

OCTOBER 2010



housing matters

Housing Matters is the newsletter for Medway Council tenants and leaseholders

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Information for tenants

Below you will find a list of useful numbers for council services. Please cut this out and retain for your future reference.

Repairs

Urgent and non-urgent repairs inside normal working hours. Phone: 01634 333601
Email: maintenancehousing support@medway.gov.uk

Out-of-hours

Emergency repairs such as a burst pipe or unsecured front door outside of office hours. Phone: 01634 304400

Gas

Problem with your boiler or gas fire. Phone: 01634 733488

Council customer services

General council enquiries. Phone: 01634 333333
Email: info@medway.gov.uk

Housing benefit / council tax

Housing benefit and council tax enquiries. Phone: 01634 332222
Email: ctax@medway.gov.uk

Bulky items collection

Got a sofa, fridge or washing machine you want to get rid of? Arrange collection. Phone: 01634 333333

MeRGe

Medway Residents' Group, working for the benefit of the council's tenants. Monitoring and influencing council policy and performance. Phone: 01634 570037
Email: mergegroup@btinternet.com

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Look out for our first **annual report to tenants** which is posted out with this issue of *Housing Matters*.

On the cover

- if you would like to see one of your pictures on the cover, please send it to the Freepost address below or to the following email address: tenant.participation@medway.gov.uk
If we use your photo, you will win £25.

FREEPOST ADDRESS FOR ALL CORRESPONDENCE

Tenant Participation, Freepost Licence No. RRXB-CCXR-JGZJ, Medway Council, Housing Services, Gun Wharf Level 2, Dock Road Chatham, Kent, ME4 4TR

Or email tenant.participation@medway.gov.uk

Please make sure you put *Housing Matters* in the subject line.

Dear resident

Welcome to our latest edition of *Housing Matters*. I hope you have all been having a good summer. Staff here in Housing Services have been busy since our last edition, developing services and driving improvements which I hope you are all starting to recognise and involving customers in consultation events. Here are some highlights of what we have been up to since our last edition

Tenant Services Authority

Since April the Tenant Services Authority has been our new regulator and it is responsible for ensuring that we comply with the national standards it has set and that we consult and involve customers properly and have plans to develop services in the future.

This month, along with other social housing providers, we have to provide a report to our tenants, with a copy to the Tenant Services Authority, about how we are doing in delivering against the standards that have been set. We have consulted with tenants through surveys, meetings and our tenants' forums. That feedback has shaped the final version. A full copy of the report is included with this edition of *Housing Matters* and is available on our website www.medway.gov.uk.

Customer involvement

We have also been making progress in ensuring there are a number of ways in which tenants and leaseholders can get involved in developing our services. We have made a number of improvements in this area and more are to come. If you would like to join one of our forums which cover repairs, leaseholders, caretaking or sheltered housing give Katherine Clark, Community Development Officer a call on 01634 333201 to find out when the next forum is to be held.

Staff re-structure

Since the last *Housing Matters* was published we have had a staff restructure. One specific area of improvement we hope you will notice is that we have moved our Housing Support Team, the staff who take calls about repairs, to our corporate Customer First Team. Over the next few months we will be working with the team to extend the hours in which you can report

repairs. From 1 November, we hope to have arrangements in place that will allow you to report repairs from 8am to 8pm each weekday and also on Saturday mornings.

Housing maintenance improvements

We have now started further work to tenants' homes to bring them up to the Decent Homes Standard by Christmas 2010. We hope that all tenants, who either had improvement work carried out last year or are now having them done, enjoy the benefit of living in more modern homes. Please tell us what you think about the way in which we have carried out the work by completing our surveys.

New void policy

We have produced a new policy on managing our void properties. This now includes an incentive scheme to encourage tenants to leave their property in a clean and tidy condition, when they move out. This should reduce repair costs and allow us to get new tenants in more quickly, reducing the rent lost between tenancies. The new incentive scheme will be reviewed in six months to check how successful it has been.

Resident involvement review

As part of our recognition that we need to get better at involving customers, we are reviewing our resident involvement service with a particular eye on value for money. A range of customers has been involved in this independent review and the results will be set out in a report due by mid-October. We will provide more details on the outcome of this review in our next edition.

