

News



For tenants and leaseholders of Solihull Community Housing

Spring Edition 2019



Saxon celebrations

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A message from Fiona

Hello and welcome to your first newsletter of 2019. This promises to be another busy year for Solihull Community Housing.

I would like to begin by revealing our brand new logo! You can see it in the picture to the right. I am very excited to share this with you and you will see more of it in the Summer newsletter.

As you will know, we spent the second half of last year with customers who 'Joined the Conversation' with us. This was a really important engagement exercise, and one in which we were able to learn a lot more about what our customers really think.

Not all the feedback from tenants and leaseholders was positive. While that is clearly disappointing,



My Executive Management Team - Deborah, Surjit and Mark

it does mean that we can now focus on improving those areas where you feel we are coming up short.

Between October and December we spoke with more than 700 customers. A number of these said they would be prepared to work with

us in the future. So in January we staged two engagement events listening to residents of all ages.

The feedback we received was excellent, with lots of great ideas and positive contributions.

During 2019 we will continue to look for ways to improve and keep you informed.

This is our first newsletter since the Mayor of Solihull officially opened Saxon Court. It was a great occasion enjoyed by all our guests along with some of the first residents to move in. There are some great pictures from the opening on Page 5.

As part of our commitment to tenant engagement I will be joining members of my Senior Management Team on monthly walks through the community. Be sure to come and say hi if you see us in your neighbourhood.

Best wishes
Fiona Hughes
Chief Executive

■ You can email Fiona at newsandviews@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk

£50 voucher for your views

You could be in with the chance of winning a £50 voucher for just a few minutes of your time.

Pictured are our latest lucky winners of the Share Your Views prize draw. Both Paul from Solihull and Jim and Carol from Solihull didn't think they would win.

Paul completed a repairs survey, and was surprised when he got the call to say that he had won a £50 voucher.

When Jim and Carol completed their survey, they weren't sure if people actually won these prize draws, so they too were shocked at becoming winners.

They were presented with a £50 voucher for sharing their thoughts on

Share Your Views and they are now planning how to spend their vouchers.

If you would like to be in with a chance of winning, all you need to do is visit Share Your Views on our website and complete an easy to follow survey.

Why is your feedback so important?

Your feedback is really important because it will help shape how we provide our services. We want you to tell us what you think of the way we do things. Good or bad - we want to know!



Carol and Jim (top) and Paul (bottom) receive their voucher from our Compliance Team Manager, Faye Williams

■ For your chance to win a £50 voucher, visit our website www.solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk and give us your feedback.



Our Executive Management Team - Surjit, Mark and Fiona prepared to go on an estate walkabout



With your help we are building a better future

Towards the end of last year we reached out to our customers through 'Join the Conversation'.

Through this campaign we spoke to more of our tenants and leaseholders than ever before.

We really want to hear your experiences as an SCH customer. Thank you to everyone who responded and shared their ideas and thoughts with us.

We spoke to hundreds of our customers in all parts of the borough including those who live in high rises, low rises along with houses and bungalows.

Your input has been invaluable and is helping how we shape services in the future.

A number of you said that you would be happy to work with us in the future. We invited a number of customers to 'Meet the Chief Executive' at two informal consultation events.

Thank you to all who attended. Our Chief Executive, along with managers from

across the organisation have listened carefully to your thoughts and the two events provided us with some great feedback.

For those unable to attend, Fiona will be arranging Facebook sessions where you can go online to discuss any housing issues you may have about your home or community.

Our management team are also now taking part in regular walks through our communities so if you see them out and about please pop over and say hello.

Another great way to stay engaged with us is through our social media channels. We're on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram so please Follow and Like us to make sure you get to hear all the latest news.

Our Engagement Team and Board Vice Chair Patricia at Coppice Way



Tenants sharing their feedback with staff at Crabtree Hall





You could be the next rent prize draw winner



We would like to say a big congratulations to our winners of the December rent prize draws.

So make sure you remember...

