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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**



If you would like this information in another language or format such as large print, CD or Braille please visit www.norwich.gov.uk/Intran or call 0344 980 3333.

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Introduction from Cllr Beth Jones

Welcome to the spring issue of TLC magazine

Deputy leader and cabinet member for housing and community safety

Happy New Year to all our tenants and leaseholders. In this spring 2024 edition of the Tenants and Leaseholders Magazine (TLC) we've got lots of important news, some exciting announcements and plenty of information which I hope you will find useful.

As both the cabinet member for housing and community safety and a nurse I am committed to making a difference to peoples' lives by promoting independent living and building safe, healthy and sustainable communities. These are core priorities for this administration.

I'd like to thank all those who have contributed to this issue especially those from our

Tenant Involvement Panel (TIP) who have told us about some of the topics which are important to them. We have included some articles addressing these issues which we hope you find useful.

I am pleased to congratulate Chris Hancock on his recent appointment as director of housing and communities. Chris has a wealth of experience in housing having worked across a variety of management and officer roles at Norwich City Council over the last 20 years and has shown a real commitment to the residents of our city.

In November 2023 Chris was awarded The Community Hero award at the YMCA Norfolk

Awards. Chris was recognised as someone who had made a considerable difference to the lives of young people across Norfolk. Commenting on the award a YMCA spokesperson said: "We are extremely grateful to our winner, Chris Hancock, who's been responsible for several strategic developments in supported housing across the City including our own provision at Norwich Central, My Place and the various shared housing units we have.

"He also steered the introduction of Pathways, a partnership involving a range of agencies, including the YMCA, in tackling the issues faced by those with complex needs who find themselves rough sleeping".



Chris Hancock (back row 5th from the left) with all the winners at the Norfolk YMCA Awards

Photo credit: Andreas Yasimi

Fulfilling our responsibilities

In a previous edition of TLC, we informed you about the Social Housing Regulation Bill's progress through Parliament, aimed at implementing the reforms outlined in the Social Housing White Paper and addressing concerns raised after the Grenfell Tower tragedy in 2017.

In July 2023, the Bill received Royal Assent, officially becoming law. The new Social Housing Regulation Act is set to take effect from April 2024, marking it the most significant change to social housing regulation in a decade. This change directly impacts councils such as Norwich City Council, responsible for owning and managing social housing.

The key focus of the new regulation is to empower the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH) in enforcing standards that safeguard tenants and drive enhancements in landlord services. Expectations for social housing providers like us will increase, adopting a stricter regulatory approach akin to 'Ofsted' style inspections.

This development is positive news for our tenants, ensuring the provision of safe, high-quality homes and services. Tenants will also gain a stronger voice in influencing decisions that affect them.

Under the new regulation, there are additional requirements for us, such as:

- Ensuring key officers possess relevant professional qualifications.
- An obligation to disclose the names of senior executives accountable for meeting the new standards, particularly in Health and Safety matters.
- We will be required to collect and publish information on standardised Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSM) to enable scrutiny of our performance and facilitate comparisons with other housing providers.

Our current performance statistics can be found in the 'How are we doing?' section.

Tenant Satisfaction Measures

To independently conduct the TSM survey, we have enlisted the services of Viewpoint, and extend our gratitude to the 750 tenants who have already participated in the survey. We also encourage any tenant contacted by Viewpoint to share their feedback.

Complaints

Starting from April 2024, the Housing Ombudsman has been granted new powers to enforce a complaint handling code applicable to all housing providers. This ensures a timely and efficient response to complaints, demonstrating our commitment to learning and addressing concerns.

If you have lodged a complaint with us that remains unresolved through our internal process, please contact the Housing Ombudsman for further investigation. More information about the Housing Ombudsman Service can be found at www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk



**STRONGER VOICE
FOR TENANTS**

Tenant involvement panel: What it does and why it's important

The tenant involvement panel (TIP) meets every six weeks at City Hall where housing policy and finance issues are reviewed, and housing service performance is scrutinised. TIP members gain an understanding of housing departments and can question council officers about their function and the problems they encounter when performing their duties.

These activities are vital to ensuring that tenants understand what their housing departments do and have an influence over their work. Housing in Norwich will get better when there is a partnership between the

council and the tenants – with a shared vision to constantly improve everyone's living conditions.

