

The aim of our Newsletter is to provide encouragement, inspiration and articles for residents and residents' associations and

- to inform Residents Associations of how to run an effective RA
- to provide examples of good RAs
- to encourage community cohesion
- to enhance skills of members of RAs
- to deal with conflicts
- to provide examples of FAQ
- to have information on legal matters and anything else you need

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From The Editor

Eighteen years ago, my husband and I ran a venture from our home providing a back-up service to small businesses to finance our free newsletter and 24hr helpline (we had over 1,000 calls in six months). As we were neither just a business or just a charity at the time, we were told we had to be one or the other. We couldn't be both! We weren't looking to make loads of money – just earn a living and help others at the same time. In fact we had started what is now known to be a social enterprise. After 2002, social enterprises existed in many forms, one of the most famous being *The Big Issue* set up by John Bird.

I started with the Phoenix Bureau in 1998, then set up Phoenix CAN, a company limited by guarantee in 2002. The name was then changed to Universal Community Action Network (UCAN) which was dissolved and then the Good Services Bureau was set up instead in 2012 as a company ltd by guarantee instead of shares. It certainly was a case of a phoenix rising.

In the second issue of the Good Services magazine (Winter 2002) I wrote about Joe Rajko, the founder of yourable.com who won the Channel 4 E-millionaire Show. (*You can read more about this at <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-41042/My-million-pound-health-idea.html>*).

RAUK came into being simply because I felt that residents' associations, if well run, provided a great way to bring communities together to deal with issues affecting residents in their area. The website was created to give information and referrals to others who wanted to form an RA or if there was a problem within one.

We are, therefore, working to encourage RAs to run with integrity and excellence to the benefit of their members.

In time, as more RAs join us,

'Social enterprises trade to tackle social problems, improve communities, people's life chances, or the environment. They make their money from selling goods and services in the open market, but they reinvest their profits back into the business or the local community'

Social Enterprise UK

we will have a register of RAs which will complement the various bodies offering membership such as the Federation of Private Residents' Associations (FPRA) and the National Associations of Residents' Associations (NORA) etc. Links to them are on our website.

I have lots of ideas, some of which I hope will come to fruition, one being reviving the Good Services magazine which has been "on hold" since 2003, so I'm starting small with **The Active Resident** newsletter for now.

Susan Hayward

Director - Good Services Bureau

RAUK



Some examples of what can be achieved by Residents' Associations

- informing residents of their rights and helping tackle any problems they have in relation to their housing;
- putting pressure on landlords or their managing agents to do repairs, maintenance or providing improvements, such as play areas;
- establishing good working relationships to improve the housing service;
- representing residents views to landlords and the media and reporting back to them on any news or concerns;
- helping keep residents informed of the issues affecting their estate and area through newsletters, open meetings, etc;
- helping resolve disputes between residents;
- campaigning on local issues, for example planning applications, schooling or traffic hazards;
- organising social, leisure or educational activities for their estates or areas;
- helping promote estate or area based activities such as good neighbour schemes or Neighbourhood Watch.
- Sharing seedlings and plants, helping with odd jobs (some even use the Local Exchange Trading Scheme or similar local currencies to help pay for things)

When is a Residents' Association NOT a Residents' Association?

This question arose because of the number of queries RAUK received from members of residents' associations who were unhappy because of the way their RA was being run.

In 1999, I came across my first residents' association. In fact, it was the first voluntary group I had encountered too. It was quite formal but they had achieved much in the years of their existence in fighting to stop more houses being built on a large playing field near their homes. The main reason was how it was going to devalue their properties but this was before the tremendous housing crisis in this country.

According to the Companies House website in December 2015, there were 23 residents associations listed. Most are Property Management companies (98000). One is a Community Interest Company (CIC), two state 'Other Accommodation (55900) but only a few are actually run with the total involvement of the residents themselves. Now this is where the confusion lies.

Most leaseholders form a residents' association which is, in reality, a Property Management Company or Right to Manage company run by directors to liaise with the landlord when necessary. Their biggest problems are usually to do with service charges and repairs.

A Property Management Company is usually run by the Directors nominated by residents at their AGM but decisions are sometimes made without consultation with other residents.

In one case we came across, the Residents' Association (a property management company) was set up and run by a solicitor who never contacted residents about anything other than service charges).

Most residents associations, were formed by residents who came together because of problems with poor repairs, planning, roads, new buildings which didn't suit local residents.

Other RAs were set up purely for social purposes to bring the neighbours together in order to get to know each other.

