



WOKING@HOME

DEAR RESIDENT



NEW YEAR, NEW SERVICE

Back in August 2020 you told us that you wanted the council to be more involved in the delivery of housing services and in February 2021, the council resolved to bring housing management and asset management services back in-house. It also resolved to procure housing repairs and maintenance works through third party contractors from 1 April 2022 when our current contract with New Vision Homes comes to an end.

The most significant area of work to deliver this service change has been to procure new contracts relating to repairs, maintenance and compliance of the council's housing stock. There are 25 contracts to be procured to replace all of the services currently provided by New Vision Homes. These range from core services such as responsive repairs and maintenance to small, one-off contracts such as sprinkler system servicing and car park barrier servicing. Not all of them are essential to have in place on day one of the new service

and priority is being given to the contracts that will keep you safe and warm in your homes (page 3).

With the council having the ability to uphold its desired standards through direct contract management from 1 April 2022, tenants and leaseholders can expect an improved customer experience and a greater say over how housing services are delivered - something which you also told us was important.

165 survey respondents also said they would like to be directly involved in decision making and we are putting in place a resident engagement team to facilitate this. We hope, for example, that in the future this newsletter will be written and compiled by residents, for residents.

In the meantime, this edition of Woking@Home covers some of your other key priorities such as investing in new affordable homes (page 2) and maintaining your properties during the colder weather (page 4).

Cllr Debbie Harlow
Portfolio Holder for Housing

NEWS IN BRIEF

GET PAID FOR MOVING

If your council property is larger than your current or long-term needs, we can help you to move to a smaller, more manageable property. We can support you with any worries or concerns related to relocating, including the costs associated with moving and the stress of uprooting from familiar surroundings.

By volunteering to downsize your property, we can offer you a wide range of incentives, including:

- a financial reward
- housing priority (Band B)
- your removal costs paid.

To find out more, please email housingneeds@woking.gov.uk or call **01483 755 855**.

VOLUNTEERS WANTED

We are keen to hear what residents want and how we can improve our service to tenants and leaseholders.

If you have something to say and, are interested in volunteering to help us shape the future, please email resident.engagement@woking.gov.uk to find out more.

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USEFUL CONTACTS

To report a repair:

☎ **0300 373 0373**

🌐 nvhwoking.co.uk

Emergency out of hours:

☎ **0203 701 3590**

INVESTING IN NEW HOMES

HALE END COURT OFFICIALLY OPENS

Hale End Court, our brand new £16.7 million extra care housing scheme in Old Woking, was officially opened by the Mayor of Woking, Cllr Liam Lyons, in November 2021.

Hale End Court comprises 48 self-contained, modern apartments. The generous living space is designed to help elderly or frail individuals and couples to live independently in a comfortable environment.



Hale End Court, Old Woking

Features of Hale End Court include:

- a beautiful courtyard and roof terrace
- large dining room where meals can be purchased daily
- warm and intimate communal lounge
- an on-site hair salon
- coffee bar
- parking for tenants
- scooter storage and charging station
- dementia friendly features such as coloured doors and carpets to help stimulate memory
- wet room bathrooms, and
- daily activities.

Tenants also have the option to sign up for various support services, including meals delivered to their door and a range of sensors and alarms to summon additional help.

If you would like to be considered for a flat at Hale End Court please contact housing.needs@woking.gov.uk to start the assessment process.



Arthur Beasley from Sheerwater was the first tenant to move into Hale End Court



The Mayor of Woking with Hale End Court residents

SHEERWATER REGENERATION PROJECT WELCOMES FIRST TENANTS

Steven Locke was one of the first tenants to move into Murray Place, in Sheerwater.

Steven has lived in Sheerwater for eight years and previously occupied one of the 449 social properties needed for the regeneration. He advised our housing support officers that he wanted to stay in the area and they were there with him on the day he moved into his brand new apartment.

There are 41 apartments and five three-storey town houses available for affordable rent in the new development. All of the one-bedroom apartments have now been let to tenants living within the regeneration area but a selection of two and three bed properties will be made available for applicants to bid on via Choice Based Lettings.



Steven Locke looking out from the balcony of his new apartment



Murray Place, Sheerwater

NEIGHBOURHOOD NOTICEBOARD

In future editions of Woking@Home we will post details of community clean-ups and other resident engagement events here on our Neighbourhood Noticeboard.

YOUR HOUSING SERVICE

MEET OUR HOUSING ALLOCATIONS TEAM LEADER



Name: Michelle Dixon

Job title: Housing Allocations Team Leader

Start date: 2002

What do you do?

I oversee housing allocations and the council's housing register. A large proportion of my day is spent responding to review requests, councillor and MP enquiries and queries from other agencies and applicants. It's a varied role and no two days are the same. It can be both challenging and rewarding.

How big is your team?

I manage a team of four. The housing register officers assess online housing applications, answer telephone and email enquiries, and submit medical applications to the council's independent medical advisor. This initial assessment is vital in ensuring all information is received and assessed in accordance with the council's housing allocations policy.

How long does it take to register an applicant?

Due to the volume of applications it can take around 12 to 14 weeks for an application to be registered. All applications are backdated to the date when we received them.

How to do you allocate properties?

We liaise with New Vision Homes and local housing associations

about current vacancies and the housing allocations officers use this information to create the property lists which applicants bid on via the council's Choice Based Lettings system.

Once bidding closes, officers review the applications and verify the applicants, which may include a home visit, in order to compile a shortlist for each property. A housing association may have additional affordability criteria which they will assess before an offer is made. We also try to complete our own financial assessment ahead of a housing association nomination to avoid disappointment.

Once the team is satisfied that an applicant is verified and the property is suitable for them, a letter is sent informing the applicant of the offer.

When the property is ready to let, the applicant is invited to view the property. If accepted the applicant will then sign a tenancy agreement.

Are there many properties available?

Currently we are very busy allocating to three new build developments - Hobbs Close; Hale End Court, which is an extra care scheme; and Murray Place, part of the Sheerwater regeneration.

Suitability is just as important as availability, so my job also involves supporting residents to downsize if they have more space than they need, and working with occupational therapists and other agencies to adapt homes to people's changing physical needs.

The most rewarding aspect of the job is being able to offer Woking residents a suitable property and a home of their choice.

BRINGING OUR SERVICES BACK IN-HOUSE

On 31 March 2022 our contract with New Vision Homes (NVH) will come to an end and the council will directly manage the delivery of housing management and maintenance services.

We will still need to use specialist third party contractors for repairs, planned maintenance and estate cleaning but as of 1 April 2022, these contractors will be directly employed by us rather than NVH. This means we can choose who delivers these services on our behalf and we can directly monitor their performance to ensure we're getting the best service possible for our residents.

Following a rigorous tender and evaluation process, our responsive repairs contract has been awarded to Mountjoy Ltd, an experienced maintenance contractor.

Our contract requires Mountjoy to reduce waiting times, offer more convenient appointment options and complete repairs first time. This contract also includes gas repairs.

The estate cleaning contract has been awarded to Just Ask Estate Services, a Woking based facilities management company. Similar to the repairs contract, this involved a two-stage quality evaluation. In addition to current cleaning tasks, our contract with Just Ask Estate Services includes the cleaning of bins and bin stores and the removal of fly-tipping.

We have invited businesses to bid for our disabled adaptations and statutory compliance contracts. We will be awarding these contracts soon and look forward to providing you with further information in our next Woking@Home newsletter.

The specifications for all contracts have been written with residents at the forefront, and with the aim of delivering a high-quality service that is easy to use and accessible to all.

CARE AND REPAIR

DAMP AND MOULD: THE MENACE OF WINTER

The cold, damp weather outside can cause damp and mould issues on the inside. Sometimes this is due to leaks or water penetration, but we create a lot of moisture in our everyday lives. On average, a person will perspire and exhale 0.85 litres of water vapour per day.

Drying clothes inside can produce 5.1 litres of water vapour, and in an average house, the activities of cooking, bathing and doing the dishes can produce 6.6 litres of water vapour per day. In a house of two people this can lead to 12.4 litres (26.2 pints) of water vapour being produced each day. This causes the humidity to be very high and active measures need to be put in place to prevent issues caused by excess moisture.

There is always moisture in the air, even if you cannot see it. If the air gets colder, it cannot hold all the moisture and tiny drops of moisture appear. This is condensation. It

appears on cold surfaces and in places where there is little movement of air. In particular, the effect can be seen on external walls, on ceilings, in corners, near windows and in or behind furniture or excessive storage.

Tips for reducing moisture and condensation in your home:

- Heat your home. Keep the heating on a low background heat even when no-one is at home.
- Cover pans when cooking.
- Dry clothes outside where possible, and never on radiators.
- Ventilate the house daily to allow good circulation of air.
- Increase ventilation of the kitchen and the bathroom when in use and shut the door to prevent the steam from getting into other parts of the house.
- Wipe windows and sills every morning.



If you do have mould in your home, wipe down affected walls and window frames with a fungicidal wash, if it is safe for you to do so. Do not brush or vacuum affected areas as this can spread the spores. Shampoo carpets and wash clothes instead.

YOUR FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is social housing?

The term social housing is defined in the Housing and Regeneration Act 2008. It refers to low cost rental homes, usually provided by councils or housing associations.

If I have a medical condition can I be assessed to move to a suitable property?

Each case will be considered on your current housing situation and the medical information that you provide. Some people with a serious medical condition or disability may be given medical priority, although this is rare. This only happens where a move to different property would

significantly improve the health or quality of life of yourself or a member of your household. We will not make decisions based on the medical conditions of household members alone.

For some people with serious medical conditions, moving home will not improve their health as they are already living in the most suitable accommodation that can be provided. In these cases we can ask our occupational therapist to carry out an assessment and adaptations to the current property can be carried out.

Send your questions to **resident.engagement@woking.gov.uk**

TRANSLATION SERVICES

Do you need help understanding this information?

Czy potrzebujesz pomocy w zrozumieniu tych informacji?

এই তথ্যটা বুঝতে আপনার কি কোনো সাহায্য লাগবে ?
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