

t1c

Tenants' and leaseholders'
community magazine



NORWICH
City Council

Summer 2014

ie awards
2014

Gold award for
Council of the Year



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Introduction from Bert Bremner

Welcome to the summer issue of *TLC* magazine

Councillor Bert Bremner, Norwich City Council's cabinet member for housing.

Firstly, I would like to say how delighted I am to again be representing you as the cabinet member for housing: an issue very close to my heart.

It was wonderful seeing so many of you at our fantastic Easter fun day in Wensum Park. We look forward to more great turnouts for all of the community events we are involved with, and (fingers crossed), more glorious sunshine.

There are other ways you can have your say in how your housing services are run, and really make a difference to your community by working with us. People living in the St Stephens area have set up a Patch Panel and have achieved some real results.

We've also set up a new sheltered housing involvement panel to help inform our future provision of sheltered housing in the city.

Saving money is more important than ever. There's a great article on page eight about the financial benefits of switching to a water meter, and I would urge you to consider doing this, if you haven't already done so.

If you've been affected by the spare room subsidy (the bedroom tax) or are considering downsizing now the children have left home – a mutual exchange could be the answer. Moving can be expensive and with large family homes in such scarce supply, we have introduced some big incentives for your consideration.

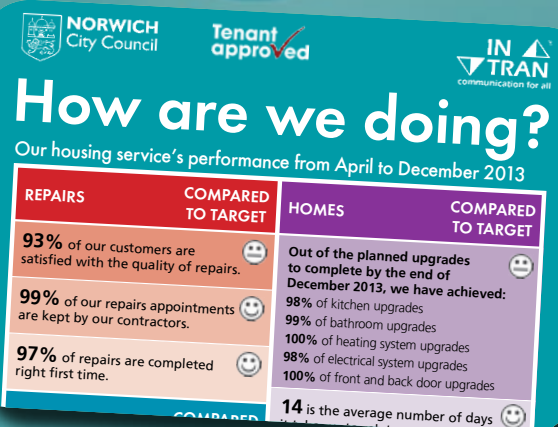
Tackling tenancy fraud has always been a priority to ensure available homes go to people in the greatest need. We are introducing new policies to help us clamp down on those who try to obtain our properties fraudulently.

Improving the energy-efficiency of our homes to save you money and reduce our impact on the environment will continue to be a council priority. So it's great to see we are conducting further pilots with new renewable technologies.

We hope you enjoy this issue of *TLC* and wish you a great summer. Don't forget to nominate your Good Neighbours in this year's competition on the back cover.

How are we doing?

To see how our housing service is performing, check out the latest scorecard in the housing section of our website: www.norwich.gov.uk or call **0344 980 3333** to request a copy.



If you would like this information in another language or format such as large print or CD, please phone **0344 980 3333** or email info@norwich.gov.uk.

Cover image: Enjoying the Easter fun day at Wensum Park.

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Norwich City Council events

Summer fun for one and all

Hundreds of residents flocked to Wensum Park in the Easter holidays for what proved to be our most popular fun day yet. The face-painter was kept busy all afternoon and there were a host of prizes up for grabs for games, such as splat the rat, hook-a-duck, and a penalty shoot-out competition.

Children explored the park as part of an Easter-themed treasure trail. They participated in various games along the way and visited stalls organised by city council partners: Norfolk Property Services, Norse, Foster Property Maintenance, Gasway, SCCI Alphatrack, Mitie, and UKDN Waterflow.

Tenant involvement officer, Amanda Green says: "It's fabulous that our fun days have become so popular, and we look forward to putting on more great events in the future.

"These days provide us with a great opportunity to engage with our tenants and there is always plenty to keep the children entertained."

Look out for our tenant involvement team at the following events over the summer months:

The Mile Cross Festival & Classic Car Show

Sloughbottom Park,
Drayton Road
Saturday 28 June,
12noon to 4pm

Now in its 33rd year, The Mile Cross Festival is a free event run by a dedicated group of local residents with support from Norwich City Council and Cotman Housing. It's the

Lord Mayor's Street Procession and Norwich Pride

Look out for the tenant involvement team in Chapelfield Gardens between 10am and 4pm on Saturday 5 July for the Lord Mayor's Street Procession and Norwich Pride on Saturday 26 July.



largest community festival of its kind in the city and has attracted more than 3,000 people in recent years.

