

Weir Estate's innovative website



Weir Estate's website is proving a popular way to get residents involved in community events and keep them updated with the latest developments around the estate.

Weir Estate Residents' Association (WERA) updates its rapidly growing website with local estate and relevant community news, and also has the fantastic 'WERA Asks' section where people such as local councillors and Clapham area staff members are interviewed. This gives an opportunity to get to know them as people along with providing information about various services available to residents.

wera.org.uk has been receiving rave reviews from across the board and has been described as an 'essential site' and a model of best

practice for any tenants' and residents' association thinking of setting up an information portal for its residents' and as an 'essential site'.

WERA chair, Dave McEvoy said, "In the 21st century, technology is at the forefront of any organisation and our website, I hope, is a great way to communicate to residents and the community what is happening". Over the next few months interviews with housing officers and candidates for the general election will be published.

WERA also has a page on the social networking site "Twitter" and publishes a monthly newsletter for those who don't have internet access.

Getting Westbury Estate on the map

by Elaine Mander

For many years the residents of Westbury Estate felt neglected because the location of the estate being at the very west border of Lambeth. Many residents also felt little was being done to improve the housing stock there.

But thanks to a pro-active tenants' and residents' association (TRA) many changes have taken place over the past three years.

In 2007 with the help of the Housing Opportunity Fund, the estate gained a new children's multi-sports play area, new walk-way and speed table

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A letter from the Chair



By Keith Hill MP

Chair of Lambeth Living, Minister for Housing 2003-2005

As the new Chair of Lambeth Living I am pleased to welcome you to this latest edition of our newsletter for residents.

You may already know me as the Member of Parliament for Streatham in the south of the

borough since 1992. If you do, you may also know that two years ago I announced my intention to retire from Parliament at the next general election – now expected in spring 2010.

So why have I taken on this tough job as head of Lambeth's public sector housing company? The answer is that for almost 18 years I have tried to resolve the individual housing problems of my constituents – sometimes successfully, sometimes not. But the problems continue.

Now I have the chance to try and work for a permanent improvement in the housing service in Lambeth for all our residents – tenants and leaseholders alike.

You see, I think you all deserve the best possible service. Our housing service should make your life better not worse. That is what I and my Board of elected residents and housing experts together with all the officers of Lambeth Living are committed to achieving.

What we also know is that if we can improve the service sufficiently and gain a two-star rating from the Audit Commission inspectors we shall qualify for a massive grant of £250m from the government towards making every home we manage warm and dry and with a modern bathroom and kitchen. That is a glittering prize.

I give you my word it's a prize I am determined to win.

Keeping fire routes clear

There is now a zero tolerance approach to items being stored or left in communal areas that could obstruct exits if there is a fire.

Lambeth Living is committed to raising standards across all its estates in order to make them safer and better places for you to live in. We want to work with you in creating estates and communities where people feel safe and are happy to take pride in.

We have an obligation to keep all fire routes in communal areas clear of obstructions and combustible materials. We want to make sure that if there is a fire you will be able to get out of the building quickly.

It may be dark and smoky and not easy to see, which is why it is important that communal areas like corridors, walkways and exit doors are kept clear.

If any items are discovered in communal walkways, landings or stairs, they will be removed within 24 hours. If an item is removed, residents will need to pay the removal and storage costs in order to get their property back. If items are not claimed within 28 days they will be disposed of.

So it's simple – store your property away from communal areas, it's much safer and you won't risk losing it!

The London Fire Brigade offers personal fire safety advice in your home and will also fit a free smoke alarm where needed. If you, or someone you know, wants a home fire safety visit, **call free on 08000 28 44 28** or email smokealarms@london-fire.gov.uk

Tenancy agreement under review

The council's 10 year old Tenancy Agreement is to be reviewed and you can have a say on the new one.

A team of staff will be making sure the agreement is up-to-date, reflects all changes in legislation and that the rights and responsibilities of both residents and landlord are clear and easy to understand. The changes will make the agreement easier to read and will help the managing agents look after homes and estates more effectively. They will also help us effectively tackle issues like nuisance neighbours and anti-social behaviour.

A copy of the draft agreement will be sent to all Lambeth Council tenants and a series of drop-in sessions will also be organised to enable you to find out more and ask any questions. The timetable for consultation will be sent out to all residents – so keep an eye out in the post.

Getting Westbury Estate on the map by Elaine Mander

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that doubled as access to wheelchairs and pushchairs.

In 2008 a major works consultation process started as part of the Decent Homes programme to replace the very old and dated secondary glazing windows on the tower blocks to more energy efficient double glazing.

The 160 flats in both Amesbury and Durrington towers had their windows replaced, smoke alarms and extractor fans installed, and the blocks also had their corridors and internal walls painted and the

external concrete walls treated and painted.

