Getting your neighbours on board

How to build support for a change in management, answer the common worries and keep people informed from the first conversation.

Most changes to how a building is run need support from other leaseholders. Some need it by law: for example, enough leaseholders must take part in a Right to Manage claim. Even where the law does not require it, a building run with its residents' goodwill is far easier to manage.

Start with the problem, not the solution

People respond to specific frustrations: repairs that take months, charges nobody can explain, or a lift that is always broken. Begin by gathering examples, and ask neighbours what bothers them. Then explain the options, rather than arguing for one.

Find your allies

Identify two or three engaged residents before you call a meeting. A small group that shares the workload is more convincing than one person with strong views.

Answer the common worries

- **"Will it cost more?"** Show what is spent now and what is likely to change. Be honest about costs that are certain and costs that depend on choices.
- **"Who will do the work?"** Explain who will take it on, and what paid help is planned.
- **"What if it goes wrong?"** Set out how risk is managed: insurance, advice, controls over money, and a clear review point.
- **"I do not want to get involved."** Make it easy to support the change without joining the board.

Communicate clearly and often

- Write in plain English, and keep every message short.
- Use one channel that everyone can reach, with a printed notice for those who are not online.
- Keep a record of every communication, including who received it.
- Share the outcome of every meeting.

Run the meeting well

Circulate the agenda early. Explain the choice and the facts. Take questions, and record the decisions. Where the law requires particular notice periods or voting thresholds, follow them exactly.

Handle opposition fairly

Some leaseholders will disagree. Listen, address factual errors, and avoid personal arguments. Residents who feel heard may not agree, but they usually do not obstruct.

> Keep everyone in the loop after the decision. The first year of a new arrangement is the time when goodwill is won or lost.

Next steps

1. List your allies and the main concerns.
2. Prepare a one-page summary of the proposal.
3. Hold an open meeting with notice and an agenda.
4. Follow up in writing the same week.

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