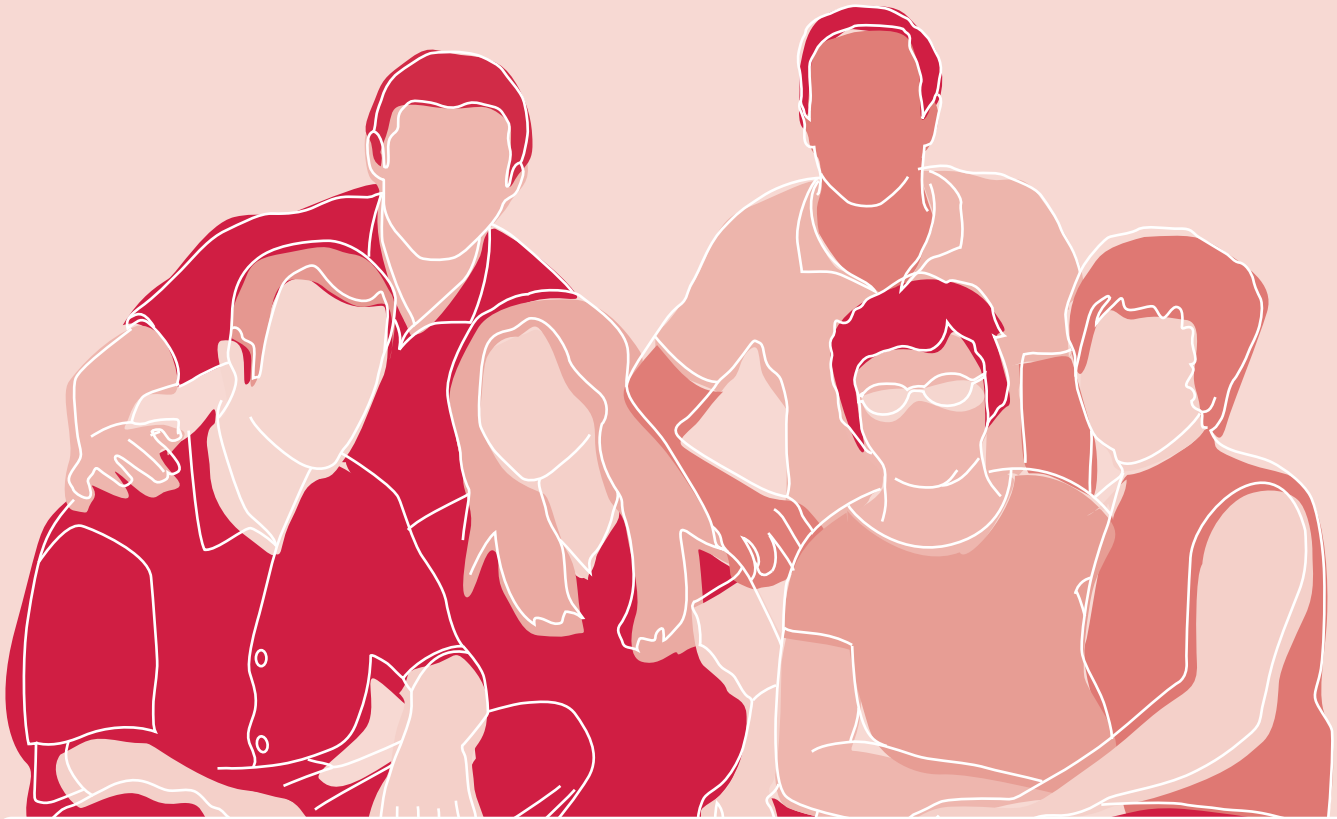


Aberdeen City Council's guide to starting a tenants' association



Contents

Introduction	2
Where to Get Help?	3 - 4
Why have a Tenants' Group or Association?	5
How to Start	6
Guidance for Public Meetings	7 - 9
Membership of Tenants' Groups and Associations	10
General information for Committees	11
Membership of Committees	12 - 13
Committee Language	14
Useful Tips for Committees	15
What is a Constitution?	16
Sample Constitution	17 - 18
Working Together	19
General Guidance for Meetings	20 - 21
Sample Minutes	22 - 23
Tips for Writing a Letter	24
Sample Letter	25
Guidance on Funding	26
Treasurer's Guidance and Information	27
Income and Expenditure Sheet	28
Improving Knowledge and Skills	29
Notes	30



Introduction

Welcome to Aberdeen City Council's Guide to Starting a Tenants' Association.

At Aberdeen City Council we have a commitment to consult with you, our tenants, and allow you to take part in the decision making process. We do this by asking you to get involved and share your views in a variety of ways.

We have a responsibility to provide support to all Registered Tenants' Organisations (RTOs) and Tenants' Groups or Associations in the City that are registered with us.

The type of support provided will depend on the stage of development each group is at. Support may include some of the following;

- Staff time – including Tenant Participation Officers' (TPOs) attendance at meetings;

- Administrative assistance – including help to organise meetings or help with minute taking and typing;
- Training and attendance at conferences and seminars;
- Financial support - Start-Up Grants and annual grants are available to groups

As part of the ongoing support we provide to groups we have developed this publication. We hope this booklet will help individuals or groups that may be thinking about setting up a group or association or newly formed groups by giving practical advice and information and useful hints and tips.

Where to Get Help?

Your local Area Office is your first point of contact for making suggestions or discussing services.

Remember, local contact will keep the Area Office in touch with local problems.

Whether you have already started, are just getting started, or are interested in starting a group or association, Aberdeen City Council's Tenant Participation Officers (TPOs) are available to get help or advice from.

