

Spring/Summer2022

InBrief

The Magazine of Gullands Solicitors



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Welcome to InBrief

As many of us will have noticed over the last couple of years, the importance of the local communities in which we live and work has never been greater.

Here at Gullands we have always taken an active role in our local community and in this edition, we put the spotlight on many of the activities and events that we will be supporting and or participating in this year.

From the vibrant and colourful spectacle of Vaisakhi which was celebrated in April by our Gravesend office, to a fantastic summer of sporting and fund raising initiatives which will take place across Kent.

For the first time this year we are supporting Cycle4Heroes, a one day cycle ride which takes place on Armed Forces Day on 25th June and raises money for Help for Heroes. The mantra of the event is no one is left behind and if you are interested in taking part – whether a novice or more professional rider then details are on page 4. Also on page 4, details of a gentler ride organised by the Rotary Club of Gravesham and Ebbsfleet.

Many of us will be celebrating the Queen's Platinum Jubilee this year and over a four day bank holiday weekend there will be street parties and celebrations up and down the country. Here on our doorstep in Aylesford is the RBLI and they will be making much of the bunting and merchandise which will be used to mark the occasion. More details on page 5.

Turning to more commercial matters there is an update on what happens to commercial rents following the end of the ring fenced period. There is also news of an interesting ruling in an inheritance case and Philip Grylls has been speaking to members of the Almshouse Association.

I hope you enjoy catching up on our latest news and please get in touch if we can help with any of your personal or business legal issues.



John Roberts
Managing Partner

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An amazing summer of events in Maidstone and the Weald of Kent



Maidstone town centre will play host to a number of events this summer, but one we are very excited for is the very first Wine Weekend, which takes place Saturday 16th July 2022 at Sessions House, The County Hall.

Supported by a number of local businesses including ourselves and organised by our friends at Frederic's Bistro, the One Maidstone Business Improvement District, and Kent County Council, the event will showcase the viticulture sector here in the region showcasing the vineyards, their produce, tours and other tourism offerings.

Tickets cost £15 which are redeemable against any produce sold at the event and all of the proceeds go directly to the exhibitors.

So you can taste, buy and take home a selection of fabulous local Kent wines and enjoy the whole experience in the beautiful setting of Sessions House.

Vineyards who will be at the event include Chapel Down, Balfour Hush Heath Estate, Simpsons, Wayfarer Wines, Domaine Evremond, Gusbourne and Biddenden Vineyard.

Tickets are available now and can be bought from www.thewineweekend.co.uk

Some other amazing events happening in Maidstone this summer include:

The Together Festival, Friday 3 June 2022 in Mote Park which is the biggest jubilee celebration in Kent and free entry for the first 2,000 key workers (or nominal £5 for other tickets) www.parklivekent.com/together-festival-home/

Kent's largest rural show **The Kent County Show** is back at Detling on the 7, 8 and 9th July 2022. Showcasing farming and agriculture here in Kent, there is a fantastic range of activities and something to suit everyone www.kcas.org.uk

For military enthusiasts the **Combined Ops Military Show** takes place at Headcorn Aerodrome on 13th and 14th August. This great family day out has military vehicles, living history re-enactments and much more www.headcornevents.co.uk/Events/Combined+Ops

The Weald of Kent Ploughing Match takes place on Saturday 17th September 2022 at New Barn Farm Hawkenbury. With a farmers' market, trade stalls, gymkhana, dog show, displays and entertainment throughout the day and of course the ploughing competitions this is a great, fun family day out. All the money raised from the event goes to support local charities. We are great supporters of this event and provide hospitality to our guests at our stand by the main arena www.wkpmma.co.uk



PROUDLY SUPPORTING

**HELP for
HEROES**

Cycle4heroes to support Help for Heroes

We are delighted to be sponsoring Cycle4Heroes which returns to Medway and North Kent on Armed Forces Day, Saturday 25th June 2022 with a new 75km route to raise funds for Help for Heroes.

Organised by Steve Craddock MBE, the cycle ride starts at the Royal Engineers Museum Chatham at 9am, then it will head out along the coast towards Faversham and return via the North Kent Downs.

Riders aged 16 upwards can now register and the entry fee is £30 and they are also asked to raise an additional £50 sponsorship. Corporate teams are also welcome to join in with a fee of £300 for up to six riders. There is also the chance for the highest individual fundraisers to win either a £700 credit to spend on cycling equipment courtesy of The Bike Warehouse, Gillingham or a comprehensive bike fit out worth £350 from Ben-efit Bikefit Studio.

