

Rochester Riverside Residents' Association

NEWSLETTER

♦
May 2026



Welcome to the seventh quarterly local newsletter! We hope that you find some useful updates and information.

Fees and Charges

There have been many questions relating to the increase in service fees that have recently gone out. These are estimates for the year 2026/2027 which runs from April 2026 to March 2027.

On the 9th April the residents' association met with Olga Souhonnet and Shola from Hyde. There were a list of around 14 questions and they had two weeks to respond to those questions. Concerns and questions included:

- **Management Fee Increases** — Fees have risen dramatically year on year with no explanation. Hyde also absorbed staff costs (for Teji and Katie) into the management charge following an internal restructure, without clear explanation to residents.
- **Inconsistency of Fees** — Contradictory weightings appear across service charge documents with no explanation. Residents in similar properties cannot verify their charges are correct or consistent.
- **Scrutiny of Contracted Services** — Some contracted costs appear disproportionate. We are also seeking clarity on the relationship between Hyde and Pinnacle, and how Pinnacle's invoices are scrutinised before being passed to residents.
- **Provisions Fund** — Most residents don't know what is held in the fund or what it covers. Residents were alarmed by a potential large bill for green roof work — only discovering after the fact that the fund covered it. Hyde should share balances and projected spend proactively.
- **Surpluses Held by Hyde** — When actual costs fall below estimates, surpluses are held by Hyde without residents being told. One member discovered a credit balance only by chance via the MyHyde portal. Hyde should notify residents proactively.
- **Errors & Accountability** — Billing errors, incorrect letters and unexplained cost reclassifications have all occurred each year. Ideally there would be formal sign-off before charge statements are issued and goodwill payments where residents are materially affected.

Fees and Charges Continued....

How Hyde's Service Charge System Works

The fee department does not control or set most costs. Invoices arrive from across the Hyde Group and are entered into Hyde's billing system, which apportions costs to each property — the department is a gateway, dependent on the accuracy of what it receives.

How the annual cycle works: Estimates are issued each February for the service charge year running April to March. Direct debit payers are charged monthly based on these estimates. Actual costs are then calculated the following September — after the year has ended — and any difference between what was estimated and what was actually spent results in either a credit or additional charge to residents. This gap between estimate and actuals is a significant source of confusion and, in some cases, unexpected payments.

All 1,400 properties — freehold and leasehold — share the estate's running costs. Since the development is not yet fully built, Hyde and developer Vistry cover the share attributable to properties not yet sold. As new homes are completed and sold, each new owner assumes their share and the developers' contribution falls.

If You Own a Freehold Property

Freeholders pay three charges: a share of estate costs (communal areas, landscaping, infrastructure) split across all 1,400 properties; a management fee for Hyde's administration of the estate; and an estate provision fee — a contribution to a reserve for future shared maintenance. Freeholders pay no building-specific costs, as they own their own structure.

If You Own a Leasehold Property

Leaseholders pay the same estate costs as freeholders, but also pay building-level costs specific to their block — communal cleaning, building insurance, shared areas and lifts — split among properties in that building by individual weighting.

The management fee bundles both estate-wide and building-specific management into one figure, split across all properties in the block. The provision fund works the same way — covering both an estate reserve and a building-specific reserve, each apportioned by property weighting.

This layered structure means two similar flats in different buildings can attract very different bills. Without a clear breakdown of each element, residents have no way to verify their charges are correct. When costs shift between categories — as happened when staff costs were folded into the management charge — the fee department processes what it is given, leaving residents with unexplained changes and no means to challenge them.

The Hyde Group — A Complex Web

Hyde Housing Association is the Group Parent. It includes:

- **Hyde Pinnacle Limited** — a limited company operating alongside Hyde, a not-for-profit organisation. The exact contractual relationship with Rochester Riverside is one of our outstanding questions.
- **Rochester Riverside Managing Agent Limited** — a specific company registered for this development.
- **Over fifteen other limited companies, two limited liability partnerships, and multiple joint ventures** — all with the same registered office at 30 Park Street, London SE1 9EQ.

Costs can pass through several internal layers before reaching your bill.

Fees and Charges Continued....

