



STRENGTH IN NUMBERS – BE LEASE-AWARE
Independent group representing leaseholders
in the Vale of Aylesbury Housing Trust

Officers:

Chair (acting): Keith Nials; **Vice:** vacant.
Secretary: James Weston; **Vice:** Alison Philpot
Treasurer: Rachel Webber; **Vice:** vacant.
VAHT Board LH rep.: Christine Campbell

PO Box 898
AYLESBURY
HP20 9FG

Committee Meeting

2nd July 2009 at 6.45pm for 7pm start.
Eskdale Road Community Centre, Stoke Mandeville

Committee Members present: Pam Rae; Mike Gaisford; Michael Young; Paul Baker; Alison Philpot; Rachel Webber; Keith Nails; Christine Campbell; James Weston.

1. Welcome, introductions & apologies

- 1.1. KN opened the meeting
- 1.2. JW Clare White sends apologies; not able to attend due to work commitments.

2. Minutes

- 2.1. KN went through minutes from April 30th meeting
- 2.2. CC brought up the point about the man from Vale House whose bill was disturbingly high
- 2.3. JW fished a copy of this man's bill out of the LRG docs which KN says he already has
- 2.4. KN tried to contact this man but there has been no response so far.

3. Matters arising

- 3.1. KN No matters arising.

4. Correspondence received

- 4.1. CC has copies of the second letter that was sent to the Trust.
- 4.2. CC spoke about the initial letter where the Trust wrote back a 'snotty, childish reply'.
- 4.3. CC Solicitor wrote back in their own time because they were so taken aback by the tone of the response.
- 4.4. CC read out her e-mail to the solicitor regarding the changeover of contacts now that TW has stood down as chair.

- 4.5.CC Solicitor wants more money to continue. Solicitor's recorded an excess of £200 worth of extra time spent dealing with TW and other background work that hasn't been billed.
- 4.6.CC Graham Bell sent a breakdown of figures that the Solicitor questioned.
- 4.7.CC has forwarded a copy of GB's letter to the solicitor which she feels will be great evidence for the LVT.

5. Board meeting feedback / Solicitors update

- 5.1.CC Since April, Trust has not acknowledged attendance at meetings.
- 5.2.CC Every month now is an information section in the meetings about LH complaints and such. Matthew Applegate asked CC for this information. CC said it was not her job to gather LH feedback.
- 5.3.JW pointed out that CC is not paid to do this.
- 5.4.CC said the whole point is that the VAHT is supposed to be proving it can do a good job for LHs
- 5.5.CC KN and AP had a meeting with Ian Silver and Evonne Hudson; in the Board meeting this event was reported very upbeat. IS chirpily asked CC what she thought of the meeting. CC was reserved and said that actions will speak louder than words.
- 5.6.CC From 9th May to 12th June, Board meeting only two complains from LHs listed in the meeting minutes. CC read out the details. ALL surprised by the notes by way of response to these complaints in particular the VAHT's 'gesture of goodwill' to repaint a communal hallway after a leak. Is this not covered by service charges anyway?
- 5.7.CC says there will be a LH complaints report like this every single month.
- 5.8.JW to get DT Barry's complaints into the Trust. We will verify they go through into the board minutes.

6. Finance update

- 6.1.RW spoke about the trouble getting the funding and the various excuses by the Trust about TW; rather childish and uncooperative e-mails. On 21st May Matthew Applegate e-mailed RW that the top-up funding request would be released to the LRG with immediate effect. But even after six days later—plenty of time for bank clearing to take place—nothing. RW called every number in the Trust she could find, even direct numbers but was either getting no response or being passed about. She then drove down to the Trust offices and parked in front of the gate until they would accept a call and bring her a cheque. After being let into the car park RW sat and waited in reception. RW persevered with the receptionist who was saying everyone was busy. Eventually the acting financial director came down and RW had a job trying to get MA to authorise a BACS transfer. He said he would do it right away but RW knew he didn't have the account number and sort code. MA eventually

had to ask for them and the financial director said he knew what we were going through.

6.2. RW said the Trust wanted to sign off every purchase the LRG makes but RW wrote back saying this would restrict the LRG severely based on the above trouble even getting funding. RW stated everything is voted on in the LRG and documented. RW said we would accept a compromise of EH coming to every LRG meeting in order to authorise purchases.

6.3. AP & RW had a meeting and decided they would have a quarterly meeting and audit the LRG's accounts and get an independent to sign them off.

6.4. RW Shall we allow the Trust to have all our receipts? Will it severely delay repayment of expenses?

6.5. CC & AP say RW should have a meeting with the Trust first to clarify issues.

7. Groups feedback

7.1. MY gave feedback on the various Trust related meetings he attends.

7.2. MY SURG - 20 May 2009. Christine spoke about Tom standing down but funding not received. Christine stated that LRG will not work with Housing Trust. Christine then left meeting.

