

Houseproud

NEWS FOR TENANTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

GOVERNMENT INSISTS ON OPTIONS REVIEW

Winchester City Council must work towards achieving the government's Decent Homes Standard by 2010, which means that over the next nine months the council will carry out an options appraisal to see how its housing services may be delivered in the future.

"We must have clear and robust plans in place to achieve the standard," said Cabinet portfolio holder for housing, Cllr Dominic Hiscock, "and we need to ensure that we also have the resources available to deliver the standard."

There are four options that the Council can consider to take it forward to meeting the Decent Homes Standard:

- Carry on managing the housing service as it is, if it is seen as viable.
- Form an Arms Length Management Organisation to take over the management of some services, while the Council remains the landlord.
- Create a Private Finance Initiative, where a contract is let to a managing agent to manage the stock and private money is invested with the Council.
- Large Scale Voluntary Transfer, which means a permanent transfer of the housing stock to a new or existing Registered Social Landlord.

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NEW CITY BOSS



Simon Eden

Simon Eden has been in post as Winchester's new Chief Executive since May, and he has spent much of his first few months meeting people and learning about the services they provide. Although he has been a Winchester resident for a number of years, being part of the Council has given him a new perspective on many aspects of the district.

"My introductory tours have included visits to several areas of Council-managed housing, and I have been shown by councillors some of the issues that local people face: maintenance of ageing property, managing our open spaces on estates better or tackling anti social behaviour for example. What may seem like small or local problems can be a real blight on the lives of individuals most affected, and it is the Council's job to make sure we tackle those problems and provide a responsive service to residents," says Simon.

"I have also met many of the Council's housing staff, including our Scheme Managers. They face some real challenges, but are tackling them well, and I know they are committed to providing the best service to all tenants. This can be difficult when resources are stretched and demand is high, but I hope you all continue to value the service they give, and remind us gently when we get something wrong.

"One of the biggest challenges facing Winchester is the need to provide housing that local people can afford. I too want to know where my children will be able to afford to live when they grow up. This is a problem which faces the whole of the South East, and we are working with partners to find new ways of meeting housing need. This can lead to problems locally, perhaps because residents feel we are developing on inappropriate sites or putting too many dwellings in a small space. There are difficult balances to strike here, and, whilst we may not always get it right, we do need to reflect both the wishes of existing residents and the needs of those who want a home.

"Housing can, of course, cause controversy. There has been a very passionate debate about where we should provide supported housing for some of the more vulnerable members of society. This is a really difficult problem, and not everyone will feel we make the right choices - but it is a duty the Council cannot shirk. We need to work with communities to allay fears, and make sure that, when we do not always get it right, we learn from our mistakes.

"I look forward to helping both the Council and the district face up to our many challenges, and to making sure that the Council continues to develop its partnership with tenants so that we make a real difference to the quality of life in Winchester," said Simon.

TENANTS GO BANANAS

City Council tenants have proved yet again what a colourful bunch they are in this year's gardening competition. As the competition, organised by Health & Housing, attracts more entries every year, we recruited professional judge Sandy Worth to help with the difficult task of choosing the winners.

Brian Witts of Stockwell Place, Sparsholt, potted The Best Front Garden award, entering his truly tropical garden, complete with bananas. A real plantsman's paradise, with plants ranging from four inches high to 10ft tall, it is crammed with exotic planting in a natural setting, using annuals, hardy and semi perennials, including cannas, bamboos, gunnera, sweet potatoes, cardoons and a tree fern. Brian even found room for a small pond.

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Sandy Worth presents first prize to Brian Witts

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LOOK OUT FOR CONTACT

Keeping an Eye on the Compact

In September 2000 the district-wide Tenant Participation Compact was signed marking the beginning of a new partnership between tenants, councillors and staff. Since then, work has continued to ensure that the Compact is working and increasing opportunities for involvement, by encouraging both individual and collective participation.

A monitoring group of tenants, staff, and councillors was set up in February 2002 to monitor the progress on the actions set out in the Compact and immediately identified the need to completely review the Compact, updating and strengthening it using examples of good practice.

The group has worked tirelessly over many months, and is now nearing the end of its review. Following consultation with TACT, Tenants' Associations, individual tenants district-wide, officers of the City Council and councillors, it is hoped that the new district-wide TP Compact will be approved and launched in April 2004.

