



A Self Financing TMO – update

Following the completion of the RMOs feasibility study, we have submitted a business case to Lambeth Council for BGRMO to become a self financing TMO.

A self financing TMO changes the relationship between the RMO and the Council; and if agreed, will result in BGRMO being responsible for providing all the housing management services on this estate and paying the Council for back office services they provide to us (IT system for example). There is only 1 TMO in the Country who has become self financed and BGRMO is keen to improve the services we offer to the residents we serve. We are waiting for a response from the Council and we will keep residents updated on progress.

The RMO movers and the shakers

The RMO can confirm that the Repairs Manager, Mr John Potter, retires at the end of March 2016. John has been an excellent servant to the RMO and we are sure you will join us in wishing him all the very best in his retirement. The repairs service is now being administrated by Mr David Ellis, Housing Assistant.

Please direct your repair enquiries to David on telephone 020 7926 0159 or email DMCellis@lambeth.gov.uk. The RMO can also confirm that Mr Gary Hooper, repairs operative, has left the RMO following his relocation. We wish Gary all the best for the future.

The RMO welcomes **Mr Andrew Callam** to our team following the successful completion of his apprenticeship. Andrew joins us as a Customer Services Officer.

For any customer service questions please contact Andrew on 020 7926 0158 or email ACallam@lambeth.gov.uk – welcome aboard Andrew.



Andrew

LHS works

For any works associated with Wate's, residents are reminded that the first point of contact is Lambeth Council since these are works that were commissioned and project managed by the them and not BGRMO.

Helen Lawrence is the Project Support Officer and she is available on Tel: 020 7926 9731 or Email: HLawrence@lambeth.gov.uk

Helen is situated in the RMO office each Wednesday between 9 – 11 am

Garry Dickson is the Capital Works Project Manager and he is available on Tel: 020 7926 8144 or Email gdickson@lambeth.gov.uk

BGRMO is able to undertake emergency works associated with this project only. Such works include a leak, a blockage and or a total loss of electrical power.



Stay & Play sessions at the Windmill

Our Stay and Play sessions are on

Tuesdays

9.30-11.30 and 1.00-3.00

Wednesdays

1.00-3.00

Thursdays

Chatterbox

9.30-3.00 and

Outdoor Learning 1.00-3.00 .

Sessions are free and available to parents/carers with children under 5 years of age.

At each session we offer a wide range of fun activities both inside and out to stimulate and encourage children's development and learning through play. It's a great way to meet other parents/carers to share tips, ideas and strategies to support parenting as well as develop your child's social interaction skills. At each session we end with a fruit snack followed by story/song time.

We also have regular visits from an advisor from Citizens Advice who can offer advice on a range of topics.

Chatterbox Stay and Play session focuses on Children's Communication, Speech and Language development, a Speech Therapist visits on a monthly basis to provide ideas, top tips and guidance as well as answer any questions parents/carers may have.

Our Outdoor Learning, Stay and Play session focuses primarily on the outdoor area, where children and nature come together. We have created raised beds for the children to dig, explore as well as minibeasts to find. Last year we successfully grew a variety of vegetables and flowers.

Please do pop in anytime during our opening time to pick up a timetable, this will also provide you details about free activities events and adult learning courses at Jubilee and Treehouse Children Centres. We also offer support and guidance to parents on an individual basis through our Children Centre Outreach Team.

For more information about The Windmill or Children Centre Services please call Holmewood Nursery School on 020 8674 3440 For our Outreach team contact Alison on 020 8674 3440 or 07930 699101

Pests controlled

The RMO in Partnership with Pestokill will soon be undertaking another round of our annual pest control inspections on the estate.

The inspections cover all pests in both tenant and leasehold properties on the estate.

But remember prevention is always better than cure . . . Simple measures can help to prevent pests being attracted to your property.

Consider that a mouse can get through any hole larger than a biro, holes around pipes and brickwork are a primary entry points.

Pests love food, the smallest crumbs will feed them so make sure waste is stored in a bin with a lid and if you get pests inside, we recommend putting food in tins or plastic containers and lifting pet foods from the floor after use.

Pests love mess, so please ensure that your cupboards (food, chemical, airing and storage cupboards) are organised and not cluttered so that any holes can be easily identified and infestations treated quickly.