7.3. MY SIPB - 26 May 2009. Did not attend. However have received minutes. Training was on VAHT Finance Part 2. Inspection Arrangements discussed and Andy Padmore gave an overview of what the inspection will cover. Ian Silver discussed the type of questions and the likely format. Andy Padmore was asked what would happen if Housing Trust received a bad report. If VAHT do not score well will have issues for reputation and lead to closer monitoring from TSA. Financial and legal consequences could result in Housing Trust going out of business although unlikely. However Management Board could be put under supervision and Directors removed from their position.

7.4. MY SIPB - 16 June 2009. Did not attend. Minutes not yet received.

7.5. MY SURG - 17 June 2009. Did not attend. Minutes not yet received.

7.6. MY SIG - 29 June 2009. Did not attend as on holiday.

8. Meeting with VAHT

8.1. KN had a couple of phone calls two weeks ago from the Auditors. A guy called Doug Furlong. KN was not contactable at the time, but couple of days later while at work he got a call from the same guy. KN took the initiative to use his lunch hour to take the guy to lunch and chat about all the LRG issues about the Trust. DF already knew about TW. DF wasn't interested in some bits as it's not his remit. KN suggested the VAHT shouldn't get *any* "stars". DF wanted something to take to his meeting with Matthew Applegate. After a couple of months we will see a report and LH would feature in about two paragraphs... Other points raised: no surveys of properties as yet; AP went to

the VAHT offices on a lunchtime and no-one was there to see LHs!
Furthermore DF advised KN to carry on with the LVT. He said the TSA is the organisation to help out the LRG. DF said if Trust get zero stars then it's a bit like schools, troubleshooter from outside will have to come in; "special measures".

8.2. KN later invited to a meeting with the Trust. CC went along. KN objected to him being labelled as Chair when he is only acting. AP went along as vice secretary to take notes. VAHT made big point of finding out why two extra people in the meeting and what "hats" they were wearing, despite KN saying that we avoid attending meetings at the Trust with only one LRG officer present.

8.2.1. AP Ian Silver went through his presentation about moving forward and working together, blah blah. AP raised issue of fine tuning of funding.

8.2.2. **get AP to e-mail her notes on meeting**

8.2.3. KN raised point about cleaning of properties. They are looking to do this. KN said LHs don't want them.

8.2.4. CC said why should those who already kept their communal areas clean need a cleaner to keep them clean?

8.2.5. KN the Trust asked about the demonstration we were going to plan, but KN explained that there was so little interest in this, presumably because people had to take time off work, that we cancelled it.

8.2.6. KN O'Connors losing grasscutting contract. VAHT serving a year's notice this month. Then it will go out to tender. Rather than outsourcing it to a big company, maybe local companies to get better service and give jobs/money back to the community.

9. Future of LRG

9.1. KN responsibility is wearing on officers who commit valuable personal time. KN said "assume we're all going to carry on?"

9.2. CC Will depend on the outcome of the LVT

9.3. KN Need to move on because we're behind schedule on meeting.

10. LVT forms

10.1. KN We don't have all the info to hand to be able to complete the forms tonight so may close the meeting early.

10.2. KN We must get TW's LVT form. Covering letter. Problems with his block/how they're equated.

10.3. CC asking for Solicitor to send back copies of stuff. Wait for that before contacting TW in case he's already sent them a covering letter.

11. Any other business

- 11.1. KN brought up the behaviour of MY at the meeting just prior to the LRG's democratic decision not to attend Trust related meetings until the Trust had reinstated LRG funding.
 - 11.1.1. MY said he did not fully understand the action that was to be taken
 - 11.1.2. CC & KN said that everything was fully explained and CC sent an e-mail just before the meeting to explain how it would play out.
 - 11.1.3. RW Initial idea was not to attend but this was changed and you were informed that we would attend the venue to explain at the start of the meeting why the LRG members would not be staying for the whole of the meeting.
 - 11.1.4. MY complains therefore that we should not have even attended the venue.
 - 11.1.5. CC said the e-mail before the meeting was very clear and even at the meeting CC was clear that both she and MY would be leaving. Just before the meeting started, when having sandwiches, and when CC made her speech, putting her hand on MY's shoulder as the signal, but he did not move.
 - 11.1.6. KN We are all agreed that this should not happen again.
- 11.2. CC announced she's been told by the Trust about the next newsletter due in September; press deadline is 31st July.
- 11.3. CC Now that we've just had the revelation of 09/10 estimates dropping, get fellow LHs to complain to Trust with 'How can you have an estimate for the next year which is supposed to be based on the actual bill for this year when the actuals for this year have not been released?'
- 11.4. MG read out complaints he'd written to the Trust about and gave copy to CC, CC to check that these will be brought up in the next Board meeting.

12. Next meeting

- 12.1. 30th July
- 12.2. KN need to have an officers' meeting before meeting with EH
- 12.3. KN will do copies of agenda and minutes.
- 12.4. CC will miss this month's Board meeting because the date was moved forward to the 16th and she is on holiday. She will try to get the minutes as soon as possible when she returns on 21st so she can report back in our meeting.