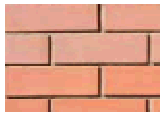




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Damaged Wall

The builder, which had previously done good work on the Estate, has made several serious errors repairing the St Benedicts Close car park wall on Church Lane damaged by vehicle impact and the work does not meet safety requirements.

These errors will have to be put right, or the wall demolished and rebuilt, whichever is cheaper. We are legally entitled to claim the additional costs of this from the building firm and will do so. Much of the original cost was covered by insurance, and the rest from the Estate reserve. We are making every effort to keep costs down.



2012-13 Service Charges Error

During the accounting work, it was found that our Managing Agent, Rendall and Rittner, had made a mistake in levying services charges in the year ending 30 June 2013. The budget set by the Directors for that year was correct.

Some charges were levied against the wrong heading, causing overpayment by flat owners and underpayment by house owners of less than £10. Rendall and Rittner has written to owners to apologise and is correcting the mistake, which will be shown in your statement for 1 January.

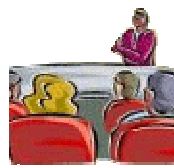
Direct debits will be changed automatically but owners need to change payments by other methods. This is especially important for standing orders, as you must contact your bank.

We encourage owners not already paying by direct debit to complete and return the form sent with the letter to ensure correct payment on time.

→ Anti-Social Behaviour

There have been some reports of anti-social behaviour on the Estate in secluded areas. The police Safer Neighbourhood Team thinks that this is by people living nearby known to them, not by anyone living on the Estate.

If you see any such behaviour, they ask that you call the non-emergency number 101 so that the matter can be logged and suitable action taken.



AGM 2013

The Annual General Meeting was held on 20 November 2013. Thank you to those shareholders (property owners) who attended.

More detailed information can be found on the St Benedicts website but, as a quick summary:

- The minutes of the AGM in 2012 and the accounts to 30 June 2013 were approved.
- We provided an update on maintenance and work on the Estate, including tree work, security lights, the LED lamp trial, flat block front door lock replacement, flat repairs and wall repairs (see separate articles). The Council will install bicycle stands at no cost to us and this work is planned before year end.
- The Directors were given approval to waive competitive tendering for work over £1,000 when beneficial, so long as they explain this. It will help us to save costs by combining the re-decoration and repair work in 2015, which requires the same surveyor to supervise it. The drain repairs and flushing can also be combined efficiently. It may be better to use the local tree surgeon found after competitive tender last year for small tree work.
- Service charge arrears were discussed and, in a vote for guidance, it was agreed that the Directors could levy interest on arrears as permitted by property legal agreements but has not historically been done. Payment by direct debit will avoid the risk of this.
- Shareholders decided to permit installation of tilting as well as side hinged replacement windows, so long as they meet other criteria.
- Mr Ravi Joshi and Mr Kevin Herrmann are willing to continue serving as Directors and there were no other volunteers.
- Owners raised other matters including faded marking of parking spaces, anti-social behaviour (see panel) and the need for more lighting and another security camera where this occurs in the far corner of St Benedicts Close. The Directors reminded flat owners that they can extend leases to 999 years.





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Maintenance Update

Flat Block Repairs

Ground investigations and drain surveys recommended by the surveyor, Hallas & Co, were carried out in the summer of 2013. The Directors reported on this work at the 2013 Annual General Meeting and gave out a username and password for property owners to access the report on the website. These are also available from the Managing Agent.

The results have been referred to a structural engineer selected after competitive quote for review and an opinion on whether this affects the repair work required. The surveyor will then carry out a competitive tender for the urgent repairs.

See below regarding drain work. More urgent building repairs will be carried out as soon as possible, likely to be in spring 2014, and others with the periodic maintenance in 2015 when scaffolding and cherry pickers will already be available without additional cost.

Service charges for repairs are being collected in 2013-14 and 2014-15. For the blocks requiring more extensive work, owners will be provided with section 20 notices before costs over £250 including VAT per flat are incurred.

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

Drain Repairs and Flushing

Drain repairs and flushing, including of car park drains, is likely to be carried out this winter.

Flat Block Roofs

There were small leaks in several blocks of flats in late 2012 and more have been noticed in late 2013. These are being investigated and repaired.

This has happened several times before in the 25 years since the flats were built and is often because sealing around the flashing fails. This is liable to happen because of the indented design of our roofs.

We will probably need to reseal the roofs on all other blocks not yet repaired during the next periodic maintenance in 2015.



Tree Pruning

More small trees were pruned this autumn. These are back under control after some had grown uncut from when the Estate was built.

It should now be possible to maintain these and the trees covered by preservation order on the four-year maintenance cycle used for buildings.

At the request of some owners, we asked the Council if preserved trees on Church Lane near their properties could be cut back further but this is not likely to be allowed. A lot of work has now been done there to reduce and fell wild trees.

Meanwhile, the lime trees in Limetree Walk are becoming overgrown and need attention. We need to carry out major work to these in 2014, so we will leave the trees on Church Lane to 2015. In 2015 we will also need to plant new trees to replace those covered by preservation order that have died or are dying, as we are required to do.



Managing Agent Contract

More repair work is needed as the Estate gets older and the periodic revaluation of buildings is due, so insurance premiums may rise next year.

Under the contract when we appointed Rendall and Rittner in 2007, they could charge extra fees for section 20 notices needed for major work and for each re-decoration. They also took insurance commission, in exchange for a guarantee on the premiums that has now ended.

To keep management charges predictable and avoid extra fees and increases with insurance revaluation, we have renegotiated the contract to remove extra fees and insurance commission in exchange for a small 5% basic fee increase.

→ 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.

