

## North Warwickshire Borough Council Tenants' Newsletter

### Maintenance News



Our aim is to provide services which ensure your home is not in disrepair, and to deliver improvement programmes. Our Reactive Repairs and Planned Investment Teams provide these services. If you are concerned that we are not providing these services in the way that you would expect, please contact us.

#### Investment Programmes

The major works programme to blocks of flats across the Borough, which has been ongoing for 5 years, is about to be completed with the £4m investment works to our flats at Abbey Green Court, Polesworth. The investment has delivered essential works to the roof, walls and windows as well as internal facilities. We would like to thank tenants and leaseholders for their co-operation and our contractor WATES for their commitment throughout the period of the works.

To meet the Government's Decent Home Standard and provide modern and energy efficient homes, we are continuing with our programme to provide new kitchens and gas heating upgrades.

### Welcome to your Spring Edition of Tenants Link

This newsletter provides you with information on the services we deliver for tenants, information from the Borough Wide Tenant Forum and good news stories. If you have any suggestions for our next issue or a good news story you would like to include.

Please contact Julie Richardson

☎ 01827 719402

✉ [julierichardson@northwarks.gov.uk](mailto:julierichardson@northwarks.gov.uk)

I look forward to hearing from you.



Abbey Green Court before.



Abbey Green Court following improvement works.

# Safety



The safety of our tenants is paramount. In addition to our annual gas safety programme and critical electrical checks and upgrades over the last year, we have started a programme of replacing fire doors to flats. This is to ensure that the doors we provide are suitable and meet current standards. New fire doors have been fitted in blocks in Chapel End, Hartshill, Polesworth and Dordon. The programme has now progressed to blocks in Atherstone and Kingsbury and will continue until all blocks have been assessed during 2025.

Ensuring our tenancies have safe and working gas heating boilers is a priority for the Council. Following feedback about the service delivered by our contractor, the Council decided to bring the service back in house. From January 2025 the Gas Heating Team is now working across

the Borough to complete annual safety checks and fix heating systems that have broken down. We expect to deliver a high-quality service with excellent customer care. Servicing our boilers is not only important for safety but should prevent breakdowns.

# Repairs Service

Not every tenancy will be part of an improvement programme during the year, but you will probably contact us about a fault or disrepair you are concerned about. Our Contact Centre Team and expert Planners in the repairs service are there to help you and ensure your concern is addressed promptly. In our most recent satisfaction survey, tenants told us that they were satisfied with the customer care and quality provided by our front-line team of Tradesmen. They also told us that our service could have been improved by getting to you more quickly to do the repair or work needed. Managers are looking to find ways of providing that improvement.

Alongside our trained and experienced Tradesmen, the Housing Division



helps to support apprenticeships. We currently have two apprentice Plumbers and one Electrician in our service. As well as learning their technical trade, they also learn what our tenants expect to see for good customer care when we visit their homes. We are proud of all

our apprentices. They are successful and committed to our service. Our electrical apprentice, Charlie, has recently been awarded Apprentice of the Year by Cannock Technical College.



# Reporting Mould and Damp

We ask tenants to report repairs needed to their homes to us so that we can act promptly to fix them. It is particularly important that you do that if you notice mould growth in a room. It might be caused by something you can address yourself, but we need you to report it to us so that we can visit and advise you, and help tackle it if it needs an intervention from us.

Sometimes it is a simple matter of fixing a leak from the roof or pipework. We can help with ventilation by improving or providing fans in the kitchen or bathroom. With older properties the fabric of the building might have deteriorated over time, and we need to employ an expert company to act to resolve the problem.

Whatever is causing the problem we ask that you alert us if you notice mould growth quickly, please. This is because living in mouldy conditions can cause health problems, and we can intervene to fix the problem as well as remove the mould growth using specialist products. Please see our leaflet on our website for more information.





We are keen to have tenants' feedback about our service. It might be a compliment or complaint, but you might just want to tell us about your experience of our service. Our tradesmen are now leaving a contact card with tenants to encourage feedback. We hope that you will get in touch.

In this edition we have some feedback to give to you.

Last summer, a large branch from an Oak tree in a tenant's garden fell off. We are grateful that no-one was hurt. Our conditions of tenancy state that tenants handle the upkeep of all parts of their garden. Whilst this is important, we would like to ask you to contact us if you have a concern about a tree in your garden. It may be growing large, or you may have a safety concern. If that is the case, please tell us and we will visit and offer advice and help.

Blocked toilets and drains are an unpleasant inconvenience for tenants and their neighbours. We act quickly when we have a report to get a Plumber on site. If they cannot clear the blockage we use a specialist contractor. Please help us to prevent blocked drains by taking care with what you flush. Experts tell us only ever flush the 3P's: pee, poo and (toilet) paper. They also tell us to bin wipes to avoid blocked drains, even the ones that are labelled "flushable".

