

Tenants' Voice

SUMMER
2020

A newsletter for and by Tenants



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FAREHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL



Hello!

Welcome to this special edition of the **Tenants' Voice**. Please take the time to read through the advice about keeping safe during the **Coronavirus** pandemic both personally and in your own home. Please pay attention to our fire safety advice. You will also find information about where you can get help if you are unwell or vulnerable.

Please take care during this outbreak and be assured that the Council will continue to provide help and resume its normal services as soon as possible. Details of what is happening with Council services is provided on Page 6.

Enjoy the newsletter and don't forget to keep in touch with all that is happening in your area.

Editorial Team

Coronavirus do's and don'ts:

Coronavirus continues to pose a major threat to people's health and although the government has recently relaxed the restrictions on our daily lives the message still remains that we need to take care.

Recent guidance from the government advises the public to do the following:

Maintain social distancing is the main message and do the following:

- Work from home if possible
- Avoid public transport
- Exercise if you want to outdoors for unlimited times
- Enjoy parks and outdoor spaces

- Meet up only with one person from outside your household outside as long as you stay 2 metres apart
- Do not invite people into your home even for a barbecue, for example in your garden
- You can drive to outdoor open places for exercise, but, not to other parts of the UK.
- You may exercise outdoors with one person from outside your household
- Continue to maintain social distancing
- Shop only for essential items including medical needs
- You are allowed to go out to care for a vulnerable person

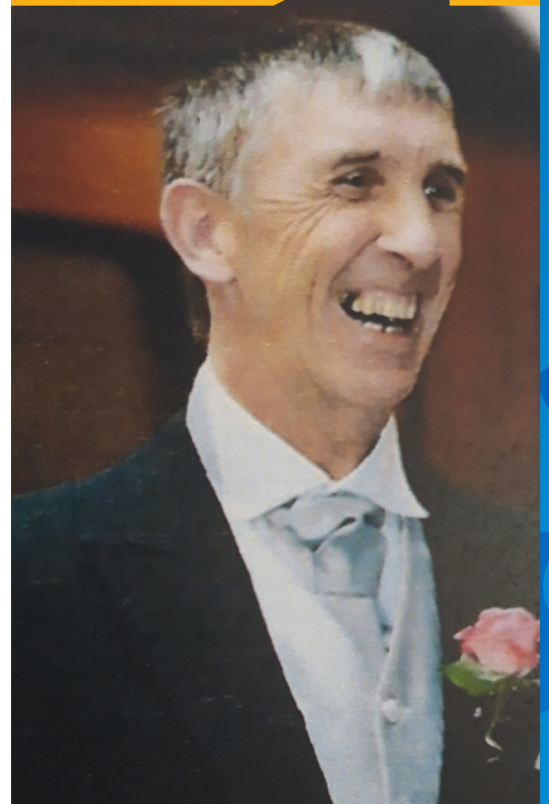
Keep your distance in public.

Doug Nimmo

Doug Nimmo sadly passed away just before Christmas 2019. Doug was a well liked and respected member of staff who became the Sheltered Housing Officer at the new Sylvan Court when it opened in 2017.

Before this, Doug worked for Fareham Borough Council as a mobile sheltered housing officer for over 30 years. He was well known to tenants in sheltered housing around the Borough.

Doug will be missed by staff and tenants alike.



CORONAVIRUS HELP AT HAND



Acts of Kindness

Shopping for essentials
Prescriptions, friendly chats & dog walking

☎ 07726 577761

● ActsofKindnessTeam@outlook.com



One Community

Volunteering opportunities

☎ 01329 239934

✉ vss@1community.org.uk



Waypoint Church (Western Wards)

Shopping for essentials
Prescriptions and activity packs
Friendly chats & dog walking

☎ 07934 726212

✉ help@waypointchurch.org.uk



Community First

Medical appointment transport
Shopping for essentials
Prescriptions

☎ 0300 500 8085

✉ support@cfirst.org.uk

🌐 www.cfirst.org.uk

Contact **Citizens Advice** for help and support across a range of issues including Food Bank enquiries

☎ 03444 111306 or 01329 223117 🌐 public.citafareham.org/advice

If you have received an NHS letter saying you are considered extremely vulnerable, please register for help if you need it. **The contact details are in your letter.**

For all other enquiries:

● leisure@fareham.gov.uk ☎ 01329 236100 🌐 fareham.gov.uk/coronavirus

If you know anyone in Fareham who is isolated and vulnerable, please share this information

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Residents of Crofton Court took part in the Review of Sheltered Housing

Review of Sheltered Housing

In Sept 2019 we asked tenants of the Borough's Sheltered Housing schemes to take part in a consultation to give feedback on their experience of the service.

