

IWRA Notes

Meeting 24th September 24 and General Update

Many thanks to those who managed to attend and to those who sent questions and information. Apologies to anyone stuck at the gate, I hope everyone got in eventually.

I also want to quickly thank those who are putting pressure on Rendall and Rittner directly like Martin on the electricity, Paul on the Antron account and others, I am sure. Do keep this up but if you can keep us in the loop and we will assist if required.

It was discussed that Teresa, Martin and I had met with R&R & St G, and an action log was set up to ensure tasks were completed and information received. There was also a call with the new MP Ben Coleman.

I can therefore report the following to you which I apologise for the length of, but I have tried to give you a good overview from my personal perspective which I hope remains unbiased. Our conversation with R&R relating to the reduction of the service charges continues in earnest and I would hope to be able to give you a full update on that in my next update.

Section 106

Which you may hear often, relates to the terms of lease between the council and St George at the time of purchase some 20 years ago. The world has moved on but this agreement seems unchangeable, and in part is not fit for purpose.

- The 3 areas of parkland - the main park, sensory gardens and the North Park - are all supposed to be dog free, which we all know does not happen. It is also almost impossible to police effectively with 4 entrances to the main park alone which is also open to the public. The cost to achieve this would be staggering.
- The car park cannot be sectioned off so that only leaseholders are allowed their own secure area.

Section 106, not unlike a section 20, seems to be used whenever R&R or St G need something to hide behind. However it is something we should probably ask the council to seriously review, it will not be easy and may have costs involved but it would bring clarity and benefits to some areas.

- For instance, if we could put a camera entry system on the sensory garden, we could at least have a dog free zone for those who would like it and leave plenty of space for the dogs to be walked. It would be nice to do this on North Park too which is very pretty but there is so much dog poo it's not a nice place to sit. And please do remember I love dogs!

Restaurants

The health and safety aspects of the Lebanese restaurant was reported to the MP and further information has now been given to him to follow up with the council and environmental health. Currently St G are in litigation with them regarding on various issues including grease in the drains, noise and exceeding hours. They have not yet begun legal action regarding the outdoor seating which is also in breach of the lease. Whilst it does bring some ambience to the boulevard the noise effects apartments and the signage is rather cheap.

The owners of the restaurant were also spoken to and given 14 days to clean the pavement outside. I cannot see this has been done and I will follow up. The R&R machine has been round but has little or no effect.

The Chinese restaurant have removed the worst of the tables out front; they are apparently awaiting replacements. They have requested an outdoor building to match the Lebanese, but this has not been approved by ST G.

Dogs

Reports have been made to the police regarding the two XL bullies which appear sometime to be off the lead and not muzzled. They may be the nicest dogs in the world, but this is illegal and causes some people a lot of stress. If you see them, please report to the police and get a crime number, pls give this to Ryan. Apparently, they live in the housing association property and R&R have no jurisdiction

Concierge and Security

At a cost of over £900k per year this obviously adds heavily to our service charge account. I think that most of us would not want to lose this service however there are many complaints, not only about cost but also about attitude and efficiency, which need to be addressed. We have asked R&R to review these costs and expect to sit down with them in the next week to see the figures. There has been concern that R&R use their own temporary agency for absences, they have explained that whilst it does cost a little more, it does ensure that the staff provided are fully trained and can provide the service required. I believe Martin has suggested a figure of approx. 6% more. However, we are awaiting a complete analysis of the figures and will come back to you on this asap. It is a priority as it is such a large amount.

R&R have assured us that all staff will be advised of the required attitude when dealing with leaseholders. Please however do remember they deserve the same courtesy. I know it can be infuriating when they can't find a parcel but if you go look behind the screen you will understand why. The area is not really fit for purpose, built in the days before we all ordered everything online and far too small.

Landscaping

Following our complaints a further walk of the development shows significant improvements. New mulch, weeding and dead heading have really made a difference. It's not 100% but its better but I will inspect again mid-October.

During the walk I learnt quite a lot about the current company SJM. They have been here from the beginning. Tom's mother designed the gardens, and his father installed them, so they know it well. However, some of the priorities he mentioned did not make sense and I told him that the areas that residents view are the most important. Particularly the main entrance and Boulevard where people first enter the development. It's always nice to come home to a well-kept development, and If you are trying to sell or rent this is the first impression that people receive so important.

I discussed with SJM the problem with the box hedging <https://www.rhs.org.uk/biodiversity/box-tree-caterpillar> which seems to be a plague and affecting the area. They originally sprayed with an insecticide but due to residents' concerns moved to a non-pesticide spray. This is sadly not proving effective and takes 4 times longer to apply.

Currently we can try and save most of the hedging and avoid replacement costs, but this would mean returning to the pesticide. It works immediately, it only needs to be done three times a year, and whilst I appreciate it is not ideal, I believe we must consider. The replacement hedging in Battersea Reach cost £300k which is a cost we need to avoid especially while we have other priorities.

I will set up a vote to ask opinions.

- e.g. Can animals be kept inside for 2 hours during spraying for instance?

In the meantime, I have asked them to research Biological Parasitoids which may work. A test will be made in an area of the park.

If we do need to replace - and this is likely on the circle around the main fountain - a quote will be given for this in next year's tender. A hedging called Prunus Sofia will be used - there is some in the Courtyard if anyone would like to see it. Evergreen and hardy, the moths do not like.

Next year's contract has been put to 5 companies to tender which must include a red/amber/green of garden requirements from their perspective. We should have sight of this by the end of the month.

The tree cutting over by the station is very disappointing. St George have added string lights which have caused the gardeners a lot of problems. We are talking to R&R regarding how this will be remedied, to St George regarding additional cost and who is paying.

