

# Two months to save PETRA!

## PETRA News

**Parkhill Estate Tenants & Residents Association**

**Number 168 July 2020**



**With PETRA's current and former Chairs, Jan and Mike Davis, looking to retire and move away from the estate, our TMO is on the brink of collapse.**

Jan Davis has had enough. For years, she and husband Mike have been the backbone of PETRA. Long-time residents, they have given their all to making this estate the best it can be.

In recent years, with Mike's health deteriorating, and Jan not getting any younger, their burden has become too much.

The fact is Mike and Jan are of a generation that took the idea of voluntary service in support of the community seriously. Many of that generation have now gone, and their successors have not come forward.

Other residents attend the PETRA committee, and there are individuals who volunteer from time to time with events or to help around the office. But sadly, there seems to be no one capable or willing to step up and take on the responsibilities that Mike and Jan have shouldered all these years.

**The have served the community, not for any financial reward, but because they care**

Between them, this dynamic duo have run the PETRA committee from its inception back in 2003 all the way through to today. Along the way, they have managed a small staff team, championed resident participation, endlessly negotiated on your behalf with the Council, offered support and advice to residents, and in a thousand other ways, improved this place we call home, for the benefit of all.

The have done all this voluntarily, not for any financial reward, but because they care.

### **What happens now?**

Residents now have a choice. You can step up to the challenge of carrying on where Jan and Mike left off, or you can watch PETRA die, and the estate return to the day-to-day control of the council.

It really is that stark. And action needs to be taken now, before it's too late. PETRA cannot operate without a functioning committee and leading officers - a chair, a treasurer and a secretary.

Residents willing to take on these roles will need to come forward by the time of our forthcoming AGM on 28th September if PETRA is to continue. The clock is ticking. The decision is yours.

**Turn to page 4 to find out how you can help save PETRA.**



# The of



## We are being ignored

I found out on Friday 26th June via a newspaper article that Havering's Planning Committee had met as a 'virtual committee' on the previous day (25th) and passed the plans for the SSS site opposite, and that these plans were now being forwarded to the Mayor of London for final approval.

I find this most disrespectful of Havering Council who should have consulted with us as near neighbours to the site in the week or so before the meeting took place, giving us the opportunity to register our objections to proposals, of which they were well aware.

I have written to Havering Council to query the validity of the decision when the formal consultation options have not been adhered to. I understand that we are living in unprecedented times but feel that the Council has taken the opportunity to ride roughshod over local people to push this planning application through using the pandemic as an excuse to flout the normal rules.

I have looked at the proposed plans online and have a number of concerns I feel need to be addressed, particularly in regard to the right of way at the back of the houses in Sunrise Avenue, and the proximity of housing to Uphavering House.

You can view these plans online via the Havering website by going to the online planning applications and using ref no. P1809.19 to search.

Regards,  
**Jan Davis**

## Covid-19 update

**The easing of lockdown has been slow, and as we all know, it could be reversed if the infection rate starts rising again.**

Our office phone will be answered between 8.30am to 4pm, Monday - Friday. The following jobs are being done regularly:

- Daily cleaning of lifts inside and out.
- Daily cleaning of door handles top to bottom of the blocks.
- Cleaning of ground floor entrances.
- Bins being moved around to give ample capacity.
- Litter picking on a daily basis.
- Emptying of dog waste bins on a regular basis.

The PETRA office remains off bounds to casual visitors. However, office manager Caroline has been working full time, while Bradley currently works part-time 10-2 weekdays. Grounds maintenance work remains limited. Bradley has been helping with deliveries to the elderly and frail.

We are still not able to do small internal repairs, and the Council's service remains focused on emergencies. Recruitment for Micky's replacement, following his retirement, has had to be put on hold until later in the year.

We ask that all residents continue to behave responsibly in and around the estate, at all times following social distancing guidelines. Parties and other large gathering are not permitted. Large outdoor gatherings should also be avoided until further notice.

This virus does not discriminate whether young or old or if you are fit or frail. We can all catch it, and though some are more vulnerable to it than others, we all have a part to play in stopping its spread.

## Andrew Bence, our newsletter editor, reflects on Mike and Jan's leadership of PETRA, and what their nearing retirement means for this estate

You cannot exaggerate how important Mike and Jan Davis have been to PETRA.

They were there at the beginning, 17 years ago, when a fledgling residents association set about raising their estate high above the bog-standard average by taking the bold decision to form a tenant management organisation (TMO).

And as their well-earned retirement nears, it is no coincidence that their beloved TMO, PETRA, now, suddenly, appears to be no longer viable.

I first met Jan almost 10 years ago while working at a London university. We got talking about >





# end an era?

## PETRA'S VISION

A safe, pleasant neighbourhood  
where people want to be part of  
a vibrant, caring community



> tenant management organisations and the challenges she, Mike and their committee were facing back home on the Parkhill Estate.

I had experience as a writer, and PETRA was looking for help to upgrade their newsletter, perhaps even create a website. It seemed like I might be the man for the job, so Jan invited me over to meet Mike..

