

TRUST talks

The Wrekin
Housing Trust

and listens

SEPTEMBER 2008

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Strawberry 'Sell'eburation raises money for charity

At the end of June, we held a special fundraising day at the Stirchley shop, in partnership with the South Telford Area Representatives (STARs).

The aims of the event were to get to know our tenants better, encourage more volunteers from the community, raise the profile of the Trust and to raise money for charity.

Staff and STARs members dressed up in red and pink, held a raffle and tombola and sold cakes and sweets for charity.

The event was held on a Wednesday, when Stirchley shop is normally closed, so as not to disrupt services offered to tenants, and raised £210 for Breast Cancer Awareness.



WIN WIN WIN
Your chance to win some great prizes in our competitions see page 12

STARs Action Planning and Achievements

STARs members have been involved in action planning sessions to identify and prioritise our activities for the next twelve months.

In March, we drew up an action plan covering everything we wanted to achieve and participate in, while making sure that these activities fit with the Trust's strategic business plan.

The STARs meet at least once a month to look through this action plan, identify their priorities and feedback to the group on progress to date.

Some of the activities that the STARs have already completed include:

- **Area representatives have now taken part in Estate Walkabouts**
- **Green Gym projects have taken place in the community, such as at Severn Walk**
- **Reviewing and setting the Trust's Service Standards**

- **The launch of an environmental project at William Reynolds School in Woodside, led by David Bellamy**
- **Visits to Bourneville Village Trust and Castle Vale in Birmingham to share best practice in resident involvement**
- **Active involvement in the Planned Programme Steering Group to make sure tenants receive as much information as possible about Planned**



Programme work and have their say

- **Gardening competition to encourage people to take pride in their gardens**
- **South Community Newsletter**
Other activities planned for the coming twelve months include:
- **Active involvement in the Quality Inspectors initiative**
- **Produce another South Community Newsletter**
- **Phase two of the Woodside Environmental Schools project**
- **Encourage more young people to get involved with the STARs and the Trust**
- **Mystery callers - 'Calling for Excellence' project**

For more information about the South Telford Area Representatives (STARs), please call Janice Diss on 217248.

• BROOKSIDE • WOODSIDE • STIRCHLEY • HOLLINSWOOD • MAD
• COALBROOKDALE • SUTTON HILL • MADELEY • STIRCHLEY • WO

W razie problemów z przeczytaniem tego dokumentu prosimy zadzwonić pod numer 01952 217100.
If you are having trouble reading this document, please call 01952 217100 for help.
如果您不明白這份文件的內容，請致電 01952 217100 求助。



business for neighbourhoods

REPAIRS: 217217

GENERAL ENQUIRIES: 217100

www.wrekinhousingtrust.org.uk

MONEY MATTERS

The Benefits Advice Team – here for your benefit!

Are you worrying about money? If so, our team of experienced benefits advisors can offer you free and confidential advice.

If you want to know more about claiming benefits or need help with a current claim, your local advisor will be happy to take your call.

For an informal chat or appointment, call direct on the telephone number below, or pop into your local Trust shop.

Call
Claire on
01952
217226



What is an Educational Maintenance Award (EMA)?

EMA is financial help so that your child can carry on studying.

EMA is a weekly payment of £10, £20 or £30 a week depending on your household income. The money is to help with the day-to-day costs of staying on at school or college – such as travel and books.

EMAs won't affect any other benefits your family might get and it's paid on top of any other support received, or earnings from the student's part-time job. You should still be entitled to Child Benefit and Tax Credits while your child is in full time, non-higher education.

For further advice and for an application form, telephone 0800 121 8989.



Welfare Benefit Reforms

2008 is proving a busy year for changes to the benefits system. Here are a few to look out for:

- Incapacity Benefit and Income Support for the sick is replaced by Employment and Support Allowance from 27 October 2008
 - Child Maintenance payments disregarded in full for Housing and Council Tax Benefit recipients from 27 October 2008
 - Lone Parents whose youngest child is 12 or over will no longer be able to claim Income Support on the basis of being lone parents. They will have to transfer to Jobseekers Allowance
 - Child Maintenance 'payments disregards' increased to £20.00 per week for people receiving Income Support, Jobseekers Allowance and Employment Support Allowance (Income Related)
 - Winter fuel payments to increase to £250.00 per household for the over 60's and to £400.00 per household for the over 80's
- If you want any advice about any of the changes listed, please contact your local advisor.

FINANCIAL INCLUSION

The Trust is committed to making sure that all of our tenants are able to manage their lives free from poverty. We have appointed a 'Financial Inclusion Manager' who will work with our teams to make sure that tenants:

- Claim all the benefits they are entitled to
- Can access money and debt advice to help with financial difficulty
- Have the skills and knowledge to be able to manage their money, and make it go further.

Deb Morrison has taken on this role for the next 12 months and is based at our Wellington Office. Deb can be contacted by phone on **01952 217311**, or via email at:

deb.morrison@wrekinhousingtrust.org.uk

"I can't pay my bills and just don't know where to turn..."

If you are losing sleep over rising debt, you are not alone, but getting the right help is easier than you think.

The Trust is working with the Citizens' Advice Bureau to make it simple to get the free, confidential, expert help that you need.

If you are worried about your debts, please talk to us.

To find out more, or to arrange a referral, please contact your local Welfare Benefit Advisor, or call in to your local Trust shop or office.



Are you thinking of taking out a loan?

Warning, doorstep lenders and expensive loan companies are in the area, offering loans at very expensive rates of up to 356% APR.

FAIRshare Credit Union offers affordable loans at affordable rates, from as little as 12.68% APR.

