

# Tenants' Voice

Winter  
2016

A newsletter for and by  
Tenants and Leaseholders

3 | What you can expect from  
a gas service

3-4 | Gardens at Trafalgar Court  
and Melvin Jones House

4 | Dates for your diary

5-8 | Annual Report

9 | Housing & Planning Act 2016  
– what it means for tenants

11 | Estate inspections

*Trafalgar Court - Silver Gilt medal winner for  
Community Garden at the Fareham in Bloom Awards*

**FAREHAM**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL





Photo of the entrance to Crofton Court  
(photo courtesy of Terry Blackburn).

# Hello,

The Queen's 90th birthday has been celebrated and summer now seems long gone. Christmas is over and we look forward to a New Year.

We do hope you enjoy this issue and find useful information in it.

Please remember we welcome your articles and comments.

*Editorial Team*

## Goodbye to Keith Nevitt

At the end of December 2016, Fareham Borough Council said goodbye to Area Housing Estates Officer, Keith Nevitt. Keith worked for the Council for seven and a half years and was a common sight out on the estates in all weathers.

Keith has been replaced by Lauren Bedford who will job share with Sian Jeffery and both will be the housing officers for Portchester and South West Fareham.

We wish Keith a long and happy retirement.

## Paying your rent:

The Council is currently reviewing the way in which we collect rent payments via Direct Debit. We are looking to collect money more often in order to make it easier for people to pay using this method. In the meantime, rent payments can be made in the following ways:

**Direct Debit:** You can now set up a Direct Debit over the phone during office hours (8:45am to 5:15pm) by calling 01329 236100. Alternatively, we can send you a form or you can email: housing@fareham.gov.uk

**Online** at [www.fareham.gov.uk](http://www.fareham.gov.uk) and look up Housing Rents

**Telephone** our automated service (available 24/7) on 0845 6066876 or during office hours (8:45am to 5:15pm) call 01329 236100.

**Visit the Council Offices** between 8:45am and 4pm. Post a cheque to the address on the back of this newsletter (do not post cash)

**Telephone/internet banking through your own bank.** The Council's details are Fareham Borough Council BP Account. Account number 07020066 and the sort code is 524132.



*Photo of Melvin Jones House which won an award for Fareham in Bloom.*

## Melvin Jones House:

The tenants of Melvin Jones House celebrated The Queen's 90th birthday with a coffee/tea morning and as The Queen was having an orange drizzle cake, we did too!

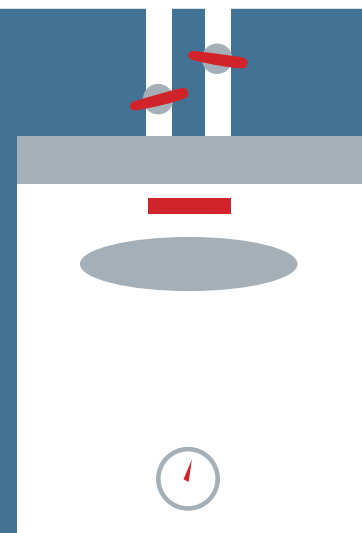
All enjoyed it and we look forward to the next celebration.

## Gas Servicing – what to expect from TSG

Council tenants have their boilers serviced once a year to ensure that it is running safely and efficiently. It is part of your tenancy agreement that you let our engineer from TSG into your home to service your boiler and it is also a legal requirement. Poorly maintained or faulty boilers can present a health hazard as dangerous levels of carbon monoxide can be released. They are particularly dangerous because you cannot smell the fumes.

Our engineer will inspect your boiler and controls to make sure they are operating safely.

- The inspection will include checking your boiler for corrosion and leaks.
- Your boiler casing will be removed to check the functioning of its main components.
- A gas pressure check will ensure your boiler is operating at the correct gas pressure.
- A flue test will ensure that no unsafe emissions are being released from your boiler.
- Your boiler's parts will be cleaned, if required.
- Your boiler's casing will be put back on and properly sealed.



- Our engineer will leave a checklist with you including all of the relevant information you need about the safety of your boiler.

Leaseholders are responsible for servicing their boilers and it is a legal requirement that this is carried out annually if you sub-let.





## Mr John Elsey, Trafalgar Court garden

John Elsey is the inspiration behind the lovely gardens at Trafalgar Court, which were only planted out in April 2016 and were award winners in Fareham in Bloom 2016. John enjoys gardening and was persuaded by the other residents at Trafalgar Court (and Sue, the Sheltered Housing Officer) to enter the gardens into Fareham in Bloom.

