

# IN TOUCH

The Newsletter from Chislehurst & Sidcup Housing Association

Issue 21 • Autumn 2009

Stanley Glynn Court was packed with people for the Association's first annual Tenants' Conference on 3 September, demonstrating that tenants have a real appetite for being involved in housing matters.

Commenting on the day, Chief Executive Angela Williams-Brown said: "From the feedback we have received from the tenants that attended, the Conference was a great success and people were keen for it to become an annual event".

The theme for the day was 'Service delivery and accountability', which is all about getting tenants involved in how the Association is managed. Tenants took part in four workshops, where they discussed how they would like to be consulted on services, how they would like to be communicated with and what promises they want the Association to make and keep.

Many good suggestions came from tenants and these will be included in the new Tenants Involvement Policy which will soon be available for tenants to comment on.

Angela Williams-Brown added: "We have also produced a list of Service Standards and our Pledge to show our commitment to providing the best service possible to all tenants".

## Tenants' Conference 'a great success'



Amongst the suggestions which are being taken up next year is giving each scheme control over a budget to be spent on anything that will benefit all tenants. The budget will be held by the Tenants' Panel representatives in liaison with the Housing Manager.

Everyone is looking forward to next year's conference which will be held at a larger venue to ensure that all tenants have the opportunity to take part.

*Above and below: scenes from the Tenants' Conference workshops.*



All representatives attended the Tenants' Panel Meeting held on 8 September at Ursula Lodges. At the meeting, Linda Ward was elected as the Chair and four other members expressed their willingness to stand as the Panel representative on the Board of Management.

As there can be only one Panel representative, each member has been invited to attend future Board meetings to see how it works for them. There will then be an election enabling tenants to choose their representative.

Other issues up for discussion include:

■ **Staffing matters** Wendy Hooper and Carol Powell continue as our temporary resident managers at Evelyn Rogers Court and Bertha Hollamby Court until permanent staff are recruited.

## TENANTS' PANEL NEWS

■ **Supporting People** The Housing Manager gave an update on the latest news from our partner local authorities on their plans for next year and beyond. All schemes have been recently visited by officers from these authorities' Supporting People teams to find out what tenants feel about living in sheltered housing and what they want in the future. It appears that all tenants who are currently eligible for Supporting People funding, and all new applicants, are to be assessed for this funding.

■ **Repairs and improvements** Day-to-day repairs and improvements were discussed, together with the repair responsibilities of tenants and the Association. In addition, the Housing Manager gave an

update on improvement works carried out so far this year and plans for next year.

■ **Surveys** The Association will audit all Support Plans and carry out a survey of tenants on access to communal areas affected by poor mobility or disability.

■ **Tenants Conference** Representatives gave feedback on the conference.

■ The Housing Manager gave an update on the Town & Country contract.

■ The representatives then raised issues affecting their own schemes.

**We still need two representatives from the Bushell Way scheme – volunteers please!!**

## Important: Help us to improve mobility

During October we carried out our annual Disability and Mobility audit of all tenants to see if there are communal areas in schemes that are difficult to access for tenants with mobility problems.

This information is important to the Association because it helps us plan improvements to schemes. Recent improvements include relaying existing paving, better landscaping, lower thresholds to main

access points, automating heavy main entrance doors, providing storage areas for scooters or walking frames, and concreting over shingle paths in gardens.

*Help us make the schemes safer for everyone. If you have not completed the questionnaire, please take time to do so and hand it to your Resident Manager.*

### Properties let

All available properties at Headingley Drive have been let apart from three specially adapted properties where further work is being completed.

### Building works continue

Building works continue in and around Headingley Drive and the Association would like to thank all tenants for their patience during this period. Any set charges for services which are not provided due to building works will be deducted from future charges.

Tree work has been carried out on the cliff to the rear of Winston

## IN TOUCH *with* TOWN & COUNTRY TENANTS

Drive. This work was essential as there was a risk that the new growth could fall down the cliff face. This work will now be a regular contract.

### Cycle shed removed

The large cycle shed at Winston Drive has been removed because vandalism made it unsafe to use and too expensive to repair.

Apologies for any inconvenience caused.

### New repairs number

There is a new telephone number for tenants in Headingley Drive and Wickets Close to call for repairs during the first 12 months – 0845 873 1321.

### Articles wanted

If any Town and Country tenant would like to contribute an article to the newsletter, please contact Rob Hughes on 0208 467 9146. All contributions will be welcomed.

### Welcome to our new tenants

Mrs Songhurst and Mr Pollard, Ms Edwards, Mrs Caulfield

# News from around the schemes

## Ursula Lodges

Congratulations to Olive Millard who celebrated her 80th birthday in October by inviting everyone to a lovely party in the lounge where entertainment was provided.

On 9 November there will be a trip to Harry Ramsden's restaurant at Lakeside for a fish and chip lunch and entertainment. The Christmas party will be held on 11 December, livened up by Reg King on the keyboard.

Recent improvements include better drainage to the path at the front of scheme and the fitting of pond protection to make it a heron-free zone!

