

Committee skills

Information booklet



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1. Introduction

Welcome

Welcome to the chairing skills course. We hope you find it useful in your role as a resident representative as a new member of a committee or a 'refresher' for those who already have experience on committee.

There is a lot of information in this booklet that we hope will help you develop as individual committee member and as a team of volunteers.

Learning outcomes

By working your way through this booklet you will be able to:

- Identify what makes an effective committee
- Understand the roles within a committee
- Know what makes a good/bad committee member
- Understand how you can help the committee to challenge behaviour
- Understand the role of the agenda and minutes

Feedback

Camden Council always wants to improve its services; this includes the information we send out to as part of our 'training offer' to you. Please help us by completing the feedback form and sending it to tp@amden.gov.uk. If you are frank in your feedback, this will help us to improve.

Jargon Buster

Here are some of the words which are used regularly by committees:

Governing Documents	<p>The documents by which the organisation is managed; includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Constitution – set out the aims and objectives of the organisation and the framework within which the organisation is managed.➤ Code of Conduct – sets out the behaviour expected of members, particularly committee members, of the organisation➤ Equal Opportunity and/or Diversity Policy – sets out how the association will involve all members of the community it represents.➤ Financial Policy – sets out how the association will manage its finances in detail (some of this is contained within the constitution)
Agenda	<p>A list of topics to be discussed or noted at the meeting</p>
Chair	<p>The person responsible for making sure the meeting runs smoothly and keeps to topic.</p>
Minutes	<p>A written record of the meeting; minutes become 'approved' documents once they have been agreed as accurate at the next appropriate meeting: i.e. next committee meeting for committee; next general meeting for open meeting (including AGM)</p>
Annual General Meeting (AGM)	<p>Annual open meeting of a group to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Report back to members on the previous years work.➤ Present the accounts (verified or audited).➤ Accept resignations of committee.➤ Elect new committee.➤ Get members views on priorities for the coming year.
Proposer	<p>A person who puts forward a clear suggestion (sometimes called a motion) for a decision which is binding on the committee.</p>
Seconder	<p>A person who supports the proposer's suggestion, thereby making a vote a requirement for the meeting.</p>
Vote	<p>A count of opinions. People can vote for or against a suggestion put forward or they can choose to abstain (not vote). If more people vote for the suggestion then the point is carried (won) and vice versa. If the vote is successful then it is binding on the whole committee to make sure it is completed, even those who have voted against it.</p>
Quorum/Quorate	<p>This is the number of people required to make a decision on behalf of the members. It is usually stated in the governing documents (constitution). If a meeting is inquorate then no decisions can be made.</p>
Resolutions	<p>These are planned suggestions or motions – they should be separate agenda items, and are usually important enough to expect all member to have a say, for example changes to the constitution; dissolution of the group.</p>
Constituents	<p>The people that the committee are elected to represent; all those eligible to vote for committee members. Usually identified in the governing documents</p>

2. Committees – What are they?

Committee Definitions

Below are two definitions of a committee. The first is a classical one and the second is a reflection of a person's personal experience; people who have experience of committees should be able to relate to both.

- A group of people appointed to perform a specific service or function. (Collins English Dictionary)
- A cul-de-sac down which ideas are lured and then quietly strangled. (Sir T.G.B Cocks, New scientist, 1973)

To make sure that the second definition is avoided a committee needs to be seen as an open, democratic body which represents all the people identified in its governance documents, including:

- Those who elected them
- Those they say they represent; and
- Those who find it hard to express their views elsewhere

If a committee is perceived as a group of people which only represents the views of the committee members, and not the constituents, then the organisation will have failed.

The role of the committee

The committee is a group of people elected annually by the wider membership to run the 'business' of the organisation for that period. They are effectively the stewards of the organisation for that period. Their role and duties includes:

- To represent all the members who make up the constituents and elected you to represent them
- To keep the organisation focussed on achieving its aims as set out in the governance documents – i.e. the constitution
- To be open, transparent and accountable to the members
- To conduct the business of the organisation to the highest standards.
- To positively promote the work of the organisation to members and other organisations
- To take joint responsibility for the finances of the organisation
- To ensure that the organisation meets all its legal and funding criteria
- To accept joint responsibility for the organisations decisions
- To maintain a long term view for the organisation and leave a good legacy for those who follow

Any committee will be made up of individuals with different life experiences, skills and abilities. These differences should not detract from the groups ability to function, rather each persons individuality should enhance this. To make sure that this is the case each member of the committee should respect others right to have a different view and find a way them to compliment each other for the benefit of the committee, the members and partnering organisations.

Within each committee there are a number of defined roles; these are:

The chair's role (and vice chair if appropriate)

It is the chair who makes sure things get done; he or she is **not** the person who does everything. The chair supports other committee members in carrying out their role in the committee. The chair role includes:

- Makes sure the committee are working towards achieving the stated aims of the association
- Ensures the committee are functioning properly
- That everyone has the opportunity to participate at meetings
- All relevant matters are discussed
- Decisions are made, and acted upon
- All the work is carried out by the people who agreed to do it
- Supports the rest of the committee to complete tasks
- Promotes the work of the committee to other individuals and organisations

In addition to this the chair should also organise regular reviews of governance documents; work with the committee and members to develop an annual action plan; and lead the organisation's development of better communication with TRA members, councillors, officers and partners.

The **vice-chair** is the chair's deputy in his or her absence. It is important that the vice-chair understands the chair's role so that he or she can step in when required. The vice-chair must be kept up-to-date on the group's activities and attend meetings regularly.

The secretary's role

The role of a secretary is to support the chair in making sure that the committee is effective. A key part of this role is to ensure that the Administration functions of the committee run smoothly. The secretary is responsible for:

- Making sure that the minutes of meetings are taken (and a record is kept).
- To keep a record of all those who attend each meeting.
- To notify the chair of any issues – e.g. the meetings are inquorate, clarifying decisions for minutes, informing meetings of apologies, etc.
- Sending invitations to relevant people, and receiving acknowledgements of attendance.
- Receiving and sending correspondence on behalf of the group. Informing the committee of all correspondence.
- Assisting with the production of publicity on behalf of the group.
- To keep a copy and appropriate files on behalf of the group.
- To assist with the arrangements for social events as agreed by the group committee.

The secretary's role is one that can be split between committee members. If a group decides to do this they should clarify the responsibility of each different role. For example:

- **Minutes Secretary** – responsible for taking and distributing minutes.
- **Social Secretary** – responsible for arranging and promoting social activities of the group.
- **Public Relations Secretary** – responsible for the production of all publicity and literature on behalf of the group. This person could also be responsible for ensuring that the group hold events to celebrate their success.

The treasurer's role

The role of the treasurer is vital to any committee. This is the role that is critical to the group being able to plan for future events and ongoing costs. The treasurer main duties include:

- Open or maintain the bank account of the organisation; making sure that the bank mandate is kept up to date and that the required number of signatories is on it.
- Keep accurate record of the organisations income and expenditure, and financial transactions.
- Regularly provide finance information to enable the committee to make informed decisions on planned expenditure and budgets.
- Allow members to inspect the accounts in accordance with agreed procedure.
- Pay from the accounts any expenditure agreed by the committee promptly.
- Annually prepare the accounts to be audited or verified by an independent body.
- Present the audited or verified accounts to the AGM and answer relevant questions from members.
- Maintain an up to date Asset Register for the organisation .

The treasurer is the one who advises the committee on finances, **not** the one who makes the financial decisions – this remains the responsibility of the committee based on the advice given.

Note: For further information on the roles of committee members see the roles and profiles in the supporting documents section.

How the committee functions

Meetings:

Most committee's run the business of the association through meetings. There is a section on running effective meetings later in the pack.

Sub-committees:

Where the governance documents permit it – organisation's can establish sub-committees through which they work. A sub-committee is a small group of people assigned a certain role from the committee. The general practice is that a sub-committee makes recommendations for decisions to the full committee; however, some governing documents allow sub-committees to be given delegated decision making powers from the committee. Regardless of where the decision is made, the responsibility for the decision lies with the committee.

There are two types of sub-committees:

- Standing sub-committees: These are permanent sub-committees, and could include finance or leaseholders
- Time limited sub-committees: These are sub-committees that are set up to look at a certain aspect of the work and report back to the committee or make decisions on behalf of the committee.

When sub-committees are in place they should have a clear 'Terms of Reference' set out by the committee. The Terms of Reference should state:

- Whether the sub committee is there to make recommendations to the committee or have they got delegated decision making power. If they have decision making power it should be clear how far that goes – many groups align this with a financial limit.
- Who can sit on the sub-committee – i.e. can it only be committee members or can it be taken from interested members of the association. If it is from all the membership then usually a committee member sits as the chair of the sub-committee.
- What the group has been established to look at – i.e. what it will and will not do.
- How and the frequency the sub-committee will report back to the committee.
- What, if any, budget the sub-committee has to carry out its work.

Any terms of reference need to be distributed to the committee and members of the sub-committee.

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) and other open meetings

The AGM is a critical meeting for showing what you have achieved and your democratic accountability. The AGM is a requirement for all organisations (private and voluntary) and is part of the recognition criteria for Camden. It is the one meeting that will have a specific clause in your governance documents stating when you should hold it and how you should notify members. At the AGM the committee should:

- Report on its work during the previous year
- Present the audited or verified accounts
- Accept the resignation of the committee members
- Accept nominations and elect a new committee
- Consider any resolutions put forward by members – including changes to the constitution
- Identify the priorities for the coming year

Other open meetings give the committee an opportunity to inform the wider membership of the work of the committee and check back on priorities.

Special General Meetings (SGM):

A special general meeting is usually called when the committee want to inform members of an important matter that will have an impact on them and get a decision on how the committee should react to it on their behalf. i.e. change to the constitution, dissolution of the association, proposal for major works, etc.

When a SGM is called the only items discussed are those that are on the agenda – no other matters are brought to the meeting.

