

RIVERMEAD COURT

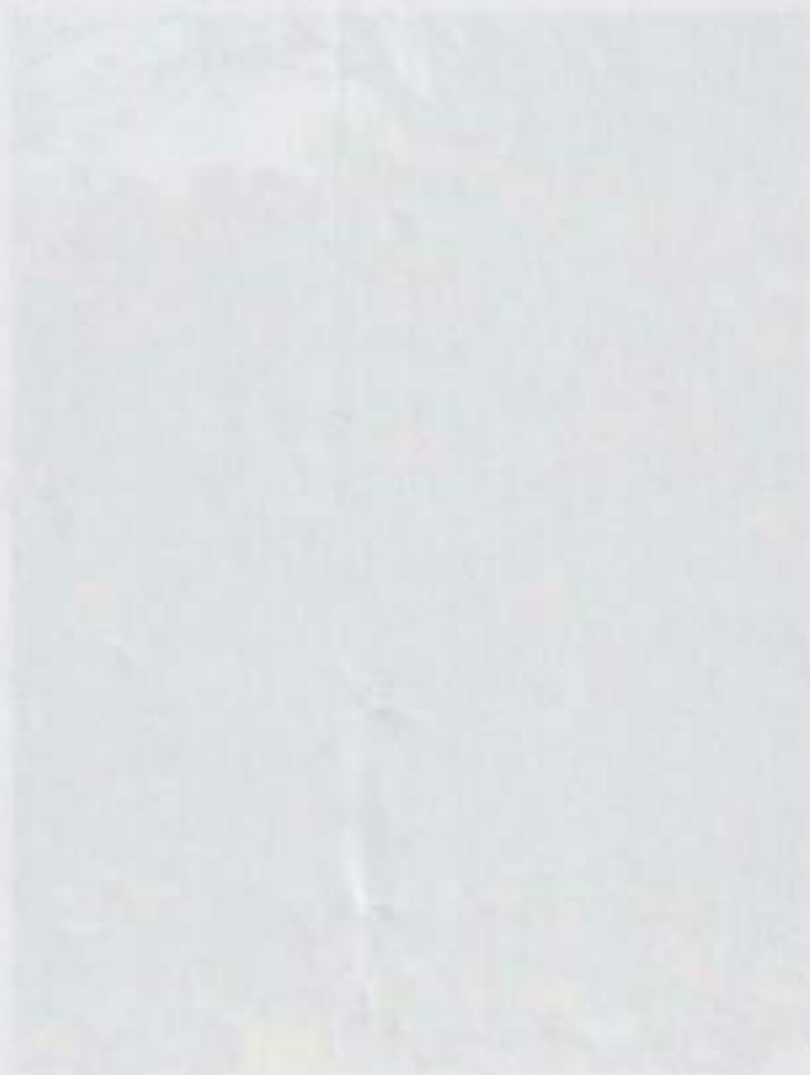
NEWSLETTER



Autumn 2017

RIVERMEAD COURT

NEWSLETTER



Newsletter editor: Fiona Fowler, flat 69, fionafowler31@gmail.com

Letter from the Chairman

Board Minutes do not usually betray emotions such as hope, doubt, scepticism or optimism and those recording the decision in early 1998 to employ Jack Tofield are no exception. Yet following its previous experience the then Rivermead Court Board would have been justified in manifesting these feelings, even if they were not documented. Jack's immediate predecessor had died at work while the previous House Manager had to be dismissed. So the Board welcomed his arrival with hope and doubt in equal measures. It was therefore Jack's task to dispel the doubt and replace it with confidence. Jack came to Rivermead, having previously established a track record of looking after other properties managed by Wood Management, Rivermead Court's then managing agents. Prior to that, Jack had managed pubs, a unique vantage point to observe humanity's strengths and weaknesses and deal with them both!

If you were to ask Jack what is the essential and prime quality needed for his job, he would reply that it's "Getting on with People". And that's quite a tall order in the Rivermead context, "People" covers, residents – a community of roughly 500 souls, staff – a far smaller team of roughly a dozen, tradesmen and builders – a floating population, who aren't used to taking "No" for an answer and finally numerous carers and visitors to be treated with courtesy and firmness. That the material needs of residents have been dealt with quickly and quietly, that the staff team has an average length of service of over twelve years, that the disturbance caused by flat refurbishment has, with few exceptions, remained tolerable and that Rivermead is one of the securest places in West London show that Jack has been able to keep matters in hand over nearly two decades.