This was a big project and scaffolding was erected and in place for over a year.

In 2009, Lambeth's Better Neighbourhood Team approached the TRA and offered to use some ring-fenced funding to renew and replace broken pavements and to improve the tarmac of the roads within the estate.

The pro-active representation of the TRA in Local Area Housing Forums, Leaseholders Council,

Safe Neighbourhood panels and other local steering groups has pin-pointed Westbury Estate on the map.

The TRA is very committed to tenant's involvement and engagement, and for two years it has organised trips to the seaside, West End theatres, bingo and race night for the elderly, a Christmas Grotto and Halloween party for the children. This year the estate's first Fun Day was held. Tenants' engagement is the key word for the Westbury Estate – and the work continues!

May's place of peace

This year, Mrs Mavis Horscroft not only won the 'Domestic Grassed Garden' category at the annual Estates in Bloom competition, but was also crowned the overall winner. I met her at a meeting in the Edmundsbury Hall on the estate where her talent is now adorning the walls through hanging baskets. After the meeting she invited me to see her prize winning display. Behind a secure door in a wall I was welcomed into an oasis of colour and light. A place of peace I thought.

May, (as she prefers to be called) is no ordinary green fingered individual in the eyes of many who know her, but she sees herself as very ordinary indeed. I wanted to know where it all came from, this passion for gardening.

"When my kids were small I didn't have a garden for them to enjoy a similar experience to my own as a

child", May explained. Her father was an avid gardener and in her home in Battersea where she grew up, they had chickens and geese in those days.

It was five years ago that May finally moved into a property that allowed her unbridled access to creating her life's dream. It did take some backbreaking work at first, clearing and preparing the space. She has entered the gardening competition for the last four years and has scored a second and three first places since that time. She doesn't see her passion coming to an end and would like now to enter a vegetable garden into a competition of that category.

May has an ambition to pass on her skills to young people in the neighbourhood and looks forward to showing other would-be gardeners.

This is one of the projects planned to commence in the very near future. **Watch this space.**

Christmas opening hours

Lambeth Living housing counters

Changes to opening hours for our housing services counters in North Lambeth, Stockwell and Vassall, Clapham, Norwood, Brixton and Streatham:

Christmas

Closed from 25 December and re-opening on 29 December.

New Year

Closed on 1 January.

Lambeth Service Centre

(telephone enquiries) will remain open during holiday period with slightly reduced hours on bank holiday and weekend days. Please contact **020 7926 6000**.

Out of hours service

(telephone enquiries)
The Lambeth Living emergency service **020 7926 6666** will operate during the holiday period.



Our commitment to drive up standards

Lambeth Living Chief Executive Cathy Deplessis told last month's residents' conference that the organisation was committed to driving up standards of service.

She outlined four key priorities for 2010 and the future:

- Income recovery
- Health and safety
- Developing customer care
- More efficient and effective repairs service

"We are committed to achieving accredited service standards and providing services that residents

have told us they want and need," she told more than 300 tenants and leaseholders at the Brit Oval.

“Engaging properly and closely with tenants and residents is the only way that housing services will get better.”

She said that in the past year, 93 per cent of the money available to Lambeth Living had been ploughed back into providing decent homes. She admitted that in the

We'll recycle your tree for free

After the success of last year's scheme we are happy to announce that we will again collect your real Christmas trees for free!

All you have to do is leave your tree next to your estate recycling bin or at a local drop site and it will be collected between 11–15 January. Make your New Year's Resolution to recycle more, it's easy!

Collection times

Due to the bank holidays that fall within the Christmas period your refuse and recycling collections may be affected. If you live on an estate, the day your estate bins are emptied may change. Contact your housing office if you have any queries.



past available cash may not have been used as well as it could have been because decisions had not involved residents effectively.

Now, all that will change.

“Good engagement is the only way that the service will get better. We are committed to achieving accredited service standards, and providing services that residents have told us that they want and need.”

To demonstrate the pledge for greater residents’ involvement, the agenda for the event was set by tenants and leaseholders and it was chaired by Ros Munday from the Lambeth Tenants Council.

Residents called for faster progress and no more delays to achieving the

Decent Homes Standards – the government target to upgrade housing stock to minimum levels of comfort and shelter by 2010/11. They also demanded better service from Lambeth Living when things go wrong.

Stephen Hack, of Myatts Fields in Camberwell said: “Since the bailout of banks there has been a failure of government and local authorities to deliver decent homes, which they promised by 2010. We shouldn’t be sitting here talking about standards, but getting the investment we need.”

“

Good engagement is the only way that the service will get better. We are committed to achieving accredited service standards, and providing services that residents have told us that they want and need.

