Bulb Planting

Bulb Planting at the Millpond, Thelma Hambling and the Grounds Maintenance Team

NEW LOOK MAGAZINE!

Tenant Open Day, claim your GOODIE BAG    Tenant Inspector, Graham Waters    2011 Garden Competition

Inside: Entry Form for this year’s Garden Competition and much more...!
“Welcome”
...to the HomeTalk Spring 2011 edition

THIS EDITION OF HOMETALK WAS BROUGHT TO YOU BY:
Tenant Representatives Peggie Brown, Vic Crosby, Sue Radwell, Lynda Swatridge, Graham Waters and Gill Waters, along with New Forest District Council Officers; Laraine Fisher, Performance Monitoring Assistant; Kevin Gould, Operations Manager; Alison Green, PA for Dave Brown (Head of Housing), Pauline Lewis, Housing Estates Manager and Natasha Searle, Administrative Assistant.

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT THE EDITOR

If you would like more information about any of the articles printed in this edition, or if you have any ideas for future articles, please contact The Editor.

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www.newforest.gov.uk following links 'Housing/Resident Involvement'.

CONTENTS

I’m Involved .... Are you?.................. 3
Tenants’ Community Chest ................. 4
Focus Groups................................ 4
Annual Report to Tenants .................. 5
Tenant Open Day ............................ 5
Tenant Led Inspection at NFDC .......... 6
TRUST Annual Conference ............... 7
Strategic Housing News ................... 8
Property Inspections ...................... 9
Sheltered Housing Review ............... 10
Rent Increase for 2011 – 2012............ 11
Sheila’s Gardening Tips ................. 12
2011 Gardening Competition ............ 13
Running a business from home .......... 14
Small Repair Service .................... 14
Housing Helpdesk ....................... 15
Bus Fares .................................. 15
Estate Inspectors ......................... 16
Wordsearch Competition ............... 16
Pet information .......................... 17
Grounds Maintenance ..................... 18
Local Resident Group News ............. 19
Garages for rent ......................... 19
Beware of Cold Callers ................. 20
Neighbourhood & Tenancy Management Officers ........ 20
Keeping you Informed ................. 21
Estate Inspections ...................... 22
Dates for your Diary ................... 23
Contact Numbers ....................... 24

All information contained in this magazine is correct at the time of going to print.
The new HomeTalk

Joy Stainer, Editor

There are lots of stories in the news these days about ‘cuts’ and how we need to be as efficient as possible with our resources. With this in mind, in the autumn last year we conducted a survey with tenants to find out what they thought of Hometalk and if any savings could be made.

Although over 88% of those who responded said they would prefer to continue to receive Hometalk 4 times a year, after discussion with the Editorial Panel and our Resident Involvement Agreement group; the decision was made to reduce the number of issues to 2 per year; for the time being.

You told us:

“I like Hometalk as it keeps me in touch with what is happening across the district.”

“Well produced and easy to read.”

“I find it very informative and do not know how you would communicate with tenants without it.”

By reducing the number of issues per year and by changing the way we deliver the magazine to some of our tenants, we are looking to save around 58% on the production costs for the magazine. Housing updates will be available in-between issues, and these will be on display at our Local Area Offices and available online.

We are confident, that when looking at the various options available for communicating Housing-related information to our tenants and leaseholders, Hometalk is the most cost-effective means of doing so.

Earlier this year we appointed a new contractor, LPC Printing, who have helped us develop the ‘new look’ Hometalk. Lynda Swatridge, one of our Editorial Panel Members who was involved in the tender process commented:

“We recently had a very interesting day listening to the presentations of various printing companies for the job of producing future editions of Hometalk. After much discussion we chose a company who we are sure will do an excellent job for us. Until I joined the panel I did not realise how much work was involved in producing Hometalk magazine. From writing the articles, proof reading, laying out of the magazine and finally printing. I am pleased to be involved and find it all fascinating!!”

If you have any further comments about Hometalk, or would like to be involved in the production process, please contact me.

by Joy Stainer, Editor

I’m Involved... Are you...?

Mike Akerman is a tenant representative from New Milton. He belongs to various focus groups as well as his local residents’ group. He said:

“The thought of getting involved will give most people a shudder! Do not be afraid, it is not as bad as you think. As a tenant you can make a difference and often influence the way in which the Council thinks. There are various groups for you to attend, depending on your interests. You can choose to come whenever you like and are not obliged to attend every time. You will not be expected to be out of pocket and reasonable expenses will be paid. New Forest District Council is very keen on residents getting involved and give the various groups lots of help and assistance through the Resident Involvement team. You will come into contact with other like-minded people and make many new friends.”

Resident Involvement support tenants who want to work with NFDC, in order to monitor and improve the services we provide to tenants. You can be involved in various ways, such as:

• Join a Focus Group, such as Grounds Maintenance, to check that our Grounds Maintenance team are performing well in comparison to the NFDC service standards. This would involve attending a meeting and giving your comments and ideas.

• Spend a few minutes completing a survey. We send out both online and paper surveys and we find this is a VERY useful and easy way of gaining tenants’ views and opinions on a whole range of housing issues.

• Help with Estate Inspections, to keep the area that you live in safe and tidy.

• Start a Residents’ Group in your area. If you feel that the area you live in would benefit from having a residents’ group, please contact Resident Involvement for further information and support.

email resident.involvement@nfdc.gov.uk or visit our website at www.newforest.gov.uk
Resident Involvement Agreement Group

This group meets quarterly and:

- Monitors the outcomes and results of Resident Involvement
- Discusses and agrees future Resident Involvement activities, and any new initiatives for involving more tenants

With all the changes to social housing that have been proposed by the new Government, it is important that these are taken into account when planning our opportunities for involvement. Recently the group have been discussing a new way for involving our tenants on a more local level. Surveys will be taking place with various tenant groups in the near future, in order to ensure that there is enough support and interest for any changes that we make. If you receive one of these surveys – please do take a few moments to fill it in and send it back to us.

Also at this group, taking into account the current economic climate, and the need to make savings and efficiencies where possible, the group agreed to review tenant travel expenses. Mileage rates will remain the same at £0.40 pence per mile for tenants using their own cars to attend meetings, with an additional £0.02 pence payable if tenants car share or provide lifts to others.

The use of taxis has been reviewed and will in future be used if no other transport is available; if attendance at the meeting or event is essential or if there are specific mobility issues.

Sheltered Housing Focus Group

For the last couple of years this group has been meeting at Appletree Court. However, meetings will in future take place at the Sheltered Schemes themselves, which will reduce the transport costs of those attending. This should be more convenient for those tenants attending as well.

Find out more

Minutes of all of these groups are available to download from our website at:

- www.newforest.gov.uk (Housing / Resident Involvement / Focus Groups / Minutes and meeting notes)
- Or contact Resident Involvement for a paper copy.

Find out more

Please contact Resident Involvement to talk it through and request an application form.

The £15,000 allocated to the Tenants’ Community Chest Grant fund (TCC) is used for projects that New Forest District Council tenants have identified and which will enhance their neighbourhood or to protect the environment. Each TCC grant can be for up to £1,000 and certain criteria must be met before grants are allocated. We want tenants to come up with ideas to improve the area that they live in and we can help out with the grant application process.

One of the approved schemes last year involved our Grounds Maintenance team planting bulbs in the autumn around the base of trees, signposts and lampposts on The Millpond and Blackwater Estates. The aim of this pilot scheme is to enhance the look of the Estate, reduce the amount of time spent strimming and reduce the amount of weedkiller needed. The bulbs that were planted were a variety that should flower at different times during the Spring and Summer. Our front page picture shows Thelma, one of our tenants, with the Grounds Maintenance team, last autumn, helping to plant the bulbs. As you can see from the picture, the results were a beautiful show of colourful flowers.

