

Autumn 2008

Housing NEWS

Tenant's Newsletter from Ashford Borough Council

Little Chequers, **Big Sign!** Residents find their Wye



ASHFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL



inside:

- Council Win 'Trailblazer' Status
- Have Your Say Day at Hackfield
- MP Visits Stanhope
- Where the Money Went
- Gas Safety

Ashford
best placed in Britain



ASHFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL

www.ashford.gov.uk

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Housing News

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editor's note

Here we are in September and as you will see in the following pages, a lot has happened over the last three months.

I have received very little feedback about the Tenant Participation Compact DVD and wonder if this is because residents do not have use of, or access to, a DVD player? If you have been able to view the DVD, the Ashford Borough Tenants Forum, who put a lot of work into producing it, would really welcome your feedback. You can contact the Forum Chair, Teri Witcher, on 01580 763892.

In the spring of this year, the Government announced that it would be carrying out a review of the future funding for Council Housing, with a view to reporting back to ministers in spring, 2009. The proposals that arise from this will be followed by a period of consultation with Local Authorities, tenant groups and other interested parties, with changes to be implemented from 2010. We will keep tenants posted on the developments.

Do you want to develop a practical skill or take a hobby to the next level? I am still interested in hearing from tenants who have training needs or wants, and although I can't promise anything, what have you got to lose by asking?

And finally, a quick reminder about the 'You said, We did' logo. If you have an idea which we take on, or if there has been a problem you reported that is now resolved, we'll print the story in Housing News along with the logo. The logo is there to let everyone know that it is always worth sharing your views with us.

Philippa Dale Editor



Philippa Dale



Pat Pearman



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Cover Picture: Ivy, left, and Annette, right, from the Wye Tenants Forum with Housing's Jo Wickens

If you know someone who is blind or partially sighted who would like to listen to Housing News on cassette or CD, then please contact the Editor on **01233 330365**.

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Hothfield Appraisal

The Hothfield Appraisal has now been completed and, together with Hothfield Parish Council, we are in the process of collating your responses about the improvements you would like to see in the village.

Everyone that returned an appraisal has been entered into a prize draw and one lucky resident will be winning £100. Could it be you?

If you have any questions about the appraisal, please contact **Housing Area Manager, Jo Wickens, on 01233 330375**

Right: Jo Wickens, Housing Area Manager, talks through the Appraisal with a Hothfield resident



123 easy as ABC

Following complaints from residents that the numbering of the properties on the Little Chequers estate was very confusing, the Housing team have devised an easy-to-use board, showing the layout of the area.

It was designed with the help of the Wye Tenants Forum and Cllr Jack Woodford, and can be found on the green beside the fire station.



Blaze of Glory – Council wins ‘Trailblazer’ status

Ashford has been selected by the Department for Communities and Local Government as a ‘trailblazer’ council and will receive up to £350,000 to provide comprehensive housing advice.

This means Ashford Borough Council and Ashford Gateway’s successful partnership continues to receive praise and recognition for its focus on providing joined-up solutions to customers.

The funding will be used to develop information available on a full range of housing options, including social housing, shared ownership and private rental.

The council will target enhanced services to homeseekers and those in temporary and overcrowded accommodation by providing:

- ✓ A dedicated debt advice service
- ✓ Employment and benefits guidance
- ✓ Assistance to identify the financial benefits of returning to work using ‘better off in work’ calculations
- ✓ A path of self-improvement by engaging with the voluntary sector to provide work opportunities

Cllr Peter Wood, portfolio holder for housing, said: “Ashford Borough Council is delighted to take part in the new trailblazer project and we hope our residents will benefit greatly from this improved service.”

“By offering advice on housing and employment under one roof, we hope to provide a better, more comprehensive service for our residents.”

Another element of the enhanced service will be to work with private landlords to advertise privately rented properties via Kent Homechoice, the new Kent Choice Based Lettings Scheme (see Page 8 for more on Kent Homechoice).



