

Newsletter – March 2011



Service Charges

This newsletter is being sent out with the notices for service charges due on 1 April 2011 to minimise postage costs. Please pay the service charges by the due date.



New Cleaning Contractor

A competitive tender was carried out for a new contractor to clean the flat common areas after poor performance by the previous contractor, which did not improve after our complaints.

Mara Services won this tender and took over the cleaning from 28 February 2011. The work carried out is similar to that under the previous contract, and is listed on a notice in each block and on the web site. The schedule is:

- Monday – 17-27 Carlisle Way, 1-11, 2-12, 13-23, 14-24 Limetree Walk, 1-11, 18-28 St Benedicts Close.
- Wednesday – 31-37 Church Lane, 13-27, 29-43, 45-59, 61-71, 73-87, 89-103 St Benedicts Close.
- Friday – 39-45 Church Lane, 105-119, 121-135 St Benedicts Close, 7-10, 21-26, 31-36 Abbey Drive, 130-133 Rectory Lane.

In addition, Mara will sweep and disinfect the bin stores and pick up litter each Friday.

We would welcome your feedback on the performance of the new cleaning contractor. Please email our Property Manager, Angela Petts at angela.petts@rendallandrittner.co.uk or write to her at Rendall and Rittner Ltd, Portsoken House, 155-157 Minories, London EC3N 1LJ.

Mara has advised that it does not need a water supply on site and will bring water. Therefore, we do not need to pay to get a water standpipe licence at present.



Rubbish and Recycling

Jacqui Kelly volunteered at the Annual General Meeting (AGM) to look at the issue of rubbish and recycling. She has spoken to Wandsworth Council twice and is now looking at what other councils do. We will keep you updated.

We are erecting two new dummy CCTV cameras in St Benedicts Close to try to deter fly tipping, as discussed at the AGM. Unfortunately, the police declined to take any action or even register the crime. If fly-tipping continues, we may put another dummy CCTV camera in Abbey Drive.

If you see fly tipping, please write down the vehicle registration number and tell our Property Manager, who will pass it to the Council.

The Council has prosecuted a nearby firm for dumping trade waste in our bin areas.

Something has to be done about the recycling area in St Benedicts Close, which has turned to mud over the winter. Since enclosures for recycling were rejected at the AGM, we are now looking at just laying paving slabs or concrete in this one place and will do this provided it can be done cheaply.



Items in Communal Areas

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

The Managing Agent has now put a final warning label on and photographed items not removed after they were labelled for the first time.

If the owner or tenant does not remove them, the matter will now be referred to solicitors at the flat owner's expense without further warning.

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Parking Control

Two new permits are being issued in March to each owner on the Estate, one for residents and one for guests. Both permits allow parking only in your single parking space, shown on the permits.

Owners need to forward permits to their tenants. If you are a tenant and have not received the permits, you need to contact your landlord.

Owners may opt out of parking control of their space by contacting the Property Manager as described in the New Cleaning Contractor article. You are still not permitted to use other spaces.

Vehicles parked on the Estate without a permit or outside the bay for which a permit is displayed in the windscreen are liable to receive a penalty notice. If they do so again, they may be clamped.

The Coalition Government has announced proposals in the Protection of Freedoms Bill that would ban clamping on private land. Instead, it suggests that spaces should be protected with barriers. The alternative is issuing penalty notices, asking drivers to pay a fine.

Many of our spaces are accessible from public roads that we are not permitted to block, so we would have to put lockable poles in each space that would be likely to cost each owner requiring one over £100. This means that you would have to pay, rather than drivers parking in your space.

If you wish to comment on this Government proposal, you must say that you are commenting on clause 54 and can do so:

- on the Government web site www.publicreadingstage.cabinetoffice.gov.uk by 7 March 2011, or subsequently
- by contacting the Minister responsible, Lynne Featherstone, at the House of Commons,
- through our local MP, Sadiq Khan, or
- by writing to the Civil Liberties and Identity Policy Unit, Home Office, Fry Building, 2 Marsham Street, London SW1P 4DF.



Grit and Salt Bins

At the Annual General Meeting, people asked if we could provide bins for grit and salt that they could put down themselves in snowy and icy conditions.

We are investigating if this can be done at reasonable cost, although bins must be secure enough to resist vandalism.



Accounting and Audit Work

Also at the Annual General Meeting, owners voted to switch from a full audit to the minimum required, taking advantage of the exemptions available to small companies, to save costs.

We will run a competitive tender to select a firm to carry out the accounting and audit work for St Benedicts, in time for the end of this financial year on 30 June 2011. The firm currently appointed, PB Associates, will be invited to submit a tender for this reduced work.

We will specify that a breakdown of costs must still be produced, so that owners can compare them with previous years, and also a statement for each reserve account, as required by the property legal agreements.



Periodic Maintenance Update

Over the next quarter, investigation of the defects found in two blocks in St Benedicts Close during the periodic redecoration will take place. This will require cherry picker access or scaffolding and some building work.

We have written to the individual owners in the blocks concerned and will give them an update when the dates of the investigation are known.