The reviewed Compact includes:

- **How the Compact was produced.**
- **The role of Council tenants, councillors and Council staff.**
- **Core Standards covering:**
 - Support for tenants
 - Standards for information
 - Standards for tenants' groups
 - Standards for meetings
- **Monitoring and dealing with complaints and disputes.**
- **A two year action plan.**

It will give you a choice of ways to become involved, from sharing views and information, to meeting other tenants, or attending Council meetings, together with a 'star rating' to indicate the level of involvement and time commitment needed.

We will be asking a random number of households to give us their comments on updating and strengthening the Tenant Participation Compact this winter.

We are already working with TACT, the Council's district-wide tenant consultative group and local tenants associations, but we need comments from other areas not already covered. So, if a questionnaire falls onto your doormat, please help us by filling it in and returning it to the Council.

More information on the Tenant Participation Compact - the document that lays down how tenants and the Council will work together - is available from Glynis Cole, Tenant Participation Manager on Freephone 0800 716987.

GOODBYE TO LYNNE

Lynne Carr, Scheme Manager at Matilda Place, left the City Council this summer to move to Lancashire with her husband who has recently retired and a special lunch was held at Matilda Place, attended by many tenants and colleagues past and present, to bid her a fond farewell.

Lynne joined the City Council in 1990 as Scheme Manager at King Harold Court, Stanmore. Nine years later she took up the post of Scheme Manager at Matilda Place in central Winchester, providing independent living and care services for 17 frail older people, and where Lynne was also responsible for two Deputy Managers and four Care Assistants.

At the lunch a presentation was made to Lynne and expressions of thanks and good wishes were offered by Deputy Manager, Sandie Russell, on behalf of her colleagues; Steve Tong on behalf of the Council and Mrs Olive Standing, who has been a tenant at Matilda Place since it first opened in 1989, on behalf of the residents.

"Lynne was a very caring and dedicated Scheme Manager," said Steve Tong, Supported Housing Manager, "and we would like to thank her for everything that she has done for the tenants in her care, and for the Council's sheltered housing service and we wish Lynne every happiness in her new home."



Lynne Carr

ARE YOU SATISFIED?

In 2000 86% of the City's tenants who replied to our satisfaction survey said they that were happy with the Housing Service. Now we want to find out whether you are still satisfied with the service and in January 2004 we will be carrying out another survey to find out what you think.

The Council has recruited specialist consultants David Couttie Associates, who will carry out the survey on our behalf. They will also be able to provide comparisons with other councils for whom they have carried out similar surveys. We will send a questionnaire to every household and we hope to get even more replies than last time - which was a huge 60% of all tenants.

The results will be analysed by area, age, cultural background, income level and type of property, to identify any areas which need particular attention.

The survey's findings will be published in June next year and an action plan will be drawn up from the results to tackle the areas where tenants say there is room for improvement.

This is your chance to have a voice and to tell us what you think of the service - and where it can be improved - so when you receive the questionnaire, please take the time to complete it and send it back to us. We are really interested in your views and keen to see whether we have made any improvements in the way we deliver the service and, if you return your questionnaire in good time, you will also be entered into a prize draw.

For further information please contact Janette Palmer, Project Co-ordinator on 01962 848577.

This survey is totally separate to the House Condition Survey and we do need your help with them both.

INDEPENDENT ADVICE

The Government has told every local authority that it must look at the future management and ownership of its housing stock and to set out how it will meet the Decent Homes Standard by 2010*.

This means that the City Council must now investigate all the options available to find the best way to meet the standard within the Government's timescale.

Your priorities are fundamental to the process and to enable you to make informed decisions on what is important to you, an Independent Tenant Advisor (ITA) - a consultant independent from the Council - will be engaged to assist tenants through the process. The ITA's role is to supplement the information that the Council provides and to give an independent view.

This long term support, as well as the project management involved on a project of this size, is intensive and goes way beyond the general information and free independent advice that the Tenant Participation Advisory Service is able to offer to its members, so this means that the additional cost will have to be met by the Housing Revenue Account.

An evaluation panel of TACT members has been set up which interviewed the three shortlisted consultants and the team of nine TACT members decided that TPAS (the Tenant Participation Advisory Service) would be the organisation which would work best with the Council's tenants and leaseholders through this options appraisal process.

They will start work by Christmas and we will bring you more information in the next edition of Houseproud.