See for yourself...

Borrow £100 for 31 weeks from a typical door-to-door lender:

Weekly repayment = £5.00.

Total cost (including interest) £155.00.

APR = 365.1%.

Borrow £100 for 31 weeks from FAIRshare Credit Union:

Weekly repayment = £3.47.

Total cost (including interest) £107.55.

APR = 26.8%.

Your loan has only cost you £7.55 - not the £55 you'd pay with a doorstep lender.

For a secure home for your

SAVINGS and access to LOW COST LOANS call FAIRshare Credit Union on (01952) 28 25 28.



DEVELOPMENT UPDATE

Since the last Trust Talks back in March, work has been progressing well on our new developments around the area:



■ At Maddocks Court in Wellington work has been completed and tenants have now moved into the 14 new homes, a mixture of houses and apartments built behind the existing Maddocks Court flats.



■ Work is underway to provide eleven new homes at Aston Court in Newport.



■ At Meadow Road in Newport, work on the final phase of construction has been completed, delivering two more two-bedroom bungalows. This brings the total number of properties here to seven.



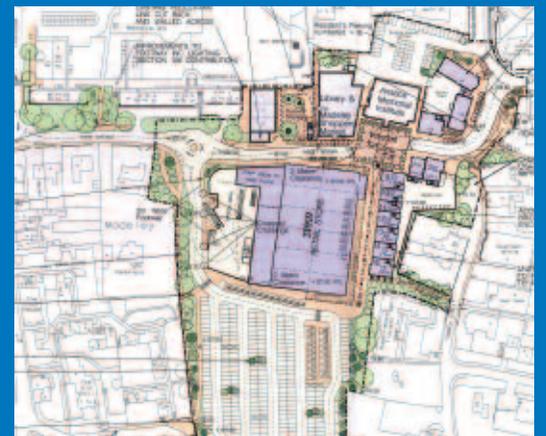
■ At Monarch Fields in Donnington the first 13 homes have been handed over to the Trust, with a further 39 to follow later this year.

New homes in Madeley Centre

As part of the major redevelopment of Madeley Centre, the Trust is building 14 new apartments at the heart of the local community.

The Madeley Centre redevelopment includes the demolition and replacement of existing shops, construction of new apartments, the building of a new Tesco supermarket and other improvements to the local centre. The project has now been granted full planning permission.

The Trust will soon be starting work on the site of the 14 new apartments, which are a range of one, two and three-bedroom homes close to the existing Anstice Hall and Square. Work is expected to be completed in the summer next year, and all of these homes will hopefully be offered for general rent.



In light of the current financial market situation causing problems for people who may be interested in shared ownership, the Trust has been working hard to convert some of our empty shared ownership properties into homes for rent instead.

So far the Housing Corporation has let us change nine properties from shared ownership to rent, and are considering a further 42 more.



Welcome to the Tenants' Panel section of Trust Talks

Here you can find information about the Tenants' Panel. We'll use this section to tell you more about us, who we are, what we do and how you can contact us.

The Tenants' Panel

The Wrekin Housing Trust Tenants' Panel is a panel of 12 tenants who have all been elected, by you, to represent you in the Trust's decision-making process.

We meet every month to discuss issues, standards and service delivery across the Trust. We receive support and training to help us to do this. Each area of the Trust has specific Tenants' Panel representatives:

East - Margo Brotherton, Jan Buttery, Sandra Smith and Mike Lugowski (representative for Supported Housing).

South - Barry Senior (representative for Supported Housing), Gerry Foxall, Len Harley and Pauleen Ives.

West - Gillian Phillips, Maura Charlton (representative for Supported Housing) and Beryl Watson.

For more information, or to contact your local Tenants' Panel representative, please call 217201.



Tool hire discount

We've worked with the Trust and Hire



Station to arrange a 35% discount for all tenants off the price of tool hire.

All Trust tenants are eligible for this discount, but you will need to show a recent rent statement to prove that you are a Trust tenant, along with a utility bill or other form of identification.

So, whatever you need to hire, you can do so affordably from Hire Station, who have depots in Trench and Tweedale. They even offer a delivery and collection service, for a small extra charge.

Visit to Bourneville Village Housing Trust

At the beginning of June, we visited Bourneville village in Birmingham, to see how the houses there differed from the Trust, and to have a look at how they are delivering sustainable housing for the 21st century.

The new Bourneville homes were a revelation, with some having solar panels and others built into the side of a hill to offer good insulation. Landscaping around the area was also purposely designed to give safe areas for children to play. Some of the older homes were of a less high standard, still having the old-fashioned metal window frames and in need of a lick of paint.

National Tenants' Voice

At the beginning of July, the Tenants' Panel attended the National Tenants' Voice conference in Birmingham.

The National Tenants' Voice proposal is for an independent organisation to be set up to make decisions on tenancy issues across the country, without government involvement or interference.

The group would also involve leaseholders and shared owners.

As tenant representatives, there was also an opportunity for us to express our views on tenant involvement.

We felt that if the group is set up correctly then it has a real opportunity to enhance the lives of tenants and lead to better housing for all.

The event was sponsored by TPAS (the Tenant Participation Advisory Service), TAROE (the Tenants and Residents Organisations of England), the National Federation of Tenant Management Organisations and the Government.

The other notable difference was that Bourneville village has no pubs in the community, and the local shops in the area are not allowed to sell alcohol, something which dates back to the founder, Mr Cadbury's Quaker upbringing, – you can decide whether that is a good or a bad thing!

Planned programme leaflets

As part of the improvements to the way we deliver planned programme maintenance, we've produced seven new leaflets to give you a guide to what to expect.

