Have you heard about ASSIST?

www.mansfield.gov.uk
Over the next few months, Government changes to the welfare system are going to have a significant local impact. I am sure this will put added pressure on household budgets that are already very tight so if you are affected by the changes please contact your Housing Officer who will work with you to find some solutions.

We have also been making changes to our Housing Policy to reflect these changes. The policy will help us to be transparent in the way we manage our Housing service and will also set out how we will deal with issues such as tenancy fraud and rent setting as well as helping you to sustain your tenancies. You will also be pleased to know that we are going to continue to offer life-long secure tenancies to new tenants as we feel that this can help families put down roots in the area of their choice, which in turn creates stable communities.

We are going to continue to build new Council homes, which will help meet the demand for Council housing as well as creating some much needed employment opportunities within the District. We are also providing you with more opportunities to own your home or part of it through our Shared Ownership scheme. Home ownership could be more affordable than you think so please contact the Housing team if you would like more information.

You may have heard about the Green Deal, which is a Government initiative aimed at improving the energy efficiency of homes and helping households save money on their energy bills. You may be approached by companies offering to carry out such improvements, however please be aware that approval is required from your landlord so please do not accept any Green Deal offers until you have checked with us.

And finally, this spring we are launching the Best Kept Garden competition to mark the start of the gardening season. I would like to encourage you all to take part in this competition, not only for the cash prizes, but to improve your neighbourhoods and help you stay healthy and fit.

Best wishes
Ajman Ali
Mansfield District Council (MDC) and Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC) are joining forces to create the development which will be made up of 64 bungalows, houses and apartments. The development is expected to take two years to complete subject to planning permission being granted. It is also subject to a funding bid for £1.3m from the Department of Health. A decision on grant funding to support the scheme is likely to be made in May 2013.

MDC, the current landowner, has invested around £11m preparing the site and will be contributing just over £500,000 towards the development. It will also be managing the scheme and letting the completed properties to NCC nominated people who require extra care, which is an extension of traditional supported housing with care staff on-site 24-hours a day. NCC will be committing £3.4m towards the development to create the extra care homes and ten bungalows for people suffering from dementia.

This will enable older people to have increased choice and control over their daily lives with care and support delivered as and when they need it.

For people who want to own their own home or want to down-size but remain a homeowner, there will be ten properties (five two-bed bungalows and five two-bed houses) available for affordable home ownership.

A Response and Support Service, which provides a variety of options for people who require long and short-term support services. This includes temporary accommodation for people who are homeless, a prevention advice and support service for people at risk of becoming homeless, a 24-hour emergency response service (including the Lifeline Service for an additional cost) and planned visits Monday to Friday.

Further enhanced Support Services are being introduced that will complement our Response and Support and Lifeline Services. These services can help with numerous tasks such as companionship, domestic duties, light housekeeping, meal preparation and help with travel arrangements.

All ASSIST services are person-centred to meet individual needs.

ASSIST will offer:

- Plans for new housing scheme

Plans for the first phase of a £6.5m housing scheme on Brownlow Road, including 48 extra care homes for older people, have been announced.

Have you heard about ASSIST?

ASSIST is a newly developed bespoke Housing Support Service, which will be launched on 2 April 2013.

ASSIST stands for Advocacy, Sustainment, Supporting Independence and Safeguarding Team and will be provided to individuals living within the Mansfield District. It will offer a range of person-centred services tailored to the needs of individuals to help them maintain an independent lifestyle within their home and community.

For more information about ASSIST please contact the Housing Needs team on 01623 463 341 or 01623 463 076.

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For people who want to own their own home or want to down-size but remain a homeowner, there will be ten properties (five two-bed bungalows and five two-bed houses) available for affordable home ownership.
For example, if the market value of your home is £140,000, and you qualify for the maximum discount, you could buy your home for just £65,000 - less than half the price it would normally cost. For a typical mortgage, this is around £100 a week (plus any service charges that apply).

Home ownership has many benefits including giving you the freedom to make changes such as decorating your home exactly how you want, putting in a new kitchen or bathroom or landscaping the garden.

Owning your home also means that you can move on when you choose or take the next step on the property ladder and provide more room for your family.

