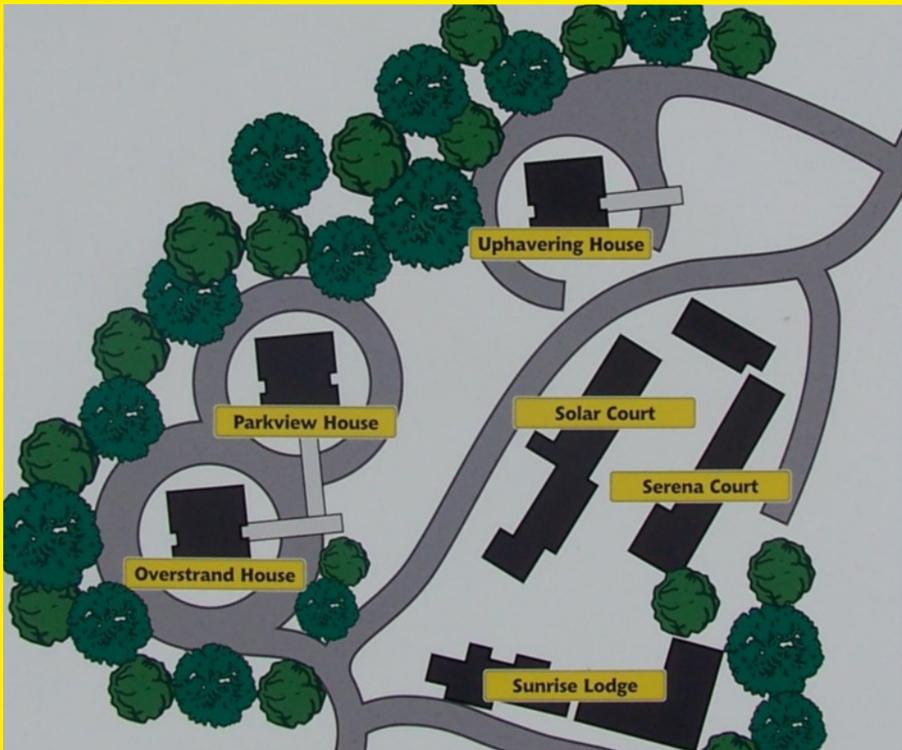


PETRA
Tenant Management Organisation

Annual Review 2014-15



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Welcome from PETRA Chair Mike Davis

This has been another busy, action-packed year for PETRA, with significant changes in the running of the organisation. Jimmy Brett reduced his working week to three days per week and stood down as our estate manager. His replacement in that role was Caroline Edwards, who joined us from our sister TMO, BETRA. The office underwent a revamp, making it a more relaxed area for tenants to come and talk to staff. The back office has been turned into a private interview room and the concierge is now used for activities and as a meeting room.

Regarding the bigger picture in which we as a TMO operate, I continued throughout the year my involvement with the NFTMO (National Federation of TMOs) and, as its vice chair and also membership secretary, met frequently with colleagues and government officials. A group of us from PETRA also attended conference in June, giving us all the opportunity to meet other TMOs and learn about their organisations, their high and low points, and how they overcome obstacles such as uncooperative local councils, staffing issues, etc.

Finally, may I take this opportunity to thank everyone – especially our volunteer committee members and other supporters – for their work this year. You help make this place what it is: one of the best estates in the borough. Keep up the good work!

Working with the Council

PETRA TMO is a London Borough of Havering council estate. What makes it unusual is that it is managed by a TMO (Tenant Management Organisation) committee, charged with providing general estate management of the day-to-day repair services and grounds maintenance, and dealing with anti-social behaviour and void turn-around actions – ie, making ready empty flats for the next occupants.

With an annual allowance built on the Council's historic cost for these services, PETRA has managed to accrue savings (surplus) each year. This is ploughed back into the estate for the betterment of the residents' living conditions.

During the past year, we have had extensive negotiations with the Council regarding signing a new and vastly amended MMA (Modular Management Agreement). These negotiations were overseen by our consultant Liz Michael (who represents all three TMOs in the Borough). We knew the new calculations meant that we would have a huge reduction in our annual allowance – something like £22,000, but with some savvy budgeting we are confident we will be able to carry on. With the pen almost in our hands to sign we were told at a meeting with Council officers in late April that everything was on hold as the Housing Department had now been tasked to find a further £3.5m of savings, so it's again a case of 'watch this space'.

Following the major refurbishment programme for the replacement of the old windows, a number of complaints were received about water ingress into the flats. A major survey was carried out by the Council and remedial works will need to be carried out in the near future.

Supporting our community

Through a range of activities and initiatives, PETRA works to support and develop our community.