After surviving two chairmen, Louis Manson and David Tatham, and inheriting a third, myself, Jack decided in August this year to retire as from end-January 2018 when he will have completed nearly 20 years as our House-Manager. Like many of us at Rivermead, he felt that he wanted to enjoy life while he had the health and energy to do so. He also wanted to be more available to care for his elderly mother. With great regret, the Board has accepted his decision, leaving us with the unwelcome challenge of finding his successor. While it may be possible to find someone with experience and technical qualifications, we'll be hard put to find someone with Jack's blend of patience, warmth, tolerance and essential firmness.

Two other developments have arisen recently of which residents should be aware.

At the end of March, the Board was informed that Faraday Property Management Ltd (FPM), Rivermead Court's managing agents, had been acquired by the HML Group, a larger property management group. The Board was assured that *"all of the existing FPM management team and staff remain with (its) business and... will continue to operate as normal from (its) offices in Holborn..... this change in share ownership will not affect the continuity of service. In particular, staff, office location and service provision, as well as contact details, will remain exactly as they are"*. The four principals of FPM who founded the firm in 2006, two of whom, Ian Gilbert and Graeme Elkington, are familiar to Rivermead residents, will remain with FPM. At the Board meeting on 30th June, the Board met Robert Plumb, Chief Executive of HML Group, FPM's new owners, to convey concerns arising from the acquisition and to obtain reassurances on service quality and continuity.

As a consequence of Jack Tofield's decision to take well-earned retirement from 1st February next year, the Board has begun to look for his successor. To advise the Board, Michael Page Group, the executive search firm, has been retained after an ad-hoc Board sub-committee interviewed three firms. The sub-committee (Tom Hackett, Richard Pollitzer, Deborah Richards and Michael Stevens) will review applications for the short-list of candidates. To take into consideration the new challenges (pipework renewal, potentially more stringent regulations, the changes to our managing agents etc.), the job and person specification has been re-defined and the post has been re-denominated as "Estates Manager". The aim is to appoint Jack Tofield's successor by the next Board meeting on 5th December so that there will be a possibility for a smooth hand-over before Jack retires.

Tom Hackett

Christmas Carols



The annual carol singing will take place on Tuesday 12 December at 6 pm
in the garden in front of the Christmas tree.
Everyone is welcome including friends and family and especially children.
Mulled wine, soft drinks, mince pies and sausages will be served.

There will be a collection for charity.

The tree is kindly provided by Vanessa Lowndes.

The Garden

The annual audit of the trees has produced the unfortunate news that one of the cherry trees which grow in the holly hedge facing on to Ranelagh Gardens has developed honey fungus and will have to be removed. Whilst this news is no doubt welcome to the owners of any cars parked beneath it, the result will be that in future we will present a rather lopsided view to the passing public.

Additions to the garden in the past few month include: new faux-lead tubs around the Centre Block, a new table, chairs, and a bench in the Secret Garden (kindly presented by Mrs. Sheila Banks who has recently moved in to the Centre Block), new metal arches in the Secret Garden, and a new bench against the Hurlingham Club boundary which has been kindly donated by Mrs. Rowson in memory of her late husband, John.

James Sheen Gardening Company, our new gardening team, have made a noticeable impact on the appearance of the garden. One of their contributions is the trellis which has been affixed to the garage walls facing the East Block as well as training wires on the West Block garage walls. Up these will be trained an evergreen shrub called Trachelospernum.

Sadly our box hedge plants have, as last year, proved a great attraction for hordes of box tree caterpillars.

We hope that residents are making full use of the herbs in the Secret Garden but how about a little watering after picking? Apparently we are not alone in London in having trouble getting parsley to grow in abundance.

Finally we have acquired a fine growth of an attractive fungus around the roots of the tree that grew by the gate into the Secret Garden and which was felled last year (see photo).



David Tatham, Garden Committee

Water Hygiene

Our continuing and now well-established procedures are keeping the whole of our common pipework system to a high level of water hygiene. We are not alone in needing to be vigilant, Legionella and other bacteria are present at low levels in all public water supplies; and the bacteria can multiply in the right conditions.

Congratulations, therefore, to all those whose taps and showers were sampled in the last few months and returned satisfactory results. These overall excellent results continue to be marred by occasional samples from individual flats revealing hazardous levels of Legionella. We investigate all such cases and overwhelmingly the problem is associated with a failure to flush regularly, especially showers with a flexible hose, which can be a veritable 'breeding ground'. Our technicians regularly hear the comment – 'but we don't use that bathroom or basin'. Precisely! It is those rarely used outlets that present the greatest hazard. And remember a bacterial infection will migrate back into the shared system, spreading the risk.



