

Item No. 8.	Classification: Open	Date: 23 October 2012	Meeting Name: Cabinet
Report title:		Response to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee review of resident involvement and resident Association Recognition and Grants	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All wards	
Cabinet Member:		Councillor Ian Wingfield, Deputy Leader and Housing Management	

FOREWORD – COUNCILLOR IAN WINGFIELD, DEPUTY LEADER AND CABINET MEMBER FOR HOUSING MANAGEMENT

Southwark has had a long tradition of resident involvement using well established resident involvement structures. We have over 130 tenant and resident associations (TRAs) throughout the borough. As well as involvement we encourage empowerment of residents for example through tenant management organisations (TMOs) that currently supply housing management services to over 3,500 homes. We work in partnership with the Southwark group of tenants' organisations (SGTO) to empower residents to form tenant and resident associations and support the resident movement.

I am proud of the achievements residents have had in shaping services and it is my desire to ensure that residents are more directly involved in deciding how services should be delivered. As well as continuing to support our existing structures to be effective, I recognise that there is more to do to ensure we involve a wider range of residents.

Involving more people will make sure services are delivered fairly and appropriately. Of the 8 recommendations of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee we are already progressing 6 as part of our commitment to improving resident involvement. I am pleased to see that the Housing, Environment, Transport and Community Safety Scrutiny Sub-committee have resolved to follow up this review by undertaking a more thorough scrutiny review in relation to TRA Halls.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That Cabinet note and agree the measures that the council has in place to respond to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee recommendations.
2. That Cabinet note in particular that the Housing, Environment, Transport and Community Safety Scrutiny Sub-committee are undertaking a full scrutiny review in relation to TRA Halls.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

3. At its meeting on 8 May 2012 the Overview & Scrutiny Committee received a briefing note from the Strategic Director of Housing & Community Services in respect of resident involvement and resident association recognition and grants.

4. The Overview & Scrutiny Committee resolved that:
 - a. Officers be asked to circulate all members with additional information on:
 - the number of TRAs who made applications in 2009/10
 - officers' contact with all TRAs, in order to assist with the recognition and grant application process
 - TRAs who have not made an application for funding and recognition, in order to assist ward councillors with supporting local TRAs to complete an application, where appropriate.
 - b. Officers be asked to provide Councillor David Noakes with additional information on the status and activity of all TRAs in his ward in order to assist with support.
5. The additional information has been provided to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee members and to Councillor Noakes
6. Overview & Scrutiny Committee recommended that:
 - I. The application process for grants and recognition be made less complicated, less bureaucratic and more accessible.
 - II. Officers create an online application process to complement the paper based process, so that tenants' and residents' associations (TRAs) have options for making applications. This to be completed within six months.
 - III. There be an emphasis on support for TRAs to make funding applications over the next few months, rather than on recognition, in order to clear the backlog of applications and enable organisations to receive funds.
 - IV. It be obligatory for a Resident Involvement Officer to attend every TRA AGM, and that officers use this occasion to assist TRAs in their applications for recognition and funding.
 - V. TRAs create a standing item at every AGM covering the administration needed to complete the recognition and funding application process.
 - VI. The Resident Involvement Team be asked to consider how to work with ward councillors to support TRAs.
 - VII. A report on resident engagement be sent to the Housing Commission, Southwark Tenants' Council and Southwark Homeowners' Council.
 - VIII. Officers be asked to return to overview & scrutiny committee in six months' time to report on progress on the above recommendations.
7. Overview & Scrutiny reported to Cabinet on 19 June 2012. Cabinet resolved that the recommendations of the brief review of resident involvement and resident association grants be noted and, and Councillor Ian Wingfield, deputy leader and cabinet member for housing management bring back a report to

cabinet, in order to respond to the overview and scrutiny committee.

