

For tenants and leaseholders of Solihull Community Housing

Autumn 2020



# Message from Fiona

Welcome to your autumn newsletter. I hope you and your families are well and have been able to cope with the incredibly challenging past six months. It's been a difficult experience that none of us has ever had to live through before.

As is often the case during tough times, it has brought out the best in so many of us, including our own staff and you our customers. I was extremely proud of how our teams responded to the pandemic, prioritising vulnerable customers and helping to make sure they received their vital food and medical supplies.

It has of course been challenging for everyone and I am aware that many of you have had to wait longer than usual for routine repairs, as we had to make emergencies and vulnerable tenants our priority. Thank you for your patience and understanding during this time.

In more recent weeks we have gradually been getting back to more traditional

ways of working. Routine repairs are now being carried out, the housing register is back open and our staff are able to continue much of their work as before in and around the estates.

Thank you to all of you who have done so much to support neighbours and others in your communities. Look out for our See the Person story on Page 3. We would love to hear your experiences!

The centrespread of this edition is taken up with some of the highlights from our annual report. This is an important document as it explains where our money comes from and where it goes! We have also for the first time produced a digital animation of our annual report. Follow us



on our social media channels and you'll quickly spot it!

We want our customers to play their part in the work we do by taking part in our wide range of engagement activities. You can read more about these on the opposite page. I hope you enjoy reading this edition of the newsletter and find the stories interesting.

# Let's do the right thing for Solihull

Solihull Council has launched a campaign – 'Let's Do the Right Thing for Solihull' – to make sure people are clear around the guidance for keeping themselves safe from Covid-19.

The aim of the campaign is to raise awareness about the simple things you can do to stop the spread of the virus.

The message is simple. Everybody needs to play their part and "do the right thing" to stay safe.

You still need to regularly wash and sanitise hands, keep a safe social distance of 2 metres wherever possible and wear a face covering where 2 metres isn't possible, or in those locations where this is now mandatory.

If you have symptoms of Covid-19, stay home and arrange a test.

For more information about the campaign and what you can do to stay safe, visit www.solihull.gov.uk



# My SCH Account helping people through lockdown

My Home

While our offices have been closed during the Coronavirus pandemic, My SCH Account came in handy for many of our residents who needed to use our services while unable to leave their homes.

My SCH Account is for all of our tenants and leaseholders. It makes it easy for you to access our services 24/7, from wherever you may be. If you're unsure of what you can do, here is a quick breakdown of the features you can access:

- Report and check a repair
- Book/cancel a repair appointment
- View your rent account details
- See a breakdown of your current charges
- See your rent statement
- Make a payment

Things have slowly been returning to normal but we know some people may still wish to stay home as much as possible, even when our offices open. By creating a My SCH Account, you can continue to pay your rent and access your current charges from the safety of your own home.

Almost 2,000 people have signed up for an account!

You can find out how to sign up by visiting our website www.solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk

Accessing the My SCH Account page couldn't be easier just scan this barcode with your phone or device!



## Make your voice heard by getting involved

There are lots of new and exciting ways you can get involved with us and have your say.

By working with us you can help us make your communities great places to live. It is also a wonderful opportunity for you to meet new people and make new friends.

Listed below are just some of the new ways you can engage and volunteer with us.



#### Residents' Association

If you and your neighbours would like to set up a residents' group, we can help. We can support you by setting up the first meeting, hiring a room and organising letters or leaflets to let your neighbours know about the group.



#### **Building Safety Advocate**

You can become a Building Safety Advocate to support our high rise buildings. You will learn about building management and safety, get involved in safety processes, report concerns and take part in annual safety events at our blocks. We will provide you with all the training and support you need.



#### **Green Forum**

If you are passionate about looking after the environment you live in, this forum could be for you. You can help us by reporting graffiti and fly-tipping in your area, sharing your gardening knowledge and skills with neighbours or supporting litter-picking in your area.



#### Home Improvement Advocate

We often carry out large repairs projects to our properties. For example we may install a new roof, update a lift or refurbish a low rise block. Home Improvement Advocates will work with us and our contractors to make sure homes are well looked after while the work is carried out. They wil also make sure the work is completed to a good standard and that the home and surrounding area is left clean and tidy at the end of the day.



Forum

way to make sure residents are included when we manage and monitor complaints. You can work with us to make sure complaints are dealt with correctly, help us to identify patterns in complaints or service areas and give us feedback from a residents' point of view.



#### Community Advocate

You can become a
Community Advocate to
support your local
community and help
deliver community
projects. This could include
volunteering to do some
shopping for someone
who can't get out,
supporting a project to
revamp an unloved area or
encouraging community
spirit in your street.



You can work regularly with our staff to monitor the standard of empty homes as we get them ready for new tenants. You will visit some of our empty homes to inspect their condition and let us know if any improvements could be made.



#### Block Advocate

You can become our eyes and ears in the block you live in. You can help us by reporting repairs and monitoring the communal cleaning and grass-cutting contracts. You can also give out information to other residents.



#### Readers' Group and Editorial Team

This group will review our key communications methods such as the residents' newsletter, leaflets and documents. You can also help us review our online communications such as the SCH website and social media channels. You will get to see documents while they are in the planning stage and you can give us your feedback and make recommendations.

■ Interested? Please email engagement@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk, visit www.solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk or call 0121 717 1515.



# Working together to keep you safe



## Fire Safety

We have a dedicated Safer Homes team to keep our high and low rise residents safe.

We carry out fire risk assessments to our high rise buildings annually and 3-yearly to our low rise buildings.

We also work closely with West Midlands Fire Service to keep your homes safe.

We need your help to keep your homes safe. Never leave things in the stairwell or communal areas. Please be vigilant and do not drop litter.

The fire service offers free fire checks to your home. They will check your property, offer safety advice and fit a free smoke alarm if you need one.

We have a 'Stay Put' policy in place in our high and low rise buildings, if there is a fire. You can read more about this on page 5.

■ Help us keep you and your neighbours' safe by becoming a Building Safety Advocate! Details are listed on page 3.

## Water Hygiene

Bacteria can grow in water that is left standing.

Sometimes this can develop into Legionella bacteria. Legionnaires' is a disease which affects the lungs and can be contracted if droplets of water containing bacteria are inhaled.

To prevent bacteria from growing, it is extremely important to maintain good water hygiene in your home. This is especially important in the summer months as standing water will be in the temperature range that the bacteria prefers.

#### Top tips:

- Always run taps when you return from a holiday or if you move into a new property
- Taps and showers that are not used often should be run for at least two minutes each week
- Clean and descale taps and shower heads at least every three months
- Leave water heaters and boilers on to avoid water sitting at temperatures between 25-45°C

# Lifts |

Lifts in our high rise buildings are serviced every month.

We also complete annual, 5-yearly and 10-yearly safety inspections.

If you spot an issue with a lift in your building please let us know.

### Gas Servicing

We have a legal duty to carry out safety checks on gas appliances that we are responsible for.

Essential safety checks are to keep you, your family and your neighbours safe.

Under the terms of your tenancy agreement, you must allow us access into your home to carry out this work.

If you can't make your service appointment, please contact us as soon as possible to rearrange.





# Electrical Testing

We have a legal duty to carry out electrical inspections to your home every five years.

By law we must make sure your electrical fittings are safe. Even if you think your appliances are working fine, you must still allow us access.

We will check for damage to fittings, wear and tear and any exposed live wires that could cause injuries or fires. Safety checks are essential to keep you and your home safe.

If you would like to change a light fitting in your home, please contact us. You must have our permission before you make any changes, as outlined in your tenancy agreement If you make changes without our approval, we will ask you to remove the fitting.

## **Asbestos**

Asbestos is a fibrous natural mineral. When material containing asbestos is broken, or is in poor condition, asbestos fibres are released.

If you have plans to carry out DIY work which may affect materials containing asbestos, please let us know. We have a trained specialist team that can provide advice and guidance on asbestos and if necessary arrange removal.

Please remember to never break or move the material and do not vacuum asbestos. Breathing in asbestos dust can be very dangerous

# In the event of a fire

We would like to remind residents that we have a 'Stay Put' policy in place in our low and high rise buildings.

If an emergency situation occurs, it is essential that you understand the procedure and what to do to stay safe.

