



DRAFT AGM MINUTES

Haringey Leaseholders' Association Annual General Meeting

Held on Thursday 22nd October 2009 in the Public Chamber, Civic Centre, Wood Green

In attendance - approximately 100 Leaseholders

Committee

Sue Brown (Chair)

Emeka Ekeowa (Vice Chair)

Delsie Grandson

Catrina Zahoor (Membership Secretary) (Minutes)

Nick Martin Clark (Funding & Press)

Rita Batzias

Alena Breckova

Anne Crellin

Guests

Frances Kneller, Digital UK, Head of Housing

Tessa Duggleby, Digital UK, Public Affairs Manager

Clr. John Oakes

Clr. Matt Davis

Clr Brian Haley (part)

Bruce Nicholas, HfH, Home Ownership Team

Bernadette Gediking, HfH, Home Ownership Team

Benjamin Ben'okagbue, HfH, ALMO Client Team

Joe Boake, HfH, Resident Involvement Team

Michael Murphy, Tenant

The meeting was opened by Sue Brown at 19:10

1. Introduction

Sue Brown welcomed and thanked everyone for coming and advised that photographs would be taken for the HLA website and asked if anyone objected to make themselves known.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from Committee members: Russell Chater (HLA Secretary), XXXX (HLA Treasurer), Scott Russell, Piers Johnson.

HfH: Paul Bridge (CEO), Jackie Thomas (Head of Housing)

Councillors: Cllr. Bevan, Cllr Peacock, Cllr. Dobbie, Cllr. Allison

3. Minutes of Previous AGM

Minutes of AGM held on the 17th September 2008 were approved.

4. Chairs Report

It had been a lively year for the HLA, evidenced by the local press coverage.

Members were thanked for their support, practical and financial, as the HLA is now in a reasonably healthy financial position for day-to-day running of the Association. The aim is to be able to offer a lot more but the HLA would need serious funding.

The HLA has recently been officially recognised by the HfH Board as an umbrella organisation and the ensuing £700 grant given, half of which was taken back immediately to pay for an HLA leaflet which had been sent out with the most recent edition of Home Zone.

The HLA met with the Home Ownership Team in August to discuss, amongst other things, ways in which HfH could increase funding so the HLA could do more, such as running an advice service for

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leaseholders. A business case was presented to HfH for an annual levy from leaseholders to support the HLA, which would mean the HLA would be able to afford to employ professional advisers. This is being considered by HfH and a follow up meeting is scheduled for November.

There is now a Service Charge sub-group, which meets monthly. The Chair welcomed anyone who would like to join this sub-group.

There is also an IT sub-group. The Chair thanked Selim Buyukdogan for all the IT lessons he has given them and for all his work. Members were encouraged to keep checking the website for updates as this is the HLA's main communication to members. The Chair said anyone who would like to join this sub-group and help run the website would be welcomed.

The main issue of the year was the HLA's campaign in relation to the installation of digital aerials and the exorbitant costs - £1,400 being the largest bill reported so far. Press coverage was good.

The HLA had been informed that day that Haringey Council were considering that HfH should proceed with a block by block consultation on a limited opt out. Residents in each block would be given the option of a basic freeview package or the current 13 wire system and the majority vote would decide which system was installed. She further reported that the Council were also are considering a cap (retrospective) but the value of that cap was still being negotiated. The Chair was hopeful of a victory for Leaseholders.

Another Leaseholder had passed to the HLA the interim results of his research, via FoI requests, on the average cost to Leaseholders of installing digital TV aerials by London local authorities

Local Authority/ALMO	Mean cost per leaseholder
Barking and Dagenham	£182.00
Camden	£389.17
City of London	£225.63
Enfield	£113.50
Hackney	£377.00
Islington	£75.00
Southwark	£250.00
Westminster	£296.00
Average cost	£230.33
HARINGEY – Mid point used	£650.00

From this analysis, the Haringey average charge of £650 is nearly three times the average cost for the other Boroughs.

The HLA carried out their own research on the Chettle Court estate, where IRS was installed 5 years ago, to establish how many Residents use the IRS system and watch the channels it provides.