If you are interested in finding out more information or whether you are eligible for the scheme call the Council’s Right to Buy Officer on 01623 463 062 or visit www.communities.gov.uk/righttobuy

The Council is committed to ensuring that tenants are secure in their homes. Therefore, it will not be adopting Government reform that gives local Councils and Housing Associations the option of offering fixed tenancies for new tenants (existing tenancies are protected) rather than life-long tenancies.

Mansfield District Council does not plan to use fixed-term or flexible tenancies and has developed a Tenancy Strategy to outline how it will continue to offer secure life-long tenancies to all new tenants.

However, the Council recognises that some Housing Associations may take up this option for their own properties and has stated in its strategy that Housing Associations and other registered providers have a duty to ensure that vulnerable groups are protected and that the length of tenancies on offer will continue to provide security and will not adversely affect the stability of the community.

A copy of the Tenancy Strategy can be found at www.mansfield.gov.uk/housingpolicies

In the wake of increasing energy costs, the Council is providing FREE energy advice that is tailored to individuals and their properties.

The Council can arrange a home visit and give you simple tips and advice that could potentially save you hundreds of pounds per year, as well as helping to keep you healthy. This can include helping you understand the information on energy bills, setting your heating efficiently, checking you are on the most suitable tariff and answering any questions you may have.

Cold homes can have a significant impact on health and can lead to serious health problems such as heart attacks, strokes, pneumonia and depression. One of the best ways of keeping well during winter is to stay warm.

If you are interested in receiving advice, a FREE energy audit, or more information please contact 01623 463 472.

Is now the right time to buy?

Now may be the perfect time to think about buying your Council home through the Right to Buy scheme as the maximum amount of discount you can receive off the price of your Council home has just increased to £75,000.

Secure tenancies continue for Council tenants

Free energy advice
Homefinder service rated as excellent by Council tenants

A mystery shopper exercise carried out by Mansfield District Council (MDC) tenants has rated the Homefinder Choice-Based Lettings service as excellent.

Tenants who volunteered to be mystery shoppers received training on how to score the level of customer service provided by the Homefinder teams at MDC and Ashfield Homes Limited.

Homefinder staff were scored on how well they answered set questions and the majority of calls were said to be handled professionally and efficiently. Staff were found to be polite, courteous, helpful, friendly, professional, approachable and patient. On the downside, some advisors did not provide their name when answering a call and this marked down the overall service received by customers.

Homefinder provides:
- A Choice Based Lettings service for new or transferring tenants
- A Mutual Exchange service [www.homeswapper.co.uk](http://www.homeswapper.co.uk) for existing tenants, and
- Access to privately rented and Social Homebuy properties for all tenants.

For more information about the Homefinder service, contact the team on 01623 463 402 or visit [www.amhomefinder.co.uk](http://www.amhomefinder.co.uk)

Helping you to get on the housing ladder

Five newly-renovated properties in Warsop are being offered for sale to existing Council tenants as part of a Shared Ownership scheme.

The Council bought the properties and refurbished them to a high standard, thanks to £500,000 funding from the Homes and Communities Agency.

The properties are valued at £70,000 and have been fully rewired and have a new boiler, mains fire alarm system, new doors, upvc windows, carpets throughout, fitted kitchen with integral oven/hob and appliances and a bath with a top of the range shower. All works come with a 12-month guarantee.

This scheme can help existing tenants who are unable to afford to purchase their home outright by allowing them to buy a share of their home and pay a reduced rent on the remainder. Tenants can then increase how much of the home they own by buying more shares until they own the property outright.

Mansfield Building Society is offering Shared Ownership mortgages for these properties, subject to the usual financial assessments. Shared Ownership not only allows you to own your own property but can sometimes be cheaper than paying full rent.

For more information, contact the Landlord Services team on 01623 463 741.

Did you know your housing benefit may be cut if your house is too big for you?

Welfare Reform changes will soon mean that if your house is too big for your needs there will be a deduction in the amount of housing benefit you will receive. This means that if you are of working age, you may not be able to afford to continue to live in a house which is too big. HomeSwapper can help you!

Join HomeSwapper today and you can find and swap to a smaller home with the right number of bedrooms for you.

