

NHG

This paper has been prepared to stimulate discussion at the WDCO Board Meeting on 21st November 2024.

The Facts:

This last year the WDCO Board has spent a lot of time talking about:

- The sewage issue at Woodberry Grove (taken over 12 years to resolve)
- The service charge delays for the NHG social rented homes at Woodberry
- Late payments of credits due to tenants who had overpaid service charges for 2020/21
- The discovery of £1m of old unallocated costs delaying further the service charge completion and purportedly delaying repayments due to tenants
- The badly managed transition from Insite to Vital energy

And now we have the unexpected Phase 3 high rent charge and service charges only advised to tenants just before they were due to move in to their previously selected flat.

What do all of these things have in common..... **NHG**

Although one of the objects of WDCO is to provide a forum for the discussion of issues affecting the residents of Woodberry Down we should not have to constantly discuss the same issues. We need to understand why there are so many issues involving NHG and what can be done about it. The Social Rent Tenants are contractually tied to NHG and there has to be a means of resolving better the issues as they arise.

From the variety of points mentioned above it is clear that not just one but several areas of NHG have failed to provide the services that are expected of them as the leaseholder of all the new social rented homes.

- Their asset management division has not followed up timeously with the developer regarding faults in the sewage system be they related to bad design or bad build.
- Their service charge division does not appear to be efficient and effective
- Their energy supply team clearly did not ask to see and question in advance, the transition plans re the transfer from Insite to Vital
- Their rental division did not plan ahead and work well with their new tenants re their move into Phase 3 homes.

Questions for consideration

These issues affect large numbers of the residents at Woodberry so what can they do about this? Individually tenants no doubt have rights under their contract with NHG. But they would be more effective acting together on matters which affect a large number of residents.

- Who, if anyone, is responsible for managing the NHG /resident relationship on behalf of the Social Rent Residents as a whole? Does anyone on the WDCO Board know?

Residents have been moved to NHG from Council owned homes and so presumably the Council through the regeneration team has some responsibilities.

- Is there an agreement between the Council and NHG regarding the transition of social housing from the Council to NHG and the quality of the services they are to provide? If so, has the Council set any key performance indicators that should be measured and monitored regularly by the Council? Does anyone on WDCO Board know?

We know that NHG has had some financial difficulties and had to make large accounting provisions this last year resulting in a substantial loss. Subsequently there has been a major reorganisation within the Company, including staffing reductions and changes.

- What would happen to the rental tenants should NHG have further problems? Are there regulatory controls which would kick in? Are there options for homes to be transferred to another Housing association?

The NHG tenants at Woodberry Down need to know that someone is holding NHG to account and is monitoring and measuring their performance. The NHG tenants on this Estate surely need support from someone and there needs to be a clear path to escalate issues.

- **WDCO needs to raise these points with the Council and get clarification of responsibilities and ensure that the issues are taken up with a senior member of NHG rather than the more junior representatives that we see at WDCO meetings.**

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11 November 2024