



c/o 46 Maskelyne Close, London SW11 4AE Email: ethelburgacommunity@gmail.com
 Tel: 070 2402 9591 Fax: 020 7691 9347 Website: www.ethelburgacommunity.com
 NEWSLETTER JUNE 2011

CALL TO ACTION!! We Need Your Help!

Please, please help us to help you by **returning the enclosed coloured sheet to:**
 46 Maskelyne Close (by hand - by post - by fax - by email - or via <http://www.ethelburgacommunity.com>)
 We need you to tell the Council that you are supportive of the improvements we are seeking to negotiate with them. It is easy for the Council to resist change if they only hear from a small group of people - if you add your voices to ours, then they can see that you are fully behind us. The more support we can prove, the more of a mandate we have to push changes through.
 So please read the enclosed letter - and **take action by ticking the boxes** and returning the letter - by hand, fax or email - confirming your support for the specific changes; you can even show further support by emailing the Council, if you feel so inclined! Or you can comment on our Website at: www.ethelburgacommunity.com. Thank you so much.

LATEST NEWS & UPDATES

GYO Food Initiative

Despite what appeared to be great progress on the Grow Your Own Food initiative - as far as we were concerned we had the Council's agreement to go ahead and were just waiting to sign a suitable lease agreement - it now appears that the Council are backtracking.

We received a formal communication advising us that the Council, *"have been advised that if we are to permit plants,vegetables or crops to be grown for consumption or sale this is likely to lead to further legal issues.*

We were of course amazed by this, when there are already so many food growing initiatives across the borough! As this is the one project on the Estate

that has engendered real enthusiasm from all ages and nationalities, we really need you to **express your support.** (see Call to Action above)

There is no way that this type of procrastination within the Council will deter us - especially as we are already registered with Capital Growth, a London wide campaign supported by the Mayor, to have 2,012 food growing spaces in London by 2012 - we have received a grant to get started and are now officially no 843.

Of course these endless delays that the Council are well practiced at, give the impression that we, the various committees, make promises, then nothing happens! So please forgive us if this newsletter is much longer than usual, but we need to explain to you what we are up against and why your support is so necessary!



Good Neighbours

We have a number of people in the community who would be very willing to help out elderly neighbours with shopping and other simple chores. If you are elderly, or know someone who is, and would like some form of occasional help, be in touch and we will do our best to organise it. We will be developing a way in which the Council can let the elderly know that such support is available from within the community.

If you would be willing to provide such help, please be in touch and let us know what you can offer - shopping, walking, visiting, keeping an eye, etc. In the event of an emergency like fire, do you know which of your neighbours might need help? In fact, do you know what would be right for you to do? If there is sufficient interest, we shall ask the fire brigade to come and give a talk.

Community Code

At <http://ethelburgacommunity.com> you will find a new section called "Community Code". This is a first attempt to provide guidelines for those who have just moved into the community. We will be encouraging landlords to give new tenants a print-out of this Code. Is there anything you would like to have added? This is an example of us collectively helping ourselves and all those who newly arrive, to make Ethelburga an even better place to live.

General Improvements

As you know we have had several meetings where the idea was put forward that we wanted to self manage the Estate. After much exploration and deliberation, it has been decided not to pursue the Right to Manage (RTM) route for the present.

However, we still wanted to make improvements, and a group of residents (currently known as the Gardening Club) are particularly keen to take over responsibility for the gardens and green spaces on Ethelburga. So, with the assistance of our Area Manager, Marc Howell, we identified something that is known as a Local Management Agreement (LMA) as the best way forward, starting with gardening. This will make it possible for us to employ a full time gardener, who will, with the support from the Gardening Club volunteers, make a real difference.



This, like everything else on the Estate, is dependent on enough people willing to run the LMA, and nobody objecting to the Council transferring this responsibility to the Gardening Club.

GARDENING - THE NEXT STEPS:

- ◆ **Your Vote** - The Council requires that you confirm to us whether you support the idea of them transferring responsibility for the gardening on our Estate. Please could you do this, by **returning the form**, via e-mail or our Website; or by popping the form into 46 Maskelyne Close. If you have any questions or would like more details about this initiative, we would be more than happy to speak / meet with you to discuss it further.
- ◆ **Do you want to help?** Under the new arrangements, we would like to encourage anybody close to, or facing, a flower bed or green space, to step forward and volunteer to take care of it. We will then discuss a plan and provide whatever support you need to keep to your and the overall Ethelburga plan. We already have two volunteers willing to take responsibility for a large flower bed on Ethelburga.
- ◆ **Would you like help?** If you have a garden you are unable to keep up, please let us know and we may be able to find some volunteers willing to take care of the garden for you.

Small Successes

A small bit of green has already been transferred to the Club's responsibility as a company and some members have confirmed that they will sponsor this bit of green (see our Website www.ethelburgacommunity.com for more information).