Steve Craddock comments: "We are delighted to be back after a two year break due to Covid and we are pleased to have Gullands on board to support us and help us raise vital funds for Help for Heroes. This is a cycle ride where no one gets left behind, we support everyone and make sure everyone gets around the route and finishes with a smile on their face. We are once again finishing late afternoon as part of the Armed Forces Day celebrations in Great Lines Park, Chatham."

"I would urge anyone who likes to cycle or is new to cycling to come along and join in to help raise much needed funds for our wounded soldiers – those with physical ailments and/or mental scars from their service. Every single penny raised from this event goes to Help for Heroes."

John Roberts, Managing Partner at Gullands Solicitors comments:

"We are very pleased to be supporting Steve and the Cycle4Heroes ride, it is a great event and brings together the cycling community – from amateurs to more experienced riders and those with disabilities both physical or hidden. This is a great ride for anyone new to cycling, especially those who have started over the last couple of years. Come along and experience the thrill of riding on some of the most picturesque parts of Medway and Kent."

www.cycle4heroes.com

On Your Bike Charity Ride

Gullands is supporting the Gravesham and EbbsFleet Rotary Clubs' On Your Bike charity ride which takes place on Sunday 22 May. The ride is raising money for Alzheimer's & Dementia Support Services.

The On Your Bike ride is one of the largest in the South East and up to 500 riders take part including many family groups. Over the years it has raised over £500,000 for local charities.

The ride has routes of 15, 30 or 45 miles and it starts from the River Thames at Gravesend and uses a section of the Sustrans national cycle path as well as the country lanes around the town. Riders are asked to make a donation of at least £30 to take part.

John Roberts, Managing Partner at Gullands comments: "We are delighted to support the ride which is raising funds for a very worthy cause."

More details can be found at www.onyourbike.org.uk



Save St Mary's Church Room

Gullands is delighted to be supporting a local campaign to save and breathe new life into St Mary's Church Room in the village of Sole Street nr Cobham, Gravesend. The 'Tin Tabernacle' church room was opened in 1889 and provided a church and meeting place for the villagers of Sole Street when they were unable to travel to their mother church in Cobham.

The land for the building was given by the internationally renowned architect Sir Herbert Baker from the garden of his neighbouring 15th century Wealden House. The building is an early 'flat pack' design made of corrugated iron, which has stood the test of time, but is now in need of some repairs to enable it to be used again.

A local funding group has been formed to save the building and to turn it into a hub providing a range of services to the local community. The vision for this beating heart of the local community will provide a space to support mental health, care, advice, education, friendship and other activities for all ages and abilities.

The group have raised over £33,000 and are also applying for grants. The group have a long way to go with their fund raising, but this is a very worthwhile community project.

Andrew Clarke at Gullands Solicitors comments: "Sole Street is a historic village which has clearly changed over the years but retains much of its character and historic buildings of which St Mary's Church Room is one. This is a great community project and we wish the group well on saving this well-known local landmark."

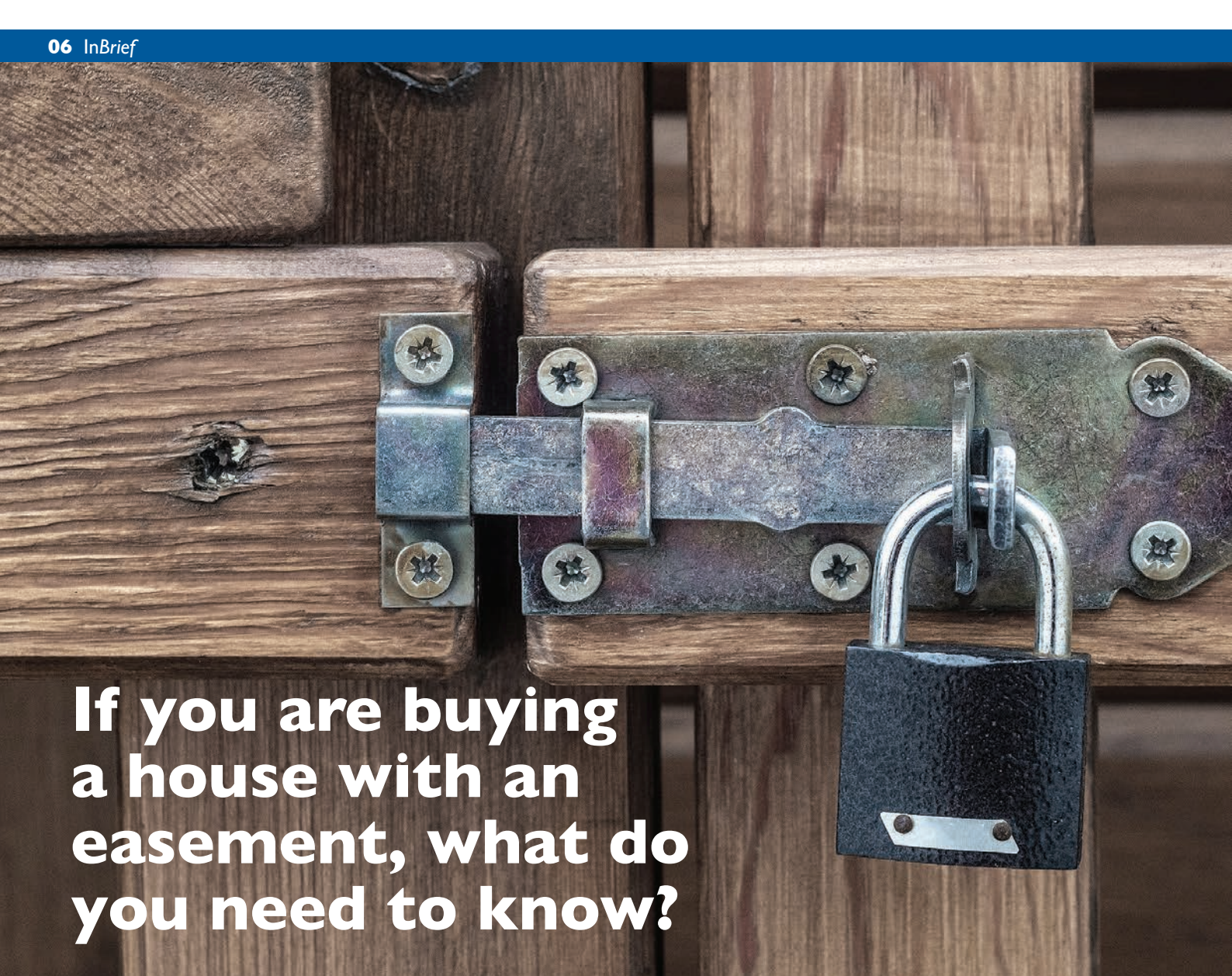
Royal British Legion Industries – helping the UK celebrate the Platinum Jubilee 2022

Our friends at the charity RBLI are using the skills and talents of former service personnel here in Kent to produce a range of goods to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee this summer.

To celebrate Queen Elizabeth's fantastic 70 years on the throne, there is a range of bunting, flags, lamp post signs and much more to decorate schools, workplaces, public buildings and of course homes across the UK.

Gullands' Blair Gulland is also a trustee of RBLI and comments: "This is clearly a four day holiday we should all be celebrating, a fantastic achievement by one of the world's longest serving monarchs and something none of us are likely to see again, so a real moment in history. Once again the team at RBLI have put a fantastic range of Jubilee items together to celebrate Her Majesty The Queen's Platinum Jubilee. All of the products in their Jubilee range have been made or fulfilled by British veterans and 100% of the proceeds will go towards the RBLI's mission to support veterans and those with disabilities. This is a great initiative which takes place right on our doorstep at Aylesford near Maidstone."

For your Platinum Jubilee shopping visit the RBLI's online store at <https://rbli.shop/collections/platinum-jubilee-2022>



If you are buying a house with an easement, what do you need to know?

An easement effectively gives access which entitles you or your neighbours to use your or their land to gain access to a property. More commonly this includes access where a property is otherwise landlocked and you need to access someone else's land to get to it.

Otherwise, it is more commonly to be used for maintenance purposes for example to access a shared septic tank, for utility companies to access, repair or replace services and allowing drainage pipes or cables to run above or below your land.

There are various types of easement so it is important to understand the differences and what your obligations are if you buy a property subject to one.

- **Express Grant or Reservation** - This is typically set out in the deed transferring the land from the seller to the buyer.
- **Implied easement** - Something is suggested but not granted in writing.
- **Prescriptive easement** - An easement where long continuous use of the right can be shown. The period of use must be uninterrupted for twenty years.