”

Cathy Deplessis

Lambeth Living Chief Executive



Every Pound Counts

Are you aged 60 or over? Or are you under 60 and suffering ill health or caring for someone who has additional support needs, including children? If so, you may be missing out on extra financial help.

Lambeth provides a benefits advice service ‘Every Pound Counts’ to help identify if you are missing out. The service, funded by NHS Lambeth and Lambeth Council, has already helped unlock over £7 million of benefit help for Lambeth residents.

Those who have been helped are on average £4,000 per year better off. Even if you own your own home or have savings or a private pension you could be eligible for extra help.

You can contact an Every Pound Counts adviser either by phone or textphone on **020 7926 5555**, Monday – Fridays 9am–5pm or email

everypoundcounts@lambeth.gov.uk

The service will check whether you are missing out on any extra income, and then arrange an appointment to help complete the necessary forms.

Examples of Lambeth residents who were missing out:

- Doreen and Albert are a couple aged 68. Their total weekly pensions are £159.75. They own their own home and have savings of £10,000. They did not realise they were missing out on Pension Credit of £42.51 and full Council Tax Benefit.
- Billy is aged 59 and recently had a stroke. He now needs help to manage his personal care and has problems walking. He can claim Disability Living Allowance worth up to over £100 a week despite the fact he has substantial savings.

Seen a house you want to live in? Register for Choice Based Letting

Instead of being “offered” accommodation, you can become more involved in finding a new home by bidding for one you like. Lambeth Council’s Choice Based Letting Scheme has been up and running for more than a year. Vacant properties in the area are advertised on the Lambeth Home Connections webpage at www.homeconnections.org.uk

You can bid for properties by using the internet, your mobile phone, or even DigiTV. Each property will then be allocated to the individual or family with the highest need.

If you want to be considered for any of the advertised homes, you will need to be listed on the Lambeth housing register and have been approved for an offer of housing. Once you are registered and approved, you will be sent a user guide, user ID number and PIN.

Please note that our viewings are at short notice and it is important that you give us your correct phone number so that we can contact you. You may miss out on viewing if we are unable to contact you in time. You can supply this information by phoning **020 7926 6000**.

Information for leaseholders

Want to step on the ‘Leaseholder Ladder of Involvement’? Lambeth Living wants to consult with more leaseholders and freeholders to help develop services.

The great thing about being a member of the ‘Leaseholder Ladder of Involvement’ is that you tell us which areas you are interested in and how much or little you would like to be involved.

Most of the consultations will be very straight forward, and we are planning to run some introductory sessions which will explain them.

If you are interested please contact Sarah Omofonmwan, on **020 7926 3812** or email: somofonmwan@lambeth.gov.uk

Homeownership Services

Lambeth Living’s Homeownership Services have been improved and we now have four teams managing processes from start to finish.

You should have received the revised service charge estimates by now (or will do so shortly) and local advice sessions have been arranged if you want to discuss the estimate with us. These are:

Friday 18 December 10am – 3pm

- North Lambeth Area Office, 91 Kennington Lane, London SE11 4HQ
- Brixton Area Office at Greenleaf Close, Tulse Hill Estate, SW2 2HB
- Streatham Area Office, 139 Albert Carr Gardens SW16 3HB

Saturday 19 December 10am – 2pm

- Brixton Customer Centre (Lambeth Service Centre) at Olive Morris House, 18 Brixton Hill, London SW2 1RL

Wednesday 23 December 2.30pm – 5.30pm

- Brixton Customer Centre (Lambeth Service Centre) at Olive Morris House, 18 Brixton Hill, London SW2 1RL

Key leasehold buildings insurance updates

Last year Aspen became the new building insurance provider for Lambeth leaseholders taking over all leasehold claims, and in August this year Lucas Associates, who are loss adjusters dealing with all leasehold claims on behalf of Aspen, took on the loss adjusting work.

Leaseholders wishing to notify a claim should do so directly with Lucas Associates on the 24hour free phone claims helpline on **0800 368 2222** within 90 days of date of occurrence.

Please note you should not wait for housing to complete repairs before notifying Aspen. Your claim will be declined if the 90 days notification period to report all claims is not followed.

Sub-letting your home

As a leaseholder or freeholder you are entitled to sub-let your flat – but please let us know! By law you must ensure gas appliances are inspected every 12 months.

Find the time to get involved

by Ros Munday - Chair, Tenants Council

This year has been difficult for many residents with a housing service under pressure. Residents often suffer when times are difficult and consequently we have taken more of a role of monitoring services in recent years.

It is essential that we are organised and have a way of being able to make our voices heard. Through our tenants' and residents' groups we have an opportunity to do this.

