

HOMEfromHOMES

A magazine from Newark and Sherwood Homes

Winter 2009 Issue 18



Many Happy Returns

Tenant Conference Report - Your Homes, Your Future, Your Choice.

Ginette Hughes and Karen Willis cut the 5th birthday cake, as Newark and Sherwood Homes celebrate another successful year.

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Annual General Meeting



The AGM panel

The fifth Annual General Meeting of Newark and Sherwood Homes was held on Thursday 12th November at Kelham Hall.

Two independent Directors of the Board have resigned from the Board. Bob Ainger and Pamela Taylor have both been Directors since Newark and Sherwood Homes was formed.

“Both Pam and Bob have devoted a significant amount of time to their role as Director, and their skills, knowledge and experience have been invaluable in helping the Company deliver the successes it has achieved for the tenants and communities of Newark and Sherwood. On behalf of the Board, I would like to thank them both and wish them well in the future”
Ginette Hughes, Chair

Ginette Hughes, Chair of the Board of Newark and Sherwood Homes, highlighted some of the successes of the Company over the past year.

This included getting a good 2* rating from the Audit Commission, which commended our Decent Homes programme, the efforts put into Value for Money and the involvement of tenants in all aspects of the services we deliver.

In her speech, Ginette emphasised many of the improvements made through investment in our properties, including £470,000 spent on safety and security work at Chatham Court which has significantly reduced crime and anti-social behaviour in and around the flats, and money spent on environmental improvements including car parking, buggy stores and fencing.

She also looked forward to the first new council housing to be built in the District for 26 years after the successful bid for funding.



Bob Ainger



Pamela Taylor

Ken Sutton has been appointed as an Independent Director to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Pam Taylor. The other vacancy will be filled shortly.

Elections were held for two Tenant Directors of the Board members. Jean Clark and Richard Tracy were both re-elected. Both Jean and Richard have asked us to pass on their thanks to tenants who took the time to vote, and they are grateful for your support.

Acting Finance Manager, John Nicholl, presented the Company’s records and accounts for the year ending 31 March 2009. Through our Value For Money work with tenants and staff, we identified potential efficiency gains of £847,000. These savings were put back into providing services for our tenants and customers.

“At Newark and Sherwood Homes we recognise that working in partnership with tenants and other organisations is how we deliver excellent housing services. I would like to thank all our partners for their continued support in delivering high quality services to our customers.” **Ginette Hughes, Chair**

Outstanding Contributions

Newark and Sherwood Homes is very proud of its reputation with tenant involvement, and we recognise how important it is to our success. The Outstanding Contribution to the Community Awards are a celebration of the good work carried out by tenants and leaseholders throughout the District. The winners of this year's awards were announced at the Annual General Meeting.

Each year we recognise two people who have been nominated by their neighbours because they give their own time to improve the community in which they live. The winners receive a glass trophy and a cheque for £100 for their chosen charity.

“Jim is the veteran Good Samaritan of Howes Court. Whatever Jim is asked to do he does with a smile. He never grumbles and is always cheerful. Howes Court would be a poorer place without him”

The first of this year's winners was Jim Fordham, a tenant at Howes Court, Newark, who was nominated by a number of his neighbours. Jim's chosen charity was the RSPCA, and he also works as a volunteer at the RSPCA shop in Newark.

The second winner is Richard Tracy of Sutton on Trent, who is an active member of the Sutton on Trent Tenants and Residents Association and also a Director of the Board of Newark and Sherwood Homes.

“Richard is a very caring and understanding man who always has time to listen. He works hard for tenants across the district as a member of various tenant groups.”

Richard's chosen charity is the Lincolnshire and Nottinghamshire Air Ambulance.

Ginette Hughes, Chair of Newark and Sherwood Homes, presenting the Awards to Jim and Richard said: “It gives me great pleasure in my first year as Chairman of Newark and Sherwood Homes to have been able to present the Outstanding Contribution to the Community Awards to two such deserving people.

Working with communities as we do, we rely heavily on the tireless contribution of people like Jim and Richard helping us to achieve our vision to “deliver excellent housing services”.



