

Newsletter – October 2010



Service Charges

This newsletter is being sent out with the notices for service charges due on 1 October 2010 to minimise postage costs.

Owners are requested to pay the quarterly service charges promptly no later than 1 October as the Estate funds are at their four-year low following the Clock Tower repair last year and the periodic maintenance this summer.

This is necessary so that we have enough money to pay for day-to-day running costs like cleaning and gardening. It is with regret that we can no longer allow the concession to pay monthly, up to two months in arrears.



Lease Extension Reminder

This is a final reminder that the Directors have arranged for flat owners to be able to extend their 125-year leases to 999 years, so preserving the flat values over the coming decades.

Around two thirds of owners have now done this.

You only have to pay legal fees and a small administration charge. The Management Company's solicitor has offered a bulk rate, which it has confirmed will be held to the end of 2010.

Please contact Angela Petts at Rendall and Rittner for more details.



Trial Web Site

<http://www.herrmann.me.uk/stbenedicts/>



Current Work by Managing Agent and Directors

After Angela Petts took over as our Property Manager at Rendall and Rittner, we introduced a new list to track and manage work and surprised ourselves with the number of matters that we are dealing with!

The trial web site now includes a summary: <http://www.herrmann.me.uk/stbenedicts/currentwork.htm>.

The web site also contains:

- Contact details.
- Information on the Estate, about the Management Company, for flats, for houses and regarding buying and selling properties on the Estate.
- The budget and calculations for service charges and reserves.
- Accounts and minutes of General Meeting for recent years.
- Local contractors that have been recommended.

We will seek feedback on the web site at the Annual General Meeting in the autumn.



Items in Communal Areas

The recent annual Health and Safety inspection advised that we must take action to remove items that residents have left in communal areas. They pose a safety risk as they hinder escape from a fire and flammable items are especially dangerous.

Please remove any such items immediately.

In October, a final warning notice will be put on items in the communal areas giving seven days to remove them. After that, the matter will be referred to solicitors at your expense.

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Periodic Maintenance Update

Following repair to the Clock Tower last year, the periodic redecoration of blocks of flats and their common areas was carried out from May to July.

This was carried out by Mulalley & Co, after a competitive tender, supervised by surveyor Smith Baxter.

In late August, the full snagging inspection was undertaken and Mulalley is due to complete the remedial work required during September.



Tree Pruning Update

Following the regular tree pruning in the winter of 2009-10, a nearby property owner asked that the cedar tree in the communal area by the block 31-36 Abbey Drive should have its crown reduced by 30%.

This tree is subject to a tree preservation order, so we sought advice from the relevant council officer, who advised that the crown could be reduced by at most 20%.

We then consulted nearby residents and the majority voted in favour of the work.

The Managing Agent appointed a contractor, which applied for planning permission in parallel with the consultation to minimise delay.

The council may take up to six weeks to respond to the planning application. Once permission is granted, the work will be carried out in accordance with any conditions set by the council.



Annual General Meeting

Once the annual accounts to 30 June 2010 have been prepared, the Managing Agent will arrange the Annual General Meeting for the Estate, in October or November.

Please make every effort to attend as it is your chance to influence how the Estate is run and we would like to meet you.

As well as the usual items, there are a number of matters that need to be discussed:

- Whether flat owners wish to have their **letterboxes** replaced with more secure ones and the costs of this. We obtained quotations before the redecoration but did not have sufficient reserve funds for this work, so it would require a surcharge on flat owners in the blocks concerned.
- Whether flat owners wish to replace the **entryphone systems**, many of which are now unreliable or damaged after 20 years, and the costs of this. This would also require a surcharge on flat owners in the blocks concerned.
- Whether owners are prepared to pay the costs of providing a **water supply** on the Estate for the gardeners and cleaners. This would also require us to pay annual water and sewerage charges in future.
- Whether owners approve the construction of **wooden enclosures for recycling** and the costs of this, to reduce the untidy appearance of orange bags.
- Feedback on the trial **web site**.

If owners have any other matters that they would like to be discussed, please tell Angela Petts at Rendall and Rittner.

Additional volunteers as Director would be most welcome given the volume of work. If you are willing to help, please contact Angela and let her know of any relevant experience.