

Abbey Road Housing Co-Operative

MINUTES OF AGM

Tuesday 19th November, 2019

Place of Meeting: Abbey Community Centre

Start Time: 18.40 pm

Present: Francis Owusu-Sekyere (FOS) Estate Manager, Lorraine Isaac (LI) Chair, Management Committee, Co-operative Members.

Guests: Kim Thompson (KT) Camden, Stephen Jones (SJ) Auditor, Steve Boulton (SB) Camden, Ann Quinlan (AQ) Camden, Karen Honey (KH) Camden, Eddie Hansen (EH) DMC Chair.

Apologies for Absence: E Henderson-Sambell (EHS) Treasurer and committee members: Bekim Gashi, Chenjerai Shire, Myrian Panayi, Adrian Young and Amina Aden. Sadia Hussein (committee nominee).

1. Welcome

LI welcomed all to the Abbey Road Housing Co-Operative (ARHC) annual general meeting and announced the presence of guest attendees.

2. Minutes of 2018 AGM

LI advised all members to read the minutes from the 2018 AGM and encouraged them to raise questions, corrections or omissions, if any. None was raised. Minutes was agreed by a tenant and seconded by another tenant. LI opted to sign the minutes later.

3. Matters Arising from the Minutes

Water Pressure: Camden has previously informed us that water pressure in the tower blocks cannot be increased. It is unknown whether Camden has ever increased water pressure for tenants in the past. LI asked FOS to enquire with Camden.

Windows Repairs: Camden will be carrying out a comprehensive windows repairs programme in the towers early next year. There will be a pilot scheme before it will be rolled out on a larger scale.

Fire Doors: Tenants have just had their front doors removed and renewed with certified FD30S timber door sets. This project is almost completed, there's only 1 or 2 flats remaining due to lack of access. They are renewing communal doors and the screen that is on the back of the staircase - replacing the doors with FD60 screens which would allow the staircase to have compartmentation for 60 minutes.

4. Presentation of Annual Accounts

LI invited SJ to give a brief of the accounts. SJ referred attendants to pages 17 and 18 of the 2018/19 annual report, which laid out the annual report for the Co-operative's audited income and expenditure account, and balance sheet. He invited members to put in a request for more information of the figures present in the accounts, if they required it.

SJ explained that his year has been very similar to last year. On page 18, the management, maintenance and committee allowances have been increased for 2019 - going from £281,839 in 2018 to £287,994 in 2019. The expenditure again is very similar to last year's, he recounted challenges in the more detailed figures, for example the increase in caretakers' costs. Most of the other figures are similar to those of last year's. On the balance sheet (page 17 - at the end of March we had £364,000 compared to £277,000 last year. The main reason for the increase is the fact that the quarterly allowance came in slightly early, so it artificially increased the cash balance. The other major feature of these accounts is the provisions for the pension deficit. The provisions increased to £543,000 this year.

5. Appointment of Auditors

LI proposed that we continue with the current auditors and invited members to vote. Members unanimously accepted her proposal by show of hands with no objection or abstention.

6. Vote on Continuation of the Co-operative

Members raised their voting cards, voting unanimously in favour of the continuation of the Abbey Road Housing Co-operative. There were no objections or abstentions.

7. Election of Management Committee

FOS reminded members that as part of the Co-op's rules, each year all members of the management committee must stand down so that new members are elected, or the old members re-elected. He called for a re-election of the management committee members and notified members that 12 out of 13 members made the decision to remain in their respective positions.

FOS announced the names of the committee members that have opted to continue with their respective roles and announced the resignation of Ms Amina Aden. There were also 2 new nominations, Ms Sadia Hussein and Mr Dashnor Qarkaxhiu.

FOS advised our rules allow us to have 15 elected committee members, at the moment we have 14, although Ms Hussein was not voted in because she was absent. FOS invited members to vote (by raise of card) for the 13 (including Mr Qarkaxhiu) to stand in as the chosen committee members for another year. Members raised their voting cards, voting unanimously in favour of all 13. There were no objections or abstentions.

FOS announced 2 more available positions in the committee and invited members to nominate themselves by raise of hand. A member asked what committee members must contribute or do within the role. FOS explained duties involved and advised enquiring members that they would normally receive a comprehensive induction pack upon joining the management committee.

Members were particularly interested in knowing what the duties entailed prior to committing to joining the management committee. FOS then suggested that members who wanted to take part shadow existing committee members in order to experience the duties first-hand. To shadow a committee member, members must write to FOS so that they are invited to a committee meeting. As a rule, each member is required to be a member of the co-operative in order to be considered for a role in the management committee.

FOS and LI will consider publishing the requirements and duties of committee members in the December, 2019 newsletter. Members welcomed the idea.

8. Report on the Co-operative's Performance

FOS invited members to peruse pages 14 & 15 of the 2018/19 annual report during the 10-minute break, or after the AGM and raise any issues. He asked members to refer to page 16 of the report for a record of the ARHC performance on repairs and encouraged members to participate in surveys, whenever they were invited to complete one.

