



Telephone & Fax: 023 9282 2021

Registered Office: HMS NELSON
Portsmouth
PO1 3HH

Secretary: Peter Tidd

SPRING NEWSLETTER 2013 No. 35

PROPERTIES

Eliza Mackenzie Court refurbishment is now almost half way through the contract period and it is anticipated that it will be completed towards the end of the year and hopefully people moving in before Christmas. The process to develop a sixth court started in 2008 and has seen the Association look at sites in Southsea, Purbrook and Waterlooville before purchasing in Cosham.

During the course of the year there will be a Stock Condition Survey of Neptune Court, which will assist the Board of Management with future planning. Already five year electrical inspections have started again with Cornwell Court the latest to be done, after the initial inspections the process should not take so long as only sample random testing is required. It is vital that any electrical work undertaken within the Associations properties is completed by an authorised electrical contractor and the appropriate certificate issued. The Associations preferred electrical contractor is J & N Burrows. If you want **ANY** electrical installations or alterations it is important that you contact the Warden or the office for guidance first as any unauthorised changes could invalidate the Electrical Compliance Certificate and the buildings insurance.

RENT LEVELS

In November 2012 rent levels for 2013 were reviewed by the Board of Management taking into consideration the September inflation rate and guidelines produced by the Homes and Communities Agency a rent rise of 3.1% was approved. Service Charge increases were also reviewed and increases approved based on figures provided to the Association's accounts at year end based on expenditure within each building. Increases ranged between 2.8% to 11.8% depending upon the peculiarities of each building. Once again Maintenance Contract increases exceeded inflation, unfortunately we have to have these contracts and therefore have to pay the price.

Management Charges continue to be included in the service charge following its introduction in January 2008 with annual increments of £2 per flat until the full management costs are recovered.

The average rent levels charged by the Association for 2013/2014 are shown below and are competitive with other Sheltered Housing providers in the area.

	Double	Single
Average Rent- Gosport	£60.49	£55.35
Average Rent- Southsea & W'looville	£67.16	£61.21
	Double	Single
Average Service Charge-Gosport	£51.09	£43.27
Average Service Charge Southsea & W'looville	£67.16	£46.90

As previously advised the Association does not currently recover the full cost of services provided, particularly building insurance and planned maintenance, which remains under constant review and you will be consulted prior to any changes.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY

Generally energy prices continue to rise but the Association continues to monitor usage to try and keep the costs down but without impacting on the service provided. The Association has recently renegotiated new contracts for the supply of gas and electricity and achieved good results with a slight decrease in both electricity and gas.

SUPPLY OF ELECTRICITY

The electricity supply to your flat at the beginning of the tenancy will be by SSE but the Association cannot stop you choosing who your electricity supplier is but does request that you provide the office with the following information if you change supplier:

Name of Supplier
Address of Supplier
Account/Contract Number

VACANCIES

Last year was a challenging year in relation to tenancy changes, a total of 28 tenancy changes occurred and once again some difficulty was experienced in re-letting flats, but on this occasion not just in the Gosport area. We also experienced the same difficulties in Southsea and Waterlooville, discussion with other housing providers indicate that they are suffering with the same problems.

If you are aware of any one who may be interested in being accommodated by the Association and are over sixty years of age, please invite them to ring the office on 023 9282 2021 for an application form or look at the Associations website for further details.
www.agamemnonha.org

CHICHESTER COMMUNITY CARELINE

Chichester Community Control continues to provide good service when required. I know this subject is mentioned frequently but I cannot stress enough the importance of keeping information supplied to the Warden and Central Control **accurate and correct**. Failure to report a change of a doctor or a change in details of a nominated persons address or telephone number may result in them being unable to contact those people you would like called in an emergency.

PLEASE ENSURE THAT THIS SERVICE CAN WORK FOR YOU BY KEEPING THE INFORMATION HELD BY THE WARDEN/CENTRAL CONTROL UP TO DATE.

If you have any doubts about the accuracy of information provided please contact the Warden immediately.

WARDENS - WORKING HOURS

The Wardens are contracted to work 35 hours per week, by working 6.5 hours daily Monday to Friday and alternate Saturday morning. This routine may be varied occasionally with the agreement of the CEO. If it is, a notice will be displayed in the office window accordingly.

I am sure you appreciate Wardens are entitled to their free time to enjoy their own life. Therefore, non urgent matters should be reported during normal working hours. **Emergency non technical** matters should be referred to the Chichester Community Careline via the pull chord when the Warden is not on duty or absent from the Court.

PLEASE RESPECT THE WARDENS OFF DUTY TIME.

