

STREETS AHEAD

THE MAGAZINE FOR FREEBRIDGE COMMUNITY HOUSING TENANTS



**ALL CHANGE AT FREEBRIDGE!
FREEBRIDGE AND COVID-19
& NEW HOMES IN WEST NORFOLK**

SUMMER 2020

DEVELOPING HOMES AND CREATING OPPORTUNITIES
FOR PEOPLE WITHIN WEST NORFOLK

Freebridge
COMMUNITY HOUSING

WELCOME TO STREETS AHEAD

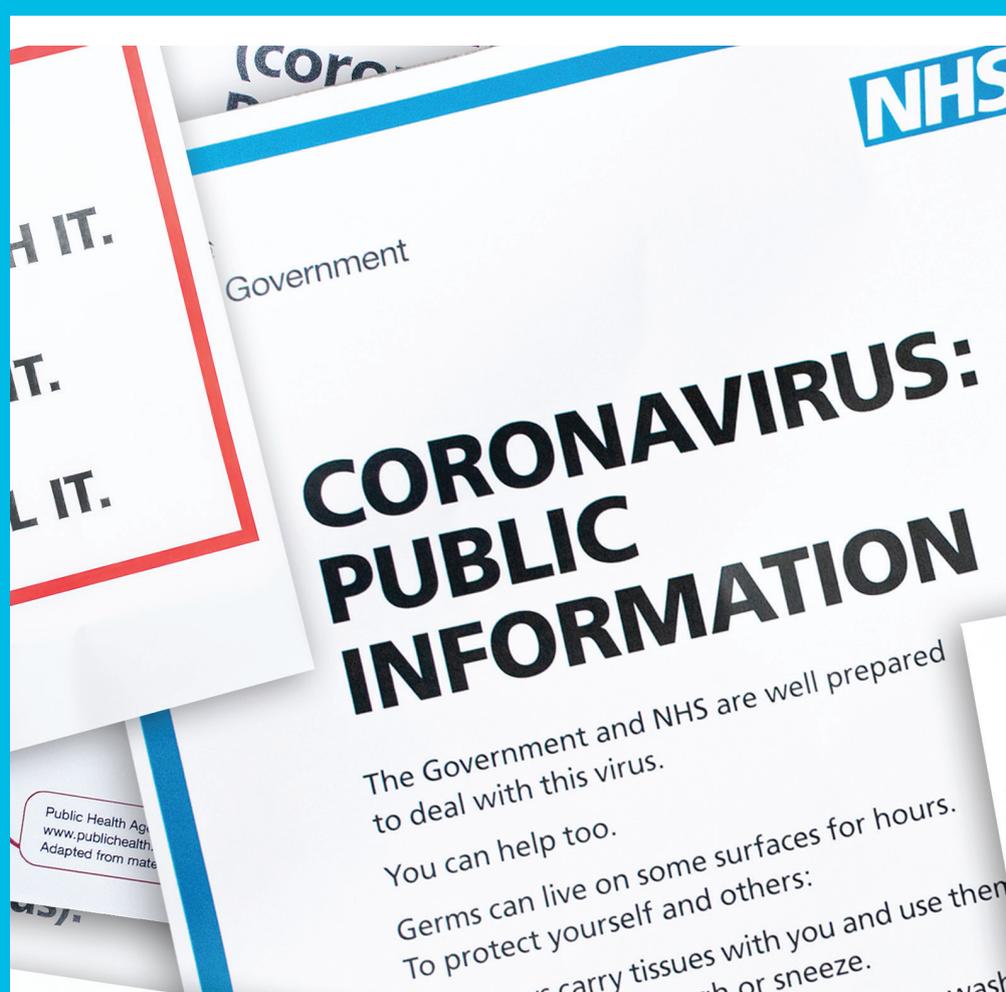
Usually when we say hello to you in the summer issue of Streets Ahead we're looking forward to warm sunny days and trips to the beach. This year's a bit different.

We're still looking forward to warm sunny days and the chance to dip our toes into the sea once again but since the early part of the year we, like everybody else, having been following the government's guidance to stay at home, protect the NHS and save lives.

We know that Covid-19 has affected all of you in some way or other, in the same way that it has affected all of us at Freebridge too. As we write this the situation seems to be improving and as a result the government has started to ease the restrictions it initially introduced. We hope that by the time this issue arrives things will have continued to get better, but we do understand that in the last few months the situation has changed from day to day.

