Self-management with or without a managing agent

Self-management is a spectrum, not a switch. Compare doing it all yourselves, keeping an agent for part of the work, and full management.

Self-management does not have to mean doing everything yourselves. Leaseholder-led buildings choose a mix of in-house work and paid help, and the right mix depends on the time, skills and appetite of the directors.

The four common models

1. **Fully self-managed.** Directors handle everything: contractors, accounts, filings, meetings and enquiries. This costs the least in fees and the most in time.
2. **Self-managed with professional back-office support.** Directors run the building and the contractors. An accountant or company secretary deals with the books, the year-end accounts and the Companies House filings.
3. **Agent for part of the service.** An agent is kept for selected tasks, such as collecting service charge, arranging insurance or handling major works, while the directors take decisions and manage the rest.
4. **Full management.** An agent or management service runs the day-to-day work, and the directors keep every significant decision.

What each asks of directors

MODEL	DIRECTORS' TIME	COST	CONTROL
Fully self-managed	High	Lowest fees	Highest
With back-office support	Medium	Moderate	High
Agent for part of the service	Lower	Moderate	High on decisions
Full management	Lowest	Highest fees	Decisions only

What to think about

- **Who will do the work?** Most boards depend on two or three engaged people. If they leave, the building must still run.
- **Which tasks do you dislike or lack skills for?** Accounts, filings and statutory notices are common candidates for paid help.
- **How much risk is acceptable?** Safety, insurance and money handling are not areas to improvise.
- **How often will you review it?** A model that suits year one may not suit year five.

Whichever you choose

- Keep your own records: lease, insurance, safety certificates, accounts and minutes.
- Agree in writing who is responsible for what.
- Set a budget for paid help, and review it each year.
- Use a compliance calendar so nothing depends on memory.

> Start where you are. Many buildings begin with back-office support and take on more once the directors are confident. It is much easier to add work than to hand a failing system back to someone else.

Next steps

1. List every task the building needs done in a year.
2. Mark which ones the directors will take on.
3. Ask for quotes for the rest.
4. Review the choice after the first year.

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