

Item No. 13.	Classification: Open	Date: 26 June 2013	Meeting Name: Cabinet
Report title:		Response to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee - Housing, Environment, Transport and Community Safety Scrutiny Sub-Committee review of TRA Halls and Communal Rooms	
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

At their best our Tenants & Residents Association Halls play a major role in strengthening their local community, providing spaces that host a wide range of activities for young and old. They provide public spaces where people come together to meet their neighbours and work together for the benefit of the wider community.

Getting people involved in the management and running of local community buildings can lead to people having a greater sense of pride in and responsibility for their local community. The best are managed by people with real commitment, many of whom bring years of experience and skills to the task. They can and do play a vital role in strengthening local communities.

I am delighted to present the recommendations of the Scrutiny Sub-committee together with the actions the Housing & Community Services Department has taken to date in realising them. I support and endorse the recommendations and actions as they are a significant step in improving our management of these facilities for the future.

This report is a timely and welcome contribution to the work we are doing to strengthen and broaden the involvement of our residents. In the past their management across the borough was too often inconsistent and not accountable to the wider community. The actions set out in this report are designed to address the weaknesses of the past and to ensure that the community facilities that we support are sustainable into the future. We want our community halls to be fit for purpose, accessible, consistently well managed and well-used for the widest possible range of community activity as part of a strategic and fairer approach to the wider provision of community buildings across the borough.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That Cabinet note and agree the response to the Housing, Environment, Transport and Community Safety Scrutiny Sub-committee's investigation into TRA Halls and Communal Rooms.
2. That Cabinet note the additional activity being undertaken to improve the service.

REPORT SUMMARY

3. The sub-committee published its findings on TRA Halls and Communal Rooms in a report in April 2013 that made 14 key recommendations.
4. Officers welcomed this review of our approach to managing TRA Halls and Communal Rooms. The recommendations complement the housing and community services' department's work on strengthening the involvement of our residents and improving the management of community buildings.
5. All of the recommendations made by the sub-committee have been accepted by the housing and community services department. This report contains a detailed response to each of the recommendations and a summary action plan is included in Appendix 1.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

6. At its meeting on 11 March 2013 the Overview & Scrutiny Committee agreed to submit a report from the Housing, Environment, Transport & Community Safety scrutiny sub-committee on TRA Halls and Communal Rooms to Cabinet.
7. This report was considered by Cabinet on 16 April 2013 where it was resolved that the recommendations of the review of Tenants and Resident Association (TRA) halls and communal rooms be noted, and that the deputy leader and Cabinet member for housing management bring back a report to Cabinet, in order to respond to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, within eight weeks.
8. There are some 113 halls and community facilities within the housing portfolio ranging from converted small rooms on estates to large purpose built facilities. The portfolio is made up of 50 larger halls and 60 small halls/meeting rooms. This figure includes four TMO offices, six halls that are closed and two halls on the Heygate Estate that have temporary use pending demolition.
9. There have been a number of reviews of TRA halls carried out over the last 10 years which have considered the management arrangements, rent policy, usage and value of the asset to the wider community.
10. Despite this work the management of the portfolio remained inconsistent and in some cases facilities were in a poor state of repair due to the lack of investment and a strategic approach to managing the portfolio. The distribution of the facilities across the borough is not even and not every estate has a hall.
11. Over the last 2 years significant work has been undertaken and is continuing on compliance and Fire Risk assessment to ensure that these are fully addressed in the future.
12. Most of the properties are in exclusive occupation of TRA Management Committees and other community groups with a wide range of agreements in place including licenses, leases (where these exist they are with incorporated bodies), tenancies at will, sub-lets and in some cases no formal arrangement in place at all. In the past there was no comprehensive picture of the financial value of the support the council gives to TRAs managing halls and to the wider community through its property estate, or of the suitability and upkeep of the properties.

