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Welcome to the December housing newsletter.

December is always such a busy time preparing for the main event. We are here if you need to talk about any financial concerns or if you're struggling to pay your rent or bills. Check out the useful contacts in the planning for Christmas article or pop along to the community hub. Read how we are progressing with the retrofit programme (Energy saving homes). We have now published the 2022/23 housing annual report, do take a moment to read the online version of the report, to see how we are performing.



ENERGY SAVING HOMES

Energy Saving Homes

We are in the process of making changes to our housing stock so that energy/fuel consumption and carbon emissions can be reduced. These changes will provide a more comfortable, warmer and healthier home with lower energy bills.

Our aim is to carry out health checks on all properties that have an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) D and below. This will help us understand the energy elements in your property: items such as wall types, floor types, insulation depths, window, and door conditions etc. We have completed 500 homes, and our aim is to complete 800 energy assessments by the end of the year. The Energy Assessments/Health Checks have led to the development of a number of Energy Improvement Projects, upgrading and replacing Cavity Wall Insulation, Upgrading and replacing Loft Insulation, upgrading and replacing Ventilation/extract fans and Whole House Energy Upgrades. These programmes are in development as well as delivery stages and will continue to expand as we progress into 2024.

We have also carried out 3 test projects to trial Internal Wall Insulation in the Void properties. The properties have been upgraded with: Loft insulation, Cavity wall insulation, Internal wall insulation, new windows and doors, new heating systems and solar panels.

For further information visit the [website](#).

HOUSING FOR WINCHESTER
2022/23
ANNUAL REPORT

Welcome...

It seems strange for Chris and I to introduce an annual report to you when neither of us were involved in the housing service in Winchester.

I started as Strategic Director in February 2022 and Councilor Chris Winchester became Cabinet Member for Housing in May this year.

I hope you will agree that the housing service has demonstrated good performance across a range of services last year. It is well placed, is in good stead to rise to the challenges that we will need to address. The retrofit programme to better insulate our properties will not just be the cost of running your home in the face of the higher energy costs, which also do well to be a benefit to the climate. This is new Government legislation

about how we engage and work with you on the services that we provide and I believe I will be more work going forward to help us take better decisions upon what you tell us. The current national economic context will require us to ensure we are achieving best value for the services and value to you. Home Inside in its April Report says we have been pleased to work towards achieving our four themes of **Greener, Faster, Cost of Living, Pride in Place and Listening Better**.

I hope that next year we will be able to report to you on a year of real better performance and demonstrate how we have addressed the challenges we face.



Contact us at the touch of a button

Visit <https://mywinchesterany.winchester.gov.uk/> or tel no 247 to access lots of useful services including:

- Check your account balance and view next statements
- Report a non-urgent repair
- Check repair appointments
- Make payments
- Send and receive messages



Produced in partnership with Winchester City Council and its landlords



Housing Annual Report 2022/23

We are pleased to bring to you the housing annual report, which is full of our achievements for the last year. See how we are performing and what our plans are looking ahead.

Click [here](#) to read more.



South Coast Training

This October 50 delegates from 9 social housing providers across the south coast attended tenant specific training, provided by South Coast Training in Southampton. five Winchester City Council tenants gave up their Saturday to learn more about 'helping residents to make a difference and the importance of scrutiny' South Coast Training has been going for twenty years and provide training twice a year to social tenants in the south coast area.

This is a great opportunity for like-minded tenants to get-together and network.

Lin Mellish from Kings Worthy said", I look forward to these events, never too old to learn and it is good to have an opportunity to meet tenants from other areas and at the same time keep up with changes in the law that are relevant to me as a tenant. The lunch is always good too!!"

If you would like to know more about getting involved and having your say click [here](#)



New Repairs Email

We have now a dedicated repairs email, if you want to email report a repair via email. The new email is housingrepairs@winchester.gov.uk

Other ways to raise a repair:

Telephone

- Call Customer Services on **01962 848 400**
- Out of hours on **01962 865 405**

Online

- Using [My Winchester Tenancy](#) - our Self Service Portal for Tenants
 - E-mail to housingrepairs@winchester.gov.uk
-

Unit 12 Pantry Community Hub



Join us for a FREE cuppa and a bite to eat at the Community Hub at Unit 12, and gain friendly advice, information and signposting around the cost of living.

