

# ConTACT

A NEWSLETTER PRODUCED BY TENANTS OF WINCHESTER CITY COUNCIL

ISSUE NO.17

MARCH 2003

## TACT IN RENT SUCCESS

TACT has been able to convince Winchester City Council not to increase rents by an average of £3 per week. Going against government guidelines, TACT representatives argued strongly against the above-inflation increase of 3.5%.

Now rents will only rise by 2%, an average rise of £2.16 per week - excluding any additional element of rent restructuring. This is a good rent settlement but to make sure that we get an equally good settlement next year, TACT will keep up the pressure on re-letting empty properties and garages, as well as other areas where costs can be saved or income generated.

"We are still lobbying hard on the unsatisfactory condition of footpaths," said Bryan

Whitfield, Evening Group TACT Chair. "We are also calling for a review of garages (for the fourth year running) and for the Council to start grappling with the problem of empty properties, to ensure that these resources start to earn income for the rent account."

## WRITE TO YOUR MP



Mark Oaten

The way your landlord calculates the amount of rent you must pay is known as rent setting. This calculation is also influenced by the recently introduced rent restructuring.

Because we live in the affluent south where property values are high, the values used by government to set the rent formula mean that tenants living in the Winchester district pay higher rents. TACT submits this is unfair and is already in correspondence with John Prescott MP, the Deputy Prime Minister, who is responsible for a review of your rent formula.

Mark Oaten, our local Member of Parliament, has also been contacted and has confirmed his support for our case. Mark is also in contact with Tony McNulty MP, parliamentary Under Secretary of State and all TACT members have copies of this correspondence.

Rent restructuring is due for reassessment. However, before this happens, tenants can put their case. The rent formula discriminates against Winchester tenants. Your council can put a case to government, but they must however know your views, as the council will be influenced by government directives.

TACT will continue to put the case to central government, to the Government Office South East and to Winchester City Council.

**As individuals we can make our views known to the council and the government. You can help by writing to John Prescott MP, Tony McNulty MP or Winchester MP Mark Oaten, and also by joining TACT. If you need further information or advice please ring Freephone 0800 716987 and talk to Glynis Cole.**

"Your views are important," says TACT Chair Cyril Gilbert-Wood. "If you do nothing, you can't complain about the outcome."

## INSIDE



Page 3 What's in it for me?

Page 4 Moving in

Also inside, your ConTACT survey



# WOODLAND WORDSEARCH

K	C	A	J	R	E	B	M	U	L	B	T	B	L	P
O	S	I	G	E	M	V	D	N	A	L	D	O	O	W
H	I	V	H	F	O	R	E	S	T	O	K	R	A	B
F	E	L	L	I	N	G	C	R	A	G	E	R	F	F
A	T	R	U	N	K	S	I	Z	G	D	H	M	I	T
E	H	T	P	O	E	J	D	W	W	R	C	R	W	K
L	B	C	S	C	F	N	U	O	T	Z	E	O	A	V
B	R	P	N	U	O	Q	O	P	L	B	E	E	S	A
C	O	A	W	A	D	D	U	C	R	W	B	X	N	P
F	O	U	K	X	R	W	S	E	E	Z	D	A	I	M
T	T	N	G	U	A	B	A	C	E	N	I	A	A	U
N	S	W	K	H	H	K	C	S	Q	S	I	P	H	T
H	A	T	S	E	C	R	O	S	L	K	L	P	C	S
D	Y	P	W	D	R	M	R	Y	U	E	D	A	L	G
G	B	G	H	J	O	K	N	U	K	L	W	Z	N	Y

Acorn	Branch	Felling	Lumberjack	Roots
Ash	Chainsaw	Firebreak	Maple	Sawdust
Axe	Conifer	Forest	Oak	Stump
Bark	Conker	Glade	Orchard	Trunk
Beech	Deciduous	Leaf	Pinecone	Twig
Bough	Evergreen	Log	Redwood	Woodland

Have a go at our knotty Woodland Wordsearch in this edition of CONTACT. A £15 voucher will be on its way to you, provided that you are the first correct entry drawn out of the hat. Entries should be returned by Friday 11th April, 2003

Send your entries to: CONTACT c/o Housing Services, Winchester City Council, FREEPOST, Licence Number SO6048, Winchester, Hampshire, SO23 9BR.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime Phone No: \_\_\_\_\_

For competition rules send an SAE to the above address.



