

# Houseproud

NEWS FOR TENANTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

## Summer Stunners

**F**rom wildlife gardens in Weeke to the tropical in Sparsholt, our very own gardening guru Nigel Trowell, (the City's Parks & Recreation Officer) has had his work cut out judging our annual gardening competition.

Best Front Garden winner was Bernie Sheppard of Mitford Road, Alresford, whose small plot explodes with colour and even finds room for a water feature and an antique bath chair filled with blooms. Bernie, who has lived in Alresford for 42 years, was pessimistic about his chances after the unpredictable weather earlier in the year and didn't even tell his wife Helen that he had entered the competition.



Bernie Sheppard keeps up with the dead heading.

The Sheppards' garden is maintained to a high standard, with a lawn like a bowling green. Now retired, they believe that daily dead heading keeps flowering displays going for weeks and Bernie also adds some feed to his water butt to keep his lawn and hungry plants in tip top condition. They didn't start on their garden until the children had left home and learnt as they went along. "You don't have to be knowledgeable to be a gardener," says Bernie, "you just get enjoyment out of what you do."

Ron Ruddle of Claylands Road, Bishops Waltham potted the Best Hanging Basket prize with a packed display of plants, covering the whole basket in a blaze of colour. Generous with his cuttings and gardening tips to neighbours and visitors alike, Ron's huge basket cascades surfina petunias, begonias, fuchsias, verbena and lobelia. Ron created some 25 baskets this year, many of which he gave to family and friends, taking some 300 cuttings.



Ron Ruddle's stunning hanging basket.

(continued on back page)

## CASH OFFICE STAYS PUT

**T**he City Council is to retain the Cash Office at Colebrook Street, and redesign the ground and first floor reception areas to provide a safe and pleasant environment that also affords a measure of privacy for customers.

The Council's Cabinet recently approved the measures and also agreed that telephone and main reception services should be separated. It heard that a survey among 5,200 tenants had a 43% response (2,248 households). Of these, 944 were opposed to the closure of the Cash Office, with 303 in support and 1001 not expressing a view. Sixty-five per cent of those

opposing closure currently pay rent at the Cash Office.

The Cabinet had decided at a previous meeting to look at closing the Cash Office in principle, subject to tenant consultation. A report had stated that the main problem was one of staff health and safety, and changes had to be made.

The report went on to say that the redesign of the reception areas should begin without delay and that the design, as well as addressing health and safety issues for staff, should try to provide better facilities for the public. This means being able to sit down at a desk to speak to a member of staff, with a measure of privacy and separate interview rooms should also be provided.

## We all need good neighbours

**B**ette Yeates has a wonderful neighbour in Sandra Prince. They live in Sparsholt and have had to endure 10 weeks of disruption while Bette's house was renovated. Bette had to move out to Sutton Scotney while major structural repairs were carried out including rebuilding external brickwork and a new porch, replacement floorboards upstairs, re-fitted kitchen, new bath and flooring, re-plastering and redecoration throughout, as well as extensive work to the garden.



Bette Yeates (left) with her good neighbour Sandra Prince.

"Sandra has been marvellous," says Bette who suffers from osteoporosis and has lived in Sparsholt for 27 years. "Every week she helped me with the shopping, walked my old labrador Monty, as well as finding new curtains for the house and a replacement washing machine, spare bed and bedding, and has kept an eye on the house and garden while the workmen were around."

"She has been absolutely brilliant in helping me, on top of working as a nurse and looking after her own family - I know I'm really very lucky," says Bette.

## inside.....

- New Tenancy Support Service . . . . . Page 3
- New Low Cost Home Ownership Register . . . . . Page 5
- Housing Pledge . . . . . Page 7
- Are you experiencing housing problems? . . . . . Page 8

**LOOK OUT FOR CONTACT**  
Your Tenant Priorities Questionnaire is inside!

# What a Cracker!

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

- |                 |            |              |
|-----------------|------------|--------------|
| Banger          | Gunpowder  | Roman candle |
| Bonfire         | Guy Fawkes | Scarf        |
| Boots           | Matches    | Soup         |
| Catherine wheel | Mittens    | Sparkler     |
| Embers          | November   | Taper        |
| Explosion       | Overcoat   | Torch        |
| Fireworks       | Plot       | Touch paper  |
| Flame           | Potatoes   | Treason      |
| Gloves          | Rocket     |              |

Light the blue touch paper and retire rapidly, but only after you have had a go at our red hot Wordsearch. Find the words in this edition, ring each one you find, fill in your details below and mail to Glynis Cole, Health & Housing Department, Winchester City Council, FREEPOST, Licence No. SO6048, Winchester SO23 9BR.

