

Mores Meadow Residents' Handbook

Great Shelford Parochial Charities

A member of The Almshouse Association

Please note that the Residents' Handbook is undergoing review and will be updated during 2023

(This Handbook is to be read with the Letter of Appointment but in the event of conflict the Letter of Appointment will prevail).

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Section 1 – Introduction

The Great Shelford Parochial Charities (“GSPC”) would like to extend a very warm welcome to you as a new resident. We hope that you will settle in quickly and be very happy here. This handbook sets out useful information about the charity and its general administration and management. It also explains your responsibilities as a resident. Please do not hesitate to speak to the Agent if you need further information on any matters.

Please note that the terms set out in this handbook form part of your contract with GSPC and supplement the regulations given in your Letter of Appointment which you signed when you accepted your appointment. It may be necessary to amend these terms and regulations from time to time, but GSPC will consult upon any proposed changes.

GSPC has tried to minimise these terms and regulations which have been designed for the benefit of all residents and to ensure the efficient management of GSPC.

Once again, a very warm welcome.

List of contacts

Chairman: Sarah Rann

Trustees: Brian Connellan, Keith Sugden, Michael Pooles, Simon White, Jaspaul Hill

Clerk: Mary Lester

Agent: Redmayne Arnold & Harris, 30 Woollards Lane, Great Shelford, CB22 5LZ

Emergency out-of-hours contact numbers: See appendix

Section 2 – History, Governance and Management

Historical note

Established in 1890 and registered with The Charities Commission and the Almshouse Association, the reasons for GSPC’s existence include to provide accommodation for “persons resident in the area of the Parish of Great Shelford . . . at low rents according to their means.”

Constitution

GSPC is a registered charity governed by a Charity Commission Scheme – registered charity number 231486.

Management

GSPC is governed by a board of voluntary, local trustees. Day-to-day management of its affairs is provided by the Clerk (assisted by the Agent).

The almshouses

GSPC manages unfurnished dwellings. We currently provide one, two and three bedroomed properties designed for independent living.

GSPC seeks to provide comfortable and secure accommodation to deserving beneficiaries.

Section 3 – Health and Safety

Emergency contact details

It is important that you let the Agent have details (names, addresses, and telephone numbers) of your essential personal contacts. If the details change from time to time, please remember to inform the Agent.

Fire precautions

The individual almshouses comply with the appropriate fire regulations. All are fitted with smoke detectors which, on sensing smoke, will trigger the fire alarm. *If a resident is hard of hearing, they should ask for appropriate equipment to alert them in the event of an emergency.*

Avoiding the risk of fire:

Please be conscious of the risk of fire, for example, regularly checking at night and before going out that appliances have been fully switched off.

We strive to achieve a reasonable balance between enabling residents to live their lives as they choose, while at the same time having regard for the views of others who could be affected by their lifestyle.

We operate a non-smoking policy in the properties and any common areas in line with the general laws which apply to public places and expect residents to abide by this.

Residents need to be aware that in extremis, if as a result of their smoking, an almshouse dwelling was damaged or discoloured by cigarette smoke, they would be liable for the cost of repair or redecoration

Slips, trips and falls

The charity draws your attention to the need to exercise care when using the footpaths in wet, snowy or icy weather

Security

Please consider the following:

DO:

- Keep your front door locked at all times.
- Use the spy hole and chain to identify callers before opening the door if provided. *The chain should only be used to open the door a few inches when identifying callers and not kept in permanent use as this may prevent access in an emergency.*

DO NOT:

- Allow a stranger to enter your home without proof of identity. If you are in doubt, please call the Agent, a family friend, or the police.
- Leave ground floor windows open so that intruders can gain access.
- Keep cash or valuables in your home.

BE AWARE of bogus officials or doorstep salesmen. Always ask for proof of identity.

Keys

Only let people into the house whom you know or are expecting. Never allow anyone claiming to be gas, electricity or water meter readers to enter the dwelling unless expected by you.