The new leaflets cover all areas of planned programme work including: kitchens, bathrooms, roofing, painting and repairs, central heating, rewires and external doors.

Between January and March each year, we will write to the tenants of homes that are on our planned maintenance programme for that year, detailing the work that can be expected. The relevant new leaflets will be sent out with this letter, giving you more information about what to expect. The leaflets also give details of any choices you can make, such as colour or style of new fixtures. These new leaflets are also available from our website. Just visit:

www.wrekinhousingtrust.org.uk/residents/futureimprovements.aspx



Planned programme info on the web

A new feature has been added to The Wrekin Housing Trust website that enables you to see when planned programme work is due to be carried out at your home.

As part of the government's Decent Homes Standard, we have planned repair work in

advance to ensure all of our properties meet the required level of quality.

From home surveys that have been carried out in the past, we are aware of what work needs to be carried out at your home. The system is very thorough and work has been scheduled as far ahead as 2056! The new feature will also enable you to check that the information we have on your home is accurate and up to date.

The information can be accessed by visiting:

www.wrekinhousingtrust.org.uk

If you don't have access to the internet you can visit one of our local shops and estate offices located around the Telford area where an employee can show you the information.

For more information please visit your local Trust shop or estate office.



STATUS survey your chance to tell us what you think

We carry out lots of surveys at the Trust and we are always interested in finding out what you think about our services. Every three years we are required to carry out a STATUS survey. This is a standard tenant satisfaction survey used by housing associations across the country. We can then use your feedback to identify any areas requiring improvement.

Over the next couple of weeks some of you will be asked to take part in this survey. To ensure confidentiality we have asked a market research company to conduct the survey on our behalf. Kwest Research will be sending out around 6,600 questionnaires by post, to a random sample of tenants. Completed questionnaires will be returned directly to Kwest

Research, so please be as honest as you wish.

Your views are very important to us at the Trust and do help to shape the way we deliver our services to you. If you do receive a questionnaire please use the opportunity to tell us what you think. All returned surveys will be entered into a free prize draw to win £100 worth of high street vouchers.

At a similar time to our STATUS survey, Telford & Wrekin Council are sending out their new biannual survey 'The Place Survey', to randomly selected households.

We want to make sure the council listens to tenants' views, so please take the opportunity to complete this survey, should you receive one.



You said, we did...

The last Trust STATUS survey took place in 2005. Here are just a few of the actions that have taken place as a result of what you told us:

Finding: Some Brookside tenants expressed dissatisfaction with Brookside as a place to live, in terms of antisocial behaviour etc.

Action:

- As part of the Brookside Regeneration Partnership, the Trust worked with young people in Brookside to involve them in community projects such as the Underground Art Project.
- We've also made considerable improvements to Blakemore Alley, which links Blakemore to Bishopdale. These improvements, which were the result of close consultation with residents, were focused around the front of the properties and included re-designed entrances to each home and new tiled porches to replace the dated concrete canopies.
- At the moment, the Trust is playing a supportive role with local agencies that are in discussion about the redevelopment of Brookside Centre, and will be working with these partners on other joint initiatives aimed at improving the appearance of the estate and its environment.

Finding: In the West area, a number of people told us that they felt their local environment was deteriorating and that there were some issues regarding crime,

antisocial behaviour and other neighbourhood problems.

Action:

- Under our commitment to the government-led Respect Standard for Housing, each of our area teams now has a dedicated Respect and Resident Involvement Champion, responsible for promoting community events and encouraging tenants to get more involved in shaping the future of their area.
- We have set up the West Area Group (WAG), a group of tenants who volunteer their time to help us improve services in the West.
- We hold regular multi-agency Estate Walkabouts, for you to walk around your area with us and identify any issues or concerns.
- We've also held gardening competitions to encourage people to take pride in their gardens, and have set up the Wellington Youth Engagement Group to help provide activities for young people.

Finding: Residents in Donnington Wood told us they were concerned about graffiti, litter, vandalism and antisocial behaviour.

Action:

- Significant improvements have been made, including the refurbishment of flats at Ash Lea Drive, the creation of a community garden and general fencing work. We also received around £25,000 funding from the Fairshare Trust, which was used for further improvements, including fencing at The Common.
- Working alongside other agencies, a number of landscaped areas have been

improved, reducing the opportunity for litter and hiding places for youths. The Trust has also improved signage, helping to make the estate more accessible and welcoming.

- We also joined the Donnington Partnership, which has carried out successful Operation Clean Sweeps in the area, including removing graffiti from walls and involving local school children in a litter picking exercise.
- Estate walkabouts have been introduced and are held every three months in Donnington Wood. Alongside this, block inspections are carried out in eight blocks of flats in the area. As a result of these and other improvements, reports of criminal damage, flytipping and vandalism have fallen.

Finding: 83% of the Trust's supported housing residents have a longstanding illness, disability or infirmity and have specific needs that must be addressed.

Action: We offer a number of different services for sheltered housing residents, to help them maximise their independence.

- As part of our commitment to Supporting People, scheme managers now complete support plans for all sheltered housing residents. These identify specific requirements such as the need to provide all written communication in large print, or on audio tape, so that we can be sure we are communicating with you in the best way.
- Our Able Living Service and WATCH alarms service have been reviewed and now provide a range of options to assist you in remaining in your home. We've also reduced waiting times for aids and adaptations.
- The housing support service offers short term support to older people and people with disabilities, and we have developed a network of support agencies and voluntary groups to help assist people in their own home.



Blakemore Alley - Before



After

STATUS survey - your chance to tell us what you think

Getting involved, staying informed...

