

# Annual General Meeting - 18th September 2022

## W&Q& TMO Board Annual Report for 2021/22

As Covid restrictions began to lift in 2021, the TMO saw much of our activity return to regular format. It was a tough year whilst we recovered from the effects and restrictions of Covid to regain a sense of normality for the everyday lives of residents and our staff in returning back to the office. We saw the long overdue TMO portacabin office installed in the Quentin House car park and Board and committee meetings were able to start using the office as face-to-face meetings resumed.

We saw the creation of a number of working groups, tasked with reviewing and implementing key actions initiated by the Board with the intention of improving both the lives of residents and the functioning of the TMO. We resumed board training and recruited five new board members and one more sub-committee member, and then subsequently had two resign due to personal reasons.

Social activities were able to resume, and we began work on major greening projects across the estate. We hosted an SGM which covered presentations about the much-requested security gates across Webber Row courtyards, repairs and buildings survey, business plan, followed by an open forum Q&A for residents.

We continued to apply for funding to help us improve the estate and were successful in our second round of funding for the Webber Row security gates. We continued to review the ground maintenance contract and whilst residents were mostly satisfied with the estate cleaning, the gardening activities caused concern. After consultation, we retained specific gardening activities and the Board approved to hire an independent specialist gardener to fulfil those. Whilst we hired two gardeners during this period neither turned out to be suitable.

In September 2021, I was voted in as the new Board Chair and began work redirecting the Board's attentions and activities to focus on delivering a better service to residents. It proved to be a work-heavy year for a few key Board members. As my predecessor stated in last year's Chair's Report, much of the sub-committee work is done 'behind-the-scenes'. I too would like to note the work undertaken by dedicated volunteers who sit on the Board and our subcommittees.

*Sophie Thorpe*  
*TMO Chair*

## **HR Committee**

The HR committee has focused this year on the review of overdue employment policies, regulation policies and staffing requirements (in collaboration with a specific working group tasked to find a new Secretary/ admin support role). HR provided a renewed set of policies regarding complaints procedure and emergency working. Next year the Sub Committee will focus on reviewing and updating the Employee Handbook, the list of our suppliers and the office emergency cover.

## **Communications Committee**

We continue to improve our channels of communication with residents, and it seems that what we have in place currently is working broadly, although with room for improvement. Our repairs survey has also been a chance to update contact details for residents. From this we have started sending emails using our new MailChimp account. Whilst we can do our best to ensure we have residents' details up to date, it helps if residents can check their spam folders for communications from the TMO, and to label emails from the TMO as 'safe'.

We are planning to trial broadcast messages via WhatsApp (one way, your number wouldn't be seen by other residents), as an alternative to the text messaging service currently used, as well as more cost effective, or even free, texting services. While we would like to move to electronic communication channels as much as possible, we still rely on printed letters and updates for certain content or to ensure we can say every home on the estate has definitely received something.

We would also like to make more content easily available on our website. After a thorough review, the committee agreed to overhaul the website to allow for better navigation and interaction and to remove the unused pages. This work is scheduled for autumn 2022.

## **Garden & Social Committee (GSC)**

The past year has seen many positive developments and also some setbacks. In 2021, the Board approved to cut back on the garden contract we had with our cleaning and grounds maintenance contractor due to resident complaints about the standard of gardening work. It was agreed to instead hire an independent community gardener. After going through two rounds of recruitment and appointing people, two community gardeners did not work out, so we are now recruiting again, with a much clearer and specific remit of what we need.

The gardening club was due to be resurrected, led by our community gardener, but with her resignation shortly after the re start, this has yet to get going again. However, despite this setback, we did have a number of residents turn up to help us work on the new planters along the front of Quentin House, the materials for which were paid for out of the Section 106 funds we have access to as a result of the two hotels being built on either side of Quentin House. The money is specific for public realm improvement projects across the Quentin House site.

