

## “PEOPLE SAY THE NICEST THINGS”

### A Compilation of Residents' Comments from Three Alternative Mainstay Sites

#### Prospect Place, Cardiff

Committee meeting on Wed 15/08/07 6 pm Business centre Prospect Place ...please all come as Bellway and Mainstay are in attendance. This is your chance to voice your concerns of which I have many!!!

Mainstay says no cash.... that's no excuse... I and many of us pay on time and should not suffer because a minority don't pay. It's up to mainstay to secure the cash of non payers and not leave us high and dry with no facilities or security!! They have responsibilities to us as residents of Prospect Place.

I will make the point however, that I have for the last 3 years paid straight up for any fees they have asked for. That is until the last request, and last under budget request, at which point I phoned mainstay to say I refused to pay until they answered my questions and addressed the issues I raised points on. Since then they have not returned any calls or messages I have left. I will not pay when it seems my money is falling into a bottomless pit, and very important points the like the 'totally non-secure' parking is not addressed. Its not that I don't have the cash at all, but more a moral stand at present.

Is anyone else starting to get p\*\*\*\*d off that Mainstay keep under-budgeting for the running of this place ... and then we have to dip into our pockets and make up the difference?? I was told when I bought the place that the service charge would be between £1,000 and £1,200 per year - now its looking closer to £1,500 ... what's going on???

I know I asked them the same thing at the last request for payment. I also asked them what on earth they were spending the money on. I was told that as more and more apartments were built, and more and more people moved in, that would keep the maintenance at about the same level. Lets face it, we haven't got any new facilities, the gym and pool were finished ages ago. The parking is a joke, the gates aren't even working, so our 'secure' parking is about as secure as an open field. I have no idea what they are spending the money on, but I can guarantee before I pay the next lot of maintenance, I want them to tell me exactly what's going on and what were paying for. Certainly until they fix the gates, I ain't paying s\*\*\*

Oh the joy what arrived this morning?? Of course another under-budgeted service charge notice. This time for £364. I have phoned Mainstay today and asked for a complete breakdown of the costs and also what apartments are paying what. The extra amount we need to pay will obviously vary from block to block and apartment to apartment.

I also asked if Mainstay were expecting to actually get a budget correct any time in the next few years, seeing as though ever since I moved in 3 years ago, they have never got it right in the first time!!!!!! I got the answer errrr.. I don't know. I mentioned the fact the lifts are often broken along with the gates, I mentioned the parking debacle again, and also the fact that most of the grass in our communal areas is on the verge of dying. Outside Jones point house it is mostly moss and weeds and even they are struggling to grow. With the summer coming up I thought it would be nice to have some grass left. Can i suggest that everyone calls them up and asks them for their own breakdowns. I doubt it will change anything but at least it will give them a headache and perhaps make them think twice when doing the next budget!!!!!!

I too have had a bill for £548.98! and I live in Great Ormes, I am so angry, how can they get it so wrong? They really need to come down and explain themselves - how can they let costs

spiral out of control like that? I noticed a landscape maintenance charged of nearly £12,000! with a budget of £6,345 - how can they get it so wrong! and what have they done for that money? the grass outside great Ormes is now all weeds and the plants in the cages are dead! It will be interesting to find out when Bellway are selling the new apartments what they are saying the charges are - its now more like £2000 a year! The business centre is costing £2,296 and its never used! Anyway guys we can't let this on go!

There are loads of things that don't add up. On the accounts look at the budget v. actual costs for things like, communal lighting, washing of windows, electricity etc. etc. for the gym. G block right up to K block have been here since I moved in, why the hell are they still getting the communal lighting all wrong, and if the consumption has changed, why has it changed, we don't control the lights in the communal areas!!!! The landscaping costs need to be questioned for sure, the state of the garden areas is disgusting. The trial pool, or whatever the hell it is outside Jones point house is stagnant and stinks, and as previously mentioned the grass is dead and even the weeds are struggling. We should not be paying for any landscaping if they are not looking after any of the gardens!!!! I will update this post on what they say if and when they finally get back to me. However I shall not be paying a penny until they do get back to me, and explain themselves.