The Agent holds a master key which can open your front door, but it will only be used in accordance with the terms of your contract with The Charity which will seek to preserve your privacy. You must not fit locks and chains without the charity's consent as these may delay access for emergency services. Chains should only be used when you wish to identify callers before deciding whether to let them in. The charity may advise on alternative security arrangements.

Please do not obtain duplicate keys without first asking the Agent, as this may lessen security. Make sure that you and your visitors check that the main front door to the house is securely shut after entry or exit.

Routine visits

The Agent will inspect your property on a regular basis to check and advise the charity about any refurbishment etc that may be required. They may take photographs to support this process. Trustees may accompany them on occasion.

This is an opportunity to get to know you better and to address any issues and concerns.

Section 4 – Terms of Occupancy

Letter of Appointment

Your Letter of Appointment, of which you have a copy, explains that you occupy the almshouse as a beneficiary of the charity initially for three years whereupon your appointment is reviewed then and at every third anniversary thereafter. This means that you are not a tenant and that in some circumstances the charity could ask you to find alternative accommodation and leave. Examples of such circumstances are if:

- A resident is no longer able to look after themselves safely or to live independently, even with the help of social services or family support.
- The resident persistently fails to pay monthly maintenance contributions (MMC) promptly without good reason.
- The resident's behaviour is considered to be unreasonable and anti-social, either in respect of other residents or representatives of the charity.
- The resident's circumstances change significantly to the extent that they are no longer considered suitable to be a beneficiary of the charity.

It is a condition of occupancy that residents provide the charity with accurate and complete information of their financial circumstances and that residents inform GSPC if their circumstances change.

GSPC will only revoke the appointment of a beneficiary after appropriate efforts have been made to resolve the issues of concern.

Monthly Maintenance Contribution (MMC)

MMCs are payable in advance on the first of each month by direct debit. If you are experiencing difficulties in making a payment, please let the charity know promptly.

The amount you pay is a contribution towards the cost of running the charity. Items covered by the MMC include:

- Building repairs and maintenance
- Servicing and repair of water, gas and electrical installations
- Refurbishment
- Insurance of the building.

The charity has the right to terminate the appointment of a beneficiary in the event of non-payment of MMC.

Consulting Residents

The charity will hold meetings from time to time to discuss the running of the almshouses with you and your neighbours. You can also talk to a charity trustee in private by asking the clerk to arrange this. Consultation and involvement of the residents in the day-to-day running of the charity's almshouses is a form of participation which benefits all concerned. The charity welcomes the residents' views on matters affecting their quality of life at the almshouses.

The charity will consult you:

- Before any work is done on your almshouse (except in an emergency or if you are not contactable over a reasonable period).
- Before making changes to the communal facilities, including the gardens.
- Before making changes to the amount of MMC payable.

- Before anyone enters your home (except in an emergency or if you are not contactable over a reasonable period).

Absence from Home

You are expected to be in full time occupation of your almshouse and extended periods away during the year might lead the charity to conclude that you have less need for your almshouse accommodation than other potential beneficiaries. If you plan to be away from your dwelling for a period of more than 28 days in any one year, please notify the Agent and explain the circumstances to the charity.

Before going away, please ensure that all food has been put away, taps and appliances have been fully switched off and windows shut. If you are leaving your property during the winter months, please discuss with the Agent how much heating is required to minimise the risk of burst pipes, etc.

Central heating, electricity and hot water

In addition to the MMC residents are responsible for paying their utility bills. Residents are not allowed to use portable gas or paraffin oil heaters, as these pose a serious safety risk. Their use is strictly prohibited.

Alterations to your Almshouse

You must not carry out any improvements, alterations, repairs or decoration to your almshouse without first discussing your plans with the Agent and obtaining the permission of the charity.

Employment

Neither the almshouse nor its garden may be used as a place of business, either from where to conduct a business or to store items connected with running a business, without the consent of the trustees

Pets

Small animals or caged birds are usually acceptable but must not become a nuisance to other residents. Permission must be sought prior to any pet living in the charity's homes.

