
TheTruthAboutSolitaire

Investigation into the actions *and*
inactions of

Solitaire Property Management

Introduction

The website TheTruthAboutSolitaire was formed in July 2008, after browsing the internet for other resident's views on the property management agent Solitaire Property Management.

Personally I wanted to identify whether the *price increases, lack of provision and awful customer services from Solitaire* that I was experiencing were just unique to my area or a regional matter.

With the lack of online information I created TheTruthAboutSolitaire website to provide a central point for all Solitaire Property Management customers to share their views, grievances and assist others.

Much to my surprise the website was inundated with responses from Solitaire Customers, who all told the same stories of price increases, lack of services, faults and property damage which has been reported to Solitaire – yet in many circumstances, nothing has yet to have been done about these problems.

Video and Photographic evidence have been supplied to Solitaire, yet so far have been ignored.

An online petition was then created for people to comment and once again this had an overwhelming response and the story was once again the same – disgust and ill treatment of customers by Solitaire Property Management.

The Secrecy of Solitaire Property Management

Investigations have been carried out into the inter-relationship between companies associated with Solitaire Group and Companies House information backed up the general consensus that Solitaire Property Management held a monopoly over clients, as they hold the freehold to customer properties via the company Estates & Management.

Clients were unable to speak to the Estates & Management in the position as the landowner to request that Solitaire Property Management were replaced as the development Property Managers due to the relationship between both companies. Estate & Management would not sack their own company from undertaking work for residents.

Solitaire Property Management is a part of a larger group called Peverel Group Ltd, whose Managing Director is Lee Middleburgh. He has informed us that in August 2008, Solitaire Property Management were incorporated into Peverel Group.

With no controlling body to protect residents against Property Managing Agents taking advantage of residents, it is pretty much a money-making business for the Managing Agent.

All of the above mentioned companies are part of a group called the Association of Residential Managing Agents (ARMA) – they portray the position that they can deal with complaints from customers in the event of the Managing Agent failing to act.

ARMA have continually been informed of complaints from all of the people that have supplied information for this report – yet no one has acted or addressed these matters. ARMA appear to be

failing in their duties, whilst also supporting the Managing Agents to make it appear that the industry is regulated.

Problems

Many of the problems reported are the fact that customers are not aware of what services they are paying for from Solitaire Property Management.

Solitaire Property Management, provided all residents with a welcome pack (enclosed with this report) – which details services that customers can expect to receive. When clients have referred to this information when in discussions with Solitaire, an excuse is always raised to advise that, that service is not included in the resident's service agreement.

When the yearly accounts are produced and supplied to resident's, they are detailed as follows:-

- Landscape Maintenance Contract
- Gate Maintenance Contract
- Cleaning Common Area Contract
- Electrical Maintenance Contract
- Light Bulb Replacements
- Electricity
- Water Charges
- Repairs & Maintenance
- Contribution to Common Service
- Buildings Insurance
- General Reserve
- Internal Reserve
- Account Handling Charges
- Bank Interest Received
- Audit Fees
- Administration / Management Fee
- VAT on Management Fee

At this point, we like to point out that VAT on the Management Fee is charged, yet on invoices received – no VAT Registration Number is listed and the Invoices never detail VAT charges.

As you will see from the above, this information is unclear and can be classified as any form of service. Invoices that customers receive are not itemised and therefore cannot be confirmed by residents that the work has been undertaken.

Another common problem resident's experience, is that of services they believe they should receive are not undertaken, despite being charged by Solitaire Property Management, in addition to being provided by copy invoices supplied to them by Solitaire from the contractor. This raises the question of authenticity of the activities taking place – by either Solitaire Property Management or Contractors.

Customer Experiences

To substantiate our claims, we have listed below the stories of 'woe' received from supporters to TheTruthAboutSolitaire who kindly supported our request for information:-

Andrew N

I have visited the website several times and think you are highlighting some great issues. The fact Lee Middleburgh is responding shows his concern. However the problems we all experience are endemic within this company.

1. They charge through the nose and ignore you till you threaten not to pay.
2. They will pay any amount their contractors invoice to them without checking the work was actually necessary or in fact completed. And we were invoiced over £1000 for repairs to lighting that was not required and only 1 quote obtained.
3. Stone slabs have been stolen from the walls but this is not covered by insurance..... need I go on?

Good luck with your crusade, we are in the process of setting up an RTM company so we can get rid of Solitaire and get someone local who we can trust.

Frank G

Our development consists of: 10 Maisionettes built in 1988 One block of six, one of four

I have been here 2 years my neighbours much longer. In ten years the "management fees" alone have risen by 149.89%:

2000 £436.63
2009 £1092.00 (Estimated by them)

For the last three years the total amount paid by the 10 properties is:

2007 £8118.34
2008 £9671.00
2009 £10,385.00

Note the last two years are estimated no actual accounts produced yet.

For this money we get

The grass cut and once a year the hedges, this is called "Landscape Gardening"
Every three years the external windows are painted (more about this later)
Buildings Insurance arranged (this is far too expensive and we were able could get it cheaper by 65%)

That is all of the services we receive for this vast amount.

Comments from other residents:

Work carried out on a front door and charged we asked for details - no reply. Once painting carried out by one person who had never seen a paint brush - had to be re-painted the cost as usual was overcharged.

The original gardener we had was excellent but left after rows with Solitaire. A replacement was found to be hopeless. Once again just grass cutting and hedge trimming - not Landscape Gardening.

A resident got so fed up and wrote to Solitaire seeking to buy the lease with the view to do the little work provided by the residents themselves. Two sent by registered post - no reply.

We mended a fence panel damaged by bad weather cost about £40 just the panel, we did this as before Solitaire replaced a panel in the past for £188.

We had no gardener from October 2007 to June 2008 so in Spring 2008 started doing the work ourselves a petrol mower was hired and numerous visits to the council dump were made to dispose of the cuttings.

We informed Solitaire many many times of the lack of gardening service. Finally after 9 months they arranged for new gardeners to attend (they should have provided three quotes for the work and shown us but failed)

There was nothing for the new gardeners to do on their first visit. As you know we pay in advance for this service so on receipt of the next Invoice deducted 6 months gardening charge as no credit had been given.

A detailed explanation of the amount deducted was given. No answer was had then a threat that if we did not pay.... we answered - no reply then the evil PDC vultures sent us the debt letters.

During this time we complained to ARMA in detail they sent a complaints procedure document which has to be seen to be believed we got no answer from ARMA but finally a reply from Solitaire who were sorry we were not pleased I think the word furious is more appropriate.

