

# A Guide to Starting a Residents' Group

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# Introduction

This guide will help you through the practical steps to setting up and running an effective residents' group for your community. The advice this book offers should be tailored to what suits your community.

Liaising with other local groups and community organisations will provide information and experience that cannot be contained in a written guide. Also getting in touch with them will ensure that your group is seen to be active in your local community. You may also encourage some new members. Think about liaising with luncheon clubs, mother and toddler groups, youth clubs, schools and different ethnic community groups.

Getting a residents' group going can be hard work but it is worth the effort and Sentinel Housing Association will support you with practical help and advice. As your landlord we can also put you in contact with other residents associations which have been established within Sentinel for advice and guidance.

If, after using this guide, you can identify any additional information needed or changes, please let us know.

Richard Pilbeam, Customer and Community Involvement Co-ordinator

## 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:

- To increase the community feeling and for neighbours to get to know each other.
- To gain a greater voice than you would have as an individual.
- To be more involved in the decisions taken by Sentinel Housing Association, which affect tenants, leaseholders and homeowners. This can be achieved by working with the other groups that your landlord supports.
- To arrange social events for local residents and apply for various funding grants to improve the facilities available in your community..
- To keep people in the area informed of all the issues that affect them .
- To harness and develop the organisational and other talents of community members
- To get involved with what other groups may be doing.

## **What is a tenants' and residents' association?**

A tenants' and residents' association is a "Voluntary body of tenants representing the views of its membership and local residents to their landlord, the local authority and any relevant agencies" (Chartered Institute of Housing definition)

A residents' association is an ideal way to help improve both your own personal development and that of your community. Sentinel can provide you with access to various national tenant bodies which can support your group and offer advice, guidance and opportunities for training in the various skills required to run a successful resident association. Examples of bodies which provide this services can be found on pages 30-31.

You may also wish to establish a residents' association in order to .apply for funding which would allow you to promote the work of the group to a wider audience and improve the services and assistance that you can give to other residents. Sentinel will also be able to provide some funding to get the residents' association established, however it will normally be the responsibility of the association, once established, to support themselves financially. Should you apply for funding on behalf of your group please note that most grant providers will insists that your group has a

1. Bank account
2. Constitution (Appendix A)

## **Is a residents' association right for my community?**

If you are considering setting up a residents' association, you may wish to consider a number of factors,

1. Whether the issues that are affecting the community are the same issues that I am concerned with.
2. If other people in the community agree that it would be a good idea to set up a group.
3. If other people agree to come to an initial meeting or an interest in knowing the outcome of an initial meeting. You only need around six people to attend the first meeting to have enough to set up a group.

# Listening to your views

Sentinel works with a number of residents' associations to promote and encourage feedback on its key neighbourhood objectives. Listed below are some of Sentinel's priorities for our neighbourhoods and you may wish to consider these in your association.

## **Your Environment**

- All communal areas to be clean, green and pleasant to use for all
- Improving the "look" and "feel" of the neighbourhood

## **Your Community**

- Making it safe, inclusive and sustainable
- Reducing crime or the fear of crime in your neighbourhood
- Reducing anti-social behaviour in your neighbourhood

## **Your Wellbeing**

- Raising educational performance
- Supporting financial inclusion
- Improving work/training
- Promoting healthier lifestyles

## **Your Say**

- Involving residents to make a difference in your neighbourhood
- Developing community spirit

Working with Sentinel towards these common objectives will enable your residents' association to play a vital role in the development of your community and achieve the aims of your group.

## Alternatives to a Residents' association

There might be a number of reasons why a residents' association is not suitable for your community, these might include,

1. Structure is too formal and people don't have the skills.
2. Lack of interest.
3. Time commitments are too great.

If this is the case, a good alternative might be to become a neighbourhood representative. This role will still allow you to play a vital part in improving your community but you are in charge of your own level of involvement. There are no restrictions on the amount of properties you can represent, however, it is envisaged that you would have responsibility for your local block or street. Neighbourhood Representatives work closely with the Neighbourhood co-ordinator for that area. You would be required to act as a link between residents and Sentinel in the following ways:

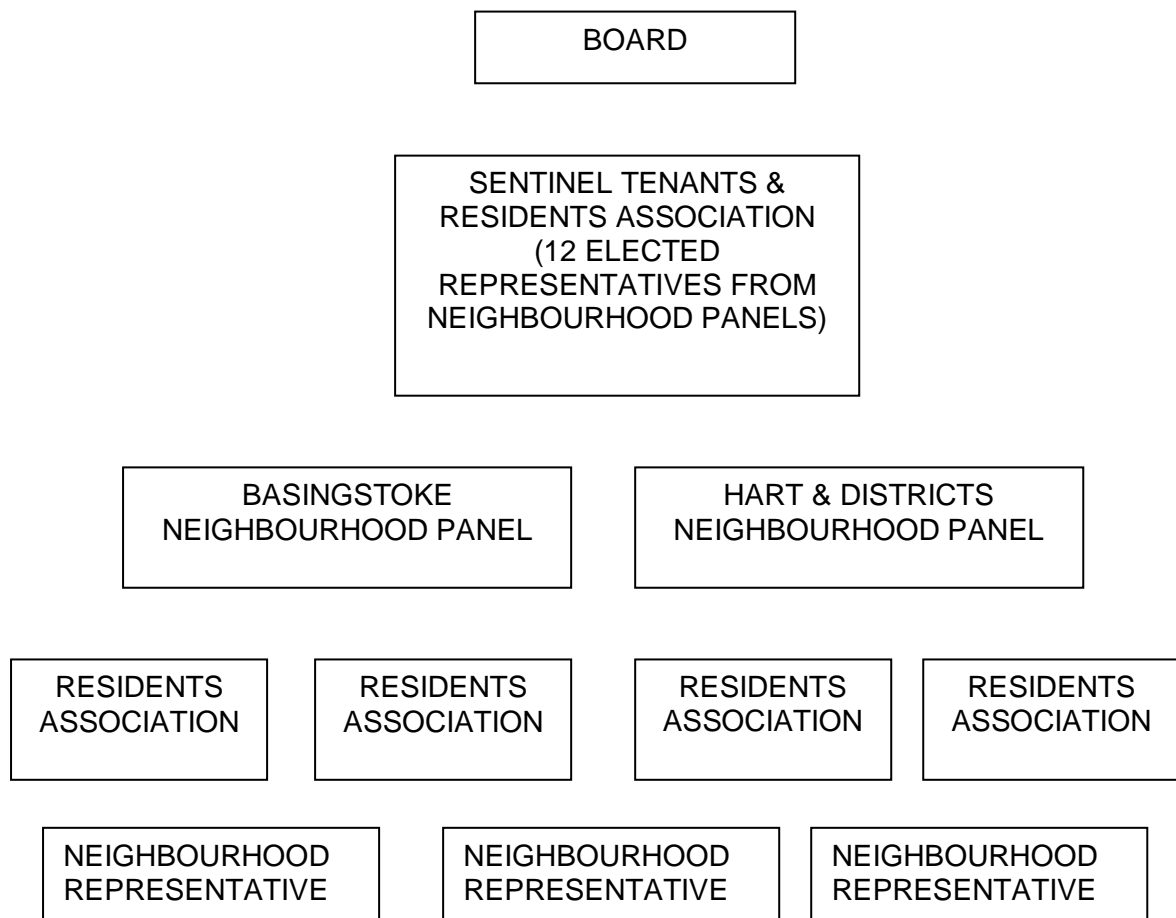
- Liaise with us over issues that need resolution
- Canvass the views and opinions of people in your neighbourhood
- Ensure that the tenants and leaseholders in your neighbourhood are consulted about any changes to the services they receive and that their views are taken into account before any decisions are made
- Help with occasional consultation exercises and surveys
- Help us to ensure that tenants and leaseholders are kept informed about anything that affects them

If you would like to know more about this role then please in the first instance contact either your local Neighbourhood Co-ordinator or Sentinel's Customer and Community Involvement Co-ordinator on 0800 195 5515. You will be asked to complete a nomination form (appendix "B") and a meeting will be organised to discuss your application and how you would like to use your role to the benefit of Sentinel and your community.