FOS referred members to page 19 where an infographic of the ARHC performance for the financial year 2018-2019 is presented. He talked about the Co-op's performance as detailed on page 19 of the annual report, highlighting key issues such as the abysmal percentage of tenants who responded to surveys and the need to improve the speed of response when members make enquiries.

FOS explained how normally we have tenants' satisfaction survey yearly (in June/July) but that we have omitted the survey this year because Camden has sent all tenants star satisfaction survey. Members were urged to respond to the survey which Camden find useful for gauging the service that the ARHC provides its residents and benchmarks it with other TMOs in the borough, as well as measure services that they themselves provide. In place of the tenants' satisfaction survey, the ARHC decided to give tenants its repairs performance. He expressed his frustration about some tenants who fail to complete the survey which is crucial for understanding how we are performing and areas where improvements must be implemented. He encouraged members to pay great attention to surveys and complete surveys when invited to complete them.

FOS referred members once again to page 19 which enumerates the ARHC performance for the financial year 2018-2019 and analysed our performance.

Break for 10 minutes, at 19.33 to return at 20.03.

FOS welcomed members back, announced Ms Foose Musse, another member who expressed an interest in joining the committee and invited members to vote. Members raised their cards and voted unanimously in favour of Ms Musse with no objections or abstentions.

FOS invited SB to discuss item 9 on the agenda (Camden Fire Safety Policy and Advice).

9. Camden Fire Safety Policy and Advice

SB explained the 'Stay Put' Policy and expressed concerns about some members not understanding what the policy entails, and general misconceptions about the use of the fire door. He explained how the fire door is meant to protect everyone in the building and that there is usually only 1 staircase for escape during a fire. He described how the fire door acts as a barrier to the passage of smoke and/or fire to varying degrees. How when closed, the fire door forms a barrier to stop the spread of fire and when opened provides a means of escape.

SB shared details of the fire doors' main category - FD30, which offers a 30-minute fire protection. He reassured tenants that all blocks had heat detector in the kitchen, a smoke detector in the hallway and carbon monoxide detectors.

LI asked SB whether a detector for hydrogen cyanide was installed in the buildings; SB confirmed that the new buildings were better protected than many London buildings, but that however, tenants must still refrain from leaving items that can cause or encourage fire in the common areas. Such items include but are not limited to shoe racks, bicycles, baby buggies, parcels or any

kind of package or combustible items. He advised members that all fire rules must be adhered to, and that where such rules were broken, they may be prosecuted.

SB reminded members of the basic guide to evacuating the buildings in the case of a fire and general safety measures that must be noted. Questions were invited from members.

Q. Do you think the error at Grenfell can be repeated here?

A. SB: Grenfell cannot happen at Camden because of the way the blocks have been built. The building is designed in such a way that fires won't spread unless the necessary measures are not taken and the door is left open.

Q. FOS asked reasons why SB was very confident that the flats were safe.

A. SB: We have fire engineers that have tested all blocks and confirmed they are safe.

Q. Has any survey been done on the windows and would holes on a window cause fire to spread in the case of a fire?

A. SB. No.

Q. LO asked for the safest way to go down the steps during a fire.

A. SB: Calm and collected. This would most likely keep you safe.

SB announced that alarms would be fitted in some flats and building blocks that do not currently have alarms.

10. Fire Risk Assessment Works in the Towers

AQ introduced herself as the Fire Safety Contracts Manager and that her job was managing and specifying works, which she has been doing in Snowman House and Casterbridge for the last 3 years where they have been installing ALD2 echo alarm systems and also the compartmentation in each flat. Tenants have just had their front doors removed and renewed with certified FD30S timber door sets. This project is almost completed, there's only 1 or 2 flats remaining due to lack of access. They are renewing communal doors and the screen that is on the back of the staircase - replacing the doors with FD60 screens which would allow the staircase to have compartmentation for 60 minutes. A pilot is due to take place in December or early in January and then the remaining work will follow on quite quickly. AQ has had a meeting with FOS and discussed collecting feedback from the tenants on the pilot when it has been completed.

AQ raised awareness of the evacuation panels, which would link to modules outside the flat, making it easier to communicate with the fire brigade and easier to leave your flat in the event of a fire. She re-iterated that items must not be left in the communal area.

AQ invited questions from members.

Q. What type of screen doors do we currently have installed at Snowman House?

A. AQ: The ones at Snowman are FD30s and would be changed to the DF60

Q. Has there been any testing on the property front doors?

A. AQ: They have all been fully certified.

Q. Can we paint the fire doors from the inside?

A. AQ: Adding paint to the door could render it flammable and in theory could increase the burning rate of the door. We wouldn't want residents doing anything to the doors, not without consulting Francis who would then refer your proposal back to us. All residents in the tower blocks were made aware of this in the past - ARHC did distribute the information by way of a letter previously.

