

TOWER HAMLETS COMMUNITY HOUSING

LEASEHOLDERS STEERING GROUP

TUESDAY 20TH JANUARY 2009

MINUTES

LSG MEMBERS PRESENT

Christina Chesterman	CC	Chapman Street (LSG Chair)
Mike Meir	MM	Gwilym Maries House
Abraham David	AD	Luke House
Mass Chefa	MC	Lysander House
Sven Parker	SP	Barnardo Street
Ares Zaimes	AZ	Cable Street (from item 4)
Julie Snell	JS	William Channing House (from item 10)

LSG MEMBERS ABSENT

David Green	DG	Grayling Square
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OBSERVERS PRESENT

Paul Turner	PT	Coburg Dwellings
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OFFICERS PRESENT

Harneck Chilemba	HAC	THCH Director of Finance
Justice Allotey	JA	THCH Financial Controller
Sheila Bradley	SB	THCH Corporate Admin Manager (Minutes)

DISTRIBUTION

All Above +	Maryann Lowry
Michael Tyrrell	Glyn Wiltshire
David Eatwell	Masood Hussain
Peter Exton	Ismail Ali
Compton Gustave	Bridgett Bardwell
Elaine Hamilton	Tracey Bellamy
Sirajul Islam	Pav Sehmy
Andy Coleborn	

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

- 1.1 Alison Cochrane - Illness
- David Jones - Illness
- David Eatwell - Conflicting appointment

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 2.1 None

3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 21ST OCTOBER 2008

- 3.1 The minutes of the meeting of 21st October 2008 were **AGREED** as a true and accurate record pending the following amendment:-

- 3.1.1 Item 14.1 should read: "The only explanation of this charge had been a reference to a Mansford Forum Newsletter" **SB –**

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MEETING OF 21ST OCTOBER 2008

- 4.1 4.7.2 MC had reported a problem with his windows to the CHO and had been told it would be his obligation to arrange the repairs, he did not feel this was correct. DE undertook to check the terms of his lease and clarify this for MC. **DE –** DE has spoken to MC and has clarified with him the terms of the lease. **MC –** confirmed that this matter had now been resolved to his satisfaction

- 4.2 4.10 (16.3 of the meeting of 15/01/08) AD reported water pooling on the 18th floor of Luke House. This had been previously reported but still persisted and he was concerned about safety. This would be referred again to the Repairs & Maintenance Manager, Glyn Wiltshire. **DE -** This matter has been referred to the R&M team

- 4.2.1 AD reported that although this matter had been inspected by GW well before Christmas and he had been told work was in hand, the problem persisted. He was very concerned that an accident would occur.

- 4.2.1 HAC undertook to take this matter up with GW urgently. **HAC -**
- 4.3 SP asked again who within the organisation could cancel or make amendments to charges levied. HAC reiterated what had been said at the previous meeting that JA was able to make amendments if necessary.
- 4.3.1 SP felt that JA could not make decisions of a practical or logistical nature. HAC requested that if a specific decision was required SP brought the matter to the attention to the Finance team who would consult with other departments if necessary.
- 4.4 11.1.2 DE undertook to look into this matter and respond in writing to MM's concerns. **DE – This matter is still under investigation.**
- 4.4.1 MM was concerned that he had not received a response to date and HAC undertook to chase DE regarding this matter **HAC -**
- 4.5 11.8 HAC thanked members for their thoughts on the future agenda items. He would update the report accordingly but asked that should any members have further suggestions they should contact him. **HAC – Report has been amended- see Item 11 on the Agenda**
- 4.6 12.1 SB apologised that the title of this item, which LSG had requested be changed to "Articles for Update" although changed by her for this meetings Agenda, had been changed back in error. She undertook to liaise with the DoF's PA to ensure that the requested amendment be made for subsequent meetings. **SB – the Agenda has been amended to reflect the change of title requested**

5. CHAIRS ACTION

5.1 None

6. MAJOR REPAIRS PAYMENT OPTIONS

6.1 JA spoke to the report detailing the various options

available.

- 6.2 MM felt that the information given in respect of a voluntary charge on the property was not consistent with that given to the Mansford Forum prior to transfer.
- 6.2.1 MM believed that the voluntary charge option would be open to anyone who wished to pursue it and the conditions shown in the report were not a requirement. HAC undertook to check this **HAC**
- 6.3 MM felt that the Government had recently introduced a scheme to assist leaseholders with major repair charges. HAC replied that some schemes such as shared equity had been suggested but they were still at a very early stage. The information on these Government schemes was being given through the Homes and Communities Agency and the Tenants Services Authority briefing notes but he had seen nothing to date in respect of major repairs payments.
- 6.3.1 JA was asked to check the briefings and he asked MM to forward any further information he found. **JA -**

7. CYCLICAL & MINOR WORKS PROGRAMME BUDGET 2009/10

- 7.1 HAC informed the meeting that this report was not yet available as the budget for 2009/10 was still being finalised.

8. MANSFORD & AVEBURY EAST REFURBISHMENT PROGRAMME UPDATE

- 8.1 HAC spoke to the report; MM felt that section 5 on New Build Progress was not reflective of the Development Committee's decision because of concerns over funding.
- 8.1.1 He also felt that the refurbishment of Southwood Smith House had been agreed by the THCH Board.
- 8.1.2 HAC replied that all schemes that were already on site were provided for in the current Business Plan.
- 8.1.3 The other schemes were subject to new external funding. Talks were in progress with a number of banks but it was too early to state at this stage whether funding would be available.