# The Neighbourhood Panels.

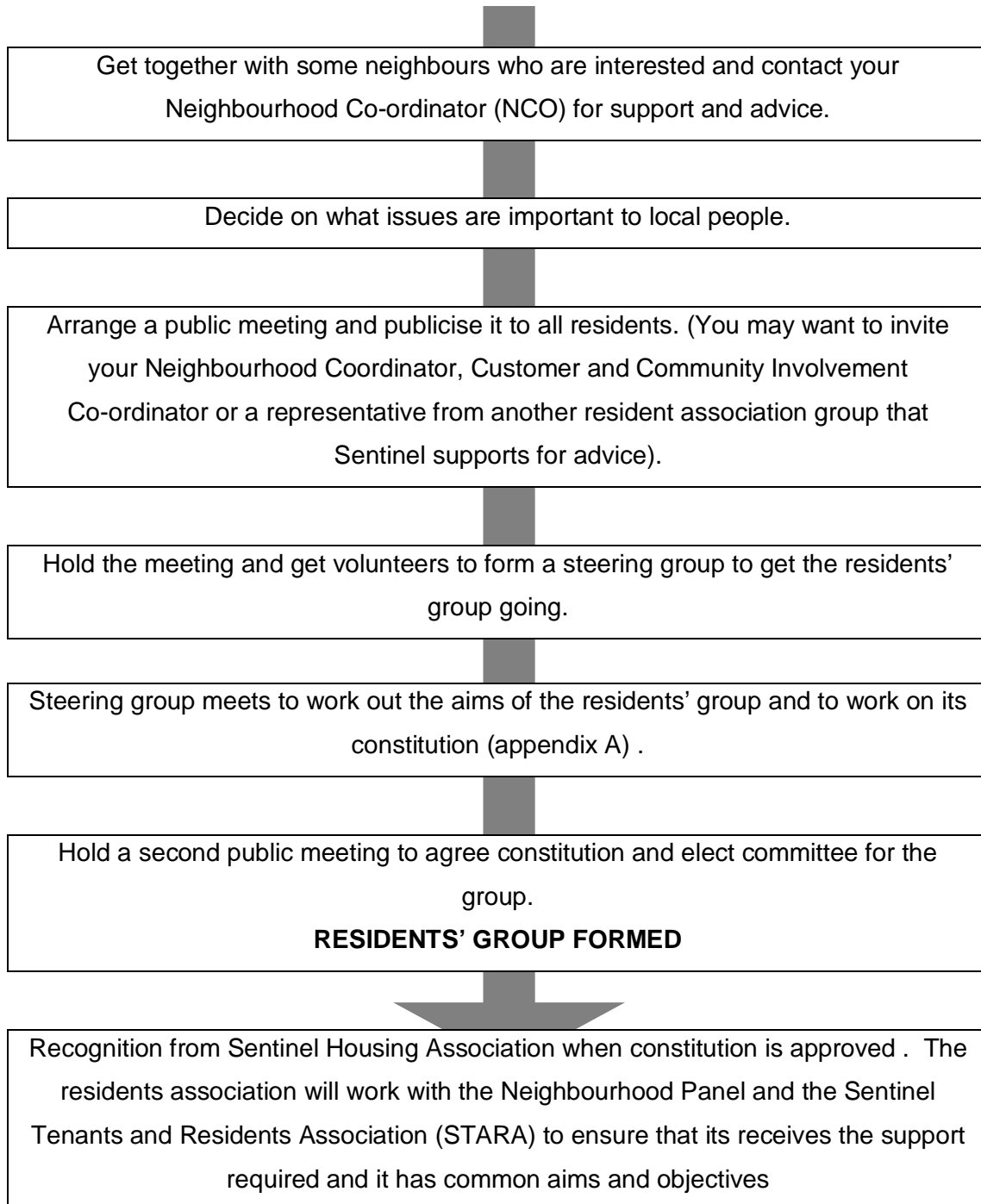
If you would like to understand what groups currently represent the views of residents within Sentinel and how you can be involved in influencing decisions that affect you then attending either a Basingstoke or Hart Neighbourhood Panel meeting is a good place to start. Each committee represents their local community and works with Sentinel and other partners to make improvements to services and contribute to the success of a range of projects and initiatives. An important part of the work that these panels do is to be consulted on and to monitor the success of the Neighbourhood Plans which Sentinel has for all the areas it works in.

Both panels meet monthly and you are welcome to come along as an observer to find out how they work. Vacancies are regularly available on each panel so please contact Richard Pilbeam, Customer and Community Involvement Co-ordinator on 0800 195 5515 for further information .



## First steps

Below is a basic outline of the steps you can follow to get a residents' group started in your area. This is only a guide, as each group will develop in its own way..



# The Constitution

Even though tenants and residents associations are not governed by any legal requirements and can be either formal or informal it is advised that for all formal groups a constitution is developed. Some areas to consider within your constitution would be,

1. The aims and objectives of the group
2. Guidelines for conduct at meetings
3. Equal opportunities

Having a set of rules and procedures will ensure that your meetings are productive and new members are able to know what is expected of them. Should you require guidance on establishing your constitution or would like to see copies of what other tenant groups have produced please contact one of the following individuals,

**Basingstoke Neighbourhood Panel:** Chairman – Tony Mitchell (01256 462354)

**Hart & Districts Neighbourhood Panel: Chairman** – Dick Wylie (01252 845514)

**Sentinel Tenants and Residents Association (STARA) :**Chairman – Brian Sanders (01256 473227)

**Austen Court Residents Association :**Chairman – Lewis Johnson (lewisj2b@hotmail.com)

**Sentinel Customer and Community Involvement Co-ordinator –**

Richard Pilbeam 0800 195 5515

Alternatively please refer to appendix “A” which gives an example of a constitution that you may wish to use.

## 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 its aims are followed.

The committee will need to hold its own meetings to organise its 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 also 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 has a chance to take part in the discussions at meetings.
- Prepare agendas 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 meetings are:

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

**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 will be the one who is in control
- Only one person to speak at a time
- Everybody agreeing to let people have their say without interruption
- No personal criticisms to be allowed
- 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 the secretary of a residents group does not mean you have to take shorthand, type or have access to specialised office equipment! Any one who has some organisational skills can be a successful secretary.

## The Secretary:

- Arranges meeting venues
- Lets people know when meetings are being held
- Makes a written of 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 Sentinel 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 and not necessarily carry them all out.

