

tlc

Tenants' and leaseholders'
community magazine



NORWICH
City Council

Summer 2018

Tenant
approved



How does your garden grow?

Page 10



New schemes become homes
Page 4



Talkback survey responses
Page 6



What makes a great tenant?
Page 8

Contents

	page
Introduction from Councillor Gail Harris	3
New developments welcome first residents	4
Changes to the way we keep in touch Free digital support	5
We are listening	6
How are we doing?	7
What makes a great tenant?	8
Shaping our services	9
Get gardening	10
Protect your belongings Information for leaseholders	11

What would you like to see in TLC?

This magazine is all about tenants, leaseholders and the housing services you're at the heart of.

If you have an idea for a story or want to let us know your views on the magazine, we'd love to hear from you!

**Send your
comments to
communications@
norwich.gov.uk**



If you would like this information in another language or format such as large print, CD or Braille please visit www.norwich.gov.uk/Intran or call 0344 980 3333.

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Norwich City Council



Introduction from Councillor Gail Harris

Welcome to the summer issue of TLC magazine

Councillor Gail Harris, Norwich City Council's deputy leader and cabinet member for social housing.

This year is proving to be a significant one for housing in Norwich. I am delighted to see tenants starting to move into newly-built properties in different areas of the city – many of which are built to high energy efficiency standards, representing great value for those living in them. You can find out the latest on schemes at Rayne Park and Goldsmith Street on page four.

It's also a busy year for the city council, and an exciting refurbishment of the customer centre at City Hall is now well underway. When it re-opens, it will be a welcoming and flexible space designed to make self-service that bit easier, as well as a comfortable place to meet an officer face-to-face.

See page five for more information about the changing ways to keep in touch with the council.

Whether you're moving into a brand new flat or have lived in a council property for a number of years, you can benefit from the range of courses available to tenants, detailed on page eight. Topics such as managing your money and knowing your rights are always valuable and it's great to hear the latest advice in these areas.

There are currently spaces on three of our tenant involvement groups – a great opportunity to develop as a person and influence your housing service.

Details of what this entails can be found on page nine, where we also thank long term tenant volunteers Terry Adkin and Les King. I'd like to express my gratitude for the time and energy they've put into voicing the views of fellow tenants over the past decade or so.

Members of the Tenant Involvement Panel suggested an article about gardening for this issue of TLC and, even if you don't have your own garden, there are various ways to get out and be involved with nature. Turn to page ten for some top tips and the different ways you can exercise your green fingers.

We'd like to get even more ideas from readers of this magazine on topics you'd like to read more about. Let us know by emailing **communications@norwich.gov.uk**



New homes at Rayne Park.

New developments welcome first residents

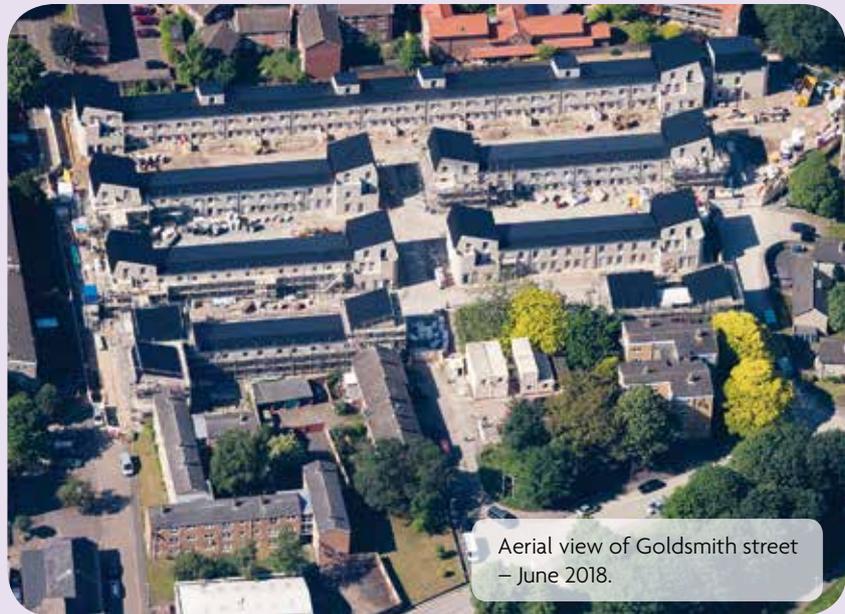
Families, couples and individuals will soon be invited to apply for new council homes at two innovative new schemes in the city, with some settling in already.

