



CITYWEST HOMES

Lessee newsletter

March 2017

We're changing our services

Re-let 2017: Better quality and value for repairs and major works

Re-let 2017 is a project to re-let five repairs contracts to replace the current contracts due to expire in summer 2017. These are for general repairs, mechanical and electrical repairs, lifts, voids (vacant properties) and domestic heating. For the first time, we will also let two area-based major works contracts. This will help us to develop better relationships with contractors to improve work quality and deliver programmes of work to a published timetable. The total value of all these contracts is between £40m-50m per year.

How will the new contracts help me?

- It will save money: Leaseholders benefit from savings made from major works term contracts such as eliminating procurement costs and reducing consultation costs for individual contracts
- Predictable timescales and costs: By simplifying the procurement process and setting a long term price framework
- A better service through technology: IT applications to keep you up to date with repairs, and an online portal via our website with timescales and cost calculator
- Opportunities for local residents: All of the new contracts will include employment and skills plans and a foundation for long term investment.

Residents have helped design the new contracts Residents have been involved throughout Re-let 2017, most recently helping to design the contractors' code of conduct for contractors, agreeing incentivised key performance indicators and evaluating tenders. Many thanks to all residents who gave up their time to help.

You will soon receive a 'Notice of Proposal' outlining who we proposed to award the repairs contracts to. A further notice for the major works contracts will be sent to you within the next two months. If you would like to view the full proposal, it will be available at our head office and area service centres with extended opening hours.

CityWest Connect

In June 2017, CityWest Homes will launch CityWest Connect, our new multi-channel customer service centre. This will include all front facing receptions.

CityWest Connect will simplify and modernise how residents contact us. It's all about connecting residents and will be at the heart of customer service for CityWest Homes.

Leading up to the launch, we have already begun integrating some key front line services. On Monday 6 March 2017, all Lessee contact by telephone and email has been redirected to the new Lease team within customer services. This will form part of the new CityWest Connect Contact Centre from June. The leasehold operations team (formerly known as lessee services) will be supporting the contact centre. CityWest Connect will move to the west area service centre in summer 2017. The leasehold operations team are now based at the south area service centre.

As we embark on this new journey you'll notice some changes to the options when calling. These are to improve the overall service and ensure that we're able to answer your enquires efficiently.

You can contact our team on 020 7245 2097 or lesseefrontline@cwh.org.uk.

Ways to get involved - Become a key lessee

We've been working with nearly 200 lessees, called 'key lessees', across the borough. They've been helping us to ensure we get the bills right.

The key lessees check detailed billing information about their block or estate (including communal repairs) so that any questions are resolved before the accounts are sent in September.

If you would be interested in volunteering for this vital role and working with us for your neighbours, please contact our leasehold operations team on lesseefrontline@cwh.org.uk or 020 7245 2097.



Fire doors

All our properties are built to prevent fire passing to other flats / communal areas through the structure of the building for at least 60 minutes. However, holes in internal walls such as doors are deemed to be 'weak' points and must be protected with special doors. These will resist the passage of heat / smoke and prevent fire spreading through the building.

We install 'fire doors' which meet the required standard for all CityWest Homes properties: FD30s doorset (i.e. the door will prevent the passage of smoke or heat for 30 minutes). As a leaseholder it is your legal duty to ensure your door meets this standard.

Flat entrance doors are an important fire safety feature and fall under the definition of 'controlled work' under Building Regulations. If you're considering changing your door, you will require Building Control Approval. To apply, please contact Westminster City Council's Building Control team at districtsurveyors@westminster.gov.uk.

To comply with Building Regulations, please note that a replacement door must be a FD30s doorset as defined by British Standard 476 and must be manufactured by a third party certified manufacturer, who will provide a certificate of compliance.

Details of where to source a third party, certified contractor can be found in our leaflet 'A guide to fire doorsets' at www.cwh.org.uk/publications.

Alternatively, as a lessee you can contact Wates, our term maintenance contractor, on 0800 6520 904, who can provide this service.

If you'd like further information on changing your door, or you have already changed your door / inherited your door from a previous owner, please contact our leasehold operations team.

Thinking of renting your home as a holiday let?

