

Tanhouse Action Group

Review and Action Plan

Friday, 15 July 2016

SUMMARY

This document reviews the activities of the Tanhouse Action Group for the years 2014-15 and 2015-16 and proposed future activities.

In particular it reviews the group's role as a tenants and residents' group and its past and future relationship with West Lancashire Borough Council.

The contents of this document are:

1. Background to the Tanhouse Action Group
2. Future role of TAG
3. The Year 2014-15
4. The Year 2015-16
5. The Year 2016-17
6. Conclusion and Next Actions
7. Appendices

1. BACKGROUND TO THE TANHOUSE ACTION GROUP

The Tanhouse Action Group Society Limited was formed as the Tanhouse Estate Management Board Limited in 1993 to provide the services of an Estate Management Board for the Tanhouse 1 and 2 estates, under the terms of an Estate Management Agreement approved by the then Secretary of State.

The Society has charitable status as an Industrial and Provident Society and is registered with the Financial Conduct Authority, to which the Society has to make an annual return. The Society has some 253 members, who joined by paying a £1 fee.

Funding and offices for the Estate Management role were provided by West Lancs council, out of the Housing Revenue Account.

The Estate Management Board was created at a time when most properties the estates were owned by the Council, who were then undertaking a major project of refurbishment.

The Council worked in partnership with the EMB, with a number of staff seconded including caretakers, and reports were presented by council officers at monthly meetings of the EMB, who were consulted on the refurbishment work and other projects. Tenants were actively interested in the work of the EMB, because they could see things happening on the estates.

The members of the EMB understood that their eventual role would be to manage the estates on behalf of the Council, and members attended a number of training courses in their own time with a view to acquiring the necessary skills for this role.

In recent years the situation has changed:

- the proportion of properties on the estates owned by the Council has decreased as many tenants exercised the Right to Buy and other properties passed into the hands of private or social landlords. Only approximately half of the properties in Tanhouse are now owned and managed by the Council.
- the Council has progressively reduced its involvement with TAG, removing the seconded staff, ceasing monthly reports and withdrawing invitations to meetings with contractors and others involved in refurbishment and other projects on the estates

Although the Council continued to fund TAG, the aim of managing the estates became increasingly remote and residents' involvement in TAG reduced as it became evident that the group had very little influence with the Council. The EMB function effectively ceased.

Matters came to a head when the Council moved to wind up the EMB, although, since the Tanhouse Estate Management Board Limited had an independent existence as an Industrial and Provident Society, answerable to the Financial Conduct Authority, it did not have the power to do this.

This resulted in a mediation exercise, the outcomes of which were that West Lancs Borough Council unilaterally terminated the Estate Management Agreement but that the group, renamed the Tanhouse Action Group Society Ltd, would continue as a tenants and residents' association, serving all of the Tanhouse Estates and Holland Park and would continue to receive some financial support from the Council.

In November 2014, to reduce costs to WLBC, the Group vacated its offices and meeting room in a Council-owned property at 103 Elmridge and has since been based in a single room in the Tanhouse Community Centre on Ennerdale.

In addition to its role as a tenants and residents' association, TAG has collaborated with a number of other local groups in the staging of community events and has undertaken a number of landscaping projects to improve the environment of the estates. Separate funding was won from various sources, including the National Lottery, and projects included:

- the pocket park on Enstone
- the wild flower garden
- the raised beds at the Owl and Pussycat site
- planting in Eversley/Evenwood

TAG has also taken over publication of "Tanhouse Talk", a quarterly newsletter, delivered door to door to 2500 properties in Tanhouse and Holland Park.

TAG has its own website at www.tanhouse.org.uk

2. FUTURE OF THE TANHOUSE ACTION GROUP

TAG has identified a need to regenerate itself as a group serving all residents, both tenants and owner occupiers, in all of the Tanhouse ward - both the older estates and the new private housing in Holland Park

We feel this would help the Council to meet its obligation to the Government to promote Neighbourhood Management.

TAG proposes to:

- consult with residents to discover what they require of a tenants and residents' association. This may take the form of an Estate Meeting (see below) and/or a door-to-door survey
- recruit new members and volunteers, so that new blood can be added to the TAG Committee, some of whom have served for over twenty years, and so that the TAG office can be open on a more regular basis and more active services offered to residents
- investigate alternative forms of incorporation, possibly a Parish Council, which would allow TAG to enter into Service Agreements with the various public service providers - the borough and county councils, police, NHS, etc.

