

Tenant & Resident Association Guide

What are Tenant and Resident Associations and why have one?

A Tenant and Resident Association (TRA) is a group of people who work together to represent the collective views of their local community. They can highlight important issues that affect their neighbourhood, provide feedback, and work in partnership with Guinness to bring about change.

A TRA can represent an entire estate, individual buildings, or a single street. However, it should be mindful that it does not grow too large that the issues affecting the residents of one area exclude residents of another area. It should also not be so small that it cannot get enough residents in the area together to form a group.

The primary role of a TRA should be to work together, with Guinness and other local agencies to ensure that the local environment is safe, secure, and welcoming as a place for people to live. TRAs can be a useful group to give residents a collective voice in addressing local concerns.

Some TRAs may also wish to organise different community activities which are of interest to its members. This part of a TRA's role can sometimes be forgotten as residents concentrate on the service improvement side of things, but this can in fact produce some of the most rewarding and productive activities of a TRA. Neighbours, friends, and communities can be brought together and enriched by a range of social activities involving as many people as possible.

For Guinness to formally recognise and provide start-up funding the TRA must complete an application form and the corresponding documents, such as a constitution. Groups can exist without completing the required documents, but they will not be formally recognised by Guinness.

1. Starting a TRA

A good starting point when considering starting a TRA could be to identify whether there are any common issues affecting residents in the area. You can call a preliminary meeting to identify and discuss these issues, carry out a door-to-door survey, or even drop a questionnaire through the letterboxes in the area to find out what people think. At the same time, you should try to establish the level of commitment residents in the area have for taking part in a TRA – as these groups require time to run.

Once you have established that local residents are supportive of the creation of a TRA, you can contact The Customer Experience Team to obtain an application pack, which contains the following documents:

- Application
- Constitution
- Code of Conduct
- Equal Opportunities Statement
- Joint Working Agreement
- Names and addresses of the Officers of the TRA
- Partnership Agreement.

The Constitution

It is good practice to have something written down which provides a framework how the TRA will be run. A formal constitution details the aims and objectives and rules of the group and must be agreed before the TRA will be formally recognised by Guinness.

Every constitution needs to cover the following points:

- Who is entitled to be a member
- How the Association will be run
- How decisions are to be made
- How money will be handled

Changes to the constitution can only be made with the consent of Guinness.

Code of Conduct

This document describes the standards of conduct that are expected of all members of the TRA. The standards set out in it apply to the TRA and explain what behaviour Guinness expects from its residents as well as the type of behaviour it will not tolerate.

This code of conduct guides the conduct of TRA business, including that at meetings, and aims to ensure that the TRA:

- Does not exclude anyone
- Operates effectively and with integrity
- Has a constructive partnership with Guinness.

All TRA members will be asked to sign up to the Code individually as a condition of membership. These standards apply to all activities that TRA members carry out in relation to TRA business, including communications (written and otherwise) and meetings with Guinness Officers, Board Members, Guinness residents and other individuals and organisations.

Equal Opportunity Statement

All constitutions must include an equal opportunities statement that promises that anyone can join the group. You cannot discriminate against anyone because of age, disability, sexuality, faith/religion, gender or ethnic background or any other protected characteristic as described on the statement.

It is important that a Residents' Association is open to all residents in a given area in order to represent everyone who lives there. The contributions of lots of individuals will be very valuable to the group. In addition, Guinness will not formally recognise or provide financial support to groups that do not have open membership policies.

Joint Working Agreement

This describes what Guinness and recognised TRAs can expect from each other when working together in several areas. It deals with things such as:

- Attendance and administration of meetings
- Communications between both parties
- Feedback on action following estate inspections
- Managing TRA business
- Training and advice
- Arranging local events including help with insurance cover.

Partnership Agreement

This sets out the Start-up Funding and the ongoing requirements for the TRA. These requirements include:

- That the business and finances of the TRA have been run correctly
- That the TRA continues to be democratic and to represent the interests of its wider membership
- That there have been no breaches of the Code of Conduct by the TRA.

2. Inaugural Annual General Meeting

Once the application pack containing the documents is received, an Inaugural Annual General Meeting is to be held. This will act as the launch of the TRA and where the committee members will be formally elected, and the constitution and other documents agreed. This will need to be noted in some way, e.g., minutes taken, and an attendance sheet signed by all who attended. It is recommended that this meeting is publicised to the residents in the area, so they have the opportunity to attend.

Send the signed and completed documents, along with the minutes and attendance sheet to the Customer Experience Team CustomerExperienceTeam@guinness.org.uk. You will then receive notification regarding the TRA's formally recognised status.

What is the Committee?

The Committee will carry out the day-to-day aspects of running the TRA and will be made up of the Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary and Treasurer and any other members willing to carry out a supportive role.

The Chair:

This person will:

- Be the main spokesperson for the TRA and will ensure the meetings run effectively
- Be aware of the activities carried out by and on behalf of the TRA
- Ensure that other members are carrying out their tasks and arrange help if necessary
- Plan and prepare meeting agendas

During meetings the Chair will:

- Make sure the meeting starts on time, runs smoothly and agenda items are discussed, and decisions made where necessary
- Chair the meeting, introducing each item on the agenda and providing background information
- Ensure that discussions stay on topic and that there are no personal discussions
- Deal with differences of opinion and solve conflicts
- Be positive and unbiased
- Summarise main points so that the minutes can be properly recorded.