8. On 9 July 2012 the Housing, Environment, Transport and Community Safety Scrutiny Sub-committee resolved to undertake a full scrutiny review in relation to TRA Halls.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Recommendation 1

9. Residents are asked for feedback on the application process as a routine part of the process. In the last round of grant making a majority (66%) of those who completed the form found it “easy, no problems”. The analysis of the responses is set out in the following tables:

Ease of completing form

Easy, no problems	52	66%
Some difficulty	23	29%
Very hard	4	5%
Total	79	100%

Help with completing the form:

Used the Resident Involvement Team

Very good	15	42%
Good	10	28%
Satisfactory	5	14%
Not satisfactory	2	6%
No response	4	10%
Total	36	100%

Used area housing staff

Very good	0	0%
Good	4	57%
Satisfactory	1	14%
Not satisfactory	0	0%
No response	2	29%
Total	7	100%

Used Southwark Group of Tenants Organisations

Very good	3	25%
Good	6	50%
Satisfactory	1	8%
Not satisfactory	0	0%
No response	2	17%
Total	12	100%

Officers have recognised that the form is not as well laid out as it could be. The form has been reviewed by officers and Tenant Fund Management Committee (TFMC). TFMC is made up of residents who make recommendations on funding. The form is being redesigned by the council's Customer Experience team to make it simpler for residents to use. Some aspects of the feedback received will require Cabinet agreement as it will alter the terms of the grant process. It is therefore proposed to incorporate the changes in time for inclusion in the 2013/14 budget setting process.

Officers will also use Tenants and resident Association Annual General Meetings to collect as much of the information needed for recognition and funding as possible, in order to reduce the burden on those who complete the forms for TRAs.

Recommendation 2

10. Work is ongoing on a web version of the grant application form. TFMC are being asked to finalise and agree the form. In the meantime the current form is being uploaded to the council website so that associations can complete and return via email.

Recommendation 3

11. Applications for funding and recognition use the same form so both can be dealt with at the same time. The Resident Involvement team has a target of 100% applications for 2011/12 by 31 September. There is no backlog of applications; all payable applications have been dealt with. Whereas in June 2012, there were 72 TRAs that had not applied for recognition and grant this is now reduced to 14 associations (plus 7 TMOs and 3 defunct TRAs that appeared in the original totals). Officers continue to press associations for the return of forms. Thirty applications have been made to date in 2012/13 (made as AGMs arise) and all processed within the set timescales.

Recommendation 4

12. Resident Involvement Officers have been instructed to attend all TRA Annual general meetings. They are using the AGM as an additional way of reinforcing the opportunity to apply for funding.

Recommendation 5

13. Officers can suggest a standing item at every AGM to TRAs but cannot insist as they are independent bodies. However, the business of completing a funding form is not a good general meeting activity as general meetings involve the wider membership who may not be involved in this activity. Feedback from associations shows that it is preferable to work with the secretary (or whoever the TRA nominates) to complete and this is the approach that Officers will take in future.

Recommendation 6

14. Officers already liaise with ward members on TRA issues. The Resident Involvement manager will meet with ward councillors to discuss TRAs in their wards, where this would be useful. Officers will also write to all members to provide them with details of the named officers responsible for supporting TRAs and arrange regular member engagement sessions if that would be helpful.

Recommendation 7

15. The report was placed on the agenda for Tenant Council on 9 July 2012 and officers have also asked for the report to be presented to Home Owners Council. A copy of the report has been forwarded to the Housing Commission for information.

Recommendation 8

16. Officers will return to Overview & Scrutiny Committee in six months time to report on progress with the above recommendations. This is in progress alongside the work that Officers are carrying out to respond to the Scrutiny sub-committee review referred to in paragraph 7 of this report.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Additional information provided to OSC members in response to Scrutiny report into TRA Recognition and Grants	Housing & Community Services, 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH	Brian O'Neill Resident Involvement Manager Tell: 020 7525 7544

APPENDICES

No.	Title
None	

AUDIT TRAIL

Cabinet Member	Councillor Ian Wingfield, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing Management	
Lead Officer	Gerri Scott, Strategic Director of Housing & Community Services	
Report Author	Stephen Douglass, Head of Community Engagement	
Version	Final	
Dated	11 October 2012	
Key Decision?	No	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included
Director of Legal Services	Yes	Yes
Strategic Director of Finance and Corporate Services	Yes	Yes
Cabinet Member	Yes	Yes
Date final report sent to Constitutional Team	11 October 2012	