We very much appreciate your co-operation.

# Delivering a Quality Service

All social housing providers, including the Council, must meet the Social Housing Regulator's Consumer Standards when providing its services. The standards are grouped as 'safety and quality; transparency, influence and accountability; neighbourhood and community; and tenancy standard.

To help the Council understand whether it is delivering services which meet the Consumer Standards, the Borough Wide Tenants Forum have set up a Scrutiny Panel.

During 2024, the Panel agreed terms of reference and chose to do reviews about reporting a repair and how the Council responded to reports of anti-social behaviour. Individual tenants were asked if they would be willing to talk to Forum Members about their experience of the service and if they said yes, they received a telephone call.

When reports are written to reflect the findings no individual tenant is identified. This means that views can be given openly and honestly. The aim of the reviews is to provide useful information to the Council so that services can be improved. It is also important to find out if tenants experience equal access to our services.

Over twenty tenants spoke to the Forum about their experience of reporting a repair. The findings and recommendations from the review are published on our website. In short, tenants said that it was easy to report a repair however some experienced delays in time before the repair was completed. New systems of work in the Maintenance Service should help to improve the service. A follow up telephone survey by the Panel will discover whether improvements have been delivered and the Housing Service is undertaking its own surveys to discover tenants' experience.

The findings from a second review, noise related anti-social behaviour, is currently being considered. Findings will be published on the website.

If you would like to be part of the Borough Wide Tenants Forum Scrutiny Panel or you have a suggestion for a future scrutiny consideration please contact the tenant Chair, Sue Healy, at [tenantparticipation@northwarks.gov.uk](mailto:tenantparticipation@northwarks.gov.uk)



# Borough Wide Tenants Forum News

The Borough Wide Tenants Forum would welcome new members and new ideas. They have had another full year engaging with the Council to ensure a tenants' voice is heard when services are delivered and planned. They share their own experience and views. If you want to do the same and if any of the following are of interest to you, please contact us.

The Forum has had a keen eye on what the Social Housing Regulator requires to meet their Consumer Standards and has been working closely with the housing team to reflect on how services are delivered and performance reported. They have also been involved in reviewing the complaints policy to ensure it allows tenants to have a fair and prompt response and that it meets the Housing Ombudsman statutory code.

The Forum has been diligent in engaging with both the Regulator and the Ombudsman to find out what they require, to learn from others and to feedback to the Council what they expect. Members have represented tenants at the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) conference events and other membership events which allow understanding, learning, and sharing ideas with tenants from other areas.

The Forum have undertaken two Scrutiny reports over the year – on repairs and anti-social behaviour – to ensure that the Housing Service has close access to tenants' views and is able to commit to hearing about their experience of the services they have requested.

With their focus on safety, the Forum received a report on the Housing Division's Fire Safety Management Policy, the lessons learned from the Grenfell Tower Enquiry and the arrangements for fire safety in blocks of flats. This links with regular updates on the review of the Maintenance Service and the delivery of the Asset Management Plan – which includes commitments for energy efficiency programmes. They were asked for their view about bringing the gas heating service back in house and overwhelming supported the proposal.

The Forum have also given their time up to training. The Silent Voices Workshop brought staff and tenants together to discover why tenants do not speak up and tell us about their experience and concerns and how we can improve that.

When people become homeless it is a difficult time for them and their family. The Forum was recently involved in considering what services and interventions the Council should have in place to prevent homelessness which led to the development of our homelessness strategy. Everyone is aware of the cost-of-living challenges and the Council provides information and services to help. The Forum took part in developing the information which we provide to tenants. You can find this on our website.



**Borough Wide Tenants Forum.**

If you would like to be involved in the work of the Borough Wide Tenants Forum or for more information on tenant involvement email: [tenantparticipation@northwarks.gov.uk](mailto:tenantparticipation@northwarks.gov.uk)

## **Borough Wide Tenants Forum Meeting Dates 2025**

The Borough Wide Tenants Forum Annual General Meeting will be held at the Council House on Wednesday 7th May 2025 at 6pm.

Meeting Date	Time	Venue
Wed 12th March 2025	11am	The Council House, South Street, Atherstone, Warwickshire CV9 1DE
Wed 11th June 2025	11am	
Wed 20th August 2025	11am	
Wed 15th October 2025	11am	
Wed 10th December 2025	11am	

# Forum Message Board

We are always looking for news items that you may find helpful, we welcome your contributions. Roger Price, the Forum Chair, has suggested and written two news items for information and to raise safety awareness.

## Keep Warm Safely

My first item is around the safe use of hot water bottles.

