

The Robert Thompson Charities' Almshouses Residents' Handbook



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Section 1**Introduction**

The Robert Thompson Charities 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 sets out your responsibilities as a resident. Please do not hesitate to speak to the clerk if you need further information on any matters.

Please note that the conditions stated in this handbook form part of your contract with the charity and supplement your Letter of Appointment which you signed when you accepted your appointment. It may be necessary to amend the Conditions of Occupancy Residents Handbook from time to time but any changes would be discussed with residents and you would be given the opportunity to express any views or concerns.

The almshouse is your home and every effort will be made to help you remain independent, free to choose your own lifestyle, and able to benefit from the quiet enjoyment and dignity that the almshouses provide. We are sure you will appreciate the importance of everyone in the community respecting one another, allowing them their privacy if that is what they wish and ensuring that rumours and gossip are not allowed to develop.

Property Information

Address: _____

The electric meter and consumer unit are located

The Gas meter is located on the outside wall of the bungalow.

The Water stop cock is located _____

The Clerk is _____

Contact number: 07486597551

email: robertthompsoncharities@gmail.com

The legal name of the charity:

The Robert Thompson Charities at Saltwood Kent

Postal Address:

Magee Gammon, Henwood House, Henwood, Ashford

TN24 8DH

The Chairman is _____

Section 2

History, Governance & Management

Historical Note

Robert Thompson Esquire was a well-respected resident of Saltwood who lived in School Road and died in 1896 aged 94. Three years after his death, James Edward Jarvis, a farmer from Ruckinge and John Watson, an Ashford wool-stapler became the first Trustees of the Charities and arranged to convey sufficient land between Saltwood Green and the Church and what is now known as Grange Road to provide both the village hall and eight almshouses (together with a nurse's residence, now demolished). The erection of these buildings was completed in 1899 following a Trust Deed set up on 22nd June 1899. This Deed entitled the Charity to be called "The Robert Thompson Charities at Saltwood". At the same time Messrs, Jarvis and Watson, being Robert Thompson's executors provided monies left by him to meet the cost of erecting the buildings and provided an Endowment Fund.

With the cooperation of other local people, Messrs Jarvis and Watson appointed the first almshouse residents. Since then the Committee of Management has appointed their successors.

In 2021 the Charity has changed its status to the Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO).

The purpose of the charity is to (1) provide homes for persons who have lived in the district of Folkestone, Hythe and Saltwood for no less than 10 years and who are from age, ill-health or

accident are unable to maintain themselves on their own exertions, and the village hall for the benefit of the inhabitants of the Parish of Saltwood.

Constitution

The Charity has been registered as Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) under its title and is governed by the Charity Commission, its registered number is 1194270.

Management

The charity is governed by a board of voluntary, local trustees. Day-to-day management of its affairs is delegated to the clerk.

The Almshouses

The charity manages 8 unfurnished dwellings. (4 with one bedroom and 4 with two bedrooms).

Section 3

Health and Safety

Doctor & Dentist

If you do not have a GP or a dentist, contact the NHS directly for details of practices currently accepting new patients. The name of your GP must be given to the clerk.

You have every right to see your doctor, nurse or another carer in confidence and to keep your medical affairs entirely to yourself if you wish. However, if you have a chronic health problem, it would be advisable (and you might feel safer) for the clerk to be made aware of it so that appropriate action can be taken in an emergency. Anything you tell the clerk/warden will be kept in confidence within the charity.

'Message in a Bottle' is a free system that encourages people to keep their basic personal information and details of their current medication in a common place where it can be found in an emergency. The small plastic container is kept in the fridge where emergency services will find it. They will know residents use this system by two discrete labels. One is fixed to the front entrance of the resident's dwelling, the other is displayed on the fridge where the information is kept. The system is usually a community-based project in partnership with other local social, health or emergency services like Lions Club International.

Emergency Contact Details

If you become ill or are in difficulties, the clerk will make every effort to get in touch with your next of kin or emergency contact. It is important that you let the clerk have details (names, addresses, email addresses and telephone/mobile numbers) of these essential contacts. If the details change from time to time, please remember to inform the charity.

