How to contact us

- Call us on 01536 410 333
- Write to us at Kettering Borough Council, Municipal Offices, Bowling Green Road, Kettering, NN15 7QX
- Come and see us in one of our Customer Service Centres in Kettering, Desborough, Rothwell or Burton Latimer
- Email us at housing@kettering.gov.uk
- Send a TEXT message to the Council
  Write a short message and send it to 07824 451281
- Send a PICTURE message to the Council
  Attach a picture and send it to 07824 451281

You can also check your Council Tax, Business Rates and Benefits online at:
www.kettering.gov.uk/connectonline

Please remember, our Customer Service Centres are able to deal with:
- Repair reporting
- Tenancy queries
- Rent queries and payments
- Housing benefit
- Council Tax benefit
- Follow us on Twitter @KetteringBC

Visit Us

Find out about events, things to do & places to eat, drink & shop in the Borough of Kettering at
www.thisiskettering.com

If you are interested in supporting your community by joining Northamptonshire Street Watch, please visit
www.northants.police.uk/streetwatch

Support Services

- Age UK
  0800 169 6565
  www.ageuk.org.uk

- Free Fire Safety Check
  (Free) 0800 389 9950
  For further information, visit the Northamptonshire County Council website

- Youth Information Helpline
  01536 510 089

- Citizens Advice Bureau
  0844 855 2122

- Welfare Reform
  www.kettering.gov.uk/welfarereform

Utilities

- National Grid – report gas leaks or for general gas information
  0800 111 999
- Anglian Water
  08457 145 145

Fire Safety

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Tenants move in at Laburnum Crescent

Meet our new Tenant Engagement Officer

Page 4
Welcome to the autumn edition of Connect.

The recent tragedy at Grenfell Tower has highlighted the importance of ensuring that your home is as safe as possible and that you know what to do in the event of a fire or emergency. So, in this issue of Connect, there are practical tips on what you can do to prevent a fire occurring in your home. We also focus on doorstep crime and how you can ensure that you don’t become a victim.

On page 4, you can meet our new Tenant Engagement Officer, Tracey Copeland, and see how you can get involved in the management of council housing across the Borough. If you want to know more, get in touch with Tracey.

Finally, this issue of Connect contains our annual report to tenants in a pull-out supplement. See how well we’re doing in managing your home and read all about our plans for improving our landlord services.

Have a great autumn!

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Welcome to our new Housing Income Officers!

Sam Nitsch and Debbie Golding have joined our Housing Income Team. Sam manages the rent accounts of tenants with an Introductory Tenancy whilst Debbie manages the rent accounts of a specific patch of properties within the Kettering area.

Remember your Income Officer is there to help so please contact the team on 01536 410333 should you have any concerns about paying your rent.
On the 25th July the Council along with Waterloo Housing Group and developers Westleigh marked the official opening of the new build development at Laburnum Crescent.

Carol and Alan Broughton moved into a one-bedroom bungalow after using HomeMove to downsize from a three-bedroom Council house on Centre Parade. We asked Carol a few questions about her move:

What was it like moving into a brand new home?

We were sad to be moving from our home of 38 years on Centre Parade, but we settled in straight away. I couldn’t have asked for anything better to move into – it’s cosy and warm and ideal to suit our needs.

What effect has it had on your quality of life?

It’s changed my life dramatically for the better, in all ways. It is so much easier for me to get around having downsized to a bungalow – now we have wider doorways and halls and a wet room. I can sleep better and feel much more secure.

How were you supported during the move?

The Council were very helpful and Anna visited often to give help. We even received the £500 HomeMove payment for downsizing, to help us with the move!

Could HomeMove help you downsize?

If you’re considering a move to a smaller property, HomeMove can help in many ways, including a grant for up to £750. You’ll receive practical one-to-one support from our HomeMove Advisor throughout your move, which can even include arranging removals, or carpets for your new home.

To find out more, contact our HomeMove Advisor on 01536 535 643 or email homemove@kettering.gov.uk

Laburnum Crescent is delivering 72 new affordable homes in total on the site of the old Avondale primary school. The scheme has seen the delivery of five council homes that are the first new builds to be added to the Council stock in over 25 years. The remaining homes are Waterloo’s and are a mixture of affordable rent and shared ownership.

The five Council properties consist of a three-bedroom wheelchair adapted bungalow, a three-bedroom wheelchair adapted house and three one-bedroom bungalows. The homes were allocated through Keyways and have proved very popular with their new tenants.

Tenants – Get involved!

We are seeking volunteers to get involved with delivering the Housing service. There are lots of ways you can get involved as either a tenant or leaseholder.

