

HARINGEY LEASEHOLDERS' ASSOCIATION

MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD AT THE WOOD GREEN SOCIAL CLUB, 3 STUART CRESCENT, N22 5NJ, ON SATURDAY 26 FEBRUARY 2011

Present: Sue Brown (Chair), Nick Martin-Clark (Acting Treasurer), Peter Gilbert (Acting Secretary) and a total of 45 members of the Association

1 Opening Remarks

The Chair welcomed leaseholders to the AGM and introduced NMC and PG.

2 Acting Treasurer's Report

NMC presented his written report on HLA's finances and said that subscriptions in 2010 had totalled some £4,500. He proposed adoption of his report. This was seconded and the report was adopted nem con.

In answer to a question from the floor, NMC added that the bank account had briefly been frozen by the then Treasurer, but had since been re-opened, and that subscriptions were still being received. If, for the purposes of the suggested merger with the new Haringey Leaseholders Campaign Group (HCLG), the HLA needed to change its name, it might then be necessary to obtain the agreement of individual members to a re-accreditation of their Standing Orders, which would inconvenience them and, apart from being a waste of time and energy, might lead to a reduced membership. That was one of the reasons why HLA officers, who were seeking to try to come together with HCLG and re-unite as one body, felt that the name Haringey Leaseholders Association should be retained. In a spirit of opening the door for the members who had felt it necessary to split off and form the new group, SB had offered to stand down as Chair of the HLA in favour of their nomination. The only organisation for which a split in leaseholders made sense was Homes for Haringey.

3 Election of Officers and Committee Members

Chair

PG took over the Chair and called for nominations for Chair. There was only one nomination, for Sue Brown, which was duly seconded. This was put to the meeting and Sue Brown was elected as Chair, with one against.

Sue Brown then resumed the Chair.

Treasurer

There was one nomination, for Nick Martin-Clark, which was duly seconded. This was put to the meeting and Nick Martin-Clark was elected as Treasurer nem con.

Secretary

There was one nomination, for Peter Gilbert, which was duly seconded. This was put to the meeting and Peter Gilbert was elected as Secretary nem con.

Vice-Chair

There were no nominations for Vice-chair.

Committee Members

Rita Batzias, Delsie Grandson, Ibrahim Mustafa and Shirley Perlman were proposed and seconded as Committee members and were elected en bloc nem con. (After the meeting closed, Molly Ejon also came forward and volunteered to serve on the Committee, co-option to be confirmed at the first committee meeting.)

4 Petition to call a Special General Meeting of HLCG

The Chair introduced discussion on a proposed request to the HLCG to call a Special General Meeting. She advised members that leaseholders had been notified of the launch meeting of HLCG held on 15 February by a special mail-out from H for H which must have cost the best part of £2000. There had been no opportunity at that meeting to discuss in detail the proposed HLCG constitution, which had been handed to those attending the meeting as they were signing in. The main purpose of the proposal was to give leaseholders the opportunity to consider a series of amendments to what in the view of the HLA Committee was a very flawed document. She invited Piers Johnson (PJ) a member of the Executive Committee of HCLG, to address the AGM.

PJ introduced himself as a Haringey resident leaseholder and a former member of the HLA Committee. He had joined the Committee in 2008 and for several months there had been no policy or other disagreement. At the 2009 AGM, some new members had been elected to the Committee, which, he said, had brought it to 12 in number. The Committee decided at its meeting in November 2009 to go round the Ferry Lane Estate to ask resident leaseholders to consider forming a leaseholder group there. At the next meeting in December 2009 there was a big argument. PJ stated that this was because two of the Committee members had thought that this would not be a good idea and, because NMC had campaigned by telephoning them meanwhile to try to persuade them to knock on doors, they fell out completely with him. In that discussion, XXXX, the Treasurer, got very angry and made a couple of threatening remarks to NMC, including, ~~My boyfriend's going to beat you up~~. PJ stated that NMC did not realise that this was classic playground conflict resolution strategy and the meeting collapsed. There continued to be personality clashes in the Committee and a number of members had tried to get SB and NMC to agree that they had made mistakes, but ~~they never take the blame for anything~~. Time passed and two-thirds of the Committee got fed up with things and asked H for H to investigate. PJ asked the AGM to consider why eight HLA Committee members had

XXXX – the name of our former Treasurer has been removed

written to H for H to say that things were not right. He added that NMC was not a suitable person for mediation. PJ concluded by saying that petitioning HLCG to arrange a special meeting was an attempt to sabotage the newly-formed HLCG and urged the AGM to reject the proposal.