HomeSwapper

Join today at [www.HomeSwapper.co.uk](http://www.HomeSwapper.co.uk)
Features Article

Changes to Council Tax Benefit

The new Council Tax Reduction Scheme has been introduced following the Government’s requirement that all councils replace the current Council Tax Benefit Scheme with their own locally designed scheme.

The Council Tax Reduction Scheme will continue to be a means-tested benefit and anyone who is on a low income or claiming state benefits will be able to make a claim. However, due to a significant cut in Government funding, it will not be possible for all residents to receive the same amount of help paying their Council Tax from 1 April 2013.

Following consultation with local groups and residents, Mansfield District Council has agreed a new scheme that aims to spread the burden of these Government cuts as fairly as possible and includes incentives for people to get into work.

The changes introduced by the new scheme are:

- A reduction to the maximum entitlement from 100% to 91.5%
- A restriction of backdating payments to three months (currently six months for working age applicants)
- To abolish Second Adult Rebate (a scheme which enables someone on a high income to get a rebate on their bill because there is someone in the household on a low income who is not a partner), and
- To allow Council Tax Support payments to continue for six weeks from when the person claiming starts work (currently four weeks).

The changes will only apply to people of working age - pensioners will be fully protected and will see no reduction in the help they currently receive with their Council Tax.

Housing Benefit changes

From April 2013, your Housing Benefit could be affected by the number of bedrooms you have. If you live in a Council or Housing Association home and you have one or more spare bedrooms your Housing Benefit may be reduced.

This could affect you if:

- You are 16 to 61 years old, and
- You receive Housing Benefit or have made a claim for Housing Benefit.

You won't be affected if:

- You live in a one bedroom flat or bedsit, or
- You or your partner receive Pension Credits

How many bedrooms am I entitled to?

Under the new rules if you have more bedrooms than the Government says you need, you will lose part of your Housing Benefit. The new rules mean you will be allocated one bedroom for:

- Each adult couple
- Any other person aged 16 or over
- Two children of the same sex under the age of 16
- Two children under the age of 10 regardless of their sex
- Any other child, or
- A carer (who does not normally live with you) if you or your partner need overnight care.

You will not be eligible for an additional bedroom if:

- You or your partner need to sleep apart because of a medical condition, or
- Your children live at another address but you have a spare room for when they stay with you.

What happens if I have a spare bedroom?

If you have one spare bedroom your Housing Benefit will be reduced by 14% of the rent you pay every week. If you have two or more spare bedrooms, you will lose 25%. If your Housing Benefit is reduced you will have to pay your landlord the difference between your Housing Benefit and your rent.
**Benefit Cap**

From 2013 there will be a cap on the amount of benefit that working age people can receive. This was originally coming into force in April 2013, however this scheme has now been deferred and it is anticipated that the Benefit Cap will be introduced no later than September 2013. The cap will restrict the level of benefit so households that are not in work will no longer receive more in benefits than the average earnings of working households.

This will include a range of benefits including Housing Benefit, Job Seeker’s Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance, Child Benefit, Child Tax Credit and Carer’s Allowance. If the total comes to more than the maximum amount allowed, your Housing Benefit payments will be reduced. The maximum amount of benefit you will be able to receive when the scheme is in place will be:

- £500 per week for single parents
- £500 per week for couples with or without children, and
- £350 per week for a single person without children.

This will not apply if:

- You get Pension Credit or Working Tax Credit, or

**Universal Credit**

Universal Credit will simplify the benefits system by bringing together a range of working age benefits into a single payment. It will replace a range of existing means-tested benefits, including:

- Housing Benefit
- Income-based Job Seeker’s Allowance
- Income Support
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Working Tax Credit, and
- Child Tax Credit.

The new system will launch in October 2013. All new claims to the current benefits system will be phased out by April 2014 and existing claimants will be transferred to the Universal Credit system between 2014 and 2017.

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**HOW WE CAN HELP**

If you are worried about any of these changes you should ask for advice now. If you don’t pay your rent you could lose your home, so contact your Housing Officer about the different ways to pay. You can also:

- Contact Homefinder, the Council’s Choice-Based Lettings service, to apply to transfer to a smaller home.
- Make sure you are claiming the correct benefits – for example, money to help with the costs of a disability.
- Contact the Council’s Money Advice Service on 01623 463 451 or the Welfare Rights Service on 01623 463 450 for help with managing your finances and claiming the correct benefits.
- Try to find some paid work to increase your income.
- Get more information about the cap on benefits by calling the Government’s information line on 08456 057 064.

