

Tenants' Voice

Issue Number 3, Summer 2013

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Melvin Jones House

The residents of Melvin Jones House in Stubbington received funding from the Council's Environmental Improvements Budget for the planting of daffodils around their homes. The residents planted the bulbs themselves.

Bishopsfield Road flats,
South Fareham

A newsletter for and by
Tenants and Leaseholders

FAREHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Welcome to our summer 2013 newsletter from the Chair of the Tenants' Forum

Welcome to the summer edition of the Tenants' Voice.

Welfare Reform and the rising cost of living are issues affecting many tenants and leaseholders. I hope that this newsletter signposts you to where you can get help and advice if you need it.

Many issues affecting tenants are also discussed at the Tenants' Forum. All tenants are welcome to attend these meetings.

If you have any suggestions for future items for the newsletter, please let me know.

I hope you all have a good summer.

Steve Lovelock

Chair of the Tenants' Forum



Tenants at the Annual General Meeting of the Tenants' Forum

Useful Contacts



Citizens Advice Bureau
01329 237121

Debt advice

For debt advice, the Citizens Advice Bureau has a debt advisor called Jacquie Smart. Jacquie can be reached by contacting your Area Housing Estates Officer (see contact details on page 6).

Council Tax and Housing Benefit
01329 236100

For planned repairs

buildingprojects@fareham.gov.uk
or tel 01329 236100

Leasehold enquiries

Hugh Saich, Leasehold Management Officer – 01329 824499 or email hsaich@fareham.gov.uk

Website

www.fareham.gov.uk
(Look under Housing/Estates/Existing Council Tenants/Tenant and Leaseholder Involvement).



Worried about how you're going to pay your bills?

Getting credit from high street banks?

Tempted by doorstep lenders?

STOP!

You have another choice... Fareham Community Savers (FCS) can help by offering you a loan.

To find out more, contact: 07511 900833 or email fcs@sehco.org.uk or visit the website at www.sehco.org.uk

South Coast Training

The next event will take place in October 2013. If you would like to attend, please contact Jennie Larkin. At the April 2013 event, tenants attended workshops on Welfare Reform, Working More Effectively as a Group, Tackling Anti Social Behaviour and Complaints.

"South Coast Training gave me a better understanding of our rights as tenants"

A quote from one of our tenants.

Right to Buy

Did you know that depending on how long you have been a public sector tenant, you can get up to **£75,000** as a discount if you choose to buy your home? For further details please contact the Tenancy Services Team on 01329 236100.

Estate improvements

New fencing in Nashe Way



Did You Know?

Fareham Borough Council's Environmental Improvements Budget is used to fund small improvement projects in housing areas. Such projects could include improved lighting near blocks of flats or garage areas or line markings in parking areas which need to be repainted. The budget can also be used for landscaping or fencing in communal areas. Suggestions from tenants and leaseholders are welcomed.

These pictures (left) show what can be done to improve where you live.

Like to Know More?

Contact your Housing Officer (see contact details on page 6).



Tenants' Forum

- Thursday 8th August 2013 at 6:30pm
- Thursday 14th November 2013 at 1:30pm

Sheltered Housing Forum

- Wednesday 18th September at 10:30am at Crofton Court

Leaseholder Forum

- Tuesday 20th August 2013 at 4pm at the Civic Offices

Housing Tenancy Board dates:

Tenant representatives regularly meet up with officers and councillors at the Housing Tenancy Board. Issues affecting tenants and leaseholders are discussed here and all are welcome to attend. The dates of future meetings are as follows:

- 29th July 2013 at 6pm
- 28th October 2013 at 6pm

To find out more, please contact Jennie Larkin on 01329 824463.

Paying your rent

The Council recognises that collection of housing rent is important so that it can ensure that commitments contained in the Housing Revenue Account Business Plan will be met. It is essential that tenants are fully aware of their rights and responsibilities and are given support where necessary to sustain their tenancies and remain in their homes.

Rent arrears often occur through no fault of the tenant. Loss of earnings and relationship breakdown are common causes of financial struggles which tenants frequently report. Debt counselling from independent external agencies and face to face contact with Area Housing Estates Officers will be offered where appropriate to help prevent arrears from mounting up.

Methods of paying housing rent include:

- Direct Debit
- On-line with a debit card
- Telephone banking through the tenants' own bank
- Setting up a standing order
- By cheque or postal order through the post
- Automated telephone service (24/7) using a debit card (0845 6066876)
- Telephone (office hours) using a debit card
- Rent payment card at any Post Office
- Cheque, cash or debit card at the Council's cash office

The Council prefers to prevent arrears so that there is no need for recovery and enforcement action. So, it is important that tenants speak with Housing staff as soon as arrears start to build so that help and advice can be given. In many cases, an arrangement can be agreed whereby the arrears can be paid in instalments. Housing Officers will offer sensitive support and advice – including benefit advice and referrals to debt advisor services such as Citizens Advice. Legal action to repossess a tenant's home will only happen if all efforts to speak with the tenant have failed.



