

# Grove End Gardens Residents Association

## Minutes of Annual General Meeting 11-July-2016 at Arnold House School

Members of the General Committee present were:-

David Burr (DB) – Chair	Maureen Deeley (MD)
Finlay Edridge (FE) – Treasurer	Jacky Erwtman (JE)
Linda Diamond (LD) – Secretary	Clare Usher (CU)

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:

Suja Eltringham (SE), Peter Jenks (PJ), Frank Lennox-Hennessy (FL-H)

**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, and Alistair Fyfe – our Estate Manager from Rendall & Rittner, who has his office in the Arcade. **DB** also thanked Arnold House School for once again allowing us to use their facilities at no cost. **DB** thanked the committee members for all they do and finally he took a moment to remember Judy Hame, Vice-Chair who had sadly passed away in June.

Judy was an energetic, enthusiastic and loyal committee member and friend to many residents. She lived at Grove End Gardens since a baby. She lived a full life and she thought communally. She was a long term committee member, a former secretary and a keen gardener, she was an enormous support to everything GEGRA. GEGRA has made a donation to Cancer Research UK in Judy's memory.

### **Penthouse project**

As the AGM coincided with the one year anniversary of the expected completion of the penthouse project, and with no reliable end date known, the meeting began with a project update from Ken Smith (KS), the developer's project manager, prior to the main business of the meeting.

**KS** admitted the planned 18 month program was now expected to take twice that long. He blamed a number of unforeseen issues and gave the following examples:

- Existing pipes at roof level were higher than expected and this meant they had to be diverted to accommodate the penthouses. This resulted in a 3 month delay.
- Asbestos was found in the rooftop service areas. Previously 'removed' asbestos had actually been stuffed into bags and pushed into corners. They had to get a specialist team to remove this asbestos. All this needed to be completed before the steel frame was fitted.
- Unexpected drainage issues at the Abbey Road side required the fitting of a 93 cubic meter rainwater tank under the car park. Consequently a further 1.5m excavation was needed and this meant delays whilst consents were obtained. The existing drainage issues were not revealed prior to commencement.

- Delays completing the car park, and the wet weather at the end of 2015 resulted in a collapse of a retaining wall and this caused a further 3 month delay.
- The "single point utility" contractor appointed to connect the penthouse with gas and electricity nearly went into liquidation so another company was engaged to finish the works. Due to the delay in getting services into the penthouse they couldn't sell the first penthouse and this affected cash flow with consequential delays to further work.

**KS** finished by saying he now expected to be able to complete the project by the end of 2016.

**DB** explained that whilst these sounded like significant problems, GEGRA had not received timely disclosure or updates to completion dates. DB gave some examples of the ever changing and unreliable updates.

**AQ (Flat 260)** asked if the central tree would be reinstated in the garden. **KS** explained this wasn't part of the scheme given planning consent.

**DB** said he had received many submissions from residents saying they urgently needed the Abbey Road entrance to be completed. Since Dekra began their promised 4 month program in Nov-2015, guests have not been able to enter on that side, and this was problematic for elderly visiting flats on that side. Completion is now much overdue but not much had been done and it seemed that little works were taking place.

**MR (Flat 11)** asked if the whole block could be hosed down including pathways. There was builder's waste everywhere and a general tidying up was required.

**KS** explained that Dekra had faced a cash flow problem but everything would be sorted out eventually.

**AF (Flat 295)** felt the problems should have been apparent from a feasibility study. Cash flow is of interest to all businesses and London clay is well known – all this should have been foreseen.

**KS** said all the unknowns are now known. This section of the meeting concluded and KS left.

### **1) Chairman's report**

GEGRA felt that dragging issues at the block took an excessive amount of management time to track and manage and most importantly that they detracted unnecessarily from residents' enjoyment of living here. Encouraging the speedy completion of issues was our priority.

