

News

For tenants and leaseholders of Solihull Community Housing

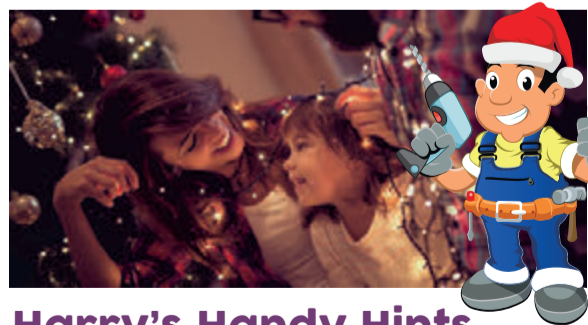


Winter Edition 2018

Merry Christmas
to all our readers!



There's so much in it...



Harry's Handy Hints

His tips will keep you safe during the festive season... Page 4



Christmas rubbish

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Chair's Christmas Message

As we wave goodbye to 2018 it seems the right time to share some of my thoughts following my first few months as Chair of the Solihull Community Housing Board.

Firstly, I still have a huge amount to learn. Whilst I have met many of the SCH team I have only scratched the surface of all the activities and services that SCH undertakes for customers and the wider community.

My first impressions are very positive. There is a huge amount of experience, commitment and enthusiasm from our staff. Colleagues have though been honest about the challenges they face.

My aim is to see, and be seen, out and about. That is the only way I will begin to understand what makes SCH tick. I also plan to spend more time talking to tenants and residents to hear things from their perspective.

Recent customer surveys have highlighted a number of areas that we must try and improve. It is my role, and that of the SCH Board, to help the Executive Management Team make this happen. We've already taken steps towards this in recent months with our 'Join the Conversation' exercise. Thanks to all the tenants and leaseholders who've found time to talk with us. You can read more details about this on Page 7.

Like all new Board Chairs, I have been keen to make changes to how our Board operates. It's important that as much work as possible occurs between Board meetings so we have the time to think strategically and focus on the issues that really matter. We need to keep Solihull Council and the tenants and leaseholders' voice at the centre of our discussions.

I have been highly impressed with the Council's plans to close gaps in education attainment, employment, crime and health across different parts of the borough. There is a real feeling that change is in the air and I hope SCH will play a full part in helping to make this happen.

I welcome feedback from everyone so if you have a view, a concern or just want to share your thoughts please email me at richardhyde@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk

Have a great Christmas and Happy New Year.

Best wishes

Richard Hyde

Chair of the SCH Board



■ You can email Richard at richardhyde@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk

Annual Report - Correction

Unfortunately there was an error in the Annual Report carried in our Autumn newsletter.

On the page containing financial information about SCH two headings used to show the spending breakdown were incorrect. The amount of money was correct.

Managing Your Home should have been called Home Improvements (covering major improvement projects and new build) £14,433,000 (or 32p in every £ we spend).



Home Improvements
£14,433,000

Supervision and Management should have been Managing Your Home (looking after estates, tenancy management, allocations, antisocial behaviour and rent collection / arrears management) £11,042,000 (or 24p in every £ we spend).



Managing Your Home
£11,042,000

We apologise for this mistake.

Thanks for Sharing Your Views

A good, quick, and efficient job

Congratulations to the recent winners of our Share Your Views prize draw.

Mrs Munro from Chelmsley Wood was met by Mandy, our Engagement Officer and received £50 of Love to Shop vouchers. She was really pleased and already has plans on what she will be spending the money on.

Our Repairs Team manager Carl presented Mrs Edwards from Kingshurst with £50 of Love to Shop vouchers. Mrs Edwards completed a repairs survey and was then entered into the draw. She was pleasantly surprised to win.

For your chance to win £50, visit our website www.solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk and give us your feedback.

Everyone who completes one of our Share Your Views surveys is automatically entered into one of our free prize draws.

Brilliant quick and very nice

Very polite and professional



Christmas hours

Our offices will be closed from:

- 24 – 26 December 2018
- 31 December 2018 – 1 January 2019

For emergencies please call
0121 717 1515



Don't miss out on our festive rent prize draws!

Christmas can be an expensive time of year, so we are offering you the chance to win one of three great Christmas treats.

To be in with a chance of winning you just need to make sure your rent account is up to date.

And if you pay your rent by Direct Debit then you are automatically entered into the draw!

Don't forget, if you are having difficulty paying your rent, we have dedicated staff on hand all year round to help you.

■ If you need support please call our Money Advice Team on 0121 717 1515.

DECEMBER 2018



Christmas Prize Draw – if you have a clear rent account on 16 December you could be in with a chance of winning one of four £250 prizes.



Rent Free Week – if you have a clear rent account on 23 December you can enjoy a rent free week from 24 December.



Quarterly Prize Draw – if you have a clear rent account on 30 December you could be the winner of our £200 prize draw.



Harry's handy hints



Top tips to keep you and your home safe over the festive period.

- **At Christmas most homes are filled with festive decorations.** It's important to keep these away from fires and other sources of heat. Never leave burning candles unattended and remember to put them out before going to bed. Never put candles on a Christmas tree.
- **Don't overload electrical circuits.** Replace any strings of lights with worn or broken cords or loose bulb connections. Always turn off Christmas lights before leaving your home or going to bed.



- **Keep a light on when you're out.** Keeping a light on when you go out gives the impression someone is home. Opening and closing curtains at the appropriate time of day and not advertising on social media when you are out will help keep criminals away.
- **Keep presents out of sight.** During Christmas most homes are filled with new presents and goodies. Always keep these out of sight! Avoid leaving presents under the Christmas tree and remember to lock windows and doors before leaving your home.

- **Get covered.** For burglars and thieves, Christmas is a prime time for finding lots of expensive goods in one place. Remember it is your responsibility to insure your furniture, belongings and decorations against fire, theft, vandalism or water damage. If you haven't got home contents insurance make sure you get it in time for Christmas.
- **To apply for home contents insurance please visit our website and download and print a form. Or call 0121 717 1515 and we can send you a form in the post.**

HI, WE'RE E-CAR CLUB!



Tired of waiting for buses, and forking out on taxis? Ever needed a car for a day, or even just an hour?

Join E-Car Club today, Solihull's first pay-as-you-go electric car hire, and gain access to our impressive fleet of brand new, fully loaded electric vehicles.

- ✓ Available 24/7 in locations across North Solihull
- ✓ Young drivers (19+) welcome
- ✓ International driving licenses accepted
- ✓ **£15** lifetime membership + **£15 FREE** driving credit

www.ecarclub.co.uk/hello-Solihull

From
£3.50
per hour



Paying your rent online now easier than ever!

If you pay your rent to us online you may have noticed some changes recently.

The old Civica WebPay Public system has been replaced by a more modern Civica eStore.

This will help put you in control like never before.

A registered user of the new system will be able to:

- **Register their card details**
- **Have access to payment history**
- **Save regular payments to Home Page**
- **Store and amend account details**

If you don't currently pay your rent this way, but would like to do so, please contact us on 0121 717 1515.



Your rubbish is your responsibility



As we approach the festive season many of us will have more rubbish than usual.

Rubbish can be a health and safety risk if it is not disposed of correctly. It can also be a fire risk so we need your help to reduce it.

Let's work together to keep you and neighbours safe by following the correct waste removal procedure.

It is vital that you do not leave any type of rubbish, including black bags and bulky items, on communal landings, stairwells, in chute rooms or outside the block.

Please put black bags down the bin chute. Remember do not overfill the bags because this will block the chute.

As you can see from our photos, we have a major problem with Christmas rubbish.

Please help us to avoid that happening again this year.

Do not throw any rubbish out of your windows. This antisocial behaviour spoils the community we live in and increases the risk of fire when cigarette ends are thrown from windows.

