

Response to scrutiny recommendations on resident involvement

TRA GRANTS

Thank you for providing us with the opportunity to respond to your recommendations and requests for further information. I have set out our comments below. I hope that they are helpful to you.

Requests for additional information

In response to your requests for additional information, the committee asked officers to circulate all members of the committee with additional information on:

The number of TRAs who made applications in 2009/10

I can confirm that 104 TRAs applied for grant funding and 17 applications were turned down because they did not meet the funding criteria. 58 TRAs did not apply. In total, there were 162 TRAs that could have applied for funding during that year.

Officers' contact with all TRAs, in order to assist with the recognition and grant application process

All TRAs have a named officer. Part of the duties of an officer under the new grants system is to provide forms to the TRAs as their AGM approaches and then to follow up to get the form returned. (Under the old system, all TRAs were sent forms at a single point in the year). Help in completing the forms is available from resident involvement officer, the community training staff within tenant and resident involvement, area management staff and the SGTO. Contact is logged on the resident involvement database.

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.

There are 72 TRAs that have not applied for recognition and grant in 2011/12. This includes eight tenant management organisations which are also recognised as TRAs. We would welcome help from councillors to encourage TRAs to apply, and staff from the team are happy to assist TRAs to make their applications.

The committee also asked officers 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 and I can confirm that Cllr Noakes has been provided with the information requested.

Initial response to recommendations

In response to the recommendations of the Committee, I have outlined our initial feedback below:

That the application process for grants and recognition be made less complicated, less bureaucratic and more accessible.

We ask residents for feedback on the form as part of the grant application process and I have summarised below the feedback that we have received from residents regarding the current form.

Ease of completing form

Completing form

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

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Help with completing the form

Used RI team

Very good	15	42%
Good	10	28%
Satisfactory	5	14%
Not satisfactory	2	6%

36

Used area housing staff

Very good	0	0%
Good	4	57%
Satisfactory	1	14%
Not satisfactory	0	0%

7

Used SGTO

Very good	3	25%
Good	6	50%
Satisfactory	1	8%
Not satisfactory	0	0%

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Following the committee meeting, the form is being reviewed by the residents who form part of the tenant fund management committee and it is currently being redesigned by the council's Customer Experience team to make it simpler for residents to use. We plan to introduce the new improved form from the start of August and a copy of the new form will also be sent to all Committee members.

We will also use AGMs 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.

That 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.

We plan to introduce a web version of the form as soon as the new form has been finalised and agreed with residents. Our target for introducing the new on line form is to have this up and running by October.

That 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.

There is no longer a backlog in processing applications and all grant applications have either been responded to with a funding decision or with a request for additional information so that a funding decision can be made. We are now turning completed applications round within five days (target is 14 days) which helps to outline the advantage of moving to the new system where applications come in throughout the year. The RI team has a target to achieve 100% applications for 2011/12 by 30 September 2012, although it is accepted that some TRAs will choose not to apply.

That 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.

Yes – This is agreed and these arrangements are now in place. We will use attendance at these meetings as an opportunity to gather information that we need for recognition and funding, and also to see generally how the group is doing and to check whether they need any additional support.

That TRAs create a standing item at every AGM covering the administration needed to complete the recognition and funding application process.

We will suggest this to TRAs but the feedback that we have had from residents is that they think that it would generally work better to liaise with the secretary (or whoever the TRA nominates) to complete the form.

That the Resident Involvement Team be asked to consider how to work with ward councillors to support TRAs.

We already liaise with ward members on TRA issues. The RI managers are happy to meet with ward councillors to discuss TRAs in their wards, if this would be useful. We will also write to all members to provide them with details of the officers responsible for supporting TRAs and arrange regular member engagement sessions.

That a report on resident engagement be sent to the Housing Commission, Southwark Tenants' Council and Southwark Homeowners' Council.

The report has been placed on the agenda for Tenant Council on 9th July 2012 and we have also asked for the report to be presented to Home Owners Council on 25th July 2012. A copy of the report has also been forwarded to the Housing Commission for information.

That officers be asked to return to overview & scrutiny committee in six months' time to report on progress on the above recommendations.

We will prepare an update report for the Committee in 6 month's time. We will also be reporting to Housing Scrutiny sub committee on 9th July 2012.

I hope this information is helpful to you. Please let me know if you have any queries or comments.

Yours sincerely

Gerri Scott
Strategic Director of Housing Services