Contained within the letter from Solitaire was the explanation about the gardener. I dislike calling people liars so to be kind their explanation was a figment of someone's imagination. We have got so fed up with the threatening letters from the vultures we wrote to Hampshire C.C office of fair trading and our local MP Mr.James Arbuthnot who has agreed to write to the MD of Solitaire (wonder if he will get a reply - I doubt it)

There are many things in their "accounts" I would like to ask about but what is the point. They will not answer but they should the law says so.

Finally the whole idea of people owning their homes then having to pay a company that "manages" needs to be reviewed.

There is no other word other than extortion to describe what Solitaire do. They are a law to themselves giving virtually no customer service it is simply a means to get money.

Cath G

Follow-up details on my current gripes with Solitaire as promised.

I raised these maintenance issues in April 2007 & have just been fobbed off with promises to attend to them (when they eventually reply). I have filed all this with ARMA & these are now supposedly following their complaints process. I don't hold out much hope as the woman at ARMA (Geraldine Shortall) appears to be a bit lacking in the customer-care department & her emails are quite rude:

1. Fences blown down & some now broken (this is a security risk as the general public can now look straight into our living rooms so the curtains are almost always kept drawn)
2. Gutterings not cleared for years; hence now overflowing whenever it rains, my house is situated next to a block of flats whose guttering is worst affected, so the rain falls down directly onto my roof & surrounding ground gets soaked. We are on a flood plain so this could be serious. Some gutterings now broken probably due to the weight of the vegetation/crap in them.
3. Light bulbs in street lights not replaced making the road dangerous to walk through at night
4. Trees & bushes not pruned often enough/properly
5. Communal bin areas being used as illegal dumps for large items of furniture, so much so we cant now get to the bins themselves that easily - Solitaire take no action to stop this & say they will the cost of collection to all of our bills when this is plainly unfair/lazy on their part

In addition, these are other issues I have raised with them more recently on receipt of another gigantic yearly bill:

6. They charge for their services (see the breakdown on their website) which we have no evidence for as having taken place eg: 4 yearly inspection visits - they have never been here 4 times a year to my knowledge, so I have asked for a refund on this portion or proof of when they came
7. Items on the bill for things they think we have but we don't actually have or we if do we can certainly do without them (eg: road & bin area sweeping, communal water tap standing charge of £300pa)
8. There seems to be little active contract tendering to find the best price/service for things like gardening, accounts prep & auditing. The same companies have been doing this for years & their charges have increased stupidly each year with no challenge from Solitaire. I think they should review contracts at least once a year & get new people in if they won't be reasonable, to keep costs down for us.

When I first moved here 6 years ago, the bills were small enough not to worry about at £300 - £400pa, and the place looked well tended. Now they are the best part of £1000 pa, and the gardener

spends less time here but his costs have doubled. I appreciate building insurance costs have escalated but they are not solely responsible for the increase – it's the fact that everything goes up year on year with no challenge or effort to contain them by Solitaire & no consultation with us as to what we would like to see done/changed. I seriously think these charges are a major stumbling block to being able to sell a property here, so most are rented out which brings its own problems like dumped furniture etc.

Hope that's enough - I've certainly had enough!

David H

Following your email I give some details.

- I have been a Solitaire Customer(?) for 6 years.
- Yearly increases have been up to some 20%
- I currently pay approx £700 per annum
- I live in a small development of 20 flats

My personal experiences of Solitaire are awful. They rarely respond to queries without me contacting them a number of times.

The only time we hear from them is when they want money. If they eventually answer emails the information is wrong, insufficient or they just ignore things.

They create and charge us for items then refuse to explain what they are.

They installed lights on the development (that would not look out of place at Old Trafford), against the wishes of the residents. They are so bright that you can read in bed with the curtains closed. I asked if they had copies of the quotes and was never answered.

We have just been re-decorated. Again I asked if they had obtained 3 quotes – no answer.

I have asked to see copies of the electric bills – no answer.

We have been charged for planting – none has been done.

The gardener comes when he feels like it (and my cat is a better gardener).

I have asked for copies of the quotes for gardening – no answer.

I could go on but what is the point?

They charge us for what they like and just ignore questions.

You never know who you are dealing with from one week to the next

Ewan M

- How long have you been a Solitaire Customer;
Since DEC06.
- During the period of time you have been a Solitaire Customer, what have the yearly price increases been
Ridiculous and completely unfounded. They manage a pond. One single pond for 120 houses. This costs each house over one hundred pounds a year, of which over ten thousand pounds pa relates to management charges.
- What do you currently pay to Solitaire
Nothing - still in dispute, they claim I owe in excess of GBP250 pounds.
- How big is the development that you live in.
About 120 houses

Your personal experiences of Solitaire, feed back to your enquiries, service levels agreements, etc.

Criminal, no feedback to enquiries, refusal to respond to letters, still address me as a woman (i.e. Mrs), still correspond to the wrong address, unable to provide any evidence of work undertaken, serious suspicions of perpetuation of fraud, no accountability, no transparency, no corporate governance, no proof of debt etc.

I would suggest that in addition to forwarding the case to the relevant MP, you also forward it to the Serious Fraud Office, and the Monopolies and Mergers Commission, as their business practice of employing in house contractors and refusing to allow due process is potentially fraudulent and at least monopolising.

Geoff B

Answers to your questions are:

I have been a customer of Solitaire for 16 years.

The development has 48 flats arranged three high.

The current charges are Â£28.25 per quarter ground rent. Over the past year I have paid Â£629 in service charges and Â£144 in service charge reserves. The most shocking aspect of my Solitaire bills is their management/administration fees. In 2006 this charge increased by 25% on the previous year and over the past couple of years it has risen again each year. I have asked Solitaire why this is happening and they say that this is to cover the cost of the implementation of the Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act 2002.

Over the years I have made many attempts to communicate with Solitaire almost always by letter. It usually took them weeks to answer - if they answered at all. When they did answer they usually tried to fob me off with irrelevant nonsense and I would have to write to them several times to get

something done. I have found that the only thing that gets them to carry out their responsibilities is when they are threatened with court action.

Solitaire Property Management are without doubt the worst organisation of any kind that I have ever had the misfortune to deal with.

I have attempted to attach some photographs which I think illustrate their managerial standards. These photos have already appeared on the 'Truth About...' website. Use them as you see fit and if you need any comment on them just let me know.

Quentin O

I will try to comment on few of the issues you have mentioned in your e mail.

I have been a Solitaire customer since summer 2004.

The annual charges started at an average of £700 a year. There was a rapid increase in the annual fees.

However Solitaire has invoiced the residents for years 2007 and 2008 extra budgeted deficit charges. This has caused the last annual bill for 2008 to exceed £2250 a year!

Priory place at Abbey Wood is managed by Solitaire Property Management and Gallions Housing association.

