

## The Robert Thompson Charities' Almshouses Resident's Handbook



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## **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 22<sup>nd</sup> 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.

**The purpose of the charity is to** (1) provide homes for persons who have lived in the district of Folkestone and Hythe for 10 years and who are in need and (2) manage the village hall for the benefit of the inhabitants of the Parish of Saltwood.

### Constitution

The Charity has been registered under its title and is governed by the Charity Commission, its registered number being 209220.

### Management

The trust 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.

‘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 discreet 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.

#### 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.

### 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.

The use of paraffin oil heaters is prohibited.

### In Case of Fire

If it is safe to do so, please evacuate your dwelling and go to the fire assembly point in the back garden. 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 or leave chip pans 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.

### 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.

### 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. Please ask the Clerk





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 you return as it is important in an emergency to know if any residents are away.

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%.

### 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 the light of that agree a phased programme of maintenance and repair work.

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

### 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.

### 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.

### 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.

### 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.

### 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 7 hours per week and will endeavour to respond to your calls in a timely manner. 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 off 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

Gillards Garden Services are employed to maintain the communal areas is the responsibility of the charity. Some residents have a small plot which they like to maintain.

Residents are asked to feed the birds only from proper bird feeders as leaving food on the ground will attract 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

As noted above, the trust 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.

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

#### 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.

#### Refuse collection and recycling

Folkestone and Hythe District Council (FHDC) supply 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 2 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 or the Citizens Advice Bureau.

### Parking

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

### Wills.

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.

### Lasting Power of Attorney

You may also feel it wise to consider setting up 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.

## Section 7

# Robert Thompson Charities 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 who complain are listened to and treated with courtesy and empathy
- residents 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.

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, 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 with 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, the Robert Thompson Charities reserves the right to close the complaint. 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.

- In cases where Trustees consider a complaint is being unreasonable and overly persistent and decide to bring the complaint to an end, they will inform the complainant of their reasons.

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

Signature:.....

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Name:.....

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Date:.....