

# **Haringey Federation of Residents Associations**

## **Minutes of General Meeting, 5<sup>th</sup> September 2019 @ Green Rooms, N22**

**Present:** Lorna Reith (Ferry Lane Action Group); Chris Barker (Muswell Hill & Fortis Green Association); Joyce Rosser (Warner Estate RA); Geoff Amabilino (Woodlands Park Road RA); John Miles (Parkside/Malvern RA); Chris Hutton (Broadwater Farm RA); Victoria Sharkey (Bridge Renewal Trust and Bruce Grove Residents Network); Sue Penny (Clyde Area RA); Caroline Simpson (Bowes Park Community Association); Jacob Secker (Broadwater Farm RA); Paul Burnham (Partridge Way RA); Dave Morris (Flexmere Marshall Residents Group); Audrey Droisen (Page Green RA); Jason Beazley (Three Avenues RA). **Apologies:** Lauritz Hansen-Bay (Hampton Court RA). **Chairing:** Dave. **Minutes:** Joyce

### **1. Background to the meeting**

Dave Morris said that when the Federation had been set up in 2001 it was probably the only active borough-wide network of Haringey community groups. Until the last about 5 years ago it had been very active and highly influential, but in the last 2-3 years had fizzled out somewhat. In its prime it had helped launch a number of other borough-wide networks, some still ongoing eg Sustainable Haringey. At one time there were 180 RAs of which over 120 were on our email list but some of these have now closed down or become “virtual” (just email lists and/or social media) or the contacts need updating. Jacob Secker is HFRA representative on the London Tenants Federation, so now needs re-ratification. The most recent activities were a couple of years ago when the Federation did a survey of council notice boards which had been handed over to RAs (it found some still well used but others neglected and/or in poor condition). The Federation also discussed with council officers creating an online map of all Haringey RAs but this proved impractical so did not go ahead. Unfortunately the HFRA website has now closed, but we still have all the archive material and minutes of past meetings etc.

### **2. Housing issues and campaigns**

Jacob Secker introduced this discussion by describing the council’s proposals for council housing on 61 council-owned sites across the borough. In total it plans to build 1000 council homes and 400 private units (to fund the council homes). He said that these plans don’t involve demolition. Paul Burnham said that council should not demolish any structurally sound council housing (eg Love Lane estate). Lobbying and protests over the last 3-4 years, especially by Haringey Defend Council Housing (backed by HFRA and Unison), and the anti-HDV campaign, have had some effect in stalling and undermining the council’s previous developer-led demolition and redevelopment policy.

General concerns were expressed about the London Plan - high rise blocks (mostly private), lack of family size units, little genuinely affordable housing being built, lots of micro-units, inadequate child play space, separate private/social entrances (eg Altitude development by Hornsey station).

Broadwater Farm Estate will lose 200 homes (due to structural problems with 2 of the blocks) and be replaced by 400 but unknown how big flats will be.

Lorna Reith said that extra housing increases the Council’s council tax base, which is a key driver in recent decision-making since swingeing Government cuts to Local Authority grants - but will there be adequate primary care and other crucial services to back the tens of thousands of new homes planned? John Miles referred to concerns

about the Iceland site development site in Wood Green. Caroline Simpson was concerned that some family homes were being subdivided (small flats and HMOs). Another view put forward was that this might enable some local residents to buy them.

Finally Dave Morris said that privately rented property was a huge and growing chunk of local housing, and the most insecure, poor quality and exploitative – and high rents were forcing people out of the borough. In recent years there were local protests by campaigning groups such as Haringey Housing Action Group and a national tenants organisation Generation Rent was speaking out across the country with some success in forcing this matter onto the political agenda.

### **3. Planning issues and campaigns**

The council in 2016-7 revised its Local Plan and its Housing Strategy. The Our Tottenham network, which formed to oppose ‘top down’ demolition and redevelopment threats, has been supporting community-led groups, campaigns, ideas and plans for the area. That network led on challenges/amendments to the Local Plan, supported by Haringey Defend Council Housing and others. This was a big and exhausting uphill challenge.

Jacob Secker criticised the focus on just the number of housing units rather than the type and quality. There have been and continue to be some significant local community-led regeneration campaigns, eg Lordship Rec, Wards Corner, St Ann’s Redevelopment Trust (StART), Selby Trust, and the Crouch End and Highgate Neighbourhood Forums. Tottenham Civic Society and conservation committees continue to respond to planning applications and issues.

There are also very useful London-wide community networks such as Just Space, which Our Tottenham and other local groups have supported. The new London Plan is due to be published soon. Dave (re parks) and Paul (re council housing) had been invited to make representations during the official hearings. It was pointed out that councils these days have less resources and clout than previous decades, and so are dependent on developers to ‘deliver’. But what is their agenda and what are they delivering? Things that make maximum profits eg tower blocks everywhere?

Chris Barker referred to Mayor’s Transport Agenda promoting ‘healthy streets’ (more walking, cycling and greenery and less cars) which is reflected in Haringey’s Local Plan. Haringey Living Streets has recently been relaunched with a 70-strong meeting.

### **4. Public Services issues and campaigns**

Huge cuts and increased commercialisation and charges have been introduced in recent years following massive budget cuts by Central Government annually since 2010. Councils now have very limited budgets. Same with other services (NHS etc)

From 2011-2014 there were massive national protests, and strong local campaigns in most boroughs to defend services – here led by the Haringey Alliance for Public Services. However, with continuing government cuts it was hard to make a real difference and maintain the effort.

