

**SPEECH FOR 40th Anniversary
EVENT
9th November
2011**

Good evening and can I begin by welcoming so many people here this evening to celebrate this important milestone for our organisation.

My name is Bob Smytherman and I am a leaseholder and have been for 20 years in addition I am also an RMC Director and Chairman of the purpose built development in West Sussex where I still live today. It is as a result of this role within my own block that I first became aware of the FPRA just a few years ago and I am incredibly proud to stand here today as the current Chairman

To celebrate 40 years as part of the 'Big Society' of leaseholders and the only national body representing the interests of long leaseholders in England & Wales which we do via their own Residents Associations, Resident Management Companies, Right to Manage Companies or similar group.

We were established in 1971 as a voluntary non political, non- profit making organisation to represent long leaseholders and share knowledge and help each other as it is rare that any problem is completely new and Someone has usually seen the problem before and come up with a solution to it.

Our first Chairman was Salmon James who lived Playfair Mansions and was appointed in Nov 1971 when we were called the Federation of London County Residents' Associations formed to encourage formation of RAs to co-ordinate residents' response to new landlords then entering market. One of the earliest publications for members was a guide to the recognition of Residents' Associations. This has been updated and is still available today. In 1972 with lobbied the then Government for a change in the law with regards to service charges, ownership of blocks of flats , self-management, licensing of landlords and right to withhold service charges. In 1974 we became Federation of Private Residents' Associations and the Housing Act 1974 was passed for the 1st time in law allowing leaseholders to challenge service charges if unreasonable and setting specific performance standards for landlord's repairing covenants as a result of our lobbying. We published for members guides on the Housing Finance Act 1972 and produced a Standard constitution for Residents' Associations

Moving in to the 80's the Housing Act 1980 was passed which improved the provisions as to reasonableness of service charges and gave the right to statutory recognition of residents' associations and Philippa Turner one of our original committee members produced the First "Legal Jottings" in Newsletter which is still hugely popular with our members today.

Thank You Philippa.

We produced the first edition of our Information Pack and published a guide titled "Disputes between residents and managing agents"

In 1982 we submitted evidence to the RICS for Code of Management which was published in 1983 incorporating some FPRA suggestions.

In 1984 the Federation represented tenants in blocks of flats on the Government commissioned Nugee Committee to advise on further legislation and the GLC Committee on the Private rented sector.

And one of members represented here today (Queens Club Gardens) was the first to purchase the freehold.

In 1986 FPRA became a Limited Company and the Nugee Report published resulting in the Landlord & Tenant Act 1987 adopting most of its

Recommendations.

In 1989 a report on the introduction of Commonhold was submitted to Government.

Moving in to the 1990's we participated in the consultation on Commonhold proposals and published "Guidelines on Self Management".

In 1993 as a result of lobbying by FPRA and others 1993 Leasehold Reform Housing & Urban Development Act passed for the first time enabling purchase of freeholds and extension of leases even when landlord is opposed.

Our last Chairman Muriel Guest –Smith's block Brendon House purchased freehold and the FPRA celebrated our 21st birthday at the Lansdown Club.

And the FPRA were invited as sole leaseholder representative to join the board of new government- funded advisory service (LEASE) a role which our very own Robert Levene holds today following a recent re-appointment by the

Current Housing Minister Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP who sadly was unable to join us to celebrate this milestone.

Also in 1993 we published "Running a block of flats" and Management Pack

In 1996 we contributed to government consultation on the Housing Bill and got a mention on BBC TV "First Sight" series

We held a meeting with official Japanese delegation inquiring into working of leasehold system and a "Participation Agreement" settled by counsel made available to our members.

The "Collective Right to Purchase" was also published.

In 1997 we gained a concession from Land Registry that copies of leases would, on request, be released whenever possible and the RICS Code of Practice was

Published with input from FPRA incorporated

Also in that year we published the First new style Newsletter which is still very well received by our members today. Thank You Amanda.

In 1998 we produced a submission to a government consultation on tax and on company law and were represented on government working party on reform of 1993 and 1987 Acts and introduction of Commonhold.

And had article published in the Financial Times.

We also published our First edition of "Summary of Rights".

In 1999 we published "Notes on Land Registry practice" and "Notes on Inquiries by prospective purchasers".

And we employed a Part-time legal adviser to assist members

Moving in to the new millennium in 2000 we were represented on a local panel to license managing agents and on a seminar on residential management companies.

