

HLRA COMMITTEE MEETING ON 13TH JANUARY 2020

PRESENT: Grace (Co-Chair), Shannon (Co-Chair), Lana (Treasurer), David, Grazyna, Isobel, Jane, Josh, Judith, Yvonne, Roger (Co-Secretary).

APOLOGIES: Alison, Danny, Hertha, Jay, Jessica, Lisa, Lorna.

OFFICER: Chris Slater, Estate Services Manager.

1. FIRE ALARMS

Grazyna mentioned that the fire alarms in the communal areas of her refurbished block go off without due cause. The only recourse is to ring Camden Repairs on 020 7974 4444 and they only operate office hours. Grace said this should be looked into as all blocks are due to be fitted with these alarms in the upcoming Fire Safety upgrade.

2. BINS

Chris reported that he had consulted with Sheltered Accommodation and received their approval to convert part of the raised flower bed by the bins into a bin shed. However, as we are in a Conservation Area, he needs to go through the Planning Department for permission.

It will probably need a Section 20 letter to leaseholders because of financial implications.

Veolia is responsible for bins but Camden Council is responsible for bin sheds.

We could try applying for DMC funding but will need planning permission first.

ACTION: Chris will send us the email again with the quote and design for this and other bin sheds.

Lana will look into a different quote for the bin shed but design must be the same for planning permission.

Jane said that although the added recycling bin outside her flat (251 HLM) had helped, people were still dumping large items, sometimes in the small hours, such as mattresses obstructing these bins. Chris pointed out that this is a large item bin area but Camden will investigate fly tipping which is always a problem. Bulk collection is on Wednesdays.

ACTION: Chris will put signs on the areas for bulk goods stating:

- What can be disposed of
- When it can be disposed of, i.e. not between 10pm and 7am (?)
- When the collections are.

3. DRAINS

Shannon has called out the Camden Drainage Team to check collapsing drains below Makepeace and around Langbourne. This is a problem throughout the Estate due to the age of the drains and root damage from trees.

ACTION: Chris will chase this up and copy us in.

4. HEATING/HOT WATER

Judith reported on the meeting on 13th November with Camden officers.

- There are 20 blocks on MM and HLM which either have communal H+HW or only communal HW
- All the blocks on Langbourne and three blocks on HLM have individual boilers and are excluded
- Camden proposed seven options
- The option to link with Whittington's new gas system has been rejected and is ruled out
- Five of the options remain viable dividing themselves between one network for the whole of the Estate or two networks, one for HLM and one for MM
- These divide again between converting all blocks onto H+HW or keeping the present system where some blocks have H+HW and some only HW
- Camden's preference is to include as many blocks as possible for 'increased efficiency'
- Camden want to install new centralised gas boilers and upgrade the entire system
- This will include Heating Interface Units (HIUs) for every flat which should meter usage, though, at best, charges will be levied by block then apportioned by rateable value, as now
- Camden considered renewable options but ruled them out as not viable

- The approximate cost for all the options is around £5-6 million.

ACTION:

- The H/HW Group has asked Camden for more financial information for Leaseholders
- The option of blocks or leasehold flats opting out entirely from the communal system and going onto individual boilers was not considered by Camden. The H/HW Group will ask them to consider this option
- LANA and JUDITH will get costings for leasehold flats going onto individual system
- They will consider all-electric systems; the Climate Emergency means gas will be phased out to be replaced by renewably generated electricity
- Electric systems are smaller and do not need external flues or cumbersome HIUs so are easier to install in small flats.
- The options need to be simplified by the Consultants and made clearer before a consultation can be held with all Residents.

5. DMC FUNDING

Shannon reported that Hugh Boatswain is overseeing a bid for the Holly Lodge Estate at the next DMC meeting (3rd March) for approximately £4,300 to fund the Football Academy that started this summer. This will be for the Highgate area in general.

Lana has a quote for repairing the pond of £800; she will get a second quote to take to the DMC meeting. This will include money to repair the pump and a standpipe. The bid will also include money for plants and bulbs for the spring to be organised by Emma Love, our Static Gardener, with Jane, Gardening Rep. It will also include money for gardening tools for the Gardening Group. Hugh is fully supportive of this bid and will write it up.

6. ROOF MAINTENANCE

Grazyna has brought to the Committee's attention the poor state of maintenance on the roofs with gutters not cleared, hoppers clogged and moss and detritus on the roofs.

David pointed out that we pay for maintenance in the Service Charge but it is not carried out. As a result, damp comes through to flats and communal areas from blocked and split down-pipes and clogged drains.

ACTION: Committee members to report this to Repairs, get Job reference numbers and let Roger or Josh know. Josh will take this to Gavin Haynes who has promised to report on maintenance on Holly Lodge. We are looking for pro-active maintenance, not reactive.

7. WEEDS AND STATIC GARDENER

Camden has agreed not to use Glyphosate weed-killer on the Estate at our and residents' request. However, they have not provided an alternative way of controlling weeds despite having funds for doing so charged against our accounts. Emma has advocated heat treatment as an effective and non-poisonous alternative.

Subsequently, on 16th January, Shannon arranged a meeting with Emma, Roger, Hugh and Je-vaughn Bailey, the Ground Maintenance Monitoring Officer. We were surprised to be told by him that weeding of paths and areas around blocks comes under the Housing Budget, not Ground Maintenance.

ACTION: Roger to get in touch with Housing about this.

This was the first opportunity Emma has had since taking up her role as Static Gardener last autumn to express her thoughts and feelings about her position at a meeting with Committee Members and Camden Officers. She said:

- One permanent gardener is not enough for such a large Estate (when it was in-house, Camden provided two)
- Because she is so stretched, she sometimes receives abuse from residents for not dealing with their particular area
- She also receives complaints about the weeds though this is Camden's responsibility, not hers.

In mitigation:

- The Gardening Group will start again next month to help her
- We could ask the Green Gym to help with major projects

- Hugh said that harassment was not acceptable and Emma could report residents to Camden.

ACTION: We need to talk with Camden and ID Verde about more support for Emma, possibly employing a second full-time gardener, acknowledging the contractual and financial implications.

8. WINDOW CLEANING

Caretakers are supposed to clean communal windows; residents their own. This can be difficult and dangerous for residents, especially on upper floors. Blocks could organise private window cleaning.

ACTION: Lana said she knew a good window cleaner and would let us know.

9. DMC HOUSING REVUE ACCOUNT (HRA)

Josh reported that a meeting was held on 8th January of District Management Committees with Camden Officers to decide on the HRA. Rents for Council Tenants will rise by Inflation (CPI) plus 1% (2.7% in total). This comes after the last four years of Government enforced 1% pa rent reductions.

The Next Meeting will be held on Monday 10th February at 7pm in the Community Centre.