For those running RAs where there are large sums of money involved, we strongly recommend that they register with Companies House as a company limited by guarantee which will protect them as individuals.

Some of the enquiries over the years via our Help Desk were as follows:

- A freeholder had to pay a service charge for communal areas to a residents' association run by a solicitor. She said that there had been a residents' association set up by residents but this stopped. With the new registered RA, there were never any meetings for residents to attend, nor was there any other form of communication with residents, except the annual invoice for charges without any explanation as to what the charges were for or why residents had no say in the running of the RA.
- A freeholder found his association's directors telling residents they would be having wardens and parking permits next year without having prior consultation with the residents. Apparently nothing could be done about this because according to the Memorandum & Articles, Directors could make decisions without consulting with residents.

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How We Can Create Strong Communities

When most of us decided to rent or buy our home, the last thing that probably came to mind were the possibilities that being part of the local community presented. After all, anytime a group of residents work together for a common goal practically anything is possible; from increasing our community's aesthetic appeal and eliminating neighbourhood crime, to creating a more influential voice in the regional issues. The opportunities to benefit from being a part of a residents' association lie waiting to be seized.



The Beehive

little
IMAGES

A hive of bees is a perfect example of a community working together in harmony for the common good of all its members.

After all, a bee living alone can barely survive, let alone prosper. But, in a hive made up of hundreds of other bees, each taking responsibility for the various jobs necessary for the survival of the community, the lone bee not only survives, it contributes mightily to the success of the hive.

The secret of the bees' success in living together in a close-knit community is that each bee not only understands the interrelationships that exist between it and the rest of the members of its community, but is willing to accept some of the responsibility for the hive's prosperity by expanding their role in the community whenever necessary.

As residents, we too can choose to recognize the inter-relationships that exist between ourselves and our neighbours and how those

'A hive of bees is a perfect example of a community working together in harmony for the common good of all its members'

interrelationships have a direct impact on our quality of life.

We can also choose to take some of the responsibility upon ourselves to contribute to improving those relationships and in the process improve our community.

In order for a residents' association to continue to protect, preserve and enhance our community assets and our property values, each member of our community has to acknowledge their role in the community and, at times, be willing to expand their role to take on some added responsibility.

For example: We must all obey the governing documents. People do that when they closed escrow on a property or accept a group's constitution.

By obeying community rules and regulations, we contribute to our community and accept the role of a rule abiding member.

Source: www.yourcommunitymanager.com

12

Most Timeless Principles for Bringing Out the Best in People

[See full article online](#)

1. Expect the best from people you lead
2. Make a thorough study of the other person's needs
3. Establish high standards for excellence
4. Create an environment where failure is not fatal
5. If someone is going anywhere near where you want to go, climb on their bandwagon
6. Employ models to encourage success
7. Recognise and applaud achievement
8. Employ a mixture of positive and negative reinforcement
9. Appeal to the competitive urge
10. Place a premium on collaboration
11. Build into the group an allowance for storms
12. Take steps to keep your own motivation high

Every community

has its own history, personality, attributes and challenges, but all associations share common characteristics and core principles.

Good associations preserve the character of their communities, protect property values and meet the established expectations of residents.

Great associations also cultivate a true sense of community, promote active resident involvement and create a culture of informed consensus.

The ideas and guidance conveyed in this newsletter speak to these core values and can, with commitment, inspire effective, enlightened leadership and responsible, engaged citizenship.

Around the UK

London Borough of Camden

Hampstead

Mums 

The aim is to connect parents and businesses in the Hampstead area (Belsize Park, South End Green, Swiss Cottage,

Primrose Hill). We are doing this by organising events, talks hosted by parents and local businesses), play dates, birth clubs, single parents, groups etc.

www.hampsteadmums.com



London Borough of Enfield

Love Your Door Step is an exciting and rapidly growing on and off-line community in Enfield, plus several other areas of London.

www.loveyourdoorstep.co.uk



Malmesbury, Wiltshire

Heals' purpose is to help, empower and provide local support to those in poverty and those who are vulnerable and disadvantaged. We enable individuals and families to make a positive change through access to local services.

RAUK: Around the UK

London Borough of Epping

Several years ago I applied for funding from the Phoenix Fund based on an idea used by Suffolk County Council who used set-top boxes which connected to the internet via TVs. I thought this would be a great way for neighbours to communicate. I didn't get the funding but I found out about www.streetlife.com which was set up in 2011.

The British site provides a social network for local communities with a simple aim: to help people make the most of where they live by connecting with their neighbours and sharing practical information, advice and resources. People sign up with their postcode and email address, and they are automatically connected with the Streetlife users in their local area. It's a place for neighbours to discuss any local issue they care about.