I hope you find this edition of *Housing Matters* useful and informative and we want you to tell us what you think. We value feedback, particularly around what works well and what we need to change. If you have any ideas or suggestions let us know by emailing housing@medway.gov.uk or by phoning 01634 333201.

Yours sincerely,

Deborah Upton

Assistant Director Housing & Corporate Services

People Bank pays dividends

The People Bank is the group of residents who have expressed an interest in getting more involved with the housing service through surveys, focus groups or as resident representatives. It has grown rapidly over recent months and now stands at 800 tenants and leaseholders; that's around a quarter of our residents who want to take a more active role in improving the housing service.

It has taken a little while to sort through the information residents have provided, but we have now begun to approach People Bank members with invitations to take part in a number of new initiatives. These include the Repairs Focus Group, where a group of up to a dozen residents meet with council repairs staff and our contractor Mears, to monitor the repairs service, suggest ways we could do it better and give their opinions on our ideas for improving the service.

People Bank members have also been invited to take part in the Leaseholder Forum, which was set up in March this year, following a leaseholder information day. This group comprises half a dozen leaseholders, who have provided feedback on our leaseholder handbook, a gas servicing deal that we are working on with our maintenance contractor and other aspects of the leaseholder service. Carol Thompson, a member of the forum, gives her

perspective in our Leaseholder Corner section on pages 12 and 13.

We have also invited People Bank members to join an editorial board to help us make this newsletter, *Housing Matters*, a more relevant, readable and attractive publication. So if you don't like the layout of this edition, or you feel the articles are boring or written with too much jargon, then why not join the editorial board?

The opportunities for residents to have their say on how the housing service is run are increasing all the time. We have a new Caretaking Forum just starting up for those who live in flats or pay a caretaking service charge. Elsewhere in this edition, we are inviting applications to join the Housing Improvement Board, where tenants will sit with senior officers to scrutinise the service, monitor performance, assist in setting service objectives, make recommendations on spending and guide policy development.

If you are interested in any of these initiatives, phone **01634 333201**, or email katherine.clark@medway.gov.uk or write to:
**Community Development Officer,
Housing Services, Gun Wharf, Dock Road,
Chatham, ME4 4TR.**

Looking for ways to make your money go further?

Register for the Medway City Card reward scheme and benefit from discounts in local shops, restaurants and attractions across Medway.

Brand new for autumn 2010, be among the first to sign up as the offers start to roll in. You can sign up for email alerts to get details of the latest deals sent straight to your inbox.

Over the coming months increasing numbers of shops and attractions will be invited to join the scheme to give you great deals at local venues.

Be ahead of the rest, visit www.medwaycitycard.co.uk and apply for yours.

It's quick, easy and free. Sign up today.





At the beginning of 2010 all of Medway Council's tenants and leaseholders were asked to complete a **Getting To Know You** survey, which included questions on how to improve Medway Council's housing services.

We received great feedback and one proposal that came forward was to set up a password scheme.

The password scheme

Under the scheme, you register a password with us, which can be used by our officers and contractors to reassure you that we are who we say we are. When a council officer or contractor comes to your home or phones you, if you are registered on the scheme, you can ask them for your password and they should be able to quote it to you.

If they cannot quote the password refuse them access to your home. If they are on the phone, ask them to call back, when they can quote your password.

All staff carry identification with them but this new scheme will:

- increase the security of the services that we provide;
- ensure the safety of our residents, particularly those who are elderly or vulnerable.

The password will be changed each year and we will tell you when this needs to happen.

If you wish to take part phone Lorraine Demery on **01634 333212** to let us know your chosen password. Once we have registered it, we will confirm it with you and inform you of its start date.

If you don't wish to take part, please remember:

- do not let anyone into your property unless you know who they are;
- if you have a security chain, put it on before answering the door;
- if a caller cannot produce an identification card, don't let them in;
- if you have any doubts as to whether a caller is a council official, call your estate warden during normal working hours or the emergency number at all other times;
- if you are still worried close the door and phone the police;
- don't let the stranger stop you doing any of these things by saying they are in a hurry. If they are genuine callers, they won't mind waiting.

Following feedback from our Leaseholder Forum, we have now negotiated an arrangement with our gas servicing contractor Mears, for them to offer an annual safety check and boiler service to Medway leaseholders, at a substantial discount. From 1 November, if you are a leaseholder who has a gas installation that needs servicing or you let your property and need an annual gas safety inspection, phone Mears on **01634 733499** (select option two, gas services).