Entries must be received by Friday 18th October 2002, and the first correct entry drawn out of the hat will receive gift vouchers for £15.

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

DAYTIME TELEPHONE NUMBER .....

For competition rules send an SAE to the above address.

## Clare wins again



Clare Smith from Stanmore was a right royal winner in our Jubilee Wordsearch, as she is the first person to win our competition twice. Clare last won in March 2000 and confesses to being a bit of an addict, having a go at every one. £15 worth of vouchers are on their way to you Clare – keep up the good work!

## WHAT YOU TOLD US

Thank you to everyone who returned our questionnaire on rents and arrears in the last edition of HOUSEPROUD. We received 684 responses, about 13% of the number sent out, and this is what you said:

Would you be encouraged to switch your payments to Direct Debit (DD) if more than one collection date per month was offered?

280 (42%) already pay by DD, 83 (12.6%) would switch.

Direct Debit is a cheaper method of payment than others offered by the Council. Would you switch to DD if an incentive were offered?

301 (57%) would consider switching to pay by DD.

What type of incentive would encourage you to switch?

Reduction in rent	257 (61%)	Gift vouchers	91 (21.5%)
Shop discounts	53 (12.5%)	Annual prize draw	22 (5%)

If the Council could accept payments via the Internet, would you pay in this way?

558 (93%) would not pay via the Internet.

If your entitlement to Housing Benefit stops and you have been overpaid benefit, how would you prefer to repay the overpayment?

Collected alongside a rent account by Housing	115 (23%)
Completely separate account	55 (11%)
Never received Housing Benefit	335 (66%)

Do you consider you receive too much information on your rent account?

Just right	487 (80%)	Not enough	86 (14%)
------------	-----------	------------	----------

If you have been in contact with Housing regarding rent arrears recently, how do you rate the service provided?

Of 575 replies to this question, 482 (84%) had not been in contact. Of the remainder, 47 (51%) felt the service was excellent or very good. 15 (16%) felt the service was poor or very poor.

How do you consider the Council's overall service on rent collection?

Of 629 replies to this question, 298 (66%) felt the service was excellent or very good, 177 (28%) did not know or had no opinion. Of the remainder, 22 (5%) felt that the service was poor or very poor.

Do you want the four rent-free weeks to remain?

512 (77%) want them to remain, 15 (2%) do not.

These findings will now help us to make improvements in the service and any changes will be included in the Best Value Action Plan. Before things like incentives for prompt rent payments can be introduced, elected members must approve these at committee, and we will report back to you in future editions of HOUSEPROUD.

## COUNCIL GAINS PEOPLE AWARD

Winchester City Council has recently been awarded the prestigious Investors in People Award.

The award, in recognition of the Council's achievement in reaching the national standard of good practice for people development and training, was awarded to Council Chief Executive David Cowan and Personnel Director, Alison Gavin, at a recent ceremony.

Investors in People is a framework which helps ensure that communication, training and development within the Council helps people to do their jobs well and this, in turn, will encourage higher standards of service to the Council's customers.

Receiving the IIP award, Alison Gavin said "This award demonstrates our commitment to improving staff development and also shows our commitment to providing better quality services to the public."

# Review of Housing Services

Thank you to those tenants who returned our questionnaire on Rents and Arrears, which was included in the last edition of Houseproud. You will find the results opposite.

The Survey was the first in a series aimed at ensuring that your views are taken into account as part of the overall Best Value review of Housing, before any further decisions are made on the best way to provide your housing service.

Much of the Best Value Review is nearly complete with a final report due in December. Full details of the outcome, and information regarding any service changes that are recommended, will be included in the Spring 2003 edition of HOUSEPROUD.

However, work does not stop there – we will be trying to make continuous improvements to services and will need your help to make sure we concentrate on the right areas.

## What Issues need more Attention?

Whilst resources are limited, it is important that your priorities as tenants are considered alongside the priorities of the Council as the *Landlord* when decisions are made on how best to allocate resources.

To help this process, a questionnaire is included in this edition which asks you to let us know what issues you regard as most important to you. Information from this survey will be used to inform the Best Value Review before any final decisions on the future of the Housing Service are made.

**Please complete and return the enclosed survey. Your views really are important and responding to the survey will ensure that your views are considered along with those of other tenants. Returns need to be with us by Friday 11 October. Postage is free.**

If you need any further information regarding the survey or have any questions regarding the Best Value process, please contact Glynis Cole, Tenant Liaison Officer, on Freephone 0800 716987.

