HAMODIA
THE NEWSPAPER OF TORAH JEWRY
WEEKLY
ISSN 1468-2583
VOL. XX - NO. 982 // 6 Cheshvan 5778 // October 26, 2017
£2.50

AIHA Holds AGM in Canvey Island

Last Thursday, in a show of support for the new Canvey Island *kehillah*, the Agudas Israel Housing Association (AIHA) held its Annual General Meeting in Canvey Island. *Hamodia* spoke to Mrs. Ita Symons, Chief Executive of AIHA. She told *Hamodia* that she felt that this would be a good way to show support for the outstanding work of the *askanim* in Canvey Island, and would also create interest both in the new *kehillah* and the event.

Mrs. Symons said that the meeting was productive, lively and well-attended. The change of venue enhanced the attendance and many people came both from the Stamford Hill community and the local community, including representatives of the local council and other local organisations. She said that when the formal speeches had concluded, the chair asked if anyone else had anything to add, as is standard practice. To everyone's surprise, a number of people, both members of the new *kehillah* and more long-standing Canvey Island residents, had contributions to make, which has never happened at previous meetings. The meeting was followed by a buffet, prepared by the AIHA staff.

AIHA has bought four properties in Canvey Island to rent out and hopes to buy another one soon. This adds the option of affordable rental housing for people wishing to move to the area who are not in a position to buy a home at the moment. Mrs. Symons comments how impressed she is with the work of the *askanim* and also with the warmth and

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support of the local community, which has gone out of its way to welcome the new *kehillah*.

The meeting was also attended by representatives of IDS, a housing association that specializes in providing housing for the Jewish community, including Mr. Alan Finkel, Director of Housing. *Hamodia* spoke to Suzanne Wolfe, Chief Executive of IDS, who explained that Mr. Joseph Stauber, a former member of the IDS board, had originally made the suggestion that the organization become involved in the Canvey Island project. Ms. Wolfe said that they had investigated and were delighted to participate in the enterprise. IDS has bought four new-build properties in the area, designated as "affordable rent" properties. There are two four-bedroom houses and two three-bedroom houses. They are hoping to purchase a fifth property in due course, as part of a matching arrangement with AIHA. Ms. Wolfe said that she is very impressed with the new *kehillah* and pleased that so far IDS has been able to house 22 people in its properties.

Mr. Yoel Friedman of the Canvey Island *kehillah* told *Hamodia*, "It was a great honour to have the AIHA AGM in Canvey this year. To us, it symbolised the commitment AIHA has towards seeking innovative solutions to Stamford Hill's housing crisis. Being at the forefront of housing for decades, AIHA acutely recognises the challenge facing the *chareidi* community, and by purchasing homes in Canvey it is doing a great deal in 'making it happen.'

"In particular, I would like to thank Mrs. Symons and Mr. Tescher of AIHA who during their many visits to our *kehillah* have always encouraged our work."

Mr Yoel Krausz, (L.) of Canvey Island with Mr Alan Finkel, (R.) Director of Housing of IDS.