Lewisham Homes

Tenants and Resident Association Information Pack

Lewisham Homes

www.lewishamhomes.org.uk

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What is a Tenant and Resident Association?

A Tenant and Residents Association (TRA) is a local group, made up of local residents (tenants and leaseholders) who represent the interests of everyone living in a particular area or block. They aim to work together to represent the views of all tenants and leaseholders to help make their neighbourhood a better place to live. TRAs play a large part in dealing with problems that people come up against, as well as organising events and activities bringing people together.

TRAs are set up for everyone to join and do not discriminate against members of the community because of race, age, sex, disability, income, religion or class.

Honor Oak Street Festival, organised by Honor Oak TRA. TRAs can get involved in organising events and activities that bring people together.

Committee and their roles

Understanding what each committee member is responsible for will help your TRA to share the workload and become successful and sustainable.

Chair
The responsibilities of the Chair include:

- ensuring all the facts are presented at meetings;
- ensuring everyone is aware of the rules, where necessary;
- ensuring everybody gets a chance to express their views and that only one person speaks at a time;
- encouraging everyone to join in discussions;
- acting fairly and ensuring order is maintained;
- ensuring that when decisions are made that everyone understands;
- assisting in preparing the agenda;
- checking the minutes for accuracy before distribution;
- opening meetings and ensuring the agenda is kept to; and
- keeping overall control of meetings.

Vice Chair
The Vice Chair chairs the meeting when the Chair cannot attend. It is important that the Vice Chair understand the Chair's role so they can step in when needed. The Vice Chair must be kept up-to-date on the TRA activities and should attend meetings regularly. Outside meetings, the Vice Chair should be prepared to act in the same supportive role as the Chair.

Secretary
The responsibilities of the Secretary include:

- ensuring all the information relevant to the TRA is kept safe;
- dealing with the TRA correspondence;
- writing and sending letters on behalf of the TRA and ensuring a copy is retained for the TRA to refer to;
- filing and keeping safe correspondence received after the information has been passed on at the meetings;
- preparing the agenda for the next meeting with the Chair and sending it out with any additional information if required;
- taking the minutes at the meeting, noting who attends, what decisions are taken and who agreed to take on any actions;
- checking the minutes with the Chair for accuracy prior to distribution;
- copying and circulating minutes of meetings to all members and other interested agencies;
- assisting the Chair in follow-up work between meetings; and
- ensuring the right number of meetings take place according to the TRAs constitution.

Treasurer
The responsibilities of the Treasurer include:

- reporting at all meetings the bank balance along with recent transactions;
- agreeing spending for the next period;
- distributing copies of the report to all committee members;
- completing annual grant applications and provide relevant supporting documentation; and
- ensuring all expenditure is approved by the group before cheques are written or money is spent.

More information on financial management can be found at the end of this booklet.

Bank account

Its important that the new commitee open a bank account as soon as possible, this will enable Lewisham Tenants Fund to pay your grant funding into the account to help you get underway.

We recommend that you have at least three signatures to access funding, useful for when one signatory is unavailable.

More information on financial management can be found at the end of this booklet

Important documents

Accounts or cash book
An accounts book is used to record all financial transactions the TRA make and is essential when the accounts are audited each year.

More information on financial management can be found at the end of this booklet.

Accreditation Criteria and Model Constitution
This document, which the TRA committee signs, are the rules which your TRA abide by. It sets out your responsibilities for holding meetings, the conduct of the meetings and what you need to do each year for your Annual General Meeting (AGM).

Code of Conduct
This document sets out the roles and responsibilities of the committee, the TRA, Lewisham Homes officers and other attendees. It also sets out the standards for behaviour at TRA meetings and what to do when these standards are not adhered to.

It also covers the TRAs responsibility when dealing with Equal Opportunities ensuring that no-one is excluded from involvement through reason of their:

- ethnicity;
- gender;
- physical or learning needs;
- sexual orientation;
- age;
- class;
- income;
- employment status; or
- religious belief.

Community Development Plan (CDP)
Community Development Plans are a great way to record the aims and objectives of your TRA and how you can achieve them. The TRA can work with a Community Involvement officer to develop and deliver the plan.

Residents Compact
The Residents Compact is an agreement between Lewisham Homes, Lewisham Council and its residents. It explains how we work together and includes:
- different ways that residents can participate in improving the housing service;
- the standards residents can expect from Lewisham Homes; and
- the various forms of support available to residents who wish to be involved.

Supporting Documents
The Supporting Documents which accompany the Residents Compact go into more detail on resident involvement and provides information on:
- the number and type of involvement opportunities available;
- how we keep you informed;
- Code of Conduct;
- our Resident Board and the eligibility criteria for joining the board;
- the terms of reference for Area Panels;
- the accreditation criteria and model constitution for TRAs;
- how to set up a Tenant Management Organisation (TMO);
- resources available from Community Involvement Team; and
- dispute resolution – when things go wrong.