The Council will also be setting up a cash-limited hardship fund of £25k for 2013/14 to assist people who experience financial hardship as a result of the changes.

For more information contact the Council’s Benefits team on 01623 463 463 ext 2.
Tenants and Residents’ Forum - Who’s who?

Mansfield District Council’s Tenants and Residents’ Forum ensures that the Council helps tenants and residents improve their housing and living environment by giving them the opportunity and support to get involved with housing groups and external organisations.

The forum is made up of representatives from all of the tenants and residents’ groups across the District. The representatives for 2013/2014 and the areas they represent are listed in the table.

If you would like to get in touch with any of the reps, please contact the Tenant Involvement Officer on 01623 463 147 or malsonso@mansfield.gov.uk

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REPRSENTATIVES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chairman</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sonja Weaver</td>
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<td>Carole Cantrell</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bull Farm TRA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joe Bonser</td>
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<tr>
<td>Roy Chapman</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bellamy Road TRA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vaughan Thomas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leslie Salmon</td>
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<tr>
<td>Greater Forest</td>
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<tr>
<td>Town South TRA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Molly Bramley</td>
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<tr>
<td>Phyllis Gregson</td>
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<tr>
<td>North Oaktree TRA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cath Hopewell</td>
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<tr>
<td>Freda Jackson</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oak Tree South TRA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carole Cantrell</td>
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<tr>
<td>Val Marshall</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peasfield Community Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>William Hurt</td>
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<tr>
<td>Veronica Goddard</td>
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<tr>
<td>Priory Community Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ken Shepherd</td>
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<tr>
<td>Josie Pearce</td>
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<tr>
<td>Robin Hood Ward TRA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rita Launders</td>
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<tr>
<td>Keith Beastall</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sherwood North TRA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mick Beresford</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cheryl Bell</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Threeways TRA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Martin Sandwell</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ian Boswell</td>
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<tr>
<td>Housing Services Panel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Joe Bonser</td>
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<tr>
<td>Val Marshall</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leaseholder’s Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>Derek Birkin</td>
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<tr>
<td>New England Tenant Voice</td>
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<tr>
<td>June Smith</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pauline Palmer</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

GET INVOLVED

Tenancy Support Officer (TSO) Jeanette Samways tells you everything you need to know about estate walkabouts.

What usually happens on a walkabout?
Our estate-based walkabouts give you the opportunity to meet up with TSOs and discuss issues that concern you, your home and your neighbourhood such as fly-tipping, graffiti and overgrown gardens.

Who will be on the walkabout?
Your TSO will lead the walkabout and may be accompanied by members of tenant and residents’ groups, Councillors and other Council staff.

How frequent are the walkabouts?
Each area will have a walkabout every three months.

How long does a walkabout last for?
It can vary but usually between 1 and 2½ hours.

Will the walkabout follow a specific route each time?
Yes, each TSO will have a set route around their patch but this can be adapted depending on who is taking part in the walkabout or if there are issues in specific areas.

Do I have to book or can I join my TSO if I see them in my area?
If there is something you would like to bring up with your TSO it would be best to contact them to arrange a meeting point but otherwise TSOs can be approached at any point of the walkabout.

Which areas do the walkabouts take place in?
Walkabouts take place across the District. You can find out which walkabout is happening near you by looking at the estate walkabout schedule on page 9.

Does the same TSO cover the same area?
Yes, we all stick to our own patches.

Can someone walk around the whole walkabout with the TSO if they choose to?
Yes.

Are the walkabouts just for tenants or open to all residents?
The walkabouts are mainly for tenants and tenant reps but members of the public are welcome to approach us and ask questions.

What are the most common issues dealt with on a walkabout?
The most common issues are untidy gardens, overgrown trees and bushes and problems with graffiti and litter.

Do walkabouts run in all areas where there are Council properties?
Yes.

Who do I contact if I have a query about the walkabouts?
Contact your TSO directly.

Can a TSO deal with my query on the spot or will they take it back to the office?
We will try and answer all questions on the spot - if we can’t we will take your details and get back to you ASAP.