As well as the bulb planting scheme, so far this year we have allocated grants for community improvements to:

- Provision of bin stores at Andrew Lane
- Enhancements to the alleyway at Beech Crescent
- Refurbishment of St George’s Hall at Calshot

Do you know of any community projects that you and your neighbours would benefit from and that would be worthy of a Tenants’ Community Chest grant?

TENANTS’ Community Chest Grant

Maintenance team planting bulbs in the autumn around the base of trees, signposts and lampposts on The Millpond and Blackwater Estates. The aim of this pilot scheme is to enhance the look of the Estate, reduce the amount of time spent strimming and reduce the amount of weedkiller needed. The bulbs that were planted were a variety that should flower at different times during the Spring and Summer. Our front page picture shows Thelma, one of our tenants, with the Grounds Maintenance team, last autumn, helping to plant the bulbs. As you can see from the picture, the results were a beautiful show of colourful flowers.

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Do you know of any community projects that you and your neighbours would benefit from and that would be worthy of a Tenants’ Community Chest grant?

Find out more

Please contact Resident Involvement to talk it through and request an application form.
ANNUAL REPORT TO TENANTS

Last year we published the first Annual Report for Tenants. All landlords are required to produce this report by the Tenant Services Authority (TSA), the regulator of all social landlords in England.

The contents and format of the report are decided by tenants, and last year it was agreed that the report should contain:

- Information about our service standards
- Key facts about our performance in these standards
- Information about how we compare with other local landlords

Work is already underway to prepare this year’s (2010-2011) report, and we welcome views from tenants as to what they want to see included.

We also need to know what you think about

- How long the report is
- How we present the information, for example should we use graphs and charts to present information
- Should we include colour pictures to brighten up the report

If you would like to be included or involved in any part of the report process please contact the Resident Involvement team for more information.

Ways of being involved could include:

- Answering a short e-mail questionnaire
- Proof reading or reviewing drafts of the report at home
- Attending a short meeting to discuss the report in more detail

The Annual Report is intended for tenants, and therefore it is vital that it contains the information that tenants want to see in a way that tenants want to read it. So your contributions and ideas are essential.

Find out more
For more information and to see a copy of last year’s report visit:
www.newforest.gov.uk and follow links to Housing or contact Resident Involvement and ask to be sent a copy.

TENANT OPEN DAY
Thursday 8th September 2011
Between 10 am – 3 pm

Come along to Appletree Court in Lyndhurst and use this opportunity to meet various Managers and staff from your Housing team.

There will be Managers and staff available from all departments in Housing, including:

- Housing Benefit health check
- Income Recovery
- Repairs and Maintenance
- Housing Help Desk
- Resident Involvement
- Estate Management
- And others

You can drop in at any time between 10 am and 3 pm. So, if you have any questions or concerns that you would like to discuss this is your opportunity to do so.

50 lucky tenants will receive a goodie bag, so don’t miss out, claim your draw ticket when you arrive.

For more information on this event please contact the Resident Involvement team.

STOP PRESS
Live demonstration of DIY skills by a NFDC Multi-skilled operative - find out how to fix kitchen/bathroom tiles, change a tap or washer and more
You may be aware that as part of the new Tenant Services Authority (TSA) regulation, all landlords are expected to have a system for tenant led inspections of their services in place. One of the main reasons for this is that the TSA acknowledge that tenants, as the customers of our services, are often best placed to assess whether or not the services we provide are

- Meeting their needs, and
- Meeting the standards that we set for the service

Over the last year or so tenants and Officers have been working together in order to put in place a system for tenant inspections at NFDC. These inspections will eventually cover all aspects of Housing Services and any other related service that tenants use and that they feel should be inspected.

It is important to say that these inspections are not just ‘fault finding’ exercises, the aim is to find out what the Council is doing well, along with identifying any areas in which we could make improvements.

Around 12 tenants have volunteered to be part of our Inspection team and over the past year they have attended training sessions and planning meetings in order to help put in place arrangements for our first ‘pilot’ inspection.

It was agreed that the first ‘pilot’ inspection would cover the service area of ‘Reporting a Repair’. This was because it was felt that this was an area of our Housing service that nearly all tenants used at some time during their tenancy.

Between the 7th and 25th March this year our tenant inspectors used a variety of methods to inspect and test the services in this area. These included:

**Desk top review:** information and data was given to the inspectors which showed the current and past performance relating to this area, for example numbers of calls to the Help Desk, satisfaction of tenants with Help Desk service etc.

**Mystery Shopping:** tenants tested the reporting process by either phoning the Help Desk with a repair or sending an e-mail or logging the repair online. They made notes of their experience along the way.

**Tenant – Tenant interviews:** tenants inspectors conducted short telephone interviews with a selection of tenants who had recently reported a repair to our Help Desk, or online. They asked questions about how they found the experience and how they rated the service.

This part of the inspection has only recently been completed and the next stage is for the tenant inspectors to review all the information they have gathered in the last couple of weeks and compile a report of their findings and recommendations. This report will be presented to various groups including: the Policy & Report Focus Group, Housing Management Team and the Housing Review Panel.

Chris Haws (Housing Support Services Manager) and Julie Lelean (Housing Help Desk Manager) have both been working closely with tenants throughout this process, offering both guidance and support.

Chris Haws, Housing Support Services Manager said:

“We welcome this opportunity to work with our tenants to ensure that the service we provide is in line with customer expectations. The findings from this pilot inspection will be considered and, if appropriate, we will include any suggestions for improvements into our service standards and the rolling training programme that we have in place for our team.”

Once ready this report and any other details will also be available on our website in the Resident Involvement section. We will keep you updated of this Inspection and any future planned inspections. Any tenant can be involved in monitoring and scrutinising our services – if you would like more information please contact the Resident Involvement team or we can put you in touch with one of our Inspectors.

**For more information:**

**TENANT SERVICES AUTHORITY (TSA)**
Telephone: 0845 230 7000  Email: enquiries@tsa.gsx.gov.uk
Website: www.tenantservicesauthority.org

**TENANT PARTICIPATION ADVISORY SERVICE (TPAS)**
Telephone: 0161 868 3500  Email: info@tpas.org.uk
Website: www.tpas.org.uk
TRUST is a partnership between landlords in the local area including Bournemouth Borough Council, Poole Housing Partnership and Sovereign Twynham Housing Association.

In October 2010 the Annual Tenants’ Conference was held at the Village Hotel in Bournemouth to which tenants from each organisation were invited to attend. The theme for the Conference was 'The Big Society', and aimed to focus on the history of Social Housing and what changes were being proposed to it by the new Government.

The guest speaker was Professor Carl Chinn, who gave a most informative and entertaining account of how social housing has developed over the last century, as well as community values.

Tenants were then able to mix and discuss the issues that are important to them in the future, for example policies on tenancies, anti social behaviour, standards in housing services etc.

Around 100 tenants attended in total, including members of the Dorset County Tenants’ Federation. Some of the feedback and comments received from the Conference included:

“Very well organised, excellent presentation by Prof Chin, very good interaction by all present”

“I felt very included. It was worthwhile, friendly and inclusive at all levels”

“I look forward to next year’s. Speaker was fantastic from grass roots, more of that please”

The ideas and comments that tenants agreed during the day were put together and sent as a document to the current Housing Minister, Grant Schapps for comment.

On the 4th March, TRUST also held a half day workshop on the Comprehensive Spending Review and what the new policies would mean for tenants and communities in general. Topics covered included:

- Changes to Housing Benefit and other social welfare reforms
- Changes to tenancies and the Housing Finance system
- Cuts that are proposed and how they affect local communities

After a presentation and overview of the Spending Review tenants were able to discuss and debate the issues in groups.

TRUST aim to provide training and networking events for tenants which are useful and Value for Money. If you think you would be interested in attending a future training event or Conference please contact the Resident Involvement team for more information.

