

It's good to talk

But is Homes in Havering listening?

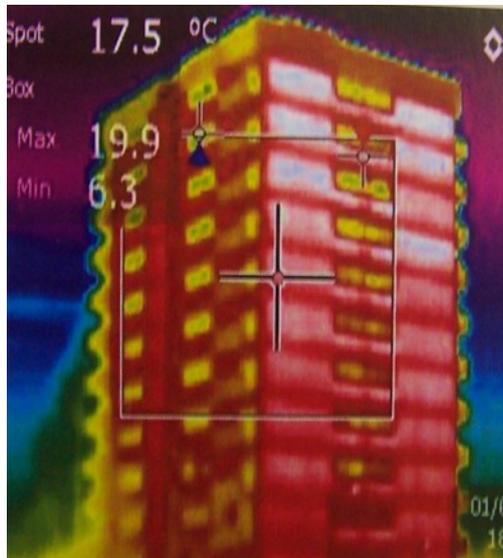
We have long complained that Homes in Havering do not consult with us properly. Now – with the upcoming new windows and doors programme – it's happened again.

At a recent meeting, PETRA Chairman Mike Davis was told that the contract for the job had been awarded, and that the work would start this financial year.

That may sound like good news, but Mike had previously told HiH that PETRA wanted to have some input into this decision, and that we might even be in a position to subsidise a contract in order to get better quality windows for our residents.

This has been ignored by HiH, and Anglia Windows has now been awarded the contract. So much for consultation.

HiH has also failed to take on board important information regarding the installation of these windows alongside the new combination boilers that many residents now have. This has



Quality window, please!

Better quality windows, such as triple-glazed ones, could have helped us save energy, including all this heat escaping from Uphavering House. (Thermography image courtesy of the Richard Hodkinson Consultancy)

a direct impact on the specification and costs of the job.

"It's very frustrating," said Mike. "Why has the Council not taken this information on board - which they should have known about years ago? Answer: Because they didn't talk to us about it.

"All too often HiH's attitude is still: 'We will tell you what we're doing, and you will be grateful.' Frankly, it ain't good enough."

Girls just wanna have Fun?

The weather did us no favours, but PETRA's Jubilee Party still proved a big hit – especially with the kids. Thanks very much to everyone who helped on the day.

PETRA women were once again the backbone of the operation – special thanks go to Jan, Zena, Sue, Mandy and Natasha for all their hard work.

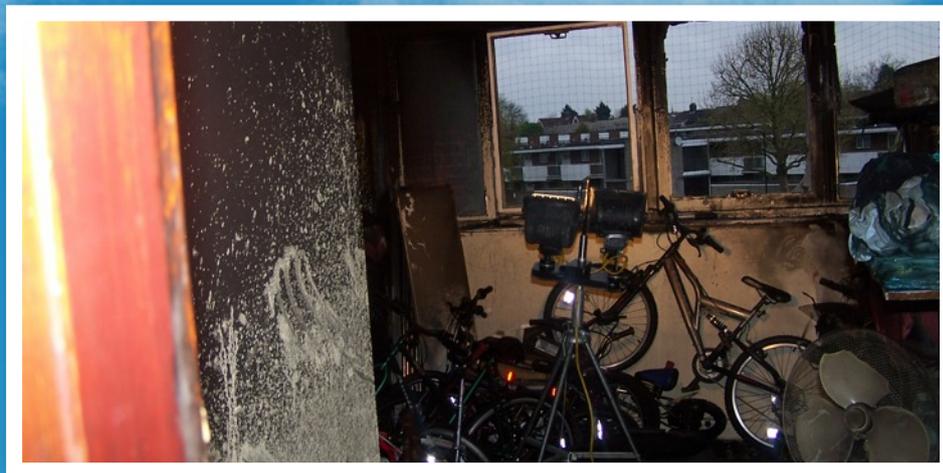
Of course it's not just girls who wanna have fun, but guys – where were you when the work needed doing?



Chairman Mike's SOAPBOX

On balance

Homes in Havering is to be wound down, and it's tempting to say Hurrah! But let's try to be fair. Like all organisations, HiH has had its strengths and its weaknesses.