How your views are taken into account by us...

We want you to get involved in the management of your homes and the way that the Trust is run. There are a number of opportunities for you to get involved:

One-to-One visits – in your home or at one of our eleven local shops and estate offices. These are ideal if you have something that you wish to discuss in person, face to face. To make an appointment, please call 217100.

Around the Wrekin Group – is a group of tenants who help us to know what you think of our services. For example, in November last year we asked the group about services that they thought needed improving. As a result, a new complaints system was introduced from 1 April 2008.

You also identified the lack of visible presence of Trust officers on estates; so all teams now aim to get out and about more on estates.



Focus Groups & Working Groups – for residents who would like to get together with staff for an informal discussion about a specific service or issue. We have held a number of Focus and Working Groups recently. One such group concentrates on gas servicing. This group has recently been involved in choosing new boilers resulting in greater energy efficiency for tenants and cost savings of over £133,000 for the Trust.

Specific Consultations – have been held about specific issues, such as communal cleaning, our service standards, and the new Tenants' Handbook and Tenancy Agreement.

Postal and telephone satisfaction surveys – are carried out regularly to find out your views and opinions on a particular service. The results from these surveys are then taken into account when drawing up action plans. Surveys

that we have carried out recently include a new homes survey. New tenants indicated that cleanliness was very important to them when moving into their new property. As part of our new service standards we promise to provide a clean property and a garden free from rubbish.

Tenant Audit Inspectors – residents who have expressed an interest have received training and support to enable them to help us by taking a closer look at the services we provide. They carry out reviews of those services and make recommendations about possible opportunities for improvement.

Quality Inspectors – are tenants who have volunteered to become Quality Inspectors and monitor the quality of the services they receive. They then report back to the Trust in order to help us continuously improve the services we offer.



Mystery Shoppers – training and support is given to enable you to provide confidential feedback based on your own experiences of contacting or receiving a service from the Trust.

Central Tenants' Panel – is a group of tenants who have been elected by other tenants to represent them and their views. The Central Tenants' Panel provides an opportunity for tenants to contribute to, influence and be consulted on policies, service standards and service delivery across the Trust.

The Central Tenants' Panel meets monthly with senior Trust staff and minutes from these meetings are reviewed by the Trust Board.

Local Tenants' Panels – are for residents who want to get involved in decision-making at a local level, and are a good way to learn more about the business. Meetings are held locally to discuss a range of issues.

Board of Management – tenants who have spent some time on the Central Tenants' Panel and want to get more involved at a corporate level have the opportunity to stand to become a Tenant Board Member.

Repairs and maintenance

We continuously work to improve our repairs and maintenance service to make sure that it meets your needs. Since the last STATUS survey, we've introduced a number of improvements.

You told us that you thought our repairs service was great, but you wanted to be given an appointment when you reported a repair.

So, we've introduced more convenient appointment times, which are offered when you report the repair.

We now offer appointments in the morning or afternoon. We also offer early call appointments at 8am, or appointments that avoid school run times. Additionally, we can now offer appointments between 4.30 and 6.30pm for some of the smaller repairs.

When reporting your repair, ask for more information about our weekday early evening slots, or our Saturday morning slots from 8.00am to 12.30pm.



Tenants' Conference – is held every year at the Trust's Old Park offices and is an opportunity for you to come along and get more involved with the Trust. This year's conference, which was held at the beginning of February, included workshops about planned programme work, disability and equality, financial inclusion and priorities for the forthcoming year. Tenants fed back that there was an issue with lack of information when major works were carried out. To solve this a suite of information leaflets have been produced which explain the processes.



Open Days and Community Events – give you the chance to meet other residents, learn more about the business and speak to staff. We also get involved with local community events such as Dawley Bank Day.

And for those of you who don't want to get too involved ... we still think it's important to keep you informed. Here are just a few of the ways that we do this...

Trust Talks newsletter – is sent out to all tenants three times each year and aims to keep you up to date on things that are happening at the Trust and in your area. We also provide this newsletter in large print, alternative languages and on audio tape to meet our tenants' accessibility requirements.

Annual Report Calendar – as well as being very useful with some great photos, the calendar gives you information about how we have performed over the previous financial year and lets you know what our plans are for the coming year.



Service Standards leaflets – give you information about our services and the standards that you can expect to receive from us.

Information flyers – help you to find out about specific things that are going on in your area.

Tenant's Handbook and sign up packs – these provide new tenants with all the information they need to settle into their new home.

Trust website:
www.wrekinhousingtrust.org.uk – we have recently introduced a feature that lets you find out when you may be eligible to have major work done on your home such as a new kitchen or a rewire and you can also report repairs using our online form.

All of our leaflets and newsletters are just a couple of clicks away too so you don't need to call into your local shop to see them.

Mobi website:
www.wrekinht.mobi
– A website specially designed for viewing



from a mobile phone. Here you can report a repair, view jobs on offer at the Trust, contact us and find out useful information and phone numbers.

Ways that you can contact us

To make the Trust as accessible and contactable as possible, there are a number of different ways that you can contact us:

Telephone

As well as our general enquiries phone line (217100), we have dedicated numbers for reporting repairs (217217) and paying your rent (217111). The enquiries and payments lines are staffed Monday to Friday 8am to 6pm and between 9am and 12.30pm on Saturdays. The repairs line is open 24-hours a day to report any emergency repairs.

In person

You can contact us in person at any of our eleven local shops and estate offices, or by calling in to our Old Park offices.

On the website

From the Trust's new website you can report a repair, check your account details, view information about planned programme works and make a complaint, comment or compliment.

