



# SHINES

## YOUR HOUSING NEWSLETTER

February 2026

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### Why SHINES?

**SHINES** sets out the 6 key principles of our service: **S**afe **H**omes, **I**nclusive **N**eighbourhoods, **E**nvironmentally **S**ustainable.

It's all about ensuring your homes meet our high standard - we want to ensure your homes are safe, that you enjoy where you live, and that we're helping you save money through ongoing improvements to your homes. SHINES is our promise to you to make sure your homes, and our services are the best they can be.

### Your Housing Newsletter

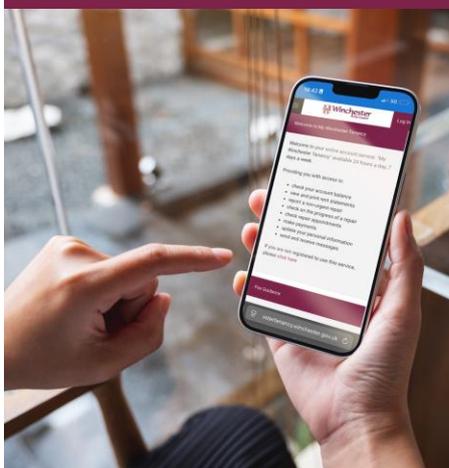
Welcome to the February edition of our tenant newsletter, providing lots of helpful information to you about the landlord service, what you can expect

from us and the ongoing work we have underway to continue to improve the service we provide to you, our valued tenants.

There has been a change in the Corporate Head of Housing. After 26 years in the role, Gilly Knight retired in December 2025, and we wish her well in her retirement. Her successor is Karen Thorburn, an experienced housing professional with over 30 years of experience in housing. Karen was previously the Head of Strategic Housing for 4 years at WCC before stepping up into the Corporate Head role. Karen thanked Gilly for her support and is looking forward to building on the excellent work achieved during Gilly's time at WCC.

In the last newsletter, there was an update about the new Housing Services Team, which is led by Laura Doyle, and the three Area Housing Managers who report to her. Then each Area Housing Manager has responsibility for both a team of Housing Officers working in a geographical area as well as accountability for ensuring compliance with the Regulator for Social Housing Consumer Standards.

Laura has provided more information below about the new Housing Service team and how they work to support our tenants and to maintain their homes and tenancies, and I hope this update is helpful to you.



## Sign up now for My Winchester Tenancy

With **My Winchester Tenancy**, you can easily make payments, check your balance, report non-urgent repairs and more online!

[Sign up today](#)

# Helping you save money

## Retrofit update

### Introducing Solar Panels

The retrofit team is now offering solar panels and battery storage to help make homes warmer, healthier, and more energy efficient. These upgrades can lower energy use and reduce bills and will be offered to tenants living in the least energy-efficient homes. Eligible tenants will be contacted directly by the Retrofit team.

### One Tenant said:

*“The whole experience was professional and courteous. Installers were polite and respectful. I’m looking forward to cheaper bills and doing my bit for the environment. liaison with the retrofit team was excellent.”*

— Tony, Upham

Good news is the solar panels should only take a couple of days to install, and disruption is kept to a minimal.

Our Conservation Area Window Programme is helping tenants cut energy bills with upgraded double-glazed sash windows that preserve local heritage while keeping warmer. We’ve also improved ventilation in wet rooms and added well-designed trickle vents to reduce condensation and help prevent damp and mould. [Click here for more details](#) on HUG ventilation.

### Be vigilant about scams calls posing as our contractors

We’ve received a small number of reports about individuals falsely claiming to work with Winchester City Council, posing as our contractors for the Energy Saving Homes programme and also around damp & mould.

### Please remember: -

- We will always confirm contractor details in writing before anyone contacts you. Contractors will not get in touch before you receive our letter.
- The programme is fully funded so you will never be asked to pay.

After you receive official notification, the contractor will contact you to arrange an appointment.

- Always check their ID badge before letting anyone in.
- If you're unsure, do not allow entry.
- Operatives will carry ID, arrive in marked vehicles
- You'll receive correspondence before any visit.

Your safety is our priority. If you have concerns or receive unexpected contact, please call 01962 848 561 or email [EHomes@winchester.gov.uk](mailto:EHomes@winchester.gov.uk)



## Get help with the cost of fruit, vegetables and milk

If you're over 10 weeks pregnant or have children under 4 and receive certain benefits, you may qualify for the NHS Healthy Start scheme.

Eligible families receive **at least £4.25 a week** on a prepaid card to buy fruit, vegetables, pulses, milk and infant formula. Payments are added every 4 weeks, and the card can be used in most shops that sell healthy food. You can also access free Healthy Start vitamins.

