



Forth Housing Association

RTO Information Pack



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1 Introduction

This information pack is designed to give members of your RTO (Registered Tenants Organisation) the basic information they will need.

Being a member brings responsibilities and the information provided in these sheets will help you understand some of these. It is important that you gain a basic understanding of the RTO and your role in running it. Don't worry if you read these sheets and have some questions, you can contact either of the following:

- Angela Laley, Project & Communications Co-ordinator, e mail angela@forthha.org.uk, Tel: 01786 446066
- or Grahame Cairns, Director, e mail grahame@forthha.org.uk, Tel: 01786 446066.

2 What is a Registered Tenants' Organisation (RTO)?

An RTO is an independent organisation set up primarily to represent tenants' housing and related interests in accordance with the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. The aim is to give tenants' associations a recognised role in the tenant participation process.

Registered tenants' organisations have enhanced rights to be consulted by their landlord over important changes to the housing service.

All tenants' and residents' groups are entitled to register with their landlord. Groups don't have to register, although there may be certain advantages for those that do.

3 Benefits of registering as an RTO

The benefits of registering as an RTO are as follows:

- A right to be consulted over proposed changes to housing services
- Support from the landlord (usually an annual grant)
- The opportunity of applying for grant funding from the Scottish Housing Regulator and other grant bodies
- The opportunity to get involved in regional RTO networking forums
- Register of Tenant Organisations

All housing associations are required by law to maintain a register of RTOs, which they consult with over housing and related services. The register is open for inspection by any member of the public and is kept at the local office.

4 Becoming an RTO

Your RTO is already registered with Forth and met the following requirements:

- A name
- A written constitution (a copy of which is included with this pack)
- A clear description of the area your RTO covers
- Has appointed RTO members and office bearers (chairperson, secretary and treasurer).

5 What is expected of RTO members?

RTO members are involved for the benefit of their community, not for individual gain. As such they should keep to the following standards:

- Assist with preparing meeting agendas.
- Stick to the topics on the agenda.
- Speak through the chairperson, and raise your hand to indicate you would like to speak.
- Stick to timescales.
- Listen to those speaking, and do not interrupt.
- Respect others choice to take part.
- Respect other people's opinions.
- Decisions will be put to vote when appropriate.
- Respect people's rights to disagree or abstain from comment.
- Maintain confidentiality at all times.
- Sign a mandate and return this to Forth to confirm that they will work to the standards outlined in this pack.

6 What is expected of Forth Housing Association?

Forth actively encourages and supports RTOs as part of our Tenants' Participation Strategy. A copy of the Tenant Participation Strategy is available upon request from our office.

We will provide a member of staff in a supportive and advisory role to help the RTO as required, However, Forth is not responsible for the RTO.

We can keep a note of any meetings attended by a member of staff. Tenants who attend meetings will be identified in the notes by name only. No addresses, phone numbers or sensitive personal information will be recorded.

Notes of meetings will be placed on Forth's website but only after the RTO members present at the meeting have had the opportunity to approve them.

7 Meetings

Meetings provide opportunities for discussion, gathering of views and giving information.

Successful RTOs use meetings to focus on steps they need to take and carry out agreed actions between their public / members meetings.

Public / member meetings should inform, gather views, set priorities and hold the RTO to account.

A good meeting will include the following:

Agenda	A good agenda will make the meeting flow, cover important issues and help you make decisions
Notes	To provide a record of who was present at the meeting, the basics of what was discussed and a clear record of what action will be taken and by whom.

8 Office bearers

Office bearers carry extra responsibilities and the following summarises these.

8.1 The Chairperson

The Chairperson's role is to guide the RTO toward its aims and:

<p>Outside meetings they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Act as the spokesperson• Work with the Secretary on meetings and agendas• Encourage and support members• Ensure actions are carried out	<p>At meetings they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keep to agenda, time and decide on AOB• Summarise discussions, frame/ accept motions, call/count votes and use their casting vote, if required• Deal with unacceptable behaviour• Ensure fair discussion, decisions are taken and tasks shared
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RTOs can appoint a Vice Chair to support the Chair and act, in the Chair's absence.

The Chair's name is included in the public register of RTOs held by Forth. Unless they chose otherwise their contact address will be given as C/O Forth HA.

8.2 The Secretary

The Secretary deals with communication and the running of the RTO and:

<p>Outside meetings they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Arrange/advertise meetings• With the Chair, set agenda• Provide agendas and minutes to members and guests• Keep members informed• Be the RTO's contact point• Keep records	<p>At meetings they:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Record those present and apologies for absence• Record discussions and actions• Present correspondence and membership applications
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RTOs may have a minutes and/or a membership secretary or they may ask Forth's staff member to take the note of the meeting. They should make it very clear who does what and they should work together.

8.3 The Treasurer

The Treasurer deals with the finances and will:

- Open a bank account for the RTO.
- Pay money into the account.
- Keep financial records and prevent overspending.
- Pay bills and expenses, as agreed by the RTO.
- Give financial statements to the RTO and an annual statement at the Annual General Meeting (Forth can provide an annual check of the financial records before the AGM).

9 Finances

9.1 General

Keeping financial records up to date will protect the Treasurer and the RTO. They should accurately record all monies paid in and out on behalf of the RTO. They should also give details of what the money was spent on.

An RTO should have a bank account and a petty cash tin for small amounts of money. It is important to keep a record of spending for both.

All spending should be approved by the RTO and be recorded in the notes. Once the RTO has approved spending, the treasurer is responsible for making a payment and obtaining proof of purchase.

If money has to be paid out in an emergency, the treasurer should check with other office bearers first, and there should be a maximum that can be paid out in these circumstances.

Where possible pay all bills by cheque, but NEVER SIGN BLANK CHEQUES. Petty cash should be withdrawn with the RTO's agreement. Receipts for the goods / services should be obtained and given to the Treasurer.

For small sums, a petty cash system can be set up with the Treasurer carrying a float. (The treasurer should check if their house insurance covers it).

When spending petty cash the Treasurer should get a receipt / petty cash voucher signed by the treasurer and the person receiving the cash. Receipts should be numbered and dated and a record kept of what the money was for.

9.2 Expenses

Members should be paid agreed expenses and never be out of pocket.

9.3 Bank account signatories

There should be 3 members recognised by the bank who can sign cheques. Normally cheques need to be signed by any 2 of these signatories. If any signatory leaves, the RTO must tell the bank and find a new signatory.

Confirmation of Receipt of Forth's RTO Information Pack

I confirm receipt of this information pack and acknowledge that by signing this confirmation that I will keep to the standards outlined in this pack.

Name

Address.....

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Date.....

Signature.....