They can be contacted at the Area Offices detailed below or can be emailed at **tpo@aberdeencity.gov.uk**

Area Offices

Neighbourhood Services North

Mastrick Customer Access Point
Spey Road
Mastrick
Aberdeen
AB16 6SH
Tel: 01224 788503

Areas Covered

Middleton, Denmore, Balgownie, Bridge of Don, Dyce, Stoneywood, Bucksburn, Kepplehills, Kingswells, South Sheddocksley, Sheddocksley, Heathryfold, Logie, Northfield, Middlefield, Cummings Park, Mastrick and Summerhill

Neighbourhood Services Central

Tillydrone Housing Office
Formartine Road
Tillydrone
Aberdeen
AB24 2RW
Tel: 01224 489500

Tillydrone, Old Aberdeen, Seaton, Linkfield, Sunnybank, Frogghall, Pittodrie, Gallowgate, King Street, Urquhart Road, Castlegate, Woodside, Hilton, Rosehill, Stockethill, Cornhill, Ashgrove, Westburn, Berryden, Raeden, Rosemount, Rosemount Square, George Street, Fountainhall, Bon Accord and Central

Neighbourhood Services South

St Nicholas House
Broad Street
Aberdeen
AB10 1BY
Tel: 01224 522000

Hazelhead, Peterculter, Cults, Craigiebuckler, Mannofield, Garthdee/Kaimhill, Ruthrieston, Rubislaw, Union Grove, Ferryhill, West Balnagask, Torry, East Balnagask, Kincorth, Altens and Cove



Other sources of help

As well as the TPOs, there are other staff and local people who might be able to help you.

Check to see if there are any of the following in your area:

- Community learning and development workers;
- Other tenants' and residents' groups or associations;
- Other community groups such as community projects, community forums or neighbourhood watch.

They may be able to give you advice and tell you about halls or meeting rooms, which you can make use of. They may have members who would be interested in joining the group you are hoping to set up.

There is also independent advice available from the following organisations;

- Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) Scotland

- Tenants Information Service (TIS)
- TIGHRA
- Chartered Institute of Housing

These organisations can provide advice and information about setting up a tenants' group or association. They should provide documents similar to this one. These organisations can also help to provide training and information on conferences and seminars that may be useful to you.

Contact details for these organisations are available on page 29.

Tenants not with Aberdeen City Council

If you are a tenant of a housing association or housing co-operative you should contact your own landlord.

Why have a Tenants' Group or Association?

Many people are keen to improve the area they live in. It is certain that you aren't alone in your concern and that other people living around you share your anxiety. This is the key to setting up a tenants' group or association. When people get together to share their worries and work together, they can help make positive changes happen in their area.

The types of work done by tenants' groups or associations comes under three broad headings:

- **Providing services**, including running community centres or other services like a community café, running groups or events, for example, pensioner day trips and gala days;
- **Advising and representing individual tenants**, a tenants' group or association can help a great deal because the committees are likely to be well known among local people. Often they can help simply by giving information on what to do, who to see or what the law says. They can step in more formally and meet with the landlord to get an individual tenant's problem sorted out.
- **Acting together to campaign for change**. Where problems affect large numbers of tenants in an area or where changes are being discussed that affect the whole community, it makes sense for everyone concerned to act together. That way the views will be stronger and more representative.

While the three areas of work mentioned above are broadly different, very few groups do only one thing. Even if they started just for one purpose, most groups broaden their area of interest to reflect the needs of local tenants as a whole. Equally, sometimes tenants feel the need to concentrate on one activity such as a playgroup or anti-dampness action group, and not get torn between different aims by forming a broad based tenants' group or association.

There is no formula for success. Groups and associations are very important as a way of creating local organisations able to respond to the very varied needs of people in an area.

The main reasons tenants' groups or associations are formed are because tenants feel:

- Their area is neglected;
- Their landlord is ignoring them and they want to gain a voice;
- They care about what happens in their area or street and want to talk to others who feel the same;
- They want to have a say in what happens in their area including how services are provided.

It is surprising what local people acting together can do. By starting a tenants' group or association you can help to create the following benefits for your area:

- Lifting community spirit;
- More people, more voice. A group of people coming together and speaking for their area is often stronger than an individual;
- Common problems are easier to identify and with more people to discuss the problems, there is extra brainpower to help solve them;
- People have different experience and knowledge to share;
- Individuals involved can gain personal satisfaction, learn more skills and grow in confidence;
- It gives local authorities and other organisations someone to contact and consult about the services they provide, discuss issues and plan for the future;
- Provide information on tenants' rights.

How to Start

Tenants' groups or associations usually start with just a handful of people. Sometimes the idea may come from one individual who is keen to do something for the area and who searches out other people interested in joining. You don't need a large army of supporters to get off the ground – most tenants' groups and associations have humble beginnings.

Why should people join?

You may be full of enthusiasm, but other people might take a bit more convincing as to why they should give up their time to join a tenants' group or association.

Right from the start it is worth thinking about what you hope to do - someone is bound to ask that question and you need an answer.

You probably have your own ideas of the sorts of things tenants' groups or associations can do. Other people will also have ideas. You should find out their ideas and try to involve them too.

Remember some people will want to give their views and opinions but some people may not want to get involved at all. Whatever the response you should always be friendly and respectful.

Contacting other tenants

The first step is to contact other tenants in the neighbourhood to see who else is interested. It is a good idea to do this informally at first - put up a notice in local shops, community centres and libraries, asking anyone interested to get in touch. Ask other people involved in established community groups if anyone is interested in the idea of a tenants' group or association. Go round the houses around you, you can either put leaflets or questionnaires through their doors or knock and ask if other people are interested in joining. Take note of the name, address and phone number of anyone who is.

If there is some interest - even if it's just half a dozen people - then get everyone together to discuss the idea. An informal meeting in someone's house is the usual approach at this stage but if this is not suitable use a local community centre or other public building such as a library or school.

At this first meeting you should start to discuss:

- Do people have ideas about what the tenants' group or association should do?
- What are the main issues affecting the area?
- In which specific areas or street is the problem worst?
- Do the people involved have skills the group can use? For example, is someone experienced in chairing meetings?
- Do you need help with anything? If you do need help, where can you get it from?
- What do you want to achieve?
- What happens next?

It may seem that people want the tenants' group or association to do lots of different things but at this stage it's better to have too many ideas than too few.

It's not necessary to decide immediately what the group or association is going to concentrate on. If you involve a lot of people you might be able to do all the things you think of. If you have ideas you can discuss them with other people and get them interested in helping.

The next steps are all to do with putting these ideas over to a wider public and involving more local people. If you are going to claim that the tenants' group or association represents the views of tenants in your area you must give everyone the chance to have a say and take part in the group or association. This is usually done by organising a public meeting.

Guidance for Public Meetings

This is when you will be able to find out just how much interest there is in setting up a new tenants' group or association and you will officially launch it. Most public meetings are used to elect a committee however some areas may want to have a series of public meetings before this is done.

By now you will have an idea of the issues facing your area and how the local people you have contacted feel. By having a public meeting you should be able to firm up those views with a wider section of the community and establish the reasons the group or association is being set up.