Do the walkabouts run at evenings or weekends?
No. They only run during the day on weekdays.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Meeting Place</th>
<th>Date &amp; Time</th>
<th>Officer &amp; Contact Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Warsop</td>
<td>Bishop's Walk Memorial Club, Church Warsop</td>
<td>18/4/2013 10am</td>
<td>Sue Jackson 01623 463 916</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Sherwood</td>
<td>William Ireland Hall, Off Burlington Drive, Mansfield</td>
<td>28/3/2013 11am</td>
<td>Emma Dabell 01623 463 129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vale Road</td>
<td>On the corner of Vale Court/Vale Road, Mansfield Woodhouse</td>
<td>25/4/2013 10am</td>
<td>Emma Dabell 01623 463 129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northfield</td>
<td>Northfield Community Centre, Charnwood Lane, Mansfield Woodhouse</td>
<td>30/5/2013 10am</td>
<td>Emma Dabell 01623 463 129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peafield</td>
<td>Ludborough Walk Community Hall, Off Peafield Lane, Mansfield Woodhouse</td>
<td>14/5/2013 10am</td>
<td>Richard Dawes 01623 463 392</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ravensdale</td>
<td>Sandy Lane Surgery, Sandy Lane, Ravensdale</td>
<td>5/4/2013 10am</td>
<td>Jayne Parsley 01623 463 356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oak Tree</td>
<td>Willingham Court car park, Off Jubilee Way South, Mansfield</td>
<td>12/6/2013 10am</td>
<td>Helen Howis 01623 463 354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eakring</td>
<td>Reindeer pub, Southwell Road West, Mansfield</td>
<td>16/5/2013 10am</td>
<td>Helen Howis 01623 463 354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oak Tree</td>
<td>Barrowhill Community Link, Barrowhill Walk, Mansfield</td>
<td>1/5/2013 10am</td>
<td>Kerry Chapman 01623 463 353</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest Town</td>
<td>Garibaldi shops, Forest Town</td>
<td>21/5/2013 10am</td>
<td>Lorraine Spalding 01623 463 354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bellamy</td>
<td>Tuxford Court Community Centre, Off Thorpe Road, Mansfield</td>
<td>29/5/2013 10am</td>
<td>Jo Mount 01623 463 357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bull Farm</td>
<td>Buddies, Peel Crescent, Mansfield</td>
<td>13/6/2013 10.30am</td>
<td>Hannah Dunn 01623 463 296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saundby/Elston</td>
<td>Saundby Centre, Saundby Avenue, Mansfield</td>
<td>23/5/2013 10.30am</td>
<td>Hannah Dunn 01623 463 296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper Ladybrook &amp; Town Centre</td>
<td>Ladybrook pub car park, Ladybrook Lane, Mansfield</td>
<td>12/4/2013 2pm</td>
<td>Ian Aspinall 01623 463 060</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brick Kiln</td>
<td>Longstone Way car park, Off Ladybrook Lane, Mansfield</td>
<td>17/5/2013 2pm</td>
<td>Jeanette Samways 01623 463 296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursery/Terrace</td>
<td>Nursery Court car park, Off Nursery Street, Mansfield</td>
<td>16/4/2013 10am</td>
<td>Jeanette Samways 01623 463 296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woodlands/Birding</td>
<td>Harold Harvey Hall, Mattersey Court, Mansfield</td>
<td>24/5/2013 2.30pm</td>
<td>Jeanette Samways 01623 463 296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower Ladybrook</td>
<td>Civic Centre car park, Chesterfield Road South, Mansfield</td>
<td>20/6/2013 10am</td>
<td>Jeanette Samways 01623 463 296</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Mansfield District Council worked with British Gas, Npower and National Grid Affordable Warmth Solutions (NGAWS) to replace all three coal-fired District heating systems on the estate, which previously heated 1,097 homes. Each property, including the homes of private tenants and landlords, has been provided with an individual, energy efficient gas boiler, new pipes and radiators.

The new heating systems can be individually controlled and will help to reduce the District’s CO2 emissions by over 10,000 tonnes, as well as reducing the Council’s costs for maintaining and operating the system. The Council contributed £500,000 towards the £6m scheme.