An **activities sub-committee** has now been set up and any resident is welcome to participate. You don't have to be a member of the PETRA committee to be a member of the sub-committee and all ideas are welcome for future events.

This year, our sub-committee organised:

Children's activities

- arts & crafts sessions during school holidays
- special evening sessions for Mothers' Day & Fathers' Day cards and gifts
- Easter egg hunt
- sunflower competition
- Halloween activities
- trip to the pantomime at the Queen's Theatre

Adults' activities

- bread baking with our resident master baker
- Christmas market at Leeds Castle
- pamper evenings for the ladies
- open evenings

Repair facilities in estate workshop

The workshop is fully kitted out and used for both estate repairs and tenants' minor repairs, such as fixing children's bikes and other small mechanical problems.

Cooking lessons

Aware that a number of our residents would like to increase and improve their experience in cooking nutritious, tasty and cost-effective meals for themselves and their family members, PETRA has installed a smart new kitchen in the Parkview House concierge area. From here we run our increasingly popular cooking, jam-making and bread-baking sessions.

For example, last summer and autumn we provided classes to make use of the produce grown in the top garden by making jams and chutneys. In the lead up to Christmas we also ran a series of classes making goodies ready for the festive season, including sweets and sauces to give as gifts.

Top garden

Having started in a small way two years ago, the top garden is beginning to live up to its name, with raised beds delivering a variety of fruit and veg for use in the kitchen and for residents to sample. This year, with the enthusiastic help of a couple of our residents, the produce has been excellent, and more raised beds have been installed and planted up.

Mini library

On the ground floor entrance to Parkview House we have installed a free mini library of fiction and non-fiction books with a whole section of children's books. The cupboards are open daily during office hours and books may be kept or returned when finished with. We also extend this invitation to our neighbours in the three sheltered blocks.

Our library is proving to be quite popular. So, with the phrase ‘charity begins at home’ in mind, if you have any books *in good condition* that you have finished with, why not offer them to us before taking them down to the charity shop.

Photo competition

This is open to adults and children on the estate. All are invited to submit two of their best photographs on any subject. However, please note: if the subject matter is of a child/ren, the parents’ permission for the image to be used must be given in writing and submitted with the photo/s.

An independent judge chooses three winning photos, one for each tower block. Each winning photo is enlarged and framed then hung in the ground floor entrance lobbies. A prize of £50 is given to each of the winners. This completion is held annually.

Democracy

As a TMO, PETRA strives to be a democratic organisation, with a main committee of residents, including elected officials, overseeing the running of the organisation, and a flexible number of sub-committees – currently **staffing and finance**, and **activities** – looking at particular responsibilities and issues.

TMO Committee

Our **main committee** varies in number from year to year. At times we have as few as eight or nine active members, but more usually we have closer to the maximum permitted number of 15. When vacancies exist, residents are welcome to put themselves forward for election to the committee.

Where possible the committee’s make-up reflects the proportion of tenanted dwellings (110 properties) as well as leaseholder dwellings (36 properties at present), acquired by individual tenants who exercised their right to buy, or by residents who have bought from those original residents. In addition, we have a Council-nominated member (usually one of our local ward councillors) and two co-opted members from the sheltered complex who we work closely with. We are awaiting the outcome of the Council’s

review of sheltered housing to resume our lengthy negotiations regarding taking on the day to day running of the sheltered housing blocks (Solar and Serena Courts and Sunrise Lodge).

We hold regular monthly committee meetings (on the last Monday in the month) ensuring that each committee member has had the opportunity to fully participate in the formal debates. All participants receive the relevant papers at least a week before the formal meeting. The committee secretary in discussion with the Chair draws up the agenda. As well as formally accepting, with amendments if necessary, the minutes of the previous meeting, the treasurer's report consists of reports to the committee on bank balances, and the spend for the previous month.

Each quarter the treasurer reports to a **staffing and finance sub-committee** with a spread-sheet showing a breakdown of each of the three monthly notional spend against the actual budget spend figures.

Each year one third of the committee are required to stand down and submit to re-election. This maintains a continuity of experience and skills of the committee.

Every five years the whole estate is required (by secret ballot) to agree or disagree as to whether PETRA should continue to provide the above services. The last ballot took place in September 2013 with an overwhelming 92% of residents in favour.

Moving forward

These are challenging times for PETRA, and things are unlikely to get any easier quickly. Local government finance has been squeezed in recent years, and with the return of a majority Conservative government in May 2015, those pressures are likely to remain.

For PETRA meanwhile, 2015 sees the end of an era. Our founder and first chairman, Mike Davis, is standing down after 17 years at the helm. Mike's contribution to our estate and this TMO has been priceless – and freely given; Mike, like all our committee members, is and always has been, a volunteer.

