



VINCENT HOUSING ASSOCIATION

Annual Review 2010



Vincent Housing Association Limited

Registered as an Industrial & Provident Society, the business of Vincent Housing Association Limited (VHA) is the responsibility of a Committee of Management which aims to ensure it is a socially, economic and environmentally responsible organisation and that its primary activity, Vincent House, is sustainable and financially viable. In accordance with the Association's objects any profit is either reinvested in Vincent House, used to develop associate projects or to help voluntary organisations or other social enterprises working with aspects of homelessness.

Vincent House

Built in the late 1930s in the 'art moderne' style typical of the period, Vincent House has been providing reasonably priced medium and long term single bedroom accommodation since it first opened to residents in 1940. The House can accommodate up to 120 residents and visitors. Some stay for just a few weeks while others reside at the house for several months and even years. The House is also 'home' to more than 20 employees, including the General Manager, Richard Tomkins.

Vincent House is constantly developing in response to its community and the changing world, which is demonstrated in the ongoing investment in the building, particularly the communal areas, the continual technological advances and the improvements to residents' facilities and services



Designed by The Learning Journey CIC (Resettlement)

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VINCENT HOUSING ASSOCIATION LIMITED

Chairman's Statement by G W Roughton – year ended 30th September 2009

2010 is our 70th year of operation since the house opened its doors for business in March 1940. The first residents included several senior people directly involved in the war effort and their presence probably saved the House from being requisitioned for military purposes. We celebrated this with a lunch following the Annual General Meeting and by re-publishing our history booklet with a good deal of additional material. Our Secretary, Sara Ives, also gave a presentation of our recent activities at the end of the meeting (see page 6).

Turning to results for the year 30th September 2009:

I referred to some cost and other challenges in my report for the previous year. The consequence of these was a decline in our profitability. On the revenue side there was a dramatic drop in interest income and on the cost side, some major one-offs. Operationally, however, it was a good year. Our turnover was up by 2.5% and our on-going operating costs were kept under control. The one-offs are behind us and we are now back on course. So last year was a blip.

The occupancy, at 95%, reflects the fact that we offer a service that is valued, but also the consequence of more attention to marketing ourselves. The first point of contact for many people is our reception; receptionists are our ambassadors. Front of house, under Carla Soares Hester's management, has played a key role in maintaining a full house. Some of the concerns we had about occupancy last year, we called them ripples, were mitigated by the competence of our front of house staff.

A need to brighten our corridors led to us to commissioning The Learning Journey to create a portfolio of art pieces for our walls. They proposed a motif that reflected the art deco style of the House and the period in which it was conceived



Geoffrey Roughton
Chairman

and began operating. They came up with a set of 63 prints and 63 decorative panels. These were launched at a special event last May when we transformed the lounge into an art gallery – the scheme and the launch were featured in last year's Review.

The physical maintenance of the House is an on-going activity and we are shortly to commission a comprehensive survey to plan these activities over the next 10 years or so. We are just coming to the end of a major re-wiring exercise. Activities included continuing room refurbishment as well as major repairs and improvements to the lifts.

You may recall that an environmental audit of the House was undertaken in 2008 where we were calculated as generating 215 tons of carbon a year. Following that various activities, under the title Project Butterfly, were initiated. Progress on this was slowed by some other more pressing issues, but we are now re-activating it. Saving water is one of the themes to which I referred when my sister stepped down from the Committee. Another audit is being done by Donnachadh

Chairman's Statement - continued.

McCarthy of 3 Acorns and we are also planning to do the same for the other properties we own through Carlisle House Limited. How much humans are affecting global warming may be a matter of opinion, but wastage is a fact. More efficient use of finite resources is a small step we can take to leaving a bit more for future generations. The idea has been suggested that we do regular audits of this; these might lead to publishing some results on our web site or elsewhere.

Our residents remain diverse in terms of age, gender and nationality. We skipped the summer party, partly due to poor weather and staffing issues, but the Christmas party was enriched by a 'slinky' Motown Diva. At Christmas Richard celebrated lunch on Christmas day with 48 residents, family and guests. So not all gloom and doom!



