

Tenant's Voice

Issue No. 1 Summer 2012

*How we are doing
(performance information)
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*Estate inspections
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Freephone Repair Number

Fareham Borough Council is pleased to announce that it is introducing a 'freephone' number for its tenants and leaseholders for the reporting of repairs. The number will be available to all tenants and leaseholders later this year. In the meantime, to report repairs you can use the following methods:

- Telephone 01329 236100
- Email at repairs@fareham.gov.uk or use the online repairs reporting form accessed via the website at www.fareham.gov.uk

For gas servicing issues you can go directly to TSG on 0800 7812739. When you go through to TSG please make sure that you select the option for Fareham Borough Council as they also deal with other landlords and this can cause confusion.

*A newsletter for and by
tenants and Leaseholders*

FAREHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL
www.fareham.gov.uk

Introduction

Welcome to the latest edition of 'Tenants' Voice' a newsletter for tenants and leaseholders of Fareham Borough Council. The Editorial Panel of tenants who contribute to the production of this newsletter include Yvonne Goddard; Liz Bartlett; Mike Busby and Steve Lovelock.

You will see that the newsletter is now in a new format and we would appreciate your comments on what you think about it in terms of how it looks and the information it contains. Also, if you would like to be a part of the Editorial Panel, please let us know. Suggestions for articles and letters are also welcome.

Letter from the Chair of the Tenants' Forum



Hello, my name is Steve Lovelock and I am the new Chair of the Tenants' Forum. I also represent the interests of tenants at the Housing Tenancy Board.

I have been a tenant of Fareham Borough Council for about 25 years and have regularly attended the Tenants' Forum for the past few years. I'm also a member of the tenants' Editorial Panel which helps to produce this newsletter and other publications.

I am very passionate about tenant and leaseholder involvement and the Tenants' Forum, Sheltered Housing Forum and Leaseholders' Forums are great way for everyone to get involved, so, please come along and support us. We have a great opportunity to influence decisions made about our homes and communities. I am sure you are aware, lots of changes are happening in the world of housing and we will do our best to make sure that the voices of tenants are heard.

Finally, I would like to remind people about the newsletter. It is full of useful information, so, please take some time to read it and let us know what you would like to see in it.

Steve Lovelock

Chair of the Tenants' Forum

Useful Contacts

Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)

01329 237121

The Citizens Advice Bureau has a debt advisor called Jacquie Smart who can be contacted either via the main CAB number shown above or by referral from your Area Housing Estates Officer (see contact details on page 3).

Repairs reporting

01329 236100 or email
repairs@fareham.gov.uk

For planned maintenance work such as modernisations, window and door replacement, external decoration and disabled adaptation work contact
buildingprojects@fareham.gov.uk

For all gas boiler related problems and for servicing, contact TSG on Freephone
0800 781 2739.

Council Tax

01329 236100

Housing Benefits

01329 236100

Leasehold Management Officer

Hugh Saich – 01329 824499
or email hsaich@fareham.gov.uk

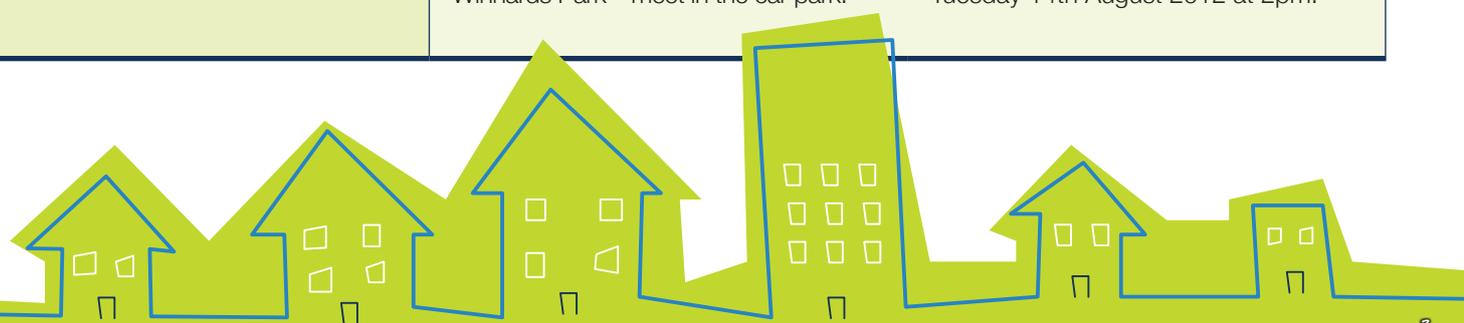
Tenant Involvement Officer

Jennie Larkin – 01329 824463
or email jlarkin@fareham.gov.uk

You can also visit our website at
www.fareham.gov.uk
(Tenant Participation/Involvement).