The Law is Changing in Favour of Residents, Leaseholders and Freeholders

🔑 Key Legal Reforms Residents Should Know About

- **Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024** — Already law. When fully activated, leaseholders will receive standardised documentation making charges easier to understand and challenge. The Act also rebalances litigation costs, removing the automatic risk of paying a landlord's legal fees.
- **Mandatory Managing Agent Qualifications** — Managing agents will require mandatory qualifications, introducing real accountability for poor practice.
- **Right to Manage — Expanded** — Expanded in March 2025 — more leaseholders now qualify and the two-year ownership requirement has been removed.
- **Right to Veto or Change Your Managing Agent** — Leaseholders will be able to demand a change of managing agent or veto a landlord's appointment.
- **Section 20 Major Works Reform** — Improved consultation rights for large one-off works, reducing the risk of unexpected bills.
- **Draft Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Bill (January 2026)** — Currently in Parliament. Proposes capping ground rents, ending forfeiture of homes over small debts, and making commonhold the default for new builds — giving flat owners full freehold-style ownership.

The direction of travel is clear: greater transparency, stronger rights, and real accountability.

What Happens Next

We have written formally requesting a full response by **Friday 9 May 2026**. If this is not met, we will escalate — including seeking a meeting with Hyde's senior directors and, if necessary, pursuing the regulatory routes available to us as homeowners. We will update residents as soon as we have answers.



Furrell's Road

A major source of frustration for residents, parents and anyone who has to enter the development is the single entrance in and out. It is far past the time when we were promised there would be another road access point for the development. Meeting recently with the Council we have been informed that the potential works at Bardell Terrace (the new development that was granted planning permission in December 2024 is Ironmonger Yard) was mentioned as something that may make access to Furrell's Road tentative but we have stressed that anything happening with this development

(which seems to have permanently stalled progress) should not delay the Furrell's Road access point. Once open Furrell's Road should stay open with full access via Doust Way a second choice in the unlikely event work started on the Ironmonger development. Network Rail are often mentioned as a third party whose permission and co-operation is needed for access due to their ownership and responsibility for maintaining the railway bridges. The next stage is for an update from the Council and Vistry regarding Furrell's Road. This is a priority although developments are slow going.



Police and Neighbourhood Watch

Just a reminder that the local police are very keen to liaise and be present within the community. Heather Greenwood and Jack-Coverley-Saich hold monthly Cuppa with a Coppa Meetings (generally the last Thursday of the month for Heather on Crow Lane and for Jack it's the last Friday of the month at Costa on the development). You can raise issues such as theft, noisy cars and bikes, anti-social behaviour, begging and anything else that is a concern and police matter. By signing up to Neighbourhood Watch this is also another way to keep up to date with what the police are doing in our area. An example of a recent update is [here](#). You can sign-up to the Neighbourhood Watch [here](#).



Intra Fest - 13th June 2026

Celebrate with Live Music, Street Food and Creative Arts at the Intra Festival on The Old High Street from 11am to 11pm.

During the day there will be street food, craft beers and hand-crafted cocktails by The Dead Pigeon, Poco Loco, Sweet One Caribbean Cuisine, The Kiki Restaurant and Lounge and Three Sheets to the Wind. Family entertainment will also be provided.

There will be barge trips launching from Ship Pier with Tiller & Wheel.

Live music will be provided from The Solarflares, Lupen Crook, The Singing Loins, The Zac Schulze Gang and many more. In the evening live entertainment will be held across venues including Poco Loco, 12 Degrees Micropub, The Ship and Nags Head. Sounds like an amazing day right on our doorstep!



Blue Boar Lane

You have likely seen the pavement and work started on as an interim solution for Blue Boar Lane, creating an improved pedestrian and cycle route. There will be bollards preventing vehicular access under the low bridge.

The original plan for one-way vehicular access appears to have stalled, with the council citing a lack of progress with Network Rail on an acceptable solution to prevent bridge strikes.

We have questioned why standard, widely-used solutions for low bridges, such as height-restricting girders or traffic light-controlled access, have not been actively pursued.

The council have suggested the core issue is likely a lack of dedicated funding and will investigate the original Section 106 and Section 38 agreements to determine what financial contributions were made by the developer for this purpose. The long-term goal should still be for vehicle access.



