



Window of opportunity:
Creating jobs for local people



Rent payments:
an easier way to pay



Keeping our promises:
repairs update

the magazine for Whitefriars tenants and leaseholders
Issue 2



election results!
why your vote counted

home again

According to you, its readers, the first issue of Home proved a big hit, and we hope this second issue is a bigger success. It once more contains useful information to keep you up to speed with what Whitefriars is doing to improve its services and your homes and environment, but this time there's more of it, and we're really having to pack in the stories. We hope you enjoy this edition even more than you did the first.

What a response!

To mark the launch of Whitefriars, we used the first issue of Home to ask you to suggest community organisations run and used mainly by tenants that would benefit from a grant of up to £250.

Well, what a response we had! There were a number of excellent suggestions and we've since handed out a total of £1,500 to seven groups across the city. They are:

Spon End Residents Associations

- £250 for environmental works on the estate.

St Catherine's First Friends

Pre-School, Stoke Aldermoor

- £250 for project run by local mums.

William Sheridan House Tenants Group

- £250 for social activities in this sheltered housing block.

Salvation Army Youth Group, Camden Street

- £250 for youth project giving somewhere to go and something to do for local youngsters.

Coundon and Radford Action Team

- £250 for parent and child community initiative.



Cheylesmore Over 60s Club

- £125 for social activities. Most members are local tenants

Self Help Osteoporosis Group

- £125 to provide support, social activities and basic aid to members in Willenhall area. Most members are tenants.

The only rules were that the organisation must be community based and run by volunteers primarily for the benefit of other tenants and leaseholders, and all people had to do was tell us in no more than 100 words why they thought a group deserved to get a grant. A judging panel of Whitefriars Tenant Board members picked the winning entries.

What do you think?

As your new landlord we are keen to know what you think of the service we're providing.

So we're preparing to conduct a major survey of tenants, which will tell us where we're getting things right, and highlight areas in which we need to concentrate on improving our service.

We've already begun the process by talking to a group of tenants who've helped us develop ideas about how best to conduct the survey, what to include in it, who

should do it and what it has to achieve. An organisation called Market Research U.K has been appointed to carry out the survey.

We're aiming to get feedback from around 2,000 tenants. A list of randomly chosen tenants will be drawn-up and if you're on it we'll write to you and ask you to take part in the survey. Your views will be invaluable and will help shape the service we provide to all tenants in the future.



You can help edit Home

We like to receive feedback about Home, and want to hear from you about how we can improve it and what sort of articles and features you'd like to see in it. In fact, you can get really closely involved by becoming part of the editorial team that puts it together. So, if you'd like to find out what's involved, write to Lynn Hanson at this address: Home, Whitefriars Housing Group, Room 202, Spire House, New Union Street, Coventry, CV1





Window work creates jobs for city unemployed

Whitefriars Housing Group has helped 47 Coventry people secure jobs fitting new windows in Whitefriars homes.

Working closely with its window and door replacement contractors - Anglian Windows and Graham Holmes Astraseal - Whitefriars has created 95 new jobs, 47 of which have been taken by local people.

We have been working hard with our contractors to make sure the investment in your homes results in jobs and training for local people.

Whitefriars chief executive, Howard Farrand said: "While this is important work - and among the most eagerly anticipated by tenants - Whitefriars is about much more than new windows.

"We must bring something more to the city, and in helping to create jobs for local people we and our contracting partners have gone some way to addressing wider issues such as employment, which are so important to our tenants."

Anglian Windows has employed 26 Coventry people. Twenty of them are fitters, while two each are employed as managers/supervisors, administrators and in the company's stores. Astraseal's 21 local employees are similarly split: 15 fitters, two managers/supervisors, two surveyors, one administrator and one in the stores.

Anglian is working on homes in the south of the city, while Astraseal is taking care of those in the north.

Anglian divisional director Steve Lawrence said: "The size of the contract means extra staff are needed if we are to complete the work on schedule, and it made sense that some of those we employed were local people. They are based at a depot we have set up in Coventry and can be on site very quickly."

Astraseal deputy managing director, David Nunley said: "We have taken on and trained Coventry people, including young unemployed, who will achieve National Vocational Qualification Level 2 and 3 with the help of our own training staff."