Outstanding Contribution to the Community winners Richard Tracy (left) and Jim Fordham (right) receive their trophies from Ginette Hughes, Chair of Newark and Sherwood Homes.

Tenant Conference Report -



At the start of a very busy week for Newark and Sherwood Homes, the Annual Tenant Conference brought together tenants from all around the Newark and Sherwood District.

Master of Ceremonies, John Clark, Secretary of Newark and Sherwood District Federation of Tenants and Residents Association opened the Conference, followed by short speeches of welcome from Ginette Hughes, Chair of Newark and Sherwood Homes, and Karen Willis, Chair of the Newark and Sherwood District Federation of Tenants and Residents Association. Karen had a busy day as she was also helping to lead the “Your Homes” workshop. There were three workshops and a “Question Time” where tenants had the

chance to ask members of the Executive Leadership Team questions. “Your Homes” covered the work of the Tenant Inspectors, a partnership between Newark and Sherwood Homes and Nottingham Community Housing Association. The Tenant Inspectors act as the “eyes and ears”, monitoring the services offered by the two social housing organisations. Each year there will be four major inspections with some flexibility to cover other matters that might arise from complaints, feedback and surveys.



Your Homes

“It was very informative. I'd heard of the Tenant Inspectors but wasn't very sure what they were doing. The workshop was very practical and the people leading it were very approachable so I didn't feel awkward asking questions”

Mrs H - Balderton

Your Homes, Your Future, Your Choice

We were lucky to have Paul Harvard from the new regulator, the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) with us for the Conference. Paul spoke about the changes that will be taking place next year, when the TSA takes over responsibility for setting the standards for all social landlords, and tenants had the chance to ask questions about what the changes could mean for them.

Your Choice

"It looks as though a lot of things are going to be changing in 2010. Hopefully we will be seeing some improvements" **Mr G - Ollerton**



Newark and Sherwood District Council are looking at the options for the future of the housing stock. Rob Main, Strategic Housing Manager at NSDC, led a workshop which explained the work done on asking tenants what they think and the next steps to be taken.

Your Future

I really learnt a lot. I didn't realise that the rent we pay was sent to the government! **Mrs C - Newark**



Fin McElhinney, Customer Services Director, and Steve Feast, Business Services Director, faced questions from the audience in a Question Time, with John Clark in the "David Dimbleby" role.

Question Time

The forum was interesting and it was good to meet the people who manage our homes.

Mrs D - Collingham



The range of questions covered the changes to the Tenancy Agreement to be introduced next year, the changeover to Digital Television and fitting new aerials and why Newark and Sherwood Homes collects information on gender, age and disability.

Feedback from those who attended the Conference was very good, and the day went very smoothly.

I enjoyed all this year's Conference

Mrs W - Collingham

The staff and volunteers have all done an excellent job. **Mr H - Balderton**

I particularly enjoyed the chance to meet the staff, and it was good to meet different people from around the area. **Mrs D - Coddington**

We wish you a Christmas full of good cheer, but please remember to keep your rent account clear!

If you have rent arrears you must make a payment during the 'No Rent Due' week 21 December 2009.

To help clear your arrears more quickly you must keep to any agreement or postponed Court Order and pay as normal.

If you are having problems paying your rent please talk to us on 0845 258 5550, and we will be able to offer you advice.

Ways you can pay your rent

Direct Debit

Many tenants already pay by direct debit and have found this the most convenient way to make payments. Please contact us on 0845 258 5550 and we will send you an application form.

Internet Payments

Online payments can be made by visiting our website www.nshomes.co.uk – simply click "Rent Payment" on the front screen and follow the instructions.

Debit Card

You can pay your Rent by Debit Card any time, any day of the year (including Christmas Day!). Telephone 01636 655978 and follow the automated prompts. You will need to know your rent account number to use this service.

Local Offices

You can pay at any Newark and Sherwood Homes or NSDC office during normal opening hours. Offices are located at Sycamore Road, Ollerton, Eton Avenue, Newark, Buttermarket, Newark and Kelham Hall. You can pay by cash, cheque or Debit Card.