Local Area

There's always a lot going on in the local area and many local groups to support. When it comes to Friends of there are Friends of The Vines (who are holding their Cherry Picnic on the 11th July) , Friends of Eastgate House, Friends of Rochester Churchfields & Esplanade, Friends of Watts Meadow, Friends of Rochester Cathedral. They are all always looking for volunteers and new members.

Be a tourist in your own town and experience some of the wonderful and famous walking tours including Rochester Revealed and The Original Rochester Spooky Tour. Visit tour-rochester.com for more information on these tours, they can be great to take any visitors or guests you have to introduce or reacquaint themselves with Rochester. The City of Rochester Society also hold popular [guided tours](#)

There's the "We Did It Medway" podcast hosted by Rob Flood and Philip Dodd which is available every fortnight, well worth a listen. You may also be interested in The Rest Is History podcast episode 600 which featured Rochester and Chatham arguing that the length of the High Street is one of the most historically significant streets in England if not the world!

Intra Arts and Sun Pier House



About INTRA ARTS

Founded in 2014, Intra Arts operates a dynamic arts venue and maker space in a historic Art Deco building. The space offers public access to specialized equipment, including a printmaking studio, glass kilns, and craft tools, and hosts creative classes and workshops.

Deeply embedded in the Medway community, Intra Arts promotes creativity and wellbeing through festivals, exhibitions, and collaborative projects. They offer affordable, inclusive arts programs, often partnering with organisations to provide free or discounted activities. Notable initiatives include printmaking courses, glass classes, and community projects like lantern-making for Medway Light Nights.

Sun Pier House and Intra Arts have partnered with Hyde Housing and Vistry to deliver a programme of activities and events for the Rochester Riverside Community. Fancy sailing on the Edith May barge? Looking for discounted art classes? Family concerts for under 3's? Free local live music nights? Join this dedicated, exclusive mailing list for the Rochester Riverside community, Managed by Sun Pier House and Intra Arts.

You can sign-up to their mailing list [here](#):

Find out more about Riverside Connections [here](#):



About Sun Pier House

Sun Pier House, founded in 2013, is a not-for-profit arts organisation in Chatham. It serves as a hub for Medway's creative community, offering a gallery, café, events space, staging area, community hire rooms and artist studios. Sun Pier House hosts hundreds of free arts activities and community programs annually, supporting small businesses and community causes with venue hire. They engage a diverse audience, including schools, families, vulnerable groups, and local artists. With a focus on inclusivity and accessibility, Sun Pier House aims to foster creativity, boost wellbeing, and strengthen community connections throughout Medway.



Please do visit their respective websites to see what's on or visit the cafe at Sun Pier House.



Rochester High Street

Very excitingly there are many new openings on the High Street including [The Little Shop](#) which is an emporium of all things Rochester tastefully decked out with items that would make great gifts or additions to your own home.

[CJ Hook's Fishmongers](#) had it's opening recently and is sure to be a real treasure providing a real alternative to the supermarket and boosting the diversity of independent shops available.

[Tribé](#), a Maltese restaurant with five locations in Malta are bringing their first international branch to Rochester!

You are likely aware of the passing of Archie Johnstone on the 23rd December 2025. Archie was the High Street's longest serving retailer opening Johnstone's in 1951. He was responsible for first installing Christmas lights on the High Street as well as encouraging the now very popular Dickensian Festival. He was a huge believer in community and an inspiration. You can read more about him [here](#).

At Johnstone's the rumour mill has been busy — but don't worry, they're not going anywhere! They're still here, still serving the community, and with your support, will continue to do so for years to come.

Fiona and Brad—Aunt and Nephew—have proudly carried on the Johnstones legacy for the past 3 years. With Fiona's wealth of experience and Brad quickly catching up, the next generation isn't just maintaining the business—we're actively tuning, improving, and shaping the store for the future.

"Together with our dedicated team, we're working hard every day to serve all our customers and keep raising the standard. So come in and shop with us—we'll always go that extra mile!"



ROCHESTER RIVERSIDE
RESIDENTS GROUP

www.rochesterriverside.org.uk

Thank you for reading!

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