

Your Actual Service Charge 2015-16

Dear Leaseholder or Freeholder



Welcome to the autumn edition of Leasehold Focus, our newsletter dedicated to leaseholders and freeholders.



Please find enclosed your Actual Service Charge Certificate for 2015-16. The certificate sets out the final accounts for the cost of the services you received between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2016. It also shows the difference between your estimated costs (sent to you in April 2015) and the actual costs we paid for goods and services.

If your actual costs are higher than your estimated charges, you will receive an invoice for the outstanding amount. You must pay this in full within 28 days of the date of the invoice. If your actual costs are lower than your estimated charges, we will credit the difference to your service charge account.

You will find details of what goes into your bill on page 2 and how to pay on page 4.

Leasehold Workshop Feedback

Thank you to everyone involved in the leasehold workshop in May. It was fantastic to see so many of you there and I hope you enjoyed the event and speaking to us about the services we provide.

The event was introduced by Cllr Sirajul Islam, Cabinet Member for Housing, followed by three workshops in which leaseholders discussed current services and helped shape plans for the future.

You told us that whilst we had made your bills easier to understand there's more you'd like us to do. You also said you would like more information about major work schemes so that you can plan ahead better. Some of you also expressed an interest in a new service offer for leaseholders; buying services from THH's repairs contractor.

We are working with volunteers from the Leasehold Workshop and our Leaseholder

Service Development Group to take forward your ideas. This work complements our existing programme of improvements which includes:

- Greater accuracy of estimated bills
- Introduction of new payment options (see below)
- Clarifying leaseholder rights and responsibilities

We really value your input and we're always keen to hear your views about the services we provide – you can tell us your ideas and find out how to get involved by visiting www.thh.org.uk.

We'll be holding another event for leaseholders later in the year, so we can update you on the progress we've made. I look forward to letting you know more about this event nearer the time.

Susmita Sen, Chief Executive

Your quick guide to Major Works Payment Options

Option	Invoice Limit	Resident Leaseholders	Non-Resident Leaseholders	Terms of Payment
1 5% discount	Over £1,000	✓	✓	• You must pay the full amount within 90 days from the date of your invoice
2 2 year interest free	Over £1,000	✓	✓	• Up to 24 monthly direct debit instalments • Minimum monthly payment £100
3 Up to 5 year payment period - partially interest bearing	Over £2,000	✓	✗	• Up to 60 monthly direct debit instalments • Minimum monthly payment £100 • Interest free: Years 1-2 • Interest charged: Years 3-5
4 Up to 10 year payment period - partially interest bearing	Over £10,000	✓	✗	• Up to 120 monthly direct debit instalments • Minimum monthly payment £100 • Interest free: Years 1-2 • Interest charged: Years 3-10
5 Voluntary charge on property	No invoice limit	✓ Only Leaseholders over 60 or on full benefits	✗	• Subject to Financial Inclusion Officer's approval • Loan arrangement fee applies • Compound interest of 0.5% above the Council borrowing rate (currently (5.34%) will be added to the debt each year
6 Statutory Loan	No invoice limit	✓	✓	Terms and Conditions apply. Please call us for more details: Tel 020 7364 5015.

If you're selling your property, please clear all your arrears on your service charge account prior to the sale.

What goes into your bill

Depending on the services you receive, your actual service charge may include some or all of the following

BLOCK SERVICE

We take the cost of providing a service to your block including management and operational overhead costs.* This is the total service cost. We apply this cost to all the homes in your block based on the individual GRV of each home.**



Block repairs

Repairs to the structure, communal areas and services in your building. Examples could include: repairs to the roof, windows, communal water supply, waste pipes, and minor redecorations such as painting and cyclical maintenance to risers.



Lift

Repairs and maintenance



Communal TV aerial

Repairs and maintenance



Communal door entry

Repairs and maintenance



Communal boiler

Repairs and maintenance

Your charge

We use the list of repairs carried out to your block in 2015-16. You pay a proportion of this cost based on the GRV** of your home.



Block caretaking service

Cleaning communal areas, stairs and corridors, bin chambers, rubbish chutes and lifts, graffiti removal, changing light bulbs, minor repairs and general management of the block.

Your charge

The cost of caretaking in 2015-16 was £24.35 per hour. We multiply the cost per hour by the number of caretaking hours for your block.



Refuse service (bin hire)

THH hire paladin bins (the large circular or square bins on wheels) from LBTH under a service agreement.

Your charge

You pay a proportion of the cost based on the GRV** of your home.



Concierge service

Block and estate security, including onsite concierges, mobile patrols and CCTV systems.

Your charge

You pay a proportion of this cost based on the GRV** of your home. You can request a list of concierge invoices for your block from THH.



Communal boiler fuel

Providing and managing the fuel supply for communal heating and/or hot water systems.

