

RAISING THE ROOF

Blenheim Gardens RMO Annual Report 2005/2006

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Introduction

Welcome to our first ever annual report for Blenheim Gardens Estate. We are sure you would agree Blenheim Gardens Estate has come a long way since the development of the RMO in June 2001.

Since our development, we have seen new windows installed, the communal lighting up graded, the introduction of the Direct Labour Repairs service, the cleaning service brought in house, scooter barriers

erected, new central heating being installed, front entrance doors being replaced, Asbestos being removed, drug houses being closed down, us being awarded TMO of the year in 2003 and not to mention being the first TMO in the county to achieve the prestigious 'investors in people' accreditation in 2004.

But for us all, the journey is just beginning, we have a very challenging year ahead with the development of the first Tenant Led ALMO (TALMO) and becoming a step closer along the path to achieving the Governments Decent Home Standards by 2010.

This report sets out what we achieved in 2005/2006 and our objectives for 2006/2007.

A message from the Chair

Welcome to the annual report of Blenheim Gardens RMO. 2005 has undeniably been a year of great challenges and learning for Blenheim Gardens RMO. We were inspected by

the Housing Quality Network in October 2005 and although the subsequent results were disappointing for all involved, we must not let the inspection results dishearten us too much, since we have come a huge distance in the last 12 months.

We are however, determined to achieve a 2 star rating in the next round of inspections by improving our services, estate and homes.

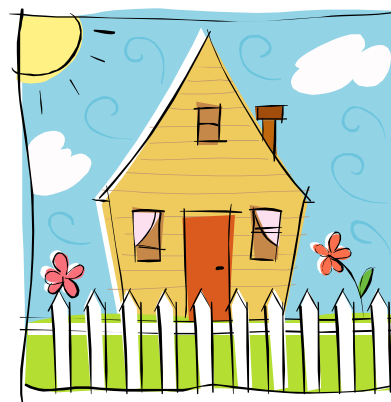
A big thank you to all those residents who had taken part in our recent surveys and focus groups, we are now in the process of obtaining detailed information on what is working and what needs to be improved. We have already started to implement some of the required improvements. We are now taking firm action and making the necessary changes to our services as we continuously seek to improve and achieve the necessary standard.

The last year also saw a number of personnel changes within the organisation with our Estate Director, Sarah Chapman, moving on to Hackney Council, and our Housing Officer, Tim Mathias, going on secondment to the TALMO project team; I am sure you will agree however, that Danny Howcroft is proving to be a capable interim Estate Director and a prime example of us investing in our staff.

The inspection feedback aside, board members and I are happy with the progress we have made in the last year and are very optimistic for the coming year. We will continue to

work in partnership with Lambeth Council, the Tenant Management Unit, the TALMO Project Team, Councillors, the Metropolitan Police, the Clapham Youth Project and other agencies to achieve excellence in housing service provision. Most importantly, we are looking forward to working with you all and encourage all residents to get involved in the organisation as much possible to make improvements on Blenheim Gardens Estate now and in the future

Angela Bartley (chair)



Housing Management-What we achieved

Revenue Management:

-We had a rent collection rate of 100.05%. We were the fourth highest rent collector in the borough.

-We had a Service Charge collection rate of 96%

-We served 29 Notices of Seeking Possessions

-We applied to the court for 12 possession orders and we were granted 3

-We made 3 applications to the court for eviction warrants and were granted 2

We evicted 1 resident for rent arrears

Allocations:

-We allocated 20 properties to new residents, with an average property turn around time of 30.2 Days

- 1 property was allocated to an emergency applicant
- 7 properties were allocated to mainstream applicants
- 8 properties were allocated to homeless applicants
- 2 properties were allocated to referral applicants
- 2 properties were allocated to mainstream register applicants

Customer Service:

-We answered 98.8% of all calls received within 15 seconds

-We received 72 letters that required a response and all were replied to within 10 days.

