



## Contact

Angela Petts, our senior property manager at Rendall and Rittner, will be on leave from 17<sup>th</sup> September returning by 12<sup>th</sup> October. Contact by email [angela.petts@rendallandrittner.co.uk](mailto:angela.petts@rendallandrittner.co.uk) or phone 07800 628907 weekdays 9am to 530pm.

**While Angela is away, please contact Yasmin Spence**, who replaced Raja Hussain, by email [yasmin.spence@rendallandrittner.co.uk](mailto:yasmin.spence@rendallandrittner.co.uk) or phone 020 3978 2231. Yasmin works Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays.



## Periodic work

The reduced priority external work is planned to start on 21<sup>st</sup> September and will take about eight weeks. Alfred Bagnall and Sons has provided a comprehensive plan of work including Covid-19 coronavirus risk assessment and mitigation.

Contractor staff will not need to enter individual flats and may only need to come into buildings to use ground floor riser power sockets.

Estate parking will be suspended in bays 57 to 64 for 31-45 Church Lane, which the contractor will use for its welfare facilities and equipment. Residents with spaces in that area will need to park in other spaces, so the requirement to park in the property's numbered space will be lifted.

Work is planned to start in Abbey Drive and on the clock tower, then downhill through St Benedict's Close to Limetree Walk and Carlisle Way.

**Parents are reminded that work sites are not safe for playing, so children must be properly supervised and kept away from work areas.**



## Tree work

The tree surgeon has applied for Council consent to carry out work to the protected ash and cedar near Church Lane and the oak on Rectory Lane overhanging houses.

When this is granted, work permitted will be carried out this autumn with work to other trees that are not protected which need cutting back.



## Fire risk

The recent quarterly health and safety report identified the risk from items left in communal areas while Rendall and Rittner was not able to inspect regularly because of Covid-19.

Communal areas must be kept completely clear with fire and riser doors closed. Landlords are legally responsible for ensuring their tenants comply (not any agent they may use).

Communal hallways and staircases are the only exit route in the event of a fire. Flammable items like chairs and tyres are particularly dangerous and may emit toxic smoke. All items create an obstruction for people escaping a fire. Bicycles must be kept in flats or by the racks outside.

Where items are reported, Rendall and Rittner will write to the owner(s) and resident(s) likely to be responsible. If flammable items posing a risk to life are not removed or are found again after this only warning, legal action will be taken against the owner at their expense. This is regrettably essential following the Grenfell fire tragedy as the Management Company would be failing its legal duty if it tolerated such risk to life.



## Cutting costs

Faced with insurance premiums more than doubling and with most other annual costs fixed, the Directors had to make very hard choices to avoid even higher rises in charges, which still averaged 11% for houses and 26% for flats.

Inessential expenditure like planting has been stopped and significant costs that can be limited are being reduced, for example, by returning to clearing dumped waste quarterly not monthly.

While some owners are not happy with this, more have asked the Directors to do everything possible to keep costs down. We think these hard choices are in the best interests of owners overall as they avoided rises being 4% higher.

### → Suspicious activity

Please report all suspicious activity including possible drug dealing on the non-emergency 101 number so these reports are logged.



## Newsletter – September 2020

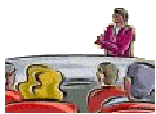


### Water leaks

More on the [website](#)

Since policies on plumbing work and leaks were updated in July, they have applied to four leaks. This rate may cause further huge insurance premium and charge rises next year, so tighter policies and care to reduce leaks are essential.

Rendall and Rittner is not authorised for legal work which by law a solicitor must handle. Flat leases specify that their charges should be paid by the owners concerned not by other owners.



### Annual meeting

The Management Company usually holds an annual meeting in November at a nearby church hall. Government Covid-19 restrictions imposed in mid-September prevent such gatherings. Current guidance on company meetings ends in September, so a decision on alternatives can only be made once this is updated. Options are:

- Not having a meeting this year, as it is not required by law, providing information and consulting with owners online instead.
- Holding a meeting attended only by the two Directors, with all owners voting by proxy.
- Attempting to hold a virtual meeting online, hosted by Rendall and Rittner on MS Teams, with registration and proxy votes in advance.