8.2 The LSG **NOTED** the progress:

8.2.1 In the refurbishment of the transferred estates.

8.2.2 Of the new build on the transferred estates.

9. OUTSTANDING ACTION

9.1 The LSG **NOTED** the action outstanding outlined in section four of the report.

10. MINOR WORKS PROGRAMME PROGRESS REPORT

10.1 MC expressed concern that he had not seen any information about the drop-in session for residents held to gauge opinions regarding the improved access, binstores etc. at Lysander House (item 4.1.2). HAC undertook to provide clarification of when the session was held and details of the works decided by residents. **HAC**

10.2 AD enquired when the works to provide bike sheds (item 4.1.8) at Luke House would start, HAC would ensure that details of the timeframe for the works would be sent to AD. **HAC**

10.3 SP enquired whether leaseholders would have to fund the improvement works detailed and AZ asked whether the works were to bring homes up to Decent Homes Plus standard.

10.3.1 HAC explained that the works were elective works which had come from the suggestions of residents. Whilst some would be funded from reserves, improvement works were chargeable to leaseholders.

10.3.2 MM felt that was not the case, for example the installation of a door entry system would not be chargeable although its maintenance would be. HAC undertook to seek clarification on this point and provide a written answer. **HAC**

10.4 Clarification regarding the TV aerial upgrade programme (item 4.2.9) would also be sought. **HAC**

11. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

11.1 HAC reminded LSG members to continue to bring forward

any topics they felt were appropriate for LSG discussion.

- 11.2 The LSG **NOTED** the proposed future Agenda items detailed at section 4 of the report.

12. INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT INTO THE REVIEW OF SERVICE CHARGE ARRANGEMENTS

- 12.1 HAC spoke to the report and explained that this was the first time that the LSG had been presented with this report. The Finance & Audit Committee of the THCH Board had felt that the monitoring of any recommendations made by the internal auditors on areas affecting leaseholders should be carried out by LSG.

- 12.2 He directed LSG to the Management Action Plan and apologised that none of the recommended actions had yet been implemented or would be within the timescales shown.

- 12.2.1 Part of the problem of not achieving the timetable shown was the fact that the new post of Finance Income Manager, which had been successfully filled, now had to be re-advertised as the appointee had decided to stay with his current employer just before he was expected to start at THCH. He explained that, within the restructured Finance Department, this post was key to dealing with leasehold financial arrangements. It was anticipated that Leasehold Management Policy review would now be completed by July 2009.

- 12.2.2 The target date for the second Management Action point would now be March 2010, as the most cost effective way of passing on this non-urgent information would be during the sending out of Service Charge Estimates. Concern was expressed at the year long delay in completing this matter.

- 12.2.2.1 Although JS felt that the setting up of a sinking fund that leaseholders could make payments for future works would be welcomed, HAC pointed out that the decision had already been made that THCH would not hold any form of sinking funds and it was up to leaseholders to make their own arrangements for saving for future expenditure. What was important was that THCH reminded leaseholders that they may have these obligations in the future. Residents were consulted on major works and the appropriate formal notices served when works were to be undertaken.

12.2.2.2 In response to a query by MC, it was confirmed that major works costs were divided amongst all residents of the block where works took place.

12.2.2.3 It was confirmed that leaseholders had available to them the payment options set out in the earlier discussion under Agenda Item six which included payment for future major works.

12.3 The report on Service Charge calculations would be **HAC-** provided for the July 2009 LSG.

13. ARTICLES FOR UPDATE

13.1 None suggested

14. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

14.1 PT was concerned about the standard of cleaning particularly in his block. He wondered whether a survey on cleaning would be appropriate.

14.1.1 HAC advised PT that he should address specific concerns regarding the cleaning to the Community Housing Office (CHO) at Shadwell who would be able to investigate.

14.2 PT was very concerned over subletting by leaseholders or those who bought their homes for “buy to let” purposes. He enquired whether leaseholders should notify THCH regarding who was living at their property and supply the leaseholder’s contact details. He asked whether leaseholders could incur a penalty if they did not notify THCH.

14.2.1 HAC responded that this was a challenging issue as not all leases contained the specific clause that required leaseholders to notify THCH and leases could only be changed with the consent of the specific leaseholder.

14.2.2 He explained that THCH was aware of the issue he had raised and JA was already undertaking the task of identifying absentee leaseholders. THCH was also in the course of producing a “good neighbour” brochure. Any specific incidents of anti-social behaviour should be reported to the relevant CHO.

- 14.2.3 AZ felt that any action against tenants of absentee leaseholders would be very difficult to enforce. He was also concerned as to who paid for repairs caused by vandalism. HAC responded that any residents found responsible would be charged by THCH while minor damage such as graffiti was generally dealt with by THCH using its revenue budgets. However, serious damage to property would be subject to an insurance claim.

- 14.3 AZ reported that although the large private development in Cable Street had been advertised as a car free development, it had come to his attention that LBTH had issued parking permits to some residents. He asked whether THCH could protest on behalf of its residents to LBTH. HAC advised that if he contacted Peter Exton with specific details he could make representations to LBTH.

- 14.4 MM was very concerned over problems he had experienced concerning the management of Direct Debit payments in Finance.

- 14.4.1 HAC replied that he was aware of the problem MM had experienced and he had spoken to the officer involved. He confirmed that the problem had been confined to 3 leaseholders and was now resolved. The matter was regrettable and had been compounded by the current lack of a Finance Income Manager to supervise the work of the officer concerned. Structures were in place but they had failed on this occasion.

15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS (WITHOUT OFFICER PRESENT)

15.1 None.

16. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING

16.1 The date of the next meeting - 21st April 2009.

There being no further business to discuss the meeting closed at 8.15 pm

Signed.....

Date.....