Four lucky people took home £250 from winning the Christmas Prize Draw. And another won £200 in the quarterly prize draw.

But, you may be thinking - how do I give myself a chance to win? Well, all you need to do is make sure your rent account is clear.

Our Spring Rent Prize Draws are coming up. If your rent account is clear in time you will be entered into two prize draws. You could win £200 or £500. You could also enjoy a rent free week.

If you pay your rent by Direct Debit you will automatically be entered into both draws.

If your rent account is clear by Sunday 24 March 2019 you can enjoy a rent free week the following week.

If your rent account is clear by Sunday 31 March 2019 you could be the lucky winner of one of our two prize draws. You could win £200 in our quarterly prize draw or £500 in our annual prize draw.

£200 PRIZE DRAW

£500 PRIZE DRAW

So who knows, maybe next time you will be the winner!



Ewa receives her prize money



Andy Jones presents Ann with her prize

- To make a payment plan or to set up a Direct Debit please call us on 0121 717 1515 or pop into a Solihull Connect office.

Direct Debit

Have you signed up yet?



Did you know that Direct Debit is the easiest way to pay your rent?
Direct Debit is the most popular way to pay bills in the UK.

Are you wondering why you should take out a Direct Debit?

Well, here are a few reasons:

It saves you time

Finding the time to stay on top of bills can sometimes be a challenge. If you set up a Direct Debit for your rent everything happens automatically and efficiently.

You won't waste time with cheques, phone calls, visiting the cash office or needing to go online to pay. There's also no need for you to

remember when the payment is due. We simply collect your rent on a date that has been agreed with you.

It takes away the hassle of late payments

There will be times when you may forget to pay on time. We've all been there, but late payments don't need to be an issue - with a Direct Debit, you pay on time, every time.

With agreed dates and the payment taken automatically you will never miss a payment.

It's secure and protected by the Direct Debit Guarantee

Using the Direct Debit system is an extremely safe way to pay, with modern encryption and secure firewalls used to protect customer information.

All payments are covered by the Direct Debit Guarantee. This gives you complete cover for payments made in error or taken fraudulently, making Direct Debit a safe payment method.



- Setting up a Direct Debit is fast and hassle-free. If you would like to set up a Direct Debit, or would like more information please call us on 0121 717 1515.



The Mayor of Solihull,
Councillor Flo Nash, with our
Board Chair, Richard Hyde
and our Chief Executive,
Fiona Hughes

Saxon gets the seal of approval

**The Mayor of Solihull has
officially opened Saxon Court,
our brand new extra care living
scheme in Chelmsley Wood.**

We were joined by a large number of guests on the day, keen to support and celebrate the opening of such a fantastic development. Saxon Court is a state of the art development with 51 apartments, designed for people over the age of 55 with a care and support need. A Court Manager will oversee the running of Saxon Court during the day, offering help and support to residents who need it. And a Wellbeing Co-ordinator will promote a range of activities designed to create a thriving Saxon Court community.

The Mayor of Solihull, Councillor Flo Nash, said: "Providing supportive accommodation that meets the needs of older people is a priority for all local authorities. Saxon Court is exactly the type of facility we need and I hope the residents enjoy living there."

Councillor Tony Diccio with
The Mayor and Fiona





Help us keep our high rises safe

We take fire safety in our high rises very seriously - but we need your help to keep the buildings safe.

The communal areas, stairwells and landings must be kept clear at all times. If bulky or flammable items are in communal areas it is a risk to your safety and the safety of others in the building.

Our estate assistants carry out safety checks twice a week, visiting every floor to make sure things are clear and in good order.

Risk assessments are also carried out annually by one of our Compliance Risk Assessors. We joined Ian on his recent visit to Wingfield House in Kingshurst to carry out a Type 1 Fire Risk Assessment.

