

Tenant Engagement News

Spring 2021



Welcome

Welcome to our Spring newsletter. We hope things are feeling a little more hopeful for everyone as the days get lighter and warmer and COVID restrictions are slowly beginning to ease. The Tenant Engagement Team has lots planned in the months ahead that we want to share with you in this newsletter. We are also keen to hear from you on a number of issues - look out for the text highlighted in yellow indicating where we'd love you to get in touch - our contact details are on the final page.

How are we doing?

Every two years Housing carries out a Satisfaction Survey, to try and gauge how our tenants feel about the Housing Service. The survey is due to take place again this spring. It will be carried out over the telephone, by company called Marketing Means, who will call a varied selection of 1000 tenants across the city to find out their views.



The feedback we receive through this survey is really important to let us know what things are working well, and highlighting areas where we need to improve. We can also use the information to benchmark how we are doing compared to other similar housing providers. If you receive a call from Marketing Means, please complete the survey if you are able.

Tenants' Summer Conference

We are planning to hold our annual Summer Conference at a little later this year, to ensure that tenants feel more comfortable about meeting in person again. As usual this will be a Tenants' Conference, with the focus being on finding out what our tenants and their groups have achieved over the past year. The date planned is the evening of **Thursday 16th September at Southampton Novotel**. Spaces will be limited, so **contact the team to register your interest.**

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'Stars in the Community' —Nominations Wanted



This year we have heard many stories of tenants who have gone above and beyond to support their neighbours and community, particularly through the challenging circumstances brought about by COVID-19. We want to show our recognition and appreciation of these people who have made such a difference to those around them, and so will be launching a 'Stars in the Community' Award. Keep an eye out for nomination forms and further details coming soon. The winner will be voted from a shortlist of nominees at our Summer Conference in September.

Local Housing Office Phone Survey

You may remember in our Winter newsletter, we shared the results of a survey about tenants phoning their Local Housing Office. We will soon be running a similar new survey to find out whether the service has improved. We would appreciate it if as many of you as possible could fill in a survey each time you call your housing office.

Let us know if you would like to take part and we will send you some surveys.

Green Space Monitors—Summer season begins

Thanks to all our Green Space Monitors who surveyed the maintenance of their green areas this Winter. It was good to see lots of positive feedback on the standard of shrub and hedge cutting plus environmental cleanliness, as well as picking up local issues or things that had been missed. As we move into the summer months, our City Services team is beginning the grass cutting programme across the city, and have updated the form for our monitors to give their feedback.

If you are interested in becoming a Green Space Monitor for your area, please do get in touch.



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Block Rep News

We're really pleased to say that we've had lots more tenants wanting to volunteer as block reps over the past year. After contacting residents on the Northam Estate, we had a fantastic response with 9 tenants coming forward as new block reps. It's inspiring to hear that rather than being deterred by the pandemic, tenants were moved to want to help their neighbours and make a difference in their communities. Block reps do this in many different ways; from raising local concerns with the council and campaigning to get issues resolved, to litter picking their area and passing on important information to their neighbours.

Tenant Repairs Panel

The group have been updated on some new additions to the Repairs department, including a voids inspector, who will carry out an inspection when a tenant gives notice, to ensure that any outstanding rechargeable repairs are made by the tenant before they move out. They are also continuing to review the repairs pages on the council website, to make sure that they are clear and easy for tenants to understand.

Housing Annual Report

As we plan ahead for this year's Annual Report, we would love to hear your thoughts and ideas about what you would like to see in the magazine. Suggestions so far include:

- Tenants stories about how you and their neighbours got through lockdown this year, or any new skills you learnt.
- Southampton estates over the years - do you have any local photos from the past?
- Question time - do you have a question you would like to see answered in the Annual Report?



Do get in touch if you have any stories, photos or ideas to share.

