



Styles House Limited

Report of the Chair and Board for the year ended 31 March 2020

Principal activity

Styles House TMO was incorporated on 1 May 2012 with its principal activity being the provision of maintenance and management services to the Styles House Estate on behalf of the London Borough of Southwark. The provision of services is stipulated in a management agreement signed on 6 January 2014 with rent collection and maintenance responsibilities to take effect from that date for an initial period of five years. A Continuation ballot was held in January 2019 and residents unanimously voted for the TMO to continue.

Our Responsibilities

As a Tenant Management Organisation (TMO) we have taken on the responsibility for running our estate. We are a resident led organisation and we direct our staff team – Linda McLaughlin and Bernard, the Esskay cleaner, to deliver the services that residents want. The TMO manages cleaning, grounds maintenance, rent collection, repairs and tenancy management.

Review of the Year's activities

Styles House Tenant Management Organisation (TMO) has had a successful year in 2019/20. We have worked to improve the appearance of Styles House and its surrounding and to build community spirit among residents. However, it has also been a challenging year and we have faced problems which we had to address and will continue to address in the coming year.

Some of our successes have been

- The installation of the automated gates. Residents had asked for security gates since the TMO took over the management of the estate. They finally appeared before Christmas, just in time for the New Year. While there have been some issues, they look good and even more importantly, they have decreased the number of intruders from the outside world. When the gates were broken for two weeks, we saw an immediate increase in trespassers and anti-social behaviour, which shows that the gates have been keeping this out. It is not perfect as you can still gain access through the Joan Street gate. Linda, our TMO Manager had been meeting with the studio residents to see how we can beef up the security in the months leading up to the Covid outbreak.
- We collected **101.4%** of rent which meant the council repaid the TMO £7000 approx.
- Rent arrears have remained at 2.5%. This is a considerable achievement given the worsening economic situation.

- One of the big successes of the year was the outcome of the test of opinion which took place in February 2020. This asked residents whether they were happy with the proposed new redevelopment that had been developed and refined over 2019. I am pleased to remind residents that:
 - 45 residents voted YES
 - 5 residents voted NO
 - 1 vote was invalid.

This meant that the proposed redevelopment could go ahead as residents were happy with the proposals and the project slowly became a reality.
- A planning application was submitted in March 2020 and we are awaiting Planning's decision to go forward to the next stage of the redevelopment.
- We set up a Project Board to manage and oversee the redevelopment with the assistance of Igloo Community Builders . Residents have attended workshops and also went on walks to look at Mortlake Court - Leathermarket JMB's new development. We have also explored nearby TMO and TA halls to consider what would be the best design for Style House's new hall and office. We have studied bricks and gardens, all with a view to incorporate the best into Styles House. Over the year, designs have changed and transformed as options were assessed which informed our decisions.
- Southwark held a TMO conference in January 2020 and I won an award as as a resident who was prepared to go the extra mile. While it was lovely to be acknowledged, it was really an award for the TMO.

Other successes have been

- Distributed Christmas chocolates or biscuits to all residents.
- Renewed garden maintenance contract with St Mungo's, the charity for helping homeless people rebuilding their life.
- Attended regulars meeting and engaged with TFL and LBS regarding the future of the redevelopment of Southwark tube station.
- Set up regular meeting with the Isabella Street bar managers regarding noise and ASB.
- Small repairs completed for residents, even if it was not the TMO or Council's responsibility eg cracked window. We are a TMO and it is important that residents see the benefits.
- Drains and bins chambers cleaned twice a year.
- Given advice to new TMOs.
- Tenancy checks of council tenants – 100% complete.
- Signed up 2 new TMO members.

Our response to COVID

It is hard to remember that the lockdown happened in the last two weeks of March. It certainly had an impact on our work as the office closed. Linda worked from home and became a regular voice at the end of the phone, or by email or WhatsApp. That service could be the only outside contact that some residents had.