The report was delivered to the meeting by Alena Breckova and is attached to and forms part of these minutes. [Page 8]. The Chair reported that the findings of the research proved that even when the installations have been carried out and the charges paid, residents are not being told how to use the aerials, what is available to them and most Residents seem little interested in using it.

The Chair thanked Leaseholders who responded to the HLA's request to write to their Councillors to alert them to the Digital Aerial issue. This resulted in a Councillor's call-in request on the Council's decision on digital aerials by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, who subsequently said they would consider whether an opt-out for leaseholders would be viable.

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In August, the Chair wrote to the Leader of the Council asking her to meet with the HLA to discuss the aerial issue and asked why Leaseholders had not been properly consulted but, apart from an acknowledgement, there had been no response.

The HLA will seek a meeting with HfH as soon as they hear what decision the Council has made over the opt-out, cap etc.

At this point the Chair wished to clarify, for the record and to be witnessed by all HfH officers and Councillors present, an ongoing disputed point, which was raised at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee meeting. The point in dispute was that Councillor John Bevan, Cabinet Member for Housing, who attended the HLA general meeting on the 20th March 2009 to talk about the digital aerial installation had misinterpreted the vote taken by members to have an opt-out as a vote to opt-in. The Chair asked that Leaseholders present who attended the March meeting identify themselves by a show of hands. These leaseholders were then asked if they thought the vote was in favour of accepting Cllr. Bevan's digital aerial system – not one did. They were then asked if they thought the vote was for an opt-out – for which they all confirmed they did.

The Chair stated that she now hoped that Cllr. Bevan would acknowledge that the HLA's minutes of the meeting on the 20th March 2009 were an accurate record.

At this point, and regarding the digital aerial installation and related costs, the chair asked that a motion be proposed to make it absolutely clear to the Council what the HLA's position was. After a discussion by members, a motion was then proposed by Nick Martin-Clark, seconded by Rita Batzias

MOTION: The HLA would like an individual opt-out; consultation on a block by block basis; and a capped charge of no more than the average charged by the other 32 London Boroughs, applied retrospectively.

68 members voted in favour of this motion.

The Chair then put forward another motion request on the payment options offered to leaseholders by HfH for major works.

NMC took the floor and explained that Leaseholders used to pay for major works after the work was carried out but now HfH want Leaseholders to pay up front which means HfH is receiving interest on Leaseholders' money.

NMC then proposed a motion, seconded by Mathew Akanji:

MOTION: Leaseholders would like the interest-free period on payments for major works extended from 3 to 5 years, to bring Haringey into line with Islington, and for leaseholders to be allowed to take advantage of the interest-free period even if they are not able to pay off the full sum within 3 years.

66 members voted in favour of this motion.

A Leaseholder asked if HfH take steps to recover charges if there is a dispute; the Chair offered to speak to the Leaseholder after the meeting and perhaps take this up with HfH.

The Chair reported that in the coming week there will be a focus group of Leaseholders who will be meeting with inspectors from the Audit Commission who are carrying out an informal mock inspection, prior to the real one which will take place next spring. Four members of the HLA Committee will be attending the focus group.

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The HLA will also be participating in a working group being set up by HfH to look at the poor results from the last leaseholders' survey and what can be done to improve leaseholders' satisfaction.

The Chair thanked all the committee members who had been working so hard over the last year and pointed out that the HLA had a number of new committee members who have been doing a tremendous amount of work and a vote of thanks went out to them all.

The Chair also thanked HfH for listening to and working with the HLA over the last year but pointed out that the challenge was to get the Council to listen to the HLA. The Chair mentioned that the HLA is non-political but did pass on thanks to those Councillors who gave their support to the HLA over the Digital Aerial campaign.

The Chair ended by saying that the HLA is in a stronger position than they were this time last year; they are being listened to more and, with Leaseholders' continued support, the HLA will continue to exert influence.

5. Treasurer's Report

As Treasurer, XXXX, was not in attendance the Treasurers report was delivered by Anne Crellin. This is attached to and forms part of these minutes [page 9].