Your charge

You pay a proportion of this cost based on the number and size of rooms in your property. A list of boiler fuel bills for your system is available from THH.



Communal electricity

Providing and managing the communal electricity supply for communal lighting, lifts, door entry systems, heating systems and water pumps.

Your charge

We divide the communal electricity charge between each home based on the GRV.** You can request a list of communal electricity bills for your block and estate from THH.

ESTATE SERVICE

We take the cost of providing a service to your mappsite*** including management and operational overhead costs.* This is the total service cost. We apply this cost to all the homes on your mappsite based on the individual GRV** of each home.



Estate repairs

Communal repairs to the external areas of your mappsite including repairs to paths, railings, fences, bollards, clearing and unblocking drains, repairs to playground equipment and other facilities.

Your charge

You pay a proportion of this cost based on the GRV** of your home.



Estate caretaking service

Cleaning, sweeping and litter picking, removing graffiti, minor repairs and safety checks to external areas.

Your charge

The cost of caretaking in 2015-16 was £24.35 per hour. We multiply the cost per hour by the number of caretaking hours for your mappsite.



Gardening

Grass cutting, planting and weeding flower beds, tree pruning, emptying dog bins for your mappsite.

Your charge

You pay a proportion of this cost based on the GRV** of your home. You can get a breakdown of the number of visits and time spent on your mappsite from THH.



Refuse service

Bulk waste and fly-tipping collections from your mappsite. We don't charge you for the collection of normal domestic waste from the paladin bins because you pay for this service through your Council Tax.

Your mappsite costs

THH pays LBTH for bulk waste collections through two service level agreements. You pay a proportion of this cost based on the GRV** of your home.

CUSTOMER SERVICE



Leasehold management

Includes service charge accounting and audit, calculating and billing service charges, income collection, dealing with payments and enquiries.

Your charge

You pay an equal share of this cost. If you are a freeholder with a service charge account you pay a percentage of this cost.



ASB

Dealing with anti-social behaviour on your mappsite.



Pest control

Providing treatments for certain types of pests, helping identify pests, and providing information on treatment.



Customer access

Housing Service Centre, first point of contact for all resident queries and complaints.



Resident engagement

Supporting the formal resident engagement panel, tenant and resident associations. Conducting resident surveys.

Your charge

The cost of these services are made up of salaries, service level agreements with LBTH and overheads to cover office costs. You pay a proportion of the cost based on the GRV** of your home.

Key

* Operating overheads are costs for things like office premises, telephones and IT equipment.

** GRV (Gross Rateable Value) is a measure of your property's size and value compared with the size and value of other properties in your block. This is a simplified definition only.

*** Mappsites help us to calculate leasehold charges such as horticulture and caretaking services. Mappsites give us important details of many of our estates and communal areas including footpaths, estate roads, grass areas, shrub beds and buildings.

Are you renting your residential property?

Did you know when you rent your property to someone else you need to register the tenancy with THH? The terms of your lease still apply to you, and you are responsible for your tenants' conduct, keeping the property in a good state of repair and paying the service charges.



Three simple steps to register a new tenancy:

- 1** Ask us for a Sub-letting pack, which includes a Deed of Covenant and a Change of Contact Details form
- 2** Sign and return the Deed of Covenant – along with a £25 registration fee
- 3** Sign and return the Change of Contact Details form

For more details call us on 020 7364 5015 or visit our website www.thh.org.uk.

Useful information for landlords

Check your tenant's right to rent

You must check your tenant or lodger can legally rent your residential property. You can be fined up to £3,000 for renting your property to someone who isn't allowed to rent property in England. Visit the government's website at www.gov.uk for more details.

Gas Safety

As a landlord you are responsible for the safety of your tenants. You are legally responsible for the maintenance and repair of appliances, pipework and flues, and that they are safety checked by a Gas Safe registered engineer every year. It could lead to a criminal prosecution, resulting in a fine or possibly even imprisonment if you don't. For more information visit the HSE website at: www.hse.gov.uk/gas

Landlord Letting Scheme

From 1 October 2016, all privately rented property in Whitechapel, Weavers, Spitalfields and Banglatown wards will need to be licensed by the Council. The cost of a licence is £520 for five years. For more information please go to www.towerhamlets.gov.uk

Stay safe. Remember your annual gas safety check

Did you know your gas appliances, including your gas boiler, gas cooker and gas fire, should be safety checked once a year and serviced regularly by a Gas Safe registered engineer? You could be putting you and your family at risk and in possible danger of carbon monoxide poisoning if you don't.

For more information on gas safety, see the Gas Safe website: www.gassaferegister.co.uk



Smell gas?

Contact the National Grid Emergency Line on 0800 111 999

Need to claim on your building insurance?

Contact Ocaso: Tel 0344 856 2032

All claims must be made within 90 days. See our website www.thh.org.uk for details.