13. Currently rent is charged on 53 of the 113 halls. In 2010/2011 the income generated totalled £47k. Where rent is charged on a hall this would normally be reviewed annually as part of the fees and charges report to the Cabinet member for Housing.
14. In the past procedures for managing the portfolio were inadequate. Collection and maintenance of management information was poor with inadequate arrangements for checks on aspects of their management and condition. At times this was over reliant on voluntary submission of information rather than proactive checking by the council.
15. In the majority of cases TRAs have the responsibility for day-to-day management of the properties. While some are clearly well managed others need support in ensuring that premises are accessible and that their Management Committee is accountable. As a result, a Tenants Halls Working Party was set up to agree a model set of terms of hire and other key documents backed by a training programme for halls managers.
16. A very small number of TRAs make a profit by operating a bar. Opinions are mixed on whether this is appropriate at all. The key issue is that bars should not deter other users of what are community premises and public money should not subsidise them. Where bars are in place there should be proper arrangements in place for their management.

Activities in the Last Two Years

17. As noted above there has been significant activity in the past 2 years to address the current weaknesses in the way TRA halls have been managed with work across the Housing Department to bring a better co-ordinated management strategy to the portfolio. This is being co-ordinated centrally by the Community Engagement Team.
18. It has been agreed that Engineering Services will manage a compliance regime for the key services and utilities including electrical testing, gas checks, water system management and asbestos management.
19. The compliance team will work with Community Engagement to develop tailored training and advice for TRAs Management Committees on their responsibilities in managing buildings used by the community in relation to health and safety.
20. The Repairs Team has agreed to manage the day to day repairs of the halls and the Investment team has agreed to manage planned preventative maintenance and capital investment programmes that are now underway.
21. A comprehensive database of halls with their contact details for lettings is being developed and the Community Engagement team is working on new governance and strategic management arrangements to ensure effective and consistent management across the portfolio. There are plans to link this information with the 'In my area' part of the council website, allowing residents to identify halls for hire in their area.
22. The aim for the future is to unify the management of TRA halls and the VCS estate under one portfolio. This will enable opportunities for shared use of these premises through mutually agreeable arrangements which benefit both TRA's and voluntary organisations and potentially maximise community use.

23. A capital sum of £2.1 million has been established for the hall portfolio within the Housing Investment 5-year programme. A dedicated repairs and maintenance budget of £500k per annum has also been set up. £200k of this has been added to the capital sum over the next 5 years to address the history of lack of investment more quickly. This gives a total capital investment of £3.1 million over the next five years.
24. A detailed stock condition survey has been undertaken to inform the investment programme. The purpose of the survey was to:
- Assess each building and recommend the works required to meet current fire standards.
 - Assess each building and recommend works required to meet current DDA standards.
 - Assess the general level of dilapidation within each building and recommend works to rectify any defects noted.
25. This survey will inform investment priorities and options appraisal. The main issue this has highlighted are:
- In many cases access arrangements are poor and there are difficulties with improving access for people with disabilities.
 - In a few cases there are difficult and expensive works required in relation to Fire Risk
 - High levels of investment are required to make all the properties fit for purpose.
 - There is an uneven geographical spread and variations in actual and potential community use.
 - The total estimated cost of works in the survey is manageable within the £3.1million of capital investment that is available over the next 5 years.
26. A compliance regime is in place as set out below:

Activity	Current Arrangements
Water Management	
Survey of water systems & immediate high priority remedial works	Works complete. Annual inspection and maintenance now incorporated into existing R&M contract.
Water system flushing	Sites subject to flushing regime reduced as water works carried out.
Electrical	
PAT testing asset register of all portable appliances.	Complete with asset register. Contract procured for future PAT and electrical installation testing.
Testing of electrical installations	Complete with asset register. Contract procured for future PAT and electrical installation testing.
Fire	
Equipment – extinguishers, blankets, signage etc.	Complete and annual inspection and maintenance incorporated into existing contract

Fire alarms, emergency lighting systems	Fire risk assessments currently under annual review. Resulting works to be progressed through major works contract.
Fire doors - renewal	Incorporated into major works contract
Fire risk assessments	Annual review taking place
Gas	
Gas safety checks (annual servicing)	Annual inspection completed with halls having current gas certificates. Contract in place for annual inspection and maintenance.