Anne mentioned that she would be happy to collect any cash, cheque or standing order subscriptions if Leaseholders would like to hand them in after the meeting.

6. Election of Officers and Committee

At this point all committee members stood down.

Official posts were voted in, with none against, as:

Chair: Sue Brown: re-elected (proposed by Nick Martin-Clark and seconded by Rita Batzias)
Vice-Chair: Alena Breckova: elected (proposed by Catrina Zahoor and seconded by Nick Martin-Clark)
Treasurer: XXXX: re-elected (proposed by Nick Martin-Clark and seconded by Anne Crellin)
Secretary: Emeka Ekeowa: elected (proposed by Nick Martin-Clark and seconded by Anne Crellin)

Committee members who wished to serve another term were voted in, with none against, as:

Catrina Zahoor – Membership Secretary
Nick Martin-Clark – Press & Funding Officer
Anne Crellin
Rita Batzias
Delsie Grandson
Scott Russell
Piers Johnson

Self proposed new committee members were voted in, with none against, as:

Ian Bush
Sarah Cope
Hussain Raja Azhar
Belinda Batten

7. Frances Kneller, Digital UK

Frances Kneller from Digital UK had been invited to address the meeting and talk about the Digital Switchover and how it affects the TV watching population.

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FK explained that when the signal changes from analogue to digital the power will increase and it is expected that the existing aerials and cabling on blocks will not be able to carry the new signal. She advised that this was not the case with individual houses where aerials support a low number of TVs.

Switchover in London was planned for 2012, in time for the Olympics and so far they are on target.

FK advised that all receiving equipment needed to be upgraded but that did not mean TV replacement. She mentioned that all existing TV's could be upgraded with the only exception being Casio hand held TVs. She advised that consumers did not need to spend a lot of money but they would need a box for each television set, although she did say that not all video recorders would work in the same way as they currently work.

Existing systems over 30 years old are coming to the end of their natural life. The old cable is not able to carry the new signal and Digital UK are advising that the old cable is replaced. If it is not replaced it could be that flats at the top of the block could receive a signal but those further away, at the bottom, would not.

A 9 wire/2 dish system would give access to SKY and freeSat.

A 3 dish system provides a wider range of services.

On the subject of satellite dishes, FK said that "satellite rash" (buildings covered with satellite dishes) was an issue and this would have an impact on Residents' pockets. She said that some dishes have been known to fall off buildings and is aware of some examples where dishes were screwed to window frames, screwed to flat roof fabric, thus causing roof leaks and or were hung out of windows.

FK advised that Southwark Council are paying £45,000 per annum for insurance against claims for damage caused by falling dishes. This charge will be being passed on, in part, to Leaseholders.

She also advised that dishes are also causing neighbour disputes.

Property managers (i.e. HfH) could receive a planning enforcement notice, as usually only four antennae are allowed on any building.

Some private blocks are having a SKY free share dish but everyone who wants SKY will have to subscribe; this might not suit those who cannot afford to subscribe.

On the subject of Costs, FK advised Leaseholders to refer to their lease as this will spell out the conditions and what liabilities are.

City West Homes found out that their Digital Aerial was deemed a repair.

Hemel Hempstead in February 2009, found that even though they opted out they still had to pay. Leaseholders need to consider that if they opt-out and wish to sell the flat then the prospective purchaser may want it installed.

On the subject of Consultation, FK stated that Digital UK have "championed" consultation from the beginning and she referred to their leaflet *Calling all Landlords* which is their "good practice" guide for Landlords (and is attached to these minutes [page 11]). FK stressed the importance of Residents having a say in what goes into their homes. She also said that Landlords have obligations.

On the subject of Help, FK stated that their website is written in non-technical language. They have a call centre open 7 days a week with advisors who are there to help and they have technical information available. They have regional teams and public protection advertisements warning consumers about bogus callers and distraction burglaries. There is a Consumer Protection scheme,

the Pink Tick, which covers products and services and is there to ensure that consumers are not being ripped off by "cowboy" installers.