STOP PRESS: This year’s conference will be on Friday 7th October 2011 at The Village Hotel, Bournemouth. If you are interested in attending please contact Resident Involvement.
There have been lots of new developments across the district in the past year, some of which have been mentioned in Hometalk previously. Here's an update along with some news about new developments planned for the future.

IN PROGRESS AND RECENTLY COMPLETED

New Milton - Manor Road

Construction work to develop 12 supported affordable homes in New Milton started in March 2010 by Ability Housing Association. The programme was ahead of schedule with completion in January 2011. It represents the first supported housing scheme to be developed in the New Forest since 2006.

Holbury - old Infant School site

Swaythling Housing Society began work in March 2010 to develop 25 affordable homes in Holbury on the former Infant School site. The construction work is on schedule with works expected to be completed this summer.

Marchwood - Africa Drive

First Wessex started construction work to build 8 family sized affordable homes in Marchwood in June 2010. The homes will be built to the Code for Sustainable Homes (see below), and are expected to complete in June 2011.

Fordingbridge - Breamore Station – Planning consent was granted to Hyde Martlet for 5 new rural affordable homes in December 2010.

Martin - Downview Road – Hyde Martlet have submitted a full planning application for 6 new affordable homes.

Ashurst - Ashurst Station – A public exhibition took place in November for proposals to build 7 new rural affordable homes on this site.

Pennington – Howards Mead The Council signed a pre-construction agreement with Mansell in December 2010, preparation of the site started in March 2011: to build 9 new houses including 6 two bedroom and 3 three bedroom dwellings. All the new homes will be built to the Code for Sustainable Homes standard.

Future developments

Ashley - Gorse Close Western Challenge Housing Association have made a start on site in September 2010 to build 2 four bedroom homes in New Milton, the homes will be built to Code 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes.

Holbury - Sloane Avenue First Wessex began work on 2 family homes in March 2010. The new dwellings will represent the first Code for Sustainable Homes, Code 4 homes in the New Forest and are expected to complete by April 2011.

The Code for Sustainable Homes (the Code) was introduced in England in April 2007. The Code is designed to improve the overall sustainability of new homes by setting a single framework within which the home building industry can design and construct homes to higher environmental standards. Where it is used, the Code also gives occupants better information about the environmental impact of their new home and its potential running costs.

Find out more

Telephone Javed Ditta, Senior Housing Strategy & Development Officer on 023 8028 5111
Email: javed.ditta@nfdc.gov.uk
If you recall, in our Summer Edition of Hometalk magazine, there was an article in which all of our tenants were notified about my new role as a Property Inspection Assistant within the Council. My role is primarily to visit every Council tenant on the Homesearch list, who is waiting to transfer or to be nominated to another social housing property. The aim is to ensure that when a property is handed back to the Council following a transfer, it is left in good condition, as stated in the Tenancy Conditions.

Since I took up this new position, I have visited many properties and met with quite a number of our tenants. I cannot but express my appreciation to all who have welcomed this new process and have cooperated with me during my visits.

You must appreciate that the majority of our tenants look after their homes to a high standard but unfortunately, there are the minority that do damage our property. By preventing damage we are trying to minimise our maintenance costs and this will leave more money available for repairs and maintenance.

To date, I have inspected 439 properties. A total of 372 of these properties were further categorized as follows:

- 274 properties will not be inspected for another three years because they are in good condition
- 66 will be re-inspected in a year’s time
- 11 have needed follow-up inspections because they are in such a poor condition, they have failed to meet with the Council’s standard.

Now that I have concluded my inspection visits to nearly all the applicants on the Homesearch list, my focus will now shift to all other Council tenants.

Over the next few months, I will write to you to arrange an inspection visit. If your property is found to be in good condition, there may be no need to visit you for another three years.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the majority of our tenants who have kept and maintained the quality and standard of our properties to that which is acceptable.
SHELTERED HOUSING REVIEW

By Pauline Lewis, Housing Estates Manager

Some of you might already be aware that we are currently undergoing a major review of our Sheltered Housing Services, in order to comply with the new funding requirements from Hampshire County Council and the National Agenda for Older Persons. A new service will be in place from 1st April 2012, and by now all of our current Sheltered Housing Schemes will have been visited by a team of Senior Officers and Councillors in order to explain in detail the changes that are due to take place, and to answer any questions or concerns that residents have.

The main differences:

Currently our Sheltered Housing Service provides a standard service for all residents of the Schemes; however in future we will be aiming to deliver a more tailored service which complements residents’ individual needs. This will apply to all Older Persons, whether they are living in one of our schemes or not. In order to achieve this new service, we are currently reviewing the schemes and the delivery of the services we provide, and in some cases have decided to 're-categorise' schemes. For example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schemes</th>
<th>New Service</th>
<th>Old Service</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gore Grange, Winfrid House, Barfields Court</td>
<td>Extra Care</td>
<td>Care and support will be available to residents of these schemes 24 hours a day. A new on site provider will be contracted to deliver this.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corbin Court, Solent Mead, Bannister Court, Evergreens, Howard Oliver House, Clover Court, Cranleigh Paddock, Whitecroft</td>
<td>Housing for over 65’s</td>
<td>Support will be available to residents of these schemes if needed. Lifeline services will also be available if required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ewart Court, Campion House (Both a partial re-categorisation)</td>
<td>Housing for over 65’s only on the ground floor of these schemes Housing for over 55’s on the top floors</td>
<td>Support will be available to residents of these schemes if needed. Lifeline services will also be available if required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawrence House, Robertshaw House, Marryat Court, Wilson Court, Clarks Court</td>
<td>General needs housing – for residents aged 45 years and over</td>
<td>Support will be available to residents of these schemes if needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compton House &amp; Sarum House</td>
<td>A decision has not yet been made on the future of these schemes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How will this new service differ from the current one?

There will no longer be a Sheltered Housing Service (as it is currently known). A team of Officers will provide the services that Sheltered Housing Managers presently deliver. Therefore there will no longer be an onsite presence at our schemes every day in the way that they are now. In future, although there will be some times that Officers spend ‘on site’ at schemes, they will have different roles:

- **For support related issues**, a team of Community Support Officers (floating support) will provide support tailored to the needs of tenants.
- **For tenancy issues** (such as nuisance complaints, and general queries): these will be dealt with by Officers within the current Neighbourhood & Tenancy Management team.
- **For involvement**, events and activities issues: these will be dealt with by Involvement, Events, & Activities Coordinators, who will work within the current Resident Involvement team.
- **Alarm monitoring** (Lifeline etc) – this service will still be available to those tenants who need it, and any who do not wish to have this support or the alarm monitoring service will be able to ‘opt out’ as from 1 April 2012.

Meetings have already been held at all of our Sheltered Housing Schemes about these changes, and factsheets specific to each scheme have been made available to residents.

Find out more

If you have any queries or concerns about these changes, please do not hesitate to speak to your Sheltered Housing Manager or contact me for further information.

**By phone:** 02380 285222  **E-mail:** Pauline.lewis@nfdc.gov.uk
Rent Increase
For 2011 – 2012

By Dave Brown, Head of Housing

The rent increase for this year will result in an average rise of 6.2%. This level of increase is disappointing, not least since we are all facing difficult times in the current economic climate. However, central Government have recommended this rate as in the long term Council house rents need to be brought closer to those set by the Housing Association sector.

If we were not to raise our rent by this level we would have been effectively penalised by the government and have lost further income in increased subsidy payments to central government. The effect of this would have been to reduce the overall services we are able to provide to you and would have likely resulted in reduced maintenance programmes.

As before, the final rent increase will vary between different housing as the Council continues to restructure its rents in accordance with Government guidance. The objective as previously stated, is to make rents readily comparable across all social housing wherever you live in the country, and whether you are a tenant of a council or a registered social landlord. If you would like further information on how we work out your rent please contact the Income Recovery Team.