The Housing Forums where residents can be nominated is where we can take up issues which effect our whole area from grounds maintenance to major works. This is a vital part of the resident movement and I encourage all residents to find out the dates of your forums and attend if you can. The forums elect members who represent their areas at Tenants Council where we deal with the

more strategic issues on policy borough wide.

I appreciate that residents have busy lives and the last thing many of you will want to do is to come to a meeting at night, but instead of moaning about the services to those around you come and be involved and help us to make those changes.

Take time to find out where your housing meetings are held and come and see how we can change things. If you do not have a residents' association on your estate, there are resident participation officers who will help with setting one up. They can be contacted through your local housing office. A registered association can make a huge difference to an estate and it is worth the work. After all our homes are one of the most important things in our lives.

The diet can wait but paying your rent can't

With Christmas coming and the excitement that comes along with it, it's easy to forget the mundane things like paying bills and making sure your rent is up to date. However, residents are being urged to put paying their rent before Christmas shopping this year to avoid arrears.

"Financial pressures obviously increase for people at Christmas but paying their rent should be our residents' priority," said Ingemar Castillo of Lambeth Living.

It is important to be aware that not keeping up with your rent payments at any time of the year can lead to further action being taken.

"Trying to pay back mounting rent arrears in the New Year is often difficult and not getting payments back on track may lead to penalties such as removing parking permits, housing transfer applications being blocked and even court action to evict you." If you are having difficulty paying your rent, please call: **020 7926 6000.**



Want to brighten up your neighbourhood?

Lambeth Living is able to assist with coordinating Community Freshview events where local residents play an active role in improving their neighbourhood.

This could be brightening up an area of local green space, giving a facelift to a disused area of land, or any other activity that would improve your local environment.

Lambeth Council will provide you with everything you need to help make your clean-up day a success. The council will consider all ideas as long as they will help to renew a sense of pride in your local area. So, if you would like to make a difference to your neighbourhood, get a group together and choose a community representative then send an email to: freshview@lambeth.gov.uk or phone your Resident Participation Officer Cathy Kempadoo on **020 7926 1681.**

Community Freshviews are held on Saturdays between 10am and 2pm and spaces are available from January 2010.

Important addresses and phone numbers

North Lambeth Area Housing Office

91 Kennington Lane
London SE11 4HQ

Stockwell and Vassall Housing Office

283 – 291 Wandsworth Road
London SW8 2ND

Clapham Area Housing Office

Worsopp Drive
London SW4 9QU

Norwood Area Housing Office

Cranfield Close
London SE27 9JT

Brixton Customer Centre

18 Brixton Hill
London SW2 1RD

Gracefield Gardens Customer Centre

2 – 8 Gracefield Gardens
London SW16 2ST

Lambeth Service Centre

020 7926 6000
info@lambethliving.org.uk

Leaseholders' enquiries

020 7926 6700

Resident Participation Officer

Anthony Hillary 020 7926 3799

Noise nuisance

020 7926 5999 (night) or
020 7926 6111 (day time Monday
to Friday)

Anti-social behaviour officer

020 8649 2161

Lambeth Victim Support

020 7820 0007

Lambeth Revenue and Benefits

0845 300 0328

Rent payment touchtone service

0845 3000 328

Refuse bin collection problems

020 7926 9000

Emergency repairs

020 7926 6666

Lambeth police

0300 123 1212

National debt line

0808 808 4000

Citizens' Advice Bureau

020 8715 0707
advice@mertoncab.org.uk

Comments and complaints

feedback@lambethliving.org.uk

If you wish to make an appointment to see your respective housing officer, regarding rent or tenancy issues, please telephone 020 7926 6000.

Alternatively you can visit the Clapham Area Housing Office, where customer service agents will be happy to assist you.

Spanish

Si desea esta información en otro idioma, rogamos nos llame al 020 1234 5678

Portuguese

Se desejar esta informação noutra idioma é favor telefonar para 020 1234 5678

French

Si vous souhaitez ces informations dans une langue veuillez nous contacter au 020 1234 5678

Bengali

এই তথ্য অন্য কোনো ভাষায় আপনার প্রয়োজন হলে অনুগ্রহ করে ফোন করুন 020 1234 5678

Twi

Se wope saa naeboy yi wo kasa foforo mu a fre 020 1234 5678

Yoruba

Tí ẹ ba fẹ ìmoràn yìí, ní èdè Òmíràn, ẹjǫ, ẹ kàn wà l'ágogo 020 1234 5678

If you would like this information in large print, in Braille, on audio tape or in another language, please telephone 0845 300 0328.

We hope that you have found this newsletter interesting and informative. We would welcome any comments or suggestions for other information you would like included.

Please contact Anthony Hillary 020 7926 3799 or via email on ahillary@lambethliving.org.uk

