

July 2022



TENANT NEWS

In this issue:

NEIGHBOURHOOD AND COMMUNITY

OUR ANNUAL REPORT SUMMARY

MONEY SAVING TIPS

MEET THE REPS

...and lots more!



RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT PANEL
APPROVED 

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

What do you think of Tenant News?

We're always looking for ways to improve Tenant News and your feedback plays an important part in this.

Please take a few minutes to complete our survey at online1.snapsurveys.com/tenantnews or by scanning the QR code opposite. Alternatively you can fill in this paper version of the survey, tear it out and send it back to us in the freepost envelope provided.



The survey is open until Friday 2 September - we look forward to hearing what you think

1 How do you rate Tenant News overall?

Please tick one box only

- Very good
- Good
- Average
- Poor
- Very poor

2 How much of the newsletter do you read?

Please tick one box only

- All
- Most
- Some

3 How do you rate each of the following aspects of Tenant News?

Please tick one box for each aspect

	Very good	Good	Average	Poor	Very poor
Quality of content	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quality of writing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Design and layout	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Photography	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

4 Do you have any other comments or suggestions on how Tenant News could be improved or for articles you'd like to see included? If so, please write in below

In memory of Brian Law



We were saddened to hear of the recent passing of Brian Law. Brian was Vice Chair of the former Tenant Consultative Group and his contributions over the years were hugely valued. He took an active role in organising and judging the annual garden competition.

Brian will be sadly missed by all the residents and staff who worked with him, and we will remember him fondly.

Keeping your garden tidy

If you have your own garden, it's down to you to keep it tidy. With summer now in full force, it's the perfect time to start doing all those little jobs to keep your garden looking its best.

You might be able to do this yourself or with a helping hand from friends and family. To keep our neighbourhoods looking pristine and well-kept, here are just some of the things to remember:

- regularly cut your grass - start with a high cut once a week and then lower as needed
- trim shrubs and hedges
- weed any window boxes and planters, reviewing any frost damage as you go
- sweep away old leaves and debris
- free your garden areas from rubbish, furniture and white goods
- keep on top of pet waste and remove it promptly

If you have a shared (communal) garden, the council is responsible for cutting the grass but it is still down to the residents who share the garden to keep it free of rubbish.

Don't sit in silence - get help and advice!

Are you experiencing excessive nuisance from your neighbour? Are you scared and not sure what to do?

If you are, please don't sit in silence. We deal with anti-social behaviour with complete confidence. Low level anti-social behaviour is dealt with by our tenancy team. If it can't be resolved at an early stage and there is evidence to show a high level of nuisance, the tenancy enforcement team will investigate further and try to resolve the issue before taking tenancy or legal action. In order to take action, it's important we provide the best evidence in court so you may be asked to provide diary sheets, video evidence and a potential statement. In more serious matters, you may be required to attend court but if you do, we'll always support you through this process.

If you report incidents that aren't within our control, we'll guide you to the correct organisation who can help. We work closely with Kent Police and can only act if you report it. Don't suffer in silence - if you report it, we may be able to stop it from happening again.

REMEMBER

You are responsible for your own behaviour as well as your children's behaviour and any visitors that attend your property.

Cuckooing: what is it?

Cuckooing is when gangs of drug dealers take over the home of a vulnerable person through violence and intimidation to use it as their base for selling and/or manufacturing drugs.

Feeling the squeeze?

Money is tight for a lot of people at the moment and the worrying events going on across the world are pushing prices up higher - gas, electricity, petrol and food are all going up.



Here are a few tips that might help you save a bit of money:

- Make a list of all the money you have coming in each month and everything you'll spend each month. Split your spending into what needs to be spent and what you want to spend. If you can't afford everything you want to spend, decide what matters most that month and leave the other things for another month
- See if you can get a smart meter installed to help you work out which appliances cost you the most to run and where possible, use those less to help reduce your energy bills
- Now the weather is getting warmer, dry your washing outside or on an indoor clothes airer rather than using a tumble dryer
- See if you can get a cheaper deal on your mobile phone, broadband, house phone and TV subscriptions
- Rather than doing your weekly shop in the same supermarket every week, shop around - see which supermarkets have got the best deals and special offers on what you need

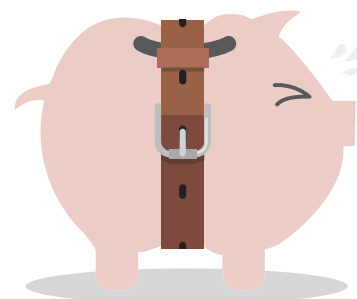
Struggling with your rent?

Your rent is a priority bill and should be the first one you pay. If you're struggling to keep up with rent payments, our income and money advice team can help you with free and confidential advice to help you get back on track with your payments. We can offer advice on benefits and maximising your income, and can also direct you to specialist agencies who may be able to offer further help. You can contact the team at [canterbury.gov.uk/contact](https://www.canterbury.gov.uk/contact) or on **01227 862 142**.

Need help with other bills?

You can get free, impartial advice from a number of organisations, including:

- Citizens Advice Bureau: visit [citizensadvice.org.uk](https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk) or call **08001 448 848**
- Step Change debt charity: visit [stepchange.org](https://www.stepchange.org) or call **08001 381 111**
- National Debt Line: visit [nationaldebtline.org](https://www.nationaldebtline.org) or call **08088 084 000**
- Kent Savers Credit Union: visit [kentsavers.co.uk](https://www.kentsavers.co.uk) or call **03333 219 050**
- MoneyHelper: visit [moneyhelper.org.uk](https://www.moneyhelper.org.uk) or call **08001 387 777**



Energy efficiency

Energy costs have already gone up and this winter, they're forecast to be much higher than previous years. More than ever, we all want to find ways to keep the costs down and operate our homes as energy efficiently as possible.

Heating our homes typically accounts for **50-75%** of annual electricity and gas costs. Heating hot water is typically the next biggest proportion of the energy costs. Finding ways to keep costs down and take advantage of available help is vital.

There are lots of easy ways to cut unnecessary energy use at home. The Centre for Sustainable Energy has published a list of helpful advice at cse.org.uk/advice.

Depending on your circumstances, you might also be able to apply for grants or benefits to help with your fuel bills. Find out more at citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/energy.

What the council is doing to improve energy efficiency

The council has declared a climate emergency and has a programme of work to help improve energy efficiency:

- we're improving the energy efficiency of over 200 council homes each year when tenancies change
- at the moment, we're installing a batch of five air source heat pumps into council homes
- we're implementing a rolling programme of improvements to doors, windows, roofs and heating systems
- overall, council housing has higher energy efficiency than private sector housing (according to the national Energy Performance Certificate register)

Did you know?

Air source heat pumps are more efficient, have lower carbon emissions than gas boilers and are a key part of the government's plans to help tackle climate change.



REVIEWING OUR HOUSING FOR OLDER PEOPLE

A councillor working group is currently reviewing the housing we provide specifically for older people.



The things they are looking at include:

- the types of housing older people want or need to live in
- how much housing specifically for older people is needed
- how we can work more closely with other organisations such as Social Services and healthcare providers to better meet residents' needs
- how other councils and social landlords provide housing services for older people
- the age, size and condition of our housing for older people and how much needs to be spent on repairs and maintenance

The working group is due to make its recommendations later in the year. If you live in housing specifically designated for older people, rest assured we will keep you informed throughout the process.

Annual

HOME

The Regulator of Social Housing's **Home Standard** says it expects us as a landlord to provide you with a good quality home and to offer value for money with our repairs and maintenance service.

This year, we have:

SPENT £6.2 MILLION ON WORK TO IMPROVE YOUR HOMES



REPLACED
44 KITCHENS



REPLACED
39 BATHROOMS



REPLACED
74 EXTERNAL DOORS



REPLACED WINDOWS
IN 25 HOMES



REPLACED
6 ROOFS



INSTALLED 17
WETROOMS

How are we doing?

How are we doing?	Our target	Our result
Routine day-to-day repairs completed on time	98%	98.24%
Day-to-day repair appointments kept	96%	95.15%
Routine heating repairs completed on time	98%	94.42%
Heating repair appointments kept	95%	99.92%

Where we need to improve

Mears, our main repairs contractor, has been told to improve its performance and we are keeping a close eye to make sure it does. We have recently brought all our housing contracts managers together into one specialist team which works closely with our on-the-ground repairs staff. This should give us better oversight and control of contracts and result in improved performance.

Report

2021/22

This is a summary of our performance over the last year. If you'd like a copy of the full annual report, please contact Victoria and Mike at getinvolved@canterbury.gov.uk or on **01227 862 059** to ask for a copy to be sent to you.

TENANCY

The Regulator of Social Housing's **Tenancy Standard** says it expects us as a landlord to let our homes fairly, transparently and efficiently.

How are we doing?

Average days to relet empty homes

Our target

16.5 days

Our result

29.93 days

Where we need to improve

The main delays in letting empty homes have been caused by contractors not meeting the standards expected of them. This has a knock-on effect because other contractors can't then get in to do the work they need to do until the initial work has been finished.

As mentioned under the Home Standard, we have made several changes to help improve the performance of our contractors. We're also planning to carry out a review of the processes and procedures followed when letting empty homes.

On 1 April 2022 there were **2,809** households on the Housing Need Register ("waiting list") wanting a council home.

The total current tenant rent arrears owed to us at the end of March 2022 worked out as **3.5%** of the total rent due for the year.

NEIGHBOURHOOD AND COMMUNITY

The Regulator of Social Housing's **Neighbourhood and Community Standard** says it expects us as a landlord to keep your estates and communal areas clean and safe, as well as working with others to promote wellbeing and to deal with anti-social behaviour.



CLEARED 14 GARDENS



DEALT WITH 168 ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR CASES

This year, we have:

- cleared **14** gardens through our community payback garden scheme
- dealt with **168** anti-social behaviour cases

We always take the appropriate measures required to address anti-social behaviour and we work with those affected and with other organisations to resolve issues including the council's Legal and Community Safety teams, Kent Police, Kent Fire and Rescue Service and Kent County Council Social Services.

INVOLVEMENT AND EMPOWERMENT

The Regulator of Social Housing's **Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard** says it expects us as a landlord to give you the information you need, to set out a clear approach to dealing with complaints and to give you a wide range of ways you can get involved and influence the housing service.

This year, we have:



HELD SIX MEETINGS WITH OUR INVOLVED TENANTS AND WILL MEET EVERY THREE MONTHS



LAUNCHED PANEL OF ARMCHAIR ADVISORS



SENT OUT THREE NEWSLETTERS



VISITED 16 INDEPENDENT LIVING SCHEMES



ORGANISED ANNUAL GARDEN COMPETITION



DEALT WITH 138 COMPLAINTS, 48.11% OF WHICH WERE REPLIED TO ON TIME

How are we doing?

Number of involved tenants and leaseholders

Our target

32

Our result

53

Residents satisfied the council listens to and acts on their views

50%

42.3%

Residents who feel well informed about things that affect them

61%

64.3%

Where we need to improve

Over the last year we've introduced new ways of getting involved with the service to help us understand your views, including the Resident Engagement Panel and Armchair Advisors.

In the coming months we're also planning to introduce our Community Champions. They will work with housing and resident engagement staff to help us identify issues on our estates and make sure they're safe, friendly and tidy places where people are proud to live.

On top of this, we are in the process of moving to a system where a team of officers each look after dedicated geographic areas of the district. This will help build and strengthen relationships between residents and council staff.

We hope the changes we're putting in place will send a strong message that we're committed to listening to the issues you face and working with you to help tackle them.

Meet the Resident Engagement Panel



The Resident Engagement Panel is made up of 14 tenants from across the district. Calling ourselves 'REPs', we will regularly monitor the performance of the council's housing service and work to make sure tenants' voices are heard.

We will also work with the council to suggest improvements, review different parts of the housing service and organise and deliver the annual garden competition.

Ultimately, we want to work with the council to make sure where you live is as safe and as nice as it can be. We aim to meet as a group every three months to discuss a variety of issues, but also arrange separate meetings for specific service reviews.

The REPs are:

- Caroline** from Grimshill estate
- Elaine** from Spring Lane estate
- Geoff** and **Rosalind** from Spring Lane estate
- Jo** from Thanington **Chair**
- John** from London Road estate
- Liz** from Telford Court
- Margaret** from Holm Oak Close
- Maureen** from St James' Gardens
- Mike** from Northgate
- Paul** from Wincheap
- Sheila** from Lower Hardres **Vice Chair**
- Tammy** from Adisham
- Victoria** from Hales Place estate

If you'd like to contact the REPs, email us at rep@canterbury.gov.uk or call the council's resident engagement staff Mike and Victoria on **01227 862 059** and they will pass your query to one of us to look into.

Meet Victoria...

'I have always wanted to be part of a team in my community. This encouraged me to join the REP for Canterbury and its surrounding areas. Additionally, as a minority in a majority community, it is vital for the council to hear tenants' inclusive and diverse voices. I enjoy our meetings, feeling valued and respected. I personally feel safe in my community and believe the council is listening to its tenants.'

Meet Sheila...

'Hello! I am Sheila King, vice chair for REPs. I live in one of the forgotten villages near Canterbury with few council properties. I enjoy helping the tenants get what they need from the council. I also organise the annual Garden Competition!'

Meet Liz...

'I moved into Telford Court in June 2011 with my little dog Casper. I am also a 'REP' and find being part of this panel interesting and informative. It can take time to achieve meaningful results, but it is vital to hear other residents' views. I have always tried to speak for those who cannot, or will not, speak for themselves and hope this can continue.'

Armchair Advisors

Would you like to get involved in your housing service without sacrificing too much free time?

Becoming an Armchair Advisor is flexible and easy. It offers a way for tenants to give us their views online. We use these views to get feedback on policies, service standards and other key issues.

If you are a Canterbury City Council tenant who is passionate about improving the service we provide, we would love to hear from you. You can register your interest in becoming an online Armchair Advisor by emailing us at getinvolved@canterbury.gov.uk.

Tenant Participation & Advisory Service (TPAS)

We've joined up with the Tenant Participation & Advisory Service (TPAS), a not-for-profit organisation which promotes, supports and champions tenant involvement.

As a tenant, you can access the TPAS website and create your own TPAS account to instantly access resources, advice and information from your mobile device or computer. Visit tpas.org.uk/landlord/tenant/create-member/326 to join.

