

HARINGEY LEASEHOLDERS' ASSOCIATION

MINUTES OF THE COMMITTEE MEETING HELD AT HARINGEY CIVIC CENTRE, HIGH ROAD, N22 ON TUESDAY 19 MARCH 2013

Present

Sue Brown (Chair) (SB), Nick Martin-Clark (Treasurer) (NMC), Rita Batzias (Committee Member) (RB), Anne Gibson (Committee Member) (AG) and Kate Worley (Committee Member) (KW).

Peter Gilbert (Leaseholder) (PG) also attended.

Apologies

No apologies for absence were received.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 31 January, which were circulated at the meeting and had previously been emailed to Committee members, were approved.

Matters Arising

There were no matters arising that were not already covered elsewhere in the agenda.

Complaint against Leaseholder Member of HfH Board

Members noted that on 8 February PG had accepted an invitation from HfH to fill the casual vacancy for a leaseholder on the Board for the remainder of Ms Breckova's term, ie until elections were due in late summer 2013. He had consequently resigned with immediate effect from the Committee.

The Committee was concerned that apparently leaseholders who sub-let their properties were not eligible to serve on the HfH Board, as this disenfranchised about a third of all leaseholders. PG agreed to check the Articles of Association of HfH. AG wondered whether HLA's complaint had triggered HfH's discovery that Ms Breckova was sub-letting her property. KW commented that Ms Breckova had not been open about her sub-letting at Leasehold Panel meetings.

Later in the meeting, it was agreed on SB's suggestion that HLA did not need to pursue the complaint against Ms Breckova as she was no longer on the Board, but that HLA could continue its complaint regarding the inappropriate funding of HLCCG, and urge HfH to seek a refund of those moneys. HLA should leave the matter on the back burner and raise it again after the AGM.

Treasurer's Report

SB said that HLA had received 15 Standing Order forms since HfH had sent out the notice of the AGM. NMC would need to check whether any were duplicates from existing subscribing members. NMC said that he would have to pay £36 for HLA's phone number.

Appeal to HfH Board against the de-recognition of HLA in December 2010

SB said that David Sherrington had agreed by email on Wednesday 6 March to the three-part format of the appeal that HLA had proposed.

In the course of emails between LBH's legal department, who were acting on behalf of HfH, and Neumans, the latter had recently received a detailed letter from Andrew Cusack (Haringey Council lawyer) in which he had said that the Panel would first consider item (a) regarding whether HfH had jurisdiction to de-recognise HLA. If the Panel decided that HfH had no jurisdiction, the Panel would not need to hear the other two parts of HLA's complaint. HfH was willing to go to alternative dispute resolution (ADR) about them. Neumans was drafting a reply for SB and NMC to consider.

SB confirmed that HfH had to use LBH's legal department, who had instructed counsel. In answer to KW, who asked whether there would be a conflict of interest if HLA took the dispute to Haringey, SB said that there was no other way to proceed.

NMC commented that as the appeal was now likely to go ahead the issues were sensitive rather than urgent.

SB added that if the Panel decided that HfH did not have jurisdiction HLA could complain initially to LBH and then, if that did not resolve the matter satisfactorily, to the Local Government Ombudsman. She said that redacted emails that had been released on FOI grounds confirmed that Paul Bridge and Nesan Thevanesan had met HLCG representatives in September 2010. Although the meeting had not been formally minuted, Joe Boake had written a briefing note beforehand and Nesan had sent a subsequent e-mail following on from the meeting.

NMC commented that the Committee should not be distracted from the forthcoming AGM and that the appeal could be put on the back burner. KW wondered whether the fact that the appeal was still pending would be likely to inhibit HfH senior officers from attending the AGM.

Later in the meeting, NMC reported that Neumans was being asked to consider a reply to LBH's legal department. It was agreed that the appeal could be deferred for further consideration until after the AGM, unless there were any further developments such as HfH trying to cancel the arrangements for a hearing to take place.

Legal Action against Lynne Zilkha

Complaints from Leaseholders regarding HfH

SB said that the leaseholders whose cases she had mentioned at the previous meeting had not advised her of any further progress on their complaints against HfH.

The Committee suggested that any leaseholder who had a successful resolution of a complaint against HfH should be invited to attend the AGM.

Meeting with HfH

SB advised the Committee that she and KW had met Eamon McGoldrick (EMcG) and Nesan Thevanesan (NT) with Bruce Nicholas in attendance on Thursday 28 February. No minutes had yet been issued, but she would draft a note of what she recalled and ask KW for comments, as well as find out whether HfH was preparing minutes.

She added that they had said that the HLA Committee would like to meet Mr McGoldrick's successor, Astrid Kjellberg-Obst.

When he left HfH, Mr McGoldrick would be working part-time (three days a week) for an organisation representing ALMOs.

SB commented that the only reason why an ALMO had been chosen as a vehicle for managing LBH's housing stock had been to obtain government grants towards a Decent Homes programme.

KW said that EMcG had said that LBH was looking at various major works schemes. She knew that Hackney was disposing of some of its estates piecemeal to Housing Associations, supposedly at market value, but the offer to leaseholders for their properties would not be enough to buy them a property on the estate where they lived. Senior councillors were considering the matter.

SB said that in the original options appraisal Haringey leaseholders had been against the option of the transfer of housing stock to a Housing Association. Leaseholders would not have the opportunity to vote on a stock transfer proposal, and this would be an issue for a campaign.

KW added that redevelopment of the Love Lane estate might not be economically viable. This was under consideration by a Housing Association.

Website

NMC said that the HLA website needed to be up-dated. He would be able to start on Thursday 21 March and would run any new content, eg a flier for the AGM, which he would try to make punchy but not off-putting to visitors, by SB and KW. AG would be

able to help on Wednesday 27 March. NMC commented that it was hard to obtain any service from the website administrator, Ian Morris.

AGM

HfH had sent notice of the AGM to leaseholders in February with the notice of the estimated service charge for 2013/14.

SB said that she would follow up the invitation to Lynne Featherstone MP to address the AGM. If Ms Featherstone was unable to do so, NMC would approach LEASE to provide a speaker who would be able to hold a question and answer session. SB would invite Astrid Kjellberg-Obst, HfH's new Director of Operations, to attend and introduce herself to leaseholders.

SB, KW and RB were willing to stand for re-election, NMC would be willing to stand for election as Secretary and AG would be willing to stand for election as Treasurer.

SB would draft an agenda for the AGM and NMC would draft a newsletter to go on the website.

NMC would arrange for Deepak Shah of Nielsens to vet HLA's accounts for the year ended 31 December 2012.

It was agreed that it would be necessary to ring leaseholders to try to ensure a quorum attended. SB had the signing-in sheets for the 2012 AGM and PG would forward the sheets for the GM on 15 December to her so that KW, NMC and AG could telephone those who had attended and encourage them to attend the AGM.

It would also be necessary to update the database to take account of this information.

NMC would be away from 28 March to 7 April inclusive and KW would be away from 12 to 14 April, so all Committee members would be available to ring leaseholders in the week before the AGM. NMC would check the response rate from the telephone service that HLA had used for the last GM and AGM and see whether it would be value for money to use the service for one day.

KW commented that the changes in the structure of HfH and the focus that the organisation would bring to bear on the enforcement of its leases and tenancy agreements were also issues that HLA would need to consider in the coming year. A diagram of the new structure had been handed to SB and KW at their meeting with EMcG and NT on Thursday 28 February.

Any other Business

KW said that she was lodging a formal complaint against HfH because, as Mike Bester had admitted to her, it had not notified her as the leaseholder but had contacted her tenant instead.

KW asked whether the existence of HfH as an ALMO for LBH was due for review.