# NEW TENANCY SUPPORT SERVICE

The Government has introduced new funding arrangements through its Supporting People programme to help vulnerable tenants maintain their tenancies and improve their quality of life. In response, the City's Housing Services department is developing a service to provide this support.

The service aims to help many people who may need support to stay in their home and continue living independently. This may include people with mental health problems, learning or physical disabilities, or who are blind or deaf, as well as vulnerable young people or those leaving care or with a history of substance misuse, ex-offenders and families under pressure.

The type of help which can be provided includes:

- Benefits advice, including help to fill in forms
- Budgeting advice and help to deal with debts and bills
- Advocacy when dealing with public, health and voluntary services
- Helping to access local facilities
- Advice and support to keep to the conditions of the tenancy
- Arranging repairs
- Help to get furniture

The service is not able to help with care, for example washing or bathing, and tenants will still need to contact Social Services for this type of help. Support will be provided in the community and will be led by the tenant's needs over a period of time.

A support officer will visit tenants referred to the service and, if the service is able to help, the tenant will be supported according to their needs.

This pilot service is being run in partnership with voluntary agencies who have the specialist knowledge of providing support to different groups.

Tenants who are eligible for housing benefit will not have to pay for support, as this is paid by a new benefit called Transitional Housing Benefit. More about this benefit will be explained to tenants at the first appointment. However, if tenants are not eligible for housing benefit, they will have to pay a charge for support.

**If you would like any further information about this service please contact Steve Tong or Charlotte Betts in the City Offices on 01962 848324.**



The Supported Housing Team, Charlotte Betts and Steve Tong.

## MAKINS LATEST



As we go to press, the 12 new bungalows at Makins Court in Alresford are receiving their finishing touches, the landscaping is being completed and new tenants are making plans to move in. This is the second and final phase of the sheltered scheme, which has won much admiration from healthcare professionals and residents alike. The 10 two bedroom, and 2 one bedroom bungalows will be managed by the City Council on behalf of Eastleigh Housing Association, one of the Council's social housing partners. This is the first time that Winchester City Council has managed properties on behalf of a housing association. Once all the new residents have settled in, there will be an official opening of the whole scheme.

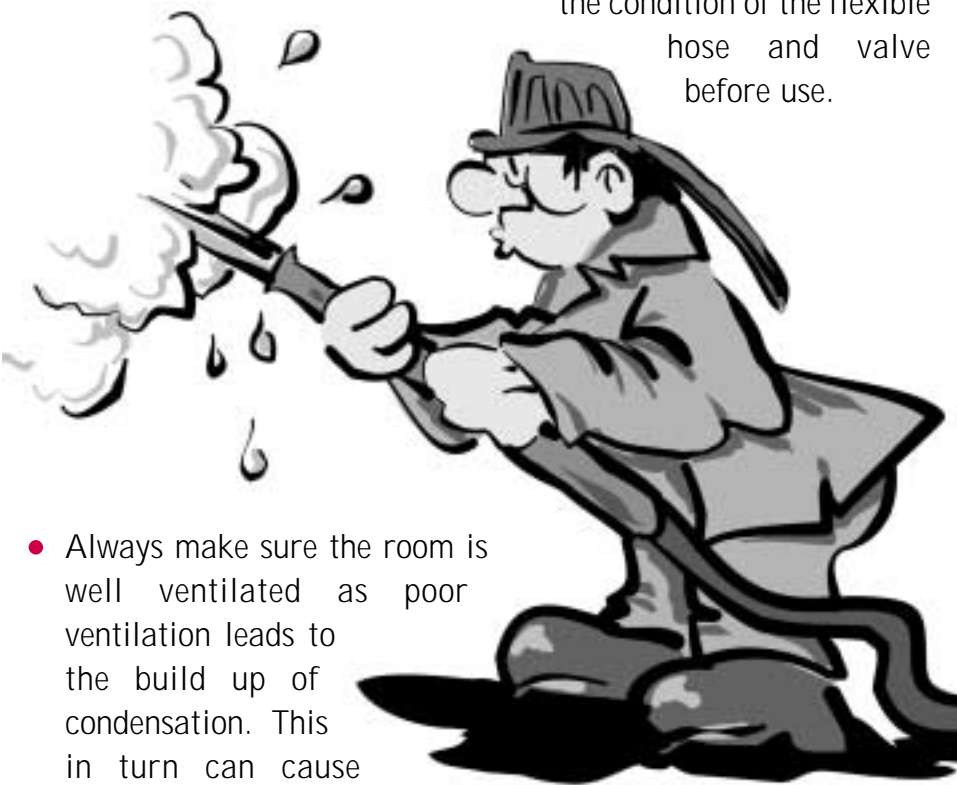
# SAFETY IN THE HOME

**With the cooler evenings, heaters will be switched on, gas fired boilers and coal fires lit and thermostats turned up. We give some timely advice on the dangers that heating appliances can cause the unwary.**