If you would like to contact the Independent Tenant Advisor call 0800 1691814 or contact Glynis Cole, Tenant Participation Manager, on Freephone 0800 716987, for more information on the housing options appraisal.

* The Decent Homes Standard says that all social housing should be in a reasonable state of repair, should have reasonably modern facilities and services and provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort.

WHAT YOU TOLD US

John Thompson & Partners were appointed by Winchester City Council last year to work with Stanmore and Highcliffe residents as part of the city's Neighbourhood Development Programme. Prior to their appointment, an urban capacity study of the Winchester area had been carried out, which identified a number of potential development sites within those areas.

The prime aim of the programme was to investigate the potential to provide new affordable homes and secondly, to improve the quality of life generally and provide a range of community benefits for Stanmore and Highcliffe.

The involvement of local residents was vital and John Thompson & Partners conducted a series of community consultation events, aimed at identifying the concerns and needs of the local communities, as well as other local agencies and council departments, and to integrate them with proposals for new affordable housing.

Initially a list of local concerns and ideas for improvements were collected and potential sites for new housing were identified. The second stage aimed to focus more closely on the potential development sites identified in stage one. Through further consideration and investigation the suggested sites were analysed in detail to see which might be most suitable for housing development. A 'Masterplan' was drawn up, and at the final consultation events held in May 2003, residents were asked to complete a questionnaire in order to prioritise possible neighbourhood improvements which could be taken forward by the city council and local community organisations.



As a result of the analysis and consultation the number of sites identified in the Masterplan was reduced and the following sites could remain as possible locations for affordable housing:

STANMORE

Garage Sites: Site between Minden Way and Chatham Road, site between Fox Lane and Stanmore Lane, Drayton Street North and South Woolford Close and Thurmond Crescent East.

Allotment Sites: Cromwell Road East, Princes Place and Vicarage Gardens adjacent to St Luke's Church.

Open Space Sites: Selected parts of the Valley.

HIGHCLIFFE

Fivefields Road Garage site, Gordon Avenue Garage site, Corner of Milland Road and Vale Road and the Serco depot.

However, there are a number of factors that are considered to be essential in order to make any developments widely acceptable:

- Residents have expressed strong views with regard to the importance of ongoing consultation and they want to be included in any future decisions. Highcliffe residents particularly felt they had been excluded from having a say on decisions which will affect them.
- Residents are particularly concerned about the effect that any new development would have on the current parking situation, so it must be a priority, to replace any parking spaces that are lost and seriously consider some form of parking control for the wider area.
- Particularly on infill sites, residents are very concerned about the preservation of their privacy and amenity, and careful consideration of the design of new homes will have to be undertaken in order to protect this.



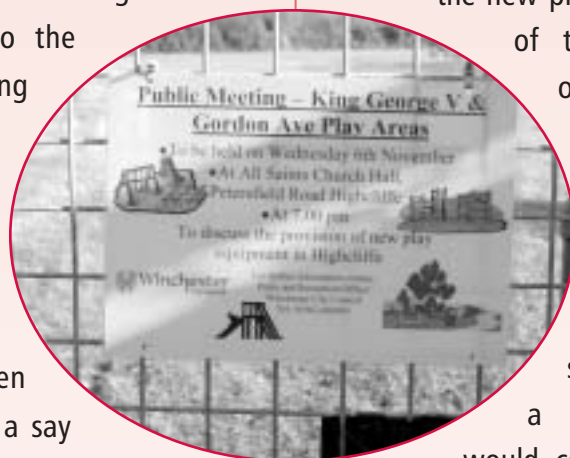
- Residents have continually expressed the opinion that any new development should be in keeping with the character of the area.
- Wider environmental issues also need to be tackled in order that people can see real benefits happening for existing residents.

Both communities identified the following key issues, which need addressing:

- Anti-social behaviour.
- Better, more visible policing.
- Improved facilities for children and young people.
- Enforcement of standards for the upkeep of homes and gardens.
- Better public transport.

In addition Highcliffe residents raised issues about the noise from the motorway and improvements to the streets like new paving, planting and benches, while Stanmore residents raised better maintenance of open spaces and footpaths.

Some of these issues are starting to be addressed, in particular, the work that is under way to include local young people in choosing the designs for the new play areas. The encouragement of the tenant and community organisations which will help to ensure that resources are being targeted towards those areas which matter most to local residents, and the introduction of projects such as the creation of a Neighbourhood Agreement, would contribute further to a feeling that local concerns are being addressed.