Available to bid on through Norwich Home Options, the new flats and houses at Rayne Park and Goldsmith Street mark a welcome addition to the council's housing stock.

The Rayne Park development in Threescore, Bowthorpe is the first project for Norwich Regeneration Company, which is wholly owned by Norwich City Council. It is made up of 172 homes, with a mix of private and social housing offering one-bed apartments to five-bed family houses as well as 57 affordable homes. The site's first residents started moving in from June.

Some 112 of the homes are being built to Passivhaus standard – an approach that produces ultra-low energy buildings that need very little fuel for heating or cooling. These are expected to save up to 70% on energy bills!

These homes are the second phase of the development on



Aerial view of Goldsmith street – June 2018.

the site and follow previous work to build the Care Village.

Find out more about this development at www.raynepark.co.uk

Meanwhile, the award winning development at Goldsmith Street is nearing completion. Once finished, the 105-home site will become one of the largest collections of Passivhaus homes in the UK.

The homes, which will offer 56 one-bed flats and a mix of two, three and four-bedroom flats, will all be let for social rent through the council's Norwich Home Options scheme. As this development will create a new community in a short space of time, the properties will be let in a way that meets local needs – and to applicants with a strong chance of managing a successful tenancy.

A team of council officers will be temporarily based at the scheme to assist new tenants with the moving-in process.

Councillor Gail Harris, Norwich City Council's cabinet member with responsibility for social housing, said: "We should always be pushing for good quality homes for our tenants, and more of them.

"We know there are too many people in the city experiencing fuel poverty. So it's a real feather in our cap that so many of the homes on these sites are built to Passivhaus standards as they deliver substantial savings on energy bills which helps to ease that particular financial burden."

To join the housing register or find out more, visit www.norwich.gov.uk/housing

Picture courtesy of Leaders



Inside a Rayne Park property.

Changing the ways we keep in touch

The number of services and tools you can access through the council's website is growing all the time, and the ways you can keep in touch with us are changing to reflect this.

Online and by email

The easiest way to find a service, make a payment or report an issue is through our website.

Whether you want to report a repair or apply for a mutual exchange, the tools are at your fingertips. Sign up for 'My Account' to view rent balances, track the progress of an issue and save time by not having to give us your details every time you get in touch.

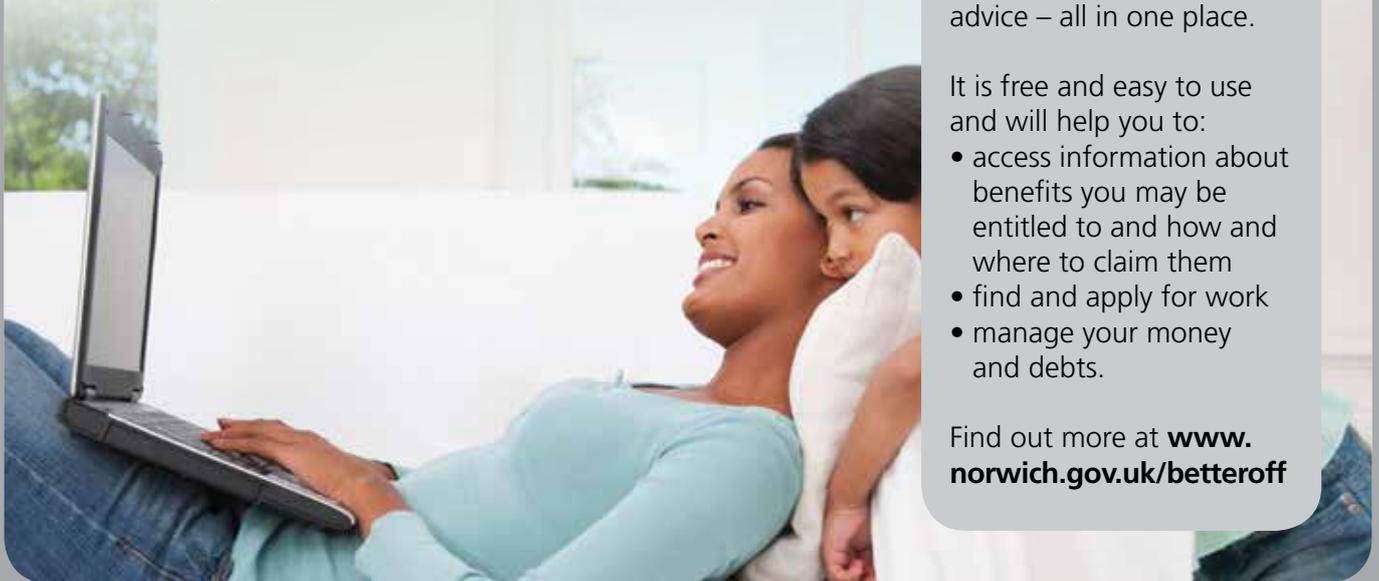
Could you be BetterOff?