Whether a gas fire, electric storage heater, central heating radiators, calor gas heater or an open fire is the main way of heating your home, there is always the risk of accidental contact with hot surfaces. For most of us this isn't a problem but it can be for vulnerable groups such as the elderly, infirm and very young children:

- If you have an elderly relative or a young child, consider buying a guard.
- If you intend having a solid fuel fire, get the chimney flue swept before use. This will reduce the risk of a chimney fire or carbon monoxide poisoning if the flue is blocked. If you have solid fuel central heating, the Council will arrange for the chimney to be swept as part of the annual service.
- Before using portable electric heaters, check the condition of the plug and flex.
- For safety reasons, LPG (propane/butane) and paraffin heaters are not allowed in flats but are commonly used for supplementary heating in other types of accommodation. Check

the condition of the flexible hose and valve before use.



- Always make sure the room is well ventilated as poor ventilation leads to the build up of condensation. This in turn can cause damp, which encourages the growth of mould, which can damage walls and furniture. LPG and paraffin heaters create even more moisture than conventional radiators so good ventilation is essential.
- To reduce the fire risk, keep spare cylinders or the quantity of paraffin to a minimum and store in a secure location, preferably outdoors.
- Be careful when drying clothes near heating appliances that are not thermostatically controlled, such as gas fires, open fires and bar electric fires. Always ensure adequate separation to avoid scorching or accidental ignition.
- Your smoke detector is a last line of defence so remember to check it regularly and don't be tempted to remove the battery.

And finally, try running your heating appliances at a lower setting as many people turn the heating up to maximum which wastes energy and costs you money.

## SURVEYORS ON THE MOVE

The Council's Area Property Surveyors have packed their bags and moved to the Bar End depot – where they used to work many moons ago. "This has to be good news," says Clive Broomfield Head of Contracts and Property Services, "as they will be working even more closely with Serco, and this can only help in the delivery of our frontline service to tenants."

## GUIDE DOGS ONLY PLEASE

A new Health & Safety ruling has come into force in the City Offices which means that all dogs – except Guide Dogs – are no longer allowed into the Colebrook Street offices. We would ask you to respect this and leave your best friend outside, where we have supplied fixing places for leads. Thank you for your co-operation.

## HELP US TO HELP YOU

As our repairs reporting system is computer-based, it would help us a great deal if, when you ring up to report a repair, you could be ready with your address first, followed by your name. Because the system is address-driven, nothing can be entered until this information is processed first. Please could you also confirm your telephone number when you call, as it is important that we have up to date information should we, or the contractor, need to contact you about the repair after your call. **You can report a repair on any of the following numbers – 01962 848172, 848174, 848351 or 848516.**

## GET IT ON TAPE

If you know anyone who is visually impaired and who would like HOUSEPROUD delivered to their home on audio cassette or in braille, please call Glynis Cole on Freephone 0800 716987 for a FREE copy today. HOUSEPROUD is recorded by the Winchester & District Talking Newspaper Association. Larger printed versions of HOUSEPROUD can also be made available. Call Glynis on the above number to obtain your copy.

## NEW TEXTPHONE

A textphone facility for use by tenants and other customers who are deaf or hard of hearing has been installed, which will give access to the Housing Management and Tenant Participation services run from the City Offices. **The Textphone Number is 01962 878982.**

Those wishing to use the service will be able to deal directly with Council officers during office hours. At other times a text message may be left on the answering service, so that the appropriate member of staff can contact the caller at the first opportunity.

We hope that this facility will make a big difference to our deaf customers, enabling them to make enquiries or report information. **If you have any questions or comments about this service, please contact Steve Tong (Supported Housing Manager) 01962 848324, or Glynis Cole (Tenant Liaison Officer) on Freephone 0800 716987.**

## NEW FACES, NEW PLACES

**P**erri Seymour is a chartered surveyor, who previously worked for the Property Services Agency in London and then in private practice. However, for the last 10 years he has worked in insurance with projects involving the reinstatement of homes damaged by fires, flood, storms etc.