I don't have an accurate number of the flats managed by Solitaire, however the number should exceed 50 flats.

From my knowledge, The remaining number of flats are managed by Gallions are charge substantially lower that Solitaire (around £700 to £800 a year). This on its own prove the extent of corruption and inefficient management.

Solitaire lacks customer service, bad management of their finances and resources, violated at many occasions Health and safety issues, due to gross negligence and lack of supervision. Priory Place suffered problem with Vermin although the properties are not more than 5 years old.

Despite the many complaints from the residents regarding our security, and despite the high maintenance charges towards the security gates, these doors are constantly faulty.

Solitaire rarely respond to residents comments, despite I have been dealing on enormous occasions with Solitaire, I have never been able to talk to our property manager.

On several occasions I complained about cleaners cheat when signing cleaning schedule, Solitaire never dealt firmly with the issue. I have many pictures taken and sent to Solitaire, however no action was taken.

Stanley O

I had been solitaire customer for 5yrs. But moved my property that is was under a government incentive scheme.

My service charge has increase from 831.60pounds to 2,800pounds

Am currently paying 1,400every 6months and was given Amber credit company to provide loan WITH INTEREST ADDED as am unable to pay it as I purchased the property under government incentive scheme.

I do not see any service which been provided at all. No consultation regarding contract been awarded. All we see is list of bills and can't understand where it comes from.

I was told in the first year it was due to vandalism, then rubbish been left out. Cleaning takes place ounce every 3months, cutting grass every quarter. No major works been carried out.

GOD HELP US IF SCAFFOLD WHERE TO BE ERECTED AND MAJOR WORKS TAKEN PLACE.
THIS IS MY LIFE UPSIDE DOWN FOR THE PAST 5YRS, heavily in debt because of SOLITAIRE.

PLEASE HELP ME. Thanks

Matthew F

You have written to me at a very opportune time because today I am absolutely incandescent about Solitaire!

In response to your questions

i) How long have you been a Solitaire Customer;

Nearly eight years but I don't consider us 'customers'

ii) During the period of time you have been a Solitaire Customer, what have the yearly price increases been;

Can't remember but I believe fee was around £80 per month 7 years ago

iii) What do you currently pay to Solitaire

Over £140

iv) How big is the development that you live in.

45 flats in one building

v) Your personal experiences of Solitaire, feed back to your enquiries, service levels agreements, etc. Absolutely awful. They never carry out any of the work they are contracted to do. The staff are institutionally rude throughout from the very top to bottom. Never return calls or emails. Never give any reasons. Treat customers as a revenue stream and nothing else. Attached is a small selection from the huge series of emails I have sent but very rarely get a reply. Incidentally as I said the

attitude is the same throughout the company. Graham Shapiro was at the time CEO of Solitaire Group.

The only correspondence I receive from them regularly are letters threatening legal action for failure to comply to their rules or pay their exorbitant fees.

Today I received a circular letter sent to all flats threatening an inspection of all flats to look for residents with pets. Anyone who is keeping a pet who does not get rid of it in 14 days will receive a solicitors letter at their expense and be charged with repairs to the building. I do not have a pet but am livid that they have the gall to send this letter when so much else requires attention

This after the front of the building was seriously vandalised (lead roofing stolen) almost two years ago and still has not been repaired despite numerous complaints.

Also a drainpipe has been broken on the front of the building for over three years (at which time I reported it so)

Finally the door entry system broke before Christmas and has still has not been fixed despite a letter from Solitaire suggesting extra charges to get extra keys cut in the interim. This obviously severely affects all residents

I pay for the communal areas to be refurbished on a 5 year basis. After 6 years my floor received a cursory lick of paint and nothing else. The carpets and pictures on the wall (that have been missing for 4 years) were not replaced despite being contractually obliged to do so.

Alan L

In reply to your e- mail :-

I have been a customer for about 14 years, and our management charge is paid half yearly and I have just paid first bill £147.90 ground rent £5 to E&M management

Our development consists of 6 flats leasehold and 12 freehold houses

Problems we have experience over the years is the way they do the accounts and billing for some reason they will not give itemised bill had a meeting with the new site manager Linda Moore who is now off sick ?

She states accounts would not do itemised bills I thought it was there legal duty to do so don't know if some of the bill is fraudulent or not trying to get answers out of them I have been told she sent a resident in the flats an e-mail calling him a muppet !

A big problem was when the BBC filmed a TV gardening program on a site next to ours they had to use our road to gain access to the site as it's the only way in we heard the BBC paid solitaire a fee but the say they have no nothing of this ?they say they do a health & safety and risk assessment of the site I find this hard to believe I am still waiting from Andrew Wheeler about itemised

billing about what maintenance & repairs have been done and what an admin fee of £70 is for surely this comes under their management fees I am trying to find out from E&M why as a freehold house am I paying for solitaire I maintain my own property ? Hope this is of some help too.

Deborah A

I personally live on a development called Avonley Village in the South East part of London. It is an absolutely lovely development, but for being managed by Solitaire.

I own a freehold house to which I moved to in October 2007. I must admit I was a bit shocked to see that there were any services charges at all, but when I first moved here it was only £120 per year and I thought that was be easy enough to live with.

The development is landscaped and has quite a few gardens, which at the start were very well maintained. Now although I am paying nothing like what the people who own flats pay, it has gone up steadily and is now £180 in just 2 years. I have also investigated a little bit more and tried to find out exactly what we are paying for - they are supposed to have a cleaner for one of the bins on our part of the development and I found out that a gentleman with a house next to it was cleaning it (A housing association resident).

No cleaner had touched it from Solitaire and I have now managed to get them doing that. They are supposed to cut the grass - they don't do that and also there is some sort of waterpipe that everyone can use. Basically out of that £200 - £100 of it is for their management charges. It is mixed housing in the part of the development I live on - one side of the road is housing assoication and the other owned or part owned. That is 20 houses paying £200 a year - that's still £4,000 a year for nothing!! I do pull them up on repairs, but I think I am the only person who does - I tried to start a residents association, but there was very little response and now I just do it myself.

I do know that in the 5 years my son lived here in a flat that the charges went up from about £600 a year to £1,800.

Last year my mother was ill and I went to stay with her for a while - I had forgotten to pay my half year payment to Solitaire of £80 and they got debt collectors onto me who charged me £150 plus the charge. This was just before Christmas and it has caused me some financial problems as I live on my own. They were totally unsympathetic when I told them what had happened.

My son also lived on this development for 5 years and this story I am about to tell you is completely without total proof, but my son is a smart cookie and I do believe now knowing Solitaire that this is what happened. He lived in a block of flats on the development that according to the terms of lease with Solitaire they were supposed to change the carpets and maintain the painting and decorating in the communal areas.

