

Islington Home Owner

Autumn Winter 2004 / 2005

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improving housing through partnership

Contact us

Home Ownership Services can be contacted Monday to Friday between 9am and 4.45pm for help and advice on:

- Your service charge account
- How your service charge is calculated
- Making payments and payment options
- Difficulties in paying your service charge
- Your rights and responsibilities as a leaseholder
- Selling your property
- Alterations to your home
- Buying the freehold of your building or extending your lease
- Subletting your home

We're split into four teams

East Team

Covers Upper Street and Boleyn Road Area Housing Offices
Tel: 020 7527 7725 / 7752 / 7758 / 7728

North Team

Covers Holland Walk and Isledon Road Area Housing Offices
Tel: 020 7527 7739 / 7756 / 7714 / 7759 / 7727

West Team

Covers Central Street Area Housing Office and Hyde Northside (Lyon Street Area Housing Office)
Tel: 020 7527 7736 / 7716 / 7723 / 7718 / 7742

Major Works

(boroughwide)
Tel: 020 7527 7712 / 7811 / 7731 / 7753 / 7735 / 7704

Home Ownership Services

2-4 Tufnell Park Road
London N7 0DL
Fax: 020 7527 7733

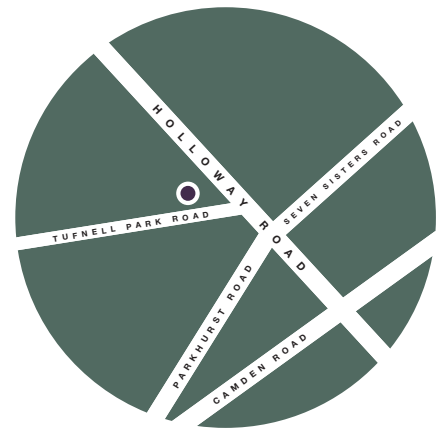
Email homeownership@homesforislington.org.uk

We are at the Holloway Road end of Tufnell Park Road, close to the Odeon Cinema, about 10 minutes walk from Holloway Road tube station

Bus numbers 4,17, 43 and 271

There is unrestricted street parking about 50 metres from our office. If you think you may have difficulty attending our offices please contact us to arrange an alternative.

You can visit the Homes for Islington website at www.homesforislington.org.uk
The council's website is at www.islington.gov.uk



Customer Commitment update: Selling your Home

In the last edition we told you about the customer commitment for homeowners which we'd launched. This is a service standard to do with providing a sell-on pack, which is information about service charges, buildings insurance and planned major works, which a seller usually has to provide for anyone who is intending to buy their property.

Our commitment is to send out sell-on packs within ten working days of getting payment of the fee. Part of our commitment is also to tell you how we are performing. The latest figures are as follows:

MONTH	NUMBER OF REQUESTS RECEIVED	PERCENTAGE RESPONDED WITHIN TARGET
2003		
September	53	92%
October	60	95%
November	51	92%
December	25	94%
2004		
January	54	94%
February	64	95%
March	31	100%
April	56	95%
May	48	90%
June	60	100%

Autumn 2004, Leaseholder Forum



By Richard Rosser,
'Homes for Islington'
Director & Leaseholder
Forum Vice Chair.

By the time this edition of HomeOwner hits the mat we should have a new Forum, elected directly by leaseholders and freeholders on estates. The new membership will represent the interests of service charge payers in consultative discussions with Homes for Islington.

Without wishing to pre-empt the decisions of the new members some things have become apparent over the last year and will need to be looked at. Many people have suggested that the Forum does not keep in touch with leaseholders and seems remote.

We have consistently asked for our own newsletter, or means of contacting leaseholders directly. The Council has not given us this opportunity and it is to be hoped that Homes for Islington, with its mission objective of being a 'listening landlord', will listen to our request with more attention. There is due to be a review of issues concerning Resident Involvement and the Forum should press for much a greater ability to keep in touch directly with leaseholders.

