

Heathfield Court Estate Management Board Meeting
19th October 2021
Residents' Newsletter

Dear Residents,

The quarterly Heathfield Court Estate Management Meeting took place on the 12th October 2021 and this newsletter contains items of interest to all Residents.

Heating

It was noted that the common staircase radiators were often too hot for comfort and windows were being left opened, thus wasting energy. It would be difficult and costly to fit thermostats to these radiators, so it was decided, for a trial period, to shut down the landing radiators, apart from on the ground floor of each block, to provide background heating. We are also getting residents mentioning that their flats are also very warm. Both these problems could be caused by the new efficient communal boiler system, so we will also investigate turning down the main boiler thermostat. Nothing will be done to contravene any regulations or compromise personal comfort, but we do have to keep an eye on minimising energy costs.

Major works

The next planned major works project will be to replace the lifts in Blocks 2 and 3, which will be done in the Spring of 2022. When the contracts have been negotiated, a timeline for the project will be shared with Residents and we will work closely with those living on the top two floors to make sure they know when their lifts could be out of action.

Cleaning

We have received some complaints from Residents that the cleaning of the staircase is not up to scratch. Staircases are scheduled to be fully cleaned once a week and the ground floor entrances each day. Inevitably the stairs and landings will, as the week progresses, become less clean as a consequence of the weather and footfall created by residents, deliveries, and contractors. But the Board takes the presentation and cleanliness of the whole estate, both internally and externally, very seriously and is acutely conscious that first impressions to visitors, as well as prospective tenants and purchasers', are important. We also have to accept that the Porter, who does the cleaning, has other duties, such as liaising with visiting contractors or dealing with potential emergencies, and there might be days when a staircase does not get cleaned. The alternative of hiring external cleaning contractors was rejected as this would materially add to the service charge bill, but a number of measures to help monitor cleaning are being implemented:

1. Peter Collier from Faradays will, during his weekly Monday morning estate inspections, inspect all blocks with the Porter and carry out spot checks on other days he visits Heathfield Court. Board members will also make regular random checks and report back.
2. The ground floor notice boards in each block will have a notice that clearly states on which day the Porter will be cleaning that landings and staircase. If residents note that cleaning has not been done on that day, or that dirt and dust is accumulating, they should contact Faradays.
3. We particularly request that residents or their contractors doing any work in their flats should not leave any rubbish in the communal areas and should clean up afterwards.

Bike storage

We received an estimate of about £5,000 to enclose the open bike rack to make it more secure. However, no incidents of attempted theft have been reported for some months and CCTV and lighting on the area have been improved. At the moment, therefore, the Board considers that, with mounting inflationary pressures on operating costs, this project should be put on hold and reconsidered next year. Security is always under review, but we urge bike owners who use this area to have suitable security devices and padlocks, as well as insurance. Under no circumstances should bikes be left in the communal halls and landings.

Gardens & Conifer trees

Peter Collier from Faraday and Board member Michael Pain plan to meet with the gardeners to discuss planting schemes and maintenance for next year. The large courtyard conifers are becoming more intrusive as they continue to grow. These trees support very little in the way of wildlife and nothing will grow underneath them. However, we know from past attempts that removing them is not that simple, as Heathfield Court is in a conservation area and the relevant permissions must be obtained from the local authority. We have asked Faraday to investigate the possibility of obtaining consent to remove them, and the associated costs of replacing them with fewer trees of a variety that will enable the courtyard to receive more light and provide a better habitat for birds and insects. We will then have a proper consultation with Residents.

Fire Detector Alarm Batteries

The standby batteries in the fire detectors inside each flat will soon have to be replaced because they are coming to the end of their useful life. Faraday will write to everyone requesting permission to enter each flat to do this work, which is an important and essential fire safety issue that can save lives.

Water leaks and Insurance

Earlier in the year a couple of leaks were reported between flats which raised some important insurance issues. These were clarified in the information and guidelines sent to all Leaseholders in August, which explained what was covered by the communal Block insurance and what should be covered by Leaseholders' and Residents' themselves. The Board also stressed that to avoid future incidents, Residents should take care using baths and showers and check their plumbing fixtures, such as the connections to kitchen appliances, as well as using properly insured contractors to do work in their flats.

HCCL Board
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