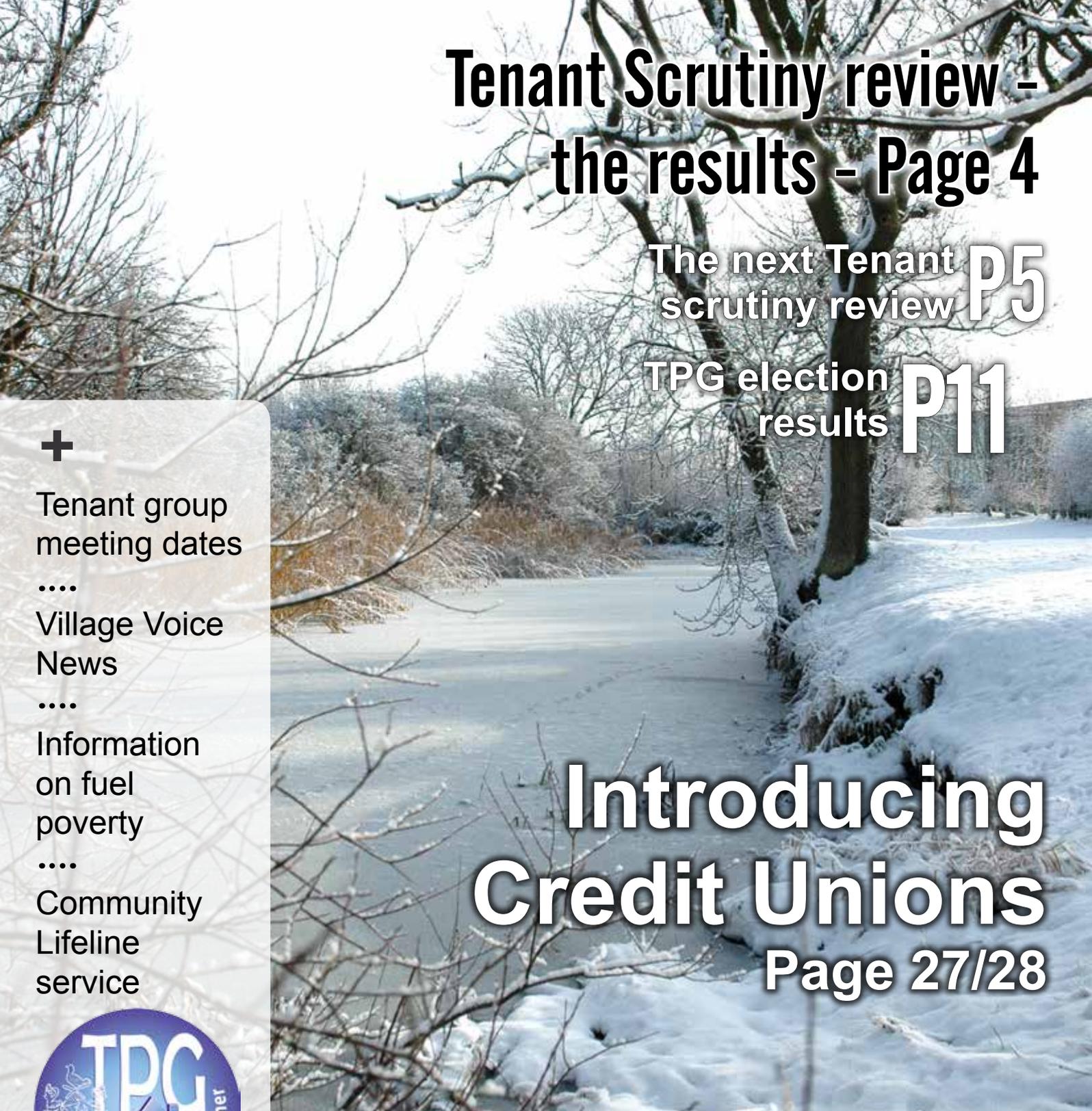


Tenant & Leaseholder

Issue 5 Winter 2014/2015



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South
Cambridgeshire
District Council

Welcome to the Autumn/Winter edition of your Tenant & Leaseholder News..

In this edition you will find information about the new tenant Scrutiny Review Team and their success with the first review into the Grounds Maintenance contract, plus what they will be looking at next.

Please get involved if the topics interest you, as your thoughts on how we can improve the housing service really DO make a huge difference.

We tell you about a recent survey we did, and highlight all the training opportunities we offer if you get involved to help improve the housing service.

We give you the TPG election results and a double page spread on our Disability Open Day

We highlight too the work of Village Voices and the success of the new Tenant Sponsored Community Grants.

You will find information on what we are doing to improve energy efficiency and tackle fuel poverty, as well as our efficient mobile working systems for surveyors.

We tell you what we are doing to tackle tenancy fraud, we highlight the very competitive home contents insurance scheme you can buy and we tell you what we are doing in terms of building new council homes as well as the setting up of our new housing company.

We have handy tips on snow clearance, dodgy DIY and avoiding rodents amongst other things.

We support Credit Unions and there is an article about the Rainbow Credit Union which offers affordable loans and simple bank accounts to everyone.

Finally there are the awards for the 2014 garden competition, featuring our youngest ever winner in the new Family Garden category.

We hope you enjoy your magazine and we will be back for the Spring/Summer 2015 edition.

All the very best



Mark Howell - Councillor & Housing Portfolio Holder



Wendy Head - Tenant Participation Group Chair

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Putting service first

If you phone us we will

- resolve your enquiry as quickly as possible
- provide voicemail if the person you need is unavailable
- answer your phone message within one working day

If you write to us we will

- reply to your letter or email within 10 working days

If we write to you we will

- write in plain language
- arrange for translation, large type, Braille or audio tapes upon request

If we visit you we will

- carry identification that you can check with a phone call to our contact service on 03450 450 500
- arrive at the time we say we will, or give you as much notice as possible if we have to change the time

If we get it wrong we will

- apologise if we have made a mistake or failed to meet our standards
- acknowledge your written complaint within three working days
- reply in full to your complaint within 10 working days

Tenant & Leaseholder Group Meeting Dates

Please confirm venue date & time ahead of meetings with Resident Involvement Team



TPG

(Tenant Participation Group)

February 2 - 6.30pm - 8.45pm

March 2 - 6.30pm - 8.45pm

April 13 - 6.30pm - 8.45pm

May 11 - 6.30pm - 8.45pm

June 1 - 6.30pm - 8.45pm

Disability Forum Meetings

February 3 - 2pm - 4pm

April 7 - 2pm - 4pm

June 2 - 2pm - 4pm



Normally held at the communal room, Denson Close, Waterbeach, CB25 9RN
Please call the resident involvement team ahead of time to confirm on 01954 713295

Leaseholder Forum

Next year's leaseholder forum dates as follows:

16 Feb, 14 May, 17 Sept, 3 Dec

All will run from 10am to 12pm - All meetings in Council Chamber at SCDC Offices Cambourne CB23 6EA

Sheltered Housing Forums

North Area Forum - Communal Room, St Vincents Close, Girton: Tuesday 10 March 2015 - 2pm - 4pm

West Area Forum - Communal Room, Elin Way, Meldreth: Wednesday 11 March 2015 - 10am - 12pm

East Area Forum - Communal Room, Lettice Martin Croft Whittlesford: Thursday 12 March 2015 - 10am - 12pm

Housing Surgery Dates for 2014/2015

Do you need housing advice, benefit advice, repairs advice, relocation advice? come along to a surgery.
No Appointment Necessary

Gamlingay:

Second Wednesday of each month,
Communal Room, Avenells Way
10.30am - 12.00 noon

- 14 Jan
- 11 Feb
- 11 March
- 15 April
- 13 May
- 10 June

Willingham:

1st Wed of every
month,
the Baptist Church,
George Street
10am - 12 noon

Sawston:

Every two weeks,
Communal Room, Chapelfield Way
10am - 1pm

- 8 & 22 January
- 5 & 19 February
- 5 & 19 March
- 2, 16, 30 April
- 14 & 28 May

Successful tenant review of the Grounds Maintenance contract

The first project chosen by the Tenant and Leaseholder Scrutiny Review Team (SRT) was to look at the current Grounds Maintenance contract and service. The team was aware that the contract needs to be re tendered in 2014 with a new contract up and running in April 2015.

The SRT have been supported with independent training and mentoring from the Linchpin Project and housing provided all the information requested.

The SRT created a report called "Grass Roots" after 6 months of work including:

- Desktop review of the contract
- Review of contract budget
- Interviews with key housing managers, housing staff, and the current contractor
- Joint meetings between SRT, housing and the contractor
- Tenant/Leaseholder inspections of external areas chosen by SRT across 20 villages
- Door knocking and surveys by tenant inspectors



The final report was presented to Jean Hunter (Council Chief Executive), Cllr Sue Ellington (Vice Chair South Cambs Council), Cllr Mark Howell (Portfolio Holder for Housing) and senior housing managers at an event on 17 June 2014.

The report recommendations included

- developing new service standards so all tenants know what they get for their money
- making sure the Tenant Participation Group has a say on what will be included in the new grounds maintenance contract
- that the new, fully trained Tenant Inspectors, are used to make sure it meets the agreed standards.
- The SRT also wanted the Council to look to develop under-used garage sites they own as they are costly to maintain. This has already begun as ten empty garages were redeveloped into four one bedroom homes in Linton last year.

[The tenant Scrutiny Review Team report has been published and can be found here www.scambs.gov.uk/content/newtenant-scrutiny-review-team - under 'Grass Roots Report.pdf'](http://www.scambs.gov.uk/content/newtenant-scrutiny-review-team-under-Grass-Roots-Report.pdf)

Of the 14 recommendations the Council has accepted 8, agreed a further 3 with a different way of achieving them and we are working on the other 3 recommendations with the SRT.