In the past Forum members have decided not to publicise their contact details. In many ways this is a reflection of our remit, which is to act as a sounding board on a broad basis about policy issues, rather than individual cases. However, it is becoming evident that leaseholders would like an avenue where they can get help and support with individual problems. It seems reasonable to expect that the members should look again at whether to be more personally responsive.

The Forum has also had a rule that the public are not allowed to address the Forum directly. Anyone wanting to raise an issue should go through their area rep and present questions in writing. The reason for this rule was that we found that members of the public were chattering and this disrupted the proceedings. At a recent meeting it was suggested that we introduce a period, say 20 minutes, which would be open to questions and comments from the floor. The idea seemed to be approved and I hope we can implement it in the new Forum.

There is also some confusion about the difference between the Islington Leaseholder Forum and the Islington Leaseholders Association. Basically, the Forum is a part of the system of Area Housing Panels established by the Council, and continued by Homes for Islington, as a means of consulting residents about policy issues. The Leaseholders Association is an entirely separate organisation that is being formed by individual leaseholders to campaign for leaseholders interests; it is not a 'recognised' part of the consultative process and is responsive to its members.



I have already mentioned that Homes for Islington is holding a review of its Resident Involvement Strategy. At the time of writing the Review will not have started work so I cannot make direct comments about what the review will recommend or how it will be carried out. As a Director of Homes for Islington, representing the Forum and leaseholders, I have made it clear that I have a couple of goals that I will be arguing for. The most important of these will be to see if we can get some funding for the Forum, along similar lines to the grant given to FITA (Federation of Islington Tenants' Associations). Leaseholders will soon comprise a quarter of Islington Council's residents and it seems only fair that we should enjoy the same kind of funding as that given to tenants. At the very least we should have greater facilities to communicate with service charge payers' so that the Forum can reflect your views and concerns more effectively. I expect that the new Forum membership will be playing an active part in the review and I am sure that it will be vigorous in supporting leaseholders interests.

One thing which may be going to happen, and we have had some discussions with Homes for Islington, is the appointment of an Independent Surveyor to monitor major works programmes. As of September the details of how this will work have not been agreed. However, the suggestion has been made that, given the expected increase in major works programmes, the appointment of an Independent Surveyor could benefit both leaseholders and Homes for Islington. Broadly speaking, the surveyor would be available to monitor works in progress for quality of workmanship and report back both to the Forum and Homes for Islington. The idea is that this will help leaseholders ensure that work is carried out to standard and Homes for Islington could follow up on any recommendations made by the surveyor. Both leaseholders and Homes for Islington would have an independent report which could be referred to in case of any disagreement.

In many ways, this Autumn should be an important time for leaseholders and I hope we can look forward to an increase in the Forum's role and an improvement in its ability to represent leaseholders' interests.

Framework Contract



One of the main reasons Homes for Islington was created was to provide additional funding to maintain and improve the buildings you live in.

Homes for Islington intends to do this in the following ways:

- Painting the external areas of your homes including communal areas and repairs that are required on the outside of your building or block. This called the CREPS programme, which means Cyclical Repairs and External Painting
- Replacing or repairing more expensive items around your block if necessary, including the roof, windows, communal entry doors, etc. This is known as the ROLEC programme, which stands for Replacement of Life Expired Components.
- Carrying out internal works to tenanted properties to meet the government's Decent Homes Standard by 2010. (As leaseholders, you won't be affected by or charged for internal works to tenanted properties)

This article explains how Homes for Islington chooses the contractor to carry out the work to improve your block or estate. Previously we asked contractors to bid for each scheme as it came up. But we've decided to use a different system to choose contractors. This is the **Framework Contract Arrangement**. This will allow us to get works done by pre-selected constructors (that is, contractors) at agreed levels of quality and cost. This means that constructors don't have to put in bids or tenders for different jobs but are kept on an approved list by Homes for Islington.

How were the construction companies selected for the Framework Contract Arrangements?

