

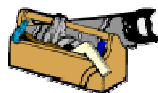
**→ Parking permits**

Parking permits last to 2025. There is a £10 fee to cancel those lost, so take care of them!

**Fibre broadband**

Community Fibre began laying fibre to the premises broadband cables in flat blocks in late November after preparatory street work. This is starting in two pilot blocks to check the work matches agreed plans and damage is repaired.

Owners and tenants (with owner consent) of Estate flats and houses can order this as shown in leaflets Community Fibre delivered. Flat receiving equipment *must* be within and powered from the flat and connected through the ground floor service box, otherwise it will be moved for safety at the flat owner's expense without notice.

**Maintenance**

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

Work to repair and upgrade the fire seals in flat block risers started in November for two pilot blocks. After fibre broadband work, this will be extended to all flat blocks in the first part of 2024. That completes the communal area work and cycle of periodic maintenance work.

Once work needing issue of keys to unfamiliar contractors is over, the delayed replacement of the security key system can begin in 2024.

**Tree work**

Council consent was eventually granted to reduce the lime trees for safety to keep them away from buildings, lights and the clock, which will be done in 2024. This expensive work will be tendered early in the year, with slightly higher Estate charges next year to cover the cost.

→ Snow and ice

If snow falls or is forecast or it is icy, grit / salt will be put in St Benedicts Close (by the bin), Abbey Drive and Limetree Walk for residents to use.

→ Holiday waste collection

Wandsworth Council waste collections will not be on Christmas and New Year days and are expected on Tuesdays 26th December and 2nd January. We expect Christmas trees must be put out for shredding by 14th January, not any later. **Leave them where visible near street entrances, not in Estate recycling areas.**

**Electricity overbilling**

Rendall and Rittner advised and the Directors agreed to pay the sum advised by Ecotricity to allow switch to the much cheaper SSE prices tendered and accepted from 1 October. Ecotricity has admitted but not resolved errors so action with Ombudsman, Regulator and, if necessary, small claims court will be taken to recover sums overbilled and extra costs arising from Ecotricity delays as the General Meeting authorised.

→ Season's greetings

The Directors and Managing Agent wish all owners and residents a happy, peaceful and healthy Christmas and New Year.

**Annual meeting**

The General Meeting was held online on 16th November 2023.

One Director and 4 other property-owning shareholders attended (1 for part of the meeting) from 10 who had voted or nominated Proxies in advance. The other Director was unable to attend and sent apologies because of a family funeral. The Senior and Assistant Property Managers from Rendall and Rittner also attended with no vote. The chairperson cast Proxy votes as instructed and had discretion to cast 3 in a personal capacity.

The chairperson explained how the meeting would be conducted online and the Director and Property Managers introduced themselves. Full documents including draft minutes are available at www.stbentooting.co.uk/meeting.

Matters considered at the General Meeting are covered on the next page.



The following matters were considered at the General Meeting:

- Minutes of the November 2023 meeting and the accounts for 2022-23 were approved with none against. The figures for electricity are the Directors' estimate of the position regarding electricity payments properly due.
- Costs of re-decorating original wooden flat windows at height are disproportionate for 2nd and 3rd floors (about £1,400 to £3,500), most owners have maintenance-free replacements so it is unfair to share these costs and those for lower floors (about £240 to £600). Leases require maintenance so unpaid costs would be recovered like other charges. Charging re-decoration costs to individual flats was approved with none against.
- Electricity costs are covered in a separate article. It was clarified that action to recover any overpaid charges would be taken so as to minimise costs and risk. The Directors were authorised to take action necessary to recover overpayments with none against.
- A formal decision was sought whether to collect reserves to replace fire doors outside flats as the Health & Safety consultancy had recommended, endorsed by Rendall and Rittner. This contained errors of fact and misquoted Government guidance, so was challenged. Its response identified that records are no longer available but admitted current law does not require replacement as the doors met standards when fitted, are original and have been duly maintained but not replaced nor altered. It asserted that nobody would now certify them, which matches Government and press findings that fire tragedies are being used to push unnecessary expensive work, although that is not suggested here. Collecting funds would increase charges considerably for years then more complex maintenance would keep charges higher. Increasing charges to collect reserves for fire door replacement was rejected with none in favour, most abstained.
- Possible closure of the Estate entrance by 31-37 Church Lane to reduce fly-tipping by those off the Estate if the owners in that block choose to pay for it was approved with none against. If not, it was suggested this be raised again next year as an Estate cost.

- There was extensive discussion whether Directors should be paid for additional work outside their normal duties with stringent controls. While it would reduce costs slightly, it needed to be limited in value and time and good practice separates authorisation and receipt of payment. Paying Directors for extra work was rejected by a narrow margin but it was emphasised this was no criticism.
- Mr Joshi and Mr Herrmann are willing to continue as Directors. There were no objections nor volunteers to assist. They were thanked for their work and condolences were offered for the recent bereavement.
- There were no queries on work in the year listed in the September Newsletter. 127 flats (over 96%) took up 999-year leases at cost on the terms offered originally. The remaining 5 flats would need to pay a fee of half the increase in flat value as approved last year.
- Several matters were raised under any other business, listed below.
- Steps to address nuisance by tenants in a freehold house were discussed and agreed.
- The reasons for Estate plumbing standards were fully explained, also that flat owners are solely responsible for meeting them and, by not doing so, caused the insurance excess for water leaks to rise to £2,500. Flat leases and the law only allow mandatory inspection with evidence of breach of lease. **Owners may request inspection at £120 + VAT.**
- The nature of the Management Company and reasons for its actions were explained.
- This is thought to be the first time in 30 years that waste disposal was *not* raised!



Flat wooden windows

Owners with wooden windows, particularly on 2nd and 3rd floors, are very strongly urged to obtain consent and replace these with maintenance free ones. Following the General Meeting decision, they will now pay redecoration costs, up to £3,500 for 2nd and 3rd floors or more by 2027 in addition to other service charges. Communal staircase window replacement only cost about twice this redecoration cost.