Planning for new members:

In many residents and community groups the majority of the work is done by the same few individuals who stand for the committee year on year. This can be tiring work and frustrating for those individuals. It can also lead to stagnation and lack of enthusiasm in the existing committee. All committees need to attract new members, people who will inject new ideas, ways of working and enthusiasm to the committee. The existing members should welcome these people and recognise that they may have to change to embrace the new ideas. Here are some suggestions for attracting the new people:

- Approach individuals directly – it is flattering to be asked, and more difficult to say no.
- Stress how important the work of the committee is – this helps if you have been informing people of and celebrating your successes with them.
- Offer some form of shadowing for new members – can existing members give up some of their time to help new members. Don't forget the new members will take some of the work on board and may free up existing members time.
- Use sub-committees and peoples individual skills to get them involved. Does your membership have people who are good at publicity – can they support the work of the committee without being a full member? They can always become a committee member at a later date.
- Develop an induction pack – so people have an idea what they are getting involved with – the induction pack should have:
 - Constitution
 - Code of conduct
 - Policies that the Association has adopted
 - 'Job' profiles – see back of booklet
 - Information on your successes
 - Planned work
- Look at the training that can be offered – show how this can benefit other areas of life – for example increasing employment skills/knowledge.
- Advertise for members regularly – and have some work that they can get their teeth into.
- Welcome new members at meetings – ask them to identify what support they may want/need – try to put this in place as soon as possible.

Run your meetings effectively – there is nothing more off putting for potential members than to attend a poor meeting where everyone is disagreeing with each other or being negative about suggestions put forward.

Reviewing the association's governance documents:

All good committees will regularly review its governing document and policies. This makes sure that they are up to date and effective. Where the review shows that this is not the case the committee should take the opportunity to make changes and align the documents with best practice. Some useful questions to ask include:

- Is the constitution up to date and relevant to what we want to achieve?
- Is our Equality and Diversity policy up to date – does it meet all new legislation and best practice?
- Is our finance policy and procedure adequate and robust enough to minimise financial risk to the group?
- Would committee members benefit from training and how do we make sure that it is provided? (Note: this should be asked annually)
- Is our communications to all member good, if not what can we do to improve it and what support do we need?
- Do we celebrate our successes?
- Is there issues' or concerns that we need to deal with amongst committee members?
- Are we answering the concerns of our members and representing them at the right forums?
- Should be develop an induction pack for potential or new members?

3. Effective Meetings

Meetings are part of everyday life for many people. For residents groups the main regular meetings are committee, general and the AGM. Other meetings are usually external one organised by a number of different organisations, e.g. council, police, etc.

Whether you have been invited to attend a meeting, or you are responsible for arranging it, proper planning and preparation for meetings makes the difference between it being a good experience or a waste of time.

WHAT IS A SUCCESSFUL MEETING?

Very generally a successful meeting is the one where people who attended got what they wanted from it. And, the key to having a successful meeting is **Proper Planning and Preparation**.

PLANNING THE MEETING

Think about why the meeting is being held

To run a successful meeting it is important to have a clear idea of why the meeting is being held and what the aims are.

Do you know what you want to get out of it? Have you a good idea what other people will be expecting from the meeting? Consider carefully why the meeting is being called. It could be for one or more of a number of reasons, such as:

- to give or receive information
- to get information
- to test reactions to ideas
- to pool ideas and experience on a particular subject
- to gain understanding of each other's points of view
- to come to an agreed decision that the majority can support
- to jointly problem solve
- to build partnerships between groups
- to develop trust and morale amongst members

Think about the people who will be attending the meeting

Consider who you want to attend the meeting. Do you want to invite people to talk about their speciality or have a guest speaker? Will it be useful to have a local Councillor present? Think about how you can encourage people to come to the meeting.

It is important to consider:

Appropriate size of meeting:

- If the meeting has to be arranged to distribute information then you will be aiming to maximise attendance.
- If the aim of the meeting is to work out a new policy a smaller meeting of the appropriate people will be more effective.

Time:

- People have other commitments so arrange meetings at convenient or regular times that allow people to place the meeting in their diaries.

- Arrange the meeting so that there is enough time to deal with the business properly but not waste time.

Location:

- Make sure that the place where you hold the meeting is accessible to all who you want to attend e.g. is it well served by public transport, is there car parking space, will the location exclude people?

Venue:

- Is the venue you have in mind an appropriate size for the meeting and accessible for people with mobility difficulties?
- Are their catering facilities?
- Is it adequately heated?

Seating:

- Is it comfortable and can it be arranged in a suitable layout for the meeting.
- See Chart

Audio and Visual and translation needs:

- Will you need to arrange for translator, signers or for a room with induction loop?
- Do you need Overhead Projector, slides, video to help explain message?

Home Comforts:

- Are you providing refreshments?
- Are toilet facilities available?
- Are you going to provide writing materials?

Publicity

- People need to know that the meeting is going to be held. Particularly if you are arranging a public meeting you need to think about giving people adequate notice.
- A general rule of thumb is a week to a fortnight. Any longer than this and people will forget about it. Any less and it will be too late to fit into diaries.
- To increase attendance at meetings it also helps to send out an extra reminder slip one or two days before the meeting.
- The personal touch of asking people to attend can work wonders.

Notice:

- If the meeting is part of a regular cycle, what is the usual period of notice that has to be given? For residents groups the AGM notification will be in the governing documents
- Will the notice of the meeting need to go out with the minutes of the last meeting? This is good practice, however not always achievable.

PREPARING FOR THE MEETING

Prepare an Agenda.

- The chair should try to discuss this with other people who will be involved in the meeting to make sure that all-important items are covered.
- The importance of the agenda is to have the items that need to be discussed in a logical order of importance so that at the meeting they all receive an appropriate amount of discussion time.

Prepare any relevant paperwork.

- If this is the background information to decisions that have to be made at the meeting send it out with the notice so that people can read it before the meeting.
- If it's going to confirm information given out at the meeting prepare handouts to clarify the issues discussed.

Decide what the ground rules for the meeting are going to be e.g.

- Standards of acceptable behaviour – see code of conduct
- How will voting be dealt with – see the governance documents
- How long will the meeting last – this should be clear on any notices sent out
- Who is going to keep a record of the discussion

- How the information will be circulated after the meeting.

Prepare the room

- Put up notices to direct people to the room if required
- Check that the audio visual equipment is in place and working
- Set out the chairs
- Set out refreshments if being provided
- Put out name cards for speakers and guests if being used
- Put out paper and pens if providing them
- Put out glasses of water for speakers
- Have spare copies of agendas and minutes in case people have forgotten theirs or are new to the meeting
- Have sufficient copies of reports and hand outs prepared

Prepare yourself mentally:

- If you are chairing the meeting go through the agenda and think about how you are going to introduce items and what decisions need to be made.
- Think about what questions you may be asked and find out the answers before you go to the meeting if possible.
- Think about the people who are likely to come to the meeting. If you know that they ask awkward questions or will behave badly rehearse mentally how you will cope with them. See dealing with people section.

DURING THE MEETING

So you are chairing the meeting! Your special role will be to:

- Ensure that the meeting starts on time
- Make sure that the newcomers and guests are welcomed and that everyone is introduced
- Keep the group to the Agenda and timescales
- Open each agenda item, identifying any decisions that need to be made, or pass/hand this task to a more appropriate member of the group if necessary
- Assist in finding common ground, especially in conflict situations
- Ensure that everyone understands and has the opportunity to participate in the discussions but tactfully keep to the timescale.
- Make sure that any 'jargon' is understood by all participants
- Remain impartial in the discussion
- Keep the meeting focused on its objectives and stop any irrelevant discussion
- Stop speakers who are waffling
- Ensure that the discussion points are summarised and decisions are clarified and noted
- Summarises the meeting and confirm to the participants the action to be taken
- Thank all the participants who have agreed to take action
- Thank all the participants for attending
- Set the agreed date, time and place of the next meeting.
- Close the meeting

Attendees Roles

- Arrive on time and well prepared.
- Keep to the agenda
- Listen to others without interrupting
- Support the chair to find common ground in discussions
- When contributing to the discussions keep to the point
- Speak clearly and through the chair
- Welcome guest and new members

- Respect other members opinion – whether you agree or disagree
- Avoid using 'jargon' or check that everyone understands

GETTING THE BEST OUT OF THE MEETINGS THAT YOU ATTEND

Everyone can help to make the meeting a success by trying the following suggestions.

Before the meeting:

- Read the agenda and papers before the meeting.
- If you do not know what the discussion points are about see if you can find out from someone else. For example ask the Chair or secretary.
- When you know what items are on the agenda check out the background. Find out the answers to the questions that are likely to come up.
- Be clear about what input you want to have on particular items – make notes to remind you if necessary.

AT THE MEETING

All members should support the chair in making sure that the meeting is run properly and clear decisions are made. You can do this by:

- Keeping to the point – use any notes you have made to help you do this.
- Sticking to the agenda.
- Clarifying any issues before the meeting.
- Encouraging other to participate.
- Listening to others without interrupting.
- Raising points through the chair – interrupting colleagues.

There are two golden rules for meetings:

1. If you are inviting councillors, council officers or others, only expect answers on issues that the person has knowledge of or the authority to action. This means making sure that the relevant people are invited.
2. Only promise what you can deliver to anyone who asks whether they are a TRA member, a councillor, a council officer or a partner organisation.

AFTER THE MEETING

If you have organised the meeting your most important task is to make sure that all participants receive a copy of the minutes or meeting notes. This will give each individual a record of the meeting and the tasks to be completed from it.

It is also important for the chair to chase up and support individuals who agreed to do things.

All members should accept and publicly support decisions made at the meeting – you have a collective responsibility to do this.

If you agreed to do anything make sure that you do it.

4. A good agenda

What is a good agenda?

All good meetings have a good agenda. This really helps with the minute-taking.

