



Leasehold Panel

Minutes of the meeting, 10 July 2008.

1. Attendance. Ms M Djemili, Ms Lucille Parris, Mrs Susan Adewumi, Mr Michael Ruggins, Mr M Pentol, Miss E Owen, Ms Mary Powell, Ms Sylvia Morgan, Ms Shelly Williams, Mr Mark Bobb, Mr Charles Connolly, Mrs M Shaw, Mrs Anne Goodhew, Mrs Shirley Perlman, Ms Rita Batzias, Mr Tim Dettmar, Mr B Hines, Ms Anne Crellin, Miss Ivonne Wollny, Ms Kali Mercier, Miss D Penn, Ms I Codrington, Ms I Codrington, Mrs S P Dorsett, Ms E Coyne, Mr Nick Martin-Clark and Ms Sue Brown (Chair of Haringey Leaseholders' Association)

Apologies. Mrs Delsie Grandson

Chair: Mr Martin-Clark.

Officers. Mr Nesan Thevanesan, Home Ownership Manager, Mr Ed Hickey, Director of TA Horn, Contractors, Mr Gethin Segel Business Support, Quality and Learning Manager Mr Michael O'Driscoll, Electrical Services Manager, Mr Nick Claxton, Senior Officer, Home Ownership Team and Mr Bruce Nicholas, Leasehold Project Officer, who took the minutes.

2. Minutes of the last meeting (5 June 2008). The minutes were agreed as a true record.

3. Matters arising.

Mr Thevanesan gave a short report on the action points arising from the last meeting, as follows

Panel Members had reported that essential day to day repairs were being postponed in view of the fact that they would be carried out under the Decent Homes Programme. Mr Thevanesan said he had sent an email to the relevant managers to obtain more information on the subject and he was awaiting their response.

- ❖ **Action point.** Mr Thevanesan undertook to report back to the next meeting on the position as to whether any essential day to day repairs were being deferred to be carried out under the Decent Homes Programme.

The Panel had asked for clarification as to whether the leaseholder nomination to the Core Group (which is concerned with the overall implementation of the Decent Homes Programme) was to be made through the Leasehold Panel. Mr Thevanesan said that confirmation had been received that the Leasehold Panel is responsible for nominating the leaseholder representative to this body. In view of the resignation of Mr Ruggins, the leaseholder representative on the Core Group, the Panel decided to elect his deputy, Mr Martin-Clark to the position. Ms Wollny was elected as the deputy representative.

The Panel had requested to know what the process would be in the event of an unplanned vacancy arising with regard to the leaseholder representative on the Board ('succession planning'). Mr Thevanesan reported that the Board had decided that nominations will be invited (through the Leasehold Panel, etc) and the selection will then be carried out by a subcommittee consisting of two Board Members and one resident representative.

The Panel had requested more information as to the qualifying criteria for leaseholders who wanted to apply for retrospective permission for new windows and doors already installed in their properties. Mr Thevanesan said that the main requirements would be that the windows should meet the necessary standards for quality and appearance. When permission was granted leaseholders would only have to pay towards the communal windows and doors in their building.

Mr Connolly requested to know when the new procedure (to enable leaseholders to apply to install their own windows) would come into operation. Mr Thevanesan replied that he appreciated the interest amongst many leaseholders on this subject. He planned to consult on and introduce the new procedure as soon as possible.

Councillor Bevan, the Cabinet Member for Housing had told him that the Council was quite happy with the proposals and that they would almost certainly be agreed at the next Cabinet meeting on the 15 July. Councillor Bevan was scheduled to attend the meeting of the Tenant Participation Panel on the 4 August and Mr Thevanesan said this would be advertised in the next notice to Panel Members.

Signage – Panel Members had raised the question as to when leaseholders would receive the refunds to be made for replacing public notices/signs with their modernised equivalents. Mr Thevanesan confirmed that where a charge

had been made for this, leaseholders would receive a refund by the end of August.

- ❖ **Action point. Provision of information to Mr Martin-Clark on the apportionment of preliminary costs.** Mr Thevanesan said he would send the presentation to him shortly.

- ❖ **Action point. More information was requested about the arrangements whereby leaseholders would be entitled to discounts for bathroom and kitchen units through the suppliers for the Decent Homes Programme.** Mr Thevanesan said he would provide this as soon as possible.

4. Progress report on the setting up of an optional gas maintenance service for leaseholders – Mr Ed Hickey, Director of T A Horn, Contractors.