So please flush every tap and shower in your flat at least once a week for a couple of minutes. And, if you going to be away, please ask the porters to do it for you. It is for your own safety and that of other residents.

Pipework Project

Work on the project continues. Seven HIUs have now been successfully installed on the existing infrastructure, of which four are operational. Two more are at an advanced stage of planning and more are being considered. We have approached specialist consulting engineers to produce for us a detailed design of the new system and oversee the works. We are just entering contract negotiations to agree a fee. A focus group has been formed to reflect leaseholder interests in the project and met for the first time this month.

Heated Towel Rails

As a result of the hot water works on 17 October, some residents have experienced an air lock in their bathroom towel rails. This is manifested by the top of the rail being cooler than the bottom. It is important to our water hygiene that all towel rails are fully hot. If yours is not, and you do not know how to bleed the rail, please contact the porters and they will arrange for someone to do it for you.

The Pipework Focus Group

At the last Rivermead Court AGM, Tim Soane told the meeting about the state of planning for upgrading Rivermead Court pipework and heating, and mentioned that the Board would be asking for a small group to make themselves available to reflect the interests of Rivermead leaseholders and to act on their behalf.

This group would be entitled to obtain its own independent legal and other professional advice to be paid for by Rivermead Court. The Focus Group is not meant to impede individuals' own access to Board members or to block any queries they may have. Its purpose is to obtain advice that can be shared with all leaseholders who may have concerns. This group would undertake to put any points requiring legal advice to solicitors, saving individuals the cost of doing so themselves and of duplicating the advice that others may already have obtained.

The following have volunteered:

Annabel Barks 144 RC, 020 7610 6550
Patrick Hanratty 169 RC, 020 7731 5540
Julian & Jane Thompson 42 RC, 020 7736 1443



Fire Safety

Communal Alarm

A new wireless fire alarm system has been installed in the common areas, including the lift motor rooms and lift shafts. There will be a weekly schedule of testing, which will trigger the alarm in each block at a set time every week. Notification of the testing times and procedures will be issued shortly.

There has been some feedback that the alarm is not loud enough as it is difficult to hear it within the flats and it has been suggested that the system should be extended into residents' flats. A decision on this has been postponed until the system has been fully tested.

Individual Alarms

At present current building regulations, housing acts and landlord regulations require flats to be installed with a means of fire detection and alarm, especially where a flat is let or shared. The internal flat fire detection and alarm is normally a separate stand-alone system to provide occupiers warning so as to get out of their flats. The standard for our type of block is for a standalone mains operated smoke alarm with rechargeable battery backup smoke detectors and sounders, and is recommended that the sound level at the bed head is 75dBA.

All flats that have carried out refurbishment works requiring Local Authority Building Control approval will have such alarms installed but it is advisable for all flats to have smoke alarms fitted. The Fire Brigade offers advice on Smoke Alarms <http://www.london-fire.gov.uk/SmokeAlarms.asp>.

Net Curtains, Corridors and Emergency Lights

Earlier this year, the local Fire Officer re-visited Rivermead. On the whole, the Fire Officer gave the estate a clean bill of health with a couple of provisos (taking into account also the planned works on the fire alert system). One was the need to replace the existing curtains on the windows in the common parts with curtains made of fire-resistant material (these are soon to be hung) and the other was that all objects (tables, chairs, umbrella stands etc) including door-mats should be removed from common parts. Faraday are hoping to obtain some flexibility on this question but we don't want to raise false expectations.

The Fire Officer also requested our emergency lighting be extended in the internal corridors and on the rear stairs landings. This will be carried out as part of the 2018 common parts redecorations and may also extend to the basement stores and basement areas.

Please

If you have mobility problems and would not be able to walk down the stairs if there was a fire or if you are hard of hearing and might not hear the fire alarm, please ensure the porters know that you will need help if there was an emergency. If you are deaf tell your neighbours too.