Here are a few of our current opportunities:

- ** Tenant Overview and Scrutiny Panel (TOSP) –** This panel works hard to make sure the council is delivering a quality Housing Service by scrutinising performance in a number of areas. They are seeking new members who are not afraid to ask questions and hold the council to account.
- **Tenant Representatives –** Tenant Representatives assist in many ways such as attending estate walkabouts with Neighbourhood Managers, and representing their areas on the Tenants Forum.
- **Focus Groups –** Ideal for those with limited time available, simply attend a one off session and give your views in a friendly, informal group lasting around 90 minutes.
- **Reading Groups –** Help ensure our literature is clear and accessible by reviewing new publications before they go out.
- **Tenants Forum –** A monthly Council Committee Meeting attended by Tenant Reps, local Councillors and Council Officers.

Meet our new Tenant Engagement Officer

Hi, my name is Tracey Copeland and I am the new Tenant Engagement Officer. My job involves developing new ways for tenants and leaseholders to get involved, whether it is giving us your views or giving some time to help improve your area.

Since joining the Council, I have been working on several projects such as the Garden Competition, Highfield Road Cleaning Pilot and hosting a meet and greet in Holyoake Court. I am looking for people to get in touch to develop new and fun ways we can work together, particularly on projects to improve your area.

Contact me on 01536 535 649 or email traceycopeland@kettering.gov.uk

Active Tenants!

Here are our two new tenant inspectors, Glenis Saddington and Katherine Matthews busy at work inspecting the standards of new pilot block clean programme in the Highfield Road estate.

For an informal chat about getting involved contact Tracey Copeland.
Keeping Safe in Your Home –
Practical Tips on Fire Prevention

With the recent devastating and tragic fire at Grenfell Tower in London, it is important to focus again on the importance of taking steps to avoid a fire in your home. Precautions must be taken to prevent anything happening to yourself or your household as your safety is imperative.

Fit at least one smoke alarm
• Don’t fit it in your kitchen or bathroom as this may cause false alarms
• Test once a week
• Never take the batteries out
• Always follow the manufacturer’s advice

IF THIS IS YOU
In your or a direct neighbour’s flat

• Leave your flat and close the door
• Use the stairs
• Never use the lift
• Get out, stay out call 999 - never assume someone else has called

IF THIS IS YOU
Elsewhere in your block

Close your windows and doors
Stay in and tune in to local TV or radio
Stay put unless advised by the fire service
If the fire service need to fully evacuate the building, they will knock on your door. Unneeded evacuation can obstruct the fire service and delay them putting the fire out.

IF THIS IS YOU
Elsewhere in your block

Keep communal areas clear
We have recently introduced a sterile environment policy in all of our internal communal blocks of flats. This means that no items are allowed in the internal communal areas or stairwells, to reduce the risk of fire as well as slips, trips and falls.

Stay Put!
If there is a fire in your block, we operate a Stay Put Policy. Unless the fire is in your flat or a direct neighbour’s, keep your front door and window closed.

Tune in to your local TV or radio and wait for instructions from the emergency services on what to do next.

Free fire safety checks
You can arrange a free fire safety check by contacting Northamptonshire Fire Service on 0300 1261000.

Prepare for the unexpected with household insurance
Remember, the Council doesn’t insure your home contents. Without home insurance, you will have to pay out to replace damaged or stolen items. You can arrange your own insurance or use our low cost scheme via Allianz. Find out more at www.kettering.gov.uk/homeinsurance or call 01536 410 333.

Here are some general top tips to reduce the risk of fire in your home:
• NEVER leave your cooking unattended. If you have to leave the kitchen, turn off the stove and take your pots and pans off the heat.
• Do not overload your electrical sockets with extension leads - too many plugs could cause a fire.
• Be careful when charging your mobile phone or tablet - do not place under your pillow.
• Smokers – make sure cigarettes are extinguished and disposed of immediately after use. Keep all lighters or matches away from children.
• Make sure anything flammable i.e. clothes are not placed next to heaters or open fires.
• Check door and window keys are easy to find in an emergency. Make sure mobility aids, such as a walking stick, are close to hand.

What to do if there is a fire...

Protect your home with a smoke alarm
Each year, Neighbourhood Managers identify potential improvements to their areas from Estate Walkabouts and from suggestions from tenants and leaseholders.

This year they put forward 17 environmental schemes to be assessed by our Environmental Working Group. The group includes 3 Tenant Representatives whose involvement is invaluable due to their local knowledge and their ideas on how to further enhance some schemes to benefit the community.

Here are the schemes which were chosen to be completed this financial year from the allocated budget of £10,000:

- Bridge Road, Desborough: Install bollards to green area to prevent parking.
- Gold Street, Desborough: Clean communal area windows in Blocks 18-32 & 34-60.
- Alexandra Street, Kettering: Clean windows to the communal area.
- 27 Polwell Lane, Barton Seagrave: Paint railings.
- Spring Gardens/Well Lane, Rothwell: Repaint communal doors, hand rails and clean fascias. Install security light and conduit.
- 31-59 Station Road, Kettering: Removal of trees, LH of carpark.
- New Buildings, Meadow Road, Kettering: Supply and install two metal sheds. Provide skip to clear rubbish in communal area.
- Grafton Street, Kettering: Replace lights to rear of blocks.
- King Street flats, Kettering: Install communal gates to deter unauthorised access.

