

Contact

THE MAGAZINE FOR MANSFIELD DISTRICT COUNCIL TENANTS



Town View opening

See page 5

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Meeting your needs

We may be able to provide this information in larger print, in Braille, on audio tape, on CD or in another language. If you'd like to find out more please contact **01623 463463**, minicom **01623 463444** or email mdc@mansfield.gov.uk

Building for the future

Welcome to the latest edition of Mansfield District Council's tenants' magazine.

This edition is packed with useful stories including details of our new tenant roadshow initiative. We would like to hear what you have to say and to share information that is relevant to you as council tenants, for example, how you can save money on your fuel bills and advice on claiming benefits.

We hope these events will prove popular as well as fun for all the family with free face painting and even a fire engine! Look out for one happening near you.

The natural environment and climate change have been in the news a lot recently and in this edition we also feature another feel-good Housing initiative: community gardens.

The plot at the Shaftesbury Avenue allotments was just an overgrown patch of weeds and grass a year ago and now we have people of all ages pitching in to grow all types of fruit and veg which they can take home for free to prepare healthy meals.



Jill Finnesey

Interim Head of Housing

We hope these schemes will blossom into sanctuaries of tranquillity and community spirit where you can get out of the house in the fresh air and meet new friends and neighbours.

Finally, we are pleased to see progress is being made on plans to build more than 100 new council homes across the district. We know just how urgently this new housing is needed and so, with the Rosemary Avenue scheme, we are trying out a new concept in council house building to speed up the process.

This innovative scheme uses pre-built modular type houses that arrive in huge pieces and then put together on site. This cuts construction time down considerably and delivers high quality, energy efficient homes. These beautiful family houses should be available on Homefinder later this year. Look out for them!



Be a champion of your community

Would you like to make a difference to your community and be involved in how the council delivers your services?

You can do this by:

- Becoming a block or street champion
- Helping out with a local project or community event
- Signing up for council telephone surveys
- Joining the Housing Services Panel
- Acting as a "mystery shopper" for the council.

For details, please contact the Housing Management team on **01623 463129**.



Roadshows offer tenants advice and support

Tenant roadshows are set to continue across the district to advise council home residents about various services that are available to them.

The events started in May at the River Maun Leisure Centre and are due to run until October 2019.

As well as information on issues such as saving money on fuel bills, sports activities and healthy eating, they also feature a fire engine for children to look around and free face-painting.

Light refreshments will be provided and everyone who attends will be entered into a free prize draw.

Full details of the dates and locations of the roadshows will be available in the coming weeks on the council's website.

Sessions are free to attend. Tenants can choose any venue, not just the one near to where they live.

Who will be there?

Among the agencies that will be available at events are:

MDC ASSIST Team – with information on sheltered housing and the Handyman Service.

Utilitease – how to save money with gas, water and electricity bills, including help and information about switching to cheaper suppliers.

DWP – information about Universal Credit and how to make claims online, training opportunities and help with getting into work.

Nottinghamshire Police / Neighbourhood Wardens – and a chance to discuss anti-social behaviour, crime prevention and neighbourhood watch schemes.

Mansfield District Leisure Trust – for advice on healthy eating, free ways to get fit and information on families activities during the school summer holidays.

MDC Repairs – advice on repairs, the importance of having gas safety checks, the use of thermostats in the home.

Qest – mould eradication company Qest will be on hand to discuss mould and condensation problems and how to resolve them.

Waste and Recycling team – how to effectively recycle.

Notts Fire and Rescue – advising on safer cooking practices, fire setting, escape routes, smoke alarms and safe barbecues.



A Lifeline to support

Lifeline is a 24-hour response service run by Mansfield District Council and gives people who live alone the security of knowing that someone is available at the push of a button if they need help.

The service can enable people to stay in their own homes and is particularly useful for residents who may feel vulnerable due to ill health, age or isolation. It also provides peace of mind to carers and families.

Lifeline takes about an hour to install and works from a unit plugged into a socket near a telephone which is linked to the council's Emergency Call Centre where a team can respond 24/7 all year round, including Bank Holidays.

Lifeline clients wear a lightweight pendant at home or in the garden. If they need help, they simply push a button on the pendant and this alerts the Emergency Call Centre team, who will know who is calling and who they should contact on behalf of the service user.