During the conversion work, which began last April, NGAWS working in partnership with J Murphy & Sons Ltd, laid 8,507 metres of gas pipeline and fitted 1,090 gas connections - all on time. The gas works were completed free of charge through NGAWS’s fuel poverty funding.

Work on the scheme is now complete and each of the new systems has a one year warranty from the date of installation with the supplier who carried out the work.

The gas suppliers are British Gas (866 properties) and Npower (231 properties). In case of an emergency the emergency contact numbers for the two suppliers are 0800 107 7009 (British Gas) and 0800 073 3000 (Npower).

Oak Tree warms to new heating system

Things are hotting up on the Oak Tree Lane estate, following the installation of over a thousand new boilers into residents’ homes.

Check with us before you seal the Green Deal

Over the coming months you may receive information from private companies offering a new Government service called the Green Deal, which allows energy efficiency improvements to be made to homes without the owner having to pay the costs up front.

If your home is a Council-owned property, work should have already been done to make sure your home is as energy efficient as possible. However, if you are contacted and are interested please contact your Housing Officer for advice, assistance and permission if you wish to have any work carried out through the Green Deal.

GREEN DEAL APPROVED
Do you know a star volunteer?

This year’s Mansfield Volunteer Awards, which celebrate the achievement of volunteers and the voluntary sector in the Mansfield District, are being held on 6 June.

If you know someone who has gone above and beyond with their volunteering work, why not nominate them for an award? Nominations for the six categories are now open. The categories are:

- **Andrew Wallace Memorial Award** - for any individual volunteering in the community.
- **Young Person’s Award** - for a young volunteer under 25, who has made a significant impact on a person or community.
- **Outstanding Volunteer Award** - for a group or individual that has gone the extra mile to make a difference to society.
- **Margaret Wilson Memorial Award** - for a volunteer who has provided exceptional support to a charity.
- **Emily Dawes Memorial Award** - for a paid member of staff in the voluntary sector who has gone beyond the call of duty.
- **Community Group Award** - for a voluntary group that has improved or made a difference to their area or cause.

Applications can be completed online at [www.mansfield.gov.uk/mva](http://www.mansfield.gov.uk/mva)

The closing date for nominations is 26 April and the shortlisted finalists will be notified by 30 May. The winning volunteers and the person who nominated them will be invited to the awards ceremony, which will take place at 7pm at the John Fretwell Centre, Warsop.

For more information contact Sioned Dolan on 01623 463 372 or sdolan@mansfield.gov.uk

Is your garden the best in the District?

The Council is hoping for a blooming good response to the launch of its Best Kept Garden Competition 2013.

The competition is open to all Council tenants and is divided into two categories; one for the Best Kept Garden and another for the Most Improved Garden. A total of £1,200 prize money is available, with the winners of each category receiving a first prize of £300, second prize of £200 and a third prize of £100. The Best Kept Garden category is open to already established gardens. The Most Improved Garden category is open for those who are starting a garden from scratch or making significant improvements. Entrants for this category will need to take photographs of their garden before they start to improve it.

Please return fully completed entry forms by 29 April 2013 for Most Improved Garden and by 1 July 2013 for the Best Kept Garden category. Judging will take place between 15 July and 2 August 2013. Winners will be notified of the results in mid-August and will be invited to the Civic Centre for a presentation of certificates and cash prizes.

To enter the competition, fill in an entry form, available from the Civic Centre and at [www.mansfield.gov.uk/parks](http://www.mansfield.gov.uk/parks)

For more information about the competition call 01623 463 463 or email parksandopenspaces@mansfield.gov.uk

IN BRIEF

Spice up your social life

Age UK Notts is offering you the chance to take part in over 100 FREE activities a month as part of its Kindred Spirits scheme. Activities include exercise classes, coffee mornings, swimming, darts, bowling and many more. Holidays and day-trips are also available for a small cost.

If you are interested in joining Kindred Spirits you can sign up to a FREE 3-month subscription which will run from April to June. You will be able to extend your subscription after this period for £7.50 per quarter or £26 per year. Welcome events are taking place from 10.30am to 12pm on Tuesday 19 March at the White Hart pub, Churchgate, Mansfield and from 10.45am to 12.15pm on Monday 25 March at Bradbury House, 12 Shakespeare Street, Nottingham.

