

# TENANTS MEET

Tenants meeting in **Denmead** had a chance to get an update on the voids situation at White Wings and, after an Open Day, several flats found new occupants.

**Eastacre** and **Normandy Court** held lively Information Sharing Sessions with over 40 attending at Eastacre where lots of issues were aired. Fifteen tenants attended at Normandy Court where they have taken action to save water with butts installed around the building.

**Compton** held its AGM recently and Chris Barton-Briddon is still in the Chair. The group is on the look out for new members and they were delighted to welcome a new recruit to the committee this year.

## WORTHY UPDATE



*Worthys TA Chairman Paul Bungey (second right) gets ready to lead an estate walkabout with new Area Housing Manager Su Morgan (second left).*

In April the first of this year's estate walkabouts took place in The Worthys. The general consensus was that apart from one or two minor things the estate is looking very good. Some members also had the opportunity to meet our new Area Housing Manager, Su Morgan.

At our last meeting the Chair introduced Su to the Group. The Chair also thanked Kate Mooge our departing AHM for all her hard work over the past years on behalf of the Tenants and Leaseholders of The Worthys. Kate will now be taking over some of the estates in the Southern Parishes and we wish her all success in her new area.

## WEEKE NEWS

Weeke Tenants & Residents Association has been tackling the problem of overflowing bins at Trussell Crescent. A letter has been circulated to all households pleading for them to be sensible about rubbish. Not to use other people's bins; to take responsibility for their own rubbish, make sure recyclables and refuse are not mixed up and to flatten boxes to make collection easier.

Weeke also has a new Area Housing Manager, Su Morgan, and Kate Mooge was thanked for all the hard work that she has put into the area.

## TACT UNDER REVIEW

Priority Estates Project (PEP) has been appointed to carry out a review of TACT, the Council's district-wide tenant consultative group, which has been in existence since 1995 supporting tenants in the Winchester district.

PEP is recognised by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister to work with resident and volunteer groups. It has been in business for 26 years and has a sound track record for working with resident groups.

Chris McConnachie will be leading the project, which will carry out a desktop review of the existing structure and practices, comparing it to other structures elsewhere in the country. Her plan is to arrange a series of workshops with small focus groups across the city to discuss residents' views on the work of TACT and how the group could be improved to attract a wider membership and increase involvement.

Chris will also be carrying out a telephone survey with residents to gain a wider view of opinions, which will feed into the review and be formally reported to the Council.

We hope that you will make your contribution to TACT's review and share your ideas, which will shape the future of the group and build on the success of full resident involvement in the work of Winchester City Council.

**If you would like to contact Chris McConnachie regarding the review please call PEP on Freephone 0800 374 864.**



# ConTACT

A NEWSLETTER PRODUCED BY TENANTS OF WINCHESTER CITY COUNCIL

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## TACT JOINS MASS LOBBY

Over 1300 tenants, councillors and trade unionists from all over the UK took part in a mass lobby of Parliament in the Spring to demand a fourth option for council housing, later attending a rally addressed by MPs Austin Mitchell, Frank Dobson and Kate Hoey.

Four tenants from TACT attended, accompanied by Cllr Sheila Campbell and Cllr Dominic Hiscock, former Portfolio Holder for Housing. Before attending the rally, the group lobbied local MP Mark Oaten, who pledged his support for the Fourth Option. TACT members also attended a meeting at TUC HQ in May to again pledge their support at a high profile meeting, which was attended by prominent speakers backing the campaign.

"We've got the attention of Ministers and the Labour Party policy review shows a change of policy is in the air. Let's bring this campaign to a successful



conclusion," says TACT Chairman Alan Rickman. "Most Winchester tenants want to stay with the Council and The 'Fourth Option' of direct investment in council housing is an alternative to the Government's proposals."

"The subsidy system means that over 40% of rent paid by Winchester tenants goes straight to the Government to fund housing nationally, as does 75% of the money from Right to Buy property sales. It is unlikely that councils will be able to continue to manage

*Tenants Janet Berry and Alan Rickman with Cllr Dominic Hiscock (right) outside Parliament.*

to operate on a level playing field with housing associations," he said.

More information on the 'Fourth Option' can be found on [www.defendcouncilhousing.org.uk](http://www.defendcouncilhousing.org.uk)

### INSIDE

Page 2 TACT Under the Spotlight  
Page 3 TACT as Busy as Ever  
Page 4 Worthy Update

# SPEAK UP

If you are interested in what happens to your home and want to have a say, why not join one of our TACT groups or a local Tenants Association? We believe that this is the best way of having an input into the future management of our homes.

Contact the TACT Chairmen if you want to find out more. You can call them on Freephone 0800 716 987 and leave a message, or write to them as follows:

Alan Rickman 101 Taplings Road Winchester SO22 6HG	David Cruden 16 Doctors Lane West Meon GU32 1LR
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## TACT MEETING DATES

Meetings of the Afternoon Group are held on a Wednesday at Makins Court, Alresford, from 2-4pm, and of the Evening Group at The Guildhall, Winchester, from 7.30-9.30pm unless otherwise stated below:

**19 July 2006**  
2pm & 7.30pm

**16 August**  
2pm & 7.30pm

**20 September**  
7.30pm - 9.30pm  
Joint meeting

**18 October**  
2pm & 7.30pm

**15 November**  
2pm & 7.30pm

**6 December**  
7.30pm-9.30pm  
Joint meeting

All tenants and leaseholders welcome.

For further information contact Glynis Cole or Seema Jandu on Freephone **0800 716 987**.

