



# Haringey Leaseholders' Campaign Group Launch Meeting – 15<sup>th</sup> February 2011

**Minutes of a meeting of the Haringey Leaseholders' Campaign Group  
held on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> February 2011 in the Civic Centre, Wood Green**

**Present:**

Leaseholders	P Agyapong, F Ahmed, G Antonacci, S Ara, C Bektasoglu, P Brown, R. Brown, S Brown, R Batzias, N Carpenter, J Charles, B Davis, B Defreitas, T Demetriou, J Dolan, C Donohoe, M Ejon, E Gallagher, E George, A Gibson, P Gilbert, S Gilbert, A Goknel, S Gordon, L Gosling, D Grandson, W Grech, S Guven, S Harris, L Harrison, J Hearne, A Hassoun, P Hettiarachi, N Ignjatovic, D Jackson, S Jacobs, R Kemp, D Kettle, L King, D Krahn, M Laheen, S Langenheldt, L Lapierre, G Levy, O Lewis, J Lewsley, C Lichie, L Long, R Lopez Monreal, M Lydon, A Mackiewicz, E Marshall, N Martin-Clark, L Marucci, Mr. Marucci, V Melzer, T McEnroe, J McGee, A Montgomery, D Munro, S Nolan, N O'Connor, C Oppong, A Orioha, L Parris, F Pinnock, I Polat, M Pollock, S Rahman, W Ramsamy, M Rawitzer, L Reith, L Richards, C Robley, M Robley, M Ruggins, D Simbo, A Soley, Ms Stewart, G St. John, D Tandis, K Tomlinson, R Towerzey, P Trainotti, C Tsouris, N Umoh, L Wall, E Wibye, I Wollny, R Young, K Yuen, A Zorlakie (92)
Non-leaseholders	Cllr. Gibson, N Thevanesan (HfH), B Nicholas (HfH), L Newman, L. Grandson, G Weaver, Andrew, D Dосdogn
Shadow Committee	Belinda Batten, Alena Breckova, Piers Johnson, Ian Lush, Catrina Zahoor, Lynne Zilkha
Speakers:	Cllr. Richard Wilson, Stroud Green Ward Alena Breckova, HfH Board member Joe Boake, Senior Resident Involvement Officer, Homes for Haringey Ian Lush, Chair Key Leaseholders
Vote Counter:	Clive Carter
Chair:	Ian Lush
Minutes:	Catrina Zahoor

Meeting opened: 7:15 pm

Housekeeping requirements regarding fire alarms and fire exits were explained.

**Introduction: Ian Lush, Chair**

Attendees were welcomed and asked that issues raised be of a general nature which affects many rather than individual issues appertaining to properties.

Ian introduced the HLCG as a campaigning group which would focus on issues affecting all leaseholders across the borough such as service charges, insurance, repairs, quality of repairs and the Decent Homes programme.



## **Haringey Leaseholders' Campaign Group Launch Meeting – 15<sup>th</sup> February 2011**

The future of Decent Homes (DH) programme is in the balance - there are two years left to run but Haringey Council does not know what funding it will receive beyond April 2011.

Leaseholders were invited to give their experience of the DH programme.

The HLCG was first announced a few weeks ago with its first mailing from which a good response was received; over 100 calls and emails, and 100 plus members on the database and over 2000 pages reviewed on the website.

Ian explained that the HLCG intends to be a listening and campaigning organisation and intends to have a relationship with Homes for Haringey (HfH).

Thanks were then given to Joe Boake and for free use of the meeting room for the launch meeting.

The intention is to have critical, constructive and forthright dialogue with HfH so that members' views are heard. HfH do want to work with Leaseholders and have already taken steps to listen to leaseholders by the formation of their Leasehold Panel and Key Leaseholder groups, which are chaired by leaseholders. It is known there are issues regarding communication with the wider HfH and Haringey Council staff and their recognition of what it means to be a leaseholder. For instance, it has been said by many that if they use the word Leaseholder in a telephone call, immediately the attitude changes. This is a concern and is something that HLCG will address with HfH's Home Ownership Team.

Referring to the amount of members in attendance an acknowledgment was made about the obvious amount of work to do for leaseholders.

### **Speaker: Cllr. Richard, Stroud Green Ward**

Cllr. Wilson said it was an honour to be asked to speak. He said it was essential to have a group for leaseholders, especially those who live on estates and in housing blocks. He acknowledged that leaseholders in his ward are committed to resolving problems in their blocks and said it was encouraging to see this energy now being harnessed in a group like the HLCG. He confirmed that hearing from the leaseholders in his ward, they have many issues.

He saw three areas key to the success of a new group as:

1. Focus on issues that matter
2. Work with HfH/Haringey Council in a constructive way
3. Independence

Cllr. Wilson related a story about a press release he had submitted to the papers concerning leaseholders. On noting that it had not been printed he questioned one of the reporters who asked "what is a Council Leaseholder?" He thus stated that the new committee should as one of their first tasks brief journalists properly about leaseholders and their issues.