This is a very important meeting so make sure you plan ahead. Preparation is the best way to approach any meeting so whenever possible allow plenty of time to prepare. You can use the checklist on the next page to help you with planning the public meeting. This list can be used for planning any meeting or event.

Your area will have a designated Tenant Participation Officer or TPO who is responsible for supporting all tenants' groups and associations. Your TPO will be able to provide valuable advice, information and possibly resources. If you have not involved your area TPO before this stage you may want to get in touch now (contact details for the TPOs can be found on page 3).

Planning for your public meeting

Who will be organising the meeting?

Get volunteers to help prepare for the public meeting and to help out on the day. Has anyone had previous experience? Think about an agenda for the meeting. Think about costs associated with the meeting and who will pay for them.

What do you want to say at the public meeting?

You should explain what you have been doing so far, what your ideas are about the new group or association, what you hope to do next, and how people can help.

There is no need for people to make long-winded speeches. A couple of those already involved can quickly outline what has been happening so far.

You might want to invite someone from outside, for instance to explain what other tenants' groups or associations have done, or if there is a very specific problem in your area to talk about that. Again your area TPO or community learning and development worker can help with this. Choose outside speakers carefully and explain to them what you want to achieve before the meeting.

What do you want to achieve?

This could include getting agreement for setting up a group or association and holding an election for the committee, what your tenants' group or association will be doing, or you might simply want to give everyone another chance to say what they feel is their main concern.

Who do you want to get to the public meeting?

Do you just want local tenants or residents? Do you also want to get along representation of the other community groups or the local Councillor, MSP or MP? Do you want to attract local young people as well as adults? Do you want pensioners and parents with young children? The different people involved will affect the decisions about where and when you hold the public meeting and whether to provide facilities such as a crèche.

Do you want to have support from your landlord?

At this stage it is important to work with officers of Aberdeen City Council to determine how and when they can help out. Contact your area TPO for advice.

It can be nerve-racking speaking at your first public meeting. Keep in mind that not many people have had this experience. People are usually very supportive to whoever is organising or speaking because they can guess how difficult it can be. It soon becomes second nature and preparation really is the key.

This sounds like a lot of work, but it's not too difficult if you organise things properly. The next page is a step-by-step guide for arranging a public meeting.

Public Meeting Checklist

1 What will the purpose of the meeting will be?	✓
2 Who will organise the meeting?	✓
3 Who will pay?	✓
4 Think about any speakers or other people you want to come and check if they are available to attend.	✓
5 Agree on a date when the meeting will be held. Check the dates of public, local and school holidays and any other existing event that may clash with your meeting – pay particular attention to sports fixtures!	✓
6 Agree on a time for the meeting. Think about who you want to attend when setting the time, remember most people work full-time so evenings can often be best. Some people will not want to come out too late at night.	✓
7 Agree on a venue. The more local the better. School halls or community centres are ideal. Make sure the seating/layout is suitable and there are no problems with the heating, noise or other distractions. If the room is very large and you are expecting a lot of people, you might want to arrange for a public address (PA) system to make sure you can be heard.	✓
8 Will you be providing a crèche? This can allow more people to attend, but it can be costly. Any contacts you have made may be able to advise on suitability and the booking of a crèche.	✓
9 Publicity and advertising. It's a good idea to give at least 14 days notice of a public meeting to local people – especially if there is to be an election. Leaflets and posters are a good way to get the information out. Agree who will distribute the leaflets/posters and where they will be displayed. Be clear about the date, time, place, purpose, and any other information, for example, crèche facilities, transport and refreshments available. You could also see if there is a local newsletter, newspaper or radio station to publicise the meeting.	✓
10 Finalise the agenda with the person chairing the meeting (guidance on agendas can be found on page 20). Check any motions to be proposed at the meeting. Decide on someone to take notes recording the meeting (guidance on minute taking can be found on page 21 and 22). Decide who will record the names and addresses of everyone who attends the meeting (this is important for the following meeting).	✓
11 On the day - get there early and make sure the room is open and the furniture laid out the way you want it (formally or informally). If it's difficult to find the room, put up signs showing the way (with the janitor's permission!). Have paper, pens, blutak and sellotape handy.	✓
12 Be friendly, respectful and welcoming. Make sure you introduce everyone, as some people may not know each other.	✓

During the Meeting

The public meeting should start with an introduction on how the idea for starting a tenants' group or association started, then move on to any guest speakers (which should not take long) and follow with a general discussion.

Remember that everyone is entitled to his or her opinions and these should be respected. Everyone at the meeting should feel that they are being listened to and have an equal say in what the tenants' group or association's business should be.

The public election of the committee should then take place. Make sure that a note is taken of all those who have been nominated and by whom, who seconded each nomination and how many votes they received. It's also a good idea to take a note of the contact details for committee members including email addresses.

The new committee should check all the motions proposed at the meeting and agree them. A note of any actions that have been agreed should be kept - this will include who has been given the action as a task to carry out.

The issues you take up or the projects the group or association agrees to work on should reflect the interests of the people involved and the people who attended the meeting's views.