# Meetings

(Arranging meetings is something a Secretary becomes 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 Meetings.** 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 you are expecting? Check this with the person you are hiring out 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 which 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 including older children (they are after all your potential future members) or see if other members can run a crèche or activity at the same venue as your meeting.

Publicise your arrangements for children when advertising your meetings. Sentinel will also be able to support your group with both should translation and sign language issues.

## **The 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. Please refer to appendix “C” for an example of how you might want to present your agenda.

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 any one out when you write up your minutes and that you spell their name correctly. Please refer to appendix “D” for an example of how you might want to produce an attendance list

# 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 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 draft 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. An example of how to lay out minutes can be viewed in appendix "E".

## 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
- 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
- Any others who attended, or who need to take action following the meeting

### **Annual General Meetings:**

- All members of the residents' group
- Sentinel Housing Association (if your group is recognised)
- Any other person who attended, or any one who needs to take action following the meeting.

### **Special General Meetings:**

- All members of the Group
- Sentinel Housing Association (if your group is recognised)
- Any other person who attended, or any one who needs 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 on 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
- Keeping a record of money received and spent
- Preparing statements for the committee and Annual General Meeting
- Keeping petty cash for the Group and a petty cash account book for 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' groups. 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 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 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. Please refer to appendix "F" for examples of how to lay out a payments and receipts ledger.

Remember the money belongs to all members and they are entitled to see how the money is spent!

**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, Sentinel Housing Association's Customer and Community Involvement Co-ordinator can advise you. Please refer to appendix "G" for an example of an income and expenditure account

## **General members**

The number of general members of a committee is set in the constitution of the group and will depend on the overall number 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 in 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 residents 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 should represent the views of its community not just those of its committee or a small number of members. Sentinel 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.

You also need to make sure that you don't unintentionally exclude people from becoming members of your group- 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?
- Do any of your potential members have particular needs to enable them to attend meetings-such as requiring transport, language translation, childcare, special access or arrangements due to disability.
- 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. Sentinel Housing Association may 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 clearly.

Once you have enough articles, you will need to lay out the newsletter. This involves deciding what goes where, depending on how 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 the text up 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**

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

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

- Are open to all 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 Sentinel Housing Association
- Are able to demonstrate a commitment to equal opportunities through its work.
- Keep an up-to-date membership list.
- Have a proper system of accounting and have accounts independently audited annually.

# Help from Sentinel Housing Association

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

Sentinel Housing Association can help your group in the following ways:

- Finding some where for you to meet
- We can help with your travelling costs and other costs associated with attending meetings

Also:

## **Grants**

We can offer your group a grant of £100 a year, providing your group meets the criteria for recognition (please refer to your Neighbourhood Co-ordinator or Customer and Community Involvement Co-ordinator) .

## **Advice and Training**

We employ a Customer and Community Involvement Co-ordinator who is responsible for giving residents groups help and advice. The Customer and Community Involvement Co-ordinator can:

- Give advice about starting a group
- Advise on setting up financial records
- Provide, or arrange for, training for 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 newsletters, making a committee work as a team and campaigning. If your group would like training, contact Sentinel Housing Associations Customer and Community Involvement Co-ordinator.

### **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 Customer and Community Involvement Co-ordinator.

### **A Voice in the Sentinel Newsletter**

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

### **Sentinel Grants**

If you get involved you will want to see results. Residents Groups have the opportunity to bid for Grants from Sentinel. These Grants are available for a wide range of works, for example, running a community event, 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 Sentinel 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 Co-ordinator.

Don't forget the Sentinel newsletter! The Newsletter team are always keen to receive information, letters and other contributions.

You can contact the Newsletter team by post at:

The Newsletter Team

Sentinel Housing

56 Kingsclere Road

Basingstoke

Hants

RG21 6XG

Or by phone on 0800 195 5515

Or by email on [newsletter@sentinelha.org.uk](mailto:newsletter@sentinelha.org.uk)

## **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.

Customer and Community Involvement Co-ordinator

Sentinel Housing

56 Kingsclere Road

Basingstoke

Hampshire

RG21 6XG

0800 195 5515

Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH)

The Good Practice Unit, Octavia House, Westwood Way,

Coventry, CV4 8JP

Tel: 02476 851700

Website: [www.cih.org](http://www.cih.org)

Community Development Foundation (CDF)  
Unit 5, Angel Gate, 320-326 City Road, London. EC1V 2PT  
Tel: 020 78331772  
Website: [www.cdf.org.uk](http://www.cdf.org.uk)

Community Matters (The national association for community organisations)  
12-20 Baron Street, London N1 9LL  
Tel: 0207 8377887 or 0845 8474253  
Website: [www.communitymatters.org.uk](http://www.communitymatters.org.uk)

