Welcome to our Spring Edition

If there are any topics you would like us to cover in future editions of Connect please contact us at:
Housing
Kettering Borough Council
Bowling Green Road
Kettering
NN15 7QX

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www.kettering.gov.uk
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connect@kettering.gov.uk

The Tenants Editorial Panel is made up of the following tenants and staff:
Brian Kimpton
Sue Shipham
Leona Mantle
Sally-Anne Harrison
Maria Keane
Darren Ibell
Sara Martin
Mark Redding
Max Salsbury

In this issue, we’re introducing a programme of Home Visits so that we can keep in touch with you. We spend quite a bit of time with our newer tenants but don’t see as much of people who have been tenants for some time. At a recent focus group, our more established tenants told us they would appreciate more contact with the Council. So, over the next five years, our plan is to visit every one of our 3,800 tenants. During the visit, we’ll check how you’re getting on with your tenancy and discuss any issues you want to raise with us. We are looking forward to seeing you.

Also, in this edition of Connect, we provide an update on our major project to refurbish Hampden Crescent which is part of our flagship ‘Homes for the Future’ programme. This project will result in the creation of 18 modern one and two bedroom flats – all of which will be served by a state-of-the-art communal district heating system. Work on the first phase of 18 flats will be completed by the end of the year.

And finally, some good news about your rent. For the second year running, we will be reducing rents by 1% in April. That will be an average weekly rent reduction of 81p.

John Conway,
Head of Housing

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Congratulations to Sarah Stewart who won £25 worth of shopping vouchers after finding the penguins hidden in the pages of the last issue of Connect!

Spot the Easter bunnies and win!
Now it’s your turn to try and win £25 worth of shopping vouchers. Simply find the Easter bunnies 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 17th April 2017.

And the winner is…
Sarah Stewart collects her winning vouchers.

Here’s an Easter bunny to start you off!

New Home Visits – Working Together
For many of you, it may have been some time since you had a chance to meet with your Neighbourhood Manager. We spend a lot of time with new tenants to ensure they are aware of all of the support and other services that we offer. We now want to make sure that we let our existing tenants have those same opportunities. So, from April, we are introducing home visits for our longer standing tenants.

We’ll give you plenty of notice to make sure you are at home for the visit. You will receive an appointment letter, together with a leaflet explaining what to expect. We aim to visit all tenants at least once every 5 years.

The tenancy visit is an opportunity for you to:
• Talk to your Neighbourhood Manager about any issues you may have with your home or neighbourhood
• Discuss any housing or repair needs you have

It gives us, as your landlord, an opportunity to:
• Tell you about the support services we have available to you as a tenant
• Inspect the property and garden

If you have any queries or concerns about the visit, please contact your Neighbourhood Manager to discuss on 01536 410 333.
Rent Review 2017/18

By now you should have received your ‘Notice of Rent & Service Charge Review 2017/18’. This will tell you what your weekly rent and service charge amounts will be from the 3rd April 2017.

If you have any queries please contact the Housing Income Team on 01536 410 333 or email rent@kettering.gov.uk

Did you know?

We now offer two additional Direct Debit dates each month. You can now choose to pay by Direct Debit on the 8th, 15th, 22nd or 28th.

To find out more, please contact us on 01536 410 333.

Council Tax Support 2017/18

Kettering Borough Council is currently drafting the final scheme for the 2017/18 Local Council Tax Support scheme (LCTS) as agreed by full council in December 2016.

The key points are:

1. The maximum amount of LCTS that a working age customer can receive will remain unchanged at 55% for 2017/18.

2. Temporary absence from home rules will change to be the same as those in Housing Benefit. The key point for this is that if a customer is temporarily absent outside of Great Britain for more than 4 weeks their LCTS will stop - previously this was 13 weeks.

3. The number of child premiums will be limited to two children for new claims after the 1st of April 2017. This change will also be brought in for Housing Benefit.

Full details of the amendments above can be found at www.kettering.gov.uk/lcts
Do you have grown up children, friends or relatives living with you?

If you do then this may affect your award of Housing Benefit or the Housing Element of your Universal Credit Award. This person is a non-dependent.

Does someone aged 18 or over live with you?

If the answer is yes, this person is classed as a non-dependent and this will affect any Housing Benefit or Housing Element claim made by you.

Why will this affect my claim?

When you make a claim for Housing Benefit or the Housing Element of Universal Credit there are a number of things considered before any award is granted. One of these is whether you have any non-dependents living with you and if you do what income they receive.

What is a non-dependent?

A non-dependent is someone who:
- Lives with you
- Is aged 18 or over
- Is not your partner or a dependent child and
- Is not liable for paying the rent

In many cases this is a grown-up son or daughter.

What is a non-dependent deduction?

This is the amount deducted from your Housing Benefit or Housing Element award. This deduction is made before any payments are made to you.

What does this mean for me?

This deduction means that you will have to pay some (or all) of your weekly rent. Any income you or your partner may have will also be taken into account.

What should I do?

If you are unable to afford your weekly rent yourself you should speak to the non-dependent(s) and explain that due to them living in your property, they need to contribute towards your weekly housing costs.

What happens if I don't pay my weekly amount due?

Failure to pay will result in arrears accruing on your rent account which could lead to the Council taking possession action. In extreme cases this could result in you losing your home.

What if my non-dependent refuses to contribute?

Seek advice and assistance as soon as possible by contacting your Housing Income Officer on 01536 410 333.

For independent advice or support regarding this matter please contact the Citizens Advice Bureau on 0844 855 2122.
Could HomeMove help you downsize?

If you’re considering a move to a smaller property, HomeMove can help in many ways, including a grant of up to £750.
Tenants receive practical one-to-one support from our HomeMove Advisor throughout the moving process to tailor a support package to meet your needs. This may include carpets for your new home, arranging removals and clearing your home.

To find out contact our HomeMove Advisor, Liz Barry on 01536 535 643 or email lizbarry@kettering.gov.uk

Wenda Jacob, Desborough
Why did you look to use HomeMove?
I had lived in my house for a long time and my kids have grown up and moved out. My garden was too big to look after and I was paying extra for spare rooms so I looked to move to a one bedroom flat.

What support did you receive with your move?
The HomeMove Advisor was brilliant at keeping me informed and made it easier to understand. I was given boxes and bubblewrap and the moving company were great.

What advice would you give to tenants thinking of moving to a smaller house?
Definitely use HomeMove; I’m happy in my new flat and I couldn’t praise the HomeMove Advisor enough for her help!

Hello!
My role as HomeMove Advisor is to provide one-to-one support to tenants wishing to downsize via HomeMove or Enhanced HomeMove. This includes finding a new home through Kettering Keyways, and if you qualify, helping to arrange a grant to help with your move. I’ll also work with you to tailor a package of support to meet your needs, which can include:
• Carpets for your new home
• Arranging your removals
• Providing a packing service
• Disconnecting and re-connecting utilities
• Advising on timescales for installing adaptations, if required
• Hiring a skip
To have an informal chat and find out more about the HomeMove schemes please call me on 01536 535 643.

Need adaptations to your home?
If you need major adaptations to your home and wish to move to somewhere more suitable for your needs, Enhanced HomeMove can help. If you’re eligible you’ll receive one-to-one practical and financial support as well as a grant to help you move.

Between April 2016 and February 2017 we have supported 15 households in downsizing or finding new accommodation more suitable for their needs.
This winter we began a major refurbishment of Hampden Crescent, in Pipers Hill Ward, as part of our flagship ‘Homes for the Future’ scheme. The project will lead to the creation of 18 modern flats – all of which will be supplied by a state-of-the-art communal district heating system.

Built in 1927, Hampden Crescent’s solid walls and large rooms mean high energy loss, draughty windows and poor sound transfer. It’s also unattractive to families due to having no gardens or immediate external area.

The work will see the building’s 11 three-bed flats restructured into 18 one and two-bed units, to match the continued demand for smaller accommodation. The remodelling will also include two ground floor flats for disabled tenants, external wall insulation, soundproofing throughout and designated parking facilities.

Are you eligible?
You must be living in family accommodation and be downsizing by at least one bedroom into non-family accommodation.

House with 2+ bedrooms or a 2 bedroom flat with garden

Downsizing by at least one bedroom to

1 or 2 bedroom flat without a garden, sheltered accommodation, or a bungalow

Hampden Crescent redevelopment to create 18 new flats

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Tenants recognised at annual awards

In December we held 2 award ceremonies to celebrate the wonderful achievements of our housing customers. Congratulations to all our winners!

Silver Service Community Hero Awards

The Silver Service Community Hero awards recognise those good neighbours or unpaid community volunteers who regularly help others and make our sheltered housing schemes a better place to live because of their acts of kindness. 18 winners who were nominated by our sheltered housing customers all received a certificate and award.

LifePlan and Tenancy Support Awards

Our 8th LifePlan and Tenancy Support awards recognised the successes of the winners over the year. This included 3 Tenancy Support award winners and 7 LifePlan award winners who were all presented with a certificate and gift voucher.

Kettering’s Tenants Present to East Midlands TPAS

In February, we hosted The Tenants Participation Advisory Service’s (TPAS) regional forum. Over 50 tenants from across the East Midlands attended and listened to representatives from the Housing Ombudsmen Service talk about the body’s work. Three members of our own Tenant Overview and Scrutiny Panel also delivered a presentation which outlined the positive results of their scrutiny work, so we’d like to thank Peter Matsa, Lynne Lund and Martyn Lund for taking part.

If you'd like to become a Tenant Representative contact Max Salsbury on 01536 410 333 or email maxsalsbury@kettering.gov.uk

The LifePlan Achiever of the Year 2016 was presented to Bernadette Roberts who also received a trophy.
Don’t miss out on these free courses.

- Cooking on a budget
- Love your garden
- DIY skills
- First aid
- Fire safety
- Food hygiene
- Dementia Friends

FREE to Council and Housing Association tenants!

www.kettering.gov.uk/lifeplan

Desborough Meet and Greet

In January we held a Meet and Greet event in Desborough. Defying the rain, dozens of tenants took the opportunity to drop in and talk to our officers and learn more about the services we offer. Amongst much tea drinking, the Housing team helped and advised on such issues as repairs, potholes, Keyways, our HomeMove service, anti-social behaviour – and even an overgrown garden. We’d like to say a big thank you to Tenant Representative Martyn Lund who also attended the event.

Yearly Gas Checks

As your landlord we ensure your gas fittings, appliances, pipework and flues are kept in a safe condition. We must carry out a service on every gas appliance in your property once a year – for which you will be given a certificate.

You are legally required to allow us access to your home to carry out maintenance and safety checks on gas appliances. It’s a breach of your tenancy conditions to refuse us access, and we could take legal action or end your tenancy.

If you have any concerns about your gas equipment, turn it off and contact National Grid immediately on 0800 111 999.
Stop the wolves from knocking on your door. 
Come and see our Social Inclusion Team for advice on:

**Household Budgeting**
We can help you look at your household budget and discuss ways to reduce your bills, apply for charity grants, reduce your household bills and make arrangements with creditors.

**A Credit Union Account**
We can help set up a Credit Union account and help arrange for your income to be paid directly in and your bills to be paid out of the account.

**Benefits and Support**
We can offer you advice on how to claim housing benefit, council tax support and DWP benefits.

Visit us at Kettering Borough Council’s offices or contact us at creditunion@kettering.gov.uk (01536 534 247)

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The Women’s Tour returns to Kettering

**Stage 1**
Daventry to Kettering
Wednesday 7th June

womenstour.co.uk
kettering.gov.uk/womenstour

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FREE COMPOST!
Supporting National Compost Awareness Week 2017
Saturday 13th May
10.30am-12.30pm
The Green Patch
Valley Walk
Kettering

One free bag of compost available per household and produce on sale from The Green Patch. Stock is limited and available on a first come first served basis.
Tenant and Leaseholders’ Garden Competition 2017

Do you enjoy gardening? Are you proud of the results? Then send in your entries for the tenant and leaseholders’ Garden Competition 2017.

There will be prizes for:
- Best front garden
- Best back garden
- Best hanging baskets & tubs
- Best wildlife garden
- Clever use of space
- Best vegetable garden
- Best new garden
- Best small planter / window box (flats only)
- Best community/shared garden

Judging is to be held week commencing 20th June, with a presentation evening held in October. If you would like to enter please complete the form below and return to us by Friday 10th June.

We welcome entries from new gardeners as well as established gardeners.

Tenant and Leaseholders’ Garden Competition 2017

Name: 

Address: 

Telephone: 

Category (pick one): 

Please return to:

Garden Competition, Housing, Kettering Borough Council, Bowling Green Road, NN15 7QX
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
and
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

- 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

Visit Us

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www.northants.police.uk/streetwatch

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