

The following is a summary of the discussion which took place at the OCRA AGM.

Thank you to everyone who attended the OCRA AGM on 24 March 2026. It was a well-attended and lively meeting, with both familiar and new faces—always great to see our community engaged. The meeting was frank, and at times heated—but it showed the level of frustrations with Freshwater property management. This is our home, and together we can push for the standards we expect.

The OCRA Committee was re-elected for another year. The committee members are unpaid volunteers who generously give their personal time to support and enhance the Oakwood Court community, while attempting to hold Freshwater accountable on behalf of residents.

Kazi Ariff – Chairman
Kate Cullinan - Garden
Lisa Digrandi – Website, Newsletter & Minutes
David Gottlieb – Legal Advisor
Laith Malhas – Treasurer
Dimitris Mantafounis – Special Projects
Valentina Police – Architectural Advisor
Daniela Schneider – Membership

We are currently looking for volunteers to help Kate Cullinan with garden administration. Please email Kate to let her know if you're interested (kate.ocra@gmail.com).

Blocks 9-10 Won The RTM Appeal

Just a few days after the AGM we received the news that Freshwater lost their appeal against the Right-To-Manage (RTM) application for Blocks 9-10. Huge congratulations to the Leaseholders of these two blocks, as they are now free to choose their own managing agent, control their service charges, manage the repairs and maintenance of their blocks, and arrange their own building insurance. There is a small chance that Freshwater may decide to appeal the court's decision a second time, but the Leaseholders' legal advisor thinks this is unlikely.

If you are a Leaseholder interested in learning more about possibly starting the RTM process in your block, please email your contact details and flat number to us at ocra.rtm@gmail.com. We will provide you with some basic information about the RTM process and put you in touch with other Leaseholders in your block.

Freshwater Key Takeaways

We would like to thank Sebastian Zawadzki, Area 05 Manager for Freshwater, for attending the OCRA AGM and answering the Leaseholders' questions. The key concerns raised by Leaseholders at the meeting:

- Poor communication and lack of response
- Lack of dedicated property manager for Oakwood Court and frequent personnel turnover
- Ongoing hot water and heating failures
- Frequent lift breakdowns
- Maintenance delays
- Not enforcing lease terms
- Security issues, including no CCTV

Sebastian acknowledged these issues and committed to:

- Addressing the hot water and heating failures as a matter of urgency
- Hiring a new dedicated property manager
- Improving communication
- Providing a written action plan by the end of April

Q&A Session with Freshwater

Sebastian responded to the following questions from the Leaseholders and residents:

Q) Hot water and heating issues

Many residents reported problems with the hot water for extended periods, heating breakdowns and severe delays in repairs.

A) Sebastian agreed to look into the hot water and heating issues as a top priority. We don't currently have a property manager for Oakwood Court and Ella Martin the Block Administrator is on long term sick leave. Residents who continue to have issues should email Sebastian on Sebastian.Zawadzki@highdorn.co.uk with a copy to Area05-Estateteam@highdorn.co.uk and kamil.mehboob@dbservices.co.uk.



Q) Petition to replace the Ginkgo trees

We would like to suggest that the Ginkgo trees in Oakwood Court are replaced. The leaves are pretty, but the fruits make a disgusting stink and mess and when mouldy are slippery for pedestrians and damaging to cars - worse, they get into the air ventilation system and smell for weeks.

A) OCRA has been in ongoing discussions with the Council about this problem over the past few years. So far, they have only agreed to prune the trees, shake off the fruit, and regularly jet wash the pavements, but this has not solved the problem.

OCRA is therefore launching a petition to request that the Council remove and replace these trees with a more suitable species. Residents are encouraged to respond to the petition and also write to the Council to provide a personal account of the way the trees have affected them.

Please email lisa.ocra@gmail.com if you would like to participate in the petition to remove and replace the trees (be sure to include your name and flat number).

Sebastian asked OCRA to keep him on copy of the correspondence with the Council regarding this issue so he can also follow up with them.

Q) Reserve fund vs service charge

Initially it was decided that a reserve fund be built up so that any unforeseen expense would be dealt with out of the reserve fund. However. It is now a regular charge. Why isn't it then added to the service charge?

A) The service charge covers day-to-day operations. The reserve fund is used for major works and unexpected costs. The increase in the reserve fund is linked to upcoming works.



Q) Cluttered common parts

One resident wrote: Rubbish and other items are regularly left outside flat entrances, the common part walls are dirty and damaged, and the corridor space and main entrance should be kept tidy.

Another resident wrote: Our entrance lobby in Block 11 has become a Fire and Health and Safety risk as in the pictures above. I have written to Highdorn about this matter and have not received any reply as yet.

A) This problem primarily relates to the fact that Freshwater management is not enforcing the terms of our leases. Nevertheless, residents are reminded that they must not leave any items in the common parts.

Any items left in the common parts will be subject to a five-day notice period, after which they should be removed and disposed of at the resident's expense.

Residents are reminded that rubbish must only be placed out at the designated collection times listed below.

Repeated breaches of this rule may result in fines.

- Monday – Saturday: 6.30am - 9.30am
- Sunday: 6.30am - 10.30am

Q) Future projects

What are the planned investment projects for 2026 and 2027?

A) Please see pages 3-4 of this newsletter.

Q) Lack of response from Freshwater

I would like to know why, after having sent several emails starting last November, I have not received a reply from anyone on the Estate Management team. When can I expect a reply? And more generally, what is their plan for addressing leaseholder concerns and what level of service are they committing to provide? Given my experience the current level seems woefully insufficient.

