



ISSUE 27 SUMMER 2008

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the magazine for Whitefriars' residents

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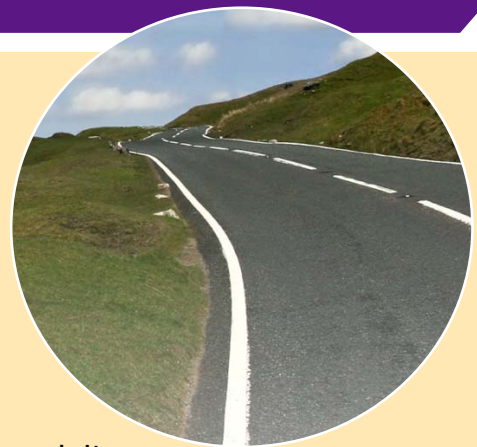


Welcome...

Welcome to the 28th edition, and last edition, of Home magazine. Don't panic though, we're not going away we're just changing. Take a look at the back cover for more information on this exciting change.

It hardly seems possible that we have been producing our Customer magazine for nearly eight years, charting the progress of the organisation, through its multi million-pound investment programme, its many changes to improve how our services are delivered, its response to your views and the start of its regeneration and new build programme.

This special edition of HOME is also our Annual Report 2007-08. In it, we are taking a quick look back at a few of the achievements and changes that have happened since Whitefriars began. It also looks forward with a proposal to join with the West Mercia Housing Group see page 4 and the special consultation leaflet included with this edition.



The Editorial Panel

We've come a long way

In the first 5 years, we delivered a £240 million programme of improvements to our homes in Coventry including kitchens and bathrooms, UPVC windows, central heating systems, improved security and much more. Our investment programme continues with major works ongoing to multi storey blocks in Hillfields and Stoke Heath and lots of planned maintenance like external painting and roof replacements.

However, we have done much more than just invest in your homes and invest in Coventry. We have aimed to develop Whitefriars as a forward thinking business. Our aim is to provide good quality services at reasonable rents that give added value to our customers and the city in all sorts of ways.

Here are just a few examples of the projects and initiatives that we have been involved in the last few years.

Whitefriars Training & Development Agency

Since 2002, the Agency has generated over £4 million worth of UK and European funding that has provided free training to over 150 construction businesses and has trained over 700 unemployed and employed people, delivering over 350 vocational qualifications.

Independent Living team

The Independent Living Team has expanded its services and since 2006 now provides support to young families, older people, ex-offenders and homeless people and continues to shape its services in supporting vulnerable people.

Choice Based Lettings Scheme

As a result of this new system our customers now only need to complete one application form and they have more choice in deciding where they want to live.

Rationalised our Housing Offices

By reducing 16 Housing Offices down to 4, we have reduced costs and responded to the changing requirements and patterns of the way our customer contact us. More emphasis has been placed on home visits and time spent on estates.

P A S T

Working towards a bright future

Repairs Call Centre

We developed a dedicated call centre, based in Coventry, for you to report your repairs at a low cost call rate.

HomeWorks

Brought the repairs service into Whitefriars from the City Council and began modernising the way it provides the repairs service. We set about making it more efficient and customer focussed and now we deliver around 50,000 repairs a year with an additional 30,000 gas repairs and annual services.

Anti Social Behaviour

We got tougher on Anti Social behaviour and hate crime through our dedicated ASB4 team. We also developed Mediation Services to help sort out problems before they get out of control.

Rent Arrears

Applying a firm but fair approach to rent collection, and arrears management, has increased collection rates and is reducing arrears.

Regeneration

We launched a major regeneration of the north east of the city, which will see the demolition of many unpopular houses and the building of 1000 new ones.

Along with our partners in the city, we have started a new house building programme that will deliver 3,500 new homes over a 12-15 year period.

Rent

Although we have had to respond to the governments rent restructuring requirements we have still managed to keep our rents at £2.20 below the average of other housing associations in the city and nearly £60 per week below the average in the private rented sector.

- We have done practical things like making sure that our offices are accessible to wheelchair users and pushchairs, having hearing loops for hard of hearing customers and using the Language Line service to help communicate with customers who do not have

English as a first language. We have even increased the size of the type on our letters to make them easier to read.