If there is no one on duty during the normal working day, emergency technical problems should be reported in the first instance to the office on 023 9282 2021 who will take the appropriate action. Over the week end any **EMERGENCY** technical problems should be reported via the mobile phone number provided. Non emergency problems should be left until the Monday and reported to the Warden.

Wardens are on contracted hours and provided with accommodation within the building and are expected to live in the flat most of the time to enable them to deal quickly with any emergency that may arise whilst they are on the premises – **it is also their home**. They are entitled to use **all of the facilities** in the building (laundry, communal lounges, car parks, guest room (if not required by a resident) and gardens etc the same as any other resident.

SECURITY

Security is one of the main reasons given when applying for sheltered housing with the Association so it is a concern that there are so many security breaches in our properties. All the Association's buildings are fitted with automated doors, a

requirement under the Disability Discrimination Act and do take a little longer to close. Please ensure that you wait until the door is closed properly before you leave the entrance/exit area. Also if you see people wandering about the building who you do not recognise, politely challenge them, if they are in the building legitimately they will not take offence.

Each building has door entry cameras so that you can see who is at the door before releasing the latch to let them in – if you are not expecting a visitor or do not recognize them do not let them in, and certainly do not let someone in for a neighbour- they may be out!!

If you open a window/door in the Communal areas please ensure that you close it properly when you leave the area, do **not** leave it for someone else to do for you. **Security is everyone's responsibility.**

PRIVATE EFFECTS IN CUPBOARDS

It has been reported that personal items have gone missing from store cupboards within the Courts. First of all I must state that items placed in these cupboards are at the owners risk, therefore items of value should not be placed in these cupboards. Secondly each item should be easily identifiable with a label identifying the owner, as from time to time these cupboards will be cleared of unmarked items. Garden furniture, household tables, chairs etc should not be placed in these stores.

Car Parking

Car parking facilities are a constant source of complaint and it is a fact that there are insufficient parking spaces at the Associations properties to accommodate all car users, including visitors and carers. This is unlikely to change because of cost and space restrictions. It is for this reason that spaces are NOT allocated, even mobility spaces, they are **all** on a first come first served basis. However I would ask that mobility spaces are left clear for use by those who have 'blue badges' and that these badges are displayed in our car parks to avoid animosity and ill feelings.

NOISE

Recently there has been several complaints regarding noise levels from residents television/radios, if they can be heard in the passageways they are too loud and is unfair to immediate neighbours as well as those above and below.

I take this opportunity to say that if you have difficulty with your hearing there is equipment that will allow you to listen to your television/radio without causing a nuisance to your neighbours. The Wardens will be able to provide you with details of organisations including Social Services and private companies which may be able to assist.

I appreciate that living in buildings of multiple occupancy may at times be frustrating because of noise, cooking smells etc but a degree of tolerance is required.

In the meantime I remind you of Clause 3 (7) of your Tenancy Agreement which reads as follows:

Noise 7 Neither to play, nor to allow to be played, any radio, television, record or tape recording or musical instrument so loudly that it causes a nuisance or annoyance to other persons in the neighbourhood or can be heard outside the Premises between the hours of 10.30pm and 7.30am

HEALTH & SAFETY

The Association, as part of its Health & Safety Risk Assessment policy and to comply with legislation has each building monitored annually by a Health and Safety Consultant person who also completes a Fire Risk Assessment.

With regard to Health & Safety, emergency escape routes should be kept clear of all obstacles. I would be grateful if they could be removed as they are a trip hazard for people who are partially sighted or who have mobility problems.

BOARD MEMBERS

During 2012 there was one addition to the Board of Management with no one retiring, but this will not stop the Association looking for suitably qualified people to join the Board of Management.

DEFECTS

All defects in your flat, which are the Association's responsibility in accordance with the Tenancy Agreement, should be **reported immediately to the Warden**, recorded in the Defect Book so they can be rectified quickly and properly by the Maintainer. This log is regularly inspected by the Administrative Staff to see if there is a trend developing within a particular building which might be part of a larger problem.

Please remember to report these problems as soon as they occur because what may be a small problem today may become a large one tomorrow.

FIRE ALARMS

I know that this is a regular article but it is necessary to remind all residents of the importance of following the correct procedure when the fire alarm goes off. Quite often it is assumed that it is just a test or that someone has "burnt the toast". **ALL** fire alarms should be treated as potentially dangerous and you should follow the prescribed procedures for your particular building. On the advice of the Hampshire Fire and

Rescue Service all the Associations buildings have a "**STAY PUT**" policy. Unless the fire is in your flat please stay there until the alarm is silenced.