I also noticed the state of the decking in the 3 courtyards of Lensbury. The first one is to be refurbished and the 3rd one (closest to the park is to be replaced.

Car Park

We seem to all agree that there are many complaints about the car park.

Teresa and I met with St George a few weeks ago and Petra Owen came back with the following

As discussed during our meeting, I have reviewed the current security arrangements and considered how the current security measures could be enhanced.

The Carpark Staff undertake regular inspections within the carpark, minimum of 3 times per day. There is one carpark officer on the shift at night, with one officer and a manager during the working days. The team monitor the CCTV throughout the carpark and should they spot a theft occurring, they would immediately contact the relevant authority. Please note that we would not be asking them to intervene as the individuals committing a crime could potentially inflict grievous bodily harm and therefore we would not ask any member of staff to put themselves in danger. Instead, they are to contact the relevant authority immediately as the safety of our team is a priority.

During our walkaround we have identified a number of areas where further security measures could be implemented and have agreed to take the following actions in order to enhance the security. As a result we have agreed the following actions:

- *Installation of additional CCTV cameras to cover the fire exit escape routes that are currently not monitored.*
- *Installation of motion detected bright lighting within a number of the fire exit escapes*
- *Installation of door closers on the fire exit doors that are currently missing them*
- *Implementation of an audio system in the car park, connected to the car park office to allow the member of staff on duty to make an announcement. This would act as deterrent for any criminal activity already taking place as they will be able to inform them that police are on their way and that they are viewed by CCTV.*
- *We have also identified a number of fire exit doors which are currently not closing and adjustments are required, Parking Partners are arranging for their contractor to address these.*

Parking Partners are currently obtaining quotations for the above and we will be installing these as soon as we can. Once I have more information on lead times I will let you know.

*It must be noted that the carpark is a public carpark which can be entered by anyone wishing to park within the area. **The carpark (or any parts of it) cannot be changed to a private carpark,***

nor can we introduce gated off areas, as this is stipulated in the planning documents and we must offer parking spaces to the members of public as well as residents of Imperial Wharf. It is therefore not possible to only allow authorised vehicles to enter the carpark, as vehicles who do not have a permit gain entry by obtaining a ticket from the barriers.

Following our meeting I have written to Petra....

Many thanks for your email and the follow up conversation, forgive the delay in my response but we needed to report back. Our resident's association met this week, and I can truthfully say the car park was something that many people wanted to talk about. Forgive the bullet points that follow I am just trying to make these questions as easy to answer as possible.

Whilst the below suggestions were obviously a good starting point the subject of a barrier/gate was a must do for many people. As I mentioned to you during our call, a shutter or barrier would deter many people. The time taken for it to open, whether going in or out, would certainly make anyone considering wrongdoing think twice about their ability to escape. As I understand it most car parks in London now have this feature to prevent theft and it is important that our residents' properties have the necessary protection. Indeed even the residents themselves, as I mentioned I feel quite vulnerable down there at times, and I consider myself reasonably ruffy tufty!. I also understand that PPL recommended this to St George, but they refused to go ahead.
- please could this be revisited

We discussed the possibility of a sensor on the exit door cameras to alert the people on duty that a door had been opened/remained open.

We discussed more patrols from staff without, of course, putting any of them in danger.

The matter of cost is also of great concern.

- Why is it not possible for most residents to have a reduced cost? It is not as though there is an option to street park.*
- Why is it that some residents do have a ludicrously low cost? How can this be fair?*
- I` s it not possible to increase the daily visitor tariff particularly for commercial vehicle's*

Electric chargers are insufficient and having visited the lower floor I would ask

- why St George have so many charging points and who pays for the electricity used*
- who paid for the fitting of these.*
- why is there no disabled electric charging bay available*
- what is the plan to provide better facilities for electric car's*

The size of parking spaces was also questioned with residents complaining of damage to their cars. I appreciate that cars have got bigger, but I do not think this is helped by the number of large commercial vehicles that enter the car park, which should be made to park in a separate area. Whilst I appreciate your reference to the original 106 agreement, I feel that this is one of many instances where it is no longer fit for purpose, and it must be readdressed with the local authority. For instance, having imposed so many restrictions and costs on motorists entering London IW is a perfect parking place for many day visitors but it does impact residents. I do not believe that was the original intention. To have specified areas would not impact on most visitors, and yet for residents it would make a difference.

I am still waiting for information on the below which I would like to receive before our next meeting.

- the breakdown of the electricity costs charged to the service charge account.*
- breakdown of car park users' residents owned and permit, other permit holders, public.*

I have also written to Rendall and Rittner to ask for information relating to the fire hazards of electric cars in underground car parks and what the fire brigades' position is on this.

Airbnb

Another very difficult subject which effects some leaseholders directly and causes them much stress, and yet for others helps with the cost of the service charges.

However, subletting on a short-term basis is against the terms of everyone's lease. R&R try to be active in stopping this, but the action required is long and there are no short cuts.

Please consider your neighbours before entering into a short term let.

Fire Door Inspection

Thanks to the information Martin supplied to me and questions from many I am in the process of reviewing this. I will report back to you within the next few days in order that we can all be clear of what is required, costs and how to ensure that this makes us all safer in our homes.

One thing that has become apparent is that the contact details held by Rendall & Ritner are way out of date. Please be so kind as to check with them that your email and telephone number are correct in order that they can contact you in an emergency.

Next meeting will be 17th October - we are going to trial a zoom (and in person at Wharf Rooms) so that everyone can try and join, I am not sur how it will go but lets give it a try! Thank you to Lawrence for offering to help.

I hope that I have covered most points but as always please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Kindest regards to you all

Sue

