


Tenants' Voice

Issue Number 4, Winter 2013/14

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The start of the demolition of Gibraltar Close flats and Collingwood House. Pictured are Janet Samways (centre, a former resident); the Mayor, Cllr Susan Bayford (sitting in the cab); Cllr Brian Bayford (front, right) and Andrew Fiske, Head of Strategic Housing (back right). Pictured also are representatives from Leadbitter who are currently demolishing the buildings to make way for a new sheltered housing scheme on the site.

A newsletter for and by
Tenants and Leaseholders

FAREHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Welcome to our Winter Newsletter 2013/14

Welcome to our winter 2013/14 newsletter from the Chair of the Tenants' Forum.

The Tenants' Forum, Sheltered Housing Forum and Leaseholder Forum have been working hard on behalf of all tenants and leaseholders during the last year. Meetings are well attended and issues are discussed which affect all including Tenancy Reform, Welfare Reform and anti-social behaviour.

One issue which has regularly come up at meetings is window cleaning and we are beginning to see improvements to this service. The grounds maintenance service has also improved over the last year.

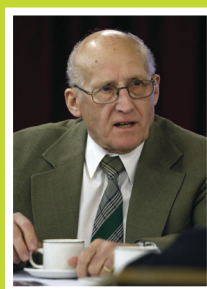
By being involved you can make a difference. You can do this by being an estate monitor and giving feedback about the services provided where you live or you can come along to a Forum meeting. You can also join the panel of tenants who help to produce this newsletter.

Sadly, three involved tenants passed away last year, Iris Host Terry Payne and Bert Chivers. All will be missed for their contributions to tenant involvement.



Steve Lovelock

Chair of the Tenants' Forum



Obituary – Terry Payne

Terry Payne was a respected and knowledgeable member of the Tenants' Forum who sadly passed away in October 2013.

Terry represented tenants at meetings with our cleaning

contractors One Complete Solution. He was also an active member of both the Tenants' Forum and Sheltered Housing Forum.

His contribution to improving services provided to tenants will be sadly missed.

Useful Contacts



To report a repair you can do the following:

- Ring freephone number 0800 1412194
- Fill in a 'report a repair' form on our website by visiting www.fareham.gov.uk
- E-mail to responsiverepairs@fareham.gov.uk
- Visit the Civic Offices between 8:45am and 5:15pm Monday to Friday.

To report a gas repair or problem contact:

- Emergency out of hours 0800 374485 (freephone)
- Gas repairs (anytime) 0800 7812739 (freephone)

For gas leaks or if you suspect the presence of carbon monoxide contact 0800 111 999.

Planned repairs – contact 01329 236100 or e-mail buildingprojects@fareham.gov.uk

Council Tax & Housing Benefit – 01329 236100

Right to Buy – if you are interested in buying your home, contact Tenancy Services on 01329 236100.

Website www.fareham.gov.uk

CAB (see article on page 3)

Fareham Community Savers

Fareham Community Savers enable local residents to seek help and support with their finances and how to manage their money more effectively. For more information, contact:

- Telephone – 07511 900833
- E-mail – fcs@sehco.org.uk
- Website – www.sehco.org.uk



How the Citizens' Advice Bureau can help you with debt

Don't struggle with debt on your own!

Rises in the cost of living and recent benefit changes, including a reduction in help with council tax, are making it harder than ever for some people to manage financially. Fareham Borough Council is working in partnership with Fareham Citizens Advice Bureau to provide help to residents who are at risk of losing their home through debt, or who fall behind with their council tax.

Two specialist debt advisers are on hand to help – Jacquie Smart and Theo Popel – who are based at the CAB's office on the first floor of the County Library.

For free, confidential, impartial and independent advice about these or any other issues you may have, you can contact Fareham Citizens Advice Bureau direct at:

1st Floor County Library Building
Osborn Road, Fareham PO16 7EN

Open Mon to Fri 10am to 4pm, Thu from 5pm to 6.30pm

Closed until 12.30pm for staff training on 3rd Wed of month.

Also at Highlands Hub, 103 Highlands Road, Fareham PO15 6HZ on Tue from 9.30am to 3pm.

