

Rochester Riverside Residents' Association

NEWSLETTER

July 2026



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

Fees and Charges

As it is an important issue we are repeating the service charges information here. Since the 9th April we (and other residents) have had a response from Sarah Raw at Hyde who is the Service Charge Manager (Olga's boss). Although this response did provide some detail it did not provide evidence or methodology. The case has now been referred to Anna Brennan Financial Performance & Improvement Director and Sharon Pearce, Chief Financial Officer at Hyde.

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 await a response to the formal letter sent to the directors. There is further action we can take.



Putting Out Rubbish

A resident has been in contact regarding placing rubbish outside of your home the day before the bins get collected (Wednesday evening). This can lead to foxes and other animals ripping into the rubbish overnight and having rubbish strewn all over the road. This is unsightly, unsanitary and potentially embarrassing. There may be incidences e.g. shift work where it is not possible to put rubbish out the morning of collection but if the majority of people can place rubbish on Thursday morning then this can help to reduce the mess. This is perhaps more achievable now that the general waste collection seems to be much later in the day compared to the previous pre-7am collection.

The resident in question has also drafted a helpful and creative flyer which has been sent with this newsletter.



Road Openings

Road opening conversations are ongoing. Vistry are keen to press on with the Furrell's Road opening and are installing kerbs and co-ordinating with Highways regarding signage. However, both Vistry and the council are experiencing delays from Network Rail. It would be useful to know who is ultimately responsible for project oversight and holding Network Rail to account. Amanda has been particularly helpful raising the issue with Vince Maple and receiving a promise that this case would be assigned to a councillor and followed up directly with the residents association.

We have initially had Cllr. Simon Curry looking into the stalled progress. After forwarding this to Lauren Edwards MP the case has now been assigned to Cllr. Linda Bowen. The key points that are being raised:

- 1) Opening of Furrell's Road
- 2) Blue Boar Lane phase 1 (pedestrian)
- 3) Blue Boar Lane phase 2 (vehicular access)
- 4) Doust Way Connection
- 5) Gas House Road pedestrian crossing

Updates will be posted as soon as we have them.



Police and Bike Marking

The PC that has most interaction with the Riverside is Jack Coverley-Saich. Unfortunately he is unwell at present. We all wish him the best and hope he can recover soon. In the meantime, PC Heather Greenwood and PC Neve Paterson are on hand to assist. Before he was signed off sick PC Coverley-Saich was looking into the recent bike thefts and had some good leads. He offered to host a bike marking session. This is where a unique number is etched into the bike and loaded into a national database helping to recover stolen bikes. PC Paterson has agreed to come to the summer event on the 9th August for a bike marking session. It would be useful to give her an idea of numbers so if you will be coming please can you indicate on the facebook post or reply to the inbox.



Creek Clean Up - 22nd July

Belinda has permission for four more creek clean up events over the next year. The next session will be taking place on Wednesday 22nd July 2026 at 10am-12pm.

The meeting place is opposite Costa at the bench next to the creek (or you may see us at Belinda's car parked next to the Marketing Suite).

Equipment is provided but please bring gloves and boots or wellies. If the the weather is good don't forget sunscreen, sunglasses and a hat!

There is a budget for refreshments after so please do come down for this satisfying task even if it's not for the entire time. Please could you let us know if you can make it so that we can get an idea of numbers. Please comment to the post on facebook or reply to the inbox.



Repairs

There are a number of outstanding larger scale repairs. Eventide Park, as confirmed by Vistry, unfortunately needs considerable work. Since the work is of a large scale it will be done in conjunction with Phases 4 and 5. It will be done at the start of works on this phase rather than at the end.

The corner of Cory's Road and Gas House Road can become quite damaged with cars turning often here. This was also reported by a resident. Vistry are still responsible for these repairs and this work should be underway shortly. We did enquire about the handover of Cory's Road (and all the roads) with Vistry.

The council will likely not take on Cory's Road

until there is full through access to the development e.g. Doust Way and Furrell's Road are also open. The council will then have to undertake one handover process rather than multiple smaller projects. Full snagging will be required before Vistry can hand the roads over to the council. As Bath Hard Wharf is not due to be complete and take in residents until the end of the year, the handover of the roads could still be some time.

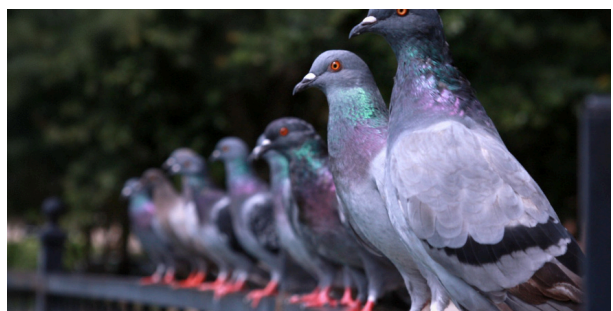
The pumping station next to Anchor House still needs tidying up by Icosa Water and Furrell's Park is still awaiting repairs from the contractor HAGs. Both these points are being pressed for action as it has been well over a year without any meaningful progress taking place.



Phase Reminders

Phase 7 is coming along. In total 3 apartment blocks have been handed over, Odin House, Calypso House and Cadmus House with Oberon House and Sunfish House expected by the end of July. Skipjack House will follow shortly with Bath Hard Wharf (Torbay House?), the large block next to Blue Boar Wharf expected for completion by the end of the year.

As Doust Way does not pass under a railway bridge, its opening should not be as delayed as Furrell's Road although the work to Bath Hard Wharf does need to be complete and as stated this is not anticipated until December 2026 at the earliest.



Pigeons

Pigeon's continue to be a nuisance to apartment block owners, particularly on Cory's Road. Hyde have, in their other locations, used a Hawk to deter the presence of pigeons and this is perhaps preferred as an option compared to humane culling. This, as with everything will come with a cost for the development but we will ask Hyde to look into this further and ascertain the costs involved.



Covenants

In every Title Deed registered with Land Registry there are covenants that were agreed to as part of taking ownership of your house or apartment. The covenants will differ depending on your type of dwelling but this is a reminder that if you wish to make a change, particularly to the front of your property or any wall or fence adjoining your property you must seek permission from Hyde before proceeding. Hyde are not interested in turning down reasonable requests (no turrets please) but asking permission before proceeding is in the covenants. The relevant section of your title deeds that deal with covenants if you are a freeholder are likely

Sections 9-12. For leaseholders the covenants are likely more detailed and could be in a different part of your deeds. For leaseholders it is also almost certain that there will be a restriction on smoking illegal substances and if reported by your neighbours eventual eviction is possible. If you are having an anti-social issue with the smoking of illegal substances please let Hyde know about the residence in question. You can also inform the police. If you have a medical prescription, that likely does not stipulate that you smoke. The required substance can be bought in oil or vaporiser form. You should not be impinging on the enjoyment of your neighbours.



Summer Event - 9th August 2026

The next Summer Event is in the planning stages and we are busy working with Intra Arts and Sun Pier to deliver another fun afternoon on the 9th August.

The Invicta Jazz Band will be attending as well as Air of the Dog, Intra Arts, Facepainting, Balloon animals, yoga, with cakes, coffee and tea provided by a local scout group.

PC Neve Paterson (covering for PC Jack Coverley-Saich) has also offered to hold a bike marking event. Given the recent bike thefts (the police are making progress with their investigations) bike marking could be a step that leads to recovery and prosecution. It would be useful to pass on numbers of those interested so please could you either comment on the post that will go out with this newsletter or message into the Residents' Association inbox to give an indication that you will be bringing your bike down on the day.

Can We Replace Our Managing Agent? A Quick Guide

A number of residents have asked what it would take to replace Hyde Housing Association as managing agent for Rochester Riverside. It's a fair question — but the honest answer is "it depends who you are and which costs you're talking about."

