

# Shadow over Solar, Serena and Sunrise

## PETRA News

**Parkhill Estate Tenants & Residents Association**

**Number 152, July 2016**

**As reported here previously, Havering's sheltered housing provision, including the three blocks situated on our estate, Solar, Serena and Sunrise Courts (SSS), has been under review by the council for the last three years. It has now become apparent that the council is thinking of using these sites for new housing developments.**

'The first we heard of these proposals was when we read about them in the *Romford Recorder*,' says PETRA Chair Jan Davis. Responding to the news, and in particular the Council's handling of the matter, Jan wrote a letter of protest published in the *Recorder*.



'I find it difficult to understand how these far reaching decisions can be made without any consultations being entered into,' wrote Jan. PETRA has long had a close neighbourly relationship with these residents, and has expressed an interest in taking on the day-to-day running of the blocks, in the interests of their elderly residents. Now they learn their fate via an article in the *Romford Recorder*, without the courtesy of even a phone call to their representatives.

Jan concluded her letter, 'This is a very disrespectful way to treat people in their twilight years who should expect to feel safe and secure. There are many of advanced years who are settled and

happy in their environment and the trauma of starting over elsewhere could be devastating. Please councillors and officials, have some respect and compassion for these and other vulnerable people affected across the borough and make contact to help allay their fears.'

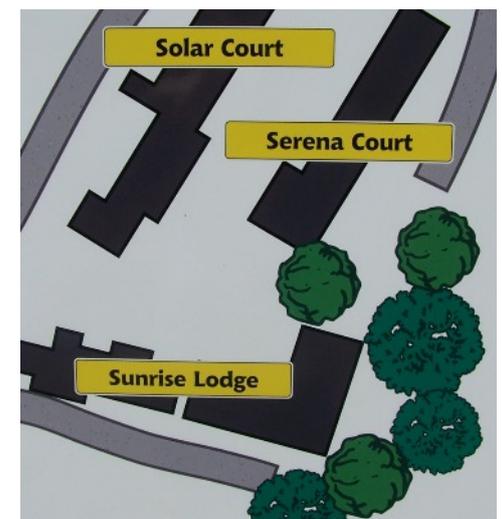


On 4th July, following Jan's intervention, Neil Stabbings, the interim director of housing services at Havering, came to a meeting with SSS residents. He explained the background to the council's proposals - that in order to accommodate an expected 16% increase in the elderly population in the borough over the next 10 years, the council must act - and outlined the plan.

The proposal is to demolish the SSS site and re-develop it as an 'older persons village' providing sheltered, extra care and dementia care units, run by scheme managers. This will not be a private development, but a joint venture of the council with a partner who has yet to be identified. The units will be mainly for council tenants, with a few to buy units which will hopefully free

up family homes in the borough that the council could purchase to let to families.

Residents who wish to return to the SSS after the works are completed will be given priority. It may be possible to build in phases so that residents could remain in their current homes until the first phase is completed and then only have to move once.



Over the next month officers will consult with residents to ascertain their needs. The council will then consider the responses and hope to have a final proposal ready within three months. Any material or significant objections will be considered. Building works will not commence for at least 18 months to two years.

A further meeting will be called in approximately one month's time to discuss further issues.

### **PETRA'S VISION**

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

Jan's



SOAPBOX

## Calling all Mums! (Yes, and you, Dad)

**Special coffee morning:  
Monday 25 July 11am,  
in the concierge**

With the summer holidays approaching, the question arises, 'What to do with the kids?' The answer should be, 'Make sure they have a great time, with memories they can cherish'. But as we all know, that can be easier said than done.

Well, not anymore. PETRA's wants to encourage all parents with young and school-aged children to get involved in activities, to keep the young ones active, entertained and learning stuff during their long break from school.

You know what your children like to do better than anyone, and PETRA can help facilitate activities, such as games, craft activities and day trips. We have some money available to support this. However, these things can only take place if you are willing to get involved.

To help get the ball rolling, we are holding a coffee morning on Monday 25 July 2016 at 11am in the concierge opposite the PETRA office. Come along with your ideas and enjoy a cuppa, I'll even bake some cakes for us - how's that?!  
Regards,  
Jan

# Preparing for success

**PETRA Treasurer Anna Duffy reports on the recent NFTMO conference**



We had a brilliant weekend speaking to representatives of TMOs countrywide at the recent NFTMO (National Federation of Tenant Management Organisations) annual conference in Stratford-Upon-Avon. Here's my summary of the key issues we discussed.

### TMO allowances

This was the name of a workshop run by Liz Michael. Many present voiced worries about their quarterly budgets being slashed by up to 15% over the next three years.



One TMO said their council was trying to pressure them into spending their surpluses on major works, which would then be recouped by the council in tenants' rent, allowing the council to save money and make a profit on something they should be paying for.

When it comes to negotiating with councils, Liz's mantra was 'Failing to prepare means preparing to fail.'

### Preparing for budget cuts

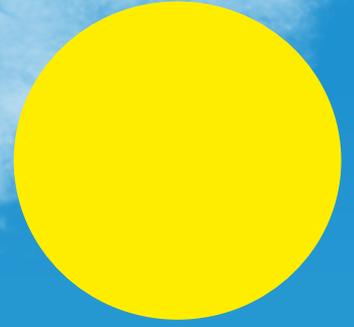
Liz reminded us that to prepare for budget cuts, we must understand how the budget works. The council pays the TMO for a list of services. It pays this at the same rate that it would cost the council to complete. In most cases, because the TMO completes jobs in-house and does not employ contractors, this can be done cheaply. This is how TMOs make a surplus (savings).

