

# WORLD'S END NEWS

The newsletter of the **World's End Residents Association**

Spring 2018

## HOUSING MANAGEMENT TRANSFERS TO COUNCIL

**On the 1st of March 2018 the Council, the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea, finally took over the day-to-day management of all of its housing stock, over 9,000 homes, from the TMO.** The Council has stressed that the transfer is an interim measure pending the outcome of a full and proper consultation of all residents with regards to the future management of their homes. **Despite this the transfer was an event that had been eagerly awaited and much anticipated by many, many residents across the borough.**

The transfer of management responsibility also involved the transfer of a significant number of staff from the TMO to the Council. Staff that had previously been employed by the TMO are now employed by the Council. This was a legal requirement and one the Council could not easily avoid.

The Council also took ownership of Repairs Direct. Repairs Direct was a wholly owned subsidiary of the TMO created by the TMO to carry out responsive repairs to the housing stock. Repairs Direct, the company, is now owned by the Council and will be carrying out the same work for the Council.

The Council has also taken on most, if not all, of the TMO contracts. Contractors that had been previously employed by the TMO are now employed by the Council.

Many residents have mixed feelings about what has just happened. We, the Committee of the World's End Residents Association, have mixed feelings about what has just happened.

The Council have been reassuring residents and Resident Associations that these changes are for the better and that the services provided to residents will improve. We certainly hope this will prove to be the case.

### **However:**

Whilst many members of staff at the TMO have always acted in an entirely professional and ethical manner there can be little doubt that some have performed, and in some cases behaved, very poorly. There are few residents who do not believe that incidents of unprofessional, and in some cases immoral, behaviour were far too common at the TMO. The Council must act to deal with those members of staff whose past behaviour has provided ample evidence of their unsuitability for the posts they still occupy. It must identify and deal with all such "rotten apples" at the earliest possible opportunity. It risks falling at the first hurdle if it does not.

The Council has published plans detailing how it intends to address and remedy the serious deficiencies at Repairs Direct. These plans promise significant improvements in the responsive repairs service over the coming months. We hope these improvements are delivered as promised.

The Council has not indicated what action, if any, it intends to take with regards to the many contracts it has inherited from the TMO. Unfortunately many of the contractors involved have provided very poor services to residents for many years. Of all of the challenges facing the Council this may be the most serious – these contractors provide the bulk of the services received by residents, and many have become accustomed to providing those services on their terms and to the detriment of residents, the TMO having failed to ever manage or monitor them properly. The Council must act to ensure that all contractors deliver what they have signed up to do and, should they fail or refuse to do so, end their failing contracts at the earliest opportunity. Early signs are that some contractors are adapting to the changing circumstances but some are not. The Council should not hesitate in not renewing, perhaps terminating, the contracts of those who do not and replacing them with new contractors that will actually deliver the services required.

We hope that all of this represents a meaningful and long awaited improvement to the services provided by the Council to residents. The TMO had become an ineffective, inefficient, and uncaring organisation. It will not be missed. **The Council's challenge is to prove that it will be a better steward of its own housing, by both managing and maintaining its housing stock to a better standard and ensuring that the voice of residents is heard and, more importantly, listened to.** We therefore look forward to the Council's consultation on the future management of our homes that is due to begin shortly; it will be an ideal test of the Council's commitment to deliver all that it has promised.

# UPDATE ON COMMUNAL HEATING OUTAGES

**Blantyre Tower and its adjacent walkways have been suffering from particularly poor heating for the last couple of weeks.**

Some residents of the block and walkways have reported heating issues going back for several months. The most recent heating issues coincided with a period of particularly poor weather. Some residents in Blantyre Tower reported having so little heating that indoor temperatures in their flats were as low as 9C. This is significantly below the safe minimum indoor temperature recommended by organisations like Age Concern and put the most vulnerable residents living in these blocks at significant risk.

The WERA Committee met with representatives of the Council and the contractor, Engie, on the 15th of March to discuss the issues and how they might be resolved.

It became clear during these discussions that the estate's communal heating and hot water system has been neglected and is in need of significant remedial works. The full details of the proposed works are not yet available but initial estimates put the cost of these works at over £300,000. The works entail the replacement of many of the system's key valves, pumps and sensors to provide better monitoring and control and enable a greater level of automation than is currently possible.

Given the amount of funding required it is likely that the works will need to be tendered and leaseholders formally consulted before they can be carried out. Whilst it is hoped that the works might commence as soon as practically possible it has been made clear that this may not be for some time. The works might commence and be completed this summer, but they might not. If they do not it is likely that the issues with communal heating and hot water system will continue. The WERA Committee have asked the Council to take steps to minimise the impact on residents should this happen.

It does appear that the TMO wilfully neglected the estate's communal heating and hot water system over a period of many years and has done the same across much of the Council's housing stock given that many other blocks and estates are suffering from similar, if not more serious, issues with their communal heating and hot water systems. The TMO failed to replace key parts and components as they reached the end of their operational life and the end result is a communal heating and hot water system that has become increasingly difficult to manage and repeatedly fails to provide the estate's residents with a reliable supply of heating and hot water.

The Committee is however encouraged by the fact that the Council staff it met to discuss these issues, all of which have only recently been recruited into their posts, behaved in an open, honest and transparent manner and have promised to keep both the Residents Association and the estate's residents aware of all decisions and developments as they occur. **The Residents Association will post any and all updates on the estate's noticeboards and website as they are received.**

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## ABOUT THE WORLD'S END RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

**The World's End Residents' Association (WERA) was created to try to make the World's End Estate a better place in which to live for all residents.**

**WERA is completely independent of the Council (and TMO) and ALL residents of the estate can join.**

Should you have a problem or issue please feel free to contact WERA. WERA may be able to help.

You can contact WERA in writing at:

- **WERA Clubroom, 16 Blantyre Street**, (located between the Blantyre Centre and the Concierge);
- By telephone on **(020) 7795 3095** (answer machine, please leave a message); or
- By email at **wera@worlds-end.org.uk**.

You can find more information on both WERA and the World's End Estate on the World's End website at: **www.worlds-end.org.uk**.

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