CAROL DUFFIN

We are sad to report the sudden death of Carol Duffin this summer. Carol had worked for the City Council since 1988, spending the last eight years as the Scheme Manager at Mildmay Court, Winchester. She leaves behind a husband and two children and will be much missed by family and friends, as well as her City Council colleagues and the residents in her care.

BULLETIN BOARD

TENANCY INFORMATION UPDATED

We have received over 3000 returns for our Tenancy update survey, which is a brilliant result. The information that we have been able to gather is vital in terms of keeping your records up to date and getting a better picture of who our tenants are. Thank you for taking the time to complete our questionnaire and £25 worth of vouchers are on their way to Lorna May Hardcastle of Swanmore, who won our prize draw.

HOUSING BENEFIT CLAIMS

Please remember that if you are submitting a new or renewal claim form into Housing Benefits *please inform your Area Housing Manager*. Your Area Housing Manager is not automatically informed that you have a claim pending. This may help prevent any Rent Arrears letters being sent to you. *Thank you.*

SUSSEX STREET MAKE-OVER

The City's Cabinet has approved plans to revamp the Sussex Street hostel in the city centre. A six-figure sum will be spent on alterations, which will see 15 bedsits converted into six self-contained flatlets for single homeless people and seven bedsits will be transformed into three two-bed family units and the scheme will include a safe play area for children.

NATIONWIDE PRIZE DRAW

A white, Freepost customer care service card is issued by Nationwide for every job carried out. These have been collected over the past year and a prize draw has been held and Mrs Tuffs (right) of Wykeham Field, Wickham has won £25 worth of store vouchers.



We value your comments on these cards and would urge you to return them following your gas service and who knows, it may be your turn to cash those vouchers next year!

GET IT TAPED

If you are visually impaired or have a friend or neighbour who would like HOUSEPROUD 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. If you need a larger printed version, call the above Freephone number to obtain your free copy.

HOUSE CONDITION SURVEY

In the last edition of Houseproud we announced that a house survey would take place over the summer months, when one in every three Council dwellings would be surveyed. This representative sample helps us to find out the current condition of council dwellings and what type of work needs to be carried out in the future. This information will be used to target both the Council's and the Government's financing of the housing repairs and improvement programme.

The survey results, along with other property information held by the Council, will help us to assess:

- **The current overall condition of the Council's housing stock and its amenities.**
- **Whether, with current levels of investment targeted towards maintenance and enhancement works, the Council will be able to improve its housing stock in line with the Government's Decent Homes Standard by 2010.**

It will also help us to produce a 30-year asset management plan for the housing stock, required by the Government.

As you are also aware, all tenants who were given written notice that a survey may be carried out in their home, will have received a household questionnaire. This gives tenants the opportunity to tell the Council their views on the quality of housing, their attitudes to the local area and any problems and work that they would like to see completed on their homes.

At the time of drafting this article some 750 questionnaires have already been returned - a really positive response - and, by the time you receive this edition of Houseproud, it is hoped that all other households (who were not part of the 30% sample survey) will have also been sent a household questionnaire.

Don't be worried if your property was *not* one of those surveyed, as the 30% stock sample is sufficient to produce the information that we - and the Government - require.

Please do take the time to fill in the questionnaire and return it to the Council, as this will tell us what you think of the current levels of services provided and what you would like to see in the future.

When all the results have been collected and analysed, we will be in a position to tell you of our plans for the future based on the condition of properties and your hopes as tenants.

This survey is totally separate to the Tenant Satisfaction Survey and we do need your help with them both.

HOUSE DOCTORS

We would like to provide you with a more accessible and responsive service so we will be undertaking a pilot scheme to see if we can introduce local housing surgeries across the district. These surgeries will be run by our Area Housing Managers, aimed at providing a face-to-face service for those who are unable, or who do not wish, to travel all the way to Winchester.

A trial scheme is due to take place in the south of the district this year and, if successful, it will be introduced in other areas and of course we will keep you informed of dates, times and places of these surgeries in Houseproud.