Marietta Maquiling at her retirement party.

On the senior staff side we created a new job of Administration Manager and were pleased to appoint Debbie Loynton to this position in June 2009. She quickly settled in and her efficiency has already borne results. Marietta Maquiling who had joined us in 1976 and for the last 30 years or so was the dining room supervisor decided to retire back to the Philippines. Many of you will remember her. We had a modest farewell for her and wish her well for the future.

In view of the frequent changes in rules governing employees, we decided to appoint outside consultants to review various aspects of our staff arrangements. As a result we have made a number of administrative changes to bring us into line with current statutory requirements.

One of our key assets is our staff. Listening on Radio 4 a few days ago to the recollections of older people who had worked all their lives at Fry's Somerdale factory reminded me that being a caring employer can be more than good business, it can be rewarding in itself. The recent BBC programme on the John Lewis organisation gives an example of trying to achieve the right balance. We are becoming active again in attempting to achieve the Investors In People standard. This has already led to a more participative appraisal approach and a review of our training arrangements. Although Vincent House may not be a perfect employer, I hope with all the things we are doing that any of our staff would give us as good a reference as our residents do. That would be reward enough on its own.

We are very pleased to have supported various charities over the years. For two of them we have purchased premises that are leased to them on beneficial terms. Stepping Stones helps people coming out of prison to find a way forward on their release. Often a prisoner, on release, has nowhere to go and is instantly homeless. Those that are met at the gate and provided with a half way house are much less likely to re-offend.

Similarly with Trinity Homeless Projects; they help people who may be disadvantaged, perhaps through drugs or other reasons, find their feet and get off the street.

Chairman's Statement - continued.

We reined back on some other charitable donations in view of the financial results, but I hope we can revert to our earlier practice of direct help for organisations such as Shelter and others.

We have retained our relationship with Charity Bank with whom we now hold some £218,000 on deposit at benevolent rates of interest. They in turn can lend this to other charities. They introduced us to Harefield Parochial Charities, which we were jointly able to help over a short term funding gap. I hope that we may find further projects where we can work together.

There are a number of more commercial initiatives which I hope we can explore to utilise the resources we have. We have a fine kitchen, as you will witness shortly. It is rarely used during the day. Certain kinds of event could well use the facilities we have.

We are all, year by year, getting older. So it is with your Committee whose average age is just over 60 years. We are very aware that we need to address our own future. Some initial work in defining the relationship between the Committee and key executives is helping focus on aspects of this. We have arranged a special meeting in May to consider various ideas that have been put forward. We shall be briefing an external consultant to assist in this and I hope that over the next few months we will evolve the means of achieving continuity. This should lead to the average age falling.

As you will all know, Sara Ives, our Secretary since 1996, is a major contributor to all our activities but especially what I will call our out of House activities. This includes Stepping Stones, Trinity Homeless Projects, Charity Bank and other similar things. She has done this for some years on a

freelance basis, but I am glad to report that she is accepting a part time staff position as Strategic Development Director in addition to her duties as Secretary. I am sure you will all join with me in wishing her well in her new position.

Finally may I take this opportunity, on your behalf, of thanking all the staff who make Vincent House the splendid place it is. Special thanks go to Richard and Estela Tomkins for managing the house so well.

Things are running well for us at the moment, so I am optimistic that we will have better results to report next year.

Geoffrey Roughton
Chairman

This is a slightly edited version of the statement that was presented to Shareholders at the Annual General Meeting on 25th March 2010.



2010 is not only the start of a new decade it is also seventy years since Vincent House opened its doors and welcomed its first residents, which seemed a perfect time to publish an updated version of our booklet 'Vincent House - The History'.

To coincide with this anniversary, Sara Ives, VHA's Secretary since 1996 and now its new Strategic Development Director too, also made a brief presentation to shareholders at the AGM in March. This featured the Association's achievements since the start of the new Millennium and previewed the principles that will provide a platform for future development.

