

IN TOUCH

A big thank you to Wendy and Joan: PAGE 2



Message from the InTouch Editorial Panel

The editorial panel is a group of involved residents working in partnership with the Resident Involvement Team to keep you informed on issues that affect tenants and leaseholders of North West Leicestershire District Council. If you would like to make any comments or contribute to the magazine, please contact the Resident Involvement Team on 01530 454605 or resident.involvement@nwleicestershire.gov.uk

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Front cover:
A big thank you to Wendy and Joan from Linford and Verdon Tenants' Association who have now officially retired after years of voluntary service to the community. We wish them all the very best.

Leavers and starters

Our involved tenants have asked that we keep you informed when members of staff leave and new team members start. Whilst we can't commit to writing to tenants with each change, we have agreed to keep our structure charts as up to date as possible on our website.

At the moment we have a lot of temporary staff working for us because of a national issue with recruitment.

This means that staff change more regularly and we move people around in our teams to make sure we keep our key services running well.

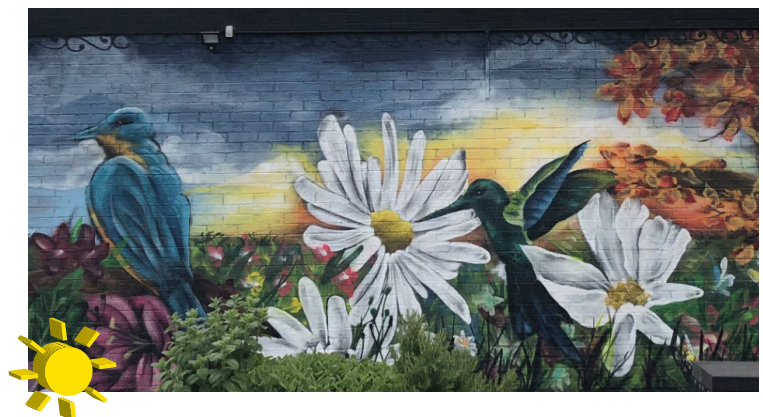
To help get your queries answered as quickly as possible, please use our website nwleics-self.achieveservice.com/myservices

Gardening in the sun – tips for summer success

Late summer is the perfect time to cut hedges. The Royal Horticultural Society has a short film available on their website that provides advice on cutting hedges:

rhs.org.uk/videos/advice/cutting-hedges

If you have an interest in gardening and want to get involved in our Greenhill Community Garden then please get in touch with our Resident Involvement Team on 01530 454605 or email resident.involvement@nwleicestershire.gov.uk



Housing Improvement Board

We're pleased to share that our elected members are keen to support the work we're doing to improve our housing service.

We've recently set up our new Housing Improvement Board to oversee this work and look closely at the operational work being done by our teams within the service.

The board is currently served by Housing Portfolio Holder Councillor Andrew Woodman, Deputy Leader Councillor Michael Wyatt and Shadow Portfolio Holder Councillor Alison Morley.

How we manage our performance, risk and complaints are currently top of the board's agenda, and there'll soon be a focus on empty properties, housing waiting lists, homelessness, and anti-social behaviour.

We've also started reviewing our policies, with more to follow.

If you have an interest in a certain area and would like to be involved, or could review documents online at home and give feedback, we would love to hear from you.

Call 01530 454605 or email resident.involvement@nwleicestershire.gov.uk

On the agenda right now:

- Improving performance
- Managing risk
- Handling complaints well

Next in focus:

- Empty properties
- Anti-social behaviour
- Homelessness
- Housing waiting lists



Cllr Andrew Woodman



Cllr Michael Wyatt



Cllr Alison Morley

Looking to move home? Consider a mutual exchange

Mutual exchanges are a way for our secure tenants who are looking to move home to swap homes with another secure tenant.

To do this, we use a national system called HomeSwapper and the cost of using the system is covered by the council.

Once you've registered, you can see if there are any possible matches for your preferred property and location. If you are looking to move to a new area – for example, to be closer to family or for work – then a mutual exchange is a good option to consider.

As you would expect, there are some rules around who can and can't swap homes – so all applications must be agreed by the landlords involved.

Since we last covered mutual exchanges in the October 2023 issue, we have made some changes to the process, including introducing an inspection by someone from our repairs team.