A Reminder: what to do in the case of a fire at Rivermead Court

If there is a fire inside your flat:

- Do not try to tackle it yourself.
- Get everyone out, do not waste time taking your belongings, close the doors and windows behind you.
- Walk calmly out of the building using either the main staircase or the fire escape stairs.
- Do not use the lifts.
- Check doors with the back of your hand. If a door is warm, don't open it as it means the fire is on the other side.
- If there is a lot of smoke, crawl along the floor as the air is cleaner.
- Once you've got everyone out of the building, call 999 from any phone. Give the operator your name and address.
- Don't go back into the building for anything. If there is still someone inside, tell firefighters when they arrive – they will be able to find the person quicker and more safely than you.

If there is a fire somewhere else in the building but you are not being directly affected by heat or smoke:

- Stay put, call 999 and listen to advice from the operator. It is also essential that you alert the Porters.

When the Fire Brigade arrive the Porters will give them a list of all residents who are not able to evacuate the building and these residents will be rescued if the fire is in the location of their flats.

Where to go

The mustering point for all residents in the case of fire is the lawn in front of the Centre Block. This ensures that the roadways are free for all emergency vehicles

Notice Board

Garage Rental Prices

There are anomalies in the annual rents currently being charged for garages and it is planned to rationalise them. The new charges will be:

Large Garages - £900

Other Garages- £750

Residents with garages will be informed about the changes by the end of October and the new charges will be implemented in the December Service Charge bill.

Please shut the door!

The door from the basement to the garages behind the West Block is constantly being left open and fastened back. This is a breach of security. Please could builders, porters and residents remember to keep this door locked.

Lightwells

The start date for abscilers to clean the lightwells has been postponed. The work will include cleaning the window frames and glass, the brick ledges and cills but not the painted brickwork generally. They will also repair leaking pipe joints and remove rust spots.

CCTV cameras

New and improved cameras have been installed. The camera locations stay the same either on the sides of the buildings or on posts at strategic points but the rotational cameras have been replaced and now connect directly to a new recorder. They provide higher definition pictures, particularly at night when the old cameras were poor.

Insurance

Please remember that only the structure and fabric of the building is insured by Rivermead Court Ltd. You need to have personal contents insurance to cover your own belongings.

Moths

Microbee, a pest control contractor treats the communal areas, both basements and hallways, but you need to rid your own flats of the moths too. Technical advisory sheets can be sent from Faraday or found in the Porters Lodge.

Residents were invited to take part in a survey with bait strips to see how many flats are affected as treating the communal areas may not be effective if there is untreated activity in other parts on the buildings. The survey results showed moth activity in a number of flats although there was no pattern.

Responsibility for Contractors

A reminder that leaseholders are responsible for their contractors and must make sure they are keeping to the working times, are using the rear entrances, are leaving all communal areas clean and tidy and are aware of the parking restrictions.

Garages and Store Rooms

There is one garage available to rent.

There are no store rooms available but some are more being created in the West block at the moment.

Visitor Parking

Hammersmith & Fulham operate a Smart Visitor Parking scheme. This allows you to pay for your visitor to park on the street at a cheaper rate than the normal pay and display price and any limited stay-time for pay and display parking does not apply. When your visitor arrives, you activate the permit online or by phone, then place it in their vehicle. It acts rather like an Oyster card – you top up your balance and then use it when you need it.

https://www.lbhf.gov.uk/sites/default/files/section_attachments/svp_booklet_24_11_15_0.pdf

Invitation to the 35th and final Asthma Christmas Fair,
27-28 November 2017, at The Harrington Club, London,
SW6 3PR



Private View - Monday 27 November 2017

5.30pm - 9pm

£15 in advance, or £20 on the door

Free parking and complimentary champagne on arrival

General Opening - Tuesday 28 November 2017

9am - 4pm

£5 entrance

£5 parking for non-members

Report from the AGM

The Rivermead Court Ltd Annual General Meeting took place on the 5 June.

The Directors' Report and the financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2016 and the report of the auditors were agreed.

Three members of the Board retired by rotation and were reelected - Peter Green, Deborah Richards and Michael Stevens. Timothy Soane was elected as a Director.

An extract for the speech of Tom Hackett, Chairman

In general, 2016 has been a quiet year for Rivermead Court in the sense that we have been spared the discussions of 2014 on the new heating project or the water hygiene difficulties of 2015. However, I hope that this won't give you the impression that the Board and Faraday have been sitting on their hands. As a Board, we have set up a more systematic process for reviewing the principal subjects for which we have responsibility. For example in matters like finance, the building fabric, the day-to-day running of the estate, we have introduced a system of twice-yearly in-depth reviews. This approach enables a more thorough examination of the matter under review and also gives time between reviews for an action point to be completed rather than be "kicked down the road" from one monthly meeting to the next.