Future activities would depend on the results of the consultation, but might include:

- an Annual Parish Meeting at which the various local organisations and public service providers can make a short report and take questions from the public
- provision of advice services
- new landscaping projects and renewal of old ones
- staging of community events
- continued publication of "Tanhouse Talk" and the website

3. THE YEAR 2014-15

In November 2014, after a period of some uncertainty, TAG was relocated from the large office at 103 Elmridge to the room at the Tanhouse Community Centre.

In that year, the group spent some £7073, of which £4177 was from reserves, the balance being from the Borough Council. The largest items of expenditure were for the utilities for the Elmridge office (£1498), for furniture and equipment for the new office (£1949) and for telephone, internet and website (£1055).

Accounts for that year were provided to the Council in November 2015, along with a projected budget for 2015-16. This was done by the Secretary, as the Treasurer had been ill for some time. Further detail was requested by the Council, but TAG has not been able to provide this in the suggested format, partly because the Treasurer continues to be extremely ill and partly because many records were lost when the Council moved the contents of the TAG office out of 103 Elmridge.

Landscaping work included creation of the beds at the Owl & Pussycat site in Egerton, in which TAG involved Hillside School.

4. THE YEAR 2015-16

Accounts for the year to 31st March 2016 are attached as Appendix A.

Although the Council continued to pay the rent of the new TAG office, the requested funding of £4503 was not received, apart from an emergency payment of £500 in the last month of the financial year, which enabled TAG to settle some of its outstanding expenses and produce an issue of "Tanhouse Talk".

£1000 had been requested to fund the consultation exercise and membership drive, but this was not approved. On the Council's suggestion, TAG invited four organisations (including the Council) to tender for this project, but none put in a bid. The consultation was deferred to 2016-17, but is still seen as a priority in order to deliver value, both to the Council and to the residents.

Because TAG did not receive the requested funding, it had to let its public liability insurance lapse, meaning that it could no longer participate in public events or continue with landscaping projects, some of which were heavily vandalised.

Also the landscaping contractors employed by the Council no longer liaised with TAG and, seemingly due to a lack of knowledge as to what had been planted, they did significant damage to the pocket park and wildflower garden.

As TAG was unable to mount a membership / capacity building exercise, due to the funding not being approved, the number of members available to man the office dwindled and this has only been open on request. Residents can leave messages on an answerphone, which is monitored regularly and also contact TAG by email.

5. THE YEAR 2016-17

Projected budget for the year from April 2016 is £4,725 plus the £6,000 rent paid to the Tanhouse Community Centre.

Details are in Appendix B.

6. CONCLUSION AND NEXT ACTIONS

We believe that the current status of TAG is unsustainable, but that, under the Government's concept of Neighbourhood Management, there should be a role for a group that represents the interests of tenants and residents in the whole of Tanhouse and which partners with public service providers, probably entering into Service Level Agreements.

TAG is anxious to:

- conduct the public consultation as to its future role and the services it could offer
- conduct a capacity building exercise and to recruit new volunteers and committee members
- investigate alternative forms of incorporation, such as a Parish Council
- enter into a new and more positive relationship with West Lancashire Borough Council

APPENDIX A

ACCOUNTS FOR 2015-16

	Income	Outgoings
Opening Balance at 1st April 2015	1,186.92	
Income from WLBC	500.00	
Subtotal	1,686.92	
Rent (WLBC garage to store gardening equipment)		287.04
Utilities		220.20
Telecoms		329.81
Committee allowances		501.60
IT equipment, internet, website		75.98
Miscellaneous		113.60
Subtotal	-1528.23	1528.23
Closing balance at 31st March 2016	158.69	

APPENDIX B

BUDGET FOR 2016-17

	Income	Outgoings
Rent (WLBC garage to store gardening equipment)		287.04
Utilities		0
Telecoms		332.40
Committee allowances and expenses		500.00
IT equipment, internet, website		30.00
Room Hire		200.00
Printing Tanhouse Talk newsletter		760.00
Stationery		50.00
Postage		200.00
Licences and subscriptions		120.00
Insurance		403.44
Consultation / capacity building campaign		2000.00
Subtotal	4882.88	4882.88
less Opening Balance at 1st April 2016	-158.69	
Requested from WLBC for 2016-17	4724.19	

Note: these figures exclude the rent paid by WLBC directly to Tanhouse Community Centre