



TACT understands the City Council's budget dilemma

The Council's decision to scale down its maintenance and repairs budget will not be endorsed by TACT (Tenants and Council Together).

The tenant group backed the Council's comments but says it cannot approve the cutbacks.

Alan Rickman, joint chair of TACT, said: "TACT realises the difficulty of the Council's position, along with many other councils around the country. The fault lies at the door of the Government.

"If TACT endorses this paper we would be sending the wrong message to the Government,

that council tenants are prepared to be short changed. We are not!

"TACT however will do all we can to work with the Council as much as possible, to achieve the best for council tenants.

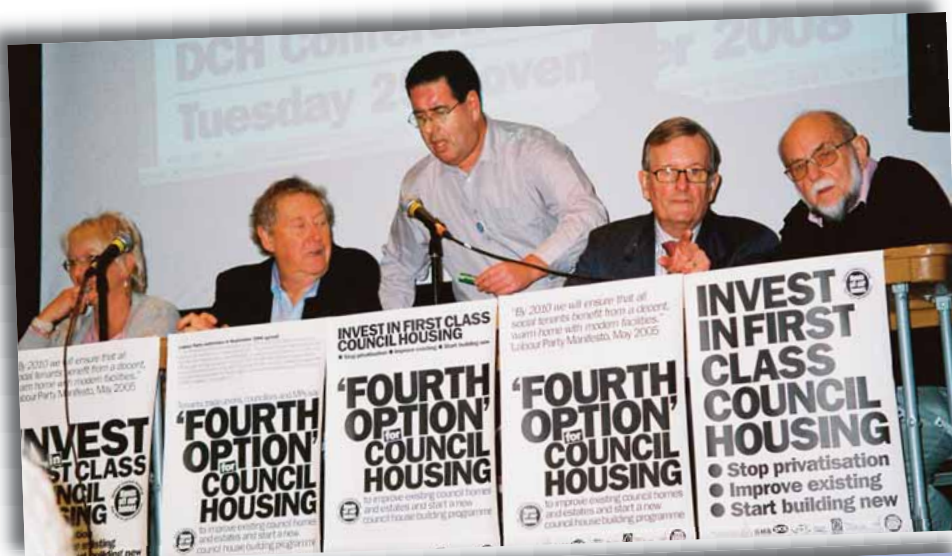
"TACT regret having to take this stand, but like the Council we have no other choice, and must make our feelings clear. Council tenants want a fair deal. With ever increasing rents, we should not have to see a decline in service levels."

Mr Rickman added: "The Government has a surplus of £194 million this year through money taken from councils in negative subsidy."

In the News!

The funding issue and council cutbacks were featured on ITV Thames Valley and Meridian News. Alan Rickman and Cllr Tony Coates were both interviewed.

Alan was a phone-in guest on the breakfast show on BBC Radio Solent. He told presenter Julian Clegg about the negative subsidy issue and TACT's fight for justice.



TACT's evening chair Alan Rickman was invited to speak at the Defend Council Housing conference in November. Alan is seated next to the group's chairman, Alan Walter, who spoke at the TACT Annual General Meeting in May last year. *Full story page 3*

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Justice for Tenants in 2009?

ask Alan and Beryl, joint chairs of TACT.

TACT wants to assure council tenants that for their part the fight for justice regarding what happens to your rent money will go on.

It is not a case of not enough money. We pay it every week to the Government.

It is what the Government does with that money when they get it.

They certainly do not give it all back to the councils whose tenants have paid it.

That is when the problems start. Councils like Winchester are grossly under funded.

Housing maintenance, repair work and housing management will fall by the wayside.

On the other hand the Government stock piles our money, part of it goes to councils who cannot



Alan Rickman and Beryl White,
Joint Chairs of TACT

reach the Decent Homes Standard. However, a large amount – over £200m – this year alone goes straight into the Government's pot.

It is said much of this pays for new homes for Housing Associations. If this is the case it is wrong. New council homes should be built instead.

Winchester City Council has apologised to its Council

tenants that 2009 will bring about a fall in standards due to under funding council budgets by the Government.

The Government, when it announces the findings of the Housing Revenue Account Review, must allow councils the funding they need out of the money council tenants pay. The Robbery has to stop! And it has to stop now!

SPRING WORDSEARCH

20 seasonal words are hidden in the grid below. When you have found the missing words, put the 23 unused letters together in the order they are printed to find a six word phrase.

- | | |
|------------------|-----------------|
| 1. DAFFODIL | 11. MEETING |
| 2. EASTER | 12. GARDEN |
| 3. APRIL SHOWERS | 13. COMPETITION |
| 4. TULIPS | 14. MAYOR |
| 5. CROCUS | 15. EGG |
| 6. FLOWERS | 16. LAMBS |
| 7. GRASSY | 17. BLOSSOM |
| 8. SUNSHINE | 18. BREEZE |
| 9. ANNUAL | 19. MARCH |
| 10. GENERAL | 20. VERNAL |

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

Send your answer (the six word phrase) along with your name and a contact number on a postcard or sealed down envelope to the Tenant Participation Team, Winchester City Council, FREEPOST, NAT 15377, Winchester, SO23 9ZW by Friday 17 April 2009. The first correct entry out of the hat will receive £30 in High Street vouchers.