# TACT UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT

A few months ago the members of the Tenant Participation Compact Monitoring Group (TPCMG) decided that as TACT had been up and running for ten years, a review should be carried out. It was agreed that an outside independent body should carry out this work. PEP (Priority Estates Project) was awarded this task.

I now hear some of you saying, "Why do we need this review"? The answer is that it will show up our strengths and our weaknesses; how we compare with other similar groups country-wide, and it will show us where we need to improve our methods when representing you the tenants, when working with the Council.

**Paul Bungey, Chairman, TPCM**

# SAVE YOUR ENERGY

Janet Berry and Alan Rickman attended a conference on energy saving organised by the Housing Corporation and Energy Conservation Trust. Here are some of the great and very simple tips they came back with:

1. Turn your room thermostat down by 1°C and reduce your heating bill by 8%.
2. Only boil as much water as you need in the kettle.
3. Draw your curtains at night and make sure they're tucked behind the radiators – you could save at least £15.
4. Washing your clothes at 40°C uses 30% less electricity than at 60°C and modern detergents operate just as well at lower temperatures.
5. Use low energy light bulbs – save £10 with each bulb – and they last 10 times longer than an ordinary bulb.
6. Taking a shower uses 60% less water than bathing.
7. Fit a hot water tank jacket and save £20.
8. Stop dripping taps – they can waste enough water in a day to fill a bath!
9. Don't leave appliances on standby – just leaving your TV on standby can cost you £25 a year.
10. Hang washing on the line – use the sun not your money to dry your laundry.

## GET IT TAPED

If you are visually impaired or have a friend or neighbour who would like CONTACT delivered to their home on an audio cassette, please call Glynis Cole or Seema Jandu on Freephone 0800 716 987 for your copy today. These publications are recorded by the Winchester & District Talking Newspaper Association. If you require a copy in larger print or a version in another language, please call the above Freephone number.

# TACT AS BUSY AS EVER

**At the TACT Annual General Meeting Alan Rickman and David Cruden (Chairmen of the Afternoon and Evening Groups) paid tribute to the hard work of all TACT members, in a year which had been just as busy as ever. Here is the Chairs' report for last year:**

**TACT membership** is more or less the same but more volunteers are always needed. Our Co-optees and Deputies, along with committee members, serve on many different and important forums and review groups. Without them and the time and effort they put in, tenant participation would fail, and the well being of all tenants would decline.

We are holding our own with **tenants associations**, trying afternoon meetings when evening ones seem not to work and vice versa. The less formal meetings are working well at Weeke - more time over a cuppa and the chance to put questions to Council staff and councillors.

**Highcliffe** is an example to us all, well done. **Kings Worthy** is another hard working team getting things done. **Compton** is also working hard to get results for its tenants, not forgetting **Stanmore** and all the work going on there. **Winnall** Steering Group is working hard to form its own association and we hope they will be up and running soon. **Information sharing sessions** at sheltered housing schemes are still proving popular.

Last year Cabinet recommended the issue of correct apportionment of costs between the General Fund (GF) and the **Housing Revenue Account (HRA)** be looked into. TACT for its part is concerned about the Catch 22 situation regarding HRA land transfer at a nominal fee to housing associations to build affordable housing. The HRA has to give away the family silver so this can happen and the only way we have is who should move into the new homes.

This year's 5% **increase in rents** was calculated by a formula laid down by central government. Tenants will be receiving an increase year on year until 2010, when your rent will be on a par with those of housing associations. At the same time the City Council is making savings to meet the decent Homes Standard by 2010 – again instigated by central government. TACT demands on your behalf close monitoring to make sure that these savings do not affect the services afforded to you.

TACT meets regularly with SERCO and it is fair to say some **improvements** have been made. Nationwide and Connaught Cleaning Services will likewise have to meet the standards required to give the Best Value set out by the government.

TACT has long found **voids and allocations** a thorn in its side. The reluctance of people to move into sheltered housing is the main reason for many voids. Other uses will have to be found as more of these properties become vacant or the loss of revenue to the HRA will spiral further out of control.

The **Social Issues Scrutiny Panel** (formerly Housing Performance Improvement Committee) considers matters put before them as part of its role in holding the Housing Portfolio Holder to account. TACT will be involved in identifying **service priorities** for the 2006/07 business plan through the joint Rents and Property Forum meetings.



*Chris McConnachie of PEP chats with Alan Rickman and David Cruden (left) at the AGM.*

TACT joined tenants from across the UK to lobby Parliament in February. **The Fourth Option** of direct investment in council housing as an alternative to the government's three current options for additional investment is the demand supported by tenants, trade unions, councillors and local authority landlords, backed by a growing number of MPs.

The House of Commons Housing Group has produced a cross-party report supporting the Fourth Option for council housing, which states the case for the use of public investment in council housing. It would allow councils to finance, maintain and improve their housing stock and seek to give councils a level playing field to work on, with the right to borrow prudently and re-invest all the housing revenues and receipts in improving housing for present and future tenants.

**The TPAS Annual Conference and AGM** held at Birmingham was fully up to expectations. Once again we set up our stand and again we were a hive of activity, networking with other tenants, with concerns on Housing Options number one on their list of priorities.

Our **thanks** once again to everyone for their input, TACT committee members and Council staff for their valuable time, and the many tenants who tell us of their concerns and many thanks to our Area Housing Managers for the hard work they put in on the estates.

Special thanks to our elected members and Vice Chairs (Paul Bungey and Judith Steventon Baker) and our Tenant Participation Officer, Seema Jandu and to Glynis Cole, our Tenant Participation Manager.

**David Cruden**  
Chair, Afternoon group

**Alan Rickman**  
Chair, Evening group