Telephone Advice: 0300 456 2987
www.farehamcab.org.uk



Are you interested in saving money on your energy bills?
Switch Hampshire

Temperatures are dropping and energy costs are rising. Register with Switch Hampshire to see if you can get a better deal on your energy bills.*



Simply register for free by **17 February 2014** and we will let you know if you could switch and save.

01962 846828 • www.hants.gov.uk/switch

Area Housing Estates Officer	Estate/area to be inspected	Date of inspection
Stubbington & South Fareham Matt Elsbury 01329 824492 • melsbury@fareham.gov.uk	Salerno House & Sicily House	11th February 2014 at 10:30am
	St Michael's House	4th March 2014 at 10:30am
Portchester & South Fareham Sian Jeffery Monday & Tuesday 01329 824484 • sjeffery@fareham.gov.uk Keith Nevitt Wednesday – Friday 01329 824484 • knevitt@fareham.gov.uk	St Quentin House; Ramillies; Marne; Tebourba; Caen; Vimy & Flanders.	25th February 2013 at 10:30am. Meet outside St Quentin House.
	Carberry Drive, Norgett & Foxbury	19th June 2014 at 10am
	Garden Court	24th July 2014 at 10am
Western Wards Helen Ayers Monday – Wednesday 01329 824464 • hayers@fareham.gov.uk Tania Meskouri Thursday & Friday 01329 824464 • tmeskouri@fareham.gov.uk	Northmore Close	10th February 2014 at 10:30am
	Birchen Close & Beverley Close	13th February 2014 at 10:30am
North Fareham Jon Johnson 01329 824458 • jjohnson@fareham.gov.uk	Frosthole Close (meet outside residents' lounge)	25th March 2014 at 10:30am
	Gaza, Arras, Nashe & Hillson House (meet outside Gaza House)	3rd June 2014 at 10:30am



Tenants' Forum

Thursday 13th February 2014 at 18:30pm
at Ferneham Hall

Annual General Meeting

27th March 2014 at 18:30pm
at Ferneham Hall

Sheltered Housing Forum

Wednesday 12th March 2014 at 10:30
at Assheton Court, Portchester

Leaseholders' Forum

18th February 2014 at 4pm in the
Vannes Room, Civic Offices

Housing Tenancy Board

22nd April 2014 at 6pm in the Civic Offices

All tenants are welcome to attend.
For more information contact Jennie Larkin.

Feedback from Estate Inspections

From July to September 2013, 15 estate inspections were carried out. Details of some of the sites visited, issues identified & outcomes are shown below:



Areas Inspected (and date)	Issues Identified & Action Taken	Outcomes
Coniston Walk (26/07/2013)	No litter/dog waste bin	Bin ordered
Dolphin Court (09/08/2013)	Weeds in drying area	Work now complete
Northways & Westways (23/08/2013)	Blocked guttering to three properties in Northways	An order for the clearance has been placed
Bishopsfield Road flats and maisonettes (12/07/2013)	Poor window cleaning to communal areas.	Reported to Monitoring Officer and clean has now taken place
Garden Court and Newtown flats (12/09/2013)	Condition of rear boundary fence deteriorating	Building Services to inspect and repair
Frosthole Close (06/08/2013)	Blocked guttering and broken boundary fencing	Guttering cleared & fence to be inspected.
Gaza House, Arras House and Nashe Way (27/09/2013)	Uneven paved area outside Gaza House. Rubbish outside Arras House	Paved area to be surveyed. Rubbish removed outside Arras House property & tenant invoiced.
Nashe House, Hillson House, Hill Walk & Park Walk (27/09/2013)	Bins not put away by tenants at Nashe House & recycling bins contaminated	Letter to all residents stating bins must be put back in bin area and recycling leaflets sent to the whole block.
Ransome Close (27/08/2013)	Build-up of weeds & litter in the walkways off Ransome Close	Streetscene to carry out a one-off tidy to these areas
St Michael's Road (10/09/2013)	Overgrown conifers at rear of flats.	Quotes being obtained & trees to be reduced in height.