To choose constructors, Islington Council had to follow central government and European law. This meant the council had to place adverts in newspapers and journals here in England and also in Europe to ensure that as many companies as possible were able to apply. The council also informed Islington leaseholders and placed articles in the local housing newsletters to make sure that all our residents were also aware of our proposals.

Over 80 constructors expressed an interest – 39 were short-listed and invited to tender, and 33 tenders were received.

Short-listing and selection of the successful companies was done by Homes for Islington directors, staff and tenants and leaseholders who had earlier expressed in interest in joining the exercise.

The constructors that were chosen were:

Apollo London Ltd	Balfour Beatty Construction Ltd
Borras Construction Ltd	Diamond Build Plc
Eugena Ltd	Frencon Construction Ltd
Imperial UK Ltd	Jerram Falkus Construction Ltd
JJ McGinley Ltd	TH Kenyon & Sons Plc
Llewellyn Rok Ltd	Lovell Partnerships Ltd
Makers Plc	Mansell Plc
Mulalley & Co Ltd	J Murphy & Sons Ltd
Saltash Enterprises Ltd	

These constructors will eventually work on all Home for Islington properties, except street properties and those managed by Hyde Northside. Tenant Management Organisations and Committees (TMO's & TMC's) have the option to chose the contractors to do their work.

Why set up the Framework Contract Arrangements?

- It makes sure that we have in place a plan to carry out planned maintenance improvements to your homes every year.
- It will help us achieve the government Decent Homes Standard by year 2010.
- Projects will be set up a partnering basis. This will allow the constructors, Homes for Islington and residents to work together
- It saves costs in having to tender for each separate project.
- It will improve customer care and reduce customer complaints.
- As constructors will be with Homes for Islington for a long time they can use all their best methods to make sure their work is of the highest standard.
- Constructors will be closer to tenants and residents and be more aware of residents' needs. There will be more resident consultation.
- Constructors will be encouraged to perform well, as they know this will lead to more work allocations.
- The government wants ALMO's such Homes for Islington to do this, and when we are inspected the inspectors will check that we have done this properly.





What else will residents get out of the Framework Contract Arrangements?

- There will be a greater willingness on the part of the constructors to work with residents
- Early involvement with the construction team – the chance to influence how works are carried out and how risks are managed
- We expect to achieve higher quality of work – and achieve cost savings, e.g. through more efficient working and less waste.

How will the Framework Contract Arrangements operate?

- Projects will be allocated to the best performing constructors
- Key Performance Indicators will include customer care, defects, and resident satisfaction.
- Homes for Islington and residents' representatives will review constructors' performance.

How has the Pilot Partnering project progressed?

We have carried out a test run with the process for the Holland Walk / Isledon Road area for 2003/2004. This was to test the new methods of working, particularly how partnership working would improve residents' satisfaction levels.

A total of 585 homes had work done to them at a cost of approximately £3 million. The constructor was Mulalley.

- The level of residents' satisfaction is high – very few complaints have been received.
- There were some money savings which are to be used to carry out even more work on the estates.
- The project has taken longer in the pre-construction phase – but once on site has progressed according to programme and is expected to complete on time.

For this year?

The following schemes/estates around the borough are to be included in the year 2004-2005 programme using our new Framework Contract Arrangement.

King Square	Red Brick estate
Aubert Court	St Paul's
New North Road,	Hilldrop Crescent
Highbury Quadrant	Wedmore Gardens
Elthorne Phase 2	Westerdale Court
Wynyard Street blocks	Quaker Court
Worley House	

Constructors to be used include Apollo, Balfour Beatty, Frencon, Eugena, Caxton, Lovell, Mansell, Mulalley, Diamond Build & Imperial.

What else is happening?

As well as the framework for constructors we will also use this new method to employ specialist mechanical and electrical engineering constructors, surveyors, engineers, architects etc.

Want to know more or to get involved?

If you would like any further information or if you are interested in monitoring the performance of the framework arrangements – please contact Richard Litherland, Building & Quantity Surveying Manager, Homes for Islington, PO Box 3333, 222 Upper Street, London, N1 1YA, or by e-mail on: richard.litherland@homesforislington.org.uk
Phone 020 7527 8665



Customer Satisfaction Survey



This spring Home Ownership commissioned an independent research company to carry out a customer satisfaction survey for leaseholders and service charge payers. The aim of the survey was to get a picture of what users think about the service they receive and to follow-up on improvements we've made since the 2003 survey.

Questions in the survey covered the following areas:

- Contacting and communication with Home Ownership Services
- Consultation for Major Works
- Listening to leaseholders
- Awareness of the Islington Leaseholder Forum (ILF)
- Leaseholder surgeries

We talked about the questions in advance with the Forum, and as a result we included a couple of questions based on their suggestions.

The results

Contacting Home Ownership Services

- 67% of people rated Home Ownership Staff either very or fairly helpful
- 50% of people agreed that staff were able to resolve their enquiry successfully

These were increases of 1% on the 2003 results. There was a better improvement from 42% to 50% of people who were satisfied with the final outcome of their enquiry, and an increase from 53% to 57% of people who thought that staff responded quickly.

Communications with Home Ownership Services

- 61% of people thought the amount of information we provide with service charge bills was about right.
- 52% of customers found their last service charge bill easy to understand

Both of these results are up 8% from 2003

Opinions are improving about the content and clarity of the service charge bills we send out. Two-thirds agree it was clear who to contact if there were queries, which is up 5%, and 57% thought the layout was clear (up 11%) and 52% that it was easy to understand (up 7%).

Your response to the Home Owner newsletter, which was first produced in spring 2003, and the first Leaseholders' Handbook which we sent out last autumn have been encouraging. Nearly two-thirds found Home Owner useful, and a similar percentage said the same about the Leaseholders' Handbook.

Home Owner

We asked what sort of articles you would most like to see in future editions of this newsletter. The top three were:

- Articles about major works
- Information about services provided
- More articles by the Leaseholder Forum

As Major Works was the most popular topic, we've responded by including more information about this area in this current edition of Home Owner.

Surgeries

Over half of you are aware of the existence of the leaseholder and service charge payers' surgeries, which we hold after both the estimated and the actual service charges are sent out. 95% of people thought these were a good idea, even if they hadn't been to a surgery themselves. And two-thirds of those who did go to a surgery found them useful.

Listening to leaseholders

We asked if you were aware of the existence of the Islington Leaseholder Forum –nearly two-thirds said yes, which is up slightly from last year. But there were better improvements in the number of people who say they know how to contact their Forum representative, which is now over a third, up from a fifth last year, and now nearly half of people agree that they have received feedback on what the Forum does – that's an increase of 27%.

Overall service

We asked homeowners to rate the services they receive from the Area Housing Offices and from Home Ownership Services. Only just over a quarter of you thought the overall quality of service from the area offices was very or fairly good and a similar proportion had a neutral view. In this year's survey, 34% of you were very or fairly satisfied with the overall service from Home Ownership Services, which is up 10% on last year.

We're pleased that overall there have been increases in customer satisfaction and are committed to continuing to make further improvements in the service you get from us. We know from the results that there are areas where we still need to do better. We've given the full results of the survey and our proposals for improvements to the Homes for Islington management team and to the board of directors. We also discussed the survey with the Islington Leaseholder Forum. The key points of our action plan include:

- Improving awareness of leaseholder surgeries
- Reviewing the information sent out with service charge bills
- Reviewing the contents of future editions of Homeowner
- Improving publicity about and feedback from the Islington Leaseholder Forum
- Devising and promoting new leasehold customer commitments