- We changed our proposals after hearing customers' views. One example of this happened recently when residents in some blocks of flats asked us to change the proposed reduction in age for new tenants from 25 to 30 and we did.
- We are increasingly using mobile phone text messages to keep in touch with customers. This includes reminders for repair appointments in response to customers who felt we did not make enough use of this facility.
- We intend to raise the profile of our staff out on estates because you said you did not see them often enough.
- Dealing with anti-social behaviour remains a big priority for customers. We are piloting more changes to our anti-social behaviour services. These have got very positive feedback from customers in the pilot area. We are looking at rolling this out across the city as soon as possible.



P R E S E N T

New homes at Stoke Heath



We know that things aren't perfect, that mistakes get made and, we cannot do everything for everyone, but we continue to try hard to meet the needs of our customer for today and for tomorrow.

One of the proposals we have for the future success of the business is the joining together with West Mercia Housing Group. This will bring a raft of benefits for customers across the city and secure the future of our business for many years to come. For full details of what's involved and your chance to express your thoughts and opinions on the proposal, take a look at the leaflet included with this edition of Home.

- Because more of our new and future tenants are young people we are doing work to understand how we need to change to deliver the kind of services that they need and value. We also have worked on a number of projects in local schools and youth clubs.
- We have introduced new Tenancy Agreements to make it easier and clearer for new tenants to understand what is expected of them.
- Our new Chargeable Repairs Policy will make sure that people who look after their homes do not end up paying for those who don't. This has been a very clear message to us from customers and something many of you feel strongly about.

There are many other initiatives in the pipeline too, including: a proposal to provide cleaning services in low rise flats, a new, easy to use, more customer friendly web site, a rolling programme of staff training and new recruitment methods to find the best staff possible.

More and more customers are getting involved in telling us what you like, what you don't like and what you think we can improve. Last year alone over 4,000 of you did this through one method of involvement or another and for that we want to say a big thank you.



FUTURE

Annual Report to Tenants

Performance Figures April 2007 - March 2008

Rent Collection

% of rent debit collected	98.65
% of rent debit in arrears - current and former tenants	4.6
% of rent debit lost due to empty properties	3.73
Total rent collected	£52.8m

Average Weekly Rents (Assured tenancies)

	Whitefriars	Average Rent W Mids*
Bedsit	48.06	47.93
One bedroom home	53.74	53.88
Two bedroom home	59.53	60.19
Three bedroom home	62.64	64.09
Four bedroom home	68.18	73.53
Five bedroom home	84.56	81.47
Six bedroom home	93.02	90.84

Whitefriars Stock Profile - general needs

Bedsits	1038
One bedroom home	4418
Two bedroom home	4812
Three bedroom home	5018
Four bedroom home	298
Five bedroom home	11
Six bedroom home	3
Total	15598

Whitefriars Stock Profile - other tenancies

Hostels and other letting arrangements	339
Supported Housing	684
Total homes in management	16621
Leasehold flats	1338

Repairs

% Emergency repairs completed in target time (as at end March'08)	97%
% Routine repairs completed in target time as at end March'08)	88%
No. of repairs completed last financial year (including SPI & OOH)	80,636

Empty Homes

Empty homes available to let	156
% homes available to let	1%
Empty homes not available to let	138
% homes not available to let	0.9%
Total number of empty homes	294
% empty homes	1.9%
Re-let times (weeks)	4.6

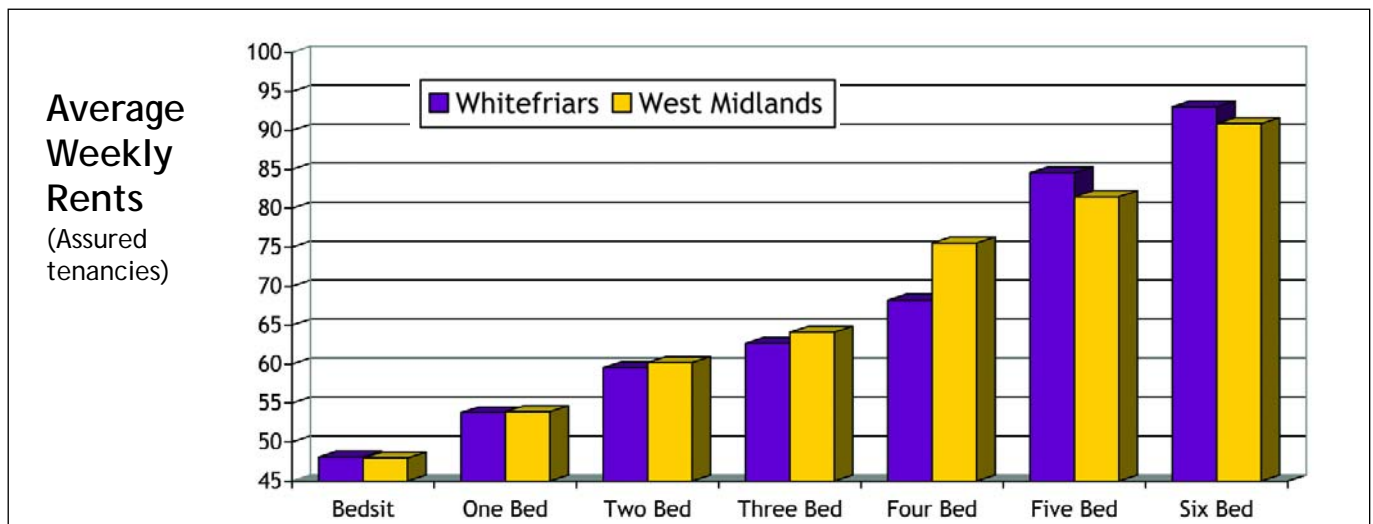
Lettings

Lettings	2239
Turnover of tenancies %	13.4

Customer Feedback

Complaints	588
Compliments	63
Ombudsman	5
Total	656
On the Spot Resolutions	720

* The Housing Corporation's published guide to local rents 2007



KEY FACTS about Whitefriars



In the last year we:

Completed 80,636 emergency, routine and gas repairs.

Received over 224,000 telephone calls on everything from repairs to new tenancies, ASB to estate management.

Had over 45,500 people visit our housing offices.

Made over 20,400 home visits by our housing staff.

Cut one million acres of grass on and around our estates on average 15 times a year, that's 15 million acres or 15 million football pitches!

Collected and disposed of 718 tons of dumped rubbish.

Undertook 14 surveys to gain feedback from you. Over 5,000 people took part, that's over a third of all tenants.

Board Members

Whitefriars Housing Group Limited board and committee members at 31st March 2008

Tenant board members:

Joan Allen; appointed, 2nd October 2003.
Janice Ashley; appointed, 10th March 2005.
Jim Cotterill (vice-chairman); appointed, 23rd March 2001.
Margaret Gale; appointed, 7th December 2006.
Maira McCall; appointed, 28th September 2006.
Bill Newey; appointed, 15th July 2004.

Local authority board members:

Altaf Adalat; appointed, 18th May 2006.
Susanna Dixon; appointed, 25th June 2004.
Peter Lacy (chairman); appointed, 14th April 2000.
Kevin Maton; appointed, 18th May 2006.

David Skinner; appointed, 18th May 2006.

David Smith; appointed 17th May 2007.

Independent board members:

Mike Beardmore; appointed, 14th April 2000.
Barrie Day; appointed, 14th April 2000.
John O'Shea; appointed, 14th April 2000.
Peter Pritchett; appointed, 15th July 2004.
Mick Rawson; appointed, 15th March 2007.
Bruce Walker; appointed, 14 April 2000.
Ken Charley, appointed, 25th June 2004, also served as a board member during 2007/8.

Home is changing

After listening to our customers needs, we are revamping our customer magazine. From the next issue, you will see a fresh new style, more in-depth features, lifestyle articles and much more. So look out for your brand new 'View' Magazine in the autumn. You won't be disappointed.

Want this magazine in a different format?

If you, or a friend, would like a copy of Home on audio tape or in a large print format, call the Communications Team on 024 7676 7029. We want all residents to know what we are doing on your behalf.

If you have access to the internet, you can keep up-to-date with what Whitefriars is doing at: www.whitefriarshousing.co.uk



Whitefriars
HOUSING GROUP