

RIGHT TO MANAGE · LEASEHOLDER VOICES

What happens after Right to Manage

Personal experiences of taking control and living with the decisions

VeraHold newsletter • September 2026

Right to Manage, usually shortened to RTM, gives qualifying leaseholders a legal route to take over specified management responsibilities through a company. They do not have to buy the freehold or prove that the existing management has failed. The company can appoint a managing agent or manage directly. [GOV.UK explains the right ↗](#).

For some buildings, that brings a welcome improvement. It also brings decisions about money, maintenance and the homes people share. When relationships break down, the consequences can be deeply personal.

This month, a leaseholder describes her experience of living in a building managed by an RTM company. Her story raises a question that deserves more attention: **where can residents turn when a dispute with their own board becomes part of daily life?**

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Our home is no longer our sanctuary

A leaseholder's personal account, lightly edited for clarity and to reduce identifying detail.

We live in a small block of flats. Initially, all the flats were sold as shells, leaving the purchasers to fit out their own flats. We were part of that original group of purchasers. We all had a sense of community; we were building a home we could enjoy and where we could feel comfortable and safe. My husband joined the board of our RTM company to contribute to the running of the building. We all rubbed along.

However, several years ago, another resident moved in. He joined the board. He seemed to think it necessary to be at war with my husband and to become the centre of power. My husband left the board for peace of mind. We hoped this man would leave us alone, but he hasn't. We feel that the board now defers to him on every issue.

The building's maintenance has also suffered. We worry that, with the poor administration of our building, our flat will become difficult to sell and its value will drop. Recently, he even suggested that everyone should clean their own windows. Abseilers are needed to clean some of the windows. Most of our windows haven't been cleaned in two years.

We have had some pretty awful things happen to us over the years. This is one of them.

- **IN NOVEMBER 2022,** we had a contractor redo the decking on our terraces. The lease obliges us to keep them in good order. While we were doing this, neighbours on our landing were carrying out a major fit-out. One of these neighbours was on the board at the time.

- **IN APRIL 2023,** the directors of our RTM company sent out a directors' report before the AGM. This was unusual: we rarely had updates from the directors, and AGMs were few and far between. The report stated that we had been sent four letters, none of which we had answered. It went on to say that we were in breach because our decking did not meet the standards of the new fire regulations.

Apparently, our neighbours' builders had seen the decking in the building's garage before it was laid. They thought it did not comply with the regulations. We wondered why they had not mentioned this at the time, before we went to the trouble and expense of laying it.

We never received any letters. When we asked for proof that they had been sent, we were met with silence. Over this period, we had changed managing agents. Supposedly, the new agent had sent one of these letters. We asked for a copy many times. The director of the agency finally emailed it to us on the afternoon of the AGM. As we understood it, the regulation referred to concerned cladding rather than decking.

- **AT THE AGM,** our decking was an item on the agenda. We, of course, found this embarrassing. We asked the agent about his reference to cladding rather than decking. He said he would get back to us. He didn't. Instead, we received an email from the board saying that Building Control would come out, at our expense, to investigate. We had already

been in touch with Building Control before this communication. They weren't interested in our decking. The issue was dropped.

Four lawyers we spoke to called this harassment. We asked for a public apology from the board and the agents. We didn't like our neighbours thinking that we didn't care about their safety. None was forthcoming.

This was a very worrying time for us. It had cost us **£10,000** to replace the decking. The thought of having to do it a second time was deeply concerning. Other leaseholders in the building, who had decking like ours, were never questioned about whether their decking conformed to the regulations.

We continue to feel harassed and isolated. Our home is no longer our sanctuary.

We hope and long for compulsory mediation or an ombudsman able to help leaseholders in situations like ours. The public housing sector has provisions for complaints. It is too easy for leaseholders to feel victimised by a director of their own RTM board. For us, going to a lawyer is prohibitively expensive, and the First-tier Tribunal feels daunting. We are always directed to LEASE with our problems. LEASE has expertise, but it cannot impose a resolution. We believe that, as an existing organisation, it is well placed to help develop the kind of mediation we need.

The gap this account describes

This account describes the difficulty of getting answers and repairing relationships when the people making decisions about a building are also neighbours. Her call for earlier, accessible help deserves consideration.

There are existing routes, but they address different problems. Complaints about an agent's service should begin with its complaints procedure and may then go to the redress scheme it belongs to. That can cover poor communication or complaint handling. **RTM companies themselves are exempt from mandatory membership of those schemes, so a complaint about the board may have no equivalent route.** [LEASE guidance on redress schemes ↗](#).

Service-charge disputes may fall within the First-tier Tribunal's jurisdiction. Company-law procedures address matters such as removing a director. Independent mediation can help parties seek agreement in some disputes. LEASE provides advice on these routes. The proposal in the account above is that organisations with that expertise could have a greater role in helping residents resolve problems. [GOV.UK on leasehold disputes ↗](#) and [LEASE on mediation and other alternatives ↗](#).

We believe residents need a clearer way to find appropriate, affordable help with disputes inside their own RTM companies. A complaint involving a director should have a fair process, with a clear response and an explanation of the next step if it remains unresolved.

