

RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION MANUAL



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Residents' Associations can make a positive difference in their local area, helping Brent Council's Housing Management Service to achieve its vision of building strong, diverse, resilient communities. In this manual you will find guidance on setting up and running a Residents' Association.

1.0 Introduction

Brent Council Registered Residents' Association

Brent Council owns and takes responsibility for the housing policy and strategy for its properties and the day-to-day management of housing services to over 9,500 council tenants and 3,000 leaseholders. Brent Council's Residents' Association members are to be made up of council tenants and leaseholders. For the purpose of this manual any reference made to "residents" refers to the tenants and leaseholders of council owned properties.

Residents' Associations must be registered annually to be recognised by Brent Council's Housing Management Service. You will find details on what registration entails in the relevant section of this manual. It is essential that formally recognised groups are inclusive. Residents' Associations wishing to be formally recognised must show annually that they are democratic, accountable and meet the registration criteria. This includes having a written constitution and demonstrating that they have held open meetings to all potential members in their area. The Residents' Association should hold regular meetings including an annual general meeting with an agreed quorum, annual reports and democratic elections. The minutes and reports should be sent to the council's Housing Engagement and Community Development Team.

Registration makes Residents' Associations eligible for funding and support from the council. This means they will have access to training for members and prospective members, be entitled to request that council employees attend meetings and allowed to use council-owned community facilities for meetings and events at no cost. Registered associations will be covered by the council's public liability insurance.

What is a Residents' Association?

A Residents' Association (RA) is a group of residents who represent the interests of everyone living in a particular area. It can play an important part in dealing with issues that people come across in day-to-day life. Residents can meet to discuss housing, community and environmental matters affecting their flats, blocks, estates or groups of houses. Anyone can join and membership is open to all local residents.

Residents' Associations are governed by a constitution and follow formal procedures to ensure they are democratically and financially accountable to their members. This should not stop members from meeting in comfortable and familiar surroundings. From time to time, it will be essential to carry out official business but it can be carried out in a fun and relaxed way. As long as

associations meet certain criteria, are run properly and are democratic, they will be registered by the Brent Council.

Associations can get involved in a range of activities to benefit residents in their local community. To be effective there needs to be a common purpose for setting up an association. Brent Council registered associations must, at a minimum, have the following aims:

- promote community spirit and cooperation between residents and the council
- promote residents' rights
- improve housing and the local environment through cleaner, safer and greener neighbourhoods
- work in partnership with Brent Council
- encourage training for all members
- be inclusive

Brent Council value and recognise the importance of listening to our customers and ensuring their voice is heard. Forming a Residents' Association is one way of getting involved with the council but its primary purpose is to work within and for the benefit of the local community.

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There are several active Residents' Associations on council estates and Brent Council will provide support to groups who want to establish a new Residents' Association. If there is already a Residents' Association on your estate, your community engagement officer can introduce them to you. You cannot form a new additional Residents' Association where one already exists but there will still be plenty of opportunities to get involved.

It only takes a few residents that are interested in getting involved to start a Residents' Association. It is important to decide the reason for setting up the group as there should be a long term vision for the

council's policy to fund Residents' Associations and contact the Resident Engagement Manager if you need help. If needed they can assist by surveying residents or help you to organise an informal

2.0
Setting up a Residents' Association



group. Running a Residents' Association is a voluntary task that can be time consuming so if its creation is to tackle a certain problem or issue in your area, there may be more suitable ways to tackle the issue(s). You can speak to the Housing Engagement and Partnerships Manager who will be able to provide further advice.

Once you have a clear idea of why an association is needed you will need to generate support from your neighbours to set up the association. Be prepared to listen to other people's ideas and suggestions. Speak to your neighbours about their views and exchange ideas. Inform them about the

meeting.

The first informal meeting

The purpose of this meeting is to get some volunteers who will help run the Residents' Association and organise a public meeting to launch your Residents' Association where all residents will be able to vote to fill various positions.

In preparation for this first meeting, you should consider the following:

- what the geographical area for the association could be

If you think there is enough support for a Residents' Association it's time to get together and think about setting up the association

Arrange an 'informal meeting'

- what the common issues that those living in the area encounter
- what the association would like to achieve
- activities that the association can organise and deliver.

At your first meeting you should discuss what positions (Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary and Treasurer) volunteers would like to stand for. The position of Vice-Chair is optional. Those that have expressed interest can form a steering group which can help plan an open meeting. The Housing Engagement and Community Development Team are available to help you through this process and will usually be able to provide a representative at the meeting. The team can help you with finding a suitable venue, drafting the meeting agenda and advertising the meeting to residents. At the open meeting (also known as an inaugural meeting), residents present will elect a committee and adopt the model constitution (Appendix 1).

You can invite your ward councillors to this meeting.

The inaugural meeting

The inaugural meeting should be chaired by an independent person, usually the Housing Engagement and Partnerships Manager or a Housing Officer, if you wish to be recognised by Brent Council. The agenda

After you have met informally and got some volunteers you need to prepare to launch your Residents' Association

Arrange an 'inaugural meeting'

for the meeting should be distributed to all invitees at least two weeks in advance of the meeting.