Complaints, comments and compliments

If you have something you wish to comment on, complain about, or compliment us on, you can pick up a Complaints, Comments and Compliments form from any of our local shops and offices. Your feedback is important.

Advisory services

We recognise that some of our tenants require further advice in particular areas. Here are some of the ways we are helping to do just that:

Advice on moving home

Chooseyourhome is our choice based lettings system that lets you see exactly what homes we currently have available, and choose to be considered for ones that interest you.

Once the homes have been allocated, the system then provides feedback about how many people were interested in a particular home and how long the successful tenant had been waiting.

The system has been running since November 2006, and has already let over 1,700 homes.

Advice for vulnerable tenants

Housing Support Service is a confidential service designed to give people advice and assistance to enable them to maintain their accommodation and live independently in the community.

Housing Support can help with filling in forms, claiming benefits, money management, accessing support and counselling, maintaining your tenancy and gaining access to support from other agencies.

Benefits and Financial advice

Welfare Benefits Advisors – are a team of trained and experienced advisors who offer a free and confidential service giving you support and advice to make sure that you are claiming everything you are entitled to.

Our advisors can see you at your local Trust shop or office or arrange to visit you at home. To contact your area Welfare Benefit Advisor, drop into your local area office or call 01952 217100.

Energyextra – is a partnership of 13 housing associations and local authorities, including the Trust, all with the aim of reducing fuel poverty.

Whenever a property becomes empty, the Trust, through Energyextra, transfers the supply of gas and electricity to Scottish and Southern Electric, who have been identified as the best value provider of these services. This means that new tenants can be sure that they are getting the best value for money for their energy supplies. Energyextra also offers free energy advice home visits.

Financial Inclusion – we have recently appointed a Financial Inclusion Manager, who is responsible for delivering the Trust's commitment to making sure that our tenants are able to manage their lives free from poverty. The Financial Inclusion Manager is working to make sure that tenants are able to maximise their income and minimise their outgoings.

Advice for new tenants

Relet standard is a new standard that all of our homes should meet when we relet them. We have produced a guide to this standard called 'Your new home', which is given to all tenants when they move in to their new property. The guide details the standards of cleanliness, maintenance and decoration that you can expect when you move in.

Spotlight on Supported Housing

FOCUSING ON OLDER PEOPLE



We held our fifth Older Persons' Focus Group at Old Park in May, which was well attended by residents from across the Trust's sheltered housing schemes.

The event had a VE Day theme, giving it a street party feeling, and residents had the chance to discuss the new Supported Housing Code of Conduct and get feedback from previous focus groups. There was also an update on the progress of the new Park Lane Extra Care Scheme in Woodside.

The afternoon was rounded off with group discussions about different social activities available to sheltered housing residents.

If you would like to get involved with future Older Persons' Focus Groups, please speak to your scheme manager.

Celebrating a century

Mrs Violet Edwards, resident at Hall Barn sheltered housing scheme in Madeley celebrated her 100th birthday recently, with a party, cakes, flowers and a card from the Queen.

The Trust's Director of Housing, Jane Brookes, can be seen here presenting Mrs Edwards with a bouquet of flowers.



20th anniversary for Frizes Leasowe

Frizes Leasowe sheltered housing scheme in Ketley Grange recently celebrated its 20th anniversary, with a special celebration including a get together and a buffet lunch.

The Trust's Director of Finance, Francis Best, went along to the event and presented residents who had been at the scheme the longest with bouquets of flowers.

Residents also presented their scheme manager, Vanda Haycock, with a bouquet to thank her for her help in organising the event.

The photo here shows resident Mrs Anne Hughes receiving her bouquet from Francis.



LAWNDALE SUPPORTS AIR AMBULANCE

Residents at Lawndale sheltered housing scheme (which includes Millward Close) in Donnington recently presented the County Air Ambulance with a cheque for £430, after raising money for the worthwhile cause.

Some of the money was raised through competitions and fundraising, and the rest was raised through donations by the family of Mrs Mary Roberts, who lived at Millward Close and passed away recently.

Nigel Davies, who received the cheque for the County Air Ambulance, said: "On behalf of the charity, thank you very much. We need to constantly raise funds to keep the air ambulance flying, and every penny that is raised goes towards keeping the helicopter in the air and saving lives."

The photo here shows resident Ivy Teece with Nigel Davies from the Air Ambulance, and scheme manager Margaret Phillips.



KNIT ONE, PURL ONE AT STALLARD COURT

There's been a flurry of knitting needles at Stallard Court recently, with residents joining in with an eight-week textiles course, arranged through Telford College of Arts and Technology.



The course is free to residents, who have the choice of different techniques,

including knitting and macramé. The photo here shows residents with some of their handiwork.

Everybody needs good neighbours

Residents at Churchway sheltered housing scheme (which also includes Catstree and Carwood) in Stirchley marked National Good Neighbour Day 2008 by holding their own 'nominate a neighbour' competition.

First prize went to Cynthia Statham, who can be seen here receiving her certificate and flowers from Tenants' Panel Representative Barry Senior.



Garages for rent from as little as £5.88 per week

Did you know that you could rent a Wrekin Housing Trust garage from as little as £5.88 per week?

We've got garages available for rent across the Telford and Newport area, in the heart of our communities and close to our homes.

All of our garages are fully maintained, offering great value for money. You don't even have to be a Trust tenant to rent one (though Trust tenants do get priority).

For more information, or to find out what garages are available to rent where you live, please call 217197.



RELET GUIDE – YOUR NEW HOME

We've recently launched a new leaflet called 'Your new home', which will be used when tenants view a new property.

