

Tenants' Voice

Spring
2018

A newsletter for
and by Tenants

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Photo of Mr & Mrs Murray's garden in Norman Close which won a prize in the Fareham in Bloom competition in 2017.

FAREHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL



Hello,

welcome to the spring edition of the Tenants' Voice.

Congratulations to all who won awards for 'Fareham in Bloom' 2017. You will see photos in this edition of the Tenants' Voice showing the lovely gardens that won awards.

Enjoy reading the exciting news and activities and don't forget to keep in touch with all that is happening in your area.

The Editorial Panel

HomeSwapper

Is your property too big for you? Do you want to move to another area?

Then Homeswapper may be for you.

In order to use it, you need to register with www.homeswapper.co.uk

Housing Policy Development & Review Panel:

All tenants and leaseholders are welcome to attend. Meetings are held in the Civic Offices at 6pm. The next meeting will be held on **24th May 2018**.

Housing Rent Payments:

You can pay your rent 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 still send you a form or you can email: housing@fareham.gov.uk

Online at 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



Mrs Ash is 100!

Congratulations to Mrs Ash from Linden Lea who celebrated her 100th birthday recently.

Dates for your diary 2018/19

Tenants' & Leaseholders' Forum meetings at Ferneham Hall (Octagon Room)

Thursday 26th April 2018 at 6:30pm – Annual General Meeting plus a discussion about anti-social behaviour and a review of tenant involvement;

Thursday 26th July 2018 at 6:30pm – Community Involvement & managing debt;

Thursday 8th November 2018 at 1:30pm – presentation by gas contractor;

Estate Monitor/Block Captain meeting:

15th May 2018 at 10:30am at Ferneham Hall;

20th November 2018 at 10:30am at Ferneham Hall.



Tracy Thomas (Vice Chair of the Tenants' & Leaseholders' Forum) with Dominic Raab'

Meeting with Dominic Raab, the Minister of State for Housing:

Over 80 social housing tenants had the opportunity to meet Dominic Raab, the Minister for Housing at an event in Basingstoke on 25th January 2018. Six tenants attended from Fareham Borough Council.

So far, nine such events have taken place around the country but, on this occasion, tenants were invited from Hampshire, Berkshire and Dorset. The previous Minister for Housing, Alok Sharma, was present at the previous events but following Theresa May's reshuffle, the new Minister attended this event.

Tenants were asked to give their views about affordable housing, the Right to Buy, rent reduction and the stigma associated with being a tenant of social housing. These were the main issues that were discussed. Tenants were also asked about what they would like to see happen and many said that they would like to see an end to the 'Right to Buy'.

The Minister said that there were plans to build 270,000 new homes, but that "money doesn't grow on trees!".

Thanks to Yvonne Goddard and Myra Lee for compiling this article.



Handy hints for reducing party food waste

- Stick to the list – don't over shop
- Find out dietary habits of guests i.e. gluten free, vegan etc to ensure food provided will be eaten
- Retain packaging pots for leftovers
- Take fridge food out last minute for a buffet and keep food covered whenever possible
- Put out small amounts of party food and top up - food that is placed out for hours cannot be safely refrigerated and there is the possibility of many hands having handled the food
- Use smaller plates – people are inclined to heap up larger plates and not eat it all
- Return leftovers from a buffet or barbeque to the fridge as soon as possible
- Send guests away with leftovers
- Eat the leftovers



Let's Talk about Food Waste

Currently, I am the Food Saver Champion for Fareham Borough Council and in partnership with Sainsbury's, we are raising awareness about saving food from the bin. Recently, I have been lucky enough to have been invited to some of your coffee mornings.

Interesting details from our chats included how childhood experiences with food had an impact on our behaviour. Food was treasured due to scarcity and expense following the war years. And growing your own food, as well as being tastier, makes you feel more connected to food and less likely to waste.

All our conversations were enlightening and sprinkled with a dose of cheekiness. I saw lovely gardens that I cannot wait to see in bloom and enjoyed scrumptious home-made cakes! I look forward to meeting with you all again! Thank you for your cake generosity and making me feel very welcome.

Barbara Cowie

Smart Shopping Tips

- Always check contents of cupboards, fridge and freezer first
- Avoid clutter in cupboards, fridge, freezer etc - easier to view what is there
- Plan meals in advance
- Use shopping lists
- Eat before shopping
- Move old food to the front, new to the back – first in first out
- Monitor what you throw away as it will help with your future food planning

Celebrating food with family and friends was also a hot topic and in a Sainsbury's 2017 study it highlighted a tenth of all wedding food is thrown in the bin.