Our response to the SRT "Grass Roots" report was presented to the SRT on September 2nd and has been published on our website after the report referred to above.

As part of this a new Tenant Led Environmental Improvement Grant has been created. Yearly funding will be £50,000 per year from next April, with £15,000 found this year to get the grant up and running. A £50,000 additional grant for outdoor works, led by tenant feedback, will we hope compliment the existing grounds maintenance contract and this separate fund is equivalent to an additional 30% HRA funding being made available for general needs outdoor maintenance work.

So what is the next tenant scrutiny project going to be?

We have retained the services of The Linchpin Project to get the tenant and leaseholder volunteers who make up the SRT well on the way with the next scrutiny project.

A couple of scoping events were held in September/October 2014 and the group has decided that the next areas of the housing service they wish to scrutinise in order are:

1. Sheltered Housing Service, 2014 - 2015

Including the estate management and support services. This project is likely to look at budgets, staffing, facilities, service charges, communal rooms, alarm systems, lettings and referrals amongst other things. This review is expected to take six to eight months

2. Voids & Lettings, 2014 - 2015

A void is an empty property, a letting is when we sign someone up for a tenancy. SRT want to look at what our standards are in terms of works undertaken before we let an empty property (void works), the speed that we carry these works out (known as void turnaround) and the process of letting a tenancy. Any work on this topic will include property inspections, budget analysis, as well as an understanding of current national legislation regarding social housing tenancies including no security of tenure, fixed term tenancies and introductory tenancies. This review is expected to take six to eight months.

3. Mears Response Repairs

As an employer of Mears over a 5 year contract that is now halfway through we need to spend some time reviewing their service. This is underway with a group of 6 trained tenant volunteers, and is separate from any Scrutiny Review. However the SRT felt that they could add to this review at a later time by offering up Tenant Inspectors to inspect and assess repairs and survey customers.

If you are interested in getting involved please contact
the Resident Involvement Team on 01954 713295

Free accessible training will be provided as required

To make sure that volunteers feel fully supported whilst doing the scrutiny, and the Linchpin Project will provide independent mentoring and support throughout.



Mears Response Repairs

Survey of Tenants and Residents

In May we sent out a satisfaction survey called STAR (Survey of Tenants And Residents). We wanted to find out what you thought of our services since our last Star survey which was carried out in 2012

We carried out the survey differently this year, instead of using an external company to survey the whole district, we decided to trial using in-house resources to prepare; send and collate responses, concentrating on an area at a time of approximately 1000 tenants and leaseholders

It is important to us to assess how we are performing; what is going well and needs to continue, as well as what needs improvement. Offering you the opportunity to have your say ensures we understand our Tenants/ and Leaseholders better, helping us to help you enables us to create and adapt are services to meet your needs

The first area we surveyed in May, covered 20 villages - including; Bartlow; Linton; & Weston Colville. The area we intend to survey next covers 26 villages - including Over; Croxton and Toft.

We wanting to ensure the design of the survey would be acceptable in length and realistic when it comes to completing it in an acceptable time scale, but still containing and capturing relevant and important information and feedback, so we tested a draft copy with TPG who offered fantastic feedback

Within the survey we also offered the opportunity to be entered in to a free prize draw, as a way to saying thank you for spending time completing the survey. We are pleased to announce that the winner of the first draw is Mrs Elliott of Fulbourn who confirmed she is celebrating a significant birthday, so we wish her a Happy Birthday and hope the vouchers go towards making it a lovely and memorable occasion.

Details of the finding from the survey are published in the Annual Tenant and Leaseholder Report 2014.



Getting Involved = Training Opportunities

We are always keen to get more of you involved with us to help improve the council's housing service.

As you may know we have recently been focussing on tenant scrutiny, working with tenants and supporting with training and mentoring provided by an independent led training company called the Linchpin Project.

If you are willing and enthusiastic we will always provide training. Training sessions for tenants and leaseholders that have run in 2014 include:

- Tenant Inspector training
- Mystery shopping training
- Talkback
- What is tenant scrutiny?
- Your housing department explained
- Understanding how the council works
- Performance management systems explained
- Report Writing
- Public Speaking / Presentation skills
- Chairing & Committee skills
- Influencing & Negotiation skills
- Computer training
- Housing Finance

All training is free.

Get involved. Meet new people. Get training that improves or enhances your skills. Help to make a difference.

Village Voice

South Cambs is a great place to live; with 103 villages spread over 325 square miles, and we have homes in 95 of these villages.



GET INVOLVED

Most of our tenants/leaseholders in these villages are the silent majority, who do not get actively involved in meetings about the service.

Village Voice - What is it?

It is - Your Voice - You could become the point of contact with the council for your village:

- A way of getting involved in helping the Council provide better services.
- A good way of getting local village views across to the Council.
- A platform for collaboration between tenants in a village, local members, Housing team, Parish Council etc
- A way to feed information to the tenant scrutiny process.
- A way of you “helping us to make things better for everyone”.

You have first hand experience of the service, so only you can tell us how we’re doing. By using the information you give us we can improve the service to meet the needs of local tenant/leaseholders. By taking part you can make a real difference to your home and local community. Let us work together to create Village Voice system that works for all of us.

At this present time we have 6 Village Voices in:

- Balsham
- Bourn
- Dry Drayton
- Guilden Morden x 2
- Litlington

Our village voice Helen, from Dry Drayton - has dealt with quite a few queries from tenants throughout the village and said “it is very rewarding when you are able to point them in the right direction to sort their query out”.



We are always looking for new volunteers.

Your opinions regarding your home and neighbourhood are very important.

- We will listen to your views
- Keep you informed
- Involve you in making decisions that affect you.
- Ask what you think of the service.

You don’t need any specific skills what we really need are your views, opinions, ideas and comments. You can give as much or as little time as you like.

Getting involved also gives you the chance to develop your skills through training and support that we offer, to add to your experience and skills or which may help you back into employment.

Since the re-launch in 2013, we have held numerous training days covering various subjects, which highlight and involve tenant/leaseholders from all our other forum groups.

If you are interested contact Helen Pagram 01954 713295 or helen.pagram@scambs.gov.uk

The 2014 Garden Awards

Thanks to all those who entered. After 2 days of judging in July the winners and placers collected their awards at an event hosted by our sponsors Scotsdales on 10 October

Mr Hall of Bourn won the Best Garden and said “I love my garden and gardening. I take great pleasure and pride in creating a beautiful garden to be enjoyed by my family and friends. Plus it keeps me fit!. It is the icing on the cake that I have won the Best Garden Award 2014 and hope that my success might inspire one or two others to have a go”

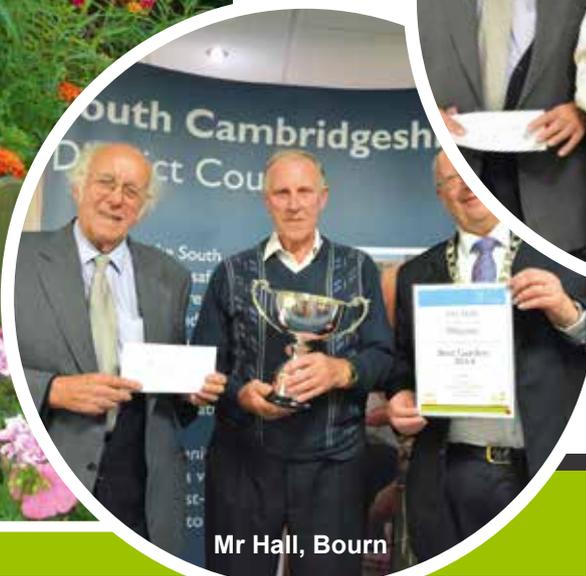
Mr Gawthorp of Balsham won 3 awards and was interviewed by BBC Radio Cambridge to promote the awards night.



Mr Hall, Bourn



Mr Gawthorp, Balsham



Mr Hall, Bourn



A new category of award was created in 2014 for Family Gardens, and this was won by Ms Free and her daughter Daisy who wore special shoes on the night in celebration.



Ms Free, Daisy and Chief Executive Jean Hunter



The Award winners group

Gents at the back - Mr Gawthorp, Mr Rayner of Scotsdales, Cllr Dr David Bard, Mr Hall and Mr Spanos-Spanellis.

Ladies at the front - Mrs Matthews, Ms Free, Mrs Hall and Monica Connolly of Stevens Close. Front and Centre - Daisy and her shoes



Winners all. Daisy with Mr and Mrs Hall

Disability Open Day 2014

In partnership with the tenant & leaseholder Disability Forum the council's resident involvement team ran a district wide Disability Open Day event in the Council Chamber on Friday October 31.

The aim of the day was to bring residents, tenants and service providers and charities together to share their experiences and to make links that will result in those who need help and assistance being put in contact with those who can provide it.



Celebrity Endorsement!

We were lucky enough to have comic Ricky Gervais endorse the event for us on social media which we made certain was spread as widely as possible via tweets and Facebook.

Stall Holders

We had 34 charities and providers attend the day and the Council Chamber was very full as a result! Stallholders included Age UK, Alzheimer's Society, Community Transport, Benefits, Help for Heroes, John Huntingdon Trust, Cambridge Alliance, Dementia Carers Support Service, Homesight, Rowan, and Headway.



A Success!!

We had a steady stream of visitors through the doors between 10am and 4pm and in terms of feedback nearly 100% of visitors and stallholders said they would come again next year.

Will We Do It Again?

The numbers attending and the enthusiasm shown by the stall holders shows there is a clear demand in the district for such an event. In the future if we run it again we would do so as a corporate Council event. Whilst this event was for all residents of South Cambs District it was created and run by the tenant Disability Forum and the Council's Housing Resident Involvement Team. A future event would be we hope even bigger and better if run as a whole council event. Watch this space!

What Did We Learn

Our District has a large number of people with disabilities or caring for someone with a disability and it is good to bring people together.

