

# Grove End Gardens Residents Association

## Minutes of Annual General Meeting 16-Jun-2014 at Arnold House School

Members of the General Committee present were:-

David Burr (DB) – Chair	Maureen Deeley (MD)
Judy Hame (JH) – Vice Chair	Suja Eltringham (SE)
Niraj Shah (NS) – Treasurer	Jacky Erwteman (JE)
Linda Diamond (LD) – Secretary	Frank Lennox-Hennessy (FL-H)

Invited guests present were:

Gary Medazoumian (GM) – Executive Director, Grove End Housing Limited (GEHL)  
Julian Butcher (JB) – Property Manager from Rendall & Rittner  
Alistair Fyfe (AF) – Estate Manager from Rendall & Rittner

Apologies for absence were received from:

Brian Steer, Maintenance Trustee, GEG  
Hilda Hewish (HH), Peter Jenks (PJ) and Clare Usher (CU) GEGRA

**DB** formally opened the meeting at 19.35 and thanked all for coming. He thanked and introduced the guests: Gary Medazoumian, Executive Director of GEHL (the freeholder) and also one of the two Maintenance Trustees responsible for the service charge. Julian Butcher – our property manager from Rendall & Rittner (the new William Heneker) and Alistair Fyfe – our Estate Manager from Rendall & Rittner who has his office at the Abbey Road side of the building. **DB** also thanked Arnold House School for once again allowing us to use their facilities at no cost.

### **1) Recent fire**

As a result of the recent serious fire that began in a fourth floor flat in the early hours of Wednesday 4-Jun, it was decided to change the format for this year's AGM and to invite a member of the London Fire Brigade to come and speak to the meeting about fire safety. Unfortunately LFB officer cancelled at short notice and could not send a replacement however DB was given some guidance to share:

- 1) If you believe you are in danger then evacuate. Please ensure all doors are closed as these make a big difference in stopping the fire and smoke spreading. In the recent fire, the tenant left their front door open and this allowed the smoke out of their flat to affect others and significantly damage the common parts. In contrast they closed an internal door and this stopped the fire affecting a room of their flat. Have a look at the photos on our website that show either side of the closed internal door.
- 2) If you see flames or smell burning dial 999 and ask for the Fire Brigade to attend. Our fire alarm is not connected to the Fire Brigade and so if no one calls 999 they won't get to know of the problem. The Fire Brigade are able to handle multiple calls so please don't worry someone else may have phoned them. In the recent fire the Fire Brigade only received one call.
- 3) Unless you believe you are in danger you should stay put in your flat. You may well be safer in the flat as there is a risk you would evacuate into danger or get in the way of the fire fighters. The building is designed to stop fire from spreading from flat to flat. If the Fire Brigade feel you are in danger they will come and get you.
- 4) Fit smoke detectors in your flat. If you don't know what to do or you can't afford them then contact the Fire Brigade and they will come and fix one for you free of charge.

London Fire Brigade Telephone: 020 8555 1200 Email: <a href="mailto:info@london-fire.gov.uk">info@london-fire.gov.uk</a> Online: <a href="http://www.london-fire.gov.uk/HomeFireSafetyVisit.asp">http://www.london-fire.gov.uk/HomeFireSafetyVisit.asp</a>
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Rendall & Rittner will be investigating whether works are needed to communal doors or flat doors to further improve fire and smoke protection. The fire alarm was not heard by the Night Porter who was having his break in the staff room. This will be rectified by fitting an extra sounder in the staff room. JB will investigate whether the alarm should be connected to the Fire Brigade. **ACTION: JB.**

LFB have not yet published their full report of how the fire was started but as soon as they do we will update the article on our website <http://www.GroveEndGardens.com>

There were several complaints from residents who did not hear the fire alarm and **SH (Flat 57)** insisted that the system therefore did not work correctly. **JB** advised that the fire alarm is designed to alert staff or residents in the common parts of a fire so that they can evacuate. It is not designed to be heard within every flat. This is why residents must fit their own smoke detectors. **JE (Flat 313)** explained that she was woken by the smoke coming up from two floors immediately below her not the alarm.

**SH (Flat 57)** stated that it was a legal obligation to inform residents of a fire after the event and this hadn't happened. **ACTION: JB to investigate what obligation there is.**

**GM** stated that the new windows fitted to the garden and ground floors have hinges that can be released to make the window open wide enough for evacuation.

One resident stated that rental landlords are obliged to put smoke alarms in flats and she had to remind her rental agent to do so. **DB** reiterated if you cannot get a smoke alarm please contact the Fire Brigade who will fit one for free.

