

Dunton Park Residents' Association Newsletter

27 February 2024

IMPORTANT - AGM

Our AGM this year will be **Thursday 14 March 2024** in the clubhouse.

Join us for complimentary drinks and collect your new membership card from 6.30pm followed by the meeting and election of committee members starting at 7.30pm.

We look forward to seeing as many members as possible but for those not able to make it, we will deliver your new membership cards in the weeks after the meeting.

We continue to fund the association on events rather than membership fees so no payments are due. Better still, from April members will also receive discounts on events.

Finally, if anyone has the time and wants to stand as a committee member please make us aware by 7 February including names of a proposer and seconder.

Pumphouse News ...

As many of you are already aware, the site has been having real issues with pump breakdowns and this has meant vacuum tankers have been coming on site every day. The office has acknowledged this is not an ideal scenario and might be inconvenient for residents, but it's the only viable option to avert a potential sewage overflow until there's a permanent fix.

The good news is, rather than just arrange repair, the company has agreed to spend a significant amount to replace the pumps and control panel. The office will let us all know when work is due to commence. In the meantime, please bear with the office staff and grounds team who continue to work unexpectedly long hours and weekends to manage the system manually until replacement.

New Pitch Fee For 2024?

As this newsletter goes out we should all be due to hear what this April's increase will be. We can confirm the maximum increase the company can make this year is 4%.

Gas Bottles ...

We still get quite a few people asking if the residents' association can help them get gas tanks back because they don't get on with bottles. Some people have even told us they have spoken to Calor and have been told they can have their own tanks and just pay directly with Calor.

The residents association has spoken to Calor and I'm afraid this is not correct. Whilst Calor sales staff might tell people they can apply to have a tank, this would be subject to a survey and Calor management has told us they will not offer anyone on our site a private supply arrangement of any nature.

We do appreciate that some people are still struggling with bottles so for those less-able, our Helping Hands team can check your bottle periodically to keep an eye on things. Special thanks to Laurie for offering to help with this.

If anyone needs our help please send us a message.

Pitch Fee Tribunal ...

Just a quick update for those disputing last year's pitch fee.

The judge has now looked at both of our cases (us and the solicitor acting for the site) and decided he wants to do a site visit sometime in March. Following the visit the chair and secretary of the association will need to attend court (normally the same day as the site visit) to thrash things out. The judge will make a final decision a few weeks after that as to whether last year's increase is fair or whether there should be a reduction for those who opted for a tribunal determination.

Don't forget, if the tribunal doesn't agree with our case we will all have one month to catch up with the shortfall since April, so even though you're not paying the increase, please save it in case it needs to be paid. The tribunal decision will only apply to those residents who didn't pay the increase and opted to let the tribunal decide.

Fancy Being Quizmaster? ...

Bill & Audrey and Kevin & Sheila continue to provide our quizzes and we thank them for all their hard work. However, I'm sure they'd like a break sometimes so if anyone fancies being a guest quiz presenter, please get in touch with our entertainment team.

Quiz-setters are volunteers but we do pay £25 expenses to cover, paper, ink and your drinks on the night. Quizzes are monthly on a Friday night and a portion of money raised goes to the quizmasters chosen charity.

Update on Administration

Royale Life sites have been sold to Ambassador Group - an independent, family-owned business based in Scotland. Ambassador have created a new park homes brand called Regency Living and these will be the people running our site as we move forward.

In announcing the deal, Ambassador's CEO said "our aim now is to transform and improve the assets into communities that provide an unrivalled quality of living and above all, peace of mind for our new Regency Living family of colleagues, residents and customers".

Right now, we're still in transition between being run by the administrators and being fully handed over to Regency Living and this could take several months to complete. Meanwhile, the administrators will remain in charge until the site licence is transferred to the new owner. The new owner also has to apply to Basildon Council to be assessed as 'fit and proper'.

Residents will not require a new written agreement from the site owner and our rights and obligations will remain unchanged.

Finally, the chair and secretary will be meeting senior staff from Regency in March. This will be an opportunity to highlight our concerns. We make no secret of the fact we found Royale's senior management challenging to work with so we are hoping for a new era whereby we all work together for the benefit of the company and residents.

Update on the club

Recruitment of a new bar manager had so far been unsuccessful and the office is finding it challenging staying behind late to keep the hall open out-of-hours. So, in order to keep bingo, pool, monthly music events and quizzes running consistently and relieve a bit of pressure on the office, the residents association has agreed to step in so that there is no disruption to these activities.