Mr Hickey began by explaining that his company was responsible for all the Council's supported housing in the borough. He said at present they were finalising the details of the scheme for leaseholders with Homes for Haringey. He confirmed that the proposed charges were as follows

- £75 (+ VAT = £88.12) - full service of the boiler and a survey of the heating system to ascertain whether any work is required
- £200 (+VAT = £235) - full maintenance service throughout the year, covering the whole system in the flat.

In answer to a question Mr Hickey said his company had now dropped the condition that the system must not be older than 7 years. So long as the boiler and the system were in good working order, there would be no minimum age. However he pointed out that for older models there were sometimes problems in obtaining spare parts.

All charges would be made in accordance with a schedule of rates. T A Horn operates a scheme for vulnerable residents, to assist the disabled and those who are over 75. Under this scheme the company undertakes to respond to an emergency call out within 2 hours.

Mr Hickey said his company set very high standards for its work. He explained that it is accredited under the CORGI Certification scheme. This requires a significantly higher standard than the ordinary CORGI registration which is the normal standard offered by most other service providers. Certification sets more demanding standards of registration to provide a high degree of assurance for the quality of the management, systems and procedures used within the organisation. It is preferred by the Audit Commission as a quality system for the management of gas maintenance and repair contracts. Under the CORGI Certification scheme 10% of all the work carried out is subject to independent checking.

The question was asked whether someone could opt simply to obtain have confirmation of the safe functioning of the boiler. Mr Hickey said that it would be quite feasible. The cost would be £50 (+ VAT= £58.75). Where work was required such as the replacement of a spare or the whole unit (for instance the boiler) the company would provide a quotation for the cost of the work. With regard to payments, he said that if there was sufficient demand for the service from leaseholders, T A Horn would consider setting up a system specifically for dealing with leaseholders' payments. At present it had no arrangements set up for accepting individual cash payments.

5. Service Improvement Initiative – enhanced use of electronic communications Nick Claxton, Senior Home Ownership Officer. Mr Claxton gave a short presentation under the following headings:

Objectives

- To increase the use of the email and the internet
- To reduce the running costs of the Home Ownership Team
- To work towards HfH's sustainable development goals

Triggers

- Expanding the number of service users wishing to receive and submit electronic documents and communications rather than paper copies
- E-services to run together with traditional methods of communication to meet the needs of both email and non-internet users.

Benefits

- Achieving a reduction in printing and postage costs to help keep down service charges,
- Cutting down the use of paper to benefit the environment
- Faster, more effective way for leaseholders to receive standard forms and information leaflets upon request

Recent developments

- Automatic acknowledgement of emails from the Home Ownership Team's inboxes (as suggested at the Panel) to let someone know that their email has been received and to indicate the time-frame for a response
- HfH publications available in pdf format via website or on request via email.

Proposals

- Leaseholders will be able to opt for paperless communications by providing email address
- To do this they will have to sign a consent form included in the customer profile form to be sent out with this year's actuals

- If someone finds the service does not meet their need, they can unsubscribe by responding to the email address which will be given with each communication
- The service will not apply to invoices, reminders or legal letters

Leaseholders' views

The Panel accepted the proposals contained in Mr Claxton's report. He concluded his presentation by inviting comments and suggestions in writing at the usual address, on 020 8489 3021 or (preferably) nick.claxton@homesforharingey.org.

6. Proposed survey of leasehold opinion – Gethin Segel, Business Support Quality and Learning Manager.

Mr Segel had circulated a report with the minutes, a copy of which is appended to these minutes. He began by explaining that Homes for Haringey is required to carry out a survey of the views of its tenants every three years. As a result of this, a survey is to be carried out this year. Furthermore the Audit Commission has made it clear in their guidelines that they also expect regular satisfaction surveys to be carried out amongst leaseholders, so it was administratively more efficient to undertake both surveys at around about the same time.

He said that HfH was working with other ALMOs to put together a standard set of questions to which would be added more questions tailored to local requirements. The use of standard questions would make comparisons of the results much easier which would be very useful for benchmarking purposes. It would enable to see where differences in policies between different ALMOs affected leaseholders' levels of satisfaction.

There were 11 questions which had been agreed with the other ALMOs and these were included in the appendix to his report. However it was expected that the number would be increase significantly – some of the questions asked of tenants would also be included. Mr Segel said that suggestions for additional questions from the Panel would also be very welcome.

In the interests of objectivity an independent market research company would be commissioned to carry out the survey. Mr Segel informed the Panel that it was planned that the questionnaire would very largely be by post (on the grounds of cost). It would be sent to 2000 leaseholders, selected on a random basis. It would be necessary to obtain a response rate of approximately 500 in order for the results to be considered reasonably representative of leaseholders' views. It was therefore planned to have a prize draw of £100 to encourage people to respond.

