

FLAG Committee Meeting

Date: 23rd April 2026

Time: 18:30

Location: Estate Management Office

Present:

Members: Elise Velkeneers (EV), Kathleen Sims (KS), Kathleen Laing (KL), Lorna Reith (LR), Melissa Carames (MC), Michael Baumgartner (MB), Pelagia Elefthiriades (PE), Quentin Given (QG), Samar Jaber (SJ), Sylvia Morgan (SM) and Vicky Ladizhinskaya (VL).

Guest: Rev'd Mo Budd (RM).

Guest: Cllr Sarah Williams (SW).

1. **Welcome and introductions:** LR shared apologies sent by committee members Tui Lin, Sinan Fahliogullari, Paul Collier; plus residents Helen Thomas and Lucas Bertholdi-Saas. Attendees introduced themselves: Rev'd Mo Budd is the new vicar at St Francis at the Engine Room (the Anglican church in Hale Village) and Cllr Sarah Williams is Haringey's Cabinet member for Housing and Planning (ward: West Green).
2. **Minutes of meeting held on 10th of February** were agreed.
3. **Cllr Sarah Williams – Cabinet Member for Housing and Planning:**
 - a. **Leaseholder and tenant repairs:** The group discussed the lack of tools to measure satisfaction on council repairs for leaseholders. **SW** mentioned the political decision to insource homes for Haringey and the subsequent focus on regulatory compliance; and explained the improvement plan for compliance in areas like Legionella, gas, asbestos, lifts and fire safety. Key points raised by Committee members included:
 - i. The need for better communication and response times for repairs, with specific complaints about leaking balconies and insulation problems.
 - ii. The council's policy on leaseholder repairs was criticised, particularly the lack of consultation and the high costs of replacing doors. The group discussed the lack of records for major works like roofing and doors, and the impact on leaseholders.
 - iii. They also discussed the frustration of leaseholders with the council's policy changes and the lack of information. SW mentioned the need for better policy changes and consultation with leaseholders.
 - iv. The council's response times and the effectiveness of their repairs and maintenance processes were also questioned. **KL and VL** shared their experiences with a leaking pipe and a broken door lock, respectively, and the delays in categorising them as emergencies. **SJ** shared repeated issues with emergency electric repairs, where contractors isolate the problem but do not fix it, leading to prolonged outages. **LR** suggested following up with the council to address the recurring problems.
 - v. Lack of recording to help identify systemic issues (e.g. insulation between floors, leaking balconies, condensation issues). The repair team are not able to pick up on structural issues.

SW explained the council hadn't had cyclical maintenance as part of their asset management.

ACTION: Forward the prepared high-level responses on leaseholder issues (including repairs, voids, leasehold valuations, and related policy decisions) to the cabinet member so they can use them in upcoming discussions with officers.

ACTION: SW to review the existing major works and asset management plans for Ferry Lane and similar estates to confirm whether the identified structural issues (balcony leaks, cold bridging, and related damp/mould problems) are already included in a remediation plan, and report back to residents if no such plan exists.

ACTION: SW to investigate and resolve the issue where the council is asking leaseholders to pay for new front doors under the fire door replacement program despite the council having lost the original installation records and warranties, including clarifying whether doors can be tested instead of replaced and ensuring leaseholders are not charged for doors they do not receive.

ACTION: SW to ensure that the council's housing repairs phone line is staffed to the agreed capacity and that residents are informed whenever the call-handling cap is applied, so they are not left waiting for long periods.

ACTION: SW to review the council's policy on charging leaseholders for minor works and repairs (including the recent significant increase in the minor works charge) and, where possible, provide residents with a clear explanation of the reasons for the increase and how the charge is calculated.

ACTION: SW to review the council's policy on cyclical maintenance (e.g. gutter cleaning and balcony maintenance) and, if retained in the role after the election, update the asset management program to include regular cyclical maintenance across council estates, including Ferry Lane.

- b. **Issues on void properties:** **SW** explained the high percentage of void properties and the council's efforts to reduce the void rate. She mentioned the neighbourhood move scheme and its impact on creating new voids. 4% of Haringey's housing stock was vacant – anything above 2% is considered problematic; to reduce it, the council decided to prioritise easier repairs over those which would take longer to carry out. The void properties in South Tottenham are included in the 2nd phase of this repairs programme. **LR** and **VL** discussed the lack of communication after void properties having been reported by residents. **QG** enquired about external contractors dealing with voids. **SW** acknowledged the frustration and recognised the council wasn't good enough at reducing the void rate and explained three big contractors had been brought in to deal with those repairs.
- c. **Fire doors replacement, insurance and service charge:** **LR**, **EV**, **KS** and **VL** highlighted communication issues with the council, with residents struggling to get timely responses on the above matters, and leading to cases being taken to the Ombudsman. [Residents are challenging the fire doors replacement programme because the council plans to replace all doors instead of establishing first if they already comply with the new fire safety regulation -all doors were replaced in 2013 but the council doesn't hold documentation on the scheme]. Buildings insurance costs were criticised, with some leaseholders paying significantly more than others. Inaccuracies on service charges are repeated year on year, with residents challenging the same issues repeatedly (e.g. fire extinguishers, controlled

entry system). Charges are increased without explanation and lack of consultation. **SW** acknowledged the underfunding of local government and the resulting inefficiencies in service delivery; she explained the technical reasons behind the insurance cost differences. She suggested having regular drop-in sessions for leasehold issues to improve communication and address specific concerns, noting the success of similar activities in other areas.