Perri joined the City Council in April, initially assisting as the Property Surveyor responsible for empty properties. As a Contracts Surveyor he now works in the Property Services section on planned maintenance schemes, which include re-roofing contracts, modernisation of kitchens and bathrooms and disabled adaptations.



Perri Seymour (left) and Neil Trenfield

**Neil Trenfield** joined the Council in May as a Property Surveyor, dealing with void properties across the whole of the district's 250 square miles. He instructs the contractors on what needs doing to each property as it becomes empty and then inspects the 40 or so homes that become available each month through moves or transfers.

Formerly a self-employed carpenter, Neil keeps a knowledgeable eye on the quality of the work that is carried out. He keeps fit by going to weight training four nights a week.

**Emma Womar** joined the City in May, working two days a week for the Business Services team in the Health and Housing Department, job-sharing with Lex Cleverley. Emma's role includes paying accounts, sorting post and distribution, stationery orders and petty cash payments and helping with the processing of applications from tenants wishing to buy their homes under the Right to Buy Scheme.



Emma Womar

A keen traveller, Emma took a year to backpack around the world and also worked in the United States. She enjoys theatre, reading and photography and lives outside Salisbury with her partner and a fat cat called Bean.



Louise McMaw

In October **Louise McMaw** will take on the role of Community Relations Officer, dealing with serious nuisance and cases of persistent anti-social behaviour. She will be working with many different agencies, such as Social Services and the Police, in an attempt to resolve issues. Louise, who joined the City Council two years ago as an Area Housing Manager, is looking forward to the challenges this new role will present.

**Mark Barnett** is also on the move, as he became an Area Housing Manager in August. He began his career with the City Council six years ago, starting on Housing Reception, before moving to Housing Needs Support. Mark now covers some 750 properties in Alresford and the city centre and will become a regular, friendly face in the neighbourhood, ready to answer tenants' questions and make sure that you get what you need from Housing Services. A great outdoor man, Mark enjoys sailing and golf in his spare time.



Mark Barnett



**Lesley Sellwood** has joined the team at the Lifeline Control Centre based at Hyde Lodge in Worthy Lane. Lesley has lived and worked in Winchester most of her adult life. She takes a great interest in people and enjoys meeting the older generation and in her spare time enjoys gardening, reading and dog walking.

Lesley Sellwood

## NEW LOW COST HOME OWNERSHIP REGISTER

**W**ith the average cost of a terraced house in Winchester running at nearly twice the average across England and Wales, the City Council - working with its partner housing associations - has launched a Low Cost Home Ownership Register. The Council will now be able to identify applicants interested in low cost home ownership who until now could only register their interest if they were eligible for the Joint Housing Register.

Given the demand for low cost home ownership in the district, it is now possible to register on both lists or just on the Low Cost Home Ownership Register, which will include *Homebuy* for those on the Joint Housing Register and the *Key Worker Starter Home Initiative*.

"The City Council works with five partner housing associations, developing properties for low cost home ownership as well as for rent," explains Councillor Dominic Hiscock. "Shared ownership involves buying 50% or 75% of a property and paying a subsidised rent on the rest, owned by the housing association. Shared equity schemes allow you to buy a larger share in a property, usually 75% and the housing association involved will provide an interest free loan for the rest. If you decide to move, the landlord will receive 25% of the property's current market value in order to help other people in housing need."

Applicants for the new Register must live or work in the Winchester district, and a local connection will be required for housing in rural areas. A simple checklist has been drawn up to ensure that the financial assistance is being channelled to those who really need it and the Register is only for those who need their own home - such as first time buyers and those who have been repossessed. £2000 in savings is recommended to cover the normal home purchase fees.

The City's development programme produces about twenty low cost home ownership units a year, and applicants will be dealt with on a first-come first-served basis.

**For further information or an application form, contact the Enabling Officer Suzanne Le Brocq on 01962 848210 or look for Low Cost Home Ownership on the Council's website, [www.winchester.gov.uk](http://www.winchester.gov.uk).**



New homes at Knowle, developed by Swaythling Housing Society

# SOUND REMEDIES

**W**e are all bothered by noise in our homes - anything from loud music and DIY to barking dogs and alarms. These can be annoying and disruptive. Here are some simple remedies that can minimise the impact of noise on others:

## Music/Entertainment

- Keep the volume down – whether its TV or car stereo – especially at night and early morning.
- Place speakers away from party walls, floors or ceilings. Standing these on an insulating material can reduce transmission of sound.
- If you are having a party, consider inviting the neighbours. Keep windows and doors closed, and if someone complains, turn it down.
- With personal entertainment – for example toys, computer games – be considerate, keep the volume down. Avoid using them in the same room where someone is watching TV or listening to the radio. Turning the volume up may disturb your neighbours.
- If you play your own music, keep the volume down, windows shut, and agree times to practice when you will cause least disturbance.