Cllr. Wilson could see that the HLCG would be an asset to leaseholders, council tenants and Haringey tax payers as everyone wants value for money especially as he felt that larger organisations like Haringey Council can lose sight of priorities. He stressed that council tenants



# Haringey Leaseholders' Campaign Group Launch Meeting – 15<sup>th</sup> February 2011

and council leaseholders want the same things in relation to cleaning, repairs, etc. and should work together.

He acknowledged that the group would have hard work in front of them and commended all those involved.

(A full copy of Cllr. Wilson's speech is attached - Appendix 1).

## Adoption of Constitution

The meeting heard from a few who wanted to discuss the Constitution prior to voting but there were more who voiced that they wished the vote to take place. As there had been no queries received before the meeting, the Chair invited any leaseholder who wished to discuss any aspect of the constitution to contact the HLCG after the meeting, where each enquiry would be responded to.

He further clarified that if enough leaseholders wanted changes to the constitution these would be made at the next or any future general meetings.

A vote followed and the proposed constitution was adopted by a simple for or against vote by leaseholders present at the meeting. The results which were counted by Clive Carter were:

For: 32  
Against: 7

## Committee members - vote

The Chair announced that a paper ballot vote would take place for committee members for the HLCG. He reminded attendees that when registering at the meeting, all leaseholders received the list of candidates and their biographies (Appendix 2).

Late nominations which were only received a few hours before the meeting were not able to be included in the voting process and their co-option would be considered at the first committee meeting.

Ballot papers were handed out, collected and counted by Clive Carter and the results (which were announced later in the meeting) were:

Candidates	For	Against	Abstain
Piers Johnson	52	6	12
Alena Breckova	50	8	10
Lynne Zilkha	49	9	6
Belinda Batten	48	8	10
Ian Lush	47	7	11
David Krahn	46	8	12
Catrina Zahoor	44	7	12



# Haringey Leaseholders' Campaign Group Launch Meeting – 15<sup>th</sup> February 2011

**Speaker: Joe Boake, Senior Resident Involvement Officer, Homes for Haringey**

Joe acknowledged the hard work which had been put in by the Shadow committee and thanked them for it for what he hopes is the creation of a borough-wide leaseholders group; which would be independent and able to effectively challenge HfH.

He said there was an uncertain future for leaseholders and it was important that HfH works with them to help them provide effective services.

Prior to recommending HLCG recognition to the HfH Board, Joe advised that leaseholders would be consulted on that proposal as soon as the application was received.

(A full copy of Joe Boake's speech is attached - Appendix 3)

## **Strategy for new group: Ian Lush**

Ian mentioned that the HLCG wanted to hear from leaseholders about their problems which would assist the new committee could forming their strategy. He asked leaseholder to think about:

Service charges: are they fair?

Repairs: what is the quality and are they timely?

Insurance: currently being pursued by the Key Leaseholder Group

Cleaning: is it value for money?

Decent Homes: have you been consulted?

## Key Leaseholder Panel

Ian explained the Key leaseholder scheme where leaseholders receive information on repairs carried out throughout the year. The group had already identified issues with communication and repair logging.

## **HfH proposed "middle band" management charge: Ian Lush**

Ian advised that the annual management charges for leaseholders are currently £275 for blocks whilst the single street properties pay £95 each.

The Home Ownership Team are proposing that smaller blocks, maximum 24 flats, charge would be reduced by £70 to £205 (so long as there are no other blocks on that estate) - whilst leaseholders in other blocks/estates would have their charges increased by £10 to £285. This proposal is yet to be approved by Haringey Council.

## **HfH proposed Advanced Payments scheme: Alena Breckova, HfH Board Member**

### Proposed HfH Advanced Payment Scheme

Alena informed leaseholders about a recent proposal by the Home Ownership Team to introduce an advance payment scheme for future work. She advised everyone to watch out for any information from HfH on this proposal and respond to it. Leaseholders paying into this scheme would not get their unspent money back when they sell their properties.



# Haringey Leaseholders' Campaign Group Launch Meeting – 15<sup>th</sup> February 2011

## Section 20's

Alena stressed the importance of responding to Section 20 notices. Issuing a Section 20 notice is the only legal obligation a landlord has to give a leaseholder. There is a 30 day period for responding to the proposals set out in a Section 20 notice. It is too late to challenge these in a LVT if they have not be replied to in the 30 day consultation period.

## Leasehold Valuation Tribunals (LVTs)

Alena advised the LVT option should always be the final option as they were a lot of work to prepare and 90% of issues can be resolved without going down this route.