For example, it is my sincere hope that the Council has the good sense to TUPE (transfer) Julie Pocock and her Resident Involvement Team over to the Council in due course.

Julie and her team have, in my opinion, built exceptionally good relationships with the TMOs in Havering, and I suspect in almost all other customer-related areas they deal with. Whilst working with, and advising us on a number of issues like our recent residents survey, Julie managed to combine both professionalism and a good deal of common sense.

On the other hand, you may recall that in the last newsletter I promised you an update on the issue of different rent levels for identical two-bedroomed flats.

Well, the HiH's rent section is still maintaining that this is consistent with how the rents were calculated pre-2002, when rent levels were calculated on the position of the flat, any improvements made in them, and what amenities if any the Council provided. I have taken advice on this from our contact at the National Federation of TMOs and their expert says HiH's line is utter nonsense, so I'm afraid the fight has to continue. Watch this space.

Regards, Mike

Wake-up call

Where are your hazardous materials stored?

Following a recent fire on the estate, a Councillor commented that he was surprised there were no smoke alarms in any of the communal areas or playrooms.

The fire, which happened in one of the playrooms in Overstrand House, shattered reinforced glass and melted residents' possessions before the Fire Service was able to bring it under control.

On inspection, Fire Safety Officer Dave Hallam noted that the fire had been successfully contained within the one room thanks to PETRA's recent fire safety improvements to all interior doors.

Nevertheless, the fire shocked everyone nearby and highlighted the need for all residents to be vigilant and responsible.

PETRA – namely Jim, our Estate Manager – has been telling residents who use the playrooms as extra storage space that no inflammable materials of any kind are to be left in these rooms.

Yet, on his weekly inspections of these rooms, Jim still sees wood, paints, aerosols and plastics left in them. If you are storing these types of materials, please keep them in your own flat, or get rid of them.

Coffee break for the over 65s

Barbara Davies is organising a regular coffee afternoon for older residents, to be held in the concierge, on the ground floor of Parkview House opposite the office. A fortnightly event, and our first meeting takes place on Wednesday 11 July at 2.30. You are warmly welcome to join us. (And if Wednesdays are no good for you, let us know – we may review this in future.)



FREEBIES!

Courtesy of your Committee



FREE reflective panels and energy efficient lightbulbs: While we wait for our new windows, why not make a start on cutting your energy bills by getting energy-saving lightbulbs and reflective panels for the back of your radiators. PETRA does have a few of these which we will give away to tenants or leaseholders. Hurry while stocks last.

FREE adventure! Kids – Fancy going to Stubbers **six** times over the Summer Holiday?! Parents – fancy volunteering to help?! PETRA is planning free weekly visits over the summer break. Contact the office if you or your kids would like to book a place.

FREE Showers: In our survey earlier this year, one of the questions was, "If you don't have a shower fitted over your bath – would you like one?" Fifteen people said yes, and we are now considering offering this upgrade to those residents. We will make the same offer again to other residents when we have completed the first 15. Is anyone interested in helping us with researching different showers units and getting quotes for this work? If you have some knowledge in this area, or would be happy to look into it for us, please get in touch with the office.



Four-legged friends

PETRA takes a tolerant view towards the keeping of dogs on this estate, providing their owners act responsibly. Unfortunately there are some owners who don't act this way. They fail to control their dogs and they allow them to pee inside the blocks. They also fail to dispose properly of their mess. If you own a dog, please make sure you are a responsible owner at all times, disposing of waste in the dog waste bins.

Rubbish people

Fly-tipping – particularly on the far side of Uphaving House – is getting worse. If you see a van or tip-up lorry shedding its load where it shouldn't, take a note of the number plate and report the incident to the office as soon as possible. Please do not approach these people yourself – we know they can't be trusted to behave properly, so you should not challenge them. We'll let Mike and Jim do that!

Caring for our children

It's great that our kids have the green to play on, but recently we've noticed some younger children playing out there alone. This worries us – there are cars on the road and, occasionally, strangers around.

We recommend that no child under ten is left alone outside to play. They should always be supervised by either an older sibling or an adult carer.



