

HOLLY LODGE ESTATE COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN'S STATEMENT NOVEMBER 2015

At the Estate Meeting on November 11th plot-owners will be invited to review the Estate's financial forecast for the year ending November 30th 2015 and the forward plan for the following three years. Both forecasts will be available as hard copies at the meeting and will also be published on the Estate's website.

2014/15 Financial Forecast

Our overall financial situation is strong, even though we have started our programme on the renovation and repairs made to the roads and footpaths of the Estate. For clarity I have rounded numbers up or down to the nearest £1,000.

Estate income was forecast to be £429,000 for 2014/15. This is £85,000 greater than budget and is mainly due to exceptionally high receipts from the sale of licenses to occupy land on the Common Parts of The Estate for the purposes of siting skips and/or Portacabins to builders and contractors.

The Estate also benefited from better collections from plot-owners' contributions towards the Estate Maintenance Fund. Professional fees came in £14,000 below budget, and notably the Estate benefited to the tune of £6,000 from a contribution from a Chinese reality TV show that filmed on the Estate.

Estate expenditure included £5,000 which was not forecast on security measures that I will return to later, and the Estate undertook emergency repairs to the wall at the top of Holly Lodge Gardens that had become dangerous.

Visible Improvements

After last winter a complete survey of road and path surfaces was undertaken that enabled us to identify those surfaces that needed attention or total replacement. The works were carried out in early October under the close supervision of Martin, George and Barbara, the result, now visible to all, is very satisfactory.

A new Estate office has been established in the refurbished Portacabin on Holly Lodge Gardens. This has improved the quality of staff facilities and enables our staff and Estate Manager to liaise more closely. It also provides us with a conference room.

The paths in the Ornamental Gardens have been re-gravelled and the flower-beds restored.

Ailing trees have been replaced. The ongoing tree maintenance programme will become more demanding of financial and human resources as trees age, become diseased and require replacement.

Building on the Estate

Construction and repair activity continues at a high level throughout the Estate. Camden's contractors are refurbishing and repairing properties in Makepeace and Langbourne Mansions.

One side effect of this is that the quantity of kerbside space available for residents' parking on the Estate's roads and avenues has been restricted. We are being proactive in notifying builders of our building code and policing it more rigorously to ensure that they occupy parking space and keep noise nuisance to the absolute minimum.

Health and Safety

Over the course of the year Barbara, Martin and Gerry have been creating a full set of policies and procedures dealing with Health and Safety. A formal initial external audit of H&S compliance gave the Estate a score of 48%. A follow up audit in October gave the Estate a score of 94%.

This took a lot of hard work and has resulted in the start of a positive culture-change amongst our staff.

Changing how we manage the Estate

A number of important changes have been made to the way we work:

1. In November 2014 we appointed Barbara Wheatley to the new post of Estate Manager. In her role Barbara undertakes the work of the Estate Secretary as well as managing the Foreman and his team. To ensure we comply with Estate Regulations, George Donaldson has agreed to act as Honorary Secretary.
2. In anticipation of Maurice's retirement at the end of this year, we appointed Gerry Hartigan as Assistant Foreman and he will assume the role of Foreman on Maurice's retirement.
3. We have introduced staff training to upgrade the skills of our staff in various areas including horticulture and hot-bitumen patching. This latter course will enable road patching to be done in-house and more cost effectively than our previous practice using cold-tar.
4. In addition to external training, Gerry and Barbara run monthly "Tool Box Training" with the staff in such matters as health and safety when using power tools, ladders and so forth. This initiative has been welcomed.
5. We have changed our way of maintaining each avenue and sections of Hillway by mowing, strimming, maintaining steps, railings, gates, flowers and shrubs etc. simultaneously, so that each part of the Estate is comprehensively maintained at least once every 11 weeks. After a review of this practice a rota indicating when each avenue will be maintained will be posted on the Estate website.

Security

Residents living in the upper parts of the Estate, opposite or adjacent to the Ornamental Gardens suffered frequent incidents of noisy anti-social behaviour and there was evidence of drug use and dealing, usually occurring in the early hours. There were 17 complaints formally logged by residents.

A well-attended meeting of Plot-owners was organised with the local Police who provided contact numbers and agreed to help support the formation of a Neighbourhood Watch (NHW) Committee for the affected area. The Chair of the NHW Committee reports any incidents to the police together with number plate details and the police then visit the intruders and give them a written warning.

The Estate subsequently agreed to run a one month trial hiring a security man to patrol the roads and avenues on the Estate.

During the month when the security patrol man was on the Estate, 11 intruders were chased away and details passed to the police.

Since the patrol man left the Estate no incidents of anti-social behaviour have been reported.

One month of the security patrol man cost approximately £5,000.

Security is not part of the remit of the Holly Lodge Estate Committee and at our meeting on 11th November I will ask the meeting for formal approval for a contingency of £15,000 to be budgeted and used anywhere on the Estate's Common Parts to fund security measures, at the sole discretion of the Committee.

Community Engagement

Following a highly successful 3rd Summer Party in June we are planning another in June 2016. We will again be looking for musical talent from the Estate to showcase. We hope that as many residents as possible will attend.

Our Officers

I would like to place on record our thanks to both Daniel Virgili, the Estate Accountant and to Barbara Wheatley, our Estate Manager, whose invaluable work is greatly appreciated.

I would also like to thank Li Weinreich for her work as Estate Secretary. After four years in post, Li handed over her responsibilities to Barbara and George in May. I am pleased to say that Li continues to serve the Estate as a valued Committee Member and colleague.

Our Staff

Sincere thanks go to Maurice, Gerry, Sean and Steven for their excellent work caring for, maintaining and where possible improving the Estate and helping it become such a pleasant place to live.

Our Committee

In April Olive Gatenby retired after 29 years of service to the Estate as a Committee Member and Trustee. Olive's contributions to the Estate are immense and her unerring eye for detail and her knowledge of the history and customs of the Estate will be missed. On behalf of the whole Committee I wish her a long and happy retirement.

During the year, in addition to Olive, Joseph Holderness and Darren Lennard resigned from the Committee.

Emma Jay, Martin Narraway and Robert Morgan were formally elected to the Committee in April 2015.

The Trustees

The Trustees are now Peter Jacobs, Martin Narraway and myself.

Finally

I thank every member of the Committee, all of whom have been instrumental in providing the wisdom, support, experience, expertise, diplomacy, hard work and patience that has enabled the Estate to be such a great place to live.

All Committee members undertake their time-consuming work for the Estate on an entirely voluntary unpaid basis.

Peter Wesley
Chair
Holly Lodge Estate Committee
19/10/15