



WHG2140:
a glimpse into
the future



**Rent
Arrears:**
its time to get
tough



**Spring
Clean:**
Millennium
volunteers get busy

the magazine for Whitefriars tenants and leaseholders
issue 6



Bonanza!
Playgroup's
£500 boost



'Giving people a bigger voice'

Home is going to be looking at people who get involved with their communities and who help, support and improve them in all sorts of ways. We start with Paul White, chair of Tile Hill North Residents Association.

According to Paul White, Tile Hill North Residents Association (THNRA) has three key aims: to represent people living there, giving them a bigger voice; to look at and implement ways of making the area a better place to live; and to organise events that help develop a sense of community spirit.

But it doesn't just represent Whitefriars tenants. Paul explained: "We're here to represent householders and leaseholders, too, taking in around 2,300 properties.

"Of those, around 50% transferred to Whitefriars' control, and when that happened we immediately established links with Whitefriars and have found that it's very important to be able to liaise with them, particularly over home improvement work.

"We wanted to ensure that homes of Whitefriars tenants, in this area, were among the first to have money spent on them, because they had missed out in the past. We were also able to have Whitefriars include Tile Hill homes in the pilot schemes that took place last year."

This close working with Whitefriars led to Paul drafting a report about the work and some of the ideas Paul came up with for improvements are now being considered by Whitefriars and Wates. THNRA also meet regularly with Whitefriars and tenants, to discuss progress.

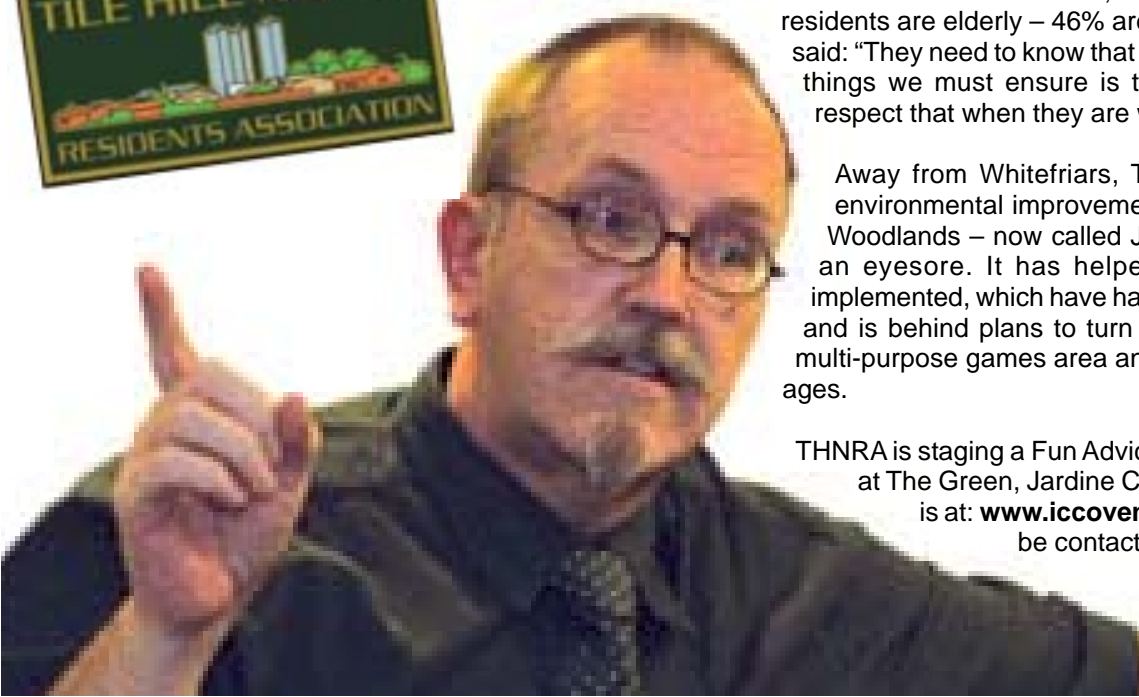
"The Association gets daily updates now on how work is going and if tenants have issues they want raising we can do it for them and get quick responses, something that might not happen without our influence," Paul said.

"We have eight committee members who meet twice-a-month, so that's eight local people with their ears to the ground, picking up issues that need to be addressed."

The Association is conscious, too, that many of Tile Hill North's residents are elderly – 46% are of retirement age and older. Paul said: "They need to know that we're here for them, and one of the things we must ensure is that Whitefriars' contract partners respect that when they are working on their homes

Away from Whitefriars, THNRA has been instrumental in environmental improvements in the area. This includes The Woodlands – now called Jardine Woods – that had become an eyesore. It has helped get traffic calming measures implemented, which have had a significant effect on road safety, and is behind plans to turn old tennis courts into a £200,000 multi-purpose games area and play area for local children of all ages.

THNRA is staging a Fun Advice Day on June 22, from 2pm-5pm, at The Green, Jardine Crescent, Tile Hill North. Its web site is at: www.iccoventry.co.uk/communities and it can be contacted via email at: thnra@aol.com





Rent arrears: time to get tough

In the last issue of Home we highlighted the importance of paying rent and told you we'd be stepping up efforts to recover rent arrears owed to us.

Well, now it's time to get tough on those who continually fail to pay their rent.

It's a serious issue. Because we're a not-for-profit organisation, we invest all our income back into the housing stock, and because rent arrears represents lost income, it reduces the amount of investment available to improve tenants' homes and the environment.

We have a duty to all tenants to keep costs to a minimum. We would be failing in our responsibilities to those tenants who pay regularly if we didn't take action against those people who refuse help, fail to co-operate or don't give proper priority to paying their rent.

Tenants who fail to make and maintain an agreement to clear their arrears will be served with a Notice of Seeking Possession. If the arrears continue they will be summonsed to appear before the County Court where a County Court Judgement will be sought requesting possession of their home.

We're just as keen to ensure that all tenants understand that they're responsible for making sure the rent is paid, but although tenants may be entitled to help with rent payments from Housing Benefit, this does not happen automatically. If people don't provide all the information required to enable the Benefit Section to assess their claim, they'll be liable for any arrears that arise as a result of non-payment of Housing Benefit.

REMEMBER:

- you must prioritise payment of rent above all other bills
- you're in danger of losing your home if you don't pay your rent
- your ability to get credit in the future will be affected if we have to take you to court for non-payment of rent
- if you're having financial difficulties you should talk to us – the problem won't go away
- and if you leave a Whitefriars property for any reason, and owe money in arrears, we won't offer you a property in the future – even several years later. Nor will we be able to give you a good reference for a mortgage if you want to buy a home later.

HOW TO PAY:

- rent swipe card at Post Offices or PayPoint outlets
- standing order
- direct from some employers
- direct payment of Housing Benefit

DID YOU KNOW...?

- two in five tenants owe rent to Whitefriars
- 144 tenants were evicted between March and December 2001
- income lost from tenants not paying rent, including those who left their properties owing money, totals £1.55 million – just imagine the improvements we could make with that sort of money

Make your vote count

Tenants are being given a second opportunity to have a say in running Whitefriars.

Last year's elections for all three of our management Boards – North, South and Services – saw an impressive 40% of you turn out to vote across the city.

This latest ballot – which will start in May – will find three tenant representatives for the North and Services Boards only.

Those elected will replace tenant Board members Jean McKean, Colin Young and Richard Donovan, although they are all eligible for re-election. The newly appointed representatives will be appointed at Whitefriars' AGM, in October.

All tenants in the north of the city have received information on the role of tenant Board members, and 21 tenants expressed interest in finding out more about the role.

These tenants will be invited to an information day which is being organised, where more details will be available. At this stage interested tenants will be asked to confirm whether or not they wish to stand.

All eligible tenants in the north will then be able to vote for their preferred candidates in a ballot organised and managed by ERBS to ensure an open and transparent process.

A third of all management Board members are tenants.

Whitefriars Services chairman Peter Lacy said: "Last year's first tenant Board member elections were hugely successful, and it was extremely encouraging to see such a big turnout - 39% in the north of the city and 40% overall.

"It proved that there's a genuine desire among tenants to get involved and have a say in what Whitefriars does and how it operates, and a desire among those who voted to make sure the right people were elected to represent them and give them a strong voice.

"We fully expect the same levels of enthusiasm for this round of elections."

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

Elected tenants would be expected to attend around 15 meetings in a year. Board membership is voluntary, with out-of-pocket expenses paid for attending meetings or other Board business, and Board members must undergo training in their main areas of responsibility.

New tenant Board members must be known by the July meeting of Whitefriars' Services Board.

Playgroup grant boost

A playgroup in Stoke Aldermoor for children aged up to four-years-old has been handed a £500 boost by Whitefriars, which could allow it take on an vital extra member of staff.

St Catherine's First Friends Pre-School Playgroup meets three afternoons-a-week, at St Catherine's Church hall, St Catherine's Close, and has two qualified staff to look after 16 children.

Parent committee member Bridget Harper said: "We provide a structured play environment for children aged from two years six months up to four-years-old. This donation from Whitefriars will contribute to a third staff member, which will improve our staff-to-children ratio."

The playgroup was started in September 2000 by parents in the area, and is now managed by them in partnership with the church, the local NHS Trust, Area Co-ordination South East and Community Education.





Sylvia Wright



Lesley Spencer

Your thoughts on life after transfer

It's almost 18 months now since we took over the city council's housing stock, so we thought we'd get a quick snapshot of how the change has affected two of our tenants and a frontline Whitefriars officer.

Sylvia Wright, aged 74, lives in a second floor flat.

She said: "There's much more contact with Whitefriars than there was with the city council. Repairs are done more quickly and notice is taken of any complaints.

"I was unsure about stock transfer until I'd heard what was intended, and I'm pleased with the results so far. All the promises that were made are being kept but, of course, more time is needed for all the work to be done."

Ray Turley, who's 55 and lives in a three-bedroom house, said: "Standards were getting low, but since transfer there's

been a significant change for the better. The promises that were made to us have been kept so far and the new landlord is accommodating, with a good outlook towards improvement.

"Transfer succeeded for us so why can't it succeed for other people? Just look at the repairs and improvements that have been carried out since."

Lesley Spencer, Whitefriars estate officer in Stoke Aldermoor, said: "I'm more conscious of us running a business and meeting the needs of our customers. The office has become more business-like in appearance and in procedures, and there's more information from senior management.

"Housing transfer was essential, because otherwise there were insufficient funds to maintain housing stock and the funding was decreasing annually. It's good to see investment in housing that transfer has brought."

Spring's here - time for gardening

It's that time of year again, when the green-fingered among you turn thoughts toward our annual Garden Competition.

Every entrant this year will receive a box of bulbs to plant and is in with a chance of winning cash prizes in each of the following categories:

- Championship Class
- Novice Class
- Leaseholder Garden Class
- Balcony Class
- Retired Class
- District Classes
- Leaseholder Balcony Class
- Communal Area Class

Judges will look for cleanliness and neatness, good arrangements and effects, hardy flowers, tender flowers and special flowers and plants.

Once again we're running a junior competition for the under-12's. Budding gardeners can grow the tallest sunflower or creative types can produce a garden picture. For a junior entry form call Donna or Sue on 02476 767030/32.

And we are also teaming up with the Council's Children and Family Education Service to encourage children attending after school clubs on our estates to get busy growing sunflowers and painting pictures.

All the winners will receive their prizes from the Lord Mayor of Coventry at a presentation ceremony at Coventry's Leofric Hotel, in September.

An entry form is included in this copy of Home, so fill it in and get gardening!





Volunteers clean up comes early to Watcombe Road



Tenants at Whitefriars properties in Henley Green will be able to enjoy a communal area outside their homes this summer, thanks to students from Coventry's Henley College.

The 16 and 17-year-olds are all Millennium Volunteers and spent a day a week for five weeks clearing the neglected and overgrown open space, in Watcombe Road.

Money secured by us through the Government's New Deal for Communities initiative has paid for new tools the students used for clearing vegetation, before they replanted the area with bushes and shrubs.

Sarah Clarke, Millennium Volunteers coordinator for north east Coventry, said: "Millennium Volunteers is a great opportunity for young people to get involved in their community and be recognised for it. I'm so pleased to see the Watcombe Road project working so well."

Anne Turner, Whitefriars' Henley Green estate manager, added: "This area had been left untended for a long time and had become very overgrown. Now it's been cleared it can be used by Whitefriars tenants for the purposes intended."

Millennium Volunteers is a government initiative for young people aged 16-24, which enables them to use their time helping others. There are 33,500 young people already involved in more than 180 projects across the UK.

comingsoon... comingsoon... comingsoon... comingsoon...



WHG2140

Coming in the next edition of Home magazine. A brand new cartoon strip about life in a satellite community in the far future. We hope our younger readers will enjoy it, but don't think it's just something for the kids. It'll feature storylines that reflect issues affecting Whitefriars tenants across the city.

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 024 7676 7029, and she'll make sure you receive a copy. We want all tenants to know what we are doing on your behalf.

এই ম্যাগাজিনটি আপনার নিজের ভাষায় শেতে হলে দয়া করে আমাদেরকে জানাবেন। এই ব্যাপারে আপনাকে সাহায্য করতে পারলে আমরা খুশি হব।

اگر آپ دوستوں کے ساتھ کسی اور زبان میں حاصل کرنا چاہتے ہیں تو براہ کرم ہمیں بتائیے۔ ہم آپ کی مدد کرنے کیلئے خوش ہیں۔

जे तपासे आ मेसजिन तपारी पोतानी भाषामां ओरतुं होय तो, महेरजानी करी अपने जहापो. अमे तपने मदद करतां हुसी अलुभावीसुं.

यदि आप इस मैगज़ीन को अपनी भाषा में प्राप्त करना चाहते हैं तो कृपया हमें बताएं। हमें आपकी मदद करके प्रसन्नता होगी।

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਮੈਗਜ਼ੀਨ (ਰਸਾਲਾ) ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿੱਚ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਦੱਸੋ, ਤੁਹਾਡੀ ਮਦਦ ਕਰਕੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਖੁਸ਼ੀ ਹੋਵੇਗੀ।

إذا أردت أن تحصل على نسخة من هذه المجلة بلغة مختلفة، من فضلك دعنا نعرف فسوف نسعد بمساعدتك.

这本手册杂志还有其他语言可供选择。如果您需要，请与我们联系，我们将热心的为您服务。

Jeśli chcesz otrzymać to wydawnictwo w języku polskim, proszę nas powiadomić. Chętnie to załatwimy.

Our website

If you have access to the Internet, you can keep up to date with what Whitefriars is doing at:

www.whitefriarshousing.co.uk

If you have any comments please contact, Lynn Hanson at the following address:
Home Magazine, Whitefriars Housing Group, Ground Floor, 9 Little Park Street, Coventry CV1 2UR