

Chief Executive
40 Westferry Circus,
Canary Wharf,
London
E14 8RN

info@towerquay.com

Philip Glanville, Mayor of Hackney
London Borough of Hackney
Town Hall
Mare Street
London E8 1EA

philip.glanville@hackney.gov.uk

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Dear Mr John Christodoulou

Residents of Somerford Grove

I am writing on behalf of the residents of the 170 homes managed by Tower Quay in Somerford Grove in Hackney to voice my concerns about their treatment during the coronavirus pandemic.

Private renters in Hackney have long been on the forefront of the housing crisis affecting London, too often subjected to the poor conditions, mistreatment and extortionate rent levels that the lack of regulation in the sector allows and which we have campaigned strongly to change.

These issues have only been exacerbated by the global pandemic, which has shone a light on the lack of stability that renters face – particularly in places like Hackney where most renters have little choice but to pay a large portion of their income on rent, leaving little to build up savings for emergencies.

At the beginning of this crisis, we wrote to landlords and managing agents in Hackney to ask them to show flexibility and understanding to their tenants due to the exceptional circumstances. I understand that many residents of homes you manage at Somerford Grove have been placed in financial difficulty by the coronavirus crisis, and have sought your support to help them get through this challenging period. From the correspondence that I have seen, this request has been met with hostility rather than compassion

While the freeze on evictions during the lockdown period has been a lifeline to many, the end of this moratorium is now just weeks away. Where landlords and managing agents refuse to offer flexibility with rent levels and arrears repayment, this has simply postponed problems until further down the line, which is likely to be exacerbated now



that the economic impact of the pandemic is starting to hit and with the government's furlough scheme due to end this autumn.

Indeed, I understand that three tenants in a home that you manage at Somerford Grove have now been advised that their tenancy will not be renewed and that they will have to leave their home by September, despite looking after the property, being model tenants, committed to staying in the property and, given all that has happened, not being in arrears.

In Hackney we have long campaigned against this type of no fault eviction. In 2019 we overwhelmingly passed a motion at Full Council to campaign to abolish Section 21 of the Housing Act 1988, which prevents around one in three Hackney residents from having a truly stable place to call home at the whim of their landlord. We know the Government will be responding to this issue in their Renters' Reform Bill 2019-20, but while we await the Bill and protections it should afford it cannot be right for landlords to continue such poor practice.

However in this instance it is clear to me that this action is a direct response to your tenants seeking greater security for themselves and their neighbours at a time of crisis – exactly the type of revenge eviction that we do not accept in Hackney. I am told that attempts by our Housing Strategy and Policy Team to raise these issues with Tower Quay have been rebuffed and there has been no explanation for your approach.

I would be grateful if you could explain your actions in relation to these tenants and advise whether you will be withdrawing the notice to evict in light of the unprecedented circumstances and difficulties facing private renters in Hackney at present.

Yours sincerely,

Philip Glanville
Mayor of Hackney

CC Cllr Sem Moema, Mayoral Advisor for Private Renting and Housing Affordability
Diane Abbott, Member of Parliament for Hackney North & Stoke Newington
Tom Copley, Deputy Mayor of London for Housing and Residential Development
Cllr Michelle Gregory, Shacklewell Ward Councillor
Hackney Branch, London Renters Union
Jordan Osserman, Somerford Grove resident
Foivos Dousos, Somerford Grove resident