Please, therefore, provide the trustees with the authority to contact your doctor and next of kin directly in the event of an emergency by signing the 'GP Authorisation Form' and 'Next of Kin Information Form' which may be obtained from the Clerk.

Fire Precautions

The almshouses comply with the appropriate fire regulations. The fire policies are frequently reviewed to ensure that every resident knows what to do and where to go in the event of an emergency. All of the almshouses are fitted with smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors. If a resident is hard of hearing, they should ask for appropriate equipment to alert them in the event of an emergency.

In Case of Fire

In case of fire or other emergencies, residents should evacuate by the safest available route to the village hall provided there is no danger to the village hall. Otherwise, evacuation should be to the Lads' Club.

If it is safe to do so, please evacuate your dwelling, shut the door of your almshouse behind you and do not attempt to take any personal belongings with you. Wear warm clothing but leave your dwelling immediately.

Avoiding the Risk of Fire:

Please be conscious of the risk of fire by, for example, regularly checking at night or before going out that appliances have been fully switched off. It is especially important that those who smoke in their own almshouse dwelling do so responsibly and that they are aware of the risk of falling asleep or getting too close to curtains while smoking. Do not wedge doors open unattended and use ashtrays if you smoke.

Smoking in bed is strictly forbidden. Please be considerate to others and avoid smoking in their presence as the risks associated with passive smoking are now well recognised. If you are expecting visitors, please air the room beforehand so that any smoke can dissipate.

The use of paraffin oil heaters or chip pans is prohibited.

Slips, Trips and Falls

Reasonable precautions will be taken to keep them hazard-free but the trustees wish to ask you to exercise care when using the footpaths in wet, snowy or icy weather and external stairways leading to dwellings on the Grange Road side.

Legionella

The risk of contracting Legionnaire's Disease from a domestic property where the water services are regularly used is very low. However, residents are advised to adopt the following recommended procedures:

- Ensure the thermostat on your hot water system is set to a minimum of 65c but be aware that the risk of scalding from outlets that are not fitted with a thermostatic mixer valve is greatly increased.
- any hot or cold tap/ shower that is not used within a seven-day period should be flushed through for at least 2 minutes at both maximum and minimum temperatures.
- Avoid the release of water droplets/ aerosols. Shower heads should be cleaned and disinfected regularly to ensure no scale or algal build-up.
- Any toilet that is not used within a seven-day period should be flushed on a weekly basis or on your return to the property. The lid should be closed to avoid contact with any water droplets/ aerosol.

Security

Please consider the following:

- Keep your front door locked at all times
- Never allow anyone claiming to be gas, electricity or water meter readers to enter the dwelling unless agreed with the Clerk.
- BE AWARE OF bogus officials or doorstep salesmen. Always ask for proof of identity.

Keys

Residents are responsible for their keys and can leave spare keys with friends, family or in the key safe provided. The Clerk and Trustees are not on call to open doors and residents are responsible for any costs incurred from calling out a locksmith.

The clerk holds a key which can open your front door, but it will only be used in an emergency or with your permission. The clerk has strict instructions only to enter your home:

- if you ask her or him to do so, or
- if you have given permission for work to be done in your absence, or
- in an emergency.

Please ask the Clerk before obtaining extra keys to your property, especially if keys have been lost, as this may lessen security.

Section 4

Conditions of Occupancy

Letter of Appointment

Your Letter of Appointment, of which you have a copy, is personal to you and explains that you occupy the almshouses as a beneficiary of the charity. This means that neither you nor any relation or guest of yours is a tenant with the security of tenure that a tenancy offers. No other person is allowed to live at the property unless they have formally applied to the charity and been granted beneficiary status in their own right and you have been jointly allocated the same dwelling. In exceptional circumstances, the trustees could ask you to find alternative accommodation and leave the almshouse (setting aside your appointment). In practice, this occurs very rarely when trustees believe that they have no alternative.

Examples of such circumstances are if:

- A resident in the reasonable opinion of the trustees is no longer able to look after themselves safely or is not able to live independently.
- The resident consistently fails to pay weekly maintenance contributions (WMC).
- The behaviour of the resident is deemed to be unreasonable and anti-social, either in respect of other residents, trustees or members of staff.
- The resident's circumstances change significantly to the extent that they were no longer qualified to live in the almshouses as a beneficiary, or did not have the required qualification when first appointed.

