



St James Park

BULLETIN

www.st-james-park.co.uk

ISSUE

002

05/2026

ALL CHANGE

We say goodbye to the
chair of the estate board

STAYING SAFE

Committed to improving
security on the estate

10 YEAR PLAN

Find out about our
commissioned survey

GROWING GREEN

Find out how we are supporting our
local wildlife and get a slug free garden



Photo by: Alexas_Fotos on Unsplash



Stephen Moss

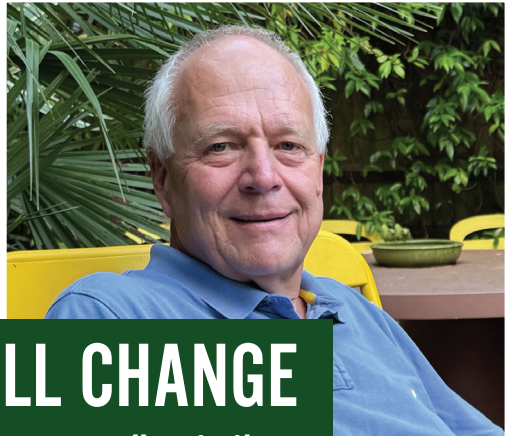
Bulletin editor and
estate board member

WELCOME

Welcome to the second edition of the St James Park Bulletin, a newsletter which the estate board plans to publish two or three times a year to keep residents informed of board thinking and activities across the estate. It will overlap to some extent with the estate website (<https://www.st-james-park.co.uk/>), but the hope is that the Bulletin will also be a useful and user-friendly snapshot of life on the estate.

Publication of this second issue comes ahead of the AGM on Thursday 25 June and airs some of the issues that will be discussed there. The estate's managing agents, Bartholomews, will issue relevant papers and voting forms ahead of the AGM, but please make a note of the date now and try to attend. It will be held at St Andrew's Church in Maple Road on Thursday 25 June, starting at 7.30pm.

Robert Smith is stepping down as chair of the St James Park board after a long and distinguished stint. The AGM will be his swansong and we will no doubt all want to thank him for his years of service. I have interviewed Robert for this edition of the Bulletin. The name of the new chair will be revealed at the AGM.



ALL CHANGE

**We say goodbye to the
chair of the estate board**

Robert Smith has been chair of the St James Park board for 13 years. Recently retired and now travelling for much of the year, he has decided it is time to step down both as chair and as a board director. We will miss his expertise enormously, but wish him well on a long and enjoyable retirement.

Robert feels that with the change in his own circumstances and the switch to a new managing agent for the estate, it is a natural moment for a transition on the board too. "With Bartholomews a lot of the work that I used to do behind the scenes has disappeared and the incoming chair will have to do less handholding than used to be necessary. So I feel it is the right time for a change."

Robert has lived on the estate since it was built in 2000 and bought his house in Williams Grove off plan. He says he is very happy here and will stay "until my knees won't get me up the stairs". He joined the board around 2013 because he had attended several AGMs which he felt could be improved. "I thought they were unstructured with unresolved views – not just between residents but among members of the board," he says. "There were clearly dissensions and many issues concerning the grounds and grounds maintenance."

He has a background in corporate governance and felt his expertise would come in useful in improving the effectiveness of the board, so decided to apply to be a director. "I felt I could add something," he says. The board evidently agreed because, after he had attended just two board meetings, the previous chair stepped down and suggested he take over the role.

Robert quickly decided a new approach was needed. "After a couple of meetings I thought 'You can't run meetings like this. Let's get a proper agenda.'" He insisted on the board being given more detailed financial and technical information, and gradually put the board's role in the management of the estate on what he considers a more businesslike footing. "We now have really constructive meetings; everybody is able to give their view; not everybody agrees with everything; but we have constructive conversations and we do reach a general agreement."

He accepts there have been blips, notably the financial problems that faced the board a couple of years ago and necessitated an increase in the service charge. "We should have picked that up sooner," he admits, "but when we identified it we took it seriously and are now in a much better state. Now we've sorted out the finances and are on top of the day-to-day budgetary costs we should be able, allowing for increases in line with inflation, to build up our reserves to cover major works when we need to do them over the next decade or so."

He is referring to the spending on roads, pavements, lighting, fencing and other hard infrastructure that will be necessary over the next decade or so, and which is the subject of the 10-year plan discussed elsewhere in this Bulletin. "Historically we've more or less guessed at what sort of level of reserves we should accumulate," he says. "The new 10-year plan will give us a very clear indication so that there are no surprises in the future."

