

YOUR *update* FROM THE HOUSING TEAM

Message from LISA BARKER, HEAD OF HOUSING



As your landlord the safety and security of all our tenants and leaseholders will always be our top priority. Following my letter to you regarding the outcome of September's housing audit, I would like to reassure you that progress is being made on areas outlined in the report that require improvement or review as detailed in our action plan. We will continue to work closely with the Regulator of Social Housing at every stage. Please continue to contact

the housing team should you have any questions or concerns and visit warwickdc.gov.uk/housingaudit for further information and FAQs.

Providing an open dialogue and regular communication with all households has never been more important. The launch of our new Resident Engagement Strategy is central to this, and I would encourage you to find out more about how you can get involved in the coming months and have your say on how services are delivered.

The Council continues to work alongside our partners to provide meaningful, practical support to help us all deal with these challenging financial times. Support is out there, and we urge you to contact the Housing team or the many local agencies available if you find yourself in difficulties. An updated cost of living support leaflet is available from your local community hub or you can visit our website page for the latest information on national and local support packages as well as professional organisations who are able to offer assistance and advice.

Wishing you all happy, healthy, and peaceful New Year.

WE'RE ON THE MOVE

In early 2024 the District Council will be vacating Riverside House and transferring its principal administrative office space to Saltisford, Warwick. This new office will not be open to the public. A new Customer Service Area will be opening in the Royal Pump Rooms, Parade, Leamington Spa offering in person support for residents who are unable to access District Council services online. There will also be discrete meeting areas available for those requiring confidential advice and information.

AFFORDABLE HOMES

Our progressive programme of local affordable council house building has continued during 2023 across multiple sites. In August the first residents got the keys to their new homes at Stoneleigh View in Kenilworth, a development which will see 248

houses over the next five years being made available at social or affordable rents or for shared ownership. All the houses will have air source heat pumps and solar panels installed. Other developments including the Paddocks in Cubbington has made two properties available for shared ownership, three at affordable rent and two at social rent. At Union View in Hatton 106 properties including social rent, affordable rent and shared ownership units will be completed in the coming months. The Council has also received permission for a scheme of 51 affordable homes at The Asps in Warwick through Bloor Homes and 20 affordable homes at Thickthorn in Kenilworth by Persimmon Homes.

Available homes are listed via our HomeChoice scheme, visit www.warwickdc.gov.uk/housing for details.



Stoneleigh View first handovers l-r Dean Jarrett, Countryside Partnerships, Lisa Barker and Lucy Carr, WDC, Vic Cox, CP, first resident Edilay and Cllr Paul Wightman

NEWS FROM THE CUSTOMER SERVICES TEAM

ARCH TENANTS CONFERENCE 2023

In September, Warwick District Council attended the ARCH (Association of Retained Council Housing) Tenants Conference 2023 alongside three of our residents John Rooney, Brad Harding and Pete Bevington. The conference focused on some really important issues around the Cost of Living, Tenant Satisfaction Measures, Consumer Regulations and Building Safety. Also, as part of the conference there was an opportunity to discuss Community and Neighbourhood cohesion. It was also a great chance for residents to meet and share experiences with other tenants from across the country during a networking lunch. Photo below: Anna Monkton and Bal Cheema alongside three Warwick District Council residents.

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ANNUAL REPORT 2022/23

The Annual Housing Report to tenants gives an overview of the work carried out by Housing Services in the last financial year. It explains how well our services are performing, highlights our key achievements and the way we meet the standards set by the government in the 'Regulatory Framework for Social Housing'. This is now available on the Warwick District Council website www.warwickdc.gov.uk. If you do not have access to the website and would like a copy sent to you by post, please call **01926 45 6445/6537**.

GET INVOLVED!

How would you like to get involved?

- **Resident Influencing Group** attending routine meetings as part of a team working closely with housing services staff to directly influence service priorities and scrutinise performance.
- **Armchair Reviewer** review draft policies and procedures to help shape services when the time suits you.
- **Community Advisor** be out in your area to give feedback from a resident perspective and attend pop up consultations on specific topics within your community.
- **Resident Writers** review communications and resident information before being issued, suggest content for publications.