Fortunately, Mike plans to stay on as an ordinary committee member, where his ceaseless commitment and wisdom will be much appreciated. Nevertheless, it is time now for others to take the lead as PETRA moves forward. Residents who care about this estate but who have not as yet become involved with PETRA, please take note.

Newsletter

Now printed professionally every three months, PETRA News goes through every letter box on the estate. It can also be sent electronically if residents prefer.

Other publications

We produce other publications periodically, including the following booklets:

- Welcome booklets for new tenants arriving on the estate
- Committee members handbook
- Annual reviews and progress reports.
- Guide to out-of-hours procedures

www.petratmo.weebly.com

Our website also provides news and information on PETRA, including our KPIs (Key Performance Indicators), news of upcoming events, useful telephone numbers, and previous editions of the newsletter.

You can also play ‘Letterbox Lottery’ on our website. Each month we put an address from each block on the website. If a resident sees their address they can contact us by email via the website to claim their free £20 voucher. It’s as simple as that.

Welcome pack

We provide new tenants with a PETRA welcome pack consisting of bucket, mop, broom, dustpan & brush, and an assortment of cleaning products. Our information booklets are also provided.

The environment

PETRA cares about the environment in which we all live. We pride ourselves on being eco-friendly and to this end we have undertaken the following initiatives:

Retro-fitting energy efficient facilities in void flats

There are approximately ten void flats per year on the PETRA estate. We use these voids as an opportunity to retro-fit energy efficient facilities.

This meets our principal objective of attacking fuel poverty at source. The improvements we make include:

- Install thermostatic showers. (We install these over the new bath with the necessary shower curtain and walls tiled to the ceiling height.)
- Install water efficient toilet cisterns.
- Fit reflective panels behind radiators
- Fit low energy light bulbs
- Replace old copper waste pipes with modern and efficient plastic pipes and fittings. (This reduces the risk of leaking pipes which can cause considerable damage by water penetration to flats on floors below.)

Improvement to and maintenance of amenities

The committee is firmly of the opinion that the physical surroundings here on the estate affect the everyday quality of life of our residents.

Consequently, PETRA has a programme of improvements intended to make this the greenest and best-kept estate in the borough.

- Recycling facilities: Paper, card, cans, plastic and glass, textile and shoes can all be recycled, as can furniture, which we make available to other residents.
- Cigarette receptacles: These are placed at the entrances of each of the tower blocks at both ground floor and basement levels.
- Cleaning of rubbish chutes: These had not been cleaned thoroughly for a number of years and were beginning to smell badly, particularly in the hot weather. This was aggravated by people disposing of rubbish without bagging it, leaving a residue in the chute hoppers. Despite reminders being sent out it is a recurring

problem. The company employed to steam clean the chutes did a professional and clean job resulting in a much better environment for all.

- Cleaning of Eurobins: A professional company was engaged to steam clean the bins. They made a clean and successful job of this.
- Fire hazards: Estate manager Caroline undertook an inspection of all the play/spare rooms across the estate, to check that they are being used properly. She shut off several because of inappropriate use. One was being used as a smoking den, another to store inflammable materials.

Appendix

Ambitions

PETRA is always looking at new ways to improve the estate, involve residents, and serve our community. These are some of our ambitions. If you can help make them happen - or have ideas to propose - let us know.

Works

- Repainting communal area
- Replace security doors at ground floor level
- Replacing flooring to all lift lobby areas.

Activities

- Bee keeping, computer guidance, and more children's activities
- Arts and crafts sessions during school holidays
- More cooking sessions using produce from top garden, and including jams, soups and chutneys
- Love Food, Hate Waste sessions: cost effective meals; making use of leftovers
- Xmas goodies and ladies pamper evening.

Trips

- More visits to places of interest for families, including Hever Castle, Clacton Air Show and Christmas market
- Nature trail on grounds and in park.

Your TMO

If you would like to know more about becoming a PETRA committee member, or if you would like to help PETRA in other ways, then please visit us for a chat.

PETRA's staff team

Caroline Edwards (Estate Manager)

Jim Brett (Senior Repairs and Grounds Maintenance Officer)

Bradley Pavey (Repairs and Grounds Maintenance Officer)

Naomi Cooper (Accounts Administrator)

Andrew Bence (Freelance writer and editor)



PETRA

Tenant Management Organisation

1 Parkview House,
Sunrise Avenue,
Hornchurch,
Essex
RM12 4YW
Tel: 01708 475358
Fax: 01708 469350
Email: petratmo@aol.com

Website: www.petratmo.weebly.com

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