

Starting a Registered Tenants' & Residents' Organisation (RTO)

CUSTOMER
APPROVED



What is a Registered Tenants' Organisation (RTO)?

A Registered Tenants' Organisation (RTO) is a group of people who live in the same area that get together to talk about Housing and Community issues that affect everyone. With the help of Falkirk Council, they try to find a solution to these issues. They are a voice for tenants and the community they represent on issues such as:

- Repairs
- Antisocial behaviour
- Untidy estates
- Housing Allocation Policies

An RTO can represent a block of flats, several streets or even a larger area of their choice. They can influence changes in their community by:

- Meeting with local Councillors
- Talking to their local Housing Team or Housing Officer
- Responding to consultations
- Attending the Tenants' & Residents' Forum
- Joining a variety of groups that represent tenants' views on Housing issues

An RTO can also help increase community spirit by organising events to raise such as:

- Outings
- Coffee mornings
- Bingo nights
- Sponsored events such as Fun Runs, cycling, swimming, walking etc.
- Raffles and Prize Draws
- Keep Fit classes

Proceeds from social activities must be used to fund the work of the RTO as outlined in the groups' Constitution.

Anyone can start a group as long as they are representing Council tenants on housing issues. The group can be made up of council tenants, private tenants or owners and occupiers.

Registration is free and Falkirk Council's Community Engagement Team will work with the group to set up an RTO. They will also provide an annual running grant of £300.00 to help with the costs of running the group.

How does a group start a Registered Tenants' Organisation (RTO)?

The following list provides a guide for starting a RTO:

- A group of three or more people contacts the local Housing Officer and/or the Community Engagement Team to discuss their wish to set up an RTO.
- The local Housing Officer and/or the Community Engagement Team work with the group to arrange a Public Meeting to discuss setting up an RTO.
- The group publicise and host a Public Meeting with the help of their local Housing Officer and/or Community Engagement Team.
- If there is enough interest in forming/ supporting an RTO, a group of volunteers must meet with their local Housing Officer and/or Community Engagement Team to draw up a draft Constitution and Partnership Agreement.
- A second Public Meeting must then be arranged to elect a Committee for the RTO and approve the draft Constitution and Partnership Agreement (the local Housing Officer and/or the Community Engagement Team will help with the process of electing a committee).

- Once a Committee is formed, they must agree who will be Office Bearers (i.e. Chairperson, Vice-chairperson, Secretary, and Treasurer) amongst themselves.
- Once Officer Bearers have been appointed, a Registration Form must be completed, and the Constitution and Partnership Agreement signed.
- If the Registration is accepted by Housing Services, a bank (or similar) account must be opened in the name of the RTO.
- After the bank account is opened and confirmation is received, the Community Engagement Team will arrange for £300.00 annual running grant to be provided to the group.

Arranging a Public Meeting

Before arranging a Public Meeting, the group should contact their local Housing Officer who will provide help and advice. They can help with:

- Finding a suitable venue to host the meeting
- Setting a date
- Arranging for invitations to be sent to people living in the chosen area, local Elected Members and any guest speakers you want to invite along
- Advertising the meeting
- Setting an agenda on what is to be discussed at the meeting
- Finding the right person to chair the initial meeting
- Finding the right person to take a Minute of the meeting

What are the Agenda and Minutes?

The agenda is a list of things to discuss at the meeting. If followed, it will help the meeting to run smoothly.

Anyone can ask for something to be discussed at the meeting. It is up to the person organising the meeting to decide whether it is appropriate to discuss the request and, if so, to make sure it is added to the agenda.

The agenda would normally include:

- Welcome and introductions
- Apologies from anyone who can't make it
- Agreement or approval of the note taken at the last meeting (also known as the Minute) and what action has been taken on things agreed at the last meeting
- Any correspondence sent to the group
- A report on the groups finances
- Any other business that is to be discussed
- Date of the next meeting of the group

The Minute is a note of what is discussed at each meeting. They should tell members of the group:

- When and where the meeting was held
- Names of everyone who was at the meeting and those who said they were sorry they couldn't manage
- A summary of each item on the agenda and what was discussed and/or agreed
- A note of what needs further discussion or action, who is responsible for the action and when it needs to be done by
- A short summary of anything else that was discussed that wasn't on the agenda
- The date, time and place of the next meeting

General Meetings and the AGM

Your group (often known as the committee) will want to hold meetings to talk about things that its members are interested in. Not all meetings need to be public meetings. Some meetings will only be for your group.