In 2020/21 the S106 Survey conducted by Molly Gadenz of Bankside Open Spaces Trust (BOST) was completed and we used the results to plan the development of the green spaces according to resident priorities. Whilst we have been able to make a start on this

significant project by installing the wall planters, the remaining elements of the project are currently on hold due to the huge increases in materials and rethinking what we can do to make effective use of the money. We aim for the Chaplin Close bin store to be completed by the autumn, and we continue to negotiate the delivery of the remaining elements.

We have seen most of the fruit & veg plots be put to excellent use, whilst some appear to be neglected. We do our best to keep communications with plot holders open, using both emails and a dedicated WhatsApp group for support. We provide multiple opportunities to improve usage of the plots. Failing sufficient improvements, we take back the plot and offer it to the next applicant on the waiting list. Having a free fruit and veg plot in central London is both a gift and a privilege, and we hope residents appreciate the value here, making the very best of this unique and wonderful opportunity to grow your own food.

We were able to resurrect social activities in late 2021 with the Summer Party hosted in the main Webber Row garden. We saw many new faces attend and lots of children thoroughly enjoyed the face painting activity, along with some of the adults too! Food was provided by residents from varying cultural backgrounds, bringing a delightful multi-cultural experience shared by all. We hosted regular Coffee Afternoons on the last Monday of every month, with residents' feedback being extremely positive. We will continue to offer this social gathering every month, however we will move the meeting to a weekend so more residents have the opportunity to attend. As we do each year, the GSC provides food and refreshments for all social activities, including the SGM and AGM. We continue to explore more ways to offer residents social events to attend, taking the opportunity to get to know our neighbours and share valuable experiences together.

## **Working Groups**

Our working groups are intended to focus on short term, specific areas or issues, as opposed to the Committees which are permanent/ongoing. The working groups investigate or manage the process to develop ways to drive action forward to better outcomes.

## **Repairs & Buildings Survey Working Group**

We have been conducting an estate wide survey to establish the extent of different types of repair issues, with a view to creating a thorough repairs and maintenance plan, addressing any underlying issues affecting multiple homes. So far, we have spoken with 50% of residents in door-to-door survey conversations. The initial findings will be used to source external specialists to investigate the full detail of each type of repair issue.

The state of repair of our buildings is something the Board takes very seriously. As residents on the estate ourselves, we understand only too well how poor workmanship and unresolved issues impact the day to day lives of residents. We made a promise to our residents that repairs would improve under the TMO, and anything less than this is a failure on our part.

We are still in the investigative stage, but we can assure you that we are doing everything we can with the information we already have to hand to initiate positive change. This comes in the form of reviewing our contractors, the processes in place for determining what work needs doing, and how completed work is assessed, by both residents and staff. We are committed to survey the remaining properties over the coming months and hope you are

able to engage with us when we visit your property. We intend the results to be a robust reflection of reality and can only achieve this with resident participation.

## **Webber Row Gates Working Group**

Following on from the previous year's successful funding bid, we received the second round of funding to install the much requested security gates across the front of the Webber Row courtyards. The funding covers the installation of the gates and then ongoing maintenance will be met from TMO surplus funds.

The intention is to reduce, if not eliminate, issues such as drug use, drug dealing, illegal parking, and other antisocial behaviour from non-residents entering the courtyards and stairwells. Installation will allow for safer playing areas for children of all ages and better security of homes. There are questions over exactly how the gates will function, in terms of pedestrian and vehicle access, and what options are for future 'upgrades' if more funding becomes available. The third funding bid will be submitted in autumn 2022 with receipt of funds in spring 2023, by which time we hope to have the first set of gates installed. Planning permission has been submitted and we await the results. The

## **Business Plan Working Group**

In 2021 we were asked by Southwark council to update and submit our Business Plan for the next three years. A working group of Board members was created to address this action and they spent many months working on reviewing the core areas of the business to put in place a robust and clear path forward. The key action points of the plan are in the attached summary grid, but the four priority areas are:

- Deal with historic repairs and deliver preventative maintenance of the buildings
- Improve the communal facilities of the estate
- Build financial surplus to enable us to do more in the future
- Engage more residents to strengthen our TMO and community