Q. Can we install carpets in our flats?

A. AQ: Carpets are OK but you must ensure that it never catches fire. It can also cause tripping.

Q. Some of our doors have not been fitted properly, there's a gap between +when the door is closed.

A. FOS: We gave residents the opportunity to assess and report any issues with their door. Of the questionnaires sent, only 16 of them came back, with 6 of them needing attention. I referred that back to Wates who dealt with them.

Q. Are the panels for the front doors fire proof?

A. AQ: Yes they are. They are FD30 on your door and another FD30 on the communal door, giving you an hour in total to leave the building in the event of a fire. Although I am not sure about the doors for the new builds, but they should be equally fire safe.

LI asked AQ whether sheds in use have fire doors, to which AQ responded that she would be happy to inspect but that if it were external, would fall outside her category.

LI asked FOS to enquire further with KH.

11. Regeneration - Phase 2 Update

KH who has worked with the LBC for 24 years expressed her pleasure of working with Committee and staff of Abbey Road Housing Co-operative (ARHC), the Abbey Community Centre (ACC) and Health Centre (HC). She thanked all who attended the exhibition of Phase 2 and encouraged members who have not attended the exhibition to see the exhibition boards at the ACC for more information.

Surveys sent to residents attracted over 60 responses which KH was satisfied with. A door-knocking exercise is also scheduled for Tuesday, the 26th and Thursday the 28th of November. The exercise would be carried out by HK, Brendan Mullings, Oluremi Oloko and some research volunteers from the community in Camden.

Members were reminded of the formal pre-planning application that was set to take place the next day (20th November, 2019) and the actual planning application that was scheduled for January, 2020. This leaves around 3 months for formal planning consultation where the application gets posted everywhere, including the website, so that everyone could put in their views with regards to the planning application. The application is then reviewed by the planning committee where it gets referred or gets pass.

In a quick synopsis, KH described that if all goes to plan, we could be looking to procure the contract for the actual building of the ACC and HC, the new TMO office, new junction crossing, improved landscaping, and taking down the bridge that runs across the top of Snowman House and Emminster to the side of Abbey Road.

KH anticipates that if all went to plan, the ACC and HC could move to the new building between the winter of 2021 and January of 2022. She invited questions from members.

Q. Can you advise Camden to construct the buildings with concrete and not plasterboard. This would ensure that noise from neighbours would no longer set off the smoke alarms.

A. KH: Confirmed that she was aware of the plan to build a concrete foundation, concrete first build - a steel structure. A form of bricks would be used; there would not be any form of cladding. All the latest legislations would be followed so as to comply with rules for safety, among others. KH agreed to take on board the members' concerns when they begin planning for Phase 3.

Q. How big would the new ACC be?

A. KH: The good news is that the ACC, HC and all the other work is being funded by a central government grant that I have been able to secure for Camden. The HC would be located on the top floor, while the ACC would be positioned on the ground floor, and the actual space including storage, the crèche, nursery and the outdoor spaces needed for the crèche and nursery is going to be slightly larger than the current premises of ACC.

Q. Would we lose the car park at Snowman House and Casterbridge?

A. KH: Do have a look at the board outside (at ACC) and you would see that the answer is no, we're not touching the car park.

LI asked KH to assure the members that the separation of the ACC and HC will be fenced so that people from the both places would not use facilities that belong to the residents.

KH reassured members that they are doing everything they can to accommodate as many of the design principles and requests possible. They are currently looking to how they can create some sort of demarcation while meeting all of the planning requirements, and also making sure that the design is welcoming and secure.

KH discussed another exhibition event that is due to take place in December. All feedback collected from meetings and exhibitions would be taken into consideration and incorporated into the design.

12. DMC – Functions and Benefits

FOS invited EH from District Management Committees (DMC). EH introduced himself to the members as the chair of the Hampstead District Management Committee and explained how crucial their role was in the decisions made by the council. He expressed how impressive he'd found the reports he has seen of ARHC management committee, how the residents have been supportive and how the ARHC has managed resources given and encouraged members to pass on any ideas for improvement to FOS who would then pass it on for action.

EH invited members to ask questions.

FOS expressed concerns about residents in the new blocks on Belsize Road not reading notices and advice for waste disposals, and general recycling management. Members were reminded that Camden will not take the bins if recycling rules are ignored. He urged members to come to the ARHC office to collect free food waste bags, which should aid proper food waste recycling.

13. Question and Answer Session

Q. There is a waste disposal issue in the new blocks.

FOS expressed his frustration at the member's complaint and reminded all members that many residents did not dispose their waste properly nor adhere to general waste management/recycling. They also do not recycle which has caused Camden to not take the bins away, resulting in very high costs to have them removed.

LI encouraged all members to remind each other to use the waste bins correctly. the food waste bins must also be used correctly and not contaminated with black bin bags.

FOS reminded members to come to the office to collect free food waste bags to aid proper food waste disposal.

Q. The windows open up really wide which is unsafe.

A. FOS advised member to contact the After-Care Team to repair it. The windows are supposed to open up in stages, not one stage only.

LI thanked everyone for attending the AGM.

Zahia Khweiss of Snowman House moved the meeting to a close at 21:15pm.