

**MINUTES OF THE 2009 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
FEDERATION OF PRIVATE RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATIONS LTD
Held on Tuesday 22 September 2009 in the Gulbenkian Room of the Park Crescent
Conference Centre, International House, 1 Park Crescent, London W1B 1SH**

Present: FPRA Executive Committee Members: Robert Smytherman (Chairman); Robert Levene (CEO), Michael Derome (Hon Treasurer); Philippa Turner & Muriel Guest-Smith

In Attendance: Nick Roberts (Legal Adviser); Ann Ellson (Hon Consultant); Yashmin Mistry (Hon Consultant); Nic Shulman (Hon Consultant); Leigh Shapiro (Hon Consultant); Amanda Gotham (Newsletter Editor); Stephen Guy (Website Editor);.

Anthony Essen (Chief Executive of LEASE, the Government Leasehold Advisory Service); Frances Kneller of Digital UK

Members representing 27 associations were present, as were several representatives from other organisations.

1. Confirmation of a quorum: The Chairman confirmed this was so.

2. Apologies for absence: were received from 12 residents' associations, from Richard Williams (Vice Chairman); Lord Coleraine (Hon Consultant); Richard Williams (Vice-Chairman); Martin Redman (Hon Consultant); Paul Masterson (Hon Consultant); Andrew Pridell (Hon Consultant); Andrew McKeer (Hon Consultant); Peter Haler (Hon Consultant); Simon Llewellyn (DCLG); Peter Bottomley MP; Caroline Spelman MP; & several other MPs.

3. Chairman's opening remarks: The Chairman welcomed everyone to the AGM. He said that this time last year was his first AGM as Chairman and he had made two key pledges.

The first was to raise the FPRA's profile with the media. This had resulted in issuing a number of press releases and making new contacts among property journalists to help widen the appeal of the Federation. He was invited to represent the Federation on BBC Watchdog to discuss the issue of property management. He had provided a number of leasehold stories to national newspapers and this is something he hoped to continue during the next 12 months.

The second pledge was to increase FPRA's influence with Government and other decision makers. He had represented the Federation on the Digital UK Housing Expert Group which included being invited to the House of Commons to address the All-party Digital Switchover group to inform MP's of the issues being faced by those of us living in leasehold flats.

He had also represented the Federation at the Department for Energy and Climate Change consultation to discuss the Government's Community Energy Savings Programme. The Federation also joined the End Fuel Poverty coalition lobby group campaigning for changes to the law to prevent people from falling in to fuel poverty.

He had been invited to represent the Federation on a Government 'Task & Finish' group with Civil Servants from DCLG and other practitioners looking into providing a regulation scheme for property managers. Stephen Guy represented the Federation at the RICS consultation and Nic Shulman gave a well received presentation at the LEASE annual conference. Yashmin Mistry, one of legal advisors at the FPRA, had being awarded Regional Solicitor of the Year at The recent Enfranchisement awards.

The Chairman welcomed back to the committee Muriel Guest-Smith. He thanked Rowena Wilson, who had stepped down from the committee since the last AGM, for all her work on behalf of the Federation, especially her work on the Discrimination Law Review as part of the new Single Equalities Bill that would soon become law.

He thanked all the committee members and consultants for their hard work and commitment to the Federation during the past twelve months, especially Robert Levene and the admin staff for managing such a smooth transfer from Colchester which took place just before last year's meeting. Robert had kept the technical difficulties to a minimum so members could continue to receive the quality service they rightly expect. Finally, he thanked all members for their patience during Robert's recent illness.

4. Chief Executive's Report: Robert Levene introduced himself as the volunteer CEO of FPRA, a role to which he was reappointed last year. In addition, he was in charge of the admin office, which is a 'paid for' service subcontracted to RL Business Consultancy Services. The office deals with all the day-to-day routine matters of running the organisation, dealing with new members, renewing memberships, preparing and sending out our publications, organising, preparing and sending out four newsletters a year and dealing with the numerous enquiries that are received every day. The office typically receives between 20 and 30 phone calls, emails and letters every single day and is extremely busy.