The pendant has in-built microphones so the response team can speak to the caller in their home.

When people sign up, they provide a list of contact names and numbers, along with their GP's contact details.



The pendant has in-built microphones so the response team can speak to the caller in their home.

As an additional service, Mansfield District Council can also supply and install smoke detectors and fall sensors which are worn in the pendant. In the event of a fire or fall, an alert is automatically sent to the Emergency Call Centre for help. Extra charges may apply for these sensors. Some people may get the Lifeline service for free.

Where charges apply, installation is £13.70 and the lifeline unit is 56p per day, £3.95 per week or £51.35 quarterly. You can also loan a keysafe with the Lifeline service. The installation charge for this is £16.44.

The Lifeline service is part of the council's ASSIST service and helps about 3,500 people. It is available to all residents in the Mansfield district and surrounding areas.

More details can be found at www.mansfield.gov.uk/lifeline or by calling 01623 463076 or 01623 463341.

Independence is a buzz for Margaret, 105

One of Mansfield's oldest residents, Margaret Rhodes, uses the Lifeline service and it has helped her maintain her independence and live in her own home - even at the grand age of 105!

Margaret wears a Lifeline pendant around her neck which means if she needs help in an emergency, she can buzz Assist call operators.

She once pressed for help when she fell in her garden. She was able to speak to an operator who alerted Margaret's family that she needed help.



Margaret wearing the Lifeline pendant



Time to downsize?

Have you ever thought of downsizing from your current Mansfield District Council property? Is your garden getting a handful and your heating bills causing sharp intakes of breath.

Moving to a smaller property can be the ideal solution if you are finding your current property hard work to manage and has more bedrooms than you need.

It will also help to free up a much needed home for a family on our waiting list.

During the last year we advertised only 120 family houses on the Homefinder website and only 68 of these houses had three or more bedrooms.

There are lots of property options if you are thinking of downsizing



But we currently have more than 2,900 families on the Homefinder waiting list who need larger houses and the waiting list is increasing every day.

On Homefinder anyone under-occupying a Mansfield District Council property is given additional priority on the council's waiting list to move.

There may be other incentives to encourage more people to move to a smaller home, too.

If the time is right for you consider moving, find out more from Homefinder on **01623 463402** and we'll do all we can to find you a suitable alternative property.

Quality new homes for the over-55s

Our over-55s housing scheme is now open and the tenants are delighted with their new homes on the site of the old general hospital, which lay derelict for more than 20 years.

The development, near the town centre, has seen 54 apartments and bungalows built, in a secure gated scheme. It includes a landscaped 'village green' with a trim trail, plus a community lounge and kitchen.

Town View complements the Poppy Fields extra care scheme on Chesterfield Road

South in the provision of high quality accommodation for older people.

“I love the fact it is near town and I can walk there. It's quiet and everybody I've met so far is very friendly. I'm looking forward to spending time out on the sun terrace.”
Mrs Connie Perry

One of its delighted new tenants, Pauline Palmer, said: "It's absolutely lovely – the apartment is so big and has great storage space. I can't wait to go out into the garden in the summer."



Construction set on

Work is set to begin on schemes to build more than 100 new council homes over the next five years at a total cost of £22m.

The plans include six two-bedroom and four, three-bedroom houses at Rosemary Avenue in Mansfield.

Work on them is due to start in July and should be complete by October when the homes will be available to rent through Homefinder.

The development is being completed much quicker than usual because for the first time the council is using modular housing.

The houses are made in a factory and then delivered to the site fully fitted out in large pieces which

are then joined to create a pair of semi-detached houses.

The council is also looking at ambitious plans for new apartments, similar to Town View, for older people at Sandy Lane, Mansfield.

More new housing is being planned at Melville Court in Meden Vale where an under-occupied and dated sheltered scheme will be demolished and redeveloped with 13 new homes. There will be a mix of houses and bungalows, plus a new community centre.

Demolition will take place in the autumn with construction work taking about a year.

In August, the council will start converting an under-used tenants' meeting room in Bamford Drive into three new homes: two houses and a bungalow, which will be suitable for disabled people. They should be ready around May 2020.

Future plans include more conversions of under-utilised tenants' meeting rooms, 36 new houses on the Bellamy Road estate, plus regeneration of the centre of the estate.



