Open House
Tenant & Leaseholder Newsletter
Issue 35  Winter 2012

Eastbourne Homes celebration event

www.eastbournehomes.org.uk
Welcome

It is ten years since the first Arm’s Length Management Organisation (ALMO) was established.

We recently held an event to celebrate this milestone and highlight the achievements of your ALMO, Eastbourne Homes, over the last seven years.

It gave us the opportunity to meet up with our working partners and thank them for their support and showcase the many successes we’ve enjoyed over the years.

You can find more details about the event on pages 10 and 11 and a video on our website – www.eastbournehomes.org.uk

This is the last issue of Open House in 2012 and we’re very pleased you like it so much! I know this because so many of you were kind enough to send back our communications survey forms.

Your feedback will help ensure our communication with you continues to improve and develop using new technology.

Best wishes for the holiday season.

Jo Ellis,
Chief Executive

Christmas week limited service

In the last issue of Open House we invited residents to share their views on our proposed Christmas closures. As there were no objections, the Ivy House office will close its doors on 24th December and re-open on 2nd January 2013.

An emergency repairs service will be maintained throughout the Christmas period and clients of the STEPS floating support service will continue to receive a limited support service on all days other than public holidays.
Eastbourne Homes staff in Jim Jams for charity

Staff from Eastbourne Homes were out on the town one Saturday night in September – donning pyjamas and pink wigs.

Thirteen members of the team took part in the annual Jim Jam walk in aid of St Wilfrid’s Hospice and were happy to stand out in their wigs.

Participants met at Eastbourne College in Old Wish Road at 6pm and followed a route through Meads and along the seafront to the mid-point at The Langham Hotel, where refreshments were served. They then walked back to Eastbourne College where the event finished.

It took the Eastbourne Homes team two-and-a-quarter hours to complete the six-mile walk and between them they raised £639. Part of the money raised will be used to furnish and equip the new hospice, which is under construction in Broadwater Way.

Eastbourne Homes’ Governance & Compliance Manager, Jane McCarthy-Penman, said: “It was a fabulous event – we had such fun and thankfully the weather was kind to us. I’ve done the walk several times before, but this was the first time we’d entered an Eastbourne Homes team.

“St Wilfrid’s is a brilliant charity at the heart of our local community. Most of us will have been touched by cancer, or know someone who has been, so it’s important to raise awareness of the support that St Wilfrid’s can provide,” Jane said.

If you would like to donate, please visit www.justgiving.com/Eastbourne-Homes

Season’s greetings

As an organisation, we will be donating to charity rather than sending Christmas cards and will be encouraging others to do the same.

We have set up a Just Giving page where donations can be made, rather than sending cards.

The staff at Eastbourne Homes voted for St Wilfrid’s Hospice in Eastbourne to be the charity to receive any such donations.

If you wish to donate to this worthy cause and send an alternative ‘season’s greeting’, please log on to: https://www.justgiving.com/Eastbourne-Homes1

Staff are unable to accept gifts personally, but will be really pleased should you wish to support this worthy cause. Thank you for your support.
TwostudentsfromBrightonUniversity’sOccupational TherapyMSccoursehavejoinedtheOlderPeople’s ServicesTeamatEastbourneHomes.

BiragoOdoiandAliceMcGarviewillspendatotalof12weekswithEHL,startingwith onedayaweekforfiveweeks,thenfulltimeforsevenweeks. Thepairareintheirfinal yearoftheirtwo-yearintensivecourseattheUniversityofBrightonMeadscampus.

Biragosaid: “We’reherelookatwhatEastbourneHomesdandoandgenerateanoccupationaltherapyrolewithintheservice. Wewanttofindoutwhatkindof occupationaltherapyneedsolderresidentshaveandwhatkindofleisureactivitystheyneed, andthen trytoimplementthem. Wewillfindoutwhattheyusedtodoandenjoy,thentrytoreinventit withthembyadaptingtotheircurrentneeds.”

OlderPeople’sServicesManager,GinaMorgan,said: “Wewereapproachedbythe universitytoseeifwewouldbeabletoofferplacementsforstudents. We’rehappytosupportthestudentsandseethebenefitofanoccupationaltherapyprojectforour residentsandclients. It’sanemergingroleandwehavehadapositiveresponsefromall involved. WehaveagreedtotakeafurthertwostudentsinJanuary,whohopewill carryonthegoodworkthatBiragoandAlicewillhaveimplementedintheirtimewithus.”