This year's event will include a classic car show, t-shirt graffiti, bungee trampolines, zorb balls, and an assault course, along with community stalls and much more!



In Focus: Patch Panels get results!



Patch Panels are a great way for you to meet with housing staff and your neighbours to discuss issues affecting your local area. Meetings are very informal and can be held as regularly or as infrequently as you like, and at a time and place to suit you.

The St Stephens Patch Panel started in April 2012. Local residents get together with their neighbourhood housing officer every couple of months to look at ways of improving their local area.



Depending on the topics being discussed; neighbourhood wardens, council officers, the police, and local councillors, join various meetings. And together they've achieved some amazing results.

They've tackled issues involving dog-fouling, fly-tipping and antisocial behaviour. New street signs have been put up, graffiti has been removed and benches, sheds and communal steps have been repaired.

The panel has worked with police to address traffic problems and is liaising with council officers to improve waste and recycling facilities.

The panel meetings have also brought together budding gardeners who have started a community gardening project.

This year, the group will feature as part of Town Close ward's

'Urban Communities' entry into the Anglia in Bloom competition, working with Town Close in Bloom and LTC (Lakenham and Town Close) Green Spaces. It will also be part of the Town Close entry in the 'Urban Communities' category of this year's Britain in Bloom finals.

The initiative has received great support, with donations of planters, plants, bulbs and compost from City College, Friends of Norwich in Bloom and Hockering Nursery, along with water butts installed by the council.

If you would like a Patch Panel in your area, speak to your neighbourhood housing officer on 0344 980 3333 or email involvement@norwich.gov.uk or call the tenant involvement team.

Success in St Stephens!

Vic Clapham (pictured) lives in the St Stephens area. He says: "The Patch Panels have been great for encouraging more residents to get involved. There is no formal commitment or structure, and people can just come along when they have something to say.

"The gardening project has also been a great way to bring residents together and we are excited about this year's competitions."

Neighbourhood housing officer Pam Keten adds: "All you need is one or two interested tenants like Vic and others will soon come along.

"It's impossible for us to know everything that goes on in a local area, and we can only tackle problems when residents tell us about them. Panel meetings have been great for that and I would encourage more residents to get involved."

Neighbourhood housing officer Pam Keten with Patch Panel regular Vic Clapham.



A fresh look at sheltered housing

Norwich City Council has 26 sheltered housing schemes across the city and most of these have tenant representatives, who, together with their colleagues, form the sheltered housing tenants' forum (SHTF).

Tenants have been able to influence how the service has been developed and delivered thanks to the forum, which has been active for a number of years. The forum also acts as a consultation and engagement group in relation to policies

affecting health and social care for older people.

Over the past 18 months, its representatives have been working with officers to influence how the service is developed with regard to the remodelling and refurbishment of some of the sheltered housing schemes, ensuring our homes meet the future needs of older people.

While some excellent work has been done with the members of SHTF, as part of the sheltered housing review we are now looking to refresh the SHTF and bring it in line with how we consult and engage with tenants living in general needs housing.

SHTF representatives have taken part in a number of workshops,



working with officers to see how best we can align it to the current tenant involvement framework.

If you are a sheltered housing tenant and would like to know more about the opportunities to get involved in the future, please contact the tenant involvement team on 01603 212829.



Panel to build on positive feedback

In consultation with the members of the working group, the SHTF will be replaced with a sheltered housing tenant involvement panel (SHIP). Its role will be to review policies and procedures for the sheltered housing service, as well as looking at service improvements such as the upgrading of warden call systems and improvements to communal areas.

This will be supported by the individual scheme tenants' meetings, which are attended

by the designated sheltered housing officer.

'The contribution of our tenant representatives has been amazing'

Tenancy support services manager Nigel Andrews says: "The SHTF has played a very important role in helping us shape the sheltered housing

service. The contribution of our tenant representatives has been amazing and is very much appreciated by the team.

"The sheltered housing service received very positive feedback from the recent inspection for Customer Service Excellence Accreditation. We now need to build on that through the work of the SHIP, where I'm sure tenants will continue to be as enthusiastic as we enter the next stage of the sheltered housing review."

Getting the city cycling

Our Push the Pedalways programme to improve a major cycle route across the city is well underway.

The route is called the pink pedalway and is one of seven colour-coded routes that form the city's cycle network. This is the first pedalway to be comprehensively improved using funding awarded to the council from the government's Department for Transport.

