

YOUR *update*



FROM THE HOUSING TEAM



Message from **LISA BARKER, HEAD OF HOUSING**

HAPPY NEW YEAR AND WELCOME TO OUR WINTER NEWSLETTER.

I know the cost-of-living crisis and high energy prices are making it hard for many families at this time of year. I would therefore like to highlight the support that is available to you from your housing team. This includes our new face-to-face housing surgeries (details below), financial inclusion officers and through our customer service centre located at the Royal Pump Rooms. We have also updated our cost-of-living support leaflet. Copies are available at your local community hub, alternatively you can visit our website page for the latest information, national and local support packages.

I very much enjoyed meeting around 50 tenants who attended the first of our Tenants Together events at Warwick Racecourse in November. It was great to get your feedback on many aspects of our service from repairs to safety and find out more about the issues that are important to you. We would love more of you to get involved either by coming to future events or by joining our Resident Influencing Group (the clue is in the name!!).

Housing Surgery

Come and meet your housing team at the Customer Service Hub in the Royal Pump Rooms, 10am to 12pm on the following days:

First Wednesday of the month Housing Officer

Second Wednesday of the month Rent Officer

Third Wednesday of the month Financial Inclusion Officer

No appointment needed, just drop in to see us.

For more information: Tel 01926 456129



ARCH CONFERENCE 2024

In October Customer Involvement Officers, Jane Rostron and Madison Wells attended the annual ARCH (Association of Retained Council Housing) Conference in Rotherham along with one of our Resident Influencing Group members.

Resident representatives from across the country found it a very useful day. There were informative presentations from key guest speakers including the Regulator of Social Housing, Building Safety Regulator and TPAS (Tenants Participation Advisory Service).

Of particular interest was the information shared by the Regulator of Social Housing following the new standards and inspection programme that came into force in April 2024, with a summary of the recent judgements and ratings given and what Councils can learn going forward.

In addition, there were presentations on tenant health and safety including new fire safety guidance for tenants in high rise blocks and actions we can take to enhance and improve tenant engagement.



RESIDENT INFLUENCING GROUP (RIG)

Our Resident Influencing Group (RIG) has been set up to ensure that the voice of our customers is heard. The group is made up of residents and members of the WDC Housing Services team and meets regularly at our offices or online via Microsoft Teams. The RIG is actively involved in shaping the new Repairs Contract and have been working together with Housing Staff along with Tim and Lynn from ARK Consultancy to give their views on what is important from a tenant's perspective.

We would love more of you to join and there are a number of ways you can get involved:

- 1. Resident Influencing Group** - Join meetings to work as a team with housing staff, help set service priorities, and scrutinise performance.
- 2. Armchair Reviewer** - Review draft policies and procedures to help shape services at a time that suits you.
- 3. Community Advisor** - Be out in your area to provide feedback from a resident's perspective and attend pop-up consultations on specific topics within your community.
- 4. Resident Writers** - Review communications and resident information before they are issued and suggest content ideas for publications.

If you're interested in any of these opportunities or would like more information, please get in touch. You can:

Email us at talktohousing@warwickdc.gov.uk

Call us by contacting the Talk to Housing team on **01926 456 357** or **01926 456 445**.



Our Lifeline personal alarm scheme run by Warwick District Council offers the security of a 24 hours a day, 365 days a year emergency helpline.

It is perfect for anyone who:

- Lives alone and wants to feel more secure
- Has health issues
- Has a disability
- Is at risk of falling
- Is living in a vulnerable situation

According to the latest annual figures (25/9/23- 24/9/24) the Acorn Court based team took 180,925 calls, assessing the client's situation and taking appropriate action which could involve calling selected emergency contacts (family member, friend or neighbour) or emergency services, passing on relevant medical information to paramedics so they are in the best possible position to help you when they arrive.

GET IN TOUCH

You can phone the team for more information on **0300 303 5573** or email lifelineservices@warwickdc.gov.uk

We now have a text message service for incoming and outgoing text messages our number is **07800 000208**. Please DO NOT use this number for emergencies.

WELLBEING IN NATURE

Join our nature-based activities that take place every Wednesday from 10am -12pm behind Eden Court at the new picnic area or if the weather is bad in Southorn Court Community room.

We welcome new members and ideas for the sessions which to date has included planting spring bulbs and clearing rubbish.



**WELLBEING
IN NATURE
East Lillington**

We invite local residents to join nature-based activities, walks, gardening and crafts for better health and wellbeing.

**Wednesdays 10.00-12.00
Behind Eden / Southorn Court
From 6th November**

Scan the QR to share your views and ideas

**Further details:
info@arccic.co.uk
07814 605245
www.arccic.co.uk**



HELPING **EVERYONE** KEEP FIT AND HEALTHY

FREE CHAIR-BASED EXERCISE CLASS

EVERY MONDAY 10AM

You are invited to join us in the Activities Room at Acorn Court on Monday mornings for a fun group-fitness session to music. Starting on September 30th, there will be a varied programme of seated exercises (standing if you prefer) with loved old tunes from the 50s/60s/70s aplenty, led by local specialist fitness trainer, Mick Hurrell.

