

**Dear All**

**We hope that you are keeping safe and well.**

**This is our 2<sup>nd</sup> newsletter of 2022 which covers a number of matters relevant to Bickenhall Residents and Leaseholders.**

**BMML/BFL Boards**

#### **RESIDENTS FORUM UPDATE – 21/06/22**

##### **Major Refurbishment Project**

We welcomed Chris Stansell, Managing Director of Earl Kendrick Associates (our appointed Building Surveyors).

Some residents in the North block expressed their weariness with the presence of Contractors and the ongoing building works. Unfortunately these works are intrusive but hopefully the long-term benefits will outlive the short-term pain. The Boards and the Building Manager meet frequently with the Contractor to try and maintain the highest standards and compliance with the Code of Conduct that we have in place. The feedback from Residents was relayed at our site meeting later that week to reinforce this message.

Again some Residents expressed a desire for works to be completed quicker. As we confirmed in our last newsletter, flooding communal parts with more Contractors at once would likely cause other problems.

That aside, there remain industry wide challenges in securing enough skilled labour. The Contractor is therefore retaining Sub-Contractors on site to work across the blocks (rather than block-by-block) as much as possible. This will maintain momentum as much as possible but does unfortunately extend the overall duration of the presence of Contractors within blocks at any one time.

The Contractor has taken a number of other steps to protect the programme as much as possible but it is being seriously challenged. Despite agreeing dates with key materials suppliers, some are being extended by as much as up to 9 weeks with little warning or notification. These issues are not unique to Bickenhall and are industry wide as a result of Covid and Brexit. We await revised forecasts from the Contractor which will be reviewed in detail by the Contractor Administrator and we will update in due course.

The Refurbishment Project Special Edition Newsletter that was issued in April 2022 included the BMML Rolling Reserve Fund Forecast. This already addresses some questions raised at the meeting; that the final costs for Internal and External works on block 7 were on budget, that the electrical intake upgrade works are not scheduled to commence until 2024 and that monies have been set aside to enable us to find a greener solution when our current boilers meet their end of life. A more energy efficient solution will also help with operational costs.

A number of other issues that were raised at the meeting are addressed in more detail elsewhere in this Newsletter.

**THOMAS ETTA-ADAMS**

By virtue of the joint statement issued 3 May by both the Boards of BMML & BFL you will very likely be aware of the recent tragic passing of Thomas Adams-Etta. Thomas was a long serving and valued member of The Corps of Commissionaires security team here at Bickenhall.

Whilst there is no suggestion that Thomas's death was anything but due to natural causes, circumstances on the night have called into question perceived failings with The Corps of Commissionaires lone working welfare procedures. Immediately following Thomas's death The Corps of Commissionaires initiated an internal review and have subsequently reported 16 changes to their lone working policies and procedures. Tellingly The Corps of Commissionaires have also now moved away from the check call system that was previously in use at Bickenhall and other sites within their business.

The Board in conjunction with Encore have also completed a review which has concluded that on the night in question there was regrettably a fundamental failing in The Corps of Commissionaires lone working welfare. The review has added concern that it is highly unlikely that this would have been the first welfare failing and has drawn into question the long-term effectiveness of the previous lone working system, which was dependent on both the staff and The Corps of Commissionaires fulfilling their respective parts.

Because of these findings, the Board have agreed that it would be entirely appropriate to re-examine The Corps of Commissionaires as Bickenhall's ongoing security provider. It should be stressed that any implemented changes would not be immediate, primarily as alternative security providers would need to be identified and interviewed and because there would also be a requirement for staff to follow a TUPE transfer process.

In the interim period, Bickenhall's new Security Manager Ahmed Youssef is tasked to ensure that the recent changes put in place by The Corps of Commissionaires will adequately serve the welfare needs of lone working staff.

**MIKE MCROBERTS**

As you will have seen from correspondence issued yesterday by Encore, our Building Manager Mike was unfortunately involved in a vehicle collision earlier this week and is currently hospital with several fractures. It is early days and we do not yet know how long Mike will need to recuperate - we send best wishes from all of us here at Bickenhall.

The Building Managers email inbox and incoming calls will still be monitored so please continue to report issues in the usual manner but please bear with us as response times may be a little longer than usual. For anything urgent in the interim, please email [tim.josh@encoreestates.co.uk](mailto:tim.josh@encoreestates.co.uk)

**COMMUNICATIONS**

The Residents Forum meetings were introduced in December 2019. At the outset, they were collegiate and productive; differences of opinion were shared openly and respectfully.