With regards to cooking I urge you to follow some simple rules and use the extractor fans (where fitted) close the kitchen door (if fitted) and never leave pots/pans unattended. The Hampshire Fire and Rescue Services are tightening up their procedures and consequently three false calls a year to any building will lead to a visit by the Fire Service to assess the cause. Recent visits have, fortunately proved that the Associations procedures are sound and that the equipment is properly maintained and tested. Please be more careful when cooking, a false call to one of our buildings may mean that a fire fighting appliance cannot attend an incident where it really is needed!

DOGS

The Association has a "No Pets Policy" which means that no pets are allowed on its property unless they are Guide Dogs or Dogs for the Deaf, this also applies to visitors pets and I would be grateful if those residents would remind their visitors of the Associations rules.

ABSENCE FROM THE BUILDINGS

If you know you are going to be absent from the building for a while please inform the Warden. In the event of an emergency it provides vital information of just who is in the building and what flats have to be checked. It is not a means of prying into your personal life but complying with a standard of good practice concerning **your** safety.

Likewise if, in an emergency you have someone staying in your flat overnight please inform the Warden.

EMERGENCY PULL CHORDS

Please do not tie up your emergency pull chords because in the event of a fall you may not be able to raise the alarm. This has happened in the past and I am sure it will happen again but the next time could be the last for someone!!! Make sure it is not you.

SO PLEASE RESTORE ALL PULL CHORDS TO THEIR RIGHTFUL POSITIONS.

BLOCKED DRAINS

Blocked drains continue to be a source of concern, both inside and outside of the building. The following is an extract from a Southern Water document included with a recent invoice.

Please don't pour fat, oil and grease down the kitchen sink because this accounts for about two thirds of sewer blockages.

Fat, oil and grease stick to the insides of drains and sewers. Over time, this hardens to form a concrete-like material that can block the entire pipe, causing flooding. Please help keep your drains and the environment clean by:

- Wiping and scraping utensils and plates before washing
- Pouring excessive fat, oil and grease into a container to harden and disposing of it with your household rubbish
- Using a fat trap to collect excess fat and oil
- Using strainers to collect food particles.

BAG IT & BIN IT

It is a water industry led national campaign to encourage people not to flush their discarded 'personal products' down the toilet.

What is the problem?

Sewers are designed to take away wastewater from sinks and baths/showers, toilet paper and human waste flushed down the toilet, and rainwater which runs into road drains.

Sanitary items and other personal waste should be disposed of responsibly in the household waste bin. This is to protect our beaches, rivers and canals from unsightly products, avoid harm to the marine environment and our wildlife and prevent blockages in the sewerage system. An estimated 2 billion sanitary protection items are flushed down toilets each year. Our sewers were not designed for this sort of waste so they suffer blockages in the pipes and treatment works and other problems.

Personal products should, for health reasons, first be placed in bags and then put in the bin.

Following the above procedures a little bleach or caustic soda crystals from time to time should keep the drains flowing freely and smelling sweet.

HOUSEHOLD WASTE/RECYCLING BINS

There have been several instances recently where items of household waste and recycling items have been placed in the wrong bins, which could result in the Association being fined by the local authority. It should not be expected that Maintainers have to sort out the different waste and put it in the correct bins, nor should they have to do it. Please ensure that you bag your waste securely before placing it in the correct bin.

Also please do not place old electrical items in the bins as this also will attract action by the local authority, if you have some old electrical items to dispose of please ask the Warden who should be able to provide you with a number to ring to dispose of the items properly.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

The aim of having a complaints procedure is not to encourage complaints. It is, however, to ensure that when things do go wrong, they are dealt with promptly and efficiently. It is appreciated that complaints can serve as an indicator of dissatisfaction with procedures and performance and the Association will be responsive to considering changes arising from complaints.

Initially the complaint should be made to the Warden as soon as possible. If the Warden is not able to deal with the complaint it should be submitted to the office, who will, if appropriate, deal with the complaint keeping the Board of Management informed.

Complainants who are still dissatisfied may have their complaint referred to the Executive Committee or a special Sub Committee delegated to deal with the complaint.

Appeals.

If the complainant is still unhappy with the decision of the Executive Committee or special Sub Committee, an appeal can be made. This should be submitted in writing within 15 working days to: The Chairman, Agamemnon Housing Association Ltd, HMS NELSON, Portsmouth, PO1 3HH

Tenants should be aware that once the Association's complaints procedures has been exhausted if they are still not satisfied, they have the right to have their complaint referred to the Housing Ombudsman Service.

Finally please be assured that if you do submit a complaint that full confidentiality will be observed and a no time will the source be disclosed.

NEWSLETTERS

Finally, if you have any items of interest which you would like included in the next newsletter please let me have them or if you have any suggestions concerning the presentation do not hesitate to contact me.

Peter Tidd
17 April 2013

WPDOCS\NEWSLETTERS\Spring2011