Refuse collections for the high rises over Christmas and New Year will be on:

- **Monday 24 December**
- **Thursday 27 December**
- **Friday 28 December**
- **Monday 31 December**

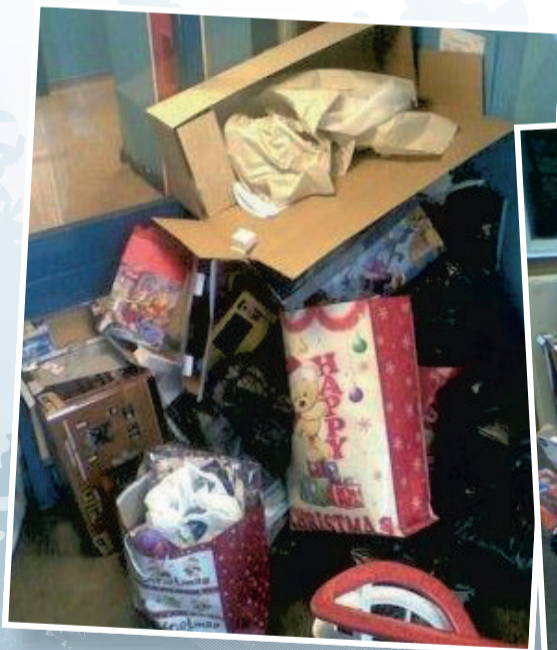
Normal service will resume on Wednesday 2 January 2019.

We will also be working with our block cleaners Wettons to remove excess rubbish as quickly as possible over the festive period.

There have been a number of bogus refuse collectors reported to us. Never pay a stranger to take rubbish from your home as this will probably be fly-tipped. If you have bulky items that you need to remove please ask for our Bulky Waste Collection service on 0121 717 1515.

We will be working hard to keep the streets tidy over Christmas but please help us by playing your part too.

- **We need your help to keep you and your neighbours safe and the environment tidy. Please dispose of your rubbish responsibly.**



Christmas rubbish dumped in communal areas



Making your homes better this year

It's been another busy year for our Capital Programmes Team. We want to show you some of the great work that has been completed and some exciting projects that are going on.

Our garage demolition project which has run for a year and half has now finished. We have demolished a total of 10 garage sites in both the North and South of the borough. We have created parking areas in some of the old garage sites for local residents to use.



The old garage site at Wildmoor Road and Plestowes Close is now a parking facility for residents



Here is an example of new windows fitted at Campden Green

Residents at Ellice Drive were really pleased with the finish on their homes



We are currently working with Oakleaf Commercial Services to carry out our window replacement programme. We are replacing windows in houses, bungalows and low rise buildings across Solihull.

Our cyclical maintenance works are also being carried out in North and South of the borough. Work has included new porches, guttering slabbing and fencing.

We have recently refurbished the flat roofs of Warwick and Chester Court. The work on both high rises took approximately four weeks. It was a difficult project as residents in the high rises shared the car parking facilities and the local shops and businesses also had interruptions during this period. We thank you for your patience. The good news is that the residents now have a water tight roof which has a 25-year guarantee!

The roofs being refurbished at Warwick and Chester Court





We're listening to what you've told us

Thank you to everyone who took the time to 'Join the Conversation' with us recently.

We were disappointed to see some of the tenant survey results earlier in the year. It is clear that there are things you feel we could be doing better.

And so in recent months we've launched 'Join the Conversation' – a massive engagement programme in which we listen to our tenants and try to find new ways of improving what we do.

Your input in this has been tremendous. We started by visiting each of our 37 high rises, speaking with almost 400 residents about their homes and communities.

From your feedback we have already been able to score some quick wins.

Of course there are longer term things that we're reviewing and will be able to report back to you on these early in the New Year.

We have now moved onto other areas, walking the streets, meeting residents and talking about your homes, services and communities. All our staff have joined in with our Estate Assistants and Housing Officers and supported by our management team, Board members and Chief Executive, Fiona Hughes.

