

NEWS



Solihull
Community Housing
Shaping our neighbourhoods

For tenants and leaseholders of Solihull Community Housing

WINTER 2022

**RENT
FREE
WEEK**

**CHRISTMAS
PRIZE
DRAW**



See full details on page 3

Chair's Christmas Message

While wishing all our tenants and leaseholders the very best for the festive season, I do so knowing that for many people things are not easy.

SCH is working extremely hard to support all customers, and the most vulnerable in particular. There is help out there for those most in need. Our Money Advice Team has supported hundreds of SCH tenants in recent months and will continue to do so.

In this edition of the newsletter, we have given over the whole of the centrespread to share a wealth of information that I

hope brings comfort and support to some of you. With our partners, Solihull Council, we are working as hard as possible to support residents.

I should also like to take this opportunity to thank all those staff, including our partners Dodd Group, for the tremendous progress they have made this year with our sprinkler installation project. We are now well past the halfway stage and the project

will come to a conclusion in the summer, by which point all 37 of our high-rise blocks will be fitted with modern sprinkler systems.

It was great to see so many engaged tenants join us for the recent tenant conference and hearing the insights this generated, is something I am keen to see more of in the future.



Richard Hyde
SCH Board Chair

Finally, I would like to wish all our customers a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Christmas hours

Our offices will be closed on the following dates over the festive period:



Monday 26 December 2022



Tuesday 27 December 2022



Wednesday 28 December 2022



Monday 2 January 2023



Tuesday 3 January 2023

■ If you need to contact us, please call 0121 717 1515.



New Year... New Portal

The new user-friendly Home Options portal will be:

- easier to use with less form-filling and no more 'Housing Wizard' to complete
- linked to Google, to enable you to look at the services in an area, when deciding to bid on a property
- More secure with additional security log in features

Please note: If you have a pin number for an existing application, this will not change.

Our weekly bidding cycle will stay the same, so you will still be able to

bid from a Wednesday to a Tuesday each week.

The new portal will still allow you to bid on two properties per week and you will also be able to see recent properties letting information.

Our website will be updated soon and will list any important information you may need to be aware of. It will also provide you with information on any new build schemes that are being developed in the area and other housing options.

Look out for further updates on our website and social media platforms.



Kingshurst masterplan on view

Plans to completely transform Kingshurst Village Centre are progressing steadily with the latest round of early works and demolition getting underway.

Demolition of the northern part of the site and the main

body of the existing arcade will clear the way for main contract works to commence in the New Year.

Did you know the Masterplan is on permanent display?

As you travel though Kingshurst you will notice site hoardings with the plans and some CGI impressions of

what the new development might look like. You can also enjoy some artwork created by local residents during a cultural project last summer.

Next time you pass through why not take five minutes to stop by and have a look. The hoardings wrap around the old Mountford site, opposite

The Parade.

If you would like to know more pop in and see Becki our Community Engagement Officer who is in Kingshurst Library every Thursday from 10:30am till 12 noon.

You can also sign up to receive regular project updates by email, just visit www.solihull.gov.uk/kingshurstregeneration

Could you be one of our four prize draw winners this Christmas?



With the current cost of living rising, we understand that it may be challenging for you to manage your rent account this Christmas.

It is important to remember to pay your rent first. Keeping your rent account up to date could see you win one of our festive prize draws. To be in with a chance of winning all you need is a clear rent account.

If you pay your rent by Direct Debit, then you will automatically be entered into our prize draws!



Rent-free week

If you have a clear rent account on Sunday 18 December, you can enjoy a rent-free week from Monday 19 December

Christmas prize draw

If your account is in arrears then you must make a payment during the rent-free week of Monday 19 December until Sunday 25 December, to be entered into our Christmas prize draw.

To win one of our four £250 prize draws your rent account must still be clear on Sunday 1 January 2023.

Winners will be drawn and announced in the New Year.

Support is available

If you are finding it difficult to pay your rent, please let us know. We understand that you may be faced with a few money challenges for personal reasons or because of the current cost of living crisis.

Our teams are here to help and support you

Please look at our centrespread feature in this newsletter, which is packed with information that you may find very useful.

- Scan the QR code and visit Solihull Council's Here2Help site for further support and information.





Lights, candles, safety!



The festive period is a time of celebration and it's a great opportunity to make your space feel a little cosier. We want you and your loved ones to have a joyous Christmas.

Here are some top tips on how to make sure you stay safe during the festivities:

- Never place candles near your Christmas tree or furnishings
- Do not leave burning candles unattended
- Decorations can burn easily – do not attach them to lights or a heater
- Always switch Christmas lights off and unplug them before you go to bed
- Most fires start in the kitchen, never leave cooking unattended
- Do not overload your plug sockets
- Test your smoke alarm regularly
- Check on elderly relatives and neighbours to make sure they are fire safe this holiday season.



Jingle all the way when putting the rubbish out

At Christmas time, most people have more rubbish to dispose of than usual, which means it needs to be disposed of correctly, especially in our high-rises.

If you live in a high rise please make sure that you dispose of your rubbish correctly. Never leave any rubbish in stairwells, on communal landings, chute rooms or outside your building.

It is essential to your own safety and the safety of others, that when disposing of rubbish down the bin chute, always remember:

- Do not overfill your bags as this can lead to blocking the chute (the chute is only designed for small carrier bags)
- Any items too large for the chute need to be broken down and put into carrier sized bags
- Please recycle what you can if there is a recycling bin outside your block

- Never put cigarettes down a bin chute

We would also like to remind you to never pay a caller at your door to take rubbish from your home.

To dispose of any larger bulky items please contact us about our Bulky Waste Collection service by calling 0121 717 1515.



Refuse collection dates for our high rises

This Christmas, bin collections will run as normal. There are no collections on Boxing Day (Monday 26 December).

Any blocks due to have a bin collection on this date will have their collection the following day, Tuesday 27 December.

Recycling this Christmas

All households can recycle the following items:

- Newspapers, magazines, and catalogues
- Juice/milk cartons and yoghurt pots
- Plastic food trays and tubs such as fruit punnets and trays from microwave meals
- Clean foil and foil containers
- Aerosol cans
- Toilet or kitchen roll cardboard tubes
- Junk mail, envelopes and greeting cards
- Cardboard food boxes and egg boxes
- Plastics e.g. drink bottles, shampoo bottles and cleaning bottles
- Food and drink cans and tins.

Please ensure all items are rinsed and cleaned before putting them in the recycling bin.

Wrapping paper: The easiest way to check if wrapping paper is recyclable is to tear a bit, and if it rips easily then it can be recycled.

Extra recycling: If your recycling boxes are full, you can leave extra recycling out in Bags for Life or boxes like your black glass recycling box. If you have extra cardboard that won't fit into your brown bin, please break it down and leave the cardboard neatly stacked next to your bin.

Thinking of having a real Christmas tree this year? We are no longer able to collect real trees. Scan the QR code to see ways you can dispose of a real tree.



SCAN ME

How to keep your home mould free

As the weather gets colder, you may occasionally find that you have damp in your home.

Damp and mould are caused by excess moisture. The rooms most commonly affected are the bathroom and kitchen, although damp and mould can occur in any room.

There are a number of simple steps that you can take to help reduce the risk of damp and mould in your home.

1. Heat your home a little more

- Keep your heating on low all day rather than short bursts of high heat. Warm air holds more moisture than cooler air, so cool air is more likely to leave droplets of condensation around your

home. Air is like a sponge, the warmer it is, the more moisture it will hold.

- Heating one room to a high temperature and leaving other rooms cold makes condensation worse in the rooms that aren't heated. It is better to have a constant level of heat throughout your home, ideally between 18°C and 21°C.

2. Ventilate rooms

- When you cook, open a window, or use the extractor fan and shut the door to prevent moisture from spreading to other parts of the house.
- Open bedroom windows for a bit when you get up in the morning – remember to shut them before you go out.
- Leave space between



furniture and cold walls.

- Don't block chimneys, flues or airbricks.

3. Reduce the amount of moisture

- Dry your clothes outside, where possible.
- Use a clothes airer in the bathroom or kitchen with the door closed and the window slightly open or the extractor fan on.
- Make sure tumble dryers are vented to the outside using the correct vent and fittings, not inside the home.

4. Treating mould

Mould can be removed by scrubbing with a mould specific cleaning product from your local store or supermarket. When removing mould, you should wear the correct PPE as per manufactures guidelines.

■ Please contact us if you have any concerns about mould in your home.



Festive safety reminder

Fire in your own flat

-  **Get everyone out of your flat, close the doors behind you and stay out**
-  **Leave the building by the stairs. Do not use the lift**
-  **Call 999 to report the fire**
-  **Meet the Fire Service on arrival to brief them on the fire**

Fire in another flat

-  **Stay in your flat. If you are in a communal area, get out by using the stairs**
-  **Call 999 to report the fire**
-  **Close all doors and windows and stay put**
-  **Only leave your flat if you feel at risk from smoke, fire, or are asked to leave by the Fire Service**

Get in touch if you have a problem

We are here to always support our customers. If you have a concern over a job that we have carried out, or a service that we deliver, just tell us.

If we are not able to resolve your problem, then you should contact the Housing Ombudsman – not a solicitor. You will find details on how to do this on our website.

As your landlord we have a duty to maintain your home. Equally, tenants have a responsibility to look after that home and to pay their rent on time. There is a section on our website that makes clear what the responsibilities are of being a tenant.

By working with you, we hope to ensure your home and neighbourhood is one in which you are proud to live.

From January 2023 we are required to check all fire doors annually. In our next newsletter we will have information on how the new Fire Safety Act will improve safety inside high rises.



REMEMBER: Smoking is not permitted anywhere in a high rise except inside your own flat. Never drop a cigarette down a bin chute.

HELP FOR CUSTOMERS WITH

Help and support this winter

Winter can often be a difficult time for people. This year, with rising fuel costs, we know it could be even harder, so Solihull Council has worked with local voluntary groups to create a package of information and support.

There's information to help you keep warm, healthy and safe plus details of financial help and assistance.

The council has created a really useful online platform with lots of practical tips and suggestions for helping you to get through the winter. Visit www.solihull.gov.uk/here2help



Keep warm

Winter can make existing health conditions worse and can also make us more vulnerable to respiratory and other serious illnesses.

It's important to stay protected against a drop in temperature as cold weather can affect your body's ability to fight off viruses and infections. By keeping warm, you can help yourself stay well this winter.

See Page 10 for more details on how to stay warm.

What can you do to keep your home warm?

Here are some tips from **Act On Energy** which can help to make your home as warm as possible, whilst reducing your energy use and saving money:

- 1. Turn your thermostat down by 1 degree.** Most people won't notice the difference – and an extra jumper can always help. The ideal room temperature is 18-21 degrees but do consider if this is warm enough for anyone who has a vulnerability.
- 2. And while we're on heating....set your timer** to come on 15-30 minutes before you need it and switch off 30 minutes before you leave or go to bed.
- 3. Switch to low energy lightbulbs.** LEDs use about 90% less energy than standard bulbs. They are more expensive to buy – but last up to 12 times longer.
- 4. Wash your clothes on the lowest heat setting.** 90% of a washing machine's energy is used to heat up the water. Reducing your number of washes by one cycle a week will save about £34 a year. Tumble dryers use a lot of

energy so whenever possible dry your clothes outside on a line.

- 5. Switch appliances off 'stand-by'** – this could typically save about £65 a year
- 6. Reduce your shower time** – try setting an alarm for 3-4 minutes. You could save about £95 a year
- 7. Thick curtains keep the heat in.** Keep them tucked behind radiators and pull them at dusk to avoid heat escaping through glass.
- 8. Be savvy in the kitchen** – only boil the amount of water you need when you need it. When filling the kettle like this you could save £13 a year. Keep a lid on it – trap the heat in your saucepan. Use the dishwasher only when it's full – and reducing use by one cycle a week could save £17 a year. Turn the oven off a few minutes' earlier and use residual heat to finish cooking. Using a microwave will also be cheaper than using the oven. Defrost your fridge and freezer regularly for maximum efficiency.

Advice and help with your fuel bills

We know that the rise in energy costs has left many people worried, but there is help available.

Contact your supplier if you're struggling to pay your bill or you are in debt. The earlier you contact them, the better. They can help with payment plans.

Price Cap explained. From 1 October, the Energy Price Guarantee is helping householders with their rising energy costs. It means that a 'typical' bill will be around £2,500 a year. But this is not a maximum bill! The £2,500 is based on a typical household usage – so the more energy you use... the more you pay.

Energy Bills Support Scheme. The £400 reduction on domestic electricity bills will be paid in 6 monthly instalments by your electricity supplier. It does NOT need to be paid back. Your supplier will be able to let you know how they are paying the instalments; it may be a reduction in your Direct Debit or a credit to your account – or discount vouchers issued via text, email or post for those with pre-payment meters to be redeemed in the usual way. Be very careful to avoid scams as no household will be asked for bank details at any point.

Act On Energy is working with Solihull Council to provide help to households with:

- Fuel bills, prepayment meters and debt
- Fuel supplies including boiler repairs and replacements, fuel meter top-ups, oil supplies

- Home improvements such as insulation, windows and doors for home-owners up to a value of £10,000, as well as support for private rented sector tenants via a grant to landlords.

For advice and support please ring the free Act On Energy advice line via 0800 988 2881, 9am – 5pm Monday to Friday, or by emailing advice@actonenergy.org.uk.

Warm places to go and things to do

There are a wide range of places within the local community where people can be assured of finding a safe, warm and friendly environment in which to enjoy refreshments, social activity, information and advice and the company of other people'.

There are a variety of places and activities across the borough at local libraries, village centres and places of worship.



Stay well

The NHS – and other services – are here to help you with physical and mental health.

If you are feeling unwell but not in need of urgent/emergency care there are several options available to you:

- Pharmacies are available to advise and treat minor illnesses.
- GP practices across Solihull are open and continue to offer both face to face and remote consultations. GPs have been working hard together to anticipate and support the additional demands of illnesses this winter.
- You can call NHS 111 or visit www.111.nhs.uk at any time. If you need to go to A&E, NHS 111 will book an arrival time. This might mean you spend less time in A&E.

Call 999 only in a medical emergency. This is when someone is seriously ill or injured and their life is at risk.

NHS flu jabs

Flu vaccination is an important priority this coming winter to reduce serious illness and death associated with influenza, and to reduce hospitalisations.

You can get a flu jab this year if you are:

- In a clinical risk groups (Aged 6 months to under 50 years)
- Pregnant

THE COST OF LIVING CRISIS

- Aged 50 years and over (including those who will be 50 years old by 31 March 2023)
- In long-stay residential care home
- A carer
- Close contact of an immunocompromised individual
- A frontline health and social care worker

Children in the following groups are also eligible:

- Aged 2 and 3 years on 31 August 2022
- School aged children (all primary school aged children (reception year to year 6) and eligible secondary school aged children)

Ask your pharmacist or GP if you're eligible for a free flu vaccine.

Covid-19 vaccinations

As we head into winter, we should remember that Covid-19 continues to circulate in Solihull and rates are still high.

For those who have not had all of their vaccinations (first, second, or booster dose), it is never too late – to book an appointment at a vaccine centre or find out where your local walk in clinics are visit www.birminghamandsolihullcovidvaccine.nhs.uk

You can get autumn Covid-19 booster if you are:

- Aged 50 and over
- Pregnant
- At high risk due to a health condition or because of a weakened immune system
- A carer of those at risk
- A front-line health and social care staff.

You will be contacted once you are eligible- this needs to be at least 3 months after your previous dose. If you have not been contacted following the three month period, you can visit www.birminghamandsolihullcovidvaccine.nhs.uk to book an appointment.

We urge all those eligible to get their COVID-19 booster vaccines as soon as you can, so you have the strongest possible protection over the winter months.

Mental health

Making sure we sleep and eat well, keeping active and talking about our feelings can make a huge difference to our mental health. There are also some free services that are here to help when things get tough:

Mental Health Helpline offers mental health support for all Solihull and Birmingham residents the service is open 24hrs a day 7 days a week. 0121 262 3555 or 0800 915 9292

Or to see the range of easily accessible mental health support that is now available visit www.solihull.gov.uk/Here2help/Stay-well

Every Mind Matters has practical tips for mental health and wellbeing at www.nhs.uk/oneyou/every-mind-matters/



Financial help

The winter poses a number of challenges for household finances. Severe weather conditions can pose a serious health risk, but many people may struggle to heat their homes and stay healthy because of costly energy bills.

We've compiled a list of some organisations that can offer advice and support.

Claims

Check that you are receiving all the money that you are entitled to. Do you know what you can claim? Call the DWP Help to Claim line on 0800 1448444 to find out or contact the Solihull Community Advice Hubs on 0121 709 7590.

Money and debt advice

Advance Credit Union is a safe way to save and a cost-effective way to borrow. 0121 350 8883 or email info@advancecu.org.uk

British Legion helps people who have served or are serving in the armed forces. 0808 802 8080

Citizens Advice Solihull provides free and confidential advice. 0808 2787976

Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm. Adviceline Universal Credit – Help to Claim Line 0800 1448 444 www.casb.org.uk

Solihull Community Advice Hubs in Chelmsley Wood and central Solihull provide a wide range of information, advice and support. 0121 709 7590 or email admin@solihullcommunityhub.org.uk

Money Advice Service is a debt counselling service. 0800 138 7777 www.moneyhelper.org.uk

Stop Loan Sharks provides 24/7 support. 0300 555 2222 or www.stoploansharks.co.uk

Entitlements and household grants

Council Tax Reduction - 0121 704 8200 or www.solihull.gov.uk/Council-tax-and-benefits/Council-tax-reduction

Free Schools Meals – call the Family Information Service on 0800 389 8667 or email familyinfo@solihull.gov.uk

Housing Benefit – 0121 704 8200 or visit www.solihull.gov.uk/housing-benefit

Sick Pay - www.gov.uk/statutory-sick-pay

Solihull Council's Discretionary Crisis Fund provides help with food, fuel and items like white goods and beds for households experiencing financial hardship. Phone 0121 704 8284.

Solihull Council's Discretionary Housing Payments provides help with rent for Solihull residents in receipt of housing benefit/Universal credit housing costs and experiencing financial hardship. Phone 0121 704 6202.

Solihull Community Housing Hardship Fund provides emergency help for tenants with urgent financial needs. 0121 717 1515 or moneyadvice@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk

Universal Credit Helpline – 0800 144 8444
Help with employment

Citizens Advice Solihull help with volunteering. 0121 779 6707 ktturner@casb.org.uk or for employment advice – 0808 2787976.

Colebridge Trust help with employment and skills. 0121 448 0720 or email jobs@colebridge.org

Job Shops 0121 704 8076

Solihull Council can help with employment. People under 30 years old - 07468 354929. People 30 years and over - 07468 354928. Email - Employmentandskillsteam@solihull.gov.uk

Solihull for Success has lots of information for businesses including help to find local jobs and training options. 0121 704 6151 or visit www.solihullforsuccess.com

Homelessness

If you are homeless or threatened with homelessness please call the Contact Centre on 0121 717 1515 and select Option 2 or visit www.solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk/homeless-enquiry/

For more information, please visit www.solihull.gov.uk/here2help

Citizens Advice Solihull are here to help you

Are you worried about the future? Struggling to pay your bills and manage on the income you have? Citizens Advice Solihull may be able to help you.

Citizens Advice are an independent charity giving free high quality advice and information to local people. They can support on a range of topics such as welfare benefits, money, employment, housing, consumer, immigration, health and relationships.

If you have a long term health condition or consider yourself to be disabled; there are benefits you can claim to help increase the money you have.

People are approaching Citizens Advice asking for assistance to complete grant applications to make their home warmer or to help with their energy supplier. Did you know they are also able to give out fuel and food vouchers to people who they are working with?

Should you be falling behind with your bills and wondering how you can increase your income and stop your debts getting worse, please get in touch.

■ **Do you require assistance or support? Citizens Advice advisers are available to speak with you.**

You can call 08082 787976 each week from Thursday to Tuesday between 10am and 2:30pm.



Case study

A customer attended an Energy drop-in day to discuss problems with her bills. The energy supplier would not accept her meter readings and was over charging her.

Citizens Advice booked a video chat appointment with the customer and the supplier to negotiate. They explained that the customer had paid two sets of bills for the first few months after moving in, which they had not realised.

The supplier referred the problem to their technical support team to repair the account as meter readings could not be accepted.

Following this, the supplier contacted Citizens Advice the next day to inform them the issue had been resolved, and the customers Direct Debit had been reduced by £90 per month, and the payments on the bill would be refunded.

This customer was incredibly grateful and could not thank Citizens Advice enough, as she had been trying for months to resolve the matter herself to no effect.

Employment and Skills help

Would you like face to face, non judgemental career and training advice from qualified careers advisors? The Solihull Recruitment Training Centre based in the heart of Chelmsley Wood Shopping Centre provides advice, support and guidance ranging from:

- Employment advice and guidance
- Training information
- Job preparation and interview support
- One to one job search
- CV update
- Support with completing job applications
- Skill matching to local employment and training opportunities in a range of sectors

Emmylou has successfully completed training with Embark and had an

interview, she is now awaiting her DBS so that she can start employment.

Send your name and contact details to employabilitysupport@solihull.gov.uk to organise an appointment.

Care to drive?

We have a fantastic opportunity exclusively for Solihull Community Housing residents.

Are you interested in working in the Care industry but the essential driver criteria is a barrier for you?

This amazing opportunity offers not only Care sector training, development and employment opportunities there are also fully funded driving lessons to support you into work!

Send your details to employabilitysupport@solihull.gov.uk to organise an appointment.

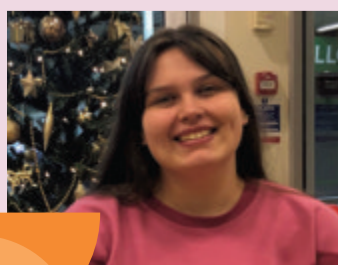
Our Employment and Skills Officer can help you develop your skills and be the best you can be!

We can offer:

- Information on local free training courses and qualifications
- Work experience opportunities
- Employment opportunities
- Confidence building
- Interview preparation
- CV writing and job application support to help you get the job you want

Job Ready

Interested? Get in touch!
www.solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk
Employabilitysupport@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk



Emmylou recently attended the centre

"I have been very impressed with the help I have received from Emma since she started working with me. The help and guidance she provided has been exemplary and she has worked hard to find opportunities for me that work with my current schedule and that are tailored to exactly what I want. The centre itself has a friendly and welcoming atmosphere and I would recommend anyone who is needing help to find work to come in and see what Solihull Recruitment Training Centre can do for them."

Tenant Conference proves a hit with all!

At long last, on 8 October, we were finally able to hold a Tenant Conference for our engaged residents and what a success it was!

We held the conference at Connections Church in Kingshurst and invited members of our Virtual Improvement Panel to join us.

The day included discussions around our 2023/24 Delivery Plan themes and workshop activities highlighting issues surrounding the current Cost of Living crisis, mental health and wellbeing, managing anti-social behaviour (ASB), and building safety.

There were also interactive stands around the venue highlighting some of the amazing work we and our partners do all year round to keep our services running.

Michael Hill from Tpas was a guest speaker on the day. Michael discussed the importance of tenant engagement and

what it means to both us and our residents, before finally awarding us with our Tpas accreditation!

Executive Director of Customer Services, Transformation and Business, Martyn Sargeant, spoke to our residents about the importance of their voice.

Tenants provided lots of really useful feedback which meant the day closed with a lively Q&A forum. Everyone then left with a small goodie bag to say thank you for giving up a Saturday to talk to us.

A very big thank you to all our engaged residents who joined us for such an insightful and enjoyable day. Your views matter and we have taken away a lot of feedback to consider.



Our Engagement Team made the day a huge success

Residents got involved in workshop discussions



Engagement never stops!

Over the last few months our Tenant Engagement team have been very busy working with you, our customers!

Our team have been working with SMBC and our Neighbourhood Services team to carry out estate walkabouts at Gilson Way, Perch Avenue and Alder Drive. These walkabouts are very good for spotting issues in the community from potholes and fly-tipping concerns to overgrown walkways.

We often have tenants join us on these walks to tell us of any concerns they have. If this is something you would be interested in, please get in touch.

Our Safe and Well checks returned to Bedford House recently. By working in partnership with West Midlands Fire Service, West Midlands Police, and our Neighbourhood Services team we were able to:

- Highlight fire safety
- Ensure safe and well checks were provided to residents in need
- Tackle any possible anti-social behaviour issues

This was a huge success and another example of great partnership working within the borough.

The SCHape Panel also came in for their review, but this was slightly different. They were concerned as to how the cost-of-living crisis would impact residents and how we could provide support.

This was also discussed at the tenant conference and together we came up with some ideas that will help us support residents during this difficult time.

Recently we attended the Queens Park Clean Up hosted by Clean and Green. We were joined by West Midlands Police Neighbourhoods team, Love Solihull, Kingshurst Parish Council, NSL – SMBC's enforcement contractors and more.

It was a great success and very well received in the area, with all involved getting lots of positive comments from local residents.

We want to hear from you!

There are lots of ways for you to get involved with us. You can find out more by visiting our website.

We'd love to know if you think we are getting it right. To help us do this, please tell us what you think are the three most important things you feel residents

should have a say on?

This could be our Estates work, making sure your home is safe or our repairs service.

Let us know by emailing us at engagement@solihull.gov.uk

Bag it, bin it



While the majority of dog owners are responsible people who clean up any mess their dogs make, a persistent few fail to do the right thing.

If you, or your visitors, own a pet, you are responsible for ensuring that you immediately clear up any mess left by the dogs.

Dog mess can be very harmful. You can safely get rid of your dog's mess using a 'poop scoop' and a bag. If there isn't a dog bin nearby, wait until you get home and put it in the bin or rubbish chute.

If you are caught letting your dog foul and not cleaning it up, you could be fined up to £1,000.

Pick it up or pay the price.

Fly-tipping is illegal

Fly-tipping of any kind is illegal and a serious health and safety hazard.

If you live in a high rise or low rise building, never throw anything from your window as this is known as aerial fly-tipping and is very dangerous.

All fly-tipping creates an unhygienic environment attracting rats and vermin.

If you have unwanted large items that you would like to dispose of, do not fly tip! Please call us on 0121 717 1515 and book our Bulky Waste Collection Service for a small charge.

You must make sure that anyone who takes your waste away is authorised to do so. If you do not check this information, you are committing a criminal offence.

You should:

- Ask the contractor for their registration number
- Phone 08708 506 506 to confirm they are registered, or check the Environment Agency's public register online
- Record details of the contractor

If the contractor is not a registered waste carrier, report them to Environmental Health by calling 0121 704 8369, or email environmentalhealth@solihull.gov.uk

Winter Warmth



Supported by Solihull Council, Age UK Solihull provides a local Winter Warmth Helpline for older people, those living with disabilities or long-term health conditions, carers and families with young children.

The current cost of living crisis and high energy bills are resulting in many households rationing their use of heating and other appliances. This could lead to illness and can cause existing medical conditions to become much worse.

All vulnerable households should aim to keep their main living areas between 18C and 21C.

If you would like advice or support on

keeping you and your home warm this Winter, please call the Solihull Winter Warmth helpline on 0121 704 8080.

The helpline is available Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm until the end of March. **Scan the QR code for more information.**



Decem-brrr is here!

- Keep internal doors closed to stop draughts
- Have at least one hot meal a day
- Have hot drinks throughout the day
- Layer up - many layers of clothing are best
- Use an electric blanket or heat pad
- Close curtains at dusk
- Ensure your heating is set to 18°C - 21°C in your home
- Contact your energy supplier to find out if you qualify for the annual Warm Home Discount of £140
- Contact your energy supplier to find out about Social Tariffs or Priority Register Schemes
- Ensure your home is well insulated and your boiler is serviced
- Get your free flu jab if you are in a vulnerable group.

Changes to our Complaints Policy

We have been making improvements to our complaints policy and processes to ensure it is easier for customers to have their concerns about services investigated.

In line with the requirement from the Housing Ombudsman Service we have published a self-assessment against the Ombudsman's complaints handling code.

We no longer have Stage 0 or informal complaints. When you call into our contact centre, we will try to resolve your dissatisfaction at the point of contact. If we are unable to do so we will raise a complaint at Stage One of our complaints policy.

Your complaint will be sent to the relevant service area to investigate, and you can expect personal contact from an investigating officer. Once they have investigated the complaint you will

receive a response in writing.

To make your experience of the complaints process easier, we have developed a handy guide to help you make a complaint which can be found on our website.

We welcome feedback from our customers on the range of services we deliver. We do listen and want to learn from the things that go well and the things that do not work so well for our customers.



Alarms on way



The Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Regulations came into force on 1 October 2022.

All our properties are fitted with smoke alarms. We now have a legal duty to also install carbon monoxide alarms in your homes.

Our Asset Management team are currently working with Dodd Group to add CO2 alarms to all our flats that have a gas supply by the end of December.

This includes:

- Redwood House
- Kingsgate House
- Fircroft House
- Avoncroft House
- Catesby House
- Demontfort House
- Digby House
- Kingshurst House
- Wingfield House

A shower of thanks!

Dodd Group, our external gas and electric contractors, have been working hard to fit a new sprinkler system in all 37 of our high rise blocks.

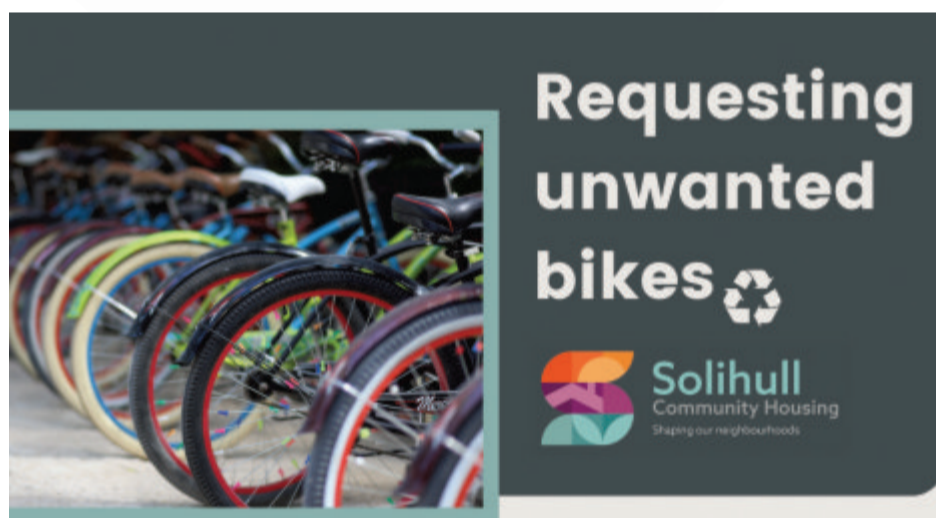
We have received some amazing feedback from our residents at Keble House on this project. Here is what they had to say:

"Communication was amazing, I knew what was happening from start to finish. All workmen treated the home with respect and cleaned up after themselves. Very well-mannered and polite."

"All the work was done very nice, all clean, tidy and respectful to me and my dog. A job well done. A great bunch of lads."

"Dodd group are to be congratulated on the team they put together. From my first meeting to closing the door on the lad cleaning up, the whole team work quickly and efficiently. All were polite and friendly. I was pleasantly surprised with how neat the job was, especially compared to previous contractors."

Thank you to all our residents for your patience and support with this project. With your help we have been able to complete over half of the blocks since starting installation back in April 2021.



Requesting unwanted bikes




Our Furniture Recycling Project aims to stop good quality housing items from going to waste.


We are requesting any unwanted bike donations, particularly children's bikes as part of our re-cycling project.

The bikes will be used as part of a family cycling project, where we work with families in a safe, secure environment to develop their cycling skills.

The parents learn to cycle and/or build their confidence with their children, to get them feeling more empowered and comfortable to cycle in their local community.

The more bikes we have of different sizes, the more families we will be able to support.

 **If you have a bike you would like to donate, please contact us by emailing furnitureproject@solihull.gov.uk**

 www.solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk/furniture-recycling-project/

Competition time!

Thank you to everyone who entered our wordsearch competition. Congratulations to our winner, Catherine. Your £25 voucher is in the post!

For a chance to win a £25 voucher you must complete our Christmas-themed wordsearch. Only one entry per person is allowed. You must be an SCH tenant or leaseholder 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: **Friday 6 January 2023**

Enjoy the puzzle!

S	N	O	O	S	N	O	W	M	A	N	U	D	W	A
L	E	I	C	T	B	L	W	I	N	T	C	E	I	G
E	R	T	H	R	R	I	E	W	T	W	H	E	N	I
I	O	W	R	E	A	T	H	P	R	G	R	R	M	N
G	L	E	I	T	P	G	A	R	N	H	R	T	E	G
H	W	Q	S	N	R	T	R	E	E	T	N	I	A	E
S	A	N	T	A	E	N	W	S	D	S	U	N	W	R
M	F	S	M	U	S	S	Z	E	D	E	E	S	A	B
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L	I	O	M	H	O	L	L	Y	L	G	D	A	H	E
L	T	R	E	C	H	M	A	R	L	I	G	H	T	S
S	N	O	W	F	L	A	K	E	S	G	I	N	G	D

WIN A £25 VOUCHER

Words to find:

PRESENTS	DEER
TREE	GINGERBREAD
LIGHTS	SNOWMAN
SANTA	WINTER
WREATH	SLEIGH

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

Website: www.solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk
Visit the contact us page on our website to complete an online form with details of your enquiry



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