Review of 2000-2010

In the ten years since the Millennium, VHA has enjoyed great success and been able to invest significant sums in Vincent House. This has resulted in several major improvements, including refurbishing the dining room and lounge; installing a new finishing kitchen and improving the main kitchens; enhancing employee facilities by giving all staff individual en-suite rooms and updating the staff dining room with new furniture and décor.

VHA also invested in 'Art Works for Vincent House', a scheme in collaboration with The Learning Journey* which saw the installation of prints and original decorative panels in all the residential corridors in 2009 and an exhibition, which was well attended.

** A social enterprise (registered as a Community Interest Company) focused on helping ex-offenders resettle successfully on release from prison through delivering professional services in art, design and media. TLJ has also designed and produced the artwork for this Review.*

In 2001 VHA acquired its third property in South Croydon for a scheme with Stepping Stones Trust. This added to its previous acquisition in 1998 of an empty supermarket in Willow Tree Lane, Yeading, Middlesex, where Trinity Homeless Projects (THP) run a mixed retail and residential scheme. In 2009 VHA was delighted to agree a new ten year lease with THP to continue its successful project at the property.

VHA has also made several new investments since 2000, including opening a deposit account in The Charity Bank with a notable amount and the agreement last year of a loan to the Harefield Parochial Trust. Gifts have also been made to a range of charitable organisations including Shelter and the Big Issue.

During the last ten years the Committee decided in common with many other businesses that it has a trinity of responsibilities: financial, social and environmental. Furthermore in March 2003, the Committee decided that it should have a mission statement expressing its commitments to the residents and employees of Vincent House, as well as its intention to provide assistance to other organisations working with homelessness.



Guests at this year's AGM discuss the display

People are at the heart of VHA's activities and to coincide with the anniversary a small display was set up in the lounge acknowledging three different groups of people that are responsible for the success of Vincent House – those who founded it and who have served on its Committee, those who have lived at the House and those who have worked at the House in the past 70 years.

It would be impossible to work out exactly how many people have stayed at Vincent House either as residents or visitors in the past 70 years. In 1999 over 1000 new arrivals registered; however, in a typical year the average is more likely to be between 500 and 600. This led us to estimate that in the past ten years over 5000 different individuals have stayed at the House.

Although the House officially has 140 rooms, some longer term residents choose to live in two-room suites, meaning the House is full when 130 people are in residence, 23 of whom are employees.

The House also continues to attract a wide range of nationalities and up to 30 different countries have been represented on occasion. On the day of this year's AGM, 25th March 2010, the residents and employees came from 18 different nations representing all five of the main continents. The largest number was 40 from Cyprus, equating to about 30% of the residency, whilst the next two largest groups were the British (14) and Taiwanese (14), followed by those from Japan.

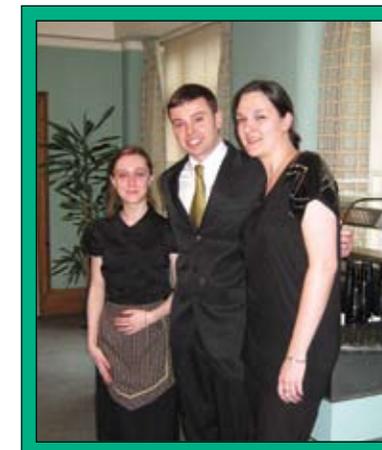
Since its opening 70 years ago Vincent House has rarely had to market itself, which is mostly due to the high proportion of word of mouth recommendations from satisfied residents. Front of House estimates that 50% of enquiries come

through personal recommendations and the rest through agencies, corporate contacts or language schools.

Another set of people vital to Vincent House's success is, of course, its employees who also represent a wide range of nationalities.

The House currently has a team of 38 (23 of whom live-in) from 12 countries in different parts of the world - UK, Europe South American and the Far East.

Four have worked at the House for 15 years or more – the longest serving of these is Robin our chef who has been here 22 years. Up until November last year the longest serving employee was, of course, Marietta Maquiling who worked at the House for over 33 years before her retirement (see special feature on pages 14 and 15). A further four have worked at the House for over ten years and seven for over five years.