The Vice Chair:

Will deputise for the Chair when required and should be able to perform all the Chair's duties.

The Secretary:

The main duty of the Secretary is communication, which may include:

- Recording minutes of meetings
- Keeping an attendance list of meetings
- Noting any decisions that have been made at meetings
- Copying and circulating minutes
- Making sure that meetings take place in a suitable location
- Raising any specific issues at meetings that require decisions
- Ensuring the required number of meetings take place per year
- Writing, receiving, and filing any correspondence

This role can be shared out to various members of the TRA due to the various duties and the commitment required. Some possible divisions could be Minutes Secretary, Correspondence Secretary, etc.

The Treasurer:

The Treasurer handles the financial aspects of the TRA; maintains the accounts and updates other members on the finances. The Treasurer's duties include:

- Opening a bank account for the TRA
- Keeping financial records
- Providing updates at meetings of money spent
- Preparing a financial statement for the Annual General Meeting and auditor

The following tasks are so invaluable to the running of a successful TRA they will be discussed in more detail below.

Bank account

It is recommended that a bank account is opened for the TRA as soon as possible. We do not advise the Treasurer to take out a personal account on the TRA's behalf. Banks and building societies have various accounts for non-personal accounts but these are limited for community groups. Be prepared to shop around for an account that has no charges and fits the TRA's needs and ensure you inform the bank that this is a non-profit making organisation.

Any payments from the TRA's bank account require two signatures. Several authorised signatories should be nominated as a result, and they must be from different households and different families.

Financial records

The TRA should be able to always find out how much money is in its account and how much it has spent. Traditionally, the method for keeping books is for a left hand column indicating the money going into the account and a right hand indicating the outgoings. The account should be balanced each month and a balance sheet produced at the end of the year.

TGP reserve the right to request a copy of the records at any time.

Meeting updates

The Treasurer will be expected to provide updates on the TRA's finances at every meeting. If the financial records are accurate, it should be easy to provide updates. If there are any issues these should be brought to the committee's attention at meetings.

Financial statement

Typically, the main financial statement will be the year-end balance sheet presented at the Annual General Meeting detailing the financial affairs for the year. This is usually a one-page document listing all the money going into and out of the account, with major items being listed separately.

3. Meetings

Other than the Inaugural Annual General Meeting, there are other types of meetings a TRA conducts:

- General meetings: Open for all residents in the area who have the right to vote at these meetings. Due to the possibility of attendance being large, ensure an adequate meeting location is booked for this meeting, e.g., a hall or leisure centre.
- Committee meetings: For members of the TRA committee, but other residents can attend as observers.
- Annual General Meeting (AGM): The most important meeting of the year where the current committee will report the year's activities and where an election will take place for committee members.

Remember: A new TRA will have to make arrangements for a meeting place, and the options may vary depending on your local area and the facilities available. Some estates have local community halls whereas others may have to rent a commercial premise with a function room. Be careful not to exclude people from being able to attend a meeting based on its location, such as a pub or place of worship.

The Agenda

Every meeting should have an agenda which informs everyone what topics will be discussed at the meeting. The Chair will lead the meeting, ensuring that the items on the agenda are discussed. As a result, they should be realistic, not too full so that it gives ample opportunity for the items to be discussed without items being left out.

Meeting Minutes

Minutes are a note of a meeting and are taken by the Secretary at every meeting. They do not have to be documented word for word; they simply have to note the item under discussion and note the decision made for that item. Be patient with minute takers as this can be a stressful task, especially at busy meetings.

The minutes of the previous meeting should always be reviewed and agreed at the start of any meeting, so that any corrections can be made. The minute taker must be cautious to never add their comments or personalise a disagreement.

A good Chair should sum up the end of each topic by what was discussed, which will give the minute taker a good opportunity to make any additions/corrections. If ever in doubt, check with the Chair to ensure accuracy.

Annual General Meeting

There are a few topics that are discussed at the AGM:

- Reports
- Any constitution amendments or changes
- Elections.

Because of the importance of this meeting, the AGM requires between 14 and 28 days notice to allow people the opportunity to attend.

Reports

- Annual Reports: A report on the activities the TRA has engaged in over the course of the year.
- The Chair's Report: Will discuss the main achievements of the TRA
- Treasurer's Report: Will discuss the financials of the TRA; main sources of income, total spending, etc. At the end of this report the Chair is to invite the members to accept or reject this report.

Constitution

Any proposed amendments or changes to the constitution will be agreed at the AGM. The members in attendance should be made aware of these prior to the meeting so that they have the opportunity to think about them so these proposals should be sent along with the notices of the AGM. However, no changes to the constitution can be made without the approval of Guinness as this may affect the eligibility of the TRA.

Elections

Once the above have been completed, the existing committee will stand down, with an independent person taking over the chairing duties. This person will call for the nominations for the new committee.

Voting is typically shown by a show of hands but can be done using a ballot if applicable. This process will be repeated until the entire committee has been elected. If only one person is nominated a vote will not be necessary.

Once the committee has been elected the independent person will hand over the duties to the Chair and the TRA can commence its duties for another year.