John is a relative newcomer to Trafalgar Court and has dedicated his time to improving the gardens there for the benefit of all. His work and efforts were recognised with a Voluntary Service Award for 'dedication to Horticulture and Community Gardening'. In addition to this, Trafalgar Court won a Silver Gilt Medal 2016 for their first time entry into the Local Authority Sheltered Housing category of Fareham in Bloom.

John said that many residents of Trafalgar Court had helped with the gardens either directly or by making signs and other garden

ornaments. Others have donated pots, plants and ornaments including the local post-delivery workers, local dog walkers and relatives and friends of those living at Trafalgar Court.

John attended the awards ceremony with three ladies from Trafalgar Court, Val Williams; Maureen Hazzard and Gwen Goldring. They all enjoyed the event and were delighted to win.

John's plans for Trafalgar Court now include encouraging wildlife including birds and hedgehogs.

## Dates for your diary 2017

### Tenants' and Leaseholders' Forum meetings at Ferneham Hall

**Thursday 19th January 2017 at 1:30pm** – Housing and Planning Bill – what it means to you

**Thursday 6th April 2017 at 6:30pm** – Annual General Meeting – review of resident involvement

**Thursday 27th July 2017 at 6:30pm** – changes to how tenants can pay their rent

**Thursday 9th November 2017 at 1:30pm** – the maintenance service.

### Estate Monitor/Block Captain meeting:

**Meeting on 23rd May 2017 at 10:30am** at Ferneham Hall.

### Health & Housing Policy Development & Review Panel:

**Thursday 19th January 2017 at 6pm**

# Annual report to tenants 2015/16

This report is produced in order to keep you up to date with how well the council is performing and to let you know how we have improved your homes over the last year. The report also tells you what we have spent money on in 2015/16; our new build sheltered housing scheme and information about how you can get involved to ensure that we are offering the best possible service to you.

## How much did we spend in 2015/16?

**£4.027 million**

on repairs, maintenance and communal services

**£3.19 million**

on managing tenancies and homes

**£0.465 million**

on sheltered housing

**£1.728 million**

in interest

**£4.074 million**

on transfer of funds

## How much money did the Council receive in 2015/16?



**£11.47 million**

in rent from tenants



**£0.83 million**

in service charges



**£0.025 million**

from the Government

## Improving and repairing homes:

**99%** of Council homes meet the Decent Homes Standard meaning your home is safe; has modern services/facilities and is comfortable

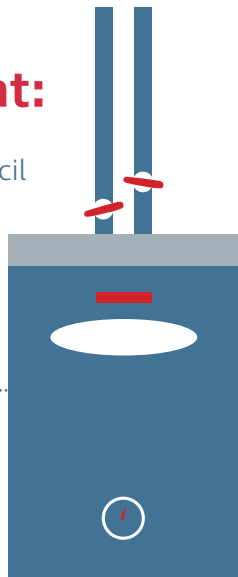
**64 kitchens** and **98 bathroom** modernisations were carried out to occupied homes and **56 kitchens** and **73 bathrooms** for empty homes

**New** front doors and windows were fitted to a number of homes

## Gas servicing and boiler replacement:

**99.94%** of gas boilers in Council homes were serviced in 2015/16. Where access proved difficult, the Council isolated the gas supply or, in some cases forced entry into the property.

Old inefficient boilers are being replaced with more environmentally friendly condensing boilers. Boilers were replaced in 225 homes.



## Impact of Welfare Reform:

In April 2016, the 105 tenants of working age who under-occupy their homes saw a reduction in the amount of Housing Benefit they received by as much as 25%.

Most of those affected by this reduction are managing or have moved to a smaller property. For some of those who are struggling, there is help in the form of Discretionary Housing Payment.

If you have been affected by this change, or know someone who has and you want to know more, please contact a Housing Officer or a member of the Benefits Team.

## Empty Council Homes and Housing Allocations:



Between April 2015 and March 2016, **185 Council homes were re-let**



The time taken to re-let homes was approximately **52 days**

## Housing rents and arrears:

At the end of March 2016 **rent arrears** totalled **£233,615**

There were **29 possession hearings** in the county court for rent owed and anti-social behaviour

There were **three evictions** for non-payment of rent

**£174, 941** was lost in rent as a result of empty homes (1.55% of the total rent due for the year)



**71** homes were offered to existing tenants and **150** to new tenants. **98** of these homes were general purpose and **87** were sheltered housing accommodation.