Since the Government changed London planning laws to allow homeowners up to 90 nights of holiday lets per year, companies such as Airbnb have become a popular way for home owners to make some extra income. If you're a leaseholder, and are considering renting your property, please check your lease first - as breaching the terms can be a serious matter.

Holiday lets are not permitted under most Westminster City Council leases. This is because the leases prohibit use of a business and requires the property to be used as a residential home ('residential' being deemed not for a short term under the recent Tribunal case *Nemcova v Fairfield Rents Ltd* [2016] UKUT 303 (LC)).

However, while most of these leasehold flats are not permitted to be let as holiday homes (even under the new planning regulations) most do permit renting for more than 90 days, e.g. as a sublet under a six month assured short hold tenancy.

Despite becoming hugely popular, short term holiday lets have resulted in complaints about anti-social behaviour, damage to common areas, leaks and excessive rubbish. That's why CityWest Homes are tackling the issue by ensuring the terms of lease are being enforced throughout our properties. Cases will be referred to the council's short term let team for further action. If you want to know more about renting your property, please visit www.citywestresidential.co.uk/let/letting-service.

If you're unsure about the terms of your lease and would like further guidance, you can also obtain legal advice from a solicitor, or contact the Leasehold Advisory Service, an independent service for leaseholders, at www.lease-advice.org.

Changes to heating and hot water charges - communal systems

This year, CityWest Homes will introduce changes to the heating and hot water charges for those on communal or district heating systems. In line with new government regulations, the aim is to improve accurate heating and hot water billing, plus reduce energy waste.

We have already installed individual or block based meters to a number of properties across the borough. These will continue to be rolled out as major works projects take place.

From 1 April 2017, we'll pilot changes to billing in four blocks: Bramwell and Shelley House on Churchill Gardens (new block based billing), Hide Tower (individual billing for Cyclo-Control electric heating) and Ingestre Court (billing for the new individual HIU units).

During 2017 the pilot blocks will start to receive heating and hot water statements for the first time. This will give residents more detailed information on their actual heating and hot water usage, based on their own meter readings (or the block-meter's readings). Payments for heating and hot water will continue to be made through the service charge as normal.

By working with a small number of blocks, we can closely monitor the impact of this pilot, plus target support to anyone who needs it.

Following the pilot, we plan to roll out the scheme to other blocks on communal heating systems. If you have any questions about the project, please contact heatingenquiries@cwh.org.uk.





How satisfied are you with our newsletter?

We want to ensure we're sending important updates in a format that works for you. To help us do this, please take a moment to rate our newsletter and share your ideas in our survey at www.cwh.org.uk/newsletter. All answers will be confidential.

To say thank you for your time, all entries will be entered into a prize draw to win one of three £100 vouchers.

The survey closes on Friday 28 April 2017.



Changing the way we bill for major works

In our September 2016 edition of the lessee newsletter, CityWest Homes announced that we were reviewing and amending the way major works are currently billed to you. This is the beginning of our consultation journey, as over the coming months, we will provide opportunities for you to feedback and share your ideas on our processes and documents.

Following consultation with lessees from our new resident engagement area panels, we're pleased to announce that, from 1 April 2017, any major works contracts that are planned to be carried out under the new contract re-let will be billed in a new and more efficient way.

From now on, when there are planned major works to your building in a given financial year (scheduled to fall under the new contract arrangements) you will receive an estimated half-yearly bill every April and October. The annual costs for the works will then be calculated on a yearly basis.

You will receive your half-yearly bills in a new format. This will include information on payment options, a breakdown of the major works bill estimate and a question and answer leaflet. If you need to refer to them, the information leaflets are also online at www.cwh.org.uk/publications.

You may have already received a Section 20 notice of intention, for a proposed major works scheme in your building. If these works are already out to tender (or on site) and have not been billed on final account, they will continue to be billed to you as a separate ad-hoc estimated account when the project goes on site.

If you have any questions about the process, please or contact our leasehold operations team at lesseefrontline@cwh.org.uk or 020 7245 2097.

More information for CityWest Homes lessees, including ways to pay service charges, is available at www.cwh.org.uk/lessee.