
Plymouth Block Management (PBM) Winter Newsletter

Reflecting on a Challenging Year and Looking Ahead

Dear Residents,

As we prepare to turn the clocks back and step into the cold, dark mornings and evenings of winter, we're reminded that Christmas is just around the corner. For some, it will be a well-deserved rest, and for others, another year of challenges lies ahead. At PBM, we've experienced our share of difficulties this year, but we remain committed to providing the best service possible.

Fire Safety and New Measures

2024 has been a year of significant change, particularly around fire safety. We have introduced quarterly fire door inspections for communal doors and annual inspections for apartment doors, regardless of the building's height. This new regime has been challenging but essential to ensuring the safety of our residents. With fire safety laws tightening and potential government changes on the horizon, we expect even more stringent regulations, particularly for leasehold properties in high-rise buildings.

For blocks with cladding issues, we are actively working on securing government funding. While this process is slow, we've successfully obtained funding for three blocks, with several more in the pipeline. We continue to push forward on this front, working alongside Homes England.

Managing Rising Costs

The rising costs of materials, energy, and contractors have posed additional challenges. Energy prices have soared four times this year alone, causing budget to overspend and leading to deficit notices and payment demand requests. We've worked hard to mitigate this by renegotiating electricity contracts, saving thousands of pounds in some cases. We've also continued to select reasonable contractors, leveraging our buying power to keep costs as low as possible.

To better plan for the future, we've been collating five-year expenditure plans for each block. This approach allows us to set aside funds for major expenses over time, avoiding large, unexpected financial burdens for leaseholders.

New Roles for Improved Service

This year, we introduced the role of **Property Relations Manager (PRM)**. The PRM helps resolve isolated problems quickly, enabling Property Managers to focus on the overall management of properties. This role also acts as a stand-in for Property Managers when they are out of the office, ensuring no issue goes unattended.

Keely Andrew the new PRM has now visited every block in our portfolio, ensuring we have an up-to-date understanding of each property's needs. , Abi Massheder

abi@plymouthblockmanagement.com> now full-time Property Manager, has also taken on more responsibilities, focusing more on the properties and their management in greater detail.

Communication and Feedback

Earlier this year, on my return to the company. I sent out a surveys to selected blocks to gather feedback. As Managing Director, I personally called each respondent to thank them and gain a deeper understanding of what's going on in the company. Based on this feedback, I have made several improvements, including:

- Ensuring all emails are answered by the close of business on Fridays.
- Leaving visit cards under every door after a Property Manager visit, now signed by the manager.
- Staff now wear body cams during visits to capture footage and ensure safety.
- Contractors wear visible ID cards around their necks. When safe to do so.
- Property Managers notify all residents in advance of any visits, and contractors do the same before attending the site.by resident.
- Call back system, any calls from our daily report not answered are done so the very next day.
- All incoming mail and external mail is logged in to ensure its been sent.
- Signed cleaner/ PM signature pages going on all block notice boards
- A list of the dates all fire doors have been done and future date will be displayed on notice boards.
- Every four months PM will visit the block and every four months the fire doors will be checked, one visit by heath and safety and one visit from fire safety FRA contractor.
- Message sent out on resident to inform you of scheduled victors who will be on the premises.
- Block visits for Annual fire door check once a year to enable all doors to be checked each year together and at the same date each year.
- Bank accounts reconciled daily. Commercial banking which ensures timely payments to contractors every Friday starting in January 25.
- PMs checking contractors before payment, before and after photographs. Secret shopper type visits from myself and my management team to properties.
- Pro active stance and go do it attitude from staff when dealing with our clients.
- Calm and active friendly policy when communicating with clients.
- Weekly training is taking place within the company each week to assist with all the above on job training to achieve level five MTPI .

Additionally, all calls and emails are recorded, and notes are maintained on our system for transparency and accountability.

Complaints Handling and New Web Features

To further improve our service, we've introduced a **Complaints Manager** who oversees the resolution of any issues in accordance with our complaint's procedure. You can find our updated procedure on our newly launched website, which also includes an **AI Bot** to answer questions about leasehold properties and freehold estates. Our blog now provides detailed information on all conceivable issues in the property management industry for those who wish to stay informed.

Looking Forward

We are constantly striving to improve our service despite the challenges we face, including the recent addition of the **Absolute portfolio**, which has come on board after a distressed sale. Despite this, we are committed to maintaining the highest levels of service and communication with our residents/leaseholders and freeholders.

Please feel free with any ideas you our clients may have to further improve our services please email Keely@Plymouthblockmanagement.com
Ask@plymouthblockmanagement.com

Two things I, as Managing Director, will not compromise on:

1. **Fire Safety Compliance:** We insist that all fire safety measures are met as required by law.
2. **Service Charge Arrears:** We cannot tolerate arrears, as they place undue pressure on managing essential services such as insurance, fire risk assessments, health and safety, and general maintenance. If service charges fall short, it impacts our ability to manage your property effectively. If you're facing difficulties with payments, please speak to your Property Manager.

Company Management System Upgrade

Our company management system has been upgraded with many new features, which will be released shortly. I encourage all residents to sign up for our **resident system** if you haven't already. This system gives you access to important documents such as insurance, fire risk assessments (FRA), Health and Safety reports, fire door inspections, budgets, and your personal account. It is also where we communicate key information. By signing up, you help us save on postage costs and ensure your information is readily available to you and your service charge postage is kept to the minimum.

Please be aware this communication is not charged to your service charge.

Just a final note as I wish all well for the rest of the year and the New Year, if we have no service charge, we can not do our job, and due to GDPR we are not allowed to inform other leaseholders of the position with regards to any persons financial situation.so please try not to take out any frustration out on the team. The industry turnaround of staff due to burn out is very high, we now have a great team striving forward and working hard to help the clients please understand they can only do so much. So please treat them they way you would like to be treated they are only human after all.

We remain totally transparent, and we are always looking for cost-effective solutions I hope you feel we have a personalised approach with the extensive professional knowledge which we as a company want to share with you as clients and make the compliance and legal obligations easier for you as leaseholders to navigate. which in turn gives you all peace of mind for the future.

Thank you for your continued cooperation, and we look forward to working with you to make the next year a successful one for all.

Yours

Mark Christie MD. MPTI. MinstLM