A good agenda should have:

- **A time frame:** if the association has a procedure for placing items on the agenda, this will help with the timings. If not, a chair can negotiate this at the start of the meeting or on each item.
- **Logical order:** the TRA 'officers' who prepare the agenda should consider this. You may need a decision on one item before you move onto the next. For example, if you were looking at investing money in an event, a treasurer's report would help you make an informed decision, so you would put this above any discussion on the event.
- **Clear agenda items:** an agenda item that refers to 'ASB', for example, would mean different things to different people, such as noise nuisance; issues with dog mess or young people hanging around. Be clear – if it means all the above, say so and give specific times for each element. This stops confusion in meetings.
- **Clear 'presenters':** who presents an item? Should it always be the chair? Why, if they are not the person putting the item on the agenda?
- **Purpose of each agenda item, for example is it for:**
 - Information, record or note
 - Discussion
 - Decision or approval.
- **Clear procedure for placing items on the agenda:** This will help with the preparation of the agenda – people know how to place an item on the agenda – and that they will be expected to present it. It will also help prevent abuses of AOB (see below).

As chair, you should be aware that some people do not like speaking in public. You may want to help by presenting the item and asking them to expand on your summary of it.

Abuses of AOB

Any other business (AOB) is often abused. Remember that this comes at the end of a long meeting – people are tired and mentally getting ready to go home. AOB should only be used:

1. For real emergency items that cannot wait.
 2. To brief members on a potential agenda item for a following meeting, where a full discussion and decision will be made.
- **Important items left to AOB:** many times, important items are left to be discussed under AOB. This should not happen. It prevents a full discussion taking place and sometimes wrong decisions being made.
 - **Short-cuts procedures:** procedures are there to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to add to the agenda. If members continually use AOB to avoid placing items on the agenda, why have an agenda?
 - **Dumping ground for difficult subjects:** too often AOB is used for discussing difficult subjects – invariably it leads to no decision being taken and the item continually coming back to the group (usually under AOB) again. If the group has a difficult item to discuss it should be a proper agenda item with appropriate time to make a decision.

- **Personal agendas:** many people raise personal items under AOB, things such as 'my tap's not working'. These can be taken outside the meeting and dealt with separately, leaving people free to go home.
- **Difficult for chair to control end time of meeting:** no control of AOB makes it hard to give a clear end time for the meeting. This will affect attendance and on how useful people find the meeting.

Suggested AOB protocol

- Anyone who wants to raise an item must tell the chair or secretary 15 minutes before the meeting is due to start. If this is not done the item cannot be raised.
- The chair will decide if the item can be raised under AOB or left until the next meeting as an agenda item.
- It must be clear what is expected from raising the item – is it for information, discussion or decision? This will help the chair decide whether to allow the item or place it in the next agenda.

5. Minuting meetings

Why take minutes?

- As an agreed record of decisions made at the meeting:
 - Shows the meeting was quorate - attended by enough members to make a decision
 - Shows that decisions took place legally
 - Records decisions accurately and dispassionately
- As an action reminder for people who have been given a task:
 - Helps the chair to support people
 - Actions are reported back under matters arising
- As a source of information for people outside the organisation. The minutes:
 - Show that the committee is working effectively
 - Show compliance with governing documents
 - Show the organisation's openness and accountability
- Once the minutes have been agreed they have 'approved' status

The minute-taking-team

Role of chair

- Summarises discussions
- Clarifies decisions
- Sets the agenda (logically)

Role of secretary

- Helps to prepare the agenda
- Invites people – making sure that they have the information to get to the meeting
- Send out meeting papers and reports – usually with invites
- Ensures that appropriate reports are at the meeting
- Advises the chair on processes as required

Role of the minute-taker

- Ensures that people sign in to the meeting, which is particularly important for confirming there is quorum (this is the number of people the governance document states is needed for a decision to be valid)
- Receiving and reporting apologies
- Ensuring papers to be discussed and past minutes are available at the meeting, in case someone has forgotten theirs
- Writing the minutes, or notes to be drafted as minutes later
- Alerting the chair to procedural issues, for example that there are not enough people present for the meeting to be held, that it is deviating from agenda or that there are confused decisions
- Ensuring minutes are signed (once agreed), and filed away

Preparation for minute-taking

The minute-taker should:

- Be familiar with the issues
- Identify who is 'present' and who is 'in attendance' (see note below)
- Understand the agenda
- Have an agreed protocol with the chair
- Prepare all the paperwork you will need for the meeting
- Check the equipment is ready and working
- Be aware of the governing documents and procedures.

Note: People identified as present will be voting members of the meeting e.g. for committee meetings they will be elected committee members; for an AGM they will be all members entitled to vote. People shown as in attendance would be people not entitled to vote at the meeting; e.g. Councillors, council officers, guests.

6. Meeting documents

In this section you will find the following example documents to assist with running your meeting:

1. Agenda
2. Pro-forma for submitting agenda items
3. Matters arising report
4. An example and explanation of minutes
5. Example of meeting rules
6. Productive Meetings Guidelines

Agenda

Meeting	
Date	
Venue	

No	Agenda item	Person presenting	Time allocated	Confidential item
1	Attendance			
2	Introductions			
3	Apologies			
4	Previous minutes			
5	Matters arising (not on agenda)			
6	Correspondence			
Items for decision				
7				
8				
9				
Items for discussion				
10				
11				
12				
Items for information				
13				
14				
15				
Items for next agenda				
16				

An example and explanation of minutes

Type of meeting	Committee
Date and time	22 April 2015, 7.30pm
Venue	Camden community hall
Present	<i>[List of all those allowed to vote at the meeting]</i>
Attending	<i>[List of those at the meeting who can't vote]</i>
Apologies	<i>[List of people unable to be at the meeting]</i>

Introductions/apologies

The chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. The committee introduced themselves. The secretary introduced Joe Bloggs, the guest speaker, to members. Apologies as listed above.

Note: at committee meetings, introductions are usually waived unless there is a guest, new or potential new member. It is good practice to do introductions before all public meetings, but usually only the committee and guest are introduced

1. Previous minutes

These were agreed to be correct.

Note: where an error has been made, the minute-taker should identify where the minutes need to be amended. The chair should then sign the minutes as an agreed, accurate record of the meeting.

2. Matters arising (not on the agenda)

There were no matters arising.

Note: this is where any action taken resulting from the minutes should be noted. If there are action points they should be referenced back to the minutes. Any matters arising that are included in the current agenda should be dealt with under the agenda item.

3. Correspondence

Note: all correspondence should be listed, marked as noted and any action or decision recorded. For example:

a) Letter from Mr Smith re consultation about service charges: noted, Secretary to arrange meeting with council officers as soon as possible, all committee members welcome to attend.

4/5/6. Agenda item

All headings in the minutes should be numbered and named as they are on the agenda. Record the relevant points of the discussion. Note any decision or action the committee agrees to take and who was to take the action. Decisions and or actions can be recorded as below.

Decision or action	By whom
Write letter	Secretary

7. Any other business

Note: It is helpful to write this in alphabetical or numerical list form (this should make it easier to refer to later), note discussion points and any action agreed by committee.

8. Date of next meeting

Note: some committees find it useful to diary a number of meetings well in advance. Always clarify the date of next meeting and confirm the venue before the meeting closes.

Close

The person recording the meeting should note time meeting finished.

Individual repairs will be noted after the meeting

This should avoid the problem of people discussing these during the meeting. It shows that the residents' association is willing to bring this up with housing staff but it is not the sole point of discussion at meetings.

Example of meeting rules

1. The meetings will begin and end on time
2. We will all help to keep the meeting to time and agenda
3. We will not accept anyone attending the meeting under the influence of alcohol or drugs
4. We will respect each other's views – the diversity of views will help our discussions, not hinder them
5. We will listen carefully to what each person has to say, without interruption
6. We will prepare for the meeting by reading all the information provided and if necessary speaking to someone (the chair, Secretary or person who placed item on the agenda) before the meeting for clarification purposes
7. Officers and residents will work in partnership. We will show this by supporting the collective decisions of the meeting
8. We will keep focused on why the group exists, as set out in the aims and objectives
9. We will look for positive solutions, not focus on the past. We will use the experience of the past to improve the future, not hold us back
10. We will have fun

Productive meetings guidelines for Committee members:

To avoid meetings being inefficient and in effective research has suggested that the following actions would help:

Action:	Reason for Action:
1. Preparing and distributing an agenda in advance of the meeting.	This allows participants to know who is attending, how to prepare and what the decisions and objectives are.
2. Consulting with participants before the meeting.	This ensures that all participants are properly prepared and do not forget anything.
3. Establish specific time parameters.	This avoids wasting time and allows participants to prepare for the meeting; meetings should begin and end on time!
4. Maintain focussed discussion.	Disruptions, interruptions and irrelevant discussions should be discouraged so that the meeting can concentrate to the issue in hand. If other people attend – this will also encourage them to attend again.
5. Encouraging and supporting participation by all attending.	The best ideas may be in the head of the silent members who need encouragement and support to engage. If only one or two people dominate it will put others off participating, and discourage potential members.
6. Encourage a clash of ideas.	Constructive disagreement are sometimes necessary to good decision making. This helps to avoid domination of the few.
7. Discouraging clashes of personality.	Personal attacks cause anger and hostility within groups. They detract from the purpose/aims and the group effectiveness. Ultimately – if not dealt with they can cause the group to fail.
8. Facilitate careful listening.	This ensures that the group have a clear understanding of what is being said and why. When members are discussing other things while others are making a point it is both disrespectful and can cause misperceptions and confusion.
9. Bringing proper closure.	The leader should end by summarising achievements and making sure that all participants are clear about what they have agreed to do.

7. Dealing with people in meetings

Recognising differences

All tenants' and residents' associations will have a committee. The committee is a group of individuals elected by the members to run the business of the TRA for a fixed period, usually one year. The chair and committee have a duty to make sure that they keep to the aims and objectives of the TRA, which are set out in the constitution. Most committees meet regularly to discuss and guide the business of the TRA.