Reporting a repair

There are a number of ways that you can report a repair to us as follows:

- Online by filling in a 'report a repair' form – www.fareham.gov.uk
- By telephone using our freephone number: 0800 1412194
- By visiting the Civic Offices (opening hours are 8:45am–5:15pm, Monday to Friday).
- By e mail at responsiverepairs@fareham.gov.uk
- In writing to Civic Offices, Civic Way, Fareham, Hampshire PO16 7AZ.

To report a gas repair or problem contact :

- Emergency out of hours: 0800 374485 (freephone)
- Gas repairs (anytime): 0800 7812739 (freephone)
- If you think you have a gas leak or carbon monoxide present call 0800 111 999.



This year we have installed 129 kitchens and 142 bathrooms in our properties. The photos show a new kitchen in Carberry Drive, Portchester and a kitchen being installed in Ransome Close, Titchfield.

Repair Priorities

Type of repair	Examples	To be completed within
Emergency repairs	Total loss of electric power Burst tanks or cylinders Toilet not flushing (when there is no other toilet).	24 hours, but, each request will be assessed according to how severe the emergency is & could result in an immediate response.
Urgent repairs	Partial loss of electric power Door intercoms not working Taps which cannot be turned	Within 5 working days
Routine repairs	Repair damaged fencing Repair gutter Renew doors	Within 20 working days

What do you think about our repairs service?

My name is Mike Busby. I sit in on the meetings with Comserv and Fareham Borough Council four times a year as the tenant representative.

As you know, every time Comserv carry out any work on your property, they give you a satisfaction card to complete. The card is your chance to inform the Council about the standard of work carried out by Comserv.

For some reason, at the moment, only 16% of the cards are returned to FBC and I would like to see at least 50% of the cards returned, giving the Council a better idea of the work carried out by Comserv.

There are also a small number of cards returned which gave less than 10 out of 10 but no reason why. If you think the job done by Comserv was less than 10 out of 10, please put the reason why. Thank you.

Mike Busby



Feedback from Estate Inspections:

Areas Inspected	Issues Identified & Action Taken	Outcomes
Bishopsfield Road maisonette (25/01/2013)	Bollards requested to prevent parking on grassed verges	Put forward as an estate improvement.
	Request for several large trees to be cut back. Referred to Council's Tree Officer	Site visit carried out and trees to be reduced.
Linden Lea and Robinson Court (22/02/2013)	Front security door to flats 18-23 Robinson Court not closing.	Repair completed
Kenwood Road/Webb Road & Roman Grove (28/03/2013)	Potholes in Webb Road and Kenwood Road reported to Highways.	Plan provided to Highways and repairs to be programmed in.
Marchesi Court & Foster Close (13/02/2013)	Fly-tipping around Marchesi Court & rear entrance door not working properly.	Items cleared by Streetscene & repair to door completed.
Redlands Lane maisonettes, Johns Road & Belvoir Close (07/02/2013)	Bulky items dumped in bin store areas. Cracked window in communal stairwell at Spithead House.	Bulky items removed and window repaired.
Fort Fareham Road flats (06/03/2013)	Wooden slats rotten in the area at the top of stairwell of 16-19 Nelson Court.	Surveyor inspected on 29/04/2013.
Valentine Close & Privett Road (17/01/2013)	Fly-tipping in bin area at Menin House.	All cleared.
Frosthole Close (14/02/2013)	Kerb stones missing around the estate. Cigarette butts thrown out of windows onto communal footpaths. New lamp-posts encroaching onto footpath	Missing kerb stones now replaced. Tenants written to regarding cigarette butts. Lamp-posts now re-positioned.
Bellfield/Ransome Close/Hewett House, Road & Close (28/02/2013)	Line-marking requested for parking spaces at Ransome Close.	To be considered through the Estate Improvement budget.
	Damaged fencing to both FBC-owned and private properties – possible Health & Safety concern.	Tenant and private residents written to and deadline given for repair.
	Blocked drains at Hewett Road & garage area of Ransome Close.	3 drains at Hewett Road already with Highways to be cleared. The garage drain is to be cleared by Maintenance.
St Michael's Road, Locksheath (25/02/2013)	Overgrown foliage onto footpaths and communal drying/refuse areas.	Streetscene have now cleared drying and refuse areas. Letters sent to private owners requesting tidy-up of hedges over footpaths.
Lodge Road flats (06/02/2013)	Drying area and footpaths around the flats full of leaves and not swept	Areas have now been swept & cleared.