The Foyer Federation  
3<sup>RD</sup> Floor, 5-9 Hatton Wall,, London. EC1N 8HX  
Tel: 0207 4302212  
Website: [www.foyer.net](http://www.foyer.net)

National Tenants Resource Centre (NTRC)  
Trafford Hall, Ince Lane, Chester, CH2 4JP  
Tel: 01244 300246  
Website: [www.traffordhall.co.uk](http://www.traffordhall.co.uk)

Priority Estates Project Ltd (PEP)  
Unit 22, Chatterley Whitfield Enterprise Centre, Chatterley Whitfield  
Stoke on Trent, Staffordshire. ST6 8UW  
Tel: 01782 790900  
Website: [www.pep.org.uk](http://www.pep.org.uk)

Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS)  
5th Floor, Trafford House, Chester Road, Manchester, M32 ORS  
Telephone: 0161 868 3500  
Email: [info@tpas.org.uk](mailto:info@tpas.org.uk)  
Website: [www.tpas.org.uk](http://www.tpas.org.uk)

Tenant Services Authority (TSA)  
Tel: 0845 230 7000  
E-mail: [enquiries@tsa.gsx.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@tsa.gsx.gov.uk)  
Website: [www.tenantservicesauthority.org](http://www.tenantservicesauthority.org)

## Funding sources

**Sentinel participation budget.** Start up grant for formally recognised residents groups.

**Sentinel environmental improvement budget.** This budget is used by staff to make environmental improvements to areas that are agreed in consultation with residents.

**Community Chest Grants:** Basingstoke and Hart Neighbourhood Panels can provide grants of up to £1000 to community groups to support projects which will improve their communities.

**Basingstoke and Deane community safety grant scheme;** such as installation of CCTV, funding mentoring projects and projects that help to reduce truancy, bullying, social exclusion.

**Basingstoke and Deane community enhancement grant scheme;** such as breaking down community barriers, development costs for youth councils.

**Local businesses** may also offer sponsorship ranging from financial sponsorship to donating prizes for raffles etc. We have successfully approached: Homebase, B&Q and Game.

## Other funding sources

**Hampshire Childrens Fund.** Look at this url for links with possible funding sources for children's projects. <http://www.childrensfund.hants.org.uk>

**Local Children's Fund.** If you want to fund a project aimed at children or young people, you may qualify for a grant of between £250 & £7000 from this fund. Tel: 0845 1130161 or RNID Typetalk 18001 0845 1130161 for application forms [www.cypu.gov.uk](http://www.cypu.gov.uk)

**Sport Relief Funds.** Sport Relief is distributed by Hampshire & Isle of Wight Community Foundation and is designed to fund work which uses sport and exercise to strengthen communities and provide opportunities for people who are excluded or disadvantaged in some way with priority given to small, locally based groups. [www.hantscf.org.uk](http://www.hantscf.org.uk) 01256 776101. Also please refer to [www.action.hants.org.uk](http://www.action.hants.org.uk) for other further funding opportunities.

**Comic Relief UK** There are two application systems:

Grants less than £5,000 a fast track system for organisations with income below £100,000. Not available to those with over £100,000 income. Grants below £5,000 no deadline

**Local Communities working for change.** Aims to support communities left out of the Governments Regeneration initiatives. Projects should address poverty and disadvantage at local level, and should be grass root organisations run by local people. Examples include food coops, credit unions.

Grants will be up to £10,000 per annum for up to two years for either revenue or capital.

Contact Details:

UK Grants

Comic Relief

5th Floor

89 Albert Embankment

London

SE1 7TP

Tel: 020 7820 5555

Website: [www.comicrelief.com](http://www.comicrelief.com)

### **Charitable Trusts**

- The Community Fund
- Esmee Fairbairn
- Tudor Trust
- The Lankelly Foundation
- Henry Smith
- Lloyds TSB Foundation
- Nationwide
- Abbey National

Trusts exist to give money away, annually in excess of £1.5 billion.

They are an important source of funding for the voluntary and community sector. New trusts are coming on stream all the time, and information on trusts is available from a variety of sources. The CD based programmes are the most up to date and easiest way to source appropriate trusts. Contact your local Council of Voluntary Services for further details and use of the CD packages.

**Awards for All.** New priorities have been set for the region. Grants are available between £500 and £5,000. Projects supported should:

- Benefit children and young people up to the age of 18 in areas where access to facilities and services is limited
- Benefit disabled people
- Benefit older people (aged over 60)
- Help communities support and explore their heritage, traditions and cultures
- Benefit people who experience traditional or cultural barriers to full participation in the community

Contact:

Website: [www.awardsforall.org.uk](http://www.awardsforall.org.uk)

Tel: 0845 600 2040

E-mail: [general.enquiries@awardsforall.org.uk](mailto:general.enquiries@awardsforall.org.uk)

Or:

Awards for All England Applications

Big Lottery Fund

2 St James Gate

Newcastle Upon Tyne

NE1 4BE

## **Websites**

For general information on funders try these websites. They provide a good general introduction to funding as well as a way of keeping up to date with new opportunities. AND THEY ARE ALL FREE!