A) Sebastian acknowledged that there is currently no dedicated property management team to manage Oakwood Court. After Annabelle Louvros was laid off in March 2025, it took Freshwater six months to hire Anastasia Skripko. Anastasia was fired after less than six months, and her replacement was only in the position for two weeks before he left too. Furthermore, Sebastian told us that Ella Martin, the Block Administrator, is currently on long-term sick leave.

Q) Security and CCTV

Security remains a major concern and several residents reported vehicle thefts, car break-ins and bicycle thefts over the past year.

A) Please see the sections on CCTV & Access Control Upgrade and Security Improvements in the next column.

2025 Highlights

Over the past year, three medium-scale projects were successfully completed:

- Block 2 Lift Modernisation – £165,000.
- Pigeon Netting & Repairs (multiple blocks) – £40,000.
- Fire Escape Staircase Repairs – £70,000.

Unfortunately, two planned projects—the Phase 3 Bay Beam Works (Block 12) and the North Side Entrance Bridge Works—were delayed due to lack of approval from the Building Safety Regulator (BSR). Approval delays, combined with insufficient application documentation, resulted in a restart of the process.

Following discussions with Freshwater senior management:

- New consultants (Consult Construct) were appointed in October 2025.
- Costs were held at previously agreed levels despite delays.
- Efforts are underway to classify works as “urgent” to enable earlier commencement.

Encouragingly, a qualified engineer has attested to the urgent nature of the works. This will allow us to start the works while waiting for the BSR approval to take its course. A pre-contract meeting is being organised. Progress on the Entrance Bridge works continues.

Plans for 2026

The year ahead is expected to be busy, with several key initiatives:

Major Works

- Restart of delayed Bay Beam and Bridge projects (expected to start in Spring 2026).
- Lift modernisation for Blocks 6, 8, and potentially 4.

CCTV & Access Control Upgrade

- A modern fibre-based system with 100+ cameras.
- Improved communication between porters and residents.
- Estimated cost: ~£450,000 (subject to tender results).

Security Improvements

In response to rising incidents of car theft and fly-tipping, several measures have been introduced:

- Three night-security guards (including control desk, internal and external patrols).
- Reallocation of patrol duties to strengthen perimeter monitoring.
- Introduction of body-worn cameras for security staff.
- Planned CCTV system to enhance real-time monitoring.

Ongoing Challenges

Residents continue to experience frustration with the managing agent's performance, including:

- Delays in appointing and retaining property managers.
- Poor communication and slow response times.
- Operational inefficiencies, delays in sorting out issues.

These problems have contributed to Blocks 9 & 10 pursuing Right to Manage (RTM) status.

Service Charge Budget 2026

The proposed budget reflects a **3.9% increase (£97,000)** compared to last year's Budget. Key drivers include:

- **Staff wage increases (DBS)** – £74,000.
- **Insurance premium increases** – £24,000 (due to water damage claims).
- **Health & safety compliance costs** – £35,000 increase.

DBS services remain the largest cost at **£1.22M (47% of total budget)**, reflecting efforts to align wages with the London Living Wage.

The Reserve Fund

- Stood at approximately £1M last year.
- Now ~£725K after recent works.
- Will increase with an additional £400K contribution this year.

Overall, the OCRA Committee considers the budget reasonable and recommends its approval.

Looking Ahead: 2027 and Beyond

Planned major works include:

- Completion of remaining Bay Beam and Bridge phases (next two years).
- Continued lift modernisation (remaining five lifts).

Redecoration Schedule:

- 2028: Blocks 7-12 External (£2.4M)
- 2029: Blocks 1-6 External (£2.5M)
- 2030: Blocks 7-12 Internal (£675K)
- 2031: Blocks 1-6 Internal (£685K)

Please note: timelines are subject to BSR approval.

Join OCRA today!

OCRA membership benefits include this newsletter, which is distributed to members three times a year in both hardcopy and electronic format, and a personal password to access all the restricted areas of our website.

Membership is free in 2026 although we welcome – and need – your voluntary annual donations. The suggested annual donation is £40 per household.

Please make your annual donations by bank transfer:

Account Name: OCRA

Sort Code: 20-47-34

Account Number: 60598720

Reference: Your Flat Number



Communal Garden

Our gardeners will be re-turfing the lawn in the upper garden shortly after Easter.

As some residents may recall, the communal lawn sustained significant damage last summer after bicycles and scooters were ridden across it. While much of the grass has since recovered, the incident highlighted the need to better protect the area during restoration.

To give the new turf the best chance to establish properly, the garden will need to be closed to residents for one month following the re-turfing works. This temporary closure is the only effective way to prevent foot traffic from damaging the newly laid lawn while it takes root.

We will also take advantage of this temporary closure to chemically treat the playmat area.

We appreciate your understanding and cooperation in helping us preserve the garden for everyone's enjoyment.

Planned garden capex for 2026:

- Replacement of two damaged benches which can't be repaired.
- Replacement of one small picnic "side table" and the addition of one more.
- Addition of a gardeners' storage shed hidden behind screening which, will also conceal the unsightly compost heap.
- Returfing of the upper garden shortly after Easter (no access for one month).
- Chemical treatment of playmat area to be done at the same time (no access for one month).

To join OCRA please email Daniela Schneider at Daniela_ocra@icloud.com.