Council get family back in home just in time for Christmas

Fareham Borough Council's hardworking contractors restored and renovated a home in Hillson Drive that was destroyed by a fire last year, just in time for Christmas.

Lora Jenkins and her three young children were forced out of their home after an electrical fire started and completely destroyed the house and all of their belongings.

However, Fareham Borough Council drafted in extra contractors who pulled out all the stops, to ensure that the family was back in their home for Christmas.



Picture: 'The News', Portsmouth

South Coast Training

South Coast Training offers tenants an opportunity to attend a workshop about a topical issue so that they can learn more about it. It also gives the opportunity to meet tenants from other organisations such as Gosport Borough Council, Southampton City Council, Winchester and Portsmouth.

The next event will take place in April 2014 and the topics to be covered are Mental Health and Wellbeing; Housing Law; Committee Skills (for involved tenants); Benefit Myths and skills needed to get people back into work. Interested? Please contact Jennie Larkin for more information.



All about leaseholders

Leaseholders are responsible for paying their service charges and maintaining the inside of their property and garden if they have one. They are also responsible for any communal area and pay for its upkeep through their service charge as well as repairs and maintenance to the exterior.

There are 62 shared ownership properties. These are let on 99 year terms and the leaseholder is responsible for maintaining the property inside and out.

There are also a handful of leasehold houses that are let on 99 year terms and are full repairing leases.

The Council employs a part-time Leasehold Management Officer who deals with enquiries about their lease and service charges and enquiries from solicitors. The Leasehold Management Officer is Hugh Saich and he can be contacted on 01329 824499 or e-mail hsaich@fareham.gov.uk

There is a leaseholders' forum held four times a year which deals with issues that leaseholders have.

The Council's website has a section devoted to leasehold issues and can be found at: www.fareham.gov.uk/housing

Did you know...? Although leaseholder numbers are not as great as tenants, they make up a sizeable number.

Did you know...? There are 443 leasehold properties. When buying their property, leaseholders purchase the lease for 125 years or the remainder of the term (if one has already been drawn up for the property or block)



Do you have Contents Insurance?

If a fire breaks out in your home, or floodwater pours in, or a break-in occurs, have you considered how you will replace your possessions?

Just because such events are rare, there is no reason not to guard against them happening.

Please be aware that contents insurance is your responsibility. The Council pay for Buildings Insurance but not for your belongings, so, we will not pay if they are damaged or destroyed, unless it's our fault.

By taking out a Home Contents Insurance Policy you would be able to replace your belongings should such an event happen.

Although Fareham Borough Council cannot recommend a particular company, there are a number of locally based companies who would be able to advise on the best option for you. You could also contact the company that you insure your car with as sometimes they offer special rates.

For more information on companies offering Tenant Home Contents Insurance Policies, please use an internet search engine, or consult the Yellow Pages or other local directory for Home Contents Insurance.



Property in North Fareham damaged by fire last year.

Tenancy Reform

There has been a lot of discussion about changes to Housing Benefit.

Property size criteria have been introduced for new and existing working-age Housing Benefit claimants living in social housing. You are considered to be of working age if both you and your partner (if any) were born after the 5th of October 1951.

The restrictions apply to all Housing Benefit working age claimants where they (and any family) are under-occupying their home. Similar restrictions have applied to claims in the private-rented sector for some years now.

The new system allows one bedroom for each person or couple living as part of the household, with the following exceptions:

- A child under the age of 16 is expected to share with one other child of the same gender;
- A child under 10 years will be expected to share with one other child under 10, regardless of gender;
- A bedroom for a non-resident carer will be allowed in the calculation of necessary bedrooms where that carer provides necessary overnight care for the claimant or their partner.

What difference will tenants see in their Housing Benefit?

- Tenants will see their Housing Benefit payment reduced by 14% of their rent for under-occupation by one bedroom and by 25% for under-occupation by two or more bedrooms.
- Based on the current average rent of £58.76, a tenant who receives full housing benefit but who is under-occupying by one bedroom will see their Housing Benefit reduced by about £8.25 a week. A tenant who is under-occupying by two or more bedrooms will see a reduction of about £14.70 per week.
- If your Housing Benefit is cut you will have to pay your landlord the difference between your Housing Benefit and your rent.