- That we would run the next event from 10am to 2.30pm as visitors clearly favoured those hours.
- That delicious cup cakes provided by a local baker will always be something to get people chatting

Your Tenant Participation Group Election Results 2014

You will recently have had a chance to vote for your tenant and leaseholder representatives to sit on the Tenant Participation Group (TPG) as elected and mandated representatives. Those elected will serve a 3 year term.

The TPG is the key overarching tenant and leaseholder group that looks at performance, policies, improvements, oversees the new tenant Scrutiny Review function and its representatives also sit on other groups or boards such as Mears, Morrisons, and various corporate Task & Finish groups.

Other tenant groups such as Leaseholder Forum, Disability Forum and the Sheltered Housing Forums elect a representative to the TPG from within their groups to ensure their particular interests are properly represented.

The election was run by the independent Electoral Reform Service (ERS) based in London and the results assessed by ERS were released to us on Monday 24 November 2014.

The tenants and leaseholders elected to TPG for 2014-17 are:



**AKRBI,
Carol**



**BALL,
Joan**



**BALLANTYNE,
Helen C**



**BULLIVANT,
Bill**



**CAIRNS,
Neil**



**HALL,
Patricia**



**HAMMOND,
David**



**HEAD,
Wendy**



**KNIBBS,
Andy**



**LEWELL,
Angela**



**RICE,
Kathy**



**ROLFE,
Leslie W**



**SARTINI-
BALDWIN, Luisa**



**SAUNDERS,
Thora**



**WATSON,
Jim**

A Fond Farewell...

We are sad to announce that our longstanding Chair of the Leaseholder Forum and Vice Chair of the TPG, the wonderful Joan Spencer, has resigned as she is moving out of the area. Joan has served in these roles for many years and has done a fantastic job, she may be petite but she leaves big boots to fill!

We would like to thank Joan for her hard work, her unwavering ability to keep things under control and her dedication. We appreciate all she has done and she will be very much missed. We wish her all the best in her new home.

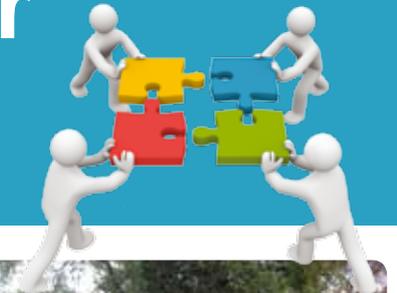
In light of this, the group elected a new Chair (Doug Gilbert) and a new Vice Chair (Jim Duffey) on 2 October and we welcome them to their new positions. Please consider coming along to a Leaseholder Forum meeting if you don't already, and get involved in a well-attended, often lively, event which is held quarterly at our Cambourne office. In addition, any potential secretaries for this Forum would also be welcome as this post is currently vacant.



If you require further information please contact Becky Gane on 01954 713334
Please note, transport can be provided.

Tenant Sponsored Community Grant - successes so far

We told you about the new grant in the last issue of the magazine, and we are pleased that some applications came in for the panel's consideration.



One of the successful applications was from tenants and leaseholders in Barton (led by Lin Heaton) who wanted to landscape around an electricity sub station with planters and climbing plants. The well thought out application was adjudged by the tenant panel to be a good use of the grant of £300 that was requested and all are pleased with the result

Another successful application was from a sheltered scheme in Cottenham where a grant approved by the tenant panel resulted in new landscaping, plants and a bench.

The maximum you can apply for is £1000. If your idea is bigger than that please still contact us as we might be able to find some money, plus some free labour from one of our main contractors to help out.

We have set aside £6000 for the year so please apply for your project. We want the tenant sponsored community grant to be a success - so apply now!



If you have an community project idea that will benefit tenants and leaseholders in your neighbourhood that needs a boost with funds, download the application form from our website or call the resident involvement team on 1954 713295 and an application pack will be sent out to you.

We are tackling fuel poverty

We are tackling fuel poverty head on with a series of measures designed to reduce energy consumption.

Our district covers 325 square miles with many off grid hard to heat properties and we have been aware for some time that tenants have been struggling to heat their homes.

We started to monitor the calls about dampness and condensation. There were over 400 separate calls from January to March. The level was quite shocking.

To tackle fuel poverty we drew up a Warm Homes Strategy and action plan, have sought to be pro-active and explore new technologies as they come along and bid for funding.

The actions taken to date include:

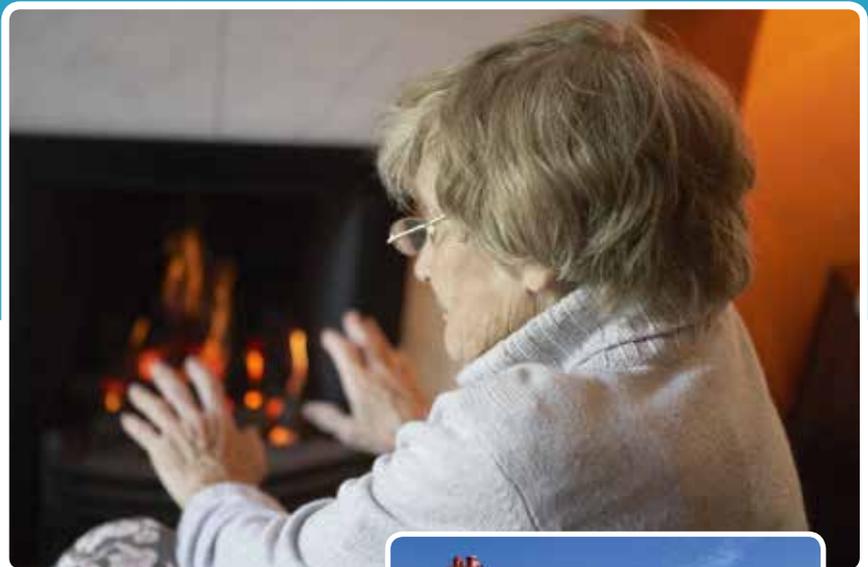
1. Employing two Warm Homes Surveyors
2. Installing Solar PV arrays on Council owned homes saving tenants around £210 a year. Over 2015 homes have had solar pv installed to date.
3. Replacing hot water cylinders with solar enabled cylinders when they need replacing
4. Installing immerSUNs to enable generated electricity from PVs to heat water
5. Installing Air Source Heat Pumps (140), and Air to Air Heat Pumps (12)
6. Replacing old and inefficient electric storage heating with Quantum electric heating systems.
7. Installing wood burning stoves for single room heat where tenants request
8. Developing a seven year external wall insulation programme to insulate solid wall properties.
9. Trialling installing innovative internal wall insulation
10. Installing and topping up cavity wall and loft insulation
11. Installing Double glazing and new composite doors
12. Installing showers (over-bath) during bathroom refurbishments or at void.

The Council have also refurbished a rural off-grid property taking the EPC (energy performance certificate rating) from a D to a B. The work was showcased by the contractor and involved complete renovation including moving the bathroom upstairs and using the space as a drying room.

The technology installed was underfloor heating, solar pv panels, solar thermal panels, an air source heat pump, external wall insulation, a wood burning stove and an energy monitoring system

We also have a policy in place to tackle condensation, employing two Warm Homes Surveyors to work with tenants to reduce the problem. The Warm Homes Surveyors will identify cases where the tenant cannot deal with the mould growth and it is having a detriment on their health. We will pay for the materials and the contractor will supply their labour free. The benefits of the project will be monitored.

Examples include; if someone is ill they can be unwilling to get out of a warm bed into the cold to make a hot drink they really need, children will be unwilling to get out of bed to go to school, if they go to school they may well have had no warm breakfast, if there is no hot water clothes may not get washed. We are determined to make an impact and are keen to join forces with agencies to target resources effectively.



Exciting Plans to Improve Our Non-Traditional Airey and Hawksley Properties

South Cambridgeshire District Council is committed to improving the energy efficiency of its properties and combating fuel poverty in our communities.

As a part of this commitment, we have been carrying out structural surveys of all our non-traditional Airey and Hawksley properties to ascertain what level of works are required.

A budget has been approved which will allow us to improve these homes within the next 5 years.

Hawksley bungalows

These were manufactured by the Hawksley Aircraft Company and built in the late 1940s, early 1950s. The properties are constructed from prefabricated load bearing timber studding panels framed with aluminium channel sections and clad with aluminium sheets.

We are carrying out the following work on all our Hawksley bungalows and our residents have already received notification and work has started on some of the properties:

The roof support structure will be strengthened to carry the new roof covering which will include integrated photovoltaic panels (PV) enabling tenants to save approximately £210 per year on their electricity bills.

This work will mean the properties remain habitable for the foreseeable future, and certainly for the next 25 years.



The Airey house

An Airey house is a type of prefabricated house built following World War II.

They were designed by Sir Edwin Airey for the Ministry of Works Emergency Factory Made housing programme. They are constructed using a frame of prefabricated concrete columns reinforced with tubing recycled from the frames of military vehicles. A series of ship-lap style concrete panels, tied back to the columns, form the external envelope.

The outcome of the structural surveys will dictate the level of improvement works required on our Airey properties but as a minimum, we will be externally insulating to increase their energy efficiency. In some cases we may need to move tenants out to carry out the work.

Other property types we are seeking to increase the insulation of are solid wall houses, bungalows with poorly insulated panels, Swedish Timber houses and a small number of homes that are built from pre-formed concrete.



Improving the Energy Efficiency of our Solid Wall Properties

South Cambridgeshire District Council have over 700 homes that are of solid wall construction and so far we have upgraded 364 of these with external wall insulation.

Uninsulated solid wall properties suffer from condensation and cold and damp resulting in higher heating bills.

We recognise the importance of upgrading solid wall properties. The current annual budget allocated for external wall insulation is over £1.5 million, which enables us to improve over 100 homes each year and we hope to have all our solid wall properties insulated within 5 years.

