

HOME



WINTER 2023/24

Welcome to the first edition of **HOME**, the newsletter for Cannock Chase Council tenants and leaseholders. **HOME** follows the Tenants Newsletter we last brought to you back in March 2023 which focused on the cost of living crisis, and the previous magazine HomeTalk.

We plan to produce two editions of Home each year, to bring you updates and news about our services as they affect you as one of our valued tenants.

We hope you enjoy reading **HOME** and will find it useful and helpful. We trust your tenancy with us will run as smoothly as possible, however please let us know if there is anything we can help with. Our staff are always happy to assist with any issues or queries you may have. We want to ensure that the property you live in is safe and comfortable.



Best wishes

Sue

Councillor Sue Thornley | Portfolio Leader for Housing

One of your best Christmas presents is a secure tenancy...

Christmas is a costly time for most people. With the ongoing cost of living crisis, this year may be more expensive than any Christmas before.

This is why it is more important than ever to think about your budget and priority bills - especially things like your rent.

One of the best Christmas presents you can give to those you care about is knowing that you live in a home where your tenancy is secure, and you are not at risk of losing it in 2024.

So be sure to think about your budget, and making sure priority bills, including your rent (and any arrears payments) are top of your list, before and after the Christmas period.

If you are struggling to pay your rent, don't ignore it - we can help!

We will be able to advise you what to do or help you to get the support and advice you need. Call or email your **Income Management Officer** on **01543 462621** or email **incomemanagementteam@cannockchasedc.gov.uk**



Leasehold Service on the move

Our Leasehold Service has moved from Housing Property Services to the Income Team, as from the start of 11th December 2023. In 2023/24 the team is busy carrying out upgrades to door entry systems. If you are affected and have any queries about this, please email leaseholdservices@cannockchasedc.gov.uk.

The **Leasehold Services Officer** is **Denis Dennehy**. Contact:
Telephone: **01543 462621**
Email: leaseholdservices@cannockchasedc.gov.uk

Other contact details you might find helpful are:

- Invoice payments - please refer to the back of the invoice or call the **Finance Department** on **01543 462621** (9am until 4pm Mondays to Fridays) for payments enquiries.
- Reporting a communal repair - please call our **Contact Centre team** on **01543 462621** and also this number for any emergency, out-of-office hours. Please remember to confirm that you are a leaseholder. Alternatively, request a repair online at housingrepairsccdc@cannockchasedc.gov.uk
- Reporting Nuisance Problems - you can report Anti-Social Behaviour to leaseholdservices@cannockchasedc.gov.uk or EMTeam@cannockchasedc.gov.uk
- Requesting buildings insurance schedule - please email the Insurance team insurance@cannockchasedc.gov.uk

When contacting the Council

When you contact us, we may ask you to clarify whether the contact details we hold for you are still current and correct.

Be assured that all personal data is kept safe and secure. All Cannock Chase Council staff are trained to understand and adopt the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which is a set of guidelines for the secure collection and processing of personal data.

And don't forget, we will be using text messages to communicate with you so please give us a call if your mobile number has changed recently so we can stay in touch.

Leaseholder certified summaries for 2022/23

In other news affecting leaseholders, we have now completed and sent out the certified summaries to all leasehold properties covering 2022/23. Please remember that a certified summary informs you of the actual cost for all the services and repairs for the previous year and will show you how this compares to the estimated charges that you have already paid.



You should by now have received an invoice or refund, whichever was appropriate, in accordance with your certified summary.

Please remember to keep us updated with your current email address, phone numbers and details of tenant(s) if you are sub-letting. If you would like to receive your future certified summary by email instead of by post, please provide us with updated contact details to: leaseholderservices@cannockchasedc.gov.uk.

New subscription scheme for Garden Waste Collections

The decision to introduce a garden waste charge follows Council's acceptance of the 2023/24 budget where the proposal was identified as part of a number of savings. Although the subscription for garden waste collection will not cover all the costs of the service, it is estimated that it will save council tax payers some **£600,000** a year.



The subscription-based garden waste service will cost £38.50 per household per year, with collections taking place fortnightly over 46 out of 52 weeks (23 garden waste collections during this period).

The first subscription period will start from 1 January 2024 and continue until 31 December 2024.

This will not impact on Council Tenants who have their grass cut for free through the Vulnerable Grass Cutting Scheme. Council Tenants who receive a free grass cutting service will, however, be charged for the collection of grass and garden waste in the brown bin.