Robert hopes his tenure as chair will be judged a success. "I am very pleased with how the meetings are run now and how the board operates compared with the way it was when I joined. We have improved governance and greatly improved the look and maintenance of the grounds." One area he identifies where he feels the board could improve life on the estate is car parking, which continues to be a problem. "I put that down to inconsiderate owners rather than people off the estate coming and parking. Yes, you get a few of those on Saturday mornings, but pavement parking is largely down to residents, and it shows a complete lack of consideration."

He also makes the interesting point that a place like the St James Park estate "should have more of a sense of community than it does". He welcomes the carol services, summer parties and Easter egg hunts which Lorraine Black, Chris Sellick and others organise, but feels there should be other ways of fostering a sense of togetherness and mutual cooperation, though the fact that many owners of properties on the estate are non-resident can militate against that.

"There should be other ways of fostering a sense of togetherness and mutual cooperation."

Robert believes the board has done a "pretty good job" in his time in enforcing covenants and protecting the appearance of the estate. "I'm very proud of the quality of the estate," he says. "It still has the same sort of feel that it had at the beginning. It is important that the estate's uniform appearance is maintained. Putting a modern lantern outside your house compared to a Victorian or Edwardian-type light is aesthetically damaging. You might not like Victorian or Edwardian-type lanterns, but you can get modern equivalents that fit into the overall look of the estate."

He does, though, admit that there are areas where "in hindsight we should have been more proactive". He cites bin stores and bike sheds being allowed to burgeon without proper oversight. He also believes the board should have specified exactly where, on the townhouses on the estate, flues should have been positioned. All these small variations add up collectively to large divergences from the original design. Multiply those variations over many years and you have anarchy, which is why the next chair will need to continue to hold the line against breaches in the covenants.

Robert is optimistic about the evolution of the board. "It is always good to get some new blood, and new directors will bring fresh perspectives. I'm not around as much as I used to be, and it seemed an appropriate time to step back. I feel I've done my bit." Nobody would gainsay that. Robert has done a tremendous job and will be a hard act to follow.

THE VIEW FROM THE APARTMENTS

A message from Tony Holder, Chair
St James (Long Ditton) Residents Company Limited



Dear fellow residents,

I am Tony Holder, Chair of St James Park (Long Ditton) Residents Company Limited, which looks after the management of the apartments on the St James Park estate. I'd like to take this opportunity to share a few updates specifically on behalf of your residents company.

Welcome from your residents company

On behalf of the residents company, we would like to add our warm welcome to Bartholomews as our recently appointed managing agents.

We are a separate company – here for apartment owners

There are two companies overseeing the management of the estate: the Estate Company, which is responsible for the grounds, lighting, roads and footpaths, and sets the estate service charge; and the Residents Company, which is responsible for providing services to the communal parts of the apartment blocks, maintaining the blocks in good order and setting the service charge for owners of the apartments.

The residents company is completely independent from the wider estate company, with our own board of directors and our own accounts. Our purpose is to represent the interests of apartment owners across the seven blocks and ensure that the blocks are well maintained. That said, three directors sit on both boards, and we work closely together to ensure we get the best value and outcomes for everyone on the estate.

We need YOU on the board

We need to grow our board and would love to have at least one director representing each of the seven blocks. Without broader representation we cannot govern effectively or truly reflect the interests of all apartment owners. The current directors have all been in place for more than a decade and, while they remain committed to the company, fresh voices and wider perspectives are essential. Being on the board of the residents company is a great way to have a real say in how your building is managed. No prior experience is necessary – just enthusiasm and a willingness to get involved.

Directors are unpaid volunteers whose workload on behalf of the company is modest – typically four to six board meetings a year plus the occasional email, with the hard day-to-day work handled by Bartholomews.

We urgently need your support and involvement, so if you are willing to help please call me via Bartholomews or email Andrew Morrison, see contact information below.

Tony Holder Chair

St James (Long Ditton)
Residents Company Ltd

Contact me via:

 andrewm@bartholomews.com

 020 8546 9441

STAYING SAFE

Committed to improving security on the estate



Security is a partnership between owners/residents and the board, and the latter is committed to improving overall security on the estate.

