

Philip Sullivan  
Chief Executive  
Tower Hamlets Community Housing  
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By email



c/o Suzanne Muna  
SHAC Secretary  
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**15 April 2021**

Dear Mr Sullivan

**Re: 2021/22 Service Charge Increases**

Following a meeting with members of your executive team on the 12<sup>th</sup> April, we write as promised setting out what we are asking of THCH. The actions set out below are intended to form the start of a dialogue on behalf of the tenants and residents we represent, and on whose behalf we are currently campaigning.

**1. 2021/22 service charge**

In one block alone, the service charge has gone from £23,343.01 in 20218/19 to £86,325.42 for 2021/22. This is an unsustainable increase. Further, THCH made an operating surplus for 2019/20 of £2.06m. Also, THCH has sink funds for individual blocks of flats. These funds can be (and should be) drawn on for any major expenditure. We therefore seek:

- 1.1. Withdrawal of the service charge increase for 2021/22.
- 1.2. Letters to be sent to all tenants and residents rescinding all previous letters and confirming that a new bill will be sent in April 2022 for the 2022/23 financial year.

**2. Future service charges**

The service charging mechanism is dysfunctional and tenants and residents have lost faith in the reliability of the charges they are presented with. We therefore seek:

- 2.1. A full audit of the service charging mechanism over the last 5 years.
- 2.2. Full refunds for over-charged or phantom-charged services.

### **3. Estate repairs**

The quality of service has reduced considerably where THCH reduced the number of caretakers. In other instances, THCH kept the same number of caretakers but changed their working patterns, increased the size of patch allocated to each, limited the amount of time they were allowed to spend on any estate, reduced the range of repairs they could carry out directly, and outsourced several repairs responsibilities to sub-contractors. We therefore seek:

- 3.1. Reduced patches
- 3.2. Increased remit
- 3.3. Adequate staffing levels
- 3.4. No limits on time needed
- 3.5. No sub-contracting unless agreed with tenants and residents.

### **4. Estate repairs and maintenance monitoring**

Such mechanisms as THCH has developed to monitor the quality of estate repairs and maintenance are clearly not adequate. It is essential that future repairs and maintenance monitoring involves tenants and residents. We therefore seek:

- 4.1. Restoration of Area Boards to oversee quality of service delivery.

### **5. Accountability**

Tenants and residents have no mechanism for challenging the board's thinking, nor can they hold them to account. This has led to a crisis in the relationship between the board and those they should be serving. We therefore seek:

- 5.1. Elected tenant and resident observers to the board with speaking rights.
- 5.2. Restoration of Area Residents Boards.

We sincerely hope that you will engage with our request in order to begin a process of restoring faith in the ability of the board and executive to govern THCH.

Yours sincerely



Suzanne Muna  
**Secretary**  
The Social Housing Action Campaign