To get involved, please fill out our expression of interest form via our website www.warwickdc.gov.uk/xfp/form/413 or email talktohousing@warwickdc.gov.uk

RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Continuing with the support of TPAS (Tenant Participation Advisory Service), we have carefully put together our Resident Engagement Strategy 2023-2027. This is now available on the Warwick District Council website www.warwickdc.gov.uk.

If you do not have access to the website and would like a copy sent to you by post, please call **01926 45 6445/6357**.



BRUNSWICK HUB

The Brunswick Hub is based at 98-100 Shrubland Street, Leamington Spa, CV31 3BD and is open 9.30am to 3pm (Monday to Friday).

The team at the Hub offer reception-based services such as hearing aid batteries, foodbank vouchers, photocopying and printing, and slipper service. They provide face-to-face support on employment, health and wellbeing, and bereavement.

There are several ongoing groups including Walking for Health, Triple Link Dementia and ASD(Autism Spectrum Disorder)/SEND(Special Educational Needs Disability) along with a selection of I.T and Functional Skills courses throughout the academic year.

You can contact the Hub by:

Phone: 01926 422 123

Email: frontdesk@brunswickhlc.org.uk

Facebook: @Brunswickhlc

Website: <https://brunswickhlc.org.uk/what-we-do/>



The Brunswick Hub entrance.

WOULD YOU BECOME A CAMERADO?

Camerado's is a social movement through public living rooms. What's a public living room? Imagine the feeling you get when you sit down somewhere you love and feel the world lift a little. Then imagine you're with people who listen, who treat everyone the same, who don't judge or try to fix you. That's a public living room. Each public living room is different, set up by a camerado for their community. You'll find public living rooms all over the place - in shops, schools, hospitals, front rooms, online. More and more are appearing all the time and we want there to be one in every neighbourhood.

If you are interested in finding out more about public living rooms or becoming a Camerado, please visit <https://camerados.org/>. You can also email us communitywellbeingteam@warwickdc.gov.uk or call us on **01926 456102**.

OUTSIDE TAPS

Remember to isolate or insulate your outside tap if you can during the cold weather to avoid a potentially costly burst pipe.



Contact Housing Repairs on **01926 456129 option 1**, housing.repairs@warwickdc.gov.uk if you need any help to do this.

NEIGHBOURHOOD SURGERIES

Members of the Housing team will be available at the following venues between 10am and 12noon on the dates below if you want to drop-in to discuss any housing-related matter:

12 January 2024

Charles Gardner Community Centre
Charles Gardner Road
Leamington Spa CV31 3BG

9 February 2024

Saltisford Gardens
Community Centre
Warwick CV34 5RL

8 March 2024

Packmores Community Centre
Sussex Court, Lyttelton Road
Warwick CV34 5EP

12 April 2024

Acorn Court Sheltered Housing
Stockton Grove
Leamington Spa CV32 7NP

10 May 2024

Fallow Hill Community Room
Leamington Spa CV31 1PD

14 June 2024

The Kenilworth Centre
Small Community Room level 1
Abbey End Car Park
Kenilworth CV8 1QJ

NEWS FROM LANDLORD SERVICES



YOUR CONTACT DETAILS

We kindly request that you check and update your contact details if there have been any changes. Your up-to-date information is crucial for us to maintain effective communication. If you would like a friend or family member to speak on your behalf, we need a signed confirmation letter from you stating that we can discuss and the person's details. For further information, please contact your Housing Officer on **01926 456129 opt 3**.

COST OF LIVING

- Help
- Advice
- Grants
- Support



With spiralling energy bills, food, and transport costs, we know that many households in our district will be struggling. We would like to signpost you to the government and local support packages available, as well as professional organisations who are able to offer advice and assistance during these difficult times. Please visit our Cost of Living Support page on <https://www.warwickdc.gov.uk/costofliving>

ARREARS

With help from the Financial Inclusion team, over the last year, average household arrears are down by 10%. We've helped 139 households out of arrears and into credit rather than pursuing enforcement actions that could lead to people losing their homes. If you are facing any difficulties paying your rent, it is important to contact your Income Management Officer as early as possible on **01926 456 129 Opt 3**.