There may be times where the approval we give is subject to certain conditions. This is known as a conditional offer. This may include work being completed by the outgoing tenant or our repairs team, or a contractor completing repairs ahead of agreeing to a date where the swap can happen.

For more information, visit nwleics.gov.uk/home_exchange

You can also use a self-serve computer at our Customer Centre on Belvoir Road in Coalville to register with the national HomeSwapper portal and take a look at the available homes.

Annual report introduction



As I have just celebrated my first year at NWLDC, I began to think about what I have come to know about the housing and repairs service.

The annual report headlines featured here define what we do, and in part explain how we do it.

A year ago, I was handed a report about our repairs service that highlighted some of the issues where we were failing to deliver the expected standard of service to our customers. I decided to go out and see for myself how we delivered services.

I spent time out with tenants and colleagues, discovered a few things that were tripping us up, and set about introducing changes to bring about better processes, including more efficient use of software and electronic systems, to make it easier for colleagues to meet the demands of our tenants and residents.

This autumn, we will set up a **new team to focus on building safety and tenant involvement**. This team will focus on what we need to do to reach the new consumer standards (more about these standards on page 7).

This will free up some of our other teams to focus on housing management, repairs and planned improvements, housing strategy and homelessness, and asset management and compliance. It will also give us more capacity to develop and grow our services.

To help us to catch up on our **backlog of repairs and planned improvement work**, we have increased our capacity by bringing onboard some external contractors – including Wates, Nationwide Windows and Doors, Aaron Services, Sure Maintenance, Lakers, European Asbestos Services and Tersus.

We are reshaping tenant involvement, and as we say a huge thank you to all of the volunteers who have worked tirelessly alongside us for their communities over the years, I would urge you to get involved. If you'd like to help shape the future of our housing service, please call 01530 454605 or email resident.involvement@nwleicestershire.gov.uk

We are also currently **recruiting to several positions** across our housing service, and I would really like more of our tenants to work with us. So, if you feel you have the technical know-how, the drive to bring about improvements, and a passion for people – please take a look at the vacancies at nwleics.gov.uk/jobs and pop an application in.

There will be more vacancies advertised as we head into the autumn, as well as a raft of **apprenticeship positions** available too. Remember, there is no upper age limit to being an apprentice.

I don't ever forget what a privilege it is to work for the benefit of our tenants and other residents in the district, and to help ensure you are safe and warm in your homes.

This can only truly be achieved by working together, and I am grateful to all our tenants who abide by their tenancy agreement, ensure their rent is paid on time and contribute positively to our communities.

Jane Rochelle, Head of Housing at NWLDC

Annual report


Managing and repairing homes



We received **19,598** calls



Repairs jobs completed **7,008**

74 Major adaptations complete 

95% heating systems compliant

222 empty homes made available to let within an average of **33** working days

We've replaced:



108 bathrooms

180 electrical systems



125 heating systems

73 external doors

external doors



63 kitchens

46 roofs

roofs



80 windows

We've received **122 complaints** and **77 compliments**



What's new?

New email allocation system being put in place to improve response times

National contractor being procured to support the internal repairs team

Review of the Repairs and Maintenance Policy now underway

Housing management



We manage **4,102** properties



Average relet times

Number of property lets last year: **186**

Average relet time (excluding where major work is needed): **29 days**

Average time from finishing work on a property to the new tenants moving in: **8 days**



Rent loss

The total amount of rent lost due to empty properties was **£231,135.25**

That's **1.19%** of the total rental income. This has increased due to the amount of properties waiting for parts to be replaced.



Tenancy audits

1,180 audits were scheduled and **1,009** were completed last year.

That's **24.6%** of our stock.

During the audits, **627** repairs were identified.



Anti-social behaviour (ASB)

Number of new ASB cases: **168**

Number closed: **161**

New Incidents per **1,000** properties: **40**

Hate-related incidents per **1,000** properties: **1.67**





Remember to get permission before making changes

If you would like to make changes to your home, please remember to get permission before you do any work.

This includes things like electrical work, installing a pond in the garden, putting up fencing or fitting security cameras.

It's important that you tell us in advance if you are planning to make any changes so we can provide the appropriate advice and information. It also means we can be sure that the work you're planning won't put you, the property or your neighbours at risk.