Long outstanding issues include:

- 1) Resolution of various Grove End Road forecourt/reception project issues. This freeholder initiative was meant to be completed more than two years ago.
- 2) Resolution of various external pathway issues along with their lighting, the making good of some retaining walls on the pond side and the pond area in general. Some of these are tied up in the penthouse project however, we really do need to find a way to reach conclusions and get works completed so the amenities can be enjoyed.

3) Agreement on what rooftop improvements will be delivered as part of the freeholder's penthouse project concessions.

We are also keen to reach agreement on the necessary pipework replacement project, but for the avoidance of any doubt, we continue to be supportive that works have been postponed awaiting certainty on the best way forward. This will be a very large project and will impact residents significantly and so it is not in any of our interests for works to begin before they are ready to begin. We also continue to support the collection of a reserve to fund these costly works when they are ready to be started.

We continue to have a high opinion of R&R in general and Julian Butcher in particular. He has proved to be a very good property manager and has made great efforts to include GEGRA with honesty and without ego. There are other aspects where we are not as happy and certainly a number of residents have raised concerns about the raising of invoices and other R&R accounting admin issues. We understand that Julian has escalated those concerns internally at R&R. We expect to see improvements and we will continue to escalate if we don't.

There have been a number of specific achievements this year, and **DB** highlighted 4:

- 1) After many years of lobbying successive managing agents, we were pleased that R&R had committed to reducing and planning the number of plumbing system drain-downs and these will now be limited to one a quarter. This should reduce inconvenience to residents, reduce the build-up of rust in the system and allow residents to plan any works they have to fit in with the schedule. This reduction in frequency is very welcome and in due course GEGRA will consider whether a further reduction would be sensible.

- 2) This year email really came of age as a way for the front desk to communicate with residents. Whether it be notifications to say a parcel had arrived for you or to say there's some sort of service outage, it had massively improved resident communications at the block and it's appreciated. It's important to point out that with this improvement the desk continued to use paper to communicate with those that don't have email.

- 3) Following much pushing and chasing, BT Openreach had now connected the block to their new fibre network. That meant those residents that wanted could now purchase superfast fibre broadband from any of the many ISPs that offered it.

- 4) Finally, we'd seen big improvements to the side gardens and DB registered his appreciation for all the efforts that Linda Diamond made, together with the late Judy Hame to cajole the gardeners. It's much appreciated.

## **2) Treasurer's report including resolution to approve GEGRA accounts**

The Treasurers report was circulated at the meeting. Income was down principally because we are no longer accepting 3 years in advance membership. Our expenditure was also down. If you know of residents who are not members please ask them to join. People renting their flats are also eligible and should be urged to join. The yearly fee is only £5. The easiest way to renew your membership is by using our new online service or else by bank transfer. Time saved in chasing membership renewals can be better spent on GREGRA business.

A resolution to approve GEGRA accounts was proposed by **FE** and seconded by **DB**. No one voted against and so they were approved.

### **3) Election for General Committee**

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

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

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

#### **a) Estate Management and Porterage**

Making Mathew our Head Porter had proved a great success. He had created a good team of porters who all worked together

#### **b) Lifts**

Dekra have replaced the service lift with a new lift however they had retained the manual swing landing doors on most floors. They said that the provision of a new lift is the lift alone and not the landing doors. GEHL and GEGRA dispute this. GEGRA feel that if the specification was remiss this issue should become GEHL's responsibility to make good.

The new Lifts 1 and 2 supplied by Dekra are more reliable now.

The new garden lift serving the car park is still being tested and not available yet.

**RZ (Flat 180)** expressed his amazement at the number of emails concerning lifts going out of order. Things seemed to be getting worse.

It was agreed that R&R will maintain a log of lift outages.

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

There had been a number of complaints concerning children playing in the gardens and so the estate team had requested that people were quiet in the side gardens due to their proximity to flats.

**JW (Flat 88)** stated that there had been an increase in the number of noisy parties extending into the early hours of the morning frequently in flats which are rented. JB explained that in the first instance you should report noise issues to the front desk but if there is no improvement you should contact WCC's noise team. The front desk keep a log of issues and landlords are written to in the case of misbehaving rental tenants.