Housing benefit: Who does what post-transfer?

Following the transfer of Coventry City Council's housing stock to Whitefriars last year, some tenants have asked for clarification about which organisation is now responsible for assessing and paying housing benefit.

Answer: the city council.

But Whitefriars staff will be more than happy to give tenants advice and can help you complete housing benefit application forms, which are available at all our housing offices.

So that you do not lose any benefit, it is important that completed forms are returned to the city council's housing benefits office as quickly as possible, and by including all the information required, your claim can be processed faster and you might avoid some of the delays in processing claims.

And if you have been asked to send documents to support your claim, make sure you include them. This is another way of avoiding delays and making sure you don't miss out on benefit you're entitled to.

If you do experience a delay, you should contact the council on 02476 831964.





Keeping our

It feels a lot longer than seven months since Whitefriars took over the running and maintenance of Coventry's former council homes.

At the time we made a lot of promises, big ones, too. We knew that we had to deliver on those promises, otherwise you - our tenants - would be the first to tell us that we weren't doing what we said we would.

Well, we think we've achieved a great deal in the past seven months, and judging by the positive feedback we've had from residents, we believe you agree that there's been quite a transformation already in the areas where work has and is being carried out.

So here's a round-up of what's been done to date and what you can expect to be done in the coming months, in the two halves of the city: north and south.

Windows

Replacing windows in tenants' homes was - and we know this because you told us so - the most eagerly anticipated work, and seven months after transfer more than 900 new window installations have been completed in the north of the city, plus around 1,000 in the south, bringing the total close to 2,000.

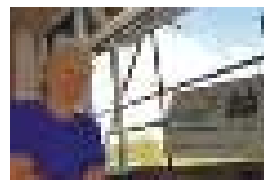
Our contractors in the north are Graham Holmes Astraseal, and we've been receiving a positive response to the work they've been doing, while Anglian Windows, working in the south, have had a similarly enthusiastic and encouraging reaction to their work.

One of the many tenants who wrote to us to compliment the fitters said: "I'd like to take this opportunity to say how friendly and efficient the fitters were. They both worked hard and it was a pleasure to have them in my home."

Mrs Ireland, of Whoberley, was so pleased with the work she had carried out that she wrote in praise of the window fitters for their hard work, friendly manner and the respect they showed to both her and her home.



She lives in a bungalow and it has been one of our priorities to improve the comfort and security of older tenants.



And Mrs Shannon, of Quinton Park, was equally delighted. When we called to check on progress the fitters were still at her home and she was full of praise for them and the standard of work.

The details of the next round of window replacement work is still being drawn-up, but it is likely to include the following areas:

North

Courthouse Green *Proffitt Avenue and properties in adjacent streets*

Bell Green *Carey Street, Dame Agnes Grove and surrounding area. Houses and bungalows Sibton Close, Cherrybrook Way and Honeysuckle Drive*

Radford *Homes surrounding Cheveral Avenue, Sadler Road and Middlemarch Road*

Holbrooks
Keresley *Bungalows Everdon Road Cottage Farm Road Estate including sheltered and Lowe Road area*

Coundon *Holloway Fields area and Three Spires Avenue*

Hillfields *Individual and small groups of properties*

Foleshill/Edgwick *Torcastle Close estate*



promises

South

Canley	<i>Glenrosa Walk, Donegal Close and 'steelhouses'</i>
Ernsford Grange	<i>homes in closes off Bredon Avenue</i>
Gosford/Copsewood	<i>Strathmore/Harper Road, Seven Road, Orwell Road and surrounding area</i>
Lower Stoke/Walsgrave	<i>Goring Road, Hastings Road area</i>
Tile Hill North/South	<i>all properties in the south and the area east of Bushberry Avenue</i>
Willenhall Wood	<i>all properties on the estate</i>

Once contracts for these areas are confirmed we will contact those of you living there to discuss the work. The standard work involves replacing existing windows with plastic, single-glazed units at no additional cost to you. The double-glazing package, which would add £1.55 per week to your rent, has the added benefits of improved insulation and security. Most tenants have opted for this package so far.

Early start for kitchens and bathrooms

You'll remember that as well as windows, we promised to begin replacing kitchens and bathrooms in year two of our improvement programme.

We've been talking with several major national contractors to find out whether they could deliver what's required and that it would be of a quality you'll be happy with.

Not only that, but much of the consultation work that will be carried out to determine exactly what you require will be conducted by the companies, so we had to be sure they could do that, too.

We will be appointing our two partnering contractors to deliver the work in the next few weeks.

Pilot schemes at 80 properties are now in the planning stages, and work will have begun by the time you read this. The main programme should start in July.

We'll give you details of future kitchen and bathroom programmes in the next issue of Home.

Help us spend £7.5 million

We've allocated a total of £7.5 million for environmental improvement work across the city over the next four years - and we want you to help us spend it.

But rather than just assume what work you'd like carried out, we believe you and your neighbours are best placed to identify what needs to be done in your area. So, an extensive tenant consultation programme will soon be underway.

We are on site at the moment with scheme of environmental improvement in a number of sheltered schemes in both the North and South of the city.

We will be bringing further details of the environmental work programme in the next issue of Home.

Other successes...

... we have also been busy with other works. The following are included in current contracts:

<i>Roofing</i>	<i>1027</i>
<i>Rewiring</i>	<i>1240</i>
<i>Insulation</i>	<i>2024</i>
<i>Fascias, soffits & gutters</i>	<i>625</i>
<i>Concrete repairs</i>	<i>408</i>
<i>Heating</i>	<i>112</i>
<i>Security & communal area</i>	<i>338</i>



Pictured: Baroness Dean, Chairman of the Housing Corporation with Peter Lacy, Chairman of Whitefriars Services Board

Baroness welcomes 40% ballot turn out

Housing Corporation Chairman Baroness Dean has welcomed the 40% turnout during a ballot in Coventry to elect tenants to the Boards of Whitefriars Housing Group.

Speaking during a recent visit to the city, she said: "It is extremely encouraging to see so many tenants - who are clearly committed to helping improve their homes and their environment - taking part in what is a hugely important process.

"The turnout means no fewer than 7,800 tenants exercised their right to vote for tenant Board members, people who will have an active involvement in vital decisions affecting thousands more Whitefriars residents.

"We want to see more of this type of involvement and empowerment, and Whitefriars is clearly helping to make it happen in Coventry."

Tenant Board member elections

You help run Whitefriars

During March over 7,800 of you - that's an impressive 40% of all Whitefriars tenants - voted your fellow tenants onto Whitefriars Housing Group's management Boards, giving you a real say in the running of the organisation.

The ballot, the results of which were known on March 14, followed our promise before transfer that all eligible tenants would have the opportunity to stand for board membership, and that all tenants could vote for their preferred candidates.

The process was organised and managed by Electoral Reform Ballot Services to ensure it was open and transparent.

Those elected will replace the existing six tenant Board members, who stood down at the end of March, unless they were re-elected.

Whitefriars Services chairman Peter Lacy said: "It was the opportunity we promised which enabled tenants to vote for tenants, who will now have a say in how this organisation is run.

"Those tenants who declared that they wished to stand for election showed

a commitment to ensuring success in bringing better homes and environments to the people of Coventry. The ones who were elected received a clear mandate to represent their fellow tenants."







There are three Boards: Whitefriars Services, Whitefriars North and Whitefriars South, plus a number of standing groups and committees. Elected tenants will all sit on the Services board and either the North or South boards, depending in which part of the city they live.

The Services board deals with Whitefriars strategy and policy, plus issues such as performance monitoring and funding, while North and South focus on service delivery, including repairs and management.

Elected tenants will be expected to attend around 15 meetings-a-year until the annual general meetings - in 2002 if they are on the North Board and 2003 in the South - when they would stand down. Board membership is voluntary, with out-of-pocket expenses paid for attending meetings or other board business.

Board members must undergo training in their main areas of responsibility.

The results of the ballot were as follows:

Whitefriars Homes North and Services	Whitefriars Homes South and Services
 <p>1. <u>Jene McKean</u> 1,794 votes (existing Board member)</p>	 <p>1. <u>Jim Cotterill</u> 1,892 votes</p>
 <p>2. <u>Colin Young</u> 1,668 (existing Board member)</p>	 <p>2. <u>Ellen Emms</u> 1,824 (existing Board member)</p>
 <p>3. <u>Richard Donovan</u> 1,648</p>	 <p>3. <u>Melvyn Evans</u> 1,592 (existing Board member)</p>

The successful candidates are pictured on the front cover with Baroness Dean, Chairman of the Housing Corporation on her recent visit to the city.

Tenant Garden Competition 2000



Green-fingered tenants are celebrating after walking off with the honours in our Tenant Garden Competition 2000.

Standards were extremely high, and the judges had a difficult task picking the winners, but they couldn't ignore the exceptional gardens tended and nurtured by the following gardeners:

Communal area	Mr Phillips	Skipton Lodge
Balcony	Mrs Warwick	Deal House, Dunhill Avenue
District 1	Mrs Browne	Camelia Road
District 2	Mrs Bramwell	James Galloway Close
District 3	Miss Rouse	Poole Road
District 4	Mr Edge	Dormer Harris Avenue
District 5	Mrs Voisey	Henry Boteler Road
Retired	Mr & Mrs Page	Merynton Avenue
Novice	Miss Rouse	Poole Road
Championship	Mr & Mrs Page	Merynton Avenue

Mr & Mrs Page made sure of the Championship title on top of their Retired category prize, with their stunning garden in Merynton Avenue.

They were among dozens of entries and we'll bring you news and pictures of the winners in the next edition of Home.

A prize giving ceremony was held at St Mary's Guildhall.

...now it's your turn

This year's competition will be the biggest and brightest yet, with new categories and prizes.

And we want budding young gardeners to get involved this time, too. You can choose to either grow the tallest sunflower or, if you don't have access to a garden, produce pictures or collages of gardens.

To find out more about this year's competition and the categories you can enter, call Teresa Kimbrell on 02476 833689 and she'll send you an application form. Those of you who have entered the competition in the past will automatically receive an entry form.

Don't get caught out!

We've been receiving reports of a spate of distraction burglaries in the city - and would urge people to be on their guard.

There are a few simple steps you can take to prevent these bogus callers - often posing as council or utility company officials - from getting into your home:

Do you know them? If not, have you made any appointments for people to call? No? Then don't let them in.

If you've got a door chain, use it.

Make sure they show their ID card.

If you're still not sure, ask them to wait, shut the door and call 999 or the organisation they say they're from.

Remember, all Whitefriars employees carry identity cards that include their photograph. Our contractors also have ID cards and/or letters of authority from us.

Further advice and a free Bogus Caller Pack is available from Coventry Action Against Crime on 02476 832978.





Rent book payments end on June 1



Tenants with old city council rent books won't be able to use them to pay their rent from June 1.

After that date all tenants will have to use the new swipe cards, which many tenants - young and old - are already using without problems. In fact, lots of you have told us just how easy they are to use.

There are just three steps:

- 1** *Present the card at any Post Office or PayPoint*
- 2** *The card will be read electronically - swiped - and the payment debited from your rent account*
- 3** *You will be issued with a receipt for your records*

And that's it. Simple. If you do have any problems or do not have the payment card we issued last year, just call in at a local office or ring 02476 831991

Opening hours change

So we can provide tenants with even better service, we have introduced a weekly staff training hour at local offices from 9am to 10am each Thursday. It means local offices will now open at 10am on Thursdays.

Directory

Telephone numbers for all local housing offices are as follows:

Bell Green	76638201 / 76638202
Canley	76474099 / 76464446
Cheylesmore	76504066 / 76502638
Ernesford Grange	76635860
Henley Green	76602203 / 76602204
Hillfields	76226471 / 76256959
Holbrooks	76662117
Foleshill	76662117
Tile Hill	76461181 / 76461199
Radford	76595940 / 76596554
Spon End	76555217 / 76555218
Stoke Aldermoor	76442327
Stoke Heath	76635778
Willenhall	76304461 / 76302507
Wood End	76618645 / 76618624
Wyken	76635860

Other useful numbers are:

Housing benefits	76831964
Council tax	76833869
Out of hours and emergency	76832222
Heating Hotline	76832934

Want help with this magazine?

If you, or a friend, would like a copy of Home on audiotape or in a large print format, call Teresa Kimbrell on 02476 833689, and she'll make sure you receive a copy. we want all tenants to know what we are doing on your behalf.