IMPORTANT CHANGES TO SERVICE CHARGE PAYMENT

The Council has had to change its bank account and you may need to update your records. **You should change your LBTH payee details immediately if you pay your service charges by:**

- Standing Order
- Online banking through your own bank
- Telephone banking through your own bank

The new details are:

Bank	National Westminster Bank plc
Branch	161 Bow Road, London, E3 2SG
Account Name	LBTH (SC Collection)
Sort Code	60-03-19
Account Number	75667266

You do not need to take any action if you pay your service charges by:

- Telephone payment direct to an officer at Tower Hamlets Homes office
- The Council's 24 hour automated payment line
- Post Office
- Direct Debit
- By post to the Cashier's Office

Please do not use the old bank account as your payment may be delayed or rejected.

Get help paying your bill

If you are having difficulty paying your service charges, please call us on 020 7364 5015. We can help you work out which one of our payment methods is best for you or if you're entitled to financial help - including help from the Department Work & Pensions. No matter how difficult your financial circumstances may seem, we'll work with you to help you get your service charge account back on track.

Did you know you can also get free debt advice from the National Debtline and free benefit advice from the government's website?

National Debtline:

Tel: 0808 808 4000. Website: www.nationaldebtline.org


Government's website:

www.gov.uk/benefits-calculators

Contacting us

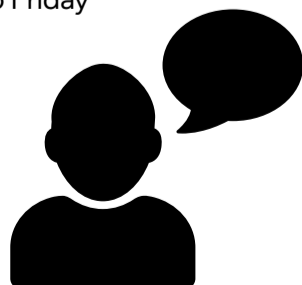
 **Email**
Send your email to contactus@thh.org.uk

 **By phone**
020 7364 5015
8:30am-5:30pm
Monday to Friday

 **In writing**
Write to:
Tower Hamlets Homes
Leasehold Services
Jack Dash House
2 Lawn House Close
E14 9YQ

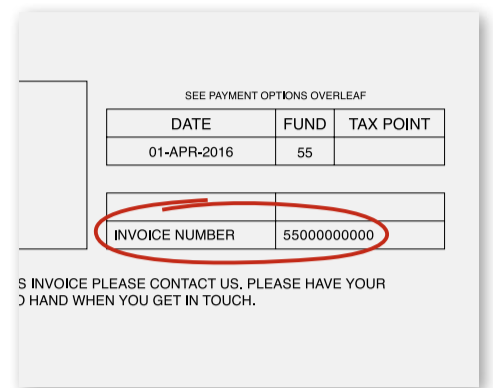
Tell us you're moving, selling or renting your property

020 7364 5015
8:30am-5:30pm
Monday to Friday



How to pay


Whichever way you decide to pay your bill make sure you have your 11-digit invoice number to hand (printed in the top right-hand corner of your invoice – it starts with 55). Please don't use any other letters or digits. That way we'll be able to match your payment with your invoice.





 **Direct Debit**
Direct Debit is the most convenient and simplest way to pay bills. Payments are made automatically, so bills are never forgotten. To set up a Direct Debit call us on 020 7364 5015, our phone lines are open 8:30am to 5:30pm Monday to Friday. You'll need the following information to set up your Direct Debit: invoice number, bank account details and sort code.

 **Credit or debit card payments**

- **By phone**
Call our automated payment line on 020 7364 5015 (press 2) anytime to make a payment by phone.
- **Online**
Why not pay your bill online? It's quick and easy to do, just log on to: www.towerhamlets.gov.uk. A charge is made for credit card payments.

 **Internet and telephone banking**
For internet and telephone banking, please quote LBTH payee details:
Sort Code: **60-03-19**
Account Number: **75667266**
Reference: **Your invoice number**

 **Standing Order**
To set up a standing order, please complete a standing order form online from your bank or building society. Alternatively, download a standing order form from our website. Please quote LBTH payee details:
Sort Code: **60-03-19**
Account Number: **75667266**
Reference: **Your invoice number**
Send the completed form to your bank or building society.

 **Cheque or Postal Order**
Cheques or postal orders should be made payable to: 'London Borough of Tower Hamlets'. Write your name, address and your 11-digit invoice number on the back of your cheque or postal order. Send it to:
Cashier's Payments, Albert Jacob House, 62 Roman Road, London, E2 0PG.
For postal payment receipts, please provide a self-addressed, stamped envelope.



New! Swipe card payments
From October, we're introducing swipe cards to make paying your service charge bills just that bit easier. Swipe cards can be a good option if you don't want to pay by direct debit and you're looking for a convenient way to make cash or card payments. You can use your swipe card at any PayPoint or Post Office using cash or card. Your swipe card will automatically allocate payment to the oldest outstanding invoice on your account so that you can clear these invoices first. To order a swipe card, please call us on 020 7364 5015 or email contactus@thh.org.uk