External Repairs & Decorations 2005/06

Holland Walk Area

Amy Griffiths Court
 Barbara Rudolph Court
 Brecknock Road Nos 66-148
 Byworth Walk
 Cardinals Way
 Crouch Hill 53
 Daisy Dobbins Walk
 Edith Turberville Court
 Ella Road 7
 Emily Heartwell Court
 Fairbridge Road 109
 Florence Cantwell Walk
 Hazelville Rd 88 1-10
 Hetty Rees Court
 Highcroft Road
 Hilldrop Crescent 50-55,57
 Hilldrop Road 39
 Hillrise Mansions 31-100
 Hillrise Road
 Hornsey Rise Gardens 32-34
 Jessie Blythe Lane
 Keir Hardy House
 Levison Way
 Louise Aumonier Walk
 Louise White House
 Marie Stopes Court
 Mary Kingsley Court
 Miranda Road, 6
 Miriam Price Court
 Nyton Close
 Orpheus House
 Pilgrims Way
 Shreveport House
 St Johns Way 99
 Sussex Way Nos 277-325
 Turpin Way
 Wartersville Rd Nos 1-35
 Witley Road 5a

Isledon Road Area

Blenheim Court
 Cottenham House
 Crouch Hall Court
 Hamilton Park West
 Kenton House
 Leiston House
 Medina Court
 Otley House
 Rosedale Court
 Tannington Terrace

Boleyn Road Area

Besant Court, 1-40
 Chestnuts, The
 Congreve House
 Crowfield House
 Highbury Quadrant (remainder)
 Patmore House
 Queen Margaret's Court
 Wyatt Road 40-50,53-63

Lyon Street Area (Hyde Northside)

Bramall Court
 Caledonian Road No 471A
 Calshot Street(Nos 13-53)
 Calshot Street(Nos 81-103)
 Everilda St (Nos 1-8)
 Fairdene Court
 Field Court
 Hartnoll House
 Hillmarton Road No 61
 Meakin House
 Nicholsfield Walk
 Penn Road, 1
 Pollard Close
 Radford House
 Russett Crescent (1-53)
 Soldene Court
 Sturmer Way (1-40 and 41-100)
 Westbrook House

Upper Street Area

Arran Walk (4-24)
 Battishil Street (15-18)
 Cedar Court
 Colinsdale
 Downham Court
 Ecclesbourne Rd (49-53,57)
 Elizabeth Kenny House
 Highbury Station Rd (41-167)
 Laycock Street (32-38)
 Lindsey Mews
 Liverpool Road (294-300)
 Mitchell House
 Napier Terrace
 Parker Court
 Richmond Grove (12-32)
 Richmond Grove (7-10)
 Rotherfield Street (1-5)
 Sebbon Street (13-18)
 Tressel Close
 Tyndale Mansions
 Upper Street, 273
 Wakelin House
 Walkinshaw Court

Central Street Area:

Bagnigge House
 Barnabas House
 Clerkenwell Close 1-5 8-13
 Clerkenwell Green 33-36
 Cruickshank Street 1/2 - 8/11 - 12/15 - 16/19 - 16/19 - 20/23 - 24/25
 Earlom House
 Farringdon Road 142/146
 Foxcroft
 Frearson House
 Gambier House
 Hurst House
 Peregrine House
 Royley House
 Sadler House
 Sharwood House
 Spring House
 St. Anne's House
 St. Helena House
 Stefox House
 Telfer House
 Tunbridge House
 Wells House
 Wilmington Square 8-11
 Woodbridge Street 18-28
 Yardley Street 15

Homes For Islington has a rolling programme of external repairs and decorations, and we've listed the buildings that are scheduled to be included in the next financial year, 2005/2006.

Please note that the programme is provisional at this stage, and subject to change, as at the time of writing we don't yet have the confirmation of what funding approval the government will give us for 2005/2006. So we cannot guarantee that these works will definitely go ahead.

If you are a leaseholder you will have to pay towards your share of the cost of works to your building. At this stage we don't know what the likely cost will be until more detailed survey work has been carried out and the exact scope of each scheme decided. Before the works go ahead you will be sent formal notification and have the chance to comment on the proposals in line with the legal consultation ("Section 20") process.