Good work. I plan to send them a letter saying of my dissatisfaction today as well!! I think as many of us should do it as possible, so that they know they cant keep messing with us!! Like I said earlier in the thread, I was quoted about £1000-£1200 as my service charge before I bought here, and now its getting closer to £1700-£1800.

I say about 300 or so flyers need to be printed, and sent to all addresses, asking for everyone to come together, to get a solicitor (a good one) to take on Mainstay, cos the way it works, they increase there charges, 1 voice doesn't stand in there way, several do..... I've seen window cleaning once since I've been here, rarely see gardeners, leisure suite is a joke.....

You're right we have to do something like that. Its not even the cost that's my biggest problem, it's the fact they can't get the damn thing right and never have!!

Anyone had a response from Robert Wiffen yet? I sent my letter off to him today, one question I'm asking him is why are the residents paying for cleaning, heat & light etc. of the Business Centre? I have also suggested he comes down and organises a meeting with the residents so we can voice our views and he can explain issues with us. p.s. I can offer some help with printing flyers

Has anybody else questioned the "brought forward balance" on their bill? We were billed £80.04 for this, so I rang up to question what it was. Turns out it is for "leisure suite charges up to May 2006". We should have had a separate demand, but none of us did. Apparently Robert Wiffen is visiting Prospect Place later this week, so it might be a good opportunity to try to arrange to meet with him to discuss the under budgeting (and other things).

Just to let you know, if you have received a ground rent request/demand from Estates and Management, don't pay them. I phoned Mainstay to query this and to double check, as im sure we paid this back in December, and surprise surprise I did. In December with my maintenance charge we paid the ground rent that Estates & management are currently demanding.

Mainstay said they are 'in the process of' writing to Estates etc. to tell them who has paid the ground rent etc., but they haven't YET. So I would suggest you call Mainstay just to check you have paid it, then phone telephone Estates etc. to tell them its already paid so effectively....get lost. Also as a side note, just to give you a heads up, expect another increase in maintenance this year. Its getting to be a joke, every time we get the letter the price has

gone up due to ....increased costs!!! More and more places are being built and more and more people are moving in, which is supposed to dilute the cost, but for some reason Mainstay keep putting it up and up.

Yeah, I noticed it too mate! I phoned them up to query it and they said that they are in contact with Mainstay to clear up the issue and that we haven't got to do anything until we hear from them.... Regarding the Service Charge issue ... this is something that has been bugging me as well!! I have heard from quite a few people that if you request a breakdown of what the Service Charge entails, it magically gets reduced. Not sure how true it is but I think it is definitely an area which needs clarification!

I am in the process of writing a complaint letter about the concierge to Mainstay. Amongst other things, they are the most unprofessional and rude people that I have ever had the complete misfortune to meet. Would any other residents please inform me if they have had any negative experiences with concierge. I am sure that many more people have.

They haven't been rude to me personally, but they don't seem to be able to control the noisy residents when you do complain.

I'm renting too so don't know how much the service charge is. Not had any direct contact with the concierge but judging by the noise and the undesirable actions of a certain few he can't be any good at his job...

Would someone please tell me what the concierge is there for! They don't assist with residential problems, they refuse to take in packages for you. What do they actually do?? All they have ever done for me is give me access to my electric meter and give me a pass for the leisure facilities. (which may i add is now being cleaned and maintained by a private company!) We pay their wages and I would like to know what we get out of it!

I wrote to Mainstay to ask them this a while back, amongst other issues. They were compiling a job description which they were then going to forward to me - have I had it yet?? - have I heck! If it arrives, I shall let you know what they do, if anything useful.

It is submitted that objectively and subjectively the concierge team here is: Totally unprofessional, rude, unhelpful, and arrogant... Residents here on a permanent basis should address this issue. I would if I intended to stay for any significant length of time. **THE CONCIERGE TEAM ARE THE MAIN REASON WHY MY PARTNER AND I ARE NOT RENEWING OUR LEASE, AND THE MAIN REASON WHY I WOULD NOT BUY AN APARTMENT HERE.**

Hello everyone. I just had a quick chat with the concierge and he advised that there is a residents meeting next week in the business centre. He wasn't sure of the details but said that he'd drop a note into our mailbox with the time & date. I was commenting on the rather entertaining game of dodge the parked cars again (Audi estate parked across the road), and he urged me to come next week to raise any views, saying that the more people that do so, the more likely it is that something will be done. He said that he thought everyone had been informed about it. Anyone heard anything?! Anyone.....