If you want to find out more about STEPS and you live in Eastbourne, Lewes or Wealden, contact:

Phone: 01323 436414
Text: 07970 668106
Email: referrals@stepswest.co.uk

If you want to know more about sheltered housing:

Contact: Wesley Davidson
Older People’s Services Team Leader
T: 01323 436450
E: wesley.davidson@eastbournehomes.org.uk

Pictured above: Wesley Davidson and Gina Morgan (back row) with Birago Odoi and Alice McGarvie (front row).
To celebrate Older People’s Day, Upwyke House hosted a special 50s and 60s event. Guests were treated to live entertainment and staff put together a slide show of old adverts and other memorabilia to bring back memories of “the good old days”. Pictured above, left to right, are On-Site Co-ordinators Lynn Doman, Janet Bandey and Kevin Pearce-Biggs.

Board Vacancy

Eastbourne Homes wants local people to get involved in key decision making.

We have a vacancy on our Board for a Tenant Board Director. This is a wonderful opportunity to make a real impression and contribute to how housing services in Eastbourne are delivered.

You will represent thousands of other tenants across the town if you become a Director of the Board, so you must be ready for a new and exciting learning experience that will broaden your horizons.

If you are interested in this position, or would like further information, please contact Jane McCarthy-Penman, Governance & Compliance Manager, in the first instance, on 01323 436404 or email jane.mccarthy-penman@eastbournehomes.org.uk
When your Area Panels meet

Working hard to make a difference in our communities

Central & Archery Area Panel
The Panel now meets at Gwent Court in St James Road every second Wednesday of the month between 10am and 12 noon. We are pleased to welcome anyone who wishes to join us.
CAAP can be contacted on caap@live.co.uk

Langney Area Panel
Langney Area Panel meets on the last Thursday of the month at the Resource Centre in Etchingham Road, Langney from 6pm to 8pm. If you would like to come along for a coffee and chat beforehand, we are here from 5pm. All Langney residents are welcome.
Langney Area Panel can be contacted by emailing langneyap@hotmail.co.uk or by telephone on 01323 764284, or call in to 10 Wiltshire Court, Etchingham Road, Langney on Tuesday and Thursday mornings between 10am and 12 noon.

Old Town Area Panel
Old Town Area Panel’s monthly meetings are held between 6pm and 8pm at Old Town Community Centre on the last Tuesday of the month.
We are currently looking for new members to help us identify improvements within the Old Town community.
The position of Chair is vacant and we would be pleased to hear from anyone interested in this role. Please come along to one of our meetings or contact James Leathers on 01323 436436 for more information.

Hampden Park & Willingdon Trees Area Panel
Committee meetings take place at Hampden Park Community Centre on the first Friday of the month, between 10am and 12 noon. All residents from the Hampden Park & Willingdon Trees area are welcome to come along and meet the Panel. We are looking for new members to join us. Our new email address is hpwtap@hotmail.com
Councillors drop in between 10am and 12 noon on the first Saturday of the month at the Community Centre in Brodrick Road. A local councillor will be there to answer any questions, or offer help and advice if needed.

Would you like to be more involved in the documentation we send out, to ensure it is customer friendly? Do you have an eye for detail? If the answer is YES, then we need you.
The existing Editorial Panel is being refreshed and we would like to hear from residents who would like to get involved by attending meetings and also those who would like to get involved but stay in the comfort of their own home.

If you feel this is something you would like to take part in, please contact Jane McCarthy-Penman, Governance & Compliance Manager, on 01323 436404 or email jane.mccarthy-penman@eastbournehomes.org.uk
Central & Archery Area Panel

Fun in the park
Members of CAAP enjoyed taking part in the annual Princes Park summer fair. The weather was kind (it was one of the hottest days of the year) and the team ran a tombola stall, with prizes donated by Panel members, friends and Eastbourne Skate Club.

The team made a profit of £60 and the remaining prizes were passed on to the retirement courts and St Andrew’s and Bourne schools for use at their summer fetes.

