

Castle Morpeth Housing

Quality homes,
thriving communities

@home

Issue 2 Summer 2008



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Welcome to the summer edition of our new Castle Morpeth Housing quarterly newsletter, @home!

A lot has been happening over the past couple of months, most notably work has begun, as scheduled, on our extensive improvement programme with residents in Stobhill and Lynemouth receiving new UPVC windows and doors.

As part of our drive to improve services, 50% of tenants will be receiving a priority and satisfaction survey. We would like to urge all who receive this survey to fill it in and return to us to ensure we do the best for you.

I would like to thank all the tenants who came along to our two discussion groups held in May which have helped us to formulate the questions for this survey - the results of which will be released later in the year.

We have also appointed the Bell Group to deliver our four year painting contract, which will polish up communal areas and the exteriors of flats and sheltered schemes throughout the borough.

For any further information on what has been happening please read through the newsletter or check out our website www.castlemorpethhousing.co.uk.

Tina Drury, managing director

Noticeboard

Paypoints

We hope that you are finding your new payment card easy to use. The cards are in place to make paying your bills quicker and easier than ever before. For your added convenience, please find below a list of Paypoints throughout Castle Morpeth.

Woolworths in Morpeth

Malthurst's Service Station in Morpeth

Gill's mini-market, Lynemouth

Bank-top stores Ellington

Lifestyle Express, Widdrington

Stobhill Off Licence

Co-ops in Hadston, Lynemouth and Pegswood

All post offices with PayPoint facilities

Tenancy reminder

Thank you to everyone who has already returned their signed tenancy agreements. We would like to remind those of you who have yet to return your tenancy agreements – a booklet, signed by each named tenant – to return them as soon as possible.

New appointment

We are pleased to announce the appointment of Philip Soden as Castle Morpeth Housing's welfare benefits advisor. Philip will provide debt management and benefits advice to our tenants. Look out for the next edition in which we will include further information about his role and how to get help from him.

Annual tenants' conference

This year's annual tenants' conference will be held on Saturday, September 20th at the Lancastrian Suite in Gateshead. It will be bigger and better than ever, as tenants from across the Isos group will be invited. If you are interested in attending, please see the enclosed flyer for more information. We urge everyone to act quickly, as places are limited. Transport will be provided across the borough.

Allowances for board members

If you weren't already aware, Castle Morpeth Housing has a board of directors who are responsible for making decisions about the policies we have in place. Fulfilling their role on a voluntary basis, members make an important contribution and bring in their individual expertise for the benefit of Castle Morpeth Housing.

During a recent meeting, the board discussed the rise in organisations, within the housing sector, which now offer payments to its board members.

They have now agreed that they will make allowances of £7500 per annum for the chairman and £3000 per annum for each other member. This is in recognition of current housing corporation guidance and the need to retain board members who make a valuable contribution to the company. It will also help recruit other members to fill future vacancies.

If you would like to comment, please contact our managing director, Tina Drury on **0845 1170020**.

Castle Morpeth gets a facelift

We are delighted to report that, after internal works began as scheduled on June 16th, our major improvement programme is now fully underway. A 'partnering charter' was signed on June 13th, with all of the organisations involved officially signing up to the next four years of work.

External work is also continuing throughout the borough, with windows and doors being fitted by Warmseal for completion by 2010.

Our appointed contractors, FHM North East and Mears, are going to great lengths to make sure tenants feel informed and involved in the process. As a result, all residents will receive an improvement handbook before work begins on their home, which provides information on what to expect, who to contact and health and safety details.

To help minimise disruption whilst work is taking place, Mears, which is currently working in the Lynemouth area, will provide a 'comfort home' - a fully equipped caravan where residents can go to watch TV in a quiet environment.

Both contractors are 'Tenant Participation Advisory Service' accredited, which means that they have been recognised as being highly committed to tenant involvement.



They have also held very successful 'choice days' where tenants went along to select their kitchen units, worktops and handles.

Exterior decoration work will be carried out in communal areas, flats and sheltered housing by the Bell Group. The company conducted a survey of all of our properties in the borough, with work due to begin later this year, starting with the homes needing the most attention. ICI Dulux Paint will be supplying the paint and ensuring the quality control of this phase.