Another Fine Mess

Thanks to the co-operation of various agencies, and, importantly, other residents, Ashford Borough Council recently prosecuted a resident of Barn Platt, South Ashford, for persistently ignoring requests to clear dog excrement from the premises. They received a County Court Order and a fine.

A Housing spokesperson said: “We hope that this acts as a deterrent to any residents who persistently ignore requests to clear rubbish. Dog mess, as with all waste, affects the quality of life for all of us and poses a serious risk to environmental health.”

All's Fair in Kennington



Kennington Community Forum and Bybrook & Bockhanger Community Group joined forces on 28th June to have a stand at the Kennington Fair.

The event, held on a beautiful if rather windy day, was well attended and enjoyed by all.

Bybrook & Bockhanger's tombola was a particular success, helping to swell their coffers so they can continue to fund community projects.

Pat Boorman helps Toby & friend to guess how many sweets are in the jar

The Green, Green Grass of Homebridge

Last summer, the Planned Maintenance team from Housing Services took part in 'Make a Difference Day', putting their green fingers to the test by building a garden at Homebridge, the temporary care scheme at Farrow Court.

They told Housing News: "This was much more than just a team-building exercise for us. The most important thing was how rewarding it was to be able to put something back into the local community."

In true Ground Force style, these pictures show the 'Before' and 'After' of the garden at Homebridge, and, I'm sure you'll agree, this is a massive improvement.

Housing Services are now on the lookout for similar projects and want to hear from you about suggestions for improving your local area. It could be anything from painting a communal stairwell, organising a community litter picking day, or designing another garden.

Get in touch with the Housing Services Team by calling 01233 330688 or email us at housing@ashford.gov.uk



Homebridge Garden Before (inset), and After



Iain Wright MP meets a Stanhope resident

New Forum members

Ashford Borough Tenants Forum (ABTF) welcomed Val Carter and Mark Smith (pictured below), both from South Ashford, to the fold recently. In addition, current Chair, Teri Witcher from Tenterden, and Stella Cowland from Willesborough, have both been re-elected for a further three years.

The rest of the forum are:

Pat Pearman (Bethersden); Robin Bateman, Michael Lavender and Lewis Evans (Ashford); Pat Boorman and Howard Dear (Kennington); Peter Stickells and Eileen Moon (South Ashford).

The ABTF's Annual General Meeting will be starting at 6.30pm at the Civic Centre's Council Chamber, Ashford, on Monday 8 September. Acting Chief Inspector Andrew Judd will be speaking at the meeting about the value of PACT (Partners And Communities Together).

Pictures:
Mark Smith; Val Carter

Stanhope 'Wright' on Track

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Iain Wright MP, visited the Stanhope estate in July to meet local people and community representatives and came away very impressed with what he saw.

He was taken on a tour of the estate, visiting a tenant whose property had been refurbished and looking around a new-build house, and also called in on the National Skills Academy for Construction.



Residents from the Stanhope estate celebrated another win at the Ashford Carnival this year with their pirate ship float.

SureStart

Bybrook and Bockhanger

SureStart, the Government programme to deliver the best start in life for children, held two "Fun Days" in August at the Bockhanger Community Centre.

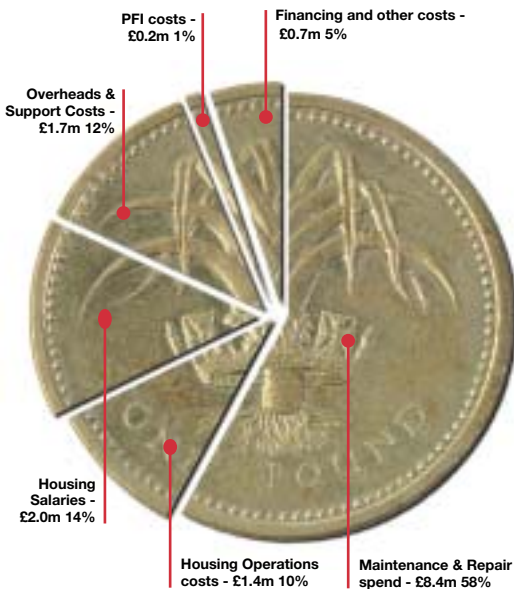
The free events were well attended, with lots of activities for children up to five years old, including a bouncy castle, Socatots, "kindermusik", and face painting.

