

Rogate Parish Council – Chairman's letter

The Council would have postponed their June meeting given the high covid cases in the village but as the R&THA Special General Meeting was scheduled for the following day a decision had to be made on how the Parish Council were going to vote. The Council holds a single corporate share which entitles them to one vote. We were in an impossible situation – not wanting to hold a meeting but being unable to vote on behalf of the community if we didn't hold one. The previous week we had recommend to R&THA their meeting be postponed but unfortunately notice was only received ½ hour before our meeting so it was too late to change. Being fully aware of the difficult situation Councillors decided to proceed with the planned meeting while being as covid safe as possible by meeting outside and limiting the agenda to the one issue. Hopefully July can be a more normal meeting.

The board of R&THA are custodians of an important village asset Not many small communities have access to a pool of social housing. Many people gave both time and money to ensuring this resource was available.

The Council have been involved in discussions with both R&THA and PHA Homes Ltd (separately and together) as well as R&THA residents, members of the community and other shareholders. We ensured these discussions bought out in the open awareness that East Lodge will need to be redeveloped in the medium term as the building is aging and there have been problems reletting flats so there will come a time when it is no longer a viable operation. Any planning permission is likely to take several years and PHA would be required to compensate and rehome the residents. However, we are reassured there are no immediate plans to redevelop East Lodge site but accept if the proposed transfer goes ahead the planning process is likely to start quite quickly.

As a direct result of our discussions with PHA they have agreed:

- the Parish Council can nominate somebody to sit on their board for a period of 3 years. The council unanimously agreed to nominate John Craven to PHA to fill this position.
- A group of 4 members of the community can help with redevelopment plans to provide a local voice.
- Local allocation policy (for Rogate residents and their families) will be strengthened but it is not exclusive so properties will be offered to people outside of the village
- East Lodge is classed as 'social housing' as such it can't be let to people who sell a property elsewhere – they have to be able to meet the financial criteria for social housing (which we understand has not always been the case but is the law).

We (together with START) tried very hard to get R&THA to look at alternative options, especially any to allow the community to retain the freeholds; regrettably they were unwilling and no alternative options were considered, analysed, mentioned or discussed within the final transfer proposal statement. It is sad that a full analysis report of the alternatives was not produced; possibly a missed opportunity, we may never know.

After much discussion the meeting unanimously decided to vote against the proposed transfer of **property and engagements of Rogate and Terwick Housing Association (R&THA) to PHA Homes Ltd (PHA)** and issued the following statement:

Rogate Parish Council's position has always been clear. In order to support R&THA and to vote in favour of the proposed transfer of property and engagements to PHA Homes Ltd, the Council has wanted to be sure that all options have been fully considered with due diligence.

We appreciate the work that R&THA has done over the years, and the support given more recently by PHA Homes Ltd. However, the lack of information provided by R&THA, and their poor communications have resulted in our decision to vote against the proposal at the shareholders' meeting next week as we do not believe all options have been considered.

Our decision in no way reflects on PHA Homes, and we recognise that the present proposal might well lead to a good route forward.

We suggest that any future proposal should be supported by an independent evaluation of options, including a local consultation. We hope that this will enable the Parish Council to support a future proposal.

By the time this article is read the fate of R&THA will have been voted on and the new phase in the life of R&THA may have started.

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