BetterOff is an online service for people who live in Norwich which allows them to access benefit entitlement information, job searches and get money advice – all in one place.

It is free and easy to use and will help you to:

- access information about benefits you may be entitled to and how and where to claim them
- find and apply for work
- manage your money and debts.

Find out more at www.norwich.gov.uk/betteroff



Free digital support

With work to transform the customer centre at City Hall underway, temporary arrangements for visitors are in place and customers are using the ever-growing list of online services available 24/7.

See us at a time that suits you

If you need to speak to an adviser, you can make an appointment to see someone at a time that suits you.

If you'd like to make use of the council's website but have problems getting online or need a bit of advice, free help is available at Digital Hubs around the city. Call 0344 980 3333 or visit www.norwich.gov.uk/digitalinclusion to find out more.



We are listening

One of the ways to have your say on how your housing service is run is to take part in the regular surveys we carry out.

We had a brilliant response to our latest Talkback survey, with more than 1,000 tenants

taking part, so thanks to everyone who responded.

The survey was all about reporting repairs online which helps us to measure the awareness and effectiveness of this approach.

Your feedback is always appreciated and will be used to help develop and improve services.

For more information and to get involved, visit www.norwich.gov.uk/yourviewscount

What you told us

- **56%** of respondents reported a repair online
- **72%** of people who reported a repair online said it was easy
- people aged 65+ are just as likely to have reported repairs online as respondents in younger age groups
- **64%** who had not previously reported repairs online would consider doing so in future.

Benefits of reporting repairs online

- speed of service
- ease of use
- time saving.

"Prompt reply communicating appointment time"

What stops people reporting repairs online?

- lack of access or IT skills/confidence
- preferring to speak to someone over the phone

What could we improve?

- more repair categories
- make appointments instantly

"Not all repairs fit in the options available"

TOP TIP

Try typing your repair into the search box if you don't think it fits into the categories listed.



STAR Survey

You may also get a phone call from Viewpoint Research asking for your views on our housing services.

Thank you to everyone who has taken part so far. We look forward to sharing an overview of the first year in the next issue of TLC.

If you do not wish to be contacted for this survey, you can opt out at www.norwich.gov.uk/starsurvey



HOW ARE WE DOING?

Housing Service performance from April 2017 to March 2018

Each shape indicates how we are performing against our targets



Above, or on target



Close to target



Below target

75% of tenants are satisfied with their neighbourhood as a place to live



96% of repairs are completed right first time



84% of tenants are satisfied with the service we provide



98% of our repairs appointments are kept by our contractors



97% of tenants are satisfied with our repairs service



Average energy efficiency rating of our homes

Very energy efficient – lower running costs

(92-100) **A**

(81-91) **B**

(69-80) **G**

(55-68) **D**

(39-54) **E**

(21-38) **F**

(1-20) **G**

70

Not energy efficient – higher running costs

96% of rent owed has been collected



17 is the average number of days it takes us to relet an empty property



7% of our homeless application decisions were overturned on review



68% of households who asked for help were prevented from becoming homeless



98% of Norwich City Council homes meet the Norwich Standard



97% of our tenants are satisfied with the quality of repairs



496 new kitchens and 632 new bathrooms have been fitted in the last 12 months.

Visit www.norwich.gov.uk/scorecards for more information or call us on 0344 980 3333



NORWICH City Council

What makes a great tenant?

Whether you're a new tenant who has recently moved into your home, have concerns about money, or would like to know more about your rights as a tenant, help is available.

New rounds of free training, from Your Own Place and exclusively for council tenants, start this September. Pick and choose one or more topics from the following four sessions, taking place on a number of dates.