My son is very like me and doggedly persisted and pursued them along with another tenant to do this.

He said he was convinced that at the time they had absolutely no money at all to do this work - shortly thereafter in an area under the flats a car turned up that looked like it had been dumped and the next day it was set on fire and a large insurance claim was put in by Solitaire and that is how they paid for the decorations to the flats. The other tenant worked for the government in some capacity that was very hush hush and found out that the car belonged to a former employee of Solitaire. It was all too much of a coincidence for my son not to believe it was deliberate, though not provable.

They could have killed the people in those flats - and I think my son feels that they are not far from being crooks!! I have been informed by the manager that I deal with at Solitaire, that they are going to have an office on site. it will be interesting to see what comes of that. I did think that if you had 60% of tenants that signed a petition to get rid of a managing agent that this could be done. Have you tried an Organisation called Lease OTR taking them to the Leasehold Valuation Tribunal.

You may find them helpful. I would very much like to be kept informed of any progress that you have made. I am sure that this company makes a misery for the lives of anyone unfortunate to have them as managing agents.

Rich S

I'm happy to share my ongoing story to you about Solitaire.

Thankfully I am no longer under their extortionate rule however my problems have been ongoing. I was an unfortunate sufferer of Solitaire for 17 months from April 2007 until August 2008. My key issues with them are:

Excessive cost with no justification.

No work actually done with this money.

Very poor customer service from the Solitaire team.

Basically Solitaire screwed up my billing. I had just moved into the property and had no breakdown of costs for the period. I eventually determined that key areas of my Statement of expenditure had gone up in cost by hundreds of percent. This became clear to me when I got a break down of charges for the next year (08-09) and it became clear what was going on. My management fee had jumped from £84 in 06-07 to £480 in 07-08 and I was being estimated £520 for 08-09!

Once I worked out what was going on I was hot on their heels. Well I tried but if I e-mailed them I got no reply. If I rang I got no answer. If I left a voice mail I got no reply back. If I rang constantly I would sometimes get an answer. I explained my problem to the property manager and she agreed a problem was evident and promised me a call back. It never came. The cycle repeated constantly for months. As a result I withheld payment when it was due. It took me tens of e-mails and phone calls, most of which were never responded to fix the problem. Finally after many credits and debits to the Statement of Expenditure and a change of property manager we had a figure for 08-09 that was roughly in line with previous spending in 05-06 and 06-07. I asked what would happen about the 07-08 year which I had already paid and was also grossly overcharged and was advised nothing could be done until the account was audited in September and no credit could be made to the current year. I paid the new figure for 08-09 and awaited the audit of 07-08.

In September I chased them for info about the audit. I had now moved out of the property having sold it but advised Solitaire before leaving that I wanted my money back and that it was not to be credited to the new occupants. The accounts were not ready despite September being the latest they should have been done. It took me two months of e-mails to get a copy of the accounts sent to me and when it arrived I nearly had a heart attack. I had overpaid the 07-08 period by about £400 and here they were asking me for more money to cover a short fall of another £460!!!! Let me put this into perspective. This is a one bed Coach House (Flat above an entry arch and two garages. No one above) and certainly not a palace. My audited accounts for 07-08 were telling me £1683.53 had been spent to keep my place running yet I had never called Solitaire to fix anything nor had I seen any of their workers doing anything they should have been doing like litter picking and gutter cleaning.

Straight back on to them I went. Looking at the accounts the following had occurred:

I was being charged £245.22 to cover a Re-lamp and clean of High Level Lights! Was I paying for the whole street! Why was I not warned of this work!

My buildings insurance which had historically been audited at £185 was now being audited at £362.96! Over double the cost!

My original problem of Maintenance Fees being too high had not been fixed. What had historically been £84 was now audited at £480!

Where did these auditors get their licences to operate? In a Cornflakes packet!

I went straight back to Solitaire. Again it took me many attempts to get a response from them. When I did I had to keep chasing for answers. I was once again transferred to another person...this time an assistant to the property manager. One month after raising the problem this new guy worked out that the high level lamp clean was wrongly applied to my account and also that the insurance premium was incorrect. He then passed the file to the New-Accounts team to investigate the management fee problem which is now where it has stalled again. I keep e-mailing them and they promise to chase but I get nothing back.

Hannah Dearing was my Property manager and Tim Hughes currently is. Their customer service has been terrible in that they don't get back to their customers, they don't answer call or e-mails. They make false promises!

This has been going on for a year now and I have been £400 out of pocket for nearly two years. If I wasn't being diligent having heard about this bunch of thieves I would probably have just paid them another £460 on top of the £400 they already had of mine. £860 too much for one year! Double the cost it should be...and even the correct amount of too much for what they provide.

The fight is ongoing. Neil O'Connor (the assistant I'm now working with) has been more promising but I am still in the situation where nothing has happened for 1 whole month and my estimates of him are falling. He promises to chase stuff and get back to me. It doesn't happen.

I hope for one that this company sorts things out once and for all. Their staff need a huge kick in the pants about customer service and how long it is acceptable for them to drag enquiries and complaints out. They need to review what they charge for the service they provide. Maybe a breakdown of the billing to show what was done and when for the money that was paid.

Please feel free to bring my problem to the attention of Mr Middleburgh.

Advise him that I was just one of many unhappy people in my street. If he feels he can take a trip to Mr O'Connor's desk and get my money back then that would go a long way to restoring my faith. Otherwise I wish Solitaire all the misfortune in the world.

Joanna C

Thank you so much for your email. I was so happy to discover "The Truth About Solitaire" last year to find out I was not alone in my long-standing battle with Solitaire. Therefore I would be very happy to assist you in contributing to your case against Solitaire.

So, to answer your questions....

I have been a Solitaire customer in the same property (a new-build block of 19 flats) for 8 years, during which time the service charge has increased from £384.18 PLUS £86.35 for service charge reserves, (total: £470.53) twice a year in 2001 to £613.21 PLUS £163.30 for service charge reserves, PLUS an end of year balancing service charge of £122.04 which totals £898.55 which is almost double- in only 8 years!

In 2006, when I received a bill for external redecoration costs because, Solitaire said, there wasn't enough in the reserve fund (despite 19 flats paying around £163 into the reserve fund alone, every 6 months which amounts to about £6500 a year! where did it go?!) Not only this, but I had never seen any evidence of any external redecoration taking place- my windows and balcony had not been painted and I had not seen any work going on. When I challenged this, I emailed Simon Cooper at Solitaire, saying that on top of being charged for work I didnt think had been carried out, I was unhappy with Solitaires service generally and fed up of paying an extortionate amount every 6 months for no service. I didnt even receive a reply AT ALL for 2 months. When he eventually replied, he fobbed me off, saying simply that the work had been carried out. I continued to complain, but was:

- a) ignored for weeks/months every time I emailed,
- b) couldnt get through on the phone and no one returned my messages
- c) when Simon finally got back to an email he would just say that he was looking into it and would call me in the next couple of days which he never did.

