



Budget 2022-23

Previously, reserves were collected for major work every 5 years. Now work is split into smaller packages at different times, the budget has had to change to collect reserves for each work package between the years that work is done.

For example, funds for insurance revaluation are now being collected between 2019 and 2023 and for clock tower work between 2020 and 2027.

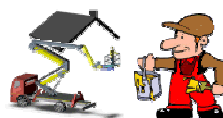
Flat maintenance costs are now charged to each block so charges are likely to vary more between years and blocks. Charges will become higher in blocks with features expensive to maintain like oriels and where residents take less care, for example, blocking drains with fat and solids.

The contractual index-linked increase for the cleaner, gardener and managing agent is 10.3% due to inflation. Insurance values rose 10.6%, causing similar increases in premiums, and the excess for water leaks is now £750. Electricity costs increased horrifically by 85% in late 2021 and will increase further in autumn 2022. Estate lights have been reduced and replaced with LED ones in recent years, reducing their cost as much as possible. Flat landlord electrical upgrades will be carried out as soon as funds allow so hallway lights operate when motion is detected rather than all night to achieve similar savings for flats.

Other Estate costs are also increasing hugely, like the clock tower and damaged parking and pavement. Trees must be cut back for safety because storms are becoming more severe. A tree fell in 2021 and large pieces fell in February 2022. Estate light supplies require upgrade to meet current standards when also done for flats.

Estate costs form the whole of house charges, while most flats charges are for costs which only flats pay and flats also pay Estate charges. No costs are paid only by house owners. After reductions in recent years, house charges have to increase by 25.0%, like flats ones did in 2020, because of huge Estate cost increases. Charges only cover costs as the Company is non-profit.

Extensive work by the Directors has kept costs of periodic maintenance below the funds collected since the large increase in flats charges in 2020, offsetting huge Estate cost increases, so flats charges can decrease, by 15.3% on average.



Periodic work

Costs in 2010 and 2015 for internal and external periodic work were under £100,000, so reserves of around £150,000 were collected, allowing for inflation increases and contingency.

Tenders from large firms just for external work in 2020 were £176,000 to £473,000 and those in 2021 for less work were £226,000 to £423,000, so were completely unaffordable. Only urgent work that could not wait was carried out in 2020.

Although much more work for the Directors, work was then split into packages that smaller local contractors could perform. This was successful in 2021 for the flat porch redecoration, gutter clearance and roof repairs. The approach was endorsed by the January 2022 general meeting and has also proved successful for 2022 work.

Following a series of competitive tenders, local handyman Rafal Wiatek, who decorated flat porches, also decorated flat low-level windows and Offeld Services, a contractor on Rendall and Rittner's approved list, has decorated flat oriels, high-level windows and the cupola feature.

Only damaged areas of flat communal areas were decorated. The total cost of the work between 2020 and 2022 is about £127,000. The huge effort by the Directors to keep costs down means the work has been delivered within the reserve funds collected, allowing flats charges to decrease slightly after a large increase in 2020.



Wooden flat windows

Only 23 low-level and 5 high-level flats of 132 have registered wooden windows. Decoration now costs about £20,000, so would now be heavily subsidised by other owners who have already paid for maintenance free windows.

Under leases, flat owners are responsible for window maintenance, the Management Company for external decoration and costs have to be apportioned to properties benefitting.

To avoid large charges in 2026 when next due for decoration, **owners should seek consent and replace wooden with uPVC windows.**



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Reducing future costs

The quote from CSCS to upgrade the landlord electrical installation to modern standards in a pilot flat block that a Director can monitor was below the cost requiring Section 20 consultation, so this was carried out as soon as possible.

Detector lights in hallways that switch on only when someone passes instead of being on all night work successfully. Lights in porches and by flat doors will remain on for safety when dark.

Section 20 consultation and tenders are being carried out for similar upgrades in other flat blocks as soon as reserve funds permit. This will pay for itself in a few years at current electricity prices and then help keep charges down. Estate reserve funds need to cover the part of these costs attributable to street and security lights.

The Directors investigated the cost of replacing flat communal staircase windows with uPVC ones not requiring re-decoration. The cost is only about 60% more than decoration now the cost of safe access at height is so high. Consequently, these windows will not be re-decorated in 2022 and will instead be replaced as soon as reserve funds permit. This will save money by the time the next decoration would be due, in 2027.



Tree work

Urgent unplanned tree work to remove a hanging tree branch and cut back a tree dropping wood into the road was needed after three storms.

Since the Estate was built in the 1980s, trees have been allowed to grow naturally if possible. More work is now necessary to cut back trees for safety to reduce the risk of damage in storms now these are more severe and more frequent.

Trees without preservation orders liable to damage will be reduced in size in summer 2022. We will seek Council consent over the next two years to keep the lime trees to the height of surrounding buildings and reduce trees over roads, including oaks and an ash with dieback.

This will increase Estate costs over the next two years but is necessary for public safety.

