

## Question from Barratt House Owner

**Q:** I wasn't able to come to the Houndwood meeting this evening but can someone let us know if this was discussed as I also disagree with the charge - flower beds look awful, there's rubbish everywhere, broken fences in public areas, roads unfinished and a total mess - every time I drive out of my space I go down a big bump! Any idea when the roads will be finished? When we purchased our house we were also promised play areas for kids - where are these?

Every time I speak to premier estates they don't want to know and say they can't do anything until they take over from Barratts. Every time I speak to Barratts they say they'll do something and don't!

I've refused to pay the charge twice and both times been sent letters saying they'll take me to court so I just end up paying it because I'm fed up of fighting with them!

Surely if we prove they're not looking after the estate we can stop paying until they sort it?

**A:** By chance I walked around the estate with two people from Premier Estates and a Crest Nicholson manager on Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> Jan 2018 in the afternoon, so I am starting to understand. I have also been asking questions via email over the last two months as well as challenging their replies to me.

The **Premier Estate Charges** will be forever and may even go up if more monies are required although they have to follow a process to enable this. At the moment the estate is being maintained by contractors paid for by Crest Nicholson and Barratts. Premier Estates is collecting monies from Barratts residents and passing it on to Barratts to pay for grass cutting and weeding etc. Barratts is not spending all the money which is why the bill in December was quickly followed by a credit note. Premier is also collecting money from apartment residents to pay for common area cleaning and lighting etc. Crest Nicholson will be handing over the estate maintenance within 3 or 4 months at which point Premier will start charging the residents for their properties. Barratts current plan is to be complete on the site by June 2018 at which point the whole estate will be looked after by Premier Estates. The Community Group would like to represent the residents in meetings with Premier to improve the quality of the works being carried out. Premier Estates bills are confusing because they show the accounts of the whole estate which includes the apartments. People in the apartments pay more than those in houses due to lighting, cleaning and decoration of common areas, we all pay for grass cutting, path maintenance and planting etc.

The kids **play area** is unlikely to be built unless we organise and fundraise as residents. My understanding was that the community monies committed to this were diverted to another community project.

**Litter picking** is something we have done for some time; the community group has equipment and insurance for those taking part. I expect there will be less need for this when Premier Estates take over and the builders leave. We have already dropped this to once a month.

The litter in the ditches is the responsibility of Barratts until Premier Estates takes over (or Crest Nicholson on the earlier part of the estate) so should be reported through their care lines. From feedback from other residents, this is not always successful. I am hopeful that this will improve when Premier Estates take over. Mendip District Council do pick up some of the litter when emptying the bins but do not cover the whole estate.

Some residents have **adopted a flower bed** because they want more gardening space, others because they hated the way it looked or were frustrated at the lack of maintenance. Whatever peoples motives they are a source of pride and companionship for people working together on them which is to be welcomed as well as a source of fruit and vegetables. Premier Estates are responsible for their maintenance in the future although we are eager to continue to adopt some of them where residents wish to do this.

**Roads** should be completed by the end of June 2018. However, both builders have to get their parts of the estate adopted by Somerset County Council, so some remedial work may take place after that date. It can take several years to complete the adoption process. Crest Nicholson is hoping to do it in 18 months. Once adopted potholes and Streetlight defects can be reported via the County Council website. A process that works from my experience.

Peter Goater (Houndwood Community Group)

**Adopting a flower bed** – I don't disagree with the idea, like you said it's great for those who love to garden and brings the community together. Say I wanted to adopt one, do I have to fund this myself? As again I believe this is something our estate charges should cover & maintain which will also ensure **ALL** flower beds are fairly maintained.

If you want to adopt a planter, then we have a greenhouse where some residents raise some plants from seed. We have tools you can use and a core of people who will assist you. We also have some limited funding from the gardening prize we won last year. It will probably cost you something. I agree the un-adopted ones should be well maintained. My conversation with Premier the other day leads me to believe they will be better maintained once they take over. It is down to us to manage the quality of their work.

Peter Goater (Houndwood Community Group)

Going back to **litter picking** – I just find this really odd and have never heard of people having to collect litter before? Effectively I see the money we give premier estates as money to look after the grounds and surely this is one of the easiest things to action?

It isn't just the formal litter picking sessions, many residents pick up others litter scattered around the estate from residents poorly managed recycling bins. Realistically there are not going to be contractors on site every day picking up litter, so the more residents pick up the better the estate will look.

**Peter Goater (Houndwood Community Group)**