Ian was there for around four hours. While checking stairwells and landings are clear, the Type 1 assessment also involves checks on the following:

- Compartmentation - fire doors (including front doors) and fire stopping
- Emergency lighting
- Dry riser inlet inspections
- Lightning conduction
- Security and arson control
- Testing sprinkler systems in bin compartments
- Fire dampers and fire hydrants
- Fire breaks in loft spaces (low rise only)



■ Please help us to maintain the buildings and keep them safe. If you need to report anything please call us on 0121 717 1515.

Scrutiny Spotlight

Hi everyone and welcome to the spring edition of the newsletter.

I love this time of year, with beautiful flowers emerging making our neighbourhood gardens look wonderful.

Over the last few months members of Scrutiny have been busy continuing our work on how SCH communicate to customers about their repairs. We have made a number of recommendations which customers feel would improve communications, including letting customers know when operatives are on their way. Our recommendations are now amongst teams and we will be updating you on changes made in the next edition of the newsletter.

The new complaints procedure will also be live in April. Thank you to all of you for your thoughts, ideas and comments. Scrutiny have played a large part in shaping this new procedure, which will improve the complaints process for those who may need to use it.

An interesting area of work which Scrutiny and I have been involved in is Customer Journey Mapping. Members of the group have been booking repairs, reporting issues and generally testing all of the services that SCH offer. Whilst doing this, Scrutiny members have been making notes on what SCH do well when a customer requests a service, and also where improvements need to be made. The aim of this is to improve any areas of customer service which are not to the standard we want them to be, for customers like you and me. This forms part of the bigger focus on Join the Conversation, which will help shape SCH services.

Once again, thank you to all of you who share your valuable thoughts and opinions with the Scrutiny members.

If you have any comments for us please get in touch. We are always happy to have your input.

Email us at newsandviews@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk or call us on 0121 717 1515.

With Jan Jackson
Chair of the
Scrutiny Committee





Rent Calendar 2019/20

This is your rent calendar for 2019/20. Please pin it up as a reminder or keep it somewhere safe. It shows all the days on which your rent is due. We will write to you in March with details of your 2019/20 charges. If you claim Housing Benefit then you will also receive a letter from Solihull Council, explaining your entitlement for 2019/20. These two letters will tell you what you will need to pay.

Your rent is due weekly but if you prefer to pay fortnightly then you should pay on the weeks in blue.

Week No.	Date	Payment Made	Week No.	Date	Payment Made
1	April 1		27	Sep 30	
2	April 8		28	Oct 7	
3	April 15		29	Oct 14	
4	April 22		30	Oct 21	
5	April 29		31	Oct 28	
6	May 6		32	Nov 4	
7	May 13		33	Nov 11	
8	May 20		34	Nov 18	
9	May 27		35	Nov 25	
10	June 3		36	Dec 2	
11	June 10		37	Dec 9	
12	June 17		38	Dec 16	
13	June 24		39	Dec 23	No rent due unless in arrears
14	July 1		40	Dec 30	
15	July 8		41	Jan 6	
16	July 15		42	Jan 13	
17	July 22		43	Jan 20	
18	July 29		44	Jan 27	
19	Aug 5		45	Feb 3	
20	Aug 12		46	Feb 10	
21	Aug 19		47	Feb 17	
22	Aug 26		48	Feb 24	
23	Sep 2		49	Mar 2	
24	Sep 9		50	Mar 9	
25	Sep 16		51	Mar 16	
26	Sep 23		52	Mar 23	No rent due unless in arrears
			53	Mar 30	No rent due unless in arrears

 £200 prize draw  4 x £250 Christmas draw winners

You will be automatically entered into our prize draws if you have a clear rent account at that time.

Warm Homes Fund turns up the heat...



If you are relying on a storage heater or coal fire to heat your home then you could be eligible for a new heating system free of charge.

Affordable Warmth Solution have set up the £150million Warm Homes Fund to help some of the four million UK households living in 'fuel poverty'.

We are contacting some of our customers who we think may be able to benefit from this scheme.

A number of homes in Solihull have already had their old heating systems taken away and replaced with modern central heating.

The environmentally friendly scheme is open to home owners and council tenants. A team from Act On Energy carry out the work free of charge at those homes who meet the criteria.