In response to the lockdown;

- Linda set up the Styles House Community WhatsApp group which was used to check up on each other and offer support. Residents advised their neighbours which shops had deliveries of eggs or flour. Residents who had regular supermarket slots generously offered to add items for their neighbours. Special thanks go to Lou Keall and Louise Spenser.
- The Board agreed that it would take action to support residents. Zoe Kennedy contacted the council who provided the initial food boxes which came from Borough Market. When they arrived, residents organised the delivery of the boxes throughout the building – the first box which was delivered just before Easter contained Easter eggs.
The TMO took a wide view of vulnerability and included the elderly, the disabled, the self-employed, mental health issues, residents on furlough and residents who had used food banks. When the situation eased and limited shops were open, Zoe Kennedy submitted a successful grant application for food boxes which we spread out until mid-August. It has been a fantastic success that we organised the delivery of 150 plus boxes to our residents.
- Residents responded to the requests for help and zealously wiped down the lift buttons and door handles to help sanitise Styles House and minimise the risk of the transfer of covid-19.

Some of our challenges have been:

- *Keeping services continuing during lockdown*
Contractors were only carrying out emergency repairs and limited their time in individual properties. This was to reduce the potential exposure of their operatives. Nevertheless, this created a problem as repairs were put on hold until restrictions were lifted. We have caught up with the backlog.
- *Managing the service and responding to new issues*
Social distancing and the closure of the office meant that the service was not as responsive as it had been previously. Assessments were made remotely which meant residents could not always be consulted widely. Linda found it difficult to judge repairs when she was not present to assess them in situ. This resulted in Linda asking residents to take pictures or videos as a tool to assist with diagnosis. Trying to respond appropriately was a challenge.
- *The redevelopment project*
While supported by residents, has taken up additional time and energy whilst maintaining normal TMO activity.
- *Collecting rent*
Dealing with rent arrears has become more complicated as more residents have become eligible for Universal Credit.

EQUALITIES & DIVERSITY STANDARD

We adopted the LB Southwark Standard on Equality & Diversity in 2018.

- This has included signposting residents to appropriate services
- Replacement light programme for the elderly and disabled residents
- Having an open and friendly service which addresses the needs to individual residents – but it's not one size fits all.
- Being a London Living Wage Employer

As a Board we expect the TMO manager and our contractors to treat everyone fairly, with respect and understanding, as well as celebrating and promoting difference.

TRAINING

Two Board members attended the National Federation of TMOs annual conference. We attended various training course organised by Southwark and the Southwark TMO conference.

As life gets back to normal, we will look at what areas we need to develop or increase our knowledge to improve our services.

Our priorities for the future have remained the same

We are committed to involving the community in providing a clean, safe and green environment that people are happy living in.

We will be having a new garden redesign with a new disabled entrance of the tower.

To that end our SHORT TERM BOARD GOALS 1920/21

- Reduce rent arrears – all residents to have an agreement in place and UC minimised as far as possible
- Continue to negotiate the best deal for residents with the redevelopment
- Work to mitigate the impact of the redevelopment on residents.
- We want to develop a skilled and committed Board that is accountable to the membership and representative of all Styles House residents
- Review spending on improvements over £2000 to assess benefits from redevelopment.

The Board (Committee of Management) 2019/20:

The Chair wishes to thank all the members of the Board for their work on behalf of their neighbours in improving Styles House and building the community:

Boyd Walter (Vice Chair), Ursa Deniflee (Treasurer), Zoe Kennedy (Secretary), Barbara Sweet, Kathy Archbold & Mark Wraith

The Chair would also like to thank

- Linda for all her hard work and dedication.
- TMI Team who have supported us all year but especially during Covid when they offered us back up contractors for emergencies repairs – we did not have to use them, but it was a safety net.

And, lastly but most importantly,

- All the Styles House volunteers who gave their time from taking part in the garden day, to fixing fences and fence posts, cleaning the fishpond and mowing the lawn. Special thanks to Joe Ball, Terry Maguire & Dana Tabaginho.

Philippe Chery
Chair of the Styles House TMO
23 September 2020

