



Welcome to the March housing newsletter!

Within this newsletter, read about the Housing Ombudsman Complaint handling code, which will be coming into effect as of April, this will help to provide a positive, fair, and efficient service to our customers.

Read about how you can get involved in shaping our services with the 4 new Consumer Standards Groups. Which are set by the [Regulator for Social Housing](#).

Lots of help is available if you are struggling in paying your rent or with the cost of living. Look out for our contractor 'Osborne Property Services' they will be rebranded as Cardo.



Electric Vehicle charging points

A network of fast and rapid electric vehicle charging points (EVCPs) has been installed in public car parks across the Winchester district.

Visit the [website](#) to find out the locations

The cost to use these EVCPs is measured in accordance with the kilowatt hours (kWh) or electricity used. The per kWh costs are located on the side of each Mer unit or can be accessed [here](#).



Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code

The Housing Ombudsman have launched their Complaint Handling Code. Following the Social Housing (Regulation) Act, the Housing Ombudsman's Code will become statutory from 1st April 2024.

This statutory code promotes a positive complaints culture across the social housing sector and ensures residents will result in best practice in complaint handling and ultimately better services for our residents.

We see the release of this code as an opportunity to reflect on our complaint handling and to make improvements where necessary to deliver better services to you.

Good complaint handling follows the Housing Ombudsman's Dispute Resolution Principles. They are:

- Be fair – treat people fairly and follow fair processes
- Put things right
- Learn from outcomes

Applications are open for our next Housing Ombudsman Resident Panel

The Housing Ombudsman are inviting social housing residents in England to apply to join our Resident Panel and contribute to the work we do to improve residents' lives through landlords' services.

As a member of the panel, residents will share experiences and suggest improvements through regular meetings and virtual discussions with the Ombudsman.

This is an exciting opportunity for you to be part of the Ombudsman's vision

to embed a positive complaint handling culture across the sector and make sure residents' views are heard.

The aim is to have a panel representative of the diverse demographic of residents living in social housing across England. The panel will be made up of residents living in all types of social housing – tenants and leaseholders of local authority, housing association or co-operative landlords.

Applications are open now and will close on **30 April 2024**. The Housing Ombudsman reserve the right to close applications early if there is an exceptionally high level of interest.

[Join the Housing Ombudsman Resident Panel | Housing Ombuds \(housingombudsman.org.uk\)](https://housingombudsman.org.uk)



To raise a formal stage 1 complaint with Winchester City Council please fill in the [online complaints form](#) and you will be given a reference number for your complaint. You can also request a printed copy of the complaints form from our Customer Service Centre by telephone on 01962 840 222 or by the following:

- Directly to an officer of the council
- Via social media - Facebook and Twitter

- In writing to Winchester City Council, Colebrook Street, Winchester, Hants, SO23 9LJ

If you have been through all stages of the complaints procedure and remain dissatisfied with the response or at any stage you feel we have not handled your complaint in line with our policy, you can ask the [Housing Ombudsman](#) and they may be able to investigate how we dealt with the matter.

The contact details for the Housing Ombudsman Service are:

- [Online complaint form:](#)
- Phone: 0300 111 3000
- [Email:](#)
- Postal address: Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool L33 7WQ



We asked, You said, We did Listening Better Survey Results

In October / November last year a survey was carried out asking what would appeal or work best when talking to all tenants about how to improve the service you receive from Winchester City Council Housing.

492 respondents returned the survey. We were particularly interested in finding out what appealed to younger tenants as one of the key results from last years Tenant Satisfaction Measures survey told us that younger households are less happy with their housing service compared to older tenants.

<p>Under 35s - preferred methods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email (23%) • WhatsApp/Text survey (11%) • Community events (11%) 	<p>Under 35s - least attractive methods</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anniversary calls (4%) • Council officers attend a group you already go to (4%) • Talking outside schools and supermarket (5%) • Task & finish focus groups (4%)
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<p>Key factors to tenants engaging across all age groups.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quick • Online • Incentives offered. • Evidence of making a difference 	
<p>Key factors to engaging – under 35s</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online (27%) • Quick (24%) 	<p>Key factors to engaging – 35 – 44 years</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quick (25%) • Online (21%) • Incentives (18%)

Information was also given about the possible development of an Advisory Group.

What has happened with these survey results?

These results fed into the development of the Housing Engagement and

Communication Plan which went to Housing Cabinet on 5th February 2024. [Minutes and Reports can be found on the Cabinet Committee: Housing web pages.](#)

The decision was made that an Advisory Board is established. This will be known as the TACT (Tenants and Council Together) Board. Non-councillor TACT board members will receive payment for attendance at the TACT board, and that the draft Housing Engagement and Communication Plan be approved.

See article below for further information about the new structure. If you requested more information, you will receive something straight to your email inbox.



Housing Engagement - How you can be involved in your housing service

We are excited to announce that recruitment for tenants / leaseholders / shared owners to get involved in having a voice in the direction, monitoring and performance of Winchester City Council Housing is about to begin. The 4 TACT members will be paid for their time for this position.

