

## North Warwickshire Borough Council Tenants' Newsletter

### Welcome to this edition of Tenants Link

Welcome to your Winter Edition of Tenants Link, we would like to wish you a Happy New Year for 2023. This newsletter is produced to provide you with information on Housing Services, work of the Borough Wide Tenants' Forum and good news stories.

We are happy to receive any suggestions you may have and we welcome feedback on our services.

Please contact Julie Richardson

☎ 01827 715341

✉ [julierichardson@northwarks.gov.uk](mailto:julierichardson@northwarks.gov.uk)

I look forward to hearing from you.

Often the new year can bring worries about paying bills that may have built up over the Christmas period, we understand that this is a difficult time of year particularly with the cost of living rises, we are here to help you. Your Tenancy Services Officer can offer you many solutions to ensure that you pay the right rent at the right time. They may refer you to our Tenancy Sustainment Officer who can work with you to maximise your income, carry out benefit checks and refer you to financial inclusion projects. They may also refer you to the Citizens Advice Bureau and other organisations who provide money advice. Your Tenancy Services Officer can work with you to work out a repayment plan and set up a Direct Debit for you. If you have rent arrears do not delay in contacting us. As soon as we hear from you, we can start to work with you.



### New Homes for North Warwickshire See page 4

#### How to contact us

You can contact us for a general enquiry in any of the following ways:

✉ [housingservices@northwarks.gov.uk](mailto:housingservices@northwarks.gov.uk)

☎ 01827 715341

🌐 [www.northwarks.gov.uk](http://www.northwarks.gov.uk)

Write to:

**North Warwickshire Borough Council,  
The Council House,  
South Street, Atherstone,  
Warwickshire CV9 1DE**

Visit: The Council House

Opening Hours

**Mon 9:00-12:30 & 13:30-17:00**  
**Tue 9:00-12:30 & 13:30-17:00**  
**Wed 10:00-12:30 & 13:30-17:00**  
**Thu 9:00-12:30 & 13:30-17:00**  
**Fri 9:00-12:30 & 13:30-17:00**

We currently offer face-to-face service by appointment only. If you need to book a face-to-face appointment, please call our Customer Services team on (01827) 715341.



# Maintenance News

The Council plans its improvement works over a five year period depending on the budget available. This is reviewed every year to appoint contractors to deliver the work.

Over the past few years, we have concentrated on creating more energy efficient homes. This includes putting external wall insulation on homes and providing new windows as well as loft insulation. New roofs also help to prevent heat loss. Over 400 properties have benefited from new windows and external wall insulation during the recent programme period. We have also delivered an extensive programme of energy efficient heating systems – gas, electric and Air Source Heat Pump.

Regulations for electrical installations require us to ensure they are safe. We carry out a safety check to tell us where work is required to meet this requirement. Legally we have to provide smoke and carbon monoxide alarms. We have had active programmes of work in place for the last 3 years to address any safety issues we find and to bring properties up to current legal standards.

Following on from the extensive regeneration works at Alexandra Court, Atherstone we are continuing to undertake essential remedial works to flats. Work is well underway to replace the flat roof on the flats at St Leonards View, Dordon with a new pitched roof.

Some blocks of flats do not need essential works, but they will benefit from new entrance doors and door entry systems. We have started a planned programme in Coleshill to improve the flat entrances and some of the external areas at Wall Avenue, Digby Road and Clinton Road.

## Financial Advice

### ‘We are here to help’!

Our website provides a lot of useful information about where to get help and financial advice:

- **For Help and Support **LOCALLY** and **NATIONALLY****  
Visit: [www.northwarks.gov.uk/help](http://www.northwarks.gov.uk/help)
- **For Energy Advice and Information including Water**  
Visit: [www.northwarks.gov.uk/info/20064/help\\_and\\_advice/1589/energy\\_advice\\_and\\_help](http://www.northwarks.gov.uk/info/20064/help_and_advice/1589/energy_advice_and_help)
- **Cost of Living Page**  
Visit: [www.warwickshire.gov.uk/costofliving](http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/costofliving)

If you are struggling to access the information or need further help, please contact our Tenancy Sustainment Officer, Glen Rowley on 01827 719242 or mobile 07970 248234 or by email [glenrowley@northwarks.gov.uk](mailto:glenrowley@northwarks.gov.uk). He will talk to you confidentially, understand your issue and identify ways to assist you.