## HomeSwapper:



Two hundred Fareham Council tenants are currently registered on HomeSwapper and are looking for an exchange. During 2015/16 a total of 17 tenants moved home by way of an exchange. Tenants can register on HomeSwapper online via [www.homeswapper.co.uk](http://www.homeswapper.co.uk)





## Managing Anti-Social Behaviour:

### Housing Officers dealt with 21 reported incidents of anti-social behaviour in 2015/16.

In a small number of cases, tenants agreed to an Acceptable Behaviour Contract (ABC) instead of risking the loss of their home. ABC's last for 6 months initially and the tenants' behaviour is closely monitored. If the terms of the ABC are broken, tenants can be evicted.

There were five serious anti-social behaviour cases during the year. Three of these resulted in notice being served on the tenant with a view to taking court action which could lead to possible eviction.

Housing Officers work closely with the Council's Community Safety Team and the local police on anti-social behaviour cases.

## Tenants' and Leaseholders' Forum



In 2015/16 the Tenants' and Leaseholders' Forum met four times to discuss housing issues of interest and concern.

**Dates of meetings** are published in newsletters; our website and in the reception area at the Council's offices.

## Health and Housing Panel

A tenant representative attends the Council's Health & Housing Panel. The Panel looks at how well Housing Services are delivered and identifies possible service improvements.

Any tenant or leaseholder can attend and observe the meetings. Details of meeting dates are advertised on the Council's website and the newsletter.



## Ways to have your say

**There are a number of ways you can help to improve homes including:**

**Estate Monitors** – provide feedback on services on estates such as cleaning and grounds maintenance

**Contract Performance Groups** – monitor the performance of our contractors and provide direct feedback to the contractor regarding cleaning; grounds maintenance and gas servicing




**Editorial Panel** – this group helps put together the tenants newsletter 'Tenants' Voice'

## Tenants making a difference

Tenants have an important role in ensuring that we offer the best service that we can. You can tell us what we do well and what we could improve.

### How do tenants make a difference?

**Throughout the year tenant representatives have:**

-  Helped to analyse housing budgets
-  Monitored housing work programmes such as kitchen and bathroom improvements
-  Looked at how well contractors carry out housing repairs; gas servicing; block cleaning and grounds maintenance



## Training and support

Fareham Borough Council works with neighbouring councils and housing associations to provide two training events each year. These provide an opportunity for up to 20 tenants to receive training and to gain knowledge about things such as Housing Law and how to improve local housing services.

The Council pays the travel expenses of tenants attending meetings. We also pay for room hire and refreshments and organise agendas and minutes.

## How can people get involved?

Tenants can **find out more** about the above groups by contacting the Tenant Involvement Officer, Jennie Larkin on **01329 824463** or email **jlarkin@fareham.gov.uk**. You can also look at Tenant Involvement on our website **www.fareham.gov.uk**

## New Build Schemes

### Sylvan Court is a new sheltered housing scheme at Coldeast, Sarisbury

The scheme will have 25 self-contained one bedroom flats and 11 self-contained two bedroom flats. Facilities will include an emergency alarm system; door entry system; lifts; communal lounge and kitchen area; activity room; assisted bathroom; laundry room; mobility scooter storage and guest suite. The scheme is due to be completed in early 2017.

### Stevenson Court is a general purpose scheme in central Fareham which was completed in September 2016

Stevenson Court has 16 one bedroom flats including one fully adapted flat suitable for a disabled person. Facilities include a door entry system; lift; communal garden and parking area.



## Estate inspections and estate improvements

Housing Officers carry out regular estate inspections and tenants are invited to take part. This provides a good opportunity to tell us about housing issues around your home and to work on solutions together.

The Council has some money to fund small scale improvements to housing sites and tenants can make suggestions about possible works.

### In 2015/16 estate improvements included:

Privacy fencing at Nashe Way

Fencing at Crossfell Walk

Bin storage improvements and landscaping at Chapelside

Line marking to parking areas at a number of sites

Signs at a number of sites

Cycle storage at Endofield Close



# What you need to know about the Housing & Planning Act 2016:

This Act has now gone through Parliament. It gives the government the necessary legislation to introduce measures which may affect you. The measures are as follows:

## The sale of higher value empty local authority homes



The money from the sale will be used to fund the right to buy for housing association tenants. The plan is to replace the home with a 'starter home'. The details of this have not yet been finalised.

