**Secretary’s Report to LFHC AGM 2016**

This year has been an interesting one for LFHC. There has been both more and less consultation and far more threats to housing co-ops (and social housing in general) through legislation than we have seen for many years. It has been a busy year, though at times there seems to have been little to show for the effort. The year also saw another grass roots group, London Coop Housing Group, set up to combat the Housing and Planning Bill and we aim to work with them to engage their enthusiasm and not squander the links that have been made.

1. **Housing and Planning Act**  
   This act has now become law. There will be a full briefing in the discussion forum which follows the AGM, but it is possible that this will be part of a longer term strategy against social housing. LFHC will need to keep members abreast of developments and look for opportunities to develop new housing.
   1. **Ownership Co-ops**  
      In the short term, the main threat to co-ops that own their properties is financial, as if they are registered with the HCA there will be pressure to reduce rents, whether that matches their business plan or not. Most of the worst aspects of the act – pay to stay, right to buy and short term tenancies will not apply.
   2. **Management Co-ops**  
      The details will depend on the terms of tenancies and management agreements, but where members are tenants of the landlord and not the co-op, then it is likely all of the provisions of the act will apply and this could cripple some management co-ops over time, depending on how issues such as tenancy reviews are implemented. Other elements, such as pay to stay will either apply as they will elsewhere, or else will be so difficult to manage that they are never implemented within the life of this Parliament. TMOs, depending on which responsibilities they manage, may benefit from an agreed approach to councils to vary agreements in a way that matches TMO needs.
   3. **Short Life Co-ops**  
      If short-life co-ops are affected it will most likely be over individual properties based on very fact-specific cases. We are not aware of any ways in which short life co-ops would be affected, unless they are themselves registered providers.
2. **Events**  
   This year we held one very successful and exciting whole day conference on new cooperative housing that was being developed in London as well as the options for generating energy on our estates to reduce fuel poverty. We held a forum in February on the Housing and Planning Bill that attracted many new faces. There was also the forum on asset management that followed last year’s AGM. That is the full complement of scheduled events, but as ever we do need members to tell us which areas they need support in.
3. **Other Issues During the Year**
   1. **Rules**  
      We have had some contacts from members of co-ops who wish to change or update their rules, some of whom have very unusual provisions adopted many years ago to deal with issues long since past. There are groups that wish to consider different stakeholder models, such as to allow tenants of sub-letters to participate without the co-op taking on a liability to rehouse them if their tenancy ends and also possible new groups that need a model which allows the wider community to have a stake while allowing residents to manage their homes. We are in communication with the FCA mutuals register about this.
   2. **Sharing Policies**  
      This will be discussed at the discussion forum after the AGM, but with ongoing changes to legislation and court decisions co-ops many co-ops are keen to review policies in a robust way which will withstand challenge, but still allow co-ops to make decisions about their properties and members. This will be ‘ongoing’ for some time.
4. **Partners**
   1. **London Tenants Federation**LFHC is a member of LTF. We work closely with them on policy matters around London development. They also have a project supporting communities in specific development areas to respond effectively to planning questions during extended ‘regeneration’ projects.
   2. **Co-ops London**LFHC is a member of Co-ops London and the Secretary is one of their directors. This forum allows better links between the housing co-operative movement and the rest of the co-operative movement. One recent project has been a series of networking meetings for people working in social and co-operative enterprises to find contacts who can help build their businesses. This is based on the sixth co-operative principle and is called “Making Good Contracts through Good Contacts.”
   3. **CCH**  
      CCH is a national body that seeks to represent the interests of mostly ownership housing co-operatives. During the year, two members of the LFHC exec were on the CCH board. Communication has continued between CCH and LFHC. CCH operates on a national level and LFHC provides services to all forms of tenant controlled housing in London.
   4. **Just Space, Locality, LVSC and Others**   
      There are a number of other groups that we work with, without any formal links. Close working with them widens the range of ‘intelligence’ that we have on the housing scene in London. It also keeps housing co-operatives at the heart of thinking of those who organise within their communities.  
      Just Space has been working on an alternative ‘London Plan’, separate to that produced by the previous Mayor.
5. **Online Presence**  
   The LFHC website has continued to be updated periodically, largely with information about meetings and the presentations (when available) given at events. Current events have largely been reported on via the LFHC Facebook **group** which has been growing steadily. Reports are also then shared through other related FB groups and wider.
6. **Progress Against Targets last year**
   1. Develop useful documents to support good co-op governance.  
      *The housing and planning bill overshadowed other areas of work, but we are working with other groups to promote this. The only document actually shared was the Code of Conduct however, so this will remain a target.*
   2. Promote and formalise good working with other partners, such as NFTMO.  
      *We formed a group with LTF, NFTMO and others to work on issues around the housing and planning bill, including advice for groups and individuals.*
   3. Continue to influence planning and development guidance in London through the London Plan and London Housing Strategy.  
      *We engaged with the London Strategic Housing Partnership through LTF, but otherwise the mayoral elections meant that there were fewer ways to meaningfully affect policy.*
   4. Develop a feasibility plan for at least one potential co-op housing development and support others doing the same.  
      *We held a one day conference and invited three groups developing community/co-op housing to speak. We are in talks with groups in some London boroughs, but these are at early stages.*
   5. Hold regular events throughout the year with a calendar set well in advance.  
      *We held the meetings that were scheduled at the last AGM, but have still to set the same for the coming year.*
7. **Target Areas for the Next Year**
   1. Develop useful documents to support good co-op governance.  
      *On the basis of principles established at the AGM, useful documents will be shared.*
   2. Clarify suitable model rules for different communities’ situations.  
      *Where suitable models are not available, discuss with the mutuals register what might be possible in future sponsored rules.*
   3. Promote and formalise good working with other partners, such as NFTMO.  
      *Agree more formal relations, possibly including named contacts who may attend meetings.*
   4. Continue to influence planning and development guidance in London through the London Plan and London Housing Strategy.  
      *We will seek to engage with the new Mayor, Sadiq Khan, and whatever structures he develops.*
   5. Develop a feasibility plan for at least one potential co-op housing development and support others doing the same.  
      *Continue working with the Blue Sky group, liaise with others doing the same and meet with local groups, providing advice and support with suitable structures and options.*
   6. Hold regular events throughout the year with a calendar set well in advance.  
      *There will be a whole day conference in late autumn and a discussion forum in early February. Dates, including for the next AGM, are still to be set. These will be published following the September Exec meeting at the latest.*

Greg Robbins  
Secretary  
June 2016