## Stanley Glynn Court

The scheme held a bring and buy sale on

24 October followed by Penny's fashion show sale on 29 October. The Christmas party will be on 18 December with entertainment from "Just Jan" and the scheme is also holding a New Year party on 16 January where residents will be entertained by Adrian Chapman.

There's now better access to the garden behind the scheme where the pathway has been relaid.



*NAME AND NAME IF POSSIBLE ENJOYING THE URSULA LODGES POND WHICH HAS NOW BEEN HERON-PROOFED.*

## Bertha Hollamby Court

Following the success of the day trip to Hastings, an outing was arranged to Tea Pot Island at Yalding and another to Harry Ramsdens at Lakeside with a fish and chip lunch and entertainment. Christmas lunch will be at Crook Log Carvery.

The rear gate access from the car park has been altered to provide easier access for tenants with cars.

## Evelyn Rogers Court

Residents enjoyed a pub lunch at The Crown in Chislehurst in August and are looking forward to a trip to Harry Ramsdens at Lakeside in November.

The area around the scheme's garden pond has been improved, with relaid paving slabs and landscaping.

## KEEPING SCHEMES SAFE AND SECURE

The Association is often asked to provide keys to fire doors or to give permission to enter the scheme through access points other than the main entrance. This is often because a tenant has difficulties in walking to the main entrance and would rather use a fire door that is nearer their flat.

Unfortunately we have to decline these requests because it reduces

security throughout the scheme. We must keep track of who is coming and going in the schemes and the more keys that are distributed the more people have access, increasing the chances that doors will be left insecure. For this reason, keys or fobs are restricted to tenants only.

There have been many instances where fire doors have been found left open, allowing any intruder to enter the scheme. There are also a number of tenants who leave their flat doors open. This combination means that any thief can enter the building and walk into a flat.

Whilst this security arrangement is an inconvenience to a few, we cannot compromise the security of the majority of tenants. There is also the issue of insurance. Should there be a burglary and the insurance company become aware

that tenants and visitors are coming into the scheme via unauthorised doors, they may invalidate a claim and increase premiums.

**Please do not allow your visitors access to the scheme through fire doors.**

Thank you for your co-operation and understanding.

## Welcome to our new CSHA tenants

A warm welcome to all our new tenants who have moved in since the last newsletter was published:

**Stanley Glynn Court**

Mr Lammas

**Ursula Lodges**

Mr Martin • Mr & Mrs Hunt

# BOARD UPDATE

The Board met in October to look at these issues:

- Various governance documents, policies and procedures for the Board of Management and the Audit and Risk Committee were discussed and changes either suggested or approved.
- Two revised policies – Complaints and Anti Social Behaviour were approved following consultation with tenants.
- Discussions took place on a potential future development appraisal process.
- The management accounts for July-September 2009 were approved.
- The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee gave feedback on the previous two meetings.
- An update on the Service and Accountability Action Plan (Tenant Involvement), which includes outcomes from the recent Tenants' Conference, was approved. Tenants are currently being consulted on the new Tenant Involvement Policy.
- The Chief Executive and Housing Manager presented their regular reports on activities over the past three months.
- The performance of the overall service for the last three months was discussed.
- Three observers from the Tenants' Panel attended the meeting with the intention of the Panel electing one member onto the full Board of Management.
- There was a confidential item on future staff salaries.

## Understanding service charges

Between now and April, the Association will be busy preparing next year's budgets. This will include working out an estimate of charges for all communal services for 2010/11.

The Housing Manager will discuss and consult with tenants on next year's charges at the October monthly meeting and will answer any questions on the income and expenditure for service charges during 2008/9.

You will already have received a document about service charges for 2008/9. This shows how much we charged you during the year and how much it cost the Association. If we have overcharged you for the year we will deduct this amount from your charges for next year. If we have undercharged you we will add it on to next year's charges.

If you have any comments on the services we provide, or think there should be changes, please come to the monthly meetings where you can talk things through with the Housing Manager.

Please remember there is often an extra cost for an additional or enhanced service. However, if a service is not up to standard and it can be improved within the existing contract, at no extra cost, we will speak to the contractor.

## Talking about ... POLICIES

The Association regularly consults with tenants on the various policies we have in place to ensure the best possible service for you. Over the last few months we have consulted with you on the following policies:

- Complaints
- Anti-social behaviour
- Abuse
- Support plans

After you've had your say on these policies we amend them, where necessary, then they go to the Board of Management for final approval.

Over the coming weeks, we will also consult with you on these policies:

- Tenant involvement and service standards
- Professional boundaries
- Guest rooms

As with everything we do, it is important that we get your input into these policies as they are there for your benefit and as guidance for our staff.

Please take time to look at the policies when they are at your scheme for consultation and let us have any comments you wish to make.

# HAPPY CHRISTMAS!

*As this will be our last edition of In Touch newsletter before Christmas, all our staff would like to wish everyone a happy Christmas.*

*We hope you enjoy all your scheme activities over the festive period.*

**IF YOU HAVE ANY DIFFICULTY READING THIS NEWSLETTER AND WOULD LIKE IT IN LARGER PRINT OR A DIFFERENT LANGUAGE, PLEASE LET US KNOW.**