

tlc

Tenants' and leaseholders'
community magazine



NORWICH
City Council

Autumn/Winter 2020

**Tenant
approved**



Covid-19
Page 4-5



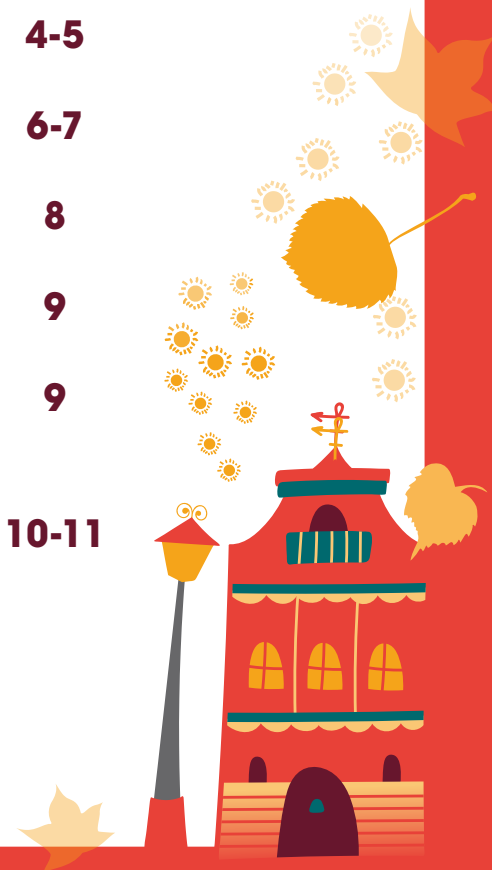
Community work
Page 8



100 years of housing
Page 10

Contents

	page
Introduction from Councillor Gail Harris	3
Covid-19 related news	4-5
Highlights from the 2019-20 annual report	6-7
Celebrating community work on estates	8
Keep warm and well this winter	9
Changes to how housing services are delivered	9
Celebrating inspirational tenants and 100 years of housing	10-11



What would you like to read in TLC?

This magazine is all about tenants, leaseholders and the housing services you're at the heart of.

If you have an idea for a story or want to let us know your views on the magazine, we'd love to hear from you!

Send your comments to
communications@
norwich.gov.uk



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Norwich City Council



Introduction from Councillor Gail Harris

Welcome to the autumn/winter issue of TLC magazine

Deputy leader and cabinet member for social housing

I'm so pleased to be able to introduce this autumn issue, which focuses on some of the positives to have come out of such a difficult year.

I'd like to take this opportunity to say thank you for your understanding and patience while we redesigned our services to cope with the restrictions that Covid-19 imposed on us. From adapting to accessing our services online (something I hope many people will continue to do), to offering support to neighbours – it's been wonderful to see.

What is also apparent is the dedication of our housing team who proved they can react quickly to a crisis situation – you can read about their response on pages four and five.

As always in this issue we've included a snapshot of our annual report for tenants. I'm always so impressed to read about all the hard work that goes on every day – and hope you feel the same.

Tenants and residents take centre stage on page eight where we focus on two fantastic community ventures which have benefited neighbourhoods, as well as provided a welcome distraction and social activity during lockdown.

Future changes to the way in which the council will be delivering some of its housing-related services, such as property maintenance and repairs, are explained on page nine. We welcome your views.

Although we weren't able to carry out all the planned activities for our 100 years of council housing year-long celebration, it seems like a fitting end to focus on a few of our remarkable tenants, whom you can read about on page 10. The 100 trees that we planted in the spring are growing well and we'll also have another lasting tribute – a specially engraved flagstone, which you can get a glimpse of inside.

Finally, we look ahead to some exciting news in regards to new council housing being planned in the city.

I hope you enjoy reading this issue and are keeping safe and well.



Our response to Covid-19

Supporting residents in our council housing was central to our work during lockdown and the team adapted fast to do this in a safe and efficient way.

Identifying tenants who needed extra support was a key role for members of our housing team so they could get help from the Norwich Community Response Hub – which was set up as a response to the crisis. Staffed by local volunteers and council staff, the hub coordinated hundreds of food and prescription deliveries to those in most need, including council tenants.

Our housing team also provided tailored financial advice over the phone on issues such as claiming benefits and accessing local support schemes.

A huge thanks must go to our wonderful caretakers who stepped up to the challenge, continuing with essential

work, such as health and safety checks, by adapting their hours and ways of working to maintain social distancing.

Our sheltered housing support team acted quickly to identify which of our scheme residents required extra support when the pandemic hit. They arranged food and medicine deliveries, made weekly phone calls and liaised with carers, family and friends to make sure everyone had what they needed.

