Welcome to the autumn edition of Connect.

In this edition of Connect, the focus is on your neighbourhoods. We have recently changed our management arrangements and we now have a dedicated Neighbourhood Manager and Income Officer for each neighbourhood. This will enable us to offer you a more co-ordinated and seamless service. There’s also plenty going on in each of our neighbourhoods as you can see in the feature on pages 4 to 8.

On page 9 of Connect, there’s a short article on ‘Pay to Stay’ which is the Government’s new scheme to charge higher rents to tenants with a household income of more than £31,000 a year. ‘Pay to Stay’ is due to start next April although the Government has yet to issue detailed guidance on how the scheme will work. As details become available, we’ll make sure that you are kept fully informed.

And, finally, on page 10, we explain how we’re using new legal powers to fight anti-social behaviour and criminality on our housing estates. We hope you notice the difference.

John Conway,
Head of Housing
Congratulations to Jarad Dione who won £25 worth of shopping vouchers after finding the beach balls hidden in the pages of the last issue of Connect!

Spot the wheat and win!
Now it’s your turn to try and win £25 worth of shopping vouchers. Simply find the wheat scattered amongst the pages of this newsletter and email the number you find to connect@kettering.gov.uk

Don’t forget to include your name and contact details. All correct entries will be checked and the winner drawn out of a hat. The closing date is 21st October 2016.

And the winner is...

Jarad Dione collects his winning vouchers.

Here’s a wheat to start you off!

Annual Report to Tenants 2015/16 – Coming soon!

Each year we produce a report to provide you with an overview of what the housing service has delivered and what we plan to achieve for the year ahead.

This year’s Annual Report to Tenants looks back on the success stories of 2015/16, highlighting how well services have performed, featuring interviews with Housing Managers and outlining what you should expect from us plus much more.

To view the report please go to www.kettering.gov.uk/tenantsannualreport
Patch 1: Highfield, Counties and Desborough

The Council manages its 3,719 homes in five patches, each of which has its own designated Neighbourhood Manager, Income Officer and Tenant Representatives. The next five pages provide a guide to each patch, complete with contact details and information about the projects we’re working on in the community.

NEIGHBOURHOOD NEWS

In August, two new one-bed flats were converted from the Housing Office at Barnes Close on the Highfield Estate and let via Keyways as part of our Hidden Homes scheme.

A five-year programme of major works on the Highfield Road estate continues at Whiteford Drive, with the construction of purpose-built bin store enclosures and internal improvements including redecoration and new communal area lighting.

Desborough’s Homes for the Future project continues with 22 homes now up to modern standards in Addison Road, Harrington Road and Alexandra Road. Tenants have since seen their fuel bills reduced by 30% and 33 homes will have been completed by April.

We’ve upgraded all of the front doors in blocks on the Highfield Estate, which are now fire compliant.

A new car park and rain water garden were installed on Northumberland Road in early 2016. The environmentally-friendly garden sustains plant life while acting as a flood prevention device.

In August, we started phase one of our programme to implement a sterile area policy in the communal areas of our flats, supported by the Fire Service.

We are currently planning a one-year pilot for block cleaning of communal areas on the Highfield Estate to commence this financial year.

Patch One’s next quarterly estate walkabouts are due in October. Recent walkabouts identified a number of issues such as fly-tipping on the Highfield Estate and on Gold Street in Desborough, plus parking issues on Bridge Road, Desborough as well as repairs to the communal path on Eastbrook Hill.

Tenant Representatives:
Jim French, Martyn Lund, Moira Brown, Reg Carvell, Brian Kimpton
Patch 2: St Marys Kettering, Burton Latimer, Broughton, Cransley, Lodddington, Thorpe Malsor and Wilbarston

Neighbourhood Manager: Hayley Knight
- hayleyknight@kettering.gov.uk
- 01536 534 184

Income Officer: Lynn Baker
- lynnbbaker@kettering.gov.uk
- 01536 535 638

NEIGHBOURHOOD NEWS
A new roofing contract is planned this financial year for the 22 bungalows on St Crispin Close, Burton Latimer.
We recently refurbished the communal garden area to the block at 1-11 Latimer Close.
External wall cladding has been applied to properties on Wellingborough Road and Hutchinson Avenue in Broughton.
Recent estate walkabouts highlighted garden conditions along with guttering issues.

What do Neighbourhood Managers do?
- Manage the Council’s tenancies and carry out tenancy visits
- Deal with all tenancy issues such as anti-social behaviour and sub-letting
- Investigate reports of abandoned properties
- Refer tenants/households for tenancy support
- Carry out quarterly Estate Walkabouts
- Work with other statutory and voluntary agencies to improve tenants’ quality of life
- Deal with Mutual Exchange applications where tenants apply to swap homes
- Carry out visits to prospective tenants and property viewings.

We recently took legal action to repossess a tenanted property from which the community was suffering from repeated anti-social behaviour.
There have been four approved Mutual Exchanges on the patch so far in 2016.
The Neighbourhood Manager has dealt with requests to purchase land from the Council.
This financial year six Community Protection Warnings and three Community Protection Notices have been served in the area to address issues such as untidy gardens.
**NEIGHBOURHOOD NEWS**

Plans to refurbish Hampden Crescent are at an advanced stage with approval being sought to double the number of existing units and bring the block up to modern standards.

From 2017, the Homes for the Future project will continue to 50 properties on Spencer Street, Rothwell. Home visits to households affected should start by January 2017.

Properties that are to be included in the Homes for the Future project in Rothwell will also receive energy support advice to help maximise their energy supplier choices.

We've been using Community Protection Notices to tackle untidy gardens, parking violations and noise nuisance with 99% of problems resolved without progressing to a Community Safety Notice. Eight Community Protection Warnings, one Community Protection Notice and one fixed-term Penalty Notice have already been served.

Our external wall insulation project is set to continue to Central Avenue, Washington Square and Naseby Road.

Sterile communal areas will be brought in to the blocks on Spring Gardens in early 2017.

Recent estate walkabouts led to a boundary fence on Naseby Road being repaired; blocked gutters on the Naseby Estate being fixed; and a long-term issue involving an illegally parked car resolved.

The parking area on Edinburgh Close, Rothwell will be extended this financial year after a successful environmental scheme bid, making it safer for residents to park their vehicles.

We've recently approved plans to improve external lighting at The Lawns Sheltered Scheme in Kettering town centre.

The Lawns is benefitting from the Sparkle Project, a scheme that delivers extensive redecoration, new lighting and carpets for the communal areas.

For any leaseholder enquiries, please contact Kirstie Craig-Young on 01536 535 654 or at kirstie craig-young@kettering.gov.uk
**NEIGHBOURHOOD NEWS**

Five new Council homes are currently being built at Laburnum Crescent in partnership with Waterloo Housing Group.

This quarter’s round of estate walkabouts has just started, resulting in a number of issues being identified such as repairs to gas meter cupboards on Walnut Crescent and untidy gardens on Cedar Road and Weekley Glebe Road.

New external lighting is due to be installed on Dahlia Road after a successful Environmental Scheme bid, to enhance safety and security for residents.

Jasmine Road car park will soon be resurfaced with designated spaces added.

Properties in Weekley Glebe Road have recently been re-roofed and new internal GRP fire doors were installed to the flats in two blocks on the road.

Our Housing Income Officers are responsible for:

- Managing your rent accounts
- Providing advice and support on budgeting and managing your money
- Carrying out financial assessments
- Taking enforcement action if rent arrears continue to escalate.

You can contact Sarah Simpson, our dedicated Officer for managing Introductory Tenancy rent accounts on **01536 535 364** or by email at **sarahsimpson@kettering.gov.uk**

**New roofs on Weekley Glebe Road**
Patch 5: Kettering Town Centre, Kettering North/East and Pytchley

Neighbourhood Manager: Glyn Dowdell
glyndowdell@kettering.gov.uk
01536 534 356

Income Officer: Karen Clarke
karenclarke@kettering.gov.uk
01536 534 394

NEIGHBOURHOOD NEWS

We’ll be enhancing lighting in a ground floor communal block on Thorngate Street and Alfred Street by the end of the year, to deter anti-social behaviour.

Over the next three years, we’ll be installing new communal entrance doors in town centre blocks.

Environmental scheme bids have been approved to install external lighting on Judith Road and to clean communal window blocks in the town centre.

We’re working closely with Police Community Support Officers to deal with incidents of low level anti-social behaviour in and around the town centre blocks, with nine Community Protection Warnings and two Community Protection Notices being issued.

We’re currently working to establish the future viability of flats on Rockingham Road as they are inappropriate for modern use.

Door entry systems have been upgraded in blocks across the town centre including Alfred Street, Ford Street and Alexandra Street.

We’re currently enhancing the external communal areas on Judith Road including external lighting, to be completed this financial year.

We’ve worked with Sackville Street residents to renew the Local Lettings Policy approved in February 2016, which is in force for one year. This means only Keyways applicants who meet specific criteria will be considered for vacancies in the area.

36 external fire doors have been installed across the patch so far in 2016/17 including to the blocks on Alexandra Street, Gloucester Close and Arthurs Way.

Our Tenants Representatives work closely with us in many ways:

- Attending Estate Walkabouts with Neighbourhood Managers
- Attending monthly Tenant Forum Meetings to discuss service improvements
- Scrutinising Council services and making recommendations
- Getting involved in consultation events
- Helping to decide how allocated funding is spent e.g. environmental schemes.

Tenant Representative:
Josephine Copson

Winsdor Gardens
Could new ‘Pay to Stay’ affect you?

What is ‘Pay to Stay’?

‘Pay to Stay’ is a new government policy that bases the amount of rent you pay on your household income. This means that if you, as the sole tenant, have an income of £31,000 or more you will have to pay market or near market rent. If you are a joint tenant or live with a partner, your combined income is taken into account. This policy is compulsory for Council tenants and comes into effect from April 2017.

I pay full rent so what happens next?

As your landlord, we will need to know your annual income and will contact you in the next couple of months asking you to provide us this information. The Council will need to verify the information you provide so please provide original copies of any paperwork such as wage slips, bank statement and letters that show your income.

What does this mean for me?

This policy is only likely to affect you if you (and/or your partner) earn £31,000 or more and currently pay your full weekly rent amount yourself. Tenants in receipt of any Housing Benefit or Universal Credit will not be affected by this policy.

Be aware that if you DO NOT provide the information to us, it will be assumed that your income is above the threshold and you will be charged FULL MARKET rent from April 2017.

If you have any questions about ‘Pay to Stay’ please contact our Housing Income Team on 01536 410 333.

‘Your Courses’ by LifePlan

We’re delighted to see how successful our first ‘Your Courses’ LifePlan training brochure and programme has been in 2016.

LifePlan is our free and friendly service providing tenant support and opportunities in training, education, employment and volunteering. All of our training is run by our LifePlan Advisor Leone Reed who facilitates group training sessions as well as the one-to-one training as part of our Practical Housing Units. If you see a course you like, act fast – all our courses book up very quickly!

This year’s LifePlan courses:

- Everyday First Aid
- Fire Safety in the Home
- Introduction to Food Hygiene
- Dementia Friends
- DIY Skills
- Cooking on a Budget
- Love Your Garden

To find out more about any of our tenancy training or for any support with education, employment and volunteering please contact Leone on 01536 534 319 or at leonereed@kettering.gov.uk

Look out for ‘Your Courses’ in 2017 where there’ll be more of this year’s most popular sessions, plus some exciting new courses!
Mobility scooters are becoming more popular with our sheltered housing tenants to help them get out and about. We’ve recently started a project to add new storage areas for scooters on our schemes. Our Silver Service Customer Forum prioritised schemes with no previous scooter storage at all at Windsor Gardens, Yeomans Court, St Andrews and Tudor Court. Some schemes have opted for conversions of unused areas such as garages to make use of existing space and others have had new pods installed.

Council tackles ASB with new powers

The Anti-Social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014 introduced a range of new powers to allow councils, police and landlords to deal more effectively with crime and ASB. Here’s how Housing Services have implemented these powers recently:

**Closure Orders** are granted when a court decides that without an order the public will be subjected to serious nuisance and disorder.

Following a firearms incident at a Kettering address in February, the Council was granted a Closure Order which made it a criminal offence for any persons, including the occupant, to enter the property. The Council has since evicted the tenant.

**Absolute ground for possession:** The Act introduced a new absolute ground for possession where ASB or criminal activity has been proved by another court. Two tenants are already subject to legal proceedings using this power, due to convictions for actual bodily harm.

The legal tool allows us to evict the most problematic tenants quicker if either themselves or anyone else linked to the property have been:

- Convicted of a serious offence
- Found by a court to have breached a civil injunction
- Convicted of breaching a criminal behaviour order
- Convicted for breaching a noise abatement notice; or
- The tenant’s property has been closed for more than 48 hours under a closure order for ASB

Universal Credit Event

At the end of July we held a Universal Credit (UC) event at the Council Offices. The event was well-attended with many referrals made. An interactive session explained the details of the government’s reform of the benefit system in a simple fashion, which was well received.

As well as guidance on UC, guests were given expert advice on LifePlan, East Midlands Credit Union and local employment services. A representative from the Citizen’s Advice Bureau was also on hand to offer support – which led to one guest learning that she could reduce her energy costs by £400!
**Garden Competition**

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

The standard was as high as ever and made our job very difficult. The presentation evening takes place in early October so look out for the winners' photos in December's Connect!

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**Tenants on Tour!**

In June, members of the Tenants Forum joined Council Officers on a tour of the borough’s housing projects.

The Forum was delighted to see that work had begun on the Laburnum Crescent site, where five new homes will soon become part of the Council’s stock. At the site of the old Savoy cinema on Russell Street, members visited 18 new one-bedroom homes that are nearing completion.

The Tour also took in the Council’s Rainwater Garden project on Northumberland Avenue, our extensive refurbishment work at Harry Potter House and Hampden Crescent, where we plan to soon bring our Homes for the Future scheme.

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**Creepy Crime Scenes**

Halloween capers for all the family

at The Manor House Museum

Friday 28th October 2016

11am - 3pm

Wounds make-up, finger printing, mystery magic show, balloon modeling and lots of creepy fun!

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**Christmas in Kettering**

The BIG Switch On  Santa’s Grotto  Teenage Market  Movie Nights  Late Night Shopping  Small Business Saturday  …plus much more throughout December!

Find out more at: kettering.gov.uk/christmas
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

You can access our Kettering Customer Service Centre from

- **8.30am to 5.30pm weekdays**
- **9am to 1pm on Saturdays**,
  or telephone **01536 410 333**
- **8.30am to 5pm weekdays**
  or **24 hours a day** at

www.kettering.gov.uk

**Support Services**

- **Accommodation Concern**
  01536 416 560
  www.accommodationconcern.co.uk

- **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

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**Visit Us**

If you are interested in supporting your community by joining Northamptonshire Street Watch, please visit

www.northants.police.uk/streetwatch

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**Recycle**

When you have finished with this magazine please recycle it.