- d. **Procurement practices and lack of responsiveness:** Based on the previous point, the procurement process for services was also questioned, with concerns about high fees and inadequate service quality. **VL** emphasised the need for better procurement practices to ensure fair and transparent pricing for services. **LR** shared a frustrating experience with the insurance team, highlighting the lack of transparency and responsiveness; and explained the struggle to get council officers to respond to FLAG's enquiries; she suggested to have a residents charter: if a recognised residents association logs an enquiry, the council should reply within 10 working days. **SW** acknowledged the need for better communication and responsiveness to residents' enquiries; she said she was aware it was an area of weakness and was hoping to address it.
- e. **Garage management:** The group discussed the lack of information and access issues with garages, including the lack of keys and nefarious activities. **SW** mentioned the need for a policy on garage allocation and the impact of untaxed vehicles. **ACTION:** Provide a written statement to residents on the council's policy and current position regarding garage management and allocation, including how garages are allocated, who holds keys, and how fire safety and storage issues are being addressed.
- f. **Parking:** Impact of untaxed vehicles. The group discussed the need for better enforcement of parking regulations and the impact of neighbouring high-density developments; and also lack of feedback from the council after the consultation on the new parking scheme plans. **JS** shared her challenges with having parking permits for the various carers who attend her disabled child. **LR** mentioned the case of a disabled resident on Reedham who holds a disabled parking permit and keeps on receiving parking tickets as she cannot find a bay. Why are there no disabled parking bays? **SW** explained the difficulty in enforcing disabled parking bays and the need for discretion in ticket issuance. **ACTION:** **SW** to follow up with the officer responsible for the parking consultation (Chris) and the relevant officer (Jonathan) to bring them back to Ferry Lane to present the consultation feedback and proposed parking scheme changes, and then work with residents to agree a revised parking permit and enforcement approach.
- g. **MUGA on Jarrow Road:** **LR** raised the issue of the games area on Jarrow Road, funded by various foundations, but lacking proper management. **VL** suggested involving a private company to manage the games area, including changing rooms and toilets, to ensure proper maintenance. **KL** mentioned the facilities are used well and often. **ACTION:** **SW** to look into widening access (girls getting more involved). Football Foundation. PlayZones. Contact the Johan Cruyff Foundation representative to explore using their funding to upgrade the Jarrow Road games area (including changing rooms and toilets) and to discuss a sustainable management model for the facility.

- h. **Lease Extension and Surveyor Fees:** MB criticises the high fees charged by the council's surveyor for lease extension surveys, noting significant cost differences compared to private surveyors. **LR** explained the historical context of lease extension issues, particularly with the right to buy and subsequent lease extension demands. **SW** acknowledges the need for better transparency and fairness in surveyor fees.

4. **Matters arising:**

- a. **Grounds maintenance:** **QG** reported of a meeting with the person who runs the team of Parks operatives. **QG** raised the issue of mowing of grass areas which were not supposed to be touched back in February, explained the arrangements reached after the 2024 consultation and an agreement was reached. **VL** noted the need for a dedicated gardener, as there had been in the past. She also reported two dead chestnut trees by Gate 3. **LR** about bidding for additional trees and the need to replace dead ones.
ACTION: Next meeting with Alex the Parks leader, raise the issue of having a dedicated gardener for the estate and a regular contact person who works with the committee on a joint maintenance plan **ACTION:** Follow up with the Parks team to confirm which chestnut trees in the estate (including the dead ones near Kessock and Armadale Green and the memorial tree) need to be cut down and which replacement trees are being provided, and update the committee on the tree plan.
5. **Celebrating our estate:** **LR** mentioned the event organised by Haringey Culture Collective, where residents gave feedback about Haringey being the Borough of Culture in 2027; this project could be a source of funding for the estate 50th anniversary celebration. **FLAG** has to review the information from Nicola (Estate Management) on which boiler houses are in use and which are available, and then plan the next steps to secure funding and permissions to use the available boiler houses as exhibition space for the celebration. Discuss with Sinan the idea of using **FLAG**'s stall at the Community Green Day to interview long-term residents (and possibly children), agree a short set of questions, and arrange for volunteers to conduct these interviews and record residents' memories. Follow up with Delroy about the mural funding and keep track of the timeline for when murals can be commissioned (likely in the new year). Develop a short set of questions for children to ask long-term residents during the community day, to support the intergenerational interview idea. **PE** suggested to use the school's coffee mornings on Fridays and the newsletter to call for residents to take part in the interviews. **LR** noted a mix-up with the regeneration officer (Jacob) and the need for an update on regeneration projects.
6. **Community Green Day – 27th June:** **LR** mentioned **RM** had agreed to arrange the bouncy castle for the event, taking over from Father Andrew. She recalled the need for shorter sessions, as a lesson learnt from the previous year's event, when the attraction was run by residents.
7. **Finance and Newsletter:** **QG** to chase the council Residents Engagement Team, as the agreed grant to **FLAG** hasn't yet arrived. The next newsletter would be printed in early June, ahead of the Community Green Day.
8. **Date of next meeting, date for summer social gathering and AOB:**
- a. **Next meeting:** In June in the run up to the Community Green Day (CGD).
 - b. **Summer Gathering:** **KL** to circulate a doodle poll with proposed dates so the committee can choose the final date.

- c. **Pergolas:** PE asked for assistance in building the pergolas funded by the Canal & River Trust. KL offered to help. The aim is to build before the CGD (target date around June 14–17) and arrange for photos and deliveries to document the project.
- d. **Updates on Candidate Questionnaires:** LR mentioned that a questionnaire was sent to local election candidates, and the Labour candidate had responded. The Greens were expected to respond soon and the Liberal Democrats hadn't responded. She asked for help in contacting Conservatives and Reform, whose details were not available.
- e. **Leaseholder issues:** LR suggests holding a separate meeting for leaseholders to discuss tribunal applications. Send out a list of suggested dates for a separate leaseholder meeting to catch up on the tribunal application and related leaseholder issues.