

Netherne Management Limited



PLEASE NOTE OUR NEW WEBSITE ADDRESS WWW.NMANLTD.COM

To: All Members, Netherne on the Hill

December 2016

This is Netherne Management Limited's last newsletter for 2016, and is being distributed with the Q1 2017 service charge bills. For the benefit of anyone who has not read our earlier updates for the year, we have repeated some of the information that was shared in those earlier updates.

We send out all of our communications by email (from NMLupdates@gmail.com), to any member who is on our email distribution list. Emails will only be sent by blind courtesy copy to all recipients. We have recently undertaken an exercise to collect more member email addresses from SHW records, but there are still many members for whom we do not have an email address. If you would like to be added to our email distribution list, please complete your details by typing the following link in your internet browser: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/NMLEmails>

Finances, debt and service charges

- Our finances remain healthy, with our reserves able to withstand the cost of large, non-regular repair and maintenance work, and the costs of improvements to the Estate, Village Hall and Leisure Centre. Such costs are not met from budgeted service charge income. Examples of the projects that are or have been financed from our reserves this year are the flooring works to the village hall, the poolside columns, the pathways to the leisure centre and an upgrade to the village hall CCTV system. We also have, as ongoing works, improving the hard standing areas outside the village hall, refurbishment of the cricket pavilion, the lighting on the Hooley footpath and an upgrade to the weights area. In total, the total cost of these various projects will be over £75,000; if we did not have reserves then it would have meant this year's service charges would have been some 20% higher.
- Our debt (amounts due from members who have not paid their service charges) remains under tight control. We began the year with £31,000 of debt and expect to finish the year with £15,000 of debt.
- There remain a handful of members who fail to pay their service charges on time. If you receive a reminder or a Letter Before Action (LBA) from SHW asking you to settle your account, please do not ignore it. This is an expensive mistake to make. If payments have not been made 7 days after the LBA we have no hesitation in referring to our solicitors for full debt recovery. This includes all legal costs incurred. Debtors also have their leisure centre memberships suspended until they have cleared their accounts.
- We urge all members to set up direct debits to pay their service charges, to avoid the risk of inadvertently forgetting to pay a service charge (and becoming a debtor in the process).
- We continue to face inflationary pressures on a number of fronts, such as insurance costs, and the amount paid to Reigate and Banstead Council for rates. As a result of these and other inflationary pressures, the service charge budget for 2017 is 3.5% higher than the 2016 budget. This will mean service charge increases of the order of 50 pence a week.

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Village Hall

- Work began to improve the hard standing areas outside the village hall. However, these works uncovered a number of issues, including damp. Many of the problems seem to stem from the ground levels outside the hall having been raised too high by Gleasons. We have now received a specialist report advising on remedial actions, and contractors are being approached to undertake the works.
- The hall is being well utilised on most days. A new dancefit class started on Monday nights (hosted by a professional dancer!) and a badminton club is underway on Thursday evenings. Thanks also to the Residents Association for organising a number of events, including the Casino Royale night on 15th October, and the recent Carol singing and Children's Christmas party on 11th December, both of which were very well attended.
- We are sad to hear that the scouts, cubs and beavers groups have decided to move their base from Netherne to Chipstead. We met the leaders to understand their needs, and offered them use of the cricket pavilion and agreed to a number of other requests. However, it became apparent that they wanted more of a "home", accessible 24/7 and with scope to develop/build bespoke buildings for their use. We understand the new base they have found in Chipstead ticks more of their boxes, with a bespoke scout hall available. They are however keen to continue to involve Netherne in scouting, and we/the Residents Association will work with them to involve them in activities that help them to gain badges.
- In September, the hall was the venue for a reunion of former Netherne hospital staff. Our thanks go to the wonderful bakers in the village, who helped to make the event extra special.