Old Town Area Panel

Panto tickets up for grabs
Once again, OTAP is offering pantomime tickets at a reduced price. The tickets are for the 7pm showing of Sleeping Beauty at the Devonshire Park Theatre on Thursday 10th January 2013. The tickets will be on sale at Scott’s Newsagents in Old Town on 7th January on a first come, first served basis.

A load of rubbish!
Eastbourne Homes residents in Old Town, as well as private households, had the opportunity to dispose of their unwanted items and white goods, thanks to funding from their Area Panel.

The Panel organised the successful rubbish amnesty around the area in October, with many people taking advantage of the service. One dustcart and one white goods van visited over 50 properties to collect unwanted items and another dustcart visited pre-arranged locations in the area to allow residents to bring their items to it.

Panel members would like to thank all those who helped to make the morning go smoothly. Neighbourhood Officers who attended the event would also like to thank the Sita staff for their hard work.

Hampden Park & Willingdon Trees Area Panel

New members
The Panel has welcomed six new members and it is hoped that by Christmas the committee will be at full capacity.

Members of the Panel recently enjoyed talks from Sue Parsons about the Responsible Dog Ownership Programme, as well as an update on Eastbourne Borough Council’s ‘At Home’ Housing Strategy.
Teaming up to make a difference

Through effective partnership working, EHL is making a positive contribution to Eastbourne’s worklessness agenda by working with others, including Jobcentre Plus and local colleges.

- Activating Eastbourne is a worklessness partnership made up of public, private and third sector organisations which share the agenda of helping unemployed people back to work and to support employers in developing and growing their existing and potential workforce. Through the partnership, members gain an understanding of the provision available to jobseekers and employers and promote this to mutual clients. For further details see www.activatingeastbourne.org

- EHL became part of Give Us A Chance (GUAC) in 2011. The GUAC initiative involves a national consortium of housing associations and registered providers working together to provide valuable trainee roles. Amicus Horizon and EHL have joined forces to form an initial partnership with the aim of creating trainee jobs within the businesses in Kent, Sussex and South London. EHL will provide three trainee roles in Eastbourne, lasting six months each; one is already appointed and a further two will be recruited in December. The new trainee roles will add to EHL’s service offer for customers and benefit local communities. The jobs will provide effective trainee work, skills and learning placements for young people between 18 and 24 years of age, not currently in work and on Jobseeker’s Allowance. If you meet these criteria and would be interested in finding out more details, please contact your local Jobcentre Plus and ask about the Work Programme with G4S.

- EHL work with partners within Eastbourne, including Sussex Downs College, Places for People and Mears, to provide free training for Eastbourne residents. There are practical courses from cooking, DIY and computers to CV writing and interview skills, as well as courses with certificates that will help to secure employment. For further details see www.streetlearning.org.uk

- EHL provides up to three work experience placements per year to schools and colleges and/or direct enquiries. Ideally, this will involve spending between one and two weeks in an area of the business to gain relevant experience to their studies for their first job, or in facilitating a return to the workplace.

- EHL is committed to supporting mentoring initiatives and is currently exploring opportunities in this area with a view to improving employability, confidence and finding work for 18-24 year-olds.

- EHL will aim to work with other contractors and use procurement opportunities to increase the number of contractor/supplier-led training opportunities and to increase the number of school visits, work experience placements and apprenticeships in Eastbourne.

- EHL also offers apprenticeship opportunities. For more details visit www.apprenticeships.org.uk

Direct Debit – the easier and smarter way to pay

Pay your rent by Direct Debit and get £10.00 credit*

Direct Debit (DD) is the simple, safe and convenient way to pay your rent. It is Eastbourne Homes’ preferred method of paying rent and, by choosing to pay by DD, you are helping Eastbourne Homes to save money. It’s cheaper to process a DD than a cash or card payment and these savings are used to improve services.

When you pay by DD, you are protected by the Direct Debit Guarantee. Most current accounts at banks and building societies can pay DD; just ask at your branch.

You can choose from:
- Weekly – on the Monday of every rent-paying week
- Fortnightly – on the Monday of every rent-paying fortnight
- Monthly – on the 1st of every month

Contact the Income Generation Team on 01323 436410 or email Rents&Leasehold@eastbournehomes.org.uk to request a form, or log on to www.eastbournehomes.org.uk and download a form.