Older brothers and sisters enjoyed trying out their spraycan skills with a graffiti artist, and, on a more serious note, the Fire Service safety team held chip-pan fire demonstrations.

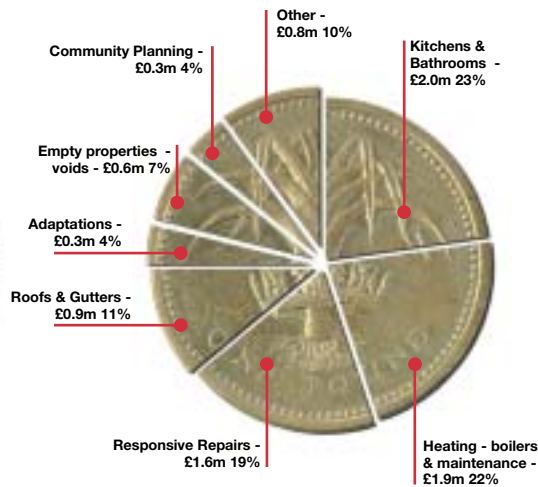


Where the money went last year

TOTAL SPEND



MAINTENANCE & REPAIR SPEND



Here is the annual update for the money spent by Housing Services for the financial year, 2007-2008

Last year Ashford Borough Council spent over £14 million managing and maintaining its homes and housing stock:

More than half the money spent was to maintain and repair our properties

During the past year nearly 500 properties benefited from either a new kitchen or bathroom

Housing salaries accounted for less than one-sixth of our total spend

Total Spend:	£m
Maintenance & Repair spend	8.4
Housing Operations costs	1.4
Housing Salaries	2.0
Overheads & Support Costs	1.7
PFI costs	0.2
Financing and other costs	0.7
Total	14.4

Maintenance & Repair spend:	£m
Kitchens & Bathrooms	2.0
Heating - boilers & maintenance	1.9
Responsive Repairs	1.6
Roofs & Gutters	0.9
Adaptations	0.3
Empty properties - voids	0.6
Community Planning	0.3
Other	0.8
Total	8.4

Council Clean Up Their Act



We are pleased to announce that a new cleaning contract has been awarded to Town & Country Cleaners, a Kent based cleaning company with over 40 years' experience.

The council have responded to concerns from an increasing number of tenants in flats across the Borough that the level of cleanliness in communal areas was poor. After a period of consultation with tenants, a cleaning standard was established and the tender process began.

The cleaning operation will kick-off with a one-off, intensive deep clean. As we were going to press, the deep clean process was well underway and some very positive feedback has been received so far.

As well as monitoring the contract ourselves, we will be writing to all of the residents concerned to set out the cleaning standards, what they can expect to be cleaned, and the cost of this service. We also want your help to keep us informed of how things are progressing.

We hope that, by working together, we can deliver a significant improvement to the cleanliness of flats, making them a much more pleasant place to live.



Gloria Rice from Town & Country Cleaners with Housing Operations Manager, Nick Watkin



Ashford Neighbourhood Walkabouts

Ashford Borough Council's Housing Area Managers and Neighbourhood Officers from Moat invite you to join them on their weekly neighbourhood walkabouts this autumn.

As local residents, you are perfectly placed to let us know about the issues that are important to you and can help us to identify the areas that we may need to be looking into and dealing with.