## Domestic Appliances

**We use more and more appliances to help us with the housework – and they can be very noisy. Where you put them and when you use them can make all the difference.**

- Make sure washing machines, fridges and dishwashers are away from party walls and on a carpet or mat to reduce vibration – especially if you live in a flat.
- Use noisy appliances at sensible times – during normal waking hours. Hoovering in the early hours could wake up half the street!
- Consider those at home – if hoovering or using a food processor, shutting doors will avoid the necessity to turn up the TV or music.
- If buying a new appliance consider the low noise option. Some products – hoovers, lawn mowers, washing machines etc., have a noise rating – if they haven't ask why.

## Pets

**If pets are well cared for and happy, they shouldn't make too much noise.**

- Dogs bark if lonely, bored or unhappy. If you have to leave them, get a neighbour to look after them or visit.
- Cats make noise too – howling and fighting at night. If your cat is annoying the neighbours, keep it inside.
- All domestic animals have the potential to cause noise. Ensure they are kept healthy and happy. Put cages, kennels, etc., where they are least likely to disturb your neighbours – and you.

## Maintenance/DIY

**We all need to do noisy work from time to time to maintain and improve our homes.**

- Do noisy jobs and operate equipment when it will cause least disturbance to your neighbours – avoid working when they are trying to sleep or enjoying a quiet night in.
- If you are doing something really noisy e.g. floor sanding, drilling in party walls – let them know beforehand and they are far less likely to complain.
- Where possible, carry out noisy outdoor jobs in the garage or shed.
- If you carry out car or other repairs outside, do this in a place and at a time when it will cause least disturbance.
- If you are employing builders, agree working times with them that will not annoy the neighbours – or you!

## Your Home

**The construction and layout of your home can cause problems within your home and to your neighbours.**

- Avoid slamming doors and thundering up and down stairs – especially if you live in a flat or terraced house.
- When considering options for flooring, be considerate. Many leases prohibit stripped floors or hard surfaces – for good reason.
- If you have stripped or laminate flooring, take off heavy boots or shoes.
- If installing laminate flooring, make sure you use sound insulating underlay.
- Sound travels through walls, so be aware of what's next door. If you can, avoid having noisy spaces (kitchen, living room) adjacent to quiet spaces (bedroom, study).

## Your Garden

- Power tools in the garden should be used with discretion – avoid strimming or shredding when your neighbours are trying to relax in the sunshine.

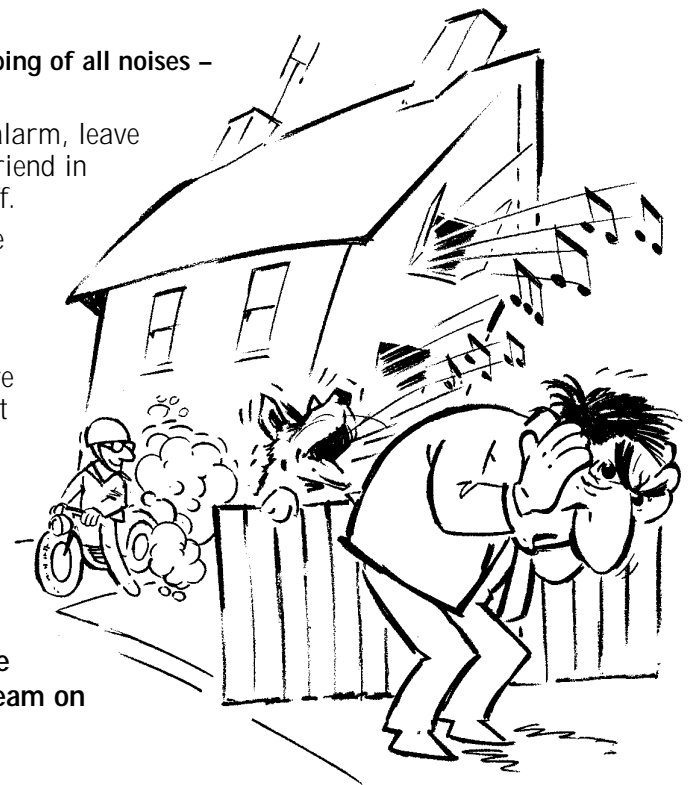
- Think before installing features in your garden that make a noise – the splashing fountain or tinkling chimes might soothe you on a sunny afternoon, but it could drive your neighbours mad at night.
- When entertaining in the garden remember that sound travels. Avoid amplified music outdoors.