The policy above outlines what you should do if there is a fire in your flat, or a neighbour's flat.

Please familiarise yourself with the policy. Cut out and keep the guide and display in a place where you will see it.





only if safe to do so. If the fire is bigger bin, or smoke is leave immediately,



Brigade by dialling



30 metres, keeping clear of roads and entrances. Meet the arrives and brief him where the fire is, that you can account for your flat and any other information you may have (such



will assist once the fire is dealt with.

#### If the fire is in another flat:



Close windows and smoke from ntering your flat. If in a communal



Call the Fire Brigade by dialling



everyone in your flat



gas bottles, disabled

immediately and follow all their

16年本中中16



call Solihull Housing on 0121 717 1515 who will assist whereve



#### In the event of a fire

High rise buildings



#### If the fire is in your flat:



If the fire is bigger bin, or smoke is making you cough,



Brigade by dialling



using the stairs.



Do not use the lift. clear of roads and entrances. Meet the Fire Officer when he where the fire is, that



THE RESERVE

#### If the fire is in another flat:



doors to prevent smoke from entering your flat. If in a communal area, get out by using the stairs.





make you cough, get everyone in your flat out and down the



Do not use the lift. tell you to leave immediately and follow all their



damage to your flat, call Solihull Housing on will assist wherever



## **Audio CD reminder**

#### Did you know we offer this newsletter in an audio CD format?

For those who struggle with their eyesight, or are registered as blind, you can request an audio CD.

The CD includes all the latest news and information from the newsletter so you can stay well informed and up to date.

■ If you or someone you know would like to receive the newsletter by audio CD, please email newsandviews@ solihullcommunityhousina.ora.uk

## Registered to vote?

Solihull Council checks the electoral register every year to make sure that any resident who is eligible to vote can do so.

To check your details are up to date, you will receive electoral registration forms in the post from the Council.

Please keep a look out for these and follow the steps set out, so you can have your say at future elections.





# Annual Report 2019/20

This report looks at our performance from April 2019 to March 2020. It highlights the services we provide to our tenants and leaseholders on behalf of Solihull Council.

9,924



**Tenants** 

1,249



Leaseholders

4,706



Garages

2,422



Households on the housing register

260





**Employees** 

46



Homes sold through Right to Buy



## **Providing homes**

- 220 Cases of preventing homelessness
- **238** Cases of homelessness provided with a home
- **281** Homeless acceptances

- 2 Property acquired
- 9 New build homes



## Managing homes

- **700** Homes re-let
- **23** days Average time to re-let homes
- 1,124 Tenants switching to Universal Credit
- **59.94%** Satisfaction with antisocial behaviour case handling
- **£1,767,107.38** Additional benefit awarded following help from our Money Advice Team

■ **36** Evictions for arrears



## Looking after your home

- 38,031 Responsive repairs completed
- 15,487 Appointments made
- **98.73**% Repairs completed on time
- **98.44%** Appointments kept
- **8,982** Gas servicing completions

- 141 New heating systems fitted
- 21 Improvement works completed
- 1,628 Electrical checks
- **86.89%** Satisfaction with response repairs service



## Support services

- 1,596 Minor adaptations completed
- 260 Major adaptations completed

**2,260** Wellbeing service users

To view the report in full take a look at our brand new Annual Report animation video!

You can view this on our website and social media pages.



- Looking after your home £9,325,000
- Managing your home £10,990,000
- New build and major works £11,815,000
- Rent, rates and taxes £1,283,000
- Loans and interest £8,285,000
- Bad debt provision £668,000

provision -0.02p Looking after your Loans & home Interest 0.22p 0.19p Rents, 0.03p rates & taxes 0.26p 0.28pNew build and major Managing works your home

Total spend = £42,366,000

### Keeping in touch



347 Compliments received



335 Complaints received



95% Complaints resolved at stage one



148,612 Calls received

Bad debt



87.53% Calls answered



541 Councillor enquiries received

# Great response to our apprenticeship scheme

# We have received a fantastic response to our new apprenticeship programme!

We promoted the scheme in the newsletter and across our social media channels and it's been great to see so many young people keen to come and work with us.

Covid-19 has affected us, as it has nearly all businesses. But the great news is that we are able to continue with the apprenticeship scheme as planned.

We have created six new apprenticeship opportunities, working across these three key areas:

- Customer Satisfaction
- Health & Safety
- Trade Skills

Our aim has been to recruit from within our community and we have welcomed the excellent response from our tenants and their families.

The roles are all two-year paid apprenticeships. During this time apprentices will work towards a relevant professional qualification, linked to opportunities for future career progression with us.

The welcome induction, training and personal development activity will be a





little different to usual as we will be observing the social distancing restrictions. But we look forward to working with our new recruits very soon.

We are continuing to offer job search support for those who sadly missed out on this opportunity with the help of the council's Employment and Skills team.

# Thyme to announce the winners!

# This year we dug up one of our favourite competitions – gardening!

We had four different categories available so everybody could get involved. There was no better time to launch this than during lockdown while we were inside with beautiful sunny weather.

We would like to thank everyone who got involved, you all did an amazing job and it was very tough picking our winners this year. With that being said, here are our winners for each category:

#### Best Community/ Shared Garden:

**1st place:** Elaine, Joan and Michelle from Smiths Wood

**2nd place:** Lynette from Chelmsley Wood

3rd place: Kingsgate House





#### **Best Floral Display:**

**1st place:** Dean from Shirley **2nd place:** Maggie from Chelmsley Wood

#### **Best Traditional Garden:**

**1st place:** The Tomlinson's from Shirley

**2nd place:** Merlie from Chelmsley Wood

**3rd place:** Bernie from

Smiths Wood

#### **Best Budding Gardener:**

**1st place:** Izzy from Smiths

Wood

**2nd place:** Owen from Olton



■ To see more images please visit our website www.solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk

# Rediscovering an old hobby!

During lockdown, our Engagement Team worked very hard to support some of our vulnerable residents who were shielding.

Many didn't have much to keep busy so our Engagement Team spent many hours creating activity packs to post out to those who were staying inside to keep safe.

We had some brilliant feedback from this project with one lady in particular, Joan, who was extremely grateful for the colouring and puzzle sheets she received inside the packs.

Luckily Joan had access to some crayons that she kept handy for when her great grandchildren came to visit, so she spent a lot of her time colouring and rediscovered something she loved to do.

Joan let her family know how much she was enjoying the pack and was thrilled when they posted some new puzzles and colouring books.

We're extremely pleased with the outcome of our activity packs and we have loved hearing the positive feedback!





# We are all entitled to respect and fairness

Following the appalling killing of George Floyd in the United States, I and my colleagues at SCH shared most people's pain and outrage. This tragedy has highlighted the uncomfortable truth that whilst everyone is entitled to respect and fairness, not everyone actually gets it.

The Black Lives Matter protests from across the globe show that we must act against continuing injustice, prejudice and inequality.

As one of the largest providers of social housing in Solihull, and an organisation that employs more than 250 people, we have a responsibility to develop conversations with colleagues and customers about removing all forms of discrimination.

We want to be a force for positive change and to make sure that our communities and workplaces are diverse, equal, inclusive and a place where people feel that they belong and can succeed. Our residents play a central role in decision-making. We want to hear from you about how we can demonstrate our HEART values into action – Honesty, Excellence, Achieving Together, Respect and Transparency – to stop all forms of discrimination, and especially that directed towards Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities.

# BLACK WES MATTER



It is our duty to educate and inform ourselves and each other about equality, diversity and inclusion, and I encourage you to be part of this discussion. I know that it is harder for people to come together to have these conversations right now, but it is essential for us to get your views and thoughts on what we could do differently and better.

Please share your thoughts with me at <a href="mailto:newsandviews@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk">newsandviews@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk</a>

# Help everyone to See The Person!

### We're looking for tenants to take part in and support the See The Person campaign.

This is a tremendous campaign that shares stories from people living in social housing so that others can see how proud they are to be a tenant.

Have you got a story you'd like to share with us? Perhaps you volunteered to support friends and neighbours during lockdown this year?

Maybe you run or attend a club in your area? Or possibly you'd like to tell us how you keep fit and healthy?

Whatever your story, we would love to hear it. This is what Steph from Solihull told us about her life.

"I have been an SCH tenant for almost three years and I am a carer for my son, Harvey."

Harvey, who is 10 years old, recently had an idea to raise money for the local parkland, Olton Jubilee Park. Harvey wanted to transform an area within the park to a Covid-19 memory garden, where people could go to reflect and remember borough residents who have lost their lives or been affected by the virus.

To raise money, Harvey participated in a fundraising event which included a tombola and raffle raising £1,027!

Harvey's idea went to Solihull Council in July and Love Soilhull have now agreed the plans. They have marked out the area in the park and will break ground later this year. Love Solihull are also donating a Cherry Blossom tree for the centre piece of the

garden. Harvey can't wait for his idea to become a reality.

If you have something to say then we'd love to share your story with other tenants. Just email us at newsandviews@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk





# Improvement works are back on schedule

#### We are pleased to announce that our home improvements programme is now back up and running!

The 2020/21 programme was scheduled to start in April but due to the coronavirus these works were put on hold.

Over the past few months we have been working with all of our contractors to identify safe ways of working so we can continue with the programme.

The programme has now been carefully adapted, in line with current government guidelines, to keep both you and our staff safe.

Below is a list of properties that are scheduled for work during this programme:

21A to 23C Grafton Road	B90 1NQ
33 to 43 Grafton Road	B90 1NQ
75 to 81 Hytall Road	B90 1NF
40 to 46 Kilcote Road	B90 1NP
10 to 20 Greenslade Road	B90 1NB
1 to 11 Hytall Road	B90 1NE
78 to 84 Lambscote Close	B90 1NU
66 to 76 Lambscote Close	B90 1NT
31 to 41 Hytall Road	B90 1NF
12 to 22 Kilcote Road	B90 1NR
59 to 69 Hytall Road	B90 1NF
7 to 15 Moorend Avenue	B37 5SD
17 to 23 Moorend Avenue	B37 5SD
2 to 8 Willow Way	B37 7PL
11 & 19 Willow Way	B37 7PJ
26 to 32 Willow Way	B37 7PL
45 to 51 Willow Way	B37 7PJ
48 to 54 Willow Way	B37 7PL
59 to 65 Willow Way	B37 7PJ
72 to 78 Willow Way	B37 7PW

96 to 102 Willow Way	B37 7PW
6 to 12 Greenlands Road	B37 7PH
20 to 26 Greenlands Road	B37 7PH
42 to 48 Greenlands Road	B37 7PH
92 to 98 Greenlands Road	B37 7QB
137 to 143 Greenlands Road	B37 7LU
159 to 165 Greenlands Road	B37 7LU
173 to 179 Greenlands Road	B37 7LT
189 to 195 Greenlands Road	B37 7LT
25 to 31 Alder Drive	B37 7QA
26 to 32 Alder Drive	B37 7QD
42 to 48 Alder Drive	B37 7QD
50 to 56 Alder Drive	B37 7QD
62 to 68 Alder Drive	B37 7QD
84 to 90 Alder Drive	B37 7QD
45 to 51 Alder Drive	B37 7QE
71 to 77 Alder Drive	B37 7QE
5 to 11 Hatchford Walk	B37 7PP
8 to 14 Hatchford Walk	B37 7PP
30 to 36 Hatchford Walk	B37 7PP

# Raise the roof!

Back in February of this year, a new roof was required on one of our low rise blocks due to disrepair.

The low rise in Foxwood Grove became part of a project called 'Pitched Roofing' and our contractors R S Miller were tasked with removing and replacing the roof.

The work started mid-February and took approximately four weeks to complete as the solar panels on the roof needed to be removed and reinstated once the new roof was finished.

The project team made sure that they stayed in contact with all the residents whilst the work was taking place, making regular phone calls to check there were no issues.

All the residents responded positively to the work, saying it was "very good and left neat and tidy".

The new roof looks fantastic! Another job well done.





# Garage site undergoes major transformation

Last year, our Capital Programme team started a garage demolition project at a site on Bentley Farm Close in Bentley Heath.

This project came about after it was brought to our attention that this site was a hot spot for illegal fly-tipping.

The project team spoke with the local residents and tenants who rented the garages.

A decision was made to demolish the old run down garage site and replace this with a set of brand new garages and a complete resurface of the whole area.

Unfortunately, due to Covid-19 this project was put on hold as we were unable to complete the work.

The great news is that we are now delighted to say that the project is complete and the new garages are ready to let.

What a transformation! We think you will agree that the site now looks amazing!







# Why are you waiting?

#### Have you been awarded a Band B and are currently waiting for a move?

We often receive questions from our Band B customers asking how long they will be waiting to move home.

A Band B is awarded for a variety of reasons; these include but are not limited to:

- Urgent medical need to move
- Statutory homeless duty accepted
- Overcrowding
- Under occupying
- Subject to regeneration / clearance
- Families in need
- · Children leaving Care

Although Band B customers have a higher priority over other customers, this does not necessarily mean Band B customers will be moved quickly.

Waiting times are based on banding, the length of time you have been awarded that banding, our available property stock and also location or property preference.

## Here are some current statistics taken from our housing register in August 2020:

825
Customers
currently awarded
a Band B

275
Band B customers
waiting for a 1 bed
property

265
Band B customers
waiting for a 2 bed
property

193
Band B customers
waiting for a 3 bed
property

72
Band B customers
waiting for a 4 bed
property

Band B customers waiting for a 5 bed property Band B customers waiting for a 6 bed property



Unfortunately, due to our limited housing stock and such a high number of Band B customers on our housing register, waiting times to move homes will still be very long.

Currently, our estimated waiting times for applicants and transferring tenants awarded a Band B are:

1 bed 135 weeks

2 bed 127 weeks

3 bed 162 weeks 4 bed 159 weeks

5 bed 203 weeks 6 bed 149 weeks

To speed up your wait time we do advise you to consider all property types and locations. We also suggest the options of private renting or a mutual exchange.

Before contacting us for an update, please consider the above information.

As soon as we can, we will contact you when you are successful in bidding for a property.

#### Last year we let...

**371** 1 bedroom properties

**225** 2 bedroom properties

**91** 3 bedroom properties

**3** 4 bedroom properties

Saxon thanks you!

# Our extra care scheme Saxon Court was blessed with a generous amount of kindness and support during lockdown.

People from all walks of life gave up their own time and volunteered to help support the residents and staff with a number of essential tasks.

From shopping and collecting prescriptions, to feeding our exhausted staff and residents with food donations, every single volunteer and their incredible support was much appreciated.

We would also like to say a very special thank you to all the pupils and staff from Coleshill Heath, St Anthony and Kingshurst schools for sending in their letters, poems and drawings.

These acts of kindness reminded our residents and staff that they were not alone during a difficult time.

Lockdown definitely brought our community together!



# **Competition time!**

Thank you to everyone who entered our word search competition.

Congratulations to our winner, Mrs Wasley from Chelmsley Wood. Your £25 voucher is in the post!

For a chance to win a £25 voucher you must complete our Autumnal themed word search.

Only one entry per person is allowed. You have to be an SCH tenant or leaseholders to enter.

Cut out and send your entry, with your name and address to:

Freepost RLSS-UEBA-RTUZ Solihull Community Housing Endeavour House Meriden Drive Solihull B37 6BX

Or take a picture of your entry and email it to newsandviews@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk

Closing date: Monday 19 October 2020.

#### **Enjoy the puzzle!**



## **WIN** A £25 VOUCHER

Words to find:SCARECROWBROWNLEAVESRAKECHESTNUTOCTOBERCHILLYCOZYPUMPKINHARVEST

#### Your name and address:

Name:	
Address:	
Phone number:	
Email address:	

## To get in touch

- Freepost RLSS-UEBA-RTUZ
  Solihull Community Housing
  Endeavour House
  Meriden Drive
  Solihull B37 6BX
- Phone: 0121 717 1515
- Typetalk: 18001 0121 717 1515
- Text: 07781 474 722
- **Email:** info@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk
- Website: www.solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk







Protecting your personal information:

We promise only to use your information strictly within the Data Protection Act 2018. If you supply your email address we will use it to send future editions of the newsletter. For further information on our Privacy Policy visit:

www.solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk/ About-us/Data-Protection-and-freedomof-information/Data-protection





solihullcommunityhousing



@solihullhousing



solihullcommunityhousing

For live updates join us on social media.