Haringey Friends of Parks Forum was cited as a good example of ongoing local defence of public services and standards, and they have recently decided to lobby and petition again for more resources for parks in order to halt the slide into financial crisis.

Audrey Droisen said that the recent introduction of charges for garden waste collections had led to people burning it in gardens, and others mentioned flytipping. Also there is no pro rata rate for paying for the brown garden-waste bins. It was agreed that the HFRA write to the Council asking that charge for garden waste collection is dropped or at least that there should be a pro rata rate (or that it starts from date when people pay for a bin).

Jason Beazley complained that notices are not being put on street trees which are due to be cut down. It was noted that the council is in the process of trying to recruit a third tree officer (in the past there have been four).

Major concern about cuts to (and lack of) youth services.

## **5. RA Reports**

*Ferry Lane Action Group* Lorna Reith, who is FLAG chair, said that 500 people came to their recent Eco Day. The Twentieth Century Society is likely to be doing a project on this historic estate. Local issues include garage rents, parking, repairs and the state of the River Lea.

*Warner Estate RA* Joyce Rosser said that the group is active with 350 people on its Yahoo group (messages about local news and recommendations for tradespeople), has an annual newsletter which goes to 650 households. 60 people attended its AGM with a speaker from the Safer Neighbourhood Team.

*Muswell Hill & Fortis Green Association* Chris Barker said that MHFGA is a civic society covering three wards. It has been going for 60 years. It has regular meetings and newsletters.

*Parkside Malvern RA* John Miles said that main recent concerns have been responding to the St Williams development plans for the old gasholder site, Wood Green Action Plan, and traffic on Wood Green High Road. Also growing problems associated with drug dealers and sex workers in part of their area. The RA has got funding for an artwork in the alley near Boots. They look after a number of planters and pockets of green.

*Broadwater Farm RA* Chris Hutton said that they meet monthly. There has been a lot of activity, including a Community Fun Day. Taking up issues of the residents, especially recently over the rebuilding of a couple of the blocks with structural problems.

*Bruce Grove Residents Network* Victoria Sharkey said that they have 1800 members on Facebook. A number of projects including "Last Elm" (Bruce Grove listed toilets) and Beautiful Bruce Grove. They are getting some more street trees. Most recent problem concerns the Elmhurst Pub (N17) where a leader of the racist organisation "Democratic Football Lads Alliance" is trying to take over the licence.

It was agreed that HFRA will support the petition on this. [Update – due to the resulting furore, the pub have since cancelled his tenancy]

*Clyde Area RA* Sue Penny said that they had a recent Play Street (street closed to traffic to enable kids to play). They are involved in Scrutiny Committee on Wards Corner and have protested to TfL in support of the market traders.

*Page Green RA* Audrey Droisen said that they have had meeting about local green spaces with the Regeneration Team. Continue to take up a range of local issues.

*Bowes Park Community Association* Caroline Simpson said that their newsletters go to 4000 homes, and they have very active social media. They have a summer picnic, a monthly market and a festival, and manage a community garden. They have litter picking volunteers. They have got funding for a new outdoor table tennis table. They sent warning to council about knives being sold at Haringey Market.

*Three Avenues RA* Jason Beazley said that their area is small (65 households) but active, and help lobby for a local green space. His daughter helps coordinate a large Friends group for public green spaces in Bounds Green.

*Partridge Way RA* Paul Burnham said that their recent concern has been about car parking charges on the council estate.

*Flexmere Marshall Residents Group* Not very active at the moment. Lobbying for improvements to a nearby unsafe road junction. Also taking up issues to do with local public greens between the housing.

## 6. Other networks

There are many other local grassroots networks these days which are worthy of support, including: Haringey Defend Council Housing, Our Tottenham, Haringey Friends of Parks Forum, Sustainable Haringey, Conservation Area Advisory Committees, Haringey Community Centres Network, and Haringey Living Streets. A range of documents and updates were circulated about the above networks. We also noted the London-wide Just Space, London Forum of Civic Societies, and London Tenants Federation (in Nov. there will be a Social Housing Conference).

## 7. Next steps for HFRA

It was agreed:

- this had been an excellent meeting and there was clearly a need to continue and to strengthen the HFRA
- to carry on using the email list (updating and adding to this) and to circulate information about news and events.
- Lorna Reith agreed to join the HFRA core group of Dave Morris (Secretary), Geoff Amabilino (Treasurer) and Joyce Rosser (Chair). Jacob Secker was re-affirmed as our rep with the London Tenants Federation.
- Possibility of HFRA YouTube channel – Audrey Droisen to draft proposal.
- Call another RAs’ meeting in 2020. The Green Rooms venue is a good location (in the centre of the borough) but aspects such as lighting need to be improved (this will be taken up).

## 8. Any other business

- a) **Extinction Rebellion** Joyce said that 7<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> September has been earmarked for a “North London Uprising” in Downhills Park and Turnpike Lane. [Update: around 500 attended]. Other XR events to follow responding to the climate emergency. Leaflets circulated.
- b) **Open House London** 21<sup>st</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> September
- c) **Brexit** Victoria said that Bridge Renewal Trust is working with council to support the 20,000+ EU nationals in Haringey and help them register on the EU Settlement Scheme. First event will be on 18<sup>th</sup> September at Chestnuts Community Centre. She distributed leaflets.