Money worries?

In the current difficult economic conditions, many of us are experiencing problems making ends meet. Perhaps you have lost your job, been made redundant or your overtime or commission has been reduced and you simply no longer have the money coming in to meet all your commitments.

If this is affecting you and your family, then it is always a good idea to speak to an experienced adviser to put your problems into perspective and identify what you can do to carry you over this difficult patch and prevent things getting worse.

There are a number of independent organisations who can help including: **Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)**. There are two CABs in Medway:

Chatham - 5a, New Road Avenue ME4 6BB

Gillingham - 46, Green Street ME7 5TJ

For both centres phone: 01634 888182

National Debt Free Helpline: 0800 881 8891

Consumer Credit Counselling Service: 0800 138 1111

Medway Council also offers face-to-face debt advice through Shelter at:

Chatham Contact Point: Riverside 1, Dock Road, Chatham ME4 5SL. Sessions take place on Wednesday, from 10am to 1pm in room 12
Phone: **01634 333600** for further details.

If you are having problems paying your rent, contact your housing officer immediately, to see what assistance may be available. You may be eligible for housing benefit or other help and the sooner you let us know of your difficulties, the better chance we have of finding a solution with you.

What have Mears and Medway Council done in your community?



Mears, working together with Medway Council, has taken part in some really good community projects in the last year. Here's what we've been up to:

- Easter 2010 – Mears staff dug deep into their pockets to buy more than 60 Easter eggs for the children on Dolphin Ward at Medway Maritime Hospital, Gillingham.
- March 2010 – Mears sponsored a basketball competition at Medway Community College. We donated a fabulous winners' cup along with engraved medals and refreshments in support of the students' BTEC exams.
- June – MeRGe/Medway Council community fun day. Mears did a mini-DIY workshop.

Mears branch in Medway, has been supporting Skinner Street Primary School, Gillingham, this year by doing a storytelling project. Mears staff have been reading stories to the children as part of the Every Child a Reader government initiative. The staff also raised £250, which the branch donated to the school to buy specialist reading recovery books. To finish off the academic year the Customer Care Team held two environmental assemblies along with the Mears mascot Mr Menda. The children did an energy saving quiz and took part in a colouring competition and prizes were awarded for the best three in both groups.

Look out for the *Mears Focus* bi-monthly leaflet in your area, which tells you all about the things we do behind the scenes and gives up-to-date information on the performance of the branch.

If you have a new idea for a community project in your area, let us know.

DIY workshops

One-day painting and tiling workshops were held at Mears in the summer for Medway Council residents. They were run by Mears Technical Training Manager Colin Wood.

Michele, from Twydall, said: "I really enjoyed the workshops, they were made fun and I learned some new skills."

Frank, from Gillingham, said: "I thoroughly enjoyed the day, everyone was so nice, and it was good to meet new people."

Mears and Medway Council worked together to make this happen and Jewsons, in Gillingham, donated the materials for the tiling workshop.



Complaints

We do our best to ensure that the service you receive from us is the best possible. However, from time to time we recognise that we make mistakes and there is the need for you to raise this with us.

In the first instance we hope you would speak to one of our officers to resolve the problem immediately. Sometimes though you may feel it is necessary to use our formal complaints procedure.

We record and monitor all complaints about Housing Services and we aim to reply to your complaint within 10 working days. We use complaints to learn from our mistakes and improve our services and our Housing Management Team reviews all complaints and lessons learned on a monthly basis.

Last year (April 2009 to March 2010) we had 65 stage one complaints about our housing landlord services. Of these, we accepted 44 as justified. We also paid compensation to seven customers as a result of something we did or did not do.

Here are some examples of what we have learnt from complaints in 2009/10:

- Following an investigation into complaints about our repairs service, we are currently developing an appointment system so customers can be told when to expect our main repairs contractor to arrive to carry out the required work.
- We have reviewed the specification for UPVC windows and this has been enhanced following complaints about their quality.
- We have reviewed our customer care and service protocols and have introduced a series of service standards to improve our response times to your calls.
- We have also launched a new IT package called Contact Point which is being used to keep track of our relationships with individual customers including repair reports and visits at our contact point in Chatham.

If you are unhappy about a service you have received from us, details of our complaints and compensation procedure can be found at www.medway.gov.uk/housing.