The leaflet, which is filled in as you are shown around the property, explains the standards that you can expect from your new home, along with space to record details of any outstanding repair or improvement work that still needs doing.

The leaflet comes in two parts – a copy for you to keep and a copy for the Trust, so that we can make sure we are doing everything we promised.



Gas Safety Checks

By law, the Trust is responsible for making sure that gas fittings and flues are maintained in good order and all gas appliances are checked for safety.

If you are contacted about a Gas Safety check, you must make arrangements to allow the gas service engineer access to your property to test and service the system. Failure to provide access is a serious breach of tenancy conditions.

Service engineers or contractors will visit to check your central heating system to make sure that it is safe and that any faults are repaired. This is important, not only for the effective operation of your heating, but also for you and your family's safety.

For a copy of the Trust's Gas Safety leaflet, please contact your local Trust shop or estate office, or call 217100.



QUALITY INSPECTORS

Since being launched in February, well over 100 monitoring forms have been returned by tenants and leaseholders to assist the Trust in monitoring the quality of communal cleaning.

The Quality Inspector process involves a limited set of questions with multiple-choice answers to enable tenants and leaseholders to quickly and accurately inform the Trust of the quality of their communal cleaning.

The Trust will be expanding the scheme to other services in the near future and if any tenants or leaseholders want to get involved, please contact Chris Shepherd on 01952 217181.

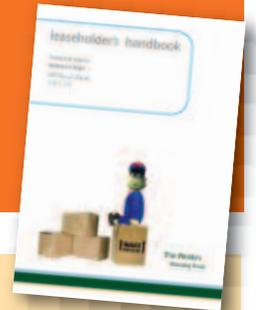


Leaseholders

Over the last 12 months the Trust has continued to improve the service it offers to leaseholders. The Leaseholder's Handbook was sent to every Leaseholder in May to ensure that everyone is aware of their rights and responsibilities, as well as ensuring that they are aware of how to contact the Trust and what they can expect from us.

We are currently reviewing the service we provide to leaseholders and members of the Leaseholders' Forum have been involved in the process, ensuring that the way the service is delivered in the future is built around what leaseholders want.

For further information please contact Chris Shepherd on 01952 217181.



eNergyextra

The Trust has been a partner of Energyextra for 18 months. It was set up to offer an easy way to save money on gas and electricity bills, together with a wide range of additional free services to reduce your energy bills.

One of the major benefits of the partnership is having access to a Home Energy Advisor, who can visit you at home, free of charge, to offer a range of advice and assistance to help you to reduce your energy usage.

To arrange an appointment contact Energyextra on 0121 561 1969 or speak to your local Trust shop or estate office, who will arrange a convenient appointment for you.

KEEPING A PET?

The Trust has a flexible approach to the keeping of pets, as long as they are well cared for and do not cause nuisance or annoyance, or cause damage to property and the surrounding area.

We recognise that if properly cared for, pets are good companions and can enhance the quality of life of our residents.

If you live in a house, you do not need our permission to keep a small domestic pet. If you live in a flat or bungalow, you will need our permission before keeping a small domestic pet and we will take into account all individual circumstances before we grant permission or not. But we won't withhold permission unreasonably.

What do we call a 'Domestic Pet'?

The definition of a domestic pet is a:

- dog (excluding those prohibited by the Dangerous Dogs Act 1991, or any other law.)
- cat
- bird
- fish
- small caged rodent
- small non-poisonous caged reptile
- non-poisonous insect or amphibian in a tank.



This does not include any other type of animal or fowl.

If you want to keep any other type of pet then you must ask our permission first.

For more information on the keeping of pets, please contact your local Trust shop or office, or see our 'Pets' section of the website:

www.wrekinhousingtrust.org.uk/residents/keepingpets.aspx

Tenant auditors

Tenant Auditors are tenants who have expressed an interest in reviewing the Trust's services. Once audits have been completed, the Tenant Auditors make recommendations about how services could be improved.



Following last year's audit of customer care, the auditors made a number of suggestions for improvement. These included playing fewer recorded messages when dialling the Customer Contact Centre. As a result, we have reduced the number of recorded messages that you'll hear when you call us.

If you would like to get involved please contact Chris Shepherd on 01952 217181.

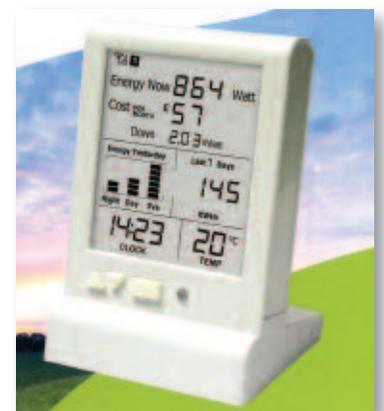
Electricity consumption meters

With the current economic situation, and the price of services such as gas and electricity rising, the Trust is keen to help tenants get the best value for money from their energy supply.

We have a small number of electricity consumption meters for tenants to trial at home. The meters show, in real time, the amount and cost of electricity being used.

Although the meters won't cut energy bills on their own, they do show how much energy and money is being used, helping people to save money and help the environment.

If you are interested in taking part in this trial, please call 01952 217259.



Tackling antisocial behaviour and promoting respect in young people...

