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## No rent cards from 1 April



As of 1 April you will no longer be sent rent, garag realing cards from the Council to pay your charges.

nstead you will be sent a letter with three unique barcodes on it one for your rent, one for heating charges and one for garage

charges. You will be able to use the barcodes to pay your charges at outlets including the Civic Centre, Chesterfield Road South, Mansfield, your local Post Office and at PayPoints.

If you have any concerns about using your new barcodes you can ask your Housing Officer for help, call Tenancy Services or come to the Housing desk in the Civic Centre. Letters which will include your new barcodes are being sent out at the end of March. If you have not received a letter by xxxx please contact Tenancy Services on 01623 463 275 or email mansfieldhousing@mansfield.gov.uk

Further changes will be introduced in June when the new IT system is up and running and will include an online self-service section. Information about these changes will be communicated at the end of May via the next edition of Contact and by letter.

# Direct Debit – the easy way to pay



There are many other ways you can pay your rent and other charges besides using your new barcodes.

f you sign up now to pay your rent by Direct Debit you can spread the payments over 12 months, rather than ten.

Direct Debit is a simple, safe and speedy way to pay your Council Tax automatically from your bank or building society account.

We offer a choice of dates and instalments for Direct Debit payments, on the 1, 5, 14, 20 or 26 of the month, including weekly and fortnightly payments. It offers greater flexibility than cash payments.

You can continue to pay your rent in tenmonthly instalments from April to January if you wish, or 12-monthly instalments from April to March by Direct Debit on the first of the month.

Paying by Direct Debit offers peace of mind and convenience that payment dates will not be missed and costs you less by reducing the need to travel.

You can set up or change your Direct Debit over the phone, without the need to fill in forms, by calling us on **01623 463 162.** 

We will tell you the amount and date of your first and subsequent instalments and then confirm this in writing.

#### Other ways to pay include:



- Telephone by either debit or credit card using our 24-hou automated payments line 01623 428 632.
- Internet by credit or debit card, 24 hours a day at www.mansfield.gov.uk/payments
- **■** Online banking
- Standing order
- **Post Office** with cash, debit card or cheque.
- PayPoint with cash see www.paypoint.co.uk/locator or phone us on 01623 463 463 to find your nearest PayPoint.
- **Civic Centre** with cash, debit or credit card.



The Council has introduced a new housing scheme called SOLAR (Sharing or Letting a Room), which helps single people to find rooms in properties in the private rented sector.

he scheme matches people
to a house shared with other
single people or a room in
a property that is currently
occupied by a family or couple.

The scheme is designed to help people who are at risk of becoming homeless or need to downsize their current property due to the new bedroom tax changes brought in by the Government as part of the Welfare Reform changes. The scheme can also help tenants who can't afford to pay charges to rent a property such as a deposit and an advance rent payment.

The SOLAR scheme can help tenants by offering:

- Financial help in getting a deposit together (through a Bond Guarantee)
- High quality houses, flats and rooms to rent
- Assess to a Tenancy and Landlord Support Service
- Help with paying the first rent payment if it is required in advance (through Nottingham Credit Union), and/or,
- Support to access employment or training.

If you cannot afford to pay a deposit in advance you may be able to receive help through the Bond Guarantee. This is a national initiative that is offered through the SOLAR scheme and enables the Council to provide eligible tenants with a non-cash deposit that is paid directly to the landlord before their tenancy starts. The Bond Guarantee can help people who can't afford to pay a deposit upfront and is valid for up to 12 months. After 12 months the tenant will need to replace it with a cash deposit to the landlord. The tenant is also liable for any successful claims against the deposit.

If you are not able to afford four weeks rent in advance, the Council or the Nottingham Credit Union may be able to provide this to the landlord on your behalf. You will be expected to repay this at an affordable amount per week.

In order to apply for the scheme you will need to provide two people (landlord, employer or professional person) we can contact for a reference (who are not a friend or family member). We will also need to see proof of all your income.

IF YOU CANNOT
AFFORD TO
PAY A DEPOSIT IN
ADVANCE YOU MAY
BE ABLE TO RECEIVE
HELP THROUGH
THE BOND
GUARANTEE.