From the left, sitting: Colin Middlemass, Mears Construction; Sean McKeon, associate director, Faithful and Gould; Tina Drury, Castle Morpeth Housing; Steve McCoy, commercial director, FHM North East.

Back row; Mike Reynolds, managing surveyor, Faithful and Gould and Andrew Kitchen, Castle Morpeth Housing.

Ask Angeline...



“In the last edition of @home I was thrilled to see that you’re conducting community walkabouts. It’s inspired me to become more involved with the needs of my neighbourhood. What can I do to help solve any problems in my area?”

Angeline says: That’s a very good question and I believe that a residents’ association could be the answer.

Resident associations help with a number of things such as allocating funding to improve local facilities and enabling people to better interact with their neighbours. Sometimes it only takes a few people to get things up and running, then others will join in. There are two types of groups; informal and formal.

Informal

You will need to find out who is interested, so talk to your neighbours and see who would like to get involved. You will need to find a venue for meetings; perhaps you could hire a local hall or room? Don’t forget - you will also need to advertise your meetings so make some posters, distribute flyers or tell others to spread the word.

Formal

If you have been meeting for a while as an informal group, you may want to become formalised and set up a committee. You must have a minimum of five people and will need to elect a chairperson, secretary and treasurer. You will also need to adopt a constitution, but it is not as difficult as it seems.

I would be pleased to support any residents’ association and will be more than happy to advise you on how to set up your own committee, help you write a constitution, book venues or promote your meetings. Just call me on our customer services number - **0845 117 0020**.

If you have a question for Angeline, then please write to us at Castle Morpeth Housing, PO Box 240, Morpeth NE61 9BU or email: info@castlemorpethhousing.co.uk

Down your way – Hadston House, Hadston



Hadston House is located in the centre of Hadston, Northumberland and is a community centre which provides youth work and activities for residents in the Chevington area.

For over 4 years it has been run by manager Michael Spears (pictured) and boasts a brand new computer suite with internet access, community library, café and operates a drop in centre every Wednesday morning.

As part of its dedication to young people, Hadston House organises a youth work session every Tuesday from 6 to 8pm. It also organises several day trips to a mixture of recreational and educational attractions including Woodhorn Colliery, Blue Reef Aquarium, Newcastle’s Discovery Museum, bowling and ice skating.

Michael said: “Hadston House is engaging for today’s youths and helps to bridge the gap between generations in a fun and friendly environment. People from across the Chevington area continue to use Hadston House for its different activities or for something as simple as a cup of coffee with friends. It’s proving to be a nice addition to the local community.”

Donna joins the ranks

Following an excellent response to our advert in the last newsletter, we are pleased to introduce Donna Dennis as our new tenant board member.

Donna, from Mitford, is one of four tenants who will join the 12 strong team of Castle Morpeth Housing board members. She will be involved at the highest level of decision-making by representing the views of the tenants.

With over 30 expressions of interest, we were delighted with the high calibre of candidates and would like to thank everyone who applied.



Meet the team

In this edition of @home we take a look at the people who make up our customer services team.

Headed by manager June Bucas, the six strong customer services team is responsible for answering the phone and spends a lot of time logging repairs and working with Milecastle Housing's responsive repairs team. Customer services assistants David Sutcliffe, Nicola Colley, Elaine Henderson and Kay Cashmore also deal with face to face

queries in the council's one stop shop - First Call - in Morpeth and help with more general queries about other housing matters such as rents and property allocations.

The final member of the team is community involvement officer Angeline Rochford. Angeline is heavily involved in a number of projects such as arranging this year's tenant's conference, planning road shows and coordinating the monthly tenants' forums. She also arranges group discussions, surveys, attends the community walkabouts and plays a large role in the construction of this newsletter.

To speak to a member of the team, please call our customer services number 0845 117 0200.



(From left to right) David Sutcliffe, Nicola Colley, June Bucas, Angeline Rochford, Elaine Henderson and Kay Cashmore

Tenants' forum update

Our tenants' forum has been working hard on a number of projects recently, notably an important satisfaction and priority survey, which 50% of our tenants will receive as this newsletter goes to print.