WHO'S WHO IN PROPERTY SERVICES

In this edition of HOUSEPROUD we would like to introduce you to the people who make up the Contracts & Property Services Division. **The Management Team**, led by Clive Broomfield, co-ordinates all policy and operational issues in relation to new build, maintenance and refurbishment of both the Council's housing stock and corporate properties. The team has responsibility for budgeting, programming and Best Value processes, effectively taking all projects right from inception to final accounts.



*The Management Team (left to right)
Clive Broomfield, Rod Shepherd, Gaynor Bromley and
Andrew Kingston.*

The **Corporate Property Team** maintains the Council's corporate properties like Abbey House, the Guildhall, the River Park Leisure Centre, King Alfred's statue, the Buttercross, shops and offices.

A large proportion of this portfolio is both diverse in nature and historically important - they are the 'jewels in the local authority's crown'. Before any work is carried out, listed building consents are often required from English Heritage. Specialist contractors such as stonemasons and iron founders are used to restore the fabric of these buildings and structures.



*The Corporate Property Team (Left to Right)
Rod Shepherd, Margaret Keil and Kevin Blake.*

The **Clerk of Works Team** carries out property inspections and oversees the planned maintenance and improvements works like the kitchen and bathroom refurbishment schemes, re-roofing, external repairs and painting, PVCu window installation and OAP internal redecoration contracts.

The **Area Property Surveyors Team** visits tenants to decide what needs to be carried out to a property and a target time for work to be carried out. Neil Trenfield is responsible for dealing with our empty properties (voids), making sure that around 500 void properties are made safe and fit for re-letting each year.



*The Area Property Surveyors and Clerk of Works Teams
(left to right) back row Derek Parker, Les Titheridge, Melvin Laney, Brian Forrester;
front row Les MacLachlan, Pat Radford, Neil Trenfield,
Anthony Clark and Graham Howard.*

Our **Customer Liaison Team** receives calls from tenants requesting repairs assistance and they will make appointments for contractors to carry out maintenance jobs, or for an Area Property Surveyor to visit, depending on the problem. Members of the team also liaise with tenants who are about to have planned maintenance work carried out to their homes, such as kitchen and bathroom refurbishments, decorating or more major structural work to help ease tenants through periods of disturbance whilst work is under way. They also assist tenants in design choices and finishes of fixtures and fittings.

For more information on any of the teams, please call Marriam Baxendale on 01962 848335.



*Planned Maintenance Team (left to right)
Brian Gibbins, Perri Seymour, Keith Miles
and Russell Hine.*

The **Planned Maintenance Team (above)** draws up specifications and contract documents to enable works to be carried out by contractors to pre-determined standards. This is often done in conjunction with tenants and our Customer Liaison Officers. When projects are carried out on site, the Clerk of Works team oversees the contractor to ensure that works are carried out to both the satisfaction of the tenant and the Council's quality standards.

Other services carried out in this way are disabled persons' adaptations where, after medical assessment by occupational therapists, improvements are carried out to assist people to live in their own homes by providing

grab rails, level access showers, stair lifts, etc.

The division also arranges and co-ordinates other services such as building cleaning and grounds maintenance work on behalf of tenants and leaseholders.



*Winchester Guildhall, one of the city's historic buildings,
maintained by the Corporate Property Team.*

GOVERNMENT INSISTS ON OPTIONS REVIEW

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"The Government has made it clear that no additional resources over and above the existing subsidy and major repairs allowance will be made available for authorities that decide to **remain as they are**," said Cllr Hiscock. "But this does not prevent authorities deciding that no change is the best option and it will be necessary to demonstrate that the decision is supported by hard evidence," he added.

"Establishing an **arms length management company** would certainly be a complicated and costly process and would have a significant impact on the rest of the authority," said Dominic. "However, it would provide greater tenant involvement in management and services, as they would have board representation. Such a move would need the support of tenants, but there is no specific requirement for a formal ballot," he added.

He went on to say that the **Private Finance Initiative** has been extended to include improvements to housing stock and ten authorities are currently undertaking "pathfinder" projects. None have yet reached final stages, and set up work has been complicated and costly. However, if successful, this could provide an option for future investment in stock without affecting ownership and tenancy conditions.

Under the fourth option, **large scale voluntary transfer**, ownership of the housing stock would transfer to a non-profit organisation registered with the Housing Corporation. A capital receipt may be received by the Council that could be used to fund improvements to your homes as well as provide additional affordable housing in the district. LSVT would change the basis of tenancy for all tenants and would require a majority approval, normally through a formal ballot.