Whatever your interest there is something for you. We will be recruiting 4 tenants / leaseholders or shared owners to be members of the TACT Board and 2 independent members, (if you know of someone not living in a WCC

property that might be interested let them know). The Board will challenge performance and drive change and be reimbursed for their time.

We will also be recruiting to the 4 new Consumer Standards Groups. These will mirror the standards as set by the [Regulator for Social Housing](#)

- **The Safety and Quality Homes Standard** focuses on ensuring that landlords understand the condition of all their homes and make use of that data to provide safe, quality homes.
- **The Transparency, Influence, and Accountability Standard:** the standard requires landlords to be transparent with tenants, treat them fairly and respectfully so they can access services. Tenants must be able to voice concerns where necessary, influence decisions, and hold the landlord accountable.
- **The Neighbourhood and Community Standard:** Landlords need to engage with relevant parties to ensure tenants live in secure, well-maintained neighbourhoods and feel safe in their homes.
- **The Tenancy Standard:** These standard outlines fair allocation and letting of homes, as well as requirements for managing tenancies by landlords.

We will continue to carry out the other engagement activities you are used to - online tenant surveys, smaller focus group discussions, local engagement activities as well as looking to introduce new ideas.

If you would like to know more about these roles or put yourself forward, please get in touch. tenantinvolvement@winchester.gov.uk or 0800 716 987

Watch this space for more details.

Rent rise we are here to help!

In April your rent will increase by 7.7% in line with inflation. Your rent money

pays for important works to improve your homes and neighbourhoods so the increase will ensure we can continue to carry out essential improvements such as redecorating communal areas, installing new kitchens and bathrooms, and fitting new doors and windows.

We have capped service charges at 7.7% for next year but we are starting review to challenge cost of services and move towards full cost recovery. You should have received a letter recently outlining your new rent amount and, if relevant, your new service charges. We have capped service charges at 7.7% for next year but we are starting review to challenge cost of services and move towards full cost recovery.

If you are worried or concerned about paying your rent, please contact the Rents Team on 01962 848 205, or [email the income team.](#) or our Financial Inclusion Officer, [Mary Struthers](#), on 01962 848 124 or [email](#), who can assist you with benefits advice, food vouchers and accessing other services such as Citizens Advice.

Our Tenancy Sustainment Team are also on hand to assist you with:

- Checking your benefit eligibility and maximising your income
- Food vouchers and Food bank referrals
- Accessing other support services

If you – or someone you know – would benefit from their help and advice, please contact our Tenancy Sustainment Team:

- Visit the [Tenancy Sustainment webpage](#)
- [Email](#) Tenancy Sustainment Team
- Telephone 01962 814 918

For more information on the support you can access, visit the following web pages:

[Winchester City Cost of Living](#) [Winchester City Council Benefits](#)



New Development at Winnall

Works are almost complete for the new development at Winnall which includes new homes for shared ownership and for private rent. This means that from 4 March, the homes will be available to rent and for sale. If you'd like to know more about the homes available, please visit ventaliving.co.uk theorchids.com. We're really proud of the new homes which have been built to high energy standards and look forward to them becoming homes to people.

**Osborne Property Services will be rebranded
as Cardo**

As of the 18 March 2024, Osborne Property Services will be rebranded as Cardo.

Any appointment letters, reminder texts, or customer communications will be sent out with a “banner” on them, alerting the customer that the business name is changing. Please see example below of the banner and logo. Any customer contacting the Cardo Group call centres, will hear a prerecorded message, explaining the branding change.

Please be advised that other than the company name and business branding change taking place it is very much business as usual



The Danger of Calor Gas

Portable gas heaters (also known as calor gas heaters) can put you at risk as they produce carbon monoxide and nitrogen dioxide which are highly toxic gases. Carbon monoxide is colourless and odourless and is extremely dangerous if not properly vented.

We strongly advise that if you should use a calor gas heater that you ensure you have a working carbon monoxide alarm positioned very close to the heater.

Calor gas heaters also generate very high levels of moisture which is released into the air. This will increase the humidity in your home and lead to condensation. If condensation is not dried each day from windows and walls, then there is likelihood that mould will occur which can be very harmful to health.



How to report a fire concern

If you have a fire concern in your property or internal communal areas. Please report any concerns about fire safety in your home.

- [Online form](#) (if you don't have an account simply use the guest option)
- Phone Housing on 01962 848 400
- Email housing@winchester.gov.uk
- Talk to a tenant representative from TACT – call the Tenant Involvement Team on Freephone 0800 716 987

For more information on fire management please visit the [website](#)

My Winchester Tenancy

It's never been easier to access our services at the touch of a button, saving you time waiting on the phone. You can now access the following services

- Check your account balance
- View and print rent statements
- Report a non-urgent repair
- Check repair appointments
- Make payment
- Update your personal information
- Send and receive messages

Click [here](#) to register for this quick 24/7 service.



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