The committee will have a mixture of skills, abilities and values. As with any group of people, there will be differences of opinion and interpretation of what is needed, based on their individual life experiences. These differences should not be detrimental to the group's ability to achieve. Rather, each person's individuality should enhance this. To make this happen each committee member should recognise that:

- The different life experiences will enhance the group's overall ability to find solutions to the issues faced
- We should respect other members' views when it differs from ours
- The committee will make better decisions for the group and the people they represent – especially where the committee reflects the members.
- Difference is actually complementary – not adversary.

This all sounds good, and would be an excellent scenario to find oneself in. However, we live in the real world and unfortunately differences often create issues for the group and the chair.

The group should have a number of policies to help them get through some of the difficulties, as they state clearly what the values of the group are. These include:

- Code of conduct
- Equal opportunities or diversity statement or policy, or both.
- Financial Guidelines.

Examples of all these are attached.

The chair is responsible for making sure that all committee members and people who attend the meeting know that the group has these documents and that everyone expects to be guided by them in the meeting, and where appropriate, outside it. The documents cover most issues that cause conflict within a group. They do not however cover individuals' personality, behaviour and attitudes. Set out below are some documents that offer guidance and possible solutions to dealing with those as a chair and committee.

Getting the best out of people

Fortunately, most people who attend meetings are nice and have a positive, constructive attitude during meetings. However, on occasion personality-related issues do arise. When this happens it is the responsibility of the chair, with support of other committee members, to deal with the issues – hopefully without causing offence. Set out in the table are some generalised examples of different personality types that may cause an issue – and some suggestion for a chair to help resolve them

Personality type	How to identify them	Suggestions for Chairs/Committee members
The attention-seeker	Will constantly chatter, is very wordy in responses and tend to interrupt the flow of the discussion, often going off at a tangent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Break up their monologue – summarise what they have said and then direct a question to another member. • If they interrupt or make an unrelated point; refer to the issue by saying ‘Perhaps we can come back to that later, at the moment we are discussing . . .’
The ghost	Sits quietly making no contribution to the discussion or group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find out why – outside of the meeting – they could: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Be seeking attention - Feel out of their depth - Feel dominated by stronger, more experienced personalities • Encourage comments based on their experience and show its value to the discussion – this will build their confidence. • Try to avoid putting them ‘on the spot’ – this may knock their confidence and make the problem worse. • See if they would like some coaching, mentoring or training, to build their confidence.
The cynic	Thinks that all meetings are a waste of time. That nothing ever gets done. That they have better things to do anyway. The trouble may be that they are right!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You will have to prove that you are serious – do this by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Running the meetings ‘professionally’ - Follow through on actions - Support members to complete actions • Work with them – they could be a good ally
The goalkeeper	Blocks every suggestion without sound reason	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus the group’s attention on their answers • Ask them to explain their reasons – this should help them not to react negatively and think about their comments • Be cautious. Do not make them look foolish: this may prove negative as you may lose them or they may seek revenge which will add to problem

The egotist	Has got all the answers and does not want to listen to others' points of view. They will try to keep the discussion focused on their own interpretation of the situation or solution – they are certain they are right.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An effective way is to let them have their say first. Listen, without interruption. This unsettles them and can make them feel uncomfortable • You may also have to be assertive and say that it is time to move to another agenda item
The pitbull	Is naturally aggressive and insensitive in the way that they express themselves. They can create resentment and unpleasant arguments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They must be dealt with quickly and firmly in meetings • You may have to call a break to calm things down or postpone the meeting • Talk to them privately – ask them to provide a solution – if you try to impose one they may get more aggressive
The latecomer	<p>There are two types of latecomers:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Genuine: it is unusual and there is a genuine reason for it. 2. Persistent: it is a regular habit for them to be late – they usually do not have a good reason. This can be a real nuisance and is disruptive. If not challenged it may spread to other members. 	<p>Genuine:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accept the situation with good grace • Tell them that you will brief them on what they missed after the meeting – and continue <p>Persistent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell them that the meeting started on time – and you will not give an update to them – this may highlight the issue and get them to arrive on time • If it continues – you will have to take further action outside the meeting, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Point out the impact their lateness is having on the meeting. - Raise timekeeping as an agenda item – seek solutions from the members of the meeting. - Remove them from the meeting in future – this may seem dramatic – but if it is not challenged, this behaviour could soon spread.
The absentee	Continually sends apologies or just does not turn up. This can annoy other members if not dealt with.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does the Code of Conduct say? • Speak to the member privately – find out what the issues are, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Day and time of the meeting is inconvenient – can you do anything about it? - They feel that they cannot contribute – try building their confidence (see 'Ghost') - They are basically not interested – resign and get someone else.
The comedian	Finds it difficult to be serious about anything. Can be useful in easing tension in the group – but continual wise-cracking is not constructive.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Similar to attention-seeker – treat in the same way

The conversationalist

Like to hold a separate conversation, or even a mini meeting, whilst the main discussion is taking place.

- Do not allow it – it is a sign of losing control.
- Politely ask them to stop. Point out that it is confusing the discussion and making it difficult to take minutes.

Open conflict in meetings:

Although problem personalities can create conflict in meetings, it can arise without them. Open conflict is not necessarily a bad thing – it shows that people are involved, committed and not just sitting on the sidelines. However, it does need to be handled carefully to avoid it being destructive. Conflict can arise from:

1. Personal animosity
2. Unhealthy 'competition' between members
3. Differing values and beliefs
4. Misunderstanding of the meeting's or organisation's purpose, aims and objectives.

When dealing with conflict, the chair should understand and if necessary re-emphasise the governing documents: constitution (aims and objectives etc), code of conduct, meeting rules, finance guidelines, or diversity statement or policy. Below are some tips for dealing with open conflict. The overall role of the chair is to find an acceptable resolution to the conflict. This is not always easy. Sometimes external advice should be sought.

Remain neutral

It is not the chair's role to take sides or make autocratic decisions. As far as possible, you should remain neutral. You should guide the debate in a way that defuses or contains the conflict.

Compromise

Sometimes you will need to take a different approach, if:

- Most of the people in the meeting are involved; or
- A decision must be taken

You may need to suggest a compromise to allow the meeting to continue – if this situation arises it is important that the members understand and support your actions, even if reluctantly.

No winners or losers

Where there is a conflict between two individuals, care must be taken to make sure that one is not seen to be a winner at the expense of the other. Seek common ground and agreement between both parties.
Remember a 'loser' is likely to seek revenge, which can perpetuate the situation.

Depersonalise the situation

You can do this in two ways:

1. **Involve everyone:** ask those involved to state the issues as they see them – write them down (preferably on a flip-chart) – then identify the advantages and disadvantages of both sides with all members – note down appropriate points. By involving everyone you move the discussion away from the individuals concerned.
2. **Hear both sides:** if both sides can express their opinion without interruption, they can get rid of their frustration or anger. The success of this will depend on the individual involved. Be aware that the meeting can become a free-for-all if you have people who find it hard to control themselves.

Adjourn/postpone

If the meeting becomes a free-for-all, you may have to adjourn it until everyone has calmed down. In extreme cases you may have to postpone (abandon) the meeting.

Tips on how to handle difficult situations

Situation	Principles	How to
Conflict/argument	Consensus	Stick to the facts
		Find common ground
		Compromise
		Lower the temperature
		Review
		Find someone neutral
Not enough time		
Not enough time	Effectiveness	Anticipate
	Prioritise	Negotiate
		Evaluate
		Action
		Defer
On a tangent		
On a tangent	Stick to the point	Intervene
		Recap
		Summarise the issue
		Clarify the decision

Deadlock	Continuity	Break it down
		Prioritise
		Programme
		
Different agendas	Teamwork	Restate the issue
		Clarify the objectives
		Involve everyone

8. Being Effective – Developing the Effective Group/Team

All committees are a group of individuals with different experience, skills and abilities. There will be a difference of opinions in any group; those differences should enable the group to have an open discussion and make sure that they come to a good, informed decision.

The key to becoming an effective group or team is how those individuals gel and work together towards achieving the aims set out in the governing documents. To enable this to happen the group/team need to recognise that the differences exist, respect people's right to have an opinion (even if you disagree with it) and find a way for those differences to be used in a complementary way which benefits the group.

Team / Group Development

Whether you are developing an effective group or team, research shows that each goes through 5 stages of development, they are:

5 stages of Group Development	5 stages of Team Development
<p>1. Forming:</p> <p>The individuals come together they are unsure of how to act and what the protocols are. They may or may not be clear about what they are meant to do or how to do it. They look to leaders to define and assign tasks to members of the group. As awareness grows the group moves to the next stage.</p>	<p>1. Searching:</p> <p>The individual team members meet and agree the aims of the team and actions needed to succeed. The team agree the ground rules for how they want to work and may assign tasks to members. The team leader acts as a facilitator for this process.</p>
<p>2. Storming:</p> <p>This is the conflict stage – as the name suggests. It is an uncomfortable period for the individuals – and many residents and community groups can struggle to get by this stage – with members jockeying for position in the group and trying to get their personal goals agreed as group ones. Sometime this can get personal and have a major impact on the way the group moves forward. Members of the group may decide to leave.</p>	<p>2. Defining:</p> <p>People express their individual ideas – this may lead to conflict and a lack of trust initially. The team leader stresses the need for tolerance and patience – and can use this stage to develop team values, behaviour, communication and clear decision making structures.</p>

<p>3. Norming:</p> <p>This is where the group begins to gel. Members develop good working relationships and each knows what the other should be doing. The group objectives are agreed and work begins on carrying out the tasks.</p>	<p>3. Identifying:</p> <p>The team identifies and agrees critical tasks which will easily allow them to show that they are achieving against the aims they have identified. All members are focussed on achieving, communication is good and members support and motivate each other. All the skills and abilities in the team are put to good use. The team leader encourages participation and 'professionalism' amongst members.</p>
<p>4. Performing:</p> <p>By this stage the group has developed and effective structure and is concentrating on getting on with the job(s) in hand. Collaboration and positive competition occurs between members; they are focussed on the objectives, tasks and problem solving.</p>	<p>4. Processing</p> <p>By this stage the team members are showing high levels of commitment and loyalty to one another. They all participate in helping the team to achieve and support their fellow members who may need it.</p>
<p>5. Morning</p> <p>This is where the group has completed its objectives – the group may disband or set new objectives (this is the more likely option with residents and community groups).</p>	<p>5. Reforming</p> <p>Some task come to an end and the team need to reform and refocus – they celebrate their success and move on.</p>

NOTES:

- The stages need not occur in sequence. Sometimes changes to an existing group – e.g. new people, refocus, etc – can instigate a well established group going through one or more stages.
- With residents and community groups the aims and objective are set out in the governing documents – how people interpret and prioritise the groups work can cause issues and lead to some ‘storming’ to take place.
- On rare occasions the group can stall in a particular stage – usually storming/norming – this will have an impact on the group.

