



QUEENSWOOD NEWS

Issue 12, July 2011

Making an Entrance

Two issues give us concern regarding security at Queenswood Gardens. The first of these is the state of the front doors. As previously reported, they have not been an unqualified success, needing almost constant attention to keep them operational. The amount of use, and abuse, that they have had since they were installed has been higher than the suppliers ever imagined. We estimate that each set of doors gets somewhere around 10 to 15 years' of normal domestic use each year. They also get a fair amount of abuse, too. A number of residents have reported to us that they have seen people trying to force the doors open, and on a number of occasions, bolts, locks and other door furniture have been broken by what appears to be deliberate misuse.

The other issue we face is the proliferation of keys for the front doors. Often when tenants move out they do not return the keys to the front doors; we also know that some residents have had an excessive number of keys cut and distributed them to many friends and relatives. All this means that it is well-nigh impossible to keep track of who has keys to the doors, and we know of cases where people who were, shall we say, less-than-satisfactory tenants returning to Queenswood Gardens, entering various blocks and doing damage.

We're therefore looking at replacing the doors with some that are much more substantial — made of steel rather than aluminium and uPVC — and at the same time moving to coded magnetic fobs instead of physical keys. The latter would allow us to disable fobs for ex-residents, and to keep a check on the proliferation of keys.

When we have more details available of what is planned, we hope to put them on our website and invite comments from lessees prior to giving the final go-ahead for their installation.

Queenswood Gardens in Cyberspace

Thank you for all the feedback that we've had about our now not-so-new website: www.queenswoodgardens.com. Most of it has been very positive and constructive.

We're continuing to add information to the site. Since we introduced you to the website in the last newsletter (over a year ago now — so apologies for the delay in sending you this one) we have added the results of the asbestos survey that was carried out early in 2010, expanded the FAQ section (Frequently Asked Questions, for those of you who are not regular Internet surfers), updated and expanded the Useful Links & Numbers section and tried to keep the News section up-to-date and relevant.

If you have any suggestions as to how we can improve the website, do please get in touch — all proposals are welcome, although we don't guarantee to implement them all. And if you have any photos of Queenswood Gardens that you are especially proud of, and would like to share them on the site, do please send them to us.

QMA Board

Board members and their block responsibilities are:

- Block A – Mike Thompson (Flat 73)
- Block B – Gerald Cox (Flat 97)
- Block C – Griff Griffith (Flat 105)
- Block D – Bob Haswell (Flat 19)
- Block E – Pauline Thurman (Flat 137)
- Block F – Len Kerridge (Flat 135)

Whilst directors are always prepared to give you advice, they are not caretakers — if there is something that needs repairing or urgent attention, please notify Hull & Co, as this is the quickest way to get it fixed. Leaving a message on a director's answer-phone can actually delay our response, as it can easily get overlooked or lost.

Parking is such sweet sorrow . . .

The ingenuity of a small handful of residents in trying to beat the parking permit scheme never fails to amaze — and amuse — us. The latest dodge is placing an invalid permit — for instance, a visitor's permit on a resident's car, or a resident's permit for a different vehicle — so that the lower half of the permit is obscured by the darkened glass at the bottom of the windscreen. Just to make it perfectly plain, if a permit is partially obscured, or shows the registration number for a different vehicle, the car will be liable for a parking charge notice.

A couple of residents have failed to apply for permits, either when they have changed their cars or when they have first moved to Queenswood Gardens, and have then been surprised to get a parking charge notice when they've parked in one of our parking bays. If you're like them, and are displaying an old, invalid, permit, or have failed to apply for a permit, this could happen to you. You can download a resident's permit application form from our website.

We make no apologies for our new policy of suspending parking permits for lessees (or their tenants) when they are significantly in arrears with their service charges. When we first introduced this policy, it certainly bore fruit — we will continue to use it as a means to chase those lessees who ignore requests to either pay up, or explain why they can't.

