



Housing News

Information Bulletin from Wigan and Leigh Housing

No. 42, December 2005

Kids are calendar hits



housing
matters



Artistic primary school children from around the borough provided the pictures that feature in our colourful Wigan and Leigh Housing Calendar 2006.

The pictures were chosen from over 1,000 entries in our Art Competition for Schools that took place during the company's marketing week in June. Children aged between 5 and 11 years of age were asked to draw a picture based on the theme "Where I Live". The calendar shows that we have some creative and imaginative artistic talent amongst our young people.

Our Editorial Board that includes a tenant, councillor and independent Board member representative

choose the content of our quarterly newsletter and Christmas calendar. The Editorial Board was so impressed with the quality of the pictures that they decided that we should produce a Leigh edition and Wigan edition of the calendar this year. Each edition features pictures produced by children from schools from either the Leigh or Wigan sides of the borough.

The calendar was delivered to all Council tenants and leaseholders during December and copies have also been provided to tenants and residents groups, Board members, councillors and partner organisations.

Contact: Phil Brown - ☎ 01942 486535

New partner contractor

Wigan and Leigh Housing has recently begun to work with another partner contractor following Council approval of the appointment of A. Connolly Limited of Aspull to a new painting contract.

A. Connolly Limited won the tender to carry out redecoration to all the communal rooms, staircases and reception facilities in sheltered and grouped schemes in the borough. The painting contractor will also carry out decorating works in housing offices managed by Wigan and Leigh Housing.

The 5 year partnering contract valued at over £1million commenced in December 2005. During the period of the contract it is expected that all of the sheltered and grouped schemes with communal facilities will be upgraded.-----

Contact: - Mike Sterlicchi ☎ 01942 705846

Board member appointment

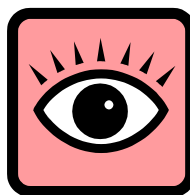
Wigan Council recently agreed to amend the Articles of Association of the company to allow Wigan and Leigh Housing to appoint an additional board member to the parent board.

Deborah Lee has been co-opted on to the Wigan and Leigh Housing Board to provide expertise on financial and accounting matters. Deborah is a qualified accountant with over 20 years experience in local government finance. She is currently employed as Assistant Director of Finance at Knowsley Borough Council.

Deborah was welcomed on to the parent Board at the December meeting.

Contact: - Jeff Prescott ☎ 01942 486511

An eye for trouble



Our Tenancy Relations Team has recently added another weapon to our armoury in the battle against anti-social behaviour.

We have purchased CCTV monitoring equipment that can be used to monitor difficult cases where the tenants affected are reluctant to give evidence for fear of reprisals. These types of cases are very frustrating because the nuisance is usually persistent, serious and very difficult to resolve without the necessary evidence.

In the most serious cases we make use of professional witnesses but this has to be carefully considered because the cost is expensive. In addition, the anti-social activities may not occur during the period that the professional witness is on site and so the return on our investment can be poor.

The new CCTV equipment allows us to carry out 24 hour monitoring and recording with footage transmitted back to a computer or laptop located anywhere. The cameras can also be automatically controlled from the computer giving us the ability to record events as they happen.

We will be monitoring the success of the new equipment to assess how successful we are in dealing with the cases that are filmed.

Contact: - Mike Grimes ☎ 01942 705738

Township champions

The Wigan and Leigh Housing Board has recently agreed a new approach to the company's involvement with the Council's Township Programme.

Staff from Wigan and Leigh Housing have always been prepared to attend Township Forums when there has been a housing issue on the agenda. Now that the Forums have matured the company has revisited this earlier decision and, as part of our Visioning of the Company, decided that we should become more involved in broader initiatives that improve the quality of life of our customers.

In the past we had presumed that Area Housing Managers were best placed to represent the company on the ground at local level. This presented practical problems, not least because there are less of them than there are Townships and the boundaries of the Townships and housing areas are different.

The Board has agreed that the company will now be represented by senior managers who have volunteered to fill the role of "Township Champion". Twelve volunteers, including many of our most experienced managers have offered to attend the Forum meetings and be the voice of Wigan and Leigh Housing. A number have indicated that they would like to be the representative in the area in which they live as they would have existing knowledge and it would enable them to give something back to their local community at the same time.

Contact: - Tony Gerrard ☎ 01942 486509

A Contact Centre Christmas Carol



This was the theme of the quarterly consultation event held at Dorset Road Community Centre in Atherton on 10th November.

Staff and tenants got together pantomime style in Scrooge versus the Contact Centre. Needless to say with convincing characters like Mandy Marley and Whizbang Wizard Scrooge was bowled over with the Contact Centre service.

The run-around workshops proved a great success. Customers views were sought on a wide range of issues relating directly to improving the Contact Centre, including security, information technology and setting standards.

The key points from the workshops were:

- Publicise use of the contact centre more
- Have a text/e-mail 24 hour dedicated service

The "Get your Repairs Right" quiz was well received with customers chancing their luck at working out the standard times for carrying out different repairs.

Feedback from the event was very positive with 93% finding it fun and challenging. 86% indicated that they felt they had the opportunity to

give their views and influence the service. Comments included "Very educational and friendly", "Many questions answered" and "Really enjoyable".

The next consultation event is to be held at Wigan Town Hall on Wednesday 22nd February. The event will focus on the grounds maintenance service, estate caretaking service, police community support officers, the townships and neighbourhood renewal.

Contact: - Patsy Murray ☎ 01942 705702

UK Housing Awards 2005

Our Tenant Participation Service was recently selected as a finalist in the category of "Excellence in Customer Empowerment" in the UK Housing Awards 2005.

A group representing staff, tenant board members and tenants attended the awards ceremony at the Park Lane Hilton in London. Unfortunately, we did not win the category award but everyone had an enjoyable day and felt proud to be representing Wigan and Leigh Housing at a major national event.

Aragon Housing Association, was the winner of the "Excellence in Customer Empowerment" category and the overall winner of the UK Housing Award 2005 was Peterborough Borough Council.

Contact: - Peter Gee ☎ 01942 486507

Complaints are reducing

The number of complaints registered by our customers in the first six months of 2005/06 show a significant decrease on the figures for the latter part of 2004/05.

In the last quarter of 2004/05 206 complaints were received. This year in quarter 1 there were 128 and in quarter 2 109.

Of the 237 complaints received this half-year, 157 were justified. The Maintenance and Development Section, responsible for delivering our massive improvement programme, received the highest volume of complaints with 91.

87.8% of complaints were responded to within 10 working days against the target of 96%. This is a significant improvement on the 71.9% at the end of 2004/05 and we are confident that with the increased tracking possible with the new computer system we will be able to continue to improve performance.

Poor customer care, incomplete work and poor quality of work were the main reasons for complaint and we recognise that we need to identify corrective action and take steps to improve these areas of the service.

120 tenants returned satisfaction surveys in 2004/05 telling us whether they thought their complaint had been handled satisfactorily. 36% were satisfied with the complaints service although over 60% of those returning survey forms in the final quarter (after the implementation of the new complaints procedure) were satisfied with how their complaint had been handled.

Our Complaints Evaluation Panel, including Council tenants, has considered the trends in complaints performance and recommended a number of actions points to the Complaints Steering Group that is seeking to extract any learning for the organisation that can be drawn from the information we receive and meet the challenge to continue to improve performance.

Contact: - Sue Brocklebank ☎ 01942 486536