They can post messages, events, polls and pictures, and locals can respond. We keep users posted on the discussions happening in their local area. Users can customise their account so they control how much information they receive, the areas they're interested in, and what they share about themselves.

Resurfacing Roads: One resident wrote about this problem:

I live on Valley Hill in Loughton towards the RGB electrical store end. I feel the road at our end needs resurfacing as the heavy vehicles and traffic cause vibrations on mine and others property. There also needs to be some traffic calming measures as people are speeding regularly along the whole stretch of road. I have tried to rally support through a letter dropped into residents close to me asking for

residents to contact the council and Valerie Metcalfe, our local Councillor. Another neighbour close to me raised a petition to Essex County Council a number of months ago and I have joined in since to help.

In response to this posting, a couple of residents recommended he contacted the Loughton Residents' Association.

A Voice For Loughton, Essex

Loughton Residents' Association (LRA) was formed because residents felt that the local government process did not consult with the people living in Loughton. LRA pioneered the demand for openness in local government and strove to get hold of the information necessary to make decisions. To do this, they decided to field local councillors on all tiers of government.

LRA Councillors

Now LRA Councillors form the majority on the Town Council and are the second largest group on the District Council. Training is provided and you would be part of a strong and experienced group. LRA sponsors councillors on all three tiers of local government in order to cut through bureaucracy and communicate between the three levels. LRA councillors are able to access information about local issues and act as a voice for

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- a freeholder resident requested, several times without success, for an explanation for the high maintenance fees she had to contribute towards. She was also trying to change her garage door for which she did not need planning permission but was not allowed to do it the way she wanted because the directors of the residents' association objected to her choice of windows because it would not look like the other properties in the area. Only a few residents were involved in running this RA who had authority over all the residents although not involving them in the running of it.

Whilst the [Federation of Private Residents' Associations \(FPRA\)](#), Lease Advisory Service, ARMA, etc. are able to help with some problems faced by RAs including Property Management Companies, we feel that prevention is better than cure.

'Great associations also cultivate a true sense of community'

The types of residents' associations should be made clearer so that there is more transparency.

It isn't until there are problems that residents discover that they really have very little say in how the RA is being run. If they want to do anything, it could, sometimes, involve legal or accountants fees having to be paid out of the residents' own pocket.

We will be writing more about these problems in our next Newsletter but any feedback you can provide will be most helpful, not only in writing the next article but also in dealing with enquiries.

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Loughton in the council chamber. They always published the names, and contact details of councillors and committee in their newsletter, Loughton Life.

To find out what is involved please contact Cllr Chris Pond on 020 8508 2361 or email contact@loughtonresidents.co.uk.

Consulting residents

The LRA aims to assess and represent the views of the residents. This can be difficult, as residents often have divergent opinions on local issues. They hold a monthly open forum at the Farmers Market, where local people can express their views, give information and raise issues with councillors and committee members. In this way the LRA can learn about local developments and opinions.

LRA also holds public meetings. Their short 2016 AGM is at 8pm on

Tuesday March 22nd, at Loughton Cricket Clubhouse (entrance in The Uplands, off Church Hill). It will be preceded by a talk by LRA Cllr Chris Pond on "Pictures of Old Loughton."

Bringing people together

Loughton RA wants to unite the community rather than divide it. They feel that national political parties are divisive at the local level.

If LRA is opposed to an issue or development it's their policy to offer sensible alternatives, and they strive to turn active proposals into reality.

Read more on their website, www.loughtonresidents.co.uk

Do share information about your residents' association with our readers in our newsletters and website

Get involved, stay informed and do your part

The possibilities are limited only by our ability to work together. Unfortunately, without a clear understanding of how and why our residents' association operates, those possibilities will elude us.

When we can grasp the theory that underlies our governing documents and the reasons that our Board and management company must, at times, do what they do, then we take a giant step towards realizing the potential of our community.

A residents' association is no different than any other organization. In order to succeed and reach its potential, it needs the support and involvement of its members.

Just think of the goals that can be achieved when we all work together for the betterment of our community.

Instead of perceiving our association as an obstacle to overcome, try thinking of it as a tool to help us create a more comfortable life-style. But, like any tool, we need to learn how to use it effectively before it can do any good.

Tips:

- Make sure you know what is in your Constitution or Memorandum & Articles
- Make sure you attend Meetings and get the Minutes

Clean Your House in 19 Minutes!