Area Housing Estates Officer	Estate/area to be inspected	Date of inspection
Stubbington & South Fareham Gemma Lewis 01329 824492 glewis@fareham.gov.uk	Alexander Grove	12th July 2013 at 10:30am
	Coniston Walk	26th July 2013 at 10:30am
	Dolphin Court	9th August 2013 at 10:30am
	Northways & Westways	23rd August 2013 at 10:30am
Portchester & South Fareham Sian Jeffery Monday & Tuesday 01329 824484 sjeffery@fareham.gov.uk Keith Nevitt Weds-Friday 01329 824484 knevitt@fareham.gov.uk	St Quentin House, Ramillies, Caen, Vimy, Flanders & Tebourba – meet in the large car park between Vimy & Tebourba House.	18th July 2013 at 10:30am
	Robinson Court & Linden Lea. Meet in the layby outside Linden Lea flats.	15th August 2013 at 10am
	Garden Court/Newtown - meet at the entrance to Garden Court.	12th September 2013 at 10:30am
Western Wards Helen Ayers Mon-Weds 01329 824464 hayers@fareham.gov.uk Tania Meskouri Thurs & Friday 01329 824464 tmeskouri@fareham.gov.uk	Hewett House, Hewett Close/Rd, Ransome Close & Bellfield	27th August 2013 at 10am
	Holly Hill Mansion	30th August 2013 at 10am
	Addison Road	3rd September 2013 at 10am
	Barnes Lane, Barnes Close, Holly Close	6th September 2013 at 10am
	Lodge Road & St Michael's Road	10th September 2013 at 10am
	Winnards Park	13th September 2013 at 10am
North Fareham Jon Johnson 01329 824458 jjohnson@fareham.gov.uk	Frosthole Close - meet outside communal lounge	6th August 2013 at 10:30am
	Valentine Close & Privett Rd – meet outside Menin House.	20th August 2013 at 10:30am
	Nashe Way, Gaza House, Arras House – meet outside Arras House.	10th September 2013 at 10:30am
	Nashe House/Hillson House & Nashe Close/Hill Walk/Park Walk – meet Nashe House car park.	24th September 2013 at 10:30am



Welfare reform - what you need to know


Benefit Type	Main Changes	When will this happen?
Under Occupation Charge (the so-called 'bedroom tax')	<p>Affects working age social tenants on Housing Benefit with one or more spare bedrooms</p> <p>Two children of different sexes aged under 10 are expected to share a room and same sex children until 16</p> <p>Those with a spare bedroom will lose 14% HB and those with two or more 25%</p> <p>Tenants could:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move to a smaller home by transfer or mutual exchange • Take in a lodger • Make up the shortfall from wages or benefits • Find a job / work more hours 	Now!
Overall Benefits Cap	<p>Affects working age households</p> <p>Total of all benefits capped at £500 per week for a couple or lone parent or £350 per week for a single person</p> <p>Those on 'excess' benefit deducted initially from claimant's Housing Benefit until they move to universal credit</p> <p>Those with larger families and / or high rents hit the hardest</p>	September 2013
Council Tax Benefit	<p>National Council Tax scheme replaced with local Council Tax Support Schemes but with a 10% smaller budget</p> <p>Working age people to fund a percentage of their Council Tax</p>	Now!
Universal Credit	<p>Will combine Housing Benefit, job seeker's allowance, income support, employment support allowances and tax credits into one payment</p> <p>Will pay support for housing costs direct to the tenant, not the landlord</p> <p>Will be paid monthly in arrears</p>	Now for new claimants and changes to existing claims until 2017 when remainder will transfer
Personal Independence Payments	<p>Replaces Disability Living Allowance</p> <p>Reduced levels of award from three to two</p> <p>Tougher eligibility criteria</p>	Now!

If you are concerned about the impact of Welfare Reform, please contact your Area Housing Estates Officer whose details can be found on page 6 Alternatively, contact the Housing Benefit Team on 01329 236100.



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Quiz

1. How many keys are on the Fareham Coat of Arms? 
2. Which Queen did Henry VIII visit Portchester Castle with?
3. Who described Fareham as 'a dear little Hampshire town'?
4. In what century was Holy Trinity Church built?
5. What was the name of the boys grammar school in Fareham?
6. Which bus companies operated prior to 'First Bus' in the Fareham area?
7. Where was the original site of Fareham Fire Station?
8. What is the motto on Fareham's Coat of Arms?
9. Which building houses the Fareham Museum?
10. What was Lysses House Restaurant originally?

The closing date for entries for the quiz is Friday 6th September 2013. Please return your completed quiz to Jennie Larkin at the address below. There is a **£20 shopping voucher** for the first correct entry drawn after the closing date.



Result of the winner of the word search from the last newsletter

The winner of the Wordsearch competition in the last newsletter was Mrs Stickland of Downing Court. Mrs Stickland won a £20 shopping voucher.

Mail bag snippets/cuttings

'I very much enjoyed the last Tenants Forum...'

'What was that number for repairs?'

'I do find the website confusing..'

'Thank you for my lovely kitchen'

'When will I get my new bathroom?'

'Wrong colour on some newsletter items ...I couldn't read them!'

Send in your articles and views by letter or e-mail.

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 email to jlarkin@fareham.gov.uk or by post to Jennie Larkin, 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

Email: jlarkin@fareham.gov.uk or tel. 01329 824463 – Tenant Involvement Officer

Email: 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.