*Council tenants and leaseholders who switch to Direct Debit and pay their rent or service charges continuously for three months. Terms and conditions apply.
Make sure you’re covered

What would you do if you had a fire, flood, accident or burglary, and lost some or all of the possessions in your home?

Eastbourne Homes, as managing agents for Eastbourne Borough Council, is responsible for the upkeep/replacement/repair of the fabric/fixtures and fittings of the building you rent but, as one of our residents, you are responsible for your belongings within it. This means your furniture, your decorations and carpets, your electrical goods, your clothing, your jewellery and other valuables. This means you will have to pay for the cost of replacing them if they are damaged by accident, fire, flood, vandalism, or are stolen.

Insurance safeguards your belongings against these unexpected events

You can get insurance to cover these risks that is usually cost effective if you need to claim, and contents insurance should be looked at as an affordable necessity, not a luxury. However, a policy needs careful checking as to what it covers and what it does not.

Insurance terms explained

‘New for old’ versus ‘indemnity’. With new for old, the insurance company pays the full cost of repairing damaged items or replacing them with new if they are stolen or damaged beyond economic repair. Indemnity policies, on the other hand, deduct an amount for fair wear and tear and depreciation from any payout. Although obviously cheaper because of this, only having an indemnity policy can leave you worse off if you have a large claim and so Eastbourne Homes would not generally recommend an indemnity policy, but one with new for old cover.

‘Sum insured’ versus ‘bedroom rated’. You can choose the level of cover you need in one of two ways. As the name suggests, a bedroom rated policy is based on the number of bedrooms your home has (this also assumes a family size similar and is often subject to a maximum amount of cover). With a sum insured policy you work out (with the insurance company’s help) how much cover you need and the insurance company works out the level of premium payment to cover that sum. It is not always obvious which type offers the best value; it is just a case of checking and comparing.

What are often optional extras:

- Accidental damage cover
- Personal possessions cover – this will cover items you take outside your home such as cameras, jewellery, laptops and games consoles.
- Legal helpline

What does a good policy look like?

Must have/should have features:

New for old policy, adequate valuables cover both for individual items and total value, possessions outside the home, freezer contents, locks and lost keys, cover for money in the home, cover for credit cards and thefts from outbuildings.

Could have features:

Cover for items in the garden, including plants, and cover for business equipment if you run a business from home.

Things to watch out for:

Make sure there are flexible payment options if you need them and that the insurance company does not insist on Direct Debit if this is not suitable for you. Check how you can pay by card or cash if need be and if there is an extra cost.

Special security measures needed, such as five-lever mortice locks/window locks. The National Housing Federation promotes a policy that has no requirements for special door or window locks.

Does the policy have an excess amount i.e. you pay or the insurance company deducts the amount of the excess. Some policies, including the one promoted by the National Housing Federation, have no excess.

Cover for valuables will usually have a total amount for all valuables and a single item limit, so check that the policy terms are suitable to you.

Internet comparison websites such as gocompare.com, moneysupermarket.com or comparethemarket.com are useful, but be careful as the greatest discounts and savings are when buying buildings and contents insurance together. You don’t need buildings cover; only cover for contents.

If you do not have contents insurance we would urge you to obtain it. If you need help, please speak to your Neighbourhood Officer, On-Site Co-ordinator, STEPS Support Worker or John Nelson.
Eastbourne Homes marks success with celebration event

Leading figures in the housing sector gathered in Eastbourne to showcase the success of Eastbourne Homes.

The occasion not only marked the success of the work completed by Eastbourne Homes and its partners to benefit the local community, but also celebrated the 10th anniversary of the first Arm’s Length Management Organisation (ALMO), a not-for-profit company that provides housing services on behalf of a local authority.

Nearly 100 people attended the event at the Eastbourne Centre, including councillors and key members of the housing sector, contractors and other business partners.

Keynote speaker was Alistair McIntosh, Chief Executive of the Housing Quality Network, who spoke at length about the future of ALMOs. Eastbourne Homes’ Chairman, Gordon Sims, and Chief Executive, Jo Ellis, also addressed the guests.

Jo said: “We’re delighted that so many people attended our celebration event, as many of them have helped play a part in getting Eastbourne Homes to where it is today. It was an opportunity to reflect on the successes we’ve enjoyed together, as well as looking at the challenges that still lay ahead.”

