



**Laois County Council**  
Áras an Chontae, Portlaoise, Co. Laois

# **Residents' Association Handbook and Guidelines**



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# **Table of Contents**

1. Introduction
2. What is a Residents' Association?
3. Setting up a Residents' Association
4. Running an Effective Residents' Association
  - 4.1 Roles and Responsibilities
  - 4.2 Constitution
  - 4.3 Insurance
  - 4.4 Meetings
  - 4.5 Communications
  - 4.6 Public Participation Network
  - 4.7 Opening a Bank Account
5. Appendices
  - a. Template Agenda for First Open Meeting
  - b. Template Agenda for Committee Meeting
  - c. Template Constitution
  - d. Role of Officers at a Meeting



## 1. Introduction

These guidelines are directed towards members of a community who wish to form a group, in the form of a Residents' Association, that will come together to address local issues, respond to local community needs, source funding/grants and work together to enhance their estate or local areas.

This handbook will support new and existing Residents' Associations to organise and manage their activities. It will explain the key roles in a Residents' Association; provide templates for managing meetings and give details of local development agencies operating across the County.



## 2. What is a Residents' Association?

Resident Associations are organisations formed by groups of local people from a specific community who come together to promote and enhance their local area and act as a voice for that community.

The Association will help address the issues/concerns of the area, such as local environmental and maintenance (grass cutting, clean-ups, etc.); undertake community projects; apply for grants; represent interest in the local area; and influence decision makers. It can also be an opportunity to meet your neighbours and gain new skills.

Laois County Council Estate Management team encourages and supports residents to work together and represent the views of all residents to make their estate/community a better place to live







## 3. Setting up a Residents' Association

### Getting People Involved

There are many reasons why people do not want to get involved in their local community. One big factor can be that residents do not feel they are being listened to and that giving of their time and energy can, in their opinion, be a waste of time. On the other hand, in an estate that has no apparent problems people may not feel that there is a need to have a Residents' Association.

The best way to get residents involved is to do something positive in your estate and invite people to help. When people see the benefits of positive actions, they are more inclined to want to get involved.

When setting up a Residents' Association there are a few points you should keep in mind:

-  Set realistic targets.
-  Try to get as many people involved in making decisions and taking on responsibilities
-  Keep everyone informed about what is happening.
-  Develop an understanding with volunteers that they will need to commit some of their time to attend regular meetings

As a first step, those residents interested in setting up the association will meet. The purpose of this meeting is to

identify a date and venue that will maximise the possible attendance at an Open Meeting (see below) and should not alienate anyone or give cause for complaint. The key tasks at this first step are to:

- 1 Appoint people to Chair, record attendance and take Minutes of the Open Meeting until a Committee is elected.
- 2 Agree a Basic Agenda for the Open Meeting.
- 3 Source a suitable venue which is wheelchair accessible.
- 4 Notify all residents, through notifications/flyers/social media/word of mouth. The Estate Management team can help with flyers, if needed.

### **Open Meeting**

- ✓ It is important that the Open Meeting is planned and structured to achieve the desired outcome - the establishment of a Residents' Association.
- ✓ Ensure venue is open on time and people are welcomed on arrival.
- ✓ Place attendance list sheet (name and house number) near entry point to facilitate signing.
- ✓ Distribute Agendas throughout the room.
- ✓ Introduce the Main Speaker/Speakers and be clear about what the group wants to achieve and how a Residents' Association would benefit the community.



- ✓ Request agreement to formally proceed and elect a Committee (Committee Officers can be elected at this meeting or at the first Committee Meeting). Any group of three or more people can set up a Residents' Association.
- ✓ AOB (Any Other Business): At this stage items not on the agenda can be discussed.
- ✓ Arrange date, time and venue for next meeting with newly elected Committee Members.

It is important that after the Open Meeting the decision to establish a Residents' Association is communicated to the estate or local area. Effective communication will be vital to the successful running of your association and engagement with your neighbours. It is also strongly recommended your committee be representatives of the estate or wider area and achieves a gender balance.



## 4. Running an Effective Residents' Association

### 4.1 Roles and Responsibilities

In this section the Roles and Responsibilities for members of a Residents' Association will be explained.