Major Works Update



Introduction

Homes for Islington's (HFI's) vision is for all homes not only to reach the Decent Homes target by 2010, but that our residents' homes and environment are improved beyond this standard to deliver housing areas where people can live in a secure and safe environment for many years to come. To deliver this, we've taken into account the condition of our stock, feedback from consultation with residents and the cost of achieving the Decent Homes Standard compared to the likely level of resources available to 2010/11. This has led to the establishment of Homes for Islington and the prospect of receiving an additional £156.820m to achieve decent homes by 2010. If we secure the additional resources our target is to invest over £500m in the housing stock by 2011.



Investment

We've found that the main areas of stock investment are the 'key components', that is, windows, roofs, heating, rewiring and structural works. So we've decided to concentrate on these. Our strategy is not just to deliver decent homes but also to achieve a higher standard, within the financial parameters we are currently working. Our strategy includes:

- A 7 year cyclical maintenance programme
- Replacement of key components (windows, roofs, electrics, heating)
- Lift renewal programme
- Adaptations for the disabled
- Security and environmental priorities as determined by residents
- Work with our regeneration partners to deliver additional improvements and investment for our residents.
- Work with the Council in delivering PFI schemes and transfers where residents support this.

Our long-term strategy is based on gaining the additional resources of £156.820m, which is dependent on the outcome of the Best Value inspection due to begin in November 2004. We need to obtain at least 2 stars to secure the additional resources. Our strategy as it affects leaseholders is to:

- Continue the 7 year cyclical maintenance programme
- Provide double glazing to low/ medium rise blocks, where practical
- Renew/ repair roofs
- Renew/ repair electrics
- Renew/ repair heating and boilers (only communal systems will affect leaseholders)
- Lift repair/ refurbishment
- Establish a 5% 'sustainability' fund linked to external fabric and component improvement work
- Establish a programme to deal with Boroughwide priorities as identified in the annual tenant survey (security/ CCTV maintenance, environmental improvements, improved lighting, security improvements)

- Continue to allocate resources for Area priorities as determined by local residents (Tenant Compact)
- Work with the Council in delivering Private Finance Initiative (PFI) schemes and transfers where residents support this.

Proposals for 2005/6

We will not know until the New Year the outcome of the Best Value inspection and whether we will secure the additional funding. So we've prepared an outline programme of 'new starts' based on receiving the additional funding or without the additional funding. Feasibility studies are currently taking place to firm up these programmes and a final programme will be agreed in January 2005.

With the additional resources we plan to start new projects totalling £63m, with £55m being spent on cyclical maintenance and component renewal such as windows, roofs, heating, electrics, lifts and kitchens and bathrooms and the remainder on such things as security and environmental works.

Without the additional resources we plan to start new schemes totalling £38m, with £33m being spent on cyclical maintenance and component renewals, with the remainder on such things as security and environmental works.

Delivering the programme

In relation to delivering our plans we have:

- Established partnering arrangements with 17 'framework' constructors to deliver a large element of the programme. These constructors have been appointed based on a tendering exercise, which included evaluating how they intend delivering a quality service as well as price.
- Established a panel of 10 'framework' consultants to deliver a wide range of building services.
- Achieved full capital spend targets in 2002/3 (£45.967m) and 2003/4 (£59.975m)
- Re - organised the staffing structure so that all aspects of delivery of the capital programme reports to one Director
- Commenced feasibility work to 30% of our stock, with 100% completion in 2005
- Appointed a 'long term' Asset Management Partner to work with HFI. The Asset Management Partner will work with us to continually improve the information we collect on stock condition.
- Produced the 'Getting it Right' booklet for all projects to inform residents of the works, and who to contact in HFI. There's a feedback form for residents to tell us about the condition of their home and how they would like to be consulted on the project, the results of which have been used towards the longer-term investment strategy.
- Established a standard 'satisfaction survey' questionnaire conducted by an independent research company for all schemes. This covers consultation, the work and the contractor's performance. Its available in a number of languages or face to face interviews are available if required, including with an appropriate translator. An annual report is provided on key findings.