



Newsletter – March 2020



Periodic external work

Initial tenders for the periodic external work to both flats and the Estate clock tower and portico were much higher than the cost of similar work in 2010 and 2015, even allowing for inflation. There is a significant challenge affording them as the reserves collected for this work between 2015-20 were based on previous costs.

The costs of specific work are similar to before, but general costs including staff welfare and scaffold and hoist costs for access have increased greatly. This is thought to result from the Government Living Wage, more stringent health & safety standards and market conditions.

The Directors met the supervising surveyor and lowest tenderer to clarify the work and managed to cut costs including contingency, fees and VAT by about £36,000 to about £194,000 for a start in April. The flat owner Section 20 consultation and Estate website provide more information.

To achieve these costs, **flat owners including landlords and residents will need to provide access to paint windows on the date advised.** There will not be a choice of dates, nor re-visits.

The Directors considered other options, but these are not considered feasible:

- All suitable contractors listed by the surveyor and Rendall and Rittner were asked to quote, including the one that did the work last time at lower cost, so it is unclear who else would tender or carry out the work more cheaply.
- With several flat roof leaks, paint peeling from wooden flat windows and parts of the wooden clock tower rotting, work cannot be delayed without damage and higher costs.

The Directors are working on options to limit the impact on charges from 1st July, for the next maintenance period starting in 2020, to keep increases to a usual level. The budget for these charges will be provided as normal with the payment requests in June, due on 1st July.

→ Parking permits

Current lilac parking permits are valid to 2021 so do not need replacement this year. Permit holders remain available on the Estate website.



Periodic flats internal work

Periodic flats external work requires all reserves collected between 2015-20 for both external and internal work and also some of the contingency reserve. Consequently, the Directors are considering options how to afford internal work without steep rises for flats service charges.

Proposals will be put to owners at the 2020 AGM for agreement. If owners want more work, flats charges would rise significantly from 2021.

We are likely to suggest not redecorating flats communal areas fully in 2020 / 2021, instead using the handyman contractor to make repairs only where essential until the next redecoration. The surveyor suggested extending the interval for internal communal area redecoration to 7 years, so next doing this in 2027, keeping that for external repair and redecoration as 5 years.



Maintenance

We are pleased to report, after great difficulty obtaining contractors and being let down:

- Paths near 89-103 and 105-119 St Benedicts Close have been levelled. A new step to access a bin store has been marked in white.
- Parking spaces in two areas affected by tree roots has been repaired to slope evenly as far as possible, although issues are likely to recur over time and require more work.
- Community Vision will test the aerial systems in blocks that reported limited reception after Freeview transmitter changes. This will allow work required to be identified, which may need access to flat lofts with the TV aerials.

The Estate insurer and loss adjuster have accepted the claims for two blocks with issues found by the periodic structural engineer inspection. We have written specifically to owners in those blocks, who need to advise any internal issues. Monitoring is being carried out to decide the remedial work required. The claim covers further sewer repairs Unbloc is making.

Metal grilles to deter pest entry have now been fitted to airbricks of blocks where owners chose to pay for this. Three airbricks remain to be done.