



TOWER HAMLETS FEDERATION NEWS

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An organisation run by and for residents of Council or social housing properties in Tower Hamlets.

Newsletter of Tower Hamlets Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations (TRAs)

Give residents a vote!

The January meeting of the Federation heard Mike Tyrrell give us a case study of how residents are campaigning to have a say in a major redevelopment on the Isle of Dogs. With pressure to redevelop other estates in Tower Hamlets in the coming years, this could be an important test project for all large estates.

Residents on four estates on the Isle of Dogs (the Barkantine, Kingsbridge, St John's and Samuda) voted 11 years ago to transfer the estates from the Council to a new housing association created to own and run the properties: Toynbee Island Homes. Residents soon found out those hoping to run the new housing association had lied to them or misled them, and the Council had not managed to put legal safeguards into the transfer, leaving residents with no redress.

The four estates were gradually transferred (again) to One Housing Group (OHG). As this was not part of stock transfer, residents had no vote on whether the subsequent transfers should take place.

Now OHG plans to bulldoze the four estates and re-build on the land (including prime riverside sites) – at four times the density of the current estates.

The Council (which will determine the eventual planning application[s] when OHG is ready to go ahead) is aware of resident dissatisfaction with OHG as a landlord and has told OHG it must consult residents about its plans. As a result, OHG's developer partners (Argent) are paying for residents to employ an Independent Tenants Adviser (ITA) for six months, to draw up a consultation framework dealing with how stock condition will be established as well as what deals will be offered to

residents and how they will be consulted overall.

Residents appointed Mike Tyrrell to be their Adviser. He told the Federation of all the issues residents are trying to write into their consultation framework. In particular, residents want to have a vote on the landlord's redevelopment proposals. Before he was elected, London Mayor, Sadiq Khan, had pledged that residents would have a vote on schemes like this – but the pledge has disappeared from his draft documents.

As usual, Mike Tyrrell gave our members lots to think about in terms of how consultation should be carried out.

STOP PRESS: Rumours are circulating that Mick Sweeney, who has worked for OHG and its predecessor organisations for 36 years – 30 of them as Chief Executive, is to leave the organisation. Sweeney had widely been seen by residents as the architect of many "mean landlord" moves – from shutting down resident organisations to removing staff, as well as inventing the "OHG special way of putting things". Residents across London and Berkshire were said to be rushing to put the champagne on ice, hoping for confirmation that the rumour was true.

However, there are also worries about why Sweeney should now be stepping down. Is he being made a scapegoat for poor performance by OHG? Is he stepping aside in order to let the new Chief Exec approach residents and Councils without Sweeney's baggage – and then try to negotiate deals favourable to OHG at residents' expense? Just because OHG did it once before doesn't mean they can't do it again.

Federation meetings

All meetings are on the **third Monday of the month, 7-9pm, Collingwood Hall, Collingwood Street, E1 5DY (Ramped entrance, no internal stairs, disabled toilet)**

Next meetings:

20th February

20th March

Speakers to be arranged.

Let us have any requests.

Tower Hamlets Homes (THH) Sub-Group

Next meetings:

7pm, Monday, 13th February

Sidney Estate TRA office,
2 Jarman House, Jubilee St.

(Disabled toilet, level inside, high doorbell).

Open to all residents but particularly of interest to residents on LBTH estates managed by THH.

Tower Hamlets Council O&S Housing Scrutiny Sub-Committee

6.30pm, Monday, 6th February
Town Hall, Mulberry Place

The Federation was rather surprised when the O&S Committee set this sub-committee up – not least because it did not consult the Federation about how residents should be involved.

The Sub-Committee's next meeting will hear presentations on how local social landlords (Harca, Swan and Gateway) and THH manage repairs.

Why not go along and see if you recognise what your landlord has to say as being anywhere close to their residents' experiences in real life?