"We're a small community - let's be proud of it"

Wooden Floors

Even in a small community like ours, from time to time residents feel it necessary to complain about other resident's activities. The most common complaint is about noise, and of those complaints, the majority relate to wooden, or wooden laminate, floors.

We do have to remind everybody that your covenants in the lease require that carpets should be fitted throughout the entrance hall, passageway and lounge of all flats. This is not an option — it is a specific requirement for all lessees. Where necessary we do take steps, including legal action, to enforce this covenant — and if this covenant has been breached, we do not transfer shares in either company to the new lessee when a flat changes hands until carpets have been laid.

In the Pipeline

We have decided to carry the scheduled external decorations over to next year. We hope that by then, we will have enough in the Major Works fund to cover most, if not all, of the costs from our reserves, so that any call on lessees' pockets will be limited.

One job that is in hand is the installation of additional handrails on the walls by each flight of stairs for those that don't already have them. Whilst we know that there is a thriving young community at Queenswood Gardens, a number of us are not getting any younger and need all the help we can get in climbing the stairs.

This work will be carried out within the coming months, as soon as our contractor can find a sufficient supply of wood that matches the existing handrails.

Gardens Update

It's very easy to take the gardens for granted, and overlook the fine work that Nigel and his small band of helpers put in to keep them looking so good. It's always nice when visitors comment on how attractive they are and how much they add to the pleasant environment of our home. The recent rain has brought out the best in them — the green-ness of the grass sets off the colouring of the flowers around the estate so well.

Prompted by a number of residents who have expressed a particular admiration for the gardens this year, they have been entered in the annual *Redbridge in Bloom* competition in the *Best Collective Display* category. Judging will start in July, and the results should be announced at the end of August. As the competition is borough-wide, we know we'll be up against some serious rivals — so do please keep your fingers crossed.

Clear the Decks

After the last fire risk assessment, we had a fairly rigorous clearance of obstructions in the hallways and on the landings in all the blocks across Queenswood Gardens. It seems that since then, various objects — chiefly plants in heavy and not-so-heavy pots, and bicycles, pushchairs & prams — have been slowly making a comeback.

It is very important that as far as is practical, the hallways/landings are kept clear of anything that could be an obstruction during a fire. This means that plant pots that are within, say, 10 to 15 feet of the top or bottom of a flight of stairs need to be removed so that nobody can trip over them and fall down the stairs when the hallways are full of smoke. Plant-pots sited in corners that are unlikely to be a hazard might be OK, but if in doubt, take it out.

It also means that bikes, pushchairs & prams should never be left in the hallways or on landings — their wheels make them a mobile hazard that is just not acceptable.

If you have put any pots out, please remove them, and do not leave anything that has wheels outside your flat. Thanks for your co-operation on this.

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We Value Your Comments

If you have any constructive ideas or comments about this newsletter, or what's going on at Queenswood Gardens generally, please don't hesitate to let one of us know.

All we ask is that you put your thoughts on paper; it will make it easier for your ideas to be distributed to board members for consideration at our meetings, and it will also ensure that we don't forget your comments — we're only human!

Health Hazard

Many residents will be aware that a rock'n'roll band (or whatever it calls itself) frequently plays — or at least practices — in one of the houses in Woodlands Avenue that backs onto Queenswood Gardens.

We don't have any comments to make on the quality of their music, but we do want to warn you that lately they have been toying with a laser pointer, and directing it all around Queenswood Gardens and the general area. If you didn't already know, we feel it's important to let you know that looking directly along the laser beam back to its source can be very dangerous as it can seriously damage your eyesight.

We have brought this to the attention of the local police, but apparently they are powerless to act unless and until someone is actually harmed by the laser!

What a Waste

You wouldn't believe what we find from time to time clogging up the drains. In addition to cooking oils and fats that have cooled and solidified, we find food waste, t-towels, tee-shirts, sanitary towels, babies' nappies and the like.

Please do not put any of these items down the drains. They cause blockages that can overflow into other flats, causing pollution, foul smells and a great deal of inconvenience — and hard work clearing up — for the affected residents.

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