In the meantime I withheld my service charge, telling them that until someone had visited my property so I could show them that no external redecoration had been done I would not pay another penny. Reminder bills turned into final demands and threatening letters. I managed to speak to Simons secretary, Claire, who told me to ignore the letters as they were computer-generated and my complaint had been acknowledged and was being "looked into" so the matter would not go any further . I then received a letter from their solicitors which, on top of the demand for payment, legal fees were added. I contacted Solitaire and they agreed it had been an admin mistake and they de-instructed their solicitors.

This then happened a 2nd time, my bill was now over £3000 and nothing had been done by solitaire- they hadnt even been to inspect the property. When I finally spoke to someone at Solitaire (feb 2008) Alex Chapman, who now had taken over from Simon Cooper, told me he would look into it but that I had to pay my service charge apart from the amount that I was disputing (even though I cant say a specific amount because Im unhappy with everything they do!) So I payed about £2000 of the bill. After this, STILL nothing was done about my complaints, but the bills kept coming and their solicitors were informed again. Eventually I managed to get someone to meet with me to inspect the property- Vincent Wood. Now this was over 2 years after the alleged works had supposedly been done, all he said was that he couldnt tell but it looked like my windows had been painted then and that was a normal amount of wear and tear for 2 years (theyre mouldy, eroded and the paint is stripping off) He then said that they redecorate their properties every 2 years so I showed him the stairwell which he admitted hadnt been redecorated ever- 11years ago. I then got out my records and quizzed him over the service charge reserve fund- I showed him the figures, pointing out that if 19 flats pay about £163 twice a year, thats over £6000 a year and the entire external redecoration costs were approx £12,000 so there should have been that in the fund. There was no account of that money being spent any where else and he agreed that he couldnt see where it had gone but would "look into it" (that infamous Solitaire phrase...) Needless to say, I never heard from him again.

The last straw came when they informed my mortgage lender about my outstanding bill (which I again had withheld to try and get them to deal with my concerns) just before Christmas. I then spoke to Alex Chapman at length, about all my complaints (that the electric gate had been broken for 3 months despite me telling them 3 times, the light bulbs in the stairwell had all blown and not been changed for weeks etc etc) and the legal fees which I were now being unfairly charged for seeing as I had been told that my complaints were being "looked into" which I assumed meant they were and that I wouldnt be taken to court in the meantime! He was actually helpful (in that he actually gave me the time of day and listened to me and asked me what he wanted me to do) He told me there was a new regional manager for my property and that he hoped for a big improvement and that we just needed better communication between us.

At the end of my tether, I eventually phoned the leasehold advisory service. They told me I could take over the management if I had over half the other owners on board which i do not have the time or energy for (plus most of the residents are renting- to contact all the landlords would be really difficult and time consuming) Or that I could pay to get Solitaire investigated. I do not want to spend any more time, money and effort on trying to get Solitaire investigated as I believe as a big corporation I sadly think that somehow they would win. So, unfortunately I felt overwhelmed, overpowered, helpless and at the end of my tether with the whole situation, so have now paid my bill of £1700. I am still refusing to pay their legal fees and have emailed them evidence of them telling me no legal action would be taken while my complaint was being looked into. I havent got a response as yet.

I now know that I am not alone and would love to help and support "The Truth About Solitaire" in any way I can and believe we have power in our solidarity. As I say it is hard for me to contact the other landlords in my building but as most of them are buy-to-let I dont think they are bothered by the everyday incompetence of Solitaire.

Anyway, although long-winded, I hope this all makes sense! I can forward you all the email correspondance between myself and Solitaire over the last few years is that helps?

Please dont hesitate to contact me if you require any more info or help with this matter. I look forward to hearing from you and making progress in bringing Solitaire to justice!

Bernadette M

Thanks for your response. I am only too pleased to help as the New Year has brought renewed enthusiasm on my part to try and sort these cowboys out once and for all!!

Listed below are details you require:

We have owned our freehold house since July 2002, therefore we've been customers of Solitaire for some 6.5 long years!

The charges for Management fees (inc VAT) are as follows:

y/e June 2002 £666.00
y/e June 2003 £670.00
y/3 June 2004 £1164.04
y/e June 2005 £1674.00
y/e June 2006 £1818.00
y/e June 2007 £1908.00

y/e June 2008 £2052.00

y/e June 2009 £2205.00

It's only when spelling it out that you realise how much the charges have risen – unbelievable!!!

The current estimation of charges (for y/e June 2009) are as follows:

Landscape maintenance

£1680.00 (I've managed to get this reduced from over £2000!)

Electricity

£140.00 (this is for 3 lights in the car park which have been out of action for at least one month!)

Repairs & Maintenance

£500.00

3rd party insurance

£389.00 (this has increased from £84.00 for last year!)

Audit fees

£160.00 (I am still awaiting the certified accounts for y/e June 2008!!)

Management fees inc VAT£2205.00

Our site consists of 6 flats and 12 houses (so we are a small site I know). The above charges are paid by everyone – the flats then have an additional list of costs which they have to pay which covers buildings insurance, external decoration etc).

I have experienced problems with Solitaire from the first bill we received. Ever since then it's been an ongoing battle to get answers from them, let alone any problems resolved!

The various complaints I've had with them are:

- They issued an insurance certificate showing the houses were covered by buildings insurance and then denied all knowledge (luckily we had our own insurance arranged).
- The increase in management fees, no explanation was given apart from the fact that they'd been undercharging us for some time!
- Accounts not being clear to understand – at least there should be a breakdown of what is covered under repairs and maintenance. Last year the houses were charged for roof tiles on the flats!!! The fiasco which ensued when trying to clear this up was laughable. I was told that we hadn't been overcharged, then we had been overcharged for floor tiles to the flats and then oops, no it was for roof tiles to the flats! No apology obviously! If I had not pursued this, then Solitaire would have profited to the tune of some £888 – how on earth did this pass through the auditors!!!!
- The total lack of customer services provided by property managers. I did actually manage to arrange a meeting with ours and the residents last year but she was an extremely dogmatic character who tended to talk over people. Unfortunately she chose the wrong person to pick on and, having had some finance/accounts experience, I did manage to pin her down on certain matters where she clearly showed her lack of knowledge. Her approach seemed to

be shout loud, don't listen and hopefully people will go away!!! In fact I have seen an e-mail which she sent to a fellow resident where she refers to their queries as "another muppet question!" Luckily for her she didn't send that e-mail to me!!!

