



Royale Dunton Court Residents Association

Issue 4

5 December 2022

Update from the Chair

Thanks for the good turnout at the AGM on 6 October and for unanimously re-electing the current committee.

- Chair - Gary Peckham
- Secretary/Vice Chair - Pat Stapleton
- Treasurer - Sheila Hobman
- Entertainment coordinators - Julie Raby and Mick Hilton
- Helping Hands coordinator - Lynda Gould
- Communications - James Hailes
- Disability/Equality Rep - Denise Rayner
- Minutes secretary - Pat Moore
- Other Council members - Terry Rose and Pat Smith,

James is a co-opted member, asked by the committee to deal with our website/social media/newsletters. Because he's co-opted he has no voting rights.

Straight after the AGM we approached Royale about some of the things people asked and here are some of the initial replies.

1. Royale's recent newsletter said that there will be 'zero interruption' to current residents when/if 85 homes get the go-ahead. We asked Royale if they could expand on that because we're unsure how it'll work.

Royale said they are unable to clarify further as the development plans are not finalised. The Association will monitor this and update once we hear anything further.

2. We asked Royale to look at the problem of speeding/vehicles going the wrong way up one-way streets.

Royale have agreed to get their health & safety manager to attend the site soon and compile a report. When that's done they'll contact us to discuss things they can put in place.

3. Dunton, like most park homes sites, is advertised as gated, safe and secure. It's the reason a lot of people move to these kinds of places so residents' have expressed concern that security is being reduced. We asked Royale for an update about security on site.

Royale said no changes are planned and they are still committed to installing gates with a fob entry for cars but there's no definite timescale.

4. We asked Royale if residents are allowed Solar Panels

Royale confirmed this is fine. Residents should use an approved supplier and also fill out a 'works to plot' form available from the office.

5. Residents asked why some homes (similar size plot) pay different pitch fees.

Royale obviously can't discuss individual cases with us but the committee can give some general advice on this matter.

When you enter into a new agreement with a park site owner, they set the pitch fee. If you think the fee is not appropriate (for example if you become aware that it is not the same as for similar pitches on your site) you can apply to a tribunal to change it. However, the law only allows people six months to apply to the tribunal.

6. At the AGM residents' expressed concern over increasing dog barking noise from a number of homes on site.

The association is aware that the only dogs permitted in the park rules are registered assistance dogs which, by their very nature, wouldn't normally be left alone, so the association wondered if this is guest dogs impacting on residents. We asked Royale about this and they said that area manager Gail and her team will look into this further and feedback. The association agreed to work with Royale to minimise any noise nuisance.

We hope that answers some of the questions asked and if we missed yours out, that means we're still working on it.

Thanks again for supporting the Association. This just leaves me to wish you a very happy Christmas.

Gary (Chair)



Merry Christmas

Roads/Street Lighting

On 6 October, the residents' association sent Royale our 7 page report on the state of roads and street lighting. We haven't had a formal response to this but we'll continue to push to make sure Royale meets their obligations to maintain the roads and street lighting.

Pitch Fee Increase

The government bill to change how site owners are allowed to increase pitch fees (from RPI to CPI) was passed in the commons and will now be made law. This is good news for park home owners because CPI is normally a few percentage points below RPI. We expect this will be rubber-stamped in the new year - hopefully before Royale sets our next increase in 2023.

Some site owners aren't increasing the pitch fee by the full amount they're allowed because in normal times these rates are only 2%-3%. Right now CPI is 11.1% and RPI is a whopping 14.2% so it does seem unfair to use the current exceptionally high rates for an increase that's cumulative (we'll never get that big rise back when rates return to normal in a year or so).

We don't want to pre-empt whether Royale will make the full increase allowed. However, the residents' association will examine any increase thoroughly in 2023 and advise if we think it's fair and reasonable and what we can do if it's not.

A few thank yous/good byes

Laurie is no longer our minutes secretary and will now concentrate on helping with the association's Helping Hands scheme. The committee would like to thank Laurie for all his hard work.