Unfortunately, at the time of writing, communal areas in our sheltered housing schemes are still closed, due to risk of transmission. We appreciate how

hard this is for our residents and will open them again as soon as it's safe to do so.

Working with Pathways Norwich, our home options team worked hard to carry out the government's urgent request to house all rough sleepers. Norwich, like all other cities, saw a big rise in the number of people requiring emergency accommodation. The vast majority of those housed have now been supported into more settled housing – a central aspect to all our Pathways work.



The Norwich Community Response Hub was established to coordinate all of our work supporting the community, including tenants, during Covid-19.



Some of our sheltered housing residents received food parcels from Norwich City Football Club Foundation.

Gas safety

We are legally required to carry out an annual gas service at your property. Our Gasway engineers have continued visits during lockdown wherever possible.

If you are due a gas check, please rest assured that engineers will wear PPE, follow social distancing guidelines and clean down all surfaces.

It's really important that these checks are carried out and if you have any concerns please contact the council.



Work to properties resuming

Although non-urgent work to properties was on hold during lockdown, it has now started up again.

Our contractors will take all necessary measures to ensure they abide by the current social distancing guidelines and wear protective equipment if necessary.

If you are due to have some work done on your property, but have a household member who is self-isolating, please let the council know as soon as possible.



All information on this page is correct at time of writing (September 2020) but is subject to change due to the pandemic still being with us.

Keep up to date with the situation at www.norwich.gov.uk/coronavirus or by following us on Twitter @Norwichcc

ANNUAL REPORT 2019-20

Every year we produce a report which provides an overview of what we've been doing to make sure our housing service delivers good quality, affordable homes that support people to live independently.

Some of the headline information from the report is detailed below and grouped into the following topics: affordable homes, quality homes, investing in homes and fire safety in tower blocks. The full report is available online at www.norwich.gov.uk/housing

Affordable homes			How your rent compares to private sector rent in Norwich		
Size of property		Norwich City Council home: average weekly rent (based on 52 week rent year)	Norwich private sector home: average weekly rent (based on 52 week rent year)*		
1 bed		£67	£137		
2 bed		£72	£172		
3 bed		£80	£206		
4 bed		£85	£322		

*Information sourced from Hometrack

Quality homes

The Norwich Standard means having kitchens that are not older than 20 years, bathrooms not older than 30 years and boilers not older than 15 years.

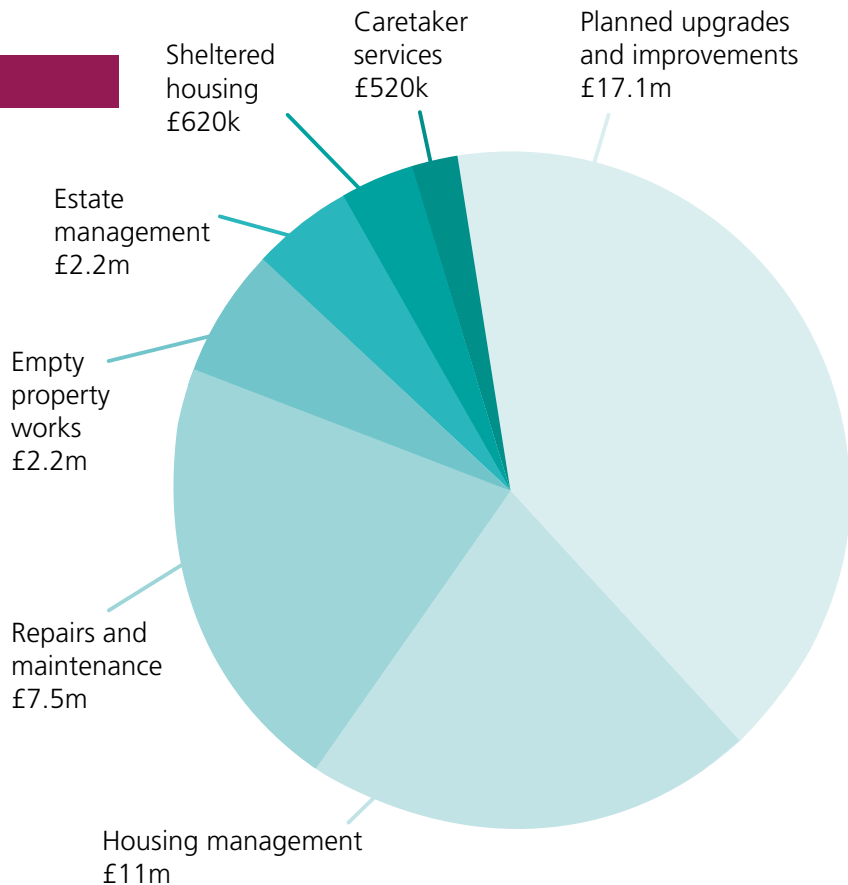
As well as this, we improve electrical installations, roofing and entrance doors, and install insulation. These improvements go a long way towards keeping tenants' bills manageable.