**Pestokill operates a
24/7/365 service
and is available on:**

**Freephone
0800 2889 911**

or online at

www.pestokill.co.uk/bgrmo

Repairs service

The RMO prides it self on the quality of repairs service we offer to residents. The RMO however, is not responsible for all repairs and maintenance required in your home. The following repairs are the tenants' responsibility and not the RMO:

- Getting access in to your property if you have lost or mislaid your door keys
- Door latches and fittings in your home
- Cupboards and cupboard handles and hinges
- Letter box
- Sink plugs and chains
- Toilet chains, toilet seats
- Tap washers
- Small faults and cracks in plaster
- Floor and wall tiles
- Hot water cylinder jackets
- Any internal doors or glass
- Decorations
- Blocked sinks, toilet and drains
- Light bulbs

The RMO will recharge you if any of the above works are requested. The RMO can also offer a repairs service to homeowners living on the estate. Please contact the RMO to discuss your requirements on 0207 926 0158

Drainage Improvement

BGRMO is pleased to confirm that the Council have now made plans to improve the drainage area in Ramilles Close car park and to repair the road. The work is expected to commence in April and should take no longer than 6-8 weeks to complete. There will be parking restrictions in this area whilst the work is undertaken. BGRMO thanks you in advance for your patience whilst this work is being completed.



The RMO would like to thank all the estate families who attended our Christmas Children's party hosted in the windmill.

It was a great day had by all and we look forward to seeing you again this year!



Mould and damp

The RMO have received increasing reports of condensation and damp in residents homes. We have found that in over 90% of our inspections, this has been caused by the residents life style.

We have found:

- Too many items being stored in a room and cupboards
- Heavy items such as wardrobes being placed too close to walls
- Heavy curtains not being opened
- Over crowded sleeping spaces
- Windows not being opened routinely or the trickle vent (in each window and sky light) being permanently closed
- Electric fans not being switched on
- Wet clothes being dried on radiators
- Cooking food without opening a window
- A non-condensing tumble dryer being used
- The central heating constantly on

All of these factors contribute to a reduced air flow in the property which in turn causes condensation and damp. If you feel that your property is experiencing mould and /or damp, please consider the above issues and then contact the estate office to organise an inspection.

Housing & Planning Act - a reflection by the RMO Chair

I work for Lambeth Housing Management in the South area and serve as a Unison steward there. I also serve as the chair of the board of governance of a residents management association in Brixton, Blenheim Gardens RMO. As such, social housing concerns are very present in my mind at all times. I attended the first protest march against the Housing and Planning Act. There will be more marches. There was an extremely wide spectrum of people and political groupings present including an impressive turnout from my own trade union, Unison, with banners in evidence from Southwark, Tower Hamlets and Camden.

Considering the potential impact of the legislation the turnout was small and I know from conversations with friends that this legislation has slipped through under a lot of peoples' radar, not altogether surprising given the number of issues progressive people are grappling with at present. With this in mind, I would like to reiterate the problems arising from this Act.

There are a number of pernicious provisions very prejudicial to the future of social housing providers.

1. Rent reduction by 1% a year for five years. This is simply fiddling the books as a huge amount of social housing rent comes from housing benefit and they can reduce this expenditure at the expense of social housing providers and local authorities. All providers were explicitly assured that the previous system of an annual 5% increase would be maintained for another five years. Everyone's business plans and financial projections have just been

falsified at a stroke and everyone is having to do their sums all over again, revising the figures sharply downwards.

2. Extension of the right to buy to housing association tenants. This will have exactly the same effect on these providers as it has had on local authority providers. They will lose their stock at a discounted rate and find themselves unable to replace it.

3. Compulsory sale of "high value voids". How the "high value" will be defined is as yet unspecified. This is allegedly to provide the money to compensate housing associations for the discounted sales under right to buy, so the money for the sale of this stock will not accrue to the local authorities thereby forced to sell. This at a time of savage cuts in local authority funding, another clear drain on available stock and likely to disproportionately effect the availability of two, three and four bedroom properties most suitable for family housing. In inner city London practically everything could be so defined. This is a particular threat to the pioneering Leathermarket TMO (and indeed all TMOs) as they are situated just south of the Thames in the very shadow of 'The Shard'.