Among those featured in a special film shown to guests at the event was Eastbourne Homes resident Gerald Shepherd, who said: “The staff at Eastbourne Homes look after you. They do the job that they set out to do.”
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Left to right: Robert Cottrill (Chief Executive of Eastbourne Borough Council), Gordon Sims (Chairman of Eastbourne Homes), Jo Ellis (Chief Executive of Eastbourne Homes), Alistair McIntosh (Chief Executive of the Housing Quality Network) and David Tutt (Leader of Eastbourne Borough Council).

The Keepmoat team, from left to right: Rachel Matthews, Nick Kidsley, Wally Shave, Mike Brogan and Neal Allison.

Left-right: Neal Allison (Keepmoat), Sue Parsons (Resident Board Director) and Pauline Harrop (Panel member).

Members of the Eastbourne Homes team, from left to right: Hannah Ketch, Gina Morgan and Paula Leighton.

Left-right: Becky James (Eastbourne Homes), Ann Murray (Board Director) and Jane McCarthy-Penman (Eastbourne Homes).

Left-right: Paul Atkinson (Eastbourne Homes) with Simren Dhaliwal and Ricky Goodall (Hays Construction & Property).

Left-right: Gordon Sims, Eastbourne Homes’ Chairman.

Guests discussing housing issues.

www.eastbournehomes.org.uk
Eastbourne Household Waste Recycling Site

Unwanted household items can be taken to the St Philip’s Avenue site free of charge. If you have an enquiry about East Sussex County Council’s waste recycling site, please get in touch with their contact centre on 0345 6080 194.

Opening hours

Monday to Thursday: 9am to 4pm
Friday: 9am to 3.30pm
Saturday and Sunday: 8am to 12 noon
Bank Holidays: Closed

What you can recycle

Aluminum foil
Aerosols
Bric-a-brac
Car batteries
Cans/tins
Cardboard
Cooking oil
Electrical goods
Engine oil
Fluorescent tubes/energy saving bulbs
Furniture
Fridges/freezers
Glass bottles/jars
Green garden waste/Christmas trees
Hardcore/rubble
Household batteries
Metal items
Mobile phones
Newspapers/magazines/junk mail
Plasterboard
Plastic bottles
Soil
Textiles/shoes
Timber/wood
TVs/computer monitors
Tyres
Yellow Pages/white telephone directories

Other waste accepted

Household waste
Bonded asbestos

Not Accepted

Trade/business waste

If you have any unwanted bulky items but aren’t able to get them to the Eastbourne Household Waste Recycling Site, please contact our contractor, Sita, on 01323 720920, who will arrange a collection for you (a charge will be made for this service).

Please remember that it is an offence to deposit litter, or any article that could cause litter, or contribute to the defacement by litter of any place in the open air to which the public are entitled to have access.

Offenders, if caught, may be issued with a fixed penalty notice or face a fine of up to £2,500.
Leasehold news

There was a fantastic turnout at the Leasehold Forum in October, with over 60 leaseholders attending.

Peter Parsons, on behalf of Leasehold member Sue Parsons, detailed how Eastbourne Homes had won a Bronze Footprint Award from the RSPCA for their work with responsible dog ownership. The Leasehold Panel was instrumental in providing funds towards leaflets promoting the micro-chipping scheme.

Shaheen Yaqoob from Eastbourne Borough Council gave a talk on the new housing strategy. If you have any comments you would like to make regarding the strategy, please contact Shaheen on 01323 415333 or email shaheen.yaqoob@eastbourne.gov.uk

The Insurance Officer for Eastbourne Borough Council has obtained a small reduction for all leaseholders’ insurance charges and this will be reflected in the actual accounts dated 1st October 2013.

Mixed tenure leasehold management, with Brenda Tuohy as Leaseholder Administrator, has returned to the Income Generation Team within the Finance and Corporate Services Department. Please contact Brenda or Helen Powell with your leasehold enquiries on 01323 436441.

Resident Scrutiny Panel activity update

The latest piece of work undertaken by the Resident Scrutiny Panel was on the procurement of contracts within EHL.

It is recognised that EHL commits significant sums annually to the construction sector. Where feasible, more of the expenditure will be available for local suppliers through procurement activity directly contracted with local firms or by the imposition of contract terms upon major contractors to engage local suppliers and labour.