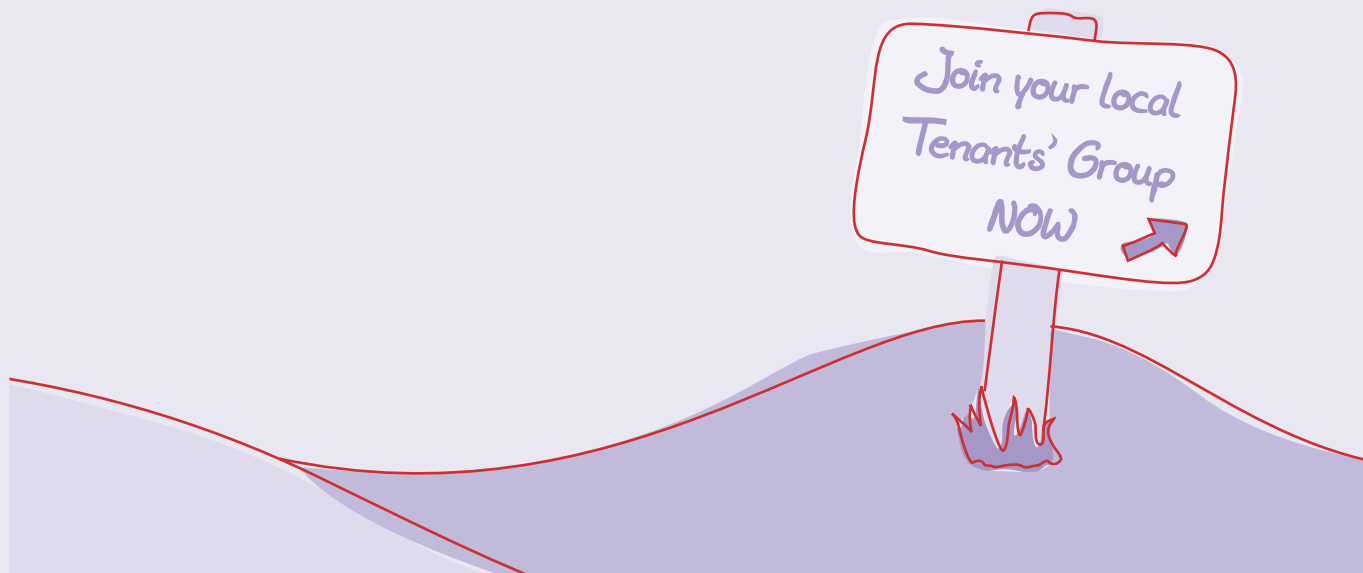
Try to end the meeting on a positive note - after all being new, there are a tremendous number of things you can look forward to doing.

Don't be disappointed if the attendance at the meeting is poor. Although you are enthusiastic and have been working hard to organise the meeting many people will be very uncertain about whether or not to join in. It often takes a long time for people to become confident enough to come out to meetings and take part. You won't change that feeling overnight, but having a public meeting and/or setting up a tenants' group or association can be the first step in building the feeling that someone cares about the area.

After the Meeting

If the public meeting goes well and you have agreed to set up a group or association and elected a committee, you need to get organised. Decisions will need to be made about various things such as who can join, membership of the group or association, how you will keep people informed about what's going on and how things are paid for.

Your tenants' group or association will also need to adopt a constitution.



Membership of Tenants' Groups or Associations

The strength of any community group lies in local people being involved. The greatest danger for any group is that they become a closed body where new members feel uncomfortable and unwelcome. Your group should try to make sure everyone has the chance to be represented. This should be reflected in the decisions you take on membership of the group.

Membership of your tenants' group or association should be open to all regardless of nationality, politics, race, colour, sexuality or religion.

Some groups and associations don't have formal membership but open their meeting to any resident in the area who is interested in becoming involved. Other groups adopt more formal arrangements. The preferences of the group or association regarding membership should be clearly stated in the constitution that is adopted.

Some of the things you may want to think about while considering membership are as follows:

- Who can become a member? Can any tenant or resident in the area join?

- Are you happy to have associate members, for example non-voting friends and well-wishers of the group?

- Will there be a membership fee to join?

Following your public meeting you should already have a list of those interested in being members.

Recruiting members is not as difficult as people think. The best advertisement for recruiting members is for the group to be seen to be active and getting results.

Other ways of interesting and involving people in your group are petitions and surveys. Try to get as many people as possible involved in things like distributing leaflets, helping with fund-raising or running social events.

General Information for Committees

What is a committee and what is its purpose?

A committee is a group of people chosen by others to regularly meet together to carry out the tenants' group or association's work. They will have delegated powers to make decisions on behalf of the tenants' group or association and they are responsible for reporting back. You will have to make some decisions on how to organise things to make sure that your group works effectively and fairly.

The committee organise all committee meetings, meetings of the tenants' group or association, Annual General Meetings (AGMs) and Extraordinary General Meetings (EGMs) and should carry out the decisions made at these meetings as set out in the minutes.

The committee should try to make sure that they are representative of all members of their group or association and of the communities they are representing. Particular attention should be paid to making sure there is representation from all sections of the community, for example, men, women, young people, older people, people of ethnic minority, people with disabilities and of any sexual orientation.

Committee members should only become involved if they are interested in, and committed to the aims of the group or association and they have the time to volunteer.

Size of committee/number of people

This will depend on what you agree is the right size for your area. However, most tenants' group or association committees are made up of at least four office-bearers and a number of general members.

You may wish to have someone from every block of flats, for instance, if there were 16 blocks this would mean 16 committee members would need to be nominated.

It's worth remembering that a large committee can be a difficult place to be heard, however a small committee could be excluding people who want to be involved. It's up to your committee to decide what is best for you. Your TPO can also provide advice.

You should consider how to involve people who want to be a part of the group or association at the very start.



Membership of Committees

Committees are made up of a number of office-bearers and general members that are elected at a public meeting or by the committee itself once it has been chosen.

There are usually at least four office-bearers on a committee but this will depend on what you decided is best for your group or association.

The number of general members on a committee should also be set out in your constitution.

Office-Bearers

The most commonly used titles of office-bearers are as follows:

- Chairperson (sometimes known as convenor)
- Vice Chair (sometimes know as vice-convenor)
- Secretary
- Treasurer

In some committees there are also the following office-bearers:

- Minute secretary
- General member (there can be a number of these – this will depend on your constitution)

The roles and responsibilities of the committee are set out below

Chairperson/Convenor

The job of the chairperson is to guide the association to achieve its aims and to chair meetings. It does not mean that only the chairperson speaks. In fact a good chairperson hardly ever speaks but makes sure everyone else gets equal opportunities. Sometimes a chairperson will be useful when they offer a summing up of a particular heavy or complicated debate. They do so to make sure that everyone is clear about what is being discussed and what possible choices can be made.

A chairperson may also be approached as a spokesperson for a group. This needs to be handled carefully and responsibly.

The chairperson should keep in touch with all the other committee members especially the secretary and treasurer.

Vice-Chair/Vice-Convenor

The vice-chair stands in for the chairperson as deputy. If the chairperson is absent, it falls to the vice-chair to take the chairperson's role.

Secretary

The secretary will normally deal with all correspondence received and sent, reporting this at each meeting. If replies are needed the secretary is responsible for producing and sending these. It is important that the secretary's name, address and contact number is widely available.

Along with the chairperson the secretary will prepare for the next meeting by making sure a record of the last meeting is given to everyone and an agenda is prepared.

In many committees the secretary will also book the room and make other arrangements.

