

Chairman's Annual report to members

Good evening and welcome to another AGM of the Federation in particular a special welcome to our guests who have taken the time to be with us this evening.

This time last year was my first AGM as Chairman and I made two key pledges to you.

The first was to raise our profile with the media which has resulted in issuing a number of press releases and making new contacts among property journalists to help widen the appeal of the Federation. I certainly didn't expect during my first year to be invited to represent the Federation on BBC Watchdog to discuss the issue of property management.

As well my new TV career I have provided a number of leasehold stories to national newspapers and this is something I hope we can continue to expand on during the next 12 months.

The second pledge was to increase our influence with Government and other decision makers and I am pleased to have been able to represent 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, sadly only two MP's turned up to listen to what I had to say so the meeting was cancelled, however I have continued to inform the Government and the other parties spokespeople of the issues we face ahead of Switchover.

I have also represented the Federation at the Department for Energy and Climate Change consultation to discuss the Governments Community Energy Savings Programme and managed to ask the Minister Lord Hunt whether the Government would making changes to leasehold law to make it easier for those of us living in private leasehold properties to carry out energy efficiency measures such as cavity wall insulation which many of us are excluded from due to the terms of our lease. I am still waiting for the answer!

The Federation also joined the End Fuel Poverty coalition lobby group who are campaigning for changes to the law to prevent people from falling in to fuel poverty and I have attended meetings at Consumer Focus to discuss how can get commitment from Government and Opposition parties ahead of the next election.

Most recently and partly as a result of the BBC Watchdog programme I have been invited to represent the Federation on a Government 'Task & Finish' group with Civil Servants from DCLG and other practitioners looking in to providing a regulation scheme for property managers and we will continue to inform you about the progress with these issues in future newsletters and on our newly improved web-site thanks to Stephen Guy.

Philippa and I also met with David Hewitt from ARMA to discuss mutual areas of interest.

Stephen also represented the Federation at the RICS consultation event and Nic Shulman kindly gave a presentation at the Lease annual conference this year which I am told was very well received by those present.

Nic has also invited me to be one of the judges for the News on the Block Property management awards later in the year and I would encourage you to nominate your own associations for either porter of the year or self managed block of the year or one of the many other categories.

I am pleased to announce that Yashmin Mistry one of legal advisors at the FPRA has been awarded Solicitor of the Year at The recent Enfranchisement awards (Our own Robert Levene was one of Judges along with The President of Law Society & Head of RICS residential.

I would like to welcome back to the committee Muriel and thank her for allowing us to use her flat for committee meetings.

I would like to thank Rowena who stepped down from the committee since the last AGM

for all her work on behalf of the Federation especially the work she did on the Discrimination Law Review as part of the new Single Equalities Bill that will soon become law.

I would also like to thank all of the committee members and our 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 years meeting and has resulted in a number of technical difficulties , which thanks to Robert have been kept to a minimum so our members can continue to receive the quality service they rightly expect and finally thank you to all of you for your patience during Robert's recent illness which did result in some delays with providing advice to members.

Bob Smytherman