

**Question from Member Mary Durcan**

Question relates to article in City Matters about residents' plants in communal areas in our blocks of flats. The article implies that the Corporation has been issuing threatening zero tolerance notices to residents in relation to plants that are left in communal areas.

**Response**

The article in question relates to Crescent House and the issue of residents putting a large number of pot plants outside their flats and in communal areas. It is an issue that Members have been advised of in some detail previously.

Firstly, it must be said that the Corporation has not and could not unilaterally change the policy relating to plants in common parts.

Residents in Crescent House do keep a significant number of pot plants outside their flats and in the common parts. Several of these plants do not seem to be cared for and, we have no real idea who they belong to. We have already, in consultation with residents, removed many plants from the top of stairs and in communal spaces because, they not only cause damage to the floor tiles but, they also constitute a hazard to our porters carrying out their cleaning duties and for other tasks such as, door step collections and waste and recycling.

Of even greater concern to the Corporation, however, is that the amount of plants that are being left outside flats and in communal areas, is creating a serious fire hazard that simply cannot be tolerated. We have been liaising with the London Fire Brigade on this matter and, as a result, have introduced a Fire Safety Protocol that has been communicated to all residents. This protocol attempts to provide a balance between the wishes of residents to make their environment more 'homely' and attractive and ensuring it is safe and complies with fire safety regulations. We had considered introducing, like many other London Boroughs have done, a 'sterile' environment, which would mean that nothing at all could be put outside flats or in communal areas. Although a sterile environment would be much easier to manage from the Corporation's perspective, we took the decision, this time, to opt for a compromise.

On this occasion, the Estate Team was simply trying to manage the increase in plants appearing on the estate within the provisions of the Fire Safety Protocol and the Estate Management Policy, which clearly set out the rules relating to items left on communal landings without permission. We have consulted extensively with residents on the above Protocol and Policy.

The article in City Matters is not a true reflection of what we are trying to achieve and how we have gone about it. The notice placed on the pots referred to in the article is necessarily firm as, previous requests have been ignored.