The purpose of the meeting is to:

- hold a democratic election of a Chair, Vice Chair (optional), Secretary and Treasurer
- to appoint general committee members. There should be a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 8 general committee members ● adopt the model constitution
- adopt the model code of conduct. This will need to be signed by the committee
- adopt the model equality and diversity policy
- decide on what you will call yourself as a group
- agree the date of the next meeting.



A Brent Council registered Residents' Association must have adopted a constitution, an equality and diversity policy and a code of conduct. This provides a guarantee to Brent Council that the association is open, democratic and supports equality and diversity. This is important as it ensures that money provided to you that comes from rents paid by residents, or generated through the management of a meeting room, is used for legitimate and transparent purposes.

What is a constitution?

A constitution is a document that sets out the rules for running the group. The constitution shows:

- who the group represents
- who can join
- what the aims of the group are
- how the group is run by clarifying responsibility
- how decisions will be made by providing a formal mechanism for making decisions and resolving disputes
- how the finances of the group will be managed and
- the equality and diversity objectives of the group.

The constitution provides a reference for members to know their rights and protects

their interest in the event that the association runs into difficulties. A model constitution (Appendix 1) has been included in this manual as a guide. It is possible to adapt it to suit your group but must include the points mentioned above and any amendment must be approved by the council.

An equality and diversity policy (Appendix 2) sets out clearly what behaviour you expect and makes it easier to challenge unacceptable language and behaviour;

- it encourages people to come forward and join the association
- it makes the association stronger and more credible
- it encourages your members to think about involving everybody.

Residents' Association Manual

Your code of conduct explains how members of your association are expected to behave in meetings and on social media (Appendix 3). It should be individually signed by all members.

Committee member roles

Recognised Residents' Associations have a committee because it is not practical to expect your whole membership to deal with the running of the group. As it is very unlikely every member will turn out for every meeting, members have a smaller group of people who look after the day-to-day affairs on behalf of the whole membership.

A committee is a group of people working together towards a common goal. However, as it is a team of people with a mixture of skills and characters, differences of opinion are natural and necessary to make the group think about what it is doing.

A good committee member:

- attends meetings regularly and arrives on time
- makes useful suggestions at meetings
- keeps comments short and to the point
- keeps in mind the goals of the organisation

- listens to others and does not interrupt
- supports others
- does what they say they will do
- abides by the group's decisions.

The executive members of the committee are the association's elected officials. These are: the Chair (and Vice-Chair), Secretary and Treasurer. Their roles have been summarised below and for reference, the role of the Vice Chair is to support the Chair in their role and act as Chair in their absence.



The Chairperson

The Chairperson has an important role to play in representing the vision and purpose of the Residents' Association. The Chairperson ensures that the committee functions properly, that there is participation at meetings, all relevant matters are discussed and that effective decisions are made and carried out. The role includes:

Ensuring the committee functions properly

- plan and run meetings in accordance to the constitution
 - ensure that everyone knows the date, time, location of the next meeting so the minutes and agenda are sent out at least 10 days in advance
- ensure matters are dealt with in an orderly, efficient manner
- bring impartiality and objectivity to meetings and decision-making.

Ensuring the organisation is managed effectively

- liaise with the Brent Council Community Engagement Officer, as appropriate, to keep an overview of the organisation's affairs
- co-ordinate the committee to ensure responsibilities for particular aspects are met
- facilitate change and address conflict within the committee, liaising with the Community Engagement Officer to achieve this
- provide leadership, support and supervision to other committee members.

Representing the organisation

- communicate effectively the vision and purpose of the Residents' Association
 - advocate for and represent the Residents' Association at external meetings and events

- be aware of current issues that might affect the Residents' Association.

Qualities and skills required

- good leadership skills
- good communication and interpersonal skills
- impartiality, fairness and the ability to respect confidences
- ability to ensure decisions are taken and followed-up
- good time-keeping
- tact and diplomacy
- understanding of the roles and responsibilities of a Residents' Association Committee.

The Secretary

The role of the secretary is to support the Chair in ensuring the smooth functioning of the committee. The Secretary's tasks include:

Ensuring responsible administration

- prepare agendas in consultation with the Chair
- circulate agendas and any supporting papers in line with the agreed constitution
- receive agenda items from other committee members
- check that quorum is present
- minute meetings and circulate the draft minutes to all committee members
- ensure that the Chair signs the minutes once they have been approved
- check that committee members and staff have carried out action(s) agreed
- circulate agendas and minutes of the annual general meeting (AGM) and any special or extraordinary general meetings in consultation with Brent Council
- ensure up-to-date records are kept of committee membership.

Making arrangements for meetings

- ensure arrangements for meetings are met (booking the room, arranging for equipment and refreshments,

organising facilities for those with special needs, etc).

Qualities and skills required

- liaise with the Chair and other committee members about financial matters
- ensure that appropriate accounting



- organisational ability
- ability to take accurate minutes
- good communication and interpersonal skills
- impartiality, fairness and the ability to respect confidences
- approachable and sensitive to the feelings of others
- well organised and an eye for detail
- ability to work well with the Chair ● good time-keeping.

- procedures and controls are in place
- ensure compliance with Brent Council's financial controls
- ensure any recommendations from Brent Council are implemented
- ensure accounts meet the conditions of agreements with Brent Council and the Community Fund (should the group have a successful bid for funding).

The Treasurer

The overall role of a treasurer is to maintain an overview of the Residents' Association's financial affairs, ensuring its viability and ensuring that proper financial records and procedures are maintained. The role and person specification are summarised below:

General financial oversight

- oversee and present budgets, accounts and financial statements

Financial planning and reporting

- present financial reports to the committee
- make a presentation of the accounts at the annual general meeting (AGM)
- advise on the financial implications of the Residents' Association's resident engagement plan
- advise on the fundraising strategy of the Residents' Association
- ensure that there is no conflict between any monies held and the aims and objects of the Residents' Association
- open and manage the bank account of the Residents' Association. Ensuring that bills are paid and income generated is recorded and banked promptly.

Qualities and skills preferred;

- good numeracy skills and the ability to manage a budget and adhere to financial controls and budgeting
- the ability to help fundraise
- good communication and interpersonal skills
- a willingness to be contacted on an ad hoc basis
- ability to ensure decisions are taken and followed-up
- good time-keeping.

Meetings

Committee members meet often, sometimes once a month or bi monthly. For all meetings you will need to consider drawing up an agenda. The Secretary will take the minutes of your meetings (a sample agenda and set of minutes are included in Appendix 4).

The agenda

- An agenda is a list of items or issues that you wish to discuss at your meeting
- An agenda makes sure that meetings are effective, structured and timely. They serve to tell those that attend what will be discussed. A time limit can be allocated to each item to keep the meeting on track
- The Secretary and Chair should prepare an agenda for all meetings and give committee members the chance to suggest any items for discussion.

Agendas should include the:

- name of the group
- date, time and place of the meeting
- items in priority order
- time limit for each item (if appropriate).

General meetings are open to all residents in the geographical area the association covers and there should be at least two meetings a year. One of which, has to be an AGM in order for an association to be registered with Brent Council. For an AGM to take place or decision to be made at a general meeting the meeting must be quorate. To keep your neighbours interested and achieve good attendance at meetings people need to feel involved.

What works well?

- Door to door canvassing – people are more likely to get involved if they feel personally recognised
- Return slips to gain views and interest in the group on newsletter and surveys

- Holding a community event and recruiting members at these events
- Reviewing times of meetings and venue details regularly to ensure certain times and venues do not exclude people from attending
- Making sure that everyone who attends a meeting is kept up to date with your news and progress.

What doesn't work well?

- Meetings that do not keep to time
- Poorly structured meetings
- Irrelevant agendas or failure to stick to an agenda
- If people do not feel welcome or involved
- Inaccessible venues
- Meetings that are not chaired effectively.

Taking minutes

Every committee or public meeting should be minuted. Minutes are a written record of what was discussed and agreed at the meeting.

There is some information that you need to record at every meeting:

- the name of your group, the date, time and place of the meeting
- apologies (a record of people who haven't been able to come to the meeting, but have let the meeting know that they won't be there. Don't record people who just haven't turned up.)
- the names of any guests, and which organisation they are from
- details of who is at the meeting. Make up an attendance sheet in advance, and pass this around for people to sign.

Tips for writing minutes

- Don't try to write everything down – it's impossible and not useful
- Concentrate on what has been decided and who is going to do it. The purpose of minutes is to record

decisions and actions agreed by the meeting

- Use simple, straightforward language. You want to be as clear as possible
- Try to sum up the issue, rather than write down all the ins and outs of a discussion and identify individuals. For example, say 'Several residents reported missed or late rubbish

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collections' rather than 'Mrs Smith said her rubbish wasn't collected last week. Tony Adams said his wasn't either and Sharon Greer said hers was always late...'

- It is not necessary to name everyone who spoke. Sometimes it is useful to, for example if they are presenting a report, but on the whole it is better to think about what the main point is, rather than who said it
- If there is a discussion about an important subject, you might want to include some key points in the minutes. For example: 'there was a

- is **not** for businesses. Banks usually charge for business accounts. (Confusingly, community accounts are usually managed by the same team in the bank as Business accounts, and will be listed on bank websites under "Business" rather than "Personal". So you will need to go to the Business section of the website, but choose a Community or Club and Society account.)

long discussion about the rubbish service and the following points were made...' List the points, not who said them

Remember that the minutes need to be understood by someone who was not at the meeting, so give a bit of background. For example, 'the people in Pepperton Court were disgusted by the rubbish in the street' rather than

'they all thought it was disgusting'

Only record what actually happened at the meeting. Don't include additional information you may have gained since the meeting.



Funding

Hall Hire Income

Some Residents' Associations manage a meeting room in their area and generate an income from the hire of the premises. This income is for use by the Residents' Association in line with the constitution. To manage a meeting room the association must have a valid licence agreement with Brent Council and adhere to the financial controls set by Brent Council (a separate guidance is available).

Community Fund

The council, subject to the approval of its annual budget, allocates a Community Fund for community projects providing facilities or activities which promote good community relations. Sponsoring projects gives Brent

Council a point of contact with residents who may not be interested in conventional participation activity and this will allow a better understanding of how local issues and problems can be tackled. Applicants can receive up to £5000 towards delivering a project that clearly demonstrates it supports the building of vibrant, diverse and resilient communities. This can include:

- building strong communities through partnership working
- increasing access to employment opportunities
- creating safer, cleaner and greener communities
- improving local residents health and wellbeing
- improving the lives of children and their families.

Residents' Associations are encouraged to apply for funding and many have been successful with their bids.

Community Fundraising

You can raise your own funds to pay for trips, social and community events. You should record any fundraising money separately in your accounts to identify the amount clearly.

Other funding

There are various organisations that have funds and grants available for voluntary groups to apply for.

They usually have conditions about who can apply and what the money can be used for. The Big Lottery Fund, for example, gives grants to organisations in the UK to help improve their communities. The money awarded comes from the UK National Lottery.

Brent Housings Community Spirit Grant – gives extra monies for Resident Associations wishing to hold a community event .

Training

Brent Council have a variety of training courses available to resident associations Courses such as: committee skills, chairing

skills, secretary skills and treasurer skills. If you are interested in training, please contact the Customer Service and Resident Engagement Manger at housingfeedback@brent.gov.uk.

Social Value

The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 requires those who commission public services to think about how they can secure wider social, economic and environmental benefits. During the procurement process the council ensures that it's contractors sign up to a commitment to improve the community that they work in. This has led to contractors offering apprenticeships, helping with gardening projects and community room improvements amongst other things. Residents' Associations should be aware that contractors can support them in the delivery of their projects and events.



6.0 Planning Events



Organising events can be a great way to let residents know about your Residents' Association and encourage them to take part. Residents' Associations can measure the social impact of an event or project by using the social value calculator. Brent Council can help associations to do this, email housingfeedback@brent.gov.uk for more information.

In the planning and preparation stages of an event, the health and safety and liability implications have to be taken into consideration.

Risk Assessment

A risk assessment should be carried out to consider the risks attached to the event and the actions required to minimise them. All aspects of health and safety should be included as part of the risk assessment. Email housingfeedback@brent.gov.uk for more information.

Insurance

Brent Council have a provision in their insurance scheme to provide public liability insurance for Residents' Associations. It is important to note that this is subject to the terms, conditions and exclusions of the policy. For example, bouncy castles and

similar inflatables are not covered and their insurance must be arranged by the hiring company. It is important that you consult the council about insurance for your event.

Licensing and Permission

You can contact Brent Council to find out whether there are any licensing requirements for your event. For example, food and drink licences. Email business.licence@brent.gov.uk

Images of residents, especially of children must not be used in publicity without the permission of the child's parent or guardian.

Safeguarding

Brent Council is committed to ensuring the safety of children and vulnerable adults. If

you think a child or adult has been harmed or are at risk of harm by an adult please contact Brent Social Care on 0208 937 4300. If they are in immediate risk call the police on 999. It should be noted that a Disclosure Barring Service (DBS) check should be carried out for all those working with children.

7.0 APPENDICES

1. Model constitution
2. Model equality and diversity policy
3. Model code of conduct
4. Agendas and meeting minutes
5. Annual registration form

6. Brent Housing Management contact list

CONSTITUTION OF

.....

Name

The name of the association shall be:
.....Residents' Association.
For the purpose of this document it will be referred to as "the association".

Area:

The area covered by the association is
.....

Aims:

The aims of the association shall be to:

- represent the interests of all residents including home owners living in the area mentioned above in matters which affect their rights regarding the management, maintenance and improvements of their housing conditions, local amenities and environment
- work with Brent Council and other authorities and organisations for the benefit of all members
- provide regular information to members and consult with the community on matters of concern
- encourage recreation and social activities, this will be open to all members, to assist in maintain good relations between all members of the community

- work towards the elimination of all forms of discrimination within the community be encouraging all members of usually excluded groups to participate in the association and its activities
- raise funds to meet the aims of the association
- be independent of control by any other body.

Membership:

Membership of the association shall be open and automatic to residents over the age of 18 living in the defined area and all members shall have an equal vote.

Membership shall be open with equal opportunities for men and women, regardless of nationality, religious beliefs, race, gender, age, sexuality, disability, marital status, or other potential cause for discrimination.

The Secretary of the association shall keep a register of all members.

All members should actively seek to represent the association positively and abide to the association's code of conduct. Members should conduct themselves in a reasonable manner when attending

meetings or any other function in connection with the association.

The Committee

The committee shall control the affairs of the association on behalf of the members.

The committee shall prepare a plan of activities and priorities for association work for approval annually by the AGM.

- Within the plan and priorities, in order to further the association's aims, the committee may:
- arrange for exhibitions, seminars, training courses or other activities
- collect and disseminate information in relation to the association's aims
- produce publications and information on paper, electronic or other form
- raise funds or receive donations for activities or projects
- purchase, lease or hire property, equipment or other rights.

The committee may produce policies and procedures for regulation and operation of the association, which shall be reported to the AGM following their initiation.

No individual may hold more than one office.

Sub-tenants of leaseholders cannot hold a committee position.

Meetings

Annual general meeting (AGM)

The committee will arrange for the AGM to take place within 15 months of the date of the

previous AGM. At the AGM, the committee will:

- report on its work during the previous year
- present a verified audited account
- stand down and allow members to elect a committee for the next term of business
- consider any recommendations or proposals by members (this should include changes to the constitution) and
- vote on changes to the constitution.

Not less than 21 days' notice of the annual general meeting shall be given to all those eligible for membership. A request for committee nominations will be included in this information.

All nominations for committee positions need to be with the secretary 14 days before the AGM. If nominations exceed committee places then elections will take place, decided by simple majority.

The Secretary will inform all members and Brent Council of the time and venue of the AGM at least 14 days before the AGM and will send out:

- a copy of the agenda ● minutes of the last AGM
- names and nominees to the committee
- notice of recommendations or proposals (including changes to the constitution)
- a copy of the audited annual accounts.

Not less than 14 days' notice shall be given to the committee of proposals to amend the constitution.

A representative from Brent Council must be invited to the AGM.

General meetings

Not less than 2 general meetings including the AGM shall be held annually and shall be open to all members to speak and vote. Decisions of general meetings of the association shall be binding on the committee.

Not less than 14 days' notice of general meetings shall be given to all members.

Special general meeting The Chair and Secretary may at any time call a special general meeting of the association, for the purpose of altering the constitution or for considering any matters which the committee may decide should be referred to the members in general. A special general meeting shall also be called at the written request of not less than members, with power to vote, from separate households who give reasons for the request.

Not less than 14 days' notice of special general meetings shall be given to all members.

Conduct of Business

At all meetings any offensive behaviour, including racist, sexist or inflammatory remarks, shall not be permitted and constitute a breach of reasonable manner;

At all meetings decisions shall be taken by a simple majority of members present and voting;

There will be no more than 2 votes per household;

The quorum for all general meetings or special meetings shall be

All voting at meetings shall be counted and recorded in the minutes;

All meetings must be minuted and minutes shall be available for inspection by members of the association.

Items to be included on the agenda must be with the secretary 14 days in advance of the meeting.

Voting at all committee meetings and at the AGM shall be by a show of hands unless a written ballot is called for by the Chairperson or any two members.

In cases where voting is tied, the Chairperson will have a casting vote.

Finance

All monies raised by the association or on its behalf will be used to further the aims of the association and for no other purpose

The Treasurer shall keep proper receipt and payment accounts of the finances of the association and shall open and maintain a bank or building society account in the name of the association.

The Treasurer shall provide regular reports on the finances of the association to the committee.

The account shall have at least two signatories, nominated by the committee, one of which must be the Treasurer. Those signatories must be unrelated and not live in the same household.

All cheques shall be signed by at least two signatories.

The Treasurer shall submit the accounts for examination by Brent Council a month before the AGM. The accounts must be approved by Brent Council's finance team before any further grant assistance becomes payable.

No payment or benefit should be received by any member of the association.

The committee members at the first committee meeting after the AGM will decide how much petty cash the Treasurer can keep. Any amount over this must be paid to the associations account.

The Treasurer is authorised to pay any expenses occurred by the members in carrying out the business of the association. Each payment must be supported by relevant receipts and recorded.

The Treasurer will provide a list of payments at all committee meetings.

Dissolution

The association may only be dissolved at a special general meeting called for that purpose and must be advertised 14 days before the meeting.

A proposal to dissolve the association shall take effect only if agreed by two thirds of the members present at the meeting.

Any assets remaining after the satisfaction of any proper debts and liabilities shall be disposed of according to the wishes of the meeting. Should an agreement not be made at the meeting, the assets can be given to Brent Council to spend on the area covered by the association.

Changes to the constitution

The constitution can only be altered at an AGM or special general meeting called for that purpose.

Any suggested changes must be handed to the secretary 14 days before the AGM.

Changes must be agreed by two thirds of the members present at the meeting.

This constitution was agreed at a general meeting:

Signed

Chair:.....

Secretary:.....

Treasurer:.....

Date:.....

Equality and diversity policy

The Residents' Association will be committed to promoting equality of opportunity to all local residents in its activities, services and practices. We believe that any form of discrimination, either direct or indirect, is wrong. We believe that such behaviour is counterproductive and harmful, not only to the association, but to our community.

We will not tolerate discrimination on the basis of:

- race
- ethnic origin
- sex
- sexual orientation or identity
- marital status
- disability
- illness
- age
- political or religious beliefs
- socio-economic background

This list is not exhaustive.

We value diversity and accept the responsibility to promote equality and diversity and challenge discrimination wherever it occurs. We recognise that some residents may say or do things which may be incompatible with this equality and diversity policy. We will do all we can to challenge such behaviour. In cases where intervention is possible we will aim to alter unacceptable attitudes and behaviour while maintaining support for the victim of the discrimination.

Signed

Chair:.....

Secretary:.....

Treasurer:.....

Date:.....

Code of conduct for Residents' Associations

It is important to note that Brent Council has a policy for resident representatives; tenants who have possession orders against them do not qualify to be representatives neither do leaseholders who fall behind with their service charge payments. This applies to elected members of the Residents' Association and a check will be conducted by the Housing Engagement and Community Development Team following an inaugural meeting or AGM.

The role of committee members is to work as a team alongside other members to achieve the aims of the association. Committee members are to accept the committee's decisions even if they are not their own.

Members should represent the Residents' Association in a positive light and champion its views to outside organisations.

Members should actively seek to represent the views of the community without discrimination or prejudice.

Association members must:

- not speak or write on behalf of the group without the prior agreement of the group.
- treat each other, Brent Council officers, councillors and council officers politely and with respect (personal attacks and abusive comments are not acceptable)
- give Brent Council officers notice of meetings (in normal circumstances this will be at least two weeks' notice)
- not ask Brent Council officers for their views about Brent Council's management, senior officers or ward councillors.
- carry out the work of their residents' association in a politically independent way.

Conflict of interest Members should disclose any interest, whether personal or on behalf of any group they represent, that they consider may affect or influence their approach to any matter under discussion.

7.0 Appendix3 Code of conduct

Meetings

Members should at all times observe accepted practice while taking part in a meeting. This involves the following:

- the Chair should welcome members and others to the meeting
- the Chair should generally avoid getting involved in debates at meetings. Their main task is to chair the meeting
- the Chair should encourage all members to be involved, but make sure that people do not dominate or take over
- only one member should speak at a time
- meetings should start at the stated time and the agenda should be followed
- late arrivals should enter quietly and not disrupt the meeting with apologies
- mobile phones should be switched off or on silent during the meeting
- if the meeting is getting heated, a break can be called at the discretion of the Chair
- wherever possible, jargon should be avoided. If it is used, then a full explanation should be given
- it is the responsibility of each member to ensure that they are prepared for the meeting by reading all the relevant papers and bringing them to the meeting

Political affiliation

Individual members may be affiliated to/or be members of a political party and as residents of the area they are entitled to be on the committee and have a vote. However, they may not represent a political party in their role as a committee member.

Confidentiality

Members should respect the confidentiality of other residents and avoid mentioning specific cases that may cause the embarrassment or identification of an individual.

Any confidential information or items shared must not be disclosed to anyone other than members of the association.

No member should share contact details of other members with a third party individual or organisation unless permission is given.

Equality and diversity

No member will discriminate against any other member of the association or the general public. Discriminatory language will not be used in discussions. All those who attend meetings have the right to be treated with dignity and respect, regardless of their race, ethnic or national origins, nationality, gender, marital status. Age, disability, sexual orientation or identity, religion or any other matter.

Social media

Social media is a term for websites that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking.

Our code of conduct provides the foundation for our guidelines for social media. The same rules that apply to your actions in general, as found in the code of conduct, apply to your conduct online.

We respect the privacy of our resident representatives and largely, what you do in your own time is your concern. When using social media for personal purposes you must not imply that you are speaking for the Residents' Association or Brent Council. Make it clear that what you say is representative of your personal views only.

You must comply with the Residents' Association code of conduct when using social media.

The Residents' Association can create social networking profiles to encourage participation by informing residents of events that have had and those that are scheduled to take place.

Ensure that those that have administration access are held accountable and the page(s) is monitored regularly. Be prepared for a twoway conversation. And be aware that people are entitled to their views. You must make sure that what you say is factual and avoid unnecessary or unproductive arguments. Handle offensive comments swiftly and with sensitivity. If a conversation turns and becomes offensive in terms of language or sentiment, make sure you inform your audience exactly why you have removed the comment... "This comment was removed because moderators found the content offensive. Comments will be responded to if they are not offensive and respect the views of others."

Social media should be used in a way that adds value to the Residents' Association and the community.

Breach of code of conduct Any member of the association or the general public who does not abide by the code of conduct can be asked to leave the meeting. The Chair may issue a warning when this first occurs and a further warning but no more than three warnings in any one meeting.

If a person continues to ignore these rules and refuses to leave the meeting after being warned by the Chair, then the Chair has the power to close the meeting.

Declaration

I have received and have read a copy of the code of conduct and I accept that any breach of the code may result in my ceasing to be a committee member of the Residents' Association.

I agree to abide by this code of conduct

Signed.....

Name.....

Date:.....

5. Committee steps down
6. Election of new committee:
Chair
Vice-Chair
Secretary Treasurer
General Members
7. Date of Next Meeting

Sample meeting minutes

Minutes of Pepperton Residents' Association general meeting held on Thursday 28th February 2016, 7-9pm

Attendees:

Tony Adams (Chair), Jan Brown (Treasurer), Doris Smith (Secretary), Sharon Greer, Tom Knowles, William Tell, Ernest Jones, Patricia Grant, Carol Perkins (Committee member), Chris Haines (Resident), Camron Taylor (Resident).
Councillor Reese Nickles and Natalie Jones from Brent Council's Housing Engagement and Community Team were also at the meeting.

Sample AGM agenda

Pepperton Residents' Association Annual general meeting Thursday 8 April Pepperton Community Centre 7pm

AGENDA

1. Introductions and apologies
2. Minutes of the last AGM
3. Matters Arising
4. Annual Reports:
Chair's
Treasurer's

1. Apologies for Absence

Andrew Hertford, Jessica Rice.

2. Minutes of the last meeting

These were agreed as a correct record of the meeting.

3. Talkback

Brent Council will be holding the next Talkback session on Wednesday March 13th at the Brent Civic Centre from 5:30pm – 8pm. Doris Smith and Carol Perkins said they would be attending.

4. Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer, Jan Brown, reported that the association has £764 in the bank and £28.67 in petty cash, making a total of £792.67.

5. Arrangements for the AGM

The Secretary, Doris Smith, reported that the Community Centre has been booked for the 8th April. There will be a social and buffet after the AGM business is over. Doris Smith and Carol Perkins offered to organise the buffet.

ACTION: Carol to organise the buffet for the AGM

6. Summer Fun Day

It was agreed to organise a summer outing to Bournemouth during the school summer holidays. Jan Brown will investigate the price of coaches, and the details will be discussed at the next meeting. **ACTION:** Jan to investigate coach prices and report back at next meeting.

7. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting is on Thursday 28th March 2016, in the Community Centre.



Application for Residents' Association Grant Year 20XX

'Building on excellence'

Application for registration

Residents' Association details

Residents' Association name

Area/s covered

Question one – association coverage

What area/s does your association cover

i.e. roads, streets, blocks or estate

Number of properties on the estate / blocks(s)

Do you collect membership subscriptions

If yes, how many subscribing members do you have

Question two – equality and diversity

How do you ensure that your residents' association is inclusive?

How do you identify residents who require translation services (state what measures are provided to ensure these members will be represented)

Committee member					
-------------------------	--	--	--	--	--

Please put any additional committee member details on a separate sheet

Question four – accountability

How many general or public meetings have been held in the last year

Date	No. attending	Method of advertisement	Purpose

Date of annual general meeting (AGM)

Copies of AGM minutes must be sent with this application

Question five – finances

Please indicate the associations main source of income
 (for example membership fees, fund raising or lettings)

Please list any assets the Residents' Association has

Banking information

Bank or building society	
Account code	
Sort code	
Account name	
Bank signatories	

Copies of bank statements, receipts, and annual accounts must be sent with this application

Summary of accounts

00/00/00	Bank balance	£
00/00/00	Plus Income	£
00/00/00	Less Expenditure	£
00/00/00	Plus any Cash in hand	£
00/00/00	Bank Balance	£

Question six – training

What training needs does the association have?

Question seven – coming tasks

What tasks does the association have for the coming year?

<u>Social Activities</u>	<u>Meetings</u>
<u>Other tasks</u>	<u>Other tasks</u>

If not approved, why

Comments

Has a copy of the Financial controls been given to the Chair, Secretary and treasurer?

	Yes/No

Final sign offs

Community Engagement Officer	
Manager	
Date	

Financial controls set by Brent Council

Brent Council set a number of rules which everyone in each Residents' Association must comply with. The treasurer and the committee need to become aware of these rules and to ensure they are followed.

By keeping to the rules, Residents' Associations can make sure that the policies of the committee are met: they safeguard assets and have an accurate record. The different records of the committee's financial policies are known as control.

Types of internal controls that resident's associations must have a plan of

Structure	Residents' Associations must have a plan of their group – a simple list setting out key tasks. It must say who is responsible for carrying out which tasks, and identify lines of reporting for all aspects of the association's activities.
Sub groups	If the group has sub-committees, or working parties, these must be included in the plan, with a line to indicate that the sub-group is responsible for reporting to the main committee about all its activities. There may also be an indication of how often they must report.
Division of duties	One of the best ways of control is separation of those responsibilities or duties, which would, if combined, enable one person to record and process a complete transaction. Dividing duties reduces the risk of intentional deception or error and increases the element of checking.

Authority	All transactions must require authorisation, or approval by an appropriate person (or several). The person or persons responsible for authorising payments and withdrawals must be specified and approved by the committee. These controls are used in the recording which checks that transactions have been authorised, that they are all included and that they are correctly recorded and accurately processed. This type of control includes someone checking the arithmetic.
Training	Training and support for volunteers who have agreed to carry out financial tasks must be provided. The community engagement officers will arrange for training.
Support	Systems of internal control must have someone or a group of people who is responsible for the day to day transactions and their recording.
Security	Security and procedures must be in place to ensure that access to computers, books of accounts; petty cash is limited to those who the committee feel are appropriate users.
Management	Controls that are exercised by the committee, outside the day-to-day routine of the recording system. They include overall controls of looking at budgets, spending, making comparisons and perhaps recommend change. Residents' Associations that manage money may need to control a number of different aspects i.e. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bank account ● Making payments ● The cash book ● The bank reconciliation
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Authorising payments ● Payment of money into the account ● The petty cash book ● Terms and conditions of grant
The Auditor	Ensuring that the committee has access to information when they need it is part of good money management. This can only be achieved by keeping good records about income and expenditure, and by having a good system of internal controls, ensuring that all members of the group know who is responsible for what.

Internal controls over income from lettings

Income is a valuable asset and is therefore susceptible to fraud or other means; therefore it is vital that appropriate controls are in place to ensure its security.

1. You must have a lettings policy in place for your Residents' Association. The lettings policy must establish the general conditions for letting your Residents' Association's premises.
2. A charging policy must be in place which covers lettings and charges for the use of your Residents' Association's facilities or equipment (where relevant). This policy must be reviewed annually.

3. All lettings must be approved by an appropriate individual within each Residents' Association in line with the lettings policy.
4. You have a system in place which ensures that your Residents' Association receives all lettings income due. Ideally payments must be made in advance or hirers required providing a deposit prior to the hire. Where possible and in order to minimise the risk of fraud, payments must be in the form of a cheque.
5. You must maintain a lettings diary or register where details of all lettings (including fees or whether free of charge) are recorded. The information on the diary must include the name and address of the hirer and the period of hire.
6. When a letting is provisionally booked the hirer must be required to complete a hire form which must be signed as evidence of acceptance of the Residents' Association's terms and conditions of hire.
7. Full details must be maintained by each Residents' Association of all expected income due from lettings.
8. Where possible an invoice must be raised for each let (recurring lets). The lettings diary must be reviewed on a regular basis in order to ensure that all lettings have been invoiced.
9. Pre-numbered receipts must be issued for all lettings income collected and these must be securely maintained.
10. All income collected (cash and cheques) must be securely stored prior to being banked. This is to safeguard against loss or theft.
11. All income from lettings must be promptly banked on receipt into the Residents' Association's bank account. Such income must not be used to fund petty cash or other expenses prior to banking.
12. You must have an independent reconciliation (at least monthly) of lettings income received and income banked.
13. There must be adequate segregation of duties to minimise the risk of fraud. This means that the person responsible for collecting monies or raising invoices must not also have responsibility for banking; undertaking reconciliations or the recording of income transactions.
14. Where invoices are issued, you must have procedures in place for cashing up invoices not paid within 30 days.

Internal controls over purchases and/or expenditure

Indicated below is a list of common controls which need to be in place with regards to expenditure incurred by organisations (small or large).

You must decide who is responsible for what with regards to its financial procedures, which includes having a list of approved / authorised signatories. The purpose of this list is to clarify who has the authority to make decisions, commit expenditure etc. on behalf of your association so that there is no confusion. Any limits to delegated authority must be clearly defined.

1. policies and procedures for purchasing of goods and services must be clearly documented. You must outline the process and authorities for ordering, receiving and paying for goods and services

2. ideally, an official purchase order must be raised for all non-utility goods and services. Purchase orders must be approved by a delegated person within your Residents' Association. Purchase orders must be issued sequentially.
3. adequate steps must be taken to ensure that value for money is obtained when purchasing goods or services
4. invoices must be checked and agreed to purchase orders and goods received notes prior to being passed for payment. They must also be checked for accuracy prior to being paid
5. all invoices must be properly approved by a delegated person within your Residents' Association prior to payment being made for goods or services
6. all paid invoices must be stamped paid in order to avoid duplicate payments being made
7. ideally and where possible, there must be adequate separation of duties between the following functions:
 - raising of purchase orders
 - approval of purchase orders, receipt of goods or services
 - payment processing, accounting, all expenditure transactions must be properly recorded.

Received by Chair _____

Signed by _____

Community Engagement Officer

Date _____

Brent Council Housing Service Contacts

You can report non-urgent repairs, pay your rent and raise queries online at www.brent.gov.uk/housingmanagement.

For general enquires please email housingmanagement@brent.gov.uk or call Brent Council's Customer Response Team on 0208 937 2400 between the following hours:

□ Monday to Friday 8am to 5pm

7.0 Appendix 6 Brent Council contact list

Social media contact



Follow Brent Council on Twitter
[@Brent_Council_Housing](https://twitter.com/Brent_Council_Housing)



Like Brent Council on Facebook
www.facebook.com/brentcouncilhousing

Get Involved

There are a variety of ways that residents can have their say in the way Brent Council delivers its housing services. For further information contact the Housing Engagement and Community Development Team:

online: www.brent.gov.uk/housingmanagement

by email: housingfeedback@brent.gov.uk