

HOLLY LODGE ESTATE PLOT-OWNERS' HALF-YEARLY GENERAL MEETING 21ST NOVEMBER 2018

CHAIR'S STATEMENT

FINANCES

Plot-owners are invited to review the Estate's financial forecast for the year ending 30th November 2018 and the financial plan for the five following years. The reports will be available at the meeting on November 21st as hard copies and also on the HLE website. Our treasurer Peter Jacobs and accountant Daniel Virgili will be available to provide a more detailed commentary than follows here and to answer questions at the meeting.

According to the arrangement which was revised 6 years ago, the London Borough of Camden has continued to contribute 46% of the cost of maintaining the Common Parts of the Estate, based on expenditure rather than income as was previously the case. Our financial forecasts are based on the assumption that Camden will continue to contribute on this basis.

Overall the Estate is well positioned to maintain and restore the Common Parts. Finances are strong and we have an excellent team of employees, officers and Committee working together to care for the Estate's fabric.

EXPENDITURE

1. Overall the committee will, we estimate, have spent some £373,000 by the year ending 31 November 2018 as against a modified budget of £366,200 – an overrun of some £9,000, or 10% (an increased budget was approved at last April's AGM to cater for the much needed hut replacement).
2. The final figure for asset purchases – including the hut replacement – was £1500 over the modified budget. This was due to the purchase of a trailer for the truck, which is making for a definite improvement in the efficiency of our work on the Estate.
3. The main budget overspend, of £33,000, has been on the resurfacing of pavement and roads carried out this autumn
4. Other overspends versus the budget include on motor expenses – running and servicing the truck - and the 'sundries' cost centre, which included for example the St Anne's security meeting and staff clothing.
5. These were offset by a £16,000 budget under-spend on Minor projects and Estate maintenance and repairs, the main expenditure here, on drain clearing, occurring in the last 2 months of the year.
6. Other underspends include staff overtime and training, secretarial and accounting, professional fees, gates and railings and trees and gardens (lime pollarding will take place early in the next financial year).

Overall the Committee will have spent some £373,000 by the year ending 30 November 2018 vs £280,000 last year, the increase, as I've described above, being due to the replacement of the hut and the resurfacing of pavements.

INCOME

Income, at £336,000, is very slightly above budget but £16,000 below that of last year, which included substantial non-recurring income from contractors refurbishing the mansion blocks.

EMF contributions from Plot-owners were strong at £156k, an increase of £1,000 on the previous year.

RESERVES

Cash balances are forecast to be £577,000 at year end 2017/18 compared with £616,000 at year end 2016/17.

PROPOSED ESTATE MAINTENANCE FUND CONTRIBUTION 2018/19

Due to the continuing careful management of Estate funds, the balance remains strong and the Committee believes that there are adequate funds to undertake the necessary maintenance and restoration programmes whilst retaining sufficient funds for contingencies, bearing in mind that there is no possibility of borrowing in the event of unexpected requirements.

The Committee therefore proposes to hold the Estate Maintenance Fund (EMF) contribution unchanged at £600 for 2018/19.

SECURITY

During the past year, the issue of security has continued to take up a great deal of Committee time. Whilst statistically the HLEC is a low crime area compared to its surroundings, residents in some parts of the Estate (particularly the top) have felt particularly affected by anti-social behaviour, although this has not been a universal experience. In previous years a group of residents have funded security patrols independently of the HLEC. The proposal to do so again this summer however was halted after the HLEC communicated legal Counsel's advice that such activity without the HLEC's permission would constitute trespass. Among the measures that the HLEC has supported are the keeping of an incident log, regular communication with local police, involvement in the Safer

Neighbourhood panel, support of Neighbourhood Watch, support for the Smart Water initiative, organisation of the St Anne's security meeting, improved lighting in some parts of the Estate and changes to the top gate opening hours. It is clear that there are very strongly held views on both sides of the security debate, particularly on the issue of private security patrols. The polarisation of the debate has limited discussion about other options and the Committee has felt that the voices of those in the 'middle ground' have not been heard. To this end the Committee has discussed methods for both research and community engagement with a number of different research organisations, working eventually with ORS based in Swansea. Quotes for a quantitative survey were in the region of £10,000 with some doubt as to whether or not a useful result would be achieved. It was eventually decided to go for a qualitative approach and residents were offered the opportunity to attend a 'Deliberative Forum' organised by ORS, at a cost of about £3000. However, response rates to attend the event were low and in particular there were few attendees who placed themselves as 'neutral' on the security issue. As such it would not meet the aim of capturing the diversity of views of residents, particularly those occupying the middle ground, and the event was cancelled. The HLEC will continue to work with residents on this issue and to consider the range of initiatives available. The Security Liaison Group which includes representatives from both sides of the security debate has continued to meet and to communicate electronically about different approaches and to contribute to future discussion by the HLEC.

ELECTRIC VEHICLES

In previous meetings it was agreed that the HLEC would apply for planning application for two double Electric Vehicle charging points. This initiative was in part informed by a survey of residents' views which had an unusually high response rate of 46% from the houses, 70% of which believed that the HLEC should invest in Electric Vehicle charging points. Once planning application is received further discussions will be held with plotowners regarding the next stage, as there are clearly a diversity of views on this matter.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The HLEC is primarily concerned with the fabric of the Estate, but has also been involved in fostering good relationships with all Estate residents. The annual summer party is an event which I hope will continue, despite the resignation as Chair of my predecessor Peter Wesley, who was much involved in the Party organisation. The Estate manager has multifarious roles in liaising and working with many individuals both on and off the Estate, whether local police, flat residents or others. We now have regular meetings of the HLE Joint Communication Group, specifically to facilitate links between plotowners and flat residents. All these activities and many others contribute to good neighbourly relations.

STAFF AND OPERATIONS

We thank the HLE staff, Gerry, Sean, Dean and Dean, for their commitment and hard work, which is reflected in the excellent condition of the Estate, undoubtedly a uniquely pleasurable environment in which to live in London. As residents we benefit greatly from having such direct relationships with the staff who maintain our Estate, again so different from most parts of London. The Estate manager, Barbara Wheatley, has raised the running of the Estate to new levels of professionalism, combined with a delightful manner in dealing with residents, staff and indeed Committee members. The programme of works is now fully established and is regularly reviewed by the Committee. The footpaths, grass, trees, roads and street furniture are all part of this process. Daniel Virgili continues to manage the accounting side of our affairs expertly and efficiently. The Committee members give of their time and expertise, sometimes on fraught matters, and serve the residents who elected them with dedication. Most of all I would like to thank my predecessor Peter Wesley for his long and single-minded service from which the Committee, and the Estate, has greatly benefitted. Peter has been patient, thoughtful and generous with his time. We are all in his debt.

Dominique Florin
Chair
Holly Lodge Estate Committee