A recent survey shows that **over 60% of eligible households in Winchester aren't claiming**, missing out on up to **£1,300**.

Check your eligibility and apply online: How to apply – [Get help to buy food and milk \(Healthy Start\)](#).

For help with your application or any other benefits, contact:

- Samantha Lee, Financial Inclusion Officer: 01962 848 260
- Tenancy Sustainment Team: 01962 848 060



## Check Your Benefit Entitlement

Are you receiving all the financial support you're entitled to? Check what benefit entitlement you are entitled to. The **entitledto benefits calculator** will check which benefits you may be entitled

Many people miss out on benefits simply because they don't realise, they qualify. To help, you can use the [entitled to benefits calculator](#) –that checks what benefits you may be eligible for.

## Community Hubs - Bringing Services Closer to Home

January saw five well-attended Community Hubs, showing how much tenants value local, informal access to housing staff. Tenants used the hubs to raise issues, get in-person advice, and access partner support. Tobey from the Tenant Partnership Team supported residents throughout the month.

Monthly Hub dates are available on our website.

Visit website for Hub dates

## Community and digital support in your community



### Stanmore Action Day - Making a visible difference

The Stanmore Action Day on 24 January was a success. With support from Cardo and Reconomy Connect, two skips were filled and staff helped residents remove bulky waste.

A resident commented: *“The idea of action days is brilliant... Well done to all involved.”*



## Digital Inclusion

Our Digital Drop-Ins continue to boost confidence for tenants who find technology challenging. *One attendee said:*

*“I came away with newfound confidence. Tobey was kind, patient and informative.”*

*This work links to our confidential Free Laptop Scheme for tenants without a suitable device or internet access.*

### Apply for a free laptop:

- Phone: Call **0800 716 987**
- Apply online

Apply for a free Laptop



## Half Term Football

In partnership with [ActiveMe 360](https://www.activeme360.com), we are providing football coaching across the district for just £1 per session during February half term. Each day will be packed with fun games and matches, with a chance to make new friends and learn new skills.

For more information email [hello@activeme360.com](mailto:hello@activeme360.com)

Book Half Term Football

# Keeping your home safe

## Communal Bin Stores

Our Neighbourhoods team is frequently finding bulky waste being dumped in communal areas of our blocks of flats, as well as household waste being left on the ground, rather than being placed inside rubbish bins.

This is not only unsightly, but attracts vermin, creating an unpleasant and unhygienic environment, as well as an unsafe environment.

Our waste collection contractor will **not** collect any rubbish left outside of bins or any bulky items near the bins on your refuse collection day. Bulky items in the bin store may also prevent the bins from being emptied.

Keeping communal areas clean and tidy is important for residents, the environment, and to help reduce costs.

Over the last three months over **£15,000** has already been spent on clearing bin stores and removing bulky waste from Housing sites across our district. This is money that could have been used to support other essential services for tenants.

To help maintain safe, clean, and pleasant communal spaces, we politely remind residents to:

- **Place all waste inside the correct bin** (refuse, recycling, or food waste). Bins are clearly labelled to help with this.
- **Take bulky items** to one of Hampshire's Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC) instead of leaving them in communal areas or bin stores.
- **Use Biffa's bulky waste collection service** for large household items. This is a chargeable service and can be booked by calling **01962 670 706**.

Thank you for helping us keep the communal areas to a high standard for all residents to enjoy.

**MORE INFORMATION ON  
WASTE AND RECYCLING IN  
WINCHESTER**

Use the QR code below or visit  
[winchester.gov.uk/waste-recycling](http://winchester.gov.uk/waste-recycling)



# Have your say on recycling.

LET US KNOW YOUR THOUGHTS:

[winchester.gov.uk/recycling-future](http://winchester.gov.uk/recycling-future)

Survey open till **Sunday 8 March**.



## **We'd love to hear your views on recycling!**

We've started rolling out food waste collections across the district – thank you to everyone taking part. We're now planning future changes so we can collect more types of recycling from homes.

You can help shape this work by taking part in our latest survey. We want to hear from all residents aged 18+, including those in flats and shared homes.

**Survey closes 8 March.**

You can currently recycle - paper, cardboard, plastic bottles, tins, cans and aerosols. Not sure about an item? Check our [A-Z of waste and recycling](#)

Take part in our survey to share your views

## Be Candle safe

To ensure candle safety, always keep candles away from flammable materials , never leave them unattended and consider using flameless alternatives.

### Did you know:

Candle fires cause over 800 UK home fires annually.

To stay safe

- Never leave burning candles unattended or by a draft
- Keep them away from flammable materials (curtains, furniture, bedding)
- Place them in proper holders on heat-resistant surfaces.
- Always extinguish candle

Consider using flameless alternatives, like battery operated candles, which can provide the ambiance without the fire risk.