#### Committee Member

Being a committee member is about much more than simply attending meetings, although that is a committee member's first task. You should see your involvement in the committee as an active not passive role. Although you need to attend meetings, you also need to be aware of what decisions your committee is authorised to make, and to work with other members of the committee to reach a consensus to enable business to move through the committee structure. Committee members are central to the running of a Residents' Association. The role of a committee member is to:

- Attend Meetings.
- Help organise events.
- Contribute to discussions.
- Give feedback on issues facing the estate.
- Ensure that everything discussed in the group remains confidential.
- Make decisions based on what is best for the local community.

- Support the committee and accept majority votes.
- Work together as a team.
- Help distribute newsletters/flyers to the local area when required.
- Get feedback from your neighbours around issues being discussed at the Residents' Association meeting.

## Chairperson

The role of the Chairperson is to chair meetings and lead and represent the committee.

### **Key responsibilities of the Chairperson include:**

- Being fully aware of all the activities carried out by the group.
- Ensuring that tasks that have been delegated to other members of the committee are being carried out in a timely manner.
- Taking responsibility for facilitating the group to work well together towards achieving the committee's aims and giving help and support where needed, ensuring all are allowed/encouraged to speak.
- Acting as spokesperson and representing the committee to outside bodies, networks and so on.
- Helping the committee to maintain its focus on achieving the agreed aims, objectives and work plans.
- Making emergency decisions between meetings where necessary in accordance with procedures agreed by the committee.

- Planning and running of meeting (or delegation as necessary).
- Ensuring that all necessary information is made available to committee members.
- Ensuring that adequate records of meetings are kept.
- Ensuring that plans/actions agreed upon during the meeting are implemented.

## Vice-Chairperson

The Vice Chairperson stands in for the Chairperson when necessary and provides administrative support when required.

## Secretary

### **Key responsibilities of the Secretary include:**

- Taking minutes of meetings.
- Writing letters officially on behalf of the group.
- Receiving correspondence on behalf of the group and keep the group up to date on correspondence.
- Keep a list of the current members on the committee.
- It may be possible to elect a separate minute taker to take some of the pressure off the Secretary, but this is at the discretion of the group.

**The key responsibilities of the minute taker include:**

- Organisation of meetings for example, time and place and so on.
- Drafting the agenda with the Chairperson.
- Taking of minutes.
- Writing up and circulation of minutes and next meeting agenda.

**Treasurer**

The Treasurer is the person that has the day to day responsibility for the Residents' Association's funds. They are responsible for keeping accurate books of account. However, it is important to note that the committee has the overall responsibility for deciding how the funds are used and ensuring that they are managed properly.

**The key responsibilities of the Treasurer include:**

- Establishing a financial policy and procedures document with approval of the committee.
- Opening the bank account.
- Monitoring income and expenditure of the group.
- Ensuring that all receipts are lodged into the group's bank account.

- Presenting the accounts for the organisation's AGM.
- Representing the organisation in funding applications.

## 4.2 Constitution

The Constitution is one of the most important documents that your group will ever develop. A Constitution is a set of rules/procedures to assist the committee in the day-to-day running of committee matters. It will help to resolve issues and clarify the rules. It is a list of procedures concerning decision making. It outlines the aims and objectives of the group. The committee agrees/amends the Constitution and it is ratified at the AGM if supported by 3/4ths of the members/residents' present. A sample Constitution is in Appendix C of this Handbook.

## 4.3 Insurance

Laois County Council strongly advises Residents' Associations to have adequate Public Liability insurance to indemnify and protect against potential claims.



## 4.4 Meetings

There are three types of meetings your Residents' Association can hold:

### Ordinary Meetings:

This will be the most frequent meeting type to deal with ongoing matters of interest to the Residents' Association. Typical agenda items may include, for example, a report on the Annual Work Plan, Financial Report and signing off on Funding Applications.

### Annual General Meeting (AGM):

An Annual General Meeting (AGM) is open to all members/residents and is organised by the committee on a yearly basis. At the AGM the committee will report on its yearly work, present a statement of accounts and facilitate the election of a new committee for the year ahead.

### Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM):

An Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) is open to all members/residents and will be called if the committee deems it necessary to discuss a matter too important to wait until the next AGM. The Agenda for an EGM must list the resolutions (formal proposals to be discussed) in advance of the EGM.

### Organising a Meeting:

The procedures outlined below are a guide to how a committee meeting could be organised.