Following on from the last edition of Trust Talks, you may remember that we told you about changes by government to how they plan to tackle antisocial behaviour in young people. Details of this have since been released in the Youth Taskforce Action Plan published by the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

Increased emphasis is being placed by government on helping young people fulfil their potential by tackling the causes of why they behave antisocially. The action plan focuses on the importance of early intervention and prevention alongside enforcement action through:

- **Tough enforcement where behaviour is unacceptable and illegal**
- **Non-negotiable support to address the underlying causes of poor behaviour**
- **Better prevention to tackle problems before they become serious, and to prevent problems arising in the first place.**

Some examples of how this is to be achieved include; getting young people into positive activities, like sports and arts, and ensuring these activities are available at times and places that are needed. It will also see the increased use of support measures, alongside the use of antisocial behaviour orders. For example, providing intensive support for the whole family where needed, so that where young people get into trouble enforcement and support can be joined up more effectively to change behaviour.

As part of the Trust's commitment to the Youth Taskforce Action Plan and tackling antisocial behaviour, we work closely with other agencies in the Community Safety Partnership in Telford & Wrekin, to co-ordinate and provide positive activities for young people in the area. An example of work taking place includes some work with young people in the Wellington area, through the 'Wellington Youth Engagement Group'. This is a project to tackle low level crime and antisocial behaviour in two estates in Wellington, by providing positive activities for the young people living in these areas.

If you'd like any further information, please contact Louise Holland on 217323.

WATCH alarms

Did you know that more than 1,700 people across Telford and Wrekin are benefiting from the reassurance and peace of mind that having a WATCH alarm can offer?

The Wrekin Alarm Telephone Call Helpline (WATCH) alarms are available to anyone living in Telford & Wrekin, whether they've been a victim of crime, are vulnerable, or just want to feel safer and more secure in their home.

The system plugs into your home phone and links to a pendant that is worn around the neck. By pressing a single button on the pendant, assistance is available at any time, 24 hours per day, 365 days a year.

The pendant will work anywhere in your home and a powerful microphone on the alarm unit will enable the alarm centre to hear you even if you are in a different room.

If you are unable to speak, we will still be able to identify your name and address so we can respond by either providing assistance from Trust staff, emergency services or by contacting your friends or relatives.

WATCH Alarms can be purchased outright or leased from The Wrekin Housing Trust.

For more information about the WATCH alarm service, or to arrange a free in-house demonstration, please contact Marie Brookes on 217129.



How we collect our rent

You may have noticed changes in the way that we want you to pay your rent, and you may have been contacted recently by your Housing Executive to make you aware that your account is in arrears if you have not paid your rent on time.

Why do we need to do this? To date, we've not been as efficient as we could be, by not collecting rent on time. It's very important that we collect the rent as quickly and cost effectively as possible so that we can use the money on the other services that we provide such as maintaining, repairing and improving the properties we own.

Your rent should be paid on or before the first Monday of the rent fortnight. Use your rent calendar to find out when your rent is due.

It is very important for us to help you if you are having problems paying your rent. Our aim is to let you know that you are in arrears **as quickly as possible**, so that we can help you get the right advice and support to help you avoid rent arrears and other debts.

If you would like to be involved with further discussions about how we collect your rent, please contact James Bailey on **01952 217166**.

Here are some questions and answers that may help you...

I have always paid my rent on the second Tuesday of the rent fortnight, why do I keep getting letters to say I am in arrears?

Rent should be paid preferably before the rent fortnight begins, or on the Monday your rent is due. We have not always been strict on this in the past, but have now changed the way that we work. Your Tenancy Agreement states that rent must be paid in advance in accordance with one of the payment options.

You can still use your plastic swipe card and pay at the Post Office and other PayPoint, PAYzone or E-Pay outlets. You can also pay by standing order, direct debit, via the internet or call us on **01952 217111** and use a debit or credit card.

I get Housing Benefit and pay a bit towards my rent; do I need to pay my rent in advance?

Yes, you must pay your rent in advance. Some tenants find it difficult to calculate how much they need to pay if they get Housing Benefit. Don't worry, contact your Housing Executive and they can do the sums for you, telling you exactly what you need to pay and when.

I am in arrears with my rent but have made an arrangement to pay my rent plus a little extra to reduce my debt, will I be asked to pay more?

No, so long as you keep to the arrangement, there is no need to pay any more than the agreed amount unless you want to. You will be told when your arrears are clear and advised about your future payments.

I pay my rent fortnightly, but on the Thursday of the second fortnight. I want to carry on paying the way I have always paid.

Although you pay regularly, the way you pay is in breach of your Tenancy Agreement and we cannot allow that to happen anymore. Your Housing Executive will do everything they can to help you to bring your account up to date and can advise you on the easiest and most affordable options available to make these changes.

I have been off sick for a while. I have been paying my rent regularly every fortnight, but I am now struggling to maintain payments, what should I do?

Contact us as soon as you can and we can arrange for you to see your local Welfare Benefit Advisor to make sure that you are getting the income you are entitled to. We can also offer you advice with your gas/electric and other financial commitments through other agencies that we work with. But most importantly, come and talk to us and we will be able to help.

Estate Walkabouts

The Trust is committed to working closely with our partners and our tenants to improve your local community.

One way we do this is by holding regular walkabout sessions – where we walk with you around our estates looking at the issues that affect you, and identifying improvements that can be made.

These walkabouts are held every three months, and are open to any Trust tenants and leaseholders that would like to get involved.

After each walkabout, we draw up action plans to make sure any issues or concerns are addressed. These action plans can be found in your local Trust shop or office, and are sent to everyone who takes part in the walkabout.

For your chance to join us on a walk around your estate, please take a look at when we are next in your area:

AREA	DATE, TIME AND MEETING POINT
Hills Lane Drive	2 September 10am at WHT Hills Lane Estate Office
Hollinswood	3 September 9.30am at Hollinswood Community Centre
Randlay	3 September 2pm at Randlay Post Office
Brookside	4 September 9.30am at WHT Brookside Shop
Stirchley	10 September 9.30am at WHT Stirchley Shop
Sutton Hill	1 October and 5 November 10am at Sutton Hill Community Centre
Woodside	2 October 9.00am at Park Lane Centre

For more information about these walkabouts, please contact Emma Humphries on 217215.

GARDENING COMPETITION

To encourage people to get outside for some fresh air and exercise and make the most of their gardens, the South Team and STARs held a gardening competition over the summer months, following a suggestion made by the STARs.

The competition was open to any Trust tenant or leaseholder living in the South area and had first, second and third place prizes for a number of different categories, including: best garden, best vegetable garden, best hanging basket, best planter and best communal garden.

At the time of going to press, judging was still taking place – look out for the winners in the next edition of Trust Talks.

A reminder about Hills Lane Drive

Please remember that the Hills Lane Drive Shop, like the other local Trust shops and estate offices, is not able to accept cash payments.

Payments can be made by Direct Debit, by calling 217111, online through internet banking, or at a Post Office or anywhere else displaying the PayPoint, E-Pay or PAYzone logos.



FUN DAYS

Over the last couple of months, we've been at community fun days in Woodside, Sutton Hill, and Brookside and Stirchley meeting people, having fun and celebrating the summer.



All of the events have been well attended (despite the weather at the Brookside and Stirchley event), and everyone who came along enjoyed themselves.

A chance to meet other tenants and residents

The Shropshire Landlords Resident Involvement Group (SLRIG) is holding an exhibition on Saturday 11 October at Hadley Learning Community in Telford.

The exhibition is open to all social housing tenants across Shropshire and is an opportunity to meet people from other housing associations and discuss the ways different services are delivered.

The exhibition will also include pensions advice, information about activities for teenagers, Age Concern advice, representatives from the Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS), martial arts demonstrations and drama sessions.

If you are interested in attending the exhibition, please contact Janice Diss on 217248 for more information or to book your place.

STATUS COMPETITION

This is your chance to win a prize! We're giving three lucky readers the opportunity to win some shopping vouchers by correctly answering five simple questions about this year's STATUS Survey. All of the answers can be found in this edition of Trust Talks.

- Q1. How many tenants will receive STATUS questionnaires?**
- Q2. What time do we offer repairs on a Saturday morning?**
- Q3. When did the Trust introduce the new complaints system?**
- Q4. When was this year's Tenants' Conference held?**
- Q5. Name three different ways of getting involved with the Trust?**

Send your answers on a postcard to our FREEPOST address (no stamp required) at: The Wrekin Housing Trust, Communications & Marketing, FREEPOST (SY1 095), Colliers Way, Old Park, Telford TF3 4ZA by Tuesday 30 September.

We want your pet pics!

Would you like to be the lucky winner of £25 worth of shopping vouchers?

Then all you need to do is send us your cutest pet photos and tell us why your pet is special. We are running a photo competition to find the cutest Trust tenant pet - the cutest one wins!



STARs get involved with Planned Programme consultation

South Telford Area Representatives

STAR

As you may have seen elsewhere in this edition of Trust Talks, we've made some big steps forward recently in the way we inform you about Planned Programme works such as new kitchens, bathrooms, external doors and rewires.

While setting up the new approach, we consulted with tenant representatives, including the STARs, to make sure we are getting the process right. The sessions explained the whole process, from tenants being notified of what planned works are being carried out, through the design of the new kitchen or bathroom, to the appointing of contractors to complete the work. Tenants also had a say on decisions over the choice of styles, colours and finishes that will be offered, such as flooring and work surfaces.

Terri Parker, a STARs member who volunteered to sit on the Kitchens and Bathrooms Steering Group, said: "As a tenant you don't really think through the process of how a new kitchen gets to you, but there's a lot involved. It's been interesting to see how they get from the manufacturing stage all the way to a tenant's home."

If you are interested in getting involved, please contact Janice Diss, Customer Research Consultant, on 217248.

BACK TO SCHOOL KIDS QUIZ



All you need to do to be in with a chance of winning a goody bag is unscramble the following words to find the names of some of the things that you will need when you go back to school:

1. **ciplen**
2. **relru**
3. **osbok**
4. **colosh gab**
5. **berbur**

Please send your competition entries, along with your name, address and telephone number, to our FREEPOST address at: The Wrekin Housing Trust, Communications & Marketing, FREEPOST (SY1 095), Colliers Way, Old Park, Telford, TF3 4ZA by Tuesday 30 September.

COMPETITION WINNERS

Congratulations to the three winners of the **Easter competition** held in the last edition of Trust Talks. The winners were Margaret Jones from Shawbirch, Susan Clarke of Ketley and Donald Huxley of Waters Upton.

The winner of the **children's competition**, who correctly spotted all the special Easter eggs in the last edition, was Daniel Johnson from Donnington.

• BROOKSIDE • WOODSIDE • STIRCHLEY • HOLLINSWOOD • MADELEY • COALBROOKDALE • HOLLINSWOOD • MADELEY • SUTTON HILL • COALBROOKDALE • BROOKSIDE • WOODSIDE • HOLLINSWOOD • STIRCHLEY • BROOKSIDE • SUTTON

12



business for neighbourhoods

REPAIRS: 217217 GENERAL ENQUIRIES: 217100 www.wrekinhousingtrust.org.uk

The Wrekin Housing Trust, Communications & Marketing Unit, FREEPOST (SY1 095), Colliers Way, Old Park, Telford TF3 4AW

PRIDE IN OUR HOMES