- There appears to be no quality control by Solitaire when contractors are tasked to do jobs. In fact Solitaire would appear to be unaware if the job has actually been carried out or not. They obviously just put the job out and assume it's been done, with no liaison with the residents or visiting of site to ensure the work has been carried out, let alone to an acceptable standard.
- Having spoken to most residents, they all say the same that they are thoroughly fed up with Solitaire but don't know where to turn as complaints seem to fall on deaf ears and there doesn't appear to be a governing body which can help.

I seem to have taken on the role of spokesperson for our site (which I am happy to do) and continue to badger our "Caretaker Manager" as our aforementioned manager is off long-term sick. Currently he seems to be slightly more dynamic than previous staff but I'm not holding my breath!!

There are numerous other complaints, all of which have been mentioned on your website by other people – lack of communication etc. I have copies of paperwork going back to 2003 so if you need anything then please let me know.

Also if I can be of any help in any way then just get in touch. Thank you for all your hard work, it's much appreciated!!!

Lee K

I have been a customer for 12 years.

Prices increase has probably doubled in the 12 years in total but administrative costs have actually gone from 20% to about 80% with a corresponding decrease in amount spent on the estate. The majority of the roads have been adopted by the local council in that time and the only difference this has made is the increase in administration charges - go figure.

I currently pay £70 per six months.

The development is 172 houses I think.

Twice this year street lights on unadopted roads that Solitaire are responsible for have been broken. The first time the lights were out for three weeks on a very dark road. The second time they were out for 11 days.

Despite the security and safety issues it was seen that this was not an issue. Nobody would speak to me about the issue directly. There were two burglaries on the darkened streets the second period of time that the lights were not working and several cars were broken into. I had to get our local Safer Neighbourhood Team and a Councillor involved to push them. SPM even lied to the councillor at that time saying the lights had been already fixed - despite them actually being fixed five days later, and that because I was the only one who knew where the electrical boxes were.

We have been trying to get some private parking signs put up. Despite being very clear on what we need we have been made to wait literally years. The job is done to such a poor standard the signs have not lasted more than three weeks. I have been told a fourth set has been contracted out. We have been waiting for this set for almost a year now.

We have had problems with commercial vehicles parking on our block paving. This was against the terms and conditions of the use of the road. Solitaire refused to back us up until I rubbed their nose in the original documents.

A portion of land was ignored by the landscapers for years until again I drew their attention to the original boundaries. This means that the decent grass that was laid was never looked after and now will never recover.

They are impossible to speak to on the phone. They almost never respond to emails and never respond to voice messages. They have refused all invites to actually visit the site and discuss issues.

I have no intention of moving but if I ever have to I will never move into a property with any connection to them again.

Two years ago I called SPM to pay my bill by switch card. The girl on the phone took my details and wrote them down. The girl at the time told me that she had to do this as she had to cross the room to put the details into the machine. So my card details had been written in plain sight on a piece of paper. The payment went through fine as I expected. What I didn't expect is that three days later my card details would be used to pay for £800 flights from EasyJet.

Now I am paranoid to the extreme with my personal details. I shred all documents and only use secure well known websites paying online. I am convinced that the act of Solitaire writing down my details lead to this fraud. I am not accusing SPM of fraud but they may not be shredding important documents, such as card details.

I now only pay by cheque and have (touchwood) never had a recurrence of fraud.

Hope this is of some help - sorry its all so garbled - they make me so angry.

Julie L

So glad to have signed the petition. Whilst on the website a hyperlink took me to the Solitare website and I left a message there in the hope that I'll get a response as letters I've sent in the past and phone calls don't make a scrap of difference.

I bought 2 brand new apartments from Persimmon Homes in October 2005 but it wasn't until the January of 2006 that our management company, (Solitaire) was appointed. This Buy to Let venture was new for me and I'd never heard of Solitaire before. One of the first things I was forced to purchase was a license to let, my solicitor had never heard of anything like it nor the amount I had to pay! Even my letting agent was amazed, she had heard of paying £25 each time a new tenant came in but it cost me nearly £400 per flat per license. I queried this with Solitaire but they were only interested in the fact if I didn't pay I would be in breach of my lease.

I also queried why the maintainance charges were going up so steeply and work needed to be done when this was a new building - I never got a straight answer. Surely if work needed to be done it should have been referred back to the builders. Nothing is being cleaned in the communal areas as far as I can see and the windows are filthy. The gardens are unkempt and parking's a joke. There has been a fault on the fire alarm system belonging to one of the apartments for over six months I wrote to Solitaire with my October payment with the details - they cashed the cheque so I know they got my letter but I've heard nothing back. I also believe that the buildings electricity meter with

its miles of wiring servicing all the apartments should be kept locked, but it remains unlocked leaving it vulnerable to vandalism. I was anxious to know if the apartments would be ready for the TV switch over coming our way soon, again I've heard nothing.

I'm very interested in the Right to Manage but I'm at a loss to know where to start - any ideas?

William C

- How long have you been a Solitaire Customer;
More than 3 years.
- During the period of time you have been a Solitaire Customer, what have the yearly price increases been;
About £50 increase each year.
- What do you currently pay to Solitaire
£1000 per year.
- How big is the development that you live in.
I live in a 2-bedroom flat. There are 6 flats in my building. There is another block of 6 flats nearby, also run by Solitaire.
- Your personal experiences of Solitaire, feed back to your enquiries, service levels agreements, etc.

Our front door buzzer broke (i.e. we couldn't converse with whoever was at the frontdoor, but we were able to let them in - this was clearly a security risk since it was impossible to tell who you were letting in without going down 2 flights of stairs to check who was there). We told Solitaire about it. Despite monthly reminders (via e-mail, telephone and letter) it took MORE THAN A YEAR for them to send someone out to fix it! Absolutely terrible service. Full of empty promises

Anna M

Thank you for your email. I am keen to assist in your campaign against Solitaire. In response to your specific queries:

- How long have you been a Solitaire Customer
several years;
- During the period of time you have been a Solitaire Customer, what have the yearly price increases been;
this year i would estimate over 15%, if you wish me to provide exact figures i can do this.
- What do you currently pay to Solitaire
£130pm (i have it on good authority that i should be paying significantly less than this)
- How big is the development that you live in.
32 flats
- Your personal experiences of Solitaire, feed back to your enquiries, service levels agreements, etc.-

Solitaire are unquestionably the worst company i ever had the misfortune of dealing with. The service is non-existent; they seem to be based in serviced offices so if you do get through you are lucky to speak to anyone. Very few requests are responded to. They seem to be firefighting and failing miserably. We have had several different property managers in a short space of time, which suggests a high staff turnover and serious problems internally. Our bills are exorbitant. I would not mind paying Â£130pm if my communal areas were impressively-maintained but we pay a massive amount for poor and rapidly deteriorating communal areas.