**AF (Flat 281)** stated on the night of the fire we had an agency porter on duty who did not know what to do. **DB** explained that it was long standing GEGRA policy that the block needed a full complement of permanent porters as the job involved significant responsibility.

**JB** stated that it was Rendall & Rittner's intention to regularise all of the staff so that they were all permanent members. Where cover is needed they aim to provide it from their staff from the other blocks they manage.

**SS (Flat 202)** queried whether the porters had a list of vulnerable people who would need help in leaving their flat in the event of a fire. **JB** stated we do have such a list and the porters have it.

The refurbishment of the 4<sup>th</sup> floor as a result of the fire is expected to be completed by the end of June.

At this point non GEGRA members left the meeting and DB commenced the AGM

## **2) Chairman's Report**

**DB** opened his report by stating it was a privilege to lead the residents association. He felt that as he is very visible as the Chair i.e. his name is on the notices and letters you see, so he wanted to publically thank the committee as a whole because GEGRA is very much a group effort.

**DB** went on to thank the various committee members:

- Judy Hame who he said was the best Vice Chair anyone could hope for. Her ideas, strength and support had been invaluable and he felt we couldn't have achieved what we have without her.
- Maureen Deeley who was our Secretary for 13 years until stepping down after last year's AGM. **DB** said he was delighted she had decided to remain on the committee and thanked her for her hard work over those 13 years.
- He thanked Jacky Erwtaman who was our Treasurer for 2 years before stepping down following last year's AGM. Jacky was pivotal in keeping our accounts sound and again **DB** was delighted that she also remains on our committee.
- **DB** thanked Niraj Shah for taking on the role of Treasurer and stated it had been a pleasure to work with him over the last year. **DB** also thanked Linda Diamond who had recently taken on the responsibility of Secretary. It's a big task and it was very reassuring to know that it's in such good hands.
- Last but not least he thanked Suja Eltringham, Hilda Hewish, Peter Jenks, Frank Lennox Hennessy and Clare Usher for their on-going support and efforts on the committee.

**DB** explained that GEGRA exists to advance its members interests. Our aims are to ensure that the block is well run, that we are all kept informed and that generally Grove End Gardens is a hospitable place to live. He said it is important that you support the Residents' Association if you want it to be effective.

**DB** then listed some of the bigger issues GEGRA had been involved with during the year:

### **a) Penthouse project**

GEGRA involved itself with this project from the outset. We quickly recognised that we could not stop it so we focussed on making it as good as possible for existing residents. We achieved many concessions as well compensation from the freeholder. Finally, last summer we enabled those leaseholders and protected tenants that wanted to assert their right of first refusal, which resulted in each concerned receiving a payment of just under £8,900.

Construction began in Jan-2014 and is due to be completed in Jul-2015. **DB** explained he sits on the Penthouse Liaison Group which meets each month and ensures that residents' needs are heard and everything promised is delivered.

He felt very proud of all we have achieved for residents from this project.

### **b) Summer party**

Having been criticised for not running a Diamond Jubilee summer party, the Committee decided to organise a summer party which was a huge success. **DB** thanked Judy Hame and Clare Usher who made it happen. Total cost to the association was £136 which everyone who attended the party agreed was money well spent. **DB** also thanked the Freeholder who let us use the garden.

### **c) Change of managing agents**

GEGRA became rather dissatisfied with the running of the block and after numerous efforts to rectify matters we wrote to the Maintenance Trustee to ask for new managing agents to be appointed.

The Maintenance Trustee fully involved GEGRA in the selection process and we were very pleased with the appointment of Rendall & Rittner and so far we have not been disappointed. Starting less than three months ago, Rendall & Rittner have already made improvements and we are very grateful. **DB** explained he was very encouraged that soon after their appointment, the Chairman of Rendall & Rittner, Duncan Rendall, invited DB to a meeting to discuss priorities. GEGRA produced a document listing where we felt the block could be improved and within a very short period of time received back a document commenting on each of our concerns. There is much to do but the start is very encouraging.

DB at this point wished to place on record GEGRA's appreciation for the continued efforts of the block's staff. The team seems to have been reinvigorated following Matthew's promotion to temporary senior porter back in Feb-2014 and we would like to see that developed further.

### **d) Water tank project**

The last project commissioned by the previous regime was to replace the Abbey Road water tank with a booster pump system. This was handled extremely badly resulting in many issues not least of which was we all had to survive without water for some days. GEGRA have asked that the block should not use these firms again and this has been accepted.