### **Access-Funds**

[www.access-funds.co.uk](http://www.access-funds.co.uk)

Excellent sections on funding from government, Europe, Lottery and trusts. This is the best overview of the main sources of funding.

### **UK Fundraising**

[www.fundraising.co.uk](http://www.fundraising.co.uk)

Good general information.

### **Miscellaneous Websites**

#### **Volresource**

[www.volresource.org.uk](http://www.volresource.org.uk)

Free website portal providing links to information about the voluntary sector.

#### **Charitynet**

[www.cafonline.org](http://www.cafonline.org)

Free website portal providing links to information about the voluntary sector.

#### **Community Accountancy Self Help (Cash)**

[www.cash-online.org.uk](http://www.cash-online.org.uk)

Free website. Financial information for charities.

# Appendix A

## THE CONSTITUTION OF THE (INSERT ASSOCIATION NAME)

### AIM

The aim of *(insert association name)* is to represent *(insert who)* and to work with *(insert name)* to improve the quality of life for *(insert who)*.

### ROLE

*(insert description here if desired)*

### MEMBERSHIP

The minimum membership will be *(insert figure)*. Should the membership of the group fall below the minimum membership level, a special general meeting will be called.

*(insert maximum membership if appropriate)*

The membership of the association will come from *(insert description of area or names of streets)*.

The membership is open to *(insert description, this may include all residents or just tenants and leaseholders)*

### EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

All members of the association will abide by the statement of equal opportunities

### CODE OF BEHAVIOUR AND DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURE

All members of the association will abide by the code of behaviour and disciplinary procedure.

### MEETINGS

The *(state who)* will have control of meetings.

Meetings will be advertised to the membership of the association *(insert how here)*.

Meetings will be open to the general membership of the association.

Every member will be entitled to attend and to put items on the agenda by agreement with the chair.

The agenda will be set by *(insert who)*.

The agenda will be set *(insert when)*.

The agenda will be circulated to members *(insert when e.g. at the meeting or a number of days before. Also insert how it will be circulated)*.

In order for **any** meeting to take place, *(insert minimum number of members that must attend)* members of the association must attend the meeting. Where insufficient members attend, an informal meeting may take place. At the informal

meeting, the chair of the meeting will agree the next meeting date with the members present.

General meeting will take place on ***(insert time scale e.g. monthly, quarterly)*** and will take place at ***(insert whether day time, evening or either)*** .

All meetings will be minuted and the minutes of the meeting will be made available ***(insert here to who)***. Minutes will always record a list of those present and those sending apologies.

### **SPECIAL GENERAL MEETINGS**

Special general meetings can be called by the committee or by the request of ***(insert proportion)*** of the membership.

Special general meetings will be publicised in the same way as AGM's. ***(if you want to publicise this differently, then insert alternative clause here)***.

Special general meetings can be called by the ***(insert name)*** if all committee members resign and an AGM is not due in the next ***(insert number)*** weeks/months ***(delete as appropriate)***.

### **VOTING**

Voting will take place by a show of hands.

Where the association requires a decision, the members shall each have a vote ***(you may need to alter this if you are to restrict voting to one per household)***.

A vote will be carried where a majority votes in favour of the resolution. ***(insert here what will happen if a vote is tied e.g. will the chair have an additional vote or will it be deemed to have failed)***.

All voting decisions will be minuted.

***(if the proportional voting is different to the AGM then insert clause here)***

### **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

The association will hold an AGM every calendar year in ***(insert month)***. Members will be given ***(insert number of days)*** notice in writing of the date of the AGM.

Resolutions from members to be considered at the AGM must be submitted to ***(insert who)***, ***(insert number of days)*** prior to the AGM. Resolutions ***(insert whether they need to be in writing and who to)***.

At each AGM the date of the next annual general meeting will be set.

If an AGM cannot be held in the usual month, the meeting will be deferred by agreement between ***(insert name)*** and a member of the associations committee. All members will be notified in writing ***(insert number of days)*** prior to the date of the deferred meeting.

Committee members will be elected at the AGM. ***(insert here a description of what positions the committee will hold)***. They will be elected by ***(insert how they will be elected e.g. nominated, seconded)***.

Committee members will hold office for *(insert time scale)*. Once their period of office has been completed they must stand down for *(insert time scale)* before being able to be nominated again for office *(this may not be applicable, see below)*

*(insert here whether they can hold one committee position and then be elected to hold a different committee position consecutively)*

Deputy committee members shall also be elected *(delete if not applicable, if applicable, state how)*.

*(insert clause here on what will happen if no committee members are elected or if committee positions are not filled)*

At the AGM: *(delete items in italics, or insert other clauses as appropriate)*

- Members will consider the minutes of the last AGM
- Consider any resolutions put forward by members
- Consider the grant request
- *Consider audited accounts*
- Vote on any amendments to the constitution *(if the proportional voting is to be different to ordinary meetings of the association, please state here)*
- *Consider the annual report of the committee*
- *Appoint an independent auditor*

## **AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION**

Any amendments that are agreed at the AGM shall be forwarded to *(insert name)* for approval. Providing the amendments are consistent with criteria for funding, they will be approved by *(insert name)* *(insert here how amendments will be approved e.g. will this be via a meeting involving elected members)*.

In the unlikely event that agreement for amendments to the constitution cannot be reached between the association and *(insert name)*, independent advice will be sought to resolve the matter.

## **DISPUTES**

The association and *(insert name)* will work together to resolve any disputes. Where the association and *(insert name)* are unable to resolve disputes by agreement *(insert here how you will deal with this)*.

## **CO-OPTTEES**

*(insert these clauses if appropriate)*

The committee will have the power to recruit non voting co-optees to serve on the committee.

Co-optees can be used to fill temporary committee vacancies.

*(insert name)* can co-opt committee members at a special general meeting if there are no committee members in office.

## **NON ATTENDANCE**

*(in this section delete any/all clauses if not appropriate)*

If members miss *(insert number)* of consecutive meetings without sending their apologies, then *(insert action the association will take)*.

*(insert statement to describe process of exclusion or replacement)*.

## **FINANCE**

The treasurer will maintain proper accounts.

The treasurer will open a bank or building society account in the name of the association and keep records of income and expenditure.

The treasurer shall produce an up-to-date balance sheet at every committee and open meeting detailing income and expenditure.

The committee shall appoint three authorised signatories for any cheques and cheques shall be signed by at least two of the authorised signatories.

The signatories will be from different households and not related to one another.

The accounts shall be kept up to date and Annual Accounts for each year shall be independently audited and presented to the AGM.

The accounts of the association will reasonably be made available for inspection.

Expenditure over £ *(insert sum here)* will be by a Committee decision

## **INFORMATION**

The association will keep all members informed.

The association will actively seek members views and will especially ensure that all sections of the community are able to participate.

All members will have access to the constitution.

Every committee member shall be given a current copy of the constitution.

Minutes of all meetings and committee meetings will be reasonably available from *(state where from)*.

The constitution will be available for inspection at every meeting.

**DISSOLUTION**

This can only take place at a special general meeting.

All members shall be given **(insert number of days)** days written notice of such a meeting, which shall contain the wording of the resolution for dissolution.

Advice will be sought from **(insert name)** on disposal, or storage of the assets, funds or equipment to ensure that they are used for the purpose for which they were raised or allocated.

The meeting shall confirm the disposal of the assets, funds and equipment based on the advice from **(insert name)**.

Generally the principle that will apply is that all assets, funds or equipment should be sent to **(insert name)** for safe keeping until the tenants and residents of the area wish to start a new association.

The association can only be dissolved if two-thirds of members present at the special general meeting vote for a motion to dissolve it.

If a special general meeting is called because the membership falls below the minimum level **(insert here what will happen)**.

Adopted as the constitution of: **(insert association name)**

On: **(insert date)**

Signed: .....  
(Chair)

Print Name: .....

Signed: .....  
(Witness)

Print Name: .....

## **CODE OF BEHAVIOUR**

This code of behaviour will give guidance to members about the way they carry out their duties in relation to the work of the association

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

The group may deal with difficult and sensitive issues; discretion and care must be exercised during and after meetings.

## **CONDUCT AT MEETINGS**

Members shall:

- Be courteous to each other and support each other with the aim of achieving the best possible decisions
- Allow each other to speak and be heard
- No individual shall dominate any discussion
- Adhere to the guidance of the chair on the conduct of the meeting
- Operate within the terms of the constitution.

## **PERSONAL INTEREST**

Members must notify the group if they have any personal interest, financial or otherwise, in any of the matters considered by the group. It may be necessary for group members to abstain from any discussion or decision on a particular item.

## **EXCLUSION AND DISCIPLINARY PROCEDURES**

Members shall, at all times, conduct themselves in a reasonable manner at meetings and may be excluded if they act in an abusive, offensive or obstructive way or if they contravene the objectives of the group.

Exclusion from that particular meeting will take place when a majority of those present and voting, at any meeting of the group or AGM of the group vote to exclude a member.

All members shall abide by the disciplinary procedures.

## **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**

**(insert name of Association)** wish to demonstrate a commitment to Equality and Diversity and have adopted the following statement:

The **(insert name of Association)** believes it must work towards the genuine involvement and representation of all members of the community.

It is committed to opposing all forms of discrimination and oppression. This includes racism, sexism and all forms of discrimination faced by black people and other ethnic communities; by women; by gay men and lesbians and by people with disabilities. The tenants or residents association is also committed to acting without discrimination on the grounds of nationality, political or religious belief or marital status.