The office is open on four or five mornings a week with Claire, Diane and Jacqui, who do a job share and are efficient and helpful. Also Karen works on an ad hoc basis on the computers and systems.

He said the FPRA had worked hard to keep the fees as low as possible, however, like many other organisations, the FPRA was seriously suffering in the recession, with around 100 members failing to renew. New members were joining, although not at the same rate, and he urged all members to try to recruit at least one new member to join so that FPRA could continue to help leaseholders and continue to have some influence when it comes to matters of legislation.

Current membership was around 530 compared to about 630 last year.

Robert thanked the admin staff, Stephen Guy for his help on the website, Amanda Gotham and Sarah Phillips for their help in editing and preparing the newsletter, Nick Roberts our legal adviser, who had also been a great help this year with drafting responses to consultations. These included the RICS consultation on Transparency on Professional Fees, the Department of Communities consultations on RTE companies, the response to the Rugg review on professionalism and quality in the sector, and in addition to this, we have responded to over a dozen other consultations and discussions. It had just been announced that the Office of Fair Trading was to carry out a major review into unfair lease transfer fees in the retirement sector following FPRA's approach on this issue. Robert especially thanked everyone involved during his recent absence of nearly three months with heart problems and all the people who were kind enough to send get well messages.

The chairman, committee and consultants - all honorary (unpaid) - had put in a tremendous amount of work over the last 12 months. They had answered around 250 questions from members seeking help and, in particular, the Chairman had attended numerous meetings with other organisations. The committee and consultants had also contributed most of the content of our newsletters, and he especially thanked the Chairman and Philippa Turner for her very interesting legal digest.

Robert said he continued to represent leaseholders' interests by attending the Residential Property Tribunal Service, (better known as the Leasehold Valuation Tribunal or LVT), national user group, as well as being appointed by the Government as a non executive director of the Leasehold Advisory Service (LEASE). He welcomed the chief executive of LEASE Tony Essen to the AGM.

5. Approval of the minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on September 23, 2008: These were approved with one amendment proposed by David Hill of Cedar Court (Sutton) Management: that the word "to" be removed from the following section of 10. Any Other Business: "FPRA was asked to for an annual report...." With this amendment the minutes were unanimously agreed, proposed by Sheila Eustace of 13-45 Engadine Close (Freehold) Limited and seconded by Roger Southcott of Malford Court Leaseholders' Association.

6. Hon Treasurer's Report: Mike Derome said that both income and expenditure were up by £10,000. There was a £24,000 total retained surplus. The main source of income was subscriptions. The extra business this year was reflected in the accounts – phone, postage, consultancy and legal fees were all costing more, as well as the website, as it should. It was a good set of figures, but having lost 100 members, FPRA needed an extra cushion, which it had. Mike pointed out an error in the accounts regarding the year quoted on page 3 should read 2009 not 2007 and with this amendment, formal approval of the accounts was unanimously agreed, proposed by Muriel Guest-Smith and seconded by Philippa Turner.

7. To authorise the Directors to appoint Auditors for the coming year: A member asked if £1,800 was not a lot for the auditors' fee, Mike Derome said he did not consider this expensive. He added that although it would be allowable to dispense with auditors, subject to formal vote, the committee felt this would not be appropriate. Mike Derome proposed the motion without change; this was seconded by Muriel Guest-Smith and adopted unanimously. Colin Cohen would supply details of two alternative firms of accountants for other quotations.

8. To elect and reappoint officers to serve on the Executive Committee: Mike Derome was reappointed Hon Treasurer; Stephen Guy was elected to the committee and Muriel Guest-Smith was re-elected to the committee. The proposer was Sheila Eustace of 13-45 Engadine Close (Freehold) Limited. The seconded was Ann Ellson and approval was unanimous.

9. To transact any other ordinary business of which due notice has been given. Nothing had been received.

10. Any Other Business: There being no other business, the Chairman thanked everyone for attending.

Formal business ended at 7.35pm. There then followed a question-and-answer session in which committee members responded to issues raised from the floor. A report will be given in the newsletter.