This work combines our statutory survey requirements with some questions on your priorities for our services. We have carried out a number of focus groups with tenants to help us formulate this list of priorities. Thank you to everyone who attended.

Members of the forum have also been present at our various repairs, communications and anti social behaviour sub-groups. The repairs sub-group helped us to narrow

down kitchen choices (including units, handles and work tops) for our major improvement programme and will continue to play a part in monitoring its progress.

Members of the repairs sub-group attended a focus session to discuss their expectations of the improvement process at the recent Chartered Institute of Housing conference, alongside one of our appointed contractors, Frank Haslam Milan (FHM) North East.

The communications sub-group helped us to develop ideas for this magazine and will also be helping to plan the programme for this year's residents' event.

Finally, the anti social behaviour sub-group held its first meeting to look at what they hope to achieve in the future.

At the click of a mouse

Castle Morpeth Housing has been working closely with UK Online Centres (UKOL) to provide free computer and internet facilities to all residents via the Castlemorpethonline Project.

Through a number of IT training programmes, participants can learn how to access the internet, use email, access their local council online facilities and fill in job applications – just to name a few.

Castlemorpethonline operates from seven local community-based centres in Widdrington, Hadston, Morpeth, Stannington, Pegswood and Stamfordham.

Project co-ordinator, **Jo Cripps**, said:

An estimated 48% of people in the North East are still offline and missing out on a fantastic resource. We aim to give these residents the opportunity to brush up on their skills in an age where IT is a large part of everyday life. All our courses are free - all you need to give is a little of your time to open up a whole new world.

So, why not come along to one of the centres, listed below, to see what it's all about, or contact Jo on **01670 863 007** for further information.

Widdrington (ATAC - David Mather House)

Mile Road
Widdrington Station
Morpeth
NE61 5QL
Tel: 01670 791808

Tel: 01670 761537 Stannington (St Mary's Church)

Church Lane
Stannington
Tel: 01670 789006

Pegswood (Pegswood Community Project)

Longhirst Road
Pegswood
Morpeth
NE61 6XG
Tel: 01670 512185

Hadston (Coquet Children's Centre)

Bondicar Road
Hadston
Morpeth
NE65 9SR
Tel: 01670 761496

Stobhill (Castle Morpeth Disability Association)

Stobhill Community Info Shop
37 Shields Road
Stobhill
NE61 1NS
Tel: 01670 789006

Stamfordham (Village Hall)

Stamfordham
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE18 0LA
Tel: 01661 886432

Hadston (Hadston House Community Centre & Library)

Bondicar Road
Hadston
Morpeth
NE65 9SR



ukonlinecentres

Savings a' flowing

Does your home have a water meter? If not you could be missing out on a flood of savings. Many people, particularly those who live in smaller homes, have found that a water meter has helped to reduce the costs of their household bill by up to £100 per year. It's quite simple to set up, with meters usually installed free of charge by Northumbrian Water.

If you're interested please ring Northumbrian Water on **0845 7335566**, which will advise on your particular circumstances and provide you with a no obligation information pack.

If you choose to install a meter you will need to inform us - our full postal address can be found on the back of this newsletter.



Lights, camera, cover!

We are calling on all residents to show us their photography talents by offering you the chance to get your work on the front cover of future editions of Castle Morpeth Housing @Home.

All we ask is that you send in your quality up to date photos of family members and friends taking part in activities within the local community. To get an idea of what we're looking for check out our current cover photo.

Print photos should be approximately 21cm x 29.7cm and digital images should be approx 300dpi with the same dimensions as print photos.

So, to get your chance at gracing the cover send your photos to Castle Morpeth Housing, PO Box 240, Morpeth NE61 9BU or **email info@castlemorpethhousing.co.uk**

Spot the difference

Can you find all eight differences between these pictures of 100 year old resident Agnes Potts with Castle Morpeth Housing Managing Director Tina Drury? The picture was

taken during Agnes' birthday celebrations held in March at Renwick House residential home. We will reveal the answers in the next edition of the newsletter.