Moving Out

If you wish to vacate the almshouse, you must give the trustees written notice of at least 4 weeks.. During this notice period you remain liable for your MMC payments even if you have already moved out. Residents or, in the event of death, their personal representatives, remain responsible for MMC payments until the almshouse is cleared of personal possessions and the keys are returned.

If a resident vacates their almshouse without giving the agreed notice, they remain liable for their MMC payments until the end of the required notice period. MMC payments should be made up to the departure date, as well as utility, service and any other bills.

Re-Housing

If you wish to move from one almshouse to another, you should contact the Agent to discuss the matter. While every effort would be made to assist a resident to move if there was a good reason, the decision would depend upon availability and be entirely at the discretion of the charity.

The charity may require you to move to another of the almshouses when major repair work is being carried out, or for some other unforeseen reason.

Gifts and Legacies

It is the charity's policy that no one involved in its operation should accept any gift or legacy from a charity beneficiary. If you wish to donate anything to the charity, please contact the Clerk. All such matters will be dealt with in confidence.

Section 5 - Services

Furniture and fittings

The almshouses are offered unfurnished, the charity is nevertheless responsible for providing flooring. If ovens have been purchased as part of a kitchen refit paid for by the charity - the charity is responsible for replacement from normal wear and tear.

Gardens

You are required to keep your own areas maintained.

Residents Responsibilities

To cultivate and manage the garden such that it is clean, neat, and tidy and free of rubbish at all times.

To maintain / weed borders and mow the back garden lawns.

To prune the back garden hedge and large bushes to max height 2 metres

To seek consent from the Charities before any tree is cut back / pruned / removed.

To seek consent from the Charities before any changes are made to the shed, paths, or lawn.

To ensure the garden is at a similar state at the end of the tenancy as it was at the beginning.

To promptly notify the Charities of any damage to the Charities' property, e.g., the shed.

To arrange agreed repairs with the Charity and pay for any remediation for all damage to the Charity's property.

Charities Responsibilities

To cut and keep the Communal lawns and hedges in front of the properties.

To keep the external facing hedge sides that create boundary with communal paths to a height of no more than 2 metres unless there are exceptional and agreed reasons with the resident not to do so

To prune and support boundary trees.

To maintain boundary fences and walls (normal wear and tear).

To maintain where necessary sheds provided by the charity, hard landscaping, including paths and patios (normal wear and tear)

To support all communal areas.

Repairs and Decorations

The charity is responsible for both external and internal upkeep of your almshouse and the communal parts. Please immediately report all necessary work to the Agent who will arrange for it to be carried out.

You will be consulted in advance about arrangements for any work to be carried out. Workmen will not be allowed to enter your home while you are out unless you have agreed to satisfactory arrangements. An exception will have to be made, however, if an emergency arises or if you cannot be contacted over a reasonable period.

Insurance

The Charity insures the buildings and its own contents only.

Television

You need a television licence to use any television-receiving equipment including TV set, set-top box, video or DVD recorder, PC or mobile phone to watch or record programmes as they are being broadcast. This includes foreign broadcasts. Permission is required for installation of devices to receive TV e.g Sky dishes.

Cleaning

You are responsible for keeping your own property and garden clean and tidy, including cleaning the windows.

Refuse collection and recycling

For information about refuse and recycling please visit <https://www.scambs.gov.uk/bins/>
You are responsible for the safe and hygienic disposal of all refuse, recycling and garden waste.

Telephone and internet

If you require them, you are responsible for making your own arrangements for installing these in your home through your chosen provider, and for payment of all bills.

Section 6 – General Information

Meters, mains switch, fuse box and stopcock

Electricity meter location	Agent to advise
Electricity mains switch location	Agent to advise
Fuse box location	Agent to advise
Gas meter location	Agent to advise
Mains water stopcock location	Agent to advise

Council Tax

You are responsible for paying your own council tax and will receive the annual Council Tax Notice from the local authority in March each year. People living alone are entitled to council tax relief of 25%.

Current Band of your almshouse: Agent to advise

Benefits Including council tax benefits

If your income consists of the basic retirement pension and you have little or no capital, you may be entitled to Benefits to help with your accommodation costs. It is important that you inform your local benefits office if there are changes in your financial circumstances as they have the power to demand reimbursement in the event of an over-payment.

