Have a proper system of accounting and have account independently audited annually. We can do this for you using our finance team.

Residents' groups are independent organisations and can choose not to become recognised if they wish. However if you are not formally recognised by TVHA or lose recognition you may lose all support from TVHA in terms of resources and officer time

Help from Thames Valley Housing Association

Thames Valley Housing Association actively encourages residents to form residents' group to give everyone a voice in important decisions made about their homes and neighbourhoods.

Thames Valley Housing Association can help your group in the following ways:

- Paying for your childcare while you attend meetings
- Finding somewhere for you to meet
- We can help with your travelling cost

Also:

Grants

The amount of grant to start up and annually maintain a residents group varies according to the size of the estate. Current amounts are as follows:

- Estates of 10 – 20 units = £50 ;
- Estates of 20 to 50 units = £100;
- Estates of 50 – 100 units = £150;
- Estates of 100 – 150 = £200;
- Estates larger than 150 get maximum of £250.

Advice and Training

We employ a Resident Involvement Officer who is responsible for giving residents groups help and advice. The Resident Involvement Officer can:

- Give advice about starting a group
- Advise on setting up financial records
- Provide, or arrange for, training your group
- Come to a meeting
- Answer your questions

Many groups find that training can help give the confidence and skills needed to do a variety of things, including: running meetings, producing newsletter, making a committee work as a team and campaigning. If your group would like training, contact the Thames Valley Housing Association Resident Involvement Team.

Getting in touch with other Residents' Groups

When you are starting it can be very useful to meet other groups to find out how they started up, the problems they experienced and how they overcame them. If you would like to meet with other groups in your area, for help and advice, or just to get together, share ideas and campaign on common problems, contact the Resident Involvement Officer.

A voice in Link Up

This is your newsletter and the editorial team are always keen to publish letters and articles written by residents and residents groups.

Perhaps your group wants advice, or would like to tell other residents about all the things it has achieved – if so use the newsletter as your voice!

Environmental Improvement Grants

If you get involved you will want to see results. Residents Groups have the opportunity to bid for the Environmental Improvement Grants. Environmental Improvement Grants are available for a wide range of works, for example, getting some landscaping done or enhancing a community facility. Contact your Neighbourhood Co-ordinator for more information.

This is not an exhaustive list; support will be offered to suit the needs of each group.

Meetings with the Housing Association

Your group can request that a member of staff from Thames Valley Housing attends your meetings from time to time. Before inviting a member of staff your group should:

- Make sure you are inviting the right person to answer your questions.
- Tell staff why you are inviting them so that they can prepare for the meeting.
- Make sure that you are not inviting a member of staff just to deal with a list of personal complaints; these are best dealt with by your Neighbourhood Services Officer or Leasehold Services Officer.
- Be respectful to members of staff when they attend meetings and encourage your membership from getting in to aggressive or abusive situations. Any staff member who feels that the meeting is becoming aggressive may leave at anytime.

Don't forget Link Up! The Newsletter team are always keen to receive information, letters and contributions.

You can contact the Communications team by:

Post – at the address below or email – info@tvha.com –and put newsletter article in the subject line.

Where to go for Help

Don't worry if you feel that you don't know everything – there is plenty of help around from a number of people and organisations. They may be able to help in providing advice, support and publications.

Resident Involvement Team

Thames Valley Housing

Premier House

52 London Road

Twickenham

Middlesex

TW1 3RP

0800 358 7767

XXX Residents' Association

CONSTITUTION

Aims:

1. To promote the interests of all its members in XXXX on matters concerning housing, the environment, and the social and community life of the area.
2. To assist residents to have a greater say over the services they receive.
3. To contribute in the setting of standards for service delivery and monitor performance against these standards.

4. To promote and develop the relationship between the Residents Association and the Council, Housing Association, or any other agency, with the aim of promoting greater harmony.
5. To actively campaign to involve all members of the community, to oppose all forms of racism and discrimination, and to strive for good relations among all members of the community.
6. The Association shall be non-political.

Membership:

1. Anyone living in XXXXX can be a member, regardless of gender, nationality, race, sexuality, disability or religion, or tenure type.
2. Membership is free.
3. All voting members must be at least 16 years of age.
4. Membership will end if you move out of XXXXXXXX.
5. Members must conduct themselves in a reasonable manner at meetings and when they act on behalf of the Association. The chair has the right to exclude a member who is conducting themselves in an unreasonable way. Any member excluded will have the right of appeal to a joint meeting with the committee of the Residents Association and officers from Thames Valley Housing.
6. All members shall have an equal vote, except the chair who has no vote except in the in the event of a tie where he/she will have the casting vote.

The Committee:

1. A committee shall be elected by all residents of XXXXXXXX present at the meeting to carry out the business of the Association.
2. The committee shall have a minimum of 3? and a maximum of 7? members which must include a Chairperson, Secretary and Treasurer.
3. Committee members can serve a maximum of 1 years.
4. Committee vacancies arising during the year can be filled by an election at a general meeting. The committee may fill any vacancies arising amongst officers of the committee until the next general meeting.

5. The committee shall meet no less than 4 times per year – these meetings are open to all members.
6. There must be at least three of the committee members present for any decisions to be made at a committee meeting.
7. Committee members can be voted off if they have not attended three consecutive meetings without good reason and have not sent apologies.
8. Committee members must declare any interest they may have in the topic under discussion and the committee will decide if they need to forfeit their right to vote on this occasion.
9. Minutes of committee meetings shall be kept and made available to all members and Thames Valley Housing on request.
10. The officers of the committee shall carry out the will of the General meeting.