If you hear from us please respond as this is a wonderful opportunity to have modern central heating fitted free of charge.

The scheme is only available to you if you live in a house, bungalow or low rise flat.

- **To see if you qualify please email advice@actonenergy.org.uk or call freephone 0800 988 2881.**



We are taking part in the Great British Spring Clean!

We are delighted to announce that we will be taking part in the Great British Spring Clean 2019. The Great British Spring Clean runs from 22 March - 23 April.



During this time our staff will be out and about cleaning areas of the borough. If there is an area near you that would benefit from a Spring clean please let us know by emailing engagement@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk

- **For more information about the GB Spring clean visit www.keepbritaintidy.org/**

Helping you get rid of your pests

Do you have problems with ants entering your home in the summer? Now is the time to act!



Early spring is the best time to treat ants before the infestation becomes a problem.

Often, by the time we reach summer it can be too late to control. When ants are treated and killed its likely more will follow. Ants typically follow scent trails from previous infestations in search of food.

To help prevent ants returning it's important to act quickly! SCH Better Places provide effective specialist treatment to kill the ants before larger nests emerge.

The treatment includes placing 'food' for the first worker ants to find and take back to the queen before she starts to lay her eggs. Charges for this service start from £100.

- **Better Places provide a range of services including internal and external decorating services, specialist mould treatments and gardening. For more information call 0121 717 1515.**

Make a swap when you next shop



Litter pickers are keeping it clean!

When it comes to taking pride in your community, few set a better example than the Smith's Wood Litter Pickers. This group of hardy volunteers turn out each week, often in all weathers, in an attempt to keep the local neighbourhood clear of litter.

Armed with bin bags and litter pickers, the team wander around the wards of north Solihull picking up everything from tin cans and bottles to crisp packets. It's certainly not a pleasant job at times, but it is still one that this determined bunch meets head-on.

The last year or so has sadly seen a sharp increase in fly-tipping in the area, creating an even bigger challenge for the litter pickers. The group - who are often seen walking the streets of Smith's Wood - bag up lots of rubbish every time they go out on a walk.

The other plus factor is the health benefits for the members who take part. The group is made up entirely of local people with a shared commitment to keeping our neighbourhoods safe and attractive.

■ You can find out more by visiting the group's Facebook page.



Don't turn a deaf ear to noisy neighbours

If you have a problem with noisy neighbours then the noise app may be able to help.

This is the best way to record and report noise problems.

The most common cause of noise complaints are:

- Loud voices
- Music
- Animals
- Antisocial behaviour



If you are experiencing noise problems call our ASB hotline on 0121 717 1500. We will then send you a text or email with a link from which you can open and save the noise app.

The app is proving very effective in helping make clear if a particular noise is unacceptable or not. This means we can prevent a full complaint where the noise is not deemed a nuisance.

A number of Noise Abatement Notices have been served where the noise app has played a significant part in determining evidence where there has been a statutory nuisance.



If these notices are breached in the future then we will have Mandatory Grounds for possession of a tenancy which means a person could lose their home.

If a breach of tenancy is proven by the noise app then other legal actions could be considered, such as injunctions or Community Protection Notices.

So please consider your neighbours.

■ To sign up to the noise app please call our ASB hotline on 0121 717 1500.



We're keeping you Safe and Sound



Would you like peace of mind knowing help is at hand by the push of a button?

SCH Wellbeing is a trusted service used by many people in Solihull. The Safe and Sound plan offers a pendant alarm service which helps you to live a happy and independent life in your own home. Prices start from just £3.27 per week and our specially trained staff are available to help no matter the hour!

We also offer:

- Sensors and detectors which alert the emergency services when triggered

- Handyperson service to carry out small jobs around the home
- Free Home Hazard Assessments to check your home is safe
- Advice about gadgets designed to make living easier
- Key safe door security



Is your responder planning a holiday? We can fill in while they are away! Call 0121 717 1515 to find out more.

We will be contacting you soon!

