

Focusing on Tenant Participation

Tenant Participation

North Warwickshire is committed to providing opportunities for tenants to have an equal opportunity to influence decisions on all matters concerning the management of their homes.

We recognise that meaningful tenant participation can achieve quality improvements within the housing service. Our Tenant Participation Officer is on hand to answer any questions you may have regarding tenant involvement, or if you have any suggestions as to how we can improve the way we involve our tenants.

Tenant Participation Officer

Who are you and what is your Role?

I am Tracy Hodgkins, Tenant Participation Officer for North Warwickshire Borough Council. The main part of my role is making sure that we have in place a variety of ways for tenants to know more about how we work, to give their views, and to be consulted on issues that are important to them.



If you don't like the service you receive in a shop, you can go to another one. It's not so simple if you are unhappy with the service or product your landlord provides. If you owned a shop but people were going to the shop across the road, you would need to find out why and do something about it. So, we need to find ways for our customer's views to be heard and considered so we are delivering an excellent product and service that tenants would choose.

We want to actively encourage tenants to get involved. If you have any ideas on how we can improve our services, please contact me on 01827 719402 or email tracyhodgkins@northwarks.gov.uk

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Tenants Forum

I am Steve Povey, Chairman of the Borough Wide Tenants' Forum, I have been actively involved for the past 10 years.

This last year has been a very busy one for all members of the forum. I will just touch on some areas that Forum Members have been involved with this past year.



The group have attended workshops on the following items: Tenant Services Authority (TSA) the new regulator for Social Housing, UChoose for choice based lettings, collections, tenant participation, responsive repairs and planned maintenance, to name but a few. Forum members were also involved

in compiling a progress report on the housing response repairs service, including the monitoring of the Kitchen and Bathroom replacement programme.

This looked at the improvements that were being made, what worked well and what did not work quite so well. We also looked at where future improvements could be made.

Tenant participation is about giving choices and encouraging tenants to have a say in how their homes are managed. So why not come along to one of our meetings, you never know, you may even enjoy yourself!

For further details of how you can become involved contact Tracy Hodgkins on 01827 719402 or email tracyhodgkins@northwarks.gov.uk. Details can also be found on the councils website; www.northwarks.gov.uk/tp

Garden Buddying Scheme

Housing staff have linked up with volunteers to improve garden plots of our older and more vulnerable tenants.

An untended garden may often be an indication that the tenant is not coping in other areas of their lives.

The idea is to not only to give the garden a new lease

of life but also to encourage some exercise in the open air as well as the benefits of perhaps having home grown flowers, fruit and veg. The Garden Buddying Scheme will also offer potentially isolated tenants some welcome company as they work with the volunteer to revitalise their garden.

The service is run by the Volunteer Centre North Warwickshire, who are urgently looking for volunteers who are willing to give their help. For further details, please contact Martin Horner on 01827 717073 or email martin.horner@wcnw.org.uk



Dig In?

Meanwhile, over at Alexandra Court in Atherstone, yet another gardening project is putting down roots.

Thanks to 'Narrowing the Gap' funding. Housing and Community Development are working with the Volunteer Centre to develop raised beds for tenants to use. The take up from residents has been overwhelming and well supported.

For further details please contact either Jess, Zoe or Jo on 01827 719220.



Communal Room Review

We are currently reviewing the use of our communal rooms across the Borough.

As part of this, it is important that we get the opinions and views of all those tenants who currently use the rooms.

To date we have carried out 9 consultation meetings in the various communal rooms regarding how the rooms are currently used and how they may be used in the future.

Some meetings have been attended better than others but we have received some very useful feedback which we will take into account when we make decisions about the future use of the rooms.

Thank you to all those people who have attended the consultation meetings we will contact you summarising the feedback and notify you of any proposed changes to the service. For further information please contact Caroline Morris, Senior Housing Management Officer on 01827 719351.



Raising the Standards of Service for Tenants

Developing our Service Standards:

The Tenant Services Authority was established in December 2008 and from April this year is responsible for the regulation of all Social Landlords including Local Authorities.

Their objectives are to:

- Improve standards of service delivery for tenants
- Support decent homes and neighbourhoods
- Promote effective tenant involvement and empowerment
- Ensure providers are well run and deliver value for money
- Promote and protect public and private investment
- Encourage and support a supply of well managed social housing

Last year as part of the national conversation, we met with many of our tenants to consult with them about the TSA's proposed national framework and service standards. They published the final framework in November which included the six standards that social housing providers will be required to meet.

The Six Standards are:

- Tenant involvement and empowerment (Customer Service and Choice, Involvement and empowerment, Responding to complaints)
- Home (Quality of Accommodation, Repairs and Maintenance)
- Tenancy (Allocations, Rents & Tenure)
- Neighbourhood and Community (Neighbourhood Management, Local Area Co-operation, Anti-social behaviour)
- Value for Money Governance & Financial Viability (this does not apply to Local Authorities)
- Governance & Financial Viability (this does not apply to Local Authorities)

For further information about the national standards and the TSA you can go on line at www.tenantservicesauthority.org

What happens next?

