

LEASEHOLDER NEWS

October 2011 Issue

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Consulting you on new subletting fees

Tell us what you think about our proposed new charges for leaseholders who let out their properties. Currently all leaseholders pay towards the administrative costs of this, but we're proposing that only those leaseholders who are subletting should pay for this. Please see the enclosed document for details.



Actuals 2010/11

In August, we sent out your service charge bill together with our Actuals 2010/11 booklet which explains your service charges in detail. This year we were able to calculate and send out the bills even earlier than before giving you more time to pay by monthly instalments using direct debit.

You will have noticed on the schedule of the actual costs that we've added a separate column outlining your estate costs where applicable.

Since we launched our email subscription scheme we've also been able to save money on postage and this has helped to reduce the management fee by about three per cent for most leaseholders.

We would also like to thank those of you who completed the feedback form we sent with your bill to find out what you think

about our services. Of those who returned the survey, the majority (just under 60 per cent) were happy with the information they had received about their service charge bill and how we explained the service charges in our cover letter, the Schedule, explanatory notes and the Actuals 2010/11 booklet.

We also asked your opinion about our services (the resident magazine Homes Zone, Leaseholder News, the website, repairs reports, leaseholder courses and the Home Ownership Team generally). While around 50 per cent of those who replied were happy with the services, around a third of respondents indicated they were not entirely satisfied. We value your feedback and are planning to get more detailed feedback from leaseholders in future.



Homes for Haringey

Tribunal approves Decent Homes work

We were recently challenged by a leaseholder for a decent homes bill of £19,300. The case was heard by the Leasehold Valuation Tribunal (LVT). At the end of the hearing they found in favour of Homes for Haringey and Haringey Council.

The leaseholder challenged us across several areas, including:

- The need for the work to take place
- Quality of maintenance in the past
- Price of the work
- Consultation work by the Home Ownership team and
- Quality of work by our Decent Homes contractor.

After hearing the evidence, the LVT dismissed all of the leaseholder's claims. They found that our work was of a good standard, was necessary and was value for money. They ruled that the bill was 'valid and payable in full'. You can read a full account of the tribunal decision on the Leasehold Advisory Service website at:

www.lease-advice.org



Who are the Leasehold Valuation Tribunal?

The LVT is an independent legal body that offers a fair way of settling a dispute without the need to go to court. Their decision is legally binding. You can find out more about the LVT at www.direct.gov.uk and type in "LVT" in the search field.

Here at the Homes Ownership team, we take pride in our work. We aim to provide you a service which meets your needs and provide you with information that is on time and accurate. We also work closely with colleagues to make sure that when we plan major works to your homes, we offer good value for money and helpful payment options.

We're moving!

As part of Homes for Haringey's efforts to reduce the number of office locations across the borough, the Home Ownership team is moving to join other teams at Alexandra House in Wood Green in November. The move will not affect our services to leaseholders, and all our contact details and email address will stay the same but our postal address will change to:

Home Ownership Team
Homes for Haringey
Alexandra House
10 Station Road
Wood Green N22 7TR.

We will continue to hold appointments in the Wood Green Customer Services Centre at 48 Station Road.

At the same time Homes for Haringey is rolling out a new customer contact system across the organisation. This means that when officers receive phone calls, letters or emails from residents, they can record them on the system for access by staff in other departments. The system will improve the way we maintain our records and help us deal with queries faster and more efficiently.



Message from the Key Leaseholder Group

In September, some key leaseholders got involved in our mystery shopping exercise. This involved calling our frontline officers to assess the quality of our customer service. Look out for our findings in the next issue of Leaseholder News. In the meantime, you can still become a key leaseholder. Call **020 8489 3060** or **020 8489 3021**, or email us at: **key.leaseholders@homesforharingey.org**

Alterations

Thinking of carrying out any improvements or alterations to your flat? Then let us know in advance. Your lease requires you to get landlord approval for this type of work, especially if you are planning work which could change the layout of your flat or if, for example, you need a new vent in the wall for a boiler. Some works may need planning permission and building control approval as well as landlord permission from us. Don't forget that even though you can install your own windows and doors, you must still get our written permission first. To apply for permission, call the Home Sales on **020 8489 3487** or email us at: **right2buy@homesforharingey.org**.