Estate inspections

Area Housing Estates Officer	Estate/area to be inspected	Date of inspection
Stubbington & South Fareham Tania Meskouri 01329 824464 tmeskouri@fareham.gov.uk	Sicily & Salerno House	3rd July 2012 at 10am
	Wallington Court, Nelson Court & Redoubt Court.	12th July 2012 at 10am
	Endofield Close St Julien & Blenheim House – meet outside St Julien.	17th July 2012 10am at Endofield Close & 10:30am at St Julien House.
	Minden House & St Michael's Road	24th July 2012 10am at Minden House & 10:30am in St Michael's Road.
	Spencer Court	26th July 2012 at 9:30am
Portchester & South Fareham Claire Day 01329 824464 cday@fareham.gov.uk	Robinson Court & Linden Lea	31st August 2012 at 10am
	St Quentin House, Ramillies, Caen, Vimy, Flanders & Tebourba – meet outside St Quentin.	6th September 2012 at 11am
	Windmill Grove and Seaway Grove. Meet at Windmill Grove.	17th November 2012 at 2pm
North Fareham Sian Jeffery 01329 824484 sjeffery@fareham.gov.uk	Gudgeheath Lane & Hammond Road.	11th September 2012 at 10:30am
	Valentine Close & Privett Rd – meet outside Menin House.	9th October 2012 at 10:30am
North Fareham Keith Nevitt 01329 824466 knevitt@fareham.gov.uk	Frosthole Close – meet outside the community hall.	28th September 2012 at 10am
	Nashe Way/Gaza Hse/Arras Hse – meet outside Arras. Nashe Hse/Hillson Hse/Hill Walk/Nashe Close – meet in car park at Nashe House.	6th July 2012 at 10am
Western Wards Matt Elsbury 01329 824492 melsbury@fareham.gov.uk	Lincoln Close – meet outside the communal lounge.	26th July 2012 at 2pm
	Birchen Road, Close & Beverley Close – meet in car park.	Tuesday 2nd August 2012 at 2pm
	Winnards Park – meet in the car park.	Tuesday 14th August 2012 at 2pm.



Estate Inspections

Area Housing Officers carry out occasional inspections of estates and tenants and leaseholders are welcome to join them. Feedback from previous estate inspections has highlighted the following issues:

- Dumped furniture in drying areas and bin areas
- Bikes, toys and pushchairs in stairwells and on landings
- Piles of leaves around entrance doors to flats
- Signs damaged by cars
- Cars blocking access to bin areas
- Windows not being cleaned
- Overgrown shrubs and trees in gardens
- Litter and rubbish
- Graffiti
- Parking problems
- Poor lighting

If you are affected by any of these issues, please contact your Area Housing Estates Officer.



Estate Improvements

Fareham Borough Council has set aside a budget of £18,000 for estate improvements in 2012/13. This budget can be used for such things as improving lighting, signs on blocks and landscaping.

The following improvements were carried out in the past year:

- Handrails have been fitted at the entrances to blocks in Redlands Lane to assist residents in getting into the stairwell where the step is high;
- Removal of the drying area at Solent House;
- Line markings at various sites;
- Bench seating at Lincoln Close and Melvin Jones House;
- Improved signage at some sites;
- Bin collection improvement work at Northmore Close
- Privacy fencing and bike storage at Frosthole Close

In 2012/13 we plan to carry out the following:

- Lighting improvements at Spencer Court, Flanders House and Chapelside;
- Privacy Fencing work at Nashe Way; and
- Improved signage at a number of sites;

If you have any suggestions for estate improvements, please contact your Area Housing Estates Officer. They will send you a form to complete and return or they will help you to complete this. Alternatively, you can access the form via our website at www.fareham.gov.uk (please look under Tenant Involvement/Participation).