We have also had some distinguished visitors who have kindly offered advice on how we can improve and coordinate Ethelburga's planting and gardening plan. (see Website / or ask for more information)

If more volunteers take on a patch, the Gardening Club will provide advice and help, and, by working together in this way, we will transform our green spaces in a relatively short period of time.

So please **confirm your support by ticking the boxes on enclosed form** and returning it by hand, mail, or via email, or comment

Major Works—Phase-1

Members of NERA recently had 2 preliminary meetings with the Council and their consultants, Amey. Amey has a new man on the job. There will be a general consultation with all residents affected by phase-1 prior to tenders for the works being invited. Everybody on Ethelburga will have an opportunity to comment on the proposed works, and NERA will run some special discussion and briefing evenings. At the end of this process, we shall have collectively negotiated the best we can get from the Council under current conditions and practices.

One of the most helpful ways of understanding "major works" is to realise that this term is a total misnomer and arises from in-Council jargon which simply means "works costing more than £50,000", this figure being the threshold above which anything becomes "major". A more accurate term for this programme would be "The Cyclical Re-decoration Programme".

Thank You

NERA would like to thank everyone for the strong support shown so far, which has really helped in their negotiations with the Council. A record of over 75% of residents became members for 2011 / 2012 - a fantastic response!

Cultural Enrichment Activities

The Council is offering grants

to encourage cultural activities. Have you any ideas or suggestions? Let us know and we will put you together with others who express a similar interest.

How about an Ethelburga musical group or band? We have a very gifted Cuban Tres player in the community; any other musicians? We will encourage him to give salsa lessons once we are clear with the Council over the legal basis of the management of the Community Centre and we can make the floor fit for dancing!

Somebody is looking to forming a theatrical group - are you interested?

Do you want to link up with people from your own country in order to arrange an event with your national flavour (the cultural department at your Embassy will almost certainly help you arrange something)?

Anything you can think of or want to explore, be in touch via our Website - e-mail - telephone or mail. Your identity will never be revealed to anybody until you are ready to "go public" with your idea and we

E-Mails and Web-Access

One of the reasons this is such a long newsletter is because

much has already been said in our Website and is here being repeated. This means is too labour intensive and is unlikely to be repeated again. So please be sure we have your e-mail address so that we can keep you up to date via e-mail with major developments. And please become interactive via <http://ethelburgacommunity.com> And use the discussion forum where everybody can see what others have to say about things - and where the Council too have the opportunity to participate and respond.

NEED HELP WITH EMAIL & INTERNET?

We understand that some of you may not have email, access to the Internet or even be computer savvy. If there is interest, we could consider resurrecting the Community Centre Computer Club for those who do not have a computer at home, or who feel intimidated by the idea of computers and the Internet - remember an important statistic : over 60% of all Internet users are over 55! You are never too old to learn!

Ethelburga Tower

This newsletter, which addresses

community-wide issues - is for the first time being delivered directly to all residents in Ethelburga Tower. The issues raised in here and on the Website go far beyond the boundaries of the Tower and we do not wish Tower residents to feel excluded from what is going on around them and at their feet! Please join in the fun, discussions and activities. Interest in the food growing initiative is considerable, so please register your interest too.

Are there any green areas you want to take responsibility for? Any other suggestions?

The Big Lunch of 5th June

Although we mentioned this not only in our last newsletter and on our Website, and one or two showed interest, nobody has taken on responsibility for arranging a Big Lunch for Ethelburga and surroundings. We were not helped by the fact that Juer Street had a street party for the Royal Wedding and its organisers declared themselves just too tired to do another so soon!

So, if you want to lunch in some street on June 5th, please get yourself invited to one of the many that will be taking place across London and the nation. There is a listing of these on www.thebiglunch.com. Perhaps some of you might want to start planning a Big Olympic Lunch 2012!

Mystery Shoppers

The Housing Department are looking for "shoppers" who are willing to test the Department's services on a regular basis.

If interested, please see our Website, <http://ethelburgacommunity.com>. Or ask for details.

Thanks

for reading this far; please visit our Website regularly. We are looking to finding a bit of software that will make it possible for you to sign-up for e-mail notification of anything being added (currently about 2-3 items per week).

The more of you who express support for our plans vis a vis the Council, the more likely we shall be able to move forward and ensure some movement in the areas currently stuck with the Council. It also helps let us know that many of you are actually behind what we are trying to do for the community.

We have almost 200 e-mail addresses now and will be able to communicate with you far more instantly than a newsletter ever permits; if you have not yet let us have your e-mail address, please send us an e-mail directly or use a contact form on the Website.

If you would like to have a meeting around these issues, again please let us know and we shall arrange.

Peter Rae Editor

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