When we upgrade we don't just install external wall insulation, we take the opportunity to replace fascias, soffits and downpipes, if required, and will also carry out asbestos removal at the same time thus saving on future scaffolding costs.

Up to 45% of the heat in a home can be lost through the solid walls and once the walls have been insulated our residents can expect to save up to 25% on their energy bills and the problems associated with cold walls are eliminated.

In addition to the increase in energy efficiency, the overall appearance of the property is improved and this is particularly noticeable on Wimpey No- Fines** properties. On last year's programme we installed external wall insulation to Wimpey No Fines properties in the Sawston area and it made such a dramatic improvement to their appearance that over 59 private owners in the area paid to have their own homes insulated. (see before and after photos below)

Our ecologist is also involved with our external insulation programme and has worked with Fosters and Cornerstone, the contractors carrying out the works, to raise residents' awareness on loss of habitation to birds and bats when we cover up crevices in the walls of the properties with external wall insulation. To counteract this, our residents are offered a choice of bird and bat boxes that we fit to their homes free of charge.

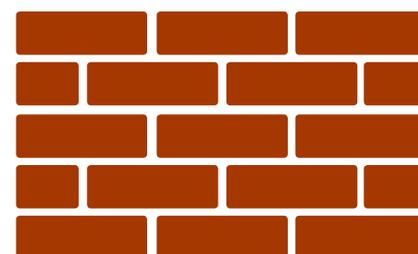
So far this year 30 bird boxes and 10 bat boxes have been fitted.

We receive very positive resident feedback on the external wall insulation and have recently developed a new satisfaction form which will enable us to create important statistics on the subject.

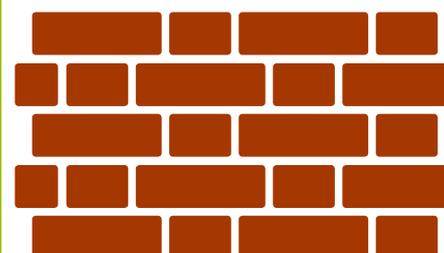
** Wimpey No-Fines : No-fines houses were built post war by George Wimpey with a ten-inch (254mm) concrete shell cast in situ. The concrete for the entire outer structure was cast in one operation using reusable formwork. "No-fines" refers to the type of concrete used - concrete with no fine aggregates.

In a cavity wall, all of the bricks are stretchers, ie lengthways on. In a solid wall, the bricks are a mixture of stretchers and headers, ie endways on. If you can't see the bricks because the walls of your house are rendered, then measure the thickness of the walls at a window or doorway.

A cavity wall is around 30cm wide while a solid wall is around 23cm wide.



A cavity wall



A solid wall



Floods and Home Contents Insurance - Are You Covered?

In August 2014 we experienced some torrential rainfall which led to the need for South Cambs to provide emergency assistance to residents and businesses in several villages throughout Cambridgeshire. Surface water flooding affected many households and those without home contents insurance found it most difficult to cope with the loss of and/or damage to carpets and other household possessions.

South Cambs as your landlord insures the structure of your home for example the roof, walls, doors and windows (except glazing) but not the contents belonging to you such as TV's, carpets and furniture.

In 2013 South Cambs contacted companies in the Insurance Industry to try to get the best deal for Home Contents Insurance. This resulted in us working with Jardine Lloyd Thompson Tenant Risks to identify the Crystal Insurance Scheme which offers all South Cambs tenants and leaseholders the chance to insure their home contents and belongings in an easy and affordable way.

This scheme was introduced in 2013 and we are pleased to report the company agreed there would be no increase in costs/fees for South Cambs customers in 2014.

Some of the benefits of the Crystal Insurance Scheme:

- Premiums can be paid fortnightly (in cash using a swipe card at any Post Office or Payzone Outlet), monthly (in cash using a swipe card or bank direct debit) or annually (by cheque, postal order, debit or credit card).
- There are no minimum home security requirements.
- There is no excesses to pay (you don't pay the first part of a claim).
- Optional extras such as cover for personal possessions (items away from the home), are available at an additional premium.
- Damage to fixed glass in doors and windows which you are responsible for is also covered.
- Flood and water damage is included as standard.

Premiums start from just £1.50 per fortnight or £27.06 per year (if paid annually in advance). This is for tenants aged under 60 for a £9,000 sum insured (minimum sum insurable).

For tenants aged 60 and over premiums start from just £1.15 a fortnight or £18.04 per year (if paid annually in advance) for a £6,000 sum insured (minimal sum insurable).



Please contact South Cambs housing department for a free information pack regarding this home contents insurance scheme or apply directly for cover over the phone, Call Crystal Insurance Scheme on: 0845 601 7007 (it may be cheaper to call 01628 586187 from a mobile) Or Email: crystal@jltgroup.com

Surveyors Mobile Working

There is a new phenomenon appearing around the district.

South Cambs surveyors are wandering round with a puzzled look on their faces and a small, flat object in their hands. Mobile working using tablets has arrived.

We have now introduced our surveyors to a system that allows them to take their office out into the district with them in a light weight, easily transported package. South View Solutions have provided us with a system that allows the surveyors to specify work out on site, issue jobs to our contractors, complete those jobs and carry out post inspection of completed works. They can even access emails while out on site.

The system is not subject to the usual vagueness of mobile phone connectivity, which in this area can be patchy at best. Provided the data is sent from the central server and synchronised once each day, the system allows the surveyors to carry out their tasks, and will send the data back to the main systems at the offices when a signal is available. This removes the need to record work on a piece of paper, then return to the office and try to remember what it was that you were looking at when you wrote it down and did you mean 6 metres or 6 units.

It means that the surveyors can be more productive and at the same time be more proactive in identifying and specifying work that needs to be done. They can also take a wider view of the district, and if they spot something that needs attending to but is not part of their responsibility, they are able to email the correct department immediately.

So if you see one of our surveyors looking as if they are playing games, they will actually be working. There are no games on the tablets, and they are fully secured so that no data can be lost or stolen.



Do you need to Repaint your place?

CCORRN's Community RePaint project has been up and running since January 2011 when the collaborative scheme with AmeyCespa and Cambridgeshire County Council was officially opened at Milton HWRC.

The national project sponsored by Dulux aims to prevent surplus, usable paint from entering the waste stream and being needlessly landfilled and diverting it to those who need it most; charities, community groups, schools, organisations and individuals.

Are you thinking of repainting your home... if so why not visit the OWL Centre in Sawston and see the range of household paints available and take advantage of the money you could save, whilst helping the planet!



The OWL centre is open Mon - Fri 9-5pm and Saturday 9-12.30pm
 Unit 27, London Road Industrial Estate, Pampisford, Sawston, Cambridge, CB22 3EE
 T: 01223 835329

Fraud Article - Progress Update On Tenancy Fraud

You will remember in the last issue we told you about our new focus on tenancy fraud. Our tenancy fraud officer has been in post now for over 6 months.



Successes to date include:

- Up to ten sets of keys back from tenants who were fraudulently living in a council property; this relates to savings of around £180k according to government calculations. These properties have been relet to applicants registered on HomeLink.
- One investigation referred back to another council for historic housing application fraud, and information was found to reject a fraudulent homelessness application.
- 2 fraudulent mutual exchanges were prevented from taking place.

Please remember: Giving false information to obtain a tenancy carries a potential £5000 fine.

Ongoing work includes

- Current caseload of around 80 live investigations
- Looking at one possible Right To Buy fraud.
- The fraud officer gets an average of 3 new referrals for investigation a week from various sources.
- Some referrals are passed to the benefit fraud team, as there was no tenancy fraud but there were Housing Benefit issues to investigate.
- Most reported frauds relate to non occupation.
- Serving a Notice of Seeking Possession for non residence . Here we hope to get keys back without court action.
- Beginning an investigation into someone applying on Homelink from an address they should not be at – we need to establish whether it is a case of subletting or tenancy application fraud.

What is the main area of fraud discovered so far?

It is the subletting relating to family members remaining in the property when the actual tenant has moved elsewhere. We need to highlight this again as tenancy fraud because it is becoming clear that many people do not understand that it's illegal.

“SCDC have recently invested in a product that we hope will help in our efforts to detect and investigate tenancy fraud. Housing Partners take a “ data shot “ of our tenancy records and cross reference this information with various accredited partners and other data sources. What we then receive back are where anomalies are found and this is the information we will take forward to check whether fraud is taking place “ said Geoff Clarke, South Cambs Neighbourhood Services Manager.

We will update with the results of this exercise in your next newsletter.

If you suspect a Council tenant of tenancy fraud please report it to Liz Berridge by calling 03450 450 051 or the Tenancy Fraud Hotline number on 0800 952 0075
Alternatively you can report it online through the Cambridgeshire Tenancy Fraud Forum website at www.cambstenancyfraud.net

Neighbourhood Support



Our Neighbourhood Service Team deals with all cases of serious anti-social behaviour and at times is faced with problem cases that are hard to resolve.

In February 2014 the Neighbourhood Services Team Sherri Lee and Claire Whiteman attended training on obtaining civil injunctions.

What is an injunction?

An injunction is a court order that requires a party to do or refrain from doing specific acts. A party that fails to comply with an injunction faces criminal or civil penalties, including possible monetary sanctions and even imprisonment.

Successes

South Cambridgeshire District Council has been trying to resolve an Anti-Social Behaviour case for some time. It was proving difficult as the perpetrator was an adult living at home with parents and 3 younger siblings. One of their parents was disabled. Despite issuing the perpetrator with several warnings about the implication that their behaviour could have on their parent's tenancy, SCDC and the police continued to receive complaints. It was decided that in order to protect this individual's family from the risk of homelessness that SCDC would seek an injunction preventing the perpetrator from living at that address. SCDC went to court in June and was granted a full injunction to prevent the perpetrator from residing at that address. This action protected their parents and siblings from eviction for ASB. If the perpetrator breaches this injunction they would be arrested and could face imprisonment. This was the first kind of this injunction used by SCDC.