Paying your rent

- If you pay by direct debit, we will notify you in April of the new monthly amount to be collected.
- If you pay by standing order, you should instruct your bank to pay the increased amount from the date of your choice.
- For other ways of paying your rent please refer to your rent card or visit www.newforest.gov.uk.

However you choose to pay your rent, please ensure that you pay in advance.

We are here to help you

If you are on a low income, you may be entitled to housing benefit to help you pay your rent. Where you are claiming housing or council tax benefit, it is most important that you provide any supporting information requested and advise the Tax and Benefits Team promptly of any changes in your circumstances that may affect your entitlement.

If you are having difficulty in paying or require information about any aspect of your rent, please contact the Housing Helpdesk on 023 8028 5222. Income Recovery Officers can offer advice to help you avoid escalation of rent arrears.

Find out more

Why not come to our Tenant Open Day on 8th September

Or contact a member of the Income Recovery Team:
Jane Cole - Lymington & New Milton
Kerry Leach - Lyndhurst & Brockenhurst
Jo Rolle - Totton, Fordingbridge & Ringwood
Peter Roberts - Marchwood & Waterside Area

Remember if you don’t pay your rent this could ultimately lead to repossession of your home.

e-mail resident.involvement@nfdc.gov.uk or visit our website at www.newforest.gov.uk
Hi Everyone

In this edition I thought I would go through the process of planting up hanging baskets and containers.

Good preparation

is so worthwhile; as your efforts will give you pleasure for many months to come! So, when you are planning please consider the following:

• It’s very important to select the right size baskets or containers for your garden.
• If it’s a very windy spot, don’t use a basket, as it will swing around, damage the plants and possibly even pull the bracket out as the plants grow and get heavier. Instead, use a container that you can fix securely to the wall, like a half moon manger.
• When using a traditional wire basket choose a good liner to hold your plants in place.
• Most importantly, use good compost.
• When choosing your plants (or buying seeds) read the labels as they contain all the information that you need. Consider colour, size, shape etc.
• Hanging Baskets are also great for other types of plants; such as STRAWBERRIES, an 8-10" basket will hold 4/5 plants (just watch out for the birds as they like them as much as you!!!), small HERB plants also grow well in baskets and there are now hanging basket varieties of TOMATOES.

Getting started

Once you have all the ‘ingredients’ you are ready to start planting up...

• Cut a circle from your compost bag about the size of a tea plate and place in the bottom of your basket. This will act as a ‘reservoir’ to keep the basket moist.
• Now fill halfway with compost and, if you are using them, add water-retaining granules and slow-release fertilizer.
• Add trailing plants around the edge.
• Place a good sized upright plant in the middle, such as a Fuchsia or Geranium, as this will give the arrangement height and width.
• Now fill up the rest of the space with your other plants.
• Be careful not to overplant, as you need to allow room for growth.

After planting

• If the weather allows, you may be able to leave baskets outside, but they will need to be protected, especially at night, until there are no more frosts.
• You can protect baskets and containers by covering lightly with gardening fleece or an old net curtain.
• After a few waterings the compost may settle so you may need to “top up” the soil around the plants.

A few Do’s and Don'ts:

• DO keep baskets and containers watered but DON'T water so much that they are soggy.
• During hot sunny days, DO spray water on the leaves and flowers, preferably during the evening.
• DO feed with liquid plant food once a week.
• DON'T leave fading or dead flowers on the plants as they will spoil the appearance and the plant will think it’s done its job, go to seed and stop producing flowers, so DO ‘deadhead’ regularly.

Once established, your basket will not want for much, EXCEPT... some TLC from you. THE GOLDEN RULE to remember is that all baskets /containers are reliant solely on YOU for their WATER and a liquid FEED – look after them well and they will reward you with a colourful show all through the flowering season.

I hope these TIPS have been of some help.

Happy Gardening!
Spring is here and it's time to bring our gardens back to life after the long cold winter. The early spring flowers give us the inspiration to prepare our gardens so that we can sit back in the summer months, sip a cool drink and enjoy all of our hard work.

Questionnaires were sent out to all entrants of the 2010 gardening competition to get their views and ensure that we deliver events that tenants want. In January the Gardening Competition Working Group met to review the responses and decide on categories and prizes for this year's competition, as well as help us to plan the Presentation Day in September.

Each year we get more and more tenants entering our Annual Garden Competition, some enter 'just for fun' and others like to show, with pride, the lovely displays that they have worked on. We are proud that so many tenants make an effort to take pride in their gardens and the area that they live in.

So, why not get digging and enter this year's competition? You could be in with a chance of winning a prize!

Any tenant or leaseholder can enter the competition, and you don't have to be a professional gardener!

Entrants will be visited by a Grounds Maintenance Officer and Resident Involvement initially, and will be judged by a panel of tenants and officers in August.

Prizes for this year's competition will be Garden Centre vouchers to the value of:

- **1st Prize - £30**
- **2nd Prize - £20**
- **3rd Prize - £10**

Please submit your entry form by Friday 17th June 2011

Judging will take place in July and the presentation of prizes will take place on Friday 9th September

Lorraine Grace, whose Garden was Highly Commended in 2010 said:

“I have always enjoyed my garden, and if I win something that is a bonus”
Running a business from home

Many people travel to their workplace, however, others prefer to work from the comfort of their own home. In general, New Forest District Council have no objection to tenants working from home, as long as they keep to their tenancy conditions and ensure that their business does not cause nuisance or annoyance to others.

The types of businesses which could be run from home include:

- IT or Office based services
- Dressmaking
- Crafting
- Running a Gardening service
- Small repairs
- Running a Handyman service

The types of businesses which would cause problems if run from home include carrying out vehicle repairs, a dog boarding kennels or cattery.

You can find out more information about starting up a home-based business by telephoning the Business Link Helpline on 0845 600 9006 or checking their website via www.businesslink.gov.uk

You could also arrange to attend a free workshop with HM Revenue & Customs Advice Teams. They can give you practical advice on the tax matters that will affect you: record-keeping, filling in and filing your tax return. You can obtain further information and find out where your nearest workshop will be via their website www.hmrc.gov.uk/startingup

Please note that your Tenancy Conditions state that "you must not run a business from the property without obtaining written consent from the Council”. If you wish to embark on a home business opportunity, please write to your Neighbourhood and Tenancy Management Officer to obtain permission or telephone them on 02380 285222 to discuss it further.

Small Repair Service

Community First New Forest run a New Forest Small Repair Service that supports people by:

- Carrying out minor repair or adaptation works in homes at low cost.
- Being a reliable, professional, trustworthy and supportive service.

This service is for people over 60, people with a disability or anyone in receipt of an income related benefit, eg Income Support, Pension Credit, Council Tax Benefit and is aimed at carrying out a range of minor works.

Examples include:

- Putting up curtain poles, blinds, pictures, mirrors, cabinets, shelving.
- Fixing hinges on cupboard doors, broken drawers, repairing or installing battery powered doorbells.
- Clearing guttering (bungalows only).
- Changing light bulbs.
- Repairing, replacing or installing new door locks.
- Plumbing in washing machines (where pipe-work already exists).

Please note that the service is not an emergency service and cannot carry out works to gas or electrical supplies or services.

Find out more

For further information contact:

Small Repairs Service, Community First New Forest
Telephone: 01425 478005,
Email: hia.admin@cfnf.org.uk
Website: www.cfnf.org.uk
Telephoning the Helpdesk is the most popular way of reporting a repair and the Helpdesk Officers receive over 42,000 calls a year. On top of this they receive nearly 4,000 gas calls, generally during the winter months. Most calls are answered in less than 30 seconds, although this can vary according to seasonal peaks and troughs.