27. A benchmarking exercise was carried out with other local authorities that demonstrated that:
- Southwark has an average ratio of facilities for residents but this is unevenly distributed so in some areas there is under-provision while in others there is very generous provision.
 - Westminster and Enfield have fully complied with good practice in disabled access requirements while other authorities have work yet to do on this but have costed strategies in place.
 - No authority yet charges market rents although some are currently considering this approach.
 - Sheffield and Islington have charging guidelines for 3rd party users.
 - Arrangements for paying insurance, utilities, costs of caretaking and opening and closing vary widely between authorities.
 - Not all authorities have done work on maximising community use of the portfolio.
 - Some authorities are more proactive in tackling obstacles to increased use. Islington for example pay for insurance and staff work with hall committees to obtain funding and negotiate on behalf of groups to wider access to premises.
 - Sheffield, Islington and Westminster regularly monitor levels and types of use, users and financial accounts.
 - In most authorities TRAs retain income raised. Enfield and Islington require a contribution back to the HRA.
 - Islington has joint management boards made up of mixed groups of users (not just TRAs) for each of their premises depending on location and suitability for general usage.
 - Direct management of premises by councils has been universally rejected mainly because this is a very expensive option.
 - It took Westminster and Islington between 18 months and 2 years to deliver changes to the overall management of their premises.
 - Strong management and member support is critical for change.
28. A working party of tenants and leaseholders has been established that is meeting regularly as a consultative body on the management arrangements and to set future aims, priorities and policy objectives.
29. The approach has been to place the halls into a wider context of community engagement by making the most of opportunities to expand their use by community organisations. This will include supporting TRAs to advertise and market their halls, build relationships with local community organisations.

30. Community Action Southwark ran a three-session course on halls management which proved very successful and elements of this can be continued as this work progresses.
31. Based on developments to-date it is timely to review progress by establishing an internal officer Project Board to look at lessons learnt to-date, agree specific targets and milestones and to monitor expenditure on works as they progress. In the coming month a Project initiation document will be developed scoping out what further work is required and identifying relevant key stakeholders to take forward the next steps.
32. The Project Board will make recommendations to and work with the Tenants Halls Working Party to develop consistent arrangements for all properties in the portfolio. This will include:
 - Work on potential suitable model management/occupation agreements.
 - A protocol on operational and financial management issues.
 - A clear arrangement on liability for utilities and non domestic rates.
 - Standard procedures on public liability insurance with an arrangement of regular checking of compliance.
 - The terms of a hall management agreement.
 - An affordable, fair and rational lettings & charging policy that is consistently applied.
 - Opportunities to share premises and maximise use.
 - Consider whether there are benefits to rationalising the portfolio where there are other suitable premises available or they are clearly under-used and where they are beyond economical repair and/or cannot be made to be DDA compliant.
 - A review of arrangements for operating bars in HRA community halls.
 - A review of income generation opportunities through the portfolio to move towards the position where the portfolio generates sufficient income to meet its revenue costs and that could potentially support other community activities. This policy will need to recognise community benefit and that the smaller halls are generally small meeting rooms for TRAs with limited income generation potential
33. Consultation is continuing with the Working Party, Tenants Council, Home Owners Council, Area Forums and TRAs with the intention that a comprehensive set of policies, procedures and protocols are in place along with a full training programme, website information, tools and guidance all available to TRAs in the future. Some elements of this will be developed earlier as a priority for example Health & Safety, finance and booking procedures.

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM SUB-COMMITTEE / RESPONSE

34. The sub-committee made 14 recommendations the response to which is set out below.

1) HRA Community Halls data held by the council: *The council does not currently have a comprehensive database of its own TRA Halls which provides detailed information on the status, rent, location and management contacts for every hall. As the Senior Management Team Paper referred to in this report notes: "Collection and maintenance of management information has been poor with inadequate arrangements for checks on aspects of their management and condition.*

At times this has been over reliant on voluntary submission of information rather than proactive checking by the council.” Given that these are highly valuable assets, it is important that up to date information is kept on all these properties. The council should never be “unsure” about the status of any of its TRA Halls. The sub-committee recommends that, as part of the capital investment programme, the current data is refreshed, subsequently kept fully up to date and systems put in place to ensure that this data never becomes outdated again.

Agreed: Improvements are underway to improve the data that the council holds. The condition surveys carried out in connection with the improvement programme were a useful starting point in developing more comprehensive records. Work is underway to update the GIS mapping of halls that is available on the Southwark maps section of the council website with key contacts for residents to make bookings and to prompt more usage of halls. A full audit to update key holder and emergency contact data is ongoing and officers will work together with the Tenants Halls Working Party to agree what additional information is required on issues such as hall usage that has not been collected in the past. The aim is to ensure that the data held is accurate, up-to-date and accessible.

2) Advertising Training: *The sub-committee believes more could be done to advertise what is on offer via training paid for via the Tenants’ Levy. We would recommend that the Tenants Hall Working Party discuss a new communications plan for the training programme to ensure as many tenants as possible know about the courses on offer.*

Agreed: The current training offer is available on the council and Southwark Group of Tenants Organisations website and has been circulated through TRAs. This covers the basic skills required for effective management of a Tenants & Residents Association. The SGTO also provide training including food safety and first-aid. This information *will* be circulated to the Tenant and Homeowner Councils, Area Housing Forums all Tenants and Residents Associations and in the SGTO newsletter. With regard to training specifically targeted at premises management officers are working with the Tenants Halls Working Party to identify what is needed in addition to the basic offer.

Courses *suggested* by the working party include:

- Risk Assessment
- Fire Safety
- Insurance requirements
- Legal liabilities and licences
- Financial management and hiring guidelines.

Officers will also be exploring the accreditation of training and offering opportunities to individual *TRA* members to gain appropriate qualifications which would enable them to deliver their own training.

3) Composite Courses: *The sub-committee has made the observation that offering 22 separate courses may be excessive and that it may be advisable to cut the number of courses and consolidate training. In particular we would recommend a course entitled “How to run a TRA Hall” which covered the basics of running halls. This is a suggestion put to the sub-committee by the Chair of a TRA.*

Agreed: The training offer is currently under review with the intention of providing a new training offer for 2014/2015. This has also been discussed with the Tenant Council and its sub-committees. The current programme has been reduced and a number of new requirements are set down e.g. courses will only be run if a minimum of 8 participants are signed up.

4) Training feedback: *The sub-committee considered the feedback statistics on the training currently provided. This feedback is overwhelmingly positive; with virtually no negative comments received whatsoever. This is clearly reflective of the positive experience of those attending. However, the sub-committee feels that it may be worth getting a fresh pair of eyes to review the training on offer. The sub-committee recommends that the TRA Halls Working Party commissions officers to review the training offer and the method for collecting feedback.*

Agreed: This is in the scope of the review noted above being conducted by officers in Community Engagement.

5) Tenancy agreements: *The sub-committee believes that it is no longer acceptable for the Council and TRAs to manage their relationship regarding TRA Community Halls according to a mish-mash of leases, tenancies and informal arrangements. The case study examples given by officers show there is a need to put this relationship on a formal footing which makes clear the responsibilities of all parties with regard to the halls. The subcommittee also believes that, to ensure fairness and consistency, all TRA community halls managed by TRAs should be subject to the same standard agreement. The sub-committee would ask that officers investigate the legal and administrative issues further and work with TRA to introduce a standardized system at the earliest opportunity*

Agreed: There is a need to standardise the occupation agreements for TRA Halls in order to make it clear what the responsibilities of the council and the occupiers are. Legal opinion has been sought on this issue. This confirms that as most TRAs are unincorporated associations in law they have no legal identity and are therefore not able to enter into any form of contract such as a lease or licence, this means that individuals would have to assume the legal responsibilities and liabilities which would be difficult to implement. In a small number of cases it is appropriate for TRAs to incorporate as charitable companies or other not-for-profit legal entity. However this brings significant responsibilities that most TRAs would not have the capacity or resources to fulfil. This could have a negative effect on the tenants' movements and act as a barrier to more people getting involved. Advice on an alternative is currently being sought and it is suggested that it may be more appropriate to issue a letter to all those TRAs responsible for halls that clarifies their rights and responsibilities and those of the council. The Working Party is working with council officers to develop the Heads of Terms for this agreement.

6) A fair rents system: *The sub-committee believes that it is wrong and unfair that some TRAs are paying significant amounts of money in rent and charges, whilst others are paying nothing. The sub-committee does not believe that the council should be seeking to make additional money from the rents paid by TRAs for halls. Further, we believe that the rents which are paid should be fair and that all TRAs should be making at least some contribution, no matter how small. Our suggestion would be that the Halls are categorised by officers (and agreed with the tenants halls working party) according to their revenue raising*

potential. The rent levels should then be set according to the revenue raising potential of the hall itself.

However, because the total amount of money collected will not rise and because there will be 50+ additional halls making at least some contribution, the rent being paid even by higher category halls should be far from punitive. The sub-committee recommends that officers draw up a new rents system based on the principle of halls with greater revenue raising potential paying more, but with the overall rent receipt for the council remaining unchanged.