Our friendly and approachable officers are keen to hear from you so if you want to join us on our walkabouts, please call the team for your area or just turn up at the meeting points below.

**AUTUMN
2008**



**Jo Wickens and
Barry Moss**

You can reach Jo and Barry on
01233 330376

Bybrook and Bockhanger

Monday 15 September, 2pm
Meeting at Nine Acres entrance to garage block P, opposite the cemetery gates

Monday 29 September
Open Slot – Tell us where you want to go or we can revisit an estate

Godfrey Walk

Monday 13 October, 2pm
Meeting at the entrance to 1-4 Pound House

Brookfield

Monday 27 October, 2pm
Meeting at the garage area by 133 Beaver Lane

Sevington, Mersham, Smeeth, and Brabourne

Monday 10 November, 2pm
Meeting at the entrance to Church Road, near Wicks

Rothbrook

Monday 24 November, 2pm
Meeting at the car park area besides 50 Gotely Mere

Monday 8 December
Open Slot – Tell us where you want to go or we can revisit an estate



**Kat Aylward and
Anthony Crossley**

You can reach Kat and Anthony on
01233 330372

Hillbrow and Clockhouse

Monday 8 September, 2pm
Meeting at Meadowsweet House car park

High Halden

Monday 22 September, 2pm
Meeting at Greenside

Biddenden

Monday 22 September, 3pm
Meeting at the entrance to The Weavers

Woolreeds

Monday 6 October, 2pm
Meeting at Court Wurtin shops

Egerton, Pluckley, Smarden and Little Chart

Monday 20 October, 2pm
Meeting at the entrance to Forstal Villas in Egerton

Brookfield

Monday 3 November, 2pm
Meeting at the car park at 13-29 Arlington Monday 17 November, 2pm

Meeting at the entrance to Langholme Road, opposite the Poplars

Woodchurch

Monday 1 December, 2pm
Meeting at the village green, by the toilets

Bethersden

Monday 1 December, 3pm
Meeting at the bottom of Chester Avenue

Newtown Green

Monday 15 December, 2pm
Meeting at the Post Office



**Tracey Homden,
Andrew Brackey and
Naureen Ullah**

You can reach Andrew, Tracey and Naureen on **01233 647396**

Andrew's routes:

Eastry Close, Sheldwich Close, Crundale Close and Sandling Close

Thursday 25 September
Thursday 30 October
Thursday 27 November
Thursday 18 December
All meeting points are at the main entrance to Eastry Close Flats at 9.30am

Leaveland Close and Lynsted

Friday 26 September
Friday 31 October
Friday 28 November
Friday 19 December
All meeting points are at the main entrance to Leaveland Close Flats at 9.30am

Tracey's routes:

Luddenham Close

Wednesday 10 September
Wednesday 8 October
Wednesday 12 November
Wednesday 10 December
Meeting at the Stanhope Neighbourhood Office at 9.15am

Bredgar Close

Wednesday 10 September
Wednesday 8 October
Wednesday 12 November
Wednesday 10 December
Meeting at the Stanhope Neighbourhood Office at 10.15am

Ackerley Court and The Square

Friday 12 September
Friday 10 October
Friday 14 November
Friday 12 December
Meeting at the Stanhope Neighbourhood Office at 9am

Newenden Close

Friday 12 September
Friday 10 October
Friday 14 November
Friday 12 December
Meeting at the Stanhope Neighbourhood Office at 9.45am

Naureen's routes:

Badlesmere Close and Frittenden Close

Wednesday 17 September
Wednesday 15 October
Wednesday 19 November
Wednesday 10 December
Please call Naureen for meeting points and times

Kilndown Close

Wednesday 24 September
Wednesday 22 October
Wednesday 25 November
Wednesday 17 December
All walkabouts start at 9.30am.
Please call Naureen for meeting points.