Three of the Vincent House team (Billie, Rodrigo and Emilia) who helped at this year's AGM.

Previewing the Future

The Committee decided that 2010 also presented an opportunity to look to the future, the first step of which was to create a dynamic vision for the House in order to provide a purposeful direction for the business.

It is easy for successful businesses to sit back and drift and this presents one of the potential challenges for the Committee. It was agreed that having a clear vision for the future was essential to avoid any complacency that could lead to stagnation. The Committee is aware that, whilst the traditional model of Vincent House has proven extremely successful and it has adapted and evolved, it remains pretty much the same as Alice Roughton's vision in the 1930's. The question to answer is: will it remain relevant as the 21st century unfolds?

Just as there are potential challenges, however, there are also potential opportunities. Most importantly for Vincent House is the apparent strengthening of 'community', something that David Cameron talked about during the election campaign as part of his 'Big Society' agenda. There has also been increasing focus on mutual principles in business, as seen earlier this year when the BBC ran a series featuring the John Lewis group, promoting its partnership model.

The trend for greater emphasis on community and mutual approaches could lead in the next few years to a growth in shared or co-operative approaches to accommodation – co-housing as it is sometimes called. This could be an attractive option not only because of the clearly inadequate supply of housing but also because sharing common facilities both reduces costs and has the added green effect of decreasing the use of resources.

As a community residence Vincent House is well placed to benefit from this trend.

A key quality of any community is, of course, its people and having already identified that people have been our most invaluable asset, the Committee together with Richard Tomkins believe any vision for the future should reflect this. A prime example of how this might be realised is the aim to achieve the Investors in People standard during the next few years.

Also important for VHA as it looks ahead to the next ten years is sustainability. Whilst it may be what is commonly known as a 'buzz' word, it is also a key principle for any business in the 21st century and especially one with social and environmental commitments. A sustainable business is defined as one that has long term objectives based upon sound business activities and it is also applied to organisations that have effective financial, social and environmental principles.

These three important commitments will set the framework for us as we develop over the next ten years. A period during which we intend Vincent House to continue as a successful, contemporary community residence. One that retains its relevant traditional values whilst meeting the modern day demands of its residents.



The Strategic Development Director's presentation to the AGM



Discussions at the AGM



Guests at this year's AGM enjoying a delicious lunch



“ A key quality of any community is, of course, its people... ”



A selection of the display boards featuring the founders and current Committee of VHA.

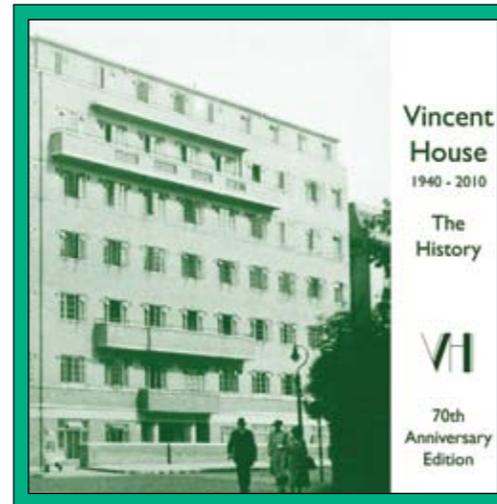


Vincent House – The History

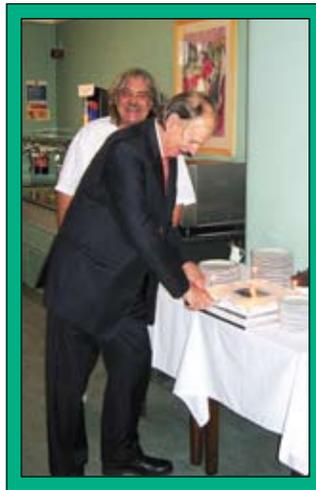
In celebration of our 70th Anniversary, we have updated our booklet 'Vincent House - The History', which was first published in 1998.

The new edition is a very interesting read and it has a stylish new look, so even if you have one of the originals, you may still wish to obtain a copy of the new edition.