Get speed cleaning down to a science. Simply incorporate this 19-minute method into your morning routine and you'll have a tidy house all day, every day. Best of all, it means you can put your feet up sooner rather than later. Here's a handy checklist you can use:

- **KITCHEN: 4 1/2 MINUTES**

Wipe down the sink after doing the dishes or loading the dishwasher (30 secs).

Wipe down the stove top (1 min).

Wipe down the counters (1 min).

Sweep or vacuum the floor (2 mins).

- **BATHROOM: 2 MINUTES**

Wipe out the sink (30 secs).

Wipe the toilet seat and rim (15 secs).

Swoosh the toilet bowl with a brush (15 secs).

Wipe the mirror and faucet (15 secs).

Squeegee the shower door (30 secs).

Spray the entire shower and the curtain liner with shower mist after every use (15 secs).

- **BEDROOM: 6 1/2 MINUTES**

Make the bed (2 mins).

Fold or hang clothing and put away jewellery (4 mins).

Straighten out the night-table surface (30 secs).

- **LIVING ROOM: 6 MINUTES**

Pick up crumbs and dust bunnies with a handheld vacuum (1 min).

Fluff the cushions and fold throws after use (2 mins).

Wipe tabletops and spot-clean cabinets when you see fingerprints (1 min).

Questions from our Help Desk on www.residentsassociations.co.uk

We've had nearly 400 enquiries since starting up the Help Desk, many from residents wanting to set up or get involved with a residents' association. There have also been requests for information in how to deal with problems with their residents' association. We are, therefore, currently working on FAQ's to put on the website. Meanwhile, here's a couple of enquiries we had recently:

An Oxford resident, after home-owning residents in the street had a couple of street parties, wanted to set up a residents' association, wrote to us saying:

'... Someone in our street is trying to set up a residents' association but they are doing it in a really bad and bullish way and putting everyone's back up. What should we do? Is there any recourse if he sets one up that isn't working in the residents' interests?'

We replied:

'It's not as easy setting up an RA as people think so if this person is keen, it might be an idea to try and work with him in the beginning. Obviously, he will need to learn "people skills" if he wants to make it work. A steering committee with a good Chair to work until the first AGM should be elected as soon as you have enough members, and if he continues to show the wrong attitude he won't be elected. Neither will he keep any members and if that happens, you will already have made enough contact with other residents in the area to form another RA.'

The resident replied that our suggestion was helpful, would take it on board and that they were managing to make some progress. He was included in the lead-up and was invited to take part in drawing up a constitution to ensure it was run democratically but he declined to take part. Following up the enquiry, we found that after another meeting, which had been quite fractious and

not very nice, the residents felt that they didn't want to have a formal residents' association so nothing more was done, although the gentleman has set up a newsletter for the road. The resident, having seen how effective a good residents' association could be would very much like to be part of one but the nearest was too far from their street.

It's so important to ensure an RA is run democratically and with ground rules set out in a constitution. Have you had a similar problem?

Public Liability Insurance

We've had several enquiries about this and were asked to recommend a good insurance company willing to provide insurance cover to residents' associations. Property Management Companies don't have much of a problem in getting cover for Directors, their building etc. but small groups find it difficult

because of a lack of funds. When there are events being held or if there are large sums of money involved it is recommended that insurance cover is used to protect individuals. In such cases, it's also a good idea to become a company limited by guarantee.

Can you recommend any good insurance companies that you use?

How to have an effective committee and avoid losing good trustees

When a trustee of a small British charity resigned, he gave the Chair a list of the usual reasons – family circumstances, growing responsibilities in his day job – but in truth he was simply fed up. After almost three years as a trustee he was frustrated and disillusioned.

He understood the complex job the charity was tasked with, and all with very limited resources. He hadn't stepped into the role blindly and knew well the myriad issues facing voluntary organisations. So why was he ready to give up so quickly?

The reality is that often the recruitment and management of trustees/directors is not well planned and can be very time consuming and expensive.

The committee was largely comprised of trustees recruited through friendship groups and business connections. Most were long-standing volunteers of 10 years or longer, so he found very little motivation for innovation and improvement. The fear of change and a sense of defeatism dogged debate. Plans set out in productive meetings then sat at the bottom of an in-tray for months, with little

chance of movement or progress between each meeting. Cold water was often poured on new ideas and, in his inexperience, he was overambitious in response.

With such a small team of volunteers there were few resources to follow through even the most carefully planned strategies. Trustees were unable (and sometimes unwilling) to perform these roles with the quality and commitment that would be expected of paid staff.