Otterden Close and Speldhurst Close

Friday 26 September
Friday 24 October
Friday 27 November
Friday 19 December
Please call Naureen for meeting points and times

Brenchley Close

Wednesday 10 September
Wednesday 8 October
Wednesday 12 November
Wednesday 10 December
Please call Naureen for meeting points and times

Sheltered Housing Gets an 'A'

During July and August this year, the Council's sheltered housing service was inspected by the Supporting People team from Kent County Council, and they received an 'A' rating - the top award for this type of inspection!

Richard Robinson, Housing Operations Manager for Older Peoples' Services, said: "We were delighted to be awarded a top level 'A' rating in this inspection, but this is more about the benefit to our tenants than an inspection process. It shows we are putting our tenants first in every aspect of the service."

As part of the inspection process, a number of residents were interviewed to gain their views on how well the council are performing. Ken Stickells, a Seniors Forum member from Moneypenny in Rolvenden, enthused:

"I am quite a new tenant at Moneypenny and the inspector was interested in my views as well as the more experienced tenants. I found it all very constructive and the Inspector was really impressed by what we had to say."

The team at the council would like to express their thanks to the Seniors Forum who were involved in the inspection process from the very beginning.

Richard Robinson added: "The whole team have worked really hard to ensure our procedures and working practices are of a consistently high standard and the important thing now is to maintain them and make them still better if we can."



Members of the Seniors Forum receive training at Farrow Court

HOT! HOT! HOT!

The council has reviewed the structure for the Housing Options Team (HOT) to create Housing Options Officer posts. The officers will be able to provide a focus on delivering advice to prevent homelessness and will deliver a service from the Gateway in Park Mall, Ashford.

The HOT team, back row (l-r): Alison Norton, Anne Forbes, Lynn Thomas; Front Row (l-r): David Gibbs, Vicky Henham, Sylvia Roberts.



Introducing Kent Homechoice

We are currently making improvements to our Choice Based Lettings Scheme by joining the county-wide partnership, along with other local authorities, known as Kent Homechoice.

Kent Homechoice will feature better property information, improved bidding methods and easier access to the available systems for vulnerable applicants.

A new magazine, 'Property Freesheets', will be produced each fortnight and will include information on how to bid, what you are entitled to bid for, feedback information of previous lettings, and information on other housing options.

Most importantly, the magazine will, where possible, include improved property descriptions and photographs, giving applicants greater access to information and allowing them to bid more effectively. Those with access to the internet will be able to view, bid and receive all of the information online.

For more information, please see the website, www.kenthomechoice.org.uk, call Housing Services on 01233 330688 or email us at housing@ashford.gov.uk



Hackfield Have Their Say

Residents of Hackfield were the first to experience a tenant 'Have Your Say Day' in July this year.

Representatives from the Housing Department, along with Sure Start, Kent Fire and Rescue Service, NHS, and officers from the Police & the Community Safety Unit were on hand to listen to the views of residents about their local area and to offer some practical advice.

Hackfield was chosen as it has been highlighted as an area that is in need of some improvement and has experienced some anti-social behaviour problems. Residents at the event were encouraged to become more involved with tenant-based schemes, such as focus groups, resident associations, Partners and Community Together meetings, and estate inspections, also known as 'Walkabouts'.

One of the main objectives of the 'Have Your Say Day' was to improve communication and there was a fun element introduced to help residents feel more comfortable about airing their views – in fact, we asked them to air their views on a washing line!

Everyone who added a comment to our specially constructed washing line was put into a prize draw to win £40 of shopping vouchers! The lucky winner was Miss Goodwin from Willow House, Hackfield.

Children (some bigger than others!) enjoy the bouncy castle



Some of the feedback included nuisance youths, neighbour problems, litter and dog mess in Victoria Park, noise and parking. Most of the issues raised we were able to deal with and put forward for possible improvements for the area.

By inviting the various agencies along, residents were able to get tips and information about fire and community safety, and healthy eating and living advice.