For more information contact Age UK Notts on 01623 488 211 or visit [www.ageuk.org.uk/notts/activities--events/](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/notts/activities--events/)

Arrange your Big Lunch

This year’s Big Lunch will be taking place on Sunday 2 June 2013. Last year 8.5 million people took part in the annual event, which aims to get as many people as possible across the whole of the UK to have lunch with their neighbours in a simple act of community, friendship and fun.

If you’re thinking of throwing a Big Lunch in your area visit [www.thebiglunch.com](http://www.thebiglunch.com) or call the Big Lunch team on 0845 850 8181 to register and receive a pack containing hints, tips and ideas to get your event off the ground as well as posters, leaflets, recipe cards and much more. If you want to have a street party you will need to contact Nottinghamshire County Council’s Highways Co-ordination Team on 0300 500 80 80 or at [www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/streetparties](http://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/streetparties) and complete an event registration form by 5 April.
**What’s on March - May 2013**

**What:** Fame – The Musical  
**When:** Tuesday 26 and Wednesday 27 March, 7.30pm  
**Where:** Palace Theatre, Leeming Street, Mansfield  
**Cost:** £8.50 per ticket

Set within New York’s celebrated High School for the Performing Arts, Fame is a bittersweet but ultimately inspiring story of a diverse group of students. With electric dance routines and unforgettable songs, come and enjoy the New Youth Theatre’s performance of this breathtaking story.

**What:** Archaeology and Egyptology for the Beginner!  
**When:** Every Wednesday from 17 April to 26 June, 6-8pm  
**Where:** Mansfield Museum, Leeming Street, Mansfield  
**Cost:** £5 per week

A beginners guide to excavations, skeletal remains, marine archaeology, ancient Egyptians and much, much more.

**What:** 1940s Knees Up  
**When:** Monday 6 May 11am-3.30pm  
**Where:** Brewhouse Yard, Castle Boulevard, Nottingham  
**Cost:** £5 Adults £3 Concessions £2 Children

Take a trip down memory lane and relive the atmosphere of the 40s and life on the home front at this popular family event.

**What:** Beauty and the Beast by Jacqueline Wilson  
**When:** Thursday 16 and Friday 17 May, 7pm  
**Where:** Palace Theatre, Leeming Street, Mansfield  
**Cost:** £3 per ticket

The Palace Junior Youth Theatre Company present this brilliantly written, original and humorous retelling of one of the most famous stories in the world. In this version, the beast turns out to be a giant mollusc with a big slime problem and Beauty is a girl who simply cannot stand slugs. Oh dear!

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**Housing group meetings**

**Housing Services Panel**  
The Housing Services Panel works closely with the Council’s Housing department to identify ways of improving how we deliver the service. The panel also monitors the Housing department’s performance and ensures that appropriate action is taken where necessary.

**Mansfield District Council’s Tenants and Residents’ Forum**  
The Forum ensures that the Council helps tenants and residents improve their housing and living environment by giving them the opportunity and support to get involved with housing groups and external organisations.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>USEFUL CONTACTS</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mansfield North Housing Office (Civic Centre)</td>
<td>01623 463 129</td>
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<tr>
<td>Housing Repairs Contact Centre</td>
<td>01623 463 500</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ashfield and Mansfield Homefinder</td>
<td>01623 463 402</td>
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<tr>
<td>Central Control</td>
<td>01623 463 341</td>
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<tr>
<td>Housing Advice Service</td>
<td>01623 463 125</td>
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<tr>
<td>Money Advice Service</td>
<td>01623 463 451</td>
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<tr>
<td>Welfare Rights Officer</td>
<td>01623 463 450</td>
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<tr>
<td>Right to Buy/Leaseholders Officer</td>
<td>01623 463 062</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tenant Involvement Officer</td>
<td>01623 463 147</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-hour Emergency Contact (repairs)</td>
<td>01623 463 050</td>
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Information has been gathered by Mansfield District Council in good faith. Every effort has been taken to ensure accuracy at the time of production. We cannot be held responsible for any amendments, changes, alterations or rescheduling of events or meetings presented in this magazine.