## **Leaseholders' Comments**

Ian encouraged leaseholders present to have their say so the information would be collated and used by the HLCG for form their campaigns. The committee would then propose a plan of action.

1. Cleaning
  - Low standards and high costs.
  - Some leaseholders expressed an interest in undertaking internal cleaning themselves in smaller blocks.
  - Recent LVT ruling means that the cleaning operation/charges are being re-examined and emails are being sent out about the cleaning charges [from who and to who]???
  - Complaints about the standard of cleaning compared to the level of charges
  - Communal areas not being cleaned
  - Frequency of cleaning needed and breakdown of what is covered
2. Repairs
  - Lack of understanding by Control Centre staff who often have the attitude “we don't deal with leaseholders”.
  - They also questioned the on cost for repairs.
  - Problem with logging repairs and have to chase them all the time.
  - Scaffolding – often up too long when no work is being carried out
  - Contingency charges
  - Repairs don't get carried out
  - Challenged charges have been reduced by 50%
  - Landlord leaseholders have to paid charges quicker than leaseholders who live in their flats
  - Roof repairs not being carried out satisfactorily
  - Additional 26% charge to repair cost for call centre
  - Routine maintenance not being carried out (5 year cycle)
  - Issue with the system for raising job orders
3. Service charges
  - Over all are claimed to be very high in Haringey
  - Management Fee – seems to be a recalculation of the service charge fee
  - Day to Day Repairs on Estimates – how are the figures calculated?
4. IRS – Recharge of £400 is too high whereas it could be done much cheaper.
5. Why is Haringey unable to demonstrate economies of scale even though works are awarded on a large scale?



# Haringey Leaseholders' Campaign Group Launch Meeting – 15<sup>th</sup> February 2011

6. Communication issues with HfH
7. Rubbish
  - Recycling facilities are unsightly and not cleaned
  - How to deter fly-tipping? Always take the reg number and report to police.
  - Recycling bins that cannot be open because the lids are too heavy
  - A request was made for the figures of fly tippers prosecuted by HfH
  - Are leaseholders paying twice? Through their council tax and also service charge
8. Insurance Policy
  - No clear procedure for clamming for malicious damage and vandalism.
  - Leaseholder was advised that because he was a leaseholder a claim could not be made and he would have to pay for the repair.
9. TEMP Panel – leaseholders were encouraged to join the TEMP panel where a lot of these estate service type issues were discussed.
10. Call Centre charges of 26% added to repairs charges
11. Intercom System – Not working but they still have to pay for it
12. Decent Homes/Major Works
  - Uncertainty for years 2011 and 2012
  - Rules have changed, less funding available and more local authorities can apply for it
  - Decent Homes programme will likely go ahead on a smaller scale
13. Section 20
  - These are complex matters, if there are enough of us can we share solicitor costs?
  - S.20 mailings go out at times when people are not around, ie. School holidays and Christmas Eve
  - Suggestion that the HLCG create a page on their website for Section 20s giving information about them, what they mean to leaseholders with a template for responding to them.

## Meeting Close

Chair drew the meeting to a close. He asked leaseholders to contact the HLCG by all methods and reminded everyone that the committee members are just volunteers.

Everyone was thanked for coming.

The meeting closed at 9:05 pm.

SIGNED BY MINUTE TAKER: \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNED AS APPROVED: \_\_\_\_\_ (CHAIR)

DATE:

## Appendix 1: Cllr. Richard Wilson's speech



Well its a great honour to be asked to speak at the launch of the Leaseholders Campaign Group. I think organisations like these are essential to improving our neighbourhoods. I know from experience in my ward how committed, selfless and hardworking many leaseholders are – endlessly pressing to get problems in their block sorted. So it's been a real shame that this energy has not been effectively harnessed leaseholders in a campaigning organisation.

I really hope this campaign group is going to make a real difference and will be a success.

I think the key to success is in doing 3 things:

- 1) focusing on the issues that really matter to residents. Its so easy to get distracted.
- 2) Working with Homes for Haringey and Haringey Council in a constructive way wherever possible - to achieve the best outcome for everyone
- 3) Having the independence and strength to constructively challenge these organisations where necessary.

Its hard work running an organisation like this – with people volunteering and giving up valuable free time.

Minutes don't write themselves.  
Meeting rooms don't book themselves  
Reports need to be read and commented on....

I think I've been asked to speak because in the 5 years I've been a councillor I've raised a number of leaseholder issues – sometimes successfully, sometimes not. I remember the first time I put out a press release on leaseholders issues – nothing happened. A week later I was speaking to a journalist and I asked her if she had seen the press release. She had seen the release – but she had on question: What is a Council Leaseholder?

I think I spent about 20 minutes explaining....

What I've learnt in those 5 years – is that leaseholders are a real asset. A strong and effective leaseholders; representative group will be a real benefit to our Borough. It will be an asset to the leaseholders, but also to the Council and Homes for Haringey, but also to tenants, other residents and to the council taxpayer.