I partly cannot sell my flat due to the level of charge and now the poor state of the communal areas. It is turning into a living nightmare and gives me sleepless nights. As with all complainants, if you do refuse to pay, you get a reminder within a couple of weeks and then a legal letter - no offer to work out a payment plan or anything.

The only thing they respond to is unpaid bills.

We have witnessed cleaners falsifying logsheets for when they have not been in previous weeks.

We have also witnessed window cleaners arriving and sitting in their van before leaving. There seems to be no monitoring of the contractors and i would not be surprised if Solitaire has an interest in the firms or gets a kickback for business placed with them.

I could go on and on. If you need anything more, please let me know

Katie W

I've lived in my property for 12 months and in that time the cleaner turns up to falsify the cleaning record, she doesn't clean yet takes money from Solitaire for no work.

Solitaire do not respond to complaints, they rip us off. I call and I'm left on hold and then disconnected.

I am embarrassed to invite family and friends over, as the stairwell is filthy, walls are scarred, windows and window sills have never been cleaned. I pay over £1100 for what? Nothing.

My 80 year old grandma visited a few weeks ago and offered to clean the stairs on my behalf as 'it's an unsightly mess' If my grandma can see the state of the stairs and offer to clean then why can't the 'cleaners' who are supposed to clean on a weekly basis.

I want to move out, but the condition of the communal area is what lets my property down. I've even contemplated purchasing paint to touch up the stairwell myself, but why should I when that's what I pay Solitaire for.

Steve H

I have been a Solitaire "customer" since October 2005. I am a lessee in a large 100+ city centre development in the Lace Market, Nottingham.

I have been absolutely horrified by the service provided to us and am currently leading a residents' group to remove Solitaire from managing the development. I have recently submitted an application to the Midlands leasehold valuation tribunal for appointment of manager for this purpose, after having served them with a Section 22 Notice in September 2008.

I would be more than happy to discuss further personally, and provide you with copies of the Notice and our issues if these will be of assistance. Also, if you have any advice I will be very grateful.

I once received a reply from Lee Middleburgh regarding our development but have heard nothing on more recent communication.

Adam S

I moved into my property in July 2006 and was originally advised that the management fee would be in the region of £860 a year. This I felt was sufficient for the work that I was lead to believe I would receive.

In October 2006, I advised Solitaire that a fence was damaged following the postman jumping over it as a short cut to the other properties – it took nearly 5 months to put two nails in this fence. I also requested if a large bush could be planted to block the postman using the fence as a shortcut – to receive the response – if the budget allows for it. It's now 2009 and still no fence and the postman still uses it as a shortcut, which leads to the postman walking mud into the stairwell, which doesn't get cleaned!

From other reports, I'd go and buy a bush and plant it myself, but I understand that if I did that Solitaire would more than likely rip it out as it wasn't an authorised bush!

However, From July 2006 until March 2008 I never had a cleaner visit to clean the stairwells, despite the end of year accounts showing that we had paid over £2200 for communal cleaning. Despite providing photographic evidence to Solitaire, Anthea Moors and Rob Banks who were responsible for my development – accused me of lying and taking the side of the contractor Kelly's Cleaners.

In addition to this, when I highlight issues with the 'Landscape Contractors' Elmtree Garden Services, about the fact they simply cut grass and were gone in 15mins, without picking up rubbish and not bothering to make the development look attractive – Solitaire ignored me.

The eventually responded when I filmed Elmtree Garden Services throwing litter onto council owned land that I overlook, whereby the evidence was undeniable.

For the year ending 31 March 2008 we residents paid £17474.57 for no services at all. My biggest issue is that people that live in 2nd and 3rd floor flats pay £528.36 more than the properties on the ground floor. The only difference is that there is a communal stairwell for the two properties that the stairwell accesses – equating to £1056.72 to basically clean the stairwell, when the cleaners are charging £2200 for the whole development.

No explanation has ever been provided in regards to the 'Groups' that are stipulated on the accounts.

I have acted on behalf of the residents and identified discrepancies with invoice postings and false invoices, which when questioned – Solitaire's recent response was we do not know what that happened and are carrying out an internal audit at the point of providing this information to you.

Solitaire are taking monies under false pretences, they are also surely in breach of their contract for not undertaking work that we pay for.

SallyAnne W

Many thanks for your letters received and yes naturally we will do anything in our power to assist you.

You asked me for some details and I endeavour here to put some words to paper but forgive me for my lack of commercial expertise.

My son purchased his property at Printers Mews, London E3 5NZ 8 years ago... purchased from Berkely Homes..... but the Landlords are Freehold Managers!

He purchased his top floor apartment at vast expense at the time which incorporated an allocated parking place below in the communal car park which have electronic gates.

Property managers of the day were Peveral OM..... despite numerous and I mean numerous requests to both Freehold and Peveral, no allocated parking space was allocated to Jason which had a street value 8 years ago of £18,000... This is confirmed as an allocated parking space to my son's property by the Land registry!... massive management fees are obtained for absolutely nothing, then Peveral leave, and along come Castle Property Management... same situation, same argument, nothing done and massive fees..... today we have Broadlands Property Management and the situation remains the same if not worse.

Eight years later in 2009, Jason has endured having to park his car on Tower Hamlets Roads, subjected to bailiff removal and car parking tickets, the landlord from the Lord Morpeth pub across the road, his wife and daughter (3 cars) use this as a free for all "cocking a hoot" when tackled and their customers are enjoying free parking as well.

When my son has written to Broadlands he was told to basically tackle this problem himself.... by approaching the offenders and pointing out the illegality of the situation. Well one is really going to do this in "knife cultured London"!

By law if you want to sell your property one must inform the incoming buyer's solicitors of any problems and basically today what should be a delightful property to sell with a parking space (valued at £25,000 today) becomes un-sellable!.

The Main electronic gates works for approx, 20 minutes to an hour after repetitive repairs and the main entrance to my sons apartment hasnt worked for months and months hence a gross security risk.

I have had to endure copulating couples (Prostitutes) copulating on the staircase, used condoms, hyperdermic needles, the list is endless. I am petrified coming home late, and to also come home and find Jason's apartment has been burgled.