Committee members or other members will approach the secretary or chairperson to have things included on the agenda. The chairperson and secretary should agree the agenda between them.

Unless someone else is appointed to do this, the secretary will make notes of each meeting so that a record is kept. See page 21 for guidance on how to take a good minute

Keeping a record of meetings and what was discussed is useful in that it prevents going over the same things, reminds people what they were supposed to do and provides information to anyone who has missed the meeting.

Minute-Secretary

A minute-secretary records what has happened at a meeting. The records or notes of a meeting are called "minutes". Not every committee has a minute-secretary, but rely on the secretary to do this job. See page 21 for ideas about how to take a good minute

If a minute-secretary is appointed then the secretary has less tasks. The minute-secretary will write up the minutes and distribute them either before a meeting (which most people prefer because they have a chance to read them in advance) or at start of the next meeting.

Treasurer

The treasurer will handle the group or association's accounts giving a report on the balance each month.

The treasurer, on behalf of the association, should:

- Open a bank account for the association;
- Pay money received into the bank, keep a record of money received and issue receipts;
- Pay bills and keep a record of money spent;
- Keep petty cash and a petty cash account book for day-to-day expenditure;
- Keep an account book of all money going in and out of the organisation, prepare statements for the committee when requested, and for the AGM

Please see pages 26, 27 and 28 for further guidance and information for treasurers that may be useful.

General Committee Members

General committee members may not have a special title or task however they all have a role to play in supporting and helping the office-bearers. Relying on the office-bearers alone to do all the work of the group or association is unfair.

For most general committee members, their biggest role is to attend meetings and contribute to the discussion. General members should always feel that they have an equal right to put forward ideas or make suggestions at committee meetings.

General committee members aware of the difficulties in chairing a meeting will do their best to help the chairperson by co-operating and setting a good example.

If someone has made notes or minutes for everyone, then a good general committee member will read them and turn up to the next meeting with them.

General committee members can also help by getting their agenda items to the chairperson or secretary in good time.

Committee Language

Agenda	List of items for discussion at a meeting
Office-Bearers	People who have been chosen to carry out a particular role for an association.
Constitution	The written statements of what an organisation's objectives are, its membership, committee and meeting procedures.
Minutes	Notes or record of what took place at a meeting.
A.O.B. or A.O.C.B	This often turns up at the bottom of agendas and simply means A ny O ther B usiness or A ny O ther C ompetent B usiness.
AGM	A nnual G eneral M eeting. Usually a public meeting held yearly at which a committee will give a report of its work and a new committee is chosen (stated in the constitution).
EGM	E xtraordinary G eneral M eeting. Usually a public meeting that is called at an irregular time and is held to discuss an issue that has arisen which requires the input of the entire membership and is too serious or urgent to wait until the next AGM.
Sub-Committee	A smaller group of people appointed by a committee to carry out a particular task. Decide beforehand whether a sub-committee can take decisions by itself.
Quorum	The number of people needed to be present to allow decisions to be made.
Inquorate	Not enough people are present at a meeting, so decisions cannot be made.
D.O.N.M.	D ate of N ext M eeting. Last item on the Agenda.



Useful Tips for Committees

- It's a good idea to buy diaries for each committee member at the beginning of the year;
- Each member should have easy access to all paperwork, for example, minutes, agendas and reports;
- Each member should take along a notebook, paper and pens;
- The chairperson needs a clock or watch to keep track of time;
- The secretary should have access to headed paper, envelopes and stamps and a computer or printing services;
- The treasurer should have access to a moneybox, a bankbook, a chequebook, an accounts book, a petty cash book, a receipt book and should have a folder to keep receipts in;
- Find out the dates of the public and bank holidays, the local school holidays and any other pre-arranged meetings or events (for example gala days) that may clash with your meetings;
- Set dates for your committee and group or association meetings a few months in advance. This makes it easier to book rooms and to make sure that guest speakers and Aberdeen City Council officers and elected members can attend;
- After setting dates for your meeting, pre-book the venue a few months in advance;
- Make use of notice boards to advertise meetings;
- Make your leaflets, posters and flyers as easy to read and eye catching as possible. Make sure the information you supply including the venue date and time for the meeting is clear and concise.

What is a Constitution?

A constitution is a written list of statements which gives your association:-

1) **Aims or Purpose**

For example, to improve the social and environmental conditions of the street.

2) **How you are organised**

For example, how many office-bearers will the group have? How many committee members will there be? How often will meetings be held?

Producing a constitution will take some time and this should not be rushed. A number of meetings will likely be held to discuss the content of the constitution and to get agreement of all members for the final version.

A constitution gives your group something to fall back on in times of crisis and is evidence of your existence when applying for funding or grants.

To help you produce a constitution we have included a sample constitution on the next page. This can be used without changes or as a basis for your new constitution. Your area TPO is also available to discuss this further.

Your area TPO should be provided with a copy of your constitution for their records. If you update and make changes to your constitution you should send this version to your TPO.

Why have a constitution?

A constitution is a document that sets out the rules and is useful for the following reasons:

- To make sure the aims or purpose of the group or association are clear and agreed by its members;
- To provide mechanisms for making decisions and settling disputes;
- To give credibility with funders such as Aberdeen City Council;
- To make sure an organisation is democratic and accountable to its members.

What happens if there is no constitution?

- The group cannot raise money;
- There is no proof you are a legitimate group;
- No rules often mean disputes cannot be settled.

Sample Constitution

01. Name

The name of the group or association shall be the

02. Boundaries

The area covered by the group or association shall be

03. Aims

The aims of the group or association will be to protect and advance the interests of all Aberdeen City Council tenants or other residents in the area covered by the group or association, on matters concerning housing and the environment, and the social and community life of the area.

04. Membership

Membership of the group or association shall be open to all Aberdeen City Council tenants and residents regardless of nationality, politics, race, colour, sexuality or religion.

1. All persons living in the area covered by the group or association, who shall be called full members.
2. Any friends, well-wishers, members of community or service delivery organisations based in the group or association's area, or any person from outside the area covered by the group or associations wishing to support the aims of the group or associations shall be called associate members (non-voting).
3. All voting members must be at least 16 years of age.
4. Membership shall be charged at the agreed rate of £ per month.