Easements don't normally affect your day to day enjoyment and use of the property or your ability to apply for a mortgage on a property. But before buying a property with an Implied, Prescriptive or Express Grant or Reservation easement, it is worth taking the time to fully understand what it means, so that there are no misunderstandings or disputes at a later date.

For example, one of the most common types of easement is where neighbours share a driveway. There would typically be an obligation for each party to contribute towards the costs of repairs and maintenance, but there may be times when parties cannot agree to the extent

of the work needed and also the costs. An easement should clearly set out the obligations of each person involved. If you are buying a property with such an easement you can ask your solicitor to make enquiries to find out if there are any ongoing disputes about access, payments, or outstanding maintenance issues.

Unless specified in the easement you shouldn't assume you can use a shared driveway to store objects – from vehicles, dustbins to building materials being delivered, as this could block access for your neighbour. Ask visitors to your property to park considerately and if you want to put up gates or fencing it would be better to discuss this with the other neighbours accessing it first to ensure there is no disagreement.

As with all aspects of buying a house, make sure you understand everything and if in any doubt, ask your solicitor to double check for you as part of the conveyancing process.

Alan Williams can be contacted at a.williams@gullands.com



Maidstone and Mid Kent Sunday League Finals

We are delighted to have supported the Maidstone and Mid Kent Sunday League Cup Finals which took place at the Gallagher Stadium Maidstone on Friday 6 May 2022. Taking part in the finals this year were the Maidstone Tempests and Whitehorse Jaguars.

The Tempests won the match 3-0 and also the title for the first time.

The invitation cup final involved eight sides from the Maidstone Minor U18 League v eight teams from the lower divisions of the MMKSFL adult league.

This competition is a unique way to help bridge the gap between under 18 football and the adult games.

Leroy Bradley, Partner at Gullands Solicitors comments: *"We are really pleased to be supporting the league and their cup final which brought together players from across Maidstone and the Weald and provided a great experience playing at the Gallagher Stadium. Football along with other sports here in Kent has been the glue which has held local communities together for generations and we are delighted to support initiatives which bring more young people into the game and encourage them to transition into the adult game and beyond."*



Landmark ruling on £1m inheritance case

In a very unusual case, which is only the third court ruling of its kind in the UK since 2007, a Will has been held as invalid on the grounds that it was obtained fraudulently and through undue influence known as 'fraudulent calumny'.

This unusual and landmark ruling heard in Bristol High Court in April 2022, saw a sister hide her father's death and with it a £1m inheritance of antiques and classic cars from her brother. The attempted fraud saw sister Sonia Whittle turn father Gerald Whittle against his son, David Whittle, shortly before his death and the Judge in the case described it as "disgraceful" and "appalling" attempts to cut the rightful beneficiary out of the Will.

Gerald Whittle, 92, died in 2016 just three weeks after executing his Will. He had two children, Sonia and David Whittle, appointing Sonia and her partner, Ray Spicer, as executors. Apart from a bequest to David of Gerald's old cars, the entire estate, valued at approximately £1m was left to Sonia and Ray.

To take instructions for drafting the Will, Gerald's solicitors unfortunately sent a trainee legal executive to his house. Sonia told the legal executive that David and his wife Julie were "psychopaths and criminals" who had stolen large sums of money from Julie's mother.

Sonia also said that David had been looking for Gerald's bank details whilst he had been in hospital, that he had stolen Gerald's antiques and his classic cars, and that David and Julie had forced their way into Gerald's house and the police had issued a harassment order against them.

In the month preceding Gerald's death, David and Sonia visited Gerald in a care home. David overheard Sonia telling their father that he had

stolen money from his mother-in-law and that he was a violent man who assaulted women. When David confronted Sonia on these lies, she left the room, verbally abusing her brother.

The judge found that Sonia had knowingly "peddled falsehoods" about David and his wife and Sonia had unduly influenced her father to cut his son David out of his Will – a legal concept called 'fraudulent calumny'.

It was subsequently proved that the antiques Sonia alleged had been stolen by David, in fact had been sold by local auctioneers at Sonia's instruction. David had worked, until retirement, in a highly vetted position and Disclosure and Barring Service certificates proved that neither he nor his wife had ever been involved in any illegality.

David and Julie, were very close to Gerald, saw him very regularly and were central to his care in his later years. Sonia sought to poison her brother's relationship with their father and, furthermore, to cut contact between Gerald and David right at the very end, when Gerald was most vulnerable and most in need of his son's love and care.