Once a decision can be made on the approach, this will be announced on the Estate website and through Rendall and Rittner Legal notices will be provided as required, online and by post.

The Directors investigated CCTV to monitor suspicious activity and dumping of waste as discussed at the 2019 meeting. This would cost many thousands of pounds so is unaffordable following huge rises in insurance premiums.



### Maintenance

Updates on the [website](#)

This autumn, Estate lights will be checked and the final phase of work to replace remaining old lights with LED ones will be carried out if they are failing. LED lights reduce electricity use and maintenance significantly yet improve lighting.



### Work this year

Work arranged by the Directors and Managing Agent this year includes:

- Periodic cutting back of the lime trees in Limetree Walk as permitted by the Council.
- Replacing a second batch of Estate security lights with more efficient LED ones.
- Repairing some uneven areas of paving and parking spaces affected by tree roots.
- Re-painting Estate metal fences and gates.
- Repairing and treating Estate fencing with preservative to prolong its life.
- Fitting metal grilles to air bricks of remaining flat blocks that opted to pay for this to deter pest entry.
- Sewer work needed, including major repairs covered by insurance at 21-26 Abbey Drive.
- Routine flat block repairs to block and fire doors, locks, closers and stair edgings.
- Investigating whether flat block TV channel coverage could be increased at economic cost but, unfortunately, this was not possible.
- Extensive re-arrangement of work due to the Covid-19 coronavirus pandemic and resulting Government restrictions, enhancing cleaning and providing frequent website updates.
- Emergency work by a Director during the Covid-19 lockdown to cut back leaning overgrown bushes near windows.
- Arranging a community volunteering scheme in the early stage of the Covid-19 lockdown.
- Making and managing insurance claims for two flat blocks where the structural engineer survey had identified movement.
- Extensive effort to re-work the budget to limit increases in charges as much as possible after insurance premiums more than doubled, saving about a further 4% charge increase.
- Carrying out a tender for the periodic external maintenance, re-specifying work when it could not proceed because of Covid-19 restrictions, tendering a reduced amount of essential and important work and arranging for this work to start in September 2020.



## Newsletter – September 2020



### Japanese Knotweed

An outbreak of Japanese Knotweed has been discovered on the Estate. The resident of the house concerned is now taking the necessary action to control and remove it. They advised that it spread from an adjoining property not part of the Estate, which our solicitor is contacting.

This plant spreads readily deep underground and there are already two further patches away from the original one. The Estate gardener is monitoring all Estate owned land, including that around blocks of flats, for further outbreaks.

**All house owners on the Estate should check for Japanese Knotweed on the land they own, using the identification guide below.**

Owners living away from the property should visit the property or instruct their letting agent or tenant to check, providing this information (noting that they remain legally responsible).

**You must tell Rendall and Rittner immediately if any more outbreaks are found or occur.**

You will then be provided with information on your legal responsibilities and what action you must take. *You must ensure that you, any tenants and your contractors do not do anything to break the law* (see below).

Roots from Japanese Knotweed can cause severe damage to property, so it is essential that any outbreaks are controlled in accordance with the law as there is otherwise a risk of damage to properties worth millions of pounds. Those owners and their insurers would be likely to take legal action for compensation against anyone allowing this plant to grow and cause damage.

There are legal restrictions on the handling and disposal of Japanese Knotweed material, waste and soil in which it has grown. Anyone breaking these laws is liable to a fine up to £5,000 and a prison sentence up to two years.

The Management Company is monitoring the treatment to remove the known outbreak, will ensure that it is completed successfully and that any other action necessary is taken. Its solicitor will be involved as required to protect the interests of owners on the Estate.

*Japanese Knotweed identification – courtesy of Non-native Species Secretariat*

