



Ouse Lea Limited

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April 2018 Newsletter

Newsletter Thankfully the winter is behind us now and we can all look forward to spring and summer. Our salt spreader was brought into action during the very cold weather at the beginning of March. The spreader was purchased for the estate in November 2013 and has stood idle since then, so in some ways it was nice to see it being used for the purpose it was bought for. The cold snap forced us to spend some money on the snow clearing efforts. We have not had the invoice yet for how much it has cost this year clearing the snow from the paths and drive but it will be approximately £200. The last time we spent money for this purpose was back in 2011, so we have got off lightly since then. We also purchased 4 x 20kg bags of rock salt at a cost of £17, but this was soon used up and we had to rely on the gardeners bringing in extra supplies. Our thanks to all those residents contacted us to express their appreciation for the snow clearing work.

Hopefully the bad weather is behind us now and we can look forward to some lovely warm days.

Lease extension Not much has happened to report since the last newsletter. The solicitor working on behalf of Ouse Lea Ltd is still in negotiations with JRHT solicitors. Hopefully all those involved will have responded to the request for a part payment towards JRHT legal costs. Once JRHT have received this part payment they will initiate their own valuation. This is similar to the one we did ourselves at the beginning of this process. They will then compare their valuation with our valuation and hopefully come up with an offer figure, which hopefully will be very near to the original valuations.

Gardening To ensure residents receive the best value for money from their service charge contributions, the Committee have spent time considering the renewal of the gardening contract. Our present gardener submitted a three year fixed price quotation, but we also offered two other gardeners to quote for the contract. The Homestead gardening team and Linton Woods Landscapes (formally Deans Landscaping) were the other gardeners who were given the opportunity to quote for the contract. Unfortunately neither Linton Woods or The Homestead Park met the deadline for submitting their quotes and as a result of this, the contract was offered to the present gardening team.

Noel and his team are now going into their fourth year on Ouse Lea and although the last three years have not been without their problems, the Committee have every confidence in Noel and his team for the next three years. A great deal of work was carried out over the winter months on clearing out the overgrown borders and the removal of all the ivy. We actually filled three large skips full of ivy and old shrubbery, not including a great deal of rubbish the gardener himself removed. The gardeners were working to the extensive gardening review work carried out by Adrian Anderson. Now that the bulk of this work is out of the way hopefully the gardeners can concentrate on the getting the grass to our standards required over the main cutting season.

Adrian has been busy planting a new tree to replace the horse chestnut tree we cut down last year. The tree is a liquidambar, which is known to be resistant to the honey fungus, which was the problem with the horse chestnut.

Children's play area equipment We are pleased to announce the playhouse is now fully completed and ready for the children's use. The budget for the playhouse went over budget after a risk assessment highlighted a potential danger for children. You can read more details about this project in the Committee report you will be receiving soon along with the AGM paperwork.

Unfortunately one evening at about 10pm the playhouse attracted some youths onto the estate and into the playhouse. The youths were removed by a brave Committee member and nothing untoward was found inside the playhouse but this incident did make us worry about security and attracting the wrong types onto the estate. With this in mind we have had to take the decision to lock the playhouse up. We have fitted a combination lock with the code **3614**. Could we please ask parents of those children who use the playhouse to ensure that it is locked after use. We have also now got the area covered by a CCTV camera but the only problem with this is the fact that the area of the playhouse is very dark at night and the camera is not night vision enabled.

Drive block chicane The Committee are still considering the option of installing two chicanes on the main drive between numbers 33 and 39. The option of installing road cushions across the chicanes is also an option up for consideration. The final decision on this will be taken at the AGM in May where there will be a short presentation to help you understand what is proposed along with the costs. If you cannot attend the AGM please use your proxy vote for this important decision.

Data protection Act Major changes to the Data Protection Act came into effect during March. The changes required organisations and companies holding information electronically on individuals must have the written authorisation from the individual. We are at the moment checking this out to our own situation but it will require you in the future to give written authorisation for Ouse Lea Ltd to send you communications such as newsletters and any other correspondence by email.

Driveway mirror I am sure you will have all noticed the mirror situated on the first corner of the main driveway. The mirror has been installed in a bid to improve road safety on the estate.

Storeroom refurbishment The refurbishment of the storeroom is now almost complete. The refurbishment involved the removal of all the asbestos material and improving the toilet facilities. Initially the room will be used as a gardener's rest room but the Committee is considering other options that the room could be utilised for. The cost of the work did come in over budget by £300 due to extra work being carried out on the floor

New fencing at the raised beds. The lap fencing surrounding the raised beds area was starting to fall over so the Committee took the decision to replace the fencing. We fully expected JRHT to contribute to the cost but when we approached them they informed us that according to the lease the fence was our responsibility. This means that Ouse Lea has had to bear the full cost of this work at a cost of £1.2k.