## You may not be eligible for the SOLAR scheme if you:

- Have a history of severe rent arrears
- Have a history of serious antisocial behaviour
- Are unable to provide evidence of your income or a reference, and/or
- Currently have suitable housing.

The Council's Tenancy Support Officers will be able to provide support throughout the process and can help you fill out forms and assist you with any support needs you may have.

If you are interested in applying for the SOLAR scheme please contact the Council's Landlord Liaison Officer on

**01623 463 121**, email

**homelessenquiries@mansfield.gov.uk** or visit **www.mansfield.gov.uk/solar** 

# PREVENTING YOU FROM BECOMING HAN HOMELESS

SINCE THE
HOMELESSNESS
PREVENTION OFFICERS
HAVE BEEN IN POST THERE
HAS BEEN A 5% DECREASE
IN THE NUMBER OF
HOUSEHOLDS THAT
HAVE BECOME
HOMELESS...

Two new Homelessness Prevention Officers were recruited ast year in response to an increase in the number of people who were approaching the Council with concerns about losing their home.

he main part of the role is to create
planned steps for people who are at
risk of becoming homeless before they
reach a crisis point of actually becoming
homeless. This also involves intervention to stop
people becoming homeless and making them
aware of the realities of being homeless.

Homelessness Prevention Officer Paula explains: "We work with all people across the District, including private tenants and home owners, voluntary and statutory agencies. If someone comes to us for support we will arrange a housing advice appointment and normally visit them in their current accommodation to assess their situation and discuss their concerns. If someone is struggling to maintain their current accommodation we can give advice and make suggestions to help them adapt their current situation and lifestyle.

"If a person aged 16 or 17 years of age finds themselves at risk of becoming homeless we can help liaise with their family. If the situation cannot be resolved we can help them explore other options that maybe available for them"

Kath, who also works as a Homelessness Prevention Officer, adds: "We often work with young people, families, vulnerable, disabled and elderly residents as they are classed as priority groups, but we can also help single adults who are at risk of becoming homeless by negotiating on their behalf with their landlords or by arranging budgeting and financial advice with the Council's Welfare Advice Officer or Money Advice

"We can also refer people to the Council's Tenancy Support Service, which aims to help people to keep their homes.

"Our advice for anyone worried about becoming homeless is to get in touch with us as soon as possible, as the more notice we have the more we can do to help. We can often offer immediate assistance or an immediate referral. If you are made homeless in an emergency situation, the Council's Homeless Service is available 24/7."

Since the Homelessness Prevention
Officers have been in post there has been a 5% decrease in the number of households that have become homeless across the District. The introduction of the role has enabled the Council to help 59 more households than the previous year.

To contact the Homelessness Prevention Officers, please call **01623 463 121** or email **homelessenquiries@mansfield.gov.uk** 

You can also find out more at www.mansfield.gov.uk/

www.mansfield.gov.uk/ homelessness



## What the Council can do to help

f you are homeless or feel you are at risk of losing your home the Council will organise a homelessness interview with you. This is to assess your eligibility and whether you are in priority need, classed as vulnerable, intentionally homeless or if you have a local connection. The following questions will help you find out what support you are eligible to from the Council.

# What do I need to do if I become homeless or feel I am at risk of becoming homeless?

- You will need to contact the Homelessness Prevention Officers on 01623 463 121 or come to the Housing desk at the Civic Centre, Chesterfield Road South, Mansfield.
- You will be offered an interview with a Housing Solutions Officer, who will look into your circumstances.

# **Q** Am I considered homeless or at risk of becoming homeless?

Yes, if:

- You have no accommodation which you are legally entitled to occupy in the UK or elsewhere (even if you think you have to move out of your present home you may be able to stay there).
- You are fleeing domestic violence, or in fear of threats of violence.
- Your family is forced to live apart.

#### **Q** Am I eligible for help?

Yes, if you are:

- A British citizen, or
- A Commonwealth or EU citizen who has a right to live in the UK.

#### **Q** Am I in priority need?

Yes, if you:

- Are pregnant
- Have dependent children
- Are homeless due to a flood, fire or other disaster
- Have experienced domestic violence, or
- Are classed as a vulnerable person.