Annual report to tenants 2016/17

This report is produced 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 2016/17; 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 2016/17?

£4.541 million

on repairs, maintenance and communal services

£3.456 million

on managing tenancies and homes

£0.443 million

on sheltered housing

£5.418 million

on loan repayment and transfer to capital/revenue reserves*

* this is to set money aside for future repairs and improvements.

How much money did the Council receive in 2016/17?



£11.55 million

in rent from tenants



£0.96 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.

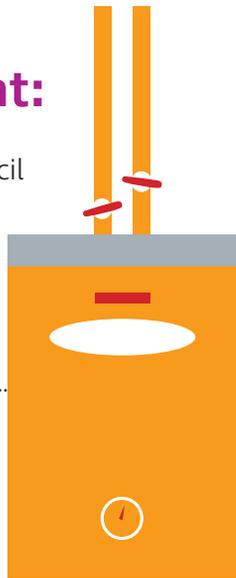
32 kitchens and **47 bathroom** modernisations were carried out to occupied homes and **53 kitchens** and **55 bathrooms** for empty homes.

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

Gas servicing and boiler replacement:

99.45% of gas boilers in Council homes were serviced in 2016/17. 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. In 2016/17 202 boilers were replaced.



Impact of Welfare Reform:

In April 2017, the 106 tenants of working age, who under-occupied 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 you know someone who has and want to know more, please contact a Housing Officer or a member of the Benefits Team.

Empty Council Homes and Housing Allocations:



Between April 2016 and March 2017, **211 Council homes were re-let.**



The time taken to re-let homes was approximately **36.75 days.**

Housing rents and arrears:

At the end of March 2017, current tenant **rent arrears** totalled **£317,884.**

There were **23 possession hearings** in the county court for rent owed and anti-social behaviour.

There were **five evictions** for non-payment of rent.

£219,995 was lost in rent as a result of empty homes (1.86% of the total rent due for the year).



101 homes were offered to existing tenants and **110** to new tenants. **135** of these homes were general purpose and **76** were sheltered housing accommodation.

HomeSwapper:



Approximately 200 Fareham Council tenants are registered on HomeSwapper and are looking for an exchange. During 2016/17 a total of 21 tenants moved home by way of an exchange, 14 within the Borough and 7 outside the Borough. Tenants can register on HomeSwapper online via www.homeswapper.co.uk



Managing Anti-Social Behaviour:

Housing Officers dealt with 12 reported incidents of anti-social behaviour in 2016/17.

In a small number of cases, tenants agreed to an Acceptable Behaviour Contract (ABC) instead of risking the loss of their home. ABCs 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. One 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 2016/17 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.

Housing Panel

A tenant representative attends the Council's 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'

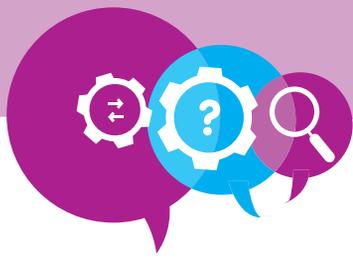
Tenants making a difference

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**



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 2016/17 estate improvements included:

Bench seating at Crofton Court, Melvin Jones House & Northmore Close

Fencing work at Barnfield Court

Bin storage improvements at Hamble House

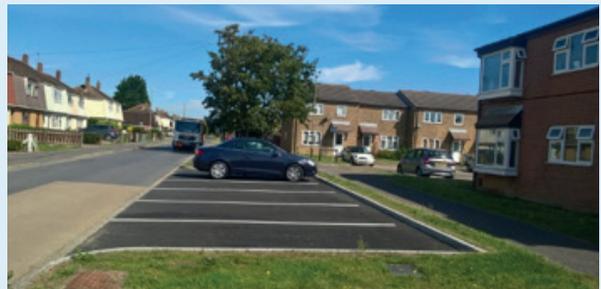
Line marking at Endofield Close and Johns Road

Storage sheds at Melvin Jones House and Trafalgar Court

Hard landscaping work at Northmore Close

Parking Schemes

Nashe Way, Fareham North West and Spencer Court, Marks Road Stubbington.
A number of off road parking spaces were provided at these two sites.