Copies are available by contacting Reception at info@vincenthouse.co.uk.



The cover of the new edition of 'Vincent House - The History'



Geoffrey Roughton cutting the 70th anniversary cake as chef Robin Thornton looks on.



This Autumn Richard Tomkins celebrates 5 years since he became General Manager of Vincent House on 1st October 2005 - well, we assume he will be celebrating!

Richard had a fairly good idea of what to expect in his new role having been Deputy General Manager since 1999, firstly assisting Robert Wiles, who was General Manager for 17 years and then Robert's successor, Paul Glashier, who had to step down after just 16 months due to ill health.

Richard, grandson of Tommy Ives (who was instrumental in the setting up of the Association in 1964 and was Secretary until his death in 1996) first came to work at the House in 1994. He decided to leave in 1996 to gain additional experience elsewhere and then returned to the House in 1999 as Deputy General Manager with specific responsibility for the Front of House, a post he held until his promotion to General Manager in 2005. He resides at the House as a requirement of his job together with his wife Estela and young son Shawn.

"Vincent House has an established reputation and has enjoyed almost consistent success throughout its seventy years, so the most important thing for me and my team is to continue that" explains Richard. "Occupancy is a key measure of how we are performing and it depends, of course, on whether or not we are meeting the expectations of those coming to stay at the House whether for just a few days, months or even years."

Reception, operated by a friendly team under the supervision of Front of House Manager, Carla Soares Hester, is the first place someone arriving at the House comes into contact with. As well as new arrivals there are many other individuals who come and go everyday, ranging from taxi drivers

and pizza delivery men to guests of residents, short stay visitors and of course contractors carrying out work at the House.

"Fortunately, most of the people coming to the House seem to be happy and we often get good feedback, especially about our staff" comments Richard.

Since June 2009 Richard has been supported by Administration Manager, Debra Loynton, who has a wide ranging role that includes dealing with staff recruitment, rotas, holiday arrangements and other personnel matters as well as purchasing and book-keeping. The duty managers are Debra and Carla, along with senior receptionist Emilia Malanticova and maintenance supervisor Rodrigo Schneider, who have all had experience of taking responsibility for the House at weekends or when Richard is on holiday.

When they are at the House, most residents tend to like the privacy of their rooms and the lounge can sometimes be a quiet spot. Following the introduction of a complimentary WiFi facility, however, it has become more popular and is regularly the scene of concentrated expressions as people sit with their laptops (often actually on their laps), typing e-mails or browsing the internet.



Richard Tomkins
General Manager



(Above) Shawn Tomkins cheering Spain's goal in front of the Vincent House spectators, (Below) Richard Tomkins with son Shawn. (Right) The victorious team's celebrations captured on the TV screen.



The use of the lounge surged during the early part of the Summer when the World Cup inspired Richard to invest in a wide screen TV for the lounge. Every game was shown, some attracting an audience of around 40 viewers! "It certainly boosted the bar sales and got people socialising. Most of the matches featured a team that was represented by either residents or staff, so the atmosphere often became quite animated!"

The World Cup Final on Sunday 11th July between Spain and the Netherlands proved to be the most popular match of the entire competition with around 50 people watching at one point.

Richard's wife Estela comes from Brazil, so they and their son Shawn were supporting the pre-tournament favourites; however, much to their disappointment the South American country were beaten by the Netherlands in the quarter finals, so they decided to support Spain in the final. Shawn, along with many others watching the climax of the month long tournament, was truly delighted when Spain became deserved winners by scoring in the last moments of extra time, as the above picture shows!



Although the TV is not a permanent fixture in the lounge, it will be used again for similar large sporting events in the future and, in the meantime Richard and his team are coming up with some ideas for other attractions to add to the ever popular snooker table in the lounge.

