

Chairman's Report 2015

There can be no doubt that Homesdale has enjoyed another outstanding year of progress during 2015. During a recent training session we focussed on our journey from the 30th October 1947 when 7 New Wanstead was purchased (for £3,800 at auction); becoming an Industrial & Provident Society in 1948 using the Model H Rules 1946; becoming a Charity in 1965 and then a Housing Association in 1975 to allow the construction of Hunter and Mountier Court; right up to our adoption of the 2010 Code of Governance. Naturally, I am delighted to confirm that the organisation has really moved with the times in every aspect of its service provision - In those early days 4 people slept in each room and they shared wardrobe and drawer space and were obliged to assist with the preparation of meals including washing up. Today, every room is en-suite providing levels of care and support positively undreamt of in those early days? The inclusion of Homesdale in the Award of "Top 20 Care Home" at the end of the year reflects just how far the journey has taken us?

I would record my thanks to all of the Committee Members who have tirelessly served the organisation during another year providing strategic direction and distilled wisdom to our debates. We were sad to learn that John Wandless would be standing down due to family and personal ill health. John joined us in 1999 and has held the position of Treasurer for many of his years of service. We will miss him a great deal. However, on the positive side we were able to recruit Jackie Baker to the Committee and she brings a wealth of care experience to our meetings along with her Nursing expertise.

During the year a vast range of topics were addressed ranging from the arrangement of additional voluntary support in Residential Care through to commissioning the upgrade of 40 bathrooms for disabled use in the Sheltered Housing scheme. To list all of the topics would not be practical but major decisions regarding investments, developing the new extended lounge project, grasping the implementations of the Care Act, arranging new insurance, investigating corroded pipework, revising policies, undertaking a formal Board Skills audit and installing 4 additional stair lifts will surely qualify as highlights.

The work is not possible without the tremendous support of a remarkable staff team. It is dangerous to mention individuals as everyone works as a truly effective team but I feel I should mention Lisa as Care Manager and her three seniors and DCU Coordinator, Julie as Warden, Mina as Finance Officer, Sarah as Housing Officer and Peter as Chief Exec as the key staff who work tirelessly for the benefit of everyone living within the complex. I thank them along with every other member of staff for the wonderful job they do day-by-day and week-by-week.

We have faced financial challenges throughout the year but have been able to plan a path through all of the conflicting changes in legislation. The Government Departments sit in isolation making what seems like wise decisions; yet they fail to recognise the cumulative impact on small charities like us? Aware that the -1% decision on rents for 4 years, the Staging dates for pensions, the implementation of the Living Wage and the Social Care cap will all hit us during 2017 led us to develop a budget for the period 2015 to 2021 to enable us to keep on top of these momentous changes. A submission has been made through the NHF to Parliament to explain our predicament along with all other small Charitable Housing Associations like Homesdale.

On a personal note, I have now served as Chair for 8 years and so will be standing down next year making this my last report. I have found the work both challenging and rewarding and am confident that my successor will continue to lead the work from strength to strength. We know that the Lord is in this work and we give praise to Him for all that has been achieved over the last 68 years and look forward to the coming years as the organisation continues to meet the needs of the elderly, frail and vulnerable within our community.