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 Actual Service Charge 2015-16

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Susmita Sen, Chief Executive

Your quick guide to Major Works Payment Options

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

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 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 repairs**
  Repairs to the external areas of your mapsite 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 mapsite.

- **Gardening**
  Grass cutting, planting and weeding flower beds, tree pruning, emptying dog bins for your mapsite.

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 mapsite from THH.

**LEASEHOLD MANAGEMENT**

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

- **ASB**
  Dealing with anti-social behaviour on your mapsite.

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.

- **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.

**CUSTOMER SERVICE**

- **Housing Service Centre**
  First point of contact for all resident queries and complaints.

Your charge

Providing information on treatment.

- **Pest control**
  Provides treatments for certain types of pests, helping identify pests, and providing information on treatment.

Your charge

Dealing with anti-social behaviour on your mapsite.

- **Dealing with payments and enquiries.**
  Provides and manages the communal electricity bills for your system is available from THH.

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.

**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.

*** Mapsites help us to calculate leasehold charges such as horticulture and caretaking services. Mapsites 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.

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

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

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.
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.

— 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.

Credit or debit card payments
— By phone
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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.

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

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

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.