Sonia even refused to allow the medical authorities and social services to let David know when their father had died. It was not until two months after Gerald's death that David eventually found out - after much increasingly frantic searching and investigation.

Whilst these cases are rare it does remain too easy for certain individuals to unduly influence elderly and vulnerable people and if they succeed they are effectively denying the 'true' beneficiaries their rightful inheritance.

Fraud and undue influence typically takes place behind closed doors and is very difficult to prove to the standard necessary to overturn a Will.

To discuss your Will contact **Alex Astley** a.astley@gullands.com

Commercial Rent Arrears, what next?

The restrictions which prevented commercial landlords from recovering rent arrears which were accrued during the pandemic have now ended (25 March 2022), so what happens next?

Rent arrears which were accrued and were payable by businesses that were subject to forced closure are ring-fenced for the period 21 March 2020 – 18 July 2021, or for a shorter period if the business was not closed for this full length of time.

This means the ring-fenced arrears cannot be recovered by using commercial recovery of arrear rent, the issue of winding up proceedings and a landlord cannot also use this as a reason to forfeit a lease. Instead, the landlord and tenant will have to take part in a binding arbitration process to resolve the arrears.

During the arbitration both the landlord and tenant will be able to present their case and also make an offer to settle the arrears. The jurisdiction of the arbitrator will be to decide if the tenant should be given relief from all or part of the payment or make an order for the payment to be collected in instalments.

The window to initiate the arbitration process is now open and either the landlord or the tenant can initiate it up to 24 September 2022.

Other proceedings which landlords may have initiated outside of this arbitration process are suspended until the same date and after that, landlords can continue with their preferred enforcement process in respect of the ring-fenced arrears.

As there is no obligation on either party to refer the matter to arbitration it is likely many landlords will choose to wait until after the 24 September deadline when the moratorium is finally lifted.

Tenants need to consider whether it is in their better interest to refer the matter especially if they believe they have a strong case to present and genuinely have no way of paying the arrears back in full in the future.

Rent arrears outside of the ring fenced period can be recovered by the landlord enforcing their rights however they risk waiving the right to forfeit the tenant's lease if they treat the lease as continuing. This includes the continuation to demand rent or take the steps which are consistent with the lease remaining in place, such as serving notices.

Where a landlord receives a payment from the tenant of the rent in arrears this must be allocated to the payment of the no-protected rent.

Landlords also have a difficult decision to make, especially as they will effectively have to make a judgement call on the financial viability of the tenant in the longer term and whether they are likely to be able to recover the rent after 24 September. Otherwise, they may be left with an empty property and the future liability for business rates.

There is clearly much to think about and if you would like advice on your commercial lease, get in touch with Marianne Webb, m.webb@gullands.com

New starters

We have expanded our commercial, residential property and private client teams based in our Maidstone office with the appointment of three new Associate solicitors.

Kathryn Shirley has joined the commercial team and she advises both private individuals and companies in all aspects of commercial property matters to include acquisitions and disposals of freehold and leasehold properties as well as grants of leases and easements.

Natalie Skinner has joined the residential conveyancing team and she specialises in all aspects of residential conveyancing including sales and purchase of freehold, leasehold, auction, shared ownership, and new build properties.

Francesca Hayward has joined the private client team and specialises in preparing both simple and more complex/tax-efficient Wills, carrying out the administration of estates of all values both within the UK and for UK clients who live and/or have assets abroad, preparing Lasting Powers of Attorney and General Powers of Attorney, as well as registering Enduring Powers of Attorney and preparing Deeds of Variation and Declarations of Trust.

Gullands has also appointed John Lloyd as a Paralegal to the firm and he will be working with the commercial property and corporate teams.

John Roberts, Managing Partner at Gullands comments: *"We are delighted to welcome four new members to our expanding team who bring with them a great range of skills and experience from their work with private clients and businesses across the South East."*



Kathryn Shirley



Natalie Skinner



Francesca Hayward



John Lloyd

Maidstone United promotion success



For the second time in seven years, Maidstone United has been crowned The Vanarama National League South Champions and here at Gullands, we have been delighted to be supporting them at their home at the Gallagher Stadium for the last ten years.

Promotion to The National League, the fifth league in English football, will see Maidstone join fellow Kent club Dover Athletic FC playing teams from across England. This higher profile for the club will help bring in larger crowds and maintain local interest in the club.