- A resident in the reasonable opinion of the trustees is no longer able to look after themselves safely or is not able to live independently.
- The resident provided untrue or misleading answers or information in his/her application to be appointed a beneficiary of the charity.

It is a condition of occupancy that residents provide the charity with accurate and complete information about their financial circumstances and inform the trustees if their circumstances change after taking up a residence—for example if they win a very large lottery prize or are named in a will for a substantial bequest. The trustees will consider each case on its merits in the light of their duty to ensure that the almshouses continue to be occupied by people who qualify under the terms of the charity's constitution.

The charity would only set aside an appointment as a last resort after every reasonable effort had been made to resolve the issues. If having been asked to leave, a resident felt aggrieved, they have the right to have their case heard in the county court. If the decision to set aside the appointment was upheld, they would be given every assistance to find alternative accommodation.

Weekly Maintenance Contribution (WMC)

Weekly Maintenance Contributions are payable in advance at the beginning of each month by direct debit.

The amount you pay is a contribution towards the cost of running the charity. The level of WMC is usually reviewed annually but the charity reserves the right to review this more frequently if it is in the charity's best interests. It is a condition of occupancy that the full amount of weekly maintenance contribution is paid regardless of the services or support elements used by the resident.

Consulting Residents

The trustees 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 trustee in private by asking the clerk to the trustees to arrange this. Consultation and involving the residents in the day-to-day running of the charity's almshouses is a form of participation which will benefit all concerned. Trustees welcome the residents' views on matters affecting their quality of life at the almshouses.

The trustees will inform you:

- Before any work is done on your almshouse (**except in an emergency**)

- Before making changes to the communal facilities, including the gardens
- Before making changes to the amount of Weekly Maintenance Contribution payable

The trustees will consult you:

- Before anyone enters your home, **except in an emergency**
- If you raise a difficulty with them.

Absence from Home

If you go away for any period, please leave an address and contact phone number with the clerk. Should you return earlier than planned, please inform the clerk immediately after you return as it is important in an emergency to know if any residents are away.

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 almshouse during the winter months, please discuss with the clerk how much heating is required to minimise the risk of burst pipes, etc. You are expected to be in full-time occupation of your residence. Please obtain permission from the clerk if you would like to be away for any period longer than 28 days.

Utility Bills (Gas, electric, water and telephone) and Council Tax

Residents are responsible for paying their utility bills, including Council Tax. You 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%.

Meters will be read prior to occupation. You are responsible for making your own arrangements for installing a telephone in your almshouse through your chosen provider.

Maintaining the property

Responsibility for the upkeep of the fabric and fixtures rests with the trustees. Residents are responsible for their own furnishings and for keeping their homes in good order. Please notify the Clerk of problems or defects as they arise so that they can be attended to. In addition, the trustees normally commission an inspection of the state of the almshouses every five years and in light of that agree on a phased programme of maintenance and repair work.

Residents are not allowed to use any heating appliance that has not been supplied by the charity, such as portable gas or electric heaters, as these pose a serious safety risk.

Employment

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

Visitors – Family and Friends

Visitors are not permitted to stay in an almshouse, except with the consent of the trustees.

Where permission is granted, occasional overnight stays only will be permitted but these must not be regular occurrences. It is vital that trustees are aware of any overnight visitors for safety and security reasons.

Residents are required to occupy the property quietly and with thought for other residents and/or neighbours. No radio, TV or music system should be operated in such a manner as to cause a disturbance, nor shall anything be done in, upon or about the premises which shall be a nuisance, annoyance or disturbance to the occupants of other almshouses, or to the general public.

Pets

Keeping a pet is permitted only with prior trustee approval. Visiting pets like dogs are welcome if kept under control and their owner clears up after them. Please advise the Clerk about arrangements you have made for the care of your pet if you are away on holiday or become ill.

Moving Out

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

Trustees have the right to start the process of setting aside the appointment in the event of non-payment of WMC.

