

WELCOME

By Tina Favier, Director for Communities

Welcome to Adur Together, our new newsletter to help us keep you updated about everything we're doing in your neighbourhood. I'm Tina Favier and I'm the Council's new Director for Communities.

Ensuring Adur Homes works better for you is my responsibility, and I hope to meet lots of you over the coming months as I travel around the area speaking to residents.

We carried out a review which made it clear to us that in some cases we are failing to provide the decent homes that all our tenants and leaseholders have a right to, so we have referred ourselves to the national watchdog, the Regulator of Social Housing.

You deserve to have a good, safe and secure home, and you should be able to feel confident that if there's a problem with your property, you can turn to us for help.

We know that for some of you that hasn't always been the case.

We know that some of you may feel that the service we've given you hasn't been good enough at times, for which we're very sorry.

This newsletter is the first step in creating a new relationship with you. Each month we'll aim to update you on what we're doing to improve our properties.

I want to make it easier for you to talk to us, and to be involved in the way your area is managed and maintained.



That includes setting up more resident groups and organising regular face-to-face events for you to have your say.

We are hiring someone to be our community development lead, who will get a tenant forum up and running so your voices can always be heard.

I want this new approach to mean that you feel more comfortable talking to us and that you'll work with us on our plans to regenerate the areas where you live.

If you see me, please come and talk to me!



RENT RISES

You should all have received a letter from us in the last couple of weeks explaining that we are unfortunately going to have to increase rent this year.

We recognise that with the increasing cost of living, this will have been unwelcome.

This increase, whilst the largest for quite some time, is still well below the rate of inflation.

We recognise that this may be tough for some of you and we want to help you if you are struggling, so if you are having financial difficulties please contact us.

We have to increase rent to pay for the services we need to run, including vital health and safety maintenance work that will be necessary for the homes of you and your neighbours.

Government rules mean that we are only allowed to fund this work using the rent and service charges we collect from our tenants and leaseholders.

This year the Government has again capped the amount we can increase rent by.

For most residents this will mean a rent increase of 7%, or around £6 per week.

If your rent is covered by Housing Benefit, you will see no change to your outgoings.

We understand that this may cause you some financial strain, but we feel we have no choice if we are going to be able to invest in our properties to ensure they remain safe to live in.

If you or anyone you know is struggling to pay the bills, you can find information about how we and other organisations can help you at:

www.adur-worthing.gov.uk/cost-of-living-support

DAMP AND MOULD

Some of you have written to us to tell us that you have damp or mould in your homes.

We take damp and mould very seriously, as your safety is our top priority.

We try to act as quickly as possible when we are told about cases where it has the potential to affect people's health.

Damp and mould is common in UK homes, but that is not to say that it is unimportant, or that you should not tell us about it.

In some cases, damp and mould are caused by problems with the

buildings themselves, so we are putting together a programme of work to fix this.

It may be that we need to work with you to find the cause of the problem so it can be solved.

If you have damp and mould problems, please email us so we can investigate. We will prioritise those with health conditions or other issues.

We have recently updated our advice on this, which you can find on our website by visiting:

www.adur-worthing.gov.uk/damp-and-mould



Condensation on a window and mould on a wall



ASBESTOS

Earlier this year we wrote to all of our tenants and leaseholders with information about asbestos.

If your home was built before 2000, it almost certainly has asbestos in it - but that is not a reason for you to be worried.

Asbestos was routinely used in house-building, including in ceilings, insulation and floor tiles. If it is in good condition, it is often best to leave it where it is.

We have a responsibility as the landlord to monitor and manage asbestos in Adur Homes properties.

Every year we will be surveying the communal areas of our buildings and garage sites and

carrying out any work necessary to prevent people being put at risk by asbestos. This could involve either replacing asbestos materials or containing them to prevent them being a hazard.

We also carry out a survey whenever a tenant moves out of a property and before we carry out work on any of our properties where there are tenants.

If you are a tenant of ours and suspect that there could be damaged asbestos in your home, please contact us immediately. Don't try to remove or repair it yourself - some asbestos can only be removed by a registered, qualified expert.



We will take immediate action, which in some cases could mean we have to move you into a new property in the short term while we make your home safe.

You can find out more about asbestos on the HSE website: www.hse.gov.uk/asbestos

BALCONIES

You may have seen that we have put fencing at ground floor level around some of our blocks in Southwick.

In December we received a survey report which said there were some issues with the balconies at Coates Court, Locks Court, Grange Court and Sea House, due to the age of the building.

Your safety is our top priority so we decided to immediately fence off the areas around these balconies while we carry out structural work on those four blocks.

That work should be completed this summer but we have told everyone living there not to use their balconies until then. We're sorry that this is necessary, but safety has to come first.

We have seen no evidence that any of our other properties are affected by the same issues, but if you have any concerns about your balcony, please get in touch.



UNWANTED ITEMS AND OBSTRUCTIONS

Over the last year we've run a series of waste amnesty events across Adur to help you dispose of larger items that you can't easily get to the tip.

Those events have helped clear items such as beds, mattresses and kitchen appliances which could otherwise have been clogging up your homes. We're going to hold more of them through the year and will tell you when we'll be in your area.

What you must not do is leave items in the communal corridors of our blocks, or outdoors away from the bin areas. Items like bikes and prams left in our corridors are a fire risk and could also obstruct you, your neighbours or rescue workers if there is an emergency.

If you see any items that have been left in corridors or fly-tipped

outside, please tell us urgently so we can tackle it for your safety.

Fly-tipping is also a criminal offence and we will prosecute those who we can prove have done it.

Please also ensure that any motorbikes or mobility scooters are left in the appropriate designated areas, safely away from buildings to prevent any risk of fire.



FIRE SAFETY

New rules have come into force to help keep you safe in the event of a fire, so in the coming weeks you may see members of our team carrying out inspections.

We're checking all communal fire doors in all of our blocks that are three or more storeys high to make sure they are in good condition. We'll be repeating this every three months.

It's very important that fire doors are never propped open or damaged, or they will not help keep you or your neighbours safe in an emergency.

This includes not screwing or drilling into the doors or their frames. Door bells, for example, must only be fixed in place with adhesive.

If you notice damage to any fire doors please tell us straight away so we can fix or replace them.

We're also replacing the front doors of all our flats in blocks that have communal hallways and balconies, to give you greater protection if a fire breaks out. These new doors will be checked every year.

It's also important that you check every month that your smoke detectors are working, and that you never tamper or disable them. If you do not have a working smoke detector, please contact us.

There should be fire action notices (pictured right) on display in your block. Please read them so you understand exactly what you need to do in an emergency.



Fire Action Notice

IF A FIRE BREAKS OUT IN YOUR HOME:

- Get everyone out of your flat, then close the front door behind you and leave by the nearest exit.
- Call the fire service by dialling 999 or 112 from a mobile and wait outside, away from the building.

IF YOU SEE OR HEAR A FIRE IN ANOTHER FLAT:

- The building is designed to contain a fire in the flat where it starts. This means it will usually be safe for you to stay in your own flat if the fire is elsewhere.
- You must leave immediately if smoke or fire affect your home or if told to do so by the Fire & Rescue Service.

IF YOU DISCOVER A FIRE IN THE COMMUNAL AREAS:

- Leave by the nearest available exit
- Call the fire service by dialling 999 or 112 from a mobile and wait outside, away from the building.

Do not return to the building until the Fire & Rescue Service confirms it is safe to do so.