Sheltered housing rewired

Sheltered housing schemes across the district are undergoing upgrade works.

Fire risk assessment and upgrade work at Pleasley Springs and The Willows is almost complete.

At Willingham Court a full rewire followed by redecoration is ongoing in communal areas and individual flats.

New fire doors and emergency lighting are also being installed, the fire alarm system is being upgraded and asbestos ceilings throughout the complex are being removed. The work should be completed by the end of the



summer. Similar work is planned for Sherwood Court. That scheme includes a new boiler house for a modern communal heating scheme after all the properties have been disconnected from the current district heating scheme

The work is expected to start in July, with further works at Willingham and Roston to follow in the autumn. A rolling upgrade programme will continue after this at the council's remaining sheltered housing and temporary accommodation.

Repairs and

166 properties get upgrade

The Housing Repairs team continue to deliver a programme of planned maintenance on a priority need basis to council owned properties.

Last year, we installed new doors, soffits and fascias to a total of 120 Mansfield and Mansfield Woodhouse properties in Abbott Road, Blythe Close, Collingham Road, Westfield Lane, Upper Ladybrook Lane Estate, Annesley Way, Devon Drive, Sherwood Street, Wilcox Avenue, Stockwell Court.

We also installed 46 new roofs with new soffits and fascias as part of an ongoing roof replacement programme on the Bull Farm Estate. The properties that had a new roof also had their external doors replaced.

new council homes

The council is also looking at ambitious plans for new apartments, similar to Town View, for older people at Sandy Lane, Mansfield. On top of the actual construction costs, the budget for of the schemes includes providing vital infrastructure, such as drainage, roads, footpaths, lighting and landscaping, as well as cleaning any contaminated land.



Two of the styles of modular houses similar to the ones to be built at the Rosemary Avenue development.

upgrades



Help to lower fuel bills

Since 2012 the council has been replacing the old district heating systems.

The old systems have become unreliable and costly to maintain and repair so a total of 2,044 properties have had individual energy efficient boilers, new pipes and radiators installed.

Areas to benefit so far are: Sandy Lane estate, Oak tree Lane estate, New England Way, Riverview/The Willows, Perlethorpe Avenue, Marston Way area. Newark Close, Newark Way, Newark Drive. Dundee Drive, and the Sandringham Court area.

This month, work will start in the Newcastle Street area of Mansfield Woodhouse. Work on the remaining district heating systems, on Longstone Way and



Bennington Walk, will begin in the autumn.

The sheltered accommodation complexes at Pleasley Springs, Tideswell Court and Vale Court have had new communal energy efficient gas boilers installed.

Sherwood Court will have a similar communal gas boiler installed this year.

iPads improve repairs service

New technology is improving the productivity and efficiency of our Housing Repairs services as well as making it greener by cutting the use of paper and using less vehicle fuel.

Since October last year around 50 workers have been using iPads to receive jobs, order parts and sign off repairs.

It means they have been able to ditch the old paper ticket system and plan their schedules more effectively to carry out more repairs in less time, all while clocking up fewer miles.

It is also improving response times, and giving customers the chance to fill in spot job satisfaction surveys on the iPads.

Good behaviour rules for new tenants

The rules on new tenancies are set to change later this year in an effort to tackle, crime and vandalism and breaches of tenancy conditions.

The council aims to start using “introductory tenancies” for all new tenants by the early part of 2020.

It will mean that anyone moving into a council home will be “on probation” for 12 to 18 months before being offered a secure tenancy.

If any tenant during their introductory period fails to pay their rent on time or causes anti-social behaviour problems, the council can take legal action to bring the tenancy to an end and repossess the property.

These changes will not affect existing tenants who will remain secure tenants and their rights will not be affected.

An introductory tenancy runs for 12 months but can be extended to 18 months if felt necessary. Once the introductory period has passed without incident, the tenant automatically becomes a secure tenant.

Help when you can't pay your rent



If you are on benefits and struggling to pay your rent, the Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) scheme can give you limited short term help.

A DHP is an extra payment to help people if the Housing Benefit or Universal Credit they receive does not cover all of their rent, due to:

- Under occupancy (bedroom tax)
- The welfare benefit cap
- A shortfall due to non-dependant deductions

There may be other circumstances where you can receive a payment to help you through a crisis or short term problem.