The aim is to create an excellent eight-mile cycling route from the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital and UEA, through the city centre, to Heartsease and Broadland.

We have already consulted tenants on some of the projects that go through estates near their homes. In March, our pedalways team spoke to tenant groups about proposals in the Mousehold and Heartsease areas and we will soon be announcing the outcomes of these consultations.

To keep up to date with the latest news on this and more, and to find out when other consultation events are being held, please visit www.norwich.gov.uk/pedalways. The page also includes information about the wider project.

Alternatively, you can get in touch with the team by emailing pedalways@norwich.gov.uk or calling on **0344 980 3333**.

Take part in our survey!

One of the main aims of the project is to get more people to choose cycling as a means transport, so we're running a survey to build a picture of cycling habits across the city.

We need as many people as possible to get involved so, whether or not you cycle, we'd really appreciate it if you could spend five minutes to answer a few questions at www.norwich.gov.uk/cyclingsurvey.

An artist's impression of proposals for a new tree-lined path across the recreation ground at Heartsease.



Don't bin it, bring it!

How to dispose of unwanted electrical items.

Come along to our next electrical event

When?

Saturday
28 June,
8am-1pm

Where?

City of Norwich
School (CNS), Eaton
Road, Norwich
NR4 6PP

What?

From toasters to TVs, power drills and kettles... bring your small and medium-sized working and non-working electrical items to be recycled or reused.

For further information on the event and what items are accepted, please refer to www.norwich.gov.uk/wasteandrecycling.

What else can I do with my unwanted electricals?

All household electrical items can be taken to Norfolk County Council's recycling centres free of charge.

Or if they are still in good working order, you can find a new home for them on Freegle, or Gumtree. Or take them to your nearest British Heart Foundation charity shop.

Please don't put electrical items in or beside your communal bin.

www.norfolk.gov.uk
www.ilovefreegle.org
www.gumtree.com/norwich

An easier way to move house

MUTUAL EXCHANGE

A mutual exchange is when two or more tenants of social landlords swap properties. This can have a number of benefits:

More properties, more choice

You can search for properties in whatever area you wish to move to. And you don't have to register on a housing waiting list and wait for tenants to move out for properties to become available.

Do it online

You can search the online database of all tenants looking to move, by registering at www.houseexchange.org.uk.

Save money and space

If you're receiving less housing benefit as a result of having a spare room, then you could swap with a family in an overcrowded property – a win-win situation for both families.

More incentives

Moving home can be expensive and larger properties are in short supply, which is why we are offering tenants the following incentives to downsize:

£150 to anybody exchanging from a house to a flat or maisonette

- plus -

£250 for each bedroom given up (regardless of the property type)

- plus -

£150 to anyone who exchanges to a property they would eligible for under the Norwich Home Options scheme.

In addition, if you are moving to another Norwich City Council property, we will award you 15 points you can use on work at your new property, such as:

- Cooker reconnection *seven points*
- Washing machine reconnection *two points*
- New door locks *six points*
- New toilet seat *three points*



Example

Mr and Mrs Jones live by themselves in a four-bedroom house. They exchange to a one-bedroom flat. Their incentive payment would be:

£150 for moving from a house to a flat

£750 for giving up three bedrooms

£150 for exchanging to a suitable property

£1,050 Total

Note: There is no cash alternative for these services and our incentives are reviewed every year.

What if I have rent arrears?

Providing you are working with us to pay the money you owe, you may still be able to exchange. We will use some of your incentive payment to pay off any arrears. But you can keep at least the minimum incentive of £150, plus any surplus left over after paying your housing debts.

For more information or to make an application to exchange, please contact us on 0344 980 3333.



Pay less for your water

Did you know you could probably save money with a water meter?

Latest figures from Anglian Water suggest that if you pay your water charges with your rent, it could be costing you more than it would on a meter!

Your water bill can either be based on the rateable value of your home or the usage levels recorded on a meter.

We have always collected water charges set by Anglian Water using the 'rateable value' formula and three-quarters of tenants still pay this way. This year charges will vary between £10.50 and £12.50 per week, depending on the size and age of your home.

However, Anglian Water's own estimates for metered water charges for 'average water usage' (described as: taking

frequent baths/ showers, regularly using a washing machine, having a dishwasher, occasionally using a sprinkler or hosepipe), are:

- one-person household **£5.50 per week**
- two-person household **£8.00 per week**
- three-person household **£9.50 per week**
- four-person household **£10.60 per week**

We find tenants on a low income often use far less water than the 'normal usage' estimates. So charges could be as low as £4 per week for a one-person household, £5.30 per week for two or £6.60 per week for three.

Even better news is that different tariffs are available for vulnerable people:

- 'Aquacare Plus' if you are receiving certain benefits.
- 'Watersure' for larger families on a low income or for households where a medical condition may mean you use a lot of water.
- 'SoLow' if you are a very low water user.

Other good reasons for choosing a meter:

- Installation is free!
- You can switch back to rateable value – based charges at any time in the first two years! (certain rules apply to some of the special tariffs).
- You can still pay weekly at any Post Office or PayZone outlet.
- If you live in a home where a meter can't be fitted, (some tower blocks, for example), Anglian Water can estimate your water usage and you can still save money!

Like to know more or apply for a meter?

All the information you need can be found online at www.anglianwater.co.uk or you can call Anglian Water direct on **0345 7919155**.

If you are having trouble paying your rent (including water charges), and would like to talk to an income officer or a budgeting adviser, contact us on **0344 980 3333**.

Tackling tenancy fraud

It is estimated there are 50,000 housing association and council homes across the UK occupied by someone who shouldn't be living there, or who has obtained the tenancy fraudulently.

There are different types of housing fraud. But among of the most common is unlawful sub-letting, where a tenant lets out their home without the knowledge or permission of their landlord. They often continue to pay the rent, but charge the person they are sub-letting to a much higher rate.

What are we doing about it?

We check all new applicants to ensure they are eligible for social housing and identification must be provided when signing for a new tenancy. Starting this summer, applicants will also have their photograph taken, so on future visits we can be sure the right person is living in the property.

Can an applicant refuse to have their picture taken?

If we made this optional, then those who intend to commit to a tenancy could just refuse to let us take a photograph. Clearly this isn't acceptable, so it is something we must insist on for new tenants.

Sub-letting a social housing tenancy is a criminal offence and any Norwich City Council tenant found guilty of sub-letting their property could face a two-year prison sentence and a fine of up to £50,000.

Using closed-circuit television (CCTV)



Tenants' use of CCTV has been increasing in recent years. But while it is lawful for you to monitor your property for security purposes, you need to also be mindful of the rights of your neighbours and visitors, and ensure you comply with the rules of your tenancy and data protection legislation.

The following guidance should help:

- Ask for written permission from the council before making any alterations to your home (as stated in your tenancy agreement). In some cases installations may also require planning permission.
- The field of view of any camera must not extend beyond your own premises.
- Display CCTV equipment in a prominent position, so it's visible to visitors.
- Any recordings of visitors should not be retained for longer than is needed for the purposes for which it was taken.
- Store CCTV data carefully and securely and ensure it's not used for a purpose which interferes with the privacy of those shown.
- Do not install in any communal areas.
- Do not fix CCTV equipment to any structure not covered by your tenancy, or in places where it could interfere with the proper maintenance of your property or any other property.
- Remove CCTV equipment or reduce the field of view, if requested to do so by the council.



Housing contracts, repairs and maintenance update

Solar project gets underway

Work has begun to install solar thermal technology at a number of properties across the city, thanks to funding from the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC).

NPS Norwich Ltd successfully applied last autumn for £10,000 to install solar thermal panels at nine council-owned homes.



Properties were chosen from those already due for heating upgrades and that had enough space for a new larger cylinder to allow for the storage of the free hot water generated from the roof panels.

It's hoped the panels will heat up to 60 per cent of the household's hot water for free, saving money on energy bills and reducing the carbon footprint of the property.

The installations will be closely monitored by NPS Norwich Ltd, DECC and the Energy Savings Trust, which set up the initiative on their behalf to increase the use of renewable

heating technologies in the social housing sector.

Chris Rayner, head of service at NPS Norwich Ltd, says: "Using this money has enabled us to add another technology to our growing list of pilot projects and following the results of the trial we hope to deliver more energy efficiency improvements to homes across the city."

All the installations will be complete in time for the summer weather when the panels will be generating the most amount of free hot water, and we will report back on the success of the project in a future *TLC*.

Be rewarded for sharing your views!

Your feedback plays an important role in helping us shape the services you receive.

Make sure you return your completed satisfaction forms, and don't miss your chance to win a £50 cheque or shopping voucher, in the monthly prize draws run by Norse and Gasway.