Extinguish candles by using a snuffer or gently blow out the flame. Avoid using water to extinguish candles, as it can cause hot was to splatter.

By following these safety tips, you can enjoy the warmth and ambiance of candles while minimizing the risk of fire hazards in your home.

Information on candle fire safety

## Delivering the best services we can

More housing officers, what this means to our tenants

We are continuing to work together to shape the future of our service, and our new Housing Services Team is now in place.

The Housing Services Team is made up of three Area Housing Managers. Each Area Housing Manager is responsible for overseeing a team of Housing Officers, Sheltered Housing Officers and Housing Assistants who will all work together on a designated patch in either the North, Central or South area of the Winchester district.

Having dedicated teams working together in smaller patches across the district means they will get to know residents, neighbourhoods and communities, and likewise you will get to know them as a single point of contact throughout your tenancy. We are busy recruiting, so we are looking forward to sharing the details of your new Housing Officers with you next time.

### **Any Day Direct Debits**

We're pleased to let residents know that we now offer 'Any Day' Direct Debits, giving you greater flexibility and control over how you pay your rent.

#### **What Does This Mean?**

You can now choose any day of the month for your rent to be collected, making it easier to line payments up with your income — whether you're paid weekly, fortnightly, four-weekly, or monthly.

#### **Why Choose Any Day Direct Debit?**

Setting up a Direct Debit is the easiest and most reliable way to pay your rent. Choosing your own payment date gives you:

- Better control over your finances
- Improved budgeting, especially if you receive benefits or irregular income
- Peace of mind, knowing your rent is paid automatically
- Less admin — no need to log in or call each time a payment is due
- No need to update your payment each financial year (unlike Standing Orders)

- Protection through the Direct Debit Guarantee

### How It Works

Once set up:

- Your rent is collected automatically
- If your chosen date falls on a weekend or bank holiday, payment will be taken the next working day
- You'll continue to receive advance notification if there are any changes to your rent amount.

### Receiving Universal Credit (UC)?

You can still use Any Day Direct Debits. Many tenants choose a date just after receiving their monthly UC payment to keep things simple.

If you're unsure which date to pick, our Income Team can help.

### Need Support?

We're here to help you set up your Direct Debit or answer any questions.

If you're facing financial difficulties, please contact us early — support is always available from the income team.

Call: 01962 848 205

Email: [housingincome@winchester.gov.uk](mailto:housingincome@winchester.gov.uk)

## Tenant Partnership update

### Working together: how tenants are shaping housing services

Over recent months, tenants across Winchester have been working with the Tenant Partnership Team and Landlord Services to influence improvements and help shape decisions. Here's a brief overview of what's been discussed.

### Co-producing policies – tenants shaping the Landlord Service

Tenants in our Policy Co-Creation Groups and Armchair Reviewers have helped shape major policies, including:

- The Tenant Partnership & Influence Plan 2025–2030
- Right to Succeed and Left in Occupation policies
- Draft policies on complaints, hate crime, ASB and no access

These contributions were recognised by senior officers and councillors when the Tenant Partnership and Influence Plan was approved at Housing Cabinet Committee. Move to the end on how to get involved

### **Want to get involved?**

There are many ways to take part — online, in workshops or by reviewing policies.

Find out more on our website or contact the Tenant Partnership Team.

Follow us on Facebook:



[Find out how to get involved](#)

## **How is your landlord performing?**

### **Performance**

See How We're Performing We're committed to being open and transparent about the services we provide. Want to know how we're doing? Visit our website to see the latest performance updates, including how we're meeting our targets and improving services for you.

Through publishing our performance information, we want to be transparent about how we are doing, where we are doing well and those areas where we know we need to improve our services for you.

[Performance webpage](#)

# Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM's) - This year's Results

Our latest TSM survey results are in. We're pleased to report strong performance in **10 out of 12 questions**, with an overall satisfaction score of **78%**, bringing us back in line with our 2023/24 result.

Two areas where satisfaction was lower were:

- **Handling of anti-social behaviour**
- **Making a positive contribution to neighbourhoods**

These results help us understand what matters most to tenants and where we need to focus our efforts and please see the update on the changes underway in our management and handling of Anti-Social Behaviour as we recognise we need to improve

## How Your Feedback Has Made a Difference

Last year's TSM results directly shaped several improvements, including:

- **Complaints Focus Group** set up to work with tenants on improving our complaints handling
- **Closer working with contractors**, increasing satisfaction with communal areas being clean and well maintained by **10%**
- **Housing Improvement Workshops** held across the district, targeting areas with lower satisfaction
- **Five Community Hubs** and **four Digital Hubs** launched to offer more face-to-face and local support
- **Policy Co-Production Group** established to review and help shape housing policies
- Partnership work with **RESOLVE**, specialist ASB experts, to review our ASB service and develop an action plan

These actions show how tenant feedback is helping us strengthen services and work more closely with communities.

## Action plan

This year's satisfaction results are now being reviewed with staff and tenants to develop a new **TSM Action Plan** to help us focus on areas of improvement that are important to our tenants

Progress will be monitored and shared through:

- **Housing Improvement Workshops**
- **TACT Board**

**To find out more about the latest TSM scores**

## **TACT Board and the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH)**

At the January Tenant and Council Together (TACT) Board meeting, we welcomed two representatives from the Regulator of Social Housing. They attended to see how tenants and the council work together to meet regulatory standards and improve services.

**The meeting included:**

Tenant-led updates on Housing Improvement Workshops:

- Tenancy – Moving Home and Downsizing
- Transparency, influence and accountability – showing what changes
- Safety and quality – Fire Safety
- Neighbourhood and community – inclusion and belonging
- Online Housing Improvement Workshop - overview of the Consumer Standards

Discussion KPI held us to account on improvement to our performance

- TSM action and outcomes and action planning
- Discussion on how tenant feedback is tracked and acted upon

- Scrutiny of how services are responding to tenant priorities and changes implemented to make things better

Over the past year, TACT Board members have also played a key role in shaping decisions. They helped design the recent Housing Revenue Account survey and attended additional housing budget meetings to ensure tenant views were fully reflected before the survey went live.



## Improving Our Anti-social behaviour (ASB)

To strengthen our response to ASB and improve our Tenant Satisfaction Measures, we worked with **RESOLVE**, national experts in ASB and community safety, to carry out an independent review of our service.

RESOLVE examined:

- Our ASB policies and procedures
- How we manage day-to-day ASB cases
- Our overall approach to supporting tenants

They also gathered feedback through a survey sent to tenants, leaseholders, staff and partner organisations.

What RESOLVE Recommended	What We've Done
Create standalone <b>ASB</b> , <b>Neighbourhood</b> , and <b>Hate Crime</b> policies	Our new <b>ASB Policy</b> , <b>Good Neighbour Policy</b> , and <b>Hate Crime Policy</b> due to be published in the spring.
Provide clear expectations around how we respond to ASB	Clear definitions and response standards for ASB have been introduced
Carry out regular case reviews for Housing Officers	Regular ASB case reviews are now in place
Recommended to appoint a <b>dedicated ASB Officer</b> to ensure consistency	We have appointed a dedicated ASB Officer – Martina Atkins
Promote our service and celebrate successes	We are also working to share more of the positive work happening behind the scenes to keep communities safe.

And we're delighted to announce that **Martina** has been shortlisted for **RESOLVE's 'Practitioner of the Year' award**, recognising her outstanding contribution to the service.

## Getting ready for the new Financial Year and Rent Increase Letters

With the new financial year starting on **6 April 2026**, here's what tenants need to know about rent changes and the support available.

## Rent Increase Letters

You'll soon receive a rent increase letter explaining:

- Your new weekly rent
- When the change starts
- How the increase has been calculated
- What to do if you receive Housing Benefit or Universal Credit
- Who to contact if you have questions

All changes follow government guidance and help us continue delivering essential housing services.

### If You Receive Housing Benefit

We will notify Housing Benefit of your new rent, and they will recalculate your entitlement. Your updated entitlement will be shown in your letter.

### If You Receive Universal Credit

Keep your rent increase letter safely.

You'll need to update your housing costs **only when prompted** through your UC journal, and **not before 6 April 2026**.

Make sure you enter the new rent as starting from that date.

Our Income Team can help if you're unsure.

### If You're Struggling

If you're worried about managing your rent or your finances, our Income Team is here to support you on **01962 848 205**. They can offer:

- Budgeting advice
- Payment plans
- Benefit checks
- Referrals to local support services



## **Changes to how you submit a complaint to the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS)**

From **13 January**, the Housing Ombudsman Service no longer accepts new enquiries or complaints by email.

Please use their [online complaint form](#) instead.

### **Why the change?**

The online form captures all the information they need, helping them respond more quickly. Email enquiries often miss key details.

### **If you can't use the online form**

Call **0300 111 3000**. The team can help you submit your complaint or offer other ways to get in touch.

### **Existing cases**

If you already have a case open, nothing changes – your support continues as normal.

### **Submit a complaint to the HOS:**

#### **How to make a complaint to the council**

Head over to our [website](#) to see how to make a complaint to Winchester City Council or to find out more about the Housing Ombudsman service.

**Make a complaint to the Housing Ombudsman**

**If you have any feedback or suggestions for future articles, or if you are interested in being involved in shaping our services, please contact the [tenant partnership team](#)**



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