Time for a boiler check-up!

Winter is fast approaching so time to make sure your gas boiler is working properly. In fact, you should have all your gas appliances checked by a Gas Safe engineer at least once a year. If you sublet your property, you are required by law to get a Landlord Gas Safety certificate every 12 months. Faulty gas appliances produce carbon monoxide which is a deadly, invisible gas that doesn't smell and can kill in a matter of hours.

Report from Piers Johnson, Chair of the Leasehold Panel

"Having chaired two meetings, I am glad to be able to tell you that our meetings continue to be very busy. We have discussed some very important issues such as dealing with anti social behaviour, achieving better value for money for leasehold services and received a report on landlord permissions for alterations and improvements. The Panel also discussed charges for subletting and we have fed our views back to the Home Ownership team who are now consulting you via the enclosed proposal document."



"At the last Panel meeting we received reports on how Homes for Haringey helped residents in Tottenham following the disturbances in August (you can read about this on page 3 of Homes Zone). We have also learnt about Homes for Haringey's plans to introduce a secure online system to allow residents to manage their rent or service charge account and other related services online. This project is currently in the initial planning stages and Homes for Haringey will consult leaseholders more widely in due course."

"As the Chair of the Leasehold Panel, I will be representing leaseholders on the Decent Homes Strategic Core Group, a committee that brings together Homes for Haringey officers, Decent Homes contractors and consultants, as well as one tenant and one leasehold representative. The Group makes important decisions on the arrangements for major works programmes including decent homes work. Having input from other leaseholders at the Leasehold Panel meetings is therefore really important. Why not come along to the next one? See the backcover for dates of the next meetings. I look forward to seeing you there."

Leasehold Panel meetings

Leasehold Panel meetings are open to all leaseholders. They start at 7pm and they are held in Wood Green Civic Centre, High Road, London N22 8LE. The next dates are:

Wednesday, 12 October
Thursday, 10 November
Tuesday, 6 December

If you would like to receive a copy of the minutes and agenda for the next meeting, or have anything you would like us to consider there, please email us at leasehold.panel@homesforharingey.org or call Bruce Nicholas on **020 8489 3487**. We also publish minutes on our website at:

www.homesforharingey.org/publications_and_minutes

Subletting?

The lease states you have to register with us when you sublet your property. Call the Home Sales Team on 020 8489 3357 or email: right2buy@homesforharingey.org to register. When you register you must give us your correspondence address and phone number and that for your tenant(s).

This means we can contact you or your tenant(s) and gain access to the property if there is a major problem such as a gas or water leak inside your flat. From 1 April 2012 we will charge investigation costs to leaseholders who fail to register their sublet.



Save £5 and help us save money too

Over 2,000 leaseholders have now signed up to get Leaseholder News and other information updates from us by email. If you haven't signed up yet, then why not do so now? It helps us keep our costs down by saving on paper and postage, and we'll take £5 off your service charge.



Arabic

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Leaseholder News June 2011
Homes for Haringey Ltd

published by Haringey Council's
Communications Service 38.22 • 10/11

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London
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020 8489 3060
Email:
home.ownershipteam1@homesforharingey.org

Team 2 – for leasehold properties in Wood Green and South Tottenham
Phone: 020 8489 5976,
020 8489 5996 or
020 8489 3042
Email:
home.ownershipteam2@homesforharingey.org

Home Sales – for resale, re-mortgage and subletting enquiries
Phone: 020 8489 3357 or
020 8489 3231
Email:
right2buy@homesforharingey.org