The two main issues which will absorb a great deal of Board time over the coming 18 months are:

- (i) progress on the new heating and hot water system, and
- (ii) the extension of the existing leases which have approximately 88 years to run.

With regard to the heating and hot-water project, we have been very fortunate to recruit Tim Soane to the Board. He will lead the Board sub-committee responsible for the discussions with legal Counsel on the procedures and agreements to be established before Rivermead can go ahead with the project.

[...] The Board has responsibilities as Directors of a company. These responsibilities may differ from those representing you as leaseholders, even though as leaseholders, you are, by definition, shareholders. ... In order that you as leaseholders and residents should feel you have a vehicle for expressing your concerns on the heating project's legal dimension and at the same time the Board shouldn't need to deal with a multiplicity of voices, many of which would be expressing the same concern, the Board has approached a small group of resident leaseholders to act as a Focus Group for residents on the heating project. The Board has suggested that this group should be entitled to obtain its own independent legal and other professional advice to be paid for by Rivermead Court. [...]

The other issue the Board wishes to address is the extension of the length of existing leases. From a limited number of enquiries received, Board believes that this question will come up more frequently in the next few years and we, as a Board, need to give you concrete answers and offer reasonable solutions. As the remaining lease life reaches eighty years, certain legal complications apparently arise, although these may not be significant in a leaseholder-owned estate such as Rivermead Court. Of possibly greater significance may be the reluctance of mortgage lenders to lend on property with shorter leases, which in turn affects the marketability and therefore value of your property.

At this moment, I cannot give you clear answers on the question of the extension of lease-life. Should the lease extension be separated from the changes to the lease that will be required to enable the heating project to proceed or should we attempt a more ambitious revision of the terms of the lease, combining those unavoidable changes stemming from the heating project with a lease extension and an up-date of the lease to bring it into line with current practice in the residential property sector. The Board has formed a working group to review the position. The point I wanted to make is that the Board is aware of concerns and will be dealing with them.

An extract from the speech of Carol Ferguson, Finance Committee Chairman

I have now completed my first year as Chairman of the Finance Sub-Committee and this is the first time I have appeared before you at the AGM. I have viewed this year as an opportunity to understand the background to the accounting process. As with most companies, it is an annual cycle of preparing budgets followed by the year end preparation of the figures you have before you.

As it has all been quite new to me, I thought I would share with you what actually happens. Faraday, the managing agents, keep the books and record all the transactions, so the budgeting takes place at their offices in Holborn. Last October, 2016, our Treasurer, Peter Tiao, Henry Bagwell, a member of the Finance Committee and I met with Ian Gilbert at Faraday's offices to review last year's actual expenditure to date against that year's budget. This enabled us to estimate what the full year would look like. We then used these figures as the basis for the calculation of this year's service charge, adjusting for inflation, any known or anticipated changes to costs and any other relevant factors. During the budgeting process the emphasis is on ensuring that costs are carefully controlled to keep the service charge as low as reasonably possible.

Separately, Faraday maintains a schedule of planned capital expenditure for several years ahead. Some of these are recurring, such as exterior painting. Others are one-off in nature, such as the replacement water tanks. These are covered either by the Reserve charge or, on occasion borne by Rivermead Court Limited for which you have separate accounts.

The Service charge accounts and the Rivermead Court Limited accounts interact with each other in different degrees. However, the bottom line is that at the end of each year the expectation is that the aggregate service charge will cover all that year's budgeted revenue expenditure and the reserve charge will cover the major items over the longer-term cycle of capital expenditure.

London Taxicard

A fellow resident wonders how many Rivermead residents are aware of the ComCab London Taxi Card scheme. This offers subsidised travel in licensed taxis and private hire vehicles to London residents with serious mobility impairments or who are severely sight impaired. It enables members who have difficulty in using buses, trains and tubes to get out and about.

The scheme provides trips for social purposes, for example going shopping, visiting friends and family, and going out to events.

The scheme is paid for by the local council and Transport for London. It is administered on their behalf by London Councils, with CityFleet as the contractor providing Computer Cab Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles.

In order to be eligible for a Taxicard you should be in receipt of the Higher Rate Mobility Component of the Disability Living Allowance, have of 8 points or more for the moving around activity component of PIP (Personal Independence Payment), be registered severely sight impaired/blind or receive a War Pension Mobility Supplement. Even if this is not the case, you may still be eligible.