What other directors told us

RTM can also bring substantial improvements. One director described the change after taking control as:

“night and day.”

The director told us that the board felt it had improved management while reducing costs during its first year. They also felt that being a smaller block had helped.

An experienced director who had led three RTM formations offered a practical warning:

“Run it as a small company, not a hobby.”

That means making time for the continuing work after the management handover. The building needs people who can review its finances, oversee its agent and explain decisions to residents. Regular communication gives people a better understanding of the spending behind a demand, even when the bill is unwelcome.

GOVERNANCE

Oversight has to continue after an agent is appointed

A capable managing agent can provide expertise, continuity and much of the day-to-day administration. The RTM board still needs to oversee the work and understand the decisions made in the company's name.

Agree the scope of the agent's appointment, which fees are additional, what spending needs approval and what reports the board will receive. Review unresolved maintenance, arrears and major projects regularly. Residents

should be able to understand who is responsible when something needs attention.

Volunteer directors need support too. If one person holds every document, remembers every decision and answers every email, the building is exposed when that person steps down. Shared records, clear responsibilities and a planned handover make the role more manageable for the next director.

FOR RTM AND RMC DIRECTORS

Five useful habits for an RTM board

1

Keep a complete and usable record

At takeover, track the handover of documents and relevant funds, recording anything missing. Keep leases, contracts, budgets, accounts, insurance information and major decisions in an organised location. Give authorised directors their own access and make sure someone can take over when a colleague is unavailable.

2

Explain the whole bill

Show routine expenditure, reserve contributions and major works separately, then make the total payable clear. Explain significant changes against the previous year and the work being funded. A lower operating budget can still coincide with a higher total demand if reserve contributions increase.

If there is a funding shortfall, ask for a reconciliation showing what was demanded, received, spent and still owed. Distinguish unpaid contributions from overspending. Any proposal for further payments should explain the calculation, the relevant lease provisions and what recovery action is being taken.

3

Make participation straightforward

Tell qualifying leaseholders how to join the company and give members regular opportunities to ask questions. Explain how directors are appointed and decisions recorded. RTM does not automatically create annual elections, and there is no general requirement for a private company to hold an AGM, but regular member meetings are valuable. Members can use formal procedures to appoint or remove directors; the applicable notice and voting rules matter.

[LEASE on meetings ↗](#) and [director appointments and removal ↗](#).

4

Prepare for major works before committing

The board needs a clear scope, a funding plan and advice on the applicable consultation process. In England, Section 20 consultation is normally required where qualifying works would cost any one leaseholder more than **£250**. Under the usual procedure for works outside an existing qualifying long-term agreement, cost estimates follow the initial Notice of Intention. A consultation failure can limit recovery, although the tribunal can grant dispensation. [LEASE explains the consultation process ↗](#).

5

Give unanswered questions an owner and a date

Record the issue, who will respond, the information needed and when it will be reviewed. Where a decision is disputed, explain the reasons and supporting documents. This helps residents follow progress and reduces the work of repeatedly reconstructing the same problem.

What the reforms change

IN FORCE

3 March 2025

The RTM reforms that took effect on 3 March 2025 widened eligibility to buildings with up to 50% non-residential floor space, subject to the other qualifying conditions. They also changed the costs regime so landlords generally bear their own RTM claim costs, and capped landlord votes at one-third of the votes exercisable by qualifying leaseholders. RTM still involves costs and a formal legal process. [GOV.UK on eligibility ↗](#), [costs and voting ↗](#) and [Parliament's reform briefing ↗](#).

ANNOUNCED

2026

In July 2026, the government set out plans for standardised service-charge demands, annual reports and stronger information rights. The draft Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Bill, published in January, proposes wider changes, including a move towards commonhold for new flats. These announcements have distinct legislative and implementation stages; an announcement alone does not make a proposed protection available. [July statement ↗](#) and [draft Bill ↗](#).

For a board dealing with a budget or contractor today, clear records and sound decisions remain essential while reform progresses.

A NOTE FROM VERAHOLD

The voice of leaseholders

One reason we started VeraHold was the gap between what happens inside residential buildings and how visible those experiences are from the outside.

Service charges, major works and building management are often discussed through legislation, accounts and formal disputes. But behind those documents are people living with the consequences of the decisions being made.

We want this newsletter to provide space for those experiences — including those of leaseholders, RTM and RMC directors, and others involved in managing their buildings. Some stories will be difficult, like the account in this issue. Others show how taking greater control of a building can work well.

At the same time, we are trying to understand whether better information can make some of these problems easier to identify and address. VeraHold is developing ways to bring together leases, budgets, accounts and other building information, and, over time, to make meaningful comparisons between similar buildings possible.

The aim is to make residential management more transparent and easier to understand — not only when something has already gone wrong, but while decisions are still being made.

SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE

If you have experience of RTM or leasehold management that you think others could learn from, we would like to hear it. You can reply to this newsletter and, where appropriate, we may invite you to tell your story in a future issue.

VeraHold

Financial intelligence for the leasehold sector.

The legal discussion concerns England and reflects information checked on 16 September 2026. This article provides general information; the position in a particular building depends on its documents and circumstances.