Leisure Centre

- On 12th July, the plant room in the Leisure Centre suffered extensive flood damage, and the fire brigade had to attend. This was due to a failure of a coupling on the water inlet which resulted in the sump pump failing, hence the build up of water. This was a major incident, but thanks to the efforts of the Nuffield team, and numerous contractors who were called to attend to various works caused by this incident, the gym was able to reopen on 15th July. Much more work was required to get the pool re-opened, and this was achieved on 12th September. Fortunately, most of the works, costing around £30,000, have been covered by our insurances.
- We used the downtime with the pool to attend to a number of other repairs and improvements. We resolved the recurring issue of corrosion to the poolside columns (with a fibreglass solution, costing £9,000), the men's changing room door was replaced, the broken ceiling tile was fixed and we remedied a recurring damp/moisture damage to the pool side area.
- Further improvements to the leisure centre are underway, in particular the long awaited weights area upgrade is taking place from 10th December.
- We are also exploring a suggestion of having an advertising screen / monitor in the reception area, to promote activities and events, and local businesses.
- Please can we make a plea from the Nuffield staff to remember to bring your gym cards when visiting the leisure centre. Forgetting them just leads to disruption to other services and classes taking place.

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Hooley footpath

- Progress on this project has been disappointingly slow. It has suffered from a number of delays and set backs, including the inclement weather at the start of the project, vandalism and theft. The digger being used by the contractor was also subject to an arson attack, and his staff have been subjected to threats and intimidation. These are all under police investigation.
- We appreciate the frustration that you (and we) feel regarding the time taken by the contractor to complete the project. We have been doing everything we can to try to get the contractor to complete the project as quickly as possible.
- The current situation is that all the cabling and boxes have been installed ready for the 49 lighting bollards to be fitted (this week and next). The electricity supply cabinet has been rendered and painted with meter installation due on 21st December. In addition the groundworks are completed for the installation of the new section of handrail which is planned to be installed week commencing 19th December.

Estate

- Following an inspection of the cricket pavilion after handover from Netherne Cricket Club, we identified an extensive schedule of both interior and exterior works that need to be done. We have appointed a contractor to deal with these.
- We have considered a proposal to run a coffee shop in the pavilion. The proposer is considering this further and we hope that they decide to make a go of this, starting next year.
- In October, we undertook a village wide consultation which consisted of a vote on two options, one that would restrict the number of dogs being walked (by one person) to 4 at a time, whilst the other would keep the current status quo. A total of 114 votes were cast with 102 (89%) choosing the option to limit any individual dog walker to 4 dogs.

There were however very strong views held by a number of people on all sides of the debate and we have met with individuals who expressed a desire to meet with the Board about this issue (and are continuing to do so). We are endeavouring to listen to the views of villagers and will continue to keep this matter under close review as we go into 2017.

Netherne Community Bus

The Netherne Community Bus is not funded by the service charge budget and is entirely reliant on fare income from passengers. The Bus Company is a separate company from NML, but has the same Board of Directors. We include it in our updates as we know many Netherne commuters rely on this valuable service.

One of our passengers wrote to us recently: *"I have been using the Netherne bus for the past couple of years and I must congratulate you on a first class service. Not only does the bus run on time, the drivers are always very friendly and go out of their way to be helpful, especially when train services are disrupted. If only the same could be said of Southern Rail! Please pass on a big thank you to all involved. Keep up the great work"*.

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Managing the bus service, which has been going for nearly 5 years, has been a large voluntary time commitment for the directors. We took the decision this year to start paying ESRT to carry out some of the administrative duties involved with running the bus service. This will mean increased costs. Other costs have also been increasing this year, such as servicing and maintenance.

It is safe to say that the strike problems at Southern rail this year have been detrimental to the Netherne Bus, as our passenger numbers (and hence revenues) are down. As you know, we are looking to purchase a replacement bus in the next year or two, and we need to build up the Bus Company funds in order to be able to afford to do so. Given the increased costs, and reduced revenues, we are having to consider another ticket price increase next year. The ticket price review will include a review of the subsidised child fare, which is currently only 50 pence a journey.

NML Directors

Being a director of NML is a very responsible, varied and time consuming role. However all Directors volunteer for the role of running the Company and making the village a better place to live, and we are not paid for the work we do. It is also rare to receive any thanks for the work we do (but we welcome all feedback)! If anyone is interested in joining the Board, please arrange to have a chat with one of us.

We hope you have found this to be an informative update. 2016 has been another busy year for NML, which can only be summarised in a short newsletter.

The Annual General Meeting of Netherne Management Limited is likely to take place in April 2017, in the village hall, date to be advised. The Directors hope that many of you will be able to attend the AGM, when we give further details about our achievements during 2016 and our plans for 2017 and beyond.

Wishing you seasons greetings and a happy New Year.

The Directors of Netherne Management Limited:

Steven Buczek Jo Robins Robert Murdoch Nikki Le Cluse Rajen Shah Lee Sheldon