Members of our Senior Management Team plan to stage some Facebook conversations

You Said	We Did
The high rises always have lots of rubbish around them	Our staff have responded with litter picks at all high rises - but we need tenants to do their bit too, by helping to keep our neighbourhoods clean
Some of our new homes are not always let in a good state	We're revisiting our standard for empty properties and talking to all new tenants
We sometimes fail to keep repairs appointments	We're focused on improvement in this area and keeping you better informed

with customers in the New Year. This will give you the chance to have your views and opinions heard at a senior level.

Thanks also to everyone who popped in to our special Drop-in Day at our Coppice Way office in Chelmsley Wood. Once again we had some great opinions expressed.

Your thoughts and views are important and help us shape things in the future for the benefit of all tenants. We care what you think and say and are always striving for ways to make our services better.



So far more than 250 customers have told us they would be pleased to work with us in the future so they can have a more direct input into what we do. That's great news! By working together we can help deliver homes and neighbourhoods that we would all be delighted to live in.

Home Hazard checks make you feel safer in your home

Liz Tomkins is feeling safe in her home for the first time in three years. And it's all thanks to our Wellbeing Team.

Mrs Tomkins, 69, is a little unsteady on her feet and has poor eyesight. It's been dangerous for her to get around the house, especially when having a shower as she was holding onto the shower head.

After several falls she contacted our Wellbeing Team to see if they could help. They carried out a Home Hazard Assessment and recommended equipment to help Mrs Tomkins around the house. They also fitted grab rails in the bathroom and outside the back door.

■ Call 0121 717 1515 to learn how our Wellbeing Team can help you.

Mrs Tomkins said: "I am absolutely thrilled with the work carried out and can't praise the staff enough. It's a fantastic service that I didn't know existed for people who are not social housing tenants. It literally made me feel safe. Everyone needs to know about the Home Hazard checks!"

Mrs Tomkins' situation is a familiar one. A third of people over the age of 65 and half of those over 85 have a fall every year. Falls can cause serious injuries and long term complications. However, a large number of falls are preventable and there are plenty of things people can do to reduce the risk of falling.

Here are our top tips:

- 1** Be safe at home. 6 out of 10 falls happen in the home or garden. Be aware of trip hazards such as clutter, worn carpets and loose rugs, poor lighting, damaged driveways and loose paving.
- 2** Be Active. Regular exercise can improve balance, muscle strength, mobility and help maintain bone strength.
- 3** Tell someone if you fall. Even near misses, loss of balance and trips are important warning signs. Friends, family and your GP can provide help and support to make sure a fall doesn't happen again.
- 4** Have regular health checks. Eyesight and hearing tests, medication reviews and foot care help ensure that you remain steady.



Scrutiny Spotlight

Let me take this opportunity to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and best wishes for the coming year.

2019 promises to be another busy year for Scrutiny! But before I tell you about some of our plans, I'll give you a brief update on our work over the last few months.

You will be aware that Scrutiny has been reviewing how customers receive communication about the repairs they raise. We have gathered information from a number of teams including the Repairs team and the Contact Centre. We asked a lot of questions about how customers are kept informed about repairs they raise.

We are now pulling together all of the information collected. This will also form part of the ongoing 'Join the Conversation' work.

We are still collecting feedback, so if you have had a repair carried out recently and there are things that you think could be improved, please let us know.

You can send your comments by email to newsandviews@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk or call us on 0121 717 1515.

Complaints and Compliments is an area of particular interest for us. We have been looking at trends and the issues that crop up frequently. It's an important area of work and our focus is on what has been learnt and what changes have been made as a result of the complaints and compliments received.

Recently the Housing Green Paper was released. Members of the Scrutiny team were invited to a consultation on the proposals. It was good to put forward our comments and thoughts on the

proposals which will now go back to central government.

We have been testing 'My SCH Account' and we are really pleased with it. It's easy to use, even for those who don't feel confident using computers. It's great to have your information at your fingertips. We look forward to the launch next year.

We have plans to review the impact that we have made on homelessness as a result of the new Homelessness legislation, and see how well we are progressing alongside other organisations.

Lastly, we have recently welcomed three new members to Scrutiny.

If you have any comments for us please get in touch. We are always happy to have your input. Email us at newsandviews@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk or call us on 0121 717 1515.


With Jan Jackson
Chair of the Scrutiny Committee





Rent Calendar 2019/20

This is your rent calendar for 2019/20. Please pin it up as a reminder or keep it somewhere safe. It shows all the days on which your rent is due. We will write to you in March with details of your 2019/20 charges. If you claim Housing Benefit then you will also receive a letter from Solihull Council, explaining your entitlement for 2019/20. These two letters will tell you what you will need to pay.

Your rent is due weekly but if you prefer to pay fortnightly then you should pay on the weeks in blue.

Week No.	Date	Payment Made	Week No.	Date	Payment Made
1	April 1		27	Sep 30	
2	April 8		28	Oct 7	
3	April 15		29	Oct 14	
4	April 22		30	Oct 21	
5	April 29		31	Oct 28	
6	May 6		32	Nov 4	
7	May 13		33	Nov 11	
8	May 20		34	Nov 18	
9	May 27		35	Nov 25	
10	June 3		36	Dec 2	
11	June 10		 37	Dec 9	
12	June 17		38	Dec 16	
13	June 24		39	Dec 23	No rent due unless in arrears
14	July 1		40	Dec 30	
15	July 8		41	Jan 6	
16	July 15		42	Jan 13	
17	July 22		43	Jan 20	
18	July 29		44	Jan 27	
19	Aug 5		45	Feb 3	
20	Aug 12		46	Feb 10	
21	Aug 19		47	Feb 17	
22	Aug 26		48	Feb 24	
23	Sep 2		49	Mar 2	
24	Sep 9		50	Mar 9	
25	Sep 16		51	Mar 16	
26	Sep 23		52	Mar 23	No rent due unless in arrears
			53	Mar 30	No rent due unless in arrears

 £200 prize draw  4 x £250 Christmas draw winners

You will be automatically entered into our prize draws if you have a clear rent account at that time.



Home Contents Insurance
specifically designed for Solihull
Community Housing tenants and
leaseholders



**FIRE,
FLOOD
THEFT**

Are you Insured?

Protect your home contents and belongings against fire, theft, storm, flood and much more. Some of the benefits for tenants are:

- No administration or cancellation fees
- No minimum home security requirements
- Tenants pay weekly alongside rent and leaseholders pay quarterly with their service charge
- No excess
- Extended accidental damage is covered as standard
- Quick and easy to apply

**"IT WILL NEVER
HAPPEN TO ME"**

Contact Solihull Community Housing on:

0121 717 1515

or email
info@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk

Limits and exclusions apply.
A copy of the policy wording is available on request.

Underwritten by Allianz Insurance plc

Funding opportunity for community safety projects

**Are you involved in a community group in your area?
Could you do with a little financial support to help the
group and benefit local people?**

If so you may be able to apply for funding from the Solihull Locality Working project.

This group has secured funding from the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner.



Grants of up to £400 are available to support local community projects in Solihull which will help to make our neighbourhoods safer and stronger.

Applications should support one or more local priorities:

- better protecting people from harm
- bringing offenders to justice and tackling re-offenders
- supporting stronger communities
- making our neighbourhoods safer places.

Online applications for funding can be made now at
www.solihulltogether.co.uk/news

The closing date for applications is 1 March 2019.

We're out and about for Mischief Week!

Our Neighbourhood Officers have teamed up with Neighbourhood Police and Solihull Council to carry out checks and patrols in areas of the borough.

Activities on these days include patrols within high rises, reassurance checks with residents and visiting antisocial behaviour (ASB) hotspots.

'All Out Days' are a great opportunity to engage with the community, address any ongoing issues. It is also a great opportunity to for residents to ask us questions and receive support from the team.



**The team out on
the patch**

Saxon Court set to open its doors

Thank you to everyone who has enquired about moving into Saxon Court – our brand new extra care scheme set to open in Chelmsley Wood this month.

Our team have been kept very busy with viewings at the show flat and the response from visitors has been really positive.

We're now well on the way to filling all 51 apartments so are not taking any new viewings at this time.

Thank you for all the interest shown so far. Look out for some photos of the official opening in the next edition.



How to keep mould at bay

Does your home suffer from mould and condensation? If so there are things you can do to prevent this.

Condensation can cause mould growth to form on walls, furniture and soft furnishings.

The best way to stop mould growing in the first place is to reduce levels of condensation.

This is done by reducing moisture levels in the room, especially the bathroom and kitchen.



You can do this by:

- **wiping down surfaces where moisture settles, such as tiles and windowsills**
- **making sure tumble dryers are vented to the outside**
- **opening windows when boiling saucepans or using the shower**
- **not drying clothes on a radiator**

It is important to try and keep as much ventilation in the property as possible without compromising security. Open windows and trickle vents allow air to circulate around furniture and in cupboards.

As the weather turns colder you need to try and keep your home warm. Do this by:

- **maintaining a low heat when the weather is cold or wet**

This is more effective than short bursts of high heat.



What to do if your home already has black mould

Wipe down the affected areas with a fungicidal wash – one which carries a Health and Safety Executive (HSE) logo.

Remember

The best way to keep mould at bay permanently is to reduce the amount of condensation you are creating by using the heating more and ventilating the property effectively.

- If you would like more advice please call 0121 717 1515.

New heating scheme in time for Christmas!

Christmas will be even more special for one Solihull couple this year thanks to their brand new central heating system.

Thanks to an environmentally friendly scheme from Act On Energy, a number of households across the borough have had old storage heaters and coal fires replaced with modern gas central heating.

Dodd Group, in partnership with Solihull Community Housing, have been carrying out this work. Mr and Mrs Westwood were among the residents eligible to have this work.

The couple have lived in their home for over 50 years but have

had to depend on a smokeless coal fire in the living room to warm the whole house.

Now they have nine radiators delivering warm temperatures in every room.

The couple first heard about the scheme through their GP. "It's absolutely wonderful," said Mrs Westwood. "Everyone involved did a wonderful job and for us it's like winning the lottery!"

We are delighted to have been able to work alongside Act On Energy to deliver more than £700,000 in new heating systems across Solihull.

Home owners and tenants can still apply for the free funding through the scheme.

- **If you do not have gas central heating check if you qualify for this scheme. Just email advice@actonenergy.org.uk or call Freephone 0800 988 2881. Alternatively, email warmhomesfund@doddgroup.com**



Triton Safeguard+ Shower Review

There have been a small number of Triton Safeguard+ showers overheating. We want to make sure all showers made between May 2014 and December 2016 receive a free safety inspection.



- This is the Triton Safeguard+.
- If your shower looks like this, please check the label on the bottom surface.
- Look for date codes 05/14 to 12/16.
- If you find a date code between these dates please follow the instructions below.



- If the codes are between 05/14 and 12/16 please call Triton on 0800 015 4145.
- Tell them you are a Solihull Community Housing tenant and need to arrange a Safeguard+ inspection.
- The shower can continue to be used with the instructions they provide.





Star Photo Competition

Last month we introduced our new photography competition.

Thank you to everyone who entered and sent us pictures that capture Solihull at its very best.

Congratulations to our winner, Miss Byrne from Shirley, on the beautiful picture above of the view of Tudor Grange Park. Your £25 voucher is in the post!

If you would like your picture in the next issue of the newsletter please enter. We're after some great images that show what a wonderful place Solihull is to live.

The photos can be taken with a camera or phone and can be taken anywhere in Solihull. Only one picture per person is allowed. Only SCH tenants and leaseholders can enter.

Please email your photos to
info@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk

The closing date is Friday 25 January 2019.



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join us on
social media.



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twitter.com/@solihullhousing



[solihullcommunityhousing](https://www.instagram.com/solihullcommunityhousing)



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