Agreed: Officers will work with the Halls Working Party to consider a fair and affordable rent policy. The first priority as is noted by the Scrutiny Sub-committee is to ensure that the data held is regularly updated so that an accurate picture exists of which TRAs pay rent and which do not. Once this exercise is completed the Halls Working party will be asked to consider the options for a fairer and more sustainable policy that does not penalise those that are successful at generating income which is used to subsidise other TRA activities that benefit the local community. The objective of this exercise is not to increase the income to the council but to ensure that the inequity in the current system is addressed.

7) Provision across the borough: *The sub-committee believes that it is important that we do not pretend to start from a blank sheet of paper. TRA Community Halls have thrived in certain parts of the borough for a reason and their location, in part, reflects the tenant population of these parts of the borough. There is potential for a better use of resources in some parts of the borough and a need to address gaps in provision in others. The subcommittee would recommend that officers are tasked with identifying those TRAs which are genuinely struggling for space to carry out their meetings and activities. Once a list has been drawn up officers should work with those TRA in identifying possible sharing arrangements with the variety of other council owned premises and community spaces which may be local to those TRAs.*

Agreed: As noted in the Scrutiny report the TRA Halls and VCS property portfolio have now been brought together under the responsibility of the Community Premises Officer in Community Engagement and the VCS Portfolio Manager in the Council's Property division with the intention of providing more consistency across the management of both. It also provides the opportunity to pursue greater sharing of premises. There are already some examples where this arrangement is in place and Officers will continue to actively pursue these opportunities in the future.

8) Advertising and information to boost involvement and use of halls: *It is interesting that 70% of people state that they never or rarely use the TRA community hall that they have access to. Of those who said they had never used the hall in the survey, a number of the comments indicated that they knew very little about what the hall was used for or even if they were allowed to use it. It was also noticeable that when tenants were asked how the running of their hall might be improved a significant number volunteered that better advertising and more information would be very welcome. To address this issue the sub-committee recommends that all TRAs have a website, a physical bulletin board outside of the TRA and a quarterly newsletter. New residents on estates should also be informed of the contact details of their TRA. The sub-committee suggests that these actions be taken up as part of the work programme of the TRA Halls Working Party who can then communicate with both officers and*

TRAs to identify what further resources and training could be provided to implement this recommendation.

Agreed: Work is ongoing to complete the mapping of all VCS premises across the borough. As noted in 1) above the existing information is available on the Southwark maps section of the council website and once this has updated contacts for making bookings is an opportunity to promote greater use and simplify this process. Officers are currently investigating the future potential to link the mapping to electronic booking forms to automate the process and make it easier for users. This supplements the mapping exercise that has taken place using various sources of data resulting in a GIS page showing all Voluntary & Community Sector groups that exist within Southwark for publication on the Council's website. Work is also ongoing in conjunction with Community Action Southwark to develop a facility for VCS organisations and individuals to search for room and facilities available for hire across the borough.

9) TRA Community Halls where there is acute under-use: *Clearly, for some TRA Community Halls the problem of under-use is more acute and needs more urgent attention. For some of these halls the situation is now finally coming to a head because of the council's multi-million pound investment programme. The council simply cannot justify investing £60,000 – £120,000 to revamp buildings which are being left virtually unused, particularly when these buildings could be converted in to new council homes. The sub-committee suggests the following principle be applied: Where a hall is being used less than 15% of the time during "core hours", the hall should not receive significant financial investment and it should be scheduled for conversion into new homes (where this is possible). The definition of "core hours" could be informed by contributions from the Tenants Halls Working Party. A list of halls which officers suspect may be acutely under-used should be brought before the Working Party. Once agreed, halls on this list should be subject to an assessment. The assessment could be made over a one month reference period and informed by a diary of events provided by the TRA itself. The assessment should be up-to-date, rather than based on historic information about usage. Where lack of investment, or other factors beyond the control of the TRA, is the central reason for under-use, discretion should be applied.*

Agreed: In building a database of more accurate information about the range and use of TRA halls the council in conjunction with the Working Party will be better placed to make assessments and progress discussions about continued use of halls or other.

10) Defunct TRAs: *Where the TRA is defunct and the hall is not being used at all, the building should be considered for conversion into new homes. This decision should include consideration of any realistic possibility of the TRA being re-launched in the near future.*

Agreed: The first priority is to work with residents to reconstitute a TRA. Where it is clear that this is not possible then consideration would be given to the feasibility of conversion into new homes. Officers will work with the Tenants Halls Working Party to prioritise those community halls that have been converted from their original residential use where the hall is not used and the TRA defunct as these are likely to be more feasible conversions back into homes. As noted above the first step is to work to re-establish TRAs.

11) Stock Condition: *The sub-committee is aware that the Tenants Halls Working Party has been working constructively with officers to move forward the TRA Halls investment programme. It should be noted that the early part of the scheme has been dominated by investment decisions that are relatively uncontroversial. A point will come in the not-too distant future more difficult decisions will need to be confronted. The main difficulties will be in considering investment in properties where two conditions apply:*

- a) *Where it is simply impossible to make the Hall compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act.*
- b) *Where there are already alternative facilities available in the area, and there is the possibility of sharing taking place.*

TRA Community Halls which fit either (or both) of these criteria might then be converted into new council homes. Clearly, decisions of this type need to be made in conjunction with the TRAs concerned. The sub-committee would recommend that all parties enter into these discussions in a constructive way. We would suggest two guiding principles with regard to these decisions:

- *Where potential sharing or DDA compliance are clearly issues, the council must not waste money by inappropriately upgrading TRA community halls simply because this is the line of least resistance.*
- *Where conversion into new council homes is appropriate, both TRAs and council officers must recognise the important of securing value to money. Where TRA community halls are converted into new council homes, comparable replacement facilities must be made available either through sharing another nearby hall or by other means (e.g. new build).*

Agreed: Officers are working with the Tenants Halls Working Party on prioritising the capital investment programme against the following criteria that the Working Party agreed:

- Compliance - Is there an immediate and significant risk to users (FRAs)?
- Governance - Are there any prevailing issues?
- Bang for our Buck test - spend vs. size of facility, location, number of users;
- Alternative Facilities in the Area that can be shared;
- Future Proof facilities - DDA compliant, longer-term sustainability;
- Alternative Uses – e.g. Hidden Homes.
- ‘If it was your money’ test
- ‘Gold’ Factor – Prioritise TRAs doing innovative things

Works are underway to the first 16 halls as a first phase of this 5 year programme, these criteria will continue to be applied as the programme

proceeds along with further considerations such as use of halls as Rest centres for emergency planning purposes.

12) Whistle-blowing procedure: *In the tenant's survey 62% of people said that, if they became aware of fraudulent activity or mismanagement, they would not know who they would report it to. This is unsurprising as neither the council nor TRAs have a standard whistle-blowing procedure in place with regard TRA Community Halls. The sub-committee believes that it is important to have a streamlined whistle-blowing agreement in place as a matter of urgency. The most preferable vehicle for delivering this would be for the whistle-blowing procedure to appear as an appendix to the new tenancy agreements between the council and the TRAs. The details and the wording of the whistle-blowing procedure should be agreed with the Tenants Halls Working Party and should include a role in whistle-blowing for ward councillors.*

Officers will ensure that the existing council procedures for reporting allegations of fraud under the council's fraud and bribery response plan are made available to all TRAs. This is through the fraud hotline on 0800 052 1010 or by email at fraud.hotline@southwark.gov.uk. These cases are investigated by the council audit and fraud team.

Officers have recently undertaken a similar exercise for Tenant Management Organisations in the borough and will adapt this procedure to apply specifically to TRAs and TRA Halls. Generally speaking the term whistleblowing applies to workers who are given protection under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998 however in cases where an issue relating to fraud is reported by a member of the public their identity would be protected in the same way including that their identity would not be disclosed to anyone without their consent (unless required to do so by a court or the law).

13) Multiple key-holders: *Several of the case studies show the problems that can arise when just one person literally "holds the key" to a HRA Community Hall. The sub-committee would recommend that for every TRA Community Hall, there are at least two and ideally three individuals given keys to the premises. For security reasons, the sub-committee believes there should be a maximum of 3 keys in circulation at any one time.*

Agreed: As noted above a full audit is being carried out of key holders and this will be addressed as part of developing the standardised agreement for use of TRA community halls along with a protocol for shared use.

