

## **CHAIRMANS REPORT**

Welcome to the AGM of the Norwich Leaseholders Association.

For those of you who don't know, the NLA is a voluntary organization whose aim is to help, support and advise people who have a Leasehold on a property where the Freeholder is Norwich City Council.

### **Lock-down**

As you can imagine, it has been a strange year, almost two years, since the first lockdown. Our activities have been quite curtailed, and there is not a lot to report on. However, we are now getting back under way, having this, our AGM, is a first step in doing so.

### **Re-start**

The Committee has recently met to discuss how to re-start activities.

Another thing we discussed was whether to request a re-start of the periodic meetings we had previously held with Norwich City Council.

Those meetings were supposed to give us a forum to raise and discuss our concerns, and give us a dialogue with the Homeowners Team.

However, in practice we found this did not happen.

When we raised concerns, we were generally stonewalled. There was little communication and little transparency.

However, the fact that there were meetings being held, did enable NCC to claim they had an ongoing dialogue with Leaseholders. So we felt the meetings benefitted NCC more than it benefitted the NLA. As a result, the Committee has, for the moment, decided against reinstating these meetings.

### **So what's going on, what issues are current?**

#### **Missing Safety Checks**

As you may well have heard, NCC have admitted that statutory safety tests on buildings, required by law, have not been carried out.

These tests relate to asbestos, Legionnaire's disease, electrical safety, and fire safety.

Now these tests are required by law....and Norwich have not been doing them.

What we hear is that Norwich have been paying for them to be done by sub-contractors, and not checking whether they actually have been done...and they haven't. This is a bit of a scandal. I was interviewed by BBC Radio Norfolk about it.

What comes out of this for Leaseholders? Well, a couple of things.

Firstly, clearly you cannot just rely on NCC to carry out their legal duties, and assume they have done so, and assume that everything is OK. I think those days are over.

I think the Leaseholder should write to NCC and ask what safety checks should be carried out on their property, when those checks should be carried out (every year? Every five years?) whether the checks are up to date, and ask for copies of the documentation.

I think NCC will have to get used to issuing safety checks documentation, proving the statutory tests have been carried out, as a matter of course.

Secondly, there is the financial aspect. I believe NCC may have charged Leaseholders, going back several years, for safety checks that they then failed to do. NCC have denied that they have ever charged leaseholders for any of these checks. However, some Leaseholders have noticed, buried in the service charges, charges for water checks; so, further investigation required.

### **Boiler replacement Normandie tower**

NCC are proposing replacing the boilers on Normandie Tower with new oil-fired boilers. The heating system with the worst environmental performance, the worst CO2 emissions, of any.

The UK Government has passed legislation which makes it illegal to fit oil fired boilers on new build properties from 2025. These new boilers will have a lifespan which may well keep them running until the mid-2040's – or 20 years after they have been made illegal.

NCC's also has its own 38-page Environmental strategy, which goes on at great length about how great they are going to be at reducing carbon emissions in Norwich. These new boilers would, of course, be in direct contradiction to their own policy.

I have written to point out these contradictions. Green Councillors have expressed an interest in this issue. We'll see what happens.

### **Service charges generally**

We've reached that time of year when NCC is sending out notices about service charges.

We've heard from people who feel for various reasons that they should not have to pay for building work they are being charged for. In one case, a charge is apparently being made for building work which has not started yet.

### **Summary**

So that is the way it is at the moment.

After almost 2 years of enforced quiet, we are starting up again.

We can now move to the next item on the Agenda, the Nominations for Committee and officers.