Post Offices

Payments can be made at any post office in the country. You will need your rent payment card to use this service.

Retail Outlets

Payments can be made at any retail outlet displaying the "Paypoint" or "E-pay" sign. You will need your rent payment card to use this service.

By Post

Cheques should be made Newark & Sherwood District Council and sent to Kelham Hall, Kelham, Newark, Nottinghamshire NG23 5QX. Please put your rent account number on the back of your cheque.

Changing places

A couple of awkward “workmen”, a well-intentioned “Boy Scout” and a thoughtless “Event Organiser” made life a misery for some local residents recently – but it was all in the interests of some excellent training on Equality and Diversity.



Back row left-right: Terry Bailey, Mick Carman, Vicky Reynolds, Tony Straw, Karen Willis, Caroline Meek
left-right: Graham Tomlinson, Kate Carter, Kizzy Carter

Three short plays were commissioned by the Equality and Diversity Continuous Improvement Group led by Caroline Meek, Customer Access and Support Manager. They featured staff and “volunteers” from the District Federation of Tenants and Residents Association, under the direction of Housing Officer, Terry Bailey, and gave a serious message in a humorous way.

The Equality and Diversity Training covered disability issues, religious awareness and attitudes towards older people. After the success of these mini-plays, Newark and Sherwood Homes are looking at ways of making this training more widely available. Look out for the touring production coming to a Community Centre near you soon!!

Emergency Repairs Service

During the Christmas and New Year holiday periods we provide a 24 hour emergency callout service. If you have an emergency repair when the office is closed you can call our emergency repairs number 0800 561 0100. This is for emergencies only.

An emergency includes things like a burst water pipe, or loss of electricity supply. Please do not use this service for any repairs that can wait until the office is open again.

If you have recently had Decent Homes work done and you have an emergency problem directly due to this work, you should telephone:

Connaught 0800 3897991

Bullocks 0800 7310326

These numbers should only be used if you have had Decent Homes work in the last year, and the work is still under warranty. Anyone having Decent Homes work done over the Christmas period will be given a contact number by the Contractors.

Focus on... our Customers

Whenever you call our 0845 258 5550 number, you will be speaking to one of the Customer Access Team. They are the first point of contact for Newark and Sherwood Homes. The Customer Access Team handle about 4000 calls each month. Monday mornings are the busiest time, but all mornings are usually busy.

The Customer Access Team deal with a wide range of enquiries, from making appointments for repairs to giving advice about applying for a property.



Part of the Customer Access Team at Farrar Close

Part of the Team are based at Kelham Hall, including our Reception staff and the clerical team.



Kelham Hall Team

If you have a query that they can't answer or needs to be forwarded to someone else, the Customer Access Team will be able to put you through to the right person, or take a message.

Our 0845 258 5550 telephone number is a low cost number (about 3.5p per minute). Check with your provider – some 0845 calls are free!

If you are ringing to book a repair please give us as much information as possible, so that our operatives can bring the right tools and parts. Repairs appointments are booked in line with our published priority target dates. In 2010 Newark and Sherwood Homes will be changing the computer system which we use to make appointments and keep all our records.

While we are changing over to the new system there may be some delays in dealing with your enquiry, but we will of course keep those to a minimum.

If you have contacted our 0845 number, you may have had a follow up call to ask what you thought of our service. This gives us valuable information about the standard of our reception services. If you have recently taken part in a telephone survey, thank you for your help.

Customer Access Team

98% of customers were satisfied with the service they received from the Customer Access Team in October 2009.

We have a Continuous Improvement Group which involves Tenants and Residents Association representatives, and looks at the ways we can work together to improve access and customer care, including the work of the Customer Access Team.

If you would like to get involved with this Group please contact Bev Hope on 01636 655536.