NOTES:

- Building a team approach takes time and effort particularly on behalf of the team leader.
- Similar to a group – an effective team must get over stage 2 – and move forward to achieving.
- The trust that is developed in team whilst good can also create problems – e.g. someone who generally comes up with a good idea to resolve problems comes up with a stinker – and no-one challenges.

Apart from the difference in the way groups and teams develop, there are also key differences in the way that they achieve things. Research has shown that teams generally perform better than groups and suggest that this is due to the different approaches. Resident Associations and community groups could learn from these differences. Understanding the differences should enable them to achieve more by making informed choices on how they are going to work together as a committee. The table below highlights some of the key difference.

Differences in the way teams and groups work	
Groups	Teams
➤ Leadership is often dependent on one person or a small group.	➤ Leadership is shared – the best person for the tasks leads and is supported by others.
➤ Accountability is usually by individual people who are given the task.	➤ Accountability is the responsibility of the whole team – success or failure is shared
➤ People are given jobs irrespective of their knowledge or ability. They may or not be given support and training.	➤ The team identifies the knowledge and skills required for a task and give that to the person best equipped to succeed. They receive support and motivation from other members.
➤ Groups are often resistant to planning – they react to situations. When they do plan it is usually by a small group who then	➤ The team set their own goals and then plan towards achieving them – all the team members are included in the planning

impose it on other members.	process – they are proactive.
➤ Groups do not usually celebrate or debrief their successes or failures. They may 'blame' an individual member for a failure or 'praise' one for a success.	➤ The team regularly review how they are doing, and make appropriate adjustments. They prepare for the next task by analysing the last one – they learn from mistakes and success. They take collective responsibility for both.
➤ Groups can sometimes operate without thinking of the wider membership and what they are aiming towards.	➤ Teams understand why they are there and who their work impacts on, they rarely do something that does not consider this.
➤ Groups have a tendency to assume that everyone understands why they are there and that they work together.	➤ Teams work as a collective, they share success and failures and will often check back with members and the wider audience that they are doing things right.
➤ Groups can work efficiently – but they usually meet because they have to.	➤ Teams see meetings as an opportunity to share ideas and have fun with other members.

Personal development process

Action	What will you do? This identifies the specific ways in which you will personally change or encourage your group to change. TIP: Only have a maximum of 3-5 points under each action. Set a timescale for it and review annually.
Stop This identifies what you have identified as unhelpful behaviour and you, or the group want to stop.	
Improve This is where you have identified a behaviour or action that can be improved – and you wish to do so. It can also be something which is positive and you want to use it more.	
Re-engineer This is a behaviour or action that you feel you and/or the group need to alter or change – for example: The way you approach people to achieve things.	
Start This is a behaviour or action that you feel would be beneficial to you and/or the group to start – for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Putting in place a Code of practice (group) – sticking to the code (individual)	

7. Supporting documents

In this section you will find the following documents that can help to govern your group sensitively and well:

1. Example of the role and profile of a Committee member
2. Example of the role and profile of a Chairperson
3. Example of the role and profile of a Secretary
4. Example of the role and profile of a Treasurer
5. Example code of conduct
6. Example Finance guideline
7. Example Diversity and Equal Opportunity policy
8. Example Committee Charter

The Role of a Committee Member

The committee is a group of people elected by members to run the 'business' of the association for a fixed period – usually one year. The main duties include:

- To represent all the members who elected you to represent them
- To keep the association focussed on achieving its aims as set out in the governance documents – i.e. the constitution, articles and memorandum of association
- To be open, transparent and accountable to the members
- To work with all committee members in a constructive way, and conduct the business of the organisation to the highest standards.
- To positively promote the work of the association to members and other organisations
- To take joint responsibility for the finances of the association
- To ensure that the association meets all its legal and funders criteria
- To accept joint responsibility for the associations decisions
- To maintain a long term view for the association and leave a good legacy for those who follow

Critical Duties:

1. To ensure the committee functions properly

All committee members have a duty to ensure that the committee is functioning properly, within the guidance laid out in the governing documents. This would include making sure that all members have the opportunity to participate in discussions; ensuring that the officers (chair, secretary and treasurer) and committee members are doing what they agreed; challenging poor practice in meetings; monitoring your work; other committee members and making sure that you inform the membership of what you are doing.

2. Acting as a representative of your community

This is why you were elected in the first place! Whilst your role is voluntary the members do want to see 'professionalism' in your approach in representing them. This would include making sure that you regularly speak to or consult with your membership to check ideas and understand what their needs are; tell them of the associations plans and other work you are involved with on their behalf; act within the code of conduct of the association at your meetings and others; make yourself available if you have specialist knowledge or skills which will benefit the committee; attend meetings regularly and participate in discussion; not seek personal benefit from your involvement.

3. To ensure the committee is planning effectively to achieve the aims set out in the governance documents

This is crucial to the success of the committee and how you are perceived by the members. Some key duties here include having a clear understanding of the associations aims; know what the financial situation of the associations is and what potential funding opportunities exists; accepting some responsibility for key areas of the workload, not just relying on the officers to do everything; fully participating in discussions and decisions; supporting the collective decision, even if you did not agree with it; putting forward suggestions at meetings; constructively challenging yourself and colleagues.

Quality, skills and knowledge:

➤ **Team Player:**

Includes;

- Respects confidences
- Accepts collective decisions
- Respects differences
- Works well with others
- Willing to learn new skills
- Supportive of committee colleagues

➤ **Qualities:**

Includes;

- Experience of Camden council housing services
- Enthusiastic
- Cares about their community
- Is approachable for committee and other members
- Patient
- Likes a challenge

➤ **Organisational knowledge:**

Includes;

- Experience of committees
- Various skills – finance, secretarial, event planning, publicity, etc – and willingness to share them
- Governance – constitutions, code of conduct, equal opportunities

Example

Committee Member's Profile

Overview

The role of a committee member is quite varied. The association needs people who are enthusiastic, willing to learn and can give their valuable time to help us achieve our aims. Set out below are some key things we expect from all committee papers.

Upholding the reputation of the organisation:

- Developing and maintaining good working relationships with members, committee colleagues and staff from the various organisations we work with.
- Work within the guidance set out in the governing documents, paying particular attention to the code of conduct
- Read and understand the governance documents to assist you with moving the group towards achieving its aims

Working Effectively:

- Attend training that will enable you to work more effectively
- Prepare for meetings by reading all reports and documents beforehand
- Do any work you agreed to do at meetings, and report back to the committee as appropriate
- Keep up to date on issues by reading relevant publications and seek help and advice when appropriate to do so
- Support the chair and officers by adhering to the code of conduct
- Participate in meeting – put forward suggestions and make a positive contribution to the committee
- Help your committee colleagues in their work

Other duties:

- Encourage and support the membership to participate
- Act as the group representative in external meetings when required

Quality and skills required:

- Enthusiasm
- Willingness to learn and attend relevant training
- Experience of being a Camden tenant or leaseholder
- Respects confidences
- Supports the aims of the association
- Committee experience

Time commitment: This will depend on what committee work you want to take part in. Generally, a commitment of 2-3 hours per month is sufficient.

A good member <u>will</u>:	A good member <u>will not</u>:
Attend meetings regularly, and read all committee papers	Rarely attend meetings or continuously turn up late
Make positive suggestions at meetings	Interrupt others regularly
Keep comments short and to the point	Display behaviour that is not acceptable – i.e. be aggressive, abusive
Listen to others without interrupting	Keep important information to themselves
Support other committee colleagues	Carry out tasks they have agreed to do
Carry out tasks they have agreed to do	Not listen to others points of view
Encourage, welcome and support new members	Not accept committee decisions
Accept decisions made by the committee	Turn up unprepared for the meeting – has not read documents
Support and keep in mind the aims of the association	Not be supportive of new members

The Role of a Chairperson

The chair plays a key role for any voluntary management committee. They are the one who:

- Makes sure the committee are working towards achieving the stated aims of the association
- Ensures the committee are functioning properly
- That everyone has the opportunity to participate at meetings
- All relevant matters are discussed
- Decisions are made, and acted upon
- All the work is carried out by the people who agreed to do it
- Supports the rest of the committee to complete tasks
- Promotes the work of the committee to other individuals and organisations

The role can be time consuming and needs someone who is diplomatic and shows leadership skills.

Critical Duties:

1. To ensure the committee functions properly

The chair is the person who makes sure that the meetings are planned effectively; conducted according to the constitution and any other guidance adopted by the committee; that matters are dealt with in an orderly, effective and efficient manner.

2. Ensure the organisation is managed effectively

In addition to the above they should also make the most of all their committee members skills; lead the 'team'; manage the performance of the committee, including their own; lead the committee on reviewing all governing documents on a regular basis, and updating as appropriate; encouraging committee members to attend relevant training.

They should also take the lead on 'succession planning' – i.e. finding and inducting new members for the committee.