Board members are all volunteers who give up significant amounts of their time for the betterment of Bickenhall. Members of the Encore team and our Building Manager are also working hard to support Leaseholders and Residents.

Things are not always perfect here at Bickenhall but that does not justify the increasingly confrontational behaviour that we are being subjected to at these meetings. Unfortunately holding these forums online seems to have exacerbated this. The tone of recent meetings has not just been unpleasant for those on the receiving end but also uncomfortable for other Residents who have expressed their disquiet.

We all have a shared goal of making Bickenhall Mansions a better place to live; Board members, Leaseholders, Residents, Encore and our Building Manager and Security team. However as these Forums are now neither a collegiate or effective means of achieving this, the Board will be reviewing their format and suitability moving ahead.

Quarterly newsletters from the Board will continue and these will be supplemented by a new regular newsletter from our Building Manager & Encore. This way we can ensure that we are engaging with all at Bickenhall. Between the Board and the Building Manager, we will update you on strategic as well as operational matters. Our Contractor, Collins Construction, will also continue to write separately to each block they are working in on a monthly basis to update on refurbishment progress.

We would like to strongly encourage Residents and Leaseholders to ensure that any relevant matters or issues are reported to our Building Manager. There have been instances where Residents have been dissatisfied with daily operational issues but are communicating these with other Residents rather than with our Building Manager which is ineffectual. Our Building Manager is best placed to help you. Issues and complaints are logged and prioritized accordingly. Recurrent issues can also be identified and rectified quicker.

[building.manager@encoreestates.co.uk](mailto:building.manager@encoreestates.co.uk)

0207 935 3227

Ahmed, our Head of Security, also works closely with our Building Manager and he can be found at the main reception desk.

### SOCIAL EVENING

The Boards intention has always been to reinstate some kind of social gatherings here at Bickenhall Mansions. You may recall that we held our first

event back in January 2020, but their regularity was cut short by the arrival of Covid.

Unfortunately Covid cases are rising again at present but we very much hope to hold an event later in the year if sensible to do so.

### CUPBOARDS IN COMMUNAL AREAS

During the refurbishment of the North block it has come to our attention that a number of Residents and Leaseholders are storing personal possessions in cupboards in communal areas. Cupboards in communal parts are not part of a leaseholders demise. In some instances locks have even been added. This is not only delaying progress of the refurbishment project in these areas but also presents a fire hazard. **All items must be removed by 22<sup>nd</sup> July when our Contractors will be instructed to remove the cupboards and dispose of the contents.**

### ACCESS FOR INSTALLING FLAT DOORS – NORTH BLOCK

There are a number of flats where Residents/Leaseholders are not responding to correspondence from the Contractors to agree dates/times for replacement of flat entrance doors. In one week alone, 10 doors were scheduled to be replaced. Proposed dates had been issued to Residents/Leaseholders but only 3 responded to confirm their availability (or otherwise). This not only delays the works but causes resequencing and abortive works which are costly. Please assist the Contractor by responding, this will enable them to progress the works as efficiently as possible.

### REMOVAL OF RUBBISH & RECYCLING

The increase in home deliveries generates significantly more packaging for our team to remove each day. Despite increasing the number of bins, they are often filled or over flowing. Please can all Residents help by flattening packaging and boxes before disposing of them.

Rubbish must only be left outside apartment doors 7am - 9am. Please do not put rubbish out at other times; spills and leaks will damage newly laid carpets.

### **BLOCK ENTRANCE DOORS**

If you are moving large items (house move, undertaking works to your property) and require the doors to remain open for a specific task, please do not prop them open as it can damage the mechanism. Please contact Security who can simply override the setting to ensure that you have unhindered access for the necessary duration.

### **INTERCOM TO BLOCK 8**

The old intercom system to block 8 is currently out of operation despite intermittent repairs. This is obviously very inconvenient for Block 8 residents and is regrettable. Temporary signage has been placed outside the entrance to Block 8 to notify visitors and delivery drivers. The new intercom system is currently being installed. Based upon current delivery dates for final parts, the new system will be operational within the next two weeks.

### **LEASES : 24A & 24b MANAGEMENT OFFICE**

New standard leases for the management office are now in place to rectify legacy issues. The new leases comply with licensing from Westminster Council planning and reflect their commercial usage.

