Tenants Link

North Warwickshire Borough Council Tenants' Newsletter

North Warwickshire Borough Council

Your Tenancy, Your Home

You may have heard about the proposals that Government is introducing for tenants of social housing. We thought it would be useful to keep you informed as part of our newsletter.

The proposals are part of the Localism Bill. The Bill covers many ar

Latest News from the Borough Wide Tenants Forum

Members of the Borough Wide Tenants Forum would like to wish everyone a happy and prosperous New Year

2010 has been a very busy year for the Borough Wide Tenants Forum members who have been involved in the following changes/recommendations;

- **Members were involved in the Tenants Annual Report, which was sent out to all tenants of North Warwickshire Borough Council back in October.**
- **Helping to develop the Service Standards, as regulated by the Tenants Services Authority.**
- **Members were involved in the selection process of appointing a consultant for tenant home contents insurance.**
- **During the beginning of 2011 members will be reviewing the Tenant Partnership Agreement.**

This year will be even busier with all the changes that are taking place within social housing. Should you wish to become involved in helping to shape your housing service, please contact your Tenant Participation Officer on 01827 719402 or email tracy.hodgkins@northwarks.gov.uk

The Garden Buddy Scheme

Before

By Martin Horner, Project Manager from the NW Volunteer Centre and Caroline Morris, Senior Housing Officer NWBC

The garden buddy scheme has been running for just over 9 months. The scheme is being run by the North Warwickshire Volunteer Centre, with funds from North Warwickshire Borough Council Housing Division, The Big Lottery Awards for All and Garfield Weston Trust. The idea of the scheme is for a group of volunteers to go out and look after gardens for elderly, disabled and long term sick tenants. At the same time volunteers will chat with the resident and in some cases encourage them to get into the garden, to either just sit and enjoy or even do some garden ing themselves.

This project is proving to be very successful; the original target and project requirement was to look after 10 gardens during the growing session. The project has actually done 20 gardens, with 8 of them being done on a regular basis. The work being undertaken in the gardens varies, from cutting back over grown hedges, to clearing gardens full of brambles and long grass. We have planted flowers in some gardens to give colour and enjoyment, we have also grown vegetables in two of the gardens.

After

The Volunteers have really enjoyed the project, with a team of at least 5 volunteers being involved on a weekly basis, this has amounted to approx 1000 hours of volunteer time, which is brilliant.

All of the residents have expressed their gratitude and have said it is great not having to worry about overgrown gardens; they now have gardens they can look at and enjoy. Work is currently underway to secure funding so this project can be continued next year. For further information please contact Martin Horner on 01827 717073 or by emailing martin.horner@vcnw.org.uk or Caroline Morris on 01827 719351 or email carolinemorris@northwarks.gov.uk

Tenants Hero

Meet Anthony Orme from Atherstone "Tenants Hero" for this edition of Tenants Link. Martin Horner of the Volunteer Centre has nominated Anthony.

Martin said; "the one person that has been involved from the beginning is Anthony Orme, a tenant from Atherstone. He has been out every week helping to maintain gardens for elderly and disabled tenants around the borough. This is really impressive for a guy who hates gardening with a passion, but he still got involved in digging, pruning, raking and generally helping sort out some very overgrown gardens.
The project has done 24 gardens and Anthony has been involved working on most of them. He has also helped new members of the team settle in; he always has something to say on any subject" Well done Anthony and a big thank you from everyone who benefits from your hard work.

Anthony has earned £20.00 in high street vouchers.

If you know anyone that deserves to be nominated for "Tenants Hero" contact Tracy hodgkins Tel: 01827 719402 or email tracyhodgkins@northwarks.gov.uk

Tenants' Celebrate

Following a three week closure, due to the redecorating of Monument View Communal Centre in Polesworth, a small group of residents celebrated it's reopening. Mrs Doris Walton aged 87 cut the ribbon and the cake to mark the opening. The group will be holding regular coffee afternoons, bingo evenings, armchair aerobics, Wii sessions and Neighbourhood Watch meetings.

Meetings will also take place following a newly formed Community Panel Group, this group will be meeting to discuss ways of improving the local area with the support of the Housing Division at NWBC. Meetings will be held bi-monthly on the last Wednesday of the month, with the first meeting on Wednesday 26th January at 6:30pm. Local residents are urged to attend.

