

HOLLY LODGE ESTATE PLOT-OWNERS' ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 1ST MAY 2019
CHAIR'S STATEMENT

FINANCES

Plot-owners will be able to review the Estate's unaudited accounts for the year ending 30th November 2018 at the meeting on May 1st as hard copies. Prior to the meeting, the accounts will also be available to view on the HLE website from the 17th April. They will be briefly presented and reviewed at the AGM on the 1st May.

GOVERNANCE

The governance of the Estate and the HLEC is largely as set out in the HLE Trust Deeds, which of course date from early last century. The Estate does benefit from many aspects of this organisation, not least the extremely low financial costs considering the detailed and extensive input required from Committee members, many of whom give very long service. Nevertheless, some aspects do appear old-fashioned and out of step with modern practices. These are issues which have been considered relatively recently but which may benefit from further examination. The Trustees are elected by fellow committee members potentially for life. Most recently a voluntary arrangement was agreed for Trustees of 2 successive 5 year terms. However, a more modern and democratic approach could be considered, despite the fact that a financial cost is entailed in changing Trustees. Currently all non-Trustee HLEC member are elected annually. Again, it may be worth considering alternative arrangements, perhaps (re) electing only a rotating fraction of the HLEC annually and with fixed though possibly renewable terms. This would allow for both increased continuity and democracy. It is suggested that the HLEC should consider these matters, together with interested plotowners' views, and report back at the November meeting.

SECURITY

During the past six months, the issue of security has continued to dominate Committee business. This may appear paradoxical given that statistically the HLEC is a low crime area compared to its surroundings. However, a subset of plot-owners, mainly at the top of the Estate, have experienced repeated disturbances particularly at night, with non-residents parking and sometimes engaging in anti-social behaviour. In addition, there have been some (fewer but of course important) incidents of more overtly criminal activities, such as thefts from cars parked on the estate. The fact that these events only affect a minority of estate residents should not of course make them of any less concern – we are one Estate and the HLEC is concerned with the whole of it. Among the ongoing active measures undertaken by the HLEC are the keeping of an incident log, regular communication with local police, involvement in the Safer Neighbourhood panel, support of Neighbourhood Watch, setting up a Security WhatsApp group, improved lighting in some parts of the Estate, changes to the top gate opening hours and regular meetings of the Security Liaison Group. The challenge continues to be to identify measures which meet a range of criteria including effectiveness, ongoing financial viability and acceptability, commensurate with the level of disruption, acceptability to plotowners who give the HLEC their democratic mandate as well as pay the EMF and legality from the point of view of the Trust deeds. It is also important for the HLEC to draw a distinction between activities which reside more appropriately in the sphere of individual plotowner responsibility or with the police versus those which on which plotowner funds should be disbursed. The HLEC has recently instituted a number of approaches specifically focusing on the parking aspect of transgressions, including a call out service from our parking contractors MET, engagement of a specific parking attendant for the HLE from MET during the night hours, use of cones and yellow lines and is actively pursuing the development of a CCTV proposal. The CCTV possibilities will be presented more fully to plotowners on the 1st May. There are significant financial implications of some of these measures particularly CCTV but the focus on parking has the advantage that it would address the majority of (though not all) transgressions and is within the current practice of the HLEC which has wide acceptance by plotowners. However there remain strong calls from a minority of residents for a permanent security guard/night watchman. The HLEC has taken the view that a short-term use of such measures is within their remit in the event of a short-term need, presuming clear indications and format for such an intervention can be developed.

On the subject of longer term or permanent security patrols funded through the EMF, this would require wider consultation and approval with the plotowners; the impact on the emf would be significant. Thus far, on the strength of the St Anne's meeting and other fora, widespread support for this has not been demonstrated. Legal advice was taken about the proposed deployment of patrols funded and organised by a small group of residents without the permission of the trustees; this was deemed to constitute trespass. An alternative possibility could be an optional security levy to fund patrols under the auspices of the HLEC; this would require approval by the plotowners as a whole. Discussion of further surveys or research into plotowner views on security measures at a recent security liaison meeting did not find favour; the meeting rather focused on the development of a number of other options which the HLEC is pursuing.

ELECTRIC VEHICLES

HLEC's planning application for a communal electric vehicle (EV) charging station has been submitted to Camden and is currently under consideration. The application shows a station with the capacity to charge 6 vehicles, all located on the south side of Makepeace Avenue just east of the junction with Hillway. Initially only facilities for 4 vehicles will be installed and only 2 parking spaces would be marked as reserved for charging of vehicles, the additional chargers / spaces could be added as demand warrants. Use of these chargers would be restricted to HLE residents and their guests and the usage cost based on the amount of electricity drawn rather than the time one is plugged in. Costs of the installation are being determined and it is hoped some can be met by obtaining grants such as from Camden's Climate Fund. The cost of the planning application has been funded by the Mayor's London Community Energy Fund. Installation of a communal charging station would enable those residents without off-street parking to charge their vehicles without trailing cables across the footpath which due to the risk of serious injury to pedestrians, and in common with all London boroughs, is not permitted on HLE land.

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 will be held on 23rd June and hopefully will be well attended. We are grateful to all those involved in its organisation. Relationships between all Estate residents have been improved by regular meetings of the HLE Joint Communication Group, which includes both plotowners and flat residents. The Estate manager is very active in multiple liaison roles both on and off the Estate, with individuals and organisations.

STAFF AND OPERATIONS

The Estate's smooth running is due to a number of dedicated individuals. Our HLE staff, Gerry, Sean, Dean and Dean, continue to work to maintain and improve the excellent condition of the Estate. We were fortunate to have a relatively mild winter, but on days when snow is forecast they have had to come in at night and at weekends to ensure that the Estate roads are safe to drive on and that gates are opened when necessary. Plotowners have an unusually direct and responsive relationship with the grounds team. Our Estate manager, Barbara Wheatley, daily (and nightly) deals with a wide range of issues and concerns, from plotowners, residents, staff and committee members. Her ability to juggle many different perspectives whilst keeping a cool head is impressive. We are grateful to Daniel Virgili for his continued input into our accounts, and particularly for his role in the past few months in helping to ensure that Camden's financial contribution, somewhat delayed, was eventually paid. The Committee members continue to serve for the benefit of plotowners and the Estate, work which is carried out unremunerated and is at times challenging.

Dominique Florin
Chair
Holly Lodge Estate Committee