As the situation changes the services we are able to carry out will too. We'll try to keep you as up to date as possible with what's going on, but if you're not sure about something or just want to find out more please check our website for further updates, or contact us in the usual manner.

In the meantime thanks for taking the time to read this, take very good care of yourselves and we'll see you again in the autumn!



When the coronavirus pandemic started impacting us all, our first thoughts were for the safety and wellbeing of our customers and our workforce, and this has continued to be our priority over the following months.

As the situation developed we knew that many of our older tenants in particular would have extra concerns, not only for their own health but around getting the essential supplies and support they needed.

With this in mind our Tenancy Support Team, who normally provide support to the residents of our 17 sheltered schemes, led a project to contact every tenant over the age of

70, regardless of where they were living. This resulted in us speaking to almost 1500 people, ensuring those identified as the most vulnerable were referred to the Borough Council's coronavirus support scheme, which helped organise food and medicine deliveries where needed. We also provided weekly follow up calls from across Freebridge, with teams from all over the organisation redeployed to make these essential calls.

Morrisons in Downham Market also provided much needed support during this time as they donated food parcels to go to our most vulnerable tenants. Almost 250 parcels were delivered by our Placeshaping and Support teams across West Norfolk.

FREEBRIDGE AND COVID-19



As you'd expect we've been following the government's instructions during the last few months across every part of the organisation.

Being able to visit your homes has been one of the main areas affected by the situation, and this has had an impact across Freebridge.

That said we have continued to provide an emergency repairs service and deal with any issues that put the health, safety or security of anyone at immediate risk or where there were concerns about the structural stability of a building.

When we have been out and about our teams have been wearing all the correct Personal Protection Equipment and following the rules on social distancing and handwashing

and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

The teams that answer calls and enquiries from you have also had to adapt how they work. We haven't been able to have face to face visits from you and have had to prioritise emergency calls. And behind the scenes we've been making sure those in our Customer Services team are kept safe by introducing social distancing and strict cleaning procedures.

Many of our employees who would normally work at our Juniper House office, or at our Property Services depot at Hamlin Way, are now working from home. This means that those who cannot do their jobs from home are able to spread out within the offices and keep as safe as possible.

And although we've kept going in some respect in most areas of our work we were sad that we had little choice other than to temporarily close our community centres in Providence Street and at the Discovery Centre. As soon as it's safe to do so we will be able to restart the many activities and events that would normally be on offer, and welcome back the groups who regularly use the centres as their base.

As we write this, the next steps are still a little uncertain and

our priority will continue to be the health and wellbeing of the workforce and tenants. We will do our best to return to 'normal' as soon as we can but are very grateful to everyone for showing so much patience, resilience and flexibility during what has been an enormously difficult time for us all.

We're now working on what's called a remobilisation plan which details all the various services we provide and the way we're working to get back to providing them in the best and safest way possible. This plan includes things like the routine repairs that have built up in the last few months. We'll make this plan available on our website and do our best to let you know what's happening. We won't be back to 'normal' for a while but we're working hard to provide as many of our services as we can as quickly as we can.

In the meantime please keep safe and well, keep following the advice being provided by government and if you have any concerns that we can help with please do get in contact with us.

The Tenant Panel on Zoom!



THE FREEBRIDGE TENANT PANEL

As we've said in previous issues of Streets Ahead, Tenant Panel members will now provide you with an update on what they've been working on over the last few months.

This issue's overview comes from **Charlotte Beck**.

Like everybody else across the country, in fact the world, the Tenant Panel have had an unusual few months!

Normally we come into the main Freebridge offices in King's Lynn each month to meet with representatives from the organisation to talk about

what's been happening, what work is being planned and to provide a tenant's view on the services being provided.

However, since the middle of March we've not been able to do that, and that's been disappointing because the debates we have in our meetings are always interesting.

The good news is that we've been able to continue to engage with Freebridge, and each other, through a variety of other ways and means!

Because there's a broad mix of people on the Tenant Panel, all

with different knowledge and skills, Freebridge have used different ways of engagement with different members of the Panel, in order to make sure we can all still contribute in a way that suits us best, and all from the safety of our own homes.