A resident contacted the police and SCDC to report that some homeless individuals had refused to leave their property and that they were now scared to remain living there. In partnership with the police SCDC was able to take this matter to court and were granted injunctions on the four individuals in question. They were removed from our resident's property, the injunction stated that they are to stay away from the village; if they breach the injunction they would be arrested and could face imprisonment. Our tenant was able to return home.

More visibility in the community

In July 2014 Sherri Lee and Claire Whiteman and several members of the Environmental Health team attended training for the Community Safety Accreditation Scheme (CSAS). Both Sherri and Claire passed their exams and await their registration, membership numbers and identification badges/arm bands.

What is CSAS?

CSAS is a voluntary scheme under which chief constables can choose to accredit employed people already working in roles which contribute to maintaining and improving community safety with limited but targeted powers. All schemes are managed, monitored and assessed at a local level by the responsible police force. Key benefits of the scheme include:

- increasing uniformed presence on the streets (CSAS accredited persons wear the uniform of their employing organisation, with a identification badge endorsed by the local police force)
- reductions in local issues such as street drinking, begging and dog fouling
- saving valuable police time in community safety to deal with low-level crime and disorder
- promoting greater business involvement with the police, and allowing the police to influence the training of businesses, e.g. security companies
- promoting partnership working and the two-way exchange of information and intelligence between agencies

The powers available to individuals accredited under a Community Safety Accreditation Scheme are similar to those of a Police Community Support Officer (PCSO), although PCSOs are designated with powers by the Chief Constable, opposed to being accredited with them as non-employees. The Act also makes it a criminal offence to assault, resist or obstruct an Accredited Person in the execution of their duty, or impersonate an Accredited Person.



Home-Link

Your choice - your home

The Home-Link choice based lettings scheme we use to advertise available homes across Cambridgeshire and West Suffolk has now been running successfully for 6 years.

The scheme advertises all the available council and housing association properties, including housing for older people, and gives you a greater say about where you would like to live.

Every 2 weeks available properties are advertised on the Home-Link website, www.home-link.org.uk

If you are on the transfer register you can look at the adverts and choose whether you want to be considered for any of the properties. To do this you will have to bid for an advertised property that has been assessed as suitable for you. You can bid for three properties every 2 weeks. Information about who can bid for properties and how to bid for them can be found on the website.

There is information on the adverts about the properties to help to choose which ones would be best for your needs. Some give extra preference, such as only people with children over a certain age, or people who really need adaptations, or people with a local connection to a village, so you need to read them carefully.

If you cannot go on-line because you have no internet access, you can use the computers in our office or in libraries, or ask us for an application form.



If you need help with bidding, the Housing Options and Advice Team can help you get started. You can contact them on 03450 450 051.

Exchange Locata - Home-Link's mutual exchange scheme

Not everyone who wants to transfer will be housed through Home-Link because there are not enough available properties. If you are already a council or housing association tenant, you can register for a mutual exchange on the Exchange Locata website at www.exchangelocata.org.uk.

This gives you the opportunity to swap homes with other tenants as a way of finding something more suitable for your needs. Finding someone to swap with can be much quicker than waiting on the transfer register. This can also be a good option if you are looking to downsize, or if you can afford an extra bedroom. If you are affected by the 'bedroom tax' and swap to a smaller property, we may be able to offer you extra help with the costs of moving.

If you find someone to swap with, you need to talk to your Housing Officer about what happens next. Most swaps will take about 6 weeks to complete once your Housing Officers has agreed.

If you need any help or advice with Exchange Locata, you can talk to the Housing Team on 03450 450 051.

Community Lifeline+ Service- helping you to remain independent in your home



I am pleased to introduce myself to you as the new Community Lifeline+ Officer for South Cambridgeshire District Council. My name is Ali Hall. Some of you may have already seen me around the district; if you haven't please do pop over to say 'Hello' to me if you see me around.

The Lifeline + service run by South Cambridgeshire District Council can offer you the tailored support and reassurance you need to retain your independence through home visits and telephone calls.

The service was being piloted in Sawston, Babraham, Pampisford, Hinxtton, Ickleton, Duxford, Whittlesford, Little Shelford and Stapleford to begin with.

I am currently the only lifeline+ officer I will be providing your service.

We are running the pilot until April 2015.

We see Lifeline+ as a long term and reliable service for those of you who would enjoy having a personally tailored service to help you retain your confidence and independence at home .

We are offering this through a - friendly and listening ear:

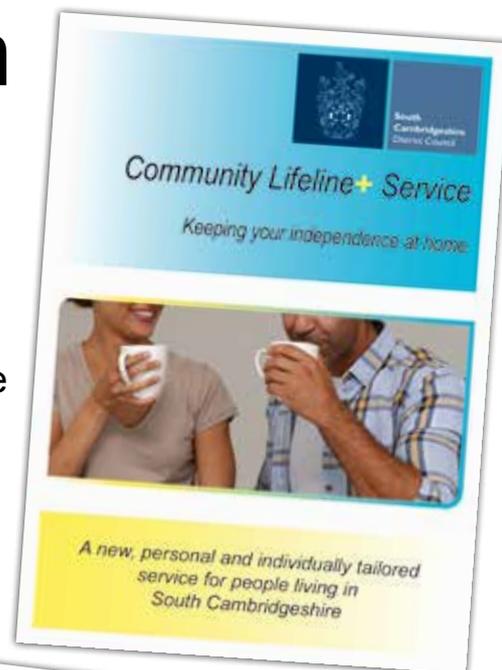
- help with arranging prescription deliveries
- emergency shopping
- assistance to do a weekly online shop
- accessing community transport for medical appointments.

There are three flexible options to Lifeline+, ranging from three telephone calls per week (Monday - Friday) costing just £1.10 per week. Up to having four home visits and one telephone call per week (Monday - Friday) costing just £6.70 per week.

We are also offering an option to make short term bookings which could cover periods when your relatives or carers are on holiday, etc. So that you can have the peace of mind of knowing that during this time you will be contacted by someone.

Marshall of Cambridge has sponsored the launch of the new scheme with a £5,000 contribution. We will use this funding to provide additional support for people who would benefit from the service but cannot afford the weekly payments.

Here in Supported Housing we all believe in what Lifeline+ offers and hope you will as well.



To find out more about Lifeline Plus visit www.scambs.gov.uk/lifelineplus, email lifelineplus@scambs.gov.uk or call 03450 450 500.

Using garage sites to create more homes

December 2013, saw the completion of the Council's first new build properties in over 20 years. The 1 bed houses in Linton were built on a former garage site that was no longer required and had become hard to let.

Following the completion of this successful project site visits by officers and the Council's appointed design team have identified 8 more garage sites that could potentially be suitable for the development of 21 more units of affordable housing. Officers are currently discussing the merits of each of these sites with colleagues in planning and a further report on progress will be available for the next edition of this newsletter.

Making the best use of what we have...

From this...



To this...



Good News

”I Never knew kindness existed like this anymore”

A Housing Officers story : A young family applied for housing and were accepted as homeless through our housing options team due to living in overcrowded & unsanitary conditions.

A viewing took place to a council home that the current tenants were vacating. During the viewing the young couple explained their circumstances to the tenant and the tenant stated that she was moving to be nearer her daughter and would be able to leave some household items for the young couple to give them a start in life.

As the young couple was waiting for the property things took a turn for the worse and the tenant or her daughter did not know when or if they would be able to move.

After a couple of months of tense waiting in a very stressful situation the tenants daughter contacted me to advise that the tenant would be returning to the property and they had some household items that the tenant wished to pass on to the young couple.

I received an inventory and was shocked and elated for the young couple when we found out the outgoing tenant had not just left some household items, but had left the entire contents of the property which included carpets, bed, 3 piece suite and even a 42” LCD TV.

When the young couple signed the tenancy for the property they stated that “they never knew that kindness like this existed anymore”. It was an extremely kind gesture that ensured a young family starting out on their own for the first time, did not have to struggle to afford the basics we all take for granted.

A lovely compliment from a tenant about one of the housing team.

Since he has taken on the job of this area he has been wonderful. He has helped so many tenants, including me. He is a very kind, relaxed and friendly Housing officer. He definitely gets things done and I think everyone whom in his area has benefited greatly from his presence and hard work.

I do think he should have a commendation for all the great work he has done since taking on this area. He has done more than any person would normally do and he truly cares for those he oversees in his council housing area. I honestly do not know what I would do now if we didn't have him and I hope his generosity and hard work can be recognised officially”.



Rural housing week

Myth busting tour marks rural housing week

Parish councillors have been on a tour of affordable housing schemes in a bid to remove myths and barriers to getting more projects off the ground in villages around Cambridge.

Over the last five years over 200 affordable homes have been built on rural exception sites in South Cambridgeshire, putting the district amongst the top performing areas in the country for delivering new homes in rural locations where planning permission would not be granted for market housing.

The tour hosted by South Cambridgeshire District Council and Cambridgeshire ACRE will help parish councils find out more about successful schemes in villages from Shepreth and Barrington, to Steeple Morden and Bassingbourn, so even more much-needed affordable homes can be delivered.

Over the next 12 months around 50 affordable homes are expected to be built on exception sites in South Cambridgeshire.



Cllr Mark Howell, South Cambridgeshire District Council's cabinet member for housing, said: "We have a fantastic track record of working with housing associations and parish councils to deliver much-needed affordable homes for local people, but more are always needed. Rural housing week showcases the vital role affordable housing plays in communities and by trying to break down some of the perceived barriers we hope we can continue our success and increase the number available."

Mark Deas, Rural Housing Enabler at Cambridgeshire ACRE, said: "Our Housing Needs Surveys continually demonstrate the challenges faced by rural communities. Many young people and families want their own home but also want to stay in their local community close to their family and social networks. Family support can be even more important to older people. However, the shortage of available properties allied to high prices is making a rural home inaccessible to people in housing need."