An important area of scrutiny is the annual rent increase discussions with the senior management and the finance department. Detailed analysis for all the contributing factors to the increase are studied along with how the income will be utilised.

TIP members can also be involved in consultations about important changes to services or to influence the future direction of the council.

One member of the TIP is a representative on the Association of Retained Council Housing (ARCH) tenants' group. The tenant representative attends quarterly meetings to discuss topics of interest to all council tenants throughout England and then reports back to the TIP. Further information about ARCH can be found at www.arch-housing.org.uk

The tenant involvement panel is always looking to gain new members and particularly welcomes applications from members of minority groups so please email involvement@norwich.gov.uk to find out more.

Training will be provided to ensure that members will have the skills required to make the most of the panel activities.



TIP members who attended the ARCH conference that was held in Stevenage in September included Peter Warren-Ward and Cym Cant.



www.norwich.gov.uk/TIP

QR Codes

We've received a great deal of feedback from readers that they were keen for us to move forward with making TLC more interactive and downloadable, so in this edition we are trialling the

use of several QR codes for readers with smart phones.

We are keen to receive any feedback on this. Please email communications@norwich.gov.uk



Housing regulator gives all-clear on safety checks

A two-year programme of work to address safety checks across hundreds of city council properties has now been successfully completed.

In December 2023, the Regulator of Social Housing confirmed that the issues which saw them work closely with the council on overdue and follow-up safety checks across some council properties, have all now been resolved.

In a press release councillor Beth Jones, deputy leader and

cabinet member for housing said: "The regulator's action to lift the notice marks a significant milestone in our comprehensive work programme. It shows we have been able to evidence that we are completely up to date with all the necessary safety checks.

"Our dedicated team of experts have been working incredibly hard to address the issues. Throughout this whole programme, we have been honest, open and

accountable – particularly with those who matter the most, our residents who live in the affected properties.

"While we are incredibly pleased with all we have done to get on top of our safety checks, we fully acknowledge this should never have happened in the first place.

"We now have a robust system of audits, checks and maintenance programmes in place to help safeguard against this ever happening again."

Help with the cost of living

If you are facing difficult financial choices at the moment, our expert budgeting and money advice team can help. They offer a range of services from getting the most from your budget to in-depth debt advice.

Money advice team facts and figures

- Last year the team received 552 referrals with a total annual saving of almost £600,000.

This equates to an average increase of +£20.81 per household each week. This was achieved via increasing income, reducing expenditure and receiving one off awards/grants.

- We collaborate closely with the food bank, the Household Support Fund at Norwich City Council, and the Client Hardship Service at Norfolk County Council. Our partnership aims to assist in various ways, including

offsetting budgets and providing financial aid for essentials such as food, energy, water, and more.

- Self-help preferred? Check whether you might be eligible for a grant by using a grant directory such as www.turn2us.org.uk and www.ncab.org.uk/grants-directory
- Visit www.norwich.gov.uk/moneyadvice for more information or email BudgetingAndMoneyAdvice@norwich.gov.uk directly.



Making tenant engagement inclusive

Norwich City Council will soon be introducing 'Community Pages' on the digital, interactive online platform, 'Get Talking Norwich' to inform, engage, and build relationships within the Norwich community.

The pages will be a safe space for you, our tenants, to have your say about important matters, influence the service we provide, get involved in discussions with other tenants, share your views and opinions, make suggestions and give us your feedback.

You will be able to take part in surveys, questionnaires, polls and estate inspections. There will be a facility to pinpoint locations on a map of your area to indicate where improvements can be made, what you like in the vicinity and anything else you think might be of interest to your neighbours. You can take part in forum discussions and collaborate on ideas.



We will also be sharing useful information about clubs and groups in your area, local events as well as important dates for your diary.

You can also contribute to your estates by taking part in regular inspections into the quality of all aspects of your environment. The results of the inspections allow us to maintain and improve standards in our estate management. Helping us with estate inspections will improve your environment.

The estate inspections will be promoted in your estate before they take place. You can come along to the guided walk around of the area along with estate management officers and councillors. If you don't wish to join the walk around you can complete a questionnaire about the quality of your area or you can pin a flag onto a virtual map of your area to show us ideas for improvement.

We'd love you to tell us what you'd like to see on these pages by emailing communications@norwich.gov.uk, tell us how we could make them more interesting and what would keep you coming back! Would you like to enter a photography competition or perhaps vote for your community champion? Or is there someone who works here at the council who you think deserves a thank you?