Initially we received a number of papers to read and consider from Freebridge. The external Panel facilitator then spoke to each of us in turn by telephone before collating our responses to Freebridge so they could still get an understanding of our thoughts and ideas about a number of subjects.

Then following that we took our meeting into the 21st century by catching up through some video conferencing software called Zoom, which I'm sure many of you will have either seen on the TV or maybe even used with your friends and family.

While we were all sat in our kitchens and front rooms we were able to virtually meet with the Director of Housing, Sophie, who gave us an update on Welfare Reform, including details about the huge increase in applications for Universal Credit in recent weeks.

She also took the time to talk to us about the Regulator of Social Housing's Neighbourhood and Community Standard as part of our development slot. And then we were joined by Jo Barrett, one of Board members who gave us an update on what they've been working on over the last few months.

It was a slightly shorter meeting than normal as most of us we're having to work out how to use Zoom for the first time, but those of us who were able to join in thought it worked really well!

So while we all hope to be back to normal sooner than later it's good to know that we can adapt to make sure things keep on keeping on.

Charlotte

More detailed notes of Tenant Panel meetings are held on Freebridge's website at www.freebridge.org.uk

COULD YOU BE OUR NEXT TENANT PANEL MEMBER?

We're always on the lookout for people who might be interested in joining the Freebridge Tenant Panel at some point in the future.

Maybe you're interested in learning new skills or playing a real role in helping improve the services that Freebridge provides? If so the Panel might be the thing for you.

The Freebridge Tenant Panel was set up some time ago to look at key areas of Freebridge's work and meets on a monthly basis to discuss a variety of different projects and consider ways of helping the organisation be the best housing provider it can be.

The panel is made up of tenants who come from a variety of backgrounds, and from the many different communities that Freebridge serves.

If this sounds like it might be of interest to you, please give Helen Richardson a call on 03332 404 444, email her at helen.richardson@freebridge.org.uk





Kelly and Hannah, two of Freebridge's Universal Credit advice team.

HELPING YOU WITH UNIVERSAL CREDIT

Are you claiming Universal Credit? Did you report your rent change in April?

If you were claiming Universal Credit before **6th April 2020** then you should have reported the change to your rent and service charges on your Universal Credit account.

If you have not reported your rent change please do this now.

If you have an online claim you need to report this through your online account.

If you have a telephone claim you will need to telephone 0800 328 5644 to report it.

If you have not reported this change then your Universal Credit claim will be calculated incorrectly and as a result you will not be paid what you are entitled to.

When changes are reported late it is unlikely they will be backdated; this means you will have to cover the shortfall yourself to pay your rent.

Your new rent and service charge details can be found on page 3 of the Rent Amendment letter that we sent to you in February. If you want to check what your current charges are, please call us.

When you report your changes, please ensure that you enter the charges exactly as they are detailed on your Rent Amendment letter. You will need to select 'weekly' as the payment frequency.

We know that applying for Universal Credit can be a complicated process, many people have experienced problems when putting in a new claim or when making changes to an existing one.

The good news is that we're here to help! Freebridge has three specialist advisors who can provide advice to you with your claim. So, if you have a question about Universal Credit that you're not sure about give us a call on 03332 404 444!

To give you an idea about the kind of problems that we've been dealing with - because if you have an issue about Universal Credit we may well have already come across the problem, we spoke to a tenant who's been receiving help from our advisors over the last few months:

"When I was furloughed at the end of March I was really concerned about how I would make ends meet. My partner had also moved out a few weeks before I got the news and this added to my worries.

"I phoned Freebridge and spoke to Abbie in the Income team who was able to let me know what kind of benefits I could apply for, she also pointed me in the right direction on who to speak to at the Borough Council about council tax reductions. When I then had a few issues applying for Universal Credit Abbie put me in contact with her colleague Kelly who was able to guide me through the online identification process and make sure everything was done properly.

"I was able to confirm with the Universal Credit people that Kelly was allowed to access my account so she could check things with me that I didn't understand.

"I found the online part of the Universal Credit system really difficult – there were three stages of checking and then I was panicking about the deadlines involved. I knew that they were so busy at the time but I was really frustrated and worried about whether I'd be able to get any help or not. I wasn't sure what I was looking at so having someone I could ask 'is this right?' or 'what does this mean?' was a lifesaver.

"Things are starting to flow a lot better now and I know that if I hadn't had Abbie or Kelly to help I would have been in a very difficult situation."

Miss H from Emneth



INITIAL DEMOLITION NOTICE FREEBRIDGE COMMUNITY HOUSING LIMITED

Section 138B and Schedule 5 of the Housing Act 1985 (as amended).

This Notice is given by Freebridge Community Housing Limited of Juniper House, Austin Street, Kings Lynn, Norfolk, PE30 1DZ ("the Landlord")

1. The Landlord intends to demolish the following properties: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 137, 138, 141, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147 and 148, Hillington Square, King's Lynn, Norfolk ("the Relevant Properties).
2. The demolition of the Relevant Properties is necessary for the regeneration of Hillington Square.
3. The Landlord intends to demolish the Relevant Properties before 31st March 2027.
4. This Notice will remain in force up to 31st March 2027 unless revoked or otherwise terminated under or by virtue of paragraph 3 of Schedule 5A of the Housing Act 1985.
5. Whilst this Notice is in force the Landlord will not be under an obligation to make such a grant as is mentioned in Section 138(1) of the Housing Act 1985 in respect of any applications to exercise the Right to Buy in respect of the Relevant Properties.
6. A Right to Buy application submitted to the Landlord in respect of any of the Relevant Properties whilst this Notice is still in force will be processed by the Landlord but cannot be completed. If this Notice ceases to be in force, the Right to Buy application can be completed.
7. There may be a right to compensation under Section 138C of the Housing Act 1985 in respect of certain expenditure incurred in relation to any existing Right to Buy claim at the date of the service of this Notice.
8. Any claim for compensation under paragraph 7 of this Notice should be served upon the Landlord within the period of three months beginning from 25th June 2020.
9. Compensation under Section 138C of the Housing Act 1985 is compensation in respect of expenditure reasonably incurred by a tenant before the date of this Notice for legal and other fees, and other professional costs and expenses, payable in connection with the exercise of that Right to Buy claim.
10. If the Landlord serves a Final Demolition Notice in respect of the Relevant Properties and a Right to Buy application is suspended due to the service of this Notice, that application will lapse and no further application can then be made whilst the Final Demolition Notice is in effect.
11. Notice in this form has been served individually on tenants and occupiers of the Relevant Properties and a copy of this Notice has been published in the Lynn News, Streets Ahead and on the Landlord's website.

Signed: Anthony Ellis Hall, Chief Executive

Dated: 25 June 2020

Tony Hall working at Juniper House.



GOODBYE TO TONY HALL

Earlier this year, Tony Hall, Chief Executive of Freebridge Community Housing, announced he would be retiring after almost 14 years at the helm of the organisation.

Tony was previously Director of Community with the Borough Council and oversaw the transfer of almost 7,000 homes to the newly established Freebridge back in April 2006. Since then he has led the organisation in activities such as the decent homes improvement programme, the regeneration of Hillington Square, taking over the ownership and management of Providence Street Community Centre and the Discovery Centre, and developing many new homes across West Norfolk.

Freebridge has appeared on the Sunday Times Top 100 Best Companies to work for list on three occasions, has received the highest ratings for governance and viability from the social housing regulator, and in 2017 Tony won the Inspirational Leader of the Year category at the Housing Heroes Awards.

Andy Walder, Freebridge Community Housing's Chair, said: "I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere thanks to Tony Hall for the time and commitment he has given to Freebridge over the years, he will be much missed, and we wish him the very best in his retirement and in whatever challenge he decides to take on next."

Tony Hall said: "Freebridge Community Housing has

been a big part of my life for the past 14 years. We have achieved some great things and I have worked with a lot of passionate and dedicated people. It is difficult to say goodbye to such a fantastic organisation. I am sure my successor, Anita Jones, will take Freebridge forward with the same enthusiasm and I wish her and my colleagues the very best."

We're sad to see Tony leave Freebridge Community Housing, but we wish him the very best for the future.



HELLO TO ANITA JONES

working to support a better West Norfolk through the development of more and diverse homes, leading on initiatives that will help and support people and communities to be the best they can possibly be and delivering a high-performance housing service to our customers.

