

Haringey Leaseholders' Association Committee Meeting

Meeting held on Monday 21 December 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)

The meeting was opened by the Chair at 7.18pm

Welcome

LG welcomed everybody to the meeting.

Apologies

Apologies were received from Michael Blasebalk, Yvonne Campbell, Lincoln Grandson, Grace Lungu, Alfred Jahn and Michael Nazarian

Minutes

The minutes of the Committee meetings held on Wednesday 30 September and Saturday 17 October 2015, which had been circulated, were read at the meeting and were agreed unanimously. NMC would redact them as appropriate and put them on the website.

Matters arising

The demonstration planned for Monday 12 October had not taken place as the only business at the Homes for Haringey Board AGM had been to approve HfH's accounts for the previous year.

NMC needed to arrange with the bank for LG to be added as a signatory to HLA's account.

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

Leasehold Panel Matters

NMC reported that, further to the meeting of the Leasehold Panel on Wednesday 9 December, we had made a complaint direct to the Chair concerning her chairing of the meeting. No reply had yet been received. The letter had included a request to meet her.

We had also complained to the Feedback Team about the conduct of Nesan Thevanesan at the meeting. This had been forwarded to Tracie Evans, the Chief Operating Officer of Haringey Council. Mr Thevanesan had not yet replied to the letter dated 8 December from our solicitors.

It was agreed that if we did not receive a reply from the Chair we should follow the matter up in the New Year. Possibly, if she did not reply, we would consider putting a motion of no confidence in the Chair, which would need to be submitted at least 10 days before the meeting. In that event, we would need to ensure that as many supporters as possible attended.

SB said that, although the Leasehold Panel's rules of procedure provided that it must meet at least four times a year, it had been agreed at a past meeting that the Panel should meet every two months.

Possible Follow-up Review by the Resident Scrutiny Panel

PG said that the RSP Chair had replied to him on 11 December to say that the RSP considered that it was not now appropriate to carry out a further audit of HLA as the judicial review that HLA had brought against HfH was now closed, and that the RSP had not received notice of the closure of SB's claim against the RSP. It was also noted that, whereas the RSP Chair had said that its minutes were not provided to non-members and, as an independent voluntary group, the RSP was exempt from FoI requests, Catherine Hardy-Smith had supplied the HLA with a copy of the minutes of an RSP meeting.

It was agreed that HLA should write to Yvonne Denny, the Vice-Chair of the RSP, to complain that the RSP Chair's actions brought the RSP into disrepute.

Facebook Account

It was agreed that as Clare Richards, HLA Press Officer, was not in attendance this item should be deferred to the next meeting.

Proposal for HfH Board to end arrangements for formal recognition and funding support for borough-wide/umbrella groups by Homes for Haringey

It was noted that at its meeting on Monday 14 December the HfH Board had received a paper recommending that the Board end the arrangements for formal funding and support for borough-wide/umbrella groups.

It was agreed that LG should email HLCG to ask them whether they were aware of this proposal.

NMC commented that HfH wanted to get rid of all umbrella groups to reduce the force of the argument that HfH was discriminating against the HLA. SB described this as a divide and conquer approach. NMC added that this approach was destroying the most significant voices which could challenge HfH. The proposal that had been made to the Board was being rushed through without prior consultation.

NMC suggested that HLA contact the Association of Tenant Representatives (ATR) in the New Year to find out their reaction to the proposals. For example, they could ask under the FoI Act for correspondence on the matter between Joe Boake and Astrid Kjellberg-Obst, as well as Joe's correspondence with Catherine Hardy-Smith and Keith Jenkins. We should contact as many people as possible about this, possibly approaching the local MPs. SB said that she would write to Cllr Alan Strickland.

Meeting with Tracie Evans, Chief Operating Officer of Haringey Council

NMC said that he had responded to the letter dated 16 November from Keith Jenkins, the Chair of the HfH Board, to leaseholders by approaching the Chief Operating Officer of Haringey Council, who was the LBH officer responsible for monitoring Mr Jenkins. He, LG and SB had met Ms Evans and LBH's Head of Internal Audit, Anne Woods, on Wednesday 2 December. NMC would be providing the minutes of that meeting.