And there was lots to keep the kids interested too. As well as face painting, there was a bouncy castle and a drawing competition for all of the children who came along.

If you would like to see a 'Have Your Say Day' in your area, please call Philippa Dale on 01233 330365.

Positive comments included:

- 'The view onto Victoria Park'
- 'Plenty of green space'
- 'Good sized properties'
- 'Close to the school'

Negative comments included:

- 'Noisy at night'
- 'The park is full of broken glass'
- 'Older kids hanging around'
- 'Graffiti in the block'



Even Spiderman has to hang out his washing!

Housing Surgery News

New Surgery for East Stour

We are pleased to announce that a new Housing Surgery will be starting at the East Stour School in Earlswood Rd, South Willesborough, from Thursday 18th September. The sessions will be open from 2pm to 4:30pm and will run every Thursday.

Housing surgeries give residents the opportunity to discuss any housing related enquires, such as rent, tenancy issues, estate inspections/improvements, tenancy participation and anti-social behaviour. It will also help the housing department to establish the key issues in the local community.

Your local **Area Manager, Anthony Crossley**, will be attending the surgery and if you would like to speak to him beforehand, you can call him on **01233 330200**.

We look forward to seeing you there.



Drop in at the Willow Centre

We are currently holding 'drop in' surgeries at the Willow Centre, Brookfield Road, every other Tuesday, from 9.30am to 12pm.

Working with local Police, we will be at the centre to discuss any housing and Police queries that residents may have. This could include anti-social behaviour and nuisance, neighbour problems, community and personal safety, or any other tenancy and estate concerns.

The dates for your diary are:

- 16th September**
- 30th September**
- 14th October**
- 28th October**

View From the Chair

The Mobile Gateway is on the move! They were in Tenterden on 25th and 27th of July to give an update on the plans for the Tenterden Gateway, with building works due to begin in September.

The Gateway offers information on the Library, Post Office and Council Office, amongst other venues.

I went to a meeting on the 16th July and was pleased to see young people from the local school in attendance. I was fortunate to get the opportunity to talk to some of them about the library and, happily, they said they liked it very much.



Has anyone else been able to visit the Mobile Gateway yet? I would like to hear your views about it so please get in touch.

Teri Witcher
Chair Ashford Borough Tenants Forum
Email: teriwtent@btinternet.com

Introductory Tenancies

Recent changes in the law have introduced a new type of tenancy called "Introductory", which means there will be a 12 month probation period for all new tenants.

Introductory tenants can be evicted much more easily than secure tenants and the council would not have to prove a legal reason to evict. Obviously, we would only want to evict as a last resort but reasons for doing this would most likely be:

- **If someone is persistently causing nuisance to their neighbours**
- **If someone persistently fails to pay their rent**

At the end of the 12 month probation period tenants automatically revert to being a secure tenant, providing no problems have been caused.

This will not affect existing tenants or any tenant transferring or exchanging; however, all future new tenants will be subject to the new laws.

Before this new process begins we must get the approval of Councillors, but in the first instance, we want to hear from you.

If you have any comments or opinions that you would like to raise about this, or if you want any more information about the new scheme, please contact **Nicholas Watkin, Housing Operations Manager, on 01233 330431.**

Gas Safety

Are you risking your life and others around you?

Recently, a tenant living in a flat in Boxley failed to let Swale Heating in to their property to carry out a legally required Gas Safety Check. Only after the tenant had been advised legal action was about to proceed against them did they finally grant access.

THANK GOODNESS THEY DID!

They removed the hearth and the decorative case of their back boiler and replaced it with their sofa (once they had a cut out the back to fit it in - see picture).

This restricted the combustion and ventilation air supply and if the boiler had blown, not only could it have destroyed the tenant's flat, but the entire block!

In the interests of your safety, and the safety of your neighbours, please always allow Swale Heating access to check your boiler.

Failure to allow access to Swale Heating will result in a County Court Injunction being sought, with re-chargeable costs of at least £250.