For further details please contact Ethel Atkins on 01827 331494, Community Panel Member for Polesworth.

Competition Time

Congratulations to the winner of the competition in the last edition, Mrs Sandra Holt from Mancetter

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barometer	sleet	humidity	warm
storm	forecast	celsius	ice
hurricane	freezing	cyclone	thunder
lightning	sunny	degrees	tornado
blizzard	windy	drizzle	typhoon
cold	hail	heat	rainbow
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temperature			

Weather Wordsearch Plus · WIN £25 in Vouchers

WIN £25 in High Street Vouchers

Complete our Weather Word search Plus for a chance to Win.

First find all the weather words in the puzzle.

Then, starting top left and working your way across each line, write down all the letters that have not been used. The letters will spell out a secret message.

Complete the attached entry form and return it to: Tracy Hodgkins,

The Council House, South Street, Atherstone, Warks, CV9 1DE.

Name: .....

Address: .....

.....

Tel: .....

The Secret Message is:

.....

.....

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All correct entries will be placed into a Prize draw. Closing date is Friday 4th March 2011

Running a business from home

Running a business from home is becoming increasingly common, it is estimated that currently one in four people now carry out some kind of work from home.

For many tenants, such as single-parent families, people with a disability or those in high cost areas – where the cost of letting work premises is prohibitive – having the opportunity to run a business from home can make a significant difference to their employment prospects. The new coalition government has expressed a strong commitment to supporting tenants to set up and run a business from home.

North Warwickshire Council is also committed to supporting tenants to set up and run a business from home. If you wish to run a business from your home, you must first apply in writing to us for permission. We will not withhold our permission unreasonably but we will consider factors such as the amount of noise that may be created, any nuisance that may be caused to those in the locality and whether any damage to the property could occur. Permission may be withdrawn should the operation of the business cause a nuisance or annoyance to other people in the locality or leads to any other breach of the Tenancy Agreement.

It's definitely worth considering the benefits. There are many types of business that you could consider running from home if you were to use it as an office for an internet or phone based business.

However, you need to ensure that you obtain and comply with all necessary legal and regulatory requirements.

UChoose homes you choose!

Uchoose Prize Draw Winner

Angela Coates Assistant Director for Housing presents prize draw winner Jane Moreton with her high street shopping vouchers for £50.00.

Following the implementation of UChoose choice based lettings system last year; we sent everyone on the register a survey asking them about their experience. We had over

168 replies, this is what they said:

- 60% found our staff helpful
- 65% were satisfied with their experience of UChoose
- 97% said they would recommend the service to a friend

Some people said they found it difficult to apply so we are working to improve this. Anyone who is experiencing difficulties should contact The Housing Options & Advice Team who will explain how they can help. Thanks to everyone who completed the survey, the feedback will be used to make further improvements to the service.

All returned surveys were entered into a prize draw and the lucky winner was Jane Moreton. Angela Coates, Assistant Director for Housing asked Jane how she found the system to use, Jane said "it's great and really easy to use, just a click of a button".

Home Energy Advice

Act on Energy

Is an independent organisation based in Warwickshire, dedicated to educating the public in the problems associated with climate change and other energy Issues.

They can provide householders with realistic solutions to reduce energy use. If you would like to save money on your fuel bills, call the advice line on **0800 988 2881** or visit **www.actonenergy.org.uk**.

Home Energy Efficiency

For energy saving ideas, to see if you are eligible for grants and offers or to ask for a free Energy Saving Trust Home Energy Check, visit the Energy Saving Trust website www.energysavingtrust.org.uk or call free phone 0800 512 012.

Extra Help for Older People

Housing benefit and council tax rules have changed since November 2009. The capital limit for pension credit and pension age has increased from £6,000 to £10,000 this means you could get more help towards your rent and council tax.

Pension Credits

If you are aged 60 or over you may be entitled to pension credit. It is made up of two elements which are Guarantee credit and saving credit. This guarantees a minimum income for people aged 60 or over by topping up your weekly income to

- £130.00 per week if you are single
- £198.45 if you have a partner

These amounts may be more if you are severely disabled. You can call the pension service about pension credits on free phone **0800 99 1234.**

Don't delay – make that claim and don't miss out.