“When I originally applied for the position at Freebridge I had no idea about the situation we would all eventually find ourselves because of coronavirus. That said it's enormously reassuring to me that the employees have been coping so well in the circumstances, and it makes it clearer than ever the importance of the role that organisations like Freebridge have in West Norfolk.”

So as Tony Hall leaves Freebridge Community Housing for pastures new, we're very pleased to introduce you to our new Chief Executive - Anita Jones.

Anita joins Freebridge from Havebury Housing in Bury St Edmunds, where she has been Director of Operations and Deputy Chief Executive since 2012.

Andy Walder, Freebridge Community Housing's Chair, said, “I am delighted that Anita is joining us as our new Chief Executive. With her experience, knowledge and expertise she

is well placed to lead Freebridge on the next stage of our growth and development. We look forward to working with Anita as we continue developing homes and creating opportunities for people within West Norfolk.

Anita Jones, Freebridge's new Community Housing Chief Executive, said: “I am delighted, excited and proud to be the new chief executive of Freebridge Community Housing, an organisation that is doing great things here in West Norfolk.

“Like the rest of the Freebridge team, and as a resident of West Norfolk, I am passionate about

Anita officially starts at Freebridge on Monday 3 August, and we hope that as the situation with Covid-19 improves that she will get the chance to get out and about across the area to meet some of you and say hello!



Freebridge Chair Andy Walder, with Freebridge Chief Executive Tony Hall and representatives of the building contractors.

DEVELOPING HOMES FOR WEST NORFOLK

Like organisations across the country Freebridge have been managing the situation in respect of Covid-19 from day to day, adapting the way we work so we could continue to provide services to our customers that needed them. Thankfully we've also been able to maintain work on longer-term plans and projects including progressing plans at a number of sites across West Norfolk where we're looking to build new homes.

One of these sites where we've just begun work is at Chapnall Road in Walsoken, near Wisbech, where we demolished a number of very tired non-traditional properties and are building 14 brand new modern homes in their place, which are expected to be finished by May of next year.

Tony Hall, outgoing Freebridge Chief Executive said: "These new

homes will be a great addition to the village of Walsoken.

"The properties that have been demolished were originally built in a non-traditional manner and as such were only ever intended to have a very limited lifespan, so we're very pleased to be replacing them with a number of new, thermally efficient homes which will provide much needed housing in the area for many years to come."

As well as these homes in Walsoken we'll soon be starting work on nine new 2 bedroom homes that will replace five outdated bungalows in Terrington St Clement, and have begun to prepare the site for a number of new properties to be situated behind the old Rampant Horse site in Gayton.



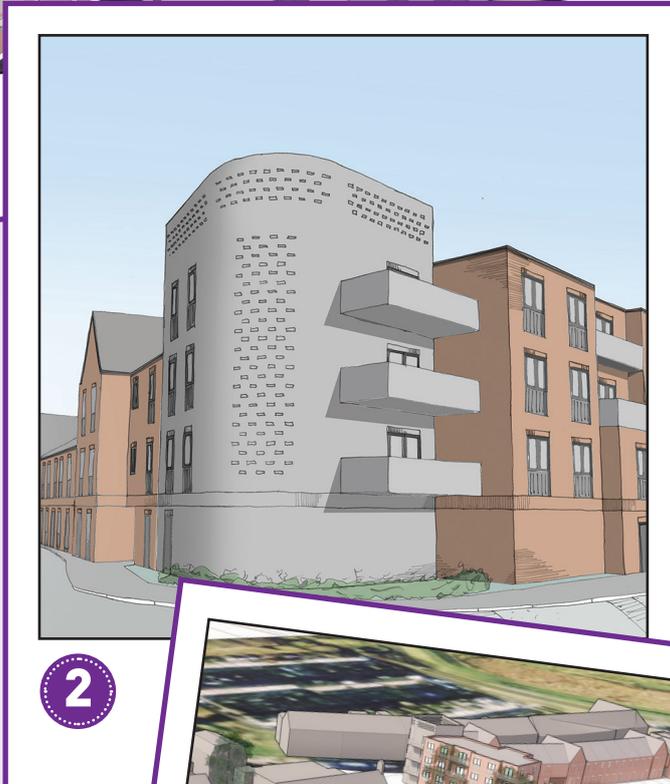
Demolishing the old properties in Chapnall Road.