"The stock condition survey currently taking place will provide information as to whether existing levels of investment are sufficient for the Council to achieve the Decent Homes Standard," said Councillor Hiscock. "It will also test the hopes of tenants, not only with their homes but also the local environment in which they live," he added.

TACT will be appointing an Independent Tenant Advisor to work with tenants to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to be involved, or at least gain an understanding of the Options appraisal process. This is likely to include briefing sessions with representative bodies, road shows, sheltered scheme drop in sessions, a telephone helpline and newsletters to all households.

* The Decent Homes Standard requires properties to be in a reasonable state of repair, to have reasonably modern facilities, and to provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort.

HARD TO LET FLATS

Some years ago the Council agreed to let first floor flats in sheltered housing schemes to people aged over 40, which has proved a great success. However, with more and more elderly people able to stay in their own homes, we are looking at ways of filling empty flats at ground floor level as well as Scheme Manager's accommodation where they are no longer required.

Residents at Harwood Place in Kings Worthy and Colson Close in Winchester met with city staff to discuss the problem of long-term hard to let flats, some of which have been empty for years, losing thousands of pounds in rental income.

Following a lively discussion, tenants were broadly in favour of the empty flats being used for homeless people, subject to them being sensitively considered for their suitability and careful monitoring should problems arise.

SERCO online

Serco manages 15-16,000 repairs every year for the City Council and has been investigating new ways of cutting down - and speeding up - the paperwork. Serco has been trialling the latest technology in handheld computers and has now decided to use the PDA Xda. This "Personal Assistant" is not only a handheld computer, but also doubles as a mobile phone. It is also hoped that the new technology will improve communications with customers and reduce the number of missed or broken appointments.

So what will this mean for you? If you have had work carried out in the last two years, then you should have been left with a copy of the maintenance job report (job ticket) just to confirm that the tradesman had called, and that the work had been carried out to your satisfaction. The tradesman should have left you with a copy of this maintenance job report so that you had a written record of his/her visit.

When Serco visit you in future, you will be asked to sign your name on the screen of the handheld computer as a record of the visit. Some of you may



already have signed similar screens when you have had a parcel delivered. The Serco tradesman should then give you a hand written receipt, which will be smaller, but similar to the old maintenance job report, for you to keep.

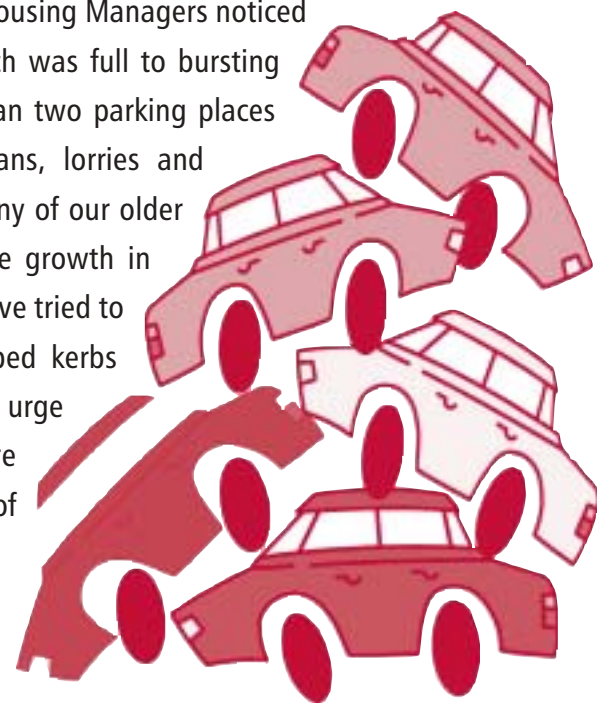
Serco is hoping to introduce these new handhelds across all trades during the autumn. If you have any queries please contact Andrew Kingston on 01962 848240.

The latest technology, now on your doorstep.

NAUGHTY parkers

We are constantly receiving complaints about inconsiderate parking on our estates. We can and will take action where possible, at other times it is just down to a plain lack of thought for other people that is causing problems, especially for older residents and mums who find their pavement blocked.

The other day one of our Area Housing Managers noticed an area in Sutton Scotney which was full to bursting with people taking up more than two parking places with large vehicles like caravans, lorries and trailers. The problem is that many of our older estates were created before the growth in car ownership exploded. We have tried to tackle this problem with dropped kerbs and hard standings but would urge everyone to park a bit more considerately and be mindful of your neighbours.