- Money – how it makes us feel and getting it under control.
 - Income, expenditure and making savings.
 - Getting to grips with debt issues.
- Understanding your tenancy rights and responsibilities.

Employability skills

For tenants seeking employment, two interactive training sessions cover the below four modules. They help to improve confidence and the chances of success in the recruitment process. The modules are:

- CVs and applications
- Personal selling points
- Interviews – preparation and the human element
- Interviews – tools and techniques

Business skills

We have training sessions for people aiming to improve professional skills, such as:

- Workload management
- Challenging conversations
- Chairing and attending meetings
- Presentation skills and public speaking

Running a home is one of the most significant aspects of our lives, and there are certain skills we all need to manage the responsibilities that come with it.

Places are allocated on a first-come first-served basis so contact us as soon as possible to avoid disappointment.

As a council tenant, you also have access to other professional courses providing employment and other lifestyle skills, all of which contribute to your quality of life.

Lifestyle skills

For anyone looking to improve verbal and written communication skills and encourage a positive mind set. We can help with:

- Verbal communication
- Written communication
- Mindset and positivity
- Influencing and negotiation skills



Training is informal...



...and practical.

To register your interest or find out more email involvement@norwich.gov.uk or call 01603 212317

Shaping our services

We pride ourselves on putting our tenants at the heart of housing matters. We work closely with tenant volunteers in a variety of ways to make sure tenants influence our service standards, scrutinise our performance and ensure value for money.

We want to hear from you! Currently there are spaces available in three tenant groups.

Tenant Involvement Panel (TIP)

The panel meets six times per year to consider housing policy and finance issues and scrutinise the housing service's performance.

New Build Group

This group receives information on current and future housing developments, for example the award winning housing development on Goldsmith Street.

Materials Advisory Group

Members of this group are consulted over the selection of materials to be used in tenants' homes as part of our housing maintenance and refurbishment programmes.

Full training will be provided so you have the skills and confidence to take part. As well as influencing our housing services, you will also improve your personal development and meet new people.



To get involved email involvement@norwich.gov.uk or call 01603 212317

End of a fine era

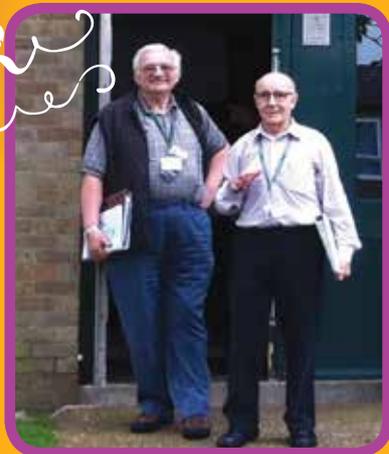
We'd like to extend our thanks to Terry Adkin and Les King – two tenant volunteers who have committed a great deal of time and energy to tenant involvement activities over the past few decades.

Both have been estate auditors and members of the TIP, as well as taking part in other groups and representing tenants at meetings and conferences.

Terry and Les are stepping down from their roles to focus on other commitments so we'd like to wish them all the best in their future endeavours.

Thank you

Terry and Les during an estate audit.



Get gardening

The summer months tempt many of us to get out and about – this can include spending time in the garden or finding other ways to exercise those green fingers!

Gardening is known to be good for physical and mental health, and helps enhance the places we live in.

Here are some top tips for tending to gardens and taking care of plants at this time of year.

- Remember to water/feed plants on dry days.
- Deadhead plants to encourage more blooms.
- Mulch around plants to retain moisture and nutrients in the soil.
- Avoid mildew by watering early in the morning, allowing foliage to dry out and reducing the risk of mildew and other fungi.
- Harvest vegetables regularly to encourage more growth.

A place for your garden waste

If you're wondering how to dispose of grass cuttings or trimmings, and don't have a communal bin, you can sign up to the council's garden waste collection service for a small fee. Garden waste can also be recycled at Norwich (Mile Cross) Recycling Centre on Swanton Road.

Allot of fun

Don't have a garden? Why not apply for an allotment? The National Allotment Society says an allotment can produce enough food to supplement a family's weekly shop with fresh fruit and vegetables over the year. Council allotments are dotted all around the city.

Despite being very popular, waiting lists are shorter than they've been in a long time so now's the perfect time to sign up for one.

You might also want to get involved with Good Gym – a friendly running club that combines running with tasks such as gardening to help older people feel independent again.