October 2009

92% of telephone calls were answered within 10 rings

We responded to all text messages within 24 hours

93% of complaints were answered within 10 days –average time 7.5 days

Help us to help you

- Please be clear why you are calling.
- Please have all the information that we need when you ring us – your name, address and a contact telephone number
- If you have received a letter from us and want to speak to the person who wrote to you, please have the letter handy so that you can tell us the name of the person you want.
- If you are ringing to report a repair, please give us as much information as possible, so that our operatives can bring the right tools and parts.

Christmas opening hours

Newark and Sherwood Homes offices will be closed on the following days over the festive season:-

Christmas Day 25th December 2009

Monday 28th December 2009

Friday 1st January 2010

Round and About

Our staff have been out and about around the District, publicising the good work we do with communities.

The Supported Housing Team were at an Older Peoples Day in Kelham Hall to celebrate the range of services available. Our display concentrated on the Careline alarm system, which is available to all older or disabled people living in the Newark and Sherwood District.



Set for Spring

Blidworth and Clipstone will be blooming next Spring, thanks to the efforts of local children who planted over 1000 daffodil bulbs during their half term break.



“Are we nearly there yet?”

At a recent event for groups working with and for gypsy and traveller groups, Newark and Sherwood Homes was represented by Housing Choice Officer, Sue Rockley.

The event was organised by Rural Community Action Nottinghamshire and brought together local agencies who work with gypsy and traveller communities. The guest speaker was Noelette Hanley, Manager of the Luton Irish Forum who spoke about the history and traditions of the travelling community and the discrimination and social exclusion that they can face. Other speakers covered education and health issues for these communities.

A summary of the issues raised at the conference will be available shortly. If you would like to know more about the event or about Newark and Sherwood Homes' services for the gypsy and traveller communities please contact Sue on 01636 655530.



Sue Rockley with Vicky Botton, Chair of the East Notts Travellers Association

Careline changes

Celebrating Careline Changeover completion



The Supported Housing Team with Lee White, Installations Manager of Tunstall Telecom.

Work to replace the old pull cord alarm systems in our Supported Housing properties has now been completed. The new Lifelines are proving to be much better for our tenants, with some very positive feedback from tenants and their families. A celebration of the completion of this work was held at Wellow Community Centre on 20th November.

Lee White, Installation manager from Tunstall Telecom said, "Our job was made much easier by the way the local Supported Housing staff know the tenants and could make sure we got access first time."

The system can now be automatically upgraded without any work being done in your homes. Chief Executive, Rebecca Rance, paying tribute to the way the staff had worked to keep the service going throughout the changeover, said, "We now offer a fantastic cutting-edge service. This huge change has been achieved without a glitch. There are a lot of people who appreciate this service, and staff should be very proud of themselves for what they have achieved."

Ending your Tenancy

Your tenancy agreement sets out the way your tenancy should be ended.

- All tenants must give 4 weeks written notice of termination. This four-week period must end on a Monday before 12 noon. Where a tenant has died or gone into permanent residential care, their representatives should give notice.
- You must pay rent up to the end of the notice period even if you have moved out. If there are arrears we will take steps to recover the debt including using a recovery agent. You may not be allowed to move to another council property if you have an outstanding debt.
- When someone has died their Housing Benefit will stop, so please contact the Newark and Sherwood District Council Housing Benefit Team.
- We will try to do an Inspection of the property before the end of the notice period. All possessions and rubbish must be removed – if you don't you may be charged. Any unauthorised alterations to the property must be made good or you will be charged.
- Tenants are responsible for the security of the property to the end of the notice period – if you leave early, you must tell us so that we can secure the property if necessary.
- You should take final meter readings before vacating and tell your electricity and gas suppliers.
- Any alarm pendants or door entry fobs must be returned to Newark and Sherwood Homes with all keys to the property. If you don't hand in the keys on time, you may be charged for changing the locks.

Keys can be handed in by 12 noon on the day of termination to one of the following offices:-

- The Town Hall Office, The Buttermarket, Market Place, Newark
- Newark and Sherwood Homes, Kelham Hall, Kelham.
- Hawtonville Local Office, Eton Avenue, Newark.
- Ollerton Local Office, Sycamore Road, Ollerton



0300 300 9999

The New Number for Nottinghamshire Police

Wherever you live in Nottinghamshire, there's now only one number for calling your local police.