In the unlikely event that any possessions, chattels or goods are, without the written agreement of the charity, left abandoned by the resident in the almshouse after the resident has vacated, the charity will take reasonable care of them for a period of up to three months. After this period the resident agrees by signing the Letter of Appointment that the charity may sell them and, out of the

proceeds, pay any outstanding amounts owing to the charity, including outstanding weekly maintenance contributions and any other expenses, including disposal and removal costs.

Re-Housing

If you wish to apply to move from one dwelling to another, you should contact the clerk 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 trustees.

There may be circumstances, for example during extensive refurbishment or other unforeseen circumstances, when the charity may need to ask you to vacate the dwelling and move, either temporarily or permanently, to another dwelling. Your views would be taken into account and you would be given at least three months' notice (unless urgent) should a move be necessary.

Gifts and Legacies

It is the trustees' policy that no one involved in the running of the charity should accept any gift or legacy from a resident. If you wish to donate anything to the charity please contact the clerk to the trustees. All such matters will be dealt with in confidence.

Section 5

Services Provided

The Clerk works 10 - 12 hours per week and will endeavour to respond to your calls in a timely manner. The Clerk is not a trained carer and cannot, therefore, offer personal care support. Only in exceptional circumstances should urgent matters be referred during unsociable hours (evenings and weekends).

If the electric consumer unit trips out and the fault isn't something obvious like a blown bulb, you should:

- Unplug all electric appliances.
- Reset the consumer unit (ie turn on the switches/fuses back to an on position)
- Plug in all the appliances again one by one to see which items caused the fault.

Community Alarm Service (CAS)

The Trustees do not arrange for and/or pay for a telephonic "Lifeline" system. However, residents may install one, at their own expense.

Drying clothes.

Washing lines are provided in the communal gardens (adjacent to 4 Rectory Lane) for all the residents to use.

Gardens

A team of gardeners is employed to maintain the communal areas is the responsibility of the charity. All residents have a dedicated plot of land at the front which they maintain and additional parts of the communal garden which they took a responsibility to maintain. If residents would like to work on additional parts of communal gardens, they must obtain trustees' approval prior to doing any work. The detailed colour-coded map of communal gardens explaining residents' area of responsibility is in Appendix 1. of the Residents' handbook.

Residents are asked to feed the birds only from proper bird feeders as leaving food on the ground will attract vermin. Residents are asked not to leave food in the open of the communal area as it attracts vermin.

Repairs and Decorations

You must not carry out any improvements, alterations, repairs or decoration to your home without first discussing your plans with the clerk to the trustees.

No shelves, cupboards, locks or fittings shall be fixed or removed without prior consent. For all major works, the trustees will instruct an architect or surveyor to design and plan the work before placing an order with a building contractor. Payment for improvements is the responsibility of the trustees.

As noted above, the charity is responsible for external and internal repairs. Please report all necessary work to the clerk who will arrange for it to be carried out. You will be informed in advance about arrangements for work to be carried out. Workmen will not be allowed to enter your property while you are out unless you have agreed to satisfactory arrangements. An exception will have to be made, however, if an emergency arises such as a water leak.

The decoration inside your home is done before you take up residence and is your responsibility thereafter.

As the trustees have responsibility for the long-term maintenance of the almshouses, they have to consider individual residents' requests for alterations alongside their own maintenance programme. If an alteration would be structurally unsound, reduce the amenities for subsequent occupants, or increase future maintenance costs, it will not be approved. If you live in a listed building, some alterations will need local authority consent before any work can be carried out.

In case of doubt over where responsibility or in the event of wanting to request any alterations to the property please contact the Clerk.

Insurance

The charity insures the building. You are responsible for insuring the contents.

ARC Television Licence

The Charity can apply on behalf of residents for the concessionary ARC tv licence for residents aged 60 -74 or who are disabled. The cost is £7.50 per year from 1 January - 31 December.

Please refer to the clerk for further details.

Cleaning

You are responsible for keeping your own property clean, including the windows. Residents should keep their almshouse clean and tidy and avoid storage of excess or unnecessary items. Hoarding of excess goods in extreme cases may be grounds for setting aside an appointment. All defects which become apparent on the property should be reported to the clerk.