In addition to the new homes we're working on, Freebridge also recently unveiled the proposed plans for the final phases of the Hillington Square regeneration project, following the successful completion of the first four phases at Millfleet Court, Valentine Place, Colby Court and Eldridge Court.

The unveiling of the plans began a month-long period of consultation with the community before submission to the Borough Council for planning approval.

Andy Walder Freebridge chair said, "Despite the current circumstances we are very excited to be able to let everyone see our proposed plans for the remaining work at Hillington Square. The project had been paused towards the end of last year to allow us to fully investigate the options available to us and we've used that time well. The final plans reflect our desire to offer a better mix and variety of housing on the estate and we feel this will result in ensuring that Hillington Square is a great place to live for many years to come."

The feedback from the consultation exercise has now been considered by the project team, and a final set of plans will be submitted to the Borough Council. We hope to have a decision from them by the end of the year and once everything has been agreed look forward to going out to tender for the work involved so we can get started on the final phases as soon as we are able.



Pictured right:

#1, an overview of the proposed plans.

#2, the view from All Saints Street.

#3, another overview of the proposed plans.



Thumbs up from the Maternity Team at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.

SUPPORTING THE COMMUNITY AT FREEBRIDGE

For the past two years Freebridge's chosen charity has been the King's Lynn Foodbank, a group who do amazing work providing help to local people in crisis.

During this time, employees raised almost £5000 to support the Foodbanks efforts. In addition to fundraising for the charity, colleagues from across the company also spent time in both the distribution centre sorting and packing donations of food, and out and about at local supermarkets helping to collect donations.

Boxes and boxes of food were also collected and financial contributions have come from a range of events carried out throughout the year.

But it's all change, as for 2020/21 employees have

voted to support the Maternity Bereavement Suite fund at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in King's Lynn.

The appeal launched at the start of 2020 and aims to raise £185,000 for the suite which will provide a space for families who lose their babies either during, or shortly after birth. As well as providing a homelier environment for them to spend time with their babies, it will be in a separate space away from the other families having happier times.

Everyone working at the QEH has done incredible work over the past few months in particular and it's important that the vital work they do across our community is supported, especially when resources are being stretched.

Hospital Chairman, Professor Steve Barnett, said: "We want to say a huge thank you to Freebridge Community Housing for nominating the Queen Elizabeth Hospital's Maternity Bereavement Suite Appeal as their Charity for 2020/21.

"Currently, we do not have a dedicated area in our maternity unit for parents who have lost babies which can make a very painful time even more difficult.

"A bereavement of this kind will stay with the families for the rest of their lives – we have one opportunity to support families through this time and it's important we get it right."

We'll update you with our fundraising activities over the year, but if you'd like to find out more about the Bereavement Suite fund in the meantime, and perhaps contribute yourself, visit the hospital's website at www.qehkl.nhs.uk



People across West Norfolk have been doing amazing things for others and the community throughout the last difficult months – and now it's time to recognise them.

The #lovewestnorfolk heroes scheme has been announced to thank those individuals, teams, and organisations who have been making a difference during the coronavirus crisis.

Through the scheme, which opened for nominations on Friday 10th July, members of the public will be able to put forward their #lovewestnorfolk heroes.

Every hero put forward will receive a special certificate and badge, and their name will be added to a roll of honour which will be displayed in the borough council offices when they reopen. This roll of honour will also be added to the Love West Norfolk website.

In addition, each hero will feature on the Love West Norfolk social media channels - on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

And, ten #lovewestnorfolk heroes will be chosen at

random to receive a very special video call from the Mayor of King's Lynn and West Norfolk Councillor Geoff Hipperson or Love West Norfolk Ambassador James Bagge.

But that's not all. When it is safe to do so, the scheme will culminate in a special reception for the #lovewestnorfolk heroes taking place at the town hall in King's Lynn.

Nominating your #lovewestnorfolk hero or heroes is really easy. Simply fill in the form on the Lovewestnorfolk.co.uk website. All that is needed is some information about who they are, how they have made a difference for West Norfolk over the last few months, and whether they are an individual, a team, or an organisation.

Nominations are now open and close on 7 September 2020.

You can follow Love West Norfolk on Twitter: @LoveWestNorfolk
Facebook: Love West Norfolk
and Instagram: love_west_norfolk

A STAKE IN FREEBRIDGE: HOW TO BECOME A SHAREHOLDER

Freebridge Community Housing is inviting its tenants to become shareholders. Shareholders have the right to attend the Annual General Meeting and vote on major issues in the running of the organisation.

Shareholding is designed to increase tenants' stakeholding in their housing provider and is a way to become involved in what Freebridge does.

If you need more information about how to become a Freebridge shareholder or just want to know more contact the Governance Team on 03332 404 444 or email enquiries@freebridge.org.uk



HOW WE PERFORMED

SATISFACTION SURVEY

Every month our First Contact Centre calls 100 of our tenants to ask them how they think we are performing.



80%

of our customers are satisfied with the overall service we provide



69%

of our customers are satisfied with our repairs service



85%

of our customers are satisfied with rent and service charges



72%

of our customers are satisfied with their home



83%

of our customers are satisfied with their neighbourhood



84%

of our customers are satisfied with how they are kept informed

COMPLAINTS & COMPLIMENTS

We hope that the services you receive from us are of the quality you would expect. We realise there will be times when you may want to complain, tell us how we can improve our services, or perhaps compliment us on something we have done well.

Your complaints, comments and compliments are important to us as they help us improve our services.

In the last quarter we took action in a number of areas as a result of complaints we received. This included ensuring that:

- all responsive work should be completed within 28 days. If this is not possible then the top up contractor should be utilised and the tenant should be informed in good time
- all required works should be completed prior to a tenancy beginning. If this is not possible, it should be communicated to the tenant so that they are aware of the situation before they move in.

Further details on complaints and compliments, and the learning from them, can be found on our website at: www.freebridge.org.uk/complaint.html

	2019/20 Target	Year to date
Overall satisfaction	88%	83%
Satisfaction with repairs service	80%	69%
Satisfaction with rent and service charges	85%	85%
Satisfaction with home	80%	72%
Satisfaction with neighbourhood	85%	83%
Satisfaction with being kept informed	88%	84%

**DURING JANUARY,
FEBRUARY &
MARCH 2020**

OPTING OUT OF STREETS AHEAD



**Total number
of compliments
received in this
quarter**

49

Reasons for compliments:

- 34** Staff attitude
- 0** State of property
- 15** Customer service
- 0** Policies



**Total number
of complaints
received in this
quarter**

19

Reasons for complaints:

- 1** Staff attitude
- 5** State of property
- 13** Customer service
- 0** Policies

Streets Ahead is sent to you every few months because you are a tenant of Freebridge Community Housing.

We send the magazine to all our tenants every few months so we can tell you about the services we provide and the work we're doing as a registered provider of social housing.

If you no longer want to have a copy of Streets Ahead delivered to you just let us know, and we will arrange for you to be removed from our mailing list.

In order to opt out of Streets Ahead, you can either call us on 03332 404 444, email your name and address to enquiries@freebridge.org.uk or complete the form below and send it to us at Freebridge Community Housing, Juniper House, Austin Street, King's Lynn, PE30 1DZ.



please sign in this box

Name:

Address:

.....

.....

.....

.....

HOW TO CONTACT US

WRITE TO:

Juniper House, Austin Street, King's Lynn,
Norfolk PE30 1DZ

TELEPHONE:

03332 404 444

We've recently been made aware that some mobile phone providers now charge for calling numbers beginning with 0333, if your provider is one of these you can also contact us on 0800 1691694 - which is free from all numbers.

Out of office hours our main number diverts to our 24 hour emergency service.

EMAIL:

enquiries@freebridge.org.uk

VISIT US AT:

Juniper House, Austin Street, King's Lynn,
Norfolk PE30 1DZ

We're open between

8:45am - 5.15pm (Monday-Thursday),

8:45am - 4.45pm (Friday).

And closed on Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays.

WEBSITE:

www.freebridge.org.uk

FACEBOOK:

www.facebook.com/freebridge

TWITTER:

@freebridge



member
tpas

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IF YOU NEED ANY HELP TO UNDERSTAND THIS NEWSLETTER PLEASE GET IN TOUCH.

DEVELOPING HOMES AND CREATING OPPORTUNITIES
FOR PEOPLE WITHIN WEST NORFOLK

Freebridge
COMMUNITY HOUSING