## Alarms

**Alarms can be the most disturbing of all noises – it's what they are for.**

- If you have a house or car alarm, leave a key with a neighbour or friend in case it is accidentally set off.
- Register keyholders with the local authority to ensure problems can be dealt with if you are out or away.
- Make sure smoke alarms are correctly sited, so they don't go off every time you burn toast. In the kitchen it is better to fit a heat detector.

**If you have any problems or queries please contact the Environmental Protection Team on 01962 848488.**



## COMMUNITY ALARM SURVEY

**T**he Community Alarm Service is responsible for supporting our older tenants in their sheltered homes when resident Scheme Managers are off duty, either during the night, at weekends or when away through sickness or holiday.

In the spring we carried out a comprehensive Best Value survey to seek your views on this service and had an excellent response from our sheltered housing scheme tenants, with some 478 replies.

89% of the scheme residents - 425 - told us that they were either satisfied or very satisfied with the service we provide. As you would expect, not everybody was happy, with some 13 tenants (3%) expressing levels of dissatisfaction. There were also some 40 tenants who chose not to express an opinion.

When asked how users of the service had been treated during the last six months, 86% were pleased with the experience, with only 1% of the respondents expressing displeasure. 61 tenants (13%) were neither pleased nor displeased. Perhaps they did not have a reason to contact us or be contacted by the service.

The quality and reputation of our service largely depends on two things - the reliability of the equipment, which is currently in the process of being upgraded, and the performance of our staff. So we were keen to hear from our customers how they rated the manner and attitude displayed by our front-line staff. We were again pleased to record that 91% of our older sheltered housing scheme customers were either satisfied or very satisfied with our staff; with just 2% (10) residents expressing varying degrees of dissatisfaction. Some 31 sheltered scheme tenants (7%) didn't express an opinion.

Whilst the results of the customer survey are very gratifying and a testimony to the Control Centre staff and our mobile Scheme Managers, there is no room for complacency. We will therefore be making personal contact with those customers who expressed dissatisfaction with the service.

**Many thanks to all of those tenants who took time to complete the survey questionnaire. We welcome any feedback on the services we provide.**

# Housing Pledge



Councillor Dominic Hiscock

**New Cabinet portfolio holder for housing, Councillor Dominic Hiscock, has pledged his support to the City's tenants and has given an undertaking that TACT\* will be consulted on all housing issues before Cabinet meetings.**

"TACT will sit at the table for all Cabinet matters relating to housing and they will have a place on all working parties looking at housing issues," he guaranteed.

"I am delighted at the way that TACT is actively seeking new members from right across the district and this can only be a good thing in making sure that the views of tenants are truly representative," he said. "The Council wants to consult with as many tenants as possible and TACT and the Tenants Associations provide an excellent channel of communication."

"We want to go on from here and a group is already looking at updating the Tenant Participation Compact, which will incorporate all the new issues we have agreed and what we want to achieve in the future," said Dominic.

"However, you don't have to wait for the next tenant recruitment campaign to get involved, you can call Glynis Cole, the Council's Tenant Liaison Officer at any time on our Freephone number 0800 716987, to find out just what you can do to make your voice heard," he said.

\* TACT is Tenants and Council Together, the Council's district-wide consultative group.

## COLE'S column



Glynis Cole

Dear Tenants,

There is always so much news to bring you in **HOUSEPROUD**, that we always have real problems trying to squeeze it into eight pages.

As always our glorious gardeners have been a real inspiration – it does your heart good to see what they have achieved. This year our judge gave an extra prize to recognise the kindness of a carer in creating a sweet-smelling balcony for an elderly tenant, and you will also be able to read about a good friend in Sparsholt, who made a real difference to her neighbour's life at a difficult time.

Many of our older residents have been having new, improved Warden Call systems installed and we have introduced a special Text Phone for the deaf and hard of hearing. There's news about a Tenancy Support Service and good news too for those of you who would like to own your own home with the introduction of the Low Cost Home Ownership Register.

As you read this, new tenants are moving into their brand new homes at Makins Court and, as the evenings are starting to draw in, we thought we would bring you another questionnaire – yes another questionnaire – because we like to know what you think. Don't forget you can always call me on Freephone 0800 716987 if you would like to find out more about joining TACT or your local Tenants Association.

Keep warm and safe this autumn – and keep those letters coming – it's always nice to hear from you!

