

Notes of NLA Open Meeting, 21 November 2019, at 7.00pm.

The meeting was attended by approximately 26 Leaseholders. Tea and Coffee was served (thanks to Mark Smith for arranging this).

Jon Neville-Jones (Chair of NLA) welcomed leaseholders and introduced the committee.

Penny Ellis (Treasurer of NLA) spoke briefly about the NLA: what it tries to do and how. It has supported her personally to understand matters that affect her as a leaseholder. In particular she has a better understanding of charges and their processes through being in the NLA. This has led her to challenge bills and resulted in savings of hundreds of pounds.

Penny urged all members to get involved. The NLA needs more members to step up and serve on the committee in order to help liaise with Norwich City Council (NCC) and support all Leaseholders. All duties undertaken are voluntary. They require some time commitment, but no more than any individual is prepared to give. However, the more people join in, the lighter the load for all. Meetings are relatively informal and a good opportunity to discuss issues potentially affecting all Leaseholders.

Jon highlighted the main areas of concern for Leaseholders as being:

- Projects believed to be unnecessary
- What appear to be excessive or unfair costs
- Poor workmanship
- Incomplete projects
- Extension of Leases

Jon introduced Watsons, a local property company who may help with negotiating lease extensions. Watsons have kindly made a donation to NLA funds. Jon added that, in the interests of transparency, other professional advice is available.

James Laughlin, a representative from Watsons, spoke and answered questions about the process of extending a lease, and the role Watsons can play in supporting leaseholders. Watsons would welcome enquiries and provide favourable terms.

Jon thanked Watsons for an interesting presentation. Leaseholders found the information and discussion helpful. Details about how to contact Watsons will soon be posted on the NLA website.

Different examples of concerns were also discussed.

Jon emphasised that all properties owned are the responsibility of each owner. NLA can support, but cannot take responsibility for any disputes.

Further discussions took place concerning how Leaseholders can help themselves to ensure fair outcomes. In particular Leaseholders should keep clear records of concerns and respond at an early stage of the consultation process. He explained that there are 2 stages of formal complaint. In the experience of the NLA these stages have not yet resolved major concerns. Proceeding to Tribunal once the formal complaint has not been upheld seems to have the most effective impact on NCC. In particular, it is important to keep clear evidence of all concerns. The NLA can advise on this if required.

There was discussion about what constitutes reasonable grounds for complaint, and how to make a complaint...having specific and clear grounds for complaint.

Examples were given on effective evidence...leaseholders had recently filmed dustbin cleaners who were seen putting stickers to say bins had been cleaned, without this work having been done or even bins being emptied. This filming gave clear evidence that charging for bin cleaning, on the occasion, was unfair. But Leaseholders were advised not to apply unrealistic standards regarding workmanship, for example, as a way of stalling a bill.

Jon also advised that when a Leaseholder receives a Section 20 estimate of an upcoming bill, then they need to start planning on how to pay it. The bill may be some years after the estimate, and it may not be the same as the estimate...but a bill will come, and will need to be paid. So Leaseholders were urged to use that 1-2-3 year period to make plans as to how to pay that bill.

Jon thanked all attendees, including James Laughlin from Watsons. Several members expressed an interest to attend the next committee meeting. The date, time, venue will be e mailed to those who left their details, in due course.

It was noted that the venue was accessible, warm, comfortable and central.

The next public meeting of the NLA will be the AGM at Norwich City Hall at some point during mid 2020. NLA will seek to inform members nearer the time.

Nov 21 2019.