EXAM SUCCESS

Sally Dunn, Deputy Scheme Manager at Victoria House, has just notched up her NVQ Level 3 in Promoting Independence and Key Skills Level 2. The course included First Aid, food hygiene, moving and handling and was organised by Atlantic Housing Association. It has taken three years of hard work and Gill Hepburn, Training & Development Manager, praised Sally for her commitment. "Sally has worked extremely hard on her NVQ and has produced an excellent portfolio," she said.

Area Housing Manager **Dominic Amans**, has successfully passed his professional Diploma in Housing from Southampton Institute of Higher Education. During the two-year course he studied housing and employment law, human resource management, housing finance and followed the latest developments in housing.



Lisa Bond (left) with Dominic Amans and Sally Dunn

"I would like to thank everyone who helped me with this in Winchester," said Dominic. "This course has given me a better understanding and the skills to help sort out tenants' problems and to be aware of the wider picture in social housing provision."

Housing Needs Support Officer, **Lisa Bond**, has just obtained her A Level in Psychology. Lisa completed her

course at Tauntons College of Further Education in

Southampton. This qualification will help Lisa in her work as Housing Needs Support Officer to the Housing Advice and Homelessness Section.

Congratulations too to **Zandra Windebank** our Arrears & Enforcement Officer, who recently completed the National Certificate in Environmental Health Studies. Organised by Nescot, the College of Higher Education in Surrey, the course includes modules on legal services, building construction and health & safety.



Berry Stevens

New faces

Berry Stevens has joined the City Council as a Mobile Warden after working for the Edwina Mountbatten Rest Home in Romsey for 21 years as an Assistant Manager. Berry will be contacting residents

in their homes, dealing with maintenance issues and visiting Lifeline users to update their contact details.

"Everyone at Central Control has given me a very warm welcome," says Berry "and I am thoroughly enjoying the diverse work I am doing. Thank you to everyone for making it such a smooth transition."

Georgia Davies (23) from Cardiff has joined the city's Private Sector Housing Team. This is her first job after completing her four years of studies in Environmental Health at UWIC (University of Wales Institute Cardiff). She trained with Rhondda Cynon Taff Council during her degree programme and graduated this summer. Georgia will be working on the city's Accreditation Scheme for privately rented properties, disabled facilities grants and other general private sector housing issues. She is hoping to study for her Masters next year.



Georgia Davies

Her hobbies include travelling, music, reading and socialising. She has just started Italian lessons and is off on a globe-trotting holiday in November to New Zealand, Australia and Singapore.

COLE'S COLUMN

Dear Tenants,

The year seems to be flying by - no sooner have we judged the annual gardening competition, than we are making plans for Christmas!

It really has been an eventful year with the appointment of a new boss for the City Council namely Chief Executive, Simon Eden, and a new Tenant Participation Officer. I am particularly pleased to welcome Zadia aboard and I know that you will find her keen to play her part in tenant involvement in the district.

As always Houseproud is bursting at the seams with news and of course we want your views as never before. The Housing Needs Survey has revealed the huge level of affordable housing that we need to find each year; the Community Planning surveys in Stanmore and Highcliffe revealed what local residents wanted and we have just finished the House Condition Survey, which will tell us what we need to know to maintain your homes in the future.

Early in 2004 we will be embarking on a Tenant Satisfaction survey, which will go to every home, swiftly followed by a consultation on the Tenant Participation Compact and you may be chosen as part of our random sample. Then we are in for one of the biggest consultation exercises Housing Services has seen for years, as part of the Government's Options Appraisal exercise, when an independent tenant adviser will be working with tenants to find what you want the City Council to do about managing and maintain your homes in the years ahead.

So keep those letters and comments coming and please fill in all the questionnaires that come through your door. They are vital in helping us to plan for the future - and we don't mind if you tell us where we are going wrong.

Don't forget, if you want more information on TACT or your local Tenants Association or to get your sheltered scheme involved in information sharing sessions, call us on Freephone 0800 716987. Calls are free and you can leave a message if we are not available and we will call you back as soon as possible.

Best wishes,

Glynis

DYNAMIC DUO

Zadia Green has joined the tenant involvement team as the new Tenant Participation Officer and will be working with Glynis Cole to help deliver the tenant involvement service to tenants and leaseholders district-wide. She has worked for the City Council for two years as an Administrative Technician in Housing Management and is currently studying for her professional diploma in Housing.