We were unable to attend but have received the minutes of the meeting. Robert Wiffen from Mainstay and four people attended from all of blocks J & K. The main points are summarised: The accounts were explained and basically it looks as all the original budgets for landscaping, electricity, water, staffing and maintenance were too low. Bellway has requested wheel clamping following creation of visitor parking. Residents to new blocks A,B and C will in short term, access their apartments by driving across a temporary road between blocks J and K. Those present were not happy with this proposal. Robert Wiffen agreed that a clear policy

regarding nuisance neighbours would be prepared and circulated to all residents confirming and clarifying the roles and responsibilities of leaseholders, the concierge, Mainstay and other parties in the event of such an occurrence. (N.B: no such policy ever followed.)

Aug 29<sup>th</sup> 2006 - Letting you know that I have sent a letter of complaint to Mainstay residential complaining about the leisure facilities. These are the issues that I raised: The lighting in the male changing rooms is not activated quickly enough. One has to walk almost all the way through the changing room before the light comes on. This is a safety issue. The shower temperature is not right for both showers in the male changing room, simply far too cold to use. Both the shower cubicles in the male changing room are not large enough, the water goes onto the floor, thus contributing towards the mess. Shower curtains would help, and also offer privacy to those wanting this. Several towel hooks are needed opposite the shower outside the male changing room. The shower outside the male changing room is simply far too hot to use. The swimming pool is very dirty and needs immediate attention. The Jacuzzi temperature is wrong, normally far too cold. The steam room is never steamy, and the temperature simply doesn't warrant use. I await a reply from Mainstay Residential.

After using the facilities again today (29/08/05), I highlight the following (although I haven't officially complained yet): The male changing rooms were completely filthy, muck on the floor The swimming pool was completely filthy, literally very difficult to see underwater with goggles. The Jacuzzi was literally freezing and too cold to use. The steam room isn't working properly (no steam). The sauna wasn't working properly (no heat despite adding water). I will raise the above issues in another letter. In the meantime I would appreciate others taking formal action, and letting us all know the results.

Sept 14th 2006 - Hello all! STILL NO REPLY FROM MAINSTAY RESIDENTIAL.

Jan 23<sup>rd</sup> 2007 - Still no reply from Mainstay - typical - have lost the will to complain and am accepting that Prospect Place just isn't a nice place to live!

### **Netherne Residents Association, Surrey**

From Residents Association - Serious cash flow problem

Posted October 5th, 2007

From Residents Association - A serious cash flow problem has come to light. This has resulted in cleaning and gardening contractors withdrawing their services because they have not been paid. The primary cause of the cash flow problem is because a significant number of residents are not paying their Estate Service charges- many because they are disputing erroneous Mainstay bills, some because they are dissatisfied with the performance of the managing agent. The RA has urged Mainstay to sort out accounting problems with individuals as a matter of urgency. The RA Committee urges everyone to pay their Estate Service charges - non payment will only result in closure of the community facilities and extra costs in the long run. It will not bring about a change of managing agents - that will only be possible when the Golden Share has been transferred and residents are running Netherne Management Ltd. In the meantime we do all we can to get Mainstay to provide a high level of service. Despite Newsletters and the invitation to the recent AGM, there still seems to be many who do not understand that residents are members of Netherne Mgt Ltd - the Estate Service charges are the main source of income into "our company" - non payment is hurting you and your neighbour, not Mainstay. Similarly, non payment is not an option because individuals are dissatisfied with the community facilities etc. please let the RA committee

members have your specific complaints about services - we would like to address any misunderstandings.

Sincerely, Chairman  
NOTHRA

I understand from Alex Elsey (the new area manager for Mainstay, and responsible for Netherne) that there is now an Assistant Estate Manager in place. Alex promised me on 13th July that a newsletter would be sent to all residents on that day, outlining their new employee's job description, roles and responsibilities and the benefits which this new appointment would bring to residents. This newsletter was also intended to provide clarity as to the roles and responsibilities of the estate manager, and how those would change in light of the new appointment. Has anyone received this newsletter, or can they shed any light on this appointment? Mainstay and Alex have stopped returning my calls, so it seems that this is yet another charge which they are happy to levy against us, without justification...