We met with over 180 people in coffee mornings and received over 200 surveys.

In general people reported being very happy with their flat and scheme, they valued the safety and security it offered and said the current support service of housing officers along with the

alarm and monitoring service, met their needs well.

The greatest number of comments concerned maintenance, garden and grounds, followed by parking and public transport. There were a lot of positive comments about where people lived, many of these about the support they received from their sheltered housing officer. Many residents reported they would welcome weekend cover and more organised activities.

If you would like a copy of the full report please contact Jackie Collins on jcollins@fareham.gov.uk or call 01329 824409

Grounds maintenance

Lots of people think that the Grounds Maintenance team only cut the grass, in Fareham. The team also care for all the 28 miles of hedges, shrub beds, winter and summer sports pitches, cemeteries (including over 100 burials and 100 cremation interments a year), play areas and the assisted gardening scheme.

In the spring and early summer there are over 280 flower beds, hanging baskets and tubs to be planted up, kept tidy and watered in preparation for Fareham In Bloom.

From the summer of 2020, the team will also look after Daedalus Common, when it will become one of the largest open spaces in Fareham.

All this work is carried out by around 30 full time staff and some seasonal workers.

If you would be interested in giving feedback about the Grounds Maintenance service in your area, please contact Jennie Larkin on 01329 824463 or email jlarkin@fareham.gov.uk.



Window cleaning

Did you know that windows in most of our blocks of flats and maisonettes should be cleaned four times a year by our cleaning contractor Hi-spec? Window cleans should take place in February, May, August and November.

In many of our blocks we have tenants and leaseholders who keep us informed about the standard of cleaning. If you would like to monitor the cleaning and or grounds maintenance for your block, please contact Jennie Larkin on 01329 824463. Also, if you want to find out if window cleaning is carried out in your block, please contact Jennie.



Fire hazards in communal areas

Tenants and Leaseholders are reminded not to store any items on landings, stairways or any other communal area.

Items stored in communal areas can pose a fire risk and may prevent people escaping in the event of a fire.

Recently, inspections of communal areas have shown an increase in the number of bikes, toys, prams, furniture and bags of rubbish left in communal areas.

Check your smoke alarms

Smoke alarms save lives - but they need to be checked regularly to make sure they are in good working order.

Alarms can be checked by pushing the test button to see if it is in working order.

Tips to remember:

- Replace the battery when needed and never use a rechargeable battery
- Install a smoke alarm on each floor including in the hallway
- Replace your smoke alarm every 10 years

If your smoke alarm is not working or is broken, please contact the Responsive Repairs Team immediately.

Balcony Fires

Balcony fires can be devastating and can spread quickly to neighbouring properties or to the building itself, so, be careful what you store on your balcony.

Items like furniture, timber, decorating materials and other flammable goods can significantly increase the risk of a fire in your home. Please do not use barbeques on your balcony as they pose a real risk of a fire.

Please also take care when smoking on your balcony and discard your cigarettes safely.





What has the Council been doing during lockdown?

During the lockdown, the Council is continuing to run many of its services, although in different ways.

Housing Options

The Housing Options team has been working from home during the lockdown period. The number of cases of people who threatened with homelessness is higher than usual, but the team is managing to cope with the increase and ensure homelessness is avoided. There is still a small minority of rough sleepers in the borough who are refusing assistance and accommodation.

Tenancy Services

The Neighbourhood Team has been working from home and dealing with all queries that have been received. Although there has been no face to face contact, most enquiries have been successfully dealt with by phone, email or letter. Neighbourhood Officers will start to undertake some block and external inspections to ensure that communal areas are safe and risk free from hazards.

Benefits

The Benefits Team is also working from home and although the

number of Council Tax Support claims received is high, the team is working hard to ensure that Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support claims are paid as quickly as possible.

Emergency repairs and empty properties

The number of requests for responsive repairs is still around 30 per cent down on usual. The team has been working on emergency repairs and refurbishing empty properties. Obtaining material such as plaster is still an issue and some specialist work can't be undertaken, but with more businesses opening on a click and collect basis it is getting easier to source materials.

