

Ashworth Mansions
Survey of owners' and residents' views
July 2007

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From the Board of Directors

As we promised at the last residents' meeting, we are carrying out a survey to better understand the views of owners and residents (whether they own their flat or not) about Ashworth Mansions – where we live and/or which is, for many of us, our largest financial asset. You may have received this survey through your door (we have sent one copy direct to each flat) or via the Managing Agents (every owner whose service charge address is not at Ashworth Mansions has had a copy of the survey sent by post). Please take a few moments to fill this out. We will use the results to inform our planning, for example about the budget process for next year, so we hope you will agree that completing the form is time well spent.

Return the completed survey to the caretaker, Daron, either by leaving it outside your flat door to be picked up with the rubbish (please put it in an envelope – or fold it – prominently marked 'Survey' to make it easier for Daron to spot) or drop it off with Daron at Flat 47a – whichever is easiest for you. If you are not at Ashworth Mansions at the moment then please return the survey by post to: 'Ashworth Survey, 70 Ashworth Mansions, Grantully Road, LONDON W9 1LN'. The next meeting of the Board is on 31 July, and the more replies we can have before then the better, but we will take full account of all replies, whenever we get them.

Fill out as much of what follows as you can or are willing to, ticking the boxes (and adding comment if you want to). If you would like to use this opportunity to address questions we haven't asked or to comment more than the boxes allow on some of the questions we have asked, please feel free to do so as you wish. We will read with care and make good use of all of the information you send us, whether you own a flat at Ashworth Mansions or are a tenant in one.

Please forgive any amateur feel to the survey: we assumed that you would not want to pay to have one done professionally. Thanks, in anticipation, for your support in this exercise.

First, we'd like to ask a few questions about you.

Q1: What is your name?

Q2: What is your flat number?

Q3: Is your flat on Grantully Road (G) or Elgin Avenue (E)?

Q4: Do you own the flat or are you renting?

Q5: If owning, how long have you owned your flat for? If renting, how long have you rented for?

Less than one year	Two to five years	Five to ten years	More than ten years

Q6: If owning, when do you expect to sell your flat (if at all – here we are trying to get an idea of how long people expect to own for, which affects attitudes towards long-term maintenance and improvements)? If renting, how long do you expect to stay for?

Less than one year	Two to five years	Five to ten years	More than ten years	Never or indefinitely	Don't know

Q7: The next question concerns how you rate Ashworth Mansions in comparison to similar mansion blocks in the Maida Vale area such as Biddulph, Leith or Lauderdale Mansions. We are interested in your general impressions and realise that this is a pretty subjective question, but your answers give us some idea of how well we are doing compared with what we could be achieving. Please tick the box (one tick only please) that accords most closely with your view.

Ashworth Mansions is among the worst blocks to live in.	Strongly agree	Mildly agree	Neutral	Mildly agree	Strongly agree	Ashworth Mansions is among the best blocks in the area to live in.

Comments

Q8: We employ a professional firm (Kinleigh, Folkard & Hayward - KFH) to manage Ashworth Mansions. Our key contact is Philip King. Have you needed to contact KFH in the last 12 months?

Yes/No

Q9: How satisfied were with the manner in which your query was handled (responsiveness, professionalism, proactivity and speed of resolution)? And with any other dealings you have had with the Managing Agents?

The Managing Agents do a good job, consistent with my expectations and with what we pay through the service charge.	Strongly agree	Mildly agree	Neutral	Mildly agree	Strongly agree	I require a better service from the Managing Agents and would be prepared to pay extra for this if necessary.

Comments

Q10: Maida Vale is changing. Property at Ashworth Mansions is becoming ever more expensive. Some owners bought recently; some have been here for many years and bought when flats were more affordable (relatively speaking). Because there appears to be a wide range of personal situations amongst Ashworth owners, we would especially value your views on how much you are prepared to spend on having your flat here. In particular we would like your views on the right balance between on the one hand maintaining the highest standards in the upgrading and maintenance of Ashworth Mansions and on the other keeping the service charge as low as possible. Please tick the box that most closely reflects your views.

My top priority is the amount I spend and keeping this down. I am prepared to accept a lower standard of appearance of common parts and less frequent maintenance in exchange for lower costs.	Strongly agree	Mildly agree	Neutral	Mildly agree	Strongly agree	My top priority is the appearance and standard of maintenance of the common parts, the exterior and the garden. I am prepared to pay more for a consistently higher quality of maintenance, cleaning and appearance around the block.

Q11: From time to time, we have the choice of whether to fund improvements through one-off payments or to spread the cost over a number of years. The main argument the Board has put forward for spreading the cost is that it has proved so time-consuming to collect payment for major works that some of these have been much delayed as a result. Most comparable properties have a 'sinking fund' of this kind, and one is allowed for in the Ashworth lease. Tick one box please.