For further information, or if you would like to speak to someone about this change, then please contact us. You can contact us in the following ways;

Visit or write to us at North Warwickshire Borough Council The council House, South street, Atherstone CV9 1DE Direct telephone line **01827 175341** or visit the branching out bus (BOB).

Help with your Gas & Electricity Bills

If you are struggling to pay or keep up with your payments for your gas and electricity bills, then help is at hand. Grants could be available from a number of charitable trusts set up by the energy companies. Have a look at the following websites for British Gas customers visit **www.energytrust.org.uk**.

For EDF Energy customers visit **www.edfenergytrust.org.uk** or call **01733 421060** for an application form.

Family Friendly Facts

If you have a child, or children living with you, and you receive Child Benefit for them, then you may be entitled to Housing and Council Tax Benefit. This will help towards your rent and or Council Tax payments.

A change to the Housing and Council tax Benefit rules means that we will not take into account any of the money you receive for Child Benefit, regardless of how many children you have! **Don't delay – make that claim and don't miss out.**

For further information, or if you would like to speak to someone about this change, then please contact us. For details on Housing and Council Tax Benefits please call **01827 715341**.

Water Bills Severn Trent Water

Severn Trent are offering a great of support and services to customers who may be struggling to pay their water bill. At the first sign of difficulties call **0845 604 3772**.

Severn Trent can help you with the following options: Affordable payment plans

- pay weekly fortnightly by payment card
- Water direct
- having a small deduction paid directly from your benefit
- Just pay for the water you use by having a water meter fitted free of charge

To discuss any of these options call Severn Trent water on **0845 604 3772**.

"Get Switched on"

Times are hard - but your rent must come first!

DIRECT DEBIT – THE EASIEST WAY TO PAY

- Relax! You can pay later with Direct Debit without being troubled with reminders
- You stay in control and you decide when the Direct Debit payment is going going gone
- By saving time in payment queues and not wasting cheques or postage

We are here to help

Paying your rent, what you need to know

If you contact us we may be able to provide advice and help you solve your problem. Speak with your Tenancy Services Officer. We are here to help!

Elizabeth Bell-Paton – 01827 719 407
Maggie Jaggs – 01827 719 306
Tony Wheeler – 01827 719 205
Maureen Abbott – 01827 719 312
or E-mail: housingservices@northwarks.gov.uk

Please contact us as soon as you realise you have, or might have, problems paying your rent. Please do not feel embarrassed to talk to us about your difficulties; discussions will be held in the strictest of confidence. When you contact us we will: -

- Talk through your circumstances to assess how best we can help you.
- Reach an agreement with you to help start to reduce your rent arrears at an amount you can afford.
- Give general advice on benefit entitlements and managing any other debts you may have.
- Liaise with the Housing Benefit Team on your behalf.
- Direct you to local advice agencies that can offer independent advice and support specific to your needs

Think rent first... because when it comes down to it, your home is what really matters

For further information on how to pay your rent, contact your Tenancy Services Officer, or email; customerservices@northwarks.gov.uk or check the payment options on the council website; www.northwarks.gov.uk/site/scripts/contact.php

Housing Matters

Condensation

What is Condensation?

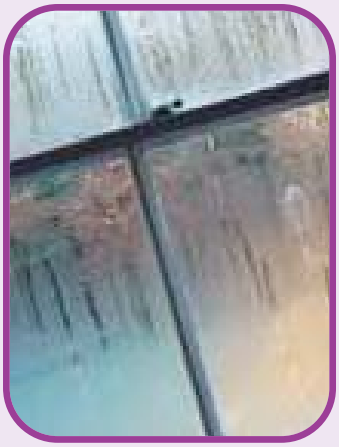
Condensation starts as moisture in the air, usually produced by cooking, washing, or drying clothes indoors on radiators. When it hits cool surfaces such as walls, mirrors, wall tiles and windows it condenses and forms water droplets. The moist air rises when it is warm and often ends up on ceilings and in upstairs rooms and then it forms mould.

Why is it a problem

Left untreated, condensation can result in mould growth on walls, ceilings, furniture, furnishings, and clothing in cupboards and drawers. It can also affect wall plaster and cause woodwork to rot.