Universal Credit - Update

This is the new government benefit for working age people who are out of work or on a low income. It is being introduced across the country in stages, and combines six benefits into one monthly payment: Job Seekers Allowance, Child Tax Credit, Employment & Support Allowance, Income Support, Working Tax Credit and Housing Benefit.

Will I be affected?

You will only have to claim Universal Credit (UC) if you are making a new claim or have a change in your circumstances that would normally have resulted in making a claim for one of these benefits that UC is replacing.

If you have three or more children, you will continue to receive your existing benefits and tax credits until November 2018.

How you claim and get paid

You must apply for Universal Credit online which means you will need your own email address. If you do not have access to the Internet at home, you can use the computers at your local library or the Job Centre.

Before completing your claim, you must sign up to **www.gov.uk** to verify your identity online so you can access government services.

UC payments are made monthly in arrears, so you will receive your first payment around six weeks after your claim is made. If you are worried about this, you can request an advance payment called a 'short term advance' to help you get by while you are waiting for the money.



As UC is paid into a bank, building society or credit union account, you must have your own account set up. Credit Unions will still accept you even if you cannot open a high street bank account.

As UC includes a housing element (in place of Housing Benefit), it is your responsibility to pay your rent to us. It is a good idea to set up a Direct Debit or Standing Order so that you know your rent will automatically be paid and that you will not fall into arrears and risk losing your home.

UC does not include Council Tax Support, so you must make a separate online claim for this.

There is a lot to take in, but don't worry we can help. If you have any queries about UC, including making a claim, help with managing your payments and paying your rent, please talk to us or call the Universal Credit helpline on 0800 328 9344.

South Coast Training:

The next South Coast Training event will take place in Southampton on Saturday **28th April 2018**.

Workshops will include:

- Mental Health & Well-Being
- Dealing with complaints – What should social landlords do and how might tenants be involved?
- Housing Policy & Legislation including Universal Credit
- Getting the most from Tenant Involvement



Citizens Advice

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

- Phone 03444 111 306 (Mon, Tues, Thurs & Fri 9am to 5pm & Wed 9am to 6:30pm. Sat. 10am to 12 noon).
- Visit Fareham Library, Osborn Road, Fareham, PO16 7EN (10am to 4pm Monday to Friday and 5pm until 6pm on Thursday).
- Visit the Highlands Hub, 103 Highlands Road, Fareham. PO15 6HZ (Tuesday 10am to 2pm).
- Visit Portchester library, 70 West Street, Portchester. PO16 9TX (10am until 2pm) every Thursday.
- Visit Lockswood Library, Locksheath Shopping Centre, Park Gate. SO31 6DX (Wednesday 10am until 2pm).
- Visit the CA website at www.farehamcab.org.uk or www.citizensadvice.org.uk

You said, we did...

Areas inspected	Issues identified & action taken	Outcomes
Solent House; Hamble House; Needles House; Meon House; Medina House; Spithead House; Langstone House & Minden House	Overflowing bins at Solent House & Langstone House & rubbish on the floor. Dumped mattress behind Medina House.	Situation being monitored as this is an ongoing problem. Mattress removed.
Sicily House & Salerno House	Rubbish being dumped next to bins and often not in bags.	Bin area fenced off at Sicily House so that only residents can use it. The same is planned for Salerno House.
Kenwood Road; Webb Road & Roman Grove	Weeds along pathways; parking issues; dog fouling & dumped freezer.	Weeding done as part of a winter tidy up. Additional parking is being looked in to. Dog fouling being monitored & the freezer has been removed.
St Quentin House; Ramillies House; Marne House; Caen House; Tebourba House; Vimy House & Flanders House	Contaminated recycling bins at Marne House; Caen House & Tebourba House.	Ongoing issues. The Council is consulting residents at Marne House about having a fenced off area for bins with resident access only.
Hewett House; Hewett Close; Hewett Road & Ransome Close.	Missing 'dragons' teeth on the access road leading to the garages at Bellfield.	Nine 'dragons' teeth replaced to prevent the grassed area being damaged.



Fareham in Bloom Winners

Congratulations to all the tenants & leaseholders who received awards for Fareham in Bloom in 2017.

Community garden awards were given to the following places:

- King George Road
- Melvin Jones House
- Norman Close
- Trafalgar Court
- Vimy House



Jonathan Pearce from Vimy House writes: 'We started the flower bed approximately 3 and a half years ago with a small group of residents taking part.

Since then, people have come and gone but we have a core group of people who tend the garden regularly. Many other residents help with the odd new plant, compost, even refreshments when we're working on it. Passers-by regularly compliment us on the garden and how it makes them smile.





This year, as the garden is now pretty well established, we thought we'd throw ourselves at the "Fareham in Bloom" community garden class. We never expected to win a thing as our flower bed is rather small, but, boy were we in for a shock; a silver medal!

In addition, to the flower bed, we have been planting spring bulbs around the block, both in our communal lawn and generally in the immediate local community. In addition to last years' planting, we have, this year, planted another 250 daffodils, about 80 tulips & 100 crocuses; should look and smell lovely in spring.

Last summer year, we organised a sunflower competition for the children in the block. Judging and awards were dished out over the August bank holiday weekend, when we threw a block party and BBQ. The tallest sunflower grew to over 10ft.

I'm still not sure whether it was the children or their parents that were the most competitive about it.

We have a few ideas as to how we take the garden forwards into next year, and are in the process of consulting with the neighbours for their ideas as well.

It would be remiss of us to not try for a Gold next year, fingers crossed!

Jonathan Pearce

Estate Inspections:

Area Housing Estates Officer	Estate/area to be inspected	Date of inspection
Stubbington & South Fareham Matt Elsbury 01329 824492 melsbury@fareham.gov.uk	Marchesi Close & Foster Close flats	Wednesday 18th April 2018 at 10.30 am. Meet at Marchesi Court opposite the car park.
	Solent House; Hamble House; Needles House; Meon House; Medina House; Spithead House; Langstone House & Minden House.	Friday 20th April 2018. Meet outside Solent House.
	Crofton Court and Melvin Jones House	1st Wednesday of every month, Matt meets with residents of Melvin Jones House between 12.30pm & 2pm & at Crofton Court between 2pm & 4pm.
Western Wards Helen Ayers (Mon - Wed) 01329 824464 hayers@fareham.gov.uk Jon Johnson (Thurs & Fri) 01329 824464 jjohnson@fareham.gov.uk	Sylvan Court – meeting with residents	Wednesday 25th April 2018 at 10.30am.
	Downing Court – meeting with residents	Tuesday 15th May 2018 at 10.30am.
	Beverley Close & Birchen Close	Thursday 3rd May 2018 at 10.30am.
North Fareham Tania Meskouri 01329 824458 tmeskouri@fareham.gov.uk	Frosthole Close	Tuesday 8th May 2018 at 10am. Meet outside Arras House.
	Arras House; Gaza House; Nashe House & Hillson House.	Thursday 17th May 2018 at 10am. Meet outside Arras House.
Portchester & South Fareham Gemma Barton 01329 824484 gbarton@fareham.gov.uk	St Quentin House; Ramillies House; Marne House; Caen House; Tebourba House; Vimy House & Flanders House.	Thursday 19th April 2018 at 10am. Meet outside St Quentin House.
	Linden Lea & Robinson Court	Tuesday 10th April 2018 at 9.30am. Meet on the road side of Linden Lea.

Complaints Policy

Overview

At Fareham Borough Council, we aim to provide high quality services at all times. However, we recognise that things don't always go to plan, and there may be times when we do not live up to your expectations. If this happens, we want you to tell us and we will do our very best to put things right, as quickly as possible.

How and where to complain to

If you are not satisfied with any aspect of our service, you can tell us about your concerns in the following ways:

Online: **www.fareham.gov.uk/complaints**

Telephone: **01329 236100**

Email: **customerservicecentre@fareham.gov.uk**

By post to: **Customer Service Centre, Fareham Borough Council, Civic Offices, Civic Way, Fareham. PO16 7AZ.**

Contact details

Fareham Housing, Tenancy Services, Department of Operations, 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
(look under Housing; Existing Council Tenants; Tenant and Leaseholder involvement).

Useful Contacts

To report a repair to your home, 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).

E-mail: responsiverepairs@fareham.gov.uk

Website: 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 781 2739. (At the time of putting this newsletter together, the Council were in the process of interviewing contractors for gas repairs, so the details here are subject to change).

General enquiries:

For all other enquiries 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.

E-panel:

Join the Council's E-panel to get involved with consultations and to have your say. Listening to your views is important to us and you can really make a difference to life in the Borough.

You can join online at www.fareham.gov.uk/epanel