Eligibility for state benefits changes from time to time. If you need advice on state benefits, please ask the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) in the first instance as they will have some experience of entitlements and benefits. Other sources of information include Age UK and various on-line resources including:

<https://www.gov.uk/browse/benefits>

There is also a local source of advice and support in Sawston, John Huntingdon's Charity, as well as a CAB clinic. For further information see <https://johnhuntingdon.org.uk/services/help-advice/>

Parking

You must not park in unauthorised places, or allow your visitors to do so, as cars so parked may block the way for ambulances or fire engines attending in an emergency, or inconvenience other residents. The charity may consider persistent disregard of this obligation to be antisocial.

Section 7 – If Things Go Wrong

Personal Problems

If you have any personal problems over money or any other matter and you have no family or friends whom you feel able to consult, the charity will be pleased to help or offer advice if it can. Please contact the charity via the Clerk. Your concerns will always be treated in the utmost confidence.

Complaints

If you have any concerns, please bring them to the attention of the Agent who will attempt to resolve them. In the majority of cases, minor issues can be dealt with informally, quickly and efficiently. The charity and the Agent can only resolve problems and improve the service provided if you speak up when things go wrong.

Set out below is a procedure to be followed if you wish to raise a complaint in connection with the occupation of your almshouse, or about services provided by the charity.

- Minor matters, such as small maintenance items, should be referred to the Agent.
- If the Agent is unable to resolve the matter, or if there is a persistent problem with pets, loud noise or matters affecting health and safety, you should refer it to the Clerk in writing. All communications about complaints will be treated in confidence.
- If you are dissatisfied with the response you receive, you should write formally to the Chairman of the charity asking for consideration of the matter by the charity. The Chairman will advise you of the charity's decision and inform you of any action taken to resolve your complaint.
- If you have a complaint about a representative of the charity, other residents, or about a serious breach of health and safety regulations, you should put your complaint in writing to the Chairman of the charity, with a formal request for it to be considered the next the charity meeting.

Housing Ombudsman

If you remain dissatisfied with the charity's decision, you have the right to take your complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service whose address is:

Housing Ombudsman Service 81 Aldwych, London WC2B 4HN

Telephone: 0300 111 3000

Email: info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Appendix – Emergency out-of-hours contact numbers



Redmayne Arnold & Harris
estate agents, letting agents & surveyors

rah.co.uk

If you have an emergency maintenance issue outside of the office hours (Monday to Friday 8:45am-5.30pm, Saturday 9.00am-1.00pm) then please contact one of the following contractors, advising them that Redmayne Arnold & Harris are the managing agents of your rental property.

PLUMBING & BOILER PROBLEMS

Nutcombes	07841801008
Entire	07595 650734 (Saturday 8am-5pm)

ELECTRICIAN

SG Electrical	07860700194
S2 Electrical	01206 899510
Gary Langley	07885 966217

LOCKSMITH

Cambs Lock and Safe	01223 353077
Redlocks Locksmith	01954 202818

If you can smell gas, are unable to contact one of our plumbers, and believe it to be an absolute emergency, please call the National Grids Emergency Number on 0800 111999.

If the problem is through a fault of your own or is not deemed an emergency, the cost of the call out and any work completed will be sent for your attention and must be paid on demand. Please note that call outs after 5.30pm, or on weekends, public holidays etc. are more expensive than a call out during normal working hours.

If any of the out of hour contractor listed are unreachable, you are welcome to get your own contractor to attend, please be aware if the call out is not deemed as a maintenance issue you will be responsible for any invoices charged.

CAMBRIDGE OFFICE: Dukes Court, 54-64 Newmarket Road, Cambridge CB5 8DZ | 01223 323130
GREAT SHELFORD OFFICE: 30 Woollards Lane, Great Shelford, Cambridge CB22 5LZ | 01223 800860

Christopher Arnold FNAEA, Director | Nick Harris, Director | Alex Gray MNAEA, Director
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