HOUSING OMBUDSMAN

Did you know you can contact the Housing Ombudsman at any time for support in helping to resolve a complaint? The Housing Ombudsman Service is set up by law and is free, independent and impartial. For advice and help to find a resolution, you can contact the Housing Ombudsman at any time while a complaint is going through our complaints process, although the Ombudsman cannot make a formal decision on a case at this stage. More information about the Housing Ombudsman, including contact details, can be found at www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

WAYS TO PAY YOUR RENT



Direct Debit

Convenient, simple and secure with a choice of payment dates on either 2nd, 8th, 14th or 23rd of the month. Apply online at: www.warwickdc.gov.uk/xfp/form/332 or telephone: **01926 456408/01926 456409** to set up over the phone or ask for a bank mandate form. You will need your rent account number as a reference.



Standing Order

Set up a standing order which means you pay a set amount every week or month. You can complete a standing order form online: www.warwickdc.gov.uk or telephone **01926 456408/01926 456409** or email: hsgfin@warwickdc.gov.uk to set up over the phone or ask for a bank standing order form. You will need your rent account number as a reference.



Online

You can pay online 24 hours a day, seven days a week at www.warwickdc.gov.uk You will need your rent account number as a reference.



Telephone

You can make automated telephone payments to us using your debit or credit card 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Call: **0800 0283377**. You will need your rent account number as a reference.



Post Office

Pay by cash, debit card, or cheque at any Post Office using a barcode that is sent to you on all letters about your rent to include rent statements. If you don't have one handy you can access your rent statement online at warwickdc.gov.uk/housing



Pay Point

Pay by cash or card at any retail outlet displaying the Pay Point logo using a barcode that is sent to you on all letters about your rent to include rent statements. If you don't have one handy you can access your rent statement online at warwickdc.gov.uk/housing

ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

Warwick District Council and Warwickshire Police are demonstrating their zero-tolerance approach to anti-social behaviour and county lines drug dealing, with the closure of several properties in the Leamington area.

In the last few months, Warwick District Council has obtained Closure Orders against tenants who have engaged in county lines drug dealing and anti-social behaviour. Properties in Windmill Road, Clapham Terrace, Clarendon Square and Briar Close have all been closed for periods of 3 months.

Closure Orders are available to Local Authorities and the Police under Section 80 of the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act 2014, and are a great example of partnership working between various partner agencies and local communities.

The orders mean that nobody, not even the tenant can remain in the property during the 3-month period, and any persons found in breach of these orders can be arrested and detained for court. If found guilty, a person is liable to imprisonment for a period not exceeding 51 weeks, a £5,000 fine or both.

The authority will now consider if further action is required, such as possession proceedings.

Councillor Paul Wightman, Portfolio Holder for Housing, said: "For a considerable amount of time the local communities have been plagued by this type of unlawful and disruptive behaviour, so we are pleased that the magistrates saw fit to grant the orders to bring normality to the area and those affected by this."

"We would encourage residents who may be experiencing similar issues with council tenants to contact us on 01926 456129 opt 3 or Warwickshire Police on 101."

County lines gangs use children and vulnerable people to courier drugs and money. A young person who is involved in county lines activity might exhibit some of these signs:



FIRE SAFETY IN YOUR HOME

Warwick District Council as your landlord takes fire safety in your home very seriously. We are currently working on a multi million pound fire safety improvement programme throughout all of our blocks of flats.

We work very closely with Warwickshire Fire & Rescue Service to help manage and mitigate fire risk in our properties, including joint inspections of blocks and take on recommendations suggested for improvement to reduce the risk of fire spreading.



FIRE DOORS ON FLATS AND COMMUNAL AREAS AND CUPBOARDS

Fire doors slow the spread of fire and smoke from one room to the next for between 30 to 60 minutes. This protects lives. Never leave a fire door open and always leave them clear of any obstructions.