The same police staff will answer your call, and you will be directed to the right person, department or police station. The only change is that you now have just one number to remember, wherever you are.

When do I use it?

To report a crime that has already happened, to speak to your local police officer or for any other enquiry, please call 0300 300 9999. If a life is in danger, a crime is in progress or to report a vulnerable missing person who may come to harm please dial 999.

Traditionally, thieves take advantage of the long, dark evenings.

Nicky Taylor, one of the Nottinghamshire force's Crime Reduction Managers, said: "Long summer evenings make things difficult for burglars. In autumn and winter, drawing the curtains or closing blinds can help make a difference.

When going out, look as though you are in. Use timer switches to make lights come on or leave a radio playing. Using low energy light bulbs is a cheap and effective way of leaving a light on without worrying about the cost. Where possible also invest in security lights and set a burglar alarm."

Responses flood in

Thank you to all of you who responded to the surveys included in the last issue of Home From Homes. The response was excellent and the Income Management Team have been kept busy handling the mail. Results will be published on the next issue.



Dennis Fearon, Rent Recovery Officer with some of the hundreds of responses to the surveys.

VALUING YOUR VIEWS YOU SAID, WE DID....

Actions we have taken as a result of the customer feedback we receive from complaints and suggestions:

YOU SAID...

The new door fitted by your contractors 4 months ago is faulty.

WE DID

We arranged for our contractors to repair your door so you are now satisfied. We have told our contractors they must check the quality of the doors they use in future.

YOU SAID...

Why did a workman come to carry out my repair on a day when I told you I would be at work? Then, when I have rearranged the appointment with you, why did no-one turn up?

WE DID

Unfortunately, there appears to have been problems with communication between the staff who booked your appointment and the workmen doing the repair. We booked a new appointment for a time that suited you and also arranged for one of our repairs co-ordinators to visit you to make sure the repair took place as planned.

YOU SAID...

The rent statement you sent me was in an envelope that hadn't been sealed. I am concerned it may have been possible for other people to see my personal details.

WE DID

We apologised and explained that we use a third-party company to send out the rent statements. We have told them to make sure all envelopes are double checked in future so it won't happen again.

YOU SAID...

Why has our community centre not been cleaned as regularly as it should be?

WE DID

We raised your problems with the contractors who carry out the cleaning on our behalf. We reminded them they must clean the community centres in line with timescales in the contract and have improved our monitoring systems to make sure this is happening.

Your Gas Service – free or costly?



Every property with a gas supply should have an annual gas inspection. This essential check could be a lifesaver, as faulty appliances could kill.

This inspection is free, and if you let our engineers in for the first appointment made, you will be entered in a prize draw to win £200 worth of shopping vouchers.

But if you refuse to allow access for the service engineers, a free gas inspection could finish up costing you a lot of money, and eventually lead to you losing your tenancy. We will take legal action to gain access to do the gas inspection. If we have to get an injunction it will cost you at least £150, and the injunction will last for the whole length of your tenancy. This means that if you refuse to allow access again, you could face eviction.

Save time, save money and possibly save your life – let the service inspectors in to check your gas supply.

Pay Direct – Win £100!



Congratulations to Mrs Jones of Thornton Road, Collingham who was the winner of our Direct Debit Prize Draw.

Mrs Jones was presented with £100 worth of High Street vouchers by Charlene Fraser on behalf of Newark and Sherwood Homes.

Just arrange to pay your rent by Direct Debit and if it is still running at the end of January 2010, then you will automatically be entered into a draw along with our existing Direct Debit payers to win £100 worth of shopping vouchers!

For more information and an application form, call in at one of our offices or telephone 0845 258 5550.