Window restrictors to bedrooms.... is your child safe?

Medway Council takes the health and safety of its residents very seriously and we believe prevention is better than cure.

To reduce the risk of any child being able to open an upper floor window fully and falling, please carry out the following checks of all upper floor windows:

Are they fitted with either:

- a restrictor, which prevents the window being fully opened or;
- a key lock which prevents the window being opened at all except with the key

If the upper floor windows in your home have neither a restrictor nor a window lock, then please phone us immediately. Phone the Customer First Team on **01634 333601**. We will arrange for window locks or a restrictor to be fitted, at no cost. Also:

- **is your child's bed placed immediately under the window?**
- **is this the only place for it to be positioned?**

If it can be relocated to another position in the room, please move it away from the window wall to prevent your child climbing on to it and from there onto the window sill.

Housing Improvement Board

Involving tenants in the big decisions

Medway Housing Services is seeking volunteers to join the new Housing Improvement Board. The board will bring council and tenant representatives together to take the decisions, which will shape the housing service, both now and into the future.

Medway is developing the Housing Improvement Board in response to the requirement of the new housing regulator, the Tenant Services Authority, that tenants should have a role in decisions at the higher, strategic level in the housing service. This means we want tenants to:

- scrutinise the service and have a central role in strategic planning and agreeing priorities for the service;
- look at financial information and assess if the housing service is achieving value for money;
- assess from the performance and tenants' satisfaction information we gather, whether this spending is meeting tenants needs and priorities in the most effective way possible;
- suggest ways to improve both the services we provide and the ways we deliver the services, to better reflect what tenants want;
- review the resident engagement strategy, with feedback from other tenants forums, to ensure we provide the most effective opportunities for involvement to the greatest range of our tenants.

The board will include representatives from the tenants' forums we already have in place and we

want to strengthen the tenant focus of the group by bringing in tenants who are not yet involved, but feel they have a contribution to make. We would welcome volunteers from a range of different backgrounds and with a range of different skills.

Perhaps, you have run your own business, or been involved on the committee of a local voluntary group or maybe you work with accounts as part of your job. What we will need from you is sound judgement based on an understanding of the issues and information put in front of you along with the confidence to ask questions where things are not clear.

The Housing Improvement Board will meet every two to three months and tenant members may also attend training events or conferences to develop the knowledge and understanding to perform their role more effectively. The meetings will be held at the council's offices at Gun Wharf, Dock Road, Chatham.

This is a voluntary role, but don't underestimate it's importance or the difference you could make to the lives of Medway's residents. If you would like to register your interest in joining the Housing Improvement Board please phone Katherine Clark, our Community Development Officer on **01634 333201** or email her at: katherine.clark@medway.gov.uk. To ensure that your name goes forward, please contact us to express your interest by 18 October.

Gas safety inspections

Medway Housing Services continues to achieve 100 per cent success in ensuring that all our homes are inspected by Gas Safe qualified contractors and have current gas safety certificates. This programme ensures that our tenants and their families are protected from the dangers of faulty gas appliances; and that their gas equipment is working at peak efficiency to minimise tenants' bills.

We need your co-operation to continue this excellent performance. When you receive notice of an intended gas inspection, please make every effort to be available to allow the contractor access to carry out the inspection. If you can't be there at the time offered, please phone Mears directly on **01634 733499** (Option 2:Gas Services) to arrange an alternative appointment.

Medway Council takes gas safety very seriously. We will take action against tenants who refuse us access to undertake this essential annual check.



Do you think buying a home is a distant dream? HomeBuy can help make that dream a reality. The initiative helps people, usually first time buyers, to buy an affordable home that suits their household needs.

Social tenants are given top priority for HomeBuy. If your household has a salaried income of at least £18,000 and you have access to savings of £5,000 or more then you could be eligible.

You may be able to buy a share of just 25per cent of a property and pay a subsidised rent on the remaining part. Alternatively, equity loans of up to 30per cent are available to help you buy a new home with HomeBuy Direct. HomeBuy also helps people to rent while saving a mortgage deposit. With many of the HomeBuy options you have the opportunity to purchase additional shares in your home when you are able to afford to do so, until you own it outright.

The application process is easy; you can apply online at www.Homebuyoptions.co.uk or phone **0845 3596161** to request a paper application pack. It can take up to eight working days to assess applications, once approved, we can start sending you information about available homes.