The focus on empty properties is now moving to larger properties and those that need more work, with the plan that as soon as restrictions are lifted people can move into their new homes without further delay. Gas servicing is still being carried out in a safe way to ensure that gas appliances are in good working order.

Grounds maintenance

Grounds maintenance work is continuing around the Borough. You will have seen the grasscutters out and assisted gardening is being carried out where social distancing is possible.



Mountjoy

The Council has been working in partnership with Mountjoy to carry out essential repairs to the Council's 2,500 homes. This is continuing during this crisis and Mountjoy is also working with the Council on empty properties.

Cleaning and caretaking

If you live in a block where the Council carries out the cleaning, this has continued during the lockdown. Window cleaning work throughout blocks has been carried out during May.

Moving forward

The gas connection at the new development in Bridge Road has now been completed and we are just waiting for SSE to install individual meters. Snagging work is now being undertaken, so properties should be available for occupation soon, subject to the individual property meter installation.

Contractors are back on site at Highlands Road. Other building projects include Station Road, Stubbington Lane, Assheton Court and Coldeast Scout Hut site will resume.

Fareham Housing: Building & Providing More Affordable Homes

New Council Homes

The Council continue to make progress with the construction of new Council homes on land at Bridge Road (Park Gate) and Highlands Road (Fareham North). Both sites should be finished by late summer 2020. Together they will provide 23 new Council homes. The new street name for Bridge Road will be Oak Tree Close and the name for the Highlands Road site will be Rose Court.

Planning and other preliminary work is also underway for further new Council house schemes at the following sites: -

- Station Road, Portchester – 16 new sheltered flats
- Stubbington Lane, Hill Head – 11 new shared ownership houses
- Coldeast Scout Hut, Park Gate – approximately 7 new flats
- Wynton Way – approximately 11 new homes

The Council have also recently confirmed that they will be seeking the redevelopment of Assheton Court in Portchester to provide a modern and larger sheltered housing facility. It is intended that Assheton Court will close when the nearby new sheltered housing development at Station Road is complete, potentially at the end of 2021/early 2022.



Artist impression of development at Oak Tree Close, Park Gate



Artist impression of Station Road

Housing Rent Payments:

You can pay your rent in the following ways:

D 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.

Direct Debit is the preferred method of payment as your rent will be paid automatically from your account, ensuring that your rent is paid on time and preventing arrears, which could affect your tenancy. You can set up a Direct Debit for any frequency and for any day of the month that is suitable to you. For example, if your benefits or wages are paid into your account on the 12th of the month, you can set up a Direct Debit for this day also so that your rent is paid out immediately and you have peace of mind that it is paid. Remember that arrears on your account can affect your tenancy and in the most serious cases where arrangements are not kept this can result in you losing your home.

G Online at www.fareham.gov.uk and look up Housing Rents.

T Telephone our automated service (available 24/7) on 0345 6066876 or during office hours (8:45am to 5:15pm) call 01329 236100.

E 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 52-41-32.

Recharging for missed appointments:

Did you know that if you miss an appointment with a tradesman or Council Officer, the cost of the appointment could be charged to you? The standard charge is £50.

So, if you cannot keep an appointment for any reason, please make sure that you cancel in plenty of time by calling us on 01329 236100 or the direct line to Responsive Repairs which is 0800 1412 194.

Universal Credit

Those claiming Universal Credit are reminded to do the following on a regular basis:

Sign in to your Universal Credit account to:

- apply for an advance on your first payment
- see your statement
- report a change in circumstances
- add a note to your journal
- see your to-do list

- see when your next payment will be
- see your Claimant Commitment

Use the username and password you set up when you applied for Universal Credit. You can ask for a reminder if you're not sure.

In order to avoid any delays to your payments, it is important to remember to fill in journals and to notify the Department of Work and Pensions about any changes to your circumstances. It is also very important to pay your rent. So, if the rent element of your

Universal Credit is paid directly to you, please make sure you pay your rent to Fareham Borough Council.

If you have any queries about your claim, always try to use the phone that you originally registered with as this will help you get through quicker.



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.

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 8:45 to 5:15) and ask for Responsive Repairs.

E-mail responsiverepairs@fareham.gov.uk

Website: www.fareham.gov.uk/housing and select the link for Repairs & Improvements.

For out of hours emergencies please contact 0800 374 485.

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

For faults with a gas boiler and gas central heating, please contact our contractor Liberty Gas on 0800 9702512.

