

TENANTS & RESIDENTS ASSOCIATIONS

Office Bearers

Committees with a large membership may elect their Office Bearers by asking for written nominations in advance. A small local group will normally elect its officers by either :

- a. asking for nominations at the groups Inaugural or Annual General Meeting and electing their office bearers directly or
- b. electing their Committee at the Inaugural Meeting/AGM, who would then elect their office bearers from the committee members at their first formal meeting.

The usual posts to be filled will include :

Chairperson
Secretary
Treasurer

Vice Chairperson
Minute Secretary

In many organisations the Secretary and Minute Secretaries roles are combined, otherwise all other posts should be filled.

Should there be more than one nomination for a particular post then a vote would be taken for each member nominated, and the member gaining the most votes would be elected to the position.

Those members of the Committee elected to office do not necessarily require to have any particular skills or experience, everyone has to start somewhere and most people learn as they go along. If possible the Committee may try to arrange training for all the members of the group.

All members of the Committee have an important role to play and their office bearers are elected to act on behalf of the Committee as a whole.

The role of the office bearers can be made easier by other members taking on tasks, attending meetings with other groups or attending seminars etc.

The office bearers are elected by the members to carry out various duties. They should not normally make decisions or take any actions unless these have been agreed beforehand by the members of the Committee.

Why have a Chairperson?

To make sure that the meetings run smoothly and efficiently and be the spokesperson of the group where required.

Why have a Vice Chairperson?

To assume responsibility of Chairperson in the absence of the Chairperson.

What are the Chairperson's Responsibilities?

To have a clear understanding of the organisation, its aims, objectives and its Constitution.

To chair the meetings of the organisation. This can be more difficult than it seems. If he/she is domineering, then the group will rightly feel that they are only there to rubber-stamp decisions already taken by the Chairperson: if on the other hand he/she is too relaxed then decisions may not be made, actions not taken and the group will be ineffective. A good Chairperson has to be able to strike a balance.

To be impartial and to ensure that meetings are run in a fair and democratic way according to the rules of the organisation.

To ensure that all voting procedures are carried out as stated in the rules of the organisation.

To introduce and welcome new members to the Committee, give them background information on the group and bring them up to date with the groups activities.

To encourage all members to take part in discussions and be involved in decision making.

To represent the views of the Committee and act as spokesperson for the group if required.

Preparing the agenda - the Chairperson should liaise with the Secretary to draw up the agenda for meetings.

Keep the meeting to time. A good Chairperson will allow time for open debate, whilst not allowing the discussion to wander off the subject.

Remind members, where appropriate, that there may be confidential information and that it must not be discussed outwith the group.

Give a brief summary of the discussion to enable a decision to be made by the members and an accurate reflection of the discussion to be recorded in the minutes.

What are the Secretary's Responsibilities?

The Secretary deals with the administrative work of the Committee. This can be difficult and time-consuming and often Committee members don't realise the amount of time and work involved.

Preparing the Agenda

An agenda is a programme of business for meetings and is normally drafted by the Secretary in consultation with the Chairperson.

Agenda items should be numbered and the Chairperson should try to follow the order of business as far as possible.

Committee members can put forward agenda items to be discussed if they feel they are relevant to the business of the Committee. They should put details in writing to the Secretary, if possible, seven days before the meeting.

It is customary to begin the agenda with the same items of business:

Apologies for Absence

It is important to record any apologies as the Constitution of the organisation may state that missing a certain number of meetings without apologies being given may result in a member being asked to resign.

Minutes of the Last Meeting

When these minutes are proposed and seconded by members as an accurate record of the previous meeting they will be recorded as such on the current minutes.

Matters Arising

Ongoing business from the last meeting.

Any Other Competent Business

This should come almost at the end of the meeting and deal with important items not included in the agenda but discussions should be kept short or passed for discussion at the next meeting.

Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The above arrangements should be agreed to suit the majority of committee members and minuted to allow notice to be given to all members.

Minute Taking

This would be the responsibility of the Minute Secretary, if appointed. If there is no Minute Secretary then the Secretary would take over this responsibility.

Minutes should not be a word-for-word record of the previous meeting but rather a short note of the topic, relevant discussion, decision agreed and action to be taken, if appropriate.

The minutes should always begin with the *Name of the Organisation* and the *Date Time* and *Place* of the meeting.