On that first meeting with Mike and Jan in the PETRA office back in 2011, all became clear. Here were two passionately committed, old-school community activists whose home was five storeys above where we were meeting but whose life revolved around this place - a converted, ground floor flat-turned office and drop-in centre for the estate's residents.



They had both been Labour councillors, finding meaning and purpose in caring for the community in which they lived. Indeed, it was in the chamber of Havering Council that they first got to know one another. They have been together ever since.

Strong-willed and independent-minded, Mike especially, and perhaps Jan too, found the restraints of party politics frustrating,

and so in more recent years the couple had turned their attention fully to PETRA. It soon became their work, their vocation and their shared passion. And for no reward other than the satisfaction of knowing they were making a difference.

Mike had been Chair of the residents association before becoming Chair of PETRA in 2003, retaining that role until failing health meant he needed to step down in 2015. Jan did not hesitate - despite Mike's health problems - to step up to the role of Chair when it became clear there was no one else as capable as she to do the job. Jan has steered the ship with great skill through choppy waters these last five years.

PETRA's achievements over the years have been their achievements. Yes, they've been assisted by talented and hard-working staff, such as Caroline and Bradley, and supported along the way by like-minded committee members and volunteers - one remembers Colin Roast, June Kight and Andy Shepherd, all now sadly passed away. But without Mike and Jan, none of this would have happened:

1) In their time, PETRA has instigated countless internal and external improvements to the estate, including communal area decoration of landings and the concierge, paving, security measures, seating, flowerbeds, new showers and kitchens, and much else besides - much of it financed through PETRA's own careful budgeting and consequent savings.

2) Events of every kind, and for every age group have been a feature of their stewardship, reflecting their belief in building a community. From fairs on the lawn, to visits to the panto and the Christmas Market, to pamper evening for the ladies, coffee mornings for our older residents, and craft sessions and Easter egg hunts for the Children.

3) They championed a programme of



environmental improvements including upgraded recycling facilities, energy-saving LEDs and the late, great garden vegetables project.

4) Their skilful and informed liaison and negotiation with Havering Council and other authorities has been outstanding, ranging across many issues, including in emergency situations, and always in the best interests of our residents, both leaseholders and tenants.

5) Mike and Jan have provided informed representation of PETRA at regional and national level via the National Federation of Tenant Management Organisations (NFTMO), and with government agencies and funding bodies.

6) Last but not least, they have handled the so-called routine stuff, with energy, diligence and great patience. This includes the over-seeing of major works, the liaison and support extended to our former neighbours on the SSS site, the day-to-day support and advice given to vulnerable residents and others in need of help, and the recruitment, support and supervision of staff, committee members and volunteers.

To say Mike and Jan Davis will be missed is an understatement. All this begs one question: How on earth will PETRA survive without them?

**Turn to page four to find out.**





# What YOU must DO

## ... if you care about this estate

**Residents must respond to this call to action, or our estate goes back to being maintained directly by the council. Don't say you weren't warned!**

It's very simple. Tenant Management Organisations (TMO) are, as the name suggests, managed by residents - both tenants and leaseholders. Without these volunteers, a TMO cannot function.

Volunteers agree to sit on the TMO committee, and that committee elects a chair, treasurer and secretary. At PETRA's forthcoming AGM, we need to elect these officials. At the moment, there is no one willing or able to step up and take on any of these roles. Will you?

**Democracy doesn't get more local than this**

Volunteers need no previous experience, and any resident over the age of 18 can apply. All that's needed is a willingness to serve your community by meeting with others every month or so to oversee the work of our small staff team.

Even for the Chair, this does not have to mean devoting many hours a week to PETRA. Jan and Mike were exceptional. A more laid-back approach will be fine, especially as we have a well-established organisation run by very capable paid staff.

**A fantastic opportunity - rewarding in all kinds of ways**

In addition, PETRA will be able to provide training and support for all its new Committee members, especially those stepping up as officers. This is a fantastic opportunity for you to acquire skills and experience of the kind that look great

on a CV and will prove rewarding to you in all kinds of ways.

**The time for action is NOW**

Time is running out. The countdown to PETRA's demise starts now. If we do not identify new committee members by the 28 September, it's over.

Please call the office today if you would like to discuss ways in which you could help.



## Events

### Coffee mornings

Cancelled until further notice. We know how much residents appreciate these coffee mornings, and we hope to resume them as soon as possible.

### Committee meetings

Formal meetings have been cancelled until further notice, however, please keep the evening of **28th September** free for our Annual General Meeting.

### Office hours

We are working regular hours, but the PETRA office is not open to visitors. Please phone if you need to talk to us.



## CONTACTS

**PETRA**

Opening Hours: 7.30am - 1600pm  
(Closed 12pm - 13.00 for lunch)

Jan Davis, Chair

Caroline Edwards, Estate Manager

Bradley Pavey, Repairs and  
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All based at the PETRA office

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Out of Hours Emergency telephone  
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(We answer the PETRA office  
phone up until 5pm.)