Apart from these meetings, your group (or committee) will need to hold an Annual General Meeting, or an AGM for short. This meeting is a public meeting and will need to be held one year after you have registered with the Council, and each year after that. Anyone in the area that the RTO covers can come along to the AGM so it needs to be advertised by your group.

The reason for having an AGM is to decide if the RTO is to continue into the following year. If it does, a new committee needs to be elected. The people who make up the committee formally step down at this meeting. A new committee, which might include some (or all) of the same people then needs to be elected by people who are at the AGM.

What is a Committee?

A committee is a group of people who have been chosen to represent the RTO at the AGM. When the committee meets, they need to decide who is going to do what tasks. For example, who is going to be the Chairperson, Secretary or Treasurer? The people who are chosen to do these tasks are often known as Office Bearers.

Chairperson: is the person who acts as the spokesperson for the group, keeps control of meetings making sure the groups stick to the agenda and gives everyone a chance to speak and be heard if they want to. The Chairperson also makes sure everyone understands the decisions that are being taken, Decisions that have been made and/or actions agreed.

Secretary: is the person who books the venue for meetings, prepares the agenda, advertises meetings, takes a Minute of the meeting and makes sure everyone gets a copy of the Minute. The Secretary is also the person who receives and records mail on behalf of the RTO and keeps the committee informed about mail received and any replies or actions needed from the committee.

Treasurer: is the person who will open a bank account in the name of the RTO. The Treasurer also records funds received by the group, raised by the group and spent by the group. They will also keep accounts up-to-date, give the committee an update on finances at each meeting, be instructed by the committee on how money should be spent and prepare an annual statement of the accounts for every Annual General Meeting of the RTO. They will be involved in the annual audit of accounts too. They will be responsible for following the Funds & Asset Management Procedures (January 2020) issued to the RTO by Falkirk Council.

Committee Members: Not everyone needs to take on a role in the committee. Anyone else on the committee who is not the Chairperson, Secretary or Treasurer is called a General Committee Member. They will take part in discussions, put forward ideas, support the Office Bearers, vote on issues discussed by the committee and help with general support (i.e. promoting the work of the RTO, distributing invitations to meetings, help with newsletters etc.).

What is a Constitution?

A Constitution is a written set of rules that states how the Registered Tenants' & Residents' Organisation (RTO) is run. It will include:

- The name of the RTO and the area it has chosen to cover.
- The aims and objectives of the RTO.
- An equal opportunities statement to make sure the group is open to anyone to join and members are treated fairly and with respect.
- How often the organisation will meet.
- How meetings will be conducted.
- The minimum number of people who must be at a meeting when decisions are made (this is also known as the 'quorum' for meetings).
- How money belonging to the RTO is managed and accounts checked.
- The process for changing the Constitution.
- When and how Special Public Meetings and the Annual General Meeting will be held.
- What happens if/when the RTO decides to stop.

How to apply for registration

After a group has formed at the first public meeting, a second public meeting needs to be held to elect a committee to represent the RTO and agree on the Constitution. After this meeting, the committee can apply to register with Falkirk Council (Housing Services).

A group can apply to register by completing the application form at the end of this leaflet or by contacting Housing Services' Community Engagement Team on 01324 590796 or by email at housing.customerserviceteam@falkirk.gov.uk

Part of the registration process involves signing up to a 'Partnership Agreement'. This is outlined later in this leaflet.

If the registration is accepted, Housing Services will formally register the RTO and provide the group with an annual running grant to get them started.

What is the Partnership Agreement?