## Am I classed as a vulnerable person?

Yes, if you:

- Are 16 or 17 years old
- Are 18-21 years old and have been in care
- Elderly
- Have a mental illness, learning or physical disability
- Have left home due to harassment or violence\*, or
- Have been in the armed forces or prison\*.

# What if I am classed as intentionally homeless?

If you are classed as intentionally homeless, we may have no duty to rehouse you. However, you may be able to appeal our decision.

You are classed as intentionally homeless if you:

- Have not paid your rent or mortgage when you could afford to
- Have been evicted for a breach of tenancy conditions such as committing antisocial behaviour, or
- Have left your accommodation without a good reason.

This list is not exhaustive and we will look at all cases individually.

## **Do I need to have a local connection?**

If you are homeless, eligible for assistance, in priority need, not intentionally homeless and have a local connection, the Council must continue to accommodate you until we have provided you with, or found you settled accommodation.

If the Council decides that you do not have a connection with the local area, we may decide to send you to a Council in another area for help with your homelessness application if you have a connection there, but we can't do this if you are at risk of violence there.

#### **Q** Do I have a local connection?

Yes, if

- You have lived in the area for six months out of the last 12 months or three years out of the last five years
- You are employed within the District, or
- Your parents, brothers and sisters have lived in the District of Mansfield for at least five years.

If you would like more information or are worried about your housing situation, please contact the Homelessness Prevention Officers team on

01623 463 121.

\*We will look at your situation and consider whether your personal circumstances make it more difficult for you to find or keep your accommodation.





- Many burglaries happen when a house is empty. If you leave your home for an extended period of time, create the illusion that someone is there. Use timer switches to turn on lights, radios and other appliances. If you're going on a trip, cancel any mail or newspaper deliveries and, you're can, get a friend or neighbour to keep an eye on your home. Ask them to collect your mail and draw your curtains at night and open them in the mornings to make your home look lived-in.
- 2 One of the most intrusive and dangerous forms of burglary occurs when somebody pretends to be a legitimate worker, for example from a utility company, and tricks their way into homes. Protect yourself against this by fitting a door chain or bar and door viewer (spy-hole) and use them. Always ask for ID and if you are concerned, contact the organisation to check the person is who they say they are.

- 3 Don't leave spare keys under doormats, potted plants or any other obvious outdoor location.
  Burglars have experience and know exactly where to look.
  Instead give a set to someone that you can trust, such as a friend or neighbour.
- Always keep your garage doors closed and locked, even when you are home and leave your lights on and shut the curtains when you go out in an evening.
- Develop the habit of performing a security review before leaving your home. Check to make sure all of your doors and windows are locked, that candles and fires are completely extinguished and any potentially hazardous appliances are turned off and unplugged.
- Don't leave notes for service people or family members on the front door, mailbox or garage as these are green lights to potential burglars that you are not home.

- 7 Install exterior security lighting to keep your home well lit on the outside. If other people can see your property a burglar may think
- 8 Keep your tools and ladders out of sight and securely locked up. A burglar could use them to get into your house.
- Increasingly, burglars are breaking in to steal cars. Make sure your car keys are inaccessible and, if you have a garage, keep your car in it rather than on the driveway.
- Don't leave empty boxes of new purchases outside your home that indicate new and valuable equipment that may be attractive to a potential burglar.





# Tips for de-cluttering your home

Whether you can't walk into a room in your house without tripping over something or you just want to do some spring cleaning, de-cluttering is a great way to feel more calm and comfortable in your home.

f you decide you want to declutter it is a good idea to make a schedule and decide how much time you are going to allocate to it. If you only have a few hours a week it is a good idea to focus on one room at a time or one part of a room at a time. It is also a good idea to ask other people to help you as they might have a clearer perspective on things you may be unsure about getting rid of.

Once you have decided what you want to get rid of it is a good idea to organise it into items for selling, donating, recycling and binning:



You can sell any unwanted items on car boot sales or on websites such as ebay, co.uk, amazon.co.uk or gumtree.com

This is a good way of raising a bit of extra money to put towards your household costs.



If you can't sell your items, you could ask friends, neighbours and relatives if they want anything you are looking to get rid of. This could help them to save money on items they would have otherwise have to spend money on. You can also donate unwanted items to a charity shop or put

them in a charity bag or bin to help raise money for good causes. Another option is to put items on freecycle.com which gives people the option of taking your items off you for free. This could be a good idea if the item you are getting rid of is large or bulky as it may save you spending money on removal costs.



#### Recycling

Over 37% of Mansfield's waste is now being recycled. All residents have a blue bin that they can put the following waste in to recycle:

- Paper (newspapers, magazines, envelopes and writing paper)
- Cardboard (cards, cereal boxes and egg boxes)
- Plastic bottles (plastic milk, fizzy drinks and shampoo bottles)
- Food and cans (drinks cans, pet food tins and aerosol cans)

Recycling that is placed into your blue recycling bin must be clean, dry and loose. If it is not, the Council may not be able to empty your blue bin.



#### **Binning**

Once you have sold, donated and recycled as much as you can there might be some items left that you just need to bin. It is still worth checking whether there is another

way of getting rid of something. For example, the Council is not currently able to recycle plastic bags, plastic food trays, shredded paper, textiles, glass or plastic toys but you may be able to recycle some of these items at your local recycling bank.



#### Ways the Council can help you to get rid of your waste

The Council operates an assisted collection service those residents who are strugging to transport their wheeled bins to the collection point. If you are experiencing problems due to age, disability or medical problems please contact the Council on 01623 463463 or email cleansingservices@mansfield.gov.uk

The Council operates a chargeable Bulky Item Collection Service. This service collects items such as:

- Furniture
- Domestic appliances including fridge/freezers
- Bagged household rubbish, and
- Larger items that cannot fit in your wheeled bins.

The Bulky Collection Service will not collect:

- Heavy garden waste
- Brick/building rubble, or
- Engine parts.

Residents who receive certain benefits will qualify for a discount on most bulky collections. For further details contact the Council on **01623 463 463** or email **cleansingservices@mansfield.gov.uk** 

# RAISING NUTRITION





On 19 March the Council held a Big Tea Party at Willingham Court on the Oak Tree Lane estate.

his was part of several events that were held around the country to promote Nutrition and Hydration week, which aims to raise awareness of the importance of good nutrition and hydration, particularly in elderly and vulnerable people.

A key priority for the Council is the welfare of our elderly and vulnerable tenants living in our rented and sheltered accommodation.

As part of the event, which was delivered in partnership with Nottinghamshire County Council Enterprise Foods, tea and cakes were available to buy and there was information available about good nutrition and hydration.

We have put together a guide to healthy eating below for people who would like to learn more about nutrition but were unable to attend the event.

# Physical benefits of eating healthy

For adults over 50, the benefits of healthy eating include resistance to illness and disease, higher energy levels, faster recovery times and better management of chronic health problems. Good nutrition keeps muscles, bones and organs strong. Eating vitamin-rich food boosts immunity and fights illness-causing toxins. A proper diet reduces the risk of heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, type-2 diabetes, cancer and anaemia. Eating sensibly also means consuming fewer calories and more nutrient-dense foods, which helps keep weight in check.

## Mental benefits of eating healthily

Key nutrients are essential for the brain to do its job. People who eat a selection of fruit, vegetables, fish and nuts can improve focus and decrease their risk of Alzheimer's disease. Healthy meals give you more energy and help you look better, resulting in a self-esteem boost.

#### Things to be aware of

**Metabolism** - Every year over the age of forty your metabolism slows. This means that even if you continue to eat the same amount as when you were younger, you're likely to gain weight because you're burning fewer calories. You may also be less physically active. Consult your doctor to decide if you should cut back on calories.

**Weakened senses** - Your taste and smell senses diminish with age. Older adults tend to lose sensitivity to salty and bitter tastes first, so you may be inclined to salt your food more heavily. Use herbs, spices and healthy oils to season food instead of salt.

Medications and illnesses - Some prescription medications and health problems can often negatively influence appetite and may also affect taste, leading older adults to add too much salt or sugar to their food. Ask your doctor about overcoming side effects of medications or specific physical conditions

**Digestion** - Due to a slowing digestive system, you generate less saliva and stomach acid as you get older, making it more difficult for your body to process certain vitamins and minerals, such as B12, B6 and folic acid, which are necessary to maintain mental alertness, a good memory and good circulation. Up your fibre intake and talk to your doctor about possible supplements.



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HEALTHY
MEALS GIVE YOU
MORE ENERGY AND
HELP YOU LOOK
BETTER, RESULTING
IN A SELF-ESTEEM
BOOST.

#### **Malnutrition**

Malnutrition is a critical health issue among older adults caused by eating too little food, too few nutrients and digestive problems related to aging. Malnutrition causes fatigue, depression, weak immune system, anaemia, weakness, digestive, lung and heart problems.

## Tips for preventing malnutrition as you age

- Eat nutrient packed foods.
- Eat a healthy balanced diet.
- Eat with company as much as possible.
- Get help with food preparation.
- Consult your doctor.

#### Try to eat with others

Eating with others can be as important as adding vitamins to your diet. A social atmosphere stimulates your mind and helps you enjoy meals. When you enjoy mealtimes, you're more likely to eat better. If you live alone, try eating meals with relatives, friends and neighbours or join a local group such as Age Concern that often meet for lunch or tea.

#### **Loss of appetite**

First, check with your doctor to see if your loss of appetite could be due to medication you're taking and whether the medication or dosage can be changed. Try natural flavour enhancers such as olive oil, vinegar, garlic, onions, ginger and spices to boost your appetite.

## Difficulty chewing or dry mouth

Make chewing easier by drinking smoothies made with fresh fruit and yogurt. Eat steamed vegetables and soft food such as couscous, rice and yogurt. Drink eight to ten glasses of water each day. Take a drink of water after each bite of food and add sauces to your food to moisten it.

#### **Adding variety to your diet**

If you were raised eating lots of meat and white bread, for example, a new way of eating might sound off-putting. Start with small steps to introduce more variety to your diet.

- Keep an open mind. If a food is healthy it doesn't mean it can't be tasty.
- Try including a healthy fruit or vegetable at every meal.
- Focus on how you feel after eating well. This will help encourage new habits and tastes. The more healthy food you eat, the better you'll feel afterwards.

#### If you can't shop or cook for yourself

There are a number of possibilities, depending on your living situation, finances and needs:

- Take advantage of home delivery -Many big supermarkets have internet or phone delivery services.
- Ask a friend if they would be willing to shop for you.
- Use the Council's ASSIST Service -ASSIST can help with meal preparation and shopping. For more information call 01623 463 076, email assistservice@mansfield.gov.uk or visit www.mansfield.gov.uk/assist



# Sing the praises of your community heroes

Nominations are being sought for the Mansfield Volunteer Awards, which recognise the unsung heroes who work tirelessly to help their communities.

Mansfield Volunteer Awards Recognising the Stars of Mansfield 2014



#### HAVE YOUR SAY

# Have you received our Housing Needs survey?

he Council has sent
4,000 Housing Needs
surveys out this month
to households picked
at random across the District.

The survey aims to identify the housing aspirations and preferences of households across Mansfield. If you are one of the households that have received a survey it is important to send it back to us and give your views as we use the information to decide on our spending priorities and target our housing resources.

#### **GREENZONE**

# Mansfield householders receive energy advice

Householders found out how to save money on energy bills at free events across the District in March.

drop-in session was held at the Civic Centre on Monday 10 March to give people advice about managing their bills and information about schemes offered by the Government and energy suppliers that could help with their energy costs.

Drop-in sessions also took place in libraries across the District. Mansfield District Council's specially trained advisor ran the sessions, which were funded by the Department of Energy and Climate Change and supported by the sustainability and education charity, Change Agents UK.

For more advice, information and tips to keep your house warm visit **www.energysavingtrust.org.uk** 



# Walking about your estates

state based walkabouts run every three months to give tenants and residents the opportunity to meet up with Tenancy Service Officers and discuss issues such as fly-tipping, graffiti and overgrown gardens.

Members of tenant and residents' groups, Councillors and other Council staff also regularly participate in the walkabouts. If there are any issues that affect your area or you have an idea or suggestion which you think may improve it, please join in! Dates, locations and times are available below:



# Estate walkabout schedule 2014

MEETING PLACE	TIMES AND DATES
Park Road Resource Centre, Park Road, Mansfield Woodhouse	10am 16/5/2014 12/9/2014 5/12/2014
<b>Ludborough Walk Community Hall,</b> Off Peafield Lane, Mansfield Woodhouse	10am 13/5/2014 9/9/2014 2/12/2014
Sandy Lane Surgery, Sandy Lane, Ravensdale	10am 15/5/2014 22/5/2014
<b>Willingham Court car park,</b> Off Jubilee Way South, Mansfield	10am 11/6/2014 10/9/2014 10/12/2014
<b>Reindeer pub,</b> Southwell Road West, Mansfield	10am 15/5/2014 14/8/2014 13/11/2014
<b>Roston Court,</b> Off Roston Close, Mansfield	10am 25/6/2014 17/9/2014 11/12/2014
<b>Barrowhill Community Link,</b> Barrowhill Walk, Mansfield	10am 30/4/2014 23/7/2014 15/10/2014
<b>Garibaldi Road shops,</b> Forest Town	10am 20/5/2014 19/8/2014 18/11/2014
<b>Buddies,</b> Peel Crescent, Mansfield	10am 25/4/2014 25/7/2014 31/10/2014



<b>New England Way,</b> Pleasley	10am 30/5/2014 29/8/2014 28/11/2014
<b>Cyril Stone Hall,</b> Off Blyth Close, Mansfield	10am 27/6/2014 26/9/2014 19/12/2014
<b>Lord Street,</b> Ladybrook, Mansfield	10am 26/6/2014 23/10/2014
Mellor Road, Ladybrook, Mansfield	10am 18/12/2014
<b>Ladybrook pub car park,</b> Ladybrook Lane, Mansfield	10am 24/4/2014 28/8/2014
<b>Longstone Way car park,</b> Off Ladybrook Lane, Mansfield	2pm 27/6/2014 15/8/2014 28/11/2014
Nursery Court car park, Off Nursery Street, Mansfield	10am 8/4/2014 8/7/2014 18/11/2014
Harold Harvey Hall, Mattersey Court, Mansfield	2pm 25/4/2014 4/7/2014 24/10/2014
Civic Centre car park, Chesterfield Road South, Mansfield	10.30am 14/5/2014 17/9/2014 12/11/2014



When: Friday 11 April, 11am and 2.30pm Where: Palace Theatre, Leeming Street, Mansfield Cost: Adults £12.30, child £10.25, family ticket £38.95

Come along for a fun-filled show with family favourites Sooty and Sweep.

To book contact the Box Office on **01623 633 133** or visit www.mansfield.gov.uk/palacetheatre

What: Fluttering Thursday

When: Thursday 17 April, 11am -1pm

Where: Mansfield Museum, Leeming Street, Mansfield

Cost: £1 per person

Help the RSPB to give nature a home by creating your very own colourful butterfly feeder to attract an array of butterflies to your back garden!

What: Love Your Local Market

When: Wednesday 14 May to Wednesday 28 May

Where: Market Place, Mansfield

**Cost: FREE** 

During the two weeks a range activities will be running alongside Mansfield's traditional market as part of the national Love Your Local Market campaign.



# **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.

#### **Housing Services Panel meetings**

10am - 12noon Meden Room, Civic Centre. Mansfield

#### 15 May

10am - 12noon Meden Room, Civic Centre, Mansfield

#### 19 June

10am - 12noon Meden Room, Civic Centre, Mansfield

#### 17 July

10am - 12noon Meden Room, Civic Centre, Mansfield

#### **Mansfield District Tenants' Forum**

Mansfield District Tenants' 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.

#### **Mansfield District Tenants'** Forum meetings

#### 7 May

1.30pm - 3.30pm Stacey Road Community Centre, Mansfield

#### 4 June

1.30pm - 3.30pm Stacey Road Community Centre, Mansfield

#### 2 July

1.30pm - 3.30pm Stacey Road Community Centre, Mansfield

#### **GET IN TOUCH**

#### **USEFUL CONTACTS**

01623 463 129
01623 463 500
01623 463 402
01623 463 341
01623 463 125
01623 463 451
01623 463 450
01623 463 062
01623 463 147
01623 463 050

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.