Some tenants choose to report a fault electronically, by email or online form. This does not delay the response time and it helps the Helpdesk Officers regulate their workload. We would like to encourage tenants to contact the Housing Helpdesk with non-urgent issues by email and via the online form.

It is important for the Helpdesk to have regular team meetings and training updates to ensure that we are providing our customers with a first-class service. In order to do this, it has been decided to set aside time for training sessions every other month to ensure that our busy team can continue to improve the service that they provide. The scheduled dates for these training sessions over the next 6 months are:

1.45pm – 2.30pm on the following Wednesdays

13th April   |  8th June  |  10th August

If you ring the Helpdesk at these times you will get a message explaining that the Helpdesk is closed and you will be asked to ring back later.

The Housing Helpdesk is currently in the process of piloting a new tenant-led inspection programme for New Forest District Council (see page 6 for more information). There will be an update about this in the next issue of Hometalk.

Did you know that Hampshire County Council has made some changes to the Concessionary Travel scheme?

These changes will affect older residents, or those over five who have specific disabilities, who are eligible for concessionary travel.

What can I use my concessionary travel pass for?

Older people can use it for:
- Free travel, between 9am and 11pm Monday to Friday and all day at weekends and on public holidays, on local bus services throughout Hampshire and the rest of England.

People with specific disabilities can use it for:
- Free all day travel throughout Hampshire on local bus services.
- Free travel, between 9am and 11pm Monday to Friday and all day at weekends and on public holidays, on local bus services in the rest of England.

If you would like to report a non-urgent repair use the web contact form or email link via the New Forest District Council website (click Housing, then Repairs & Maintenance) or email: housing.helpdesk@nfdc.gov.uk or if you would like to telephone and speak to a Helpdesk Officer:

The Helpdesk telephone number is 023 8028 5222

Find out more

If you would like to find out more about the scheme telephone 0845 045 8355
email concessionary.fares@hants.gov.uk
or check Hampshire County Council’s website via www.hants.gov.uk/concessionary-travel

If you would like a leaflet and application form, these are available from most:
- Libraries
- Adult and Children’s Services offices
- Bus Stations
- Information Centres
and from New Forest District Council Offices – please ask at reception!
Tenant Estate Inspector

New Forest District Council have been running a tenant Estate Inspector programme for just over 18 months now. The programme complements the regular inspections that our Neighbourhood and Tenancy Management Officers (NATMOs) carry out. It has proved to be extremely useful for someone who lives in the area to keep an eye out for any problems that might occur.

We asked one of our tenant Estate Inspectors a few questions regarding his involvement in the programme:

Q. What encouraged you to get involved in Estate Inspector programme?
A. I liked the thought that I could help to improve the community that I live in.

Q. What does it involve?
A. Checking the estate at regular intervals to look around and make sure that everything is in good order and, if it isn’t, reporting things that need to be improved.

Q. What sort of thing do you look out for?
A. Damaged fences, manhole covers and kerbs that might be sunken down and dangerous. I also look for overhanging bushes or brambles that might be causing difficulties for pedestrians. I check to make sure the whole area is tidy and safe for everyone that lives there.

Q. What do you feel you get out of it?
A. It gets me out in the fresh air and gives me the opportunity to get some exercise and meet people that live in my neighbourhood.

The Resident Involvement team would like to send a ‘Big Thank You’ to all of our tenant and block inspectors who help to keep their areas in good order.

Find out more

If you would like to keep your neighbourhood tidy and get involved in the Estate Inspector programme please contact the RI Team on 023 8028 5459.

SPRING WORDSEARCH COMPETITION

If you would like to have a chance of winning a prize, find the TREES named below.
The winner of the first correct entry drawn will win a £20 Argos voucher and the runner up will receive a £10 Argos voucher. Good Luck!!

Name
Address
Telephone No
Email address

ALDER
APPLE
BEECH
BIRCH
CHERRY
CYPRESS
HOLLY
LARCH
MAGNOLIA
MAPLE
PINE
Sycamore
Willow
YEW

We would like to include your email address for occasional short email surveys that help us make decisions about the Housing Services that we provide for our tenants. If you don’t want us to use your email address for this purpose, please place a cross in the box provided.

CONGRATULATIONS
To the following winners of the Autumn 2010 Wordsearch competition: 1st Prize: Maureen Lockyer, Totton
2nd Prize: Mrs Blandford, Totton

Find out more

Please send your entries to:
The Editor, Resident Involvement, Housing Services, New Forest District Council, Appletree Court, Beaulieu Road, Lymington, Hampshire SO43 7PA.
Closing date for entries is Friday 27 May 2011. This competition is open to NFDC tenants and leaseholders only.

E P E X N L T H D O T S Q J F
E R I K I Y G M Y L Q S H K O
H W O N D L E R B L A E I J P
L O G M E A R U Z R W B W E
M J L B A E B I R C H P V S Y
L A P L H C X T B W D Y E E O
M W P C Y D T P H D C W U I
A U I L B C M S J F Y E Q P R
R P Q L E K C J A Y O P F N V
E H P W L A W Q L W I J G F H
D V M L P O W G D B E E C H C
R Y H Q E V W Z E Y R V W W R
A I L O N G A M R S T H J W A
H U O J V F M H I L A H S L L
U X L P H W M C L T B U F X H
Do you have a Pet? Or are you thinking of getting one?

Before you get a pet you must make sure that you choose the right pet to fit in with your lifestyle and make sure there is enough room for it to be looked after properly. For more information about choosing the right pet for you and your family and finding out how to look after them properly, we recommend you check the PDSA website www.pdsa.org.uk or call 0800 731 2502 to speak to a PDSA advisor.

It is important that you take good care of your pet or pets and ensure that they do not cause a nuisance to your neighbours. If your pet causes problems we may withdraw permission to keep it and, in extreme circumstances, we could commence legal action against your tenancy.

If you are considering getting ‘livestock’, (eg chickens), you need to obtain written permission before you do so from your Neighbourhood and Tenancy Management Officer (NATMO) - you can contact them via the Helpdesk on 023 8028 5222.

A few do’s and don’ts to keep everyone happy

Please Don’t

• Allow your cat or dog to foul paths or any public areas.
• Allow your pet to make a mess. Make sure that you ‘bag it and bin it’. (Dog mess can contain Toxocara canis, a roundworm, which can cause stomach upsets and, in rare cases, blindness.)
• Put cat litter down the drain, as this will cause a blockage and you will be charged for any repairs needed.
• Let your dog bark excessively. This is distressing to both your dog and your neighbours.
• Allow your dog or cat to cause a problem to traffic or people living in the community.
• Allow your dog to become aggressive.
• Breed or sell cats or dogs.
• It is an offence to not pick up dog fouling and failure to do so may result in a fine or even prosecution.

Please Do

• Get your cat or dog, or other pets checked by a vet and vaccinated against any diseases that they may be susceptible to.
• Make sure your pets are wormed regularly.
• Make sure your cat or dog has adequate ID. Dogs must wear a collar and ID tag when they are in a public place and we would recommend that your pets are microchipped by a vet.
• Ensure dogs are trained and socialised so that they do not cause a nuisance to anyone.
• Get your pet neutered to prevent unwanted animals being bred.

If you would like a dog, but do not wish to have one long-term, you could have a ‘part-time’ puppy and help Pets for the Disabled by socialising a puppy for them. If you are interested in becoming a puppy socialiser, please call 01295 252600 or check their website www.dogsforthedisabled.org

Look out for the article about ‘A Day in the Life of’ the NFDC Dog Warden in our next issue of Hometalk.

If you do have a pet, please ensure that it is well looked after and that it does not cause a nuisance to others

JUST A TICK!!

Ticks are tiny spider-like creatures found in woodland and heathland areas. They attach themselves to passing animals and sometimes people. The peak period for ticks is late spring and early summer, although there can be a risk of tick bites at any time of the year if the weather is mild.