Refuse collection and recycling

Folkestone and Hythe District Council (FHDC) supplies recycling and general waste bins for the properties. FHDC should be contacted directly if bins go missing or collections are missed.

The Robert Thompson Charities provides 4 garden waste bins for grass clippings and weeds etc collected from the communal gardens and the hall. These are not for food waste.

Section 6

General Information

Housing Benefit/ Local Housing Allowance/ Universal Credit

Eligibility for State Benefits changes from time to time. If you need advice on State Benefits, please consult Age UK on 01303 279 621 or Shepway Citizens Advice on 01303 241435 (the contact details may change. Please check with the Clerk). To claim Housing Benefit / Local Housing Allowance you should ask for an application form at your local benefits office (DWP) or Housing Department. 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 overpayment.

Parking

Parking is on the road. There is no space on the site.

Will

You are strongly advised to make a Will and it is best to ask a solicitor to help you with this. If you need help in finding one, the local Citizens Advice Bureau in Folkestone will be able to suggest names.

Neither staff nor trustees can act as executors of residents' wills.

Lasting Power of Attorney

It is strongly recommended that you arrange a Lasting Power of Attorney, which allows you to appoint someone to look after your finances and to take welfare and healthcare decisions on your behalf in the event of your mental incapacity. Again you should seek legal advice from a solicitor.

Social Media

Those residents using social media such as Facebook and Twitter are asked to respect the fact that no views should be expressed via social media about the charity, its trustees, other residents or staff.

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 trustees will be pleased to help or offer advice if they can. You can ask to see the clerk/warden or any of the trustees and your concerns will be treated with the utmost confidence.

Complaints

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

Robert Thompson Charities

(1194270)

Complaints Policy

The aim of the policy is to ensure that the complaints process is flexible and responsive to the needs of individual complaints. The policy seeks to ensure that:

- residents/hirers who complain are listened to and treated with courtesy and empathy
- residents/hirers will never be disadvantaged as a result of making a complaint
- complaints are investigated promptly, thoroughly, honestly and openly
- apologies are given as appropriate
- complaints handling will comply with confidentiality and data protection policies

Complaints may be made by residents, their carers and families or a representative of a resident or a hirer of the Saltwood Village Hall.

The Robert Thompson Charities will not be able to deal with an issue through the complaints process if:

- a complaint relates to a legal matter that is already being dealt with by a solicitor
- the complainant is anonymous unless there is sufficient documentary evidence to substantiate the complaint.

Residents should be encouraged to raise minor complaints informally in the first instance, preferably verbally, as this can lead to better understanding and very often to a quick resolution of the issue.

If the complaint cannot be solved quickly or if the complaint is more serious, it should be made in writing. A written complaint should include sufficient detail to enable the charity to investigate.

Complaints should be made to the Clerk in the first instance or to the Hall's Admin (for the hirers of the Village Hall), who will acknowledge receipt of a written complaint within a reasonable amount of time. This acknowledgement will indicate the next course of action and the anticipated timescale. The charity will seek to resolve the complaint as a matter of urgency.

If the complainant is still not satisfied with the outcome they have 14 working days to submit a written appeal, and the appeal will be dealt with by the chair of trustees who will convene a special meeting within a reasonable amount of time of the appeal being submitted.

The chair of trustees will respond in writing to the complainant in a reasonable period of time advising of the action taken to resolve the complaint.

The decision of the trustees will be final.

If a complaint is pursued unreasonably or where a resident's actions or behaviours are deemed to be unreasonable, Robert Thompson Charities reserves the right to close the complaint. The trustees will inform the complainant of their reasons. A complainant who displays threatening or abusive behaviour or language (whether oral or written), that causes staff or trustees to feel threatened, abused and/or continues to contact the charity with unreasonable demands during/following a complaint investigation, may have their appointment set aside.