Gullands' Practice Manager Paul Mannering comments: *"This is once again a fantastic result for the team who have worked hard all season and it is also great for the Stones fans who turn out each week to support them. Moving the club back into the heart of Maidstone has been a great way to keep interest and to attract new supporters. With its friendly feel, a visit to the Gallagher Stadium is a great day out for football fans of all ages."*

Gullands sponsors the Gullands Lounge, the team shorts and has a number of signs up around the club. Paul Mannering continues: *"We are a Maidstone business through and through and we have been here in the town centre for over 100 years. We strongly believe in supporting the high street and the local business community and Maidstone United helps bring together both the local business community and fans as well. We look forward to the start of the 2022/23 season and hope the team can continue to go from strength to strength."*

Almshouse Resident issues

The Almshouse Association is a support charity representing over 1,600 independent Almshouse charities across the UK. Almshouses provide self-sufficient and low cost community housing but like many 'landlords' they also face a number of issues with which they have to deal.

Gullands' Chairman Philip Grylls recently presented a webinar to approximately 200 Almshouse Association members all across the country on some of the many issues they may encounter with residents. The purpose of the webinar was to consider common challenges and how best to deal with them in the most consistent, practical, and appropriate manner.

Many of the common challenges include nuisance or breach of regulations such as antisocial behaviour, noise and disturbance to other residents, physical and verbal abuse towards other residents or contractors and staff, non-payment of maintenance contributions for their occupation, unauthorised visitors, cohabittees, or long unauthorised absences. Almshouse Trustees naturally owe a duty of care to residents and staff for their safety and they need to consider their responsibility to safeguard individual residents alongside their responsibilities to other residents who can also be impacted by the behaviour of another resident, so it is a fine line to tread.

When dealing with all cases Philip stressed the importance of carefully gathering evidence, carrying out a full and fair investigation, using mediation in suitable cases and if necessary issuing warnings, but ultimately it might be necessary to remove the resident if all other options have been exhausted.

In addition to nuisance issues, another common challenge Trustees face is dealing with residents who are no longer capable of independent living. It is always a condition of appointment of Almshouse residents that they are capable of independent living, if necessary with help from family and Local Authority care packages, as Almshouses and their staff are not equipped to provide nursing or medical care. Unfortunately, even with these additional measures, it may no longer be safe for a resident to remain and in those circumstances, the difficult decision has to be made to ask a resident to move to more suitable accommodation, which is designed for and better able to deal with their specific needs. Issues in these situations normally revolve around personal care and hygiene, the condition of the property, hoarding, refusing help and ultimately not responding to communications.

If a Lasting Power of Attorney (health and welfare and financial options are available) has been made, this can be very useful in these circumstances so that welfare and/or financial decisions can be taken by someone trusted by the resident if they no longer have capacity to make their own decisions.



It is also common to seek to involve the resident's GP, Adult Social Care, the Local Authority, and family members. What is important in these situations is to work with all parties to secure accommodation suitable for the resident's needs so they are kept safe.

Where a resident is admitted to hospital, perhaps for a long period, they have the right to return to their property when discharged but may need support. If the charity needs to take measures to ensure the property is habitable, these should be agreed if possible and documented.

Removing a resident is always a last resort for a charity as their primary objective is to provide a home for residents. That said, the best interests of the resident and the Trustees' responsibilities to other residents have to be taken into account and sometimes the difficult decision is taken to ask a resident to leave. In these situations, it is advisable to seek specialist and independent legal advice. Philip has acted for many years for Almshouse charity Trustees and was involved in the last major Court of Appeal case on the status of almshouse residents.

Another common issue for Almshouse charities is in the event a resident dies without having made a Will, particularly where there may be no family who can help. Trustees, faced with such a situation have to decide how to deal with various matters including the disposal of furniture and other personal belongings left in the property. A well drafted document setting out the basis of the resident's occupation will include a clause dealing with this but in default we can advise on the steps to take. Clearly it is simpler if a resident has made a Will to set out what happens to their estate on their death, but it is not uncommon for residents to die intestate.

Clearly Almshouses have and continue to play an important role in providing safe and affordable accommodation for some of our most vulnerable in society and Gullands continues to support the excellent work which Almshouse Trustees provide but if problems arise we are here to help.

