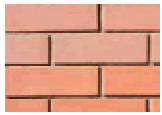




## Newsletter – September 2013



### Damaged Wall

In September 2012, a vehicle damaged the St Benedicts Close car park wall on Church Lane.

After arguing with the insurance company and its loss adjusters for nearly 9 months, we are very pleased to report that the Directors finally managed to negotiate an acceptable settlement.

The insurer initially refused any payment, as Laing Homes did not originally build the wall properly and nobody saw the damage happen. The first loss adjuster made several other incredible claims that we were able to disprove.

The insurer finally offered just over £4,000 towards the building cost of just under £8,000 and we then argued for it to pay the costs of making safe and safety fencing (greater because of its delay) without reduction, which it did. Our hard work has saved the Estate over £5,000, just over £25 on average for every property owner.

Repair work will start on 4 September.



### Flat Block Door Locks

We will soon continue the gradual replacement of worn flat block door locks with new higher security locks on a master key system.

Each flat is entitled to three keys and you will need to pay for any extra keys. The security keys cannot be copied and can only be supplied by Saxon Security on Mitcham Road. For other residents' protection, keys will only be supplied with a letter of authority from the Management Company and proof of your identity.

If you later need the block door lock to be changed, for example after having keys stolen or an eviction, you will have to pay for a lock on the master key system and keys for other residents. This may be covered by your insurance.

### → Items in Communal Areas

Residents of flats may not store items in communal areas because of the fire risk and the obstruction of emergency exits. Any items found will be removed without notice and a note left.



### Sub-letting – Changes to Process

We are pleased to report that, since owners (shareholders) voted to introduce additional controls in 2011, the number of complaints about tenant behaviour has decreased and some problem tenants have left, to the great relief of their neighbours.

We thank the great majority of flat owners who have applied for permission as required by the master lease agreements and whose increased checks on tenants have enabled this improvement for everyone's benefit.

The few owners that have not co-operated are being referred for further action by our solicitor for breach of lease at their expense.

Now that the process has been running for over 18 months, we are streamlining it to reduce the administration needed. Owners have already benefitted by now being able to apply online for initial permission, for change of tenant and for renewal with the same tenant without a fee.

In future, flat owners sub-letting will receive a single reminder when the existing permission is due to expire. This will be by email if you have given an email address, otherwise by letter. There will no longer be repeated reminders.

If you do not apply within 30 days of the existing permission expiring, you will no longer be able to apply online, will get a final reminder and will then need to send a paper application to the Managing Agent and pay it the relevant fee to cover the additional administration required.

### → Security and Fraud

There have been recent reports of door-to-door callers asking to be let into flat blocks. They may come up with plausible explanations. **For your and other residents' security, only let in people that you know or who show id.**

There have also been requests for old clothes, but many are from commercial companies and there are reports of scammers forging charity bags and charity bags being stolen. **To ensure a charity benefits, take old clothes to its shop.**





## Newsletter – September 2013



### Maintenance Update

As previously reported, the estimated cost of repairs in line with the second opinion is around £25,000, compared to a projected cost based on the first surveyor's estimate of over £100,000.

We are carrying out investigations and urgent work this year and will write to owners in the blocks concerned with costs in the section 20 notices required.

Less urgent work can be carried out when the next periodic maintenance takes place in 2014-15 (delayed by a year to keep costs down), when scaffolding and raising platforms will already be available. This will keep costs to a minimum.

It took longer than hoped to replace the entryphone in 17-27 Carlisle Way, because the main wiring was faulty, could not be re-used and needed replacing in a way that was not unsightly.

We will continue to provide maintenance updates on the website and in the newsletter.



### Tree Pruning

The oak trees and some lime trees covered by a preservation order were pruned in the summer, after the Council granted permission.

Please tell the Managing Agent about any small trees that need pruning this autumn **by 30 September** or send a fault report on the website.

It is no use waiting until the work has been done and then reporting more trees, because it will be another year before they can then be pruned!

### → AGM 2013

The Annual General Meeting will be around November as usual, after the accounts have been prepared. This will be publicised on the website and by a notice to each property owner.

Please attend if you can as this is your chance to influence how the Management Company and Estate are run for everyone's benefit.



### Work in 2012-13

Over the past year we have, among other work:

- Obtained a second opinion on the cracking in most blocks of flats and had the reduced work specified, reducing the estimated cost from over £100,000 to around £25,000. Started investigation and repair work.
- Saved over £5,000 by appealing against the insurer's initial refusal of our claim for the damaged wall and reaching a settlement.
- Tightened the criteria for arrears and took solicitor action to keep them under control.
- Carried out a major programme of tree surgery to bring trees not protected by preservation order back under control.
- Arranged the 5-yearly electrical inspection required for common facilities and had urgent repair work required carried out. Also secured old Ryefield panels at minimal cost.
- Launched St Benedicts Online, allowing applications, including for sub-letting, online without fees.
- Followed up on flats that are apparently sub-let but do not have the permission required.
- Fitted automatic closers and padding to security gates so that they are not left open.
- Replaced old security lights with new ones that last longer and use less electricity.
- Carried out more paving and fence repairs.
- Re-sealed leaking flat common area roofs.
- Replaced three obsolete entryphone systems that had failed and could not be repaired.
- Replaced more worn flat block door locks with a new master key security system.
- Replaced more old and worn flat door mats.
- Reported graffiti for removal by the Council.
- Dealt with several rodent infestations.
- Applied for and were granted Council funding for two sets of bicycle stands at no cost to us, to be installed by March 2014.
- Spread grit and cleared snow last winter.