On the subject of the Governments Help Scheme, FK advised that a Help Scheme is available for people:

- Over 75
- With a disability
- In a care home
- Blind

The government will be writing to this category of people advising them they can apply for help. Their options are to receive a high specification box which would only cost them £40 or a lower specification box for free.

The help scheme is **only** for equipment – there is no help scheme for costs incurred to upgrade aerials, install IRS systems or replace cables.

8. Questions and Answers

Frances Kneller took questions.

- a. What happens to people who don't upgrade?
Answer: Their TV will be blank on switchover but a digibox can cost as little as £10, although my recommendation is purchasing one for £25.
- b. Do you have to subscribe to SKY?
Answer: Yes, but not to Freesat.
- c. What will happen to the registered blind person in a Haringey block?
Answer: Haringey will give the list of people who fit the criteria for the Help Scheme to the DWP who will contact those residents. The cost of aerials are not included in the Help Scheme.
- d. We were not charged to receive Channel 5, why should we have to pay for the switchover?
Answer: You are paying for the work being carried out to facilitate the switchover.
- e. What about different language needs. Will IRS support this?
Answer: It depends what satellite are provided for.
- f. People with analogue TV and Freeview digiboxes won't get the service?
Answer: No, I didn't say that. The digital signal will dissipate through the old cables going through the building.
- g. Consultation was only via Section 20 notices. We don't believe this is proper consultation?
Answer: Section 20 meets the legal requirements. BUT it is good practice to consult with residents and is what we are aiming to achieve.
- h. At what point did the Government make the decision to switch to digital?
Answer: 1990. This is the digital age. Digital takes up less space in the airwaves which allows for more channels.
- i. Assuming the majority of a block is non-Leaseholder then they would naturally wish for the higher specification as they don't have to pay.
Answer: There is no-one who doesn't pay. All public sector landlords factor the cost in over 10 years.

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- j. At a meeting with Larry Ainsworth (HfH) he said we are subsidising the tenants and the freeholders. Why should we?

Answer: I can't comment on HfH's pricing and finance policies. But by and large, tenants are contributing.

- k. I have an HD ready TV.

Answer: You can be watching the TV now and you can be watching Freeview. HD will give you a sharper picture. At the moment we don't have HD on Freeview but they have recently made space, hence the recent re-turning of your Freeview boxes, so it is coming.

- l. Cllr. Bevan said the high specification HfH went with was your idea and you approved it, so I consider it is all your fault.

Answer: I did come and see HfH. I presented to them but did stress consulting with residents and referred to the CALLING ALL LANDLORDS leaflet. What they chose was their decision. It is a good system but does have to be paid for.

- m. Will the elderly and disabled receive help with our invoice?

Answer: No. But you can get help to upgrade the equipment in your home.

Frances advised anyone with further questions to go to the Digital UK website or call their helpline number.

Sue Brown thanked Frances Kneller very much for her time.

Meeting concluded at 9:10 p.m.

Chettle Court, a large block of flats in Stroud Green, had its IRS system installed in 2003/2004, giving those Residents access to Hotbird, Turksat and SKY. All individual dishes were removed.

We have been told that the only difference to that currently being installed across the Borough is Chettle Court had SKY and everyone now is getting SKY +

HfH have confirmed that the cost of the IRS was £35,627.64 for the whole block; this figure divided equally between all 147 flats averages out at just under £250 per flat. We were unable to get a breakdown of this figure as we were advised “the IRS was installed as part of a larger scheme of works”

The HLA decided to carry out a survey of these residents to see who actually watches these channels.

Our survey was carried out in September this year.

52 flats out of 147 – just over one third - were surveyed

Residents told us that they watched:

Hotbird	2
Turksat	10 – although 2 of those watch it through their receivers and not the IRS system because of the poor quality of reception of the IRS system
SKY	13
Virgin Media	14
Other (e.g. BT Vision)	2
Own satellite dish/receiver	9
Freeview	9

One person had opted out (of the installation not the survey)

Residents moving into Chettle Court since the installation are not advised by HfH about this digital IRS system and what is available to them, or how to access or subscribe to it.

Even some of the existing Residents we spoke to are unaware of its existence or of how to access these additional channels even if they wanted them.