**DB** expressed his thanks to GEHL who have agreed that the project should not cost residents.

### **e) Grove End Road Forecourt and Reception Project**

Construction began on 11-Nov-2013 and was due to end no later than 17-Mar-2014. The project has massively overrun as what should have taken 18 weeks is now at 31 weeks and still counting. The project seems to have been managed very badly with works commencing before all decisions were made and in particular without the necessary approvals from WCC. This slowed down the work and created a real nuisance and in some cases hardship for residents. We are hoping that the project team will be able to agree the last disputed items with WCC quickly so that in particular the parking can be brought back into use.

**DB** thanked Niraj Shah who represented GEGRA during the project progress meetings for his tireless efforts in ensuring that residents' needs were on record.

**DB** expressed his thanks to GEHL who have agreed that the project should not cost residents and that all costs will be borne by the freeholder.

In summing up **DB** explained that GEGRA felt that over the year management had not done a good enough job at preventing or minimising interruptions to key services. Whether it was the number of hot water drain downs, lift outages, or indeed the loss of water during the water tank replacement or the loss of the forecourt and reception during that 7 month project. Management need to understand that first and foremost the block is home to 271 households and that any interruptions should be very much

the exception. We now have new managing agents and the feeling is that they understand this point and so we hope they will prioritise the continuity of operations in the future and the year to come will be markedly better. This is a key measure we will report on at next year's AGM.

### **3) Treasurer's Report including resolution to approve GEGRA accounts**

**NS** expressed his gratitude to the former Treasurer who had left everything in immaculate order and given him a set of notes which had made his task easier. **NS** reported that income was about the same. Under expenditure he explained that the bank had suddenly applied bank charges and he was trying to get this reversed. The other unusual expense was for the Garden Party. We have a healthy balance and will continue to monitor the market for a better interest rate.

A resolution to approve GEGRA accounts was made by **DB** and seconded by **NS**.

### **4) Election for General Committee**

Since existing committee members had expressed their wish to stand again and as no new names have yet come forward, there was no election.

**DB** once again asked for volunteers to come forward for the committee promising those that volunteered would gain a huge feeling of satisfaction from the work.

### **5) Penthouse Development**

**DB** informed the meeting that our website contained comprehensive information and was continually updated.

**RZ (Flat 180)** thanked **DB** for his fantastic work as Chairman for which everyone was very grateful.

**SH (Flat 57)** asked that as the front reception project had overrun does this mean the penthouse project and the Abbey Road reception project are also delayed? **DB** explained that they were not linked and that Dekra were currently on schedule.

**VG (Flat 60)** asked when and for how long would we lose the garden? **DB** explained that the current expectation was from late Aug-2014 until Jul-2015. Dekra did in fact have the rights to take the entire garden and Abbey Road forecourt from Jan-2014 to Jul-2015 but have done what they could to preserve their availability.

**AH (Flat 201)** will the same team that undertook the prolonged Grove End Road forecourt and reception project also undertake the Abbey Road project? **DB** explained that the Abbey Road forecourt and reception project would be undertaken by Dekra as part of their penthouse project.

**VD (Flat 240)** Will there be pilling placed round the perimeter of the garden to support the new underground garage. **DB**: Yes.

**ND (Flat 285)** Once we lose the main garden where can we sit? **DB** explained that everyone is entitled to use the side gardens now, regardless of the penthouse project. However in doing so please respect the privacy of the garden flat residents so do not sit right outside flat doors or windows.

**LT (Flat 91)** asked if there were works to monitor how well the block is standing up to the penthouse project structurally and will this be ongoing after the development is completed? **DB** stated that GEHL had appointed a surveyor and that he would ask the surveyor for an explanation. **ACTION: DB.**

**JE (Flat 313)** Asked if it was known when the banging would end. **DB** explained that there was a project plan on our website which showed the schedule for demolition work which was likely to be amongst the noisiest of the works. **JE** felt the plan wasn't useful.

**ND (Flat 285)** Felt that dirt was coming off the roof and dirtying windows and ledges and would management have these cleaned. **ACTION: DB to raise at next Penthouse Liaison Group meeting.**

**RA (Flat 315)** said that the existing roof had allowed water ingress damaging their flat on a number of occasions and asked whether the penthouses would effectively provide him with a new watertight roof. **DB:** Yes.