Lyme’s disease, which can be very serious if not treated early, is carried in the gut by some ticks. Most ticks do not carry the bacteria, but the Lyme disease infection can be passed on to people bitten by infected ticks.

Prevention is Best

When in woodland and heathland areas:
• Keep your skin covered
• Consider using appropriate insect repellents
• Examine yourself and your children regularly and carefully looking for the small nymph as well as the adult tick
• Consider using tick and flea repellents or tick collars on pets

If you find a tick that has attached itself:
• Don’t Panic – even if the tick is carrying infection it is very unlikely to transmit it in the first few hours that it is attached.
• Do Remove the tick as soon as possible – grasp it as close to the skin as possible with fine tweezers or fingernails and pull firmly, ensuring that the whole tick is removed.
• Don’t Use – heat from cigarette ends or matches, chemicals such as alcohol, nail polish remover or petroleum jelly as these substances could increase infection risk by stimulating the tick to produce saliva which can get into the bite wound.
• Do be aware – if after a few days to several weeks a rash or redness develops in the area of the bite, seek advice from your GP.

Find out more

For more information please pick up the NFDC “Just a Tick” leaflet from your Local Area Office or check specific information on the NHS website www.nhs.uk
Hedge Laying

Byron McGrail, Grounds Maintenance Foreman, and five other members of the Grounds Maintenance team were recently trained in the traditional art of Hedge Laying. ‘Laying’ hedges is a technique used to control hedgerows and stop them from continuing to grow upwards and outwards. If left unmanaged a hedgerow will continue to grow and will eventually become a line of trees.

Hedges are environmentally-friendly and very important for wildlife such as birds and small mammals. When Hedge Laying, the stems are cut and bent over at an angle, binding is then tied along the top to make the hedge secure and strong. Laying the hedge tidies it up and encourages the shrubs to regenerate, keeping the hedge bushy and healthy. Once a hedge has been ‘laid’ regular trimming will keep it in good order for up to 50 years.

An ‘out of control’ hawthorn hedge in Ashley was used when our team learned this technique. The trainer from Dorset College was impressed with all of their efforts and the hedge is now neater and allows more light into the area and all of the team passed their course !!

Changes Ahead!

There have been a number of changes in the structure and responsibilities of the Grounds Maintenance section and their areas of work. Grounds Maintenance work areas have been divided into six zones across the New Forest and each team will have a much larger area to cover. The Grounds Maintenance Supervisor advises that there may be some ‘settling in issues’ whilst the teams are getting used to the new zones that they will be working in. Grounds Maintenance are now responsible for mowing all grass verges and roadside spraying across the New Forest. (Please note: the weedkiller spray, which is very effective, is not toxic to animals).

What do you think of the grass cutting in your area?

This summer we are looking for NDFDC tenants or leaseholders who are able to check and monitor the quality of the grass cutting in their area.

Your name: 

Your address:

Your email address:

Area monitored:

If you are willing and able, please complete the form below and send it back to Resident Involvement before Friday 22nd July 2011. The information you provide will be used at our next Grounds Maintenance Focus Group meeting to see how our teams are doing in your area.

Comments:

You can send us your information:

By post: To Resident Involvement, NFDC, Appletree Court, Beaulieu Road, Lyndhurst, SO43 7PA

In person: Hand this form in at any NFDC local Office and ask them to send it to Resident Involvement

By e-mail: you can e-mail the information to resident.involvement@nfdc.gov.uk

We would like to include your email address for occasional short email surveys that help us make decision about the Housing Services that we provide for our tenants. If you don’t want us to use your email address for this purpose, please place a cross in the box provided.
Local Resident Group News

North Milton Residents’ Group

They said...
They would like a bench in the new play area for parents and other residents to sit on whilst supervising children.

Could we invite Maintenance Managers and Officers to the Residents’ Group meetings so that they could inform residents about the detail of the estate refurbishments programme?

We Did...
We supported tenants through a Tenants’ Community Chest application and approval was given for a bench to be installed in the play area for residents to use.

We invited the appropriate NFDC Officers to attend and residents were able to ask questions and get the latest information on the progress and plans for the refurbishments.

We also organised a Kitchens and Bathrooms information evening. Residents were able to see samples of the kitchen choices and plans of the layout.

Davis Field Residents’ Group

They said...
Could we have improved rubbish / bin arrangements for those who live in the maisonnettes?

They would like to have a notice board to publicise local events as this will help to reach everyone in the local community.

There was a problem with people regularly climbing over and damaging a fence on the estate.

There was a problem with cars parking along the road at school drop-off and pick-up times.

They said...
We said...
Davis Field Notice Board

They said...
Could we invite Maintenance Managers and Officers to the Residents’ Group meetings so that they could inform residents about the detail of the estate refurbishments programme?

We Did...
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We also organised a Kitchens and Bathrooms information evening. Residents were able to see samples of the kitchen choices and plans of the layout.

Have you completed your census form?

27 March 2011 was Census day, and by now you should have received and completed your census questionnaire.

If you have not already sent yours back – please do so as soon as possible.

Find out more
For more information about the census, or if you need assistance in completing your form, telephone Census Customer Services on telephone number 01329 444 972 or email census.customerservices@ons.gov.uk

Find out more
If you would like more information on renting a garage, or to apply for a garage, please contact:
In person: at any local Council office
Online: from www.newforest.gov.uk following links: housing / forms & applications / estate management service request forms
Phone: 02380 285234
E-mail: Housing.helpdesk@nfdc.gov.uk

GARAGES FOR RENT

Garages are available to rent throughout the New Forest district, to both tenants and non-tenants.

Currently the rent is:
£10.32 per week for non-tenants (£8.60 + 20% VAT)
But, as a tenant, you will be given priority and the rental rate for NFDC tenants is:
£8.60 per week

Rent for garages is payable in advance, and a garage tenancy will not be offered where rent is owed for any current or former NFDC tenancy.

There are currently garages available to rent across the district.

If you think your area could benefit from a Resident Group, please contact the Resident Involvement Team.

email resident.involvement@nfdc.gov.uk or visit our website at www.newforest.gov.uk
New Forest residents are warned to be on their guard against 'cold calls' made by sales people to their homes, as this has been on the increase lately. If unwanted telephone or doorstep callers contact you, tell them that you are not interested in their product and, if they start to pressurise you, tell them that you will be informing the Police.

One New Milton couple called NFDC for support when a carpet cleaning technician refused to leave the property, despite being asked a number of times to do so. The technician was insistent that they should take extra services that they didn’t want and only left their property when they turned to a NFDC officer for help. Another lady, who wasn’t fully aware of the final costs, ran up a bill of £500 when she was persuaded to have her sofa and chairs cleaned and treated with a stain repellent.

The Safer New Forest Partnership, which includes Hampshire Constabulary and NFDC, advises local people to check that elderly or vulnerable relatives and neighbours are made aware of how to deal with nuisance calls.

Police are warning:

- In some cases, cold callers have falsely claimed to be linked with the Police or Crime Prevention Officers in the area. Census field staff may visit your home between March and August 2011, they will carry ID. However, our advice is always, do not let anyone unknown into your property. Census staff will only call if they have not received a completed form.
- You should never purchase items from anyone cold calling on the telephone or who calls at your home unannounced.
- Beware of hard-selling tactics that callers may use in an attempt to get the householder to sign for a product they don’t want.

