



# on the house

housing news for Winchester City Council tenants and leaseholders

## Government **U-Turn** on rents Average rise cut to 3.2%!

In the last edition of *on the house*, we announced that average rent increases set by Government resulted in a 6.14% annual increase for Winchester. This was based on inflation rates last September, which have fallen significantly.

The Government has now listened to councils and tenant groups and accepted that rent increases should be adjusted to reflect current inflation rates.

As a result, the annual rise for Winchester tenants will now be 3.2%. Whilst excellent news for tenants, the very late announcement by Government meant that all councils had already announced and implemented the original rent increase.

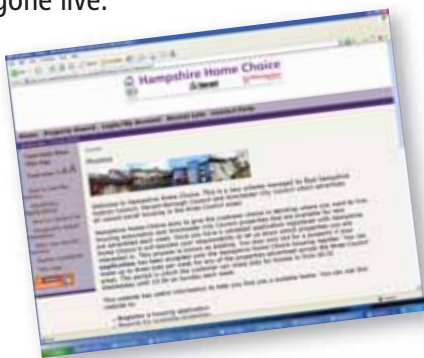
We will be writing to all tenants to let you know how your rent will be adjusted.

The reduced rent will be backdated to April 2009, although it is likely that changes cannot be completed until September 2009.

In the meantime, if you would like more information on these changes, please contact the Customer Services Centre on 01962 840 222 or email [housing@winchester.gov.uk](mailto:housing@winchester.gov.uk)

## **New bidding system for council homes**

Hampshire Home Choice, a new system for allocating council and housing association properties, has gone live.



Applicants can bid for homes across the Winchester, East Hampshire and Havant council areas.

Properties are advertised weekly at [www.hampshirehomechoice.org.uk](http://www.hampshirehomechoice.org.uk), on the property line on **0300 300 0028** and at the Customer Service Centre.

Applicants can bid for up to three properties a week from Wednesday morning until Sunday midnight.

To place a bid you need to:

Visit [www.hampshirehomechoice.org.uk](http://www.hampshirehomechoice.org.uk)

Call the bidding line on **0845 260 2303**.



### inside this edition:

- **Tips to beat the Credit Crunch**
- **Get gardening**
- **Community Alarm Service Annual Report 2008**
- **Tenants Handbook on its way**

## thebigword

### telephone interpreting service

The Council uses a 24-hour Telephone Interpreting Service, which also provides written or recorded translations including audio tapes and CDs.

If you, a relative or a neighbour would like to talk to the Council through an interpreter, please contact your **Area Housing Manager** on **01962 840 222**.

## get it taped

If you would like any of the information in *on the house* made available in large print or audio format, please call Glynis Cole on **Freephone 0800 716 987**.

## TEXTPHONE

This facility is available for readers who are deaf or hard of hearing.

**Please telephone 01962 878 982.**

If you have any particular needs which affect how you are able to use or be involved in our services or how you would like to receive information - for example translation, interpreters, Braille, audio tape, large print, sign language - please contact the Customer Service Centre either by **telephone: 01962 840 222** or by **email: customerservice@winchester.gov.uk**

Winchester City Council,  
City Offices, Colebrook Street,  
Winchester, SO23 9LJ.

**telephone** 01962 840 222

**fax** 01962 841 365

**email** [housing@winchester.gov.uk](mailto:housing@winchester.gov.uk)

**website** [www.winchester.gov.uk](http://www.winchester.gov.uk)

Telephone calls may be recorded.

Printed on 75% recycled paper.



# Dear Readers



Thank you so much to everyone who took part in our recent tenant satisfaction surveys. It was really good to hear that so many of you remain happy with our service – in particular tenants in our supported housing services!

You will all soon receive your new, revised Tenants' Handbook. A team of officers and tenants have put together a user-friendly book packed with important advice about your tenancy and handy tips.

Talking of tips, my colleague David Lumby has created an information sheet full of advice on how to beat the Credit Crunch.

We know that not everyone has a computer or the internet, so have included them in this issue of *on the house*.

Summer is ahead of us now – we hope – so it's time to get your gardens, balconies and hanging baskets in shape for our annual garden competition! You can find out more on page 4.

I wish you all a very happy summer!

**Glynis Cole**

## Less talk and more action approach gets result in Stanmore

Parking problems have eased in Stanmore thanks to work by the Stanmore Community Plan Steering Group, which has helped create new traffic regulations.