**This policy has been approved for issue by the board of trustees
of Robert Thompson Charities in July 2022.**

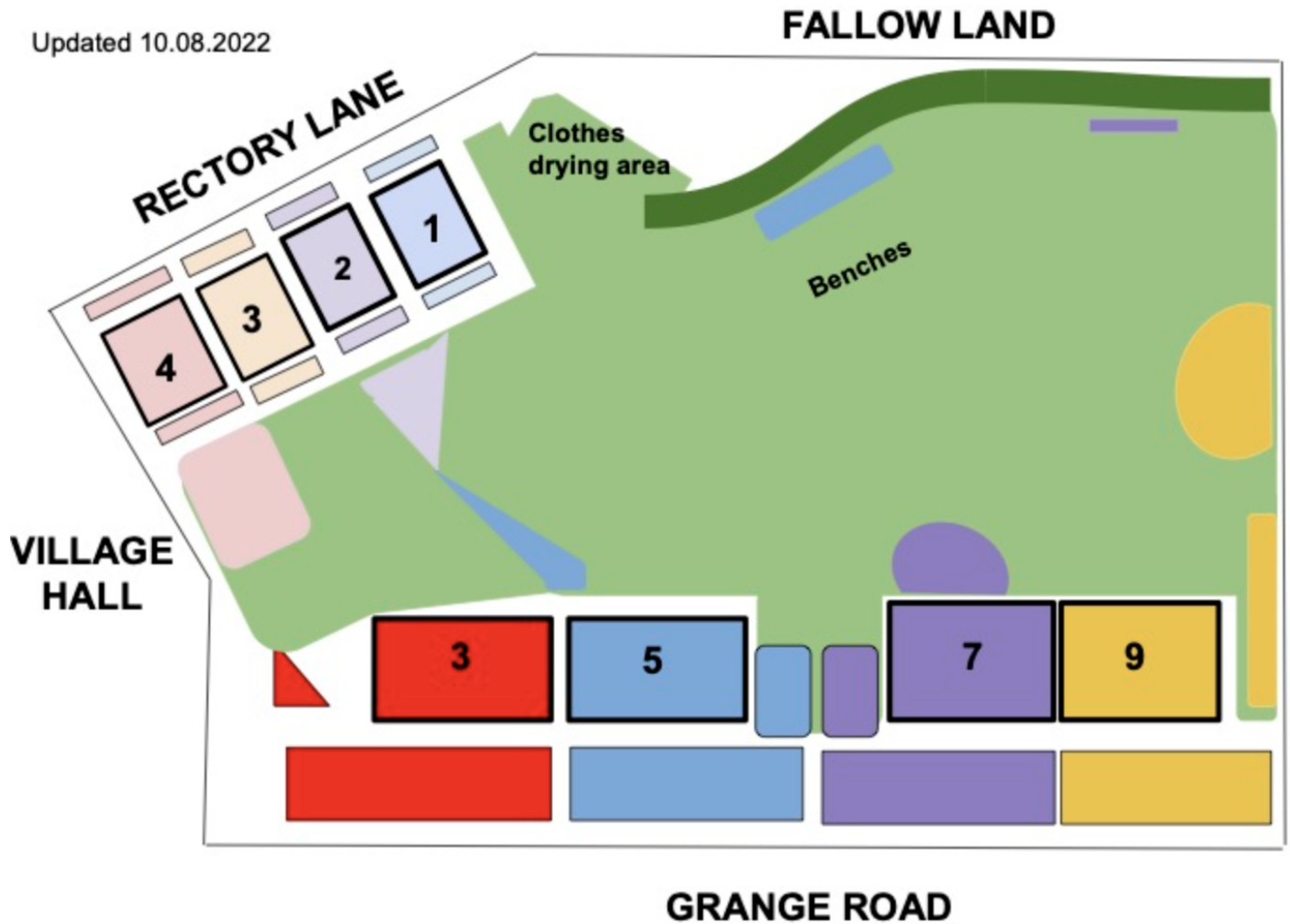
It is a condition of occupancy that a resident signs a copy of the Residents' Handbook, signifying their willingness to abide by the above rules and that they have read and are happy to comply with the rules as laid down in this Residents' Handbook.

Resident(s) signature (s) _____

Resident(s) Name(s) _____

Date _____

Appendix 1.
Communal Gardens of the Saltwood Almshouses



Note: Each colour corresponds to each numbered resident's area of responsibility.