You can obtain a ‘No Cold Calling window sticker’ from the NFDC local offices or by telephoning Stephanie Bennett, Safer New Forest Co-ordinator on 02380 285148 or email stephanie.bennett@nfdc.gov.uk

For more information on No Cold Calling zones visit the Hampshire County Council website:
- [www.hants.gov.uk](http://www.hants.gov.uk) and follow link: Business & Economy / Trading Standards / No Cold Calling Zones
- Phone: Trading Standards: 0845 404 0506 or the Police: 0845 045 4545

We are currently working with police on North Milton estate to set up a No Cold Calling Zone. For more information contact Resident Involvement

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**Neighbourhood & Tenancy Management Officers in your area: update**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Officer</th>
<th>Working Patterns</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Totton, Marchwood, Hythe, Dibden, Dibden Purlieu, Blackfield &amp; Holbury</td>
<td>Miss V Bray</td>
<td>Monday – Friday (am &amp; pm)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lymington, Pennington, Calshot, Lyndhurst, Boldre, East Boldre, Milford on Sea, Hordle, Sway, Brockenhurst, Minstead, Burley, Bransgore, Ashurst, Bartley, Woodlands, Walkford</td>
<td>Mrs S Wicks</td>
<td>Monday – Friday (am &amp; pm)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashley, New Milton and the surrounding areas</td>
<td>Mr S Loades</td>
<td>Wednesday – afternoon only Thursday – am &amp; pm Friday – am &amp; pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fordingbridge, Ringwood, Hale, Woodgreen, Damerham, Rockbourne, Martin, Whitsbury, Bramshaw</td>
<td>Mrs S Rogers</td>
<td>Monday – am &amp; pm Tuesday – am &amp; pm Wednesday – morning only</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please do not come to Appletree Court to see an Officer WITHOUT AN APPOINTMENT. They may be out on visits and you will have wasted your journey.

Please note that if you have a query for Mr Loades or Mrs Rogers, unless it is urgent, it will not be dealt with until their next working day in the office, so please try to contact them only on their working days.

If you would like to join your NATMO when they do their monthly estate inspections, please check the ‘Dates for your Diary’ section at the back of Hometalk. All queries for NATMOs should be directed through the Housing Help Desk (02380 285222).
During 2010 we ran a variety of forums on topics such as
- Housing Development.
- Safer Neighbourhoods.
- Performance Monitoring and Income Recovery.

Notes from all of the forums can be found on New Forest District Council website www.newforest.gov.uk or you can request them from Resident Involvement. At the September Forum we heard a very interesting talk from The Environment Centre about energy efficiency. Here are a few of the items from their handout sheet:

**Hints and Tips to Save Money and Help the Environment**

**Kettles**
- Only boil as much water as you need or keep a thermos flask near the kettle and use it to save any excess hot water. This can then be used later for hot drinks or for washing up.

**Taps**
- A running tap wastes over 6 litres of water a minute so turn it off whilst brushing your teeth, shaving or washing your face. A dripping tap can waste around 15 baths full of water a year so make sure your taps are properly turned off and change washers promptly when taps start dripping.

**Energy Saving Light Bulbs**
- Traditional bulbs use five times more electricity than energy saving bulbs; swap them over and make instant savings.

**Electrical Items**
- Turn things off when you’re not using them. Leaving TVs and computer monitors on stand-by wastes energy and money; as does lighting rooms with no one in them.

**Set your Hot Water Cylinder thermostat to 60°C**
- Heating your water more than this just wastes energy. Make sure your cylinder is well insulated.

**Get your butt in gear!**
- Your roof collects tens of thousands of litres of water each year, which then just runs straight into the drains. Invest in a water butt and use the water to water your garden, houseplants and wash your car. Rainwater is better for plants than tap water, as it is softer.

**Bucket the trend!**
- Avoid jet washes and energy wasting auto car washes. Use the water (preferably from your water butt) to wash your car using a good old bucket and sponge!

*All figures are approximate and based on those published by the Energy Saving Trust.*

**Find out more**

If you would like to buy a water butt you can find out more about the special offers that Hampshire County Council promote by visiting www.hants.getcomposting.com, alternatively call 0844 571 444 and quote reference HANTSO1L

For further Home Energy Efficiency Advice contact The Environment Centre on Freephone No 0800 804 8601 or visit their website www.environmentcentre.com

**WATER SERVICES**

As a NFDC tenant you DO NOT need to take out insurance to cover your water supply pipes! If there is a problem with your water supply your landlord is responsible for any repairs necessary from the external stop cocks to your water service.

**Warning - Some residents in the area have received letters stating:**

“YOUR 2 MONTHS’ FREE COVER IS DUE TO EXPIRE”

These letters encourage residents to sign a direct debit form to give them further insurance cover. Please note, it is not necessary for NFDC tenants to take out this type of insurance.

**SURFACE WATER CHARGES**

It might be worth checking your last water bill! If the surface water from your property goes to a soakaway and none of it enters the public sewers then you can claim a rebate of £22 a year for the current charging year onwards. Mrs H, a tenant from New Milton, contacted Southern Water and has now had £22 a year taken off her bill.

To check whether you are eligible for a rebate, call Southern Water on 0845 279 0845, or alternatively, you can find out further information and complete an online form via Southern Water’s website www.southernwater.co.uk
Estate Inspections

Estate inspections will be carried out by Neighbourhood & Tenancy Management Officers on the following dates:

**Estate: Calshot**
- **Month:** April
- **Date:** 8
- **Time:** 10 am
- **Meeting Point:** Next to St George’s Hall

**Estate: Davis Field**
- **Month:** April
- **Date:** 28
- **Time:** 3 pm
- **Meeting Point:** By the Davis Field Notice Board

**Estate: Fordingbridge**
- **Month:** April
- **Date:** 19
- **Time:** 10 am
- **Meeting Point:** Outside John Barlett House, 2 Waverley Road

**Estate: Heather Road**
- **Month:** April
- **Date:** 20
- **Time:** 10.30 am
- **Meeting Point:** Outside the Childrens’ Centre

**Estate: Netley View**
- **Month:** April
- **Date:** 21
- **Time:** 10.30 am
- **Meeting Point:** Outside Costcutters

**Estate: North Milton**
- **Month:** April
- **Date:** 28
- **Time:** 1 pm
- **Meeting Point:** Outside the Nedderman Centre

**Estate: Pennington**
- **Month:** April
- **Date:** 8
- **Time:** 11 am
- **Meeting Point:** Forest Court

**Estate: Ringwood**
- **Month:** April
- **Date:** 5
- **Time:** 10 am
- **Meeting Point:** The top of Hurst Road

We always invite your local Police Safer Neighbourhood Team and other agencies, as appropriate to join us on the Estate Inspections.

Tenants are also welcome to attend the Estate Inspections, but please check beforehand by contacting your Neighbourhood & Tenancy Management Officer (NATMO) via the Helpdesk telephone number 023 8028 5222, in case an inspection has had to be cancelled or postponed.

Making Debit Card payments at your Local Information Office

Did you realise that you can make Debit Card payments at NFDC Local Information Offices for:

- Council Tax
- Sundry debts
- Parking Fines
- Parking Clocks
- Rents
- Refuse and garden waste sacks
- National Non Domestic rates

Alternatively you can phone our 24 hour automated payment system for council tax payments by debit card on 01590 646114, or for your rent payments phone the helpdesk on 02380 28 5222.