**Question:** How many years should you keep a hot water bottle before buying a replacement?

**Answer:** Two to three years

When I heard this, I was astonished, I remember as a child having the same one for many years. On a recent BBC news item, they showed some horrific images of scalds caused by what they described as hot water bottles 'exploding'. This caused me to check my own and to share the information.

### What do you need to know?

Every hot water bottle will have a 'daisy date' melted into the rubber. A number in the inner circle shows the date of manufacture, giving you information to make your decision.

Don't rely on this alone, check for a good seal around the screw in top, also the seams, edges, and general condition of the rubber for signs of perishing or damage.

It's surprising the amount of us who fill a hot water bottle incorrectly, here is the approved method. Never fill a bottle with boiling water, a 5-minute wait is recommended. Wrap a towel around the neck of the bottle, pour in the water while holding it over the draining board, do not over fill. Gently lay the bottle on the draining board until the water is visible at the spout, this will expel the air. Tighten the lid, shake the bottle over the sink to remove any spillage, a cover is advisable. Never lie or sit on a hot water bottle.



## Battery Caution

You may have seen news reports about fires caused when batteries are being charged up in a home. Some have led to loss of homes and death which is tragic.



I would like to share a cautionary message about electric bikes and scooters and the possible danger of charging them up, unattended, in your home. Whilst it is hoped that a purchase will ensure that there are certain standards for the battery this is not always the case, and they can be damaged and become faulty. It is particularly unsafe to charge these devices unattended – perhaps overnight whilst the family sleep and charging them indoors where if they cause fire there are lots of combustible items and where they might block an escape route.

### What's the cause?

Its normally mis-matched lithium-ion batteries and chargers or indeed damaged battery packs. These overheat and go into a spiral of heating until igniting. Once alight they are almost impossible to put out.

### What can we do?

- Only buy from reputable sources and avoid the do-it-yourself versions of some products. Take extra care if the battery is damaged. Avoid kits that only offer some of the parts, meaning you must mix and match. The main cause for these reactions is the charger and the battery not being compatible with each other.
- Keep your hallways and exits clear.
- Do not leave devices on charge overnight or longer than the manufacturers recommendations.
- Finally in case of such a fire, do not try to put it out. Get everyone out of the premises and call the Fire Brigade.

## Good News Charity Events

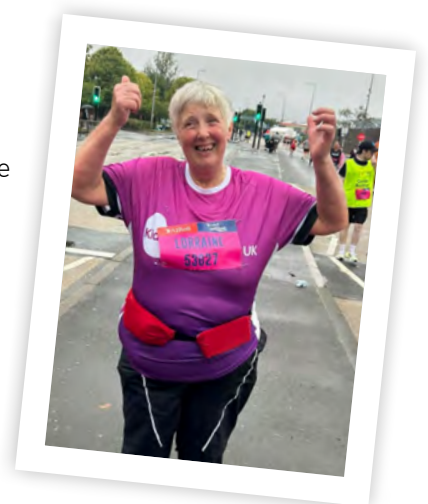
The annual Macmillan coffee mornings were held in sheltered scheme communal rooms in September. Organisers worked hard to make the day a success raising money for a good cause, the events were enjoyed by all who attended. The Woodlands raised £450, and Hunters Park raised £250.

Mancetter community group held a charity event in October at Mancetter Memorial Hall. Fifty prizes were donated in total raising £500 for Cancer Research.

Congratulations to Lorraine Clark from Baddesley. Lorraine enjoys taking on different challenges each year donating money to charity. In September, Lorraine took on and

completed the Great North Run raising £800 for Kidney Research UK to help change lives and transform kidney health.

Lorraine said, 'The day was exhausting but so rewarding reaching the finish line knowing I had helped to make a difference.'



# Pete's Plot Gardening Tips



"Hello again gardeners. Spring has arrived, a clean-up of your garden can begin.

Now is the ideal time to look for problems such as rubbing & crossing branches or any signs of disease and tidy up or shape the bush or tree in question. It's worth reading up on what to cut and what not to cut, for example last year's growth on your forsythia bears this spring's flowers. But no need to worry too much, most plants thrive on a trim or tidy up.

Tidy flower borders and remove weeds from vegetable beds to prepare for planting. Plenty of flower and

vegetable crops can be sown in March now the days begin to lengthen and become a little warmer. It's a good time to sow a variety of seeds, some can be sown directly into the ground and others sown indoors to be planted out after the risk of frost has passed. Potatoes are mainly planted in spring over several weeks. First early potatoes can be planted late March, second earlies mid-April and main crops plant late April.

Another little job is to clean out and repair nest boxes in readiness for our feathered friends. My old favourite, I know I bring this up regularly, but a few minutes cleaning and checking

your tools both hand tools, mowers and strimmer's will save any frustration later."

