

Fabian Hamilton MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Environment and Neighbourhoods

Neil Evans, Director
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Wednesday 27th July 2011

Dear Mr.Hamilton,

I refer to your letter of the 17th June 2011 in respect of the Open House Community Association and the concerns raised by the Lingfield and Fir Trees Tenants and Residents Association.

Since your original letter the Tenants and Residents Association took a deputation to Full Council. As a result of this deputation officers will be providing a progress report on the actions taken in response to the deputation.

Having consulted with officers from the Area Management Team and Commercial Asset Management I thought it would be useful to provide you with the background to the association.

Background

Open House Community Centre was established in June 1985. The primary aim of the organisation was to work in partnership with the public, private, community and voluntary sectors, in order to improve the quality of life of residents in Outer North East Leeds estates of Lingfield, Fir tree, Queenshill and the surrounding neighbourhood. These communities suffer consistent social, economic and physical deprivation.

In 2003, the organisation became a limited company, with the Memorandum and Articles being adopted on 29th January 2003 and a formal registration date of the 11th April 2003. At this point it became known as Open House Community Association.

The commercial premises are let as at tenancy currently on peppercorn rental with no charge levied.. The costs of gas, electricity and water rates are met by the association through funding that it receives through a variety of charitable sources and grants, including a grant from the Outer North East Area Committee.

The Association over the years has run a range activity groups / interest groups for people of all ages. A copy of the weekly programme is attached for your reference. The centre is available for rent to community and residents' groups. The groups are run on a voluntary basis with funding from a variety of sources and own fundraising.

Concern has been raised that the trustees are being paid for running the centre. Our understanding is that the trustees undertake this work purely on a voluntary basis. Grant funding is from time to time used to employ sessional workers to deliver specific projects or pieces of work.

Current Position

The Association is the responsibility of a group of four trustees there is also a management committee which was created [at](#) an AGM of the organisation in 2009. The reason for creation of the management committee was an attempt to encourage greater involvement of the local residents in the running of the centre but ultimately failed to achieve this aim.

The Trustees have subsequently expressed their intention to dissolve the company / charity. A letter to this effect was received by Area Management in May 2011. The manner of dissolution is prescribed in the organisation's Memorandum and Articles of Association. The date agreed with the Area [Management Team](#) and local ward members for dissolution is 31.8.11.

Lingfield and Fir Trees Tenants and Residents Association.

The association who use the facility are an independent organisation. The Association used to be represented on the management committee but its representatives have since resigned from it. They have expressed their perceived concerns about the management of Open House on a number of occasions.

The local ward councillor Peter Harrand, who has been a trustee in the past for Open House, has attempted to mediate between the management committee and the tenants and residents association [recently](#). Two meetings were organised earlier this year to discuss [matters](#), [however](#), the Tenants and Residents Association did not attend the second meeting [and as a result](#) issues remain unresolved.

Interim Arrangements

The ward councillors' priority is to ensure that the Open House community centre remains open and have suggested [the council, through Area Management](#), temporarily take over the responsibility including bill payments for the centre until the 31st March 2012 assuming the AGM for the association formally dissolves the organisation.

The Area Management Team will work on a more permanent solution for the management and running of the community centre, involving and including all local stakeholders and local interests.

I understand that the information you required concerning MICE payments has been sent you under separate cover.

My colleague Sharon Hughes, who works within Area Management, will keep you updated with progress on this matter including the outcome from the report back to Executive Board in September.

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