It was proposed that it would take place in November/December. It would take about 12 weeks for the work involved in the survey to be completed. It would cost in the region of £9,400, that is about £2 per leaseholder. Mr Segel suggested that it would be a good idea for the company undertaking the survey to attend a meeting of the Panel and give a short presentation. The results would be important in ascertaining the effectiveness of HfH's service delivery from the point of view of leaseholders. They would also be very relevant in helping to plan future services and address any areas of weakness.

Ms Brown asked why the survey would only be sent to some leaseholders rather than all leaseholders. Mr Segel responded that this was on grounds of cost but anyone could download the form from the HfH website, complete it and return it, in which case it would be included in the survey results. The Panel voted against having a prize draw. In response to a question Mr Segel confirmed that Panel Members would be provided with summaries of the results of the survey. The contract would be awarded by competitive tender. Mr Connolly proposed that the Panel should be represented in this process and the proposal was passed. Mr Segel undertook to provide the Panel with a copy of the questionnaire after it had been finalised. He said if Panel Members had any suggestions they could send them to him by email: Home.OwnershipTeam@HomesforHaringey.org.

7. Proposed digital TV contract - Michael O'Driscoll, Electrical Services Manager

Mr O'Driscoll commenced his talk by pointing out that the switchover from analogue to digital transmission having started in 2007 was scheduled to be completed by 2012. Homes for Haringey was responsible for 11,000 properties served by communal systems. Most of them were about 25 to 30 years old and the majority of them were coming to the end of their normal working lives and so were due for replacement.

Unfortunately it was the case that a significant number of residents had installed their own satellite dishes, without permission in order to get a wider range of services. In some cases the dishes detracted from the appearance of the building, or they were too close to other residents' window or the brackets connections were not entirely safe in conditions of gale force winds. In all such cases where residents had fitted their own satellite dishes, they would be removed. However residents would still be able to obtain their subscription services through the communal aerial. The integrated satellite reception systems to be installed would include all the main services, such as Freeview, Sky, etc as well as the main DAB radio channels.

Mr O'Driscoll said that the new connectors would all be compatible with the old ones. New cabling would be fitted to minimise inconvenience to residents, often on the outside of the building.

Tendering was in progress for a new contract with up to 4 contractors to be appointed. Pre qualification questionnaires had already been submitted by suitable contractors as a preliminary to making formal bids for appointment under the contract. These would be evaluated by a panel which would include one tenant and one leaseholder. This contract would be for work not included as part of the Decent Homes Programme, under which some communal aerials would also be replaced. It was expected that the cost would be of the order of £400 per property. Although this was significantly more than the (subsidised) deals offered by many private service providers, the services to which it provided access gave more choice than individual subscription services.

It was decided to invite Mr O'Driscoll back to the next meeting in view of the fact that the discussion had to be curtailed on account of lack of time.

8. Feedback on booklet regarding Major Works Guide for Leaseholders. Owing to lack of time this item was deferred to the next meeting.

Mr Martin-Clark thanked the speakers, Mr Hickey, Mr Claxton, Mr Segel and Mr O'Driscoll for the very interesting talks they had given. He then closed the meeting.

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Report Title	Leasehold Survey 2008-09
Reporting Officer, Team, Role & Contact details	Gethin Segel, Business Support, Quality & Learning Manager. Service Development Team. Ext.4462
Meeting Description	Leaseholder Panel
Meeting Date	10 th July 2008
Agenda Item	4

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide the panel with details of our proposal to conduct a survey of leaseholders this financial year using an independent market research provider.

2. Background

- 2.1 We conducted our last survey of leaseholders in 2005 the results are now out of date and take no account of current plans (i.e. Decent Homes).
- 2.2 This year we are required to conduct a "STATUS" survey of our Tenants. We are proposing to conduct a leasehold survey at around the same time, as STATUS, and in the same manner to allow benchmarking.
- 2.3 In addition to the above we are working with a group of London & South East ALMOs to put together a standard survey for leaseholders, again this is to allow benchmarking.

