

## SPEECH BY ROBERT LEVENE FOR FPRA AGM 22 September 2009

For those who do not know me, my name is Robert Levene and I am making this speech in my capacity as the volunteer CEO of FPRA, a role I was reappointed to last year. In addition, I am also in charge of the admin office which is a 'Paid for' service subcontracted to RL Business Consultancy Services. The admin 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; indeed the admin office typically, receives between 20 and 30 phone calls, emails and letters every single day and is extremely busy.

We open the office four or five mornings a week with Claire, Diane and Jacqui, who do a job share and, who fortunately for me, are extremely efficient as well as very helpful, as I am sure the members who contact them, would agree. We also have Karen who works on an ad hoc basis on our computers and systems.

We have worked hard to keep the fees as low as possible, however, FPRA like many other organisations is seriously suffering in the recession, with around 100 members failing to renew. We are gaining new members, although not at the same rate, and therefore I would urge all members to try and recruit at least one new member to join us so that we can continue to help more and more leaseholders and continue to have some influence when it comes to matters of legislation.

Our currently membership is around 530 compared to about 630 last year.

I'd like to record my thanks to not only the admin staff but also 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 has also been a great help this year with drafting some of our responses to consultations. These have included the RICS consultation on Transparency on Professional Fees, the Department of Communities consultations on RTE companies, our response to the Rugg review on professionalism and quality in our sector, and in addition to this, we have responded to over a dozen other consultations and discussions. It has just been announced that the Office of Fairtrading is to carry out a major review into unfair lease transfer fees in the retirement sector following our approaching them on this issue. I would especially like to thank everyone involved during my recent absence of nearly three months with heart problems as well as thanking all the people who were kind enough to send get well messages.

I'm sure most of the membership appreciates that our chairman, committee and consultants are all honorary (that means unpaid) and have put in a tremendous amount of work over the last 12 months. They have answered around 250 questions from members seeking help and in particular, our chairman has attended numerous meetings with other organisations as documented in his report. The committee and consultants have also contributed most of the content of our newsletters, but I have most especially to thank our chairman and also Philippa Turner for ever popular and very interesting her legal digest.

I continue 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 and I am particularly pleased to welcome their chief executive, Tony Essen and ..... here today.

I'm happy to answer any questions, thank you for listening.