Solar PV

Do you remember the lovely summer we had? Especially the record breaking hours of sunshine we enjoyed in July. This was great news for those of you lucky to have solar panels installed.

The money saved on your bills in that period will certainly help during the winter months when you consume more electricity. And remember even during the winter months try and use more electricity during day to maximise your savings.

Over 2000 homes in the district now benefit from solar panels, not only saving you money but reducing our carbon footprint by using energy from a renewable source instead of relying on gas and coal. Our installation programme was one of the biggest schemes of its kind in the country and other councils and landlords are now following our lead.

If you have any questions about your solar panels, how they work, or how to maximise your savings, please contact our Warm Homes Team on 01954 713039



Snow Clearing

Can tenants and leaseholders clear snow?

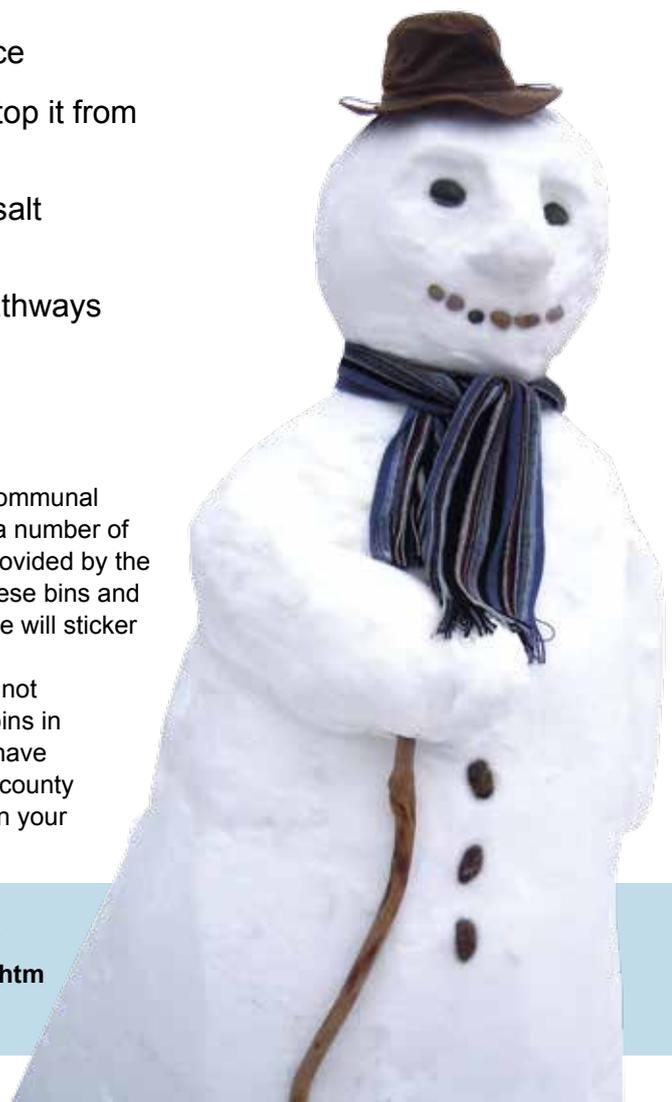
You can clear snow and ice from pavements yourself. It's unlikely that you'll be sued or held responsible if someone is injured on a path or pavement if you've cleared it carefully.

When you clear snow and ice:

- * Do it early in the day - it's easier to move fresh, loose snow
- * Don't use water - it might refreeze and turn to black ice
- * Use salt if possible - it will melt the ice or snow and stop it from refreezing overnight
- * You can use ash and sand if you don't have enough salt - it will provide grip underfoot
- * Pay extra attention when clearing steps and steep pathways - using more salt may help
- * Snow clearing can be hard work - don't attempt it unless you are fit and able.

We provide grit bins on our sheltered schemes, usually next to the communal room. We fill these bins in November each year, and upon request. On a number of our sheltered schemes there are additional grit bins which have been provided by the Parish Council. The parish council have the responsibility to maintain these bins and keep them filled. To clearly identify which grit bins are the council bins we will sticker them with a South Cambs District Council logo.

If you do not live on a sheltered /supported housing scheme you will not have grit bins provided by the council housing department. If there are bins in your area they will be Parish Council, County Council/Highways. If you have any concerns about your area please contact your parish council or the county council, or speak to your housing officer who will be happy to mediate on your behalf with these bodies.



www.gov.uk/clear-snow-road-path-cycleway for general advice

www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/transport/roads/winter/grittingroutes.htm

For information on the main gritting routes.

Tenants Alterations

- Hidden Danger

Sometimes the council's surveyors happen across interesting alterations that occasionally hide a disaster waiting to happen. In this case during the void process these doors were found to hide an "open" fire.

The warning notices attached to the doors don't quite convey the serious consequences of using this alteration.

What may seem like a solution to tidying away this fire was actually potentially life threatening. The original fire had been decommissioned leaving just a builders opening, this was then adapted. There was no fire surround but possibly most worryingly the material used to create the fire surround was wooden, not heat treated and showing signs of partial combustion to the back above the doors.

All of our open fires are regularly checked for soundness as we were not aware of this one we were unable to carry out the necessary checks until the property was empty.

We were lucky it wasn't too late.



Please contact us before making any alterations that may impact upon your health and wellbeing. The council are unlikely to refuse as long as the alterations are made according to current building regulations.

Repel Those Rodents

A few handy tips for you to prevent rodents coming to your home

- If you get rodents in your house call the professionals, seal up all holes inside and outside to prevent further entry, check your roof tiles and under the edges and guttering, as rodents are acrobats
- Never try to put rat poison down as children and pets can be greatly harmed even killed by poison, mouse traps are not advisable for the same safety reasons
- Eliminate all food sources around your house and garden to prevent infestation.
- Be aware rodents carry 35 diseases many of which can be carried to people and pets by ticks, mites and fleas
- Regularly treat your pets for fleas and check them often, don't forget rodents can be your pets favourite toy, so assume they may come into contact with each other

Many of us love to feed the birds and yes there are times, especially in winter months when the birds need our help. Please use proper bird feeders and never over fill, as any feed on the floor will encourage rodents.

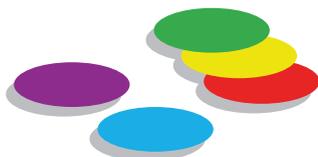
Carol Akribi - Tenant and TPG Member



Avoid 'payday' loan companies - Credit Unions are a cheaper alternative and can help you save

For some time we have been concerned over the growth of 'payday' and 'doorstep' loan companies which offer almost instant access to small loans at extremely high rates of interest often exaggerating financial hardship to those households least able to afford it.

South Cambs are committed to help people access good quality, affordable, financial services and one of the ways we will do this is to work closely with local Credit Unions.



Rainbow Saver Anglia Credit Union Ltd

We invited Rainbow Savers Credit Union to give a presentation to tenant representatives at our last Tenant Participation Group meeting in June 2014. The information was well received and it was felt it would be a good idea to publicise more details in the next newsletter.

Credit Unions are for everyone although they specialize in helping those who would otherwise have difficulty accessing ordinary bank products. They can provide a lifeline for folks grappling with their finances.

There are now about 500 Credit Unions in the UK, with over a million members and this number is increasing daily.

South Cambs Housing support Rainbow Savers Anglia Credit Union which has more than 4,000 members across East Anglia.

Rainbow Saver Credit Union is a financial co-operative which is owned and managed by its members, with many volunteers and a few paid staff, providing a safe place to save as well as low cost loans. Anyone aged 18 or over who lives or works in Cambridgeshire, Suffolk or Norfolk can join.

Why choose rainbow Credit Union:

You will be part of a savings and loans co-operative which provides financial services to people in the local area: people helping people through fair treatment and access to services that the high street banks can't be bothered with.

The credit union can also help tenants to manage their rent and benefits more easily, despite all the changes to the benefits system.

Even if you have previously been refused a bank card, Rainbow can offer a prepaid Visa Debit Card to all members. This gives you all you would want from a Debit Card with the benefit that you can never spend more than you have loaded onto the card from your credit union account.

Well over a thousand Cambridgeshire residents are already members of Rainbow Credit Union and saving regularly through Jam Jar accounts and Christmas Clubs. For example a young mum living in Cambridge who joined in April saved over £300 by October using the Christmas Club by saving £5 per week topped up whenever she could.



Your money is safe: Like banks, Credit Unions are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority so your money is safe and protected by law. Your savings also entitle you to free life insurance.

How to pay in money: You can pay in money using cash, cheques, a PayPoint Card, bank transfer, standing order or direct payment of your salary or benefits.

Loans: If you need a loan, you get a better deal the longer you have been saving with the Credit Union. Most members save regularly for at least 13 weeks and then apply for a loan of up to three times their savings. Income and expenditure forms are used to make sure people are in a position to repay the loan.

Typical Loan Example: Borrow £500, Repay £47.28 per month for 1 year and the interest charged will be £67.28. Other repayment periods are available and please note rates of interest can vary over time so check with Rainbow staff for the latest information.

You can repay a loan by any of the means you use to deposit funds.

How to join: To open your own credit union account call in at any of the local drop in points:

| | | |
|-------------------------------|---|--|
| Cambridge | Cambridge Rainbow Savers Mandela House 4 Regent Street Cambridge CB2 1BY | Mondays 11am to 1pm Thursdays 11am to 1pm |
| Cambridge | Cherry Hinton Family Centre Fishers Lane Cherry Hinton CB1 9HR | Tuesdays 2pm to 4pm |
| Histon & Impington | St Andrews Café School Hill Histon CB24 9JE | Fridays 11.30 am to 1pm |
| Sawston | John Huntingdon's Charity office Tannery Road Sawston CB22 3UW | Daily 12pm to 1pm |
| Sawston | OWL Cafe Sawston Free Church, High Street, Sawston CB22 3BG | Thursdays 12pm to 1pm |

Please note: Two forms of ID will be required - one to prove identity (e.g. passport or driving licence) and one to prove address (e.g. utility bill or wage slip - less than 3 months old). Full details of accepted documentation available on Rainbow's website.