Training

There is a wide range of training opportunities for new committee members when getting started, including:
- charing skills;
- secretarial skills;
- event management;
- speedwriting; and
- treasury skills.

We also offer additional training to support your TRA and help you work together, this includes:
- Community Premises and Compliance;
- The Art of Partnership Working;
- Communication and Writing Skills; and
- Equality and Diversity.

TRA members take part in online training to help them set up their own websites.

If you would like to take part in training that is not listed, please let us know. For more information, speak to your Community Involvement Officer.

Funding

Funding is essential to ensure you have the rights equipment, tools and access to an appropriate meeting place. Funding can also be used to hold events, plan activities and for improvements to your neighbourhood.

Lewisham Tenants Fund provide the following grants to TRAs:

- administration grant;
- computer grant;
- equipment grant;
- special grant; and
- venue grant.

For more information, speak to your Community Involvement Officer or Lewisham Tenants Fund.

There are a number of other ways Tenant and Resident Associations can access funding including:

- Local Assemblies funding;
- Big Lottery funding; and
- Other local and national funding opportunities.

Speak to your Community Involvement Officer if you would like help in applying for funding.

TRA meetings

The Constitution states that the TRA must meet at least four times each year and one of these meetings must be an Annual General Meeting (AGM).

To prepare for a meeting the TRA should:

- publicise the meeting 14 days in advance;
- ensure the minutes of the last meeting are available;
- prepare an agenda;
- use a venue that is suitable for everyone; and
- encourage attendance by providing light refreshments such as tea and coffee.

Annual General Meeting (AGM)

Each year your TRA must hold an Annual General Meeting where:

- the annual report and accounts are agreed; and
- members of the committee are elected.

Your TRA must ensure:

- the accounts are audited before the meeting is called;
- twenty-one days notice is given to the TRA membership, Lewisham Tenants Fund and the Community Involvement Team; and
- your Community Involvement Officer holds the elections.

Area Panel representation

As well as having a committee made up of Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and Treasurer each TRA can have two elected member to sit on the Area Panels.

Area Panels provide a forum for residents to work with Lewisham Homes in shaping the services provided to their area and borough wide. There are three Area Panels, who meet bi-monthly and are consulted on strategic, policy and operational matters. Area Panel members feed back information from Area Panel meetings to their TRA. The separate Area Panels come together on alternate months for the Combined Area Panel.

Area Panel members receive an induction to help them understand how the Area Panels work and there is additional training available throughout the year.

Getting people involved

The most important part of a successful TRA is its people. However getting people involved can sometimes be challenging, so it is well worth spending time thinking about how to do this.

There are a number of reasons preventing people from becoming involved, but even more ways to overcome them!

Childcare	Often parents find it difficult to get involved especially when they have young children. Encourage their involvement by offering crèche facilities or covering childcare costs from TRA funding. You could also think about holding your meeting at different times of the day.
Language / Cultural Barriers	Involve neighbours who are able to translate and interpret to play an active role. The Community Involvement team can also help with translations and signpost to support services and groups.

Fear of Going Out at Night	Choose local venues to hold your meeting such as church halls or even the local pub! Encourage neighbours to travel to and from the meetings together.
Timing of meetings	Try to avoid big events when planning your meetings, especially Royal Weddings and Cup Finals! Some TRA's hold winter meetings during the day and summer ones during the evening. By varying the times of the meeting will encourage more people to attend.

Encourage your TRA to be realistic and aim for small successes that will build confidence. Although this may mean that not everyone gets what they want straight away, you should be more successful in the long run.

Involve neighbours who are able to translate and interpret to play an active role.

Think about ways to contact people
Often personal contact is a great way to get your neighbours involved, but it is not always possible to speak to everyone.

Be creative, and consider using other ways such as leaflet drops, notices and questionnaires. Get your committee working together and carry out door knocking.

More Information

There is a wide range of information available to support your TRA and the wider community.

The Community Involvement Team
Phone: 0208 613 7660
Email: getinvolved@lewishamhomes.org.uk
Website www.lewishamhomes.org.uk

Our aim is to make involvement with Lewisham Homes as easy and as effective as possible, making sure your input has an impact on how we shape and deliver our services.

Lewisham Tenants Fund
Phone: 020 7635 9200
Email: administrator@l-t-f.co.uk
Website: www.l-t-f.co.uk

An independent grant funding body for Lewisham Homes tenants.

Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS)
Phone: 0161 868 3500
Email: info@tpas.org.uk
Website: www.tpas.org.uk

The national organisation committed to ensuring that tenants are knowledgeable, skilled and informed to make decisions about their homes and communities.

Once accredited by Lewisham Homes, all TRAs automatically become members of TPAS and will receive weekly emails, information on training, events and the annual conference and a wealth of useful information on running a successful TRA.

National Federation of ALMOS
Phone: 0845 4747 008
Email: almos@hqnetwork.co.uk
Website: http://www.almos.org.uk

The national organisation representing ALMOS through events, regional meetings and briefings on latest policy and best practice.

Tips for good financial management

Tips for good financial management.

Although the Treasurer safeguards the TRA's finances it is good practice for all financial tasks to be performed in a transparent way **and** is the responsibility of the whole committee.

The TRA Committee

All funds must be used in accordance with the management committee decisions, and these decisions must be minuted.

The committee must ensure that the use of funds complies with the conditions set by Lewisham Tenants Fund.

We recommend that all committee members attend training to ensure they fully understand financial administration, book-keeping and how the accounts work.

It is good practice for the Treasurer to produce a report at each meeting, outlining monies in and out of the TRA account and the current balance. This is also a good opportunity to discuss any planned expenditure.

Banking, Book-keeping and Record Keeping

The TRA committee must have three signatories for the association's bank account and decisions to open, close or change a bank account must be approved by the TRA committee.

The Treasurer is responsible for recording any financial transactions in the **Accounts or Cash Book**.

Petty Cash/Cash

Confusion sometimes arises over the distinction between cash and petty cash.

Cash is money received in the form of coins and notes. It should be paid into the bank and recorded in the **Accounts or Cash Book** in the same way as cheques.

Petty cash is a float system which is used to pay small expenses of up to £50 and should be recorded in the petty cash book.

The committee should decide on the appropriate amount for your float and withdraw that sum from the bank by cashing a cheque. (The cheque details should be entered in the **Accounts or Cash Book** in a column called "Petty Cash").

Any monies withdrawn from petty cash should be recorded using a petty cash voucher. Receipts should always be obtained for petty cash claims, and the receipts should be attached to a petty cash voucher.

All petty cash vouchers should be signed and then authorised by another committee member. The person making the claim should never be the person that authorises it!

Bank reconciliation

Bank reconciliation checks the accuracy of your **Accounts or Cash Book** entries and Bank Statements. It proves the accuracy of your book-keeping and helps you identify where there are discrepancies.

Your bank statement details payments made into your account and withdrawals from your account. You might think that the total on your bank statement should equal that in your **Accounts or Cash Book**, but there are several reasons why the two balances may differ and these are referred to as items in transit. Reasons for differences could include:

- cheques that have been issued, but are yet to be presented;
- items that have been paid into your account, but have not appeared on the bank statement;
- interest on the bank statement that has not been entered in the Accounts or Cash Book;
- credit transfers, (i.e. direct debits, standing orders, BACS payments) - appear on the bank statement but have yet to be entered in the Accounts or Cash Book; and
- errors in the book-keeping, or the bank has made a mistake - banks make mistakes too!

Auditor

The Treasurer must prepare the accounts for auditing prior to the TRA committee setting a date of their Annual General Meeting (AGM). The AGM should not be publicised until the accounts have been audited satisfactorily.

The Auditor provides an external check ensuring the TRAs finances are being managed properly and has to be satisfied that the money raised and spent by the organisation is within the aims and objectives of the TRAs constitution.

To prepare the accounts for audit the Treasurer must ensure the **Accounts or Cash Book** is complete, with all transactions for the year included.

The Auditor will also need:

- the final bank statement for the auditing period showing the balance in the Accounts or Cash Book reconciles with the bank statement;
- bank statements for the whole year;
- bank paying-in book;
- all documents relating to bank receipts, including letters from funders who pay by credit transfers;
- cheque book stubs;

- invoices/vouchers to support all banks payments in cheque number order;
- the Petty Cash Book which must be fully written up;
- written confirmation that, at the end of the auditing period, the amount of cash in the petty cash box agrees with the balance of cash in hand shown in the Petty Cash Book;
- the petty cash vouchers and receipts filled in number order;
- minutes of all the committee meetings (and AGM) held during the year;
- a copy of the constitution;
- a copy of previous year's audited accounts; and
- the names of the Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and Treasurer.

The Auditor will produce the end of year financial report based on the information provided by the TRA committee.

A copy of the financial report should be sent to the TRA membership with the invite and agenda to the AGM - the TRA committee must give 21 days notice when calling an AGM.

The Treasurer is also responsible for providing a copy of the Financial Report to Lewisham Tenants Fund (LTF) and the appropriate Community Involvement Officer conducting the elections.