My research: well we appear to have Solitaire at the top, then Freehold, then Peveral, Castle (unsure of who the directors are) and now Broadlands (unsure of directorship)..... When I looked into Companies House at Broadlands Estate Management I see Linda Margaret WILSON is a director and funnily enough the old Milton Keynes address. LLP Number OC334800 31 Caesars Close, Bancroft, Milton Keynes. To my mind it is a mine field out there with Solitaire being the pinnacle, all hiding behind different names.

When I spoke to Jamie Hulse yesterday who is Property Manager at Broadlands I did say I was aware

of what was going on and that I am collating enough evidence to present to George Gallaway MP/Talksport Presenter who would love to get his teeth into this....(hopefully)

I feel I am on the right path Admin and I apologise for my ramblings, just sitting here and typing what comes to mind and awaiting your comments.

Very best wishes and a wonderful site, you are to be commended.

Marie R

Our first service charge bill for the year 2004-2005 was £630.

Since then we have watched it increase to £800.00 in 2005-2006. From 2006-2007 to £953.00 From 2007-2008 to £1085.00. From 2008-2009 to £1448.00. To rub salt into the wound there has always been a balancing service charge on top which we had to pay. All the above have been estimated bills hence the balancing charge.

Since we moved in our service charge has since double. We have asked Solitaire on several occasions to send us the end of year accounts so we can compare the actual cost to the estimated cost but they kept stalling and making excuses. At one point they said they lost the accounts and that it will take a while to recover.

Personally I believe they are cooking the books and that they are in cahoots with the maintenance company gateway. Our tenancy association representatives have visited Solitaire to look at their accounts and what they saw was incompetence on the part of the accountant. There invoices which has been entered twice by the same companies for repairs.

The electric and water bill is very high. The insurances is also very high. We have lived here for 5 years and the carpet in the hall to our flat has not been shampooed. They seem to have a knack for not replying to the resident's complaints.

They only respond when their golden goose is frightened. At present our resident association are in the process of taking them to the tribunal to replace them with the management company of our choice.

There are 400 flats in our development. We lived in the annex part of the main building and we have to pay huge sums of money when we do not have a lift or use of telephone or lobby. In our sections there are six flats and not much traffic so therefore we do not see why we have to pay large sums of money

Anonymous

We have Pembertons which is part of the same group and we have the same issues as you. Accounts/lack of management etc..The overall experience is bad. There is no good news to report. Our landlord is Bradmoss Ltd who operate through Estates & Management who also have given us the run around.

Please ensure my name is not used, as I said Pembertons have worn me to the ground and make me not want to live in my home!

Good luck with your campaign.

KevinC

Bills have been circa £650 to £750 in 2005-2007. The estimate for this year is £850 but I expect a further balancing charge. Last year was about £850 if you include the balancing charge. Maybe a 12 percent hike.

Since Estates & Management began to take over the ground rent it went up from £40 to £150 p.a. Also E&M have this thing about putting "Urgent and Date of reminder" on the first bill they send which gives the appearance the resident is already behind with the payment, along with a threat that interest may be charged on late payment and a £25 admin charge applied to the account.

I live on an estate of 100 or so flats in 6 blocks, there is a pro rata charge per property size, mine is 5.03% 25% of the costs are management fees. For each block that is about 4 to 5 K a year. Another 30% is buildings insurance -about 6K, the rest is made up of cleaning, bin hire, sweeping , gardening, electrical, general maintenance and repairs and reserves ,plus audit fees and bank charges.

That is just for one block so times this by 6 and you get the picture!

I get the impression that Solitaire does the bare minimum to earn their management fees.

Litter is strewn around the entrances to the blocks, there is a burned out bin store in one of the blocks. The communal carpet has been in the block for 20 years and has some unpleasant looking stains. I know because I moved in here in 1989. The communal garden is quite well maintained, but the cleaning is minimal in the common areas with cobwebs on the ceilings and litter on the stairs.

I notice the accounts that are sent with the invoices are signed Webster's and not by any person. I am a bit suspicious about that, particularly as I read a post somewhere that suggested they were in-house accountants and also that ex-directors of Solitaire are on the board of ARMA, the self regulatory association of Management Agents.

The overall impression I get is that they are all in it together. Solitaire are connected up via a string of offshoots that are lining their pockets with our cash for service charges which are never broken down accurately. The services do not appear to be quality controlled and probably subject to false accounting.

Of course all this needs to be proven but I have had my doubts about the integrity of this company for some time.

Piers W

With regard to your enquiry I would be more than happy to assist you in any endeavours to get Solitaire Property Management to actually do any of the work they bill me for.

The answers to your questions are as follows:

- i.) I have been a Solitaire customer since June 2004, the site being completed on that date.
- ii.) The service charge can be broken down as the following: (note this is just service charge, not ground rent etc)

09/04 - £205.61

03/05 - £312.35

09/05 - £312.36 + £86.81 Reserves
03/06 - £312.35 + £86.80 Reserves
09/06 - £312.35
03/07 - £312.34
09/07 - £343.68 + £90.72 Reserves
03/08 - £343.67 + £90.72 Reserves
09/08 - £420.23 + £90.72 Reserves
09/08 - £153.93 Balancing Charge
11/08 - £134.48 Supplementary Charge
03/09 - £420.23 + £90.72 Reserves

iii.) The current service charge plus reserves payment annually is
£840.46 + £181.44 Reserves - A total of £1021.90

iv.) The development consists of 53 flats

v.) Solitaire is the most expensive management company in this area.
There are also the ones who appear to do the least work. Everything is a nightmare with them, from contact to site visits to cleaning to repairs. On average I spend 4 hours a month on the phone to them trying to get them to repair things that are broken. At present I am trying to get them to answer why they don't clean the windows in the communal area, haven't done for four years, but continually charge for them. Also had problems regarding leaks

Conclusion

We the unfortunate 'customers' of Solitaire are seeking help, advice, assistance and justice for the treatment that we have received from Solitaire Property Management have provided over the years.

We are aiming to expose the flaws of Solitaire Property Management and associated companies where possible and endeavour to resolve all of the above issues as well as the many other complaints received on TheTruthAboutSolitaire website – in addition we look to replace Solitaire Property Management as our Managing Agent.

The problems outlined above, will result in a detrimental effect on the value of our properties when residents look to sell their properties, as this information will have to be disclosed within 'Home Information Packs' for buyers.

The government need to implement a regulatory body to control Managing Agents, as without these rules and regulations – Managing Agents can continue to abuse their powers, leaving the customer / resident to suffer, without anywhere to go.

At the time of completing this report, the official Solitaire Petition had 237 signatures from residents that are aware of the website and petition, what would this figure be if the results of our investigation were made public?

I can be contacted via e-mail only at this moment in time at: admin@thetruthaboutsolitaire.co.uk