The recent spate of break-ins on the estate has led to deep concern among residents. This is of course shared by the board, which has commissioned an independent security adviser to complete a security audit and put forward recommendations on what we might do to improve security on the estate. Outgoing board Chair Robert Smith will outline the conclusions of this report at the AGM and in subsequent communications to residents. This is seen as the board's number one priority and will be treated as such by the new chair.

Security of individual properties is the responsibility of owners, but the board and Bartholomews will work together to develop clear guidance on permitted security improvements, including cameras, alarms, lighting, and door and window upgrades. The board will streamline approvals where covenants require consent, avoid blocking reasonable security measures on aesthetic grounds, and consider co-ordinating group discounts with alarm and CCTV suppliers and on door and lock upgrade services.

Security is a partnership between owners/residents and the board, and the latter is committed to improving overall security on the estate. Areas being considered include improving lighting, trimming hedges and trees that potentially allow cover for intruders, the possible use of CCTV (where permissible under the law) and assessing what can be done in terms of access to the estate.

The latter is made more difficult by the fact that there are legally designated footpaths through the estate, but the security review will take a fresh look at the question of access points to the estate. The board will also look to promote neighbourhood watch schemes and consider the setting up of an estate security group to oversee this vital issue.

Garages have already been pinpointed as a key vulnerability in houses on the estate and the board recommends the installation of a **garage defender** (a ground-anchored lock) to prevent lifting.



Using high-quality locks, adding side bolts and installing motion-sensor lighting further prevents forced entry.

The board has in the past considered the use of a company providing manned guards on the estate in the hours of dark. The cost of providing random vehicle patrols and foot patrols at night would be more than £50,000 a year, rising according to the number of hours in which a presence is maintained. The board felt that, given the limited likely deterrent effect from occasional random patrols, the cost seemed excessive – the service charge would have to rise considerably to pay for such provision. But that remains an option if owners feel that this is the direction in which they wish to travel.

GROWING GREEN

Plans for the park and our local wildlife



Why is part of the park closed? – the gardeners explain

There has been some disquiet among residents that the central park on the estate was closed for several weeks and that half of the park will be out of bounds throughout the summer. The green in the crescent at Savery Drive will also be out of bounds while restoration of the lawn is undertaken. The board accepts that residents should have been informed of this work in a more timely fashion and wishes to apologise for this.



Mark and Alan, the excellent gardeners who have worked on the estate for 12 and 16 years respectively, said that the work had been delayed by poor weather in March. Alan explains that they are now “top-dressing” the lawns and that the work ideally needs to be done in the spring and then given time to bed in. It was last done around 10 years ago.

“The thing that will stunt grass the most is compaction,” says Alan. “If the soil is compacted the roots can’t develop, so you don’t get new growth and the grass doesn’t spread. We scarify the soil to give aeration to the bottom of the roots and then go over the area with metal spikes called tines which penetrate the ground to open up the roots again to allow them to stretch and move. And then we put on a top dressing which is a mixture of very fine loam and sand mixed together with a pre-seed fertiliser. We spread that over the top of the area, rake and brush that in, and it gives the roots room to expand and improves the grass.”

One half of Chadwick Park will be closed until September. Then the second half will be treated and fenced off. Alan explains that the complete closure for two weeks was necessary so there was no damage to the treated area in the early phase of the work, and because he and Mark were working in the park intensively and had left materials on site.

Please respect the fenced-off areas over the next few months, but of course enjoy the section that is open, and also bear in mind that there is a delightful small park which can be accessed through an alleyway in Williams Grove. The gardeners call this “The Meadow”. It is full of fruit trees, and a lovely place to spend time on a sunny day. Ideal for family picnics, but not ideal for ballgames or over-vigorous children’s activities as some of the trees and plants are fragile.

The Meadow also has two beehives – perfectly safe if you don’t disturb them (they are fenced off at the far end of the garden). We will return to the subject of St James Park’s bees in a future edition of the Bulletin, and talk to the beekeeper who harvests the honey from them. Enjoy St James Park’s green spaces, and please bear with us as we try to improve them.

Hedgehog highways

We are exploring the creation of hedgehog highways within the St James Park estate to support local wildlife and help reduce slug activity in our terraced gardens. These small pathways between gardens allow hedgehogs to roam safely for food and shelter, benefiting both residents and the environment.

More details are available from Bartholomews – please register your interest if you'd like to be involved or learn more.

Mosquitoes – buzz off!

Several residents have raised concerns about mosquitoes during the summer months. This issue has been shared with the Long Ditton Residents Association, who are coordinating a community discussion on possible solutions.