Residents who have a garden but do not want to subscribe to the service will be able to take their garden waste to the Household Waste and Recycling Centres (HWRC) in Cannock or Rugeley or can compost their garden waste at home for use in their garden.

Please note the Council will not be taking back any brown bins from households that do not wish to subscribe to the service. These are required to stay in case future occupants wish to take out a subscription.

More details about the new garden waste subscription scheme, including how to subscribe and pay can be found at www.cannockchasedc.gov.uk/brownbins

NEW

Mobile Text Service for Repairs

From 1 November 2023 we introduced mobile text message confirmations and reminders for when you report repairs to us.

This means you now receive confirmation of the date we will attend for any repair reported and you will also have a reminder text the day before we are due to attend your property.

This is part of our continuous drive for improvements to our repairs service and one we are sure will benefit everyone. Please be sure to let our staff know of any changes to your contact numbers when you call in, so we have the most up to date details for you.



Do you know if your benefits are moving onto

Universal Credit?

If you are still receiving what are now called legacy benefits such as tax credits, income support or ESA, you should be aware that the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is continuing to move more people onto Universal Credit. This is called 'managed migration' and involves both individuals and families.

A specific start date for managed migration to Universal Credit is not yet known. However, the proposed schedule is as follows:

- During 2023/24 - tax credit only cases
- During 2024/25 - income-related ESA with tax credits, income support, income based JSA, housing benefit only or with tax credits
- During 2028/29 - All other income-related ESA cases

When it is time for you to migrate to Universal Credit, you will receive a migration notice from the DWP.

If you do not apply within the set time limit, they give you, this will result in your legacy benefit awards being terminated.

You will need to act immediately to ensure you benefit payments do not stop.



If you need support, you can contact your local Job Centre Plus or check for further details at www.gov.uk/universal-credit

Advice on Fire Safety

for battery powered mobility scooters and wheelchairs

Some helpful advice if this affects you:

- Always have a safe area for storing scooters and wheelchairs that will not hinder fire safety evacuation in the event of a fire
- You should not leave your scooter or wheelchair on charge for long periods of time, especially overnight
- Please give consideration to where you store your scooter or wheelchair - in a safe place, free from obstruction in your home or outside your home at least six metres away from the building
- Scooters and wheelchairs should not be left in the internal corridors within Communal Block Flats or Independent Living Schemes for fire safety regulation reasons
- Please note that regular checks will be carried out by Housing Officers to ensure internal corridors are free from obstruction

Looking after Communal Flat Blocks

The Housing Neighbourhoods Team is committed to making the communal flat blocks across the district clean and tidy and a place where people are proud and happy to live.

The Neighbourhoods Caretaker conducts regular communal flat block inspections to check that the internal areas inside the communal blocks are safe and clean.

Our housing cleaning contractor also carries out regular cleaning inside the communal areas on a monthly basis, while the communal windows inside and out are also cleaned once a year.

Meanwhile, weekly fire alarm checks are carried out by the Neighbourhoods Caretaker to ensure that the blocks are safe.

Neighbourhoods Officers work in partnership with other providers to ensure that communal areas are clean, free from rubbish and well maintained. The officers conduct on the spot inspections and engage with tenants to encourage them to take pride in where they live and ensure that the communal areas are clean and tidy and free from rubbish.



Have you got Home Contents Insurance?

Having home contents insurance is an important way to ensure your home is protected. There are two cover levels for you to consider: 'Standard' and 'Standard Including Accidental Damage'.

Most of your household goods and contents are insured when inside the home and are covered against loss or damage caused by specific events such as theft, fire and flood. Aviva Insurance Limited, the insurance brokers, have low-cost tenant premiums for 2023/24.



Please call **01962 892 086** or email: incomemanagementteam@cannockchasedc.gov.uk for an application form. More details are available at <https://wessex-online.net/aviva-tenants/contents/cannock-chase-council>

Allocations Policy update - come!



The Council is seeking views as it updates its Allocations Policy. This sets out how we treat housing applicants and how we decide who to allocate council homes to.

Your views would be welcome, especially if you have recently moved into a new council home or have views on how we can make the best use of our housing stock.

Go to our webpage at www.cannockchasedc.gov.uk/residents/housing/housing-allocations/allocations-policy-consultation-202324 for more details, you can also scan this QR code and let us know what you think.



Tenant Satisfaction Measures Survey 2023

Housing Services has recently carried out a general satisfaction survey for housing tenants and leaseholders. A third of tenants were randomly selected to take part in the survey, conducted in late June/July.

A big thank you to all of you who responded, your opinions and comments are important to us. They help us to improve the quality of services we deliver to you, our tenants.



A summary of the results can be found within the Tenant's Annual Report and in more detail on our website at www.cannockchasedc.gov.uk/residents/housing/tenant-and-resident-engagement



Be Water Efficient



The Housing Team is working together with South Staffordshire Water to provide advice to tenants on what they need to know about water efficiency.

Financial help schemes are available, and we are issuing leaflets and advice to new tenants who are moving into their new home, and existing tenants who may require advice or assistance.

If you require any further information, go to www.south-staffs-water.co.uk or we can arrange for Nichola Clarke, South Staffs Community Engagement Co-ordinator to contact you directly. Nichola has been meeting with the Independent Living schemes to provide advice and assistance to tenants.

All you need to know about water efficiency

These tips could help you save on your energy bills as well as your water bills.



Saving water - Get Water Fit

Download the **Get Water Fit app** or visit the website to see how you can save water and save money. Take the survey and find out more at www.getwaterfit.co.uk.

Water meters

Water meters can be a great way to help save water and money, by paying for what you use, you have some control. Use the water calculator to see if you can save money on your water bill www.ccwater.org.uk/watermetercalculator.

Meter myths

We have heard that some people think having a meter means you have to “top up” - but its just a way of measuring what you use, so you pay for what you use.



Shorten your shower!

If each member of your household shortened their shower from 10 minutes to 5 minutes, could save you an average of £175 on your gas and water bills combined (based on average household of 4 people).



Change your shower head

If a family of four replace their inefficient shower head with a water efficient one, they could save around £55 off their gas bills and around £45 off their water bills (if they have a water meter) each year.



Turn it off

A running tap can use more than ten litres of water a minute, so turn off the tap while brushing your teeth, shaving, or washing your face. Use cold water if you don't need hot will also help you save on your energy bills.



Fill up enough for a cuppa!

Only fill the kettle with the amount of water you need not all the way up! You'll use less water and energy.



Suds law

Using a bowl to wash up rather than a running tap could save you around £25 a year on your energy and water bills combined.

Housing Property Services Team

The Housing Property Services Team is responsible for the planned and cyclical maintenance of the Council's housing stock. The team is based at the Hawks Green Depot in Cannock.

The team is responsible for ensuring our properties comply with all the necessary requirements for the Decent Homes Standard, as well as standards and regulations set out by the Regulator of Social Housing. This includes meeting all applicable statutory requirements that provide for the health and safety of our residents in their homes.



To deliver on those regulations and standards and ensure we have good quality homes that are safe, the team manages contracts and works programmes for the following work:

Capital Works improvements

- Kitchen and bathroom upgrade programmes
- Electrical upgrades
- Central heating upgrades
- External envelope improvements i.e. windows, external doors and roofs

Building Safety Compliance

- Servicing of heating and hot water systems (gas, solid fuel and renewable technologies)
- Fire safety risk assessments and remedial works
- Asbestos management surveys and removals
- Lifting equipment (lifts, stairlifts and hoists)
- Water hygiene/Legionella risk assessments, water sampling and remedial works
- Electrical testing (electrical inspection condition reports, PAT testing, emergency light testing and fire alarm testing)

The team also manages the following work streams:

- Disabled adaptations for Council properties - working with Staffordshire Cares and an occupational therapist service to deliver adaptations across the district for our residents to support their medical needs
- Tenant alternations - handling applications, assessing proposed works and issuing permissions, in some instances a post works inspection and final sign off
- Right to Buy applications - processing applications from tenants who wish to buy their homes from us
- Asset surveys and data collection - carrying out Stock Condition Surveys and collecting the required data which will help drive our improvement programmes in future years

You can contact the team by telephone on **01543 462621**, email **hps@cannockchasedc.gov.uk**, or visit our webpages for more details at **www.cannockchasedc.gov.uk/residents/housing**

Annual Report to Tenants

The Annual Report to Tenants 2022/23 has been published and is available on our website at www.cannockchasedc.gov.uk/residents/housing/housing-services-annual-report

A hard copy will also be delivered to tenants and leaseholders.

The report includes information about how we invest in homes, repair and improve them and respond to issues and complaints you may raise. It will tell you how the rent that we collect is used to maintain and raise the quality of council homes across the district.



Keep in touch...

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