The **(insert name of Association)** will take steps to remove direct and indirect discrimination in any of its activities.

The **(insert name of Association)** will work towards the development of an awareness of equal opportunity issues amongst its members.

The **(insert name of Association)** will work with reference to Sentinel Housing Associations Equality and Diversity Strategy and the Housing Corporations Race and Equality Code of Practice for Housing Associations.

Members of the (insert name of Association) committee will participate in a continued programme of Equality and Diversity training to make sure their knowledge and practices are current.

Signed

Chair of **(insert name of Association)**

Signed

(Secretary)

Date

**Recognition:**

For your group to be recognised by Sentinel Housing Association you will need to make sure the following items are included in your constitution

- 1. Membership must be open to all residents in the area of your group.**
- 2. A clear statement on the groups' commitment to equal opportunities in its membership 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 would like more help and advice on drawing up your constitution please let us know.

# Appendix B

## Neighbourhood Representative Nomination Form

To: The Customer and Community Involvement Co-ordinator, Sentinel Housing Association,  
56 Kingsclere Road, Basingstoke, Hampshire, RG21 6XG

I .....  
of (full address) .....

.....  
I am interested in acting as a Neighbourhood Representative for (insert name of block,  
street or estate)

.....  
and have been proposed by the residents of Sentinel Housing Association shown below.

Signed ..... Date .....

Proposer name.....

Address .....

.....  
.....

I am prepared to propose:(insert name)

.....

to act as our Neighbourhood Representative  
I am a resident of Sentinel Housing  
Association.

Signed .....

Date .....

Proposer name.....

Address .....

.....  
.....

I am prepared to propose: (insert name)

.....

to act as our Neighbourhood Representative  
I am a resident of Sentinel Housing  
Association.

Signed .....

Date .....

Please send this completed form to the Participation co-ordinator. We will now write to all Sentinel residents in the area you wish to represent asking if anyone has any objection to you acting as a representative. If no-one objects you will become the neighbourhood representative for the next 12 months. You may be asked to stand down, if after this time one of your neighbours wishes to become a Neighbourhood Representative or your neighbours decide they no longer wish to be represented by you.

## **Appendix C**

### **The Tree's Residents' Group**

**Oakwood Lane Community Hall**

**27 January 2000**

**7.00 to 8.30 p.m.**

**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**



# Appendix E

<p>The Tree's Residents' Group          General Meeting          Oakwood Lane Community Hall          27 January 2000 – 7.00 p.m.</p>		
<p><b>Minutes</b></p>		
<p><b>Present:</b></p>		
Mrs Beech	Chairperson	
Mr Ash	Treasurer	
Ms Pine	Secretary	
Mr Conifer	Committee member	
Mrs Elm	Committee member	
Mrs Housing	Neighbourhood Co-ordinator, Sentinel Housing	
PC Bobby	Community Police Officer	
Mrs Holly	Tree Road	
Mr Cedar	Oakwood Lane	
<p><b>1. Welcome</b>          Mrs Beech, Chair, welcomed members to the meeting and introduced Mrs Housing from Sentinel Housing Association and PC Bobby the local police beat officer.</p>		<b>ACTION</b>
<p><b>2. Apologies for absence</b>          Apologies for absence were received from: Mrs Spruce, Oakwood Lane.</p>		
<p><b>3. Minutes of the last meeting</b>          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><b>4. Matters arising</b>          Refuse collection – Mr Conifer confirmed that he had contacted the council and the problem had been resolved.</p>		
<p><b>5. Summer Fair</b>          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>		<b>Ms Pine</b>
<p><b>6. Proposals for new play area</b>          Mrs Housing explained that the survey to all local residents would be going out during the next week, to consult with everybody regarding the proposed site and equipment wanted for a new play area. Mrs. Housing would give a report on the findings of the survey at the next meeting.</p>		<b>Mrs Housing</b>

**Any other Business**

Mr Cedar asked if members knew when Sentinel Housing Association 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.

**7. Date of Next Meeting**

It was agreed that the next meeting would be on Thursday 1 April at 7.00 p.m. at Oakwood Lane School.

**The meeting closed at 8.30 p.m.**

**Mrs  
Beech**

**Ms Pine**





## Appendix G

<b>The Tree's Residents' Group</b>		
<b>Income and Expenditure Account</b>		
<b>For the period 1 January to 31 December 2005</b>		
<b>Income</b>	£	£
Grant received D.H.A		150.00
Fund raising income		130.00
		280.00
<b>Expenditure</b>		
Photocopying	4.00	
Postage	2.00	
Travel	6.00	
		12.00
<b>Excess of income over expenditure</b>		<b>268.00</b>
<b>The Tree's Residents' Group</b>		
<b>Balance Sheet</b>		
<b>As at 31 December 2005</b>		
<b>Current Assets</b>		
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
		256.00
<b>Represented by</b>		
Surplus		256.00