The Housing Division has already talked to tenants about the six standards during the conversations last year.

We want to review all our service standards which make clear the level of service tenants can expect to receive from the Housing Division.

In October 2010 we will report how we are performing against these standards. By April 2011 we will have completed our review of the service standards after consulting with our tenants.

To start, we really want to hear what you think of our draft service standards and about what's important to you locally. You can do this by contacting Helen Hughes Principal Housing Management Officer 01827 719242 or on line www.northwarks.gov.uk/tp where you can get more information about the standards and let us have your comments.

Also come along to our Summer Road shows where officers and members of the Borough Wide Tenants Forum will be available to talk to give more information about our service.

Everyone that comes along will have the opportunity of being entered into a prize draw for prizes of £25 and £50 shopping vouchers. We will be holding competitions and fun activities for the children and a chance for them to win some goodies too. It would be really great to see you!

Road Show Dates & Venues all Aboard Bob the Bus

- Friday 16th July 10.00 am - Digby Road, Coleshill
- Saturday 14th August 10.00am - Alexandra Court, Atherstone
- Friday 20th August 10.00 am - The Communal Room, George Road, Water Orton.
- Friday 27th August 10.00 am – Coronation Avenue, Polesworth



Where's Bob?

Taking services to the streets of rural North Warwickshire.

“Tenants Hero”



Meet Andrew Tozer from Arley, Tenants Hero for this edition of Tenants Link. Julie Richardson who is the Neighbourhood Warden for the area nominated Andrew.

Julie said ‘Andrew deserves to be recognised for all the hard work he does for the community, he mows the grass in the church yard, collects litter from around the estate and generally helps out in lots of ways around the village’. “He’s an absolute Star”. Well done Andrew and a big thank you from everyone who benefits from your hard work. Andrew has earned himself a “Hero’s reward” of £20.00 in vouchers.

If you know anyone that deserves to be nominated for “Tenants Hero” please contact Tracy Hodgkins on 01827 719402 or email tracyhodgkins@northwarks.co.uk

Handyperson Service Handyfix.it



The Age Concern Warwickshire Handyperson Service called Handyfix.it operates throughout all 5 District & Borough Council areas of Warwickshire. The service is for people who are aged 50 and over or those who have learning, physical or sensory disability of any age.

The Handyfix.it service provides minor repairs to domestic properties within the County. The works are carried out by a team of handypeople, who are employed directly by Age Concern Warwickshire and who have all been vetted through the Criminal Records Bureau for their suitability for working with older people.

Examples of work which can be undertaken are:

Fixing a dripping tap

Easing doors

Fitting Keysafes and grab rails

Moving furniture

Fixing the fence or even taking down the curtains

The service is funded by Warwickshire County Council, supported by Borough & District Councils. If you are in receipt of benefits you may qualify for a reduced hourly rate.

**Please call 01926 458131
for more information.**



Housing Matters



Cleaning Service Survey

We would like to thank all the residents of our flats who completed the communal cleaning questionnaire. We had an excellent response. With many residents giving us additional information on how they felt the service could be improved.

- 56% of residents felt that the standard of cleaning was good
- 29% felt it was a reasonable standard
- 15% felt that it was below their expectations
- 88% felt that a weekly clean was sufficient
- 78% felt the service was value for money
- 51% felt that they would be willing to pay more for an enhanced service

Also 50 residents expressed an interest in providing more feedback to us as part of a focus group which we will be looking to set up over the coming months.

This is valuable information, which will help us to improve our service, and we will be acting on the individual comments provided by residents.



Property Survey (not all properties will be Surveyed)

Our Surveyors will be undertaking stock condition surveys throughout this year. The surveys will take up to an hour and the surveyor will be assessing the condition of the roofs walls windows doors kitchens and bathrooms. This information will help us in developing our future maintenance and improvement programmes. Our own staff will undertake this survey we will write to you to advise when we will be calling and the surveyors will carry Identification cards. We will also be undertaking a further programme of surveys later in the year to update our asbestos risk register. We will be appointing a specialist contractor to undertake these surveys and we will again notify residents to make appointments for the surveys to be undertaken.

Decent Home Programme completed early

Lovell Partnership Ltd have completed their programme of decent homes works a year ahead of time. A three year contract was established in April 2008 and work commenced the following July since then we have completed the following works

- 554 kitchen and bathroom refurbishments, converting 145 of these bathrooms into level access shower rooms
- Undertaken the whole house refurbishments to 36 properties in Piccadilly village
- Fitted external wall insulation to 100 properties
- Provided gas central heating to 297 homes
- Installed new composite doors to 1505 and new UPVC windows to 545 properties
- Fitted door entry systems and new communal entrance doors to 9 blocks of flats, reroofed 14 blocks of flats

Accelerating the programme has resulted in reduced contract management costs and this was achieved by working in close partnership with Lovell and their delivery teams.