You can also find property details on the HomeBuy Options website, along with housing news and details of HomeBuy events.



Stephen and Jo-anne Dell bought a 25per cent share of their home on St Mary's Island, Chatham, through HomeBuy

What is a local offer?

Local offers are a new way to tailor the services we provide to deliver what tenants want. They are based on discussion between Medway Housing Services and you, to identify how you would like to see local services improved. Local offers are a key part of the changes the Tenant Services Authority want to see in the way social landlords like Medway Council organise and deliver their services.

In the last edition of *Housing Matters* and elsewhere in this issue, we have introduced you to the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) and explained that they are now our new regulator. One of the regulatory requirements is that we produce an annual report for tenants, setting out how we are meeting the standards the TSA has set. Your copy of the annual report is included with this edition of *Housing Matters*.

The development of local offers is the next step in working out a more tenant-focused approach. To make it work we need you to get involved, to tell us what you think needs to be improved in the housing service in your area.

The council is required to deliver value for money; so we are looking for your ideas on how we can improve services without increasing costs – by being more efficient, taking out services that you don't need and introducing a different way of doing things, which is both more useful for you and less expensive. It's all about balance.

In the annual report you can read more about the ideas we are working on to establish our local offers and we welcome your feedback, both individually and through our existing forums and consultation events. This helps us create **your** housing service.



Estate champions

Help make a difference to your neighbourhood

Are you interested in what's going on in your area?

Would you like to have a say in how things in your neighbourhood should be organised?

Do you want to help make a real difference to where you live?

We are piloting a scheme where Medway Council tenants can volunteer to become estate champions - the eyes and ears of their neighbourhood. We are seeking to recruit estate champions in each of Medway's neighbourhoods, to report directly back to us any caretaking or estate management issues: from graffiti to anti-social behaviour, that need sorting out in your area. This will allow Medway Council to respond quickly to any issues reported in each area and ensure that they are dealt with promptly and efficiently.

What is an estate champion?

An estate champion is someone who wants to help Medway Council make a difference to the area they live in. We want residents in their local neighbourhood to talk to each other and tell us about issues that are affecting them.

What does it involve?

We would like estate champions to walk around their local estates on a regular basis and identify any caretaking or maintenance issues that are affecting them. Estate champions will then report this information back to Medway Council, regularly meeting with Medway staff and other estate champions to discuss how their neighbourhoods could be improved.

If you are interested in the scheme and would like to find out more please phone Community Development Officer, Katherine Clark on **01634 333201** or email katherine.clark@medway.gov.uk.





The MeRGe Community Fun Day

Medway Residents' Group (MeRGe) hosted a community fun day in June at All Saints Church Hall in Twydall, with support from the council's main repairs contractor, Mears and council officers from the Housing Management and Sheltered Housing teams.

The day was blessed with good weather, which allowed Mears to run mini-DIY workshops on the terraced area at the back of the hall, while inside there were stalls from a range of voluntary groups including Neighbourhood Watch, Medway Carers and Medway Asthma Self Help. There were also stalls from Kent Fire and Rescue Service, as well as displays from MeRGe and Medway Council.

Entertainment was provided by Kent Circus School, which provided juggling classes for old and young alike. Medway Rangerettes gave demonstrations of baton twirling and pom-pom dancing, which were enjoyed by everyone.

Other attractions for the day included face painting, provided by council officer Lorraine Demery.

Council tenant and Treasurer of MeRGe, Mary Falkner, commented "It was a lovely day and everyone loved the circus skills, especially the children."

Mary went on to say that "there is a need for more support from the local community to make these events even more successful."



Leaseholder corner

Useful leaseholder contacts

General enquiries or complaints
leaseholders@medway.gov.uk

If you are experiencing problems with other residents
01634 333601
estatemangement@medway.gov.uk

Faults or repairs
01634 333601
housingmanagement.support@medway.gov.uk

Service charge payments
01634 333219
leaseholders@medway.gov.uk

Rubbish enquiries
01634 333333
customer.first@medway.gov.uk

Ground maintenance enquiries
01634 333333
customer.first@medway.gov.uk

Gas safe register
0800 4085500
www.gassaferegister.co.uk

Leaseholder hot topic: Leaseholder handbook

Medway Council is producing a handbook for leaseholders, which will provide useful information on your rights and responsibilities as a leaseholder and the obligations Medway Council has to you, as your landlord.