99%
of homes have achieved the Norwich Standard, which is higher than the government's decent homes standard

Investing in homes

As you can see from the pie chart, the majority of money (£17.1m) is spent on major improvements and upgrades across our 15,000 (approximately) council homes. This approach leads to higher quality housing and a reduced need for tenants to report repairs.

Outside of the cost for managing our housing stock (£11m), our next biggest expense is for repairs and maintenance (£7.5m).



Fire safety in tower blocks

Following the devastating fire at Grenfell Tower in London in 2017, we commissioned NPS Norwich to undertake detailed surveys of each of the council's eight tower blocks, with the support of Norfolk Fire and Rescue Service. While none of our tower blocks have been fitted with cladding, the surveys identified a number of

repairs and improvements to help mitigate any possible issues in the future.

Overall, the surveys showed that the compartmentalisation of each flat was intact and that the evacuation policy was fit for purpose.

Improvements completed this year include replacement of all entrance doors and doors to sheds in communal

areas, and, where necessary, the installation of new hard wired smoke detectors.

Some planned work was delayed by Covid-19 but is now underway such as upgrading electrical risers and laterals in the communal areas.

For more information visit www.norwich.gov.uk/towerblocks

To read the report in full, visit www.norwich.gov.uk/housing

Investing and improving estates

It's fantastic to hear about some of the community projects set up and run by tenants and residents. These can really transform neighbourhoods and bring people together.

Potting in Pottergate

The Dingles community garden can be found within the small wooded area sheltering the blocks of flats at West Pottergate from the traffic on Earlham Road.

Using a grant from the city council, local residents have created their own small garden growing fruit and vegetables.

Chris Elderton, chair of the West Pottergate residents' association got involved when he moved into the area in 2016 and encouraged others to do the same.

"We work as a team on the garden, as well as doing regular litter picks in the area – it's nice to meet other people."

Community spirit in Mousehold

A group of residents covering Mousehold Street (and roads off it), Heathgate and Cannell Green have cut back bushes, pulled out weeds and tidied up the area as part of regular community days.

The first (socially distanced) event took place at the start of August with around 40 tenants and residents coming along to help, and there have been two other successful gatherings since.

The group has been doing such a great job that some of the estate flower beds and green areas have been assigned to them to tend as they wish.

Got an idea for improving your estate?

If there is somewhere in your neighbourhood that you think would benefit from an estate improvement, let us know by contacting the council.

Local tenant and volunteer for the group, Cym Cant said. "It was so lovely to get out and to be doing something, rather than being stuck in the flat. This kind of event, during the current virus situation, is helpful to everyone and it would be good to see more taking place."

Councillor Matthew Packer with Chris Elderton, chair of the West Pottergate resident association at the Dingles Community project.



Residents get busy preparing flower beds as part of regular community days in Mousehold.

This photo was taken before social distancing rules came into force.



Get ready for winter

You may have concerns about how to keep your property warm this winter, while also trying to keep costs down. Here are some top tips for you to consider:

- Understand your boiler controls and use the timer.
- Keep as much heat in as possible – drawing blinds and curtains at night prevents heat escaping.
- Let in the light – opening blinds and curtains during the day warms your home for free.
- 15-20 minutes of fresh air in winter is enough to keep your home healthy and fresh.
- Think about switching supplier via the Big Switch and Save www.bigswitchandsave.co.uk or head to council-run energy company Roar Power www.octopus.energy/roar-power Both schemes offer 100 per cent renewable electricity as well as a great deal.
- Heat your living room to 21°C and the rest of the house to 18°C.
- If you are self-isolating or shielding due to Covid-19, and are concerned about topping up your pre-payment meter, get in touch with your energy supplier. They'll discuss options to keep you connected.
- If you are struggling to pay your bills let your supplier know as soon as possible as they can often help.



Changes to how housing services are delivered

Over the next two years we will be changing the way we deliver a number of our key services, including some which relate to our housing stock and surrounding areas.

Environmental services, property services, as well as our building maintenance and repairs service were all previously delivered in a joint venture agreement with Norse.

We have now decided to bring these service areas back into our own control, which we believe will bring us greater control and flexibility over how they are delivered.

We do not anticipate any major changes to how you experience the services, but once they are successfully integrated we will consider any adjustments or improvements we need to make.

You can read more about this change at www.norwich.gov.uk/housing and email any feedback to involvement@norwich.gov.uk by 20 November 2020.



100 years of council housing

Inspirational tenants

As part of our celebrations, we asked you to nominate a tenant who regularly goes out of their way to help others and improve life in the community. Here are the three worthy winners.