These will be YOUR community pages and we need your help to make them a success!

New eco-friendly homes for Bowthorpe

In December the council took ownership of 22 new eco-friendly homes off Saxoncote Avenue. The properties mark a significant step in the city council's commitment to offering high-quality, sustainable housing for local residents.

Lion Homes, the council-owned housing delivery company formerly known as Norwich Regeneration Ltd, have worked

in partnership with the council's in-house Housing Delivery team to provide the 76 eco-efficient properties on this site.

The remaining 54 homes are scheduled for handover between February and September this year.



www.norwich.gov.uk/Bowthorpe



Mr and Mrs Paliulis receiving the keys to their new home

How are we doing?

We monitor the performance of the housing service by asking residents to take part in our TSM satisfaction survey and measuring key performance indicators. Here are the latest quarterly results:

- Above or on target
- Target not yet set
- Below target

65%

of tenants are satisfied with the service we provide

69%

of households who asked for help were prevented from becoming homeless

61

days is the average time it took to relet empty properties

0%

of reviewed homeless decisions were overturned

78%

of tenants feel their home is safe and secure

54%

of tenants feel we listen and act on their views

94.27%

of rent was collected (including arrears brought forward)

65%

of tenants feel we provide them with a well maintained home



Visit www.norwich.gov.uk/HousingPerformance for more information.

Award for INTERACT

Congratulations to all those who work as part of our INTERACT team which has received an award at the recent Norfolk & Waveney Integrated Care System Social Prescribing Conference.

INTERACT is a partnership which includes Age UK Norwich and Norfolk Citizens Advice, a team co-ordinator and housing specialist from Norwich City Council, an integrated care co-ordinator from Norfolk County Council

and a volunteer development worker from Voluntary Norfolk.

They work alongside our Home Improvement Team to help people with health issues improve their housing situation and home environment.

INTERACT's Social Prescriber from Norfolk Citizen's Advice, Stacey Staines (second from the right in the photo), was also nominated for Norfolk and Waveney Social Prescriber of the year.



The INTERACT team with their trophy and certificate.

Keeping you safe

Following an audit of multiple occupancy properties, we are in the process of introducing the following:

- revised fire safety signage to ensure it is compliant (available in a variety of languages)
- a fire safety leaflet for all residents (available in a variety of languages)
- new communal area signage encouraging people to be tidy and safe

- a new web page has been launched dedicated to improving safety in communal areas. www.norwich.gov.uk/CommunalAreas



Tenancy consultation

Between July and September 2023, we invited our tenants for feedback on our revised tenancy strategy, policy, and agreement. In addition to tenants, we also asked for feedback from social housing providers and others who work with us.

We were grateful to receive more than 500 responses, this feedback was used to shape the final tenancy agreement, tenancy strategy and tenancy policy which was approved by cabinet on the 15 November.

Below you will see some extracts from comments made by tenants and the responses from Norwich City Council.



The city council asked	Tenant response	The city council's response
What is missing from the tenancy agreement or policy that you think we should include?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Storage and charging facilities for mobility vehicles. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are currently developing a mobility vehicle policy which will provide further advice and guidance on our approach to safe storage and charging of mobility vehicles for our tenants and leaseholders.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be clearer on what is anti-social behaviour and what the Council will do about it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We are currently developing a new anti-social behaviour policy which will provide further advice and guidance on our approach to tackling anti-social behaviour.

You can see all the comments, suggestions, and responses by visiting the Norwich City Council website and searching for Appendix four in the Cabinet Report from 15 November 2023. We will write to all those affected by the revised agreement and policy in the coming weeks.

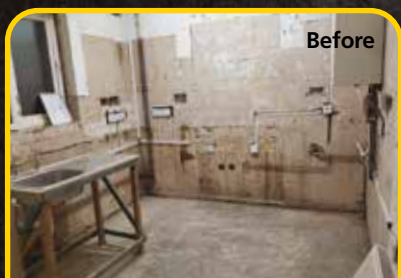
High praise for kitchen makeover

We were really pleased to be tagged on Facebook by a tenant who was 'over the moon' with her new kitchen.

Describing her experience on Facebook Julia said: "Old to new.

Now to clean my home and make food! Thank you Norwich City Council, your workers were all just brilliant! I love my kitchen."