## NEW FOR 2025

From the next issue I am going to feature a focus on one aspect of our gardens. With this in mind, if anyone has a garden project or suggestions they would like to put forward for future editions please let me know, or if you have a question or a subject please email [tenantparticipation@northwarks.gov.uk](mailto:tenantparticipation@northwarks.gov.uk)

Happy Gardening  
**Pete**

## Feedback, Complaints and Compliments

Our teams want to provide a good service. If we do something well it is great to have your feedback so that we know that we are on track and working to your expectations. It is also good for staff to know that their efforts are appreciated. We share compliments with the people concerned.

We don't want any of our tenants to experience a failure of our service. If it does happen, we want to hear from you so that we can understand your concern and resolve it. Complaints are also an opportunity for us to learn about our customer's view of our service so please tell us what you are unhappy about or want us to change.

### HOW TO HAVE YOUR SAY

- On our website [www.northwarks.gov.uk](http://www.northwarks.gov.uk)
- By email to [complaintsandcompliments@northwarks.gov.uk](mailto:complaintsandcompliments@northwarks.gov.uk)
- By telephone to **01827 715 341**
- In writing

We continue to obtain feedback through surveys and questionnaires to gain views and comments on housing services. This enables tenants to have their say on the services provided to ensure our services are delivered to a good standard. A tenant satisfaction survey was conducted in September 2024. Thank you to everyone who replied and congratulations to those who one of our prizes for taking part. Results will be published in June 2025 when we have had time to assess our performance to provide our priority services.

## Competition Winner



## Congratulations

Thank you for taking part in our last competition.

**The lucky winner is Mrs Caroline Relph from Kingsbury** who received £25 in High Street Vouchers for her entry into the Word Search competition.

# How to contact us

You can contact us for a general enquiry in any of the following ways:

- ✉ [hosingservices@northwarks.gov.uk](mailto:hosingservices@northwarks.gov.uk)
- ☎ 01827 715341 between 8.30am and 5pm, Monday to Friday
- 🌐 [www.northwarks.gov.uk](http://www.northwarks.gov.uk)

**Write to:**

**North Warwickshire Borough Council,  
The Council House, South Street, Atherstone, Warwickshire CV9 1DE**

**Visit:**

**The Council House between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday**

**Opening Hours**

- Mon 9:00-12:30 & 13:30-17:00**
- Tue 9:00-12:30 & 13:30-17:00**
- Wed 10:00-12:30 & 13:30-17:00**
- Thu 9:00-12:30 & 13:30-17:00**
- Fri 9:00-12:30 & 13:30-17:00**



We currently offer a face-to-face service **by appointment only**. If you need to book a face-to-face appointment, please call our Customer Services team on (01827) 715341.

We also have social media channels people can contact us on.

**If you require a version of this document in large print, audiotape, or in another language, please contact us.**

# Competition Time

# Bird Word Search

**FIND THE HIDDEN WORDS TO  
WIN £25  
IN HIGH STREET VOUCHERS**

B	L	A	C	K	B	I	R	D	E	U	S	R	K	L	M	V	N	G
Y	H	D	B	X	L	I	Z	O	J	O	M	J	I	P	U	G	P	R
C	Y	K	D	A	E	R	A	V	E	N	P	L	N	Q	C	R	Y	W
W	F	D	O	O	K	B	O	R	E	D	K	M	G	C	S	E	A	S
Q	V	Y	V	G	D	W	V	B	T	U	P	M	F	A	N	E	F	T
O	I	M	E	F	A	T	S	N	I	S	T	D	I	J	O	N	Y	A
D	R	W	A	C	V	D	U	L	M	N	R	W	S	A	W	F	N	R
S	I	O	F	M	Y	R	V	B	E	T	S	F	H	L	P	I	E	L
J	A	C	K	D	A	W	P	V	R	I	Y	Q	E	P	L	N	H	I
A	I	E	O	P	K	H	F	S	L	S	C	J	R	Y	R	C	O	N
R	I	R	S	G	Z	A	I	H	I	Y	L	Y	E	E	A	H	B	G
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Y	S	P	A	R	R	O	W	J	L	B	E	A	N	I	O	K	T	S
P	U	A	R	L	N	I	Y	R	W	A	C	B	M	O	K	W	L	F
D	I	H	E	P	E	A	C	A	L	M	H	G	I	K	T	E	L	J

Please return the completed entry form to :

**Julie Richardson**  
The Council House, South Street,  
Atherstone, Warwickshire, CV9 1DE

Name .....

Address .....

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Tel .....

- |            |            |          |
|------------|------------|----------|
| BLACKBIRD  | KINGFISHER | HERON    |
| ROBIN      | JACKDAW    | RAVEN    |
| GREENFINCH | OWL        | DOVE     |
| SPARROW    | MERLIN     | STARLING |

**All correct entries will be placed into a prize draw. Closing date Friday 25th April 2025**