Repairs and Maintenance:

-We completed 93 % of our Gas Service programme (we also had a central heating renewal programme underway)

-We completed 827 repair orders

2.8 % of all repair jobs were completed out of hours (urgent)

27.6 % of all repair jobs were completed in 1-day (P1)

20.3 % of all repair jobs were completed in 2 days (P2)

27.6% of all repair jobs were completed in 1-week (P3)

2-0.4% of all repair jobs were completed in 1-month (P4)

1.3% of all repair jobs were completed in 3 months (P5)

We completed 98.9 % of all repairs on time.

98.4% of Residents were satisfied with the standard of repair completed.

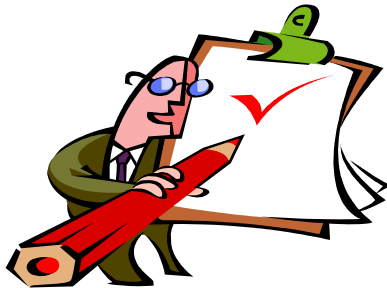
-We painted all the walkways on each block

-We installed **23** New kitchens complete

- We installed **19** New bathrooms
- We renewed **17** fences
- We renewed **115** Front entrance doors
- We replaced **2** roofs
- We rewired **20** properties
- We renewed **10** Garage doors
- Added **10** new litter bins and **5** new dog waste bins in the communal areas including on walkways

Anti-Social Behaviour:

- We served **1** Notice of Seeking Possession on the grounds of Nuisance Behaviour (ASB)



How was your budget spent?

We received income of £613,978 for the 2005/2006 financial year.
Generally we spent:

£268.493 on Direct Expenditure including

£19,362 on electrical work including in void properties

£35,157 on repair materials

£36,605 on block maintenance

£15,841 on bulk rubbish collection

£23,438 on pest control

£41,729 on Gas servicing (+ accruals)

£4,136 on estate cleaning materials

£11,758 on decorations and voids

£249.694 on Staff costs

£112.183 on Overheads

March PAYE £6,548.62
December Pension £3,335.45
4th qtr VAT £22,822.40

Actual Balance £374,479.82

These figures have yet to be independently certified by our auditors and therefore should only be used as a guide only. Our financial audit will be completed in August 2006 and information will be published accordingly.

Investing in People & Resident Involvement

Employing, securing and developing our staff is essential to the development of BGRMO in improving service provision, customer focus and continuing to become a desired area of choice for people to live and work.

Throughout the year we have continued to develop and review our customer care training for staff across the organisation from office staff to members of our DLO and caretaking team. This training promotes the importance of being proactive and responsive to resident needs, understanding who our customers are, their perspectives and dealing with matters in a professional and skilled manner. Such training is at the very heart of our developing customer care strategy, to help drive improvements throughout the organisation and change the way in which we do things for the better.

We have already been accredited with 'Investors in people' status, and being the first RMO in the country to receive such an award,

Bank Balance.

<i>Current</i>	£4189.81
<i>Deposit</i>	£36.41
<i>Money on 30 day deposit</i>	£102,708.63
<i>Investment Account</i>	£300,000
<i>Total:</i>	£406,934.85
<i>Less (UN-presented cheques)</i>	£9,632.63
<i>Actual Balance</i>	£397,302.22

Commitments

demonstrates our commitment to investing in our staff in order to provide you with the best possible services.

During this year we have already held a number of focus groups and distributed a number of satisfaction surveys to help us improve our key housing management services to you. From the focus groups we have

- **Implemented a Customer Service Charter, Estate Cleaning Charter and a Repairs Charter as a minimum standard of service you can expect from us.**
- **Implemented procedures for working in your home and completing forced entries to carry out annual Gas services.**
- **Reviewed our repairs service and we are in the process of offering early mornings, late night (Thursday) and Saturday appointment slots on request.**
- **Introduced a weekend cleaning service**
- **Introduced a empty property re-let standard**

From our surveys we found

Opening Hours Survey: From the 67 respondents

28 were satisfied with the current opening hours

27 requested a Saturday service

11 requested a later service

14 requested an earlier service

(13 respondents chose two options)

From the findings we are in the progress of reviewing our opening hours and these will be amended for June 2006

Estate Cleaning Survey: From the 68 respondents

66 were either satisfied or very satisfied with the general estate cleaning

2 were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the general estate cleaning.

