

MINUTES MINUTES

Haringey Leaseholders' Association Committee Meeting

Held on Friday 19th June 2009 at the Civic Centre, Wood Green In

attendance

Committee

Sue Brown (Chair)

XXXX (Treasurer)

Rita Batzias

Janet El-shoubashi

Catrina Zahoor (Membership Secretary) (Minutes)

Nick Martin-Clark

Anne Crellin

Leaseholders

Alena Breckova

The meeting was opened by Sue Brown at 19:10

1. Apologies

From: Russell Chater; Emeka Ekeowa; Piers Johnson

2. Previous Minutes

Minutes of the Committee meeting held on Thursday 18 May 2009 at 57 Yarmouth Crescent were agreed.

3. Matters Arising

- a. SBr to request a chequebook and locate Rupert Marsh's resignation letter to pass to the bank. AB is to help chase Rupert as she lives in the same block as him. Action: SBr/AB
- b. PJ is to email FLAG informing them what HLA does and discussing the possibility of us raising money for them and working with them. It was noted that the HLA can only affiliate with the FLAG leaseholders group. PJ is to check that he has received the necessary contact details from CZ and/or LZ in order to help him make the necessary contact. Action: PJ
- c. Sbr needs to photocopy attendance sheets from the AGM meeting before she can send off the paperwork for the Umbrella Organisation Recognition and Funding department. These attendance sheets will help demonstrate the support of leaseholders to the HLA - one of the criteria the funding department seeks. Also copy to CZ for updating db. Action: SBr
- d. Selim is to upload AB's window information to the HLA website. Action: Sbu
- e. AB would report back at the next meeting re her findings into the possibility of securing funding from the European Union. Action: AB
- f. AB reported that she will report back at the next HLA meeting on possible insurance for the HLA. Action: AB

4. Correspondence

- a. NMC had sent a complaint email to the complaints department regarding his treatment at the Residents' Consultative Forum meeting, where he was asked to leave the meeting and escorted out of the building by the Police. Copy of complaint attached to the minutes.
- b. SBr sent an e-mail to Paul Bridge about the incident above. Complaint to go on the HLA website. Action: XX/SBu
- c. CZ confirmed she had sent the "digital aerial" email out to about 400 leaseholders, asking them to write to their Councillors.

5. Finances

- a. XXXX gave an update on the current bank balance and the number of paid up members. XX would send detailed account information to Sue Brown. Action: XX
- b. Committee members were asked to come forward at any time with any fund raising ideas. Action: All

6. Outreach

Emeka not available - and due to personal circumstances will not be available until September 2009 so he had suggested that someone else carried out this function in his absence. Carried forward to next meeting. Action: SBr

7. Membership Matters

- a. CZ circulated a draft "Members' Personal Details - HLA Internal Policy" which she asked to be considered and formally adopted by the Committee. The document was unanimously approved and it was agreed to adopt. All committee members present signed the declaration. A copy is attached to and forms part of these minutes. CZ will ensure all Committee members are signed up to this policy. Action: CZ
- b. NMC advised that he would delete his out of date version of the database. Action: NMC
- c. CZ explained that the full database was kept securely by herself and XXXX.
- d. CZ advised the database was as up to date as possible but it was agreed to try and get another copy from H4H. CZ to draft up a request email which would go to Nesan Thevanesan. Action: SBr/CZ

8. Business Case for Levy

NMC's draft Business Case document was circulated for comments. As this needs to be submitted to Paul Bridge, HfH, giving him time to meet our dead-line of the end of July for a reply, SBr asked that comments are supplied to her at the beginning of next week via email. The draft document is attached to and forms part of these minutes. SBr will draft covering letter/email. Action: SBr

9. Digital Aerials

- a. An email with suggested letter attached was sent out to c.400 leaseholders asking them to contact their Councillors about the Digital Aerial scheme and asking them to investigate the high cost of implementation. The email is attached to and forms part of these minutes.
- b. Sue Brown said that the HLA would organise a demonstration
- c. Cllr. Richard Wilson had emailed to congratulate the HLA for organising the campaign.
- d. The HLA would consider putting something to the LVT. Action: SBr

10. Service Charge Sub-Committee {SCSC)

Anne Crellin reported that the first Service Charge Sub-Committee meeting had taken place and the minutes would be presented to the next committee meeting once they had been approved. Date of the next SCSC is 10th July 2009 at Anne's flat.

11. IT Sub-Committee {ITSC)

- a. NMC promised to contact Easily/Chris Graham to arrange for the transfer of the HLA domain name to HLA ownership. This means that committee members would be able to send emails from their HLA domained email accounts which they currently cannot do. They can only receive. Action: NMC
- b. A discussion was held about the future of the website and the committee's expectations. All committee members present felt that the website should be "slicker" and the home page needed to be regularly changed/updated to attract attention. It was pointed out that this was the best window to leaseholders and unless it was professional it would not attract new subscribers.
- c. XXXX confirmed that the General Meeting minutes of 20 March had been uploaded to the website the previous week. SBr wanted assurances that minutes would be posted in a timely manner in future. Action: ITSC
- d. Web-Group: It was agreed that XXXX and CZ would design and trial a proto-type web-group for leaseholders to communicate with each other. Action: CZ/LZ

12. Committee Members

Janet El-Shoubashi formally resigned as a committee member.
Alena Breckova was formally accepted as a committee member, proposed by CZ and seconded by RB.

13. London Leaseholders' Network

No report available

14. Date of Next Meeting

Friday 17th July 2009 at 7pm in the Civic Centre, Wood Green

Meeting concluded at 9:30 p.m

Haringey Leaseholders' Association Members' Personal Details - Internal Policy; to be read in conjunction with Haringey Leaseholders Association Data Protection Policy, dated December 2008.

The Data Protection Act requires all organisations that handle personal information comply with a number of important principles regarding privacy and disclosure.

All Committee members will be asked to read this document and sign the declaration below.

The Membership Secretary ("MS") is responsible for maintaining and updating the "MASTER DATABASE" ("db"). The MS is also responsible for ensuring Committee members are aware of their obligations in complying with the Data Protection Act and protecting Members' personal details.

Members' personal information held will be confined to Leaseholder name(s); address(es); contact information; purchase date; subscription details; bank account details; and may include notes relating to specific issues, advice given or conversations held.

If any committee members have any questions/concerns relating to the DPA you should contact the MS for clarification.

Finances

The Treasurer will have access to a copy of the full db. The Treasurer will keep additional member information relating to members' bank account details which will be kept confidentially and separately from the main db.

Security

The db will be password protected, as will any extracts of the db which hold personal information. Neither the db, extracts of the db or password will be passed on to anyone who is not a committee member.

Committee members will not keep a copy or any extracts of the db unless they need it to carry out HLA duties. Once these duties are concluded, or the committee member resigns, the db will be deleted from their PC/Mac/flash-drive, and hard copies shredded. The db will be deleted from any hard-drive before the PC/Mac/flash-drive is disposed of. Leaseholder personal details will not be shared with anyone unless they are committee members, or unless requested by a recognised authority (e.g. police) if requested.

db extracts

Committee members can be given access to leasehold property addresses together with personal information for the purpose of HLA research, for acquiring or verifying Leaseholder names and/or contact details and for meeting/information announcements; personal information acquired will only be passed back to the Committee and MS for insertion into the db after gaining the permission of the member/leaseholder that it can be stored and used by the HLA.

HLA Members, who are not committee members, who wish to contact their leasehold neighbours can be given the leasehold property addresses only and will not be given the leaseholder names or personal details. If they wish to pass personal information gained from their research back to the HLA, they must have received permission to do so from the member.

Ex-Members

HLA will not keep any personal details on ex-Leaseholders except those who have paid a subscription.

Contacting Members

When emailing more than one Leaseholder/member, email addresses will be inserted in the bcc (blind carbon copy) field to maintain their privacy.

Members emails and correspondence, which include any personal information, i.e., name, email address, must not be forwarded on or copied to anyone who is not a committee member without the express permission of the member.

Sue Brown, Chair

16th April 2009

Declaration

I have read, understood and agree to comply with Haringey Leaseholders' Association's Data Protection Policy dated December 2008 and their Members' Personal Details - HLA Internal Policy above, together with the legislation as set out in the Data Protection Act.

| | |
|----------|-------|
| Signed: | |
| Name: | Date: |
| Address: | |
| | |



Haringey Leaseholders' **Association**

Run by Leaseholders' for leaseholders

**“DRAFT” BUSINESS CASE
FOR
HFH / HLA CO-OPERATION
ON
HLA MEMBERSHIP LEVY**

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1. Executive Summary

The purpose of this paper is to set out the context in which it makes sense for HfH to consider assisting the HLA boost its funding; the pros and cons of different ways in which it might do so, and the advantages to both organisations of making a change from the present situation.

Sections 2 and 3 examine the current difficulties that leaseholders face as a result of the Decent Homes programme and the history of the development of a partnering relationship between HfH and the HLA. Sections 4 and 5 address the question of what additional leaseholder funding would be used for and why, in view of its success in generating resident involvement, the HLA is the right channel for that funding.

Section 6 focuses on the financial benefits and cost savings to HfH that can be expected to flow from this change in policy while Section 7 looks at the Islington experience and asks the question: ~~is~~ this a nail in the coffin for levies or can we profit from that experience and find a way forward? ~~q~~

Section 8 takes a detailed look at three possible improvements, two of which would genuinely be solutions.

Finally the discussion is summed up in the conclusion that if HfH is to provide leaseholders with an excellent service it needs to up its game significantly and these proposals give it a great opportunity to do just that.

2. Why should HfH be looking at new ways to fund leaseholders at this time?

The short answer to this is: ~~because~~ of the Decent Homes programme ~~q~~ Major works bills of up to £18,000 or more have started to flow in on a regular basis as the programme enters its second year.

At a time of falling house prices these bills pose a serious challenge to the finances of many leaseholders. Leaseholders ~~q~~ input into decision-making, through the Leasehold Panel, the Core Group and the HLA, has not yet been sufficient to generate confidence amongst the body of leaseholders that they are being properly included and that their interests and views are being taken into account as much as they should be.

As a result, many leaseholders remain dissatisfied with the service from HfH as the recent survey made so very clear.

Leaseholders do not feel that they are truly considered to be partners in the Decent Homes project.

3. HfH /HLA Partnership

At the HLA general meeting held on the 20th March 2009 this topic was discussed in detail. The picture that emerges is that, whilst substantial progress has been made, more still needs to be done.

It is for instance very encouraging that HfH have now included HLA enclosures in mail-outs on three occasions. Progress has also been made on recognition where the HLA have been able to clarify what it is they stand for through their new constitution and this has been accepted by HfH. Co-operation between the HLA and HfH over the new windows policy was fruitful and constructive and the HLA has had several high-level meetings with HfH officers as an organisation.

Whilst on the downside, HLA was specifically excluded as a Decent Homes partner in the Guide to Residents. The Leasehold Panel has suffered from a lack of respect by officers for the resident chair and it has not been possible to pass the minutes of several meetings. Complaints have been made only some of which have been addressed. The HLA was subjected to heavy-handed treatment over its new constitution.

Some past mistakes in the treatment of leaseholders have been apologised for but the HLA are still awaiting concrete improvements in its relationship to HfH that would give substance to the notions of mutual respect and collaborative endeavour. In short this is an area brimming with promise that is not as yet delivering its full potential.

4. What do leaseholders need more funding for?

The HLA cannot be a genuine partner for HfH, the constructor partners and the compliance teams, if it continues to be a shoe-string outfit dependent on the extraordinary goodwill and efforts of a mere handful of volunteers and with an annual budget of only two or three thousand pounds.

Leaseholders are crying out for access to a local advice centre where they can get technical and legal help with their problems. But paying for office space and employing one or two people even on a part-time basis would require a step-change in the level of financing the organisation receives.

The present opt-in system is inadequate to the task. In practical terms it is a huge task to contact each leaseholder individually and ask them to take the time to fill out an annual standing order for £20. People just have too much else to do and it is always so much easier to leave it to others to sort out. There is a huge problem of inertia and also of free-loading.

From the point of view of our volunteers, we are overwhelmed by the workload we already have. By the time the HLA gets around to signing up a significant proportion of the leaseholder base through those means the Decent Homes programme will be long gone. It is very much a threshold effect situation.

If the HLA had an office with an advice service opt-in scheme subscriptions would likely go up and with the extra active support sign-up campaigns could be organised. But how do we get to that stage? The answer is that we need to change to an opt-out system at least for a while. The different possibilities are examined in Section 8.

5. Why does the HLA deserve to be the channel for that funding?

The HLA is the only borough-wide body representing leaseholders. It is well-run, inclusive, democratic and successful. The make-up of its committee is as diverse as the borough they come from. It is chaired by a woman and numbers Turkish, Jewish, black and other ethnic minorities amongst its members. It is committed to equality by its Constitution and in its practice.

It can sensibly claim to have the passive support of the vast majority of leaseholders and has demonstrated a high level of active support through the attendance it generates at general meetings. Only the HLA is in a position to be a partner for HfH and the others involved in Decent Homes across the borough.

6. How does HfH stand to benefit from this?

There are financial and political benefits to HfH from acting imaginatively to improve the service they provide to leaseholders.

Putting the often adversarial relations of the past behind us and by building on the genuine advances that have been made towards a co-operative relationship based on mutual respect would mean better communication and more ready conflict-resolution at an earlier stage.

Going to court or to a tribunal would become very much a matter of last resort, to be undertaken perhaps when both parties wanted a legal determination, and this would generate significant cost savings in the legal department with a direct benefit to HfH.

A thriving, active, HLA would naturally carry out much of the same basic work of informing the leaseholder body about the basic facts of their situation, what their obligations are under the lease,

what the policies of HfH are and how best to approach matters that the Home Ownership Team currently does. This would reduce the workload of the HOT and lead to a second direct financial benefit to HfH.

Thirdly, leaseholders naturally sharp eye for cost overruns, errors or oversights, could lead to significant savings for both leaseholders and tenants, thus enabling HfH to central government allocation to go further.

Politically this would be a bold and pioneering effort and it would increase the profile of HfH, turning it into a leader in the field. Reaching out to leaseholders in such a significant way would be a big part of delivering an excellent service overall and this would help HfH with future funding bids and in the expansion of its role.

7. What went wrong in Islington - and does it affect us?

The Decent Homes programme in Islington predates the one in Haringey with the result that both HfH and HLA often look to Islington for a way forward.

In December 2007 Homes for Islington (Hfi) unsuccessfully defended an LVT case that would have allowed them to collect a subscription from all Islington leaseholders through the service charge.

The tribunal defined the issue in dispute as ~~the~~ liability to pay a levy for the formation of a leaseholders association as part of a service charge. It held that the lease should be interpreted restrictively and ~~contra proferentem~~ (that is to say that ambiguities should be not be resolved in favour of the party that put forward the lease, namely, Islington Council in this case), that the costs of setting up an independent body were not ~~management~~ costs and that ~~the~~ terms of the ... leases do not make provision for the recovery of a service charge in respect of the costs of the proposed association.

So is that the end of the road then? Well yes and no.

Certainly it means that the compulsory collection of a sum of money by a Council as part of a service charge is a non-starter. But are there alternatives? The facilitation of a voluntary donation? A service charge discount even?

HfH may well have been right to be cautious when the HLA first raised the issue of a levy in May 2007 saying that they wanted to wait and see what happened in Islington first. But maybe it is possible to learn from what happened there and still find a way forward.

8. Proposed solutions

The HLA has three possible solutions that we would like HfH to obtain a legal opinion on the viability of:

i) A service charge discount

HfH could increase the annual service charge under the management heading by, say, £25 on a one-off basis. That money could be destined for improvements in consultation with leaseholders, for instance to increase the amount given to the HLA from its current low level of £750.

On the basis that the HLA has proved remarkably successful at generating resident involvement, and noticeably better than HfH's own structures, it would then make sense financially for HfH to offer to discount that £25 charge to leaseholders if they returned a standing order subscription to the HLA to the HOT in a SAE.

As the standard subscription to the HLA would remain at £20 leaseholders would thus have an incentive to subscribe. Discounts routinely appear on service charge bills usually for choosing a particular payment method so this would not be an innovation in that sense.

Advantages

This would be a one-off gesture. Leaseholders would have signed standing orders to the HLA so there would be no question of HfH having collected any money on behalf of the HLA.

Leaseholders would, of course, also be able to cancel their standing orders at any time, whether for the current year or for future years, so there would be no obligation on anybody to support the HLA if they didn't want to.

The HLA would undertake to refund any leaseholder who felt unhappy about his subscription, at least for the current year, and HfH could similarly consider a refund of the £25 if it was proving contentious.

This and the one-off nature of this idea make it extremely unlikely that there would be any legal challenge to it; but see below for the HLA's proposed way of minimising the risk to HfH of any such challenges anyway.

Disadvantages

None.

ii. HfH would facilitate a voluntary donation to the HLA on an 'opt-out' basis

An amount of £20 would appear at the bottom of the list of service charges but distinct from them, in the same way that ground rent is distinct. It would also be made clear on the bill that this amount does not have to be paid. If a leaseholder wished not to pay that amount he would be requested to return a form in an SAE to the HOT.

The HLA would undertake to reimburse any leaseholder who was unhappy, at least for the current year. In the same way that the Inland Revenue facilitates charitable donations by giving people the option of using gift-aid on its forms HfH would be encouraging a public-spirited act in a friendly, non-coercive, way.

Advantages

This would achieve the step-change in HLA financing that is needed. It is not unduly cumbersome administratively. It is simple, easy to understand and fair.

Disadvantages

This would need to be repeated each year making it more likely to be challenged (but see below). It would also mean that the HLA's independence could be compromised. Leaseholders would not have signed an individual independent agreement with the HLA.

iii. HfH would facilitate a voluntary donation to the HLA on an enhanced 'opt-in' basis

Actually this is what we already have as HfH have included the HLA's standing orders in their mail-outs. But it might be possible to enhance the effectiveness of the way in which this is done by including a mention of it in HfH's letter, including a SAE and maybe throwing in incentives like prize-draws for a freemembership.

Advantages

This is the safe option. A challenge is virtually inconceivable. All leaseholders have independent relationships with the HLA.

Disadvantages

This would not achieve the step-change in leaseholder financing that is required thus defeating the point.

General observations

HfH will naturally be concerned at the possible hidden costs of any of these solutions. The only sensible response by the HLA is to acknowledge that they may exist and offer to cover them from the proceeds of subscriptions. With goodwill and common sense it should be possible to find a compromise.

The other fear that HfH may have is of the cost of an LVT challenge, as happened in Islington. The HLA believe that the clear voluntary nature of all the solutions that being proposed is enough to make the prospect of any challenge very remote. In the unlikely event of such a challenge being mounted, the HLA would offer to meet the costs of defending it provided the HLA is allowed to choose where to go for legal advice and how much to spend.

The notion that disgruntled leaseholders would want to battle against a well-run HLA at an LVT tribunal when they could simply have asked for their money back we feel unlikely.

9. Conclusion

There is a need for HfH to lift its game with respect to leaseholders in view of the levels of dissatisfaction and the exigencies of the Decent Homes programme. This is best done through the empowerment of an existing, well-run, borough-wide leaseholder organisation the HLA.

HfH was judiciously cautious in waiting to see what happened in Islington before committing itself. Now it can benefit from that experience as a careful reading of the Islington case indicates that there is a way forward.

Just as there is a time for caution so there is also a time for being creative and bold. HfH should seize the opportunity of establishing a genuine partnership with the HLA and become a leader in the field of leaseholder relations.

11. Time Frame for Response

HLA require a formal response to this proposal from HfH by 31st July 2009.

Sue Brown
Chair
Haringey Leaseholders Association
chair@haringeyleaseholders.org.uk

Dear Leaseholder

As you will no doubt know, the HLA has been campaigning on behalf of leaseholders to reduce or remove the huge cost that the installation of digital aerials by HfH has been putting onto leaseholders, in particular because of the high specification Haringey Council were insisting on.

They had exceeded the budget of the money allocated specifically for digital aerials and were dipping into the Decent Homes funding for the balance.

We understand that the board of HfH has apparently passed a 'gateway report' saying that years 4 and 5 of the Decent Homes programme risks running out of money unless the Council scales back both the digital aerials and the flat to pitched roof policy. This is a confidential report and there will be a decision in a couple of weeks or so.

We feel that a letter campaign by leaseholders could push the balance of this and ask whether you could write to your **three local Councillors** and ask them to support stopping the installation of these aerials, or at least only installing a basic aerial. I attach a suggested template for this letter. Also please consider contacting the Leader of the Council, Cllr. Claire Kober, claire.kober@haringey.gov.uk and the lead member for housing, Cllr. John Bevan, john.bevan@haringey.gov.uk. Could you please also ask any other leaseholders you know to do the same.

Here is a link below to establish who your councillors are and you can contact them directly via this site. http://www.writetothem.com/?keyword=councillors&creativeid=521752599&qclid=CN_lx6S3h5sCFUEA4wodCEAv0A

Thanks

Sue Brown
Chair
Haringey Leaseholders' Association
chair@haringeyleaseholders.org.uk

Your email address: we do not share it with others. We have sent you this email because, according to our records, you have previously contacted us and/or agreed to receive updates by email from us. If you would rather not receive emails in future, please let us know.

Address 1
Address 2

Date

Dear Councillor

As a Council leaseholder in your ward I am writing to urge you to put a stop to the current programme of digital aerial installation being carried out by Homes for Haringey.

The cost is just ridiculous and much higher than in other boroughs. Leaseholders are regularly receiving bills of £700 per flat or more because of the particularly high-specification system being put in. This includes hundreds of Turkish and European channels that few people watch and no-one has actually asked for. In addition, we are now in an official recession and this cost will likely have an adverse impact on many, especially those who have already lost their jobs.

Apparently the purpose of this is in order to remove any incentive for people to put up illegal and unsightly satellite dishes. But why can the Council not just enforce existing regulations against this? It seems we are being forced to pay through the nose just because the Council finds taking down dishes too difficult and expensive.

But this is effectively a subsidy of tenants by leaseholders which is illegal. What is more, even tenants don't want this! The huge cost over-runs caused by pushing this agenda to the exclusion of all else now means that the latter years of the Decent Homes programme are likely to run out of money. That means some tenants will miss out on new kitchens and bathrooms they should have had.

Every way you look at it this is a fiasco. Please reinstate common-sense and get rid of this policy. Thank you for your time.

Yours sincerely

Dear Sir,

I wish to make a formal complaint about how I was treated at the meeting of the Residents Consultative Forum at the Civic Centre yesterday evening 17th June 2009. The meeting was chaired by a resident, Tyrone Clarke, and the lead officer for the panel was Simon Godfrey. They sat at the front in the Council Chamber next to the officer presenting a document to do with the roles of officers, chairs and members at panels. I sat close to the front with two other leaseholders, Anne Goodhew and Michael Ruggins.

I was interested in this discussion and felt I had a lot to contribute mainly because the entire topic grew largely, if not entirely, out of difficulties at the leasehold panel when I was chairing it. From the start I had contributions I wished to make. The chair was hostile towards me right from the beginning, warning me to watch it when I had in no shape way or form breached normal panel behaviour or showed any disrespect for procedure. He was clearly nervous and unsure of what to do in the situation. He needed help and guidance from Simon Godfrey but this last was only to pour oil on the flames.

The comments I made were throughout pertinent and reasoned. At no time did I raise my voice or use bad language or insult anyone. I raised my hand consistently and showed respect for the chair. I thought the wording of some of the proposed document could be changed and I thought some of it was redundant. I also felt that there was a significant omission in the part to do with the role of the chair. I felt that it should be clearly stated that the chair, or at least the chair acting with the panel, has the final say in matters of procedure. Simon Godfrey objected strongly to this and made a number of contentious and confrontational statements. He said that it was not right to give such powers to someone who happened to be chair that Homes for Haringey would retain control of the panels and that Nick had threatened to disband the leasehold panel. Both his manner and the substance of what he was saying are incompatible with genuine consultation and a direct cause of the widespread disillusion with panels and the consistently poor levels of resident involvement. His tone was dismissive and curt. Much of what he was saying was also inaccurate or irrelevant. The chair refused to allow me a right of reply. I protested but acquiesced. There was then a good deal of confusion about taking a vote on this point. Eventually it was decided not to have one as other members, including a board member, felt they didn't understand the issues properly. The chair then proposed to move on but Simon Godfrey said that the issue needed to be resolved and over-ruled him. I then raised my hand to ask for permission to speak and the chair turned to Simon Godfrey and said I want to get rid of him. He said, Are you going to kick me out for raising my hand?

Mr Clarke misjudged and mishandled the situation. There was no need to behave aggressively or intolerantly towards me. However Simon Godfrey is clearly most at fault. Not only had he not briefed the chair on the background to the content of the agenda, nor any of the other residents who were present, with the result that they were confused and unable to follow the discussion and thus became restless and disgruntled, he also intervened in a directly partisan way and then failed to guide the chair towards a smooth resolution of the situation. He encouraged the chair to take a confrontational approach. The chair said to the meeting in general on the microphone that he wanted to shut me up for good and that he wanted to put me in a corner and leave me there. At no point did Simon Godfrey attempt to calm him down or point out to him that such language is against the code of conduct. When I said to the chair that he should not be abusive towards me he replied, You don't know what abuse is. Again that was disrespectful. I noted all these comments down at the time on the paper in front of me.

Simon Godfrey encouraged the chair to ask the meeting to vote on excluding me. 20 residents voted in favour, the two other leaseholders present supported me and there were some abstentions. This also shows that there was a bias against leaseholders. I refused to leave voluntarily because the proceedings had been so manifestly flawed and undemocratic and exercised my right to peaceful protest by passively resisting when the police were called. Eventually I was wheeled out in the chair I was sitting in. This was a grotesque way to treat anyone but particularly someone who is representing leaseholders at the Core Group. I repeat that at no point did I breach the code of conduct but that I was on the receiving end of several breaches by the chair and Simon Godfrey. It is also particularly galling to note that the chair's frustration was principally with not being able to move on but that it was Simon Godfrey who had prevented that not me. And yet I was subjected to the humiliation of a vote to exclude me.

This situation was grossly mishandled with the result that a great deal of time was lost and the effectiveness of the meeting undermined. I was also deprived of the opportunity of making further contributions, a number of which I believe were of value and important. For all of this Simon Godfrey must bear a very considerable responsibility. His approach is never going to encourage resident involvement and he should be replaced rapidly in that role. Mr Clarke should be required to do some retraining as chair and I am owed a proper apology,

Yours sincerely,

Nick Martin-Clark

Sue Brown e-mail to Paul Bridge

Paul

I would like you to be aware of the complaint below. I was not able to attend the meeting in question due to another important commitment but am very concerned to hear about what went on. This sort of undemocratic and overbearing behaviour on the part of your officers is not conducive to good relations with residents and resident organisations. I think that the way Nick was treated was appalling and totally out of line with the agreed Code of Conduct. From what I understand Nick was, in fact, raising issues which I myself had raised in the subgroup which worked on the amendments to the terms of reference and which I thought were agreed. It sounds as if Simon Godfrey is going against things which were agreed in the subgroup.

If this is the way residents are going to be treated, with officers over-ruling residents, refusing them the right to speak and throwing them forcibly out of meetings if they object, then we are not going to be able to work with Homes for Haringey. We will not participate in panels which are ruled by officers with a rod of iron in their own interests and in which the so-called "resident chairs" are, in fact, just puppets. I find Simon Godfrey's attitude deplorable, as I have done on numerous occasions in the past.

Sue Brown
Chair
Haringey Leaseholders' Association