The Partnership is a document that details how Housing Services will communicate with your group and what support you can expect from us. It also details what Housing Services expects from your group and what arrangements we have agreed with your particular group, taking account of the individual needs of each group.

Do Registered Tenants' & Residents' Organisations get financial help?

Housing Services' Community Engagement Team, in partnership with your local Housing Team, will help your group to get up and running with a start-up grant of £300.00. Your group should get this money shortly after you have registered and the groups' bank account has been opened.

If your group continues, Housing Services will give you an annual running grant to help with on-going costs. For example, the money can be used to pay for booking venues, paper, pens, tea/coffee etc. at meetings.

Housing Services' also offers up to £5,000.00 for projects identified by your group in the area covered by the group. This money is available through the project award scheme 'Make a Difference'. To find out more you can check out the Falkirk Council website, contact Housing

Services' Community Engagement Team on 01324 590796 or email at housing.customerserviceteam@falkirk.gov.uk

Once the group has registered, they could apply for funding from other places such as the Big Lottery Fund or local organisations.

All members of your group should have a say on how money held by the group is spent. Each year, the group's accounts must be audited before the Annual General Meeting. The audit will be arranged by the groups' committee and must be carried out by someone independent from your group (i.e. a voluntary organisation, a local accountant or another group).

If your group want to arrange social events such as fun days and trips, they will likely need to apply for Public Liability Insurance. Arranging and paying for this is the responsibility of the group.

Is there any training available to support the group?

Housing Services offers training to help run your organisation. For example, we may offer training on:

- Committee skills
- Book-keeping
- Taking Minutes
- I.T. or computer skills
- Designing a newsletter
- First Aid

Where do I go for help and advice?

Housing Services' Community Engagement Team are always on hand to offer help and advice. Your local Housing Team can also help with things like:

- Photocopying
- Publicity
- Accessing funding
- Putting you in touch with others who can help

How to contact us:

To get in touch with us you can:

- Telephone Housing Services on 01324 506070
- Speak to the Community Engagement Team on 01324 590796
- Email Housing Services on housing.customerserviceteam@falkirk.gov.uk
- Call in to an Advice & Support Hub
- Speak to your local Housing Officer when they are out and about
- Write to us at:
Housing Services,
The Forum,
Callendar Business Park,
Callendar Road,
Falkirk,
FK1 1XR

**Application
Form for
Registered Tenants'
and Residents'
Organisation**

1. Name of Organisation

2. Area covered by your Organisation

3. Main contact name (Chairperson)

Address

Telephone

E-mail

4. Second contact name (Secretary)

Name

Address

Telephone

Email

5. Have you attached a copy of your Organisation Constitution?

YES NO

Please send the completed form to:

**Tenant Participation Team,
The Forum, Callendar Business Park,
Falkirk FK1 1XR
or email the form to: tenant.participation@falkirk.gov.uk**

Further Information and Assistance

If you have any queries or need help to fill in this form please contact your local Housing Team/Community Engagement Team.

Agreement

On behalf of the organisation, I have read the guidance notes in this booklet "Starting a Tenants' and Residents' Organisation" and have the Committee's agreement to be bound by the criteria laid down in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. I understand that the contact details (Section 3 of this form) will be published in the Register and may be viewed by the public.

Signed on behalf of the Organisation:

Committee position held:

Date:

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY:

	Criteria Met	Comments
1. Constitution	YES / NO	_____
2. Committee	YES / NO	_____
3. Area of Operation	YES / NO	_____
4. Membership Policy	YES / NO	_____
5. Accounting	YES / NO	_____
6. Consultation and Representation	YES / NO	_____

APPROVAL GRANTED YES / NO

Signed:

Designation:

Date:

Have your say on how your Housing Service is run, or how it could be improved. To find out more, contact Inspector Tenant on 01324 590796, email inspector.tenant@falkirk.gov.uk or visit us at www.falkirk.gov.uk/inspectortenant for more information.

If you would like this information in another language, Braille, large print or audio tape please contact one of our Neighbourhood Offices or One Stop Shops.



Falkirk Council

www.falkirk.gov.uk/inspectortenant

March 2020