- Benefits:**
- Increased flexibility and strength
 - Increased coordination
 - Increased circulation
 - Reduced risk of falls because chair-based exercises improve posture and balance
 - Increased confidence and self-esteem

**SIGN UP ON THE DAY OR CONTACT
benmoore@everyoneactive.com TO BOOK**

everyone
ACTIVE

WELCOME TO LYTTELTON ROAD WILDLIFE COMMUNITY GARDEN

We are working with the local community to provide a quiet community garden for wildlife and people to enjoy, please respect this garden and the plants trees and wildlife.

All young children should be closely supervised by an adult at all times
Opening times: Monday - Friday, 10am-5pm

NO GLASS BOTTLES

NO DOGS
Except Guide Dogs

NO DRINKS

PLEASE TAKE YOUR LITTER HOME AND RECYCLE

This park is maintained by Warwick District Council.
To report any damage or accidents please call 01926 456129 or email estates.services@warwickdc.gov.uk



NEW REASONS TO VISIT CROWN WAY

The Council has been working hard with AgeUK to expand their already thriving shop in Crown Way to join two separate units into one larger space. The refurbished space allows a wider range of goods to be displayed, offering plenty of choice to our residents at affordable prices. WDC has also secured Sweeney's Martial Arts as a tenant in 57 Crown Way where the shop was fully refurbished to offer a fantastic teaching and training space. The studio's owners offer a range of activities to help build strong community links. You may also have noticed that during the summer, a group of young people from Lillington came together to create a brand-new mural at Lillington Youth Centre on Crown Way. The project engaged local young people in creating something fresh and vibrant for the community while also highlighting the positive role the Youth Centre plays in their lives. Around 20 youngsters joined BRINK Contemporary Arts over the summer to bring the mural to life.



Sweeney's Martial Arts



BRUNSWICK HEALTHY LIVING CENTRE

Your local community centres are welcoming places that can provide support and assistance with health and wellbeing, employment, financial support, food support, mental health, energy concerns, loneliness and isolation. They can also help you access the internet and many provide Youth Clubs and School Holiday Activities.

The Brunswick Centre also offers a number of reception-based services such as hearing aid batteries, Foodbank vouchers, photocopying & printing, and slipper service.

They have several regular groups including Walking for Health, Triple Link Dementia Group and a selection of I.T courses throughout the academic year that are run by Adult Community Learning.

Information on all the services currently available are on their website <https://brunswickhlc.org.uk/>

☎ Telephone: **01926 422123**

✉ Email: **frontdesk@brunswickhlc.org.uk**

f Facebook page: **@Brunswickhlc**



ARMED FORCES COVENANT

On Wednesday 6 November 2024 members of the Community Wellbeing Team attended the signing of the Armed Forces Covenant. Leader Cllr Ian Davison signed the Armed Forces Covenant on behalf of Warwick District Council alongside Lt. Col. Duncan Southall, joining other local Councils and businesses in demonstrating our support for the Armed Forces community, serving personnel both Regular and Reservists, Veterans and military families.



A NEW SEAT IN LAPWORTH

Thanks to The Bell Group, the residents of Harborough Bungalows have somewhere to sit down and chat on a bright day. Another example of great work for our local communities.

Lapworth Parish Council reported that the bench on the community green was in a state of disrepair and asked if Warwick District Council could help.

The call for assistance was passed to the Bell Group, who offered to replace it with a brand-new bench at their cost. They even attached the original memorial plaque to the new communal seat.



Before



After

FEEDBACK FROM OUR CUSTOMERS

It's extremely rewarding for our officers to be able to allocate a new home, especially for those who have been on our housing register for a long time. Here is some feedback we received from two new tenants we recently helped.

"I wanted to contact you to say what a wonderful service you, and others in the allocations team provide. You are truly amazing and after a horrific few years it's been so refreshing to deal with people like you and finally get our beautiful (final) home."

"I just wanted to let you know what an amazing person she is. Her customer service is outstanding, she has made me feel heard and listened to and has always been polite and helpful. I honestly don't think I have ever received such compassion and understanding from someone that isn't a family member or friend. I can't thank her enough and I just thought she should be recognised for her obvious dedication to her job."

"I think I was treated exceptionally well considering I wasn't on the council list for long."

"It was a smooth experience carried out with courtesy."

"The staff we worked with were all excellent and we were extremely impressed with the service they provided."

LANDLORD FORUM

Tuesday 22 October 2024 will be remembered as our most successful Landlord Forum to date, with around 100 delegates in attendance!

A gigantic thank you to everyone who took part in the Stratford-upon-Avon Racecourse event including stalls and sponsors Alan Boswell Group, Handles Properties, KS Connexions Ltd and Tara & Co.

Enthusiastic landlords, letting agents and others involved in the private rented sector, received guidance on their property journey with help from around 25 local and national specialist companies and support organisations.

The afternoon was packed with valuable content. Motivating and thoughtful presentations covering :

- Damp and Mould – Law and Practice
- Self-Managing Landlord Tips
- Landlord Challenges in the Current Climate
- Local Authority and Legislation Updates



THE NATIONAL FRAUD INITIATIVE

Fraud affects all of us.

Government figures show that £2.4 billion of fraud has been detected or prevented across the UK through the National Fraud Initiative (NFI) since it was launched in 1996.

Nobody would wish to see fraudsters making money from illegal sub-letting of council properties, or getting their hands on council accommodation instead of people that are entitled and in genuine need.

Information technology has a key part to play in stopping this.

The NFI harnesses this technology with the help of your Council by matching data we hold with data held by a network of public and private sector organisations including all local councils and housing associations.

The law requires us to share data about our tenants with the Cabinet Office as they direct us. At the same time, we operate strict security measures to protect this data so it does not fall into the wrong hands.

For further information please refer to our website: www.warwickdc.gov.uk/nfi or the NFI website: www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-fraud-initiative

CHANGES TO RIGHT TO BUY SCHEME

Since 1980 the Right to Buy scheme has allowed many council tenants to purchase their homes at discounted rates. Recent updates to the scheme announced in the Government's Autumn Budget came into effect for applications received on or after 21 November 2024. The new maximum discount cap is £26,000. Further details of the changes at <https://www.gov.uk/right-to-buy-buying-your-council-home>. Application forms can be obtained and handed in at Customer Services at the Royal Pump Rooms or requested through our website to be sent out by post.

HELP WITH YOUR ENERGY THIS WINTER

TAKE A LOOK AT WHAT COULD BE AVAILABLE TO YOU THIS WINTER.

Household Support Fund

In September 2024, the UK Government extended the Household Support Fund until April 2025. The fund helps households struggling with everyday costs such as energy bills. There is help available to provide fuel and food vouchers, essential items or small cash payments.

To find out your eligibility and what's available please call the Warwickshire Local Welfare Scheme on **01926 359182**.

Other weather payments

- The Warm Home Discount Scheme provides £150 off energy bills in winter 2024/25. You can go to <https://www.gov.uk/check-if-youre-eligible-for-warm-home-discount> to find out if you're eligible for the discount.

Cold Weather Payments are available for people on certain benefits. You'll get £25 if the temperature in your area drops to zero degrees Celsius or below for seven consecutive days.

<https://www.gov.uk/cold-weather-payment>

Other help available

Act on Energy offer support with energy advice as well as checking grant funding for energy efficiency measures in your area. Call **0800 988 2881** for further information.

Better Housing Better Health work to reduce the number of people in fuel poverty and improve domestic warmth & wellbeing. Call **0800 107 0044** for help.

Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline can help with energy problems such as billing errors and meter issues. They can escalate to the Extra Help Unit for in depth investigation. Call **0808 223 1133** or go to <https://ehu.org.uk>

Help through Hardship can help with emergency support, grants and DWP claims. Call **0808 208 2138** for a full exploratory appointment.

Citizens Advice South Warwickshire can offer advice in all areas to include emergency grants and Fuelbank Vouchers. Call **0808 205 5715**

British Gas Energy Trust offer financial help with energy debt to all energy users not just British Gas customers. <https://britishgasenergytrust.org.uk>

N.B. Several suppliers have their own support fund which is restricted to their customers only. These are: OVO, Boost, Eon, Eon Next, EDF, Scottish Power, Octopus, Shell Energy, SSE and Utilita. If you are a customer of one of these companies, please apply to them directly.





WELLBEING WALKS

in Warwick District

Why not join one of our regular Wellbeing Walks in Leamington, Warwick, Kenilworth or Hampton Magna? It's a great way to keep a healthy mind and body, meet new people and prevent illness. Walks are led by a friendly team of volunteers and vary in length and distance from half a mile to four miles depending on your walking ability and most cater for wheelchairs and pushchairs/ buggies.



first steps to
a happier,
healthier you

Contact Joanna Dagg
T. 01926 456004 M. 07912 774529 E. joanna.dagg@warwickdc.gov.uk
@healthywalks Wellbeing Walks in Warwick District

CONTACT US

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

Customer Services Hub

Royal Pump Rooms
The Parade
Royal Leamington Spa
CV32 4AA

For all your face-to-face support and enquiries about WDC services.

Opening hours:

Monday to Friday, 9.30am to 4.30pm.

SIGN UP TO OUR E-NEWSLETTERS!

Would you like to have your copy of the Housing Newsletter and all the latest news from Warwick District Council delivered straight to your inbox?

Our e-newsletters include news about Council services, initiatives and local events.

To subscribe and view our privacy notice visit Warwickdc.gov.uk/newsletters