I prefer to pay one-off lump sums, project by project, as these come up, accepting that this may lead to delays. I want to pay only for predictable and routine items through the service charge. A sinking fund is unimportant.	Strongly agree	Mildly agree	Neutral	Mildly agree	Strongly agree	I would prefer to pay for major projects over a number of years, spreading my payments out over time. A sinking fund is important.

Q12: A related question has to do with the level at which we set the service charge. The Board always seeks best value for money and monitors expenditure to achieve this, but when we set the budget for the service charge we have to decide how much leeway to allow for unexpected expenses (the block is old and often surprises us with unanticipated, urgent maintenance). If we allow too much then the service charge is higher than it needs to be (the money rolls forward to the next year, of course); if we allow too little for surprises then there is the risk that we have to ask for extra payments to make up the shortfall. Tick one box.

I prefer the Board to set the lowest possible service charge and am content to run the risk of a surcharge proving necessary.	Strongly agree	Mildly agree	Neutral	Mildly agree	Strongly agree	I would prefer the Board to make a sufficient allowance to make surcharge unlikely, even if this means a higher service charge.

Comment

Q13: We employ a resident caretaker (Daron Tyas). We are very satisfied with his performance since he joined us last year. From time to time, though we are asked to review caretaking arrangements and would like your views. Please tick the box that most closely coincides with your opinion.

I would like the cheapest caretaking arrangements possible even though this would mean a poorer service than today.	I am happy with the current arrangements.	I would like additional caretaking, e.g. during evenings, silent hours and at weekends even though this would cost more than the current arrangement.

Comment

Q14: From time to time, residents complain about noise or other nuisance from neighbouring flats. Sometimes this is due to the installation of bare wooden flooring, despite a clear requirement in the lease to maintain carpeting in all rooms except kitchens and bathrooms. Other disputes arise from leaks. Please tick the box that most closely represents your views about how these and other nuisances should be dealt with.

(Please bear in mind that if we were to ask the Managing Agents to take on more work of this kind then we would have to pay for them to do so. We would also have to pay for legal costs, if it came to it.)

Noise and other problems are an inevitable consequence of life in a 100 year old block of flats. Neighbours need to talk to each other and come to their own agreements. The board and managing agents should not get involved unless absolutely essential.	Strongly agree	Mildly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mildly agree	Strongly agree	Residents should stick to the rules and the board/Managing Agent should settle disputes between neighbours, resorting to legal action once it becomes necessary. A strict line should be taken with owners in breach of their lease obligations.

Comments

Q15: The Board and managing agent circulate residents and lessees with regular updates and maintain a website www.ashworthmansions.com. We'd like to know what you think of these communications.

I would like more information on the running of Ashworth Mansions.	Strongly agree	Mildly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mildly agree	Strongly agree	You are sending me more information than I have time or inclination to read. Please send me less.

Q16: How would you like us to communicate with you (one tick for each row please)?

	More	The same	Less
Paper circular			
Residents and owners meetings			
Website			

Comment

Q17: Most Ashworth Mansions flats have their own, independent hot water and heating systems. Others are served by a communal hot water and heating arrangement, with which there have recently been considerable difficulties causing a great deal of inconvenience and cost to those who use it. If we were to try and move away from the communal system to individual arrangements then there would be substantial work and expense involved so we would like early views from those affected. **Please only answer the next question**

if you are currently served by the communal system, bearing in mind that those not on the communal system will not have to pay for any changes (by all means comment though, either way). Tick the box you most agree with.

I would prefer any money that has to be spent to go into improving the current communal hot water and heating system rather than move to an individual system and would like the Board to investigate further options for doing so.	Strongly agree	Mildly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mildly agree	Strongly agree	I would prefer to have control over my own individual heating and hot water system and would like the Board to investigate options for moving to this arrangement. In principle I accept the idea of paying to fund the move to my own system, subject to all the normal consultations.

Comment: (Please say if you are interested in helping members of the Board to research hot water options further.)

Q18: Natasha Keats kindly organised a garden party this summer and was unlucky to have it take place on a day of truly rotten weather. But should we hold regular social events (e.g. once a year)?

I think it's a good idea to have a social event for residents to get together for an informal drink and a bite to eat.	Strongly agree	Mildly agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Mildly agree	Strongly agree	I have no interest in attending social events with my neighbours.

Q19: Would you be willing to help organise social events?

Yes/No

Q20: Can we contact you, if necessary, about your answers to this survey?

Yes/No

Q21: If you have an email addresses and are prepared to be contacted through it, please add it below

Email Address:

Q22: If there anything else you feel is important concerning the running of Ashworth Mansions that the Board should hear about please add it below.

Comment