4. "Pay to Stay". An arbitrary cut-off point at which an individual or couple earning more than thirty thousand pounds a year in the country at large and forty in London in London will no longer be eligible for social housing rent but have to pay the ludicrously inflated "market rate". For a couple in London this would amount to no more than the

London living wage. How will this be verified and implemented? Will housing providers be obliged to ask for wage slips and bank statements? This provision is also highly likely to create the very "sink estates" that the government has just given Micheal Heseltine millions of pounds to prevent. It will deprive estates like ours at Blenheim Gardens, run by the residents, and all others of just the kind of skilled and motivated people we so badly need.

5. I asked an expert, a consultant whose knowledge Blenheim Gardens has often found to be highly valuable, if the government were not merely killing off social housing. His reply is worth quoting. "It's not shooting it in the head, Eamon. But it's definitely shooting it in the leg and watching it limp".

I would advise anyone who cares about the quality of life of the less well off people of this country to oppose this Act by all available legal means until this ill thought out and dangerous legislation is repealed. Please look out for future protest dates.

I hope to see you all there.

Thank you.

Eamon Maguire
RMO Chair

Ode to Blenheim Gardens

When I first came to Blenheim Gardens it was a bright and sunny day I took a leisurely stroll around this place and almost lost my way Each dwelling from outside although identical had a character all of its own Some front yards where meticulously maintained whilst others were excessively overgrown

A cacophony of music, birds singing, children playing (knock down ginger) all sounds of life that filled the air Grandpa trying to catch them out peeking from behind the curtains in his rickety old chair

Octopus and tentacles springs to mind as I followed the many pathways Branching out in all directions each one leading me somewhere new I came across a windmill on my journey through this vast maze One day I'll take a trip up to the top so I could really admire the view

Herbaceous borders and flourishing flower beds makes for a beautiful sight But as the autumn puts his winter coat on and the leaves turn from green to red to brown Blenheim Gardens blends into the cool dark night And there is silence all around

Thanks,
Ode



Do you require help de-cluttering your home?

The RMO will happily help support any estate resident who wish to de-clutter their home and/or garden areas

The RMO already provides a bulk refuse service each Monday, Wednesday and Friday to remove most household items.

There is no need to dump any items on the estate, since the RMO has introduced a number of cages throughout the estate where items can be safely stored and removed. **Free of charge.**

If you have any large items you wish to dispose of, the RMO may also arrange for the bulk tipper to come to you and collect them from your garden. This approach will reduce the caretakers time in clearing the waste away and your time in dumping it. If you are thinking de-cluttering please let the RMO know and we will provide you with as much support as we can.

Thank you.

useful numbers

RMO office - 020 7926 0158 or 0207 926 0159

Smith and Byford – gas servicing and repairs – 0800 091 2140 or 0208 722

3425 – do not wait until the RMO office is open to report a boiler fault

Pestokill – pest control - 0800 2889 911 or online at

www.pestokill.co.uk/bgrmo

Lambeth call centre 0207 926 1000

Out of hours repair service 0208 646 9100

Housing benefit - 034 5302 2312

or email benefitsinfo@lambeth.gov.uk

Benefit advice - Every Pound Counts - 020 7926 5555

or email everypoundcounts@lambeth.gov.uk

Age UK - 0800 169 6565

Women's Aid - 0808 2000 247

Non- emergency Police service 101

All estate emergencies 07903 824 072



The Right to Rent scheme – update for private landlords – are you ready?

On 1 February 2016 the Right to Rent immigration checks scheme will go live across the United Kingdom. This means that private landlords will be responsible for checking that new tenants are allowed to be in the United Kingdom before granting them a tenancy.

Right to Rent was introduced in the Immigration Act 2014 as part of the government's policy to curb illegal immigration. The Act includes new measures to prevent people who are in the UK unlawfully from accessing key services, including privately rented accommodation.

The Act makes private landlords

responsible for checking whether prospective tenants have the Right to Rent before they enter into tenancy agreements. If they do not, then they should not be granted tenancies. As well as tenancies, Right to Rent also applies to licences, sub-tenancies and lodging houses. Right to Rent checks need to be carried

out only in respect of agreements entered into on or after 1 February 2016.