Cleaning & Caretaking and Grounds Maintenance

Since the article that appeared in the last newsletter, we now have 42 tenants and leaseholders monitoring the caretaking, cleaning and grounds maintenance on our estates. They provide a valuable service to the council and other tenants and leaseholders as they monitor the work that is carried out and tell us if work

is carried out to a satisfactory standard. Services are paid for out of your rents and service charges, so, it is important that an acceptable service is provided.

Fareham Borough Council has 64 blocks to manage and urgently needs more tenants and leaseholders to monitor these services at blocks in Redlands Lane and Bishopsfield Road in particular. If you would like to do this, please contact Jennie Larkin on 01329 824463 or e mail jlarkin@fareham.gov.uk. All that is involved is returning a card to us when work is carried out to let us know if the standard of work is acceptable or not. We then reply to your comments and update you about what will happen next.



Fountains

Our cleaning and caretaking contractor, Fountains, have been taken over by a company called OCS. However, you will still see the 'Fountains' name on their vehicles. The previous employees have been transferred to the new organisation.



Tenants' Forum

5th July 2012 at 6:30pm – Ferneham Hall
27th September 2012 at 6:30pm at Ferneham Hall
17th January 2013 at 1:30pm at Ferneham Hall

Sheltered Housing Forum

13th September at 10:30am at Frosthole Close

Leaseholder Forum

21st August at 4pm – Council Offices
22nd November at 2pm – Council Offices

Tenant Scrutiny Group

Would you like to know more about the services that are provided to you and to have a say in how they are provided? If so, please join our Tenant Scrutiny Group which meets regularly to discuss housing service delivery and performance in greater depth than discussion at forum level permits.

If you would like to know more, please contact Jennie Larkin on 01329 824463 or e mail jlarkin@fareham.gov.uk

Performance information - how well are we doing?

Your top 10

We asked members of the Tenants' Forum to list the services that they most wanted to hear about in terms of our performance and here are the results. This information will in future be included as a regular feature of the newsletter. If there is any information that you would like to see printed here, please let me know.

Top 10 areas	Level of satisfaction	Comments
1. Satisfaction with responsive (day to day) repairs	804 satisfaction cards returned between April 2011 & March 2012. 10% of people who had jobs carried out returned a card. 98% satisfaction.	J 8158 of jobs were carried out during this period, so, the figure of 98% is from the 804 cards returned. We need more cards returned.
2. Satisfaction with planned repairs	Boiler installation 86% satisfaction (58 cards returned). Digital TV 94% satisfaction (325 cards returned). Electrical upgrades 96% satisfaction (98 cards returned). Gas servicing & maintenance 95% satisfaction (297 cards returned).	J We need more cards returned when work is carried out.
3. Satisfaction with the cleaning & caretaking service	Jan. - March 2012 - 88% feedback & 83% of these were satisfied with the service. .	J An increase in satisfaction. Main issue is with the window cleaning.
4. Satisfaction with grounds maintenance	72% satisfaction Jan - March 2012.	L A decrease in satisfaction of 12% from the last quarter.
5. Void turnaround times	Jan - March 2012 - 27.89 days overall.	L 27 voids as at 31 March 2012. Performance affected by low demand for a few sheltered housing units & some refusals.
6. Number of complaints received	4 complaints received since January 2012 (about the housing service). Reached the first stage of the new complaints process.	Complaints related to window cleaning & rent. Two complaints were about maintenance.
7. Anti social behaviour cases	Jan - March 2012 8 cases	J 6 serious cases. 4 notices served & 2 Acceptable Behaviour Contracts are in place.
8. Number of Block Captains	42 (38 are from blocks). 65% of blocks have a block captain or estate monitor.	K We need all blocks to have a Block Captain or estate monitor.
9. Current tenant rent arrears as a % of collectable debt.	2.12% 1.95% target	Failed to meet target. L
10. Number of estate inspections	96% - 29 estate inspections took place from February 2011 to April 2012. The target is 100%.	J Estate inspections are working well.

South Coast Training

Nine tenants and leaseholders from Fareham recently attended this event in Southampton along with tenants from Gosport Borough Council; Southampton City Council; Portsmouth City Council; Winchester City Council; Guinness Hermitage and the Spectrum Group.