Please note the organisation of the Residents' Association's

Annual General Meeting (AGM) or an Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) should follow the guidelines contained within the Residents' Association's Constitution (a sample Constitution is included in Appendix C)

### Committee Meeting Procedures:

The agenda should be distributed to committee members a week prior to the meeting and made available at commencement of the meeting. New items may be added to the agenda at the beginning of the meeting under AOB. Each agenda item should be dealt with in sequence and concluded before moving on to the next item.

Where an agenda item requires a decision to be taken and if the committee cannot agree on a decision, a show of hands will determine the outcome. The Chairperson, in the case of an equal number of votes, will have a second or casting vote.

The Constitution will set out the numbers of committee members, known as a quorum to be present for a meeting to take place and decisions to be made. It is important to follow good meeting etiquette by ensuring meetings start and end on time and the views of those in attendance are respected.

The Chairperson manages the meeting and is responsible for ensuring that all topics on the agenda are dealt with and all opinions are heard. Questions are directed through the chairperson



## 4.5 Communications

To have an effective and inclusive Residents' Association communication between the Residents' Association and the wider estate or area is critically important. It is recommended the committee identify one person to oversee communications. This may take the form of:

- Residents' Association social media accounts to distribute information and receive feedback from residents.
- Regular leaflet drops.
- Public Notices (if agreed, within the estate or area).
- Maintaining an email address set up by the Residents' Association.

The Estate Management Team can assist in deciding the most effective means of communication for your Residents' Association. We can also help design and print any newsletters or leaflets.

## 4.6 Public Participation Network

Laois County Council strongly advises Residents' Associations to become members of the Laois County Council Public Participation Network (PPN). For further information on the PPN and how to register go to [www.laoisppn.ie](http://www.laoisppn.ie). The Estate Management Team can also assist you with this process.

## 4.7 Opening a Bank Account

It is strongly recommended your Residents' Association opens and maintains a bank account, with a bank of your choice, which will advise you of what documentation you need. This will assist with managing your finances and is a transparent way to track income and expenditure.



# Appendix (a): Template Agenda for First Open Meeting

**Date:**

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**Time:**

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**Venue:**

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## Agenda

- Item 1:** Welcome and Introductions
- Item 2:** Guest Speaker (if any)
- Item 3:** Priorities / Concerns
- Item 4:** Motion that a Residents' Association be formed and Committee elected
- Item 5:** Election of Committee
  - Chairperson
  - Vice Chairperson
  - Treasurer
  - Secretary
  - Ordinary Members
- Item 6:** Setting Aims/Objectives of the Residents' Association
- Item 7:** Any Other Business (AOB)  
Setting a date and venue for the next meeting

# Appendix (b): Template Agenda for a Committee Meeting

**Date:**

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**Time:**

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**Venue:**

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## Agenda

**Item 1:** Apologies

**Item 2:** Minutes of last meeting

**Item 3:** Matters arising

**Item 4:** Correspondence

**Item 5:** Treasurer's report

**Item 6:** Secretary's report

**Item 7:** Any other items to be included on the agenda for that meeting

**Item 8:** AOB  
Setting a date and venue for the next meeting

# Appendix (c): Residents' Association Constitution Template

## Title:

The name of the Association shall be XXXX Residents' Association.

## Objectives:

The objectives of the Association are to protect and improve conditions and amenities in the area for the benefit of members and their families.

## Membership:

Membership is open to all householders in the area of (define geographical limits). Any such householder, having paid their annual subscription, shall be deemed to be a member.

## Subscription:

The annual subscription shall be € XXXX per household, or such sum as shall be fixed from time to time at a General Meeting, and may be paid in monthly installments of €XX due on the XX day of every month.

## Committee:

The Committee shall be composed of a Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer and XXXX members, and shall be elected each year at the Annual General Meeting. In the event of a person leaving the area or resigning from the committee, the remaining committee shall co-opt another member to fill the position.

An Officer shall not hold the same office for longer than XXX years.

An Officer or Committee Member who absents him or herself from XXXX consecutive meetings or committee without a valid excuse shall be deemed to have resigned from the Committee.

A person who holds any elective position in local or central government shall not be eligible for election to the committee, and any committee member wishing to contest such elections must first resign from the committee.

Two ordinary members of the Association, not being related to any committee member, shall be elected at the AGM as Auditors of the Association.