Sam, you must agree if nothing else that the Mainstay crowd are chuffing consistent. It appears this new guy is useless, like the previous one and the one before that:-

“Mainstay induction technique for new employees”

Part 1: Please don't get anything done or you will make us all look bad.

Part 2: Never respond to phone calls or we will all look bad

Part 3: Never under any circumstances respond to letters

*a: You will make us all look bad as we never respond*

*b: We can't be sure if the answers we give are correct, if they are not correct you will make us all look bad. If they are correct no one will believe us because we are always wrong.*

Part 4: Job Description, One day we will have to give one out but hold off as long as possible or we all look bad. Tell them it's been done but we are waiting for it to be translated into 47 different languages including Braille. Just blame someone else.

Part 5: Bonus will be given to any employee found upsetting residents. Bonuses are an incentive and can be worth thousands to employees as we really don't care how much we have to pay out; The residents will be paying for it whatever happens. Any member of staff found breaking these golden rules will be severely reprimanded and in the most severe cases forced to stay with the company.

Douglas (Harsh but true)!!

I am sitting at work very bored and have just read the last comment made by Douglas. I fell about, I have not laughed so much in ages, however, every point that he made can be quantified in one way or another. I wish somebody would just let us know what is going on. I have a beef with Mainstay at the moment as there is a leaving fee for selling our house at Netherne however, we are buying another property at Netherne and therefore not leaving!!!! They say the charge is on each individual house and they will not be flexible in any way shape or form. Once Mainstay get their finger out I am sure things will be great but until they do, we all just have to live with it whether we like it or not. But I agree with most of what Douglas says.

I called Mainstay this morning and spoke to somebody after the first ring. I asked for an itemised bill which they told me came out with the last bill. After searching I did eventually find it and like a previous post on here noticed it was cheaper than the bill I received before. I have now paid this bill, although like many on here I feel aggrieved that I am paying for something I cannot use. Yes I know I was one of the people who did not pay their bill for sometime, but I was the only one who was attacked on here and viciously for not doing so. Maybe that was because I was the only one stupid enough to admit it. Anyway, that aside, what can we do? Is there anyway we can get rid of Mainstay, I thought we had made a vote of no confidence in them, does that not mean that we can find somebody else to run the Village for us?

How much longer are we going to have to put up with Mainstay.? They are a completely disorganised shower of fools that couldn't organise issuing a bill to the correct address, that read correct and was for the right amount even if their life depended on it. Hence the reason the leisure centre run out of money, not just those that did not pay when they should. Idiots, clowns, incompetents. they should be fired at the first opportunity.

I also have had the exact same problems. However, after speaking with Sheila Nash, I have now been put in touch with a Manager called Mr Alex Elsey. I have written to him, and advised him that if Netherne residents collectively want to 'sack' Mainstay then they will. It takes time, co-ordination and commitment, but if we can rally together, then I believe that we can get a new managing agent. Can I remind you all to keep any correspondence you have had with mainstay and log any calls. This I can see becoming legal, and we will need all the evidence we can muster. Although I don't think it is going to be too hard to prove their incompetence.

I don't pipe up often but feel now is as good a time as any.... Like you I received a hand delivered "demand" dated October 3rd on about the 7th of October. No real issues there, a warning that they wanted 6 months money instead of 3 would have been nice, but hey-ho that's the cost of living in this lovely area!! Anyway, this morning I received another letter telling me that due to no payment on my behalf, I would be charged an extra £30.....now after comparing the statement attached to their latest demand, I find the 2 sums of money totally different. (!!!) I called to ask what the heck was going on, to be told that the difference in the monies that they are demanding is due to there being money left from June 2006. Hence now my bill is £75 or so less than the original invoice, just as well I held off paying until pay day I guess, who knows if I would have received a refund?? I just don't get why this second invoice could not have been sent a week ago to save me the mad rush to get them on the phone this afternoon. How hard can it be??

I have to agree with that. Exactly the same thing happened to me. When I complained about receiving a £30 penalty only a few days after receiving the bill, they blamed the post, but the first bill was clearly delivered by hand!