## Starter homes



The government wants to build starter homes for first time buyers aged over 23 and under the age of 40. All local authorities will be expected to promote this. The details of this policy are still being discussed.

## Fixed term tenancies



The Act requires that most new local authority tenancies are given for a fixed term of between two and ten years. If there is a child in the household under the age of nine, a longer tenancy can be given until the child reaches 19. Councils may also be able to do this in other circumstances.

At the end of a fixed term tenancy, landlords will have to decide whether or not to offer a new tenancy either on the same or a different property.

In future, successions to secure tenancies (other than by a spouse or civil partner) will result in the granting of a fixed term tenancy and not a secure tenancy.



## King George Road – Gold medal winners for a Community Garden

Mrs Corbin and her neighbours at King George Road entered the gardens around their block for 'Fareham in Bloom' for the first time in 2016.

Mrs Corbin said: "When I suggested we enter our communal gardens into Fareham in Bloom 2016, it was for the first time. Little did we expect to win overall gold, but, the residents were all behind us and after a lot of hard work from Mrs Perry, Mr Coad and I, it was all worth it. We had a small garden party to celebrate and we are all thrilled to bits. Here's to next year and doing our bit towards Fareham in Bloom 2017!"



## Estate improvements:

The photo below shows a patio area at Northmore Close which was put in place at the request of residents.

The residents provided their own garden furniture and like to meet with each other and enjoy any good weather on the patio. Residents at Northmore have also benefited from a bench seat.

There have been improvements to parking during the last year. These have taken place at Minden House; Thorni Avenue; Nashe Way and Nelson Court, Fareham and Marks Road, Stubbington.

Other estate improvements requested include fencing at Endofield Close and white lining of parking bays at Frosthole Close. The fencing at Endofield Close is now up and provides the residents with more privacy.

If you have a suggestion for an estate improvement, please contact your Area Housing Estates Officer.



## You said, we did...

Areas inspected	Issues identified & action taken	Outcomes
<b>Redoubt Court/ Nelson Court</b>	Overgrown shrubs & an old fence which needed to be removed.	Fence removed and shrubs cut back.
<b>St Quentin; Ramillies; Marne; Caen; Tebourba; Vimy &amp; Flanders House</b>	Paths; parking area; bin areas not being swept.  Dumped sofa & rug at Caen House.  Overflowing bins at Marne House.	To be swept every 6 weeks.  Both items removed.  Problem being monitored by Area Housing Officer.
<b>Robinson Court &amp; Linden Lea</b>	Overgrown shrubs around blocks.  Concerns over cleaning.	This will be cleared as part of a winter tidy up.  These were raised with the contractors & some residents report some improvement.
<b>Chapelside</b>	Weeds & overgrown shrubs in communal areas.  Lighting on all day in a communal staircase.	Dealt with as part of a winter tidy up along with sweeping of hard surfaces.  Lighting adjusted.
<b>Hewett House; Hewett Rd; Hewett Close &amp; Ransome Close</b>	Weeds were growing alongside the roads.  A car was seen driving over a grassed area.	Reported to Hampshire County Council as this is their land.  The Housing Officer asked residents to monitor this & to report any further incidents.
<b>Frosthole Close</b>	Overgrown trees & shrubs.  Problems with parking with some people parking over two bays.  Problem with dog fouling.  Damaged kerb stones in some areas.	To be cut back in the autumn.  Car parking spaces to be outlined in white as old markings are worn. This may help.  Need to know who is doing this. A dog waste bin may help.  To be repaired.
<b>Arras House/ Gaza House</b>	Residents would like the walkway panels cleaned.  Dumped items.  Interest in Neighbourhood Watch.	This is to be done for all blocks with walkways in the Borough.  These have been removed.  Residents interested were put in touch with the police to arrange.



## Locks Heath Free Church Debt Advice

Locks Heath Free Church Debt Advice service is free, available to all, confidential and non-judgemental.

All the volunteer advisers have been trained to deal quickly and efficiently with debt, creditors and budgeting and respect your right to make your own decisions.

To find out more, please contact us. Leave a message at any time and we will get back to you. Our trained and supervised team of volunteers will do all they can to help. We can also help with personal and household budgeting working with you to find a way forward through the debt.

