

Money talks

PETRA News

Parkhill Estate Tenants and Residents Association

Number 146, January 2015

For the last two years we have been reporting on the progress made – or rather the lack of progress made – in our renegotiation of the management agreement with the Council.

Just to recap, PETRA, like its sister TMOs in Havering BETRA and DELTA, regularly has to renegotiate its management agreement with Havering Council – usually every three years. We expected the latest of these negotiations to be difficult because of the austerity cuts affecting Havering and all other local authorities.

And boy, are they proving difficult! The negotiations are still dragging on, not helped by the fact that the Council has failed to answer one basic question: can PETRA take on new responsibilities with regards to the sheltered blocks, Sunrise, Solar and Serena Houses?

The answer to this question obviously has implications for PETRA's budget requirements, so we've reached a kind of stalemate. Yes, we are expecting a cut in our existing budget, but equally we believe additional money should be made available if we are to take on greater responsibilities for Solar, Serena and Sunrise Houses.

The Council says it is reviewing its overall strategy in regards to sheltered housing, hence they are stalling. PETRA says the Council really needs to conclude its review and make a decision. In the meantime, PETRA – and more importantly, both our and the sheltered blocks' residents – anxiously await their decision.

Meanwhile, the Government continues to talk about 'Tenant Leading Change'. Chance would be a fine thing!

The view from the garden



It's been a lovely year in the PETRA garden, situated just beyond Sunrise Court, thanks largely to our volunteer gardener Colin Roast. Here, Colin reports on what's coming up in 2015.

So all the winter work has now been done and the weeds have been cleared and we are in the middle of creosoting all the wooden boards and generally tidying up.

All the spring bulbs have been planted. They consist of Irises, Narcissus, daffodils, crocuses and blue bells, which will give the garden a lovely splash of colour.

This year we had a very good crop of vegetables which consisted of tomatoes, carrots, parsnips, beans, lettuces and potatoes. We are looking forward to the spring and if anyone is interested in volunteering and joining us – including toddlers with their mums or dads – to learn about vegetables and how they grow please contact the office, we would love to see you.



Chairman Mike's SOAPBOX Grumpy New Year?

Since the 1960s, the number of council tenants has dropped by around 4.7 million. Today there are about 1.9 million council-owned properties and 2.1 million homes owned by housing associations. The figure of privately owned rented properties is not known.

Those council and housing association tenants could have a huge impact if they were to use their vote as a united voice. The hated 'bedroom tax', for example, would be abandoned overnight if the Government thought for one moment that tenants would protest on block at the ballot box, by using their vote accordingly. And the general election in May will soon be here, so hold that thought...!

Meanwhile, as an active member of the NFTMO (National Federation of Tenant Management Organisations) – albeit speaking in a personal capacity here – I would dearly like to see all tenants be asked to contribute a nominal sum of say £2.00 per year – or to put it another way, just over £0.16 a month – to set up a legal fighting fund to employ legal representation on an area by area basis to defend tenants' rights.

Yes, lawyers are expensive, but I reckon we could get an awful lot of lawyers for £8m a year! Some of them might even be prepared to waive their fee for the privilege of representing such an honourable cause. Well, you can dream!

Alas, the reality is that most tenants are apathetic, and if an extra charge doesn't affect them directly, they're not bothered. Sorry if this is a bit grumpy for a new year's message. 'Tenants Unite!' I say. Then we really could have a happy new year!

**Regards,
Mike**

Vandalism in Overstrand ***Did you see anything?***

Thanks to the actions of an idiotic few, the season of good will quickly turned sour for Overstrand residents as vandals set about causing mindless damage to the block over the Christmas holiday.

We believe most of the perpetrators were outsiders, ie not PETRA residents, but one or more of our residents must have let them in. Do you know who did that? If you do, or if you saw any damage being done, we would like to talk to you, in confidence, about what you witnessed.

While PETRA's Jimmy and Brad have been busy tidying up and making good the damage, the Police have been informed and are looking into these incidents. Community wardens have been alerted and are making special patrols in the area. PETRA will act to evict anyone found responsible for aiding and abetting vandalism on or around our estate.





The sky's the limit

Our events: just as good as you make them

PETRA is setting up an events sub committee, to help improve the organisation of our activities and events. Are you prepared to get involved?

Given the amount that goes on, it's easy to forget that PETRA is, first and foremost, a voluntary organisation. Mike, Jan and all the committee members devote their time and energies to the community for free, including the organisation of PETRA events and activities.

Whether it's our day trips, like the recent one to Leeds Castle in Kent (below), or our school holiday activities, pamper evenings, cookery classes and fun days, they all take a lot of organising. So the more people step forward to help with them, the better they will be.

In our recent residents' survey, you were not short on suggestions for the things you would like PETRA to organise. Tai Chi, musical instruments, first aid, sky-diving - you name it, it was suggested! But are you prepared to help make them happen? That's the question.

If you have a bit of spare time on your hands and would like to get involved with our new events sub committee, please pop into the office for a chat.





Brad and friend with an example of bulk rubbish

Message from Brad

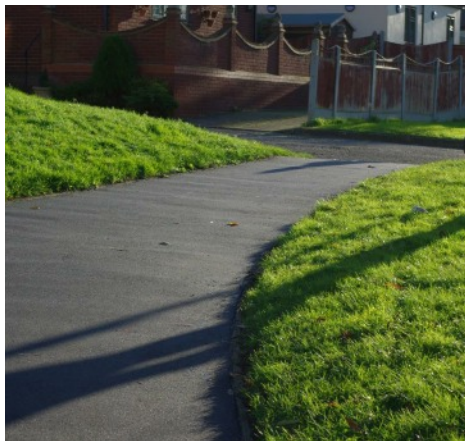
Some residents continue to have trouble working out where they should and should not put different types of rubbish – and I don't just mean cigarette butts (see below).

The area set aside for bulk rubbish disposal, situated below Uphaving and Parkview, should only be used for large items. The clue's in the name – Bulky! Things like old sofas, fridges, bookcases, etc.

Unfortunately, I continue to find mops, bags of crockery, picture frames and all sorts left down their, but these small household items should be put in the ordinary bins.

If in doubt, please ask me!

Work in progress



Residents will be pleased to see that new pathways have been laid leading to Parkview and Overstrand Houses.

The Council has undertaken this work, and we believe a resurfacing of the car park in front of Uphaving House is next on their agenda.

Smokers - do you need help?

Cigarettes butts dropped thoughtlessly from balconies continue to be a problem, especially in Overstrand and Uphaving Houses. They get blown into other residents' balconies, causing a fire hazard, or fall to the ground where they litter our grounds. If you're a smoker, and still don't get it, follow these simple steps to becoming a *considerate* smoker.



Letterbox Lotto!

Every month, we give away three gift vouchers worth £20 each to residents who have gone online to our website and spotted their door number in the Letterbox Lotto section of our home page.

These door numbers change every month... So, what are you waiting for?!

www.petratmo.weebly.com

Next Committee meetings

Monday 26 January

Monday 23 February

Monday 30 March

Monday 27 April

All at 7.30pm

in the Concierge

CONTACTS

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