Ray Parkinson Sadly I have to report that Ray Parkinson of No20 has left the estate for a nursing home. He lived on the estate for many years. Ray lost his wife Margaret about four years ago and since then his health has deteriorated to the point where he could no longer look after himself. He is a very modest man and a total gentleman. He is 91 years old and among many other things he flew Spitfires during the Second World War. I am sure that you will join with me and wish him all the best for the future. Ray's flat will be going up for sale at some time in the future but for the time being his family have decided to keep it.

AGM Due to the availability of Committee members we have had to change the date of the AGM from April to May. The new date is now **Wednesday 23rd May**. You will all be receiving the official paperwork approximately four weeks before the meeting. Please try and attend the meeting as it is your opportunity to influence policy on the estate and to take part in important decisions. If you are unable to attend the meeting you will have the option of providing a proxy vote through one of the other shareholders.

Garages 60-80 The Committee are always receiving complaints regarding the general state of the 14 garages at the bottom end of the estate. One of our resident's kindly power-washed all the garage doors recently, some of which had never been cleaned for many years. The wooden fascia boards, which are your own responsibility are now once again in need of painting. The estate is prepared to have this painting carried out unless you have any objections, but there will be a charge of approximately £20. Please let us know as soon as you can if you prefer to carry out this work yourself, otherwise we will assume you have no objections.

Vandalism & estate security After receiving several complaints regarding the proposal to block off the pedestrian access to the front of the flats, the Committee have decided to drop the idea. The idea of blocking the access was to make it harder for undesirables to enter and leave the estate. Over the years we have had several car incidents in the car park to the front of the flats. We have installed a floodlight for the car park, which will hopefully improve this area during the hours of darkness.

Charging points for electric cars With the prospect of us all changing over to electric vehicles in the not too distant future, the Committee have decided to explore options of installing communal charging points on the estate. The importance of ensuring all residents have an option of charging an electric vehicle on the estate is something the Committee feel should be available to all, especially those residents who live in the flats. The government do offer grants to companies and organisations towards the installation costs of these charging units, and we will be checking this out to see if Ouse Lea qualifies.

Bottom end car parks The Committee over the years have received several complaints about the condition of the lower end car park. The car park flood after periods of rain and the surface is now totally unacceptable. After much debate the Committee have decided to address this problem by totally resurfacing the car park. The Committee considered several options for the surface, including block paving and tarmac but finally decided to go for a tarmac surface. We are still in the process of obtaining quotations for this work but we have set aside the sum of £12k for the work. This work is expensive due to the fact that we will have to lift all the existing Grasscrete, which needs to be dug out and another six-inch sub base installed ready for the tarmac. The work would also involve installing a new drain, which will add to the final costs of the project. Assuming we get the go ahead for the project at the AGM our aim is to get the work done before next winter and the problems that winter brings with it.

Fire Risk Assessment Following on from the Grenfell Tower incident, our insurance underwriters requested an independent audit of our own Risk and Fire Risk assessments. The assessment was carried out on March 16th 2018 and covered all aspects of our insurance cover including play ground equipment, asbestos surveys and compliance with fire regulations relating to multi occupancy buildings. The assessment team included Paul Heritage (No1) Patricia Williams (No 8) Hazel Crosby (No 37) and Kath Lillie the insurance assessor. The Assessor was very impressed with the detailed content of our own fire risk assessment. During the assessment the Assessor photographed all our under stairs meter cupboards, drying rooms and communal areas. We are still awaiting the full report from this assessment but the Assessor commented that she was highly impressed with the standard of all of the facilities she visited and photographed, and the overall management of the estate. One area where we will have to act on, are the first and top floor landings where the gap between the bottom balustrade rail and the floor is too wide. We will be fitting an extra rail in this gap as a short-term measure, but in the longer term, the plan will be to replace all the existing wooden stair rails with metal.

Island car park The Committee wish they had the funds to do with this car park what they are doing with the lower end car park but unfortunately they do not. For the time being and until the funds are available our aim is to maintain this surface using gravel. We have found that by using 20mm gravel the surface is much more stable and less likely to move. We have recently placed five tonnes of 20mm gravel in parts of the car park and the feedback from residents has been very positive.

New Residents Since the last newsletter No31 and No 5 have been sold. The new owners of No31 are Peter and Deborah Doherty and the new owner of No 5 is Bethany Cross. On behalf of all Ouse Lea residents and the Management Committee, we would like to wish them all the very best in their new homes.

Bungalows and ground floor flats We have lots of requests both from existing residents and outsiders enquiring about the availability of bungalows and ground floor flats. If any bungalow or ground floor flat owner is considering moving in the near future, then please get in touch and we could save you a great deal of expense on estate agent fees.

Selling your property If anybody is tempted to place their own property on the market, can we please remind you that you **MUST** inform Charlie Wells (No 60) as soon as it goes onto the market and that all outstanding debts against the property **MUST** be cleared before the sale. Failure to clear any outstanding debt will only delay the sale of the property. Also, to remember to inform the Estate Agent of the rule that there is **STRICTLY NO LETTING OR ANIMALS/PETS ALLOWED ON THE OUSE LEA ESTATE**, as we still get calls from estate agents asking these questions.

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