There is a myth that leaseholders interests are separate for other groups they are not. I find that leaseholders' points of view are often very much aligned with the Council's and the taxpayers – they want good value for money. Sometimes a big organisation like Haringey can lose sight of that – and leaseholders can bring us back to earth.

And I also find that 99% of time leaseholders' interests are very much aligned with tenants – they want the blocks clean, repaired, looked after and secure – just like the rest of the residents. It just so happens that leaseholders are the ones with the biggest motivation and with the skills to make their voice heard. But the achievements in improving their estates benefit all.

And the Council and Homes for Haringey benefit massively from having the eyes and ears of leaseholders on the ground



## Committee nominations: 15<sup>th</sup> February 2011

### **Belinda Batten**

Leaseholder, Tottenham for 3 years

She works professionally as an accountant. With the help of leaseholders, Belinda wants to campaign for reduced service charges and will strive to ensure we get the best value for our leaseholder money.

### **Alena Breckova**

Leaseholder, Tottenham for 7 years

She is familiar with issues affecting home owners whilst working in the property sector. Alena is qualified in law and she is currently training to become a solicitor; she is especially interested in leasehold law. For the last two years Alena has been attending and contributing to HfH (Homes for Haringey) resident panels and she has just commenced a three year term as the Leaseholder representative on the board of Homes for Haringey.

### **Piers Johnson**

Leaseholder, Ferry Lane for 10 years

Piers' career has been a mixture of teaching (Drama, Art, Music, Design and Technology, Special Needs) and building (Carpentry, conversion work, Project Management). He retired as a teacher from Gladesmore School in 2009, where he was also NUT Union rep.

As a leaseholder he is most concerned about the procurement and management of repair and refurbishment contracts. He does not think leaseholders receive value for money and the process of reporting faults and getting works commissioned and adequately completed is frequently very poor. He anticipates a lot of hard work but also a lot of fun in working with a like minded group to campaign for change for us all.

### **David Krahn**

Leaseholder, Highgate for 5 years

He is a property developer, builder and owns a chain of health food shops. David had a successful outcome to a recent Leasehold Valuation Tribunal case where he challenged repair and external decorating costs. He offers us valuable knowledge and experience in this field.

### **Ian Lush**

Leaseholder, Alexandra Park for 2 years

He has 30 years professional experience in the heritage, regeneration, cultural and arts sectors, and has been Chief Executive of the Architectural Heritage Fund, the UK's largest non-Government funder of heritage regeneration projects, since 2003. Ian is also Deputy Chair of The Heritage Alliance, an Adviser to the Prince of Wales's Regeneration Trust, a member of the Great Ormond Street Hospital Foundation Trust Steering Board and Redevelopment Board, and Chair of the Northern Ireland Built Heritage Forum. Ian is Chair of the HfH Key Leaseholders Panel.

### **Catrina Zahoor**

Leaseholder, Stroud Green for 5 years

She works full-time as an office manager. Catrina is an experienced campaigner; she is the Secretary of her estate's Residents' Association and produces their newsletters. She attends various HfH panels to keep up to date with leasehold issues.

### **Lynne Zilkha**

Leaseholder, Muswell Hill for 3 years.

Lynne is a business woman. She is a member of the HfH Leasehold Panel and Key Leaseholder Panel and is a moderator on the *haringeyleaseholders* webgroup. Lynne would bring campaign expertise to the group and is an excellent researcher and communicator. She is committed to working towards improving leaseholders' conditions and gaining fair treatment.

### Appendix 3: Joe Boake's speech



"I think all the hard work put in by the shadow group is exemplary, and has gone a long way to laying a constructive foundation for a borough-wide leaseholders group.

This comes at a time when an uncertain future makes it vital that HfH works with all our leaseholders in a range of ways to find how best to provide them with the efficient and effective services they deserve, *want and pay for*.

We welcome the proposal for HLCG to become a democratic collective voice. We highly value the benefits that HLCG leaseholders can help us provide, by acting as an independent challenge group, considering our services, and responding to our proposals.

I am delighted to have been asked to speak at the Inaugural meeting of HLCG *tonight*, and accepted this request with no hesitation.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those involved for their efforts, and indeed, their patience in the time it has taken to ensure that things can start from a solid foundation.

I will programme a report on the HLCG recognition application onto the HfH Board agenda as soon as possible, however, prior to this, I will need to allow time for leaseholders more widely to be consulted, as was agreed by the Board.

This is a straightforward process, and will be done by informing leaseholders that we have received an application for formal recognition by HLCG, and asking for their comments. Any comments received will inform the subsequent report and recommendation to the Board.

Thanks again for inviting me to speak on this very special occasion – I would like to wish you all every success in your future work *on behalf of Haringey leaseholders* "