



## Evans's Cottage Homes

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### **December 2020**

A Newsletter to keep you informed about events at Evans Gardens, plans for the future and items discussed by the trustees.

### **Residents**

Since the Newsletter in January 2019 there have been a number of residents who have departed Evans Gardens: CB and CM moved to new accommodation and AJ, VD, GT and OB have all sadly died. We have welcomed JQ, PM, JT, PC and VN – we hope that they will all enjoy their time at Evans Gardens.

When the Evans's Cottage Homes Trust was established in 1868 the age qualification for residents was set at 50 years (quite elderly in those days). Recently the Trustees had to amend the Trust Articles and at the same time it was decided to increase the age qualification to 60 years.

### **Pathways and grounds**

During the Covid restrictions it was thought that, while there has been less 'traffic' in and out of the flats, we should consider the works to improve access to all of the flats, front and back, by ramping the paths to the doors. At the same time, it was decided to replace the uneven slabs around the patio and remove the two sets of steps which were becoming dangerous. The other set of steps were re-configured to make it easier for those who rely on aids for walking and/or shopping.

You are reminded, and asked to remind your families, that the 'ambulance bay' (marked with cross-hatching) is for dropping off/picking up only – it should not be used for parking.

## **Quinquennial Inspection**

Every five years the Trustees are required to arrange for an inspection of the fabric of the buildings and the site. The report comments on issues that will need to be considered in the next five-year cycle. In the report from the latest inspection, the condition of the pathways and steps was identified as a need for consideration within the next five years. Other items included a reminder that we were due to have the 5-yearly inspection of the electrics in each flat and communal area. The Trustees are also considering an energy report, and its recommendations, regarding the heating and insulation needs for the future.

## **Covid-19**

The government restrictions during the pandemic have severely impacted the social life of Evans Gardens. Though it is pleasing to report that Evans Gardens has remained Covid-free since the pandemic hit. The Trustees are grateful to residents, and Sue Williams, for their co-operation and good spirit during these very difficult times. However, it has been disappointing to see some residents, and families, ignoring the various requirements and restrictions which has put other residents more 'at risk'. It was good to see the video of the open-air keep fit, all socially distanced, when it appeared at the end of the Midlands Today news early in the lockdown.

## **Heating**

10% of the annual expenditure is on heating and lighting – i.e. gas for the heating and electricity for the communal areas. It is disappointing to see times when the heating is on and flats have their windows open letting out the heat into the atmosphere. All of the radiators have thermostatic valves which mean that the radiator shuts off when the room reaches the set temperature. In an effort to reduce the overall heating cost there have been wall heaters fitted in all of the bathrooms which will enable us to schedule the 'central' heating more appropriately during the warmer months whilst allowing the provision of a warm bathroom when needed. Most similar housing has the 'central' heating switched off from May 1<sup>st</sup> to October 1<sup>st</sup> – this is not being suggested, yet, but we would like to reduce the overall expense. All flats should have a spur suitable for an electric fire in the lounge, which you may use if you need localised heating.

## Summary of accounts for 2019-20

	Year ending March 31 <sup>st</sup>	2020	2019
<u>Income</u>		£	£
		153,377	193,454
<u>Expenditure</u>			
		150,524	180,836
<b>Under spend on the year</b>		<b>2,853</b>	<b>12,718</b>

The surplus on the year is much reduced compared with the previous year. During the year there was major expenditure on dampproof remedials, new stairlifts and extra car parking, plus the continued replacement of hot water tanks with an online heater and on-going modernisation of flats when possible.

Often the trustees have been able to secure additional funds from various grant making bodies but this has not been possible recently. Also, whilst we budget for empty flats and an associated loss of income there have been several changes which have reduced our reserves.

### Other work being undertaken

The Trustees have been pleased that, during these restricted times, it has been possible to continue to address routine maintenance issues as well as some more challenging improvements around the site, including the refurbishment and re-painting of the front door surrounds, and full electrical safety checks.

### Electricity fuse box

You should be familiar with the location of the fuse box for your flat. If there is a sudden power cut – first switch off any electrical item that you may be using, then switch the power back on at the fuse box. If the power goes off when you switch the device back on it suggests that the item is faulty. You should carry out this simple check whenever there is a sudden power cut, even if you are not aware that you are using any electrical device.

If the electrician is called, as an emergency, it costs about £100 which could be avoided by simple steps to isolate the cause, and then reconnect the power yourself.

## **Use of washing machines and dryers**

Residents are reminded that the communal washing machines are designated for washing items which belong to the resident only, and not any items brought in from outside Evans Gardens. You are asked to ensure that the communal machines are left clean after use. They should not be used for items that contain any colour residue or dye which could be left in the machine and then affect subsequent loads of washing.

## **The future**

Sue Williams and the Chair of Trustees have decided that they wish to retire from their respective roles during 2021. The Trustees are presently considering the process for appointing their replacements. Further information will be made available as the picture of the future sharpens.

## **Christmas vouchers**

At a recent meeting of the Trustees it was decided that we should not issue vouchers at the moment because of the uncertainty of the present retail arrangements. The Trustees would not wish to issue vouchers which may not get used conveniently during the validity period. It is intended that vouchers will be issued as 'Easter Eggs', when it is hoped that the retail economy is more settled.

The Trustees and the House Manager wish you, and your families, a happy, peaceful and healthy Christmas and New Year.