Denise has helped secure a number of donations for the residents association including £500 towards the defib and further cash to pay for printing and publishing the newsletter. She's also just got us two 'A boards' so we can advertise events around the site.

Bill and Audrey - thanks for your marvellous quizzes. We look forward to more in the new year.

Mick, Chris and Usher good luck in your new home in Cambridgeshire. We'll all miss you.

Fascinating Tales

The residents' association is keen to hear from people who've lived at Dunton for a long time. One such person is Len who's lived at Dunton Park for over 42 years. Laurie Gould met up with Len to find out more.

Len said he's seen a lot of changes over the years but still loves living here. He was born in 1936. When he was just a year old, family circumstances meant that his mother had to put Len in a home. Len was adopted soon after by a very well-off family in Hackney. He said he had quite a privileged childhood. At 7 years old he went to a private school in Snaresbrook and after that, he was a pupil at the City of London boys school, one of the best fee paying schools in the country!. With the qualifications Len achieved, he managed to get into London University.

Len left university in 1957 and worked for a firm called Campari (ladies fashion, outdoor clothing and equipment, etc). In 1963 Len married Gweneth Jones and they had 2 sons. Sadly Gweneth died in 1966 leaving Len with 2 small children.

In 1968 Len opened a grocery store in Canning Town, he also had a pie and mash shop in the area. Len married his second wife Dena in 1971 and had a daughter Deborah the following year. He did a bit of mini-cabbing in Belsize Park before moving to Gants Hill where a chance meeting saw him start his antique business that lasted over 30 years.

On May 1st 1980 Len moved onto Dunton Park with Dena and the children. Sadly Dena died last year after a long illness.

In Len's younger days he was a very keen sportsman excelling in football, cricket, boxing, shooting and ice hockey. In 1951 he even signed for Spurs as an amateur.

Len recalled lots of fascinating stories during our chat. One very special one was that, one day he decided to find out about his birth mother and family. He discovered he had a sister called Iris and to Len's astonishment, she lived just 4 doors away from him at Dunton Park!

Thanks to Len for the fascinating chat. - Laurie Gould

Helping Hands

Our team of 7 volunteers are here all over Christmas to help those less able with small tasks such as collecting prescriptions, driving to GP appointments, trips to the barbers/hairdresser and picking up bits from Tesco.

In the home we can change lightbulbs, beds, curtains or any other small tasks.

We can even just call in for a chat and cup of tea.

Call Lynda 07951 660115

Defib News

A few weeks ago we had a message from the ambulance service to say our defib could have been used over the weekend so they mark it as unavailable until we've carried out checks.

Once a defib is used we have to fit new pads to make it operational and mark it as live for the ambulance service again. We've checked the unit and don't think it's been used so it's now back online.

Moving forwards, if you're ever asked to fetch the defib by the 999 operator please let the committee know (even if you don't actually use it). The ambulance service aren't allowed to give us details as to who makes 999 calls so we're reliant on residents letting us know if the machine is ever used (in which case we need to renew the electrode pads). Thank you.



Energy Grants Update

Some residents tell us they are confused about all these grants so we'll try and summarise things below.

We have a direct contact at the Government's Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and as this newsletter went to print, the current position is -

£400 Energy Bills Support Scheme-Alternative Fund (EBSS-AF) - this is for all park homes and it will come via the government, not Royale. Unfortunately, we're still waiting to hear how we will be paid because the mechanism is still being set up. However, we suspect it will be via Basildon Council. Watch this space.

£200 Alternative Fuel Payment (AFP) - This is a recently-announced one-off extra payment (increased from £100) to those not on the gas main-grid. As with the £400, we still don't know how they will pay this but the government say they will 'confirm shortly' (we suspect via Basildon Council again).

The Energy Bills Relief Scheme (EBRS) - this scheme effectively caps how much the electricity supplier can charge Royale and Royale are obliged to pass that on. Royale has confirmed that from 1/10/2022 to 31/3/23 we will pay £0.34 p/kWh which is in line with Ofgem's cap.