We love to receive positive feedback, thanks Julia.



Recycling

We can all play our part in ensuring that Norwich continues to be a great place to live by keeping it neat and tidy and recycling whenever we can.

If you still have an unwanted Christmas tree hanging around from the festive period remember you can chop it up and put it in your garden waste bin (if you subscribe), if not you can dispose of real trees at recycling centres.



SCAN
ME



www.norwich.gov.uk/Recycling

Fly-tipping

You may not be aware that fly-tipping is a criminal offence and can be punishable with an unlimited fine and up to five years in prison.

It is everyone's responsibility to report fly-tipping and you can do so on our website.



SCAN
ME



www.norwich.gov.uk/Fly-Tipping

City Streets targeted by clean up teams

Over 170 streets, cycleways and footpaths have been cleared of litter, rubbish, fly-tipping and overgrown vegetation across key residential areas in Norwich as part of the Love Norwich campaign.

Teams from Norwich City Council and Norwich City Services Ltd (NCSL), which provides environmental services on behalf of the council, have been working on a rolling programme of neighbourhood clean-up visits to remove fly-tipped rubbish, litter and graffiti in public areas, tidy grass edging and shrubs, clean down pavements and sweep hard surfaces.

SCAN
ME



www.norwich.gov.uk/CleanStreets

Alleyway clearances

Since June 2023 and in collaboration with Community Payback (The Probation Service) we have carried out 34 alleyway clearances.

We are very pleased with this progress and will continue with this work.

Next are some before and after photos.



Rent increase

If you are a tenant, you will receive your annual rent notice at the beginning of March explaining what the weekly rent for your tenancy will be from April 2024 to March 2025.

Council rents are agreed each year following rules set by central government and taking into account factors such as average manual wages, council property values and the number of bedrooms in your home.

This year's 7.7% increase represents an average rise of £6.91 per week. The increase will help cover rises in inflation and make sure the council can continue to:

- Maintain council homes and estates.
- Provide kitchen, bathroom and electrical upgrades.
- Build more council homes.

Previously we notified you of the rent increase and service charge increase in two separate letters.

This year, we will be communicating both your rent and service charges within the same letter. We will contact you directly about your rent and anything you need to do regarding your payments. If you pay by Direct Debit, you don't need to do anything, your payments will update automatically. If you receive Universal Credit, you will need to update your journal with the increase in rent or you won't receive all the benefit you're entitled to.

Dealing with rising costs

Many residents are feeling the effects of rising living costs. Don't forget, you can speak to an income officer at any time if you have concerns or questions about your rent.

Email them at: HousingIncome@norwich.gov.uk

The city council is committed to supporting those hit hardest by the cost-of-living crisis.

Free money and budgeting advice is available to all council tenants. Visit www.norwich.gov.uk/MoneyAdvice for more information.

	Rent 2023/24	Increase (7.7%)	Proposed Rent 2024/25
Average	£83.71	£6.91	£90.62
Maximum	£139.09	£10.71	£149.80
Minimum	£63.75	£4.91	£68.66

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.

Out of hours emergencies:
01603 412180.

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

Money advisers:
BudgetingAndMoneyAdvice@
norwich.gov.uk

Text relay users only:
18001 01344 980 3333
(9am to 4pm, Monday
to Friday).

Leaseholders:
For help and advice on your
rights and responsibilities,
email the home ownership
team on HomeOwnership@
norwich.gov.uk

Housing Ombudsman:
info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk
0300 1113000
www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

Report repairs online

A chance
to win
£50!!

*T&Cs apply

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

- **Log in to 'My Account'**
- Sign up for '**Housing Online**' to report and book your repair, where you can also manage other elements of your tenancy, including your rent account.

You will need to set up two separate log-ins for both **My Account** and **Housing Online** if you've not logged in before. After you have signed up, you'll only need to sign into My Account to access Housing Online features.

When signing up for the first time, you will need your unique rent reference number, which can be found on your recent rent notification.

**Available 24/7 and works on
PCs, tablets and smartphones**



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.

Need space for your car?



Are you confident that you can secure a parking space every time you drive to work? Would you like secure off-street parking at home? Why not rent a garage or parking bay from Norwich City Council? Garages are located throughout the city and available to rent whether you live within the city boundary or not.

For more information, go to www.norwich.gov.uk/garages