Residents and Council Officers are part of the group and now, other areas across the city are following Stanmore's lead!

Winnall is due to launch its main consultation soon and the St Barnabas ward and Harestock areas recently established a steering group.

Stanmore Combined, in partnership with local Tenants and Resident Associations, will review the parking situation next year and also look at the impact of the new Park & Ride at Bushfield on the area.

To find out more contact the Council's Community Planning Team on **01962 848 518** or email [mmaitland@winchester.gov.uk](mailto:mmaitland@winchester.gov.uk)

# Police award for Laura



Laura Nash, the Council's Community Relations Officer, has received a special award from Hampshire Police for her work in addressing anti social behaviour.

Chief Superintendent Karen Manners, Commander of Hampshire's Operational Command Unit, presented Laura with a special award at a ceremony at Winchester Police Station, and said:

"Special congratulations are awarded to you in respect of your hard work and commitment in dealing with a long-standing problem family in Spring Vale, Swanmore who had a detrimental effect on their community.

"With the assistance of PC Hurd and PC Fitchet, you painstakingly gathered sufficient evidence to achieve civil ASBOs for the whole family which led to them being successfully evicted from their home. This reflects the excellent partnership work in Winchester."

Laura's work focuses on serious and more complex cases of anti social behaviour involving Council tenants. Fortunately, most cases are resolved without the need for formal action, although the Council will use its full powers where necessary and Laura has led work on three drug-related closure orders and a number of evictions where tenants were not prepared to be reasonable neighbours and comply with their tenancy conditions.

Pictured with Laura are Chief Superintendent Manners and PC Georgiana Fitchet, who also received special praise for her work on the case.

## Mystery Shoppers will improve services

Members of TACT have put the Council to the test over its communication with tenants.

In two Mystery Shopping campaigns, the tenants telephoned the Customer Service Centre (CSC) and sent nine letters to the Council.

The telephone calls were for specific information or to be put through to a Council Officer and around half the tenants who expressed an opinion, said the Council had responded properly and on time.

Paul Wood, the Council's CSC Manager, said: "Being tested by real customers is the best way to find out how well we are doing, we have made a point of going through the results with the customer service team and making changes to the way we do things based on what the mystery shoppers found.

"One of the key findings is that you don't like spending time on hold and sometimes we were guilty of keeping customers on hold for far too long. In future, if we cannot either answer or direct your call immediately, we will try and contact you with the answer."

Mystery Shoppers also tested the Council's response to a total of nine written letters.

Richard Botham, Head of Landlord Services said: "We only met our 10-day response target in a few cases and we also need to avoid using jargon."

He defended the Council's right to respond to a letter by telephone or email and said the response would come from an 'appropriate' officer, who may not have received the original letter.

The Mystery Shopper exercise is due to be repeated later in the year (we don't want to say when) but rest assured, we will be reporting the findings to you in a future edition of on the house.

# Housing budget – the Minister's response!



Cllr Tony Coates,  
Portfolio holder  
for Housing

In the last edition of on the house, we included a letter from Cllr Tony Coates to the Housing Minister calling for urgent reform of Housing finance.

The Government replied in April 2009, 5 months later saying the rent reduction (see page 1) has used up its surpluses! Cllr Coates has strongly refuted this in his response:

As things stand, the only viable option for the future management of this service is a "Large Scale Voluntary Transfer". This is not wanted by tenants and not needed if the national system shared housing rents fairly without providing a national surplus. A transfer would only result in £15m going to the Government.

The Council is once again calling on the Government to create a fair finance system for its tenants.

Cllr Tony Coates, Portfolio Holder for Housing, has said that action is "needed to address the current inequalities brought about by the outdated housing finance regime".

As many tenants know, the Government takes a subsidy of around £9m each year from Winchester but it is currently reviewing the system.

We need to put an end to the "Tax on Tenants" without delay! "Without a major change to current funding levels, a large scale transfer will be unavoidable (many Winchester tenants are convinced that this remains the Government's agenda anyway)."



## Get gardening!



It's time for proud gardeners – or their neighbours – to join our annual competition to find the best gardens, balconies and hanging baskets.

Councillor Rob Humby, from Owslebury, a keen gardener and nurseryman, has kindly offered to be the judge for this year's contest.

He said: "I've followed the gardening competition with interest and am really looking forward to being part of it this year!"

I / We would like to enter / nominate \*  
(please delete as appropriate)

### **Best Front Garden**

First Prize £30 Garden Vouchers;  
Runner Up £20

### **Best Hanging Basket**

First Prize £25 Garden Vouchers

### **Best Sheltered Housing Scheme**

First Prize £30 Garden Vouchers;  
Runner Up £20

### **Best Balcony**

First Prize £25 Garden Vouchers



# YOUR Tenants Handbook is on its way

All homes will soon receive a copy of their new, revised Tenants Handbook packed with useful information and tips.

Tenancy Services Manager Amber Crosskey said: "The new format aims to make it easier for people to find information and was more cost-effective to produce.

"We have also used this opportunity to update all the information and add some new sections, for example Your Neighbourhood and Supported Tenancy Services."

Remember:

- Keep your tenants handbook in a safe place with your Tenancy Conditions and other important documents relating to your tenancy
- If it gets lost we can replace it for a small charge
- Use it as a useful information and reference guide to your tenancy
- If you move out of our property please leave your handbook behind

- If you need the handbook in another format i.e. translated into another language please let your Area Housing Manager know by contacting our Customer Service Centre on **01962 840 222**.

We value your views and ask you to tell us what you think of your new handbook by returning the comments slip to us in the prepaid envelope provided.



*Sandie Benstead of Jwyford taking delivery of the Tenants Handbook*

## What to do with your old Tenants Handbook?

You can **re-use** your folder at home and you can recycle the pages and dividers in your green bin!



Your Name .....

Address .....

.....

Daytime Tel. No .....

Name\* .....

Address .....

.....

Daytime Tel. No .....

\*If you are nominating another gardener please enter their details here:  
(Please also make sure that you have their permission)

Please return to: Glynis Cole, Tenant Involvement Manager,  
Winchester City Council, FREEPOST, NAT15377, Winchester SO23 9ZQ

by Friday 24 July 2009. No stamp required.

Email entries to [tenantinvolvement@winchester.gov.uk](mailto:tenantinvolvement@winchester.gov.uk)



As we reported in the March edition of *on the house*, Winchester's modernisation and renovation programme has been reduced because of a budget shortfall.

The Council has apologised to tenants for this situation, which has been partly caused by Government policy.

The main areas affected are:

**Redecoration programme for older tenants** – this has been suspended until further notice.

**Kitchen and bathroom replacements** – replacement kitchens and bathrooms will only be installed where they are needed for re-letting. This will not apply to all empty properties. A limited number of properties may be refurbished if they are beyond economic repair.

**Adaptations for disabled tenants** – this programme will continue to clear the current backlog and cope with demand in 2009/2010.

**External repairs and painting** – this operates on a five year programme. The Council has surveyed all the properties to be included in this year's programme and will carry out essential repairs only as strictly necessary. Tenants will receive further details by letter.

By carrying out essential repairs properties will remain in a weather-tight condition and will not fall short of the Government's Decent Homes Standard.

Homes in the following areas may be included in this year's programme:



## ALRESFORD

- Ashburton Close
- Crockford House
- Jacklyns Lane
- Robertson Road

## BISHOPS SUTTON

- Hobbs Close

## BISHOPS WALTHAM

- Battery Hill
- Blanchard Road
- Claylands Road
- Greens Close

## CHERITON

- The Pastures

## DROXFORD

- The Park

## EASTON

- Chapel Fields
- Chapel Lane
- Cocketts Mead

## HAMBLEDON

- Barn Green Close
- Stewarts Green
- The Gardens

## HIGHCLIFFE

- Highcliffe Road

## HURSLEY

- Catways
- Keble Close
- Pelican Court
- Tudor Cottages

## MARTYR WORTHY

- Couch Green

## MEONSTOKE

- Pound Cottages

## MICHELDEVER

- Meadow View
- Southbrook Cottages

## STANMORE

- Airlie Corner
- Eversley Place
- Kings Avenue
- Kingsley Place
- Milner Place
- Selbourne Place
- Stanmore Lane
- Stuart Crescent
- Walton Place

## STOKE CHARITY

- Old Stoke Road

## WEEKE

- Stoney Lane

## WEST MEON

- Doctors Lane
- Meonwara Crescent

## WICKHAM

- Mayles Close
- Warwick Way

## WINCHESTER TOWN

- Albert Court
- Bartholomew Close
- Canon Street
- Cripstead Lane
- Danemark Court
- Forder Court
- King Alfred Place
- Matilda Place
- Monks Road
- Prospect House
- Richard Moss House
- St Bedes Court
- Staple Gardens

## WINNALL

- Ebdon Road
- Fairdown Close
- Firmstone Road
- Moss Road
- St Martins Close

## Gas Heating Upgrades

Heating Upgrades will take place in certain areas as determined by the age, reliability and condition of the existing gas appliance.