Workshops included 'What's New in Housing'; Involvement in Complaints, Asking the Right Questions, Involving More People and Mystery Shopping.

The next event will take place in October and the workshops will include 'What's New in Housing'; Public Speaking; Money Matters and Local Service Standards. If you are interested in attending this training, please contact Jennie Larkin on 01329 824463 or email jlarkin@fareham.gov.uk.

Repair and Maintenance Satisfaction Cards

Whenever any repair work or maintenance is carried out in your home, the contractor providing the service should leave you a satisfaction card to complete and return. Please would you take the time to complete these cards as your feedback is vital to us in order that we can monitor and improve the service provided to you. Also, we need to hear from you if cards are not left when work is carried out.

Anti Social Behaviour (ASB)

The Editorial Panel of the Tenants' Forum has recently approved a leaflet about ASB which will be available to all tenants and leaseholders of FBC. If you are having problems with anti social behaviour, please contact your Area Housing Estates



Right to Buy

New rules have recently come into force which will affect tenants who may wish to buy their property under the 'Right to Buy' scheme. Under the scheme you must have been a public sector tenant for at least five years in order to qualify.

If you live in a house, after five years you can get a discount of 35% and an extra 1% for each year you have been a tenant, up to a maximum of 60%

If you live in a flat, you can get a discount of 50% after five years and an extra two years for each year that you have been a tenant, up to a maximum of 70%

For both houses and flats, there is a maximum discount of £75,000

Repayment rules apply if you sell the property within five years

If you purchase under the RTB scheme and wish to sell it within ten years, you must offer it back to the Council at full market value

If you buy a flat or leasehold house, you will have to pay service charges (ground rent, insurance, cleaning, grounds maintenance, repairs and major works). The Council will be able to give an estimate of these charges for the first five years.

Buying your own home is a major financial commitment. Apart from paying for it (upfront in cash or with a loan), you will have to maintain it. The Mortgage Advice Service can provide useful information on mortgages and the implications of buying your property. You can contact them on 0300 500 5000 or at www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk You should also employ a solicitor or licensed conveyancer to deal with the legal aspects of buying your property.

If you are interested in buying your property or have any questions about possible entitlement please contact the Tenancy Services Section on 01329 236100.

Collingwood House

Collingwood House a Sheltered Housing Scheme with 26 units of accommodation in North Fareham is to be demolished in 2013 to make way for a new sheltered housing scheme which will still be owned by Fareham Borough Council.

The decision to demolish the scheme was made because the accommodation is made up of a mixture of bedsit and one bedroom flats which does not meet the 21st century standard for sustainable sheltered housing accommodation in the future.

Tenants have been fully consulted and have seen plans for the new scheme. They are to be moved to other accommodation in the Borough and will have the opportunity to move back to the new Collingwood House when it is completed in 2014-15.



Letters & Poems to the Editor

Do you have something you would like to share with other tenants or leaseholders? Also, what would you like the Council to do for you? 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.

The Homeswapper Scheme

Homeswapper is a nationwide exchange scheme which tenants can use to move from one area in the country to another. Access to this internet based service will in future be free to all Fareham Borough Council tenants. In the past, tenants had to pay a charge.

For further information about how you can access this scheme, please contact your Area Housing Estates Officer

Administration Charges For Leaseholders

During the consultation regarding the digital TV repair/upgrade, the Council received a number of queries regarding the administration charge. These charges related to the tendering and awarding of the contract, monitoring the contract, dealing with queries and apportioning the cost. This amounts to 15% of the cost of the contract and is considered a reasonable percentage based on the works completed and falls within the range that the Leasehold Valuation Tribunal considers acceptable (the LVT is an independent body funded by the Government to provide free advice on the law affecting leasehold properties).

There are many services provided to leaseholders which do not incur an administration charge and these include:

- Accountancy maintains a database of details for leaseholders and calculates service charges estimates/actual statements. They also arrange building insurance for each block of flats.
- Exchequer deal with customer accounts; send bills, allocate payments and help manage payment plans where necessary.
- Tenancy Services deal with day to day enquiries- for example: enquiries about communal services, complaints about nuisance or anti-social behaviour.
- Leasehold Management Officer acts as a focal point for leaseholders' problems and makes sure the Council is fulfilling its duties.
- Cash office take cash/cheque payments which are received in respect of service charges.
- Repairs administration officers based at the Depot deal with day to day repairs and maintenance enquiries and arrange visits by contractors or the in-house repair team. Also, they arrange consultation with leaseholders regarding any major works or improvements.
- Leaseholders are only charged 15% which is added to the cost of all repairs, as provided for in the lease. No other administration costs are recovered from leaseholders.

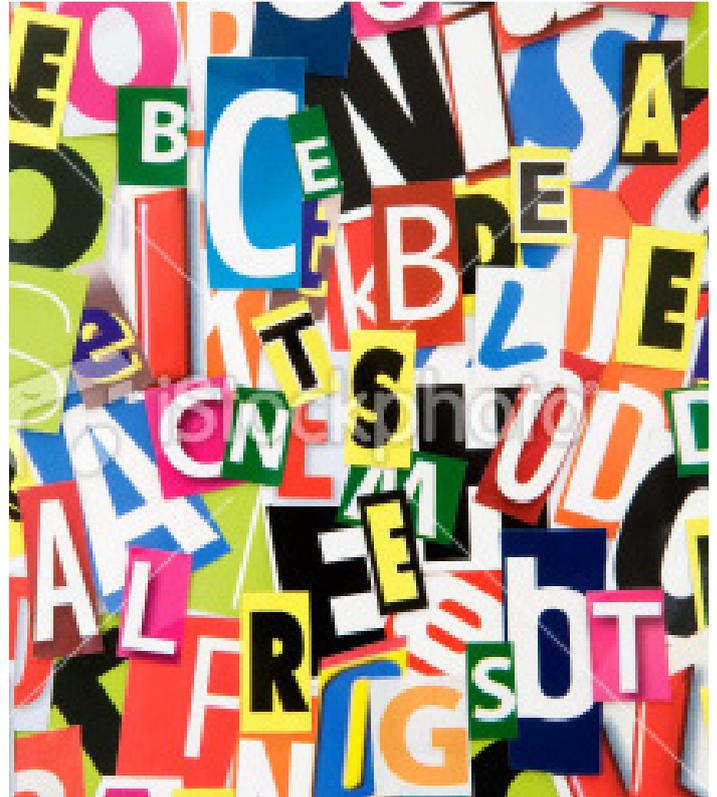
Answers to the quiz found in the last newsletter:

In the last edition of 'Tenants' Voice' we included a quiz and the answers are as follows:

- The famous bricks made in Fareham were red.
- Henry Cort's father was a brick maker.
- Fruit stopped being transported from Fareham railway station in 1887.
- The tree on the roundabout at the bottom of Castle Street, Portchester is an oak.
- The small tower in the inner bailey of Portchester Castle is called Assheton Tower.
- Augustan monks once lived in Portchester.
- The font in St Mary's Church, Portchester is Norman.
- Westbury Manor is built of blue bricks.
- The first Cams Hall was built in the 13th Century.
- The Ashcroft Arts Centre is on the site of the former National School.
- Titchfield Abbey was built in the 13th Century.
- Titchfield Abbey was converted to a Palace House for the Earls of Southampton.
- The war memorial in Stubbington was erected in 1922.
- The leather industry thrived in Wallington in 17th Century.
- There were 6996 residents in Fareham in 1801.

The successful prize winner was Mrs Rigden-Murphy of Flanders House who won a £20 Marks and Spencer voucher.

In this newsletter we are including an anagram. The prize for getting all the answers correct will be a shopping voucher. All entries are to be returned to Jennie Larkin at the address at the foot of this page by Friday 31st August 2012.



Anagram

Places to visit:

1. LIFT HEAVEN DITCH (10,5)
2. ROB RAN WE MUSTY (8,5)
3. IN CURE STEELER (7,6)
4. HARM HEEL FLAN (8,4)
5. CHARTS ROT FENCE (8,6)
6. SEND GORY NEARS (7,6)
7. LEFT OR N SON (4,6)
8. LET CT PROCESS HEART (11,6)
9. LOCUMS NON SEL (7,6)
10. HIL HO LY LL (5,4)

The correct answers will be printed in the next newsletter.

Contact

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

Email: jlarkin@fareham.gov.uk – Tenant Involvement Officer

Email: hsaich@fareham.gov.uk – Leasehold Management Officer

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