SB said that PJ's account of the situation was very inaccurate. In late 2009 the HLA Committee originally agreed to carry out a door-knocking exercise on the Ferry Lane Estate. Under item 3 a) of the HLA constitution, part of its first objective was to encourage local leaseholders' associations or local leaseholder groups within residents' associations so that the [HLA] can fulfil its role as an umbrella organisation. HLA would then be able to deal with representative leaseholder groups on particular estates. (The general reaction of members at the AGM indicated that they thought this was a good idea.) In 2009 PJ, a member of the local tenants' association, the Ferry Lane Action Group, had informed the HLA that FLAG would be happy to work with them and the HLA was keen to ensure that they did not tread on FLAG's toes. The HLA Treasurer and Membership Secretary had each thought that HLA was simply collecting leaseholders' names and addresses for the HLA database that they held. (This misunderstanding had been because they apparently were unaware of the clause in the HLA constitution about local groups.) NMC had tried to ring them to discuss this. Owing to other obligations, he had had only a limited time to do so, and when they did not answer their telephones they had not explained to him that they were busy.

NMC added that until then the Committee had all been friendly and it had also been a social organisation. He had been hurt when they had refused to speak to him. HLA bore a responsibility to other leaseholders and he needed to talk to them about the constitutional basis and why the Committee was trying to knock on Ferry Lane leaseholders' doors. The Committee meeting in December 2009 was important and as the Treasurer and Membership Secretary were important officers he had thought that they should support the HLA constitution while it was in place. The Treasurer's partner had left him a message prior to the meeting saying "Back off or else". At the Committee meeting, the Treasurer had then made it very personal and had said, "You deserve to be beaten up".

In response to PJ's assertion that this was just typical playground behaviour, SB said that committee members should behave like adults, not like children.

The comment was made from the floor that people should move on from the past. In reply to questions from the floor, SB confirmed that XXXX had been expelled from HLA by the General Meeting held on 15 December 2010 and that XXXX had since handed back HLA's data base to HLA.

Rita Batzias said that she had been present at the Committee meeting of December 2009. She had been very disturbed at the bad feeling. She had also been accused there of not doing anything to support the work of HLA and even of not helping with

translation (when the only language she speaks fluently is English). She had in fact had other commitments that had clashed with the Ferry Lane door-knocking exercise and had also been unwell. SB said that the situation had escalated.

In answer to a question from the floor as to the purpose of the petition, SB explained that the HLA Executive had felt that HLCG had behaved undemocratically because they had refused to accept three nominations to the HLCG Committee which had been made legitimately before the meeting, as stated in the publicity leaflet, and to put these names to the launch meeting for election and had also refused to discuss the constitution before asking for it to be voted on by the meeting. NMC said that the HLA Committee was trying to re-unify leaseholder organisations.

From the floor, Bob Towersey said that constitutions should never be viewed rigidly and that HLA seemed to be spending all its time arguing and going nowhere. He asked that HLA look into the possibility of merger and move on from that. Delsie Grandson said that there should be a single body representing all lease holders to H for H and that HLA was thinking of getting together with HLCG.

NMC said that the HLA Committee had tried to talk to the people who had upset them and had apologised, without having the slightest gesture back in return. He asked if PJ defended that behaviour.

A leaseholder interjected that HLA/HLCG should get on with fighting H for H.

PJ said that HLCG's aim was to be a campaigning group and that HLCG did not propose to set up an advice centre for leaseholders. If HLA wanted to merge with HLCG, it should first put its house in order and should obtain recognition from H for H.

SB said that HfH would recognise only the one organisation as representative of leaseholders and that HfH would then consult only that organisation. The constitution was not just a piece of paper but was the fundamental basis on which an organisation worked.

PJ said that at present H for H did not recognise either group. NMC said that H for H had in effect financed the publicity for the launch meeting of HLCG.

SB said that HLA had been in existence for over 10 years and had a number of achievements to its credit, such as persuading H for H to cap the cost of installing an integrated digital aerial system and enabling leaseholders to seek permission to instal their own replacement windows. It was an experienced organisation with a substantial number of contacts and a comprehensive database of leaseholders.

NMC said that the HLA Committee would be happy to join HLCG in a single organisation. PJ said that the founding members of HLCG, who were all volunteers, were not able to work together with the HLA Committee.

In reply to PG, PJ confirmed that if the HLCG Committee received proper written requests from 25 leaseholder members they would arrange a Special General Meeting. They would not simply accept e-mails saying %Yes+when it wasn't clear what the respondent was saying %Yes+to or whether the respondent was an identifiable Haringey leaseholder.

NMC put forward the proposal that HLA supports a Special Meeting of HLCG to discuss the HLCG constitution. This was carried with overwhelming support, there being only two dissenters.

Officers of the HLA then proceeded to pass round copies of the petition asking the HLCG to call an SGM to discuss four listed topics. As these papers were being passed around, a number of leaseholders left the meeting and it became inquorate. The Chair therefore decided to conclude the AGM at that point.