

## **MAUNSEL (FOURTH CO-OWNERSHIP) HOUSING SOCIETY LTD**

### **ANNUAL REPORT 2020**

The last year has been very strange, owing to the Covid pandemic. This meant that the Committee could not meet as usual, but met virtually. Consequently, it has only met on three occasions, in June, September and November. Our social events were also strictly curtailed.

#### **Meeting on 17 June 2020**

The Committee considered the parking situation in Bartle Road, where others have been taking advance of our parking spaces owing to fewer patrols done by ACE Securities, as well as some illegal fly-tipping. The contract with ACE was due for renewal or otherwise during the year and will be reviewed.

Following a vote of all co-owners, with 30 in favour, 13 not in favour and 7 no responses, it was agreed that the CCTV proposal for the Square would be progressed – and the CCTV has now been installed. Please note that Marie at JMW Barnard will be the main point of contact if access to the CCTV footage is ever required.

We also bade farewell to our very long-standing gardener, Reg (although to describe him as a “gardener” since he has worked in the Square since it was first occupied, does not do him justice). He was given three months’ notice and Hilary and his niece arranged get him the all the benefits that his salary from Wesley Square had denied him. Hilary also arranged a leaving card and gifts, although owing to the pandemic, we have not been able to organise his leaving/90<sup>th</sup> birthday party as yet.

Other issues discussed included a tenant noise complaint, sword lessons in the Square and the

cross-Borough virtual meetings of resident associations.

#### **Meeting on 9 September 2020**

There was more discussion about the noise complaints, although these are a common complaint now throughout the Borough. Placing everyone into lockdown makes this inevitable, especially where there are children involved.

The meeting also discussed the redecorations, which are due next year and subsequently there was an extensive drone survey of the roofs and gutters. The Annual General Meeting will consider whether the redecorations can be deferred for a year, given the difficult pandemic situation.

There was also a debate about the quotation for the fences and gates, the fact that only one quotation had been obtained owing to the difficulty of getting labour and materials in the current climate.

Other items discussed included offering space in the bike sheds to tenants; problems with some residents leaving rubbish out overnight, which attracts the foxes or putting it out after the collection has taken place; and the sub-committee that considers references for tenants, which now had only one resident on it. It was agreed to remove non-resident co-owners from that sub-committee.

#### **Sales during the year**

Nos 16 and 28 were sold during the year and we welcomed Ben and Jessica at No 16 and Bella and her young son at No. 28. No 19 is also in the process of being sold within the Square.

## **Meeting on 18 November 2020**

The Committee undertook to review the present solicitor's contract, since some felt that his fees are rather high and others that he was gruff and abrupt.

Sadly, Hilary resigned from the Committee. Her contribution to the life of the Square has been immense, including her work on the garden – and she will be irreplaceable. She and John also arranged the innovation of the Square's Christmas tree.

Those who criticise committee decisions, whose members devote so much of their time entirely unpaid, need to reflect on whether their criticisms should be linked to a commitment to address them themselves, rather than expecting others to do it for them. If we did not have a volunteer committee doing so much work, the service charge would rocket, work would be done less expeditiously and thoroughly (believe me, I have so many complaints from residents who have to rely on distant management companies). The Square was originally set up as a low cost development to enable those on lower incomes to get on the housing ladder. Raising the service charge significantly would also obviously impact most on them. So before anyone launches unrealistic objections, please think about following them through.

It was agreed at this meeting that our Surveyor Charles will be invited to the next ordinary meeting to talk through his drone report on the roof and any other highlighted external areas. There is flexibility to delay the redecorations because of the pandemic, although the Square has money in reserve to pay for them and there will be a transfer from the service charge account. The first consultation of co-owners will

begin shortly and co-owners will be invited to recommend any contractors they might have. Mark Alexanders is our managing agent's recommendation, since they did last redecorations and have since been used on another building that JMW Barnards manages. Charles will also go round sample flats to investigate what specific problems people are having.

There was a discussion on the clawback, whether it is now too high or too low, or whether clawback could be based on the uplift in value of the property (the original system, which proved very difficult to manage). The possible impact on service charge was also raised and no conclusion was reached.

Rubbish continues to be a problem, especially with people leaving donations to the Food Bank on days when the Church is not open for donations to be collected. However, this has been raised with the Minister and alternative arrangements have now been put in place.

## **Consultations**

The Council has given an undertaking – rather late in the day – to engage properly with everyone living within the areas affected by the Grenfell Tragedy. Previously they had really only worked with their own residents, especially on the Lancaster West Estate. So we hope and expect to be asked for our views on how the money available for a Grenfell Legacy will be spent. The government's Grenfell Memorial Commission is also opening its own consultation about what should happen to the Tower itself.

Judith Blakeman

pp the Management Committee

*5 February 2021*