3. To act as the organisations figurehead

The committee, all members and outside bodies will look to the chair for leadership. This will mean the chair making sure that the association is working within the aims and objectives set out in the governing documents. It also means that the chair, and from time to time other committee members, representing the association at outside meetings and functions; How members do this will have an impact on the reputation of the association.

Quality, Skills and knowledge:

Diplomacy: Includes;

- Being tactful
- Respecting Confidences
- Speaks clearly and clarifies points
- Remaining impartial

Good Time Manager: Includes;

- Planning and notifying members of meetings in accordance with governing documents.
- Keeping meetings on time and to agenda.

- Ensuring decisions and actions are realistic for all.
- Delegating appropriately.

People Orientated: Includes;

- Is approachable for committee and other members
- Is sensitive to the feeling of others
- Shows an interest in member's viewpoints, even if it is different to theirs
- Listens carefully to others, without interrupting them or being defensive
- Be aware of members who are more reluctant to express their views, and invite comments

Strategic: Includes;

- Has a clear understanding of the organisations aims.
- Has an overview of the work the organisation is involved with at any given time.
- Has an understanding of key networks that can help the organisation.
- Has reasonable experience of committees and how they work.

Example

Chairperson's Job Profile

Overview:

The chairperson has a strategic role to play in representing the aims and purpose of the association. They ensure that the committee functions properly, that there is full participation at meetings, all relevant matters are discussed and that effective decisions are made and carried out.

Ensure the committee functions properly:

- To plan and run meetings in accordance with the governing documents.
- To ensure that matters are dealt with in an orderly, efficient manner.
- To bring impartiality and objectivity to meetings and decision-making.
- To facilitate change and address conflict constructively within the committee.
- To regularly review governance, performance and skills within the committee.
- To plan for recruitment and renewal of the committee (new blood).

Ensure the organisation is managed effectively:

- Regularly liaise with committee members to keep an overview of the association's work.
- To co-ordinate the work of the committee and ensure that key roles are being done adequately – i.e. secretary; treasurer and sub-committees.
- To identify and suggest appropriate training for committee members.

Provide support for members:

- To offer support and advice to committee members to carry out tasks delegated to them.
- To be approachable for members to discuss issues and where necessary add them as agenda items for meetings.
- To be able to identify where members can get relevant information or additional support.

Represent the organisation:

- To communicate effectively the association's aims and purpose to members and other organisations.
- To advocate for and represent the association at external meetings.
- To be aware of current issues that may have an impact on the association's work, aims or purpose.

Qualities and skills required:

- Good leadership skills
- Good communication and personal skills
- Fairness and an ability to respect confidentiality.
- Good understanding of performance issues.
- Tact and diplomacy.
- Understanding of the roles and responsibilities of a committee
- Experience of organisational and people management (desirable)

Time Commitment:

This will depend on the work the association is involved with – however a chair should expect to do a minimum 1-2 hours per week.

Chairperson – Do's and Don'ts

A good chair <u>will</u> :	A good chair <u>will not</u> :
Make all members feel valued	Be the person who talks most at meetings
Strive for consensus – using their casting vote sparingly	Make all the decisions
Listen to others	Allow one or two to dominate the meeting
Encourage new faces onto the committee	Cut people out of the discussion
Plan for the future	Allow meeting to be unproductive
Make new members feel welcome	Make people feel foolish or useless
Allow others to take responsibility	Force people to contribute to discussions
Keep calm	Lose their temper
Know when to stand down	Stay to long

The Role of the Secretary

The role of a secretary is to support the chair in making sure that the committee is effective. A key part of this role is to ensure that the Administration functions of the committee run smoothly. The secretary is responsible for:

- Making sure that the minutes of meetings are taken (and a record is kept).
- To keep a record of all those who attend each meeting.
- To notify the chair of any issues – e.g. the meetings are inquorate, clarifying decisions for minutes, informing meetings of apologies, etc.
- Sending invitations to relevant people, and receiving acknowledgements of attendance.
- Receiving and sending correspondence on behalf of the group. Informing the committee of all correspondence.
- Assisting with the production of publicity on behalf of the group.
- To keep a copy and appropriate files on behalf of the group.
- To assist with the arrangements for social events as agreed by the group committee.

The secretary's role is one that can be split between committee members. If a group decides to do this they should clarify the responsibility of each different role. For example:

- **Minutes Secretary** – responsible for taking and distributing minutes.
- **Social Secretary** – responsible for arranging and promoting social activities of the group.
- **Public Relations Secretary** – responsible for the production of all publicity and literature on behalf of the group. This person could also be responsible for ensuring that the group hold events to celebrate their success.

Critical Duties:

1. To ensure the committee functions properly

The secretary plays a key role in supporting the chair and committee to function effectively. This would include making sure that all the arrangements for meetings are in place; an effective filing system is in place, to enable the committee to find things easily; informing the chair if the meetings are not quorate; all correspondence is dealt with and replied to as required.

2. To ensure the committee's administration is effective

This does not mean that the secretary has to do everything themselves. They should make sure that all committee members know who is responsible for certain tasks and where items are filed; establish a clear procedure for setting the agenda with the chair; set reasonable deadlines for agenda items and any reports or documents to be placed on the agenda (Note: emergency items are the exception to this) and circulated to members as appropriate; ensure that a record of members is in place and up to date.

3. Act as the main point of contact for the organisation

The secretary is the main point of contact for external organisations. Therefore they should be open to having their contact details in the public domain. In addition the secretary may find it useful to have their contact details distributed to other relevant groups, who do similar work or can assist in key areas of work the group wish to participate. The committee should be informed of all relevant information received.

Note 1: The contact details may only be an e-mail address or the address of a community facility if appropriate.

Note 2: Some secretaries may be uncomfortable with this – when this happens the group should discuss and decide who should be the main contact. That person's contact information should be made available.

Quality, skills and knowledge:

Team Player: Includes;

- Works well with chair and other committee members
- Respects confidences
- Good organiser – who enthuses others to help
- Support the group to build effective relationships with others

Organiser: Includes;

- Methodical, someone with an eye for detail
- Good organisational skills
- Administration skills
- Knowledgeable on committee procedures

People Orientated: Includes;

- Is approachable for committee and other members
- Is sensitive to the feelings of others
- Is a good networker
- Is willing to support colleagues to achieve

Strategic: Includes;

- Has good knowledge of organisations governance documents
- Understand how their role has an impact on the effective and smooth running of the organisation
- Uses their contacts to assist the organisation and committee members to achieve the groups aims
- Regularly reminds the group of their aims and achievements

Example

Secretary's Job Profile

Overview:

The secretary's role is to support the chair in making sure that the committee runs smoothly. In residents associations they are usually responsible for the day-to-day administration of the committee. A secretary's tasks include:

Ensuring the administration is effective:

- To prepare the meeting agenda in consultation with the chair.
- To distribute meeting notices and relevant papers in good time.
- To receive agenda items from other committee members.
- To make sure that at each meeting the relevant quorate is met.
- To make sure that the meetings are minuted.
- To circulate draft minutes are circulated to the committee.
- To make sure the chair signs the minutes once they have been agreed at the relevant meeting.
- To check that committee members and others are carrying out actions agreed at the meetings.
- To make sure that an up to date list of member is kept.

Make sure the arrangements for meetings are in place

- Book the venue.
- Book equipment as required.
- Organise refreshments.
- Confirm guests are aware of venue and will attend.

Other duties:

- Develop and/or manage the groups filing system.
- Work with other member on group publicity and other documents.
- Lead on the arrangements for social and group events, as required.
- Advise the chair on governance issues – in particular if a required quorate has not been achieved at meetings.
- Report all correspondence receive to the committee.
- Represent the group at other meetings if required.

Quality & Skills required:

- Organisational skills
- Experience of committee work and procedures
- Minute taking experience
- Good communication and interpersonal skills
- Fairness and the ability to respect confidentiality
- Well organised with an eye for detail
- Good timekeeping
- Ability to work well with chair and committee members

Time commitment: This will depend on the work the association is involved in and how the role is managed. Generally, 2-4 hours per month is sufficient.

Secretary's – Do's and Don'ts

A good secretary <u>will</u> :	A good secretary <u>will not</u> :
Be organised	Ignore correspondence
Keep copies of all correspondence	Keep information to themselves
Check quorum is met for meetings	Be late for meetings
Respect confidentiality	Throw away important information
Work closely with the chair	Write down trivial details of discussions at meetings
Make it easy for other to stand in by keeping good records	Rely on their memory
Prepare for meeting well in advance	Repeat private conversations
Help the chair to summarise discussions effectively	Organise meetings at the last minute
Keep people informed	Make sure that accurate records of meetings are kept

The Role of the Treasurer

The role of the treasurer is vital to any committee. This is the role that is critical to the group being able to plan for future events and ongoing costs. The treasurer main duties include:

- Open or maintain the bank account of the organisation; making sure that the bank mandate is kept up to date and that the required number of signatories is on it.
- Keep accurate record of the associations' income and expenditure, and financial transactions.
- Regularly provide finance information to enable them to make informed decisions on planned expenditure and budgets.
- Allow members to inspect the accounts in accordance with agreed procedure.
- Pay from the accounts any expenditure agreed by the committee promptly.
- Annually prepare the accounts to be audited or verified by an independent body.
- Present the audited or verified accounts to the AGM and answer relevant questions from members.
- Maintain an up to date Asset Register for the organisation.

The treasurer is the one who advises the committee on finances, **not** the one who makes the financial decisions – this remains the responsibility of the committee based on the advice given.

Critical Duties:

1. To ensure the committee functions properly

The treasurer plays a crucial role in this by providing up to date and relevant information to the committee on the association's financial situation. This should ensure that the group can make informed decisions on budget allocations for events and plan when, who and how they apply for grants, etc. In addition to this they should make sure that the group complies with and legal or funders financial criteria and be the lead committee officer for the financial accountability of the group.

2. To ensure that the group has effective financial policy and procedures in place

The treasurer has the responsibility for making sure that all the financial systems are in place to make the association's financial transactions open, transparent and accountable for members and funding organisations. They should concentrate on the account books (income, expenditure), the bank books (mandate, show the funds available) and expenses payments. They should report back to the committee on a regular basis on all finances and any issues that may impact on the group's funds. They will also be responsible for preparing the accounts and presenting them at the AGM.

3. To act as the lead officer and representative for the groups financial matters

The treasurer should be a key point of contact for people making inquiries about the association's finances. They should be willing to provide information in a reasonably quick time and if necessary arrange to meet with people to explain things. The treasurer should also be willing to attend external meetings with funders and others to represent the group on financial matters.

Quality, skills and knowledge:

Team Player: Includes;

- Works well with chair and other committee members

- Shares financial information amongst committee
- Is available for ad-hoc advice
- Is good at explaining complex financial information

Financial Knowledge: Includes;

- Has a good understanding of financial book-keeping principles
- Is methodical with a good eye for detail
- Has good understanding of financial control and budgeting
- Has experience of dealing with sums of money

Strategic: Includes;

- Has good knowledge of the organisations governing documents, paying particular attention to financial clauses
- Understands how their role impact on the smooth and efficient running of the organisation
- Keeps up to date with best practice in financial management and recommends relevant changes to the committee
- Is aware of the 'big picture' finances and its likely impact on the group

Example

Treasurer's Job Profile

Overview:

The treasurer's role is to maintain an overview of the association's financial affairs, ensuring the association remains financially viable. Key to this is making sure that proper financial records and procedures are maintained; informing the committee of issues that may impact on the finances of the association and providing regular reports. In some cases it may be appropriate to establish a finance sub-committee, if this is the case the Treasurer should act as chair of this committee. The roles duties include:

General oversight:

- To present budgets, accounts and financial statements as appropriate.
- To make sure that appropriate and effective procedures and controls are in place.
- To ensure the association's finances and expenditure meets the requirements of the governing documents and funding criteria.
- To make a recommendation to committee on the appointment of the auditors/verifiers.
- To ensure that the associations finances are seen as open, transparent and accountable to the membership and funders.

Financial planning and reporting:

- To prepare and present regular financial reports to the committee.
- To prepare, with auditors/verifiers, the annual accounts and present those accounts at the Annual General Meeting.
- To advise the committee on the financial implications of its plans.
- To maintain accurate and up to date information on the organisations financial transactions.
- To advise and support the committee with its fundraising activities.

Other duties

- To chair the finance sub-committee – if applicable.
- To lead for the organisation on all financial activity, including representing the organisation at appropriate external meetings.

Qualities and skills required:

- Integrity
- Experience of finance systems
- Fundraising knowledge
- Good communications and interpersonal skills

Time commitment: This will depend on the activities the association you are involved with. Usually a commitment of 2-4 hours per month would be sufficient.

Treasurer's – Do's and Don'ts

A good Treasurer <u>will</u>:	A good Treasurer <u>will not</u>:
Be trustworthy	Commit fraud
Be impartial	Keep financial information to themselves
Feel comfortable working with figures	Delay banking funds for weeks on end
Be willing to explain figures if asked	Neglect to pay bills
Be methodical	Ignore good practice and the law
Bank group money as quickly as possible	Rely on their memory
Keep up to date with all financial transactions	Overdraw the groups account – unless agreed by committee
Work with the chair effectively	Pay or receive money without recording it
Make it easy for others to take over by keeping clear records	Allow groups funds to be used for personal issues

London Borough of Camden Tenant & Leaseholder Engagement Code of Conduct

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The aim of this Code is to help tenants and leaseholders who engage with Camden about how we manage their homes to get the most out of their voluntary efforts.
- 1.2 Engagement is about working collaboratively together, therefore we want it to be a positive experience for residents, staff and council members. Residents expect staff and members attending engagement activities to be amongst other things well prepared, helpful and polite. Expected standards of staff and Councillor behaviour is covered in officer and member codes of conduct.
- 1.3 Equally those attending engagement activities need to be aware of the boundaries of acceptable behaviour from tenants and leaseholders and the actions taken when the boundaries are breached.
- 1.4 This code sets out the behaviours we expect of all tenants and leaseholders involved in our formal and informal engagement activities; including but not exclusive to:
- Tenant & Resident Associations
 - District Management Committees
 - Residents Scrutiny Group
 - Active Tenant & Residents Panel
 - Focus Groups
 - Coffee Mornings
 - Consultation events
- 1.5 It covers expected standards of behaviour when participating in resident involvement activities, both in at and outside of formal meetings.
- 1.6 The chair of any meeting is responsible for enforcing this Code of Conduct, with the support of the other people present. For other tenant and leaseholder engagement activities, the organiser or staff member will be responsible for enforcing this Code. If the Chair breaks the code, the vice-chair or any other member can call the Chair to account under this code of conduct.
- 1.7 To be recognised and supported by Camden Council, tenants and residents groups must agree and adopt this Code. They may also add to the Code to suit the needs of their own group.

2 Personal conduct for those taking part

Involved residents should:

- 2.1 Demonstrate good manners at all times;
- 2.2 respect differences in age, knowledge, background, ability to present ideas, ethnicity race, religious belief and sexuality etc.
- 2.2 act fairly and not discriminate, on any ground, against any other individual or group;
- 2.3 treat people with dignity and respect;
- 2.4 refrain from any type of anti-social behaviour including but not limited to:
- abusive, offensive or aggressive behaviour
 - racist or sexist remarks
 - bad language
 - defamatory, insulting or personal comments
- 2.5 listen to other views and not dominate discussions;

- 2.6 not promote party political or sectarian views whilst participating in engagement activities;
- 2.7 ensure that confidentiality is maintained at all times in relation to matters of a personal or sensitive nature, or anything which has been shared in confidence;
- 2.8 not claim to represent their group or Camden tenants and leaseholders, unless they have been specifically charged with “representation” by the group itself;
- 2.9 not seek preferential treatment by virtue of their engagement and are expected to use the normal procedures for reporting repairs, neighbourhood issues, complaints etc.
- 2.10 attend training or other events they have signed up to, unless there are unavoidable circumstances; in which case they must notify the Chair or Camden Council staff member immediately;
- 2.11 declare any potential conflicts of interest that are identified (for example because of personal relationships, employment, involvement with other groups, business etc.)
- 2.12 not to cause harassment and anti-social behaviour against anybody including officers and members of the Council fellow residents and visitors. This covers in person, by phone, written, text, email or internet harassment and anti-social behaviour; and
- 2.13 use email and social media appropriately.

3 Meetings code

In addition to the general personal conduct rules above the following apply to meeting conduct. Attendees are expected to:

- 3.1 Send apologies if they are not able to attend a meeting or other group business;
- 3.2 prepare for meetings by reading the papers and bringing them to the meeting;
- 3.3 arrive punctually to enable meetings to start promptly;
- 3.4 leave any personal issues to outside of the meeting; and
- 3.5 switch off mobile phones during the meeting.

Be bound by normal procedures, such as:

- 3.6 Arrive on time so that meetings can start on time;
- 3.7 not to interrupt when another member is speaking;
- 3.8 seek to intervene or contribute “through the chair”;
- 3.9 co-operate with the Chair in dealing with the business and keeping to the agenda and time available for the meeting/ agenda items;
- 3.10 accept that the Chair’s rule is final unless they have breached this code;
- 3.11 keep contributions brief and to the point;
- 3.12 not to distract the meeting by holding individual conversations with others;
- 3.13 accept other people’s right to speak and accept that different points of view are valuable to good decision making;
- 3.14 avoid jargon or explain what it means; and
- 3.15 work with other members constructively to arrive at the best possible solution.

4 Finance

Tenants and leaseholders are expected to:

- 4.1 Only use grants for the purpose that they were applied for. This includes grants from the Council and any other funds;
- 4.2 return equipment funded through grants to the Council if the group cease to exist;
- 4.3 follow financial guidelines within their TRA constitution. In the unlikely event that these are not covered the Council’s model constitution will apply;
- 4.4 abide by the expenses policy, complete expense claim forms and provide receipts for any expenditure; and
- 4.5 if the group is funded, close the bank account according to the terms of the Constitution or the Council’s Model Constitution.

5 Chairing code

The Chair should:

- 5.1 Undertake initial and regular refresher training on chairing skills;
- 5.2 encourage all to participate;
- 5.3 sum up at the end of each discussion / agenda item; and
- 5.4 manage the agenda and timing of meetings.

6 Breaches of this Code of Conduct

Meeting breaches:

- 6.1 All members of the group or activity are responsible for abiding by the Code of Conduct and helping to ensure that others do so;
- 6.2 if a meeting is getting heated a five minute time out can be called at the discretion of the Chair. Any member of the group can suggest this option to the Chair;
- 6.3 if a member of the group or activity do not abide by the Code of Conduct, the Chair will warn that if they break the code again they will be asked to leave the meeting;
- 6.4 if the Chair breaks the code, they can be warned by any other member and may be asked to leave the meeting with the support of the majority of the meeting members;
- 6.5 serious or persistent breaches will result in a written warning, suspension (time must be specified) or permanent expulsion. A decision to temporarily or permanently exclude any tenant or resident can only be taken after a quorate meeting of their group to discuss the breach where a majority have voted in favour of this action;
- 6.6 temporary exclusion can last only for a maximum of one year; and
- 6.7 allegations of breaches of misconduct by one resident against another outside of a meeting should always be raised with the relevant residents' group in the first instance.

7 Conduct for TRA Hall key holders

- 7.1 The Council's memorandum of understanding must be adhered to.
- 7.2 If the TRA is no longer recognised or closes, the keys must be returned to the Council within 7 days.
- 7.3 A current inventory must be kept of all grant funded equipment within the hall with a copy to the Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Team.
- 7.4 A spare set of keys must be registered with the Tenant and Leaseholder Engagement Team.
- 7.5 A lettings policy and fee structure should be agreed with the committee and made public.

8 Role of the council

- 8.1 Where there are breaches of the code, the role of the Council is to:
 - Provide advice and support to a group in taking its own action where appropriate (at or outside meetings if required);
 - take direct action, i.e. writing to / speaking to perpetrators;
 - provide training where identified as a need;
 - arrange mediation between two parties if identified as appropriate.
- 8.2 In very serious cases, the Council will investigate an issue and take action. This action could include:
 - a restriction or ban on engagement activity;
 - action against the tenancy or lease should the behaviour result in a breach; and / or
 - a referral to the Police should a crime have been committed.

Financial Guidelines

Association financial controls and procedures

(Good practice guidelines)

1. General management

- The association shall have a bank or building society account for the management of funds connected with the group.
- If a specific project is identified that requires fund-raising, the committee may agree to establish a separate account solely for that purpose.
- The association's treasurer shall maintain overall responsibility for overseeing the accounts held in the name of the group.
- All money raised by or on behalf of the association will only be used to further the Aims of the group, as laid out in the constitution (this includes attendance at conferences, seminars and relevant training for group members).
- There shall be a minimum of **three** agreed signatories on the Associations account(s), one of whom **must** be the Treasurer.
- All cheques and instructions to the association's bankers shall require **two** of the three signatories.
- Signatories for the accounts will be nominated and agreed **annually** by the committee, at the first meeting following the association's AGM.
- No members either related (including by marriage) or from the same household can be signatories of the accounts.
- **Under no circumstances** are cheque signatories allowed to sign blank cheques.
- The treasurer shall have the accounts audited or verified by an independent person, acceptable to the association and Camden Council, at the end of each year before the AGM.
- The treasurer will present the audited or verified accounts to the members at the AGM. Copies of the accounts will also be made available to members.
- An independent, appropriately qualified auditor or verifier will be proposed by the committee and agreed by a show of hands at the AGM.
- It is the responsibility of the treasurer to ensure that financial records and account(s) are kept accurate and up-to-date.
- The accounts and records of the association are open to scrutiny by all members and interested parties. The treasurer will make them available within ____ days of a request being made.
- **Under no circumstances** shall any person be permitted to borrow money from the association's accounts. (Note: advance payment of expenses to members attending

training, conferences, or meetings with other organisations/groups will be permitted, see below)

- The association agrees to abide by all terms and conditions for Camden Council grant funding, should this be applied for. If the association applies for grant from Camden Council, it will provide the Council with a copy of the audited or verified accounts.
- No money over the sum of £_____ (amount in words) can be spent without prior approval of the committee.
- Requests to spend over £_____ should be made in writing for committee approval.
- If a specific project be identified that requires a separate bank account, then these rules shall also apply to the administration of that account.

If the association dissolves or a project is aborted, then:

- any outstanding debts of the association or project will be met where possible from funds available.
- any specific funds received (if unspent) will be returned to the funder
- any remaining funds and assets will be disposed of as laid down in the constitution.

2. Receipts and invoices

- All requests for payment of any kind from the association's funds must be supported by receipts or invoices.
- A general rule shall be that if a receipt or invoice is not produced in support of a claim, then no payment shall be made. The full committee, at its discretion, may waive this rule, following a recommendation from the treasurer.
- In the event of a receipt or invoice not being available, the person submitting a claim **must** sign a petty cash slip confirming that the expenditure has been incurred and for what purpose.

3. Payment of expenses

- The treasurer will hold a duplicating petty cash book for recording the refunds for expenses.
- Members (usually committee members) are entitled to claim for legitimate out of pocket expenses that are incurred in pursuance of the association business. (see section 4)
- Requests for expenses must be submitted in writing and supported by receipts or invoices.
- The treasurer shall be responsible for reimbursing the payment of out of pocket expenses.
- The person receiving the money shall sign for all reimbursements on a petty cash slip. This transaction shall be witnessed and signed by a committee member.
- Advance payments of expenses shall be permitted, subject to committee approval. Receipts or invoices for any payments made must still be submitted and any money left returned. The transaction should still be witnessed as above.

4. Legitimate expenses

The following items will qualify as legitimate expenses provided that the above criteria have been met:

- Personal car or motorcycle mileage (including parking costs) whilst attending events related to the business of the association
- Train, bus and taxi (where essential) fares whilst attending events related to the association's business
- Meals (where not provided at the event) whilst attending events related to the association's business
- Care costs (including children and pets) whilst attending events related to association business. (Note: the group should state the upper age (of the child) limit for claiming childcare expenses and an hourly rate.)
- Telephone costs relating to associations activity. (An itemised bill with the relevant calls highlighted would be sufficient evidence)
- Refreshments for meeting or whilst attending association business
- Purchasing of food and refreshment for committee or open meetings (following approval of committee).
- Purchasing of stationery, equipment, etc that are essential for the associations business.

This list is not exhaustive. If any member feels that they should be able to make a claim for an item not included, they should put details in writing and submit them to the committee for discussion and approval, if agreed.

These procedures are subject to regular review by the association's committee.

Example:

Diversity and equal opportunities policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Theassociation/group are committed to the central role of equal opportunities in all our practices, in the formation and implementation of policies and in service delivery.
- 1.2. The group aims to achieve equality of opportunity in all activities, literature and services it provides to the members.
- 1.3. The group will actively promote this policy within the community and in its dealings with Camden Council and other partners.
- 1.4. The group will actively seek training on all issues surrounding equal opportunities and diversity and all members, particularly committee members, will be encouraged and supported to attend relevant training.

2. Objectives

2.1. Race equality

The group will make appropriate arrangements with a view to ensuring that its functions are carried out with due regard for the need to eliminate discrimination and promote good relations between persons of different racial backgrounds.

This policy aims to ensure equality of opportunity in all group matters, giving encouragement, including the use of positive measures, to all ethnic groups that make up our community.

The group seeks to achieve the goal of a voluntary workforce which accurately reflects the community we serve.

2.2. Sex discrimination

The aim of this policy is to ensure equality of opportunity in group matters and the removal of barriers that prevent individuals from realising their optimum potential. In addition to this the group wishes to introduce good practices that encourage individuals to participate fully.

2.3 Sexuality

The group believes that people should not be discriminated against because of their sexuality. The group will seek to provide an environment where lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and transgender people will not be discriminated against. The disclosure of a person's sexuality is a personal matter and the group will not directly seek this information, however we will encourage people to inform us.

2.4. Disability

The group will promote a positive attitude towards people with disabilities and will introduce measures that enable people with disabilities to participate in the group's activities. In addition the group wishes to work towards the removal of barriers that may prevent people with disabilities from achieving their potential.

2.5 Age

The group believes that all age groups, young and old, have a stake in the communities in which they live. The group will encourage and support positive action to ensure all age groups can participate in the group's activities.

3 Responsibility

3.1 The committee

The committee has the overall responsibility for the effective implementation and monitoring of this policy. It will conduct regular reviews and report to the AGM on progress made.

3.2 Members

All members will be encouraged to support the objectives of this policy and the committee's implementation of it.

4 Communication

4.1 This policy will be distributed to all members and potential members.

4.2 Any group wishing to work in partnership with the group must provide evidence of their commitment to equality and agree to follow this policy

4.3 We will actively highlight the positive benefits of our work in the communities.

4.4 We will work with individuals and groups who demonstrate that they wish to positively challenge negative stereotyping and prejudicial information in the areas and communities in which they live and work.

5 Consulting excluded groups

5.1. The group will seek to establish good relationships with groups representing people who are identified as excluded. These groups will include Black and Minority Ethnic people, lesbians and gay men, young people, elderly people, unemployed, single parents and others.

5.2. The group will ensure that all literature is appropriate and has positive images.

5.3. The group will use a variety of methods, which include written, verbal and others when consulting on local issues.

6. Implementation

6.1. The group will draw up an annual action plan and present it to the AGM for agreement.

Example:

TRA Committee Charter

1. As an individual member of the committee I agree to encourage good team working. I will try to listen to, respect and trust my fellow committee members. I will consider how my actions will affect others, committee and the wider membership.
2. As a committee we agree to listen to each other and consider alternative points of views. This will give us a better understanding of one another.
3. We must learn to be patient and to recognise that we can learn from each other.
4. We will show each other respect and be sensitive to one another which will help us to be more inclusive.
5. We agree to support, encourage and motivate each other.
6. We agree to talk through problems and set backs openly and honestly. We will seek solutions to these and not apportion blame.
7. The whole committee, but especially the officers (Chair, vice chair, secretary and treasurer), must be seen to be open, fair, honest and consistent in representing all members.
8. We will remember that we are colleagues and friends and will focus on achieving our aims for the benefit of all our members.
9. If conflict arises we will acknowledge it and see it as an opportunity to strengthen and grow as a team.
10. We will meet as a committee regularly to discuss our plans and give and receive feedback and support on how well we are doing.
11. We will regularly provide information to and seek feedback from all our members and use this to help us achieve more.
12. We will try different ways of making sure that all our members can influence the work of the committee, where possible we will be innovative in our approach.
13. We will provide coaching and source training opportunities for new or potential members.

Complaints, suggestions and feedback

We welcome your comments about our service - it can help us to improve further.

Service Improvement Suggestions

If you have suggestions for improving this booklet or our service, please inform a member of our team on 0207 974 2377, or write to us at tp@camden.gov.uk . We welcome your views to learn and improve our service to you.

Compliments

If you are happy with the service we provided for you, we would be very grateful if you would let us know so we can share comments

Complaints

If you have a complaint about our service, please ask to speak to the manager r. We will aim to deal with your complaint straight away

Contact details;

London Borough of Camden
**Tenant and Leaseholder
Engagement team**
London Borough of Camden
Judd Street
London WC1H 9JE
Telephone : 020 7974 2377
website: www.camden.gov.uk

If you would like this document in large print or braille, audiotape or in another language, please contact 020 7974 2521.