Entertainment News

In July, Royale welcomed the residents' association's offer to help with entertainment in the club and to try and make more use of this great facility.

Mick and Julie have begun putting on once-monthly events which we hope everyone will enjoy.



Our Christmas party on Friday 2 December was a huge success. We had local singer Sam Knight who had us all singing along and dancing for most of the night.

Everyone we spoke to said they want Sam back - he read the audience perfectly and wasn't stupidly loud.

Merry Christmas

We also hired a local catering company to make us this delicious buffet.

Finally, Kim's done a lovely job making the club look christmassy, so thanks to her and Sid for all their hard work.

Roll on New Year's Eve when it'll be disco and karaoke.



Sheila's weekly knit and natter sessions are going well. You can join fellow crafters every Thursday from 2pm-4pm in the hall. It's a free session and it's very informal (just take your own current projects or come along just for the 'natter').

Also, Bill and Audrey have been helping us with monthly quiz nights. This is taking a break in December but will be back again in the new year.

We asked Royale if they can supply an extra pair of hands on our monthly event nights and they agreed (obviously subject to availability). Many thanks to our area Manager for helping us with this. Committee members also support Kim by collecting glasses throughout the night and tidying the hall at the end of the evening.

The only slight snag is, although we're all volunteers just trying to help out, we are subject to financial risk. As an example, if the club is ever forced to close at short notice through staff illness (or any other reason), the association will be liable to refund tickets and pay for cancelled acts/catering. To mitigate against this kind of risk, we did ask Royale if we could just use the hall if the bar was ever unable to open but they won't allow this. So, we have to be careful and make sure we have extra money in the pot so we're covered in the event of cancellations.

Another scenario is, if we hire an act/caterers, we're duty bound to pay them whether we sell 80 tickets or 18. If there's ever a time when ticket sales don't meet costs, we need to have some reserves to draw on. So, the primary thing that determines a ticket price is the cost we have to pay for the entertainment and any additional costs if we hire caterers etc. However, we also need to build in a bit of profit for the examples given above.

The association is committed to being open and transparent with money matters and, thanks to our treasurer Sheila, our full income and expenditure can be seen on our website.



Coming up in the club

TABLE TOP SALE

Thursday 8 December 1pm to 3pm (set up from midday) in the club hall.

Handcrafted items, bric-a-brac, floral displays, etc.

Book a space with Sheila on 07929 388105. £5 a table. Come along and sell your wares.

New Year Year's Eve Party

PJ's Sounds Disco/Karaoke 8pm to 12:30. Tickets £10 each from Sheila at 26 Orchard View or Lynda and Laurie at 3 Meadow View. On sale from 7 Dec for residents only then from 14 Dec for family/friends.

Planning News

No decision yet on Royale's application to site 85 new homes on the old caravan site. This is not expected to go to the Planning Committee until early 2023.

Meanwhile, an application has gone in to build 31 new homes at Dunton Grange - near to our site. As local residents, you're entitled to have your say on this, You can do so at the planning website <https://planning.basildon.gov.uk/>

Enter this ref number in the search box. 22/01522/OUT

Keep in touch

The residents' association updates almost every day on our Facebook and website - something we're not able to do with a newsletter.

We've nearly got 100 park residents on our Facebook page which generates lots of healthy discussions.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/royaleduntoncourt>

You might also like to check out our website which is packed with news and information and gets updated regularly. You can even pop your email address in a little box to receive a message whenever we update the site to save you having to keep checking.

<https://www.duntoncourtresidents.org.uk>

You can email, the association here - rdprc2022@gmail.com

Alternatively pop us a letter or note in our black letter box on the club house wall marked 'residents association'.



To everyone in the site office, Gail our area manager, Dunton grounds staff, security and Kim and Sid in the club. Last but not least, to all residents. Happy Christmas.