Winchester City Council Officers and experts from partner organisations will be on hand to answer questions on increasing your income, reviewing benefits, relieving debt, keeping your private or council tenancy and much more!

No need to book, just come along. You're welcome to bring babies/ children along too.

Every 3rd Thursday of the month | 10.30am - 12.30am

Unit 12 Community Food Pantry, Winnall Valley Rd, Winchester SO23 0LD

For more information, please contact Wellbeing & Inclusion Officer, [Charlotte Bailey](#)

01962 848 26



Planning for Christmas

Need support? Let's talk. Let's work it out together.

Please contact the Housing Income Team on [email](#) or send a message via [My Winchester Tenancy](#) or telephone 01962 848 205.

For top tips and advice please visit our dedicated [web page](#) full of tips and advice.

Other useful websites to help you

- [Winchester City Council cost of living website](#)
 - [Winchester City Council Tenancy Sustainment website](#)
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STOP LOANS

Intervention . Support

Loan Sharks

The cost-of-living crisis has left many people struggling to make ends meet. One consequence is that loan sharks are taking advantage of this hardship. With Christmas fast approaching and festive spending in full swing, we want to warn you about the risks of illegal money lending.

Learn how to spot a loan shark and avoid falling into their clutches.

- When borrowing money, check that your lender is genuine, loan sharks operate illegally and without permission from the Financial Conduct Authority. Check the firm is registered on the Financial Service Register.
 - Never send money, give financial or personal information or copies of documents to people you don't know or trust.
 - If you are worried that you, or a friend or family member is being taken advantage of by a loan shark contact the Stop Loan Sharks 24/7 support line on 0300 555 2222. Find help [here](#).
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Tea Party for Sheltered Residents

An annual tea party event to help combat loneliness among Winchester City Council sheltered housing scheme tenants has been hailed a success by attendees.

The tea party, which took place on 25 October at St Peters Church Hall in Bishops Waltham, was attended by 50 elderly tenants from Bishops Waltham, Wickham, and Swanmore.

Attendees were treated to a performance by Vintage Entertainer Dawn Gracie, a variety of 50's and 60's music and a raffle that raised £129 towards the Mayor of Winchester's charities.

Attendees shared their thoughts with staff at the event, with one attendee stating that it made "a very nice change".

The daughter of another attendee hailed the event as a "great afternoon",

adding that there was a “great social side for those living alone – mum really enjoyed it”

The event itself is an annual tenant-led initiative, organised by a small team of four Winchester tenants, led by tenant and member of the Tenants and Councils Together (TACT) tenants’ forum, Monica Gill.

Support was also provided by Winchester City Council’s Sheltered Housing Team and the council’s property services contractor, Osborne.



Damp and Mould

What is Condensation, Damp and Mould?

Condensation is the most common kind of damp. It is caused by moist air condensing on walls, particularly in rooms with a lot of air moisture.

Condensation can be exacerbated by poor ventilation and heating that

comes on and off, as this allows warm, damp air to condense. You may notice water droplets on windows or walls, see dark mould appearing, particularly on glass or around windows, and/or notice an unpleasant smell.

This can provide ideal conditions for mould especially mildew which causes black patches on walls and fabric. If you have mould in your home you're more likely to have respiratory problems, such as respiratory infections, [allergies](#) or [asthma](#). Damp and mould can also affect the immune system. Condensation can damage your home, your clothes, furniture and personal effects, so when you see it form, it is very important that you should wipe it away with a cloth.

What you can do for a healthy home:

- Keep lids on your pans when cooking
- Dry clothing outside, or vent any laundry appliances such as tumble-dryers or heated airers
- If you need to dry laundry indoors, do this in a closed room where you can open a window – the bathroom is best
- Wipe down wet windowsills and frames every day when you wake up
- Ventilate your home by opening windows or trickle vents – ideally first thing in the morning and when you are washing or cooking.
- When showering, bathing and cooking, close the door to the room so that the moist air can't travel to other rooms including the bedrooms where it could condense and cause mould.
- Use the extractor fan when you're cooking, showering, or bathing, leave any window vents open, and don't block off any other vents.
- Make sure air can circulate by leaving gaps between the wall and any furniture and belongings Keep a warm home (ideally 18 °C).
- Don't overfill your wardrobes so air can circulate inside.