If you have made changes you haven't told us about, please apply for retrospective permission by contacting our repairs team online at

nwleics.gov.uk/contacts/housing_repairs

You can also find a tenants' guide to permissions and property alterations by searching for 'alterations' on our website.



It's our 50th anniversary – share your memories

2024 marks the 50th anniversary of North West Leicestershire District Council, which was created in 1974 following national changes to local government.

We're planning a range of different ways to celebrate our 50th year – and we want to hear from our tenants who have lived in the district for 50 years or more.

Get in touch on 01530 454605 or resident.involvement@nwleicestershire.gov.uk to tell us your stories and memories about being a tenant in the district over the last 50 years.

We'll print the best stories in future issues of InTouch!



New consumer standards for social housing

The government's Regulator of Social Housing introduced a new set of consumer standards from 1 April 2024.

The new standards are designed to help protect tenants and improve the standards of service you receive. They apply to all social housing providers including councils and housing associations.

Under the new standards, we will need to:

- Ensure tenants are safe in their homes
- Listen to tenants' complaints and respond promptly to put things right
- Be accountable to tenants and treat them with fairness and respect
- Know more about the condition of every home and the needs of the people who live in them
- Collect and use data effectively across a range of areas, including repairs.

The regulator also recently introduced a new set of tenant satisfaction measures. These are questions we must ask our tenants, and each year we have to submit our results to the government. You might remember receiving a survey about this last year.

As part of the consumer standards, the regulator will also inspect housing providers who have more than 1,000 properties, which will be a bit like the inspections Ofsted do at schools.

We are organising an event to tell you more about the consumer standards. If you're interested in finding out more, or want to become an involved tenant, then please contact our Resident Involvement Team on resident.involvement@nwleicestershire.gov.uk

An update on our home surveys

As we work to make our housing service the best it can be, we recognise that we need to bring in external support to help us improve.

Recently we have partnered with some new suppliers to help gather information about our homes. One of these is Savills, a surveyor which has been working throughout the district and are now more than two-thirds of the way through inspecting our homes.

We're pleased to report that early indications suggest our homes are in a decent condition, well maintained and cared for by the people who live in them.

Surveyors have commented on how hospitable our residents have been too – in fact one surveyor had to move his belt along a notch to accommodate all the tea and biscuits he's been enjoying!

If you haven't yet had a survey, please do book an appointment as we really need to see inside every home and ensure they're safe and well maintained.

Scan the QR code or visit tinyurl.com/3cp4t9x2 to watch a short video which explains more about the surveys.



Nominate your community champion

Do you know a NWLDC tenant, leaseholder or household member who goes the extra mile to help someone in the local community? If so, why not nominate them as a community champion?

Community champions are those volunteers who are proud of where they live and are inspired to help their communities become better places to live. They also focus on helping others living within the community.

Here are some examples of what a community champion might do:

- Volunteering, in some cases this may be over a long period of time
- Acts or speaks on behalf of the community
- Goes out of their way to help others, for example getting shopping or helping with transport

- Helps improve neighbourhoods, such as looking after community gardens or projects
- Involved in local groups in a voluntary capacity
- Involved in organising community projects as a volunteer
- Fundraises for local community projects.

This isn't an exhaustive list, so if you feel that someone within your community goes the extra mile, please nominate them to be recognised. It can be anyone – they don't need to be registered with a voluntary organisation.

You can submit your nomination by calling 01530 454605, scanning the QR code on your phone or by going to



nwleics.gov.uk/communitychampions

Could you be a Tenant Inspector?

Sharon Cole, our resident involvement team leader, is very keen to recruit volunteers to view empty properties and help us set the standard every home should reach before keys are given to new tenants.

All training will be provided. So, if you'd like to support us in improving how we manage empty homes, make them available quickly and ensure each property is ready to welcome new tenants, we'd love to hear from you! Even if you aren't able to do property inspections, there are other ways to be involved – so please get in touch.



How many suns can you count?



The competition this time is to count the number of suns scattered around the pages of In Touch. You could win a £20 High Street Voucher. Please submit your answers by Friday 30 August.

Either fill out the form and return to us at Resident Involvement, North West Leicestershire District Council, PO Box 11051, Coalville, LE67 0FW or email us your answer at resident.involvement@nwleicestershire.gov.uk with your name, address, telephone number.

Number of suns you have found:

Your name:

Address:

Telephone: