



“How To”

Organise

Annual General Meetings

**for
Tenant &
Resident Associations**

“Building Communities”

August 2004

No.1

Southwark Housing Department is currently undergoing a Best Value Review. This will result in major changes in the way the department is organised and managed. The current Neighbourhood structure will be changed to eight Management Areas. When this is in place the services currently available from the Housing Community Development Section will be available from Resident Involvement Teams based in each of the eight Areas, and information will be made available to all Tenant and Resident Associations on who to contact and how to do so. Until these changes take place please continue to contact Housing Community Development Section and your Neighbourhood Community Development Officer.

Housing Community Development Section

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“How To”

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for

Tenants & Residents Associations

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Introduction

At the inaugural Tenants' Conference held in May 1999, one of the recommendations was to produce a "Troubleshooting Pack". This pack was designed for Tenant & Resident Associations (T&RAs), and produced in May 2000. As the pack was being developed it became clear that the information did not cover certain issues or situations. A clear example was how to run an Annual General Meeting. The Community Development Section had been working with Tenant and Resident Associations on how to hold successful Annual General Meetings and much of the information in this pack has already been used with many Associations.

This is the first "How To" pack of four and others are being considered. It is aimed at T&RA committee members to help them work in an effective, accountable and democratic way and hopefully will be of assistance when your committee needs to prepare for its Annual General Meeting.

Other Packs produced by the Housing Community Development Team:

		<u>UPDATED</u>
"Troubleshooting pack for T&RAs"		August 2004
"How to" pack No. 1	Annual General Meetings	August 2004
"How to" pack No. 2	Increase Participation	August 2004
"How to" pack No. 3	Financial Practice	August 2004

PART 1

Purpose of an Annual General Meeting

Annual General Meetings (AGMs) are an important occasion for a Tenant & Resident Association. They are a time to:

- Inform the membership of what has been achieved in the past year.
- Be accountable to the membership in terms of activities and financial management.
- Recruit new members.
- Look forward to the new year by setting targets and objectives.

All Tenant & Resident Associations have to hold an Annual General Meeting once a year in accordance with their constitutions. There are three important stages to holding a successful Annual General Meeting:

1. Before the Annual General Meeting.
2. Annual General Meeting itself.
3. Follow up and evaluation after meeting.

The important issues in each are set out in Part 1 of this pack. Part 2 will then look at issues in more detail and is set out in alphabetical order.

Preparing for the Annual General Meeting

Tenant & Resident Associations need to start preparing for their Annual General Meeting around three months beforehand.

Check the clauses in your constitution which relate to the Annual General Meeting and ensure you comply with them. Remember that if your AGM is not quorate (see your constitution) you will have to re-convene it. Good planning and advertising can ensure that this is not necessary. The committee should meet regularly to decide on how the AGM should be held. At this stage the following needs to be agreed:

- Date, time and place of Annual General Meeting.
- Accounts to be audited and Treasurer's report.
- Notice of meeting to be prepared, agreed and produced, follow up notice if necessary.

- Delivery of notice.
- Any speakers or independent Chair to be invited.
- Agenda for meeting; Chair's report.
- Refreshments.
- Childcare.
- Constitutional changes.

A week prior to the Annual General Meeting

It is advisable that officers of the Tenant & Resident Association meet in the week prior to the Annual General Meeting to check everything is under control.

The Treasurer

Ensures the audit is complete and produces enough copies for each person likely to attend the meeting.

Produces a Treasurer's report explaining aspects of the Auditor's report, any update and looking at projections for the coming year.

The Chair

Prepares their speech – a review of achievements over the past year. This should cover activities, successes and failures.

The Secretary

Ensures all is organised – hall booking, chairs and table, notices, crèche, childcare costs, refreshments, speakers, microphones if appropriate.

The Annual General Meeting itself

- If you are having a crèche arrive early enough to receive the crèche workers and help organise the crèche.
- Committee members should arrive early to set up and welcome newcomers.
- Set out the seating so that everyone can see.

- If not many people are expected why not set seating out in a circle, otherwise use rows and a "top table".
- Set up and test the Public Address system if you are using one.
- Ensure copies of the agenda are available to everyone.
- Encourage tenants to join up as members of the Association.
- Open the meeting.
- Ensure that minutes are taken.
- Ensure that all views are heard and that no one is allowed to dominate the meeting.
- At the end of the meeting ensure that the crèche workers are paid and that the appropriate paper work has been filled in. Record how many children were in the crèche.

After the Annual General Meeting

The new committee needs to evaluate the Annual General Meeting and its success or otherwise. It is important to learn what went well and what needs to be improved.

The committee needs to pick up on any recommendations or suggestions that were made and if appropriate build them into the Association's Action Plan for the coming year.

The independent Chair and/or speakers should be thanked for their contributions, as should any other outside person who helped to make the meeting a success.

If childcare was organised seek reimbursement from the Tenant Fund. Ensure minutes are produced promptly and are available for submission with the Tenant Fund application form.

Inform the Bank/Building society of any changes in signatories.

Annual General Meeting Planner

Weeks Before	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	After
Set Date	✓													
Notice	Draft				Agree		Print		Deliver					
Audited Accounts	Prepare				At the Auditor				Receive Audited Statement	Photocopy	Present			
Meeting Place	Decide where to book									Check Venue	Set up			
Speakers	Invite						Confirm						Thank	
Independent Chair	Invite						Confirm						Thank	
Annual Report						Prepare				Write	Photocopy	Present		
Childcare/ Crèche	Decide what childcare provision will be provided				Include on Notice	Book Crèche						Check	Hold Crèche	Pay
Constitutional Changes	Committee to consider implications of any proposals				Include on Notice			Committee to agree their view					Consider	Amend
Agenda	Plan				Include on Notice	Plan						Photocopy		
Last years' minutes	Obtain Copy											Photocopy	Consider	
Minute taker										Decide who will take Minutes			Take Minutes	Produce Minutes
Committee Meetings to plan AGM														Evaluate

PART 2

A Accounts

Audited accounts for T&RAs are required to ensure the business of the Association is carried out properly by the committee. Associations have the following, or similar, clause within their constitutions that relate to the production of audited accounts.

Under the clause relating to AGMs the following applies:

“At this meeting the committee shall present the audited accounts of the Association for the previous year. The officers, committee and *auditor* for the next year shall be elected.”

The responsibilities of the Treasurer are as follows:

“The Treasurer shall keep proper accounts of income and expenditure and report on them or deliver them up as required by the committee or General Meeting. Such accounts shall be audited by a qualified accountant or a non-member of the Association appointed by the membership at the AGM.”

Production of Audited Accounts

- Appoint an auditor at your Association's AGM.
- About two months prior to the AGM get the books up-to-date and in order, to enable them to be audited.
- At least a month prior to the AGM, pass the books over to the auditor, informing them of the date of the AGM.
- Chase up the auditor about two weeks prior to the meeting.
- Obtain a statement signed by the auditor of the accounts and photocopy enough for each person likely to attend the AGM.
- The Treasurer should present the statement of accounts at the AGM and answer any questions from the floor.
- The meeting should then be asked to agree the statement of accounts. They need to be proposed, seconded, then voted on.
- The auditor responsible for the next year should be appointed.

A Agenda

The committee needs to agree an agenda for the meeting prior to the notice being completed. An example of an agenda is included in the sample notice attached as an *Appendix*.

The agenda needs to contain all the items that the Association needs to consider at its Annual General Meeting in accordance with its constitution. Other items should be lower down the agenda. It is important that the meeting does not go on too long so ensure that the agenda itself is not too long.

A Annual Report

Officers and committees should produce an annual report of the work and achievements of the Association over the past year, to be presented at the Annual General Meeting. This report will clarify what the committee has achieved – often more than you think. It is also useful to look forward at the things that need completing or starting over the coming year.

A Auditors & Accountants

An auditor is a person eligible to inspect, correct and verify accounts. For T&RAs, the constitution states they must either be a qualified accountant or a non-member of the Association appointed by the membership at the AGM. Usually this is a competent person who does not live in the Association area, or is a qualified accountant.

Housing Community Development may be able to help with names of auditors. Please note that this does not mean that the people have been “vetted” or approved. Associations are free to choose whoever they wish to audit their accounts, providing the conditions within their constitution are met.

Please contact your Community Development Officer for further information.

See: Accounts, Treasurer

B Bank Signatories

Bank signatories need to be agreed at the first committee meeting following the AGM. There should be a minimum of three signatories, two of who would sign each cheque. If signatories change, the outgoing signatory must sign a mandate from the bank and minutes from the committee meeting when changes were made should be made available to the bank. If signatories change at the Annual General Meeting it

would be helpful if the outgoing signatories sign a mandate at the meeting or set up a time with the Treasurer when this will be done.

B Behaviour

The T&RA Constitution has clauses that set out what is acceptable behaviour to ensure that everybody attending a meeting can participate and contribute fully. A model Code of Conduct for meetings that Associations could adopt is attached as an *Appendix* to this pack.

It is important that everybody knows that there is a Code of Conduct and it would therefore be appropriate to adopt the code at a General Meeting and possibly an AGM. The code should then be publicised widely in newsletters and prominently displayed in T&RA offices and the lobby of the hall.

To help ensure meetings achieve their aims and objectives it is useful to adopt a set of “ground rules” that set out how the meetings could be conducted – a model set is attached as an *Appendix* to this pack. Ground rules indicate how people should behave and the commitment needed to ensure that a meeting is successful. Ground rules indicate how people should behave and the commitment needed to ensure that a meeting is successful. Good ground rules will help everyone to participate fully!

C Chair

For the Annual General Meeting the outgoing Chair (even if they would be willing to stand again) needs to prepare their speech – a review of achievements over the past year. This should cover activities, successes and failures. A positive speech gives a lead to the Association and makes it more likely that new people join the committee. Would you join a committee that has had no successes, argues amongst itself and suffers from poor attendance?

See: Appendix “What do T&RAs do?”

C Childcare

From 1993 the Tenant Fund set aside a budget to encourage T&RAs to make meetings and events more welcoming. The Equal Opportunity Fund will pay the cost of childcare at an Annual General Meeting. The Association is responsible for arranging and paying for the crèche. Costs will be paid following submission of an invoice. The Association must advertise the provision of crèche facilities on the notice advertising the Annual General Meeting and the following should be taken into consideration:

- Childcare and/or crèche provision should always be offered and advertised on the notice of the meeting.
- Under the Children Act 1989 there needs to be a minimum of two crèche workers for each crèche.
- A separate, warm room is required. Crèche packs can be borrowed from the Neighbourhood/Area Office.
- Expenses for childcare and other caring responsibilities at AGMs can be claimed from the Tenant Fund.
- For people with caring responsibilities attendance may be a problem. There are certain provisions that can assist these people:
 - Have a defined “meeting finish time” so that carers can give accurate information of when they will be home.
 - Carers will occasionally attend meetings with children. Ensure that pencils and paper are provided if a crèche pack is not available.
 - After the meeting discuss with the carer any ways of helping to improve the situation of the carer and child alike.

If you do not have a crèche, a childcare/carer allowance may be paid to parents/carers who attend the meeting. The Tenant Fund Management Committee (TFMC) will pay £4.75 per hour to carers and babysitters.

C Committee

See: Appendix “What do T&RAs do?”

C Community Development Section

In order for a Tenant & Resident Association to receive funding from the Tenant Fund an officer from the Housing Community Development Section must be invited to the Annual General Meeting.

The officers within the Community Development Section can provide support, training and advice.

Contact your Community Development Officer for more information.

C Constitutional Changes

If there are any proposals to amend the Tenant & Resident Association Constitution then they must be considered in accordance with the relevant clauses in the Association's own constitution. The relevant clause from the Model Constitution is:

“Any proposal to alter this constitution must be submitted to the Secretary of the Association not less than 28 days before the General Meeting at which it is to be discussed. Not less than 14 days notice shall be given of such a meeting, together with the wording of the proposed alteration(s). Any alteration shall require the approval of two-thirds of those present and voting at the meeting.”

C Crèche

See: Childcare

D Date

It is very important to get a good turnout from a cross section of the area the T&RA represents. Try to set the meeting when it will be easy for all sections of the community to attend. Be careful to choose a day that suits your membership. Check out any events, either local events such as bingo, or events on television, such as major football matches.

D Delivering the Notice

It is important that the notice of the Annual General Meeting is delivered to everyone eligible to be a member of the Association as stated in the constitution.

It is not acceptable to put an advert in the local paper or newsagent's window or a notice on the stairwells or on the Clubroom door – this can be done and is helpful, but must not be done in isolation.

On large estates it is important that the work of delivering the notice is shared, so set up a good system that makes sure different people are involved to ensure that everyone receives the notice.

If notices are not delivered to all those eligible for membership as stated in the constitution, your Annual General Meeting is unconstitutional and therefore invalid.

“The committee shall call an Annual General Meeting of the Association each year in the month of (_____). Not less than (_____) days notice of

the Annual General Meeting shall be given to all members and all those eligible for membership, together with a form of application for membership.”

“Notice of all meetings where required shall be sent to each member’s dwelling and shall include the date, time and place of the meeting and an agenda of matters to be discussed.”

D Disability

All Tenant and Resident Associations should be committed to ensure that all people are able to be included in all the activities of the Association. For disability this can take on many forms, some visible, some not so visible. The following is a selective list:

Deafness, Allergies, Blindness, Mobility problems, Literacy, Numeracy, Language, Phobias, Medical problems.

Steps should be taken to ensure that people with disabilities are catered for in a discreet manner and basic consideration given to their needs. Steps could be:

- To ensure that there is wheelchair access.
- Provide written material in large print.
- Have a signer present.
- Awareness of the need to speak clearly without mumbling.
- Have an awareness of First Aid and an understanding of how to deal with an emergency for those with a disability, e.g. an epileptic fit or an allergic reaction.

Please contact your Community Development Officer for further information and support.

E Elections

The elections at the Annual General Meeting should be carried out by the independent Chair. The outgoing Chair should, with their fellow officers and committee, stand down and ask the independent Chair to take over as Chair.

The independent Chair should explain how they will conduct the elections – this is usually by asking for nominations from the floor for the officer positions (Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary and Treasurer) and in turn each nominee should be proposed and seconded and then a vote should take place to decide. Explaining what is involved in being an officer of the Tenant & Resident Association is useful at this stage. Voting is

normally by a show of hands and it may be appropriate for each nominee to say a few words about why people should vote for him or her.

Following the election of officers, depending on the Association, assistants to the Secretary and Treasurer may be elected or other positions like Social Secretary and Publicity Officer. The rest of the committee is then elected, as are representatives to any outside organisations like Area Housing Forums or the Southwark Group of Tenants Organisations, etc.

See: Independent Chair

E Equal Opportunity Fund

T&RAs in Southwark are becoming increasingly aware that many groups and individuals in the community are prevented from attending or taking an active part in Association meetings. Two reasons for this are because of caring responsibilities and mobility difficulties.

The Tenant Fund Management Committee decided at its meeting on 22nd March 1993 to set up a fund to help T&RAs address some of these issues. A budget is set aside each year for this. The Equal Opportunity Fund would give grants to T&RAs to help toward the cost of the following:

Annual General Meetings

- Payments of all crèche fees and carers allowance if advertised on AGM notice to all residents. (This will be paid on production of notice and invoice to the Funding Monitoring Officer.)
- Payment of signer or interpreter.
- Provision of transport.

Minor Adaptations to Buildings to Improve Access

If providing minor adaptations to the hall would enable more people to attend meetings and your Association does not have the funds, you can apply to the Equal Opportunity Fund. If you wish to apply for other items, which you feel would encourage or enable more people to get involved in your T&RA, please apply. The Tenant Fund Management Committee will consider your application.

If you wish to apply please phone Housing Community Development Section on 020 7525 4025.

See: Childcare

I Independent Chair

An independent Chair is needed for the elections when the outgoing Chair stands down. Associations could invite a local councillor, housing/council officers, local clergy or anyone that the membership would have faith in being impartial.

The independent Chair would often be seen as the independent person for council monitoring purposes.

See: Elections

M Minute Taker

It is important that the Annual General Meeting is minuted and the committee needs to identify someone to do this. It could be the existing Secretary but it does not have to be and if they are standing down they may not wish to do this work.

N Notice

It is a requirement of all Tenant & Resident Association Constitutions that a notice of Annual General Meetings be delivered to the home of each eligible person. These need to be delivered the required number of days before the Annual General Meeting (see your constitution).

The notice should include:

- Name of Tenant & Resident Association.
- Welcome to everyone.
- Date of meeting.
- Time of meeting.
- Agenda for meeting.
- Any proposed changes to the Association's constitution, either referred from the membership or recommended by the committee (proposed changes must be published on the notice).
- Information on how to nominate officers and committee members.
- Details of carer's allowances, crèche facilities and where appropriate, transport.

- The notice should ask if anyone needs help in getting to the meeting or participating in the meeting, e.g. do they need an escort, a signer.
- Make the notice as interesting and striking as you can.
- A telephone number or address should be included for people to request any of the above and a latest date by which they need to apply.
- Information on how to join if your constitution includes a membership form-type clause.
- Information on opt-out if this clause is included in the constitution.
- A month prior to the meeting the notice and agenda should be finalised, enough copies of the notice should be made for every eligible member of the Association and delivery arrangements agreed.
- Because a notice has to go out sometime before your Annual General Meeting (see your constitution), it is often too early for people to remember, therefore a reminder the week before the meeting is often useful.
- If the Association has a blanket membership clause in its constitution, a "tear off slip" must be included to allow tenants to join the Association.

A sample Annual General Meeting Notice is set out in the *Appendix*.

O Officers of the Association

The officers of a Tenant & Resident Association are the Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and Treasurer.

See: Chair, Secretary, Treasurer and Appendix "What do T&RAs do?"

P Place

It is very important to get a good turnout from a cross section of the area the Tenant & Resident Association represents. Therefore try to set the meeting where it will be easy for all sections of the community to attend. A suitable hall that is easily accessible is very important:

- Does the hall have disabled access?
- Would it be large enough for the expected turnout?
- Is it easy to find? (Put up signs or put a map on the notice if not).

P Public Address System

If the venue is a large hall and many residents are expected it may be advisable to use a Public Address system. Also, if there is concern that the meeting may be difficult to control, then a Public Address system may help the Chair keep order.

A Public Address system can be borrowed from the Community Development Section.

R Refreshments

Having light refreshments before the meeting is welcoming, and helps to break the ice for anyone new coming. If there is an intention to have some kind of social after the Annual General Meeting don't sell or provide alcohol before or during the meeting as it can disrupt the meeting. Who provides and gives out the refreshments needs to be decided.

R Reminder Notices

It is useful to put out reminder notices in the week leading up to the Annual General Meeting. In addition, posters or other forms of advertising – loud hailer, local newspapers or advertising in local meeting places – help to get people to come out to an AGM.

S Secretary

For the Annual General Meeting the Secretary needs to ensure that all is organised on the day – access is possible to the hall, chairs and tables set out, notices have been sent out, photocopying completed, crèche and childcare organised, refreshments available, speakers know where to go, microphones available if appropriate.

See: Appendix "What do T&RAs do?"

S Signs

If the meeting place is not that easy to find then put up posters and arrows directing people. This also has the advantage of advertising the meeting again.

It is important that people can find the location of the T&RA meeting. Even if you think that the hall's address is obvious, do not take this for granted, as new residents may not recognise the building as the tenants' hall. If the meeting place is very difficult to find it may be appropriate to station people at various locations to ensure people find their way. Include a map on any notice that goes out on the estate.

The venue should have a clear sign stating that it is the T&RA hall and a notice board stating when the meeting for the Association will be held.

S Speakers

The committee needs to consider very carefully the merits of inviting speakers to the meeting.

Speakers and guests can be an important technique in getting people to a meeting, especially if they are there to talk on an issue that is relevant. Advertise the speaker or guest on any publicity.

Remember that the most important issue is the business of the Annual General Meeting (elections, audited accounts and annual reports), so carry out the business first and inform speakers that they will be invited to speak after the business is concluded.

Do not let speakers take over the meeting or use it as a political platform.

T Tenant Fund

In order to receive funding from the Tenant Fund it is necessary to provide details of the finances of your Tenant and Resident Association. A copy of the audited accounts as agreed at the Annual General Meeting or at a General Meeting should be sent together with the following information:

- Name and address of auditor.
- Date and status of meeting where accounts were agreed.
- Name of Treasurer.

It is good practice for Tenant & Resident Associations to produce a draft budget for the coming year at one of their first committee meetings. This budget must be included in the funding documentation.

T Timing of the Meeting

It is very important to get a good turnout at meetings from a cross section of the area the T&RA represents. Therefore, try to set the meeting when it will be easy for all sections of the community to attend.

Annual General Meetings are traditionally held in the evening. This is to enable those who are working to attend. It is important to note that people who could attend during the day may not be able to in the evening. The time of the meeting in the evening is also important:

- 5.30 p.m. – 6.30 p.m. is often too early for those working.
- Starting at 7.30 p.m. could mean that the meeting would go until very late, causing difficulty for childminders.

T Transport

If there are a number of people with mobility problems in one area, e.g. Sheltered Housing Unit, it may be appropriate to provide transport by hiring a mini bus.

T Treasurer

Prior to the Annual General Meeting the Treasurer ensures the audit is complete and produces enough copies for each person likely to attend the meeting. They also produce a Treasurer's report explaining aspects of the Auditor's report, any update and looking at projections for the coming year.

See: Appendix "What do T&RAs do?"

APPENDICES

Code of Conduct

To ensure that meetings are conducted in the spirit in which all opinions can be heard the following Code of Conduct will apply to **all** T&RA members and meetings.

- All members have a responsibility to conduct themselves in a way that does not cause offence to others or limits in any way their ability to participate in a meeting.
- This includes racist, sexist or other derogatory remarks or actions, behaviour that intimidates people who are speaking or wish to speak, and preventing people from expressing their views through interrupting or talking whilst they are speaking.
- The officers of the Association will point out to anyone who breaches this Code of Conduct that unacceptable behaviour will not be tolerated.
- If the unacceptable behaviour persists, a motion will be put to the meeting to suspend the person from meetings.
- Future participation by such persons will be dependent on a written commitment, sent to the Chair (or Vice Chair in the event of the Chair being the perpetrator), that such behaviour will not be repeated.
- Further breaches of the Code of Conduct by such persons will result in their right to attend meetings being withdrawn.

Ground Rules for Meetings

- To ensure there is no racist, sexist, homophobic or discriminatory language towards people who are physically or mentally disabled or from different cultures and backgrounds.
- To actively listen to what others have to say.
- To respect the opinions of others as well as tolerance and patience.
- To give honest and constructive feedback to each other in a helpful and non-confrontational manner. It also is important to say if you disagree with another and explain why.
- To speak through the Chair, ensuring that you wait until you have been asked to make your contribution.

Annual General Meeting

Thursday 27th February 2002

7.30pm

Blackberry TA Hall , The Applecote Centre, Barley Road

It's next to the youth centre (1st Floor) so take the ramp in Barley Rd pposite the Orchard.

Agenda of the meeting

The things that we have to do as part of our rules and to get our funding:

1. Introductions and Apologies
2. Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting and Matters Arising
3. Annual Report of the T&RA
4. Financial Report and Presentation of the audited accounts
5. Appointment of Auditor
6. Elections of T&RA Officers and Committee
 - *Chairperson*
 - *Vice-Chair*
 - *Secretary*
 - *Treasurer*
 - *Committee Members*
7. Election of Area Housing Forum Reps
 - *Delegate & Deputy*
8. Election Of SGTO Reps (3)

The Things that matter to people Living on the Orchard!

9. Communal repair
10. Anti – Social Behaviour
11. Estate car parking
12. Any other Business

Everybody Welcome to attend!

How about getting involved? Living on the Orchard is all the experience you need! So join a friendly committee at a 2-hour monthly meeting?

Housing Department Staff & Local Councillors will be invited to this meeting

**Come and have your say about living on the Orchard!
Everybody welcome!**

**We can also arrange payment for a baby-sitter or carer to sit with an elderly or disabled person at their home during the meeting.
Contact Pip on: 77X1 0XX4 to pre book a place**

What is a Tenant and Resident Association?

A Tenant & Resident Association (T&RA) is a group of people from an area, estate or block who have come together to raise issues that affect them. Tenants, leaseholders, Housing Association tenants and owner-occupiers can all get involved in T&RAs.

T&RAs are concerned with the following:

- Repairs
- Council Policies
- Housing Management
- Harassment
- Play Facilities
- Animals
- Reducing Isolation
- Day Trips
- Rents
- Future Improvements
- Education
- Car Parking
- Play Groups
- Meeting other tenant groups
- Socials
- Youth Activities

And much more...

Why should I get involved in, or start, a Tenant & Resident Association?

As a T&RA or resident you probably have many concerns about your flat, house, estate, landlord or the council. As one person it is harder to put forward your views, but by getting together with other tenants and residents to form an Association you will have a stronger voice. T&RAs can cover large estates or just one street or block. The more people in your area that get involved in your Association, the stronger it will be in representing the views of your estate.

Does Southwark encourage T&RAs?

In Southwark, T&RAs are one of the main ways in which the council consults its tenants on anything which is likely to affect them. The council supports Associations with grants, training and a Community Development Section. Council tenants have a legal right to be consulted on certain changes of policy or practice or when the council plans to carry out work.

Southwark recognise T&RAs if they have rules and regulations set out in writing (a constitution). Associations must elect tenants and residents onto the Association committee that comprises the officer posts of Chair, Secretary and Treasurer plus general committee members to run the Association and carry out their Equal Opportunity policy. Associations should also have meetings open to all their tenants called General Meetings and keep accounts from their grant, fund-raising, etc.

What do Tenant & Resident Associations do?

T&RAs start up because of particular issues that tenants or residents feel strongly about and want action to be taken over.

1. Campaigning

Most T&RAs campaign for repairs or other improvements to be done. Campaigning can achieve real changes for your area. Associations may also campaign on community issues. This could be for a new hall, crèche or to support people who are facing racial or sexual or other forms of harassment.

2. Consultation and Participation

T&RAs get involved in the formation of council policies by attending Area Housing Forums or by sending a group of tenants to meet with councillors or council staff (this is called a deputation). Associations also meet with housing officers when work is planned on their estate or block. This can be consultation on the colour of paint in the lift or larger schemes such as Capital Programme Bids, Southwark Estates Initiative or Single Regeneration Budget (where the government allows the council to borrow money for estate improvements).

3. Social Activities

T&RAs also run many social activities like children's parties, day trips, bingo, coffee mornings, keep fit, etc. It is up to each Association to decide what activities it runs. Some run campaigns and social events.

4. Information

T&RAs are a good source of information for tenants and residents. The Association receives council papers and newsletters regularly and should be notified of work being carried out on the estate before it takes place. The Association committee may have had training on council structures, complaints procedures, etc, and may also send out its own newsletters.

5. Building the Community

T&RAs are part of creating a strong community spirit. People living on the same street or block soon get to know each other. The Association will mean regular contact for tenants on the estate, perhaps through a newsletter or social event. The Association may run events such as keep fit or a children's club. The Association should try to tackle problems of discrimination and help tenants who have language difficulties so that everyone from every section of the community is involved.

What do the Officers and Committee do?

Chair

The Chair is elected to provide leadership for the committee and the Association; they ensure that the committee officers do their job and that the committee works together. They make sure that the committee works for the aims of the Association and that in doing so it does not become remote from the ordinary members.

Committee

The committee is a group of people elected at the AGM who agree to meet on a regular basis to further the objectives of the T&RA. They comprise officers of the Association and other members who will take on a variety of roles over the year, supporting the officers and contributing to the debate at the committee meetings. Various members can take on issues or responsibilities that particularly interest them, e.g. publicity, social activities, parties, block representatives, representatives at Area Housing Forums or the Southwark Group of Tenants Organisations, etc.

Secretary

The Secretary is responsible for the general administration and planning for the Association. They would set the agenda for meetings with the Chair, take minutes of meetings, and distribute previous minutes and agendas for upcoming meetings. They write letters on behalf of the Association and receive correspondence from a wide variety of sources and then report on this to the committee.

It can be an onerous job and for some Associations it is worthwhile sharing some of the tasks with other committee members, e.g. taking minutes.

Treasurer

The role of the Treasurer is to oversee all monetary transactions and make sure that they are in order. It does not mean that the Treasurer is the only person that should keep track of the finances.

The Treasurer works with the committee to carry out financial planning for the year. They work with the committee to prepare and submit any funding applications. They set up and oversee all payments and receive income to be banked, recording all transactions. They ensure all expenditure is agreed at a minuted committee meeting. They should prepare a financial report and bank statement to the committee at every meeting. At the end of the year they prepare the final account for auditing purposes.

We hope this “How to...” pack has been of use to you and provided ideas on how to deal with some issues that come up. It should be noted that there is often not just one way to deal with a problem, so please use common sense. It would be helpful to know if this pack is effective in dealing with the issues it covers and whether there are other issues you would like covered in any future pack.

It would also be useful to know your views on the overall idea and presentation. Please complete the questionnaire attached and return in the pre-paid envelope provided. Thank you.

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“How to...” Organise Annual General Meetings

What I liked most about this pack:

What I liked least about this pack:

What I found most useful about this pack:

What I found least useful about this pack:

Our Association has used the following sections within the pack:

The following issues would be useful in any future pack:

Any other comments:

Your Name: _____ Date: _____

Association Name: _____

Annual General Meeting Planner

Weeks Before	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0	After
Set Date														
Notice	Draft				Agree		Print		Deliver					
Audited Accounts	Prepare			At the Auditor					Receive Audited Statement	Photocopy	Present			
Meeting Place	Decide where to book										Check Venue	Set up		
Speakers	Invite						Confirm						Thank	
Independent Chair	Invite						Confirm						Thank	
Annual Report						Prepare			Write	Photocopy	Present			
Childcare/ Crèche	Decide what childcare provision will be provided				Include on Notice	Book Crèche					Check	Hold Crèche	Pay	
Constitutional Changes	Committee to consider implications of any proposals				Include on Notice			Committee to agree their view				Consider	Amend	
Agenda	Plan				Include on Notice	Plan					Photocopy			
Last years' minutes	Obtain Copy										Photocopy	Consider		
Minute taker										Decide who will take Minutes			Take Minutes	Produce Minutes
Committee Meetings to plan AGM														Evaluate