LG was arranging a follow-up meeting with Ms Evans's PA. He had recently been advised that Ms Evans would be away until Monday 4 January.

Possible Future Judicial Review

NMC suggested that if Ms Evans did not resolve these matters, it might be possible to mount a legal challenge in consultation with tenants about the complete scrapping of the consultation process with umbrella groups. We might seek under the FoI Act the details, including the contact details, for all residents' associations in Haringey, or seek this information from Dave Morris, Secretary of Haringey Federation of Residents' Associations (HFRA).

We would explain to each RA that we were contacting them because we were concerned that, having got rid of umbrella groups, HfH would now seek to isolate each individual residents' organisation and thereby make it much more difficult for residents to combine effectively if they wished to oppose HfH on issues that related to Haringey as a whole or to significantly large groupings of residents' organisations.

Resident Engagement and Communication Strategy – Consultation

The Committee noted that, although HfH was supposed to expand the local offer, leaseholders had so far only had the letter dated 16 November 2015 from Keith Jenkins and there had been no consultation whatsoever on the proposal in Chinyere Ugwu's paper to the Leasehold Panel meeting on 9 December which had suggested four main leaseholder groups. HLA should respond to the document on HfH's website that it made no mention of abolishing the HLA and did not include the diagram which had been shown to the Leasehold Panel. It was also out of date in that it described the strategy as being for the period from 2015-2018. Although the purpose was supposed to be to increase resident and leaseholder involvement, the proposals would cut out from the consultative process an irreducible number of tenants and leaseholders who were unable to avail themselves of IT or web-based services.

In Joe Boake's response on 13 October 2015 to a FoI request, he had referred to a meeting of the Tenant Participation Panel in December 2014 which had been supposed to report to the meeting of the HfH Board in January 2015. We thought that option 2 referred to in the minutes of the Panel meeting had not been explored sufficiently. HfH officers should try to improve the consultative process and get tenants on board.

It was agreed that HLA should ask HfH what the period for consultation on the draft Resident Engagement and Communication Strategy was, and by when people were expected to respond to the information which Chinyere Ugwu had presented to the Leasehold Panel at its meeting on 9 December 2015. HLA should also ask HfH for an electronic copy of her presentation.

Housing and Planning Bill – approach to Catherine West MP

SB said that she would, as previously agreed, make a formal approach to Catherine West MP in relation to the Housing and Planning Bill.

It was agreed that the HLA should not get involved in political issues such as Housing Association Right to Buy but should, as previously raised with Catherine, draw her attention to such issues as leaseholders' inability to vote in stock transfers and the disenfranchisement by Haringey of landlord leaseholders in terms of sitting on the Board or voting for leaseholder Board members.

Social Cleansing and Demolitions

It was agreed that HLA should advise Paul Burnham that in our view the approach that HfH was taking to the Love Lane development, whereby there would be enough room for all current leaseholders to return, with shared equity being available if they cannot otherwise afford to do so, must be safeguarded for **all** subsequent regeneration schemes for the scheme in question to be acceptable to HLA. Similarly, HLA thought that the same principle should be applied to all tenancies in regeneration areas.

We should copy any such letter to Sue Witherspoon, Housing Strategy and Projects Officer, Haringey Council, who had spoken to the Leasehold Panel on the matter at the Panel meeting on 9 December 2015.

Committee members noted that we had said in a recent newsletter that HLA was opposed to social cleansing.

Treasurer's Report

In view of the limited time available, NMC did not make a formal report, but advised the Committee that HLA still had a balance at bank of about £1,000.

Next Meeting

It was agreed that the next Committee meeting should be held at Wood Green Social Club after the next meeting with Tracie Evans, on or about Wednesday 20 January.

The meeting closed at 10.15pm