



Newsletter – June 2018



Budget 2018-19

Over the last few years, the Directors and managing agent have focused on keeping costs down and have been able to keep the average rise in charges close to the level of inflation while house charges have even decreased.

Unfortunately, that is no longer possible this year, with unavoidable average rises of 5.9% for flats and 5.8% for houses.

A major reason for this is a large 72% increase in insurance premiums because of the Estate's very poor record of claims for water damage.

Only flat owners can do anything about this. Owners, including those off-site who are renting their flats, have a responsibility to maintain their flats and plumbing. Inspections by a qualified tradesperson should be carried out for electricity and plumbing every 5 years.

If the Management Company discovers that alterations have been made without the consent required under the lease, or if a leak occurs, action is taken, but it is then too late to prevent damage, an insurance claim and premium rises. Legal advice is that we are not allowed by law to intervene in the insurer's handling of claims.

Another major factor is the need for flat block roof repairs. There were several last year and this year two repairs were required to 1-71 St Benedicts Close and another to 31-45 Church Lane. Owners in these blocks have to pay for these and money must be collected to inspect all roofs during the periodic work in 2020. Repairs in 2020 would be funded from reserves and costs recovered in 2020-25, so reserves are essential.

Electrical work is being carried out in June after the 5-yearly inspection and testing. However, the electrical installations are now 30 years old and do not meet current safety standards. Money is being collected to replace these in around 2025. This applies to Estate lighting paid by flats and houses as well as flat communal areas.

The other main cost increase affecting everyone is for removing dumped waste, which is partly shared between flats and houses for Estate areas and partly paid by flats for bin stores. Only residents can keep costs down by disposing of waste properly. Please report anyone you see dumping waste, so this can be charged to them.



Data privacy

St Benedicts and Rendall and Rittner hold personal data as defined in UK legislation implementing the European *General Data Protection Regulation*, about which there has been much publicity recently.

This is necessary to meet the purposes and obligations of the Management Company and by law. For example, we have to know who owns Estate properties (which is also the shareholder list), be able to contact property owners, keep accounts of charges and submit information to HM Land Registry and Companies House.

The Management Company and managing agent have privacy policies for collecting, holding and processing data that comply with the new law and these are available on their websites.



Electrical work

The electrical testing required every five years was carried out in November 2017. We had hoped that most work could be left until the planned electrical upgrade in the flat communal areas and for Estate street and security lights around 2025 but some is required more urgently.

This was confirmed by other electricians when a tender was carried out for the work. Work will therefore be carried out in June to replace fittings in the clock tower, replace the original three round pin plugs for strip lights outside flats (whose connections could be exposed) with fixed connections (which will be re-used when LED lights are fitted) and seal consumer units.

The street light in St Benedicts Close near 105-119 needs to be replaced. A suitable contractor is being sought but this is proving difficult as it requires work at height and a hoist or scaffolding.



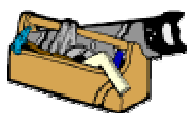
Insurance claim record

Buildings insurance claims in 2017-18, still open, total £43,868 against a premium paid of £11,168. The 2018-19 premium is 72% higher at £19,210.





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Maintenance

Detailed information on maintenance is reported on the website, usually monthly, so you can see when work is being done on reported issues.

The Directors no longer propose to seal flat communal area floors before 2020 to keep increases in flat charges down. This money is now allocated to inspecting flat block roofs.

Flat blocks with the highest increases have had significant maintenance this year, such as roof repairs and new soffit grilles to block squirrels.



Metal grilles for air vents

Because the initial trial in 2-12 Limetree Walk was inconclusive, a further trial of metal grilles over air vents to deter mouse entry is being carried out in 1-71 St Benedicts Close.

Residents will be surveyed in the autumn and results will be presented to the annual meeting. Flat owners in other blocks will then be consulted whether they wish grilles to be installed, paid for by higher charges in 2019-20 for their blocks.

These costs are not being collected without choice to keep increases in flat charges down.

→ Cost of losing keys

Flat blocks have special security keys that cannot be copied. If you fail to take care of these or landlords fail to recover them from tenants and there is a risk to the safety and security of other residents, you will need to pay for the lock cylinder and all block keys to be changed.

Someone where keys were lost renting is having to pay around £300, with the cost depending on the number of flats and keys held. You are advised to have insurance covering key loss.



Tree work

Tree work is now carried out on a regular five-yearly schedule to spread the work and cost.

Around August this year, the protected oak trees along Rectory Lane will have dead wood removed and be cut back where required, to the extent permitted by the Council.

A few small trees not cut back last year will also be pruned where now needed and some self-seeded trees that appear dead will be removed.



Carlisle Way street signs

The Directors presented proposals at the annual meeting last December to improve road signage in Carlisle Way. This was intended to reduce incorrect deliveries by couriers. The house owners who had suggested this said it had their neighbours' agreement.

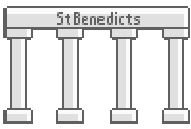
Unfortunately, some neighbours later confirmed they did not agree to additional signs outside their houses when consulted directly.

The Directors will write to the Council to move the poorly sited Limetree Walk signs now obscured by bushes but will not request additional signs in Carlisle Way. We do not expect any quick Council action.

In future, the Directors will not take forward such proposals before clear consent has been given to avoid a repeat of this waste of time and effort.

→ Items in communal areas

Residents of flats may not store anything in the 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. Removed items not claimed will be disposed of.



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The diagrams below show where your money will be spent in 2018-19, to the nearest percent (those shown as 0% are less than 0.5%). Annual expenditure is shown on the left, reserves on the right.