05. Committee

- a) A committee shall be elected to carry out the business of the group or association.
- b) The committee shall be made up of a chairperson, a vice-chairperson, a secretary, a treasurer and general members.
- c) The committee shall be elected at the Annual General Meeting of the group or association.
- d) The committee may co-opt an officer-bearer or general member if a vacancy arises.
- e) The quorum for any meeting of the committee shall be members.

06. Annual General Meeting

- a) The committee shall arrange an Annual General Meeting in of every year, at which the committee shall make a report of its work, present a statement of the accounts and then resign.
- b) The Annual General Meeting shall elect a new committee, vote on recommendations and make any amendments to the constitution.
- c) The Secretary shall notify all members of the group or association of the date of the Annual General Meeting not less than 14 days in advance.

07. General Meetings

- a) There shall be a General Meeting open to all members every weeks.
- b) Extraordinary General Meetings open to all group or association members can be held for purposes of altering the constitution and for considering any matter, which the committee may decide should be referred to the members in general. The secretary or chair shall call such a meeting at the request of not less than committee members or at the written request of not less than group or association members.
- c) The secretary shall arrange for such a meeting to take place within 14 days.
- d) In all cases the secretary shall publicise general meetings at least 14 days in advance, by advertisement, leaflets or posters.

cont.

08. Quorum

No vote or decision shall be taken at a General Meeting if less than group or association members are present

09. Finance

- a) The group or association shall have the power to raise funds legally and receive contributions in money or kind on behalf of the association.
- b) All monies raised by or on behalf of the group or association shall be applied to further the object of the group or association and for no other purpose.
- c) The treasurer shall keep proper accounts of the finances of the group or association and shall open a mandated bank account in the name of the group or association. The mandate shall authorise three members of the committee, one of whom shall be the treasurer, to sign cheques on behalf of the group or association. All cheques must be signed by not less than two of the three signatories.
- d) The accounts shall be audited at least once a year and shall be available for inspection by members of the group or association on request and at the Annual General Meeting.

10. Alterations to the Constitution

- a) The constitution may only be altered at the Annual General Meeting or at an Extraordinary General Meeting.
- b) Any proposed changes to the constitution must be received in writing by the secretary at least 14 days before the General Meeting.
- c) Any alteration to the constitution shall require the approval of a two-third majority of those present and voting at the General Meeting at which it is discussed.

11. Dissolution of the Association

- a) An Extraordinary General Meeting called for that purpose and advertised at least 14 days in advance, may only dissolve the group or association.
- b) The proposal to dissolve the group or association shall only take effect if agreed by two-thirds of the members present at the meeting.
- c) All funds, documents and possessions belonging and relating to the group or association shall be disposed of according to the wishes of the meeting.

This Constitution was adopted as the Constitution of the group or association at an Extraordinary General Meeting held on....

Signed Chairperson

Signed Vice Chairperson

Signed Secretary

Signed Treasurer

NB: You should always keep an up to date copy of this constitution in a safe place and send a copy to your area TPO.

Working Together

No matter how you are organised, whether a committee, action group, forum on some other form, it is important that people feel they are working together.

When people come together it is to produce co-operative effort.

Some of the following points will be useful to consider.

Accountable

How will you keep people informed about what you are doing?

Representative

Have people been given good and fair opportunity to get involved? Is there equal opportunity? Does your group or association represent the views of all people in the area?

Discussion/listening

Is there more talking than listening? Are things fully discussed? Was I helpful or unhelpful at meetings?

Consensus

Do we reach agreement through discussion?

Confidence

Do meetings allow people to be confident and contribute?

General Guidance for Meetings

Attendance Lists

It is a good idea to keep a list of all those who attend a meeting. This can be done in the minutes or on a separate sheet. You may want to ask those who attended to write down their name, address and phone number for future contact.

Welcome and Introduction

Any meeting should start off with a welcome from the chairperson or organiser of the meeting.

The welcome for a public meeting should include a brief introduction such as the following:

"Good evening, thanks for coming, we have called this meeting to see if there is interest in setting up a tenants' group or association."

A general welcome could start off with the following:

"Good afternoon and welcome to the meeting of ABC Tenants' Association."

The welcome would continue with a note of fire safety procedures including any information about the alarm or where the fire exits are. You will need to tell people where the toilets and other facilities are.

It would be a good idea before business is discussed to go around the room and ask those present to introduce themselves, as some people will not know who others are.

Agendas

An agenda sets out what the meeting is going to discuss. It usually looks like a menu and is meant to help stop conversations going all over the place without beginnings or ends. Agendas depend entirely on what you want to achieve at a meeting and what people want to discuss or talk about. Usually you will put important things at the start of the agenda.

The sample agenda below gives some idea as to how an agenda should look. It clearly sets out the order to what is going to be discussed at the meeting and who will be leading each discussion. This is only an example of an agenda you may want yours to be different.

Sample Agenda

- 1 Welcome and Introduction
- 2 Apologies
- 3 Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising
- 4 Guest Speaker, Mrs A. BCDEF
– Community Mediation Officer
- 5 Update on Parking Consultation
- 6 AOB
- 7 Date of next meeting

Taking minutes

Minutes should be

- Authentic;
- Complete;
- Concise;
- Free from ambiguity;
- Easily read.

The minutes should show

- The items discussed at the meeting including the background to an issue; the discussion on an issue; the action to be taken and who will do this;
- Who was at the meeting and who was absent, but has sent their apologies;
- Any other information given (reports can be attached to minutes);
- The date of the next meeting.

The style of minutes depends on who is doing them and what they are comfortable with. There is no one correct way to write minutes.

Read the agenda in advance so you know which subjects will be discussed. Before the meeting list the agenda items on separate sheets of paper or with big spaces between items. You can take notes on each agenda item as they come up.

Minutes do not record every word that was said and who said it. Names are rarely needed except for recording who was there and apologies from people who didn't attend. Names will be used when referring to people who have been invited and to record their agreement/disagreement and information given. If someone is given a task to carry out, it is known as an "action". The name of the person would be written beside the action.

You will need the co-operation of others, so be assertive. Get someone to help if you need to – don't be afraid to ask for an issue to be clarified during the meeting so you can minute it appropriately or ask for someone else who attended the meeting to look over your draft minute when it's prepared.

Two samples of minutes follow:

Sample 1 - shows what is known as action minutes. There is an action column on the right side of the page. The initials of the person who's been allocated the tasks are written alongside it.

This style of minutes makes it easy for people to check what they have to do before the next meeting.