*The GEGRA AGM was then adjourned for the question and answer session with Julian Butcher representing Rendall & Rittner.*

#### **a) Estate Management and Portering**

**JB** announced that Alistair Fyfe would be leaving us in July and that he was presently looking for a replacement.

**JB** went on to say that we have excellent staff at GEG and that they intend to stop using staff via agencies in favour of employing full time staff. Rendall & Rittner manage several blocks and have numerous staff who could be called in to cover for our staff during illness or holiday periods if it wasn't possible to cover from the block's staff. **JB** said that he was implementing various helpful suggestions from Matthew to alter the staffing arrangements.

**RZ (Flat 180)** said that over his 20 years at the block he had always been able to get help from staff for ad hoc odd jobs but in recent years these requests had been refused for health & safety reasons. **JB** explained that unfortunately we are not insured to allow Ken to work in private flats but we can recommend firms who could help.

#### **b) Lifts**

As part of the penthouse project:

- Lift 1 will be replaced at Dekra's cost
- Lift 2 is likely to be replaced at Dekra's cost and confirmation should be received soon
- The service lift will be replaced at Dekra's cost
- A new garden lift will be installed at Dekra's cost

**DB** committed that once dates were known for the above lift changes an article would be written for our website. **ACTION: GEGRA.**

**JB** has arranged for Lifts 3 and 4 to be surveyed to see if they can improve the speed, reliability and ensure they work in concert effectively.

**PP (Flat 167)** asked why lift 4 is not being replaced? **JB** explained that it wasn't part of the penthouse project and any works would be at the expense of the service charge.

**ND (Flat 285)** said that lifts 3 and 4 do not work well and it can be impossible to call the larger lift as the small lift always responds. **JB** explained that they were trying to get this improved.

**RZ (Flat 180)** said that often when you call a lift it will arrive, the calling button lights will go off but the doors won't open. It is only when you push the button again that the doors will open.

**DB** asked for a show of hands it was clear that the majority of those using Lifts 3 and 4 felt that they did not work effectively.

**FL-H (Flat 171)** reminded the meeting of the question he has asked at previous AGMs. The existing service lift is switched off after 9pm each night due to the noise it produces. He is still awaiting a response to the question of how will GEHL ensure that the new lift, which is intended to run 24/7, will not create a noise nuisance to his flat overnight. **ACTION: GM.**

#### **c) Noise disturbance**

**MD (Flat 125)** complained that wooden floors had been fitted in the flat above. They had been assured that insulation would be used to prevent noise transfer however she can hear everything, particularly when occupants are wearing shoes. Can there be a policy to prohibit wooden floors? Can occupants with wooden floors be required to take their shoes off?

**DB** explained that GEGRA had formally requested of the block's management not to licence any new hard floors back in Sep-2012 but this request had been refused. Our rationale had been that noise easily transfers, that it was hard to inspect the fitting of floors to ensure insulation compliance, it was hard to investigate the complaints, and even well fitted hard floors cause problems when used irresponsibly.

**JB** explained that no new hard floors would be permitted in bedrooms. Following discussion, **JB** confirmed that in the event of flat reconfigurations this meant rooms that had originally been built as bedrooms. Rendall & Rittner also have a policy only to allow wet rooms (i.e. bathrooms and kitchens) above other wet rooms.

**LT (Flat 91)** felt that the policy needed to be retrospective as she is often woken up with people walking about. **JB** explained that he should be advised of any noise complaints and he will investigate whether the licence can be revoked if complaints are received.

**FL-H (Flat 171)** stated that William Heneker had resolved his noise complaint requiring the neighbour to fit carpet.

**SH (Flat 57)** stated that the maisonette flat above him has a kitchen above his bedroom and the dish washer is on for 4 or 5 hours some nights. **ACTION: JB to investigate.**

**LT (Flat 91)** felt that a notice educating the tenants how to be considerate to each other should be sent round.

**HR (Flat 213)** confirmed that in her tenancy agreement Winkworth had laid down when you can use washing machines or dishwashers and everyone should be made to adhere to this ruling.

#### **d) Outside spaces**

**ST (Flat 16)** complained that the new Grove End Road garden gates were easily climbable. She has done a lot of work in getting the gates checked by a number of different people in authority and yet the project team have not rectified the issue over many weeks. **DB** agreed and stated that the concerns had been raised with the project manager quite some time before the old secure gates had been removed and he doesn't understand why they were removed when this serious issue was outstanding. **JB** confirmed that the project manager knows we will not accept the gates as they are and he will have to address this issue. Unfortunately the project manager has been ill and this has delayed any resolution.