The results of our survey paint a picture that:

1. HfH are installing this expensive IRS system but failing to let residents know of its existence, let alone how to access it
2. This IRS system is not giving the majority of Residents – and not just leaseholders – what they want to have.
3. Consultation with Residents should be being carried out to identify, on a block by block basis what they want.

**TREASURER'S REPORT
AGM 2009**

It has been a slightly better year than last year for the HLA's finances. It should be noted, however, that the HLA continue to be very badly under-funded considering the work we strive to do on your behalf and what we wish to achieve.

It goes without saying though, we are extremely grateful for all the support we do receive from our subscribers - which number approximately 200 out of roughly 4,500 leaseholders (just 4½%). I must stress that only with your support can the HLA be guaranteed success and independence.

We have seen an increase in subscribers over the last year, especially noticeable when certain issues like the Digital Aerials came to everyone's attention.

We introduced Standing Orders only last year and these have proved to be the preferred method for our members to pay our nominal subscription of only £20 a year.

It should be noted that we have again received funding from Homes for Haringey of £700 which just covers the cost of two of our mailings which HfH actually do on our behalf. These you will have noticed are included with the HfH service charge estimates at the beginning of the year and hopefully you will have seen another, announcing this meeting, in the recently mailed HomeZone.

Receipts & Payments Account for the year to 31 March 2009

	2009	2008
	£	£
<u>INCOME</u>		
Members' subscriptions	4667.36	1673.25
Rates refund	359.51	-
HLA Ltd - Loan repaid	-	2000.00
Grant - HFH 11/06/2008	340.00	-
Advertising revenue	-	150.00
	<u>5366.87</u>	<u>3823.25</u>
<u>LESS: EXPENSES</u>		
AGM costs	-	174.00
Postage, stationery & office expenses	770.63	52.00
Windows campaign costs (mailings, postage, etc.)	-	1296.58
Accountancy fees	287.50	235.00
Sundry expenses - Data protection	35.00	-
	<u>1093.13</u>	<u>1757.58</u>
Surplus for the year	4273.74	2065.67
Reserves brought forward	2347.63	281.96
	<u>6621.37</u>	<u>2347.63</u>
Represented by:		
Bank balances	6621.37	2347.63
Cash in Hand	-	-
	<u>6621.37</u>	<u>2347.63</u>

Leaseholders who have subscribed are carrying all the others that haven't and as we have virtually no funding from elsewhere, we rely on your subscription.

The subscriptions are being raised to fund the development of the website, and general ways of communicating with leaseholders but we would like to have enough to re-open our leasehold advice centre.

Good practice guide

Calling all landlords

A guide for landlords and property managers about resident consultation for digital TV.

The existing analogue TV signal will be switched off transmitter group by transmitter group, between now and 2012. This is called the digital TV switchover.

Many households can choose which TV services they want for themselves. However, those who are dependent on their landlord, property manager or factor to provide the TV signal through a communal or shared aerial, consultation is vital.

Communal TV aerial systems which deliver digital TV are:

- A Master Antenna TV (MATV) system, providing Freeview only
- An Integrated Reception System (IRS) provides Freeview, Sky, freesat from Sky, or Freesat
- Cable TV is available, in limited circumstances, through a communal system

Phone lines and internet access are individual services.



Ways to go digital:

Through an aerial	e.g Freeview
Through an aerial & phone line	e.g BTVision
Through a phone line	e.g Tiscali
Through a satellite	e.g. Sky TV, freesat from Sky, Freesat
Through a cable	e.g Virgin Media

Many landlords, property managers and factors replace their old MATV system with an IRS, which provides access to Freeview and satellite services. Most choose one that will support Sky+, Freesat + and interactive services.

Upgrades involve costs, and public and private sector landlords, property managers or factors may seek to recover these from residents.

Even if the tenancy agreement, lease, title deeds or legislation doesn't require it, **consultation** with residents about the existing system, and its potential upgrade, is **good practice**. It should make the implementation and delivery of the works programme more straightforward.

digitaluk

Providing independent advice.