Amanda Betts, Saffron Square

Amanda has been nominated for her kindness towards others. She helps out neighbours when they are poorly, such as picking up medication or food shopping, and keeps an eye out for the needs of older people in the community.



Josephine Bilton, Custance Court

Josephine has been nominated for an inspirational tenant award, specifically for her work during lockdown. She supported her neighbours who were shielding and unable to leave their homes by shopping for them, as well as helping in other ways – an absolutely essential role to play during this difficult time.



Lasting legacies

As well as the 100 trees we planted back in the spring, we'll also be installing a specially engraved paving stone in October. Look out for it outside Collins Court on Angel Road as a concrete reminder of 100 years of council housing in Norwich.



Cym Cant, Mousehold Street

Cym is involved with lots of different work to help improve life in her community, such as sitting on the council's tenant involvement panel, as well as organising wildlife projects and litter picks. Cym has been actively helping her neighbourhood, as well as other wider voluntary work in the city, for over 20 years.



A century of stories – David's story

We asked you to send in your memories of living in a Norwich council home over the years. Here's an extract from one of the stories you sent in, which you can read in full by visiting:

www.norwich.gov.uk/100years

"I was born in the 1930s and lived in council accommodation for most of my years in the city. I have moved away now but still consider myself a real Norwich boy, return to visit often and have the fondest memories.

"I felt part of a vibrant, tight-knit community"

I was born in a flat on Bullard Road, part of one of the first council estates in the city, later moving to Motum Road. I have very pleasant memories of living there.

I know my parents were delighted with the space in the house and garden, electric lighting, bathroom and inside toilet. We also enjoyed Earlham Park, the river at Lower Hellesdon, fields off Dereham Road and Earlham Green Lane Woods.

I have many memories of bold community characters, using shared toilets and living through the war years. I remember watching 'dog fights' between war planes from our back garden in Motum Road. Planes came very low, low enough



we could see the pilots. We also had to build an Anderson shelter in the garden.

When we lived at Bacon Road, my brother and his friend started a little lending library in our back gardens, lending books out for a penny a week! This inspired me to use the public library on Colman Road which fed my growing addiction to reading. Here we spent the winter of 1946-7, one of the worst winters of the century. We had 6 to 7 feet of snow, and there were wonderful sledging opportunities in Eaton Park. With only one coal fire in the house, it was very difficult to keep warm.

On all of the estates I lived on, I felt part of a vibrant, tight-knit community, mainly of working class families with aspirations to improve their lives while also working together to improve the community."

It's not too late to send in your story! Share them through the form on our website or contact us by calling 0344 980 3333

Looking ahead

Our ambition is to continue our proud tradition of council house building, so we were delighted when cabinet members approved plans to redevelop the former depot site at Mile Cross providing 200 new council homes.

Next steps include progressing to the planning application stage along with further work to

estimate the cost of designing and delivering the homes.

Providing new council homes falls within the 'housing, regeneration and development' theme – of our Covid-19 recovery plan which identifies eight themes and associated actions to guide the council and city through the challenging times ahead.

Councillor Gail Harris, deputy leader and cabinet member for social housing said: "These new homes will help meet the vision set out in our housing strategy – to provide good quality, well maintained affordable homes to meet local housing need within a safe, clean and well cared for neighbourhood."

Contacting Norwich City Council

ONLINE You can report repairs, access council services and make online payments.

www.norwich.gov.uk

Register for 'My Account' to check your rent and council tax balance. Take a look at 'My Norwich' to see what services are available in your area.

POST Norwich City Council, City Hall, Norwich NR2 1NH.

PHONE 0344 980 3333.

Lines open 9am to 4pm, Monday to Friday.

Out of hours emergencies:

01603 412180.

Free phone payment hotline: 0800 021 7784 (a 24/7 service).

Money advisers:

0344 980 3333 or email

budgetingandmoneyadvice@norwich.gov.uk

Text relay users only:

18001 0344 980 3333

(9am to 4pm, Monday

to Friday).

Leaseholders:

For help and advice on your rights and responsibilities, contact the home ownership team at homeownership@norwich.gov.uk

Report repairs online

To report non-urgent repairs (and for a chance to win £50) go to:

• www.norwich.gov.uk/repairs

• Click 'report a non-urgent repair'

• Enter your details and let the repairs software guide you through the rest...

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Norwich Leaseholders' Association

Are you a Norwich City

Council leaseholder?

If so, why not get involved in Norwich Leaseholders'

Association which meets to

discuss issues that affect you.

For further information call

01603 615132.

Loss of gas or electricity?

If you have lost your gas or electricity supply you should contact your energy supplier directly in the first instance.