We are working in partnership with a company called BMG who will be carrying out surveys about our services. You may be contacted by text and/or email.

We need your thought on our services to help us improve. Please share your feedback with us!

- **If you do not want to participate please let us know at newsandviews@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk**



Make sure you have your say! X

Voting timeline

- X **Week commencing 25 March** | Poll cards issued
- X **Friday 12 April** | Last date for registration
- X **5.00pm Monday 15 April** | Deadline for postal vote applications
- X **5.00pm Wednesday 24 April** | Deadline for proxy vote applications
- X **7.00am - 10.00pm Thursday 2 May** | Polling day



Harry's handy hints



Useful tips for Biomass users.

The Biomass heating system is designed to provide 21°C in the living room and bathroom and 18°C in other rooms.

The temperature in your flat can be managed by the thermostat located in your hallway. The most economical way to use the thermostat is in 'automatic mode'.

How to set up automatic mode:

- 1** Pull up the cover flap to reveal the controls. Rotate the minute hand clockwise until the clock shows the correct time and move the slider switch to 'AM' or 'PM'.
- 2** To the left of the clock there are two small dials. Use the top dial to set your preferred daytime temperature and the bottom dial to set a night time temperature. We suggest 5°C - 10°C.



- 3** Around the outside of the clock face there are 96 'tappets' or little switches. These relate to 15 minute intervals throughout the 24 hour day. Move the tappets outward for the periods of the day that you want the heating on. And move the tappets inward for the periods when you want the minimum 'night time'/off temperature.

- 4** Finally, set the slider switch below the clock face to the clock symbol. This will place the unit in automatic mode and heating will now provide the daytime and night time temperatures you have set.

■ If you need further help with your Biomass heating system please call 0121 717 1515.

Green light for new residents' security!

The Green Hill Way Street Association held an open day recently to let residents know what is going on in their area.

The group has recently been awarded some funding from the Active Citizens Fund which will be used to provide free home security equipment such as window locks, door chains and sensor lights. Residents were able to see the items available and request what items they needed.

As part of the day, they also staged a special exhibition that revealed plans for a garden landscaping project.

With some funding from the Solihull Locality Working project, the entire area around Astley Walk will soon enjoy a complete makeover.

Overgrown vegetation, untidy shrubbery and broken planters are being replaced by new turf and small trees. The work will help to improve the look of the area, making this a spot residents can now enjoy.

The open day, which was supported by Solihull Council and Solihull Community Housing, was a great success and residents hope to stage further community events in the future.



Top tips to help prevent car crime



Vehicle crime is often committed by opportunists who may be put off by simple security precautions. West Midlands Police have recently shared some useful security advice to help reduce the likelihood of becoming a victim of vehicle crime.

- Lock all windows, doors and sunroof whenever you leave the vehicle
- Remove all valuables and never leave anything on display
- Don't leave items in the glove box
- Register all valuables in the car, such as radios and sat nav systems on Immobilise at www.immobilise.com
- Use a steering lock
- Fit a locking petrol cap and locking wheel nuts
- Take portable sat navs and dashcams with you when leaving the car
- Wipe away any suction pad marks left on the windscreen or dashboard and remove the cable - thieves will look out for these.





Star Photo Competition

Thank you to everyone who entered and sent us pictures that capture Solihull at its very best.

Congratulations to our winner, Miss O'Brien from Chelmsley Wood on the beautiful picture above of the Solihull skyline. Your £25 voucher is in the post!

If you would like your picture in the next issue of the newsletter please enter. We're after some great images that show what a wonderful place Solihull is to live.

The photos can be taken with a camera or phone and can be taken anywhere in Solihull. Only one picture per person is allowed. Only SCH tenants and leaseholders can enter.

Please email your photos to
info@solihullcommunityhousing.org.uk

The closing date is Sunday 28 April 2019.



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For live updates
join us on
social media.



facebook.com/solihullcommunityhousing



twitter.com/@solihullhousing



[solihullcommunityhousing](https://www.instagram.com/solihullcommunityhousing)



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