### ABBOTTS BARTON

- Simmonds Court

### HIGHCLIFFE

- Milland Road
- Quarry Road

### WEEKE

- Taplings Road
- Trussell Crescent

### BISHOPS WALTHAM

- Oak Road

### STANMORE

- Minden Way

### WINCHESTER TOWN

- Alresford Road
- St Martins Close

## Electrical Testing

This programme will start with remedial works being carried out that were identified during last year's programme, before moving

on to a new regime of testing based upon the previous test date. If your home is to be included, you will be notified in writing.

## Digital Switchover Programme

It is proposed to start a programme of work during 2009/2010, continuing into 2011 in order to meet the 2012 deadline. **Only those properties which share a communal television aerial will be affected.**

## Annual Servicing of Gas and Solid Fuel Fired Appliances

As your Landlord the Council is required by law to undertake an annual inspection of any gas fired or solid fuel heating appliance in your home. This also applies to gas supply pipes that may not be in current use.

Over the past year the Council has continued to take the strongest steps to gain access to some homes where tenants have not co-operated. As a result of this firm approach, we are pleased to report we have gained

access to 99.7% of properties resulting in another successful year.

However we must strive to gain access to 100% of properties and your co-operation as tenants is absolutely essential. The Council will continue to take whatever legal steps are necessary to gain access – e.g. by seeking possession of your home through the courts – **Don't lose your home - let us in!**

First Saxon-Clenmay is able to offer you timed appointments to carry out this service. Their staff will also check and service your smoke detectors and carbon monoxide

detectors when carrying out the gas servicing, ensuring the safety of you and your home. But remember:

**FAILURE TO CARRY OUT THIS WORK COULD RESULT IN SERIOUS ILLNESS OR DEATH BY CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING.**

For further information about any of the information in Hot Property Pullout call Gaynor Bromley, Senior Customer Liaison officer on 01962 848 141.

# BEAT THE CRED

Some practical advice and tips for those who do



## Housing Advice

**Homelessness** - The Council provides a Housing Advice service for people who are homeless or threatened with homelessness. You can call **01962 840 222** to speak to an advisor, or alternatively make an appointment to see an Officer face-to-face by calling the same number.

**Council Housing** - If you are having housing issues and wish to apply for a Council house contact the Council for an application form on **01962 840 222**.

**Winter Warming Payments** - if you are over 60 you are eligible for a winter fuel payment to help with your fuel bills. For more information call the helpline on **08459 151515**.

**Benefits** - There are numerous Benefits schemes aimed at helping people in difficulty. The Citizens Advice Bureau will be able to advise you on exactly what may be available to you. Winchester City Council offer Housing and Council Tax benefits to those who qualify. For more information and to see if you are eligible for help call **01962 848 539**.



## Citizens Advice Bureau

### Winchester

The Winchester Centre  
68 St Georges Street  
Winchester SO23 8AH

Telephone: **01962 848 000**.

We can provide advice and/or information on any subject including:

- Social security benefits/ sickness/disability benefits
- Housing/Employment
- Debt counselling/management
- Legal and Consumer problems
- Family and personal issues
- Health/Community Care
- Immigration and nationality
- Access to other services
- Tax
- Leisure.

### Bishops Waltham

Well House,  
2 Brook Street,  
Bishops Waltham, SO32 1AX

Telephone: **01489 896 376**.

## Food shopping!

Plan your week's meals in advance, buy as much of the food you need and can carry in one shop. The more often you shop, the more tempted you are to buy items that you don't need.

Cook for yourself instead of buying takeaways and ready meals! Make your own sandwiches for lunch. If you buy a daily meal for £2.60 for a month, it will add up to about £60!

If you go to a supermarket just before it closes for the day you can often find a wide variety of reduced items that have reached their sell by date.

Don't shop when you are hungry. You will buy food that you don't need.

Buy the store's own economy brand of goods. Often these items are just as good as the big brand names, but cost much less!



## Money Matters

### Tax Credits

Are you paying too much tax when you don't need to? To find out more you can phone us on **0845 302 1400**.



# IT CRUNCH

not have access to the internet



## Employment and Training

Job Centre Plus is part of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and offers support to people of working age from welfare into work, and helps employers to fill their vacancies.

Winchester Jobcentre Plus  
City Gate 1-8 City Road Winchester  
Telephone: **01962 745 200.**

**Pension Credit Helpline**  
**0800 991 234**

**Debt Advice** (See Citizens Advice Bureau on page 8)

**National Debtline**  
Free independent confidential debt advice **0808 808 4000.**



## Learndirect

It's never too late to brush up on those skills or even learn new ones, and in changing or difficult times, it's important to think about your skills so you can get what you want out of life.

From improving your maths and English skills to give you more confidence, to work based courses such as NVQs, we have a range of flexible online courses to suit all levels.

Winchester Learning Centre (Outreach)  
Parchment Street  
Winchester  
SO23 8AT  
Telephone: **01962 849 092.**

## Age Concern

"More money in your pocket" is a useful booklet available free from **Age Concern Hampshire at 1 St Cross Road, Winchester, SO23 0PW.**

You can call in and see one of their information advisers anytime



## Personal and Family Support

Financial pressures can cause stress to both you and your family. Support is available from the organisations listed below.

**Your Local GP Surgery** - can offer advice and support, and recommend treatments to help you through the difficult times.

**The Samaritans** - offer confidential emotional support 24 hours a day. If you find yourself stressed and needing someone impartial to speak to call **08457 90 90 90**, or talk face-to-face by going to the local branch: 13 Upper High Street, Winchester, Hampshire SO23 8UT.

Usual opening hours  
9.30am until 10pm.

**Supported Tenants** – Support is available for Council tenants by contacting Lesley Paradise through the Customer Service Centre on **01962 840 222.**

between 10am and 3pm  
Monday - Friday or call them on FREEPHONE **0800 328 7154.**  
Whatever your question, Age Concern's Information & Advice service is there to help you, your family and friends.

# Community Alarm



Mobile Warden Marina Hambidge

Welcome to the Community Alarm Service Annual Report for 2008/2009. The Service is based in Hyde Lodge, Winchester, but provides a vital lifeline to more than 3,000 people – mostly elderly people living alone – in Winchester and surrounding districts.

Our service is valued by both tenants and non-tenants who raise the alarm by pressing a pendant or pulling an emergency cord.

In 2008/2009 we answered more than 81,700 alarm calls and attended more than 600 incidents. When we attended, our Mobile Wardens always arrived on the scene within our 45-minute target.

These statistics show the loyalty and dedication of our staff. I would like to thank them for their hard work over the last year and look forward to taking the service forward again in the years ahead.

We have already started work on the Government's Telecare project, installing a wide range of additional items of equipment such as fall and flood detectors, bed sensors, and smoke alarms.

We have also upgraded our alarm equipment to the latest versions and relocated our Community Alarm Centre within Hyde Lodge to provide improved space and facilities.



Telephone Operator Sandra Fishlock

## Accreditation

We have now been awarded accreditation with the Telecare Services Association, a national body that inspects and assesses Community Alarms, their installation and response. We are working to national standards of service and performance.



## Satisfaction and Complaints

Each year we survey a proportion of our customers and ask them if they are satisfied with our service. Our target is that 90% will say yes – in fact last year 98% said yes – so about 8 people said "No".

We also look very closely at any complaints – last year 12 of our 3,000 customers complained about an aspect of the service. Each complaint was considered and answered within our target of 10 working days.

The majority of those who were not satisfied or who complained were unhappy about the time it took emergency services to reach them, or about electrical disconnections, neither of which are under our control. Where the performance of our own staff was the issue, we were able to check our voice-recordings, and usually the matter arose from a misunderstanding of what our staff team is able to do, or what was actually said.

**Steve Tong**  
Housing Services Manager

Look out for Landlord Services Annual Report 2008/9 in the October issue of *On The House*

# Community Alarm Service

## Annual Report 2008/9

### Facts and Figures

**Open 24 hours a day,  
365 days a year.**

Based in Winchester, the Community Alarm Service offers three main services to council tenants, private tenants and home owners:

- Installation
- Call handling (Monitoring)
- Response

The monitoring services are also provided for other private and social landlords within Hampshire.

The staff aim to treat all Service Users with respect and professionalism.

They ensure that Service Users' best interests are upheld, and the Council's values, policies and procedures are met, while abiding by the Telecare Services Association (TSA) Code of Practice.

The Community Alarm Service has seven Operators, full and part time, and additional management staff.

Two staff members are always on duty in the Control Centre during the day (from 9am until 5pm) and one at night (from 5pm until 9am).

All alarm calls are recorded and kept for 7 years.

### Installation service

Team members carry out assessments, demonstrate and install the necessary equipment in homes in the District.

### Installation Statistics

**New Service Users connected - 224**  
in the Winchester Council area.

### Call-handling Service

**3,141 properties were monitored:**

- 941 in sheltered housing schemes, and other properties designated for older persons, belonging to Winchester City Council
- 350 in sheltered schemes belonging to other organisations
- 1850 in private properties, of which 950 are in the Winchester District and 900 in the Eastleigh Borough Council area.

### Call Statistics

**Calls received** – 85,816; equivalent to 1650 calls a week, or just over 236 a day.

**Emergency Alarm Calls answered within 30 seconds** – 83.2% (the TSA target is 80%).

### Response Service

We offer a 24-hour, 365-day Response Service to customers living in the Winchester District.

### Response Statistics

**Calls attended** – 665, including Service Users who had fallen, general and emergency welfare calls, Service Users locked out and Fire Alarms.

**Arrival of Mobile Warden within 45 minutes** – 100%  
(The TSA target is 90%).

For more information about the Community Alarm service please contact the team on **01962 856 488** or email: **lifeline@winchester.gov.uk**



# Tenant Satisfaction on the rise!

A recent Council survey of tenants has shown an increase in overall satisfaction to an impressive 86%.

The result of last October's survey rose by 4% since 2006 and was based on a return rate of 57%.

Meanwhile, tenants in Sheltered Housing schemes reported a fantastic satisfaction rate of 93%, which was based on a return rate of 68%.

Janette Palmer who co-ordinated the survey said: "We are delighted that so many of you responded that you are satisfied or very satisfied with most areas of the Council's housing service. Thank you for taking part! "However, fewer people from the younger age groups responded so the Council will be analysing all responses in detail and weighting the information to take account of this."

The Tenant Involvement team will continue its work to offer a range of options that fit with the lifestyle and work pressures of younger people to ensure all residents have every opportunity to be involved in the management of their homes.

Glynis Cole, Tenant Involvement Manager, added: "We really appreciate all the feedback and support we receive from TACT and other tenant groups. All tenants and leaseholders are welcome to get involved in improving our services."

You can contact the Tenant Involvement Team on Freephone 0800 716 987.



You told us	We will
Car parking is the biggest neighbourhood issue for tenants, especially for Stanmore, Winnall & Highcliffe areas - 33% said it was a very big problem.	Continue to work with the Community, Access & Infrastructure teams who are addressing parking in these areas. Some measures have already been investigated and some new restrictions have recently been put in place.
Although overall satisfaction was still high, levels were generally lower for those who had reported problems with anti-social behaviour – 69% of tenants were satisfied and only 44% were happy with the final outcome.	Raise this issue and investigate the reasons why we are not meeting customer expectations when they report problems with anti-social behaviour with the Housing Management Group. As well as using the routine satisfaction survey to establish the causes of the dissatisfaction.
58% of tenants were satisfied with the way the Council takes account of their views.	You prefer feedback through the newsletter so we will make better use of <i>on the house</i> and <i>Tenant News</i> to let you know what we have done because of what you have told us.
Dissatisfaction (10%) was generally higher with the quality of overall repairs work.	Investigate the reasons for dissatisfaction at the Property and Contracts Group and report back to you.
Sheltered tenants would like to see more recreational activities.	What's on offer should be improved through scheme managers linking in with the community hubs initiative, pooling resources which provide this support in a way that it can benefit more residents.

Our thanks again to those who completed and returned the questionnaire.

Now turn the magazine over to read