## Damp and Mould

The Council wants to act to ensure that tenants do not live in a home that is damp and suffers from mould. There are many different causes of damp and mould. It could be a roof or gutter leak, due to poor ventilation or, over time, the properties damp proof course could have deteriorated. Often it needs a technical assessment to find out what is causing the problem. If you have a concern about damp, mould or condensation please report it to us. We will arrange for a surveyor to visit your home within 10 working days. They will discuss your concerns with you, do a full inspection of the property and act to address the cause of the problem.

# Clean and Tidy

The Neighbourhood Warden service ensures that our blocks of flats are clean, tidy, and safe. We need all tenants to co-operate with us to keep our neighbourhoods nice places to live. To support this service, we have appointed a window cleaning contractor, Hi-spec Facilities, to clean windows at our flats and communal rooms. The contract started in July and customer feedback so far has been positive.

The Neighbourhood Wardens have a responsibility for certain health and safety aspects within communal areas of flats, maisonettes and sheltered scheme communal rooms. For everyone's safety, we need your co-operation in keeping stairwells and landings clear to allow for clear access in and out of the building. We must ensure that combustible items do not pose a fire risk and there are no obstructions or tripping hazards. We ask that you leave unwanted items inside your home until you can arrange for safe, correct disposal and that you remove all personal belongings from landings and walls.

Fire alarms and emergency lighting in communal areas are tested in accordance with agreed procedures and rotas and to assist the team with inspections, a new reporting tool, Photobook, has recently been introduced. The reporting tool is an app on a mobile phone used to report and record identified issues efficiently along with supporting photographs to evidence reports and record data.

Communal space inspections are an important measure helping to identify numerous health and safety issues. During a recent block inspection, the Neighbourhood Warden identified a smell of gas coming from one of the flats. Unaware whether the occupier was inside the flat, the Neighbourhood Warden acted swiftly to contact gas emergency services, tried to get a response from the occupier and contacted their next of kin to assist with access into the flat. On entry it was discovered that gas on the cooker had been left on, there was no one at home. Fortunately, all the right actions were taken, and an accident was averted.



## Triton Showers

Housing Direct Works electricians have been attending several jobs recently to fault find and carry out a repair to Triton shower units, only to find damage to the shower has been caused by the tenant using alternative shower heads to those provided.

Alternative shower heads are being purchased by some tenants to replace the Triton head; an incorrect fitting reduces water flow causing the shower valves to blow. Damage to the shower unit caused by an incorrect fitting is not repairable resulting in the complete unit having to be replaced. In such instances there could be a charge to repair or replace the shower.

To ensure your shower works correctly, please make sure you only use the shower head and hose that have been supplied by the Council. A frequent check of your shower head to keep the jets clean will make sure your shower runs efficiently and effectively.

**If you notice damage to the shower head or hose, please call the contact centre on 01827 715341 to request a replacement.**

# Saving money on your energy bills

To help cut the cost of energy bills, it is recommended to change to a lower setting on your gas boiler. Running your heating system at a lower 'flow' temperature can save around 6-8% on your gas use.

To be more energy efficient the boiler stat should be set at 60 degrees, any higher than this will use a lot more gas and could cause problems with the general running of the boiler. It is advisable for the room thermostat to be set at 21 degrees; this will keep the room at a comfortable temperature. The boiler will cut out when it reaches the required room temperature.







# New Homes for North Warwickshire

North Warwickshire Borough Council has built 4 energy efficient, 3 bed town houses in Atherstone. After unforeseen delays, the properties have now been let to applicants from our housing register. The homes provide much needed family housing within the town centre integrating well with the current surroundings and in keeping with the conservation designation.

## Climate Change Action Plan

An action plan to outline how the Council plans to reduce carbon emissions was produced in 2021. It includes a focus on Housing and the aims to achieve targets. There is also a dedicated area for Climate Change on the Council's website [www.northwarks.gov.uk/info/20236/climate\\_change/1585/climate\\_change](http://www.northwarks.gov.uk/info/20236/climate_change/1585/climate_change)

### What we want to achieve

- Ongoing retrofit of existing homes
- Build new homes to a low or zero carbon standard
- Engage our tenants to help us deliver solutions

### Our achievements so far

- We've been working hard to retrofit our existing properties and provide more energy efficient homes. Retrofit is a process of making changes to existing buildings so that energy consumption and emissions are reduced. Since 2015 we are working to install new windows and external wall insulation to properties. Blocks of flats have also benefitted from new windows and external wall insulation. These changes should provide the benefit of more comfortable and healthier homes with lower fuel bills.
- Through our roofing programme we deliver 50 new roofs annually
- We've fitted properties with loft insulation to further improve their energy efficiency and save tenant money
- Through our replacement heating scheme, we deliver 150 to 200 new efficient gas heating systems annually
- Low energy lighting has been installed in our blocks of flats as part of electrical upgrades
- Thanks to Green Homes funding from central Government, we've installed energy efficient Air Source Heat Pump systems in properties across the Borough to replace inefficient and expensive heating

- All new properties developed by the Council since 2020 have electric vehicle charging provision
- All new properties developed by the Council between 2015 and 2018 have solar panels
- Our new build regeneration schemes have ensured that local shop facilities have been provided to support the new developments, reducing the need for those residents to travel by car





Crystal Insurance  
Scheme

# 10 reasons to choose Crystal Insurance Scheme this winter



- ❄ Flexible regular Pay-As-You-Go payment options (fortnightly and monthly premiums include a transaction charge).
- ❄ Apply over the phone or by completing an application form.
- ❄ You don't need to have special door or window locks (just a lockable front door).
- ❄ Covers theft, water damage, fire.
- ❄ Covers tenants improvements (up to £2,000 or 20% of the sum insured whichever is greater).
- ❄ Accidental damage to TV's and aerials and home computers is covered as standard (excludes items designed to be portable including mobile phones, ipods etc). A £50 excess may apply, full details are available on request.
- ❄ Covers damage to external glazing for which you are responsible.
- ❄ Covers replacement and installation of locks for outside doors or windows and alarms, if keys are lost or stolen.
- ❄ The sum insured will be increased by £1,500 or 15% (whichever is the greater) for one month before and after Christmas to cover presents bought or received (excludes theft which does not involve forcible or violent entry into your home).
- ❄ Covers theft or attempted theft of contents in sheds, outbuildings and garages (up to £3,000).
- ❄ Optional extras are available for an additional premium.

Exclusions & limits apply. A copy of the policy wording is available on request.

**Ask your landlord for an application pack or  
to apply for cover today, call Crystal Insurance on:**

**0345 450 7286**

**email: [crystal@thistleinsurance.co.uk](mailto:crystal@thistleinsurance.co.uk) or visit [www.crystal-insurance.co.uk](http://www.crystal-insurance.co.uk)**

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For information about what we do with personal data please see our Privacy Policy at [www.crystal-insurance.co.uk/Privacy-Policy](http://www.crystal-insurance.co.uk/Privacy-Policy)

**THISTLE**   
TENANT RISKS

# Rogue Traders

Rogue traders are any company or individual who offers services on the doorstep, often with little or no means of identification and unfortunately go on to take money for work they didn't carry out properly or add on extra unnecessary costs onto the original price.

Concerns were raised recently when an elderly gentleman contacted us to say that a person knocked on his door and advised that chimney and roof works were required on the property. This person did not show a Council ID badge and there were no reports of a Council employee being in the area at the time.

- If a person knocks on your door and say they are from the Council, ask to see their ID badge, all Council employees have ID badges.

- If you are not sure who the person is, ring the Council on 01827 715341 to confirm that the person at your door is from the Council
- If you are told that your Council property needs works, ring the Council to report the repairs, we will then carry out the necessary work.
- Do not allow anyone into your home without checking their ID. If they do not have ID they do NOT come into your home.
- Use your door chain when answering the door
- If you are concerned, ring the Council or the Police – we are all here to help!

**We ask everyone to be vigilant, rogue traders can con you out of your money, always be aware.**



## Borough Wide Tenants Forum News

The Borough Wide Tenants Forum resumed meetings in March following a break during the pandemic. Bi-monthly hybrid meetings have been scheduled whereby the forum have agreed a Forward Work Plan and have been busy working through action points.

### **The Forward Work Plan includes:**

A review of the Tenant Partnership Agreement to look at reducing information ensuring its clear and concise. The revised document will be in place for use in April and will be available to view on the Councils website.

Consider the impact of cost of living rises and energy crisis. The forum is keen to ensure tenants are aware of the financial initiatives that are available to them and are looking at ways to get information out to tenants.

Help with content to produce 2 newsletters in July & January.

Input into an Annual Report which is made available on the website to inform tenants on the performance of Housing Services.

Consider the climate change agenda and what the Council is doing that is relevant to tenants to reduce carbon emissions.

Consider an implementation plan with the forum on requirements set out in the Governments Social Housing White paper.

Consider and feedback on performance reported against the Tenant Satisfaction Measures. Tenant Satisfaction Measures will come into force in April.

If you would like to be involved in the work of the Borough Wide Tenants Forum or for more information on tenant involvement.

**Email: [tenantparticipation@northwarks.gov.uk](mailto:tenantparticipation@northwarks.gov.uk)**

### **Borough Wide Tenants Forum Meeting Dates 2023**

Meeting Date	Time	Venue
Wednesday 11th January 2023	11am	Microsoft Teams & Council House Chamber
Wednesday 15th March 2023	11am	Microsoft Teams & Council House Chamber
Wednesday 12th April 2023 AGM	11am	Microsoft Teams & Council House Chamber



# Fly-tipping

Housing is dealing with increased incidents of unwanted, fly-tipped items left in communal areas including bin stores. Communal bins are provided to deposit household waste and are not for large bulky items.

It is an offence to fly tip, we ask you to consider your neighbours and dispose of your unwanted items in the correct manner.

The Council offer a bulky waste collection service at a cost of £28 to collect 5 items. For more information or to arrange a collection call 01827 715341.

Lower House Farm Recycling Centre operate a booking system, to book your visit, for further information or to find a recycling centre nearest to you, visit [www.warwickshire.gov.uk/recyclingcentres](http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/recyclingcentres)

[www.northwarks.gov.uk/info/20047/recycling\\_centre/32/second\\_hand\\_furniture\\_and\\_white\\_goods](http://www.northwarks.gov.uk/info/20047/recycling_centre/32/second_hand_furniture_and_white_goods)

You can also take your unwanted items to the on-site charity re-use shop. The re-use shop is run by Age UK Warwickshire and all sales from the shop go directly to the charity.

Second Chance is a furniture re-use project run by charity Chapter 1 that collects unwanted, good quality furniture, and other household items. To donate to Second Chance call 02476 385986 to discuss suitability and arrange a collection.

**If you witness an incident of fly tipping, please report to the Council on 01827 715341**

# Good News Story

## Raising funds for Macmillan

In September people all over the UK were hosting coffee mornings raising funds for Macmillan.

Residents living in Baddesley meet every week for a cuppa and a catch-up in the communal room at Hunters Park. Organisers of the group took the opportunity to host a special coffee morning to help raise funds on the day for Macmillan. Cakes and coffees were on sale, and everyone enjoyed friendly conversation and company in aid of a great cause.

A total of £350 was raised on the day, all proceeds went to Macmillan to help everyone living with cancer.



# Pete's Plot Gardening Tips



During the cold winter months, gardeners don't want to be spending hours on end working in their garden. However, the thought of fresh produce combined with ever increasing prices in the shops can give a spur on to do a little here and there in the garden.

It can be a daunting task to start a new veg plot, the thought of digging, possibly through an established lawn, would put most of us off. There's a very old idea that has surfaced again in recent times, the no dig method, interested?

First choose the area you want to plant up, think about how much sun will hit the spot along with tending and watering the plot. To create an area

for planting you will need to make a raised frame to place over the lawn, no need to dig anything up or out. The frame can be made from old scaffold boards or pallet timber and will need to be a minimum depth of about 30cms or 12 inches. Put some old plastic bags inside the frame on the grass, most importantly, make holes in the plastic for drainage. At this point you can choose your preferred type of growing medium; any multipurpose peat free compost will be fine, fill the frame with your compost or soil. There it is a ready-made bed to plant up with as much as you can.

It's not all about food, remember a good display of flowers can cheer up a dull day. Plant up several pots with a

combination of flowers. The pots can be moved and swapped around your garden keeping the best in view while in bloom, the others out of sight until they flower.

## Top tip

Winter is a good time to clean and check your gardening tools. I have a bucket filled with coarse sand mixed with a cup of cooking oil. If you plunge tools such as shears or gardening knives into the sand after use, it will clean, prevent rust, and sharpen the blades while providing a safe place for your sharp tools.

# Competition Winner

Thank you for taking part in our last competition, the lucky winner is Clare Morris from Warton who received £25 in High Street Vouchers for her entry into the Word Search competition.



A	D	S	D	A	F	F	O	D	I	L	S	L	Y	R	W	F
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O	S	W	I	R	R	B	C	D	A	W	H	K	H	F	E	W
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## Word Search

FIND THE HIDDEN WORDS TO  
**WIN £25**  
IN HIGH STREET VOUCHERS

Please return the completed entry form to :

**Julie Richardson**  
The Council House, South Street,  
Atherstone, Warwickshire, CV9 1DE

Name .....

Address .....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Tel .....

- |         |           |           |
|---------|-----------|-----------|
| FLOWERS | DAFFODILS | HYACINTH  |
| EASTER  | BLOOM     | FLOWERING |
| SPRING  | TULIPS    | GROW      |
| GARDEN  | FREESIA   | BRIGHT    |

All correct entries will be placed into a prize draw. Closing date Friday 31st March 2023