

ALF CHANDLER

1921- 2017

Alf Chandler, who passed away on the 24th April 2017, devoted his life to tenants and was founder Chair of the Tenants and Residents Organisations of England (TAROE) and founder Chair of Hounslow Homes.

Alf started his voluntary career fighting for the housing rights of servicemen returning from the second world war and attended his first tenants organisation in 1946 two years before the abolition of The Poor Law.

He was on the Committee of the Hounslow Municipal Advisory Committee from 1978 and for many years he was Chair of the Hounslow Federation of Tenants and Residents Association and the Federation's centre at Benson Close is named the Alf Chandler Centre. Alf lived in Beavers Lane for over 45 years and chaired the Governors of Beavers Community School from 1985 – 1999.

Alf became TAROE's first chair in 1999 on the amalgamation of two national tenants associations. He inherited a Board of 28 individuals and his ability to manage such a number was always amazing. No one ever left a meeting thinking or stating that they never had the opportunity to air their views. How Alf managed to do that and finish on time is still a mystery to most. Famously he always addressed everyone as 'colleague'.

Alf ensured that during the initial establishment of TAROE, members from all over the country were individually valued for their contribution making TAROE the successful tenant led organisation it is today. In his capacity as Chair, he led very successful delegations to meet every housing Minister.

But there was another Alf. That was the ordinary family man who would seize the opportunity to go to a local market, wherever he travelled and buy meat, which he would state was far cheaper and better quality that he could get at home in Hounslow. Alf generally avoided the limelight although in 2007 he accepted a crystal bowl in recognition of his national achievements in tenant's empowerment from Baroness Andrews CBE, Housing Minister, at the National Conference of TAROE.

In 2001, Alf became Chair of the shadow board of Hounslow Homes, an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) set up by the London Borough of Hounslow to manage and maintain their Council housing stock. He became Chair proper on the formation of the new company in April 2002. He stood down in October 2009.

Under his leadership, and his very successful partnership with the Chief Executive Chris Langstaff , Hounslow Homes went from strength to strength. Following an earlier Audit Commission 2 star rating they achieved the highest possible rating of 3 stars with excellent prospects for improvement in 2005. Hounslow Homes then achieved the government's decent homes standard across the whole of the Council's housing stock in 2007 – 3 years in advance of the target date.

Widely seen as one of the leading ALMOs in the country, Hounslow Homes was chosen to participate in the self financing pilot project and led the way in the development of new build housing projects. Tenants and Residents on London Borough of Hounslow estates benefited hugely from the additional investment ALMO status brought, with some 7,000 new kitchens and bathrooms installed across the borough by its workforce and partnering contractors. The emphasis put by Hounslow Homes in reducing anti social behaviour on estates was recognised as particularly effective . The early introduction of appointments for all repairs and effective work programming through the Customer Services Centre is also seen as an example of best practice in the sector.

These and many other service improvements were introduced during Alf's time as the Chair of Hounslow Homes board. Throughout his term as Chair, he brought a tenant's perspective to the way in which improvement programmes were delivered. There is no doubt that Alf was one of the driving forces behind the success of Hounslow Homes and the real improvements brought to residents on Hounslow estates.

Alf and Hounslow Homes were recognised in 2009 by the House of Commons Community and Local Government Select Committee along with Kirklees Homes, chaired by the late Cora Carter MBE (a tenant) for outstanding performance in the Governments Decent Homes Programme. In 2010 the National Federation of ALMOs awarded Alf "Board Member of the Year" for outstanding work in Hounslow Homes achieving Three Star Audit Commission Rating and completing the Decent Homes programme three years ahead of schedule.

Alf Chandler was a member of that group of tenants who from the 1970s nationally sought to get tenants proper recognition and respect. Along with Denis Rees OBE from Derby; Cora Carter MBE from Kirklees; Doris Besant MBE from Kensington and Chelsea, Alf fought for tenants rights and for making Council housing a decent place to live.

From 1946 Alf fought for tenants in Hounslow and became a National figure – a giant of a man who all his life was selflessly committed to others.

Martyn Kingsford OBE, TD, FRICS FCIH Trustee, TAROE Trust