Find out more at www.goodgym.org

Help at hand

If you need a hand with gardening, or a one-off clearance, you may be eligible for assistance from Mow & Grow.

If you're in receipt of a health-related benefit, have health problems or a disability which makes it difficult to maintain your garden, you may be eligible for the scheme. Call 0344 980 3333 to find out more.



Protect your belongings

Getting the items in your home insured is your responsibility, and you can protect your possessions against theft, fire or flooding for as little as 55p per week.

Our contents insurance scheme for tenants is supplied by a leading provider and includes cover for accidents such as lost keys and broken windows at no extra cost.

Find out more and apply online at www.norwich.gov.uk/contentsinsurance

Information for leaseholders

Proposed new contract for leasehold insurance

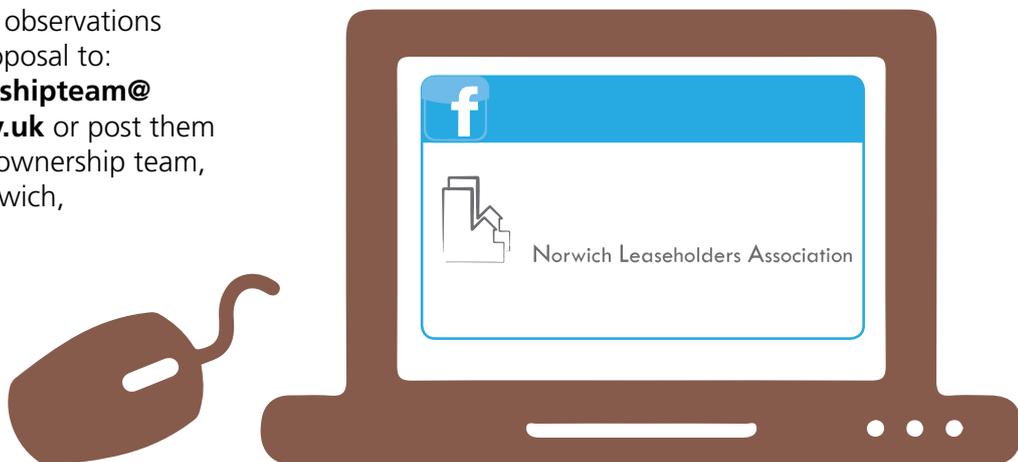
A consultation about the proposed insurance contract provider closes on Monday 30 July.

Email written observations about the proposal to: homeownershipteam@norwich.gov.uk or post them to the home ownership team, City Hall, Norwich, NR2 1NH.

A voice for leaseholders

Norwich Leaseholders Association (NLA) seeks to represent the interests and concerns held by any leaseholder of Norwich City Council properties.

Membership to NLA is free and there is an open invitation to any leaseholder to join. If you have any issues you'd like to raise with NLA, email kirklorna@gmail.com or follow the group on Facebook.



Contacting Norwich City Council

ONLINE You can report repairs, access council services and make online payments.

www.norwich.gov.uk

Register for 'My Account' to check your rent and council tax balance. Take a look at 'My Norwich' to see what services are available in your area.

POST Norwich City Council,
City Hall, Norwich NR2 1NH.

PHONE 0344 980 3333.
Lines open 9am to 4pm,
Monday to Friday.

Out of hours emergencies:
01603 412180.

Free phone payment hotline:
0800 021 7784 (a 24/7 service)

Money advisers:
0344 980 3333 or email
budgetingandmoneyadvice@norwich.gov.uk

Text relay users only:
18001 01603 212587
(9am to 4pm, Monday
to Friday).

Leaseholders:
For help and advice on your rights and responsibilities, contact the home ownership team on 01603 213143 or 213144 or at homeownership@norwich.gov.uk

Report repairs online

To report non-urgent repairs (and for a chance to win £50) go to:

- www.norwich.gov.uk/repairs
- Click 'report a non-urgent repair'
- Enter your details and let the repairs software guide you through the rest...

A chance
to win
£50!!
*T&Cs apply

Available 24/7 and works on
PCs, tablets and smartphones



Quick and easy to do



Request your preferred time



No waiting in phone queues



Save the cost of a call

Loss of gas or electricity?

If you have lost your gas or electricity supply you should contact your energy supplier directly in the first instance.

Until next time...

The autumn issue of TLC will be distributed from Monday 22 October.