Sample 2 - is a method of minute taking which is a variation of action minutes.

However you decide to produce your minutes the contents will be the same. The specific information recorded in your minutes will have your perspective on what was discussed or agreed, so when writing the minutes consider what wording to use. The wording will have to be such that everyone will accept that the minute is accurate.

Sample 1 - Minutes

ABC Residents' Association Minutes of Public Meeting on 17 November 2003

Present: Mr Hall, Mrs Johnston, Mr Henderson, Mrs Connelly, Mr Brough, Mrs Dawling, Mrs Burza, Mrs Bell, Ms Simpson, Ms Y Zee.

In Attendance: Councillor A. Smith, Aberdeen City Council
Councillor B. Jones, Aberdeen City Council

Item	Action
1. Introduction	
1.1 Ms Y Zee (ACC) welcomed everyone to the meeting and outlined the background to what was to be discussed.	
1.2 It was explained that the main reason for getting together had been concern for the lack of facilities for children in the area.	
1.3 It was agreed that forming an association could put pressure on agencies and businesses to listen to what the community is saying.	
1.4 Individual complaints would still be dealt with by staff and local councillors but issues concerning the neighbourhood would be considered by an association.	
2. Issues	
2.1 There was general discussion regarding other issues in the area such as parking, derelict buildings and swimming pool passes for the disabled.	
3. Meetings	
3.1 It was agreed that there would be a meeting on Monday 21 November to agree a constitution.	
3.2 An inaugural meeting will be held on Thursday 24 November at 7.30pm to adopt the constitution and to elect a committee.	ALL
3.3 A poster will be distributed to shops, the post office and library, and a letter will be sent inviting all the people who have been at a previous meeting	YZ

Sample 2 - Minutes

DEF Tenants' Group Committee Meeting - 14.6.2003

Present: Mr Hall, Mrs Johnston, Mr Henderson, Mrs Connelly, Mr Brough, Mrs Dawling, Mrs Burza, Mrs Bell, Ms Simpson, Mr Jones.

In Attendance: Councillor A. Smith, Aberdeen City Council
Councillor B. Jones, Aberdeen City Council

1. Apologies

Ms I McNab, Mr Waterson, Councillor D. Green.

2. Running a Committee Meeting

Mr Jones explained the agenda and pointed out that by following it everyone will be able to participate. It was explained that people becoming involved in a Residents' Association for the first time have a lot of learning and information to pick up on.

3. Election of Office-Bearers

Chair: Mrs Johnston - proposed by Mr Hall, seconded by Mr Henderson.

Vice-Chair: Mrs Connelly - proposed by Mrs Johnston, seconded by Mr Hall.

Treasurer: Mr Brough - proposed by Mrs Dowling, seconded by Mrs Burza.

Secretary: The Committee agreed to approach Ms I McNab to find out whether she would take on this position. Action Councillor A. Smith.

4. Update on Issues to Date

1. Re-litter - Steering group had written to City Council (Environmental Health). Letter from Mr D Rae advising that someone from Environmental Health and from Contract Services would be in touch with us re. litter campaign and placement of bin.

5. Road Works / Planned Improvements

On a question from the Committee Councillor Smith advised that ACC was undertaking a road investigation re. roundabout at ASDA and DEF Road with a view to planning improvements.

7. Date of Next Meeting

It was agreed that the next meeting of the group will be on Monday 9 July at 7.00pm.

Tips for Writing a Letter

You may be required to write letter on behalf of your tenants' group or association. Here are some tips to help you get it right.

Helpful Hints

- Sit at a table;
- Make yourself comfortable;
- Use scrap paper when you are writing your first draft – you can copy it out later when you're happy with what you want to say;
- Have a dictionary at hand, in case you want to check spelling, or if you want a better/stronger word. A thesaurus is also useful.

Writing your first draft

- 1** Think - who, why, what, how.

Who am I writing to? Why am I writing this letter? What do I need to say? What action would you like to see happen as a result of this letter. How am I going to say it?

- 2** Once you have worked out why you are writing the letter, this can help set the style and tone. Remember the opening paragraph sets the scene;
- 3** Don't bother about your best writing – you can re-write the letter more neatly or type it once you are happy with the final version;
- 4** Use headed paper or put your name and address at the top wherever possible;
- 5** If you are responding to a letter you have received and there is a reference number, quote it underneath the date and address;
- 6** Put a reference title under the salutation line - see sample letter on page 25;
- 7** Put in dates of phone calls and letters - if appropriate;
- 8** Keep to the facts;
- 9** Don't use abbreviations;
- 10** Discuss your final draft with others - family - people you trust or have a list of contacts you can use, e.g. your area TPO or local community learning and development worker.

Finalising the letter

Finally, ask yourself if you are saying what you want to say? When you are happy with the content and have finished the letter, keep a copy and post it off.

Sample Letter

ABC Tenants' Association
c/o Mrs I Johnston
16 DEF Road
Aberdeen
AB00 0AB

01224 123456

Aberdeen City Council
Neighbourhood Services North
Mastrick Access Point
Spey Road
Aberdeen
AB16 6SH

7/7/07

Dear Sir / Madam

RE: Parking Problems

I write to you on behalf of the ABC Tenants' Association to request your attendance at our next meeting which will be held on Thursday 20th July 2007 at 6pm in the Valley Community Centre.

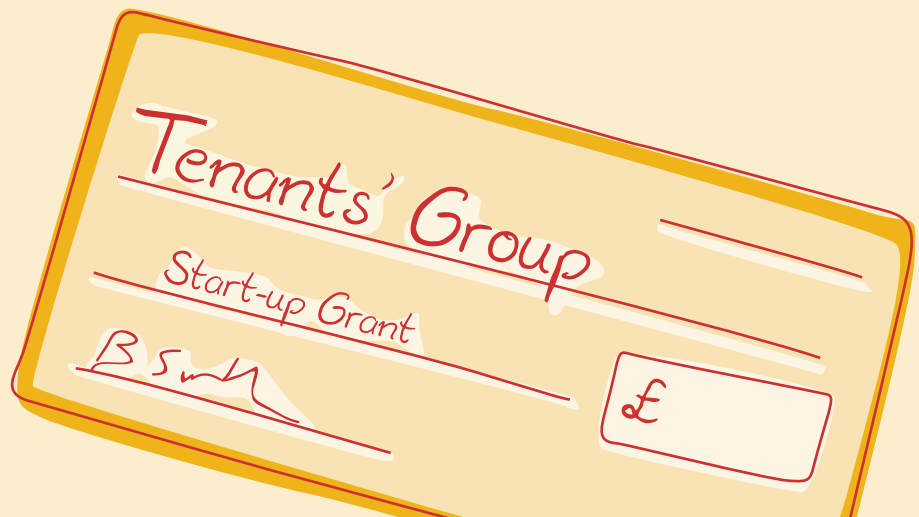
We would like you to attend so we can ask you questions about parking problems local tenants have been reporting at our meetings and to find out how Aberdeen City Council plans to address these problems.

