

St James talk



How are WE Doing?

Here's an idea of what's been happening at your housing office for the period April 2010 to June 2010:

- Callers to reception 3138
- Telephone calls dealt with 9826
- Home visits by Estate Officers and Rents Services Officer 2442
- Bulk rubbish removal 778
- Graffiti removed 75

Summer Success

This year Whitefriars set aside £10,000 from its Pride in Your Street, grant award scheme, to fund small projects within communities. The customer panel, who decided on the successful bids, wished they had far more money, given the exciting range of really great projects submitted.

Each project had to describe the benefits that it would bring to Whitefriars customers, their families or communities.

And it just proves how much is going on in our communities with 29 projects funded, across the city.

Summer schemes in both Willenhall and Ernsford Grange

have been supported to provide young people with some constructive activities during the long school holidays.

In Cheylesmore, the local Police Community Support Officer bid for funds to work with Sky Blues football in the community scheme, and young people who have been making

life a bit difficult for local residents.

A Willenhall based health support club, run by local residents, with the support of the community nutritionist, successfully bid for funds to extend its activities and include more local residents to spread the healthy eating and weight management message.

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Come **Talk to Us** we can help

Friday Mornings you can see a rent officer at the One Stop Shop in Stoke Aldermoor by appointment.

Emma is our employment worker.

If you are having difficulties completing application forms; you need to talk to someone about interview techniques; or just want some general advice about getting back into work, Emma would love to meet you. She is at the St James Lane office on Wednesday mornings but we can arrange an appointment if this is not a suitable time for you

Pete is our debt advice worker.

He is based at Coventry Law Centre but is in the St James Lane office once a week. You will need to book an appointment to see him. If you cannot see your way out of a debt problem come and see us and we can direct you to the correct people.

We are here to help. Our team at St James Lane can usually direct you to other agencies if we do not know the answers.

Evictions **Cancelled!**

Four households due to be evicted from their homes had their evictions cancelled as they made contact with the Housing Office, preventing the evictions from going ahead.

The eviction action and associated court costs could have been avoided if they had made contact earlier, but the fact that these people followed the advice they were given meant they kept their homes and everyone is happier.

Whitefriars take eviction action as a last resort. Don't leave it till the eleventh hour before contacting us if you are having difficulty paying your rent. We want to help you.

Money Aid fund

We've recently had a successful applicant to the Money Aid fund.

They were awarded a £100 grant to help purchase essential goods for their new home, as they had no furniture or money to buy furniture when they moved in.

Have you had a look at the **Whitefriars web site?**

www.whitefriarshousing.co.uk

We also have YOUTUBE and a Portal for you to tell us about any problems or compliments about our services. We are always glad to hear from our customers.

We are here to help

Over recent years, we have had several customers that have had difficulties with maintaining their tenancies. They are not able to keep the property clean, the garden maintained and generally live in a bit of a mess.

When our estate officers come across these cases they always try to make contact with the customer, offer help and work with other agencies to assist the customer to get the property back to an acceptable standard in line with the tenancy terms and conditions.

However when customers get in to this sort of difficulty they often bury their heads in the sand and

do not talk to the people that can help.

Customers have lost their homes because they cannot sort the problems out; they become homeless and will in future not be able to find housing with a social landlord. In some cases, we have to go to court to evict the customer and this results in debts for the customer.

Whitefriars want to help customers stay in their homes and sustain the communities. Our staff are experienced in dealing with these situations and can put you in touch with other professionals who can give support. If you are in a similar situation or know a friend or neighbour who is, please get in touch. All contact is in strict confidence.

What's going on

Playing **Safe**

The new playgrounds in both Willenhall Wood and Willenhall have now been officially opened.

They have been built out of natural material wherever possible. It has been made the responsibility of the local community to report any anti social behaviour in these playgrounds.

Willenhall Together

The Willenhall Together Days held last July and November had been shortlisted for a Community Cohesion Award by the Coventry Partnership. The days brought many parts of the community together and some of the best traditions from those communities to a wider audience.

Their efforts were rewarded by winning the Voluntary and Community category.

Meet for tea

Communi-Tea is now open at the Haggard Centre. It is open every day except Sunday.

Pop in and enjoy a cup of tea and a chat with your friends.

Notice **It**

We now have a community notice board in the office.

If you would like to advertise an up and coming event then please bring in a poster and ask to speak to Caroline, Carol or Ruth. We can also advertise the event on our St James Lane page on the Whitefriars web page. We want all events to be a success, if you would like us to help at the event please discuss this with us. We cannot always be there but we can often offer raffle prizes.

Clean it up

Residents in Willenhall Wood have launched a campaign to stop fly tipping in the area.

The cash to help support this campaign was part of the Pride in our street awards from last year. To launch the campaign the residents held a day offering free collection of unwanted goods or furniture and spent the day litter picking in the area. All the work was rewarded with a Hog roast.



Looking after our future

Champions choose New Street Names

Young residents have been making their mark in the area after naming the first new streets of the Spirit Quarters scheme.

Local residents, including a group of 20 Junior Street Champions, were invited by Whitefriars Housing Group and the residents' Regeneration Action Team to choose names and themes for the first five streets that will be built in the Deedmore area around the former Deedmore School and Monkswood Crescent.

Four of the street names will reflect a wildlife theme and have been carefully selected by the Junior Street Champions aged between 9 and 12.

The fifth name, Tipton Way, was chosen by the Regeneration Action Team as a tribute to former community champion and Chair of the NDC Partnership Board, Roger Tipton who sadly died last year after serving 10 years as Chair.

The Junior Street Champions got

involved in the street naming after carrying out a number of projects to help improve their community such as working with Warwickshire Wildlife Trust on a project to clean up the Sowe Valley river and planting 100 trees in Bell Green Park.

Junior Street Champion Lorraine Sietambi, age nine, said:

"It is really exciting that we got the chance to name the streets. We had been doing some creative exercises with Warwickshire Wildlife Trust which gave us the ideas for the names of the streets."

"We liked the activities we did at the river and looking at nature so that helped us to think of the names."

Vicky Scott, Chair of the Deedmore Residents' Association and member of the Regeneration Action Team, added:

"We're especially pleased to have young people involved as it reflects our hope that the regeneration will result in a community that people are happy to live in for many years to come."

Lynn Wassell, Project Director at Whitefriars

Housing Group, who is leading the housing redevelopment work on behalf of Whitefriars, Coventry City Council and Coventry New Deal for Communities (NDC), said:

"Working closely with residents has been the key to the success of the regeneration of this area – right from the planning stage. Now we're seeing the plans come to life it made perfect sense to get residents involved in the naming, as it's their area and we want them to feel proud of it."

Spirit Quarters new street names:

- Tipton Way
- Dragonfly Drive
- Butterfly Walk
- Kingfisher Close
- Crayfish Close



Members of the Junior Street Champions and Regeneration Action Team with representatives from the Council, Whitefriars and Warwickshire Wildlife Trust

Wow! what a difference

Who would have thought that a block of flats could look this good? Extensive works to windows and panelling have produced a sleek modern look for Alpha House. The transformation started late last year bringing draft free warmer living to its 97 flats.

A unique history

Standing on Barras Heath, this block has been a city landmark since its construction in 1962. When built it was the first example of 'Jackblock' construction, where each floor was raised using a hydraulic jack. This meant work could be completed under cover, and without scaffolding, during poor or cold weather. Starting with the roof, each storey took around a week to jack up once completed, and the entire building process took about 18 months.

Present Day

Experienced contractors Frank Haslam Milan, (FHM), carried out this unique project, and in just 7 months installed double-glazing; fixed insulation panels and then attached modern aluminium cladding all the way around to create its fresh modern look.

The project took a long time to plan, as lots of structural issues had to be looked at. It is hardly a simple job to replace the sides of a 17 storey block.

Residents were informed of progress through meetings and newsletters, and also visited a similar tower block in Wolverhampton, where improvement works had recently been carried out, to get a feel for what Alpha could look like.

Similar to its construction in 1962, scaffolding was not used. Instead mast climbers allowed the contractors to move easily up and down the building, whilst minimising disruption to residents. FHM provided an on site resident liaison officer, who was there to deal with residents' concerns.

Other improvements have already taken place to the block. These include installing new kitchens and bathrooms and decorating communal stairways and corridors. A satellite television system was also installed, so no need for satellite dishes to spoil the new clean look.

Improving the entrance to the block provided the final changes.



We expect high demand for any vacancies, for what is now the best-looking block in the city!

Contact Centre Extends Hours

It is not always easy for all our customers to report a repair between 8am and 6pm so we have extended our opening hours so you can **report any repair between 8am and 8pm Monday to Friday.**

Call **0845 850 6090** or use the repairs reporting tool on our website at **www.whitefriarshousing.co.uk/repairs**

Coventry Early Years & Childcare Service

Your child deserves the best start in life

Research shows that high quality early years provision significantly improves children's life chances. Through play, children learn and grow, develop social and language skills and increase in confidence.

All children are entitled to 15 hours a week of free nursery education from the term after their third birthday which is 570 hours over a year. This can be taken over a minimum of 38 weeks a year though some early years providers may be able to offer a more flexible arrangement, such as being able to take fewer hours per week and spreading the 570 hours over more weeks.

Is your child eligible for a free nursery education place?

If your child's 3rd birthday is between:

1st April - 31st August - Summer Term

1st Sept - 31st December - Autumn Term

1st January - 31st March - Spring Term

They will be entitled to a free nursery place:

Following September - Autumn Term

Following January - Spring Term

Following April - Summer Term

You can choose from the following early years settings, provided they are registered with Ofsted:

- ◆ Pre School / Playgroups
- ◆ Private Day Nurseries
- ◆ Independent Schools
- ◆ Maintained nursery classes (September admissions only)

The setting is paid directly by the local authority and you should not be charged by the nursery unless you buy other services such as lunch or extra hours.

To find out more about early years settings in your area contact:

Coventry Family Information Service
Main Floor Central Library
02476 834773



Keeping up **Appearances**

During our most recent estate inspections the Better Estates Group noted a small number of areas that were not being maintained properly. To help keep up the appearances of these areas we would like to highlight the following points:

If you are maintaining a communal area of land which you are no longer able to do please contact Whitefriars to make them aware.

If you live in a flat and want to look after the area nearest to your home please contact your Local Housing Office so they can advise you of the steps that you need to take.

If you are taking on a new tenancy that includes a garden, Whitefriars staff should talk to you about your responsibilities for maintaining the garden.

Group feedback

On our recent estates inspection we found the majority of the work has been completed to an acceptable standard.

In-depth inspections carried out during June showed us a range of results. The grass was a mixture of good and fair quality. It was also noted that the hardsurfaces required improvement on both estates.

All these results help us to maintain our services and keep us informed of necessary improvements.

The Better Estates group will be inspecting again during September.

Would you like to join us?

We still require representatives from Stoke Aldermoor, Holbrooks, Radford and Henley Green. If you are interested in how the grounds and trees are looked after, we would welcome you.

Finally, we would like to thank everyone that replied to the survey sent out by the Better Estates Group. Your response to what is happening in your area tells us where we need to look for improvements and see where we are doing well. We will announce the winner of the prize draw shortly.

Who finds a home with us?

Between April 2009 until March 2010, we successfully advertised and let 1889 properties through the Coventry Homefinder Scheme. Here are some facts about who we housed:

By Property Size and Type

- 976** properties let were either bedsits or 1 bed properties.
- 627** properties were 2 bed.
- 273** properties were 3 bed.
- 12** properties let were 4 bed.
- 1** property let was 5 bed.
- 1444** properties let were flats or maisonettes.
- 346** properties let were houses.
- 99** properties let were bungalows.

By Age Group

- More of our properties went to younger groups of people - younger people setting up home for the first time or growing families moving to larger homes.
- 1179** properties were let to applicants aged 18 to 35
- 519** properties were let to applicants aged 36 to 55
- 191** properties were let to applicants aged 56 and over

By Priority Band

Under the Coventry Homefinder Banding Scheme we housed 270 applicants in Band 1 (very urgent housing need), 736 applicants in Band 2 (urgent housing need) and 883 applicants were in Band 3.

By Area

The areas where we let the most properties were in Willenhall Wood, Tile Hill North, Willenhall, Bell Green and Hillfields.

The areas where we let the least properties were in Whitley, Aldermans Green, Cannon Park, Longford and Foleshill.

Boxing for good

The Willenhall Boxing Club, established in 1959, was recently awarded a Pride in Our Street grant for £1100. The recent award has enabled the club to buy some new gloves and head guards.

The club is held 3 nights every week with the current users ages ranging from 9 to 32. The club classes are held in the basement of the Willenhall social club in Robin Hood Road, and a number of local youths started their boxing career at the club before they turned professional. The club aims to teach youngsters manners and respect as well as health and fitness and certainly serves the community as there are few after school facilities for youngsters in the area.

The club has a mini bus and will take the youngsters off to other clubs for boxing tournaments as well as adventure days, youngsters from all areas of the city attend.

One local lad said that the club had "kept him on track and out of trouble and that his fitness had improved considerably" since starting at the club.

A new female boxercise class has been launched recently as well, please contact Seamus on 07980620843 if you are interested in attending any of the boxing sessions, it is free.



Need help in your own language?

If you would like this leaflet in large print or audio format, please contact the Communications Team on **024 7676 7029**.

French

Vous avez besoin d'aide dans votre propre langue

Arabic

هل تحتاج إلى مساعدة بلغتك

Farsi

آیا به زبان خودتان به کمک نیاز دارید؟

Polish

Wymagają Państwo pomocy w swoim języku?

Kurdish

تایا پێویستت به یارمهتی به زمانی خۆت ههیه.

Urdu

اپنی زبان میں مدد کی ضرورت ہے۔

t: 024 7676 7000

Contact corner

Our office is based at St James Lane, Willenhall. We are open from 9am - 4:30pm every day except Thursday, when we open later, at 11am.

Call: 024 7651 6700 Email: info@whitefriarshousing.co.uk www.whitefriarshousing.co.uk