

Haringey Leaseholders' Association Committee Meeting

Meeting held on Friday 17 July 2015 at Wood Green Social Club, Stuart Crescent, N22

In attendance

Committee:

Lloyd Grandson, Chair (LG)
Sue Brown, Vice-Chair (SB)
Nick Martin-Clark, Treasurer (NMC)
Peter Gilbert, Secretary (PG)
Yvonne Campbell (YC)
Grace Lungu (GL)
Clare Richards (CR)

Leaseholder

Mercy Boahene

The meeting was opened by the Chair at 7.20pm

Welcome

The Chair welcomed everybody to the meeting.

Apologies

Apologies were received from Michael Blasebalk, Saida Mohamed, Barbara Moore and Ruth Ortiz.

Application for Judicial Review of the HLA's Appeal against De-recognition by the Board of Homes for Haringey on 20 October 2014

Possible Follow-up Review by the Resident Scrutiny Panel

PG circulated to the Committee an email that he had received that morning from Roger Bush, the Chair of the Resident Scrutiny Panel (RSP). The RSP had agreed at a meeting on 15 July that they would be happy to carry out a review of the HLA. The follow-up review would look at progress against the findings reported in the RSP's summary report of October 2014 and in particular would look at:

- Membership and representation of the HLA
- Compliance with HLA rules and procedures in relation to committee meetings, approval of minutes, member relationships, conflict management, complaints handling and roles of officers within the HLA
- Meeting the objectives of the HLA
- Integration of the constitution and the Code of Conduct
- Financial procedure covering budget setting, procurement, financial management and monitoring
- Removal of the fear of litigation to members and other resident volunteers
- Election procedures and reporting
- Commitment by the HLA to work with leaseholders and HfH

The RSP had asked the HLA to provide the appropriate evidence that the HLA wished the RSP to review and provide feedback on, and had said that it might be necessary to meet the HLA after the desk-top review to validate the RSP's understanding of the information that had been provided.

The Committee considered that it would be unfair to remove the HLA's right to litigate. GL wondered whether the RSP meant that leaseholders were fearful of the costs that they might incur were the HLA to take court action against them.

NMC suggested that arguably the problem of litigation had been created by HfH, but that, as HLA's case against the former Treasurer of HLA had been made on a 'no win, no fee' basis, HLA had had to go for a more manageable court case. NMC said that the RSP report had not stated that people were afraid of being sued. He added that the RSP might think that he had broken the Code of Conduct by suing the former Treasurer of HLA.

SB commented that the report had ruined HLA's reputation and that this would be compounded if the RSP were to say that HLA was pulling its socks up because of the RSP's criticisms.

CR suggested that HLA engage with the RSP. After further discussion, it was agreed that PG should reply that HLA would be happy to provide the information which the RSP needed and that to this end it would be helpful if the RSP could clarify precisely what information it required from the HLA.

It was also suggested that the constitution should be amended to provide that, if in future HLA considered whether to take action against a former member of the Association, such action would have to be approved by two-thirds (rather than by a simple majority) of those present and voting at a General Meeting.

Review of Recognition Criteria for Tenant and Leaseholder Representative Groups – draft letter to Chair of Leasehold Panel

PG reported that when he had recently emailed Catherine Hardy-Smith, Company Secretary to HfH, to ask for a copy of the current application form for recognition by HfH, she had replied on 14 July that the Board had asked for the recognition criteria for leaseholder groups to be reviewed and that this was part of the current consultation for the Resident Engagement Strategy. Until that consultation had been completed, no recognition was being considered.

SB said that the Resident Involvement Agreement (RIA) which set out the basis for representative groups gaining recognition from HfH had been agreed by a Working Party of Haringey Council officers and residents in or around 2005. It had been signed off by the then CEO and representatives of tenants and leaseholders. The recognition process was part of the RIA.

SB added that at the last meeting of the Leasehold Panel on Tuesday 9 June, NMC had asked if the RIA was still in place and the Chair had replied, 'Yes'. HfH could not just ignore the RIA.

It was agreed that LG should write to the Chair of the Leasehold Panel with a copy of Ms Hardy-Smith's email, and that PG should reply to Ms Hardy-Smith pointing out that HfH could not just cast aside the RIA without the agreement of residents.

Draft Request to attend HLCG committee meeting on Saturday 25 July

NMC reported that he had seen on the HLCG website that the HLCG Committee was due to meet on Saturday 25 July. It was agreed that PG should write to HLCG to ask if a representative from HLA could attend to discuss the establishment of a dialogue with a view to finding a mutually agreed modus vivendi.

Future of Haringey Council Housing Services Review – Proposals by HLA

The Committee received and approved unanimously a letter dated 30 June from PG to Haringey Council setting out the idea that it might be helpful to the Council to tender out the leasehold services part of HfH or to tender the Community engagement and Resident Involvement function.

The Committee noted that the report on the Review of the future of Haringey Council housing services was likely to be considered at the meeting of the Haringey Council Cabinet in September.

Appointment of, and parameters for, HLA Press Officer

NMC advised the Committee that he had recently met CR to discuss how best to use social media to further HLA's communications with leaseholders.

CR explained that she was proposing to set up a Twitter group where leaseholders could talk about what was going on in their area.

NMC added that up to now all releases to the Press had had to be agreed with the Chair. It was now being proposed that, within broad parameters that NMC read to the Committee, CR should be allowed to speak on behalf of HLA. This would have the benefit of flexibility and immediacy.

The Committee unanimously agreed to appoint CR as HLA's Press Officer. It was further agreed that, subject to the outcome of discussions with the Chair on the detailed proposals, CR should set up a Facebook page for the HLA and in time create a hub.

NMC expressed the Committee's thanks to CR and asked her to advise the Committee if the work became too onerous.

Freedom of Information Request on Agreed Maximum Price

The Committee considered and agreed a draft request by NMC asking for a comparison between the agreed maximum price as per the estimate and the final invoice price for all blocks during the most recent two years of the Decent Homes Programme for which the information was available.

General Meeting Arrangements

It was agreed that PG should invite Catherine West, MP for Hornsey and Wood Green, Cllr Alan Strickland, Cabinet member for Housing and Regeneration, and Andrew Billany, Chief Executive of HfH, as guest speakers to the next General Meeting of the Association on Saturday 17 October at Wood Green Social Club

Next Committee Meeting

It was agreed that the next Committee meeting would be on Wednesday 2 September 2015 at Wood Green Social Club, starting at 7pm.

Any other Business

YC reported on an enquiry from a leaseholder as to how HfH had calculated the final balance due for work that had been carried out under the Decent Homes scheme. PG said that the leaseholder had been in touch with NMC and him, and that he would contact HfH to obtain a detailed explanation and analysis.

Treasurer's Report

In view of the late hour, it was agreed to defer the Treasurer's report until the next meeting.