→ Don't flush fat / solids

More sewers have needed unblocking. Flat charges in blocks where residents misuse drains are likely to increase under the new budget.

Do not flush fat down drains, this sets and blocks them. Fat should be allowed to cool to set then disposed of in household waste when solid.

Only use toilets as intended and do not flush solids like tampons, pads and nappies. These should be wrapped and put in household waste.



Maintenance

Updates on the [website](https://www.stbentooting.co.uk/maintenance)

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

Rafal Wiatek, the local handyman used by the Estate sealed gaps around flat communal area fire doors and flat service entry points. He is now upgrading rider door seals. He will then upgrade fire seals in riser cupboards to higher standards required following the Grenfell tragedy after wiring work that may affect the fire seals.

→ Smoke alarms

You are reminded to fit a smoke alarm, test it weekly and change it when due for your safety.



Key system

The cleaning contractor, DNK cleaning, reported loss of a security key, which was assessed for risk like any other loss under the policy on the Estate website. Immediate replacement of the system was not considered necessary but flat owners were surveyed in case they wanted this.

The majority of owners responding endorsed replacement over time when locks are replaced for other reasons, such as key loss causing greater risk or when worn out. This is expected over the next couple of years, because most locks are now fairly worn after about 8 years.

→ Flat communal areas

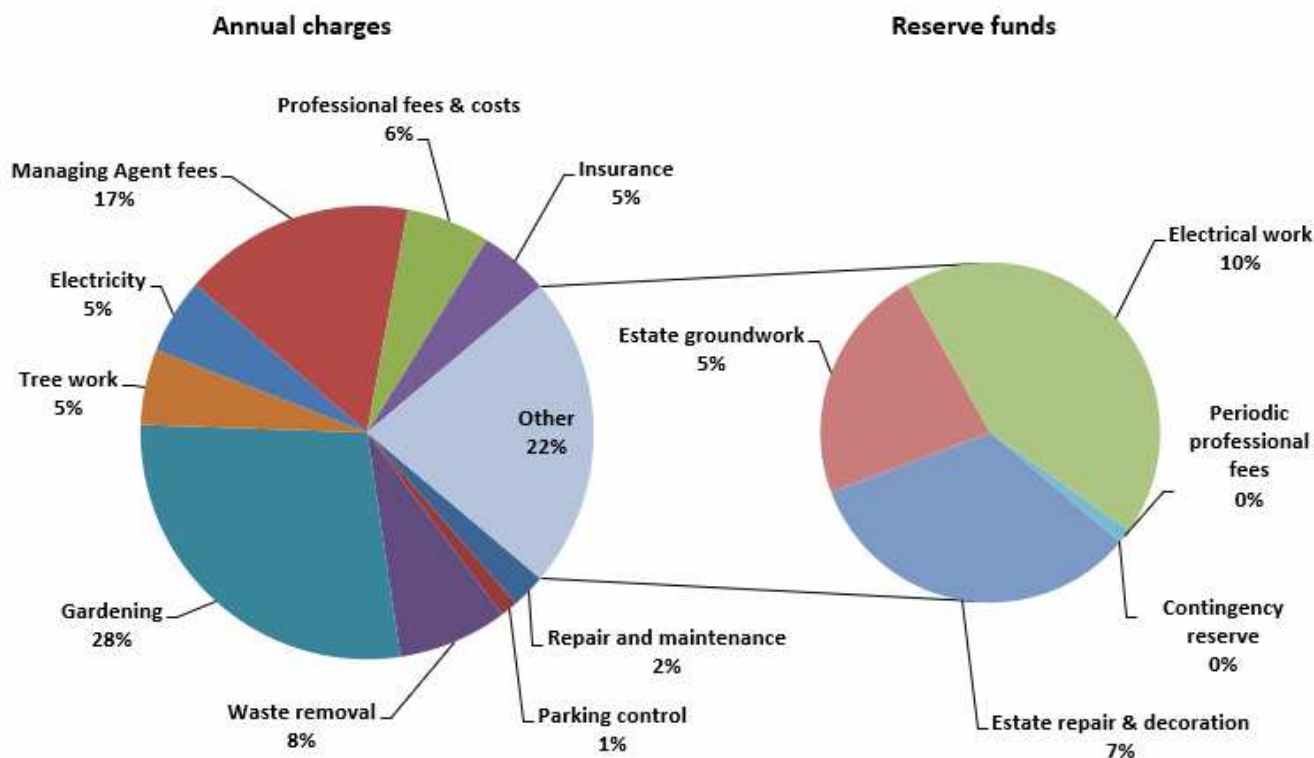
Items must not be left flat communal areas as this is a fire risk and obstructs emergency exits. Notes are left and items may be removed. If items remain or fire doors are open / obstructed, solicitors will contact flat owners at their cost.



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The diagrams below show where your charges will be allocated in 2022-23, to the nearest percent (those shown as 0% are less than 0.5%). Annual expenditure is shown on the left, reserves on the right.

Freehold houses / Wandle Housing Association breakdown



Leasehold flats breakdown