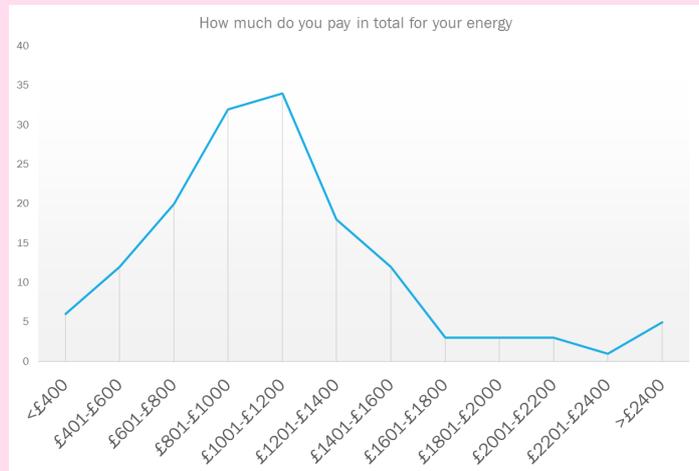
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Tenant Resource Group—Heating Survey

A big thank you to everyone who returned a survey about their heating and energy costs. The Resource Group were overwhelmed with the response. Using the results of the data they could see that the amount that tenants pay for their energy costs range from £300 to £3600 per year.

The group have recently fed back the results to senior managers and have

used the results to push the council to invest in tackling fuel poverty and encourage more investment to make buildings more efficient to help save tenants money. You can view the results of the survey here: www.easymapmaker.com/map/TRGEnergyCostsSoton



Tenant Scrutiny Panel

The group have worked alongside the City Services Team to approve the updated Service Commitments for maintaining green spaces as well as the new Summer season forms for our Green Space Monitors to use. They have also reviewed recently updates policies and procedures, for example looking at how we deal with recycling bin contamination. Another key area the panel has been feeding into is the recent Complaints procedure, with a recommendation that staff received more training on dealing with housing complaints.

Tenant Inspectors

The group are now well into their latest inspection, looking at the issue of the stigmatisation of those living in council housing. They have interviewed various managers from the different teams within housing and are finishing off a survey to send out to tenants and staff to get your views on this interesting subject.

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National Housing Ombudsman Panel

The Housing Ombudsman Service has set up its first Residents Panel, made up of 600 residents from housing providers across the country—including 2 representatives from Southampton! Frank Boulton and Vicky Lee Egerton were successfully recruited to the group which will help to give a tenant voice and improve openness and accessibility, as the Ombudsman makes plans for the coming 3 years. The role of the Ombudsman is to improve landlord services and the tenants' experiences through complaints.



Dealing with Complaints at SCC Housing

We know that things don't always go as they should, and we want tenants to know that if they are not happy with their Housing service, they can raise a complaint feeling confident that they will be listened to, and that the issue will be quickly resolved. We also want to make sure that we are using the complaints we receive in a positive way, helping us spot the service areas where we need to make changes or improvements. If you need to put forward a complaint, you can do so by whichever means suits you—whether that is by letter or email, telephone or in person. To find out more about the complaints process and how we are looking to improve this for Housing, visit: http://www.southampton.gov.uk/images/complaint-handling-code-self-assessment-form-final_tcm63-435908.pdf

Tenants Tell Us

Thanks to all those tenants who have signed up to Tenants Tell Us - short and snappy online surveys each month about a whole range of Housing issues. We are pleased to say that this has now launched, with our first survey looking at tenant priorities for the home and community;



- 130 tenants responded.
- The top priority in the home was the external aspects, such as door and window replacement.
- The top priority in the community was safety related items, such as lighting and CCTV.

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Social Housing White Paper Workshop

Southampton tenants took part in an interesting workshop in March to find out about the recent White Paper—the government’s charter for Social Housing. A rep from the organisation TPAS talked the group through the 7 key areas covered in the White Paper—from building safety and the standard of your home, to complaints and being respected and listened to as a tenant. Tenants were invited to share their thoughts and experiences for each area.

Keep your Details Up to Date



We recently wrote out to all our involved tenants with a new ‘Get Involved Form’ to make sure we have all your latest up to date contact details, and to see whether there are any new groups or activities you would like to take part in. A reminder to return this if you’ve not yet had the chance.

New statement on Vexatious Tenants and Tenant Engagement

We have recently introduced the following statement for our activities;
“Any SCC Tenants and Leaseholders who are on, or are added to the Council’s Vexatious List and / or Incident List will not be able to engage in any of the Tenant Engagement supported groups, roles or activities, while on these lists.”

Contact the Team

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