If you need to report any damp or mould issues please email the [housing repairs team](#) or call the Council repairs line on 01962 848 400 or if it's outside of normal opening hours on 01962 865 405



Frozen Condense Pipes on a Boiler

Frozen condense pipes are one of the most common winter problems with modern boilers and during extreme cold weather conditions accounts for the highest percentage of repairs call outs. If part of your condense pipework is outside, then in very cold weather it may freeze which could cause your boiler to stop working.

Whilst the Council tries to attend to emergency repairs within its published timescales, this may not be possible during bad weather as road conditions may be treacherous. Phone waiting times may be longer during these times as multiple tenants might be phoning in at the same time.

If your condense pipework has frozen your boiler may show the following error codes:

- Vaillant: F29, F68 or F77
- Remeha/Baxi: E4
- Potterton: E133

When pipework freezes you may want to try the following easy fixes before contacting the Council as you may be able to fix the problem quicker than the council will be able to get to you.

You can use warm water – not boiling – heated by a kettle or a microwave and pour over the end of the pipe where it is frozen using a container like a watering can, ensuring any excess water is mopped up afterwards to prevent ice puddles forming.

Once the pipe has thawed you should re-set your boiler by holding in the re-set button for 3-10 seconds and wait for the boiler to re-fire (the reset button may be clearly marked “**RESET**” or “**R**” or it may be highlighted by a picture of a flame with a line through it).

If you have tried either of the above and the boiler is still not working, please email the [housing repairs team](#) or call the Council repairs line on 01962 848 400 or if it's outside of normal opening hours on 01962 865 405

The 5 C's

Do you know the **5Cs** and how you can keep you and your family safe this winter?

- **Carbon monoxide (CO)** - Is known as the silent killer. CO poisoning occurs when any fuel-burning appliance has not been properly installed or maintained, or in cases of poor ventilation.
- **Cooking** - never leave cooking unattended. Switch off the oven or hob when you have finished cooking and take pans off the heat. Keep electrical leads, tea towels and clothing away from the oven and hob remember to clean your grill, hob, and oven regularly. A build-up of grease and fat can catch fire whilst cooking

- **Candles** - Candles at Christmas, to scent a room and to give a winter's night a warm glow, but left unattended, an open flame can destroy your home in minutes. For more information click [here](#)
- **Clothing** – Don't dry clothes on electric heaters.
- **Chimneys**

For more information click [here](#)

Fire Safety

If you have any concerns about fire safety we are here to help you.

- Report it through [My Council Services](#) – you don't need an account you can report concerns using the guest option at the bottom left
- If you're unable to report your concern online contact Housing on 01962 848 400 or [email](#) the repairs team.
- If you'd prefer to discuss your concern with a TACT (Tenants and Council Together – the council's formal consultation group) tenant representative. Call the Tenant Involvement Team on Freephone 0800 716 987.

Merry Christmas Wishes - from Gillian Knight Corporate Head of Housing

This time of year can be challenging for anyone experiencing financial or health issues, and the current cost of living crisis means many more people are really struggling to make ends meet this winter. If you are worried about money – from paying the rent to buying food - please get in touch as there is support available to help you at this time. And remember, the perfect Christmas doesn't mean spending lots of money – it's about being with the

people we love and giving thanks for what we have.

As 2023 draws to a close I would like to thank everyone who has paid their rent and service charges on time – this ensures we can invest into your homes and neighbourhoods and deliver our services. We look forward to the year ahead when we plan to deliver on ambitious plans for the future including making further improvements to homes and neighbourhoods, delivering more affordable homes and enhancing support.

I should like to personally invite you to get involved with us in 2024 so that you can play a role in shaping our priorities. Feedback from tenants and leaseholders is essential in helping us to ensure our services meet your needs, so if you're not already involved with the council please do [get in touch](#) to find out how you can be.

I look forward to meeting more of you in 2024, and in the meantime please enjoy the festive period.

I hope your home is filled with laughter, love and good health this Christmas.

Christmas and New Year opening hours.

The council offices will be closed from **5pm on Friday 22 December 2023** until **8.30am on Tuesday 2 January 2024**.

Over this time, in the event of an emergency, you can call 01962 865 407. For housing repair emergencies, call 01962 865 405. You can also continue to report any issues [online](#). All non-urgent enquiries will be dealt with from 2 January 2024.

If you have any comments on this newsletter or any suggestions on what you would like to hear about please contact us by [email](#)



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