## WORDSEARCH WINNER

Congratulations to Miss Nancy Farthing from Alresford, whose correct entry was drawn in our Rivers Wordsearch. £15 worth of vouchers are on their way to you Nancy!

# TACT MEETING DATES

TACT meetings are open to all City Council tenants and leaseholders and new members are always welcome. Meetings of the Afternoon Group are held on Wednesdays at Makins Court, Alresford (from 2-4pm), and of the Evening Group Wednesdays at The Guildhall, The Broadway, Winchester, (from 7.30 - 9.30 pm), unless held jointly - see dates below:

16 April, 2pm & 7.30pm

21 May, 7.30pm - AGM, Winchester Guildhall

18 June, 2pm & 7.30pm

16 July, 2pm & 7.30pm

## 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 on Freephone 0800 716987 for your copy today. These publications are recorded by the Winchester & District Talking Newspaper Association. Larger printed versions of CONTACT can also be made available, call the above Freephone number to obtain your copy.

# WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?

Last year the TACT Chairs, Bryan Whitfield (Evening Group) and Cyril Gilbert-Wood (Afternoon Group) and Glynis Cole, the Council's Tenant Liaison Officer, were invited to a coffee morning at Danemark Court in Gordon Road, Winchester by Brenda Chandler, the Scheme Manager. During the visit we were asked to *sing for our supper* and we made a presentation on the work of TACT, the Tenants Associations and Tenant Participation.

The residents enjoyed our light-hearted and informative presentation and now want their own regular information sharing sessions. This will help them receive information on the services provided by our landlord and in turn help their voice to be heard.

So if you think "Tenant Participation - I don't know what's in it for me?" then visit your local Tenants Association or, join us at an afternoon or evening meeting of TACT. If you are still not sure, then how's about an informal get together of tenants and leaseholders - ring Glynis Cole on Freephone 0800 716987 for some help and advice. And thank you Brenda for the invitation to Danemark Court - and the chocolate biscuits.

**If you would like us to call in to your next coffee morning for a chat about what TACT, Tenants Associations and Tenant Participation is all about, then call Freephone 0800 716987.**

# EMPTY PROPERTIES

They are known as voids and these empty council properties cost the tenant money. How? By not earning money through rent, so that next year we will have to pay a larger increase in rent than we may have needed to. The same goes for garages. When they



are standing empty, they are not earning the Council any money.

**So please help. If there is a void near you, please ring the City Offices and complain. If the property remains empty, please ring one of your TACT Chairs - Bryan Whitfield on 01962 777597 or Cyril Gilbert-Wood on 01962 884505.**

# WHAT IS THE TP COMPACT?

The Tenant Participation (TP) Compact is designed to ensure that the Council is more answerable to tenants in the way that it makes decisions. Tenants are invited to get involved in housing matters such as empty properties, repairs, etc. and to let the Council know what matters concern us so that we can work together to put them right. TACT's successes have included:

- **changes to the Tenancy Conditions**
- **a complete review of the Tenants Handbook**
- **involvement in the Best Value review, looking at estate management, rents and arrears and Property Services**
- **a major recruitment campaign for new TACT members**
- **an increase in the number of Tenants Association in the Winchester district**
- **the establishment of a Rent & Business Planning Forum**
- **the creation of a Property & Contracts Forum.**

We are currently reviewing the district-wide Compact, updating and strengthening it to reflect tenants needs and wishes. Watch out for more information about this review in the coming months.