We published an "Information pack for sellers' solicitors"

In 2001 we launched our Website which is now the most popular way for leaseholders to contact us and a vital resource for members to keep up to date of developments between newsletters. Thank You Stephen Guy for all your work in this regard.

In 2002 Commonhold & Leasehold Reform Act passed taking into account many of FPRA suggestions.

In 2003 Government invites input from FPRA as each section of 2002 Act is brought into force.

We issued responses to the Law Commission inquiry into termination of tenancies by default and Objection to Inland Revenue consultation paper on taxation of Trust funds.

In 2004 we responded to Law Commission proposals on forfeiture And consultation on accounting for leaseholders' monies and we continue to lobby to safeguard service charge funds.

In 2005 we responded to Land Registry consultation on prescribed information in leases and our FPRA's legal adviser contributes chapter to major textbook on Commonhold.

We produced a useful Flow chart to show Rights of members of Residential Management Companies.

In 2006 we successfully obtained a reduction in price of latest edition of RICS Code of Practice from £30 to £12.50.

We had discussions with Law Commission on dispute resolution between residents and our newly designed website with "members only" section.

The FPRA are represented on the National User Group of the Residential Property Tribunal Service and we continue to do so today.

In 2007 we wrote to then Prime Minister and to leaders of the three main political parties concerning failure to consider impact of new legislation on the private leasehold sector received some positive responses

We issued a response to consultation on regular statements of accounts and to Companies Registrar in respect of striking off inactive companies.

Resulting from lobbying by FPRA and others, tax rate on sinking funds capped at 20% rather than the previous 40% maximum.

In 2008 we joined the Housing expert group advising Digital UK on Switchover and I delighted to welcome Frances Kneller from DUK today. We issued a response to the consultation on proposed changes to discrimination legislation which has now become the Equality Act 2010 and as a result of our concerns of the impact on 'common parts' the Government is still considering how to implement this aspect of the new law.

The FPRA launched a campaign to take into account particular needs and problems of blocks of flats in implementing Green Energy proposals and the lack of grants for flat-owners and joined forces with others on the End Fuel Poverty Coalition in 2009 and most recently participated in the working group with the Department of Energy and Climate Change on the barriers facing leasehold blocks of flats when accessing the Green Deal which is included in the new Energy Act given Royal Assent last month.

We continue to lobby for electricity disconnection protocol for the common parts of blocks of flats and for special treatment of blocks of flats who want to access the Green Deal.

We have represented leaseholders on DCLG working group on Rugg Review proposals to introduce regulation of managing agents. And responded to consultation with RICS on transparency of insurance commissions.

I have also represented the FPRA on BBC Watchdog, Rip off Britain and Radio Kent.

We have helped persuade the Sky Switchover Team to provide especially- tailored assistance for Residents' Associations in blocks of flats and I am most grateful for them for being our headline sponsor for tonight's event.

As result of FPRA and others the Office of Fair Trading have set up review of transfer fees in retirement sector.

Last year we issued OUR Manifesto of 3 demands and sent to leaders of three main parties in the run- up to the general election.

This year we have worked with LEASE and attended advice sessions with local MP's in West Hamstead and Walthamstow at leaseholder meetings. We were part of a reference group responsible for advising on the new Fire Safety guidance for common parts of blocks of flats that was published this summer.

As a result of our publication 'Forgotten Leaseholders' this year which featured a summary of our proposals for reform of the leasehold sector to the Law Commission. On Monday just this week [Baroness Gardner of Parkes](#) tabled a question to Her Majesty's Government to ask whether they will consolidate all Landlord and Tenant legislation.

Finally, we are currently campaigning for an exemption for leaseholders and their visitors from the wheel-clamping ban on private land as part of the Protection of Freedom Bill and as a result I have been elected to represent landowners on the British Parking Association (Approved Operator Scheme) and we have secured support from former Tory Chairman Norman Tebbit for our amendment to be tabled during the Lords stage of the Bill later this month.

Thank you to all our sponsors for supporting this prestigious event which I hope you will all enjoy and benefit from the advice available

Can I recommend that you visit the Leasehold Advisory Service stand which is a Government funded advice service and which provides excellent help for leaseholders.

Thank you for listening to me, please visit our FPRA stand and see how we can help you, the cost of membership is discounted for those joining as a result of tonight's event and receive the many benefits including free legal advice, you will find a leaflet all about us in your delegate pack and there are sample newsletters and other information available from our display stand

Thank you.