Finance:

1. All money raised on or on behalf of the Association is to be used only to further the aims of the Association.
2. The treasurer shall open a bank account in the name of the Association.
3. All expenditure shall be agreed and controlled by the committee. Receipts should be acquired for all expenditure over one pound.
4. No officer shall sign a blank cheque – all cheques to be filled in before signatures are added.
5. Once a year, the accounts will be audited and presented to the Annual General Meeting of the group. The Auditors will be either Thames Valley Housing or Bank Employee.
6. All correspondence of the group including the bank statement, shall be addressed to the secretary.
7. Cheque signatories will be the three officers of the committee except where any of the officers are related in anyway. In which case a nominated signatory from the wider group will be a signatory.

8. All cheques and instructions to the Association's bankers shall require two of the agreed signatures.
9. The accounts shall be made available to Thames Valley Housing and to members at the AGM.

Annual General Meetings (AGM):

1. The secretary will notify all members of the date of the meeting not less than twenty-one days before the AGM.
2. There shall be an Annual General Meeting held each year. The committee shall report on its work, present a statement of accounts and resign.
3. The AGM shall be held at a suitable venue to accommodate as many members as possible.
4. Officers are eligible to stand for re-election.
5. The AGM shall elect the officers and committee for next year.
6. The AGM shall vote on recommendations and any amendments to the constitution.
7. Voting at the AGM shall be by show of hands.

Other General Meetings:

1. A Special General Meeting open to all members will be held if ten or more members submit a request for such a meeting to the secretary. The secretary shall arrange for the meeting to take place within twenty-eight days.
2. The secretary will publicise all general meetings at least fourteen days in advance.
3. If the secretary fails to convene the meeting, members may convene it themselves.

Quorum:

1. No General Meeting or Annual General Meeting shall take place if less than 10% of members are present or seven members, which ever is the greater.

2. Where the Quorum for a General Meeting is not met, the meeting may be reconvened within 28 days at which time the meeting will proceed regardless of whether the Quorum has been met.
3. No committee meeting shall take place if less than half of the committee is present.

Changes to the constitution:

1. The constitution can only be altered at an AGM or at a special general meeting called for that purpose.
2. Any suggested changes to the constitution must be handed to the secretary 14 days before the AGM.
3. Changes to the constitution must be agreed by two thirds of the members present at the meeting.

Dissolution:

1. The Association may only be dissolved at an AGM or a Special General Meeting called for that purpose. The proposal for dissolution must be advertised at least fourteen days before the meeting.
2. A proposal to dissolve the Association shall take effect only if agreed by two thirds of the members present at the meeting.
3. Any assets (financial or otherwise) remaining after the payment of all debts and liabilities shall be distributed to other properly constituted residents associations or groups with charitable aims approved by Thames Valley Housing.
4. On dissolution, any documents belonging to the group shall be disposed of in a manner agreed by that meeting.

Decision-making:

1. The chair shall allow issues to be properly debated which are on the agenda, but should seek the agreement of the meeting for lengthy discussion on items that have not been allowed, for example, a matter arising from a minute, an item of any other business. The chair has the right to cut short contributions which unnecessarily prolong debate or because the meeting will not have enough time for other items on the agenda.
2. Any member may make a proposal. In order for it to be voted on by other members it must be seconded by someone else.

3. Only members present at the meeting may vote.
4. No member shall have more than one vote.
5. When there is no clear consensus on a proposal, the chair shall take a vote at the end of the discussion. Any voting member may call for a vote on a proposal if the chair fails to do so.
6. Votes take place by a show of hands and the chair gives the result. Any voting member may query the result, and if this happens, the chair shall take the vote again and ask another members to recount.
7. In the event of an equal vote, the Chair shall have the casting vote.

Conduct during meetings:

1. Members shall at all times conduct themselves in a reasonable manner. The Association will not tolerate behaviour that is aggressive, threatening, insulting or discriminating on the grounds of race, gender, age, disability or sexual orientation. The Chair may exclude members behaving in this way.
2. Members may only speak through the chair.
3. Members may only interrupt another speaker to raise a point of information through the chair.
4. Meetings will end at the time agreed by the committee unless all those present agree to extend the meeting.
5. The Secretary shall deal with all correspondence.
6. Complaints about the conduct of members or the actions of the Residents Association can be made to the committee and to the appropriate officer of the Thames Valley Housing.
7. Any member who brings the group into disrepute or refuses to comply with the constitution shall be expelled on a majority vote of the full committee. Any such member will have the right to appeal within 28 days of the expulsion. The appeal shall be heard by the membership at a Special General Meeting called for that purpose.
8. The Secretary shall deal with all correspondence.
9. Agendas will be distributed to the membership at least four days before a meeting, where possible. Items for the agenda should be forwarded to the Secretary and Chair seven days before the meeting, where possible.

10. Minutes will be distributed to the membership 7 days after a meeting, where possible.

Equal Opportunities Statement:

All people in the community should be able to participate in and / or be represented by the Association. No person should suffer disadvantage or discrimination by reason of their race, colour, ethnic or national origin, or because of their religion, gender, sexual orientation, appearance, age, disability or marital status.

In order to achieve these aims:

1. The Association will actively seek to recruit members that reflect the diversity of the community we represent.
2. We will ensure that our choice of dates, times and venues for meetings does not exclude any particular section of the community.
3. Behaviour and language that is discriminatory will not be tolerated in Association meetings or at any time where members are representing the Association.

This constitution was adopted at a committee meeting of the

XXXXXXX Residents Association on

Signed Print name

Chairperson

Secretary

Treasurer