1. For leaseholders (flats)

- Leaseholders have a genuine legal route available: the Right to Manage (RTM).
- It's a "no-fault" right — you don't need to prove Hyde has done anything wrong.
- Leaseholders form an RTM company, which then takes over management responsibility for a building (not necessarily ownership).
- You need at least 50% of flats in that building to participate, and the qualifying rules were relaxed in March 2025, so more mixed-use buildings now qualify.
- RTM operates on a building-by-building basis. With 24 separate blocks, leaseholders would likely need to organise (and potentially claim) block by block, rather than as one development-wide vote. Some blocks might qualify easily; others (e.g. shared ownership or HA-managed blocks) may not, or may need separate handling.
- Note: RTM would only transfer management of block-specific costs (the building itself) — not necessarily the wider estate charges.
- An alternative (harder) route is applying to the First-tier Tribunal for a court-appointed manager, but unlike RTM this requires evidence of mismanagement.

2. For the development as a whole (including freeholders) this is more difficult, and affects everyone — leaseholders and freeholders alike, since estate-wide costs (roads, landscaping, shared amenities) are charged separately from individual block costs.

Freehold houses aren't held under a lease, so RTM does not apply to freeholders at all - it's a leasehold-only right.

Currently, there is no equivalent statutory right for freeholders on mixed estates to force a change of estate manager, even where they're paying an estate rent charge or service charge. This is expected to change: the Leasehold and Freehold Reform Act 2024 includes provisions to give freeholders on private/mixed estates similar consumer protections and redress rights to leaseholders. However, as of mid-2026, these provisions are not yet in force. The government ran a consultation on estate management and service charges that closed in September 2025, and is still working through the roughly 25–30 pieces of secondary legislation needed to bring the Act fully into effect. There's no confirmed date yet for the freehold estate provisions specifically.

In the meantime, the practical options for the estate as a whole are: raising concerns collectively with Hyde directly. See the next page on joining the committee to help with this!

The costs involved regarding RTM are generally in the low thousands per block. You need to consider not just ongoing management but also compliance with legal requirements.



Waverley Paddle Steamer

This will again be launching from Rochester Riverside on the 4th and 11th October (both Sundays). The 11th October is a Grand Thames finale departing at around 11am reaching London Tower Pier at around 8pm.

It's a wonderful opportunity to take part in a cruise that travels all around the UK. For more information please see the website [here](#).



Join the Committee!

We're always looking for new members to join the committee. There's a lot that can be done to make this a great place to live and more hands are always welcome! We have meetings every one to two months although obviously things will come up which means not everyone can attend every meeting. Having more people would mean we could spend more time on the following:

- Service charges
- Maintenance schedules for communal areas and flats.
- Summer party and other events.
- Road openings.
- Website.
- Co-ordinating Creek Clean-up.
- Artwork for the tunnel to the train station.
- What's going on with the rail arches near the school.
- Recycling in flats.
- Gardening and cleaning schedules.
- Hyde portal and communication improvements.
- Effectiveness of the managing agent.
- Residents' handbook and FAQs.
- Liaising with Intra and Sun Pier Arts who have specific funding for programs at Rochester Riverside.

Particularly useful would be to have more communication from the (soon to be) 24 apartment blocks on the development. Each can have their own individual issues. I'm sure that each block has their own WhatsApp group. It would be really useful to have a representative from each block. They wouldn't need to come to each meeting but it would be good to have an update each month, even if there was nothing to report. Things that are particularly useful to report on from flats:

- Maintenance (inc. ad hoc large costs)
- Anti-social behaviour
- Theft and damage
- Parking

It would also be good to share best practice. Things that work for your block may also work for other blocks. This would be particularly useful for the new blocks that will have residents soon or will be built in the future for phases 4,5,6 and 7.

To join the committee come and speak to us at the Summer Party or message into the contact email address.



**ROCHESTER RIVERSIDE
RESIDENTS GROUP**

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Thank you for reading!

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