If a landlord is found to have contravened the Act, then the Home Office can commence enforcement action and impose a penalty of up to £3,000.

Residents profiling –

**Have we got
your correct
details?**



Enclosed with this newsletter is a resident profile form. Please complete and return this form to the RMO office. The information provided will ensure we have the most up to date information about you and members of your household. With the correct information, we are able to provide a more responsive service to you and your family.

If you require an additional form, please contact the estate office on tel: 020 7926 0158.

All returned forms will be entered into a prize draw to win £50.00 of high street vouchers. One form is to be completed for each member of your household.



The RMO would like to say 'a big thank you' to the estate residents who attended our mature residents Christmas lunch. Also 'a big thank you' to Age UK Lambeth who sponsored the event.



Blenheim Gardens RMO

FOOTBALL

TRAINING SESSION

@Windmill

Under 12s, 15s, 18s

AND IT'S

Boyz & Girlz



Where? The Windmill Park SW2

When? Every SATURDAY

Time: 1pm TO 3pm

Register @:

**HOUSING OFFICE, Blenheim Gardens,
24 Prague Place SW2 5ED**

Or

CONTACT:

Christian: 07706 179 851

DELIVERY BY



CEFL
COMMUNITY EDUCATION FOUNDATION & LYNCX

Blenheim Gardens is Going Veggie Growing!

Blenheim Gardens RMO community garden project has been shortlisted for a grant by Tesco. Just 3 projects have been shortlisted and our project is to redevelop the garden area situated between Blenheim Gardens Estate and Ramilles Close in to a mini food co-op for local people and visitors to the estate to enjoy.



If you are interested in supporting the scheme please contact the RMO office on 020 7926 0158 or email blenheimgardens@lambeth.gov.uk

Tesco has teamed up with Groundwork to launch its Bags of Help initiative in hundreds of regions across England and Wales. The scheme will see three community groups and projects in each of these regions awarded grants of £12,000, £10,000 and £8,000 – all raised from the 5p bag charge. Bags of Help offers community groups and projects in each of Tesco's 390 regions across the UK a share of revenue generated from the five pence charge levied on single-use carrier bags. The public will vote in store on who should

receive the £12,000, £10,000 and £8,000 awards.

For more information please visit www.tesco.com/bagsofhelp

Voting between 27.02.16 until 06.03.16 at the following Tesco's stores; Brixton, Brixton Road Express, Brixton Hill, Clapham



Use your Vote and Vote for BGRMO!

A small-holding of animals in Windmill Gardens

Over the last three years, a group of Brixton residents have been surveying the community to discover if there is interest in a small farm on the Windmill Gardens site. In keeping with the heritage of the park, where chickens were once kept, The "Brixton City Farm" is proposed initially as a three year plan to bring chickens, several sheep and a number of small animals into the park in a facility that would allow children (and adults) to interact with animals, learn about sustainable food production, and develop community spirit. With Lottery funding, a small feasibility study was conducted in 2015. Brixton City Farm asked locals at various events in the Windmill Gardens whether they would like such a facility, what should be included, and whether they would like to be involved. They also asked about any concerns. More than half of the respondents surveyed indicated they would like to actively be involved in activities related to caring for the animals, and/or supporting activities the bring young people and the rest of the community into contact with animals and issues related to food sustainability. Although a number of worries were raised in relation to animal safety and welfare, the report highlights that most risks can be mitigated and the animals kept in a way that is both safe, and does not impact on other park users. The full report (including some initial architect drawings of what it could look like) can be found at this link:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B0kYe_igfrQ7NVU0aFR6MTJQd1U/view

You can also access through our Facebook page www.facebook.com/TheBrixtonCityFarm/

Your invitation to:

You are warmly invited to join us every 2nd Sunday of the month for Messy Church 3.30pm at St Paul's with St Saviour's Community Centre, 24 Blenheim Gardens, SW2 5BZ.

The dates for 2016 are: 10th April, 8th May, 12th June, 10th July, 11th September, 9th October, 13th November, 11th December

For more info contact Ben 020 7738 7259 www.stpaulsbrixton.org