The Resident Scrutiny Panel recognises that EHL is under an obligation to demonstrate value for money in its procurement and sets out those principles in its strategy document. The Panel also recognise that local suppliers may lack the financial credibility for larger contracts and may not have access to operational capability to deliver larger contracts in line with our timetables or quality conditions required by EHL.

Following their report to the Board of Eastbourne Homes, the following recommendations were agreed:

1. The use of Constructionline as a tool to pre-qualify local companies for EHL’s potential projects.
2. The revised financial regulations that provide greater flexibility to the Asset Team to secure quotations and not tenders for smaller project work.
3. That best value is not automatically the lowest price.
4. Greater enforcement of ‘local content’ clauses by the procurement team where contracts have been let to a principal contractor and there is an expectation of significant sub-contracting.

There is further agreement that resident involvement in design, specification and procurement matters that directly affect their residential accommodation should be encouraged. As such, members of the Resident Scrutiny Panel will be involved in these design and procurement processes in ways that take advantage of their respective skills and interests.

Once again, the Resident Scrutiny Panel has undertaken a key piece of work which has proved to be an extremely useful exercise for both EHL and the Panel.

If you would like to get involved in the work of the Panel, please contact Jane McCarthy-Penman, Governance & Compliance Manager, on 01323 436404 or by email to jane.mccarthy-penman@eastbournehomes.org.uk
RESPONSIVE REPAIRS

Your Call, Your Home, Your Service

Your Call

Please call 01323 436436 (24hrs) for all repair enquiries.

You can also contact the service by using one of the following methods to report non-urgent repairs or to enquire about an existing repair:

Internet – www.eastbournehomes.org.uk – just follow the link to report a repair online.

Email – repairs@eastbournehomes.org.uk

Your Home

Repair responsibilities

The Repairs Team have recently received a small number of complaints about the repairs service where tenants have alleged that repairs have not been carried out to their homes after being reported. Upon investigating these complaints we have found that in many instances the repairs had not been reported and therefore the complaints were not upheld.

Please remember to report all repairs which are the council’s responsibility as soon as practical using the contact details above. This will enable our contractors to attend and complete a repair within the agreed timescale for the type of repair you have reported.

Your responsibilities regarding repairs to your home and our own responsibilities to you are outlined within the following documents:

• Tenancy Agreement
• Tenant Handbook
• Reporting your Repairs Handbook
• Repair Services Policy

These documents (apart from your own tenancy agreement) are available to view on our website. Alternatively, you can request a copy by contacting the Repairs Team on 01323 436436.

Controlling condensation within your home

Remember, condensation within your home can be caused by any of the following:

• A room with increased moisture levels.
  Through cooking or drying clothes on radiators.

• Where there is insufficient heating.
  Condensation is most likely to occur in unheated rooms where the colder air cannot retain as much moisture and the colder surfaces encourage the droplets to form.
• Where there is inadequate ventilation. Ventilation is needed to remove moisture which is being produced all the time, including that from people's breath. Keep a small window ajar or a trickle vent open when someone is in the room.

By following a few simple steps you can prevent, and often cure, condensation from forming in the first place. The normal way in which we live can contribute to the condensation problems and, by taking certain steps, you can combat condensation in your home and, indeed, prevent it in most cases. If you would like to receive an information leaflet on damp and condensation, please contact the Repairs Team on 01323 436436.

Keeping warm this winter

The temperature falls considerably at this time of year and we all rely on our heating systems more often to keep warm. Unfortunately, due to the extra workload put on our boilers and heating systems, it is not uncommon to experience temporary faults. If your boiler does develop a fault, please report this to our gas contractor as soon as possible using the contact details above. From 1st November to 30th April we have a 24-hour response time to attend to repairs for complete loss of heating and hot water. Fortunately, our contractors are on standby to respond within hours to attend and rectify any issues for this type of repair, although when demand is high we may need slightly longer to attend within the 24-hour target time. When using your heating system please ensure that you check your thermostat is set correctly, and that there is credit on your gas card meter, before logging a repair on the Repairs freephone number.

Your Service

Repairs Service Satisfaction questionnaire

Please remember to fully complete your questionnaire and answer all the questions. We have recently received a high number of incomplete questionnaires which will not be added to the prize draw.

