



Newsletter – March 2022



Periodic maintenance

The AGM endorsed the approach of splitting work into small packages that local contractor can carry out of lower cost. This approach was successful for flat porches redecoration and flat block gutters and roof work in 2021.

The Estate handyman completed limited decoration of flat block communal areas where damaged or stained by water in December.

The Management Company and Rendall and Rittner are now running tenders for flats work planned in summer 2022 for redecoration of:

- Flat block oriels (projecting wooden features)
- High wooden flat windows with safe access
- Low wooden flat windows from the ground
- The Estate cupola in St Benedicts Close.

Work will be awarded in the combination that leads to the lowest overall cost. A Section 20 consultation with flat owners will be carried out if the costs are above the threshold needing this.

The Estate handyman has been asked to quote for items of fire safety work in flat blocks. Details of this work are on the Estate website.

The latest information is on the Estate website: <https://www.stbentooting.co.uk/periodic>.



Maintenance

Work is updated monthly on the Estate website at <https://www.stbentooting.co.uk/maintenance>.

CSCS repaired an area of car parking damaged by tree roots and rat runs in Carlisle Way.

Unbloc had to jet two sewers blocked by fat recently. **Fat must not be poured down drains.** It should be allowed to set then put in the weekly household waste collected on Mondays.

The budget has to be revised to collect reserves for each flat block to handle separate smaller periodic work packages as flat leases require.

Costs to clear sewers and other maintenance costs will be charged to owners in the blocks concerned from 1 July 2022. Owners in flat blocks where they or their tenants take less care to look after them will face higher charges.

→ Parking permits

Parking permits are valid to February 2023 so do not need to be replaced this year.



Flat block fire safety

The recent fire tragedy in New York showed the critical importance of fire doors being closed in a fire to avoid loss of life. All the communal and flat fire doors on the Estate had automatic closers when built and these are essential for safety.

Items in communal areas obstruct fire evacuation and flammable items could kill through smoke. No action will be taken if other residents move these outside to protect their and other lives.

Some residents are still acting irresponsibly and are endangering their own lives and the lives of others by leaving out items and tampering with fire doors, despite repeated warnings.

After the success of the revised policy on water leaks, which led to a dramatic reduction, a similar policy will apply to fire safety from 1 April 2022.

Items in communal areas will get one notice. If items remain, fire doors are tampered with or any flat is found without operating automatic fire door closers, **the Management Company's solicitors will take action against the flat owner to protect life without further warning.**

The legal costs involved will be charged to the property account under the terms of the lease.

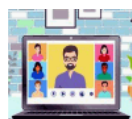
Landlords remain legally responsible for their properties so must ensure tenants comply.



Bicycle hangars

The difficulties of installing a bicycle hangar on the Estate were explained at the AGM (*see the separate article*). A better option was suggested, to lobby Wandsworth Council to provide these on Church Lane and Rectory Lane (**not** on the Estate roads as there is no suitable space).

The owner who suggested hangars withdrew their offer to coordinate this while the Directors focus on periodic work. Anyone interested in a bicycle hangar please follow the link currently on the Estate website home page to register interest directly with Wandsworth Council.



Annual meeting

The Annual General Meeting was held online on 27th January under the *Articles of Association* as amended last year. This enabled the meeting to go ahead safely despite high local Covid levels.

The 2 Directors and 8 other property-owning shareholders or proxies attended from 15 who had voted or nominated Proxies in advance. The Assistant Property Manager from Rendall and Rittner also attended, while the Senior Property Manager sent apologies. The chairperson cast 4 Proxy votes as instructed, cast 1 in a personal capacity and one other named Proxy attended.

The chairperson explained how the meeting would be conducted online. Full documents are available at <https://www.stbentooting.co.uk/agm>, including draft minutes of the meeting.

The following matters were considered and all votes were passed without opposition:

- Minutes of the November 2020 meeting and the accounts for 2020-21 were approved. Charges collected matched expenditure closely, the largest rises were in insurance and now electricity costs. Future charges can only be estimated when the budget is set.
- The difficulties of hugely increased costs tendered for periodic work have been explained in Newsletters and on the website over the last couple of years. Work has now been split into smaller packages that local contractors can carry out at lower cost. This worked well for gutter and roof work in 2021 carried out together by a local contractor with a discount from using the same hoist hire.
- This approach was approved. It will now be used in 2022 for decorating flat block oriels (wooden features), flat windows at low level and high level that require safe access.
- Questions on the fire safety work in flat block communal areas were answered with examples given, such as gaps around fire door frames, missing riser cupboard wooden strips and gaps around service ducts into flats found by health & safety inspections.
- Roof inspections are not recommended as they are more likely to cause damage than find issues. Leaks are dealt with when found.
- The budget must be revised now work is carried out in smaller packages over different intervals, with more charged to specific flat blocks to match leases. Charges collected into the single flats reserve will be transferred to the block reserves in proportion to the contributions as, otherwise, charges for this work would need to be paid for a second time into the block reserves. This was approved.
- The new policy introduced in July 2020 on water leaks and plumbing standards has proved highly successful. The number of leaks has dropped drastically, with one last year from plumbing already due for repair and another proving not to be a water leak. Potential issues raised at the 2020 AGM did not occur, as no plumbing to the required standards being maintained has leaked.
- The insurer finally agreed to pay for tree work it requested in accordance with the house freehold agreement. The resolution to allow re-charging the cost in these circumstances was approved. It was clarified this is only likely to apply to house insurance, as flat blocks are covered by the Estate insurance. This means any future argument will be over payment of charges not the tree work itself.
- There were no queries on work in the year set out in the September 2021 Newsletter.
- Mr Joshi and Mr Herrmann are willing to continue as Directors. There were no objections nor volunteers to assist. Thanks for their work were gratefully accepted.
- A query on provision of bicycle hangars was raised under any other business. Parking spaces belong to the properties concerned so cannot be used, there must be room for access without damage and there must be road access to avoid encouraging illegal cycling on pavements. Only the grass area in Carlisle Way would be suitable, a long way from some properties, may need planning permission and would need users to pay in advance. A better option is to lobby the Council for provision on Church Lane and Rectory Lane (*see the separate article*).
- Food dumped on the Estate was also discussed. This encourages vermin including rats and foxes. If anyone on the Estate is seen doing this, please inform Rendall and Rittner to take action for nuisance. While illegal, the Police are unlikely to take action.