We need to know what is written in our management agreement, and what our rights are. We also need to have a three-month contingency fund, in case of emergencies. We must also seek to reduce our outgoings, and consider what is good value for money. PETRA has done this, for example, by asking for a contribution from residents towards the cost of day trips and other social activities.

**PETRA delegates, including Anna on the right, enjoy a well-earned break from proceedings at the NFTMO conference.**



# Summer fun



On 12th June, we held a party on the green, to celebrate the Queen's 90th birthday, and yes, OK, the weather wasn't great, but we still managed to have a lot of fun, as these photos show.

'The surprising thing,' says Jan, 'was how much the kids loved the simple, traditional things - the toffee apples, apple bobbing, pony rides and hook-a-duck. A big thank you to everyone who helped make the afternoon a success.'

## Housing reform

Liz noted that the 1% rent reductions year-on-year for the next four years will be harsh on councils, will result in fewer social housing units being built, and cuts to housing staff. The introduction of universal credit could all impact social housing negatively, with the onus on tenants to keep up to date with their rent payments.

## Team work

Another workshop was concerned with the way TMO committees function. Some common problems include board members not having anything to say during meetings, the chair ploughing on and not giving people no space to contribute, and individual committee members having their own agenda and dominating proceedings. Of these scenarios, I must say we at PETRA aren't guilty of many!

The moral of this workshop was that every member of the committee is valued and each brings their own unique skills and opinions which should be listened to. A team is stronger when it works together. There is no 'I' in team.

## NFTMO Kite mark

PETRA is working towards being awarded the NFTMO kite mark, and Liz believes we are well on our way to achieving it. However, one of the areas where we need to make progress is in tenant involvement (see Jan's soapbox article). We would love to see some new faces at our next committee meeting (25 July), and for parents to get involved in helping to organise social events for the estate's children and young people.

Finally, may I say how proud I was to represent PETRA at the conference, and to share our achievements with those of other TMOs near and far. Mike Davis got a special award in recognition of his contribution to PETRA and the NFTMO over the years, and we all felt very proud of him.



## Eve in the garden

Meet Eve, a resident of Serena Court, who has been tending several of the beds in the PETRA garden.

Eve, who comes from South Africa originally, knows a thing or two about gardening, and is looking forward to sharing her crop of spinach, red currents, kale, pumpkins and sweetcorn with her friends and neighbours in the sheltered blocks.



## News in brief

### Silly season

Summer is sometimes called the silly season for good reasons. Here at PETRA, these include kids risking serious injury by jumping from walkways on to bins, barbecues on balconies, loud music played late at night, and the thoughtless chucking of cigarette butts from balconies and kitchen windows - all examples of inconsiderate and/or dangerous behaviour. Please avoid doing any of these things, and, if you see others committing ant-social behaviour please report it to office.

### Home improvements

As always, PETRA has been busy making improvements where possible, despite the current budget Constraints. Recent work has included the addition of speed bumps at strategic locations around the estate, to curtail speeding cars, the repointing of paths and a new walkway along the side of Overstrand House, and the placing of new hanging baskets on the estate, to add a splash of colour. We hope you approve.

### Welcoming Micky



With Jim due to retire later this year, maintenance officer Michael (Micky) Hughes has joined PETRA from our sister organisation in Harold Hill, BETRA. Micky will work three days a week, usually Monday through to Wednesday. Welcome Micky.

### Could you be a Young Leader?

The NFTMO (National Federation of Tenant Management Organisations) in partnership with the Terry Edis Trust will be holding a Young Neighbourhood Leaders Conference in spring 2017. And PETRA is on the lookout for one or more young tenants willing to represent us at this conference.

This will be a chance for young people to learn about TMOs, discuss the challenges and opportunities for getting involved, and have some fun! The venue is yet to be decided, but if you think you might be interested, pop into the office for a chat with Jan and Caroline.

### Befriending service

**Sandy Johnson** writes:

Did you know that Age Concern Havering offers a FREE telephone befriending service for older people 50+ living in the borough?

The service seeks to help reduce feelings of loneliness and isolation by providing a regular telephone call from a befriender. This gives the befriended a chance to chat about local issues, current affairs, or any problems they may be having. In addition, it's a chance to pass on advice and information about other services and activities available locally, and to help with other day to day issues and concerns.

If you are housebound or feel socially isolated, live alone, and are aged over 50, this might be for you. For more information, call Brian Reeves on 01708 479647.

### Letterbox Lotto!

Every month, we give away three gift vouchers worth £25 each to residents who go online and spot their door number on our website home page.

Play Letterbox Lotto today!  
[www.petratmo.weebly.com](http://www.petratmo.weebly.com)

## Events

Special coffee morning - for parents of school-age kids  
Monday 25 July 11am,  
in the concierge

PETRA's regular Coffee morning  
3 Aug, 7 Sept, 5 Oct  
1st Wednesday of each month,  
11-1pm, in the Concierge.

Next committee meeting  
25th July  
22 August  
26 September (AGM - 7.30)  
8pm, in the concierge

Also, watch the noticeboards for news of a visit to a winery in late August, and a trip to Leigh-on-Sea in September.

### CONTACTS

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