

## Newsletter – March 2018



### Rendall and Rittner Online

Our managing agent, Rendall and Rittner, is looking to move correspondence with property owners online wherever possible. This saves paper and postage, so is more environmentally friendly. It also reduces the chances of errors and lost correspondence. The Directors fully support this initiative and have signed up.

**If you have not already done so, please sign up to Rendall and Rittner Online by emailing [registration@rendallandrittner.co.uk](mailto:registration@rendallandrittner.co.uk)**

Our property managers will contact anyone not signed up, aiming to move online from the 1<sup>st</sup> July requests. Paper correspondence will still be available to those without Internet access.



### Flat doors and fire doors

We are pleased to report that all flat front doors that had been changed have either been checked by the health & safety consultant, certified as meeting the standards required by building and fire regulations or replaced by their owners. This now includes two not done by the final deadline, where we instructed solicitors.

Despite all the publicity, an owner recently changed their flat door without consent and was required to provide certification. Two buyers of flats altered without consent are being required to reinstate the fire resistance at their expense.

**Flat owners are required by the lease to obtain consent before carrying out any work other than routine re-decoration.**

Now all known issues have been resolved, **damage to flats or reduction in their fire resistance will be referred to solicitors immediately.** Under the lease, this will be at the owner's cost, added to the property account.

Brushes have been fitted to the bottom of fire doors in the communal areas with large gaps to improve smoke resistance. One fire door has been re-hung to close gaps and the fitting of another two in their frames will be adjusted.

### → Parking permits

Current parking permits run to February 2019 so should continue to be used. They are no longer replaced annually to avoid unnecessary costs.



### Tree work

Tree work is now carried out on a regular schedule over five years to spread the work and cost. This year, the protected oak trees along Rectory Lane will have dead wood removed and other trees nearby will be pruned as needed.

Extra safety work was carried out to small trees last year. A couple more need attention this year.

**Please advise any small trees you think need pruning by 10<sup>th</sup> April**, by using the website fault report form or by contacting the Managing Agent, Rendall and Rittner. If you miss this deadline, the next opportunity for tree work will be in 2019.



### Flat water leaks

Water leaks in flats have reached a wholly unacceptable level, many also causing damage in the flat below. This results in distress to those affected through no fault of their own and higher insurance premiums for all flat owners. Some owners, particularly those living off site, do not seem concerned by these consequences.

Flat owners are required by the lease to maintain their properties in a state of good repair and to obtain consent in advance for any alterations. This is particularly important for plumbing, where leaks can cause extensive damage, and electrics, where faults may risk injury or fire.

Owners are strongly recommended to have an electrical inspection, test and report (EICR) by a qualified electrician every ten years or every five years for sub-let properties. You should also have plumbing inspected by a qualified plumber.

Because of the worsening situation with leaks, the Directors have decided that, as well as paying the insurance excess, a full flat plumbing inspection will now be required at the owner's cost where there is a leak into the flat below and any work recommended must be carried out.





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## Maintenance

Maintenance carried out over the last quarter includes repairing faulty strip lights outside flats, fixing a communal TV issue, repairing a leaking roof at the front of 29-43 St Benedicts Close (more work is being carried out at the rear) and dealing with two sewage leaks by Hawthorn Crescent and in Carlisle Way.



## Electrician

We are sorry that it is proving extremely difficult to find a reliable electrician to carry out work quickly on the Estate. This varies from replacing bulbs in external lights and faulty fittings to tracing and repairing faults such as that causing the lights to stay on in 73-87 St Benedicts Close.

So far, we have tried 3 contractors on Rendall and Rittner's approved list, 3 local electricians and now another contractor used successfully for building work. All have either not carried out work satisfactorily, proved unreliable or taken months.

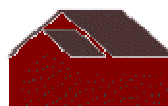
We are now going to try more local electricians, one recommended by our handyman and others rated on Checkatrade. **If you have used a reliable electrician that you can recommend, please give their contact details to our property managers at Rendall and Rittner.**

### → Identity theft

A resident has advised us that there was a recent attempt at identity theft against them, presumably using post stolen from their letterbox or, perhaps, at the sorting office.

You are warned to watch out for mail to your address but to another name (unless to a former resident) and to alert the sender, particularly if it is a bank or similar. If you suspect criminal activity, contact the police on 101.

Mail to former residents must not be dumped in the communal area but must be put in a Royal Mail post box marked "return to sender".



## Roof repairs

Over the past three months, roof leaks have been found on both sides of 29-43 St Benedicts Close. These have been and are being repaired, funded from the block reserve fund.

There is another leak at 31-37 Church Lane, on a different part of the roof from that repaired last year. 31-45 Church Lane is a small block of 8 flats, so the cost per flat means that we will be required by law to carry out another section 20 consultation. We are ordering a temporary repair to be carried out to prevent further damage while the consultation is carried out.

More money will be lent to this block from the common reserve to afford the full repairs, as agreed at the 2011 AGM. However, there will be a further significant service charge increase in this block from July 2018 as the leases require that owners in each block must fund its repairs.

A roof repair was required at 130-133 Rectory Lane last year, so it is becoming clear that another inspection of all roofs is needed, with repairs to be carried out if required. Roofs were last inspected in 2013-14. The inspection will be most economical when scaffolding, hoists or other means of access at height are already on site for the periodic maintenance planned in 2020, so we propose to carry out the roof inspection as part of that work in 2020.



## Soffit work to deter pests

Following work to fit new air grilles and block gaps in the soffits at roof level in Limetree Walk, similar work was offered to owners of 21-26 and 31-36 Abbey Drive. Owners who replied to the section 20 consultation opted to leave this work until 2020 when the cost will be less, as access will already be provided rather than at extra cost.

### → Snow and grit / salt

After snow at the end of February, grit /salt was put out for residents to spread if they wished. The slight delay in putting it out was caused by the very cold weather as one padlock had iced up and could only be opened during the day.