Please **DO NOT**:

- X** Remove any 'smoke seals' or 'smoke brushes' that are part of the door or the door frame
- X** Remove or disconnect any self-closing device that is attached to the door
- X** Make any alterations to any fire door, as that can reduce its fire resistance
- X** Drill any holes in the flat door to fit any door furniture, such as a safety chain
- X** Prop or wedge open any fire door
- X** Make any adjustments to fire doors. You may affect the door's mechanism potentially putting others as well as yourself at risk.

If you have a concern about your front door, or any of the communal doors in the block you live in (if in a flat) report this to Housing Repairs on **01926 456129 Opt 1** or housing.repairs@warwickdc.gov.uk

FIRE SAFETY IN COMMUNAL AREAS

- X** Do **not** store anything in the internal communal areas in your block, this includes bicycles, pushchairs, childrens toys.
- ✓** If you have a bin chute in your block only use it for **small items**, large items can block the chute
- ✓** Take your rubbish to the bin store regularly

FIRE SAFETY TIPS IN YOUR HOME

Heating your home

- X** Do **not** leave electric fan heater on when you are out the house

MOST FIRES START IN THE KITCHEN. KEEP YOUR KITCHEN SAFE:

- X** **Never** leave your cooking unattended
- X** **Don't** cook if you are drunk or affected by strong medications
- ✓** Regularly test your smoke detector
- ✓** Vacuum your smoke alarm to remove any dust
- X** Avoid fat build-up in your pans (**Do not** use a chip pan)
- X** **Never** use water to put out an oil pan fire - drop a damp cloth on top, or the lid

To prevent electrical fires:

- ✓** **Only use** electrical appliances that have a British or European safety mark
- X** **Do not** overload your fridge freezer/ freezers beyond it's capacity
- X** **Do not** put electrical leads under carpets or rugs/mats
- X** **Avoid** charging your mobile phone or tablet when you're asleep or not at home
- ✓** If you have a tumble dryer, **remove** fluff build-up regularly
- ✓** Keep clothes, furniture, and curtains **away** from heaters
- ✓** **Unplug** appliances when they are not in use

SMOKING

- X** **Do not** smoke in bed
- ✓** Make sure your last cigarette is put out properly
- X** **Do not** overload your ashtray
- ✓** Empty your ashtray regularly
- X** **Do not** smoke in communal areas - this is against the law

- X** **Never** cover heaters with a cloth
- X** Do **not** use paraffin or Calor gas heaters in your home

ELECTRIC VEHICLES

- X** **Do not** charge batteries, e-bikes and e-scooters on exit routes in your home. If a fire breaks out, you won't be able to leave safely. Store them in a shed or garage where possible.
- X** **Never** leave your battery to charge when you are out or while you're asleep.
- ✓** Make sure your battery and charger **meet UK safety standards**.
- ✓** Use the **correct charger** for your battery, and make sure to buy from a reputable seller.
- ✓** Let your battery **cool** before charging it.
- ✓** **Unplug** your charger once the battery is fully charged.
- ✓** Fit **smoke alarms** in the area where you charge your batteries
- X** **Never** keep chargers in the internal communal areas of blocks of flats

FIRE SAFETY AT PARTIES & CELEBRATIONS

- X** Keep decorations, fairy lights, Christmas tree, cards and ribbons **away** from fires, electric heaters, and vents.
- ✓** Ensure all your electrical appliances are in working order and replace any frayed cords or broken plugs.
- X** Be careful with candles, tea lights, and incense. Never leave them unattended and use stable, heat-resistant holders. Keep lighters and matches out of the reach of children.
- ✓** Check the fuses for your decorative lights are the right type (see the box for the maximum size of fuse you should use).
- X** **Do not** leave lights on when you go out or when you go to sleep. Ensure the bulbs aren't touching anything that can burn easily, like paper.
- X** **Do not** overload sockets

If you no longer wish to receive these newsletters, please contact us by email talktohousing@warwickdc.gov.uk, phone 01926 456357 or post Warwick District Council, Town Hall, Parade, Royal Leamington Spa, Warwickshire, CV32 4AT and we'll remove you from our mailing list.