Water charges for Eastbourne residents

If you are still paying for your water based upon the rateable value, you should review whether metered water will be cheaper. If meters are unavailable, you can ask for details on assessed charges.

South East Water, like the majority of other water providers, is undertaking a long-term strategic plan of installing meters to properties in their area. Most properties will have meters installed by 2015. There may be some properties where it is impossible to install a meter. In these circumstances, you may be able to request that your service is determined as an assessed charge.

An assessed charge may be beneficial for low water consumption tenants and leaseholders and particularly for single occupancy tenants. The assessed charge is based on the number of bedrooms in the house, but for customers who live alone, a discount is available providing the resident can confirm that they receive single person discount on their Council Tax charges.
Residents can make a difference

By Sue Parsons, a Resident Board Director and a member of both the Leaseholder Panel and the Central & Archery Area Panel.

As a member of a Resident Panel, I was stopped in the street by a tenant and asked why his neighbour could keep a dog in his flat, when his tenancy agreement stated that it was not permitted.

I was given to understand that dogs (and cats) could be kept if the tenant applied in writing to Eastbourne Homes for permission to keep a pet. There was also the understanding that if there was any anti-social behaviour (ASB), such as fouling in the communal areas, aggression to other residents, or noise, then the tenant was in danger of having to get rid of the pet.

On making enquiries to Eastbourne Homes there appeared to be no record kept of tenants who had permission. There was also a problem tracing stray dogs and returning them home to their owners.

At most residents’ meetings, generally there would be an issue raised around dogs in flats, urinating and fouling on balconies, causing problems for people with balconies below, aggression towards residents, especially causing distress to nervous people or children, barking when shut in, and even indiscriminate breeding of puppies or kittens.

Working with the Dogs Trust we have already set up a Responsible Dog Ownership Programme with other partners, including the local vets and Eastbourne Borough Council’s dog welfare officer. A programme of micro-chipping dogs has been set up, so details are already going on that tenant’s record.

The aim is to have details of all pets in the properties, for the safety of the pets and to make it easier for the Neighbourhood Management staff to manage any issues around dog ownership. We are in partnership with Eastbourne Borough Council who are offering their RSPCA neutering vouchers to those who are eligible and incorporating this has proven to be a great success, with high-take-up.

At a Board Regional Networking meeting I learnt from other Arm’s Length Management Organisations that their introduction of dog training classes had reduced their ASB dog-related incidents. Our Resident Panels, and Eastbourne’s Joint Action Group (JAG), are now helping fund dog socialisation and training classes and we have worked with Eastbourne Homes to re-word the policy on pet ownership.

When residents ask ‘What is Eastbourne Homes doing about this?’, I can now respond.
The free 10-week dog obedience training course takes place on Thursday evenings at Langney Community Hall. Each session lasts around an hour, during which time the owner and dog will learn the basics, including sit, down, stay and recall.

Attendees will also receive advice on other aspects of dog ownership, such as travelling with a dog, ongoing health care and dog laws. The trainers will also be happy to advise on any particular problems owners may experience.

Please contact the Customer Services Team for more details on 01323 436436 or email enquiries@eastbournehomes.org.uk

RSPCA award
Residents and staff at Eastbourne Homes are delighted to have received a Bronze Housing Footprint Award from the RSPCA’s Community Animal Welfare Footprints 2012 scheme.

Representatives from the Resident Panels are due to attend a celebratory event at the House of Lords in December. Look out for the full story in the next edition of Open House.

“My dogs went AWOL whilst I was putting the shopping away. They didn’t have any kind of tags on them. I looked for them for an hour and then called Sue Criddle, the dog welfare officer, who had found them. This really opened my eyes to the importance of micro-chipping Pepper, Willow and Terra. I will also be attending the next dog training. Thank you.”

“I was getting frustrated by my dog’s behaviour, so am enjoying learning to train her in a positive way. She was nervous of people, cars and other dogs. She pulled a lot on the lead and is very strong. The trainers know what they are talking about and have shown me how to train her well. I am really enjoying the classes and enjoy learning with other people, as we’re all in the same position.”
Candles, decorations and decorative lights are a growing cause of fires. By following these simple guidelines you can use candles safