



news

from Nottingham City Homes

INCLUDING:
New Lease
the newsletter for leaseholders

Issue 44 December 2011 The newspaper for Nottingham City Homes' tenants and leaseholders



'Think again' about benefit changes

The Government needs to 'think again' about plans to cut housing benefit, says the Tenant and Leaseholder Congress (TLC).

TLC Chair Jean England said: "Their proposals could force people into greater poverty, force them to move home and force Nottingham City Homes to cut services. They need to think again. Our housing services are at risk if they don't."

Jean's letter said: "What you propose will damage the fabric of family and community life in our city. It is surely better to spend money on the cost of improving communities – not the cost of fixing them once they've broken."

In reply, Welfare Minister Lord Freud confirmed: "We shall restrict housing benefit for working-age claimants in the social sector who are occupying a larger property than their household size warrants."

The Welfare Reform Bill is now going through Parliament and is expected to become law in the New Year. The new 'Universal Credit' from April 2013 would also reduce disability benefits.

Read more about what Jean said to Lord Freud – and what he said in reply – on page five.

What matters to you?

These are challenging but exciting times – both for Nottingham City Homes and our tenants and leaseholders.

We're now working on our new Corporate Plan – where we'll set out how we will build 'homes and places where people want to live' between 2012 and 2015.

Money is tight – and as we've told you in previous editions, the way council housing is financed is changing in April 2012 too.

But we're committed to improving services and building hundreds of much needed new homes – while reducing our running costs by £4m in 2012/15.

We can do that because we've spent the last couple of years restructuring our repairs service and tenancy and estate management service.

Since the new repairs service started in April, customer satisfaction has risen to record levels while costs have dropped significantly. And since we opened the new Customer Service Centre in September we're able to answer more calls, more often.

We're now looking at our corporate functions – finance, IT, human resources, communications and more – to make sure they are offering great value for money too.

That's all designed to make us fit to face the future. Now we need to hear from YOU about what matters in your community, so we can complete our Corporate Plan by February 2012. Turn to page three to find out more.

Money Matters

Inside this edition you'll find your **FREE** copy of Money Matters – our magazine designed to help you manage your finances better. Thousands of tenants could be worse off following Government welfare changes in 2013. But don't wait until then – if you need help our advice is confidential, personal and free. Call us on **0115 915 4920** today – and see page four for more.



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Top Christmas Tips
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Nottingham City Homes

Central Edition • Aspley • Bilborough • Strelley • Radford

welcome

to your edition of the Nottingham City Homes newspaper for tenants and leaseholders

a message from the Chair

As we come to the end of 2011, we start to think about our plans for next year, the improvements we want to make, and how we can create homes and places where people want to live across Nottingham.

You'll see on page three that our aspirations and plans for the next three years (2012-15) will soon be mapped out in our Corporate Plan. But this is not just something we can do as a company alone. We need your help to make sure our plans, vision and mission, align with your hopes for the future.

We will be consulting with you over the coming months to find out what is most important to you – and we'll use what you tell us to build our plan.

I would encourage all of you to have your say on the future of Nottingham City Homes' services. You can make a difference.

I would like to thank all of you who entered the Best Garden Competition this year. I attended the awards ceremony and was delighted to see the fantastic standard of gardens, and meet all of the winners.

It was great to meet the children from Milford Primary School who won our sunflower competition, and the pupils from Riverside Primary School who came a close second. It's great to see young people interested in gardening – I hope to see some of them entering their own gardens in future years!

Look out for our top Christmas Tips in this edition – little snippets of advice to keep you safe, reduce your waste and manage your money over the festive period.

Finally may I wish you and yours a very Merry Christmas and all the best for 2012.

Janet Storar
Chair, Nottingham City Homes



a message from Jean

I told you in the last edition of the newsletter of my concerns about the Government's plans to reform the benefit system, which could mean households losing £10 a week in Housing Benefit for every bedroom you are 'under-occupying'.

Since then, the TLC has been very busy writing to our local MPs with our concerns and also to the Minister for Welfare Reform, Lord Freud.

You can see the main points of my letter to Lord Freud – and his reply – on page five.

Although I was disappointed with his response, I was grateful for his full, frank and quick reply.

I still believe that the Government's plans will hit many of us hard – especially people with disabilities and their carers – so all of the TLC will continue to oppose these plans and make sure your voice is heard.

I have, however, been much heartened by the responses I have received from our local

MPs and I know that they will be speaking for us in Parliament.

On the subject of local MPs, I was pleased to hear that Lilian Greenwood, MP for Nottingham South took time to meet with the Homes 4 Us forum and answer their questions. You can read all about that on page 11.

All-in-all, 2011 has been a tough year and as we head towards 2012 I think the next year could be equally as tough. But I believe that many of the improvements that Nottingham City Homes has made will benefit us, as tenants and leaseholders.

Finally I'd like to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Stay safe, look after yourself and your family and don't forget those who are on their own at this time of year.

Jean England
Chair, Tenant and Leaseholder Congress



Solar panels to be fitted by mid-December

We've been telling you in previous editions about the solar panels we are fitting to 1,450 of our homes. We were aiming to complete the works by the end of March 2012.

Since then the Government has said that houses that do not have panels by December 12 will earn less for the spare electricity they produce – which means that we will also receive less money from the energy suppliers to invest in energy efficiency improvements to homes across the city.

We are, however, now aiming to have all of the panels fitted by the new deadline. Over the past month we've been working at a much quicker rate and over weekends to make sure as many panels are fitted as possible. We'll keep doing this right up until the deadline to make sure as many of you as possible can make savings on your electricity bills – up to £100 a year!

Didn't receive a letter?

If you didn't receive a letter in July inviting you to apply for solar panels, this was because your home was not eligible. To meet our eligibility criteria your home had to be facing within 60 degrees of due south, excluding shaded areas, had the potential to install at least six or seven panels and have a pitched roof.



**Nottingham
City Homes**

News from Nottingham City Homes

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[nottinghamcityhomesinvolvement](https://www.facebook.com/nottinghamcityhomesinvolvement)

Follow us on:



[@nottmcityhomes](https://twitter.com/nottmcityhomes)





Help us build homes and places where people want to live

What are we doing well? Where could we improve?
 What's good about where you live? What could be better?

We've begun to develop our plans for the next three years – and we want everyone to play their part to help us achieve our vision of 'homes and places where people want to live'.

Between now and February we'll be consulting with our employees, partners (such as the Police), Nottingham City Council officers and councillors, community groups – and you, our tenants and leaseholders – about what our priorities should be.

We'll then use what you tell us to write our new Corporate Plan. It will state very clearly what we are aiming to achieve between April 2012 and 2015 – and how we can best contribute to the city's priorities. We will agree performance measures and targets with the tenants and leaseholders who represent you.

Chief Executive Nick Murphy said: "In the past the Audit Commission has set the benchmark for us – and we did well in achieving the 'two star' standard. But now the Audit Commission has been abolished – and instead we are asked to set our own standards for excellence based on what our customers want.

"This means a sea change in terms of tenant involvement, and it requires us to make sure our customers really are at the heart of our decision making."

YOU can make the difference

Your opinions really do count! Right now we are asking a sample of tenants their views about our services (see 'Do you think we're a STAR' on page nine). We'll use what you say to help us write the plan.

Over the next two months we'll also be holding events with our tenants and leaseholders, Board members, councillors and partners. The first of these is happening on Monday 12 December. Read about that and how you can register to attend in the panel opposite.



There are a number of other ways to give us your views:

Visit our website:
www.nottinghamcityhomes.org.uk
 to take part in our short survey.

Email us:
corporateplan@nottinghamcityhomes.org.uk

Write to us:
Business Improvement and Development Team, 14 Hounds Gate, Nottingham, NG1 7BA.

Or why not take the chance to join one of our area panels or service forums?

Call the Involvement Team:
0115 915 7380 or visit
www.nottinghamcityhomes.org.uk/get_involved to find out how!

Event:

Building our future together

Monday 12 December 2011,
 10am to 4pm

Bolero Suite, the National Ice Arena,
 Nottingham

In a difficult economic climate, we remain committed to providing excellent services and creating homes and places where people want to live.

To do that we need you to tell us what you think our priorities over the coming years should be. And we'd also like the opportunity to discuss with you the types of services and investment in your home that you would like to see from the rent you pay.

That's why we're holding this special event – your views really count and you can make a difference.

Interested?

Places are limited so call the Involvement team today on **0115 915 7380** to confirm your attendance.

Make a seasonal spending plan

Knowing what you can afford at Christmas is more important than putting together the perfect Christmas shopping list. Create a simple budget of what you can afford – spend sensibly and stick to it!



Rents



Here to help all year round

We know that the Christmas period is a difficult time for many of us. There's added pressure to spend money on presents for the family, decorations for the home and food and drink for festive cheer.

It's all too easy to spend more money than you can afford, which could result in you struggling to pay for the things that really matter – including your rent.

That's why we are here all through the year to offer you free debt advice and support should you need it. Our team of Financial Inclusion Officers are on hand to help if you're struggling to pay your rent and bills. They can also help you access benefits that you might not be

claiming for, find ways to help you cut your energy bills, refer you for extra support and advice and help you tackle any debt problems.

If you're struggling this Christmas, or at any other time of the year, call the team today on **0115 915 4920** or email **rents@nottinghamcityhomes.org.uk** and let's work together to make tackling your money worries a new years resolution you can keep.



Great discounts with your Rent Card

Your rent card is also your Citycard – which helps you make more of the city for less. It offers the benefits of discounted travel along with great retail, leisure and library savings.



Bus and tram travel

Citycard holders can add Easyrider travel to their card. With Easyrider travel you can travel anytime, anywhere and also make great savings.



Keep fit and save money

Your Citycard automatically saves you 10% on most activities at city leisure centres. You can also add 'flexible fitness' to your card – a health and fitness membership for all city council leisure centres.



Use city and county council libraries

Citycard holders can use their card to get free book loans, free IT and internet services, information collections and children's areas, plus lots more.

A bit behind on your rent? Could do with a chance to catch up?

Rent-free Week

For two weeks every year we give you the chance to catch up on your rent payments. The second of the two weeks is coming up on:

Monday 26 December 2011 to Sunday 1 January 2012

If your account is in credit and you don't owe any rent, you will get a rent-free week.

But if you owe us money, you **MUST** pay your rent as normal. This will reduce the amount you owe, or could even put your account in credit!

Pay by Direct Debit?

You don't have to do anything – your payments already take these weeks into account.

Call the Rents team on **0115 915 4920** or email **rents@nottinghamcityhomes.org.uk**

Priceless cover for less

If there is a fire or flood or your home is broken into and your possessions are stolen or damaged, would you be insured to cover your losses?

The home you live in is insured by Nottingham City Homes but all of your contents and belongings are not. Would you be able to replace everything in an emergency? If you're not insured, it could cost you a lot of money to replace your items.

Where the flood or damage is not caused by us, you will have to sort everything out yourself. This is why it is so important to have your home contents insured.

You may want to make your own arrangements but take a look at what is available on our scheme provided through Aviva.

- low cost – starting from just £1.39 per week, or from £1.16 for tenants in sheltered schemes
- same price wherever you live in the city
- easy ways to pay
- no excess – you don't have to pay the first part of a claim
- accidental damage cover is a small extra cost
- 'new for old' cover
- freezer and theft of keys cover.

To find out more, contact our Rents team on **0115 915 4920**.



Making sense of welfare changes

The Tenant and Leaseholder Congress (TLC) is the body that represents all our tenants and leaseholders.

It's made up of representatives from area panels, consultation forums and tenants and residents associations – and is the main voice for customers working with us to improve services and strengthen communities.

The TLC has asked us to publish extracts from the letter its Chair Jean England recently sent to Welfare Minister Lord Freud about Government proposals to cut housing and other benefits – as well as change how it's paid – and also his reply.

The Rt Hon the Lord Freud
Department for Work and Pensions
Caxton House
Tothill Street
London
SW1H 9DA



Friday, 28 October 2011

Dear Lord Freud

I am writing to you as the voice of every council tenant in Nottingham that will feel the impact of the proposed changes to the housing benefits system.

We were shocked to see that the worst hit (would be) a disabled couple, living in a three bedroom house, with a 20-year-old non dependant – just because they have a spare room. This family will have to find an extra £26.22 a week just to stay in their home.

We understand your concern that there are too many families waiting for a suitably sized home. But your proposals will not, in our opinion, address this problem. All they will do is drive some of the poorest people in the country further into poverty.

We also have big concerns about proposals to stop paying housing benefit directly to the landlord. You may not realise this, but many tenants still don't have bank accounts, so setting up a Direct Debit as an alternative payment method would not be possible.

Our landlord, Nottingham City Homes (NCH), has made great strides since 2005 to improve our services, but your benefit changes threaten to derail all of this progress.

What you propose will damage the fabric of family and community life in our city. It is surely better to spend money on the cost of improving communities – not the cost of fixing them once they've broken.

I urge you to reconsider your reforms to the benefit system and invite you to meet with our congress so you can hear directly from tenants what an impact your proposals will have on those affected

Yours sincerely

Jean England
Chair of Nottingham Tenant and Leaseholder Congress

Cc: Graham Allen MP, Lilian Greenwood MP, Chris Leslie MP



Jean England
Tenant and Leaseholder Congress
Head Office,
14 Hounds Gate,
Nottingham, NG1 7BA



Monday, 14 November

Dear Jean

Those in the social rented sector generally have their rents met in full from Housing Benefit.... Traditionally, their entitlement to benefit has not been affected by whether or not they under occupy their homes.

However, this is no longer sustainable... we shall restrict Housing Benefit for working-age claimants in the social sector who are occupying a larger property than their household size warrants.

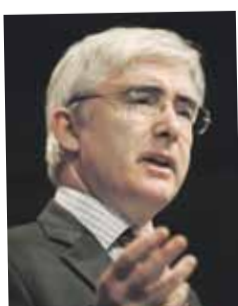
The proposal is that the applicable maximum rent will be reduced by a national percentage rate depending on how many bedrooms the household is considered not to require.

We believe that the benefit system should not treat people in a way that is materially different from the situation that they would experience whilst in work.

However, we do recognise the importance of stable rental incomes for social-sector landlords ... and the extent to which direct payments of housing support contribute to this. We, therefore, intend to run about half a dozen demonstration projects designed to get into the detail of how direct debit payments will work in Universal Credit.

Yours sincerely

Lord Freud
Minister for Welfare Reform
Department for Work and Pensions



Put paying your rent at the top of your Christmas list

When there are gifts to buy, it's tempting to ignore the bills and not pay your rent.

If you're struggling to pay your rent, we can help you. Call the team on 0115 915 4920 for FREE money-saving advice.

Christmas Top Tip



Round your way...

Where we are improving your homes

In each issue we'll tell you what work we're doing as part of the Secure Warm Modern programme. This is what's happening in your part of the city in December and January:

Nottingham Secure
Nationwide Windows – Citywide

Warmth for Nottingham
SPI – Aspley, Bilborough and Wollaton East and Lenton Abbey

Vinshire – Arboretum

Modern Living
Frank Haslam Milan – Aspley
Wates Living Space – Leen Valley

Bullock – Bilborough, Radford and Park and Wollaton West

We'll let you know what will be happening in February and March in the next edition of News, out in the middle of January.

Find out more

Contact our Secure Warm Modern team:

Tel: 0300 333 8100

Minicom: 0115 915 7447

Email: SWM@nottinghamcityhomes.org.uk

For details of the latest coffee mornings go to our website:

Web: www.nottinghamcityhomes.org.uk



Former carer enjoys life at Albany House

Having spent her life looking after others, 76 year old Pat Barry (pictured below right) is looking forward to enjoying life in a new £9m supported housing development in Nottingham.

Just 12 months ago at the grand old age of 76, Pat was still working seven days a week as a cleaner after a long career in caring with Nottingham City Council. Then tragedy struck. A routine hospital visit ended in the amputation of her left leg below the knee, as a result of bad circulation. Having spent a year living away from her family, she grabbed the opportunity to move into LHA-ASRA's new Albany House development in St Ann's - and hasn't looked back!

Pat says: "It has been a difficult time but now I'm close to my family in St Ann's I'm really enjoying life again."

"My flat has a lovely view out onto the garden at the front of Albany House, and I can watch the birds nesting in the tree outside my window, which considering I'm living in the inner city is a real bonus."

"What I'm really looking forward to is getting to know more of the residents. There's a community café and hairdressers on the ground floor of the building and we've got a lovely communal sitting room, so I'm sure I'll soon be making new friends."

Albany House is based just off Carlton Road in St Ann's. It includes a mix of 71 one bed and one bed with study, social rent extra care apartments. The complex also includes a new community café and hairdressers which will open in the next few weeks, as well as a communal lounge and activity rooms.

Viewings of Albany House can be made by prior appointment. Contact Estelle Williamson on 0116 257 6888 to arrange a day and time.



Protect your home this Christmas

1. Lock your doors and windows when you leave the house
2. Don't leave presents under the tree in full view of burglars
3. Don't put your empty Christmas present boxes out until your next recycling collection day
4. Don't store keys near the front or back door – and never leave a spare key in a 'hiding place' such as under a mat or flower pot
5. Take down the serial number of all electrical goods such as TVs, DVD players, computers and camera equipment
6. Mark your goods with Smartwater if you have it, or an ultra-violet marker pen – this makes it harder for a thief to sell items and easier for the police to identify them if they are stolen. Contact Nottinghamshire Police to get Smartwater by calling 0300 300 99 99.





Round your way...

Help us create places where people want to live!

Winter ward walk inspection timetable



Are you concerned about vandalism where you live? Is illegal parking on your streets an issue? Are there high-levels of anti-social behaviour that you want tackling? Do you think there are things that can be done to improve your estate? If you've answered yes to any of these questions, then why not join us on our next estate inspection and tell us about them?

You'll be joined by fellow tenants and leaseholders, local resident groups, the police, local councillors and your housing patch manager. You'll have the opportunity to point out things that you feel need addressing in your local area. The inspection will last for about two hours. At the end of the inspection action will be taken to deal with the issues. Letters will be sent to homes of concern, as well as 'thank you' letters to those homes that are being kept in excellent condition.

This is your chance to have a real input in tackling the issues that affect you.

Interested? Listed below are the dates and locations of inspections happening in your area during December and January. For further details, contact your local housing office (details on the back page of this newsletter).

ESTATE INSPECTION TIMETABLE DECEMBER AND JANUARY

Housing Patch Manager	Area	Meeting Point	Date	Time
Radford and Hyson Green				
Balkar Rathore	Hyson Green between Bobbersmill Road and Gregory Boulevard	The Mary Potter Centre at the 'Ask Here' desk	13 December	10.30am
Kareece Marzink	Arboretum	Call the Radford and Hyson Green Housing Office for details	10 January	TBC
Balkar Rathore	Radford West	Outside 'Sonya's Café', Hartley Road	19 January	2.30pm
Balkar Rathore	Canning Circus blocks	Highhurst Court	12 January	10am
Lenton				
Maureen Birkin	Lenton Abbey	Woodside Road Shops	19 January	10am
Diane Stone	Lenton – Penn Avenue	Penn Avenue	19 January	10.30am
Rukaiyat Ahmed	Dunkirk and Abbey Bridge (excluding Penn Avenue)	Dunkirk Community Centre	25 January	1pm

Get Involved and have your say



At Nottingham City Homes we are committed to empowering our tenants and leaseholders to get involved and influence the way we shape and deliver our services. Area Panels have been set up throughout the city to find out what matters to local people and what we can do to make a real difference.

Check the information below to find your next Area Panel meeting.

Area Panel 7

Wollaton and Lenton Abbey

Date: 13 December 2011

Venue: Sheila Roper Centre

Time: 11am to 1pm



Further Information

To find out more about getting involved, contact our Involvement Team:

Tel: **0115 915 7380**

Text: **text INVOLVE to 80800**, followed by your name and address

Email: **gettinginvolved@nottinghamcityhomes.org.uk**

Web: **www.nottinghamcityhomes.org.uk**

Staying safe when you're out and about

1. Make sure when Christmas shopping that you keep your bag zipped up, with wallets and purses out of sight. Be aware that pick-pockets are always looking for easy pickings!
2. Don't carry all your possessions in one place – keep your mobile separate from your purse or wallet
3. Don't leave shopping on display in your car – keep it out of sight in the boot and make sure your car is secure.

Christmas Top Tip

Once, twice, three times a winner at the APSE awards

Nottingham City Homes was three times a winner at this year's Association of Public Service Excellence (APSE) Awards.

Apprentices Matthew Derbyshire and Helen Cort were up for awards – and the company was also awarded for having two finalists and its overall commitment to training.

Matthew was named the winner of the Mechanical and Electrical section – and Helen came runner-up in the female Mechanical and Electrical awards.

Both Matthew, an apprentice electrician and Helen, an apprentice plumber, have been a part of the repairs and maintenance team – Helen even had the chance to work on some of our new-build properties earlier this year.

What is APSE?

The Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) is a not-for-profit local government body working with more than 300 public organisations throughout the UK, promoting excellence in public services including housing.

The APSE Apprentice Awards have been running for 12 years. The aim is to give



Pictured: Second left Matthew Derbyshire receiving his award

recognition not only to future tradespersons, but also to the organisations that are investing in learning and development, and are providing jobs to local people.

Our Chief Executive, Nick Murphy said: "Matthew and Helen are dedicated apprentices and it's fantastic to see them representing Nottingham and winning at the national APSE Awards.

"I am also hugely pleased that the company has been recognised for its commitment to training – particularly after being named one of the country's top 100 employers for apprenticeships earlier this year.

"We will continue to provide apprenticeships through our One in a Million scheme as part of our commitment to tackling worklessness across Nottingham."

You're hired!

We told you in Issue 41 of 'News' how Nottingham City Homes was named in the top 100 employers across the UK for delivering apprenticeships.



Pictured: The 14 new Business Administration Apprentices

Over the autumn we began recruiting for a number of Business Administration Apprentices. We had nearly 300 applications and, after a rigorous recruitment process, selected 14 candidates to become our new apprentices.

All 14 showed a real dedication to study, great skills and most importantly, positive and enthusiastic attitudes. Each apprentice will work

in two different areas of the business in their first year and will complete a level two or three National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) along with studying towards a Technical Certificate, Key Skills in Communication, IT and Numeracy.

We wish all our apprentices good luck in their new roles!

Cold weather tips!

At the time of writing, this year's winter has yet to truly bite. But if we do end up having a winter anything like as cold as last year, it's important you know what to do to prevent frozen or burst water pipes.

We gave you lots of information in the last issue of 'News', but here's a summary of things to remember to protect your home:

- Always keep your heating on low, even if you're on holiday. Around 18 degrees centigrade is usual, timed to come on during the day and night
- Turn off your water at the stopcock if you are going away. The stopcock is a valve that turns the cold water system on and off. If a pipe bursts when it's turned off it will prevent you from being flooded. It's usually found in your kitchen, below the sink unit – but not always
- If a pipe does burst, turn off the stopcock – turn it clockwise and the water supply will be shut off and call the repairs team on 0115 915 2222
- If your condensate pipe freezes (the pipe that comes from the bottom of your boiler and goes outside into the drain) call the repairs team to thaw it out or you can pour warm, but not hot, water on the pipe and repeat this until the pipe has thawed
- If you have an outside tap, wrap it with bubble-wrap or something similar to insulate and prevent freezing
- Check that all of your radiators and fires work before the cold weather bites. It's better to try them now than to find they are not working when you need them most.
- Make sure you have contents insurance – call the Rents team on 0115 915 4920 to find out about our home contents insurance scheme.

War on waste

Got an unwanted gift? Visit www.recycleagift.com – an easy way to turn your unwanted CDs, DVDs, books and games into cash!

Christmas Top Tip



Looking forward and saying goodbye

In our last edition we included our annual report for 2010-11, and told you about the retirement of Chief Executive Chris Langstaff after 40 years in housing.

We officially said goodbye to Chris at our October Annual General Meeting – as well as celebrating what had been our most successful year since we formed in 2005.

The event brought together the Nottingham City Homes Board and directors, tenant and leaseholder representatives, city council leader Jon Collins and other local councillors – and, of course, our new Chief Executive, Nick Murphy.

It included speeches from Chair of the Board Janet Storar, Cllr Collins and surprise guest Dorian Leatham, Interim Executive Director of Housing Regeneration at the London Borough of Lambeth – an old friend and former colleague of Chris.

We took a look back at Chris's long career and how social housing has changed in the past 40 years.



Pictured: Board Member Merlita Bryan enjoys a farewell drink with Chris Langstaff

The event ended with new Chief Executive Nick Murphy talking a bit about his vision for the future – including how the company can help address the greater needs of the city, such as health and employment.

To close he invited award-winning apprentices, Helen Cort and Matthew Derbyshire, to the stage to receive their APSE Apprentice of the Year awards (see page eight to find out more).

Nick Murphy said: "This year's AGM was a great event and I would just like to say well done and thank you to all the people who took part and made it happen."

Improving how we serve you

We've been telling you in previous editions of 'News' about the big changes we're making to improve your services and your communities.

Our new customer service centre at our Hounds Gate head office is now up and running – with our repairs call centre, rents call centre and customer service improvement team all under one roof.

Over the coming months we'll be installing a new computer system to make sure we can answer as many of your questions as possible in one go. We'll also be launching a single telephone number for all of your enquiries.

We're also making big changes to how our housing patch managers work, so we spend more time working with you to improve your community.

We now have three 'regional' managers – covering the north, centre and south of the city. They're already out and about meeting local people and community groups and building stronger links with our partners in the police, the city council, NHS and others.

We've co-ordinated our estate inspections so they take place as part of council ward walks (see the local pages for walks happening in December and January) – and in the future we will be giving housing patch managers new mobile computing devices. That means less time in the office doing paperwork – and more time helping you.

We'll tell you more about all these changes and introduce you to your new regional manager in our next edition, out in the middle of January.

Matching the patches

At the moment all of our 'patches' are roughly the same size. So that we're able to offer you an even more co-ordinated service, we've been re-drawing these areas so they are in line with the patches that are covered by your local police beat teams and the City Council.

There will be lots more on this in our next edition. We'll also be writing to you directly over the coming weeks to confirm some of these changes and what this means for you.

Do you think we're a STAR?

Are you one of the 4,200 tenants who have received our 'STAR' customer satisfaction survey?

If you haven't completed it yet, you've still got time. Everyone who replies could win a first prize of £100, a second prize of £50 or one of four runner-up prizes of £25 in shopping vouchers.

We've commissioned independent research company Kwest to ask questions about our services – known as STAR (or 'survey of tenants and residents'). Everything our tenants tell us will be confidential.

Between 2007 and 2009 customer satisfaction rose from 60% to 80% – what do you think of us in 2011? We'll use what you tell us to write our next Corporate Plan (see page three).

Why aren't we asking everyone?

An accurate survey only requires a sample of customers to take part – exactly like with national opinion polls, when researchers will ask only 1,000 people, but make sure have spoken to all parts of the community.

It would be extremely expensive to engage every tenant. The results we get will be accurate to within a couple of percent – what's known as a 'confidence interval'.

What do I need to do?



Just fill out the survey and send it back to us in the envelope provided. If you're struggling with any of the questions, contact Kwest on 0800 634 8260.

Love your leftovers!

Every year 6.7 million tonnes of food is wasted in the UK – and 80% of this is over the Christmas period! Make sure you use up any spare food this festive season (that's still in date!). Have a look at some recipes at www.lovefoodhatewaste.com

Christmas Top Tip



Celebrating gardeners making great places!



Great gardeners gathered at the Council House at the end of October to celebrate the annual Best Garden Competition Awards.

The competition started in Nottingham in the 1930s to recognise the hard work and commitment of gardeners on council estates across the city. It has been popular ever since, with many entrants coming back with wonderful new displays every year.

In fact this year's winning gardener for the Clifton North East area, Jack Noon, has 55 years experience in the competition!

Eighty-six-year-old Jack first won his category in 1956 – the year his daughter was born.

He said: "I remember winning the cup and them all commenting on me using the winning cup as a christening jug, as my wife was heavily pregnant at the time."

Jack has won the competition on countless occasions in the last 55 years, and still relishes the challenge: "I take a real pride in my garden and would love for more of my neighbours to take part next year so I can have a lot more competition in my area."

The Special Cup, which is entered by last year's first-prize winners, was won this year by Mr and Mrs Marecki of Whitemoor.

Aspinall Court won the sheltered housing category – sponsored for the first time by our Secure Warm Modern contractor Wates Living Space.

Milford Primary School in Clifton also took top spot in our brand new Tallest Sunflower category, with their entry standing proudly at a mighty 2 metres 62 centimetres. The runner-up, Riverside Primary School in The Meadows, grew their flower to an also fantastic 2 metres, 7 centimetres.

Our Chair, Janet Storar read out the names of all the winners who were presented with their awards by the Lord Mayor. Janet said: "Each year I am delighted to see all the wonderful gardens and to meet the people putting so much time and effort in to create them.

"As a tenant myself, I know how lovely it is to look out and see gardens that are cared for. It really makes a difference, not just to that individual property, but to the community as a whole. Congratulations to all this year's winners!"

Supporting charity

We raise money each year for our chosen charity by selling a selection of plants, supplied by the city council's nursery.

This year we raised more than £200 for 'SANDS', the stillbirth and neo-natal charity, which supports people affected by the death of a baby and promotes research to reduce the loss of babies' lives.



All winners



Jack Noon



Aspinall Court

Help improve your community

Next year's Best Garden Competition and Good Neighbour application forms will be out around May. If you haven't entered before, why not give it a go? Colourful gardens can improve a whole community – we can all do our bit to create places where people want to live!

Winner correction

In issue 42 we listed all of the area winners in this year's awards. We listed Mr Cairns as the winner of Area 6a Bestwood Park. Mr Cairns won this area in 2010, the 2011 winner is in fact Mr J Walker and we would like to apologise for this error.

Everybody needs good neighbours – like Vivien!

Vivien Callum, from Basford, is Nottingham City Homes' Good Neighbour for 2011.

Vivien was nominated by her neighbour Jerome Gardener, who described her as "a friend, a surrogate aunt, a counsellor and my gardening buddy".

Jerome nominated Vivien for everything she has done to help him and his grandmother, Delores. He himself won the 2010 Young Persons Garden Competition award – and puts his love of gardening down to Vivien and the help and encouragement she gave him to make his garden what it is today.

She has also been a constant support to her neighbours, in particular supporting Delores through the tragic loss of two of her grandchildren. Jerome says he takes great comfort knowing his grandmother can call on Vivien for anything and at anytime – she's always available for a coffee and a chat!

Despite suffering from ill health herself, Vivien hasn't let her disability stop her helping others. She is always keen for the children in her area to try new experiences and has organised trips to the theatre to go and see plays.

Delores and Vivien have been neighbours for 26 years and class each other as lifelong friends.

Our Chief Executive, Nick Murphy, presented Vivien with her award at last week's Best Garden Competition. He said: "We've all read stories of anti-social behaviour, crime and disorder on our streets – and it can be easy to forget the many people who are the real gems of our estates and neighbourhoods.

"People like Vivien are selfless in their actions and are always willing to give that little bit extra to help and support those around them. Really strong communities are made up of people like



From left to right: Jerome Gardener, Vivien Callum and Lord Mayor Councillor Mick Wildgust

Vivien, who help to make Nottingham's estates homes and places where people want to live."

If you know a good neighbour and feel they deserve some acknowledgement, why not nominate them for the Good Neighbour Award 2012? Application forms will be out in spring next year.



Bin days are changing in Nottingham

Almost three quarters of Nottingham residents have now had their bin collection day changed – were you one of them?

The changes came into effect on Monday 21 November – with many homes either having a new collection day, a change in their alternate weekly collection cycle, or both.

The changes are designed to offer you a more effective and value-for-money service. You should have had a letter from the city council, including a new collection calendar.

If you haven't, get in touch straight away. Or you can visit www.mynottingham.gov.uk/bins. Simply type in your postcode and you'll be able to see your new bin dates and download the collection calendar on your computer or phone. It'll also give you information on the collection dates over the Christmas period.

For any further information about the new collection dates, call **0115 915 2000** or e-mail waste-manager@nottinghamcity.gov.uk

Bin Days are changing!
in the City of Nottingham

starts **November 21**

We are writing to you about your bin day. Please check your post from November 7th.

Changes start from 21st November.

To find out more go to www.mynottingham.gov.uk/bins
Phone: 915 2000
Email: bins@nottinghamcity.gov.uk

Nottingham City Council

Homes 4 Us meet with Lilian



Pictured: Lilian Greenwood listening to the views of the forum

The Homes 4 Us forum had an opportunity to get answers to some of their concerns regarding welfare reform when they met with Nottingham South MP Lilian Greenwood at their October meeting.

The forum represents disabled tenants and leaseholders and their carers to improve housing services for people with all disabilities. They invited Lilian to attend so they could get her views on a number of issues that could directly affect disabled tenants, leaseholders and their carers over the coming years.

The group discussed a number of issues with the Labour MP, which included:

1. Concerns regarding the proposed changes by Government to incapacity benefit
2. Benefit changes in relation to additional rooms and allowances for carers
3. Transport shortages for people with disabilities
4. The lack of provision of disabled toilet facilities in public places in the City
5. The future of the Supported People funding
6. Changes to rent payments as a result of welfare reform

On all of these questions, Lilian gave full and frank responses and promised to support the forum with many of their concerns both in her role as a local Nottingham MP and as a member of the opposition.

The forum were hugely grateful to Lilian for taking time out of her busy schedule to come and speak with them and they all found what she had to say to be both interesting and positive.

The minutes of the October meeting can be found on our website at www.nottinghamcityhomes.org.uk/get_involved

Interested in joining the forum?

Contact the Involvement team on **0115 915 7380**

(Minicom 0115 915 7447) or email: gettinginvolved@nottinghamcityhomes.org.uk to find out more.



Competition time

This month we are giving away a slow cooker.

To be in a chance of winning, simply answer the following question:

What is the name of this year's Nottingham City Homes Good Neighbour Award winner?

To enter by text simply type: NCH, followed by your answer, name and address, text to **80800** (all entries are charged at standard network rates)*.

Alternatively, send your entries (with your name and telephone number) to:

The Communications and Marketing Team,
14 Hounds Gate, Nottingham, NG1 7BA*

Deadline for receipt of entries is Friday 23 December. *Only one entry per person

We have a winner!



Congratulations to Martyn Barnett from Bestwood Park, who won a George Foreman grill!

We asked: **What is the name of the winner of this year's Garden Competition Special Cup category?** The answer was Mr and Mrs Marecki

Be festive and fire safe this Christmas

1. Check the fuses in your fairy lights are the right type
2. If a bulb blows, replace it
3. Don't leave fairy lights on when you go out or when you go to sleep
4. Don't let the bulbs touch anything that can burn easily – like paper
5. Don't overload power sockets
6. Decorations made of tissue paper or card can easily burn – don't attach these to lights or heaters and keep them away from lit candles

Christmas Top Tip



get in touch

Opening hours are 8.30am to 4.30pm Monday to Friday and 10.30am to 4.30pm on Wednesdays

Rents Call Centre

We offer a range of ways to pay your rent – and free debt advice if you need it.

Ways to pay your rent:

Direct Debit Via our website

PayPoint By telephone

At your local Post Office

Ask us about setting up a Direct Debit, claiming council tax and housing benefit or FREE debt advice.

Tel: 0115 915 4920

Minicom: 0115 915 4113

Text: RENT to 80800, followed by your name and address

Info Point

Nottingham Central Library, 3 Angel Row, Nottingham NG1 6HP

Tel: 0115 915 2828

Mon-Fri: 8.15am to 5.30pm

www.nottinghamcityhomes.org.uk

Reporting anti-social behaviour

Text: REPORTASB to 80800, followed by your name and address

Report it online www.nottinghamcityhomes.org.uk/anti-social_behaviour or contact your local housing office

Repairs Call Centre

Tel: 0115 915 2222

Minicom: 0115 915 1826

Text: REPAIRS to 80800, followed by your name and address

Email: repairs@nottinghamcityhomes.org.uk

www.nottinghamcityhomes.org.uk/your_repairs

Your local housing Offices

Aspley

14 Strelley Road, Strelley, Nottingham, NG8 3AP

Tel: 0115 915 3121

Minicom: 0115 915 3126

E-mail: aspleyoffice@nottinghamcityhomes.org.uk

Radford and Hyson Green

Mary Potter Centre, Gregory Boulevard, Hyson Green, Nottingham, NG7 5HY

Tel: 0115 883 8220

Minicom: 0115 883 8225

E-mail: radfordoffice@nottinghamcityhomes.org.uk

Get Involved!

Tel: 0115 915 7380

Text: INVOLVE to 80800, followed by your name and address

Email: gettinginvolved@nottinghamcityhomes.org.uk

Secure Warm Modern

Tel: 0300 333 8100 (calls charged at local rate)

Email: SWM@nottinghamcityhomes.org.uk

Nottingham On Call

Tel: 0115 915 1640

Email: housingoncall@nottinghamcityhomes.org.uk

Tenant and Leaseholder Resource Centre

Tel: 0115 915 7222

E-mail: resource.centre@nottinghamcityhomes.org.uk

Translations

If you are unable to read this tenant and leaseholder newspaper please contact your area housing office, or call us on 0845 3303131. We can arrange for an interpreter to explain it to you, or send you a spoken word version on tape or CD. If neither of these are suitable, we can translate this publication into your chosen language. This is also available in large print.

Cantonese

如果你不能夠閱讀這刊物，請聯絡你的地區房屋辦公室，或致電 0845 330 3131。我們可以安排一位翻譯員去為你解釋，或寄送一份口述版本的錄音磁帶或光碟給你。如果這兩者都不適合，我們可以把這刊物翻譯成你所選擇的語言。我們也可以用大字體提供。

Czech

Pokud si nejste schopni tuto publikaci přečíst, prosím kontaktujte bytový úřad pro Vaši oblast nebo nám zavolejte na 0845 330 3131. Můžeme zařídit tlumočnicka, který Vám to vysvětlí, nebo Vám můžeme zaslat namluvenou verzi na kazetě nebo CD. Pokud ani jeden ze způsobů není vhodný, můžeme tuto publikaci přeložit do Vámi vybraného jazyka. Můžeme ji také poskytnout ve velkém písmu.

French

Si vous ne parvenez pas à lire ce bulletin d'information, contactez s'il vous plait votre service du logement local ou appelez-nous au 0845 330 3131. Nous mettrons à votre disposition un interprète qui se chargera de vous l'expliquer, ou vous l'envoyer en version parlée sur cassette audio ou CD. Et si aucune de ces options ne vous convient, alors nous pourrions traduire le bulletin d'information dans la langue de votre choix. Nous pouvons aussi vous le fournir en grands caractères.

Gujarati

તમે આ પ્રકાશન વાંચવામાં અસમર્થ હોવ, તો તમારા વિસ્તારના આવાસન ઓફિસનો સંપર્ક કરવા કે 0845 330 3131 પર અમને કોલ કરવા વિનવો. અમે તમને તે સમજાવવા દુભાષિયાની ગોઠવણ કરી શકીએ, અથવા ટેપ કે સીડી પર બોલેલા શબ્દની આવૃત્તિ તમને મોકલી શકીએ. આ બંને માંથી કોઈપણ તમને યોગ્ય ન હોય, તો અમે તમારી પસંદગીની ભાષામાં આ પ્રકાશનનું ભાષાંતર કરી શકીએ. અમે તેને મોટી પ્રિન્ટમાં પણ પૂરું પાડી શકીએ.

Hindi

यदि इस पत्रिका को पढ़ने में आपको कठिनाई महसूस होती है तो कृपया अपने इलाके के हाउसिंग दफतर से इस नंबर पर संपर्क करें, 0845 330 3131। इसे समझने के लिये हम दुभाषीय का प्रबन्ध कर सकते हैं, या टेप अथवा सीडी पर रीड या कहे शब्द को भी भेज सकते हैं। इनमें से यदि कोई भी उचित नहीं है, तो इसे हम आपकी पसंद की भाषा में ट्रांसलेट कर सकते हैं। इसे बड़े प्रिन्ट में भी प्रदान किया जा सकता है।

Kurdish Sorani

ئەگەر ئێوە ناتوانن ئەم بەڵگەنامە ئێوەیەکە بخوێنن، تێگەیشتنەکەتان بۆ ئێوەمان دەستبەردار دەکەین. ئێوەمان دەتوانین ئێوەیەکە بۆ ئێوەمان وێنێت، یان ئێوەمان بۆ ئێوەمان وێنێت. ئەگەر ئێوەمان ناتوانن ئێوەیەکە بۆ ئێوەمان وێنێت، ئێوەمان دەتوانین ئێوەیەکە بۆ ئێوەمان وێنێت. ئەگەر ئێوەمان ناتوانن ئێوەیەکە بۆ ئێوەمان وێنێت، ئێوەمان دەتوانین ئێوەیەکە بۆ ئێوەمان وێنێت.

Polish

Jeżeli nie potrafisz Pan/Pani przeczytać tej publikacji, prosimy skontaktować się z Pana/Pani lokalnym housing office lub zadzwonić pod numer 0845 330 3131. Możemy zorganizować tłumacza, który objaśni Panu/Pani treść tej publikacji lub wysłać Panu/Pani mówioną wersję na kasiecie audio lub na płycie CD. Jeżeli żadna z powyższych opcji Panu/Pani nie odpowiada, możemy przetłumaczyć tę publikację na wybrany przez Pana/Panią język. Możemy również przekazać Panu/Pani wersję drukowaną dużą czcionką.

Portuguese

Caso não consiga ler esta publicação, favor entrar em contato com o housing office (departamento de habitação) de seu bairro ou telefone para 0845 330 3131. Podemos arranjar um intérprete para explicar, ou enviar uma versão falada em fita ou CD. Se nenhuma dessas opções lhe forem convenientes, podemos traduzir esta publicação no idioma de escolha. Também disponível versão escrita em letras grandes/ impressão maior.

Punjabi

ਜੇਕਰ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਪਤ੍ਰਿਕਾ ਨਹੀਂ ਪੜ੍ਹ ਸਕਦੇ ਤਾਂ ਕ੍ਰਿਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਅਪਣੇ ਇਲਾਕੇ ਦੇ ਹਾਉਸਿੰਗ ਆਫਿਸ ਨਾਲ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ ਜਾਂ ਊਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਨੂੰ 0845 330 3131 ਤੇ ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ। ਅਸੀਂ ਤਰਜਮਾਨੀ ਦੇ ਲਈ ਇਕ ਇਨਟਰਪ੍ਰੀਟਰ (ਦੁਬਾਸੀਏ) ਦਾ ਵਿੱਚਾਰ ਕਰ ਸਕਦੇ ਹਾਂ ਜਾਂ ਇਹ ਟੇਪ ਜਾਂ ਸੀ ਡੀ ਤੇ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਭੇਜ ਸਕਦੇ ਹਾਂ। ਜੇ ਇਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਵਿੱਚੋਂ ਕੋਈ ਵੀ ਉੱਚਿਤ ਨਹੀਂ ਤਾਂ ਅਸੀਂ ਤੁਹਾਡੀ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿੱਚ ਇਹ ਟ੍ਰਾਂਸਲੇਟ ਕਰਵਾ ਸਕਦੇ ਹਾਂ। ਅਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਵੱਡੀ ਛਪਾਈ ਵਿੱਚ ਵੀ ਮੁਹੱਈਆ ਕਰ ਸਕਦੇ ਹਾਂ।

Urdu

اگر آپ کو اس دستاویز کو پڑھنے میں مشکل پیش آ رہی ہے تو براہ مہربانی اپنے ایریا ہاؤسنگ آفس سے رجوع کریں یا پھر فون نمبر: 0845 330 3131 کے بارے میں آپ کو سہماے کیلئے ہم آپ کے لیے مترجم فراہم کر سکتے ہیں یا پھر انگریزی معلومات کو آپ کی زبان میں ٹیپ یا ڈی ڈی پر ریکارڈ کر کے بھیج سکتے ہیں۔ اگر یہ سب آپ کے لیے موزوں نہیں ہے تو ہم اس دستاویز کو آپ کی اپنی زبان میں تحریری طور پر بھیج سکتے ہیں۔ یہ دستاویز بڑے حرف میں بھی مہیا کی جاسکتی ہے۔