The minutes should have a separate list of all those present at the meeting. It is important to keep an accurate record therefore the Secretary or Minute Secretary should pass round an Attendance List (Sederunt) for everyone present to sign. Remember to include people who are not members of the committee ie Council staff, Police etc and if there are late-comers to the meeting remember to have them sign the Sederunt.

Routine items are normally dealt with at the start of the meeting, eg

- Apologies for Absence
- Minutes of the Last Meeting
- Matters Arising
- Correspondence
- Financial Report

The meeting will usually end with the same items ie

- Any Other Competent Business (AOCB)
- Date, Time & Place of Next Meeting

The minutes should follow the order of agenda headings and the committee will decide whether members are identified by name in the minutes.

If the Minute Secretary/Secretary is unclear about the decision or the discussion taking place, they can ask for it to be made clear when the speaker has finished. Enough time should be allowed for the minutes to be recorded after each item.

The draft of the minutes should be written up, or preferably typed, as soon as possible after the meeting, as this will make it easier to remember the important points and decisions made. The minutes can be read out at the next meeting and once carried as a correct record are signed by the Chairman. This is to ensure that the minutes are not altered at a later date. The minutes should be checked over with another office bearer before being distributed. All minutes of previous meetings should be kept.

Minutes Should Be :

- an accurate and fair record of the meeting
- short and to the point
- show committee decisions, either clearly marked 'agreed' or give details of any vote taken
- should record the names of members proposing or seconding motions

Correspondence

The Secretary will deal with all incoming and outgoing correspondence for the group. If the group do not have an office then the Secretary's home address is usually used for all correspondence.

All correspondence received is usually read out to members at meetings by the Secretary, who then records action to be taken, if appropriate. Copies should be kept of all correspondence and made available to members of the committee upon request.

Membership

The Secretary will keep an up-to-date list of members.

Constitution

Each Tenants/Residents Association must have a Constitution which outlines the groups aims, membership, management structure, rules, frequency of meetings, AGM's, Special General Meetings, the financing of the group, how office bearers are elected, the dissolution procedures, and the quorum of the group (the minimum number of members who must be present before any business can be dealt with). A model constitution can be obtained from the Tenant Liaison Officer, Argyll & Bute Council.

The Secretary as well as the Chairperson should be familiar with the groups' Constitution and should check that a quorum is present before any meetings begin.

Groups may find it necessary to have a constitution in order to open a bank account and receive funding from other bodies.

A draft constitution should be made available at the groups Inaugural Meeting and should be approved by those attending. It is then formally adopted as the Constitution of the organisation. Funding bodies ie Argyll & Bute Council may wish alterations or additions to the Constitution and this must be approved by the committee members.

What are the Treasurer's Responsibilities?

The Treasurer must be the person in control of all the income and expenditure relating to the group.

The Treasurer should use a simple method of accurately and efficiently recording all income and expenditure for the group - the following basic rules may help:

Bank Account

It is best if the group operate a current account with a bank and have a bank mandate (authorisation) naming three Committee members who are authorised to sign cheques on behalf of the group. The bank is normally instructed that 2 out of 3 signatures will be required to validate cheques being paid out. When there are two members of the same household or family who are Office Bearers, it is advisable to have another signatory to the account.

Using a current account with a bank will give the Treasurer three checks on the groups finances.

1. Cheques drawn on the groups account will require two signatures
2. Cancelled cheques will, if requested, be returned by the bank.
3. The bank will issue a regular statement of account detailing all transactions.

The Treasurer should, as far as possible, pay accounts by cheque, but there will be times when the amounts involved will be small and this will involve operating a Petty Cash system.

Petty Cash

The Treasurer should have a supply of petty cash vouchers to pay out small sums and a receipt should always be kept for the items purchased. The petty cash vouchers should be signed by both the Treasurer and the person receiving the cash and the purpose, date and amount of the expenditure should be detailed on the voucher.

It is very important that all receipts and invoices are kept and dual signing of cheques and petty cash vouchers is adhered to as the Treasurer will be asked to

provide accurate accounts of the groups finances at the end of the financial year (end of March each year). These accounts must be audited by a chartered accountant and also shown to Argyll & Bute Council at the end of the financial year.

Treasurers Reports

It is a good idea to have a Treasurers Report presented to your Committee at regular intervals, perhaps once a month. This allows all the members of the Committee to be kept aware of the bank balance, how funds are being spent and where funding is coming from.

It is also a good opportunity for the Treasurer to discuss any concerns he/she may have.