Best wishes,

## TENANTS HANDBOOK UPDATE

**F**ollowing the launch of the new Tenants Handbook, we received comment cards from 191 tenants with queries ranging from the siting of digital aerials, debts from previous tenants and tenancy support, to safety in the home and making your voice heard.

In response to your suggestions we will be publishing some new pages.

🏠 We will supply you with a complete list of sheltered schemes in the district for Section 8 – Services for Older People.

🏠 We will introduce a new *Moving Home Check List* in Section 11.

🏠 We will add a list of *Frequently Asked Questions* in Section 3 – Your Tenancy.

The section on Homelessness and Housing Advice is also under review.

Keep an eye out for the new pages, which will be coming through your letterbox at the beginning of October.

**If you have any comments on the Tenants Handbook, please call Glynis Cole on Freephone 0800 716987 or, if you have not already used it, there is reply paid card in the front of your Handbook.**

## NEW RECRUITS

**C**ity Council tenants are delighted with the results of their recruitment campaign. Held over three weeks, tenants, councillors and staff took to the road to boost the number of people involved in Tenants' Associations and TACT, the Council's district-wide tenant consultative group.

As a result of their efforts, two new tenants' associations will now be created in Colden Common and Weeke and the membership of TACT has been boosted by 38%. In addition, the tenants association in Chester Court may be brought back to life, bringing the total number of associations in the district up from six to nine.

"We realise that people are busier than ever," says Bryan Whitfield, Chairman of TACT's Evening Group, "but it is in tenants' own interests to get involved. We have been able to recruit tenants in rural areas like West Meon and Colden Common to help swell our ranks. All the people we met during the roadshows were invited along to the TACT Annual General Meeting and many of them said that they had no idea they could get involved in such a positive way in how their homes were managed."

**"Don't worry if you couldn't get to the roadshows," says Bryan. "You can still get involved by calling Glynis Cole, our Tenant Liaison Officer, on Freephone 0800 716987, to find out more about joining TACT or your local Tenants' Association."**



Scheme Manager, Lynne Carr (left) with residents Wilfred Ball (88), May Etherington (90) and Charlotte North (89) at Matilda Place.

(continued from front page)

Ron recommends a slow-release fertiliser as "you need to treat your plants like children and not overfeed them". Ron has lived at Claylands for 22 years, where his garden keeps him on the go - despite the need for two hip operations.

Best Sheltered Scheme winner was Matilda Place in Gordon Road, Winchester, where Scheme Manager Lynne Carr is the blooming star of the show, nurturing 15 baskets and 21 tubs with absolute dedication, helped by her deputies Mary Lawrence and Sandie Russell. Many of the residents have sponsored individual planters, and this year a newly-installed watering system has helped keep the hanging baskets in tip top condition, although Lynne and her team still need to keep the geraniums, petunias and Jubilee roses topped up with regular feeds. The residents just love sitting outside in their sheltered courtyard garden, just absorbing the perfume and colour of the display, along with Jaycee, the resident Siamese cat.

Doreen Feltham of Godson House was awarded a special Judges Prize because of her wonderful balcony, which fills her living room with perfume. This tiny area was crammed with sweet peas, petunias, stocks, lillies, carnations, nasturtiums, lobelia and snapdragons, giving partially-sighted Mrs. Feltham immense pleasure. Doreen paid tribute to her carer Kate who, in her own time, maintained this sweet smelling bower. "I hope Mrs. Feltham will be able to find some more smelly plants to enjoy," said Nigel, as all the winners received gardening vouchers.



Doreen Feltham enjoys her scented balcony.



Community Alarm Service Manager, Lynn Curtis, with the newly installed Warden Call System in the home of Mrs. Pat Richardson at Airlie Corner.

## Is anybody there?

We are receiving our tenants on the new Warden Call systems loud and clear. The new systems are being installed on a phased basis and they are proving to be a great success. The new digital systems have a better sound quality and using the latest technology, incorporate smoke detectors. Before installation at your sheltered housing scheme, tenants will be invited to a coffee morning with officers and Tunstall Telecom, who will explain how the systems work and answer any questions you may have.

## Are you experiencing housing problems?

*Do you need impartial advice on:*

- Housing complaints
- Problems with student accommodation
- Houses in multi-occupation
- Housing repair grants
- Disability facility grants
- Homecheck
- Home energy advice
- Mobile home parks
- Noise & nuisance

**Winchester City Council, in conjunction with the Citizens Advice Bureau has one-stop surgeries on the first and third Tuesday of the month at the CAB in the Winchester Centre, St George's Street, Winchester.**

**Please call 01962 848400 for an appointment**