3. Survey proposal

- 3.1 The survey is to be conducted via freepost in the main but would also be available to complete online via our website.
- 3.3 Based on the current number of Leaseholders 500 responses are needed for reasonable statistical accuracy ($\pm 4\%$).
- 3.4 Based on a minimum response rate of 25%, surveys would be sent to 2000 leaseholders initially. We will carry out a publicity campaign and offer a £100 prize draw to encourage a higher response rate.
- 3.5 The initial mail out of 2000 surveys would be sent to a sample group designed to ensure representative responses for the entire client base (i.e. Age, Gender, Area, Resident vs. Absentee leaseholders etc.).
- 3.6 The results of the survey would be presented to this panel as well as the Homes for Haringey board and management team.
- 3.7 We are working with a group of ALMOs to get a market research provider to carry a survey for all of us at the same time. The benefit of this approach would be to reduce costs and improve benchmarking.
- 3.8 A set of 11 questions has been agreed and are detailed at Appendix A. Each ALMO will be able to submit their own additional questions and we plan to work with the panel on some or all of those questions. In addition there are 43 questions STATUS survey and we may wish to include some of these in the Leaseholder Survey.
- 3.9 We are looking for volunteers from the panel to form a working group with Homes for Haringey officers to draft the leaseholder survey.

4. Timetable

- 4.1 We plan to carry out the survey in November and December
- 4.2 The overall process would take approximately 12 weeks and a basic timeline is detailed below.

TIMETABLE	TASKS
Week 1	Agree questionnaire. Define and take sample
Week 2	Prepare and send out mailing
Week 4	Review response and send postcard reminders
Week 6	Review response and send full reminder
Week 8	Response closed. Data processing completed
Week 9	Analysis
Week 10	Draft report submitted
Weeks 11/12	Report finalised. Presentations made

5. Possible Costs

- 5.1 We have received one quote, from our current market research provider (ECOTEC research), for the proposed survey which is £7970 +VAT. A break down of the quote is detailed below.

TASK	COST
Printing, preparation and despatch of mailings	£2,220
Data Processing	£1,550
Questionnaire development, project management, analysis and reporting	£2,500
Postage outward	£1,270
Postage inward	£ 130
Prize Draw	£ 100
Travel etc expenses	£ 200
TOTAL	£7,970.00
Total inc. VAT	£9,364.75

- 5.2 We estimate that the cost to individual Leaseholders, assuming full recharge, would be just over £2.

Appendix A – Standard questions agreed by the London & South East ALMOs Home Ownership Group

- How satisfied are you with the overall service provided to you?**

A, by the leasehold/home ownership team
(Very Satisfied / quite satisfied / neither / quite dissatisfied / very dissatisfied)

B, by the organisation
(Very Satisfied / quite satisfied / neither / quite dissatisfied / very dissatisfied)
- How satisfied are you with the opportunities given to you to participate or be involved in the management of your property?**
(Very Satisfied / quite satisfied / neither / quite dissatisfied / very dissatisfied)

3. **How satisfied are you that your service charges give you value for money?**
(Very Satisfied / quite satisfied / neither / quite dissatisfied / very dissatisfied)
4. **How satisfied are you that your major works give you value for money?**
(Very Satisfied / quite satisfied / neither / quite dissatisfied / very dissatisfied)
5. **How satisfied are you with your neighbourhood as a place to live?**
(Very Satisfied / quite satisfied / neither / quite dissatisfied / very dissatisfied)
6. **How good are we at keeping you informed in general?**
A, as a leasehold/home ownership team
(Very good / quite good / neither / quite poor / very poor)
B, as an organisation overall
(Very good / quite good / neither / quite poor / very poor)
7. **How easy is it to understand letters sent to you about your service charges?**
A, by the leasehold/home ownership team
(Very easy / quite easy / neither / quite difficult / very difficult)
B, by the organisation
(Very easy / quite easy / neither / quite difficult / very difficult)
8. **How satisfied are you with the consultation carried out over major works?**
A, by the leasehold/home ownership team
(Very Satisfied / quite satisfied / neither / quite dissatisfied / very dissatisfied)
B, by the organisation
(Very Satisfied / quite satisfied / neither / quite dissatisfied / very dissatisfied)
9. **How easy was it to contact the right person at the ALMO the last time you tried?**
A, as a leasehold/home ownership team
(Very easy / quite easy / neither / quite difficult / very difficult)
B, as an organisation overall (please state the team you contacted)
(Very easy / quite easy / neither / quite difficult / very difficult)
10. **How fair was that person in dealing with that enquiry?**
A, within the leasehold/home ownership team
(Very fair / quite fair / neither / quite unfair / very unfair)
B, as an organisation overall
(Very fair / quite fair / neither / quite unfair / very unfair)
11. **How satisfied were you with the way that enquiry was dealt with?**
A, by the leasehold/home ownership team
(Very Satisfied / quite satisfied / neither / quite dissatisfied / very dissatisfied)
B, by the organisation
(Very Satisfied / quite satisfied / neither / quite dissatisfied / very dissatisfied)