So far this year, we have successfully gained enforcement of two housing injunctions, costing the tenants over £500.

Please don't mess around with gas or gas appliances. There is more to lose than the cost of a County Court Injunction!

If you need advice or help, you can contact Swale Heating 24 hours a day on 0800 731 3344.



Be A Calendar Star and Win £20!

Do you know any budding young artists who would like to win money as well as see their work adorn our 2009 calendar?

We are looking for seasonal drawings or paintings to decorate the calendar, which will be sent to all tenants along with the winter issue of Housing News in December.

For example, for December we would like a festive picture, fireworks could be the theme for November or Easter Bunnies for April.

Please feel free to submit as many entries as you like. If your picture is chosen for the final calendar, you will be awarded with a £20 gift voucher, along with the satisfaction of having your artwork published for thousands of tenants to enjoy.

Parents, this could be an ideal half-term activity if any of your children say they're bored!

Please send entries to Philippa Dale, Housing News, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford, Kent, by October 31. Don't forget to include your name, address and phone number!



Your Letters...

Dear Housing News

I recently decided to replace my gas cooker but when I made my choice and went to pay, I was told that, as I live in a flat, the one I wanted was not available to me because it did not have a Flame Supervision Device.

I've been told that this is a new regulation applying to gas cookers installed in flats, which raises many concerns and questions and may well affect other residents, so I would appreciate your views.

Mrs Janet Osbourne, Willesborough

All retailers are required to inform purchasers about these rules before the sale of a new cooker is agreed, but this only applies to flats.

It is a legal requirement for anyone installing or repairing gas fittings or appliances (such as cookers) to be registered with the Council for Registered Gas Installers (CORGI).

Ashford Borough Council's gas contractor is Swale Heating and, through another contractor, Gas Control Services, we carry out annual gas safety checks on all of our properties.

Dear Mrs Osbourne

Thank you for your letter.

Councils or any other landlords are legally required to carry out annual gas safety checks to all properties covering safety of fittings, flues and appliances.

The Flame Supervision Device regulations came into effect on 1 January 2008, and only apply to new cookers and multi-occupational dwellings. Existing and second hand units are specifically excluded.

For further information:

Swale Heating
0800 7311 886
www.swaleheating.com



CORGI
0800 915 0480
www.trustcorgi.com



Institute of Gas Engineers
01509 282728
www.igem.org.uk



Competition Winners

DVD Quiz one from the Summer edition of Housing News was won by Mrs G Berry from Wye, who receives £25 worth of vouchers.

The winner of Quiz Two was Miss J Shephard from South Ashford, pictured below receiving her £25 voucher from Housing News editor, Philippa Dale.



Winning Wordsearch

Back to School is the theme of this month's wordsearch.

Words to find are: TIMETABLE, LESSON, TEACHER, SCHOOL, TERM, UNIFORM, STUDY, ENGLISH, TIE, MATHS, PRIMARY, LEARNING, SCIENCE, EDUCATION, GCSE, HOMEWORK, SECONDARY, EXAM, PUPIL

Got something to say? Send your letters to Housing News, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford, Kent TN23 1PL or email philippa.dale@ashford.gov.uk

win £25

WORDSEARCH

A R E N G L I S H S S H T A M
E L B A T E M I T C T O W I R
E X A Y S T E R M L Q U A S E
G I S O N I M E A H N V D L S
O L E S S O N L P I Z E R Y T
F A C W G A G H F K D N J N A
T R O Y O N I O F E L O I M H
K C N R O F R R S E L I P U P
R O D A R M E K A D R T R F U
O T A M W N T R E H C A E T P
W V R I C E N O S X A C N D I
E S Y R D I V E C G E U L P F
M E J P N C D N I H E D S R A
O A B G C S E S B T E E X A M
H F E C N E I C S S C H O O L

Back to School is the theme of this month's wordsearch. Winning entries received by 31st October 2008 will be entered into a prize draw for £25 in vouchers.