You cannot use it for paying water rates, meals, fuel or other service charges included in your rent or for sanctions and reductions in your benefit.

In assessing your claim for a DHP, we consider your income and expenditure, any debts you may have and any savings or capital you or your household have.

You will also be asked about what steps you have taken to reduce your rent bills. For example, if you are affected by the bedroom tax, are you actively seeking a smaller home?

For advice on claiming a DHP, email Maria Griffin, Financial Inclusion Officer, at mgriffin@mansfield.gov.uk or call on **01623 463147**.

Our staff are here to help if you get into financial difficulties



Fire! Fire!

Test your smoke alarms

We recommend you fit smoke alarms or detectors to your home as an inexpensive way of protecting your family – and to check them every month.

For a flat or bungalow, one alarm will probably be enough in the hallway. If your home has more than one floor, an alarm for each level may be necessary on the ceiling at the bottom of the staircase, and then on each stairs landing. It is best not to fit smoke detectors in kitchens or bathrooms as steam can trigger the alarm.

The devices should be checked and cleaned regularly to make sure they do not get clogged with dust. Most alarms will sound alerts when you need to change the battery.



Moving to another council home

When a tenant moves from one council home to another, before any offer of accommodation is approved they first have to pass what is called a pre-transfer inspection (PTI).

These inspections are to make sure the property is clean and tidy and has no damage for which the tenant is responsible for rectifying or unauthorised alterations.

If any such alterations are found, a tenant will be informed within seven days by letter and will then have 28 days to remove the alterations and make good, or pay for the cost of the council



Pre-transfer inspections ensure council homes are left clean and tidy

carrying out the work. The council will revisit the property within 28 days of the PTI failure letter to check that the remedial works have been done.

It is important that a council property is returned in good condition because if a PTI fails, the tenant's transfer to another property will not go ahead and they will not be considered for any further offers of accommodation for six months.

Anti-social behaviour

If you have a problem with anti-social behaviour involving a council tenant, report this to your local Housing Management Officer, or call our Tenancy Enforcement Officers, Geoff Lomas and Helen Howis, on **01623 463082**.

The council's Community Safety team will look into ASB complaints against homeowners or tenants in privately rented accommodation. Call them on **01623 460144** or email at asb@mansfield.gov.uk.



Neighbourhood walkabouts

This is your chance to raise issues of concern with the Housing Management Officer for your area.

! Bull Farm

starting at Bull Farm shops at 10am: **5 August**.

! Bellamy Road estate

starting at Tuxford Court Centre at 10am: **18 June, 10 September and 3 December**.

! Eakring

starting at the Reindeer pub at 10am: **11 July**.

! Forest Town

starting at Garibaldi shops at 10am: **19 September and 5 December**.

! Ladybrook

starting at Ladybrook Place shops at 10am: **3 June**.

! Ladybrook

starting at Longstone Way, 3.30pm: **7 October**.

! Mansfield Woodhouse

starting at Lawrence Avenue at 10am: **10 June and 25 November**.

! North Oak Tree Lane estate

starting at Barrowhill Community Link at 10am: **25 June, 17 September and 10 December**.

! Peafield Lane Estate

starting at Litton Road shops at 10am: **13 June**.

! Ravensdale/Blake Crescent area

starting at Sandy Lane Surgery at 10am: **13 June and 12 September**.

! Sandy Lane/ Bilborough Road area

starting at Sandy Lane Surgery at 10am: **20 June and 26 September**.

! South Oak Tree Lane estate

starting at Willingham Court at 10am: **23 July and 8 October**.

! Town centre

starting at Lord Street at 10am: **19 August**.

! Warsop

starting at Warsop Town Hall at 2pm: **12 June**.



Dog fouling

Bag it, bin it or face £100 fine

The vast majority of dog owners who live on our estates and neighbourhoods are responsible and will always clean up and dispose of any mess made by their pets.

Sadly, a minority don't act in such a responsible manner, and we know from talking to you that one of your main concerns in your neighbourhoods is the issue of dog fouling.

Mansfield District Council is determined to do everything it can to tackle what is a health hazard and one of the most unacceptable forms of littering in order to make the district a cleaner place to live and visit.