Accordingly, the committee are now club keyholders, initially for a period of two months. The chair has had to sign for the keys and agree to terms and conditions and committee members will now be responsible for unlocking and overseeing all activities.

The office is confident the bar will re-open at some point in the future. However, until the new owners have got their feet under the table, recruitment for a bar manager is now on hold.

We've had to agree to health and safety obligations as well as taking responsibility for cleaning the club so we'd like to thank all committee members for agreeing to take this on and making sure the usual activities are unaffected in the transition to new owners.

Since we're all doing this voluntarily, can we please ask that residents help us by taking away their rubbish at the end of activities and events. Thanks in advance for your support.

Entertainment News ...

We hope everyone is enjoying the selection of once-monthly events the association puts on in the club. Don't forget, we do all this voluntarily to keep the club viable so please support us if you can.

Our entertainment team has another few crackers for us in March.

Friday 1 March - 'Quiz Night with Kev and Sheila'

Only £2 per person - just pay on the door.

Friday 22 March - 'A night of Golden Oldies with The Big Bopper'

Simon Rawlings was BOPPER in the West end Production of The Buddy Holly Story for 6 years.

Expect an evening of nostalgic 50/60s Rock n Roll and other golden oldies.

Tickets on sale at £10 each.

Future Dates For Your Diary ...

Friday 5 April - 'Quiz Night

Saturday 27 April 'Race Night'

Friday 3 May - Quiz Night

Saturday 25 May - Karaoke Night

Coffee Morning, Bingo & Pool ...

As well as monthly events and quizzes, don't forget everyone's welcome to the following free activities -

Every Wednesday - Coffee Morning 11am - 2pm

Every Wednesday - Bingo 7pm to 9.15pm

Every Thursday - Knit & Natter 1pm - 4pm

Every Thursday - Pool 8pm to 11pm

Book Exchange and Hall....

The hall is now available for residents to use Monday to Friday daytimes. The residents association has provided a self-serve tea and coffee station and we've brought a new easy-to-handle kettle. There's also games and a table with hardcopies of recent residents' association leaflets. It's free to use the hall. Just wander in, take your friends and family etc. Also we're working on getting a table tennis table so watch this space.

Also, our book exchange is going well. Once again just wander in and choose a book or jigsaw or leave unwanted books and puzzles.

The office unlock these spaces every morning but if you find them unlocked please just call in at the office. Some days they are incredibly busy and don't get a chance to open so just give the office door a knock and they'll be happy to help.

Roads, lights and signage ...

One of the biggest questions the residents association gets asked is, what's being done about long-standing issues like poor street-lighting, signage and road conditions across the site?

Unfortunately, despite our best efforts, this was an uphill battle with Royale and we reached the stage where we escalated things to the council. Basildon Council is responsible for enforcing the site licence which includes maintenance obligations. However, just when we thought we were getting somewhere, the site went into administration and our dealings with the council officer were left up in the air.

Now the site has been sold, the site licence gets transferred to the new owners and the council have assured us that they will discuss issues with the new licence holder on any action that needs to be taken to satisfy the licence conditions.

You will have noticed the licensing officer making visits to the site recently and this is all part of her role in issuing and enforcing site licences.

If you want to give any feedback about problems with the site to the licensing officer you can email her at

Cynthia.Ndlovu@basildon.gov.uk

Money Money Money ...

The association is committed to being open and transparent with money matters so here's our current balance. **£4,068.25** - thanks to Sheila Hobman for doing the books. Full accounts will be available to take away at our AGM in March.

Good News ...

Before the site went into administration we were constantly badgering Royale head office about our sky high electricity rates. So, the first thing the residents association did when the administrators started running the site was take this up with them too. The good news is they negotiated a new deal with the supplier and we should all be now enjoying a new rate which is around 33% cheaper.

Keep in touch ...

FACEBOOK

www.facebook.com/groups/duntonparkra

WEBSITE

www.duntonparkra.co.uk

NEWSLETTERS

Delivered to those on our list who opted for paper copies and spares left in the club hall. Naturally, paper newsletters will always lag behind the times so if you are able to, join our Facebook group or visit our website you will always be more up-to-date.

EMAIL

duntonparkra@gmail.com

LETTERS

If you want to contact us but don't do 'digital', just pop us a letter or note in our black letter box on the clubhouse wall marked '**residents association**'.

Finally we'd just like to take this opportunity to thank residents for all their kind words of support for the residents association, including emails, letters and thank-you cards. From those who have told us their social life has never been better since we got involved to those who've said they appreciate how there's now an official group to represent their voices. **Thank you from your committee.**