Please contact your Area Housing Estates Officer if you have any queries. See contact details on Page 4.



Help us to spot Housing Cheats

50,000 social houses in the UK are thought to be occupied by someone other than the original tenant or by someone who has obtained the property dishonestly. At the same time there are nearly 2 million families waiting for a council house and 250,000 households classed as overcrowded.

Fareham Borough Council is part of the Hampshire Tenancy Fraud Forum, which is working to tackle social housing fraud across the county. However, we need your help in spotting housing fraud in your neighbourhood.

For example:

- You might know someone who has another home they haven't declared or who has given false information in their housing or homeless application.
- You might be suspicious because the tenants of a property near you keep changing.
- You might suspect that a property is not being occupied.

If you think someone might be committing housing fraud please Call our confidential fraud hotline on 01329 824667.

Alternatively e-mail us at corporatefraud@fareham.gov.uk

or use our online form at www.fareham.gov.uk/housing/hsgfraud.aspx

All reports will be treated with the strictest confidence and you don't have to give your name or address, if you prefer not to.

DO YOU HAVE A WORKING SMOKE ALARM AT HOME?

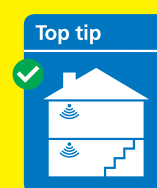
IF NOT YOU ARE FOUR TIMES MORE LIKELY TO DIE IF A FIRE STARTS IN YOUR HOME



226 people die each year in fires in their homes, caused by smoking materials, cooking, candles and other things such as faulty electrical wiring or appliances.

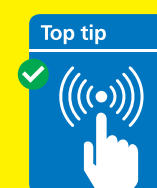
You can reduce the risk of fire in your home by following some simple fire safety steps.

1



Fit smoke alarms on each level of your home.

2



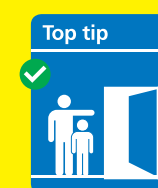
Test your smoke alarms weekly. Never remove the batteries.

3



Put it out. Right out! Make sure you put cigarettes out properly and never smoke in bed.

4



Plan an escape route and make sure everyone knows it and where door and window keys are kept.

Social housing landlords have a responsibility to you and your home and must ensure that gas and electrical appliances they supply are safe and in good working order. Your landlord may also fit smoke alarms in shared accommodation and communal areas. Speak to your landlord if you have any questions or concerns. **Contact your local Fire and Rescue Service for further fire safety information.**



**In the event of a fire
Get out, stay out and call 999
Don't attempt to tackle a fire yourself**

www.facebook.com/firekills

Word Search - Around the Borough

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

ABBEY • CASTLE • CHURCH • CREEK • FAREHAM • HILLHEAD
LEISURECENTRE • LOCKSHEATH • MUSEUM • PARKGATE
PORTCHESTER • STUBBINGTON • TITCHFIELD • WARSASH

The quiz about Fareham featured in the last edition of 'Tenants' Voice' was won by Jan McClean. Jan won a £20 Marks & Spencer shopping voucher.



Letters & poems to the editor

Do you have something you would like to share with other tenants or leaseholders? Have you got a suggestion about how your estate could be improved?

If you would like the chance to win a shopping voucher, please send in a letter, poem, recipe or a good idea and if it is published, you will be sent a voucher.

Please send in to
Jennie Larkin by e-mail
jlarkin@fareham.gov.uk or
by post to the Civic Offices,
Civic Way, Fareham,
Hampshire PO16 7AZ

Contact

Fareham Borough Council Tenancy Services, Department of Community, Civic Offices, Civic Way, Fareham, Hampshire PO16 7AZ

E-mail: jlarkin@fareham.gov.uk or tel. 01329 824463 – Tenant Involvement Officer

E-mail: hsaich@fareham.gov.uk or tel. 01329 824499 – Leasehold Management Officer

Website: www.fareham.gov.uk (look under the A to Z at Tenant Involvement/Participation).

If you would like to receive this publication in another format such as Braille or audio tape or in another language, please contact our Customer Service Centre on 01329 236100.