Do you have large items that need taking away?

Use Kettering Borough Council’s Bulk Collection Service to arrange for large items to be collected from your home. The service costs £25 for up to six items, and must be paid in advance.

We CAN remove:
- Fridges
- Freezers (food removed)
- Washing machines
- Televisions
- Small WEEE (microwaves, lamps etc.)
- Beds
- Mattresses (base & mattress 2 items)
- Wardrobes
- Sofas
- Chairs
- Tables
- Portable garden furniture

We CANNOT remove:
- Commercial items
- Black sacks
- Garden waste
- Sheds/greenhouses
- Vehicle parts
- DIY items such as: bathroom suites, kitchen cupboards/worktops or flooring, fencing, pallets, radiators or boilers

Discounts
If you’re aged 60+ or a student, or under 18, you’ll pay £12.50.
If you receive Housing or Council Tax benefit, you’ll pay £6.

To book a discounted bulk collection please call 01536 532 423 or visit one of our Customer Service Centres with proof of eligibility.

Universal Credit (UC) replaces six means-tested benefits and tax credits with one monthly payment. This is paid to you in arrears. In February 2018 Kettering will move from ‘live’ to ‘full’ service.

What does this mean?
If you make a new claim for any of the benefits that are included within UC you will move onto this. The full list of included benefits can be found at www.gov.uk/universal-credit

Will this affect my Housing Benefit?
Yes. When you make a claim for UC any Housing Benefit you receive will STOP and you will need to claim the Housing Element of UC. This will be paid directly to you.

Once you have made a claim for UC you must contact the Council who can provide you with a Proof of Rent form. This will show the DWP that you rent your home, are liable for the weekly rent and how much this is. You may also need to provide a copy of your tenancy agreement.

What can I do now?
There can be up to a 6 week wait for Universal Credit. You should start to think about how you will be able to cover all your bills during this waiting period. Why not:
1. Put your rent account in credit - start making payments now onto your rent account to put yourself in front. This will ensure that your rent is paid whilst you are waiting for your Universal Credit.
2. Set up a Credit Union savings account - just putting a small amount of money to one side each week or month can help. For help and support contact us on 01536 334 247.

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Garden Competition

Thank you to everyone who entered our Garden Competition this year. The judging took place in June by our returning judges, previous winners in the competition, Jim and Jackie French from Desborough.

Do you have concerns about the safety or welfare of a child or adult in your neighbourhood?

Protecting our vulnerable neighbours

Northamptonshire County Council Safeguarding Teams can be contacted to seek advice or make a referral where there are safeguarding concerns.

- Complete an online referral form by logging on to www.northamptonshire.gov.uk and searching for safeguarding.
- **Online**
- **Dial**
  - 0300 126 1000 - option 1 for concerns relating to children, option 2 for adults

Emergencies:

If a child or vulnerable adult is in immediate danger, a child is left alone, or missing, contact the police and/or ambulance service directly on 999.

Doorstep Crime: Be on the lookout

Every day in Northamptonshire people are prone to falling victim to doorstep crime. Most of the victims are elderly or vulnerable.

Everyone can play a vital role in raising awareness to reduce levels of doorstep crime. Whether you are caring for a family member, or just keeping an eye out for a neighbour, you may be the only person that has regular contact with them and can play a vital role in preventing them from becoming a victim.

If you have been a victim of doorstep crime or have something suspicious to report, call 101.

Distraction Burglary Tactics

Distraction Burglars or ‘bogus callers’ will call at a house with the intention of tricking their way inside to steal money and/or other valuables.

- Distraction burglars may be smartly dressed and claim to be from the water board, the council, the police, health organisations or charities.
- They may say they need to turn off the water because of a leak, use the phone because their car has broken down, or perhaps say they have lost a pet.
- The caller may be a man, a woman or even a child and they will use any story they can to try and gain access to the property.

**Always Ask for ID**

Any genuine caller will expect to be asked for ID. You can take the ID card and call the telephone number on the back and KBC will verify the identity of your caller.

**“IF YOU’RE NOT SURE DON’T OPEN THE DOOR”**

- Display a ‘No Cold Calling Home’ sticker to discourage unwanted callers.
- Remember you are never required to open the door to unexpected callers and that it is not rude to send someone away.
- ALWAYS ASK TO SEE ID.

We want your feedback!

We hope you’ve enjoyed our Autumn edition of Connect. We’re always interested to hear from tenants about your thoughts on our housing newsletter. If you have any ideas for future articles or any things you’d like to see included or if you’d like to join our Editorial Panel and get involved in the process of making Connect, please get in touch by emailing connect@kettering.gov.uk or contacting Tracey Copeland on 01536 535 649.