

IS IT TIME TO RESURRECT THE EMB?

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The residents of Lancaster West Estate have had enough of seeing our homes and community run into the ground by the RBKC and their quislings at KCTMO. Many of our readers will be familiar with the underhand and duplicitous manner in which the Council and the TMO closed down the Lancaster West Estate Management Board in 2013 and, in so doing, seized from local residents what little control they had previously exercised over homes and services at Lancaster West.

Now residents are fighting back and there has been a recent call for local tenants and leaseholders to come together to re-establish the Estate Management Board in order to hold our abusers to account and, ultimately, secure real control for residents. We have recently written to Laura Johnson, Director of Housing at RBKC, and one of the architects of the EMB's demise, to inform her that Lancaster West residents wish to reassert our "right to manage" and we include a copy of the correspondence below:

Dear Ms Johnson,

I am writing to you on behalf of a group of Lancaster West Estate residents who wish to pursue their legal right to re-establish the Lancaster West Estate Management Board in order to return some control and power to our community.

Many residents were disappointed that the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea did not offer any support to the Lancaster West Management Association and chose instead to work with the TMO to end local resident representation in 2013.

According to the National Federation of Tenant Management Organisations "A Tenants Guide to the Right to Manage" our community is required to wait a period of two years before we can apply to reinstate the EMB.

According to our records, this time period is about to expire and we believe that Lancaster West residents should now be legally permitted to apply to RBKC to re-instate the EMB.

Please can you confirm the official date that the RBKC consider the Lancaster West EMB to have been formally terminated and provide us with information about who to contact at the Council with regards serving a formal Right to Manage Notice in order to set up a new Lancaster West EMB?

Thank you for your assistance with this matter and we hope that both the RBKC and the TMO will show a level of professionalism and respect that will allow local residents to re-establish the EMB and bring some self-determination and control back to our Estate. If we have made any errors in our understanding of how the process of re-establishing the EMB functions maybe you would be kind enough to explain how the proper procedure should run and how residents can reassert our right to manage?

At present, many residents are completely dissatisfied with how Lancaster West Estate is being run into the ground by our landlord, the TMO, which we consider to be lazy, negligent and incompetent. We wish this to change.

Regards,

On behalf of Lancaster West residents.

We believe that it is crucial for Lancaster West residents to understand that The Royal Borough and its agents, KCTMO, blatantly and systematically discriminated against Lancaster West EMB and the several thousand residents it represented, for many years, during which time the right to manage was illegally withheld, and treated with complete contempt, by both RBKC and KCTMO. Although the Management Agreement signed in 1993 empowered the EMB to manage Lancaster West Estate on behalf of the Council, that agreement was never honoured by the Council, who chose instead to delegate all management powers to KCTMO instead. The TMO made virtually all decisions affecting Lancaster West and provided all essential services via their own contractors.

Under this arrangement the EMB was left virtually powerless and could only exercise a very limited scrutiny function, invariably in the face of constant obstruction and opposition

from TMO officers who held all the power. Under such circumstances it is no wonder that, having struggled courageously for many years against a TMO bureaucracy that had no respect for the EMB's right to manage, nor for its right to scrutinise and challenge, EMB members eventually became so demoralised and disorganised that the RBKC and TMO could successfully collude to deliver the final coup-de-grace that destroyed the EMB.

It is worth noting also that the Kensington and Chelsea TMO is the exception rather than the rule as far as TMO's are concerned. KCTMO is a monster – a single monolithic TMO that controls all council housing throughout the borough. Council housing in Islington, which is a much more typical example of tenant/resident management, is divided into a combination of no less than twenty two TMO's and EMB's which manage individual estates locally on behalf of Islington Council.

<http://www.islington.gov.uk/involved/consultation-engagement/tenant-homeowner-involvement/tenant-management-organisations/Pages/tmo-offices.aspx>

The uniquely atypical arrangement between RBKC and KCTMO is a fundamentally anti-democratic and authoritarian arrangement which concentrates all power in the hands of a single monolithic and unrepresentative so-called 'Tenant Management Organisation' (ie it is a Tenant Management Organisation in name only). KCTMO is, in reality, a house of cards which serves only to create a false sense of separation of powers, responsibility and accountability from the Council itself. This is also, of course, entirely consistent with the authoritarian instincts attitudes and culture of the neo-con Tory leadership of the Rotten Borough.

The demise of Lancaster West EMB is now 'old news', as the saying goes, and the question now facing Lancaster West residents is what will the future hold? Once we have received a response from Laura Johnson we can hopefully begin the search for residents who would be willing (and able) to serve their community by joining a newly formed EMB – perhaps even a local TMO like one of the many in Islington – and wresting control from the mini-mafia at KCTMO. Until then, we will have to tolerate the likes of the TMO's Kiran Singh (Area Manager North) and Siobhan Rumble (Lancaster West Estate Manager and borough-wide rent arrears collector/enforcer) treating our community with both hideous contempt and brazen impunity.