

Residents committee or social club

If you're wondering whether your village needs a residents committee or a social committee, a hybrid or both then perhaps it might help to understand the differences.

A residents committee is a group of residents who are elected to represent the interests of all residents in a retirement village. They might meet regularly with the village management to discuss issues that affect residents and they can make recommendations on how to improve the village.

For example they might recommend changes to the rules and regulations, or they might suggest new amenities or services. Residents committees can also play a role in resolving disputes between residents and the management.

Resident committees tend to be structured. They will have a constitution or guidelines, keep minutes and are enabled under the Code of Practice ie a group of residents have a legal right to form a residents committee in their Village.

A social committee, on the other hand, is a group of residents who organise social activities for the village. They might plan events like potluck dinners, game nights, or outings. They also might help to organise volunteer opportunities for residents. Social committees can help to create a sense of community and belonging in a retirement village. They can also provide opportunities for residents to socialise and stay active.



A village can have one, or both, or a hybrid of the two. The most common is a combination – a residents committee that initiates a residents committee that initiates social activities on behalf of the village.

The main difference between a residents committee and a social committee is that a residents committee is responsible for representing the interests of all residents, while a social committee is responsible for organising social activities.

If you are thinking of setting up one then RVR residents (in conjunction with the Retirement Commission) have a have a great booklet that can help. Visit www.rvr.org.nz or contact 0800 787 699.

How Residents Committees work within a Village

Residents' Committees are formed by residents of the retirement village, often through a democratic election process as is the case at a Village in Auckland.

Members are typically volunteers who want to participate actively in the community.

The committee represents the collective voice of the residents to the retirement village management and owners. They often address issues related to facilities, services, and policies that affect the residents and serve as a communication channel between residents and management/owners by gathering input and feedback from residents.

Effective collaboration between the Residents committee and retirement village management is crucial for addressing residents' concerns and ensuring a harmonious living environment. One person comments, "At our facility we are lucky to have an interested and proactive Manager who works well with our residents' committee. Her door is always open and she is invited to the last half hour of the bimonthly meetings where any concerns are discussed. On

occasions, the Facilities Manager and Health and Safety Officer attend too so that issues of maintenance and safety can be discussed.”

Residents committees may be able to help in resolving disputes or concerns that residents have with the retirement village management or services. However the complainant is usually encouraged to approach management in the first instance as they find that most problems can be sorted quickly. If this is not the case, the complaint can be discussed at a committee meeting and the committee may decide to approach the Manager to support the complainant, in this way, the committee representative can act as a mediator and help work towards a solution and thereby avoid escalation to a Formal Complaint.



Some committees organise social events and activities within the retirement village to promote community engagement and a sense of belonging among residents.

From Resident Chairs

“Our Manager is frequently invited to attend the bi-monthly meetings of Independent Residents and has welcomed our suggestions to invite other staff with responsibilities. Our Facilities Manager has attended two meetings this year and we are looking forward to hearing about the role of the staff with Health and Safety responsibilities this month. Her door is always open but the demands of the Hospital and Care sections and staffing issues mean a very busy schedule for her. Working with the Facilities Manager more directly has been beneficial for staff and residents equally.”

“Personally I wonder about the separation between Resident and Independent resident. This would appear to suggest the resident in Care has no advocate. Yet, if there is one thing we all need to be aware of it is the nature and state of Hospital and Care facilities. Many of us are likely to be using them and we want quality staff and quality facilities. Transition from independence to dependency requires good communication and good understanding of the process. The Resident’s Committee is a group ideally suited to explore these issues and our Village Manager has agreed to address them.”

“We feel the committee and management both work forwards the same goal which is the well-being of all who live and work in the Village, staff and residents alike. It’s a mutually beneficial arrangement!”

“At our village we have a Managing Residents Committee, a Social Committee and a Bar Committee. The residents committee became incorporated in 2014, which allowed it to hold a bar licence and run a bar. This meant all operating funds would be managed by the Bar Committee which in liaison with the Social Committee, then channels profits back into social activities for the residents and on request pays for equipment not funded by the owner eg music stands library books etc. The three committees are autonomous but work closely together. In fact, some residents are on two or all three committees. This makes communication easy as we support each other and work very well together.

As Chair, I have found our operator and present Manager very supportive – as demonstrated during and after the cyclone. They communicate well. Gone are the days when residents felt they couldn’t email office staff or the Manager if they needed to know something”, says a resident.

A resident at another retirement village says:

“The catalyst for our Residents Committee coming together was the arrival, virtually on mass, of 60 or so new entrants in 2019. We comprised 40% or so of the village’s independent residents. Overall we were a younger cohort.

Many of us saw a place for a committee though sensed that support was perhaps at best 50/50. We first formed a steering committee to canvas residents and to research what other villages did. Six months on we called a special residents meeting at which a motion to form a committee was arrived by a margin of seven votes out of 90.

Village management were neutral in this regard. They didn’t oppose though also didn’t promote. Head Office personnel were less positive.

Following establishment, however, management have supported us with the use of facilities including photocopying, and on one occasion with airfares for an out-of-town guest speaker. The operator’s Wellington regional manager helpfully facilitated our first few meetings with management. There were also no barriers to our Legislative Review meetings”.

Terms of Reference

The committee’s foundation Terms of Reference described the role in terms of assisting in the optimal development of the village’s physical and social environment and at all times working constructively and in goodwill with management.

We were clear that we fitted between residents and management, primarily as a voice for residents.

The first sections of these terms of reference were amended at the first AGM to *actively promoting the physical and mental wellbeing and the independence* of the village’s independent and supported living residents. The shift is significant in terms of how roles and functions have evolved.

Some of the committees early work included:

- Protocols around staff and contractor access to our apartments including unannounced walk ins
- Emergency procedures better fit for purpose for residents
- Fire and other emergency evacuation processes
- Out of hours ambulance access. Ambulance staff had previously needed to jump fences and knock on apartment doors for access and direction.
- The committee also progressed road and traffic safety matters. The outcomes include agreement by the council to seek a speed reduction from 50 km/hr to 30km/hr past the village, electronic speed alert signs for each lane, a protected crossing (ie a centre island with railings), and a designated parking bay for goods service vehicles (including for emergency services). Separately though the Regional Council we have secured an additional bus stop shelter.

Alongside these legacy and systemic matters, the committee meets monthly, normally with the manager in attendance or part.

Observations:

The resident notes the following:

- Increasing average ages (and higher entry age thresholds) potentially make traditional committee structures difficult to sustain.
- The very large village operators seem to very tightly centrally manage. Their village roles, as here, are supervisory and administrative rather than management, which can create challenges.
- This raises an opportunity for committees, that well used, can be of benefit to local village operations, and can say things to the operator at national office in a way and at a level that village managers can't.
- Looking at other villages, I sense that those without paid activities programme staff seem to have more vibrant committees; especially when their activities roles are seen as facilitating rather than provision.
- I think that the Retirement Commission 2023 Annual Investigation Report makes good points re the expectations that village promotions unnecessarily or unintentionally create. That is, especially around unrealistic expectations of wrap-around support.

I think committees have a key role in helping ensure that these 'independent' years are more, rather than less – including by pushing back n processes and messages that better fit independent rather than care living.

Ref: Aged Advisor 2024