The handbook has been designed with input from the Leaseholder Forum and will be in an easy-to-use loose-leaf format. The folder will have pockets on the front and back covers, which will contain, for example, leaflets on payment methods for service charges, the Fair Trader Scheme and contact details for your housing officer. You can also add other relevant material to keep all useful information about your lease in one place. We have received feedback from forum members and a final draft is being worked on. We anticipate that the handbook will be distributed to all leaseholders by Christmas.



Leaseholder Forum

Following the successful leaseholder information day in March, a Leaseholder Forum has been created and is running well.

The forum has met three times, attended by up to eight leaseholder members and relevant Housing Services Staff. The forum allows leaseholders to make a real contribution to the running of the leasehold service and has so far discussed issues as diverse as the leaseholder handbook and a proposal to offer a gas servicing scheme to leaseholders. If you want to find out more about the gas inspection and servicing offer, including how to book an appointment, phone Mears directly on **01634 733499** and select option two for gas services. The forum has also covered other areas of concern including caretaking and grounds maintenance issues and ways in which Medway Council is working to improve the leasehold service. Full minutes from these meetings have been sent out to leaseholders and a forum member has written an article about her experience of the Leaseholder Forum, see opposite.



They take my money but what do I see in return? Why does the council never listen to my opinion?

As a leaseholder in Medway for the past 18 years, questions like these are regularly on the tip of my tongue when I think about Medway Council. Over the years, I have been a regular complainer to the housing service about many issues such as a lack of service, poor workmanship, anti-social behaviour and much more.

When I received an invitation to a Leaseholder Information Day in March, I went along to see what I could find out. It was a very useful day with speakers discussing topics such as leaseholder rights and the leaseholder's right to manage.

When registering at the information day attendees were asked to participate in a leaseholders' forum the council was planning to introduce. I couldn't refuse given the number of times that I had complained the council never listens or responds to what I have to say. I received an invitation for a Leaseholder Forum meeting at Gun Wharf on 27 May. Six leaseholders attended and four members of Medway Council staff, increasing to eight leaseholders at the second meeting. The forum aims to improve the level of engagement between leaseholders and the council to enable dialogue about services

offered and their quality. Initially meetings will take place bi-monthly.

These meetings have been useful for discussing issues of general concern. The council is willing to listen and respond to our comments. The forum is to discuss matters which are affecting leaseholders as a whole.

Forum attendees have also been able to provide feedback on the proposed leaseholder handbook and discuss the results of the leaseholder STATUS survey. At future meetings it has been agreed to invite specialists to come and talk about interest areas such as insurance and planned major work.

It is early days for the Forum but the signs are encouraging that it will help improve the relationship between the council and its leaseholders. Terms of reference have been agreed. To be successful membership needs to be representative of leaseholders across Medway. If you think you have something, which you would like to contribute and can spare a couple of hours, phone Community Development Officer Katherine Clark on **01634 333201** for more information.

Medway *in Bloom*

Many thanks to Medway tenants, who entered the Housing Services Medway in Bloom competition. As you can see from the selection of photographs here, the gardens entered for the four categories in the competition were all very different and demonstrated that a beautiful garden can have a range of different meanings. What they all have in common is their ability to bring pleasure, to their creators and to other residents in the area fortunate enough to be able to share them.

There were ties for first place in two categories, with St Mark's House and Brennan House sharing first prize for best communal

garden and two very different gardens in Patribourne Avenue and Toronto Road, again sharing the top spot in the best front garden category. We had outright winners in the best balcony category and again in the best display of baskets and/or containers division. The judge also decided that a special award for best back garden was called for when he saw the prolific display at a property in Hollingbourne Avenue, when judging the entry there for the hanging baskets category. The sheltered scheme at Mountevans House came third in the communal garden category with a fine display of

pots and innovative use of herbs and vegetables.

The overall winner of the competition, with a cup and B&Q vouchers to the value of £250 was Barbara Peterson (*pictured below*) of Bearsted Close in Twydall, with a magnificent and varied garden, including a massive palm, a Japanese corner, a fabulous display of fuscias plus some clever ideas aimed at getting her grandchildren interested in plants and gardening. We would like to offer Mrs Peterson our warmest congratulations and hope her garden continues to grow from strength to strength. Our best wishes and congratulations to all our prizewinners.