I would appreciate if you could let me know as soon as possible if you would be able to attend.

Yours faithfully

Insert signature here

Mrs I Johnston
ABC Tenants' Association



Guidance on Funding

Start-up and annual grants are available for each tenants' group or association.

Start-up grants are one-off payments while annual grants can be applied for each year. If a tenants' group or association has spent their entire annual grant before the end of the year they can apply for additional funding, however they need to show how the original grant was spent and demonstrate that they can justifiably use the extra grant.

Start-up and annual grants can be used for the following

- Hire of venues for public or other meetings;
- Production, printing or photocopying of posters, leaflets, minutes and agendas;
- Costs of communication for example postage, phone calls or internet access;
- Training.

You should contact your area TPO to request up to date information and an application form for either of these grants.

Additional information on other types of Aberdeen City Council funding or information on other funding bodies can be obtained from;

**External Funding Support Officer
The Office of the City Chamberlain
Resources Management
Town House Extension
Broad Street
Aberdeen
AB10 1AH**

Tel: 01224 522504

Email: efs@aberdeencity.gov.uk

Treasurer's Guidance and Information

Aberdeen City Council recommends that your tenants' group or association agree to open a treasurer's cheque account.

It is useful to have a list of at least three office-bearers (including the chairperson, secretary and treasurer) that are signatories on this account. At least two of these signatories will be required to withdraw any money or sign a cheque. Signatories should not be from the same family. In general it is advisable that open or pre signed cheques should not be used.

All banks and building societies will have different criteria for opening a bank account, so it's a good idea to shop around to find the most suitable for your group or association. Usually all signatories will have to go to the bank to show two forms of identification and sign the form in front of a witness before an account can be opened.

This kind of cheque account means money cannot be withdrawn by only one signatory and very little cash is in circulation. This makes the treasurer's job of keeping a record of expenditure and income easier.

Any income should be immediately banked because if it is used to pay for things the records become hard to keep. If possible, always pay by cheque.

A treasurer does not have the final say on spending - the whole committee decides and the whole committee is responsible for the finances of the group or association.

General decisions on income and expenditure should be made at committee meetings, however it is sometimes a good idea when you plan to spend a large sum of money or purchase a large item that you discuss this at a full tenants' group or association meeting.

Financial Records

All income and expenditure should be recorded and this should include all items purchased including the purchase price together with full details of all other expenses and expenditure. This record should be maintained by the treasurer on behalf of the group or association and details should be reported at each of its meetings. The record should be made available for inspection upon request at any time.

Petty Cash

Petty cash up to a maximum of £100 may be kept by the treasurer for incidental expenses. No money is to be issued without a receipt.

Audit

A proper record should be kept of all income and expenditure for each financial year. Tenants' group or association account books should be audited by a reputable independent person. The audited accounts should be presented to the tenants' group or association's Annual General Meeting.

Donations from Organisations

It's best to keep separate financial records if a group or association raises its own funds as well as receiving a grant from Aberdeen City Council.

Sample Monthly Statement of Income and Expenditure

(Name of Tenants/Residents Association) - Statement of Income & Expenditure
1st - 30th April 2007

Date	Income		Date	Rec. No.	Expenditure		
	Balances b/f						
	Bank Book	£1816.50					
	Cash in Hand	£198.80					
							£2015.30
			12 Apr 07	23	Entertainment		£30.00
			17 Apr 07	24	Hire of Coach	Cheque	£300.00
			18 Apr 07	25	Stationery (Vice Chairperson)		£13.00
				26	High Teas (Coach Trip)	Cheque	£47.45
	Football Cards						
	4 Apr 07	£15.00					
	11 Apr 07	£15.00					
	25 Apr 07	£15.00					
							£45.00
	Raffle						
	Bingo Admission						£21.50
	4 Apr 07	£4.00					
	11 Apr 07	£4.00					
	18 Apr 07	£4.00					
	25 Apr 07	£3.75					
							£15.75
					Balances c/f		
					Bank Book		£1469.05
					Cash in Hand		£238.05
							£1707.10
							£2097.55

Bank Account b/f	£1816.50
Less Coach Hire Cheque	£300.00
	<u>£1516.50</u>
Less High Teas Cheque	£47.45
Bank Account c/f	<u>£1469.05</u>

Cash in Hand b/f	£198.80
F/Cards + Raffle + Bing Admission	£82.25
	<u>£281.05</u>
Total Expenditure	£43.00
Cash in Hand c/f	<u>£238.05</u>

Improving Knowledge and Skills

Aberdeen City Council holds a mailing list of all registered tenants' groups and associations. If you are on the mailing list we will regularly send you details of events such as conferences, seminars or training which will help improve your skills or knowledge.

We will meet the costs for a number of these events so it will not cost your group or association anything. If you are interested in attending an event you should contact your area TPO to discuss this as soon as possible so arrangements can be made.

If you have any suggestions for an event Aberdeen City Council can organise for your group or association or as a City-wide project, please contact your area TPO to discuss further.

There are a number of other organisations that also hold training events, seminars and conferences that tenants' groups and associations may find useful.

Name of Organisation	Address	Tel No.
Tenants Participation Advisory Service (TPAS)	74 - 78 Saltmarket Glasgow G1 5LD www.tpasscotland.org.uk	0141 5523633
Tenants Information Service (TIS)	Suite 335 Baltic Chambers 50 Wellington Street Glasgow G2 6JH www.tis.org.uk	0141 2481242
Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH)	6 Palmerston Place Edinburgh EH12 5AA www.cih.org	0131 2554544
TIGHRA	Fairfax House Market Street Inverurie Aberdeenshire AB51 3XN www.tighra.org	01467 672233

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Please call **01224 523029**.

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