### LHFC Debt Advice

Locks Heath Free Church  
255 Hunts Pond Road  
Titchfield Common  
Fareham PO14 4PG

Phone: 01489 579669

Web: [www.lhfc.org.uk](http://www.lhfc.org.uk)

E-mail: [debtadvice@lhfc.org.uk](mailto:debtadvice@lhfc.org.uk)

**LHFC DECT ADVICE** is a community programme of Locks Heath Free Church, based on Christian values and principles and is free and available to all.

Authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. Affiliated to Community Money Advice.



**BUILD**



## Estate Inspections:

Area Housing Estates Officer	Estate/area to be inspected	Date of inspection
<b>Stubbington &amp; South Fareham</b> Matt Elsbury 01329 824492 <a href="mailto:melsbury@fareham.gov.uk">melsbury@fareham.gov.uk</a>	Solent House; Hamble House; Needles House; Meon House; Medina House; Spithead House; Langstone House & Minden House.	Thursday 16 February 2017 at 10:30am.  Meet outside Solent House.
	Marchesi Court	Thursday 23 February 2017 at 10:30am.
<b>Portchester &amp; South Fareham</b> Lauren Bedford (Wed to Fri) 01329 824484 <a href="mailto:lbedford@fareham.gov.uk">lbedford@fareham.gov.uk</a>	St Quentin; Ramillies; Marne; Caen; Tebourba; Vimy & Flanders Houses.	Thursday 16 February 2017 at 10:30am.  Meet outside St Quentin House.
	Sian Jeffery (Mon & Tues) 01329 824484 <a href="mailto:sjeffery@fareham.gov.uk">sjeffery@fareham.gov.uk</a>	Garden Court
<b>Western Wards</b> Helen Ayers (Mon to Wed) 01329 824464 <a href="mailto:hayers@fareham.gov.uk">hayers@fareham.gov.uk</a>	Northmore Close	Tuesday 14 March 2017 at 10:30am
	Jon Johnson (Thurs & Fri) 01329 824464 <a href="mailto:jjohnson@fareham.gov.uk">jjohnson@fareham.gov.uk</a>	Foy Gardens
<b>North Fareham</b> Tania Meskouri 01329 824458 <a href="mailto:tmeskouri@fareham.gov.uk">tmeskouri@fareham.gov.uk</a>	Frosthole Close	Thursday 26 January 2017 at 10:30am (meet outside the communal lounge).
	Gaza; Arras; Hillson & Nashe House	Monday 6 February 2017. Meet outside Arras House at 10am.



## Contact details

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

### Email / Tel:

jlarkin@fareham.gov.uk  
or tel: 01329 824463  
hsaich@fareham.gov.uk  
or tel: 01329 824499

### Website:

[www.fareham.gov.uk](http://www.fareham.gov.uk)  
(look under Housing; Existing Council Tenants, Tenant and Leaseholder involvement)

## Useful Contacts

### To report a repair you can do the following:

Phone 0800 1412 194 (free from landlines, some mobile networks may charge) or 01329 236100 (Monday to Friday 8:45am to 5:15pm).

Email – [responsiverepairs@fareham.gov.uk](mailto:responsiverepairs@fareham.gov.uk)

Web – [www.fareham.gov.uk/housingrepairs](http://www.fareham.gov.uk/housingrepairs)

Visit or write – Civic Offices, Civic Way, Fareham, Hampshire, PO16 7AZ

For out of hours emergencies please contact 0800 374 485.

### Gas repairs

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

For faults with a gas boiler & gas central heating please contact our contractor TSG directly on 0800 7812739.

### General enquiries

For all other enquires such as Council Tax, Housing Benefit, transferring to another property and the Right to Buy, please contact 01329 236100 or visit our website at [www.fareham.gov.uk](http://www.fareham.gov.uk)

### Citizens' Advice

For advice about employment; debt; family; relationship breakdown; legal help and more you can contact the Citizens' Advice.

Phone 03444 111 306.

Visit Fareham Library, Osborn Road, Fareham, PO16 7EN (10am

to 4pm Monday to Friday and 5pm until 6:30pm on Thursday).

Visit the Highlands Hub, 103 Highlands Road, Fareham, PO15 6HZ (Tuesday 10am to 2pm).

Visit the CAB website at [www.farehamcab.org.uk](http://www.farehamcab.org.uk) or [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)

**citizens  
advice**