We also take payments online, to do this visit: www.newforest.gov.uk and follow links from ‘Do It Online’
### DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

**APRIL – SEPTEMBER 2011**

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<td><strong>Wednesday 6th</strong></td>
<td><strong>Wednesday 4th</strong></td>
<td><strong>Wednesday 1st</strong></td>
<td><strong>Wednesday 6th</strong></td>
<td><strong>Wednesday 3rd</strong></td>
<td><strong>Wednesday 7th</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cabinet</td>
<td>Cabinet</td>
<td>Policy &amp; Report Focus Group</td>
<td>Hometalk Editorial Panel meeting</td>
<td>Cabinet</td>
<td>Cabinet</td>
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<tr>
<td>Meeting of all Portfolio Holders / Councillors to discuss new reports / policies</td>
<td>Meeting of all Portfolio Holders / Councillors to discuss new reports / policies</td>
<td>Reports for review prior to next month’s Cabinet and Housing Review Panel</td>
<td>1st meeting for the Autumn edition to discuss and agree content of magazine</td>
<td>Meeting of all Portfolio Holders / Councillors to discuss new reports / policies</td>
<td>Reports for review prior to next month’s Cabinet and Housing Review Panel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Thursday 7th</strong></td>
<td><strong>Tuesday 10th</strong></td>
<td><strong>Thursday 9th</strong></td>
<td><strong>Thursday 21st</strong></td>
<td><strong>Monday 25th</strong></td>
<td><strong>Thursday 8th</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRUST planning meeting</td>
<td>Housing Services Monitoring Focus Group</td>
<td>Tenant Open Day – Planning Meeting</td>
<td>Resident Involvement Focus Group</td>
<td>Grounds Maintenance Focus Group</td>
<td>Tenants’ Open Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review events of last year and plan for training and conference 2011-2012</td>
<td>Monitoring of performance indicators in Housing Services</td>
<td>Tenants and Officers meet to plan for the Tenant Open Day in September</td>
<td>To review and monitor all aspects of Resident Involvement Service</td>
<td>Meeting to discuss any issues or concerns with Grounds Maintenance in the forest</td>
<td>Opportunity for tenants to drop in and find out more about the housing services department. Officers from NFDC will be available for question and answer sessions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Wednesday 27th</strong></td>
<td><strong>Thursday 12th</strong></td>
<td><strong>Wednesday 15th</strong></td>
<td><strong>Monday 25th</strong></td>
<td><strong>Wednesday 24th</strong></td>
<td><strong>Friday 7th October</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Howards Mead Open Afternoon</td>
<td>Grounds Maintenance Focus Group</td>
<td>Housing Review Panel</td>
<td>Grounds Maintenance Focus Group</td>
<td>Hometalk Editorial Panel meeting</td>
<td>Annual Tenant Conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions and Answers for residents about the new development on Howards Mead with Mansell</td>
<td>Meeting with Tenant Representatives and Councillors of the Housing Review Panel, to debate Housing reports</td>
<td>Meeting with Tenant Representatives and Councillors of the Housing Review Panel</td>
<td>Meeting to discuss any issues or concerns with Grounds Maintenance in the forest</td>
<td>2nd meeting for the Autumn edition to discuss and agree content of magazine</td>
<td>Each year NFDC (in partnership with other local landlords) hosts a tenants’ conference.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Friday 29th</strong></td>
<td><strong>Wednesday 25th</strong></td>
<td><strong>Wednesday 26th</strong></td>
<td><strong>Monday 25th</strong></td>
<td><strong>Wednesday 27th</strong></td>
<td><strong>Friday 7th October</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal Wedding Street Party</td>
<td>Tenant Training - Effective Speed Reading</td>
<td>North Milton Resident Group Meeting</td>
<td>Housing Review Panel</td>
<td>Resident Involvement Focus Group</td>
<td>Annual Tenant Conference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Milton Residents are having a street party to celebrate the Royal Wedding</td>
<td>An opportunity for tenants to improve their reading speed, comprehension and retention</td>
<td>Meeting for residents of the North Milton estate to discuss local issues and the refurbishments</td>
<td>Meeting of all Portfolio Holders / Councillors to discuss new reports / policies</td>
<td>To review and monitor all aspects of Resident Involvement Service.</td>
<td>Each year NFDC (in partnership with other local landlords) hosts a tenants’ conference.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you are interested in attending any of these events, or would like more information about them, please contact the Resident Involvement Team.
Please check beforehand in case an event has had to be cancelled or postponed. Remember, assistance with transport costs can be given, in line with our current transport policy. Email resident.involvement@nfdc.gov.uk or visit our website at www.newforest.gov.uk
### CONTACT US AT NFDC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>By Phone</th>
<th>By E-mail</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resident Involvement</td>
<td>023 8028 5372 023 8028 5459</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Resident.involvement@nfdc.gov.uk">Resident.involvement@nfdc.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Services, including:</td>
<td>023 8028 5222</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Housing.helpdesk@nfdc.gov.uk">Housing.helpdesk@nfdc.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Option 1: This week’s current Homesearch vacancies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Option 2: Waiting List information and general Homesearch advice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Option 3: Housing Benefit applications and claims queries</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Option 4: Gas Heating queries</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Option 5: All other Housing queries including repairs, rent and arrears etc</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homesearch, including:</td>
<td>023 8028 5234</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Housing.needs@nfdc.gov.uk">Housing.needs@nfdc.gov.uk</a>  <a href="http://www.newforest.gov.uk/homeswap">www.newforest.gov.uk/homeswap</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Homesearch • Homelessness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer Services, including:</td>
<td>01590 646123</td>
<td><a href="mailto:customerservices@nfdc.gov.uk">customerservices@nfdc.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Abandoned cars • Concessionary travel • Fly tipping</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Special collections • Graffiti • Discarded syringes • Refuse collection</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council Tax queries</td>
<td>01590 646111</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Taxandbenefits@nfdc.gov.uk">Taxandbenefits@nfdc.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing Benefit queries</td>
<td>01590 646121</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Taxandbenefits@nfdc.gov.uk">Taxandbenefits@nfdc.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefit Fraud</td>
<td>0800 854 440</td>
<td>Contact via <a href="http://www.Direct.gov.uk">www.Direct.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Line &amp; Telecare Service</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>023 8023 5523 023 8028 5453</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Jane.wheeler@nfdc.gov.uk">Jane.wheeler@nfdc.gov.uk</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheltered Housing &amp; Older Persons’ Floating Support</td>
<td>023 8028 5436</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Jane.wheeler@nfdc.gov.uk">Jane.wheeler@nfdc.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General enquiries – not related to Housing Services</td>
<td>023 8028 5000</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Contact@nfdc.gov.uk">Contact@nfdc.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other useful numbers:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street Lights at Hampshire County Council</td>
<td>0800 50 60 60</td>
<td><a href="http://www.highwayenquiries.hants.gov.uk">www.highwayenquiries.hants.gov.uk</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Bank Holidays 2011

All Council Offices will be closed on the following dates:
- **Good Friday**  Friday 22 April
- **Easter Monday**  Monday 25 April
- **Royal Wedding**  Friday 29 April
- **Early May Bank Holiday**  Monday 2 May
- **Spring Bank Holiday**  Monday 30 May
- **Summer Bank Holiday**  Monday 29 August

If you require an emergency repair please ring (023) 8028 5000 and you will hear a recorded message advising you what to do. Please only call this number if the problem is likely to endanger life, seriously affect health, or put at risk the safety of the building.

**PLEASE NOTE:** BANK HOLIDAY REFUSE COLLECTIONS WILL BE CARRIED OUT AS NORMAL ON ALL OF THE BANK HOLIDAYS, INCLUDING THE 29TH APRIL.

### Appointments with New Forest District Council Officers

Please note, if you wish to see any of the following officers:
- Income Recovery Officer
- Reactive Maintenance Officers
- Planned Maintenance Officers
- Homelessness & Housing Advice Officer
- Allocations Officer
- Neighbourhood & Tenancy Management Officer
- Right to Buy Officer

You need to make an appointment. Please do NOT come to Appletree Court without an appointment, as Officers are frequently out on visits, and we do not want you to have a wasted journey.

Unfortunately, you will not be seen without an appointment.

### CAN YOU SEE ME?

This magazine is available in other formats, for example in Braille, audio tape, CD, in large print or another language. If you would like to receive a copy in a different format, please contact the Resident Involvement Team.

This magazine can also be viewed on our website: www.newforest.gov.uk following links ‘Housing/Resident Involvement’ and then ‘Useful Documents’