Jade Marshall was chosen as

Gasway's March winner. She filled in the survey because she was pleased with the work the engineer had done on her boiler, and was delighted to win the draw as she didn't even realise there was a prize!

Did you know you can also return your Gasway surveys by completing them online? Just go to the web address on your form!



Would you like to rent a garage?

Did you know city council tenants can rent lockable parking bays from as little as £17.25 per month, with garages starting from just £24.13 per month?



All of the garages and parking bays currently available are advertised every fortnight on our website and are updated after each application deadline.

Although priority is given to city council tenants, non-tenants and those living outside of Norwich are also welcome to apply.

Eliminate the stress of finding somewhere to park.

Visit the garages and lockable parking bays page on www.norwich.gov.uk/garages to check availability, view prices, and download an application form. Or you can request a form by calling **0344 980 3333** or collect one from City Hall.

Information for leaseholders

Norwich Leaseholders' Association (NLA) will hold its annual general meeting on **Thursday 24 July 2014 at 7.30pm** in the council chamber at City Hall, with council officers on hand from 7pm.

NLA is a group run by leaseholders that discusses issues affecting leaseholders, such as service charges, improvement, maintenance and painting contracts.

All city council leaseholders are invited to attend and matters of interest must be raised by Thursday 17 July.

Any nominations for NLA officers and committee members should also be received before 17 July, although an opportunity to present nominations from the floor will be given during the meeting. Access to City Hall will be via the side entrance on Bethel Street.

The NLA committee holds a public meeting once a year and meets with council officers on a monthly basis for Partnership Action Group (PAG) meetings. Leaseholders are welcome to attend these meetings, providing they give advance notice using the contact information opposite.

For further details, or to get involved in influencing council services as a leaseholder, please

contact any of the following:
Kevin Hayes – NLA chair
t: 01603 259781
e: kevinhayes@talktalk.net

Lorna Kirk – secretary
t: 01603 615132
e: kirklorna@gmail.com

Or contact the home ownership team
t: 01603 213144
e: homeownership@norwich.gov.uk



The NLA committee members.

Contacting Norwich City Council



www.norwich.gov.uk

ONLINE You can now report repairs, access council services and make online payments.

EMAIL You can email your enquiry to Norwich City Council by sending it to info@norwich.gov.uk.

POST Norwich City Council, City Hall, Norwich NR2 1NH.

IN PERSON The customer centre at City Hall, via the Bethel Street entrance, is open 8.45am to 5pm, Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday and 1pm to 5pm on Wednesdays.

PHONE 0344 980 3333. Lines open 8am to 5pm, Monday to Friday.

Out of hours emergencies: 01603 412180.

Telephone payment hotline: (24 hour): 01603 212282.

Money advisers: 0344 980 3333 or email moneyadvisers@norwich.gov.uk.

Report antisocial behaviour: 01603 212100 (24 hour).

Minicom users only: 01603 212587 (8am to 5pm, Monday to Friday).

Social housing fraud hotline: 0800 731 4515.

Leaseholders: For help and advice on your rights and responsibilities, contact the home ownership team on 01603 213143 or 213144 or at homeownership@norwich.gov.uk.

Do you have a good neighbour?

Win
£100

- Is there an unsung hero in your neighbourhood who deserves to be recognised?
- Do you know someone who helps others with shopping or gardening?
- Perhaps your neighbour is a great listener and a good support to you?

a winner, who will receive a £100 prize.

The person you nominate must be a Norwich City Council tenant and will not be eligible if they are in breach of their tenancy agreement.

You have until **Friday 25 July** to submit your nomination.

We'd like you to tell us!

Fill in the form below and post it to service development team, Norwich City Council, City Hall, Norwich NR2 1NH, or take it to City Hall. Or you can send an email to involvement@norwich.gov.uk with the details asked for on the entry form below.

A panel made up of Norwich City Council tenants will select



Last year's winner – Fay Wales (pictured right).

Your name:

Your address:

Name of good neighbour:

Address of good neighbour:

Reason for nominating:

Please use a separate sheet and give as much information as possible.

Loss of gas or electricity?

If you have lost gas or electricity you should contact your energy supplier directly in the first instance.

Have your say...

Please contact us if you have any concerns as a tenant or leaseholder, or if you would like to share something.

Write to TLC magazine, Conesford Room, City Hall, Norwich NR2 1NH or email involvement@norwich.gov.uk.