If you are a dog owner, please make sure that you

always take plenty of dog waste bags and throw them in the bin after use. Not picking up after your pet if it fouls a public place is also against the law and can lead to a £100 fixed penalty notice or up to a £1,000 fine if convicted in court.

It is also a breach of your tenancy conditions if you are a council tenant.

If you witness any incidents of dog fouling, please report these to the Neighbourhood Wardens on Mansfield **01623 463185**.

Meet our team

Our team of housing officers is available to help tenants and liaise with organisations to solve issues.

Housing Income Team



Emma Dabell

Warsop, Church Warsop, Meden Vale

t: 01623 463113



Jayne Parsley

Mansfield Woodhouse, Peafield Lane and the Burlington Drive area

t: 01623 463356



Sarah Dalby

Ravensdale, Forest Town, Eakring Road and Central Mansfield areas

t: 01623 463274



Hayley Jackson

Oak Tree Lane and Bellamy Road

t: 01623 463354



Kim Wilkinson

Ladybrook and Bull Farm

t: 01623 463307

Housing Management Team



Sue Jackson

Warsop, Church Warsop, Meden Vale, Peafield Lane Estate, Mansfield Woodhouse

t: 01623 463916



Ian Aspinall

Mansfield Woodhouse, Central Mansfield

t: 01623 463060



Richard Dawes

Ravensdale, Forest Town and Eakring Road

t: 01623 463392



Kerry Chapman

Oak Tree Lane and Bellamy Road

t: 01623 463353



Mark Wregitt

Ladybrook Estate, Bull Farm Estate, Burlington Drive area

t: 01623 463127

Get in touch

- Housing Management Team 01623 463129
- Housing Income Team 01623 463842
- Poppy Fields Extra Care 01623 463076
- Welfare rights/money advice 01623 463147
- Housing Repairs Contact Centre 01623 463463
- Out of hours emergency contact (repairs) 01623 463050
- Ashfield and Mansfield Homefinder 01623 463402
- Central Control 01623 463341
- Housing Advice Service 01623 463125
- Financial Inclusion Officer 01623 463451
- Right to Buy/Leaseholders Officer 01623 463360
- Tenant Involvement Officer 01623 463363



Growing the love

A community allotment project has gone from strength to strength since it was set up a year ago on the Bull Farm estate.

The aim of the scheme is to encourage more people to get the health and wellbeing benefits of gardening and growing their own food.

The plots, known as 'Growing Bull Farm' at the Shaftesbury Avenue allotments, have been such a success that now a second community garden has been launched at Sandy Lane allotments.

Clare Heyting, of Feel Good Gardens, a community interest company, which delivers the scheme on behalf of the council, said: "Horticulture is such a positive and therapeutic pastime for any age.

"It is obviously a great workout and can improve all sorts of physical

To get involved at the Growing Bull Farm garden, just turn up between 10.30am and 2.30pm every Wednesday. For information about Feel Good Gardens, visit www.feelgoodgardens.org.



Clare Heyting

“It can really help alleviate depression, improve self-esteem and reduce stress.”

skills and capabilities. But what is often less appreciated is the positive impact community gardening has on mental wellbeing.

"It can really help alleviate depression, improve self-esteem and reduce stress. Connecting to nature and the cycles of life just seems to make people feel more calm.

"It also brings people of all ages and backgrounds together and develops a sense of motivation, commitment and pride."

Sandy Lane garden

A new community garden at the Sandy Lane allotments aims to help tenants in the council's temporary accommodation flats, learn gardening skills which they can take forward when they move into more settled accommodation.

"You can still grow your own food even in a small space," explained Clare Heyting, of Feel Good Gardens.

"You can grow potatoes in heavy duty shopping bags or planters and strawberries in hanging baskets or herbs or lettuce in window boxes."

One of the Sandy Lane gardeners said: "It gives us exercise rather than sitting in our room. It's good to watch the plants grow it gives us a lot of satisfaction."

Billy takes on his own plot

For 12-year-old Billy Crowder, helping at Growing Bull Farm meant he discovered he has a talent for gardening.

He has now taken on his own full-sized plot at Shaftesbury Avenue to become Mansfield's youngest allotment holder.

He still lends a hand at the community garden, too. "It's peaceful and relaxing," he said. "Growing helps everyone and I enjoy helping all the families."

He plans to grow a variety of vegetables in his own plot and then help turn them into family meals.