These are common pitfalls for small groups. Ultimately they discourage aspiring trustees, especially younger ones, from giving their time. They stop small charities from reaping the rewards of creative thinking. So here is his advice for boards/committees, to avoid falling down the common potholes when money and time is tight.

His six tips can help the process of appointing a stronger trustee board/committee and to make the best use of their skills.

1. Recruit professionally

When a group is very small, it's important to work towards ensuring that your board/committee represents the diversity of your residents.

2. Offer fixed-term positions

Set fixed term positions of no more than 3 or 5 years to allow new trustees to get involved with long term projects and see the fruits of their labours. This also ensures that new voices are constantly challenging your trustee team and making changes. Fixed-term positions can also prove attractive to potential volunteers who may fear getting involved in an open-ended commitment.

3. Avoid empire building

It's great to have a bond between you, but if your committee is essentially a friendship group then work simply won't get done. Move responsibilities around so that one individual can't monopolise work on a core area. If you decide to set up sub-committees to work on projects then make sure these are refreshed annually or bi-annually.

4. Set boundaries

Every trustee should have a core area of responsibility and understand what is expected of them. Set out clear goals and guidelines to channel the enthusiasm of younger or inexperienced trustees into achievable aims with

long and short term goals through use of their connections and skills.

5. Make volunteering useful

When resources are tight, think about how to make the most of what you have by way of areas of expertise. Introduce them to advisors and mentors where possible. Allow them to use their experience as a volunteer to build up new skills of their own, which may then prove useful in their own careers or personal lives. This should prove beneficial for all, if being a trustee doesn't also benefit the volunteer then something's going wrong.

6. Finally let your trustees be ambitious

However naive you think they are, there's nothing more frustrating or de-motivating for a new trustee than hearing a chair or chief executive say: "No, we can't do that because we're too small". Allow your trustees to think big. Avoid saying 'no' by asking trustees to work with you to plan backwards from an ultimate ambition to design a realistic strategy which can be implemented over a number of years. For small RAs, having a good relationship between trustees and other volunteers can help to manage this process.

Adapted for RAs from <http://www.theguardian.com/voluntary-sector> - Last modified on Friday 11 July 2014

What makes a good Residents' Association?

Being part of a residents' association is a great way for people to have a greater voice in their communities. It's not for us to judge how residents associations are run but there does need to be some accountability as well as transparency. So, how do we as residents, hold those who set up and run residents associations accountable to the communities they claim to represent?



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Some RAs have been guided by political beliefs especially when one or more of the residents was a councillor, or rarely, an MP. Housing Associations or local councils can sometimes help, but often the RA was formed to "fight" them in the first place.

Others have been seen just as nose-y busy bodies but on the whole, the majority have been seen as a very positive force for community cohesion and a great way of getting to know the people around you.

Since starting up this website we have had numerous enquiries from people questioning how things were carried out by their committee collectively or individuals frustrated at how to deal with these situations.

In some cases we have written to the committee but if they do not answer us, there's been very little we can do. We are not a force to be reckoned with yet but hope to be one day.

If an RA is a company limited by guarantee, it could be held accountable to Companies House. If the RA is just a small group, the committee is really only accountable to their members. The trouble is that some residents have felt helpless to do anything if their committee did anything wrong and that is when they often contact us for help.

Until now, if someone was unhappy with their residents association they just left it. In time this left a small number of people claiming to represent a larger amount of people which was no longer true. This also left people thinking that residents' associations were to be avoided at all costs. With your help we hope to change things.

If you would like to contribute an article to this Newsletter, please let us know via the Help Desk on www.residentsassociations.co.uk or email info@goodservices.co.uk

The Active Resident is published by the



Good Services Bureau

Promoting excellent services in the community

Mailing address: c/o Raffingers, 19-20 Bourne Court, Woodford Green, Essex IG8 8HD

Never underestimate the power of a good Residents' Association!

It takes just one step in the right direction with the right attitude to bring about positive change and this is what is happening not only in this borough but around the UK and the rest of the world.

Young and old people everywhere are fed up with how life doesn't seem to be as it could be and are deciding to do something about it themselves instead of leaving this up to others.

We think Residents' Associations can be a great force for good in communities and so we invite you to join us—either as individuals or a group.

Application Forms are on the www.goodservices.co.uk website

Individual Membership
£12.00 a year

Family Membership
£15.00 a year

Residents' Associations
£20.00 a year

Businesses & other
voluntary groups
£25.00 a year

By becoming a member of the Good Services Bureau, you will be able to help many more than those in your local community

Please click on the link below to complete this [Feedback Form](#)