14) Multiple signature withdrawals. *Fraud is rare in Southwark's TRAs, but we must always be vigilant over safe-guarding against financial malpractice. As the case studies on possible examples of fraud showed, the practice of allowing single signature withdrawals from HRA Community Hall bank accounts is inadvisable. Even in situations where the single signatory's conduct has always been beyond reproach, this is an unwise arrangement. New committee members come and go, and where a system has been adopted with one person in mind, there may soon be another person put in their place. The sub-committee recommends that all Southwark TRAs handling money generated through TRA Community Halls should operate a system of multi-signatory withdrawals.*

Agreed: It is a condition of funding and recognition by the council that this is in place and this issue is covered in the training and advice given to TRAs. It is

also, as noted by the Tenants Halls Working Party, normal practice for banks to insist on this for TRA accounts.

The SGTO verifies accounts annually for a number of TRAs and reports that it has not identified a single instance of this practice. This requirement will also be written into the agreement for TRAs managing TRA Halls.

15) *The council is embarking on a homes building over the coming years. The council should continue to consider the provision of new community space where significant concentrations of new building take place.*

Officers from Community Engagement attend the Officer Working group that oversees the delivery of the 1,000 new council homes. This is to ensure that both needs for community space and opportunities for conversion of unused facilities can be considered at an early stage in the development of these schemes.

Community impact statement

35. Southwark is one of the largest housing providers in the country. The 53,500 households who rent or are home owners in Southwark managed properties make up just about half of all the people who live in the borough. It is clear from comparing the 2001 to the 2011 census figures that the borough is becoming more diverse in terms of ethnicity and religion and is becoming younger in age profile.
36. Improving the usage of TRA Halls is an essential part of improving the “resident involvement offer” and is intended to ensure that many more residents gain from their involvement with their local tenant and resident association and are encouraged to offer their skills and knowledge to their own local community.

Resource implications

37. There are no additional resource implications to delivering the recommendations of this report.

Financial implications

38. An amount of £2.1m has been set aside for works of a capital nature to TRA halls. This allocation is to be increased by £200k per year over the next 5 years by way of a contribution from the TRA halls revenue maintenance fund, which means that a total amount of £3.1m will have been made available for works of a capital nature in 5 years’ time.
39. The 2013/14 budget for TRA halls maintenance of a revenue nature is £510k, of which £200k is set aside to be transferred to capital. This means that the effective budget for revenue maintenance is £300k per year for the next 5 years.
40. There are no additional resource implications to delivering the recommendations of this report.

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

Director of Legal Services

41. Cabinet is asked to note and agree the response to the recommendations of the review of TRA halls carried out by the Housing, Environment, Transport and Community Safety Scrutiny Sub-Committee. Where there are legal implications arising from the recommendations, these are referred to in the body of the report. As to recommendation 5 in paragraph 34 (Tenancy agreements), there are different legal and constitutional requirements depending on the type of agreement the council enters into with a particular TRA. The type of agreement appropriate will depend on the circumstances of the particular TRA and the arrangements envisaged. Officers are therefore advised to seek further and specific legal advice when developing such agreements.

Strategic Director of Finance & Corporate Services (FC13/040)

42. This report responds to the Overview & Scrutiny Committee review of TRA halls and communal rooms. Financial implications are detailed in paragraphs 38 to 40.
43. The strategic director of finance and corporate services notes that at this stage there are no additional resources required to deliver the recommendations. If additional resource pressures emerge these will have to be carefully managed within the budgetary constraints set out paragraphs 38 and 39.
44. Any request for an increase in available resources will have to be submitted as part of the Council's annual budget setting process. It is also noted that recommendation 6 includes the intention to establish a consistent and equitable rent policy for TRA halls.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Report Into TRA Halls And Communal Rooms (Housing, Environment, Transport And Community Safety Scrutiny Sub-Committee) – Cabinet 16 April 2013 http://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/ie/ListDocuments.aspx?CId=302&MId=4253&Ver=4	Housing & Community Services, 160 Tooley Street, London SE1 2QH	Brian O'Neill Tenant & Resident Organisation Co-ordinator 020 7525 7455

APPENDICES

No.	Title.
Appendix 1	TRA Halls & Community Rooms Action Plan

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	13 June 2013	
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	13 June 2013	