Another interesting event earlier this year was the rehearsals for a play called 'Marlowe', following a request by its American writer and director, Don Lillie who was staying at the House between January and May this year. Around twenty people were involved and they rehearsed in the garden on what was fortunately a pleasant day in early May. The play was about Christopher Marlowe, a leading Elizabethan dramatist and poet who was stabbed to death in 1593 aged just 29. There were certainly some surprised looks as a sword fight was practised. Unfortunately, we did not hear whether or not the play was a success, but the rehearsals certainly looked exciting!



Don Lillie (right) rehearsing the sword fight with one of his cast.



Members of the cast enjoying the rehearsals in the garden.



On Your Bike!

In a new development we are pleased to announce that we are now able to offer an additional transport option to our residents and visitors. One of the docking stations in the new bicycle hire scheme launched this Summer by TfL has been located within a few minutes walk of the House and it already looks as though it will be popular alternative for many. We will certainly be encouraging its use!



Dominic Kardic, from the Vincent House maintenance team, checks out the local cycle hire scheme.

And finally.....

Marietta Maquiling our popular dining room supervisor, who first came to work at Vincent House in March 1976, retired at the end of November 2009 to return to live in her family home in Zamboanguita, a coastal resort in the province of Negros Oriental, on one of the many islands that make up the Philippines.

Marietta made the decision to retire earlier in 2009, so she had time to prepare for what was to be a major change in her life as she was not only leaving her job but the place she had called "home" for the past 33 years.

Several staff and residents got together for a special farewell party, hosted by General Manager, Richard Tomkins. It was a fun occasion even though there was sadness that Marietta was leaving after having been such a key person at Vincent House for so many years. There were plenty of drinks and nibbles and everyone thoroughly enjoyed themselves, especially Marietta who appreciated that so many people had come to wish her well.

Marietta first came to London to work at Vincent House at the suggestion of her Aunt who was already employed there. Joan Allaway was General Manager at the time and Grace Alder was the Dining Room Supervisor, a post that Marietta successfully applied for when Miss Alder left in 1977 and which she was to hold until her recent retirement.

Marietta enjoyed working at the House from the outset, especially as she joined a group of 12 from the Philippines working in the House at the time. A year after she started her sister Sophie also came to work at the House and she stayed in her job until 1987. Marietta recalls that the House was run



Marietta Maquiling with two Vincent House residents at her farewell party.

much more strictly in the late 1970's - "more like a convent" - but that it was always very comfortable and that it was her "home" for the 33 years that she both lived and worked there.

In the early years she and her Filipino friends would regularly go dancing at the Hammersmith Palais, sometimes as often as three times a week. They also indulged in frequent Chinese takeaways, although the style of cooking was very different to the food they were familiar with in the Philippines! Like many from her country Marietta is a devout Catholic and during her many years at Vincent House she would visit Tyburn Convent near Marble Arch in London several times a week to worship with the nuns.

Marietta experienced life at Vincent House with five different General Managers: Joan Allaway, Arthur MacDonald Smith, Robert Wiles, Paul Glashier and, of course, Richard Tomkins.

She also witnessed a few changes in the kitchen. When she first started work the House had two female cooks, but the kitchen became more of a male domain with the arrival in 1987 of Robin Thornton who is still the chef today and who, as a result of Marietta's retirement, has become the longest serving employee at Vincent House!

Marietta, who has two brothers and two sisters, will now mostly live in Zamboanguita with her elderly father, next door to the home of one of her brothers and his family. She also expects to spend a lot of time with one of her sisters who lives in Dumaguete City the seaport capital of Negros Oriental and her other brother who lives on the neighbouring island of Cebu. Sophie, her other sister, is continuing to live in London with her family, although they expect to return to the Philippines in the future.

Marietta who has been extremely well-liked in her role as the head of the dining room team at Vincent House for so many years will be greatly missed by both residents and colleagues alike and we know that for a long time to come visitors returning to the House will continue to ask after her.

Web site addresses where you will find interesting information about the activities of some of the organisations we work with and support:

www.trinityhomelessprojects.org.uk
www.stepsingstonetrust.org.uk
www.thelearningjourney.co.uk
www.charitybank.org
www.brenthomeless.com
www.beyondboyle.com
www.nottinghill.biz



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