

Newsletter – June 2012



Budget 2012-13

The budget for next financial year, to 30 June 2013, accompanies this Newsletter and the service charge demands due on 1 July 2012.

At the Annual General Meeting on 30 November 2011, shareholders (property owners) took two key decisions. They opted to extend the current maintenance period by a year to 2015 and to share the cost of investigating the cracking among all the blocks of flats that will benefit.

By extending the maintenance period as the Directors recommended, money can be collected towards repairs without the contribution to reserves and service charges increasing significantly. Charges for houses will increase by about 2.2% and for most blocks of flats by about 3.3%, broadly in line with recent inflation.

Service charges for owners in the blocks investigated will decrease to below normal levels next year as they have been reimbursed for the investigation by owners in other blocks and they already contributed towards repairs last year. Service charges for owners in blocks not needing repair will also decrease because of the extended maintenance period.

Owners of both houses and flats will need to make a small contribution to the Estate reserve next year, after a gap of a few years, following paving repairs required for safety.

Fallen Trees

Strong winds blew down two small Estate trees on Monday 4 and Friday 8 June. The Gardening firm made these safe and is clearing them.

Paving Repairs

Hobex has now completed paving repairs around the Estate recommended by the annual health and safety inspection. This work took longer than expected because of the poor quality of some original paving and poor weather. Repairs included levelling paths in Limetree Walk that residents had reported as uneven.



Television Switchover

The switchover to digital television in London took place in April 2012 and analogue television has been discontinued. The aerials in blocks of flats receive digital signals, for which you need suitable equipment like a digital TV or set top box, and we have had no reports of issues.

Flat owners and residents are reminded that you may not erect satellite dishes under the lease. If you wish to receive satellite television, you can do so from the communal service provided by Community Vision. Contact them on 01892 722887.



Parking Control

As we previously advised, the Government is changing the law on parking control to ban clamping because of abuse by some operators. This is despite there being no good answer to how parking can be controlled in places where barriers cannot be used, like our Estate where many spaces are directly accessible from publicly adopted roadways.

The ban on clamping is likely to come into effect in the autumn of 2012. The Management Company will wait until then to find out the exact situation, investigate the options available and present the options to the Annual General Meeting, around November 2012, for property owners to decide what they wish to be done.

Items in Flat Communal Areas

You must not leave items in flat communal areas as these are the only means of exit in a fire and must be left clear and free of flammable material.

This includes shoes, umbrellas and furniture.

Any items found will be removed immediately, a notice left and then disposed of after 30 days.



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Maintenance Update

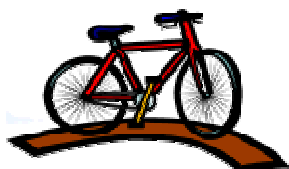
The Directors met with the firm of surveyors, Smith Baxter, which carried out the investigation of the cracking to some blocks of flats, and the managing agent, Rendall and Rittner. We explained our strong concern whether the extensive repairs that Smith Baxter were proposing (estimated by Smith Baxter to cost £900 per flat on average) were really necessary.

An architect living on the Estate and the loss adjuster for the insurance company (which confirmed that such work was not covered by our insurance) both advised that local crack repairs should be considered, rather than rebuilding the top courses of brickwork below the roofs.

Smith Baxter has agreed that we may seek a second opinion on its report and the Directors will carry out a tender for that work, which will be done from the existing documents and photographs to keep costs down. If this confirms that local crack repairs would be adequate, it will save flat owners significant repair costs.

All parties involved have confirmed that the cracking presents no danger and that delay to repairs while we seek to keep costs down will cause no harm. There is little risk of water getting into the cracks, which are just below the roofs, and there is no sign of internal damage.

We will continue to provide updates on the website, in the newsletter and, when costs are known, by writing to the owners concerned.



Bicycle Storage Update

Wandsworth Council confirmed that planning permission would be required for any bicycle store on the Estate.

We are obtaining rough costs for different options and will present these to the Annual General Meeting, around November 2012, for property owners to decide if they wish to go ahead with any of the options.



Flat Front Doors

The annual health and safety inspection reported that some original flat doors have been replaced.

As demonstrated by recent minor fires on the Estate, it is vital for the safety of the flat occupants and other residents and visitors in the block that front doors meet fire standards.

The managing agent is writing to each flat owner with a front door that appears to have been replaced for confirmation that it is marked with or meets the required standard. If the door is not suitably fire resistant, you will need to fit one that is fire resistant at your expense.

Older replacement doors must resist fire for at least 30 minutes like the original doors. This requires solid wood over 4cm thick, three hinges and a working door closer. uPVC doors are not suitable.

New replacement doors must meet standard BS 476 and have intumescent strips to resist fire and cold smoke seals that meet standard FD30S.

Doors and frames must be undamaged and seals must not be painted over.

Owners and residents are reminded that under the lease any building work to flats other than routine re-decoration requires permission from the Management Company. You can seek this by contacting the managing agent.

Rubbish and Recycling

Some residents have recently been dumping items in recycling like food waste and nappies. These are not permitted by the Council in recycling and are being scattered by foxes, which is very unpleasant. Such rubbish must be placed in sealed bags in bins with secure lids.

Action will be taken against anyone seen dumping rubbish for nuisance, at the property owner's expense. If you see someone causing a nuisance by dumping rubbish, please tell the managing agent giving as much information as possible.

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