Prevention

Producing less moisture in your home will help prevent and reduce the effects of condensation and dampness. To control condensation, please follow these simple steps;



- Keep kitchen and bathroom doors closed when in use to stop steam reaching cold surfaces in other rooms.
- Wipe down surfaces where moisture settles to stop mould growing.
- Keep rooms ventilated by opening windows and using extractor fans to allow steam to escape.
- If you have UPVC windows fitted with an air vent, leave in the open position when there is a likelihood of condensation forming.
- Do not obstruct or seal air vents.
- Do not draught proof rooms where condensation or dampness is present.
- Allow air to circulate around the home by moving furniture away from cold external walls.
- Remove any visible mould by using a fungicidal wash to help prevent further growth (e.g. Detox mould and mildew remover).
- Try to keep your home at an even temperature at all times so walls and surfaces become warmer.

Produce less moisture

- Produce less moisture
- Cover pots and pans when cooking.
- Dry clothes outside instead of on radiators.
- If you use a clothes dryer, make sure it is ventilated to the outside of your home.
- When filling a bath, fill with cold water first, then add hot water.

Keep your Home warm

A constant warm temperature in the home will keep condensation to a minimum. To do this a few steps can be taken to insulate your home, making it warmer, reducing condensation and cutting your fuel bills.

Should you require further information telephone the Repairs Department on 01827 719299

WANTED - Tenant Representatives

- Do you want a say in the future of the Housing Service?
- Do you want to be listened to?
- Do you want to help us improve services to tenants?
- Do you have an opinion?

If you have answered yes to any of the above questions we would like to hear from you.

Please call Tracy Hodgkins - Tenant Participation Officer for further details 01827 719402 or email: tracyhodgkins@northwarks.gov.uk

Do you have a question for our Housing Team? If you do please contact Tracy Hodgkins on 01827 719402 with your enquiry and we will print the answer in the next copy of "Tenants Link"

Dates for your Diary

Community Panel Meetings

Hartshill (Drayton Court Communal Room)

Drayton Court is currently undergoing refurbishment - for meeting details please contact Tracy Hodgkins 01827 719402

Ansley Common (St Johns Community Room)

Monday 17th January 2011 at 10:30am
Monday 21st February 2011 at 10:30am
Monday 21st March 2011 at 10:30am
Monday 18th April 2011 at 10:30am

Old Arley (Rowland Court Communal Room)

Tuesday 8th February 2011 at 6:30pm
Tuesday 12th April 2011 at 2:30pm
Tuesday 12th July 2011 at 6:30pm

Fillongley (Eastlang Road Communal Room)

For meeting details please contact Tracy Hodgkins 01827 719402

Kingsbury (Jubilee Court Communal Room)

Tuesday 18th January 2011 at 10:00am
Tuesday 22nd March 2011 at 10:00am
Tuesday 24th May 2011 at 10:00am

Polesworth (Monument View Community Room)

Wednesday 26th January 2011 at 6:30pm
Wednesday 30th March 2011 at 6:30pm
Wednesday 25th May 2011 at 6:30pm

Meetings are Open to all Tenants and Leaseholders of NWBC

Bringing Communities Together

Borough Wide Tenants Forum

All Meetings start at 6pm at the Council Offices

Tuesday 18th January 2011
Tuesday 15th February 2011
Tuesday 15th March 2011
Tuesday 19th April 2011
Tuesday 17th May 2011
Tuesday 24th May 2011 (AGM)
Tuesday 21st June 2011
Tuesday 19th July 2011

Minutes from previous meetings can be viewed on the Council website

Tenants Meetings

As part of our commitment to tenant involvement we will be re-introducing Tenant Meetings throughout the Borough. These meetings will be open to all tenants and leaseholders of NWBC. At these meetings you can discuss issues that affect your community and talk to staff and local representatives who will listen and take appropriate action.

These meetings will also be an informal mechanism for tenants and leaseholders to influence the housing service.

Meetings will begin in March and we will notify you of dates and venues before hand. For further information contact Tracy Hodgkins 01827 719402.

DID YOU KNOW?

We currently have 170 tenants on "Homeswapper"

The UK's largest community of social housing tenants looking to swap home; www.HomeSwapper.co.uk

All of our Documents can be made available in other languages and formats: please contact Tracy Hodgkins on 01827 719402 or email tracyhodgkins@northwarks.gov.uk