Residents expect a say in the services they receive and how their money will be used. Sufficient transparency and time needs to be built into the process, to allow residents to get an adequate understanding of what is being proposed.

Consultation should be based on realistic response times. This can take several months to complete where there is liability to consult under relevant legislation. If you get it wrong, some residents may have recourse to a Rent Assessment Committee or Leasehold Valuation Tribunal.

Key Stages for Consultation

- 1 Involve representatives from internal and external stakeholder groups in a digital switchover group, and appoint a 'digital champion' in your organisation
- 2 Ask your residents what TV services they have now and expect in the future: e.g. satellite services, foreign language channels, broadband
- 3 Identify the impact of the digital switchover on your organisation's other policy agendas e.g. Asset Management, Digital Inclusion, green issues
- 4 Consider the options available for your properties and residents, and how you are going to procure the works. Don't forget that service charge payers have legal rights that you need to observe, if you want to recover the costs
- 5 Give residents ample time to consider and respond to the proposals. Supply information about what the options will deliver, likely costs, how they will be recovered, and a timing plan for the works
- 6 Keep everyone informed about your switchover preparations
- 7 Use your successful consultation process to meet the criteria for the Accreditation Award 'Homes set for digital'.

'Homes set for digital' Accreditation Award:

Awarded to organisations which can guarantee the delivery of digital TV to all homes where they are responsible for the provision and maintenance of the aerial system.

To achieve this an organisation must have:

- An action plan and timetable to meet the switchover deadlines
- A named digital switchover champion to lead the implementation of the switchover action plan
- A statement of proposals to keep staff informed of digital plans and progress
- A statement of plans to communicate with residents or purchasers, as appropriate.

For more information or to apply visit digitaluk.co.uk/propertymanagers



Consultation checklist for landlords, property managers and factors

Your preparations

- Do you know when switchover happens in the areas where you have properties?
- Do you need to do anything to your communal TV aerial systems in readiness for switchover?
- Have you checked your tenancy agreements, leases or title deeds to see who is responsible for the communal TV aerial and undertaking any works?
- Have you asked your residents about their TV service needs or aspirations?
- Have you visited digitaluk.co.uk/propertymanagers to consider the options available?

Reaching an agreement

- What arrangements have you made to ensure that all your residents, including people with disabilities or sensory impairments, non-English speakers and those with literacy limitations, know about the TV services and options that are on offer, such as audio description, together with the likely costs and their obligations?
- Are there other policy considerations e.g. removal of individual satellite dishes with the installation of an IRS system, additional satellite services for non-English services, multi-room points?
- Do you have knowledgeable staff to answer questions?
- How will you reach consensus, including the views of everyone affected?
- Will your decision about the system to be installed apply across all your properties, or vary from block to block depending on the views of residents in each block?

Providing information

- Does the information shared with residents include an explanation about:
 - The TV services available after switchover
 - How the works are to be funded, including details of leaseback arrangements, if proposed
 - Maintenance contract options
 - Collection of costs through the rent or service charges (if permissible)
 - Application of housing benefit to infrastructure costs.
- Will you let your residents know:
 - Who has been invited to tender;
 - Their credentials;
 - The outcome of the tender process;
 - Revised costings, if necessary?
- Will residents have enough time to consider proposals and to respond at each stage of the consultation process?
- Have you met all legal consultation requirements?

The works and what happens next

- Will your programme of works be published, including writing to individual residents, before the works begin?
- Are residents clear on how maintenance is managed?
- Are you monitoring each stage of the process?

- Landlords are increasingly being judged on their residents' satisfaction
- Appropriate consultation is important, and valued by both tenants and owners
- Good practice guides and publications are available for public and private sector property managers from regulatory, trade and professional bodies.

There is more information at digitaluk.co.uk/propertymanagers

Remember

Failure to consult properly could mean failure to recover your costs!



For more information on the digital TV switchover, contact Digital UK. Call us on 08458 455 455* or visit us at digitaluk.co.uk/propertymanagers

Digital UK is working with:



*Calls are free for BT customers within inclusive calling plans. Call charges from other providers may vary.



C. Alcock V. 2