Bin it!

Any budding young artists or graphic designers out there? Fancy having your work on display all over the estate? We need a bright, clear, simple PETRA logo or sign to put on all the waste bins on the estate, to encourage people to use them. There's a £20 voucher for the best design handed in to the office by 31 July. Come on Kids!



The Young Ones

If you are aged 8 to 14 and like having your say, then join 'the Young Ones' – PETRA's new children's committee. The committee will meet four times a year, during school holidays, to decide what PETRA should do for children on our estate. Pop into the office for a chat if you would like to join in.

The view from here

Overstrand residents Roxanne Isbell and daughter Kayleigh

What brought you to the estate?

I'm local, brought up in Cranham, and I got the offer of a flat here some six years ago. I've been here ever since.

How has the estate changed in your time?

Quite a lot, and for the better. People used to do horrible things in the lift, and leave rubbish about the place. Now, more people are taking a responsible attitude.



What do you like best about living here?

The fact that we've got Jimmy and Mike. They are just so helpful. Even silly things, like when my curtains fell down once, Jimmy it was who helped me put them back up! To have people around who are nice like that is great.

What do you like best, Kayleigh?

Erm... The ice cream van! You can hear it coming sometimes, and Mum let's me have one when it's Friday.

What's the biggest drag?

Kids playing football near the cars. I'm sure they keep hitting mine! I don't see why they need to play there when we've got fantastic playing fields nearby.

Most memorable occasion?

The barbeques are always good. There was one a couple of years ago where we had DJs playing music and circus stuff going on for the kids, it was great. It's a good way to meet people, to get to know your neighbours.

How do you rate PETRA?

I think they're brilliant. I've got no complaints. The only thing is those ball games. The area immediately around the three blocks should have 'No Ball Games Allowed' signs. That's my only gripe. (Sorry kids – I don't mean to get at you, honestly!)

How can PETRA get more residents involved in the running of the estate?

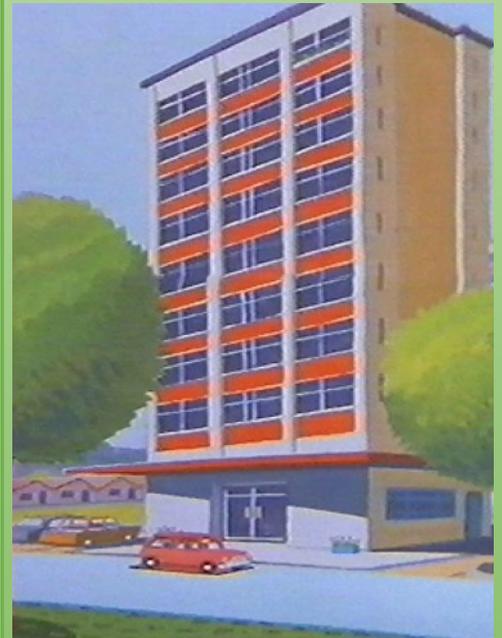
I've thought about becoming more involved. It would be nice to give something back, but it's difficult when you have children. Perhaps PETRA could offer childcare for parents who wanted to attend committee and other meetings?

PETRA's Natasha replies: Yes Roxanne, we are happy to cover carers' costs for those who want to attend our meetings.

Like to be featured here? Pop into the office to arrange an interview with our roving reporter.

Model estate

Councillor Andrew Curtain visited the estate recently. "I do like this place," he said. "The blocks remind me of those nice, modern flats that 'Mary, Mungo and Midge' used to live in." A nice compliment that, which middle-aged residents will particularly appreciate!



Dates for your diary

Next committee meetings – Tuesday 26 June, and Tuesday 31 July.

Contacts

PETRA

Mike Davis (Chair), Natasha Cruickshank (Trainee Manager), Jim Brett (Estate Manager), and Bradley Pavey (Repairs and Ground Maintenance Officer) are based at the PETRA office.

Tel: 01708 475358

Fax: 01708 469530

Email: petratmo@aol.com

Homes in Havering

Tel: 01708 434000

Email: contactus@homesinhavering.org

Website:

www.homesinhavering.org