There is a small one-off joining fee - currently £3 which South Cambs will meet for the first 100 tenants/leaseholders that join up.

For more information:

Rainbow Savers Credit Union: Tel:01502 584854
mail@rainbowsaver.org.uk or www.rainbowsaver.co.uk

South Cambs contact: Peter Moston T:01954 713037

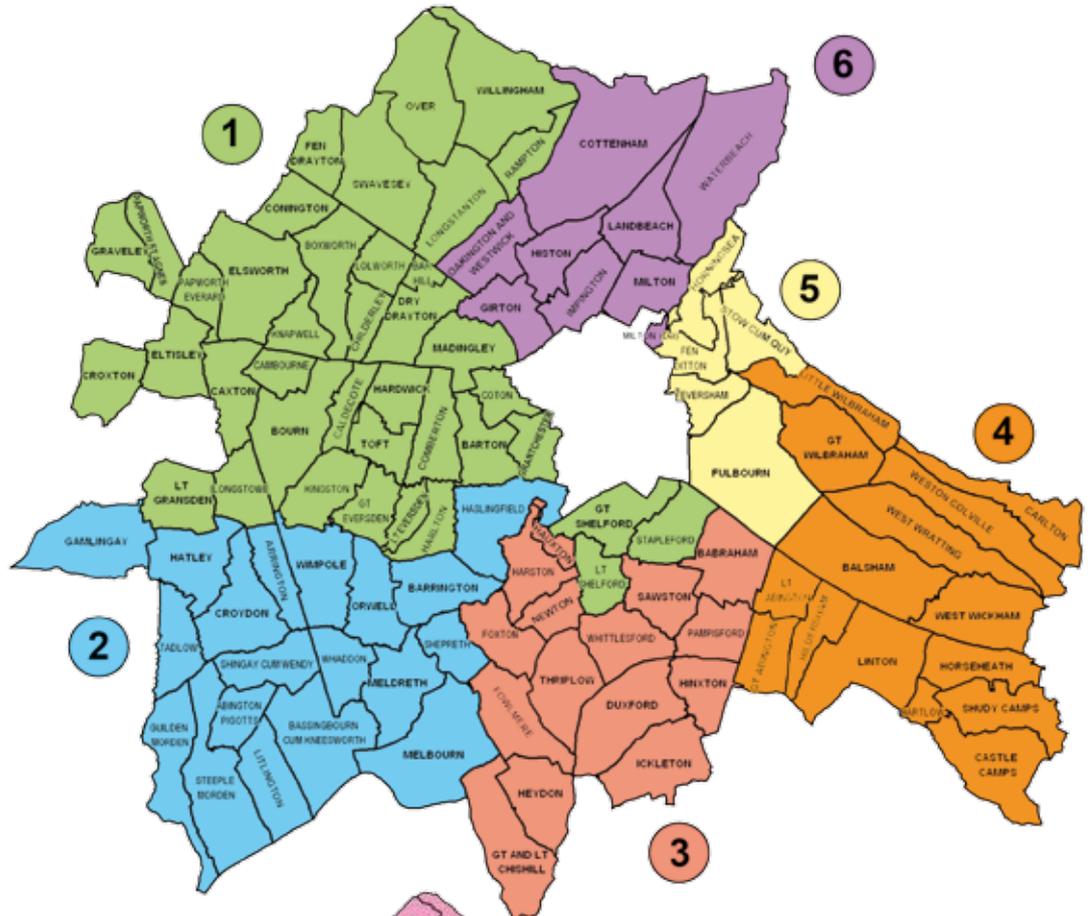


Your local area and your housing team

The map below shows the areas covered by each Housing Services Officer. Your Housing Services Officer is your first port of call for enquiries about your tenancy, neighbourhood, landscaping etc. Repairs need to be reported directly to Mears as our repairs service.

The Housing Officers are:

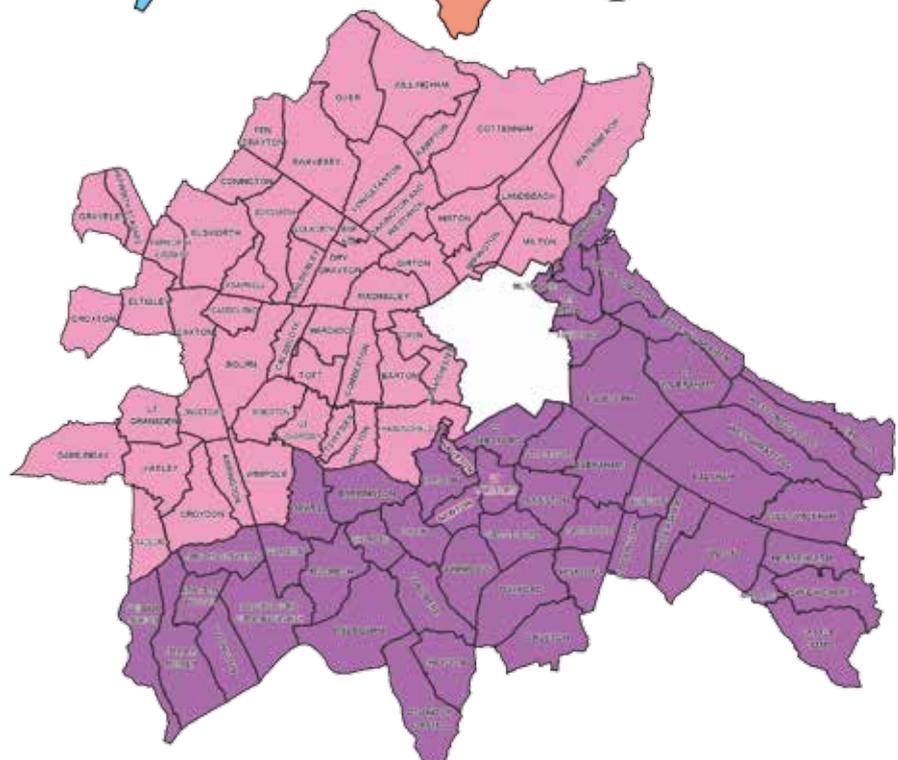
- Louise Moulding/
Cheryl Wilding**
- Andrew Cole**
- Simon Booth**
- Carly Freed**
- Vacant post**
- Lynne Roberts**



Neighbourhood Support

We now have a Neighbourhood Support Team managed by Sherri Lee and the map below shows the areas the 2 neighbourhood support officers cover

- Claire Whiteman**
- Pat Cassidy**





Our New Housing Company

The Council has set up new company, Ermine Street Housing to buy properties to rent. The purpose of the venture is to provide much needed homes and to make money to protect Council services. We know we have the skills and expertise to manage homes and we look forward to trying out these skills in the private sector.

Councillors have agreed a £7 million investment in a pilot project which could see us buy up to 40 homes. These would be rented on the open market to repay the initial investment and provide an income. The pilot will enable us to test the concept and could lead to committing to a larger scale investment in the future.

At the moment existing housing staff have been seconded to the new housing company and ten properties have been purchased with another ten in the pipeline.

The great news is that the Council was approached by the Ministry of Defence and asked if we wanted to lease houses on a small estate in Waterbeach which they owned, but had been vacant for a number of years. We took the Ministry up on their offer and decided that this would be the perfect opportunity for the new company to cut its teeth on acquiring, letting and managing homes. Ermine Street Housing took over the 27 homes on 1st May 2014, and managed to rent them all within a month. We contacted people from our waiting lists that had a connection in Waterbeach and had expressed an interest in living there. They were all overjoyed at moving into the spacious homes with large gardens. However, it must be pointed out these homes will eventually go back to Ministry of Defence to be used by service personnel in the future.

We are all looking forward to this exciting venture, and we are excited to be providing good quality rented homes for people in our district and beyond.

Duncan Vessey - Ermine Street Manager
 Emma George - Ermine Street Project Officer
 Stephen Hills - Director of Housing



For more information please contact Duncan Vessey on 01954 713139 or email duncan.vessey@scambs.gov.uk

Our Customer Contact Centre

Plus, other ways you can contact us...

Did you know that our Council has an in-house Customer Contact Centre located next to Reception in our HQ at Cambourne. The centre takes calls for the whole of the Council covering all of its services such as:

- Housing (Advice, Homelessness, Sheltered Schemes, Lifeline+, Garages),
- Revenues (Council Tax, Recoveries, Business Rates, direct debits)
- Benefits (Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support, change of circumstances),
- Fraud,
- Planning (Applications, Decision, Forms),
- Building Control (Site Inspections, Building Notice Certificates),
- Health and Environmental (Missed bins, assisted collections)
- Electoral (registrations), etc.

In fact over 150,000 calls are made to the Contact Centre each year. We employ 18 staff (including Manager and two Team Leaders) that are highly trained who work on a flexible rota basis between the hours of 8am-5.30pm, Monday to Friday to make sure the Contact Centre is staffed effectively at all times. At peak times, such as Council Tax reminders, more staff from that service are drafted in to help meet the demand, and when the welfare reforms hit in 2013 we had 6 extra temporary Benefit staff for a 6 months period to deal with the queries which were often complex and lengthy.