www.warwickdc.gov.uk



BALCONIES

- X** Use of barbecues is **not** permitted.
- X** **Do not** store items on your balcony.
- X** **Avoid** putting bottles or mirrors, on your balcony these can focus sunlight and start fires.
- X** **Avoid** use of soft furnishings on any furniture on your balcony, do not keep on there when not in use.
- ✓** Preferably use metal furniture on your balcony.
- ✓** Take **extra care** if smoking on your balcony and do not dispose of cigarettes over the edge of your balcony.

IF A FIRE DOES BREAK OUT:

- ✓** Be prepared for if this happens
- ✓** Know the fire evacuation plan for your building
- ✓** Know your escape routes
- ✓** Know what the fire alarm sounds like
- ✓** Make sure you know where the keys to the front door and windows are kept.
- ✓** Learn how to navigate any stairs in darkness, so if there was thick smoke you could do the same.
- ✓** If you have restricted mobility, make sure you have a plan of how you will get out of the building.

IF THERE IS A FIRE IN YOUR HOME

- ✓** If you live in a house
 - ✓** Get out!
 - ✓** Call the Fire Service out
 - ✓** Stay Out
- ✓** If you live in a flat
 - ✓** If the fire is in your flat, get out of your flat
 - ✓** Call the Fire Service
 - ✓** Stay out until safe to go back inside by the Fire Service
 - ✓** If the fire is in another flat stay in your flat unless you are on your way out and then continue to leave
 - ✓** Call the Fire Service

New home? Looking to protect the things you love and need? We've given RSA's contents insurance the thumbs-up for our tenants.



To get a quote please refer to;

quote.rsainsurance.co.uk/#/landing

Or call **RSA** on **03456 718 172**, lines are open Monday to Friday between 9am and 5pm.

HOUSING CONTACTS

All phone lines are available between the following hours:

Monday to Thursday: 8.45am to 5.15pm

Friday: 8.45am to 4.45pm

Housing: 01926 456 129

- Option 1 for Repairs
- Option 2 for Homechoice and Homelessness
- Option 3 for Rents and Housing officer enquiries
- Option 4 for Supported Tenancies

Council Tax and Benefits: 01926 456 760

Neighbourhood (Recycling and Refuse, Parks and Trees) 01926 456128

Emergency out of hours

All phone numbers apply outside of Council office hours and bank holidays.

Homelessness: 0300 303 5573

Council Housing Emergency Repairs:

01926 456129

Lifeline Services: 0300 303 5573

Car park emergencies:

01926 314009 or 01926 456128

TENANT PERCEPTION MEASURES



In general, **77%** of residents were fairly or very satisfied with the overall service provided by Warwick District Council, Housing Services, while **11%** were dissatisfied

Almost **80%** of residents said that they were fairly or very satisfied with the repairs service, while **13%** were fairly or very dissatisfied

70% said that they were satisfied with the time taken to complete the most recent repair, while **22%** were dissatisfied

77% were satisfied that WDC provides a well-maintained home which is safe to live in, while **12%** were dissatisfied

61% of tenants were satisfied with how WDC listens to views and acts on them, while **15%** were fairly or very dissatisfied

72% of those surveyed were satisfied with the way WDC keeps them informed about things that matter to them, while **9%** were dissatisfied

79% of residents agreed that WDC treats its residents fairly and with respect, while **4%** disagreed or strongly disagreed

55% of tenants were satisfied with WDC's approach to handling complaints, while **13%** were dissatisfied

70% of respondents agreed that they knew how to make a complaint to WDC if they were not happy with the service they received. **10%** did not know how to make a complaint

53% were satisfied that WDC keep their communal areas clean, safe and well-maintained. **31%** were dissatisfied

61% were satisfied with the extent to which WDC makes a positive contribution to their neighbourhood. **12%** were dissatisfied

55% were satisfied with the way WDC deals with anti-social behaviour. **15%** were dissatisfied