



## Newsletter – September 2012



### LED Light Trial

We are always seeking to reduce costs and LED lights may now have developed enough to help.

Although five times the initial cost of fluorescent lights they use less than half the electricity for similar brightness, so are more eco-friendly. LED lights will have lower total cost if they last at least 4 years. The manufacturer claims that they should last 11 years, compared to 2½ years for fluorescent lights, so there may also be a future benefit from reduced maintenance.

We are testing LED wall lights in the block 1-11 St Benedicts Close, where a Director can monitor them. If they last long enough to reduce costs, we will install them in other flat blocks from 2016, or sooner if prices fall.

When flat communal areas are next redecorated, we will see if it is cost effective to change fittings to replace fluorescent strip lights outside flat doors with LED lights. Half of the Estate electricity is used by street and security lights but no LED lights are bright enough for these yet.

### → Security Gates

There have been problems with people leaving the metal security gates open and non-residents loitering in the alleyways. After a successful trial between Limetree Walk and St Benedicts Close, automatic closers and padding have now also been installed on the gates in Abbey Drive and between Carlisle Way and St Benedicts Close.

### → Ryefield Electrical Panels

The obsolete locks in Ryefield electrical panels in many flat blocks are all now open to allow necessary electricity company access and the panels have been sealed with tape.

### → Laundry

Residents are reminded that the flat leases do not permit washing to be dried outside.



### Flat Block Door Locks

After 25 years, some flat block door locks and keys are becoming worn and unreliable. Worn locks are gradually being replaced 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 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.



### St Benedicts Online

To make things easier for owners, we are introducing a new service, **St Benedicts Online**, at <http://www.stbentooting.co.uk/forms/>

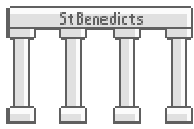
This will allow you to contact the Managing Agent and Management Company using online forms available on the website. Initially these will cover change of owner contact details, fault reports and applications for permission.

Owners who applied for and received permission to sub-let flats as requested paid no charges as stated at the AGM and will also be able to renew sub-letting permission with the same tenant(s) from February 2013 free of charge.

We regret that Rendall and Rittner had to introduce charges to handle paper applications for permission to sub-let flats. These require significant additional work in addition to that contracted and covered by service charges.

This is because of the low level of co-operation among flat owners and the failure by many to submit all the necessary paperwork. Flat owners living off site who have not applied are being contacted and will need to pay the charges if they sub-let. The charges also apply to new applications and to changes of tenant.





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### Maintenance Update

As reported in the June newsletter, the Directors are concerned whether all the work specified by Smith Baxter to repair the cracking affecting most blocks of flats is really necessary.

We met with Smith Baxter to discuss our concerns and it agreed that we could seek a second opinion on its report on the causes of the cracking and its specification of repair work.

All parties involved 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 have now carried out a competitive tender for another firm of surveyors and building engineers to provide this second opinion and the competition was won by Ellis & Moore. The second opinion will cost an average of £18 per flat including VAT. We hope to save much more than this from Smith Baxter's estimate of around £900 per flat for the repairs originally specified.

The Directors therefore decided to go ahead with the second opinion and awarded the contract to Ellis & Moore in August 2012. We expect to be able to report the results to the 2012 AGM.

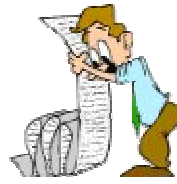
We will continue to provide updates on the website, in the newsletter and, when repair costs are known, by writing to the owners concerned.



### Tree Pruning

The annual tree pruning will be carried out in the autumn. Please tell the Managing Agent about any trees that need pruning **by 30 September**.

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



### Work in 2011-12

Here is a selection of other work that we have carried out for you in 2011-12:

- Paid rebates to owners of flats with maintenance free windows for costs saved in the redecoration in 2010.
- Continued dealing with the cracking in most blocks of flats (see *Maintenance Update*).
- Rebuilt the wall demolished by a tenant's car, after long negotiation through insurers.
- Levelled uneven paving and carried out other minor remedial work reported by the regular health and safety inspections.
- Dealt with rats, squirrels and cockroaches.
- Pruned trees where requested and allowed.
- Replaced worn flat block door locks with a new security master key system.
- Replaced old and worn flat door mats.
- Resolved problems with emptied bins not being returned to the correct bin store.
- Took action against large vans that overhung parking spaces, damaged fencing and obstructed adjoining spaces.
- Had the clock on the tower serviced and replaced its failed light.
- Erected more CCTV warning signs in visible positions to deter fly-tipping.
- Reported graffiti for removal by the Council.
- Investigated storage for bicycles.
- Removed fallen small trees after gales.
- Spread grit after snow last winter.

### AGM 2012

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 owner.

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