### **Management:**

The general management of the affairs of the Association shall be vested in the committee, who shall perform all such acts, as may be deemed necessary or expedient to further the objects of the Association.

### **Banking Procedure:**

the Association shall have a banking account(s) into which all monies received shall be lodged. All cheques shall be signed by the Treasurer, as well as by the Chairperson or Secretary.

The account of the Association shall be closed for audit purposes on the last day of XXXX in each year.

## **Committee Meetings:**

All meetings shall be convened by the Secretary, who shall give due notice of dates and times of such meetings to each committee member.

Any XXXX committee members, by giving written notice to the Secretary, may call a meeting.

A quorum for committee meetings shall be XXXX members, including at least one officer. The Secretary shall keep minutes of meetings and records of attendance.

## **Annual General Meeting:**

The Annual General Meeting of the Association shall be held during the month of XXXX each year. Notice, in writing, must be given to every paid member at least 21 days prior to the meeting.

All members of the Association may submit motions for discussions at the AGM. Such motions must be received by the Secretary not later than XXXX days/weeks prior to the meeting.

## **Extraordinary General Meeting:**

An Extraordinary General Meeting may be called by the committee or by requisition signed by not less than XX ordinary members of the Association, delivered to the Secretary, who in turn must call such a meeting within XX weeks from the date of receipt of such requisition. Only the business stated in the requisition may be debated at the Extraordinary General Meeting, and details of the said business should be included in the notice of meeting sent to all members.

## **Voting Rights and Quorum:**

A quorum for an Annual or Extraordinary General Meeting shall be XX members. If a quorum is not reached, the meeting shall be re-convened and all members informed of the new date and venue. Those present at a re-convened meeting shall constitute a quorum.

At all General Meetings, each member household will have one vote only.

Voting at all General Meetings shall be by show of hands, except when a ballot is demanded, and a simple majority supports such demand.

## **Dissolution:**

The Association may be dissolved only by the vote of not less than - XX% present at an Extraordinary General Meeting called for that purpose. An audited financial report shall be presented at such meeting. The dissolution will not be effected until assets are disposed of and liabilities discharged. In the event of insufficient funds to clear liabilities, the existing members shall contribute the deficiency, in equal shares.

## **Indemnity:**

All Officers of the Association shall be indemnified by the Association for any expenses incurred in executing their duties on behalf of, and on the direction of, the Committee of the Association.

## **Acceptance of Rules:**

Membership of the Association shall imply the acceptance of each and all of these rules, and any additions and/or alterations, which may be agreed to at General Meetings.



## **Interpretation:**

The Committee for the time being shall have full power to decided any question for which no provision is made for in these rules and shall be responsible for proposing the appropriate amendment at the earliest possible time.

## **Amendment of the Rules:**

These rules shall not be amended, added to, or otherwise altered in any way, save with the consent of at least XX% of the members present and qualified to vote at the Annual General Meeting or Extraordinary General Meeting called for that purpose in accordance with these rules.

# Appendix (d): Role of Officers at Committee Meetings

## The Chairperson:

- Welcomes people and opens committee meetings.
- Ensures that an agenda is prepared for the meeting in consultation with the Secretary.
- Moves through the agenda in the set time and encourages full participation of members in doing so.
- Signed the minutes when agreed (or subject to amendment if required).
- Makes sure that the group is clear about what has been decided, who will do what and when.
- Arranges the next meeting.
- Is one of the Bank account signatories.
- Opens the AGM and delivers the Chairperson's report and remains the Chairperson until election of new Chairperson or is re-elected to the position.

## The Secretary:

- Welcomes people and opens committee meetings.
- Ensures that an agenda is prepared for the meeting in consultation with the Secretary.
- Moves through the agenda in the set time and encourages full participation of members in doing so.
- Signed the minutes when agreed (or subject to amendment if required).

- Prepares and presents at the AGM the Secretary's report and remains Secretary until election of new Secretary or is re-elected to the position.

## **The Treasurer:**

- Is one of the Bank account signatories.
- Maintains the financial records.
- Makes payments/lodgements on behalf of the committee.
- Presents a financial report at the committee meeting.
- Prepares a financial report for the AGM and remains Treasurer until election of new Treasurer or is re-elected to the position.

## **Contact the Estate Management Team for more information:**



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