You can request an application form by phone, e-mail or post, using the following set of contact details: London Councils – Taxicard, 59 Southwark St, London SE1 0AL
T: 020 7934 9791, email: taxicard@londoncouncils.gov.uk



Sport

Football: Home Fixtures

Fixtures are subject to change due to TV cup competitions.

Fulham			Chelsea		
28/10/2017	Bolton Wanderers (h)	15:00	23/10/2017	Watford (h)	20:00
31/10/2017	Bristol City (h)	19:45	05/11/2017	Manchester United (h)	15:00
18/11/2017	Derby County (h)	15:00	29/11/2017	Swansea City (h)	19:45
25/11/2017	Millwall (h)	15:00	02/12/2017	Newcastle United (h)	15:00
09/12/2017	Birmingham City (h)	15:00	16/12/2017	Southampton (h)	15:00
23/12/2017	Barnsley (h)	15:00	26/12/2017	Brighton(h)	15:00
01/01/2018	Ipswich Town (h)	15:00	30/12/2017	Stoke City (h)	15:00
20/01/2018	Burton Albion (h)	15:00	13/01/2018	Leicester City (h)	15:00
03/02/2018	Nottingham Forest (h)	15:00	31/01/2018	Bournemouth (h)	19:45
17/02/2018	Aston Villa (h)	15:00	10/02/2018	West Brom (h)	15:00
24/02/2018	Wolverhampton (h)	15:00	10/03/2018	Crystal Palace (h)	15:00
06/03/2018	Sheffield United (h)	19:45	31/03/2018	Tottenham (h)	15:00
17/03/2018	Queens Park Rangers (h)	15:00	07/04/2018	West Ham United (h)	15:00
02/04/2018	Leeds United (h)	15:00	Huddersfield Town		
10/04/2018	Reading (h)	19:45	(h)		15:00
14/04/2018	Brentford (h)	15:00	21/04/2018		
28/04/2018	Sunderland (h)	15:00	05/05/2018	Liverpool (h)	15:00



Rowing

Sat 11 Nov 2017	Ranelagh Sailing Club Race	Barn Elms Reach to Chelsea Bridge
Sat 11 Nov 2017	Veterans' Fours Head of the River Race	Fulham Railway to Kew Railway Bridge
Sun 12 Nov 2017	Fuller's Head of the River Fours	Kew Railway to Fulham Railway Bridge
Thu 16 Nov 2017	Wingfield Sculls	Putney Bridge to Chiswick Bridge
		Kew Railway Bridge to Fulham Railwa
Sat 2 Dec 2017	Vesta Scullers Head of the River Race	Bridge
		Kew Railway Bridge to Fulham Railwa
Sat 10 Mar 2018	Women's Eights Head of the River Race	Bridge
		Kew Railway Bridge to Fulham Railwa
Sun 11 Mar 2018	Head of the River Race	Bridge
Mon 12 Mar 2018	Schools' Head of the River Race	Kew Railway Bridge to Putney Bridge
Sat 24 Mar 2018	Universities Boat Race	
Sat 8 Sep 2018	Great River Race	Greenwich to Twickenham

Contact details

If you have a problem and need to contact someone, please first contact the Porters Lodge - 020 7736 3993. If you need the House Manager, Jack Tofield, he can be contacted on 07711 752 906 or emailed at jack.tofield@btconnect.com. If you wish to contact a board member, please leave a note at the Porters Lodge.

Board of Directors	Staff Complement
Thomas Hackett (Chairman) Fiona Fowler (Company Secretary; House Committee; Communications) Peter Green (Estates Committee; Heating sub-committee) Tim Halford (Estates Committee; Basements) Richard Pollitzer (Investments; Parking) Deborah Richards (Board minutes; House Committee; Health and Safety) Tim Soane (Heating sub-committee; Pipework project) Michael Stevens (Heating sub-committee; Pipework project) Bernard Weatherill (Legal)	House Manager – Jack Tofield Deputy House Managers – Berhane Dejenie Terry Fowler Porters – Keith Moody, Nicholas Odei, Rony Pereira, Abel Abebe, Jozsef Kozma, Dylan Fowler Cleaners – Jaime Villapa, Malinda Fowler, Roy Moody, Robert Baxter Contract Gardener – James Sheen Gardening

Help!

We need a pianist to accompany the carols on 12 December.

Can anyone play the piano or has a friend who would be prepared to do so?

Does anyone have a keyboard that could be used?