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**Wellington Mills Housing Co-operative**

**General Meeting**

**Held on Wednesday 14th May 2025 at 7:15pm at the Oasis Academy**

**Present:** Peter Lane (PL, MC Co-Chair), Alistair Crosby (AC, MC Secretary, Minutes), Sheila Smith (SS, MC Assistant Secretary), Katie Barker (KB, MC member), plus 21 other residents*. This meets the quorum of 25 members.*

**In attendance:** Roseline Mann (RM, Estate Director), Lucy Sudbery (LS, Lambeth TMO Liaison Officer)

# Apologies for Absence and adjustments to the agenda

PL welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Richard Cunningham (RC, MC Co-Chair), Daniel Sincel (DS, MC member), Charlotte Axelson (CA, MC member), Maria Parry Burns and Martin Mulloy.

PL requested that item 7 in the published agenda (motion to approve WM taking control of communal ventilation) be taken after item 2 (approval of the minutes of the previous meeting), and that item 3 (oral report from the MC Chair) and item 5 (update on the Major Works) be taken together.

# 2. Request to approve the minutes of the General Meeting held on 26th September 2024, including matters arising not on the agenda

There were no corrections to the minutes, and they were **APPROVED** by a **VOTE** (Prop: Bryan Vermeulen (BV), Sec: Carole Donaghy (CD), In favour: 25, Against: 0, Abstentions: 0).

# 3. Motion to approve the Co-Op taking control of the maintenance of the communal ventilation system

PL introduced the discussion by stating that Lambeth currently charge approximately £14K annually for maintenance of the communal ventilation system for the sheltered flats. The size of the bill surprised the MC, given that the task is not arduous, and has not been performed well by Lambeth. The MC believes there is the opportunity to save the Estate and leaseholders money by taking this work in-house and has obtained two quotes (for £4,750 and £6,480, respectively) illustrating potential cost savings of at least 50%. To proceed, a variation of the Management Agreement is required, which requires (amongst other things) approval at a General Meeting.

Doug Wright (DW) queried whether a variation of the Management Agreement was required, as the Management Agreement already had this task as a Co-Op responsibility (even though Lambeth have in practice been responsible for the past 15-20 years). LS said she would check. A member of the audience thanked the MC for proposing this motion and said that he supported the motion. PL replied that there are surely other opportunities to save more money by taking over responsibilities from Lambeth.

The motion was put to a **VOTE** (Prop: Craig Leeper (CL), Sec: SS) and was **APPROVED** (In favour: 25, Against: 0, Abstentions: 0).

# 4. Update on the Major Works from the MC Chair

PL introduced the discussion by expressing exasperation with Lambeth’s oversight of the estate (a trivial but telling example was being denied access to our own boiler room). He then thanked the MC and the Major Works Sub-Group (in particular, its chair, DW) for their hard work over the last year. Communication with Lambeth has been difficult and discussions go frustratingly round in circles. PL believes that, despite Lambeth’s protestations, the money for the works is simply not there – he recently attended a meeting of TMO Chairs in which a list of upcoming major works was shown; WM was not on the list. At a recent meeting with the Capital Works group, Lambeth said that £100K had been allocated for this financial year but could not provide firm assurance for the remaining £3.7M. This was hardly reassuring. PL said he had written a robust reply on behalf of the MC after the most recent meeting with Lambeth (which was made available in the meeting). PL also expressed frustration that refurbishment of the windows was no longer being considered, although Lambeth had conceded to a test installation of new windows before the main works started, which was some good news.

DW said that Keegans (Lambeth’s surveyors) have priced window refurbishment, and that the first iteration of their report had recommended this option as the size of the casements pushes the tolerance of UPVC frames. DW shared PL’s worry that Lambeth will end up walking away from these works for a second time. We need a fallback option, and that piecemeal refurbishment of the windows, organised by the Co-Op, is a good choice. PL noted that it has been three years since Lambeth announced in an open meeting that works would start “this calendar year”, yet no works will happen until at least Spring next year. PL felt that we can easily maintain the cladding ourselves; if this continues to be neglected, the estate will start looking shabby. PL reassured the meeting that there is no intention to cut corners – everything must be done safely, but there are other options beyond what is being proposed by Lambeth. We have a dedicated Major Works group and are supported by our own surveyors (Landers and Associates). We do not want to repeat the disruptive “big bang” approach of the last major works.

BV said that he supported PL’s alternative course of action. PL replied that the MC needs residents’ continuing understanding and support. CL agreed that we all want the windows replaced, but in the end, we are limited by our relationship with Lambeth who are the freeholders of the estate. AC agreed that we are stuck for as long as Lambeth maintain that the works are in the plan and are budgeted for. Alexey Waskowski (AW) felt strongly that the Co-Op needed to take back control. PL agreed that we are currently limited by Lambeth being the freeholder and that ultimately, we might want to change that (and that there are emerging processes that could help us do that). Someone in the audience asked if we could seek legal advice. PL said that the MC is looking into this and that we have the authority from a previous GM to spend up to £25K on specialist advice regarding the upcoming works. CL said the key question about any future enfranchisement is what happens to the tenants. PL said he did not know the answer yet, but the MC is starting to explore these bigger questions. There was a request from the audience to present these options more formally at a future General Meeting. PL said that was the intention.

At a later point in the meeting, PL returned to this topic. He noted that there is also the issue of roof replacement and a lack of guarantees for past work done. It is clearly Lambeth’s intention to do roof replacement, window replacement and cladding renewal all at once, and that there is some logic to this. It would be difficult for the Co-Op to take on responsibility for major roof works as a fallback. If the works do go ahead as planned, Lambeth will need to consider resident needs sensitively.

# 5. Oral report from the Estate Director

RM provided the meeting with a brief update on office staffing and key performance indicators (KPIs). The office is currently fully staffed with a full-time Estate Director, part time Housing Officer and a part-time Housing Apprentice. After some problems earlier in the year, the office is now working well. The quarterly Management Accounts showed a £12K surplus, and RM will present the final accounts for the 2024/5 financial year (FY) at the September AGM. Our annual allowance from Lambeth is £255,571, but this is under review and may be increased. The MC currently has a vacancy for a Treasurer, which has not yet attracted any applicants. The Co-Op will have an internal audit from Lambeth in July or August, which will check on compliance with the recommendations of the last audit. RM will provide Lambeth with information for this year’s service charges in June, with provisional bills issued in September. So far there has been an underspend, which should be good news for hard-pressed leaseholders.

Turning her attention to KPIs, RM said the Lambeth targets were mostly unchanged. Until March, rent and service charge collection rates were well above target, but performance in April fell noticeably. RM pleaded with leaseholders to make sure that service charges are paid promptly and to the correct invoice number. However, regarding tenant repairs, we have exceeded the target set last year. RM asked that it is important to measure tenant satisfaction, so please take the time to return any feedback forms. The repairs contract was reviewed in 2023 so is not up for renewal this year. Cleaning and grounds maintenance standards remain high.

Regarding the scaffolding recently installed around Morley College (including on some WM flower beds), we have an agreement that any damaged vegetation will be replaced at Morley College cost.

In terms of resident engagement, More Welly continues to be published every two months, and we are always looking for feedback to make it better. We have also restarted tea and coffee mornings in the Large Playground now that the weather is warmer, which are a good opportunity for a chat with fellow residents.

Regarding estate improvements, RM said the following were planned for this FY: polishing the cladding, painting the metal fences and gates, deep cleaning the stairwells and landings, redefining the markings in the outside parking area, and replacing the broken parking bollards.

Finally, in terms of complaints and anti-social behaviour, RM noted the following. There have been complaints about cannabis smoking in Holst Court. RM said that she needs to hear reports immediately so she can catch the perpetrator in the act (similarly with reports of littering in the Oakey Lane stairwell). There have also been reports of dumping oversized rubbish in the bin rooms – please do not do this. Finally, due to some abuse of the parking spaces behind the Mead Row barrier, two new (unallocated) disabled parking bays will be created in front of the Mead Row barrier.

Nicolette Bagnall (NB) made a point about littering in Holst Court last week. RM said Abiy had already cleaned it up. PL noted that the service charge collection metric is a bit technical. LS said that the target is cumulative and is measured reliably; however, it is hard for WM to meet it as the figure of 105% assumes the existence of large service charge arrears, which is much less of a problem here than it is on other estates.

PL noted that the MC was also exploring the option of a leaseholder levy for cladding maintenance.

# 6. Update on Heating and Hot water System

RC has been leading this activity on behalf of the MC, but in his absence, PL gave a brief update. PL noted that the performance of the heating system had been poor since it was installed. It had been difficult to find agreed service standards, but the MC had tracked them down and could confirm that they were not being met. PL also noted that the boilers were nearing their official end of life, but that Lambeth had no plans for their replacement. PL thanked residents for continuing to log complaints with Lambeth and with the Estate Office – this data is essential if we are to make the case to Lambeth for poor performance. AC noted that our consultant (Green Building Design Consultants) is in the process of preparing a technical report on the performance of the system.

A member of the audience said they had been overcharged for the capital cost of the previous major works and for this reason supported more Co-Op control of the next round of major works.

# 7. Update on the Estate’s 50th Anniversary Celebrations

CA is leading the 50th Anniversary Group, but in her absence, AC gave a very brief update. The 50th Anniversary Group has been busy, with an exhibition in the Small Playground area organized in July, an ongoing oral history program, plans for a special website and plans for a larger celebration later in the year. The group were lucky to receive a £5,000 grant from the South Bank and Waterloo Neighbours forum to support their work, in addition to the funds agreed at the last General Meeting.

# 8. AOB

AC noted that MC elections were coming up and that there will be vacancies on the Committee. He reiterated the need to fill the post of Treasurer to be compliant with the Management Agreement, and that existing MC Officers are unable to take on a second role. He noted that the role of Treasurer was less scary than it sounds – the paperwork only takes about 1 hour a month, and we are supported by a professional accountant who prepares the quarterly and annual accounts. PL reflected on the value of being a MC member and said that we have some big challenges coming up. He then thanked everyone for coming and closed the meeting.

*Meeting finished at 8:15pm*