If you'd like to take part or offer input, please email Chris Sellick via c.sellick@hotmail.co.uk.

10 YEAR PLAN

For the estate

The board has commissioned MM Building Surveyors Ltd to undertake a survey of the general condition of the estate and the likely maintenance costs over the next 10 years. The aim is to ensure that the board has sufficient reserves to cover ongoing costs as the estate ages.

The initial findings of the report are that roads are in reasonable condition and will not require urgent attention, but that some work will be needed by the end of the decade and in the early 2030s. Pavements and footpaths are in less good condition and will need early repair and ongoing maintenance. But the most immediate need is to start work on repainting the railings across the estate, which are in poor condition. The board is getting quotes on this work, which is likely to be undertaken on a rolling basis to spread out what are likely to be quite substantial costs.

The board's aim at all times is to maintain the fabric of the estate while keeping increases in the service charge as low as possible. Having a coherent and well-costed 10-year-plan will enable it to be proactive in terms of what needs to be done on the estate rather than dealing with issues on an emergency basis.

GET INVOLVED

Would you like to be a director?

There are currently nine directors on the St James Estate board: Robert Smith (Chair), Derek Ball, Lorraine Black, Fiona Canning, John Farmer, Alexander Harvey, Tony Holder, Andrew Keen and Stephen Moss. Robert Smith will step down as chair and leave the board after the AGM in June.

Derek Ball has also indicated that he will step down after the AGM. Three other St James shareholders – Steven Giddings, Stephen Rawlinson and Chris Sellick – have applied to join the board and will be voted on at the AGM.

If you would like to apply to be a director, please use the form on the St James Park website or contact Bartholomews directly.

We would be particularly interested to have a lawyer on the board, or perhaps co-opted as an affiliate member to assist the board with the legal issues which arise from time to time.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Other important things!

Useful Information

The Bartholomews team

Here is a reminder of the key staff at Bartholomews and their contact details:

Leon Hunter, director:

leonh@bartholomews.com

Andrew Morrison, property manager:

andrewm@bartholomews.com

Office number: 020 8546 9441

St James Park estate website

www.st-james-park.co.uk

This is maintained by board member Derek Ball. Please give us your feedback on how we can develop the site and make it more useful for residents.

- Long Ditton Residents Association
longditton.org
- Elmbridge Borough Council
www.elmbridge.gov.uk 01372 474474
- Kingston Council
www.kingston.gov.uk 020 8547 5000
- Surrey Police
www.surrey.police.uk 101 (non-emergency)
- The Dittons and Hinchley Wood Police
www.police.uk/pu/your-area/surrey-police/the-dittons-and-hinchley-wood
- Follow your local police officers on
Twitter (X): @elmbridgebeat

Fancy a Pimm's and meeting your neighbours?

There will be a summer party in Chadwick Square on Saturday 27 June. The likely starting time is 11am and it will run to around 5pm, but exact timings will be confirmed nearer the date of the event. Keep an eye out for posters which will appear around the estate. There will be Pimm's for the adults and games for the children, but please bring your own picnic ... and pray for fine weather!

Caretaker

The position of the caretaker is currently vacant and we are looking to recruit a suitable candidate for the position. Interviews are under way and an appointment should be made soon.

Covenants

Over the past six months, following the appointment of Bartholomews as the estate's new managing agents, we have undertaken a review of what we consider to be covenant breaches on the estate. Bartholomews has been tasked with systematically following these up and asking owners to make changes where necessary. The application of the covenants can be contentious, but please be assured that everything we do is for the benefit of the estate and to protect its pleasing appearance, much of which depends on uniformity.

Parking

Parking on pavements continues to be an issue. PLEASE refrain from doing this. It inconveniences pedestrians (especially partially sighted ones), can create dangers when people are forced on to the road and damages pavements. The board has so far avoided the introduction of parking controls. We believe that employing an outside company to monitor parking and issue tickets would cause a great deal of acrimony on the estate. But if residents and owners persist in exploiting what is a very liberal parking regime, the board may consider it necessary to go down the ticketing road.

Future issues of the Bulletin

Board member **Stephen Moss** and graphic designer **Wendy Dobing** produce the Bulletin and have plenty of ideas for material for future issues, but we are relying on you to come up with some too. As well as reporting on board matters and estate bureaucracy, it would be good to show the human side of the estate. If you have ideas for things that could be included, **please email Stephen** via stephen.moss@theguardian.com or **Wendy** via wendy@dobingdesign.com.