Congratulations to Eleanor-Maria Moraghan from Central Winchester the winner of the Wordsearch in October's Tenant News. She won £30 in Love2shop High Street Vouchers.

Defend Council Housing Conference

As TACT evening chair I have been very involved with Defend Council Housing (DCH), writes Alan Rickman.

Over the past few years, having attended many of their meetings, I have found the networking invaluable and their knowledge top notch.

It was with great pleasure that I accepted the invitation to speak at the DCH conference in London last November. Beryl White, TACT afternoon chair, and Janet Berry, TACT member, came along to give their support.

Many delegates from areas around the country took part. The speakers and their diverse subjects were well received. The workshops that followed proved very informative.

The main theme of the day was



Beryl White (Left) and Janet Berry went to the DCH conference in London.

without doubt seeking justice for council tenants.

Negative subsidy is the main subject of concern and what the Government will do about it in 2009, when the review of the Housing Revenue Account findings will be announced.

Council tenants made it very clear they would not continue paying ever increasing rents.

When the standards of maintenance and repairs are falling. The Government must listen to what council tenants are saying and not bury its heads in the sand.

It was recognised at the conference that Housing Associations are beginning to have problems of their own along with many people having their homes repossessed. This is causing an added burden and further problems for councils with huge waiting lists already.

The conference is run on a shoe string, with very little funding. But it is up there with the best for information and enthusiasm for justice for council tenants.

"I was very honoured and privileged to be voted on to the DCH committee at the conference," said Alan Rickman, TACT joint chair.

Going walkabout in Stanmore!

Members of the North Stanmore Residents Association (NSRA) have identified a 15 point action plan to improve the estate following a walkabout in October 2008.

The residents raised concerns about the area in general and some issues relating to specific properties.

The findings were reported officially to the Council and steps are being taken to address the problems.

Issues included waste dumped in front gardens, overgrown weeds, cracked pavement slabs and broken grit bins.

The walkabout team also reported a general litter problem, which the Council is looking to address across the district.

Rose Prowse, Secretary of the NSRA, said: "The walk about has highlighted a number of issues which the officers were able to see at first hand. This has proved to be invaluable in getting things done swiftly."

"It's surprising what issues are identified when you spend time walking round. Solving them will make North Stanmore a more attractive place to live!"

For more information about Estate Walkabouts contact David Lumby on

Freephone 0800 716 987

Moonlight Robbery

The Committee Meeting held in January went very well, writes Alan Rickman.

We reviewed what had been achieved in 2008, and how the Government was listening to what Tenants are saying.

But there is no guarantee that when Ministers report their findings to the Housing Revenue Review every thing we have asked for will be done.

It is for this reason Moonlight Robbery will be stepping up the campaign over the next few months.

Tenants must play their part too – it is far from over.



The Chairs and
Members of TACT
(TENANTS AND
COUNCIL TOGETHER)
invite you to the...

TACT Annual General Meeting

Wednesday 13th May 2009

7pm coffee for 7.30pm meeting

at The Saxon Suite, Winchester Guildhall

light refreshments wheelchair access

For more information call **David Lumby**

on FREEPHONE **0800 716 987** or

email tenantinvolvement@winchester.gov.uk

Great turnout for diversity course



Nineteen tenant representatives took part in an Equality and Diversity briefing session organised by the Council in December.

The course was run by the Housing Quality Network and led by trainer Chris Root.

Equality and Diversity are key priorities for the Council, which felt that TACT should be involved in the issues because it is an important part of the consultation process for housing.

The participants discussed Equality and Diversity, which included identifying what the phrase meant and why it is important for an organisation to go the extra mile.

This edition of Tenant News has been produced by a Tenant team including Alan Rickman, David Cruden, Sheila Greaves, Joan Downing, Angela Stevenson and Susen Harding



TACT Meeting Dates



March-July 2009

Meetings are held on a Wednesday Afternoon from 2.00-4.00pm, and in the Evening from 7.30-9.30pm in The Common Room, Godson House, Central Winchester unless stated otherwise.

18 March - Joint Meeting (7.30pm - 9.30pm)

15 April (2.00pm and 7.30pm)

13 May - Joint Meeting - (7.30pm - 9.30pm)

Annual General Meeting (AGM)

17 June (2.00pm and 7.30pm)

15 July (2.00pm and 7.30pm)

All tenants and leaseholders welcome

**For further information contact Glynis or David
On Freephone 0800 716 987.**

- Contact the TACT Chairs Alan Rickman or Beryl White if you want to find out more about TACT or want to raise any issues.
- You can call them on Freephone 0800 716 987 and leave a message, or write to them at:
- **Alan Rickman, 101 Taplings Road, Winchester S022 6HG**
- **Beryl White, 2 Pine Road, Bishops Waltham, Nr. Southampton, S023 1EH**

Now turn the magazine over to read