TRA Contact Numbers

Bailey Road & Thoresby Avenue

Kate Carter
07813 251191

Bilsthorpe

Marian Bradbury
01623 871329

Bilsthorpe Youth

Stefan Prest
07876 485417

Blidworth

John Allen
01623 407149

BOTRA

Tony Straw
01636 684343

Clipstone

Dorothy Harkess
01623 636439

Coddington

Diana Jones
01636 706266

Collingham

Joan Curtis
01636 892890

Farndon

John Clark
01636 705241

Lovers Lane

John Franks
01636 650871

Lowdham

Maurice Tracey
0115 966 3539

Rural

Graham Tomlinson
01623 883083

Sutton-on-Trent

Doreen Stapleton
01636 821723

Winthorpe Road

Maureen Wilcoxson
01636 684655

Federation of TRAs

Karen Willis
01636 684343

Forthcoming Events

All tenants are invited to come and listen to what is discussed - most of which affects you. Public questions are invited prior to the Board meeting. Please telephone Karen on 01636 655992.

BOARD MEETINGS

Board Meeting
28th January 2010 at 5.15pm
Drawing Room, Lady Chapel, Kelham Hall

Job Vacancies

Do you want to join an organisation that really cares about its employees and offers an excellent remuneration and benefits package?

We advertise our vacancies on our website and in local papers. Alternatively you can contact Human Resources via email: human.resources@nshomes.co.uk or by telephone on **01636 655447**.

Newark and Sherwood Homes welcomes applications from all sections of the community irrespective of race or ethnic origin, religion or belief, sexual orientation, disability or gender.

Contact Us

NEWARK AND SHERWOOD HOMES

Kelham Hall, Newark on Trent, Kelham, Notts NG23 5QX
Tel: 0845 258 5550 (Local call rate) - Fax: (01636) 655514
Minicom: (01636) 655651. Opening times - 8.30am - 5.15pm Monday - Thursday 8.30am - 4.45pm Friday

HAWTONVILLE OFFICE

77c Eton Avenue, Newark on Trent, NG24 4JH
Tel: (01636) 655503 - Fax: (01636) 655504 - Minicom: (01636) 655583. Opening times - 9.00am - 4.30pm Monday - Friday

OLLERTON OFFICE

Sycamore Road, Ollerton, NG22 9PS. Tel: (01623) 860740 - Fax: (01623) 860729 - Minicom: (01623) 837819. Opening times - 9.00am - 4.30pm Monday - Friday

REPAIRS FREEPHONE
0800 561 0010

EMERGENCIES OUT OF HOURS FREEPHONE
0800 561 0010

COMMENT ON THE SERVICE YOU RECEIVE 0845 258 5550

Our website address is: www.nshomes.co.uk - Email us at: housing@nshomes.co.uk

If you would like this document in another language or format, or if you require the services of an interpreter, please contact us.

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(Polish)

(Mandarin)

(Portuguese)



Signing



The Big Word Translation Services



Audio Tape

De Lacy Court make-over



(Newark & Sherwood Homes' Gary O'Donovan and Kevin Boyes, Foreman from Ian Williams)

As part of our commitment to carry out improvements to our Community Centres and internal common areas, we are delivering a number of redecoration schemes under the Cyclical Works Programme.

Some of the schemes we have worked on in this year include William Bailey House, Newark, Kings Court, Southwell and De Lacy Court, Ollerton.

Newark & Sherwood Homes employed Ian Williams Contractors to carry out the works at these locations. William Bailey House and Kings Court are now complete and De Lacy Court is near completion, 3 weeks ahead of programme.

Tenants at De Lacy Court have commented that they are “very happy with the new look of the communal areas... and the painters have done a great job of brightening up the place, they have been hard-working, polite and helpful”.

Inspectors make the grade

Service Inspectors from Newark and Sherwood Homes and Nottingham Community Housing Association were celebrating success in their Level 2 Certificate in Housing with a graduation ceremony at Kelham Hall in November.

Paying tribute to their achievement, Chief Executive of Newark and Sherwood Homes, Rebecca Rance said, “I am passionate about housing and I hope this course has inspired you and given you the confidence to build on this and encourage others to do likewise.

I hope you will all be sitting here today full of pride – because you have done exceptionally well and you should be very proud of yourselves.”



The successful Inspectors with NSH Housing officer, Terry Bailey and Tracy Adams from Nottingham Community Housing Association