**JE (Flat 313)** complained about increasing noise from the arcade. Sometimes there had been loud talking at 6am in the arcade which could clearly be heard in the flats above.

**DS (Flat 263)** complained of the noise of walls being taken down which is increasingly taking place as part of flat refurbishments. The noise is unbearable. She felt the person doing the refurbishment should give longer than 14 days' notice and

that a limit should be placed on the duration of refurbishments. **DB** asked R&R to provide the refurbishment rules so these could be reviewed.

**VD (Flat 240)** complained that she had been advised of noisy works dates that had not been stuck to and that updates should be given if the job was not going to be completed on time.

**d) Outside spaces.**

One residents asked that table tennis be provided in the garden but there was no other support for the idea.

**AS (Flat 120)** complained that when moving vans are parked in the Grove End Road forecourt, they block the exit. This often meant vehicles using the entrance to the forecourt as an exit. **DB** explained that WCC will make residents bays available if these are booked. Furthermore, GEHL intend to increase the entrance to the loading area (east side of the forecourt) and this would allow vehicles to park without blocking the exit. This work is well overdue and a date is awaited.

**DB** stated that the GEHL had agreed to resolve the design issues with the block sign at the Grove End Road entrance to ensure it was legible at night from the road as the previous sign had been. **AS (Flat 120)** commented that any illumination should take into account the flats above the sign who had previously been disturbed by the bright lights shining through their windows at night.

Comment was made that nobody uses central path to leave the building but rather everyone used the vehicle exit instead as most foot traffic was towards St John's Wood station direction. This is dangerous as pedestrians are not as visible to drivers as they think and an appeal was made that pedestrians should please use the central path.

**AF (Flat 295)** commented that the central path is dangerous as it gets slippery, particularly when wet. GEHL have said this will be rectified.

**ST (Flat 16)** asked that a note be sent round informing cyclist that they must dismount when on the garden pathways.

**MR (Flat 11)** complained that the works to the pond area had left it in a dangerous state. GEHL have said this will be rectified.

**e) Plumbing (incl. heating, hot and cold water, drainage)**

**JB** explained that a lot of analysis was being done and that GEGRA were being included and that the priority was to minimise inconvenience to residents. **JB** explained that in time it will be necessary to survey all flats to determine the layout of any new pipework.

**JC (Flat 100)** stated that water pressure has been very bad for some time. It was fine before work on the penthouses started but now continued to cause problems. **JB** said they were aware of the problem and that Welbeck have fitted some pumps to pressurise the system. **RZ (Flat 180)** reported that Welbeck had been in his flat many times. He has no hot water and if he turns on the tap it can result in noisily exploding water.

**f) Refurbishments of common parts**

After the installation of the new pipework, all of the corridors will be refurbished. This will include new carpets, lighting and protective and decorative wall coverings.

**NB (Flat 241)** complained that all the external window sills were left very dirty by all the penthouse work which had taken place and asked that the exterior of the windows be cleaned. She and other residents were told to contact Dekra directly about this as it would be Dekra's responsibility to put matters right.

**MD (Flat 125)** asked what was happening to repaint the outside of those flats which still had wooden window frames. **JB** explained this would have to be done using abseilers or cherry pickers and would probably be done after all the external work was completed.

**g) Rubbish collection and recycling**

The large paladins are left on the Abbey Road forecourt overnight and there are no plans to change this.

**h) Security (incl. CCTV, Entry fobs, Intercom)**

It is felt that the intercom system is unreliable and should be addressed.

**i) Service charge accounts**

There had been a delay in sending these out.

**j) Other business**

It was suggested that when the main garden is handed back by Dekra that a rose bush be planted in Judy Hame's memory.

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*Recommended GEGRA AGM*

**4) Other Association business**

None.

**DB** closed the meeting at 21:25.