How you can Help

If you are interested in finding out more about how you can get involved in our service you can contact us by: Telephoning 01827 719402 or email: tracyhodgkins@northwarks.gov.uk

Service Review Groups



Housing Management

Although our rent performance is good, we always want to do better. In September last year we commenced a review of how we manage our rent income, including things such as our approach to rent arrears, the rent arrears letters and rent statements. For further information on how you can become involved contact Tracy Hodgkins on 01827 719402

Focus Groups

A focus group normally brings together a few people to discuss specific issues, such as repairs or consultation. It aims to gather views about a particular subject that we can use alongside opinions we get from other methods. Focus group meetings are normally one-offs or held over a short period of time.



WANTED Tenant Mystery Shoppers

No previous experience is required as training will be given

Mystery Shoppers need to be a North Warwickshire BC tenant and will be expected to attend a training session to provide the skills required to carry "shops". Once you have completed your "shop" you will feedback your results. Reimbursement for these services will be made in high street shopping vouchers.



Completing Surveys and Questionnaires

We carry out a range of surveys, either by post, phone or online to find out the views of our tenants on various issues, for example what did they think about their experience of UChoose.

This information is used to help us check satisfaction with our services and make improvements to our service delivery in the future.



Repairs and Maintenance

A new group open to all tenants who have expressed an interest in working with the Council in improving the repairs and maintenance service. If you wish to express an interest in joining this group, please contact Tracy Hodgkins 01827 719402 or email tracyhodgkins@northwarks.gov.uk

“Fill in the Missing Words” for a chance to Win £25 in Shopping Vouchers

All of the missing words can be found in this edition of “Tenants Link”

1. Tenant Authority
2. Andrew Tenants Hero
3. Who operates the Handyperson Service
4. Service Groups
5. There are Service Standards
6. Wanted Shoppers
7. We currently have Tenants on Swopper
8. Decent home Programme was completed early
9. Garden Scheme
10. Borough Tenants
11. Communal Review
12. The Regulator for
13. Property surveys will take approximately to complete
14. There were new composite doors fitted
15. We carry out a range of either by post, phone or email.

Name

Address

.....

Telephone

Please return your completed entry by Friday 20th August to Tracy Hodgkins,
The Council House, Atherstone, CV9 1DE

Points of View

What

Do you think?

Following the redesign and renaming of your Tenants Newsletter we are asking for your comments/remarks.

Should you have any questions regarding any articles featured or any suggestions for future editions, please contact me by telephoning 01827 719402 or by emailing tracyhodgkins@northwarks.gov.uk

Neighbourhood Walks



Neighbourhood Walks are carried out monthly in the main towns and villages, except for some of the very small villages or areas where there is little or no council accommodation, when the walks will be less frequent.

Tenants are encouraged to join the walks and report and discuss any issues they may be concerned about in the area. The Neighbourhood Warden will be able to offer advice and report issues raised to the relevant team for action.

The schedule is available in all the communal rooms and via the website www.northwarks.gov.uk. The walks cover areas where there are Council Properties and are currently well attended by the Police and some Councillors. For further information please contact Debbie Fitter, Neighbourhood Services Officer on 07970248236 or email: deborahfitter@northwarks.gov.uk

Community Panel Meetings

Old Arley (Rowland Court Communal Room)

Tuesday 13th July 2010 starting at 6:30pm

No meeting in August

Tuesday 14th September 2010 starting at 6:30pm

Hartshill (Drayton Court Communal Room)

Monday 28th June 2010 starting at 10:30am (AGM)

Tuesday 6th July 2010 starting at 10:30am

No meeting in August

Ansley Common (St Johns Community Room)

Monday 12th July 2010 starting at 10:30am

Monday 9th August 2010 starting at 10:30am

Monday 13th September 2010 starting at 10:30am

Fillongley (Eastlang Road Communal Room)

Monday 26th July 2010 starting at 6:00am (AGM)

Monday 27th September 2010 starting at 2:00pm

Kingsbury (Jubilee Court Community Room)

Tuesday 6th July 2010 starting at 10:00am (AGM)

No meeting in August

Tuesday 14th September 2010 starting at 7:00pm

**Community Panel Membership is open to all
Tenants and Leaseholders living within the area**



Bringing Communities Together

Borough Wide Tenants Forum

Tuesday 22nd June

Tuesday 20th July

Tuesday 17th August

Tuesday 21st September

Tuesday 19th October

Tuesday 16th November

Tuesday 14th December

**All Meetings start at 6pm at the
Council Offices**

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