Main picture, overall competition winner's garden; Inset 1 and 2: Joint winners of the best front garden; Inset 3: Best balcony; Inset 4: Best display of baskets and/or containers

How are we doing?

The following statistics reflect the performance of landlord services

	Target	Apr	May	June	July	Year to date	Year-to-date performance against target
Percentage of out-of-hours emergency repairs completed in time	99%	100%	100%	100%	99%	100%	😊
Percentage of day emergency repairs completed in time	99%	99%	98%	98%	94%	98%	😐
Percentage of urgent repairs completed in time	99%	97%	91%	92%	96%	95%	😐
Percentage of routine repairs completed in time	96%	96%	96%	93%	92%	94%	😐
Average start-to-end time for all reactive repairs (calendar days)	10 cal days	15	12	14	13	14	😐
Overall customer satisfaction with day to day repairs	95%	95%	86%	100%	100%	96%	😊
Percentage of customers with a compliant gas safety record	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	😊
Average time to re-let council owned general needs dwellings (calendar days)	25 cal days	36	32	34	27	32	😐
Average time to re-let council owned sheltered properties (calendar days)	25 cal days	59	67	13	49	50	😐
Percentage of rent collected including arrears (year-to-date)	99.62%	77%	87%	90%	92%	92%	😐
Percentage of rent collected excluding arrears (year-to-date)	99.80%	105%	103%	101%	101%	101%	😊
Number of tenants in arrears	Monitoring	1058	1064	1076	1077	1077	Monitoring
Number of new tenancies	Monitoring	29	43	31	30	133	Monitoring
Percentage of tenants served NOSP	>15%	1.05%	2.17%	3.50%	4.12%	4.12%	Monitoring
Percentage of tenants evicted	>0.2%	0.03%	0.10%	0.16%	0.19%	0.19%	Monitoring
Percentage of anti-social behaviour cases dealt with on time	100%	N/A	0%	0%	27%	25%	😐
Percentage of repairs calls to the Housing Support Team answered	90%	77%	76%	84%	82%	80%	😐
Percentage of written correspondence answered within 10 working days	100%	100%	100%	86%	94%	93%	😐
Percentage of emails answered within five working days	99%	93%	89%	100%	100%	95%	😐

The following statistics reflect the performance of all of Housing Services

	Target	Apr	May	June	July	Year to date	Year-to-date performance against target
Percentage of stage one complaints responded to on time	100%	68%	27%	45%	33%	44%	😐
Percentage of stage two complaints responded to on time	100%	0%	0%	75%	75%	55%	😐

Bringing our services to you



As part of our continuous programme of reviews, we are looking at the ways we deliver our services to you. We recognise that some customers would prefer to speak to us face-to-face about specific issues, but that it is not always convenient for them to come to our offices.

We are doing a survey of the demand for local housing advice surgeries in neighbourhoods where we have our stock. Your feedback is important for us to understand the demand and the areas of the service that you would specifically be interested in speaking to us about in these surgeries.

By completing the form below and returning the information to us, you will help us in developing and improving our services.

Complete and return this survey to us by 31 October, 2010 and you will automatically be entered into a free prize draw to win £25 of shopping vouchers.

1 Would you use a local housing surgery if one was held in your area?

Yes No

2 Where do you live?

Rainham Gillingham Twydall

Other (please state)

3 How often would you like a housing surgery to be run?

Monthly Every six weeks Every two months Every three months

Other (please state)

4 Which of the following services would you like to see provided in any local housing advice surgery?

<input type="checkbox"/> Rent arrears advice	<input type="checkbox"/> Advice about moving
<input type="checkbox"/> Anti-social behaviour advice	<input type="checkbox"/> Resident involvement information
<input type="checkbox"/> Repairs reporting	<input type="checkbox"/> Leaseholder information/service charge advice
<input type="checkbox"/> Tenancy advice	<input type="checkbox"/> Allocations information

Other (please state)

Please add your details here

Name:

Address:

..... **Postcode:**

Thankyou for completing the survey. Please pull it out of *Housing Matters*, fold the form in half and stick the edges together using the gummed strips. Post it back to us using the FREEPOST address provided - no need for a stamp.