Says Zadia "I am very pleased to be joining the Tenant Participation Team and look forward to working with TACT, the Tenants' Associations, tenants and leaseholders to increase their involvement with the Council and more importantly, in their own communities."

Cyril Gilbert-Wood, Chairman of the Afternoon TACT Group, was involved in the recruitment process and says, "Zadia's knowledge and enthusiasm impressed me, she brings a wealth of knowledge to the Tenant Participation section, and this appointment is a great boost to the work of tenant involvement in the district and we are fortunate that she is joining the team."



Glynis Cole



Glynis Cole, Tenant Participation Manager (left) and Zadia Green

TENANTS GO BANANAS

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"The Best Sheltered Scheme was a difficult one to judge," says Sandy, "as all the areas were so different, some were individual gardens and some were communal areas; some on a large scale and some were small, so it was a tough decision to make."

Tipping the scales was Chester Court in Chester Road, Winchester. Scheme Manager Jackie Ford and resident Peter Jones were on hand to accept their gardening vouchers in a street full of window boxes, plant pots, hanging baskets and a diverse collection of shrubs, perennials and annuals, giving interest to the whole street.

Sandy was so impressed with the interest that the residents had created that she decided to give a special Judges prize to John McDonagu of Chester Court, for his well thought out design and planting, brightening up a small area of the city centre. "This garden would not look out of place in the small gardens section at Chelsea or Hampton Court," said Sandy. "All the plants were in keeping with each other and anyone viewing them could feel only happiness."



John McDonagu with his delightful corner at Chester Court

The Best Hanging Basket Award went to Joan Sherfield of Long Priors, West Meon, who produced basket after basket of prize fuchsias, geraniums and petunias in beautiful colours which, together with begonias and lobelia, were displayed all along the walls of the house as well as adorning all the fence bordering the green - a sight to behold.



Joan Sherfield in her garden, packed with colour

All the prize-winners received gardening vouchers and Sandy Worth donated a £20 voucher from the Water Meadow Nursery and Herb Farm in Cheriton as her Judges prize.



HOMES NEEDED

Winchester needs over 1250 affordable homes each year to meet the housing demands of the district, according to a City Council Housing Needs Survey carried out by independent consultants last October.

The Council's Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Housing, Cllr Dominic Hiscock, is worried, but not surprised by the results. "It is well known that the Winchester district is one of the most expensive places to buy a house in the UK. The survey shows that the average cost of a house in the district is £260,903 and many people just cannot afford to buy a home here.

"Affordable housing is the Council's key priority, and the results of this survey will be used to inform debate about the development of housing in the Winchester district, as well as contribute to the discussions that planning and housing officers have with developers to ensure housing needs are met," he added.

Some 8,400 households across the district were randomly selected to take part in the survey, to help the Council gain a better picture of the housing needs of local people and the results will be used to help assess the need for affordable housing in different parts of the district.

The survey highlighted that there is a need for 1250 affordable housing units each year, and this figure may increase as the number of people living in the district over 80 years of age is projected to grow by 32% by 2011.

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want to get involved in the social life and some flats have a Scheme Manager or Mobile Warden who can provide friendly support. Extra assistance can be provided subject to assessment by social services.

*Call Jayne Godding, on 01962 848342
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Apologies to Wordsearch fans, but because of pressure of space, there is no Wordsearch in this edition but it will be back in 2004.

BOWLED OVER

Our new housing scheme at Makins Court in Alresford, opened by HRH The Princess Royal earlier this year, has been awarded the Rose Bowl by The Alresford Society. Presented annually by the local preservation society, the award recognises outstanding visual improvements to new buildings or improvements to existing buildings within the Alresfords.

Clive Broomfield, Head of Contracts & Property Services, will receive the award on behalf of the City Council at the Society's AGM at the end of October. "We were delighted to receive this prestigious award," said Clive. "It is nice to know that not only has this scheme made a difference to the housing needs of so many people in Alresford, but that it is appreciated for its visual presence as well."

WORDSEARCH WINNER

Congratulations to Mrs Vera Warner from West Meon, whose correct entry was drawn in our Veggie Wordsearch. You should have received £15 worth of vouchers in the post Vera - well done!