I this morning received two letters from Mainstay saying that I was to be charged £30 for non payment. I only received my bill on Thursday, the demand date said 3rd October and the original letter that came with the bill said 5th October. How can the demand date be before the letter was even sent? I was even in credit from my previous bill so it was obvious that I was not usually a non-payer. I agree get rid and lets get a management company that knows what they are doing!

That is why I ranted and they included £70 this morning which I had sent a few weeks when they asked for it, and they had confirmed it was received because when sending the last cheque I asked them to send an invoice, but in fact they just sent another statement, but did show then it was paid, now apparently it is not. If none of that makes sense its because I angry I think the bills last

week were not delivered by posty, in view of the strikes you would think they would make other arrangements to receive cheques (estate office) without having to pay credit or switch charges if you ring them. and as for Direct Debit I would have them nowhere near my bank account. If these morons are left in charge, the leisure centre will never open.

The bills for the quarter 1 July to 30 September should have been issued in mid June. They total nearly £49,000. even if only half the residents actually paid on time, Mainstay would have had about £25,000 in the bank. They could have paid the gardeners, cleaners and pool maintenance people and our facilities would not have been withdrawn. A considerable sum is also due from the various developers for the periods between completion of properties and their sale. So it IS primarily Mainstay's fault. Why was there such a long delay in sending the bills? I have asked Mainstay but of course they do not answer. It certainly was not due to fine tuning the budgets - the only change compared to the previous budget is the increase in Mainstay's "management fee" - on the Estate budget it is UP by 32% . That is totally outrageous!!!!

That's funny I also received the same letter from Mainstay charging an extra £30.00 for a bill a week ago!!!!

Just had a rant at Mainstay on the phone. I don't think that I've ever used the word incompetent more in a conversation. Feel a bit better. Might go to the gym later and take it out on the treadmill. Oh I forgot it's closed.

So we all know Mainstay sucks, and I have tried for the past 6-8 months to get in touch with them, STILL awaiting a phone call back! Netherne is a great place to live, and we do have problems there, but nothing that bad!

### **Whitefriars Wharf Residents Association, Tonbridge, Medway**

Do you agree that Mainstay are causing more hassle than good? It appears they can not produce accurate paperwork, letters, or even answer their own calls:

Here's a few things you might not know:

1. Mainstay employ a switchboard company to divert their calls - who pays for that? Like the payments company?!
2. The payments company are a sub-group of Mainstay!
3. Mainstay have still not contacted some residents who have bought from previous residents, despite being hassled for recognition - if they can readily send out demands, you think they would readily contact new home owners!
4. They have still not produced a letter of permission for our pet, despite our dog being 8 months old now - we asked for it when we got her at 6 weeks old and have asked half-a-dozen times since!
5. Gleasons & Dennes are still in legal disputes with the window company Focus as they removed and replaced the windows themselves without the fitters during the build - forfeiting all guarantees and ruining many people's windows.
6. Gleasons were without an MD for nearly 3 months at the start of this year. They have now appointed a new director to try and rescue their business. They will be selling off assets and land and will only focus on government related re-build and renovate housing projects. This

may put us in a strong position should we wish to become a Freehold development!

6. The cleaner employed by Mainstay will not perform anything over and above what he is told to do - that includes the obvious, like weeding the front patios! Not helped that apparently there is no contract between Mainstay and TCS (cleaning company) - they say that both parties are happy with their working relationships - stuff service level agreements!!

I am sure I have much, much more to post - but I won't bore you with it all at once!!  
I have submitted a letter today questioning Mainstays fees and service charges. I think its unacceptable. Not a bean from me !!!

Get your votes in! I am talking to other management companies getting quotes in and I have Gleasons in on the act. They are the superior landlord and would be involved in getting rid of Mainstay. I have requested a meeting between themselves, Mainstay and either all the residents or if it is easier to get them to commit I have agreed to go down to their head office and meet with them on behalf of everybody. I would prefer that they come here, but I am tempted to go and camp out on their doorstep soon to get things sorted! You won't be surprised that all the companies I've contacted are able to readily supply detailed cost breakdowns, simple and professional. I am on the case, but it is slow and painstaking. If anyone knows of a good LOCAL management company, please let me know.