To enter complete the wordsearch and send to Housing News, Ashford Borough Council, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford, Kent, TN23 1PL

Name:

Address:

Tel:

Terms & Conditions:

Please complete and return this entry form along with your completed wordsearch puzzle to:
Housing News, Ashford Borough Council, Civic Centre, Tannery Lane, Ashford, Kent TN23 1PL.
The decision of the editor is final and no correspondence will be entered into. **Closing date for entries is 31st October 2008**



Ashford Back Chat!



Calling all tenants and leaseholders...

We want to make it easier for more people to tell Ashford Borough Council Housing Services what they think, and to get involved in the management of their homes and neighbourhoods.

Most people have an opinion about the way the council does things. We want you to tell us where you think improvements are needed, and what you think we do well. To help you to do this, the council is introducing some new ways for you to talk to us and to make a difference.

We will be keeping a database or list of tenants from all over the borough who have told us how they want to get involved in improving the Housing Services.

Offering a range of options will mean that if you want to have a say, you can do so in the way that suits you best. We really want to attract more people from different age groups and backgrounds so that we get the broadest view possible, and may ask you to complete a Tenant Profile form if you have not already done so.

Here's how you can get involved

Monitoring Groups Discuss issues and ways to improve services that affect particular groups – these include the Seniors Forum, the Leaseholders Forum, the Repairs Monitoring Group, the Housing Options Monitoring Group, and the Housing Survey Monitoring Group [Commitment - one two hour meetings at the council offices every three months – training available]

Tenants and Residents Groups Care and campaign for local communities. [Commitment – regular meetings local to your home – training available]

Focus Groups A small cross section of people brought together to provide feedback on a particular aspect of the service. [Commitment – one-off meetings approximately two hours at the council offices]

Ashford Borough Tenants Forum Made up of elected representatives from throughout the borough. [Commitment – monthly two hour meetings at the council offices – training available]

Editorial Board Write and approve newsletters, leaflets and entries on the website. [Commitment - one two hour meetings at the council offices every three months – training available]

For some people, going to meetings and joining groups is not the way they want to participate. You may not have the time, may have other commitments or just not feel comfortable in that type of forum. But you may still want to have a say about what is happening in your local area and how Ashford Borough Council Housing Service works. If that person is you we can offer quick and easy ways for you to get involved and have your say, in the way that works best for you:-

Estate Inspections Officers, tenants and councillors identifying problems in the area [Commitment – walking around your neighbourhood approximately every six months]

Mystery Shopping A chance to carry out 'reality checks' on service and standards. [Commitment – complete and return a form whenever you contact the council]

Postal Surveys We write to you for your opinion [Commitment - occasional contact]

Telephone Surveys We telephone you for your opinion [Commitment - occasional contact]

@ Email Surveys We email you for your opinion [Commitment - occasional contact]

Online Feedback Give us your views at www.ashford.gov.uk/housing



Ashford Back Chat!



We want to make it easier for more people to tell Ashford Borough Council Housing Services what they think, and to get involved in the management of their homes and neighbourhoods.

Please tick the way/s that you would like to get involved:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Monitoring Groups | <input type="checkbox"/> Estate Inspections |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Tenants and Resident Groups | <input type="checkbox"/> Mystery Shopping |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Focus Groups | <input type="checkbox"/> Postal Survey |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ashford Borough Tenants Forum | <input type="checkbox"/> Telephone Survey |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Editorial Board | <input type="checkbox"/> Email Survey |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Online Feedback |

Name:

Address:

Tel:

Mobile:

Email:

Terms & Conditions:

All information supplied will be confidential and not shared with anyone unless permission is given to do so.

Please complete this form and return it in the pre-paid envelope with the contact details and chosen options identified. All completed forms will be entered into a monthly prize draw to receive £25 worth of high street vouchers.