**AS (Flat 120)** asked that as no vehicle barriers have been fitted what will stop vehicles coming in late at night? **JB** explained that barriers will be in place at 23:00 as before. WCC wanted the barriers to be 6 meters in from the boundary which has made the fixing difficult with the present layout. No one will be allowed to park on the forecourt before the barriers are fitted. **DB** explained this was an example of the sort of issue that should have been resolved before the project was started.

**JH (Flat 124)** complained that the parking spaces had not been marked on the forecourt even though the last letter said it would be finished today. **JB** explained that again that hold up was due to agreeing with WCC the location of the lines. **GM** explained that the reception is finished but forecourt is not. The front planting will remain as it is as WCC have not allowed them to remove it.

**VD (Flat 240)** asked whether improvements could be made to paths and hand rail around the fish pond area as it was in need. **JB** explained that there are plans to install a ramp in keeping with the building so there is step free access to the service entrance.

**VD (Flat 240)** said the new Grove End Road forecourt will require more maintenance and asked whether there was a plan? **JB** explained that there were still issues that needed to be resolved including the fact that the Portland stone cannot be allowed to come into contact with salt which would otherwise be used to treat the area for ice in winter. **JB** advised that it may be necessary to lay down matting or to apply an anti-slip treatment. **DB** explained that during the consultation GEGRA had asked for intrinsic finishes to be used for the low walls rather than paint and that even on day one the white painted walls were showing wear.

**SH (Flat 57)** expressed his concern that any antifreeze salt used on the tarmac would be washed onto the stone or transferred to the stone by the wheels of the cars driving across it. Therefore a strategy needs to be formulated as to how we are going to handle the entire forecourt area without salt before icy weather comes.



**ND (Flat 285)** explained that the step to the front door is easy to miss as two thin metal strips have been inserted near the edge and these are not easy to see. The step needs a more prominent black line to show there is a step. **ACTION: Project team.**

#### **e) Plumbing**

JB explained that the potential entire replacement of hot and cold water pipes is being reassessed by new consultants to see what is really required and what can be left.

#### **f) Refurbishment of Common Parts**

**SH (Flat 40)** explained that he felt we were deceived by communications for the Grove End Road forecourt and reception project. Nobody was told of the amount of noise, dirt and dust which would result. No method statement was published and the project is overrunning greatly. He spoke on behalf of his mother as he felt her health had been put at risk. He says her flat was sealed off by the works and so she was isolated with her only access to the outside via the stone side steps. She would have to leave her flat and go down the stairs to let visitors in. The constant sound of drilling and banging had a very damaging effect on her health. The flat has been ruined with dust, needing complete repainting. In the end felt he had to remove his mother from the flat because she was in such a distressed state.

Other residents at the meeting also confirmed that they had had to visit their doctors because of the stress experienced and the noise and dust.

**JE (Flat 313)** felt that if residents had been informed as to the extent of the noise and dirt they could have taken evasive action.

#### **g) Rubbish Collection and recycling**

**VD (Flat 255)** asked whether tenants could be instructed to break down boxes before putting them into the bins. It was felt that this was hard to enforce.

#### **h) Security**

**JB** stated that the door entry fob system will be centralised so it can be managed more easily. Once this is done fobs will be reissued to every flat. The new fobs will also allow entry to the bike shed. The CCTV is now improved with more cameras and screens. The Intercom unit on porters' desk has been replaced and should work better.

**SH (Flat 57)** why go through the expense of reissuing all the fobs. **DB** explained that it had been realised that Winkworth were not keeping tabs of the fobs they were allocating to the large number of flats they rent out. As a result, given the frequency of new tenants, fobs had become untraceable and as fobs are lost they cannot be blocked. By reissuing all fobs we can start again securely. Those fobs handed back in can be recycled.

#### **i) Service Charge Accounts**

**PP (Flat 167)** queried the electricity deficit mentioned in the latest service charge account. **JB** will investigate as this happened under the previous firm of managing agents. He confirmed that the accounts are audited by independent auditors.

**ACTION: JB to investigate.**

**PP (Flat 167)** asked who was paying for the electricity used by the penthouse builders and the Grove End Road forecourt and reception builders. **ACTION: JB to investigate.**

**j) Any other business**

**JH (Flat 124)** felt that our present gardeners were not doing a good job and if anything they should be doing a better one given the gradual reduction in the size of the garden due to the penthouse project. **JB** stated that they were about to re-tender the management of the gardens.

**ST (Flat 15)** asked if a sign could be fitted in the bicycle shed reminding cyclists not to cycle through the garden. **ACTION: JB.**

**6) Other Association business**

None.

**DB** closed the meeting at 21:43.