In reference to you searching for a new management company, please see my thread titled "Wragge & Co letter re Whitefriars Wharf Management company" - this is the process to hand over, as you put it, the superior landlord, to the control of the residents. Once this process is done, i should think it would be much easier to remove Mainstay and replace them with another management company (for the record I agree Mainstay are unprofessional and we must be able to find a better value for money organisation to manage our property). Did you receive this letter ? They also require a Director and Company secretary for the residents company - am thinking your pro-active approach would suit one of these roles perfectly !!!

I am already a director. apparently - yet no -one has sent me the paperwork - I expect this might be true if you asked the other directors. Not that you even probably knew there was directors already? But who knows!! The organisation is appalling. Waiting for quoted from Canonbury Management, London and trying to source two others - if anyone can recommend good, preferably local management companies (if they are in existence) please let me know.

I had my service charge from Mainstay through in the post the other day, just wondering with everything going on, should I pay it or not?? Was going to wait until they send final reminders etc.

Pay something towards the bill as a gesture of good will, but withhold the entire payment and include a strongly worded letter indicating the reasons why you are refusing to pay the rest.

Anybody received a letter for not paying the total amounts due for management fee ?? I am aware of at least 3 people who have received these. Let them take me to court I'll happily stand and tell them why I am withholding monies.

I too have received a letter threatening court action and additions to my 'service' fees for administrative costs. I have written them a letter back explaining why they haven't been paid this year and suggested they made 2007 the year they became a more professional management company. I doubt very much that it will result in court proceedings. On other forum boards people have suggested a united approach from residents with regards to payments and perhaps contacting the Watchdog program from TV to highlight our plight.

Thought you would appreciate hearing from others who are in your position and prepared to hold fast until services are improved.

Make written contact with Mainstay and explain your reasoning for not paying the charges. According to my solicitor you may need to provide documentation to support any lack of payment.

Exactly my thoughts, getting the letter drafted is on my list of things to do urgently. I am intrigued to how they could recover costs for a fee that is a forecast of anticipated expenditure. A list of defects is heading there way I think. Thanks for the support, and if you want to create a united front from the residents then count me in.

Count me in. I am at a loss to see what exactly we are paying Mainstay for. The bin depository is a disgrace, the windows aren't cleaned often enough (and they leak) some people are letting their patios become tips and nothing is done about it, the vandalised gate in the car park has been left for months and basically it seems we are paying all that money for a little man to sweep up bits of litter and weed the flower beds which don't need weeding for six months of the year.

Totally agree, for my new years resolution I have decided to do more about it. I am too concerned about what the money is actually being spent on ?? So I am going to start harassing Mainstay on a regular basis until they sort stuff out and we either start getting value for money or we get rid of them. So if everyone can use this forum to list problems and everybody takes it on themselves not to leave it up to the few I am sure headway will be made. On another note rather than leave things to Mainstay I am also going to start doing stuff that gets to me i.e. Bin store. So this weekend another Resident has arranged to get a large van from work and we will be filling it with all the large furniture that has been "dumped" in the bin store near block 1. Hopefully we should be able to do this on Saturday so if you see us struggling with the bed/sofa/mattress/bed frame etc. etc. please feel free to come lend a hand. I am hoping by doing stuff like this it will make it a much nicer place to live and have a positive affect on house values. I'm hoping if we all do a little bit (weeding of patios areas/ arranging for unwanted furniture to be taken away????) we can have a positive affect on the development...maybe we can forward the costs to Mainstay for payment ??

It was my New Year's resolution too. I have arranged to call John Nouch at Mainstay tomorrow (Thurs) to beat him up about a few things. He's handing over WW responsibilities to a new girl called Kim. (They were both conveniently out today!) I agree totally that we should show a united front as they probably rely on being able to bully individuals. Anyhow I'm fed up about the bin place and will be giving him both barrels even though they will probably say it's not in their remit. It will be tomorrow hopefully!! I won't say that arrangements have been made to sort it out ourselves so if you want to go ahead that's fine. I'll let you know if they agree to sort it. I think they should be made to do it as if we keep doing things ourselves we're paying them for even less! Does anyone know how many of us it will be necessary to give them the boot as that's what I'm going to tell him we're going to do?

No luck with Mainstay - as expected. The guy "wasn't there" when I was told he would be and he didn't call me back when I left a message for him to do so. did find out that he's based in Dorset so how he can know what's going on here and what needs doing etc. is beyond me...