Philip Grylls can be contacted at p.grylls@gullands.com

Kent sport in the spotlight

We are lucky to have some great and affordable sports to watch here in Kent and a number of teams to play for depending on age and ability. Here are just three clubs which we at Gullands are proud to sponsor:

Maidstone United celebrates its 10th anniversary in the Gallagher Stadium here in Maidstone this summer and on 25th and 26th June 2022 it is hosting a ten year stadium anniversary football tournament for young people. With matches for the current U7, U8, U11, U12, U13 and U14 year olds, it is a great opportunity to play on a professional pitch and to soak up the atmosphere of a larger game.
www.maidstoneunited.co.uk/tournament

Mote Cricket Club in Maidstone has a long association with Gullands Solicitors and the Gulland family, with Blair Gulland serving as the current Chairman and his father, the late John Gulland, was the secretary to the club for many years, starting in the 1950's. Once the home of top flight cricket in Kent, the club has now increased the number of cricket teams available to join. www.pitchero.com/clubs/themotecricketclub

Ebbsfleet United which was known as Gravesend and Northfleet till 2007, was the first Kent football team to win the FA Trophy at Wembley in 2008. In the same season they also won the Kent Senior Cup. The Fleet celebrates its 75th anniversary this year and hosted a dinner at the Kuflink Stadium for supporters, staff, management, and players.
www.ebbsfleetunited.co.uk

Bearsted Cricket Club had an incredible season in 2021 becoming Champions of the Kent County Village League Division 1 for the first time. A thriving village club helping to bring the game to young people, we are delighted to sponsor the club and look forward to enjoying matches on Bearsted Green this summer.
www.bearstedcricketclub.co.uk

John Roberts Managing Partner at Gullands comments: *"Thanks to our long history in Maidstone town centre and nearby villages and in the last ten years in Gravesend, we have come to know and admire many local clubs for their hard work and involvement in their local community. With two of the clubs we sponsor celebrating significant anniversaries this year, we would like to wish them all a successful season and to thank them for inspiring and encouraging so many people, especially young people to take part."*

Staff profile: Natalie Skinner

Position: Associate Solicitor in the Residential Conveyancing Department

Time at Gullands:

I joined Gullands in February 2022.

Main responsibilities and duties:

I specialise in all aspects of residential conveyancing, including sales and purchases of freehold, leasehold, auction, shared ownership and new build properties.

What is the best part of the job:

Providing a personal service to my clients.

If you were not in this job, what would you be doing:

I would own an independent coffee/book shop.

What changes would you like to see happen in the law in the next 10-20 years:

Better use of technology to make the house buying experience run smoother for clients.

What do you like doing in your spare time:

Yoga, walking in the Kent countryside and sport; good food and wine.



Gravesham Business Awards 2022

Gullands is delighted to be sponsoring the Gravesham Business Awards 2022 which help celebrate Gravesham's diverse area and its enterprising mix of rural and town centred business community.

Organised by Gravesham Borough Council, the awards which take place this spring and recognise how the area and local business community is changing with ongoing regeneration projects and the opportunities this brings. Gravesham has a healthy local business base comprising around 3,200 registered businesses of which 80 per cent employ less than 10 people.

As well as the smaller firms in the borough, there are also sizeable national and international firms such as Comma Oil & Chemicals Ltd, Kimberly Clark, Rodenstock, and Britannia Refined Metals (part of Glencore).

Gravesham is also the gateway to London by boat, with the unique 11km waterfront and long-standing maritime connection. The Port of London Authority's main offices are based in the town and much of the area's deep-water wharfage is used to transport commercial materials.

The River Thames plays a central role to the town's economy with a new pontoon off the Town Pier, providing modern facilities to receive visiting leisure craft from London or those coming upriver from the North Sea and Continental Europe. Also completed is the £2 million refurbishment of the Riverside Leisure Area to the east of Gravesend Town Centre.

Vaisakhi returns to Gravesend



One of our favourite events is the Sikh festival of Vaisakhi, which returned to the streets of Gravesend this April after a two year absence.

Vaisakhi marks the beginning of spring and it is one of the most important dates for the Sikh community. The celebratory and colourful parade starts and finishes at the Gravesend Gurdwara and is part of a weekend of celebrations.

Sunita Chauhan, Associate Solicitor at Gullands comments: "It was great to be back with the Gullands' stand, handing out sweets and enjoying the parade and the celebrations. Vaisakhi brings together the wider Gravesend community and it was wonderful to see so many families out enjoying the sunshine."