Interesting facts

- 85% of queries are dealt with by the Contact Centre at first point of resolution to conclusion
- We receive approximately 700 calls on average per day.
- We are presented with approx. 3,800 calls per week.
- The biggest volume of calls comes through our general enquiries line. If you want us to deal with your call as quickly and as efficiently as possible please, make sure you dial the correct number for the specific service you need for example: 03450 450 063 for Environmental Services relating to a missed bin!
- The biggest volume of calls and the most complex and time consuming to deal with are Revenues, Benefits and Housing. Calls can sometimes last 10 minutes to resolution.
- For your Housing queries the average number of calls per week to the contact centre is approx. 1,100.
- We are aware you may be on hold for some time - please do not give up - we aim to answer within 2 minutes but this may be longer at peak times. If you ring off and call back you will go to the back of the queue.
- Our peak times are: Monday's; Tuesday's if the Monday has been a Bank Holiday; every third week of the month when we are dealing with Council Tax reminders; please try to avoid calling at those times if you do not wish to hold for longer than normal.

On occasion call wait times are longer than we would like or expect. We are working hard within our budget to remedy this, and will shortly be adding three more full-time staff to the team.

You can access a huge amount of information via our website at www.scams.gov.uk. You can also report things and ask questions using it. The symbols are easy to follow: Report it.... Apply for it.... Pay for it..... So, if more of you use our on-line services via our website the Contact Centre can answer more calls or spend more time on each call; giving better customer service for all.



Please consult our website for information before calling as it is likely that the information you need IS on the website. Otherwise do call us, we are here to help.

Words of Wisdom from Thora Saunders, Tenant Participation Group Member



Thora Saunders is a long standing member of the Tenant Participation Group

and is passionate about helping the Council shape the housing service.

At the age of 93, she is our oldest member of TPG and brings a wealth of knowledge, compassion and enthusiasm to the group.

Putting the heart into housing is a sentiment that is dear to Thora; believing that the home should be the heart of family life to raise our children ,creating good citizens for the next generation.

Putting the Heart into Housing (written by Thora Saunders)

In the last century we developed the capacity to destroy ourselves; can we now develop the capacity to save ourselves? Will this century be one of happiness or self destructive greed?

Now more than ever we need to teach our children based on the tried and tested values of respect, loyalty and compassion. At its best bringing up our children is a reimagery of the world to come through the childhood we give to our children; they are the living messengers we send to a world we shall never see. They are our messengers to a time we shall never know. They are all we have and we must foster in them the best care for themselves and for others.

We provide the homes in which they are to be nurtured. Remember it is only people who can provide homes from houses, who can fill the rooms with laughter - and with tears - who can write "Welcome" on the mat and put a lighted Christmas tree in the window, where its golden shaft of light shines out into the darkness of a December night with its eternal message of hope.

Home - the place to where we all return sooner or later, to lick our wounds, to celebrate our triumphs, to be nurtured and cherished until we are ready to re-enter this complex and ever changing world in which we all live, ready to face any challenges which may be hurled at us.

Let our children take this message with them into the brave new world which awaits them, that we may rest in peace knowing that Today is the Tomorrow we worried about Yesterday; and all will be well.



Chicken Tikka Masala

This chicken tikka masala is an easy but flavoursome version of everyone's favourite mild-medium curry!

Serves: 4



Ingredients

- 4 chicken breast fillets, cut into 2.5cm cubes
- 2 garlic cloves, roughly chopped
- 2.5cm piece root ginger, roughly chopped
- 400g tin chopped tomatoes
- 4 tablespoons natural yoghurt
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 2 tablespoons masala curry paste
- salt and pepper to season
- 1 tablespoon plain flour
- 50ml water
- 3 tablespoons fresh coriander, chopped
- coriander leaves to garnish

Method

Prep: 20min › Cook:20min

1. Put the tomatoes, garlic, ginger and yoghurt into a blender or food processor and process until the mixture is smooth and set aside.
2. Heat the oil in a large frying pan, add the onion and fry over a medium heat for 3 to 4 minutes, stirring constantly.
3. Stir in the masala curry paste and fry for a further 1 minute over a medium heat, stirring once or twice.
4. Add the tomato mixture and chicken to the pan and mix together. Season with salt and pepper. Mix the flour and water together and stir into the pan off the heat. Return to the heat and bring to the boil stirring constantly. Cover and cook over a gentle heat for 15 minutes.
5. Sprinkle in the chopped coriander and serve immediately garnished with coriander leaves.

Victoria sandwich cake

Serves: 6

Ingredients

- 225g butter (room temperature) or vegetable spread (at least 70% fat), plus extra for greasing
- 225g caster sugar
- 225g self-raising flour
- 2 level tsp baking powder
- 4 large eggs

For the filling and topping:

- 4 tbsp raspberry or strawberry jam
- A little caster sugar, for sprinkling



Method

Prep: 20 min › Cook:20-30 min

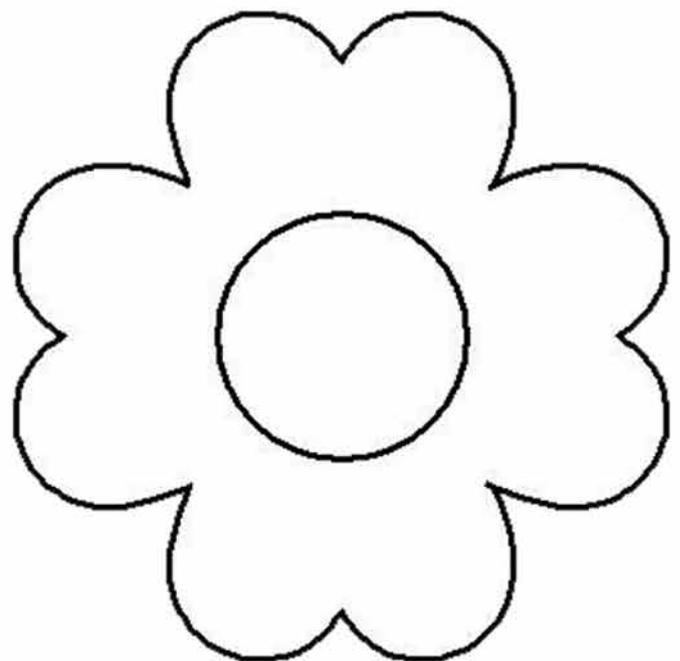
1. Place the butter or vegetable spread in a large bowl, then add the caster sugar, self-raising flour, and baking powder. Crack the eggs one at a time and add to the bowl.
2. Using the electric mixer on a slow speed, beat for two minutes, or until smooth. The mixture will be soft enough to drop off the beaters when you lift them up.
3. Divide the mixture equally between the prepared cake tins and level the surfaces with a palette knife or spatula, smoothing it over the surface of the two cakes.
4. Bake both cakes for 20 to 30 minutes. When done, they will shrink away from the sides and the tops will spring back if pressed. Cool for two minutes; loosen the edges with a knife.
5. After about 10 minutes, push the cakes out of their tins on their bases, invert them onto a thick tea towel, and remove the bases. Cool the cakes the right way up on a rack.
6. Soften the jam with a palette knife. When the cakes are cold, remove the lining papers and invert one cake layer onto a plate. Spread with jam, put the other layer on top, and sprinkle with caster sugar

Remembrance Day Word Search

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

battle
 bravery
 courage
 flanders
 freedom
 hero
 honor
 infantry
 liberty
 loss
 November
 patriot

peace
 poppy
 remember
 sacrifice
 soldier
 troops
 valor
 veteran
 victory
 war
 wreath



A gentle reminder for your diary -



TPG - (Tenant Participation Group)



February 2 - 6.30pm - 8.45pm
 March 2 - 6.30pm - 8.45pm
 April 13 - 6.30pm - 8.45pm

May 11 - 6.30pm - 8.45pm
 June 1 - 6.30pm - 8.45pm



Disability Forum Meetings

February 3 - 2pm - 4pm
 April 7 - 2pm - 4pm
 June 2 - 2pm - 4pm

Normally held at the communal room, Denson Close, Waterbeach, CB25 9RN
 Please call the resident involvement team ahead of time to confirm on 01954 713295

Leaseholder Forum

Next year's leaseholder forum dates as follows:
 16 Feb, 14 May, 17 Sept, 3 Dec

All will run from 10am to 12pm - All meetings in Council Chamber at SCDC Offices Cambourne CB23 6EA

Sheltered Housing Forums

North Area Forum - Communal Room, St Vincents Close, Girton: Tuesday 10 March 2015 - 2pm - 4pm

West Area Forum - Communal Room, Elin Way, Meldreth: Wednesday 11 March 2015 - 10am - 12pm

East Area Forum - Communal Room, Lettice Martin Croft Whittlesford: Thursday 12 March 2015 - 10am - 12pm



Dont forget to bid for the Tenant sponsored community grants

Monday - Friday (8am to 5.30pm)

03450 450 061 | Benefits

03450 450 062 | Building Control

03450 455 214 | Elections

03450 450 063 | Environmental Services

0800 731 1892 | Fraud

03450 450 051 | Housing Services

03450 455 218 | Payments (automated)

03450 455 215 | Planning

03450 450 064 | Revenues

03450 450 500 | General Enquiries

Emergency Out Of Hours Numbers (after 5.30pm)

Dangerous Structure Enquiries (Building Control)

01253 501 055

Environmental Health Emergency

0845 609 5437

Homelessness Emergency Service

0845 609 5438

Repair Numbers

Housing Repairs, Electric Heating and Hot Water Repairs
(Mears, 24hrs)

0800 085 1313

Gas Heating/Hot Water, Repairs and Servicing (Morrison, 24hrs)

0845 650 0065

Oil and Solid Fuel Heating, Repairs and Servicing
(Rule & Parker, 24hrs)

01480 466 893

Air Source Heat Pump (ASHP) Heating, Repairs and Servicing
(Rule & Parker, 24hrs) **01480 466 893**

(Foster, 24hrs) **01945 586 999**

Gas Escape, Smell of Fumes, Suspected Carbon Monoxide Leak (National Grid, 24hrs)

0800 111 999

www.scambsgov.uk

For more information visit:
www.scambsgov.uk/tenant-information



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