A big 'thank you' to all those residents who participated in our survey's and focus groups. We are in the process of organising additional focus groups around how we collect rents and deal with complaints of Anti-Social Behaviour, so if you would like to get involved please contact the estate office.

Today, investing and involving our residents in how we operate our services has never been more crucial.

To involve our residents in estate activities we have developed a partnership with the Clapham Youth Project to provide various activities throughout the year. We have already sponsored a trip to the cinema for the under 12's and a day trip to a leisure centre for the 12's and under. We have a number of other activities arranged throughout the year, including offering professional

football coaching lessons, so look out for the Clapham Project's newsletter to find out more details. If you would like us to arrange any specific activity that is not currently on offer, please complete the attached resident notice form and return to the estate office.

We are also in the process of arranging a day trip to the seaside for our senior residents. We have provisionally booked a mini bus for June 2006 to take 12 senior residents to the seaside. Leaflets regarding this trip will be distributed soon. This trip will be completely FREE OF CHARGE and bookings will be on a first come first served basis.

We have erected a number of Resident Notice Boards around the estate to provide you with up to date information and advice. We hope that you are finding these useful. Should you wish to place an advert card in one of the notice boards please contact the estate office. They have proved particularly useful for advertising mutual exchanges.

Throughout the coming year we are committing ourselves to increasing the number of residents that are involved in the estate activities. Through greater participation in the consultation process surrounding our policies and procedures, we hope to work more effectively and collectively with our residents.

Breaking down communication barriers

This year we plan to increase communication with

both disabled residents and residents from ethnic minority groups.

A significant proportion of our residents do not speak English and in order to ensure they are not excluded from the services we provide, we now offer a translation and interpretation service from the estate office and over the telephone. We are now also able to produce literature in a number of formats including Braille and Large print; and soon we will be installing a loop communication aid in reception for those residents with hearing impairments

Local Services Handbook

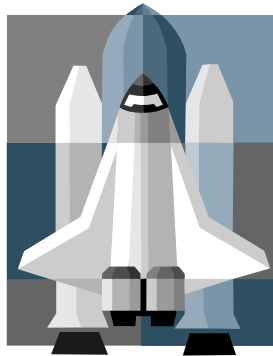
We are in the process of developing a local resident's services handbook for new and existing residents. This handbook is packed with information and advice regarding the estate community, your tenancy agreement and our obligations as a landlord. The booklet also sets out our new service standards and has useful sections on other local services available. The handbooks will be published and distributed for consultation by June 2006.

WWW.BGRMO.ORG.UK



Our own worldwide website will be going live in May 2006. We will be the first RMO in the borough to offer access to our information and services on line 24hrs a day 365 days a year. The site provides information regarding all the services we provide and contact information such as reporting a repair on line and your tenancy obligations. The site also provides useful link pages from rent payments and leasehold services to transfers and independent advice agencies. It is envisaged that this website will become a primary way in which you can access all our services and become more involved in estate activities. Once the website is launched please feel free to make any comments and suggestions regarding its format and contents, since we aim to constantly improve this facility.

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2006 and beyond!

This year is going to be a very important one in determining the future of Blenheim Gardens Estate. As you are aware we are in very advanced stages of developing a TALMO (Tenant Arms Length Management Organisation) with four other Residents Management Organisations in the borough. We need to achieve at least a 2 star rating during our next round of inspections to receive additional funding of approximately £4 million pounds. This money is direct from the Government and is in addition to our annual Management Allowances received from Lambeth Council. The money is specifically ringed fenced to bring our estate up to the Decent Home Standard by 2010. This money will mean new kitchens, bathrooms, rewiring and/or front entrance doors. There may also be additional funding for further estate improvements.

What is the Decent Homes Standard?

The Decent Home Standard (DHS) is a target the Government has set to ensure all council properties have modern facilities and are comfortable. The standard is to be achieved by 2010.

In a general sense DHS refers to a minimal property condition standard in terms of *repair, facilities and thermal comfort*. In order for this standard to be achieved, homes will need to have modern facilities including new kitchens and/or bathrooms, rewiring, insulation, central heating, double glazing, new front entrance doors etc.

What is a TALMO?

A TALMO is a Tenants Arms Length Management Organisation and it is the first of its kind in this country. It is one of the options available to local authorities to meet the Decent Home Standards. A TALMO is a governmental policy objective of separating the strategic housing function of the local authority from the day to day management of housing services. Effectively Blenheim Gardens Estate will be managed in the same one it is now, but forming part of a TALMO, will enable us to receive additional funding and greater independence from the local authority.

Why set up a TALMO?

All councils in England are required by the Government to bring their homes up to a 'decent standard' by 2010. A local authority survey completed in 2002 indicated well over half of all properties on Blenheim Gardens fails to meet the Decent Home Standards and the local authority cannot afford to bring us up to standard from the money they have available in the time given.

What are the benefits of forming TALMO?

- Resident participation will remain central to the TALMO
- Blenheim Gardens RMO will continue to provide your housing management services.
- The tenancy agreement will remain unaffected. You will remain secure tenants.
- Rights and entitlements remain the same

- Rents will continue to be set by the council.
- Ownership of the properties will remain with the council.
- The TALMO will receive additional Government funding in addition to our Management Allowances to invest in your home.
- The TALMO will ensure all services provided will be responsive to local need and demonstrate value for money.
- the TALMO will share best practice that will lead to an increase in efficiency savings.

What if we do not achieve a 2 star standard?

We are still able to form a TALMO without receiving a 2 star status from the next round of inspections. If we fail to reach 2 star rating however, we will not receive any additional funding from the Government. The TALMO is scheduled to go live in July 2006 and we are due to be inspected in January 2007.

Where can I get independent advice regarding the TALMO?

PPCR (Public Participation Consultation and Research) have been appointed independent resident advisors to Lambeth's TALMO bid. It is their job to make sure that you understand what the TALMO is, why it is being set up and what it will mean to you. PPCR can be contacted direct on **FREEPHONE 0800 317 066**

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A new computer system is on its way.....

In July 2006 the council is set to introduce a new computerised system-SX3 to replace HICS and SAFFRON. Where piloted, this system has proved to be user friendly, effective and efficient. The new system is internet based so therefore provides greater use capabilities than our existing system.

Managing Mini-Motos

With spring bringing warmer weather and longer daylight hours BGRMO and the metropolitan police want to make users of Mini-Motorbikes and scooters aware of the strict restrictions placed on their use. It is illegal for any type of motorised bike to be used on roads, pavements, cycle paths and any other land which has public access. Riders causing Nuisance will have their bike seized. The owner of the bike will be liable for the cost of seizing the bike £105 and a storage charge of £12 per day for up to 21 days. After 21 days the bike will be destroyed. Parents and/or legal

guardians of those children under the age of 16 years caught in possession and using a motorised bike will have nuisance action taken against them. We have served 2 notices of Seeking Possession on properties for nuisance behaviour; please ensure your property is not the next one.

Re-developments to the Mall

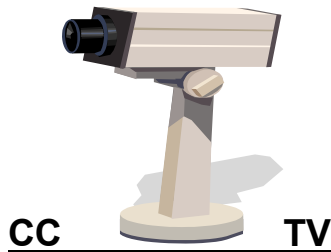


Work to re-develop the mall area is well underway and is scheduled for completion by June 2006. This work will be costing in the region of £220.000 pounds and we are sure you will agree that this will be money well spent.

The mall area had been neglected greatly over the years and the tree roots presented a number of health and safety issues to both residents and visitors to the estate. One visitor to the estate broke her arm tripping over a raised paving slab.

We are intending to replant the same number of trees as removed and the area will also include grass and flowerbeds. As always, we are inviting your comments and/or suggestions regarding the replanting of trees and flowers in this area, so please contact the estate office with any suggestions you may have.

We appreciate that while the re-development work is in progress the centre of the mall has been cordoned off. We apologize for any inconvenience this may be causing and thank you for your co-operation and patients at this time.



We are in the process of erecting a number of mobile CCTV cameras around the estate. We are inviting your suggestions on where you would like them situated. One suggestion has been overlooking the Mall development whereas others have suggested the car park areas, particularly in Glanville Road and Ramillies Close. Should you have any additional suggestions, please contact the estate office by 10th May 2006. Your suggestions are always welcomed.

Put Paying Your Rent First

We all know the consequences of not paying our rent, but did you know we have introduced a new incentive to maintain your rent payments throughout the coming year? All residents who have a clear rent on 1st April 2007 will be entered in to a prize draw to have a room decorated in their home free of charge. Yes that's right, we will decorate, provide materials, and labour to decorate a room in your house to the value of £150.00 as a reward for simply paying the rent regularly and on time throughout the coming year!

Please contact the estate office for further details.

Planned Maintenance Programmes

This year we are starting our external decorations programme in May. We are repainting the block at Blenheim Gardens and residents in this block should have already received notification of this work. We are also intending to repaint the garage areas in both Ramillies Close and Glanville Road this year as well as the communal stairwell handrails.

The second phase of the front entrance door programme is underway. Funding for this programme is from Lambeth's

Housing Opportunity Fund and the work is being completed by Gerda Security. Unfortunately, there is not enough money in the fund to complete all entrance doors' on the estate until additional funding can be identified.

The third phase of the central heating replacement programme is well underway. The programme is being funded by Lambeth Council and is being administrated again by EPS. If you would like to be nominated for this programme please contact the estate office.

Following the completion of our own stock condition survey this year we will aim to install a further 15 new kitchens and 10 new bathrooms. Those residents selected from the completed survey will for the first time be offered a choice of 4 kitchen colours and be consulted regarding the kitchen design.

We aim to renew 10 fences

We aim to renew 30 pram-shed doors

Ground and Block Maintenance Works

This year ground maintenance programme is already underway. We have already repaired the road curbs leading in to Glanville Road from St. Saviours Road. We have also resurfaced the entrance road in to Prague Place.

We further plan to resurface the entrance walkways into Glanville Road by the Levity School, replace 10 garage doors, renew 30 pram shed doors and renew all the broken bin hopper lids in Glanville Road this year.

Aids and Adaptations Scheme

For the first time we have set aside a specific budget in this financial year to install minor aids and adaptation's into properties where residents are disabled and/or elderly. The long waiting time to receive a needs assessment from Lambeth Social Services results in many residents struggling to live independently in their home. Taking matters in hand we are now able to offer-

- Mixer taps in the bathroom and/or kitchen
- Hand rails (internal and external)
- Entrance and exit ramps
- Additional / relocated power points

Unfortunately due to financial restraints we are not able to install shower units, lower level baths, and/or stair lifts. Please note this scheme should not be used as a substitute to having your care needs professional assessed by Lambeth Social Services.

Please contact the estate office for further details.

Should you require this information in other languages and or formats please contact the estate office

Benefit Advice for Leaseholders

Our Customer Services Officer, Sarah Uwajeh, is now able to offer Welfare Benefit Advice to leaseholders. Sarah successfully completed training on 'Benefits for leaseholders and shared ownership'. If leaseholders require any benefit advice please contact Sarah direct on 0207 926 0161 or email: suwajeh@lambeth.gov.uk

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WATCH OUT THERE'S A BOGUS CALLER ABOUT.....

WE HAVE RECEIVED REPORTS OF A BOGUS CALLER VISITING RAMILLIES CLOSE.....PLEASE BE ON YOUR GUARD AND IF NECESSARY CONTACT THE POLICE.