### **ELECTRICITY & GAS METERS**

Our Building Manager is in the process of trying to identify the flat owners of those gas and electricity meters that are not clearly labelled. He is also in the process of identifying the location of the isolations switch for each meter and labelling accordingly. This is incredibly time-consuming given the large number of flats across the estate and the sometimes surprising locations in which they can be found! When you are next

undertaking a meter reading, please check if the flat number is clearly indicated. If not, we would be grateful if you could contact the Building Manager to expedite this process and he will label accordingly. This will also help us prepare for major electrical upgrade works in the future.

Queries persist regarding smart meters and at present there is no one answer that fits all. It depends on a number of factors: the location of your meter, the distance between your meter and your flat and sometimes the numbers of floors that you are above ground level. Leaseholders will need to individually contact their own suppliers to ascertain if a smart meter can be installed.

### **SHAWARMA SHOP – LICENSING UPDATE**

Thank you to those who wrote to WCC to voice their objection to the extended late night licensing application.

BFL instructed Counsel (Mr Asitha Ranatunga) who specialises in council legislation and policy to attend the hearing on 7<sup>th</sup> July. Board members from BFL and BMML also attended, along with the Building Manager to put forward objections. We provided photographic evidence showing that the premises were already operating well beyond their licensed hours which strengthened our objection.

Their application for later opening hours (until 5am) was refused. Shawarma is only licensed to operate Mon-Thurs until 11.30pm, Friday and Saturday until midnight and Sunday until 10.30pm. They can appeal to the Magistrates Court within 21 days and we will monitor the situation. If you notice Shawarma is operating outside of these hours, please do take a photograph if possible and email it to our Building Manager.

Given the density of fast-food shops in this area we may face other applications for late-night licences in the future. It is important that we continue to have the evidence to support any objections. This can include evidence of litter or

noting dates/times of late night disturbances. Our Building Manager will continue to collate these for us.

### **MARYLEBONE PRIVILEGE CARD**

Marylebone Village have launched a Privilege Card Scheme which offers 10% off in a number of local shops and restaurants. These include Rococo Chocolates, Sweaty Betty, Fishworks and Orrery to name just a few.

As long as you live or work in Marylebone you can apply here  
<https://www.marylebonevillage.com/privilege-card>

### **GENERAL REMINDERS**

**KEYS** In the interest of safety and security, lessees are asked to inform the Building Manager when their flat is likely to be unoccupied for any period longer than 14 days. All lessees are also asked to leave a set of keys at reception for emergency use in the event of a flood or other serious incident. Please ensure that a key disclaimer form is filled in and submitted to the management office. If you have recently had your flat door replaced, ensure that a current key is held to enable access.

**Bike Racks** These can only be used if you have notified the Building Manager and are paying the appropriate rental fee of £120 per bicycle per annum (under cover) or £80 per bicycle (uncovered). Bikes that have been attached and are not paying the fee will be removed.

**Need Extra Storage Space?** Vaults can be rented for £600 per annum (reducing to £300 per annum for any additional vaults rented).

**Pets** Under the terms of the lease, we remind you that pets are not allowed within Bickenhall Mansions.

**Sub-letting/Letting Agencies** Short lets, Airbnb and the like are not allowed under the provisions of your lease and we have encountered a number of difficulties with flats that have been let under such agreements. This has caused considerable inconvenience and distress to other apartment owners and the on-site staff. For those who do let their apartments in accordance with the terms of their lease, please ensure that you use a reputable letting agency and issue the correct documentation which includes an Assured Shorthold Tenancy Agreement. This is as much to protect you as it is your tenants. A copy of a Notice to Sublet along with a scanned copy of the signed AST is to be submitted to the management office.

**Mailchimp** Our Building Manager, Mike McRoberts, has introduced a Resident Notification system via Mailchimp. This relates to building operational issues that may affect you eg: loss of services, maintenance and enables Mike to quickly notify residents. To subscribe, visit:  
<http://eepurl.com/hikRpD>

You can unsubscribe at any point. Please note that this will not replace any official communication from Encore relating to legal/financial matters.

**Undertaking works to your Property?** Should you wish to undertake any works to your property you must obtain formal consent and apply for a 'License to Alter'. There are various types of Licenses available to cover all types of works, even simple decoration works. Unfortunately there have been recent instances where leaseholders have undertaken works without consents in place, resulting in abortive works and additional costs to leaseholders. Please do speak to our Building Manager before commencing any works.