



Newsletter – March 2014

Parking Permits – Current parking permits issued last year are valid until 28 February 2015 so are not being replaced this year.

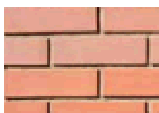


Cycle Stands

We are pleased to report that Council contractors finally installed cycle stands in December and completed the work in January. This was funded by council grant at no cost to St Benedicts.

There are three stands in Limetree Walk near Hawthorn Crescent and two stands in the centre of St Benedicts Close, each taking two cycles. There was no suitable area in Abbey Drive but, if the first stands are well-used and further council grant becomes available, we will consider stands in Abbey Drive, where a tree has since fallen.

The stands are available for use on a first come first served basis at the bicycle owner's risk. The small picture above shows one in use already.



Damaged Wall

Competitive quotes were obtained to complete remedial repairs to the car park wall damaged by vehicle impact or to demolish and rebuild it.

We claimed the additional costs from the builder whose repeated faulty work has led to this situation and caused increased costs. The Directors have now reached a settlement with the builder, which has waived its charges and agreed to pay us additional compensation.

Another builder should resume work in March.

→ Clock Tower

In response to a campaign by the local Labour MP, Sadiq Khan, some Tooting residents have proposed without telling us that the St Benedicts clock tower should become a listed building.

This is extremely unwelcome news as it would place legal restrictions on use and maintenance of the building and would likely result in more work and higher costs and service charges.

The Directors will investigate and object, as we already keep the building well maintained. We will publish further information on the website when known and invite owners also to object.



LED Lamp Trial

The trial of LED lamps on flat hall walls started in the summer of 2012 is going well. The lamps remain as bright as the replaced fluorescent lamps and none has failed or needed maintenance, which has been reduced. We are also trying newly available LED strip lamps by doors.

The lamps had to last 4 years before the lower cost of electricity saved more than the original extra cost of the lamps. Electricity costs have since risen while lamps are sometimes cheaper.

We had an opportunity to buy wall LED lamps at about half the original price, so bought another 30. These have been fitted to flat block porches, where light is important, and in some 2-storey blocks, where checking is difficult with no switch.

The old lamps cannot all be replaced at once because of the high initial cost, but we will take every opportunity to fit LED lamps as soon as affordable, to keep future electricity costs down.



Security Lights

As requested at the 2013 AGM, more lighting has been installed for the far corner of the car park in St Benedicts Close, where anti-social behaviour was reported. An additional motion-activated light has been fitted. The failed flood light is not just a blown bulb and needs replacing.

Two low-power LED lights in secure casings have been fitted near the steps between Rectory Lane and St Benedicts Close after a trip hazard was reported, and steps edges will be re-painted.

→ Mail Theft

There have been further reports of mail theft from Rectory Lane and Abbey Drive. If you see youths interfering with mailboxes, call the police on the non-emergency number 101. If mail is stolen, report the crime, which you can do online at <https://online.met.police.uk>.

As requested in the last Newsletter, please also report any other anti-social behaviour on 101.





Newsletter – March 2014



Maintenance Update

Flat Block Repairs

The structural engineer reviewed the ground investigation and drain survey reports and confirmed that the proposed repairs to flat blocks should go ahead. His opinion is available on our website with the password given out at the 2013 AGM and available from the Managing Agent.

We therefore appointed the surveyor who had specified the work to supervise the next stages without competition, as agreed at the AGM, because he knows the work. The surveyor has specified the work required and will now carry out a competitive tender for the more urgent repairs to at least five building firms.

We intend to start the urgent repairs after Easter and before the end of May and will write to owners and residents of the blocks concerned with more details when these are known. Section 20 notices will be provided as required if work costs more than £250 including VAT per flat.

We will continue to report in the Newsletter with more frequent interim updates on the website.

Drain Repairs and Flushing

We commissioned Unbloc without competition to repair drains and to flush the private road and car park drains, as agreed at the AGM. This was because it carried out the survey last year in connection with the flat repairs that identified the problems, so knew the exact work required.

They did an excellent job and removed about 35 bags of debris from the drains!

Flat Block Roofs

There were leaks in several blocks of flats in late 2012, so we had those roofs re-sealed. Unfortunately there have been more leaks in the heavy rain in late 2013 and early 2014.

Rendall and Rittner carried out a competitive tender and we have instructed Central Services to carry out urgent repairs. This will require cherry pickers and some scaffolding.

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

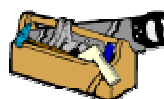


Tree Pruning

We carried out a competitive tender to six firms for work to the overgrown lime trees in Limetree Walk. Only Edward Payne & Co, which carried out recent work on other trees, responded.

As the cost is reasonable, we have appointed them to seek planning permission this spring and then carry out the work in July 2014, in the new financial year.

The budget for tree work will need to increase for one year only next financial year because of the amount of work involved, but it would not be economical to split this work across years.



Apology About Maintenance

Since late in 2013, we have been unable to use the building firm that used to carry out most of the maintenance on the Estate because of its repeated severe mistakes repairing the damaged car park wall. Rendall and Rittner has also stopped using that firm on other estates.

We instructed Rendall and Rittner to obtain quotations from other building firms on their panel, but these were very slow to quote and provide an adequate itemised response and all took an extended break over Christmas.

Consequently, we were unable to get any building maintenance, including roof repairs, carried out for around four months, for which we apologise. This work is now being carried out.

We have asked Rendall and Rittner to consider adding more firms to its panel, to include another firm that we have used before in tenders, to consider local building firms and to improve its process for tendering for such work.

→ Pest Survey

There have been some reports of pests recently. **Please take our pest survey** online at <http://www.stbentooting.co.uk/pests> (or return the enclosed form) to tell us if you have seen any pests or signs of them in the last year.