# EMERGENCY OR NOT?

We are glad that you are getting so much use out of the new Tenants Handbook and TACT is particularly delighted, as we helped with its creation.

In particular the way in which tenants are seeking Property Services help has improved.

The Property Services department provides an emergency service 365 days a year (see your new Handbook section 6.3). So we would ask you now to do something to help all tenants - *please, only ring the emergency number when there is a real emergency*. This service costs us all money from our rents. If you ring the emergency number needlessly to jump the queue, you will inconvenience your fellow tenants and neighbours who have a genuine need for emergency help.

**We make no apology for repeating this, but please, help us all - only use the emergency service when you have a real emergency. Thank you.**

# MOVING IN

TACT is pressing the Council for a more professional approach when moving a tenant into a property - either for the first time or when transferring. TACT says:

- full information on the property must be available in written form and readily available before signing
- all keys must be available to a prospective tenant on a visit
- photographs and detailed information should be available on the size of garden, rooms, windows, etc.

We do not believe that these requirements are unreasonable - the technology is available these days - and it is even more important for hard to let properties. All of these ideas are just common sense and TACT will be pressing the City Council to move with the times.

## TACT AGM

**WEDNESDAY 21ST MAY 2003**  
**SAXON SUITE, WINCHESTER**  
**GUILDHALL**  
**7.30 - 9.30 pm**

When the new committees for both the afternoon & evening groups will be elected for the coming year

**All Welcome**

Refreshments will be served after the meeting

Only registered members of TACT will be able to vote

Wheelchair access

**For further information and to book your free transport contact Glynis Cole on FREEPHONE 0800 716987**

# AN OPPORTUNITY - OR A CHANCE MISSED?

I hope it will be an opportunity, as 2003 has given the tenants of Weeke another chance to have more say in matters that concern them:

- *We can make a difference*
- *Please don't grumble and do nothing*
- *Help us to put our views forward*

I hope it will be an opportunity grasped rather than missed!

**If you live in Weeke watch out for information coming through your letterbox or contact Glynis Cole, Tenant Liaison Officer, on Freephone 0800 716987 to find out how YOU can get involved.**

**Alan Rickman,**

TACT member and member of the newly formed Weeke Steering Group



*Right: Betty Westcott, Martin Nel and Alan Rickman of the new Weeke Steering Group get down to business.*

## NEW LOOK

What do you think of our new look edition of ConTACT? We have given our image a re-vamp to reflect TACT's new corporate look, using the colour scheme that was so successful in the Tenants Handbook and the tenant recruitment campaign. We shall also be revamping our TACT letterheads and have already given our TACT Welcome Leaflet an overhaul, which now includes an important section on Equal Opportunities.

To help us make ConTACT more relevant to you, we would like to know what you think of it. Please fill in the short survey enclosed and pop it in the post. No stamp is needed. What's more, if you return it to us by Friday 11th April, we will enter your name in our free draw when you could win £25 worth of gift tokens. Thank you for your help.

## WANT TO KNOW MORE?

We want to recruit more tenants to make our voice even stronger right across the district. Call Cyril Gilbert-Wood or Bryan Whitfield if you want to find out more about what TACT gets up to. Their details are below:

**Cyril Gilbert-Wood BEM**  
22 Mountbatten Place  
Kings Worthy  
Winchester SO23 7PL  
Tel. 01962 884505

**Bryan Whitfield**  
20 Hilly Close  
Owslebury Close  
Winchester SO2 1LW  
Tel. 01962 777597

ConTACT

This edition of ConTACT has been produced by a Tenant team including George Brown, Cyril Gilbert-Wood BEM, Brian Hayes and Bryan Whitfield. TACT is Tenants and Council Together, the Council's district-wide Consultative Group.

PRINTED ON  
ENVIRONMENTALLY  
FRIENDLY PAPER