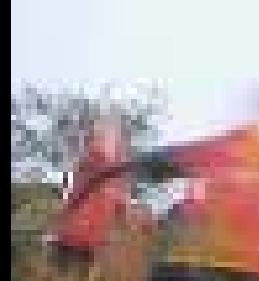




Easy pay:
We've made it easier
for you to pay your rent



**Tenant board
members:** How
you can get involved



**Supporting
communities:**
Grants up to £250

the magazine for Whitefriars tenants and leaseholders

Issue 1

home

**Home heralds new era
for Coventry housing**



Here we GO!

Well, this is it. Whitefriars Housing Group is up and running and making a start on a massive £240 million investment in your homes over the next few years.

You'll all have been aware of the long process that we've had to go through to reach this point and, we're sure, will have noted the promises we've made to you during that time.

Well, we're about to start delivering on those promises. Indeed, our programme of work up to the end of March includes:

windows replaced in over 1,400 homes
re-wiring in over 1,000 homes
re-roofing
central heating installation
boiler replacements
security door fitting in 50 blocks of flats
repairs to fascias, soffits and bargeboards on 500 homes
loft insulation upgrades to 2,000 homes
environmental works

By the end of March 2001 we aim to spend over £20 million on both repairs and improvements.

So you can see that straightaway there will be real benefits for tenants. And when you consider that there will be just six months left of our 'first year', that's a lot of work in a short space of time.

And we're determined to do it. Determined to provide better homes for you, the tenants.

Welcome home

This is your magazine. We want tenants of all ages to get involved in producing Home and making it a must-read magazine, something you want to pick up.

Yes, it'll contain important information and useful telephone numbers, but it should be entertaining, too.

So, while there'll be details about the likes of ID cards and housing benefit, you'll also be able to read about people - fellow tenants - enter competitions, tell us your own stories and keep up-to-date with how Whitefriars is improving housing in the city.

And you'll be helping to set the agenda, because we want to establish an editorial board that includes tenants, so that Home - if indeed that's what you decide to call it - really can address the things you're interested in, not what others think you're interested in.

So, if you'd like to get involved and help make Home a really lively read, contact Lynn Hanson, Whitefriars Tenant Participation Manager, on **02476 831985**.



Whitefriars
HOUSING GROUP

Paying rent just got easier



One of the first things Whitefriars has done is to make it easier for you to pay your rent.

We're introducing the Easy Pay Rent Card, which enables all tenants to make payments quickly, easily and conveniently.

The plastic 'swipe' card lets you pay your rent at any Post Office or at one of the payment points displaying the PayPoint symbol, anywhere in the country.

And it's so simple to use:

- ***Just hand the card and your payment to the counter staff each time you pay. You can pay by cash, cheque or postal order.***
- ***Each time you pay you will be given a receipt, which should be kept safe in the wallet provided.***
- ***The payments will be automatically credited to your rent account.***

It really is that easy.

Remember that when paying at the Post Office you need to make cheques payable to Post Office Counters Ltd and to write your rent account number on the back of the cheque.

If you use any other PayPoints that accept cheques, ask who to make the cheque payable to.

You do not need to do anything to receive your new card, it will be sent to you automatically. You will receive your card shortly and it will include your rent account details and your own PIN (personal identification number.) Having a PIN means that even if you move to another Whitefriars property, you can use the same card.

And if you are a joint tenant, the person who is a joint tenant with you will also receive a card. When either card is used, the joint rent account will be credited.

The card is not a credit card and has no monetary value. What it does is tell us who you are so that we can credit your rent account accurately.

You should keep your card safe, but if it does get lost or damaged, get in touch with your Local Housing Office, which will make sure you receive a replacement.

Information about exactly how to use the card will be sent with it, but if you would like further details call the Freephone helpline on **0800 0686679**.



Tenants Garden Competition 2000

Results of the garden competition are being processed as you read this. Launched at the beginning of summer, the competition has attracted dozens of entries and we'll bring you news and pictures of the winners in the next edition of Home.

A presentation for the prizewinners will be held at St Mary's Guildhall.



How, you're already involved



Some of you may not be aware that tenants are already closely involved with the running of Whitefriars.

The Group - which comprises Whitefriars Homes North, Whitefriars Homes South and Whitefriars Services - is run by boards of unpaid volunteers, with each board made up of one-third tenants, one-third council nominees and one-third independent representatives.

It makes sense to have tenants as board members, because they have a better understanding of what tenants want. So, here they are:

Whitefriars North

Jene McKean



Jene is chairman of Stoke Heath Tenants and Owners Association; a Tenants Association Liaison Committee member; a co-opted member of the 1999/2000 Housing Policy Team; chairman of the local police liaison committee and of Coventry North police consultative committee.

She qualified in housing law at Birmingham Polytechnic in 1985 and has been involved in Council housing for more than 40 years.

Jene said of the Whitefriars launch: "Having spoken to tenants I know that they are really looking forward to this, but are especially keen on having doors and windows replaced, which will, in turn, make it easier and cheaper to heat their homes. This is a huge step forward and it is marvellous that the money is there now to create better homes for people to live in."

Bill Newey



Bill has been chairman of Roseberry Avenue Area Tenants and Residents Association for several years. He is also a member of the North East police consultative committee; a lay visitor for M Division, West Midlands Police Authority; a Tenants Association Liaison Committee member; and was a co-opted member of the 1998/99 Housing Policy Team.

Bill said: "This is an excellent move and one that's long overdue. Lots of promises have been made and as tenant board members we've got to make sure they are carried out. It's a huge task that Whitefriars has taken on, no doubt about it, but I'm confident it'll do a good job."





Colin has been actively involved as secretary of the Falkener House Tenants Association since it was formed in 1994. He is also a Tenants Association Liaison Committee member and was a co-opted member of the 1998/99 Housing Policy Team.

Colin worked as an architectural design consultant and has been involved in the design and construction of housing all his working life.

He said of the transfer: "Tenants I come across and speak to are really looking forward to this, it's a huge step forward. It's being seen as a fresh start and they have been counting down the days. They're expecting tangible results from day one, too, and we're working hard to make sure that happens."

Whitefriars South



Ellen has been a member of the Stoke Aldermoor Residents Association since 1969 and its secretary since 1990. She is also a Tenants Association Liaison Committee member, a police consultative committee member and a co-opted member of the 1999/2000 Housing Policy Team.

Ellen said: "This can only benefit the tenants. In fact, it's got to benefit the tenants. We have promised them that they will have better homes and we've got to make sure that they get them. No ifs or buts, they have got to be delivered. Tenants, though, do have realistic expectations and realise it won't all happen over night."



Melvyn has been a member of Tile Hill South Residents Association for four years and was, until recently, its chairman. During this time he has worked with local councillors, housing officers, other council departments and the police on a variety of projects. Melvyn is a community development worker.

He commented: "If everything goes to plan then things are going to be a lot brighter for residents. They will be more comfortable and more secure. But what's most important is the fact they now have a real voice and rather than being told what they are going to get, they will be able to influence what happens, because there's now a real partnership between residents and Whitefriars."



Derek is secretary of Willenhall & Willenhall Wood Tenants & Residents Association. Having been seconded to the Willenhall Community Forum Ltd for the last four years, Derek is now a director of the organisation, as well as being its treasurer. His responsibilities include running the Willenhall Education, Employment & Training Centre.

Derek said: "I've been very impressed with the professionalism shown by Whitefriars throughout this process and I know that the directors are dedicated to fulfilling the promises they have made to tenants. I'm anticipating a bright future for tenants, which will see them getting their homes brought up to standard. I believe people will be thrilled by Whitefriars."

...and there are more opportunities

From the date of Whitefriars' first annual general meeting (AGM), any tenant will have the opportunity to stand for election to the tenant vacancies on the Whitefriars Board.

We will be offering training so that tenants who might be interested in becoming more closely involved can get a better idea of what the role of a tenant board member is.



Don't worry about all this info...

In the next few days you'll be receiving a lot of information from Whitefriars.

Don't worry. All tenants will be getting some information and it will all be explained.

One of the most important things popping through the letterbox will be your Easy Pay Rent Card (which you can read all about on page three) and the formal statutory notices advising you that Whitefriars is now your new landlord.

Then, a few weeks' later - within a month of transfer - we aim to issue new tenancy agreements to those tenants eligible to receive them. Tenants who do not receive tenancy agreements will be notified about why they have not been issued with them.

All tenants will receive copies of the new tenant handbook.

We realise that some of you might be a little overwhelmed at receiving all of this information so soon after the transfer of housing stock being made official. It's all very sudden, we know, but the sooner it happens the sooner we can get on and get the work done that will provide tenants with better accommodation.

And we're eager, also, to ensure that you're not worried about your fundamental rights as a tenant.

Transfer of Council homes to Whitefriars does not mean you will have to move out of your home.

You will continue to enjoy the same main rights that you enjoyed as a tenant of the Council.

Housing Benefit is still payable and you'll be able to visit or to call the same local offices as before, which will be staffed by the same people.

Neither should you be concerned that Whitefriars is a company already in existence and which is moving into Coventry to take over Council homes. In fact, Coventry City Council has set it up with the sole purpose of improving housing in the city.

Whitefriars is a registered social landlord (RSL) and has to operate within strict rules and regulations.

And it is run by voluntary boards, which - and this is very important - include tenants, who have a good understanding of what other tenants want and don't want.

But possibly the most important thing to remember about Whitefriars is the fact that it is a non-profit making organisation. Legally, it is not allowed to make a profit and any extra income it generates must be put back into improving housing and carrying out necessary repairs and services.

The only differences you should really notice will be for the better.

Aged 13-18? Got a talent?

...then we want to hear from you.

If you've got a flair for writing, art or photography, then we think you'd be perfect as a contributor to Home. There's lots of young, fresh talent out there, and we think this magazine could be a great way to channel some of it.

And you never know; it could just be starting point for a career. Get in touch with Lynn Hanson, on **02476 831985**, if you'd like to get involved.





Supporting communities

Do you know any community-based clubs, groups or other organisations that could put £250 to good use?

To mark the launch of Whitefriars, we want you to suggest community organisations run and used mainly by tenants that would benefit from a grant of up to £250. We believe this is an appropriate way of marking the transfer of Coventry's council housing to Whitefriars and it ensures that it is local community projects and activities that benefit.

So, we want to hand out a total of £1,500 to the likes of play-groups, youth football teams, after-school activities and social clubs for the elderly or disabled. In fact, any community organisation that contributes to the quality of life of people living in Whitefriars homes.

There are grants of up to £250 each for three worthy causes in the north of the city and three in the south. The only rules are that the organisation must be community based and run by volunteers primarily for the benefit of other tenants and leaseholders. The grant can be used for anything from new equipment to organising a day trip.

All you have to do is tell us in no more than 100 words why you think your community organisation deserves a grant of up to £250. Send in your entry, remembering to include all the details mentioned in the box below, to: Lynn Hanson, Tenant Participation Manager, Whitefriars Housing Group, Room 202, Spire House, New Union Street, Coventry, CV1 2PW.

A judging panel of Whitefriars tenant Board members will pick the winning entries and the results will be announced in the next issue of Home.

The closing date is Friday, 3rd November 2000.

!We understand that the decision of which organisations receive grants will be made by the tenant members of the Whitefriars Board and that their decision is final. Organisations receiving a grant will be required to prove that it has been used for the purposes stated.



Your application should include:

1. name of organisation
2. your name, address and a daytime phone number
3. your reason - in no more than 100 words - why a grant will benefit tenants and/or their families
4. has the organisation you have nominated received grants from other organisations in the past two years? If so, from whom and what was it used for?





id card keeps you in the picture

So that tenants feel safe, all Whitefriars employees who visit you in your home will be issued with new identity cards.

The cards carry employees' names and photographs.

You should ask to see this ID card before letting ANY Whitefriars employee into your home. If you are at all unsure about their identity you should call our Freephone helpline number - **0800 0686679** - and check before letting anyone inside.

Genuine Whitefriars employees will be only too happy to show their ID cards and will not mind waiting while you check their ID if you're not sure.

Don't forget, though, that some Coventry City Council employees will still be visiting you on behalf of Whitefriars, and they will have their own ID cards. But the same rule applies: if in doubt, check.

New name, new signs

Our network of 16 local housing offices has got a fresh, new look as part of the housing stock transfer.

The offices, which provide you with essential and frontline services, have had their 'City Council' signs replaced with new ones reading 'Whitefriars'.

We are planning to have all 16 new signs up during the week of the transfer.



Now let us know what you think

Now you've read the first edition of home - we want your feedback, so that we can make sure that future issues feature the things you want to know about and read about.

Once again, the address is: home, whitefriars housing group, room 202, spire house, new union street, coventry, CV1 2PW.

Directory

Telephone numbers for all local housing offices are as follows:

Bell Green	7663 8201 / 7663 8202
Canley	7647 4099 / 7646 4446
Cheylesmore	7650 4066 / 7650 2638
Ernesford Grange	7663 5860
Henley Green	7660 2203 / 7660 2204
Hillfields	7622 6471 / 7625 6959
Holbrooks	7666 2117
Foleshill	7666 2117
Tile Hill	7646 1181 / 7646 1199
Radford	7659 5940 / 7659 6554
Spon End	7655 5217 / 7655 5218
Stoke Aldermoor	7644 2327
Stoke Heath	7663 5778
Willenhall	7630 4461 / 7630 2507
Wood End	7661 8645 / 7661 8624
Wyken	7663 5860

Other useful numbers are:

Housing benefits	7683 1934
Council tax	7683 3869
Out of hours and emergency	7683 2222

Freephone helpline

Whitefriars has taken on the Council's Freephone helpline number - **0800 0686 679** - so that you can contact us at anytime should you want help and advice.

Are there other numbers you think might be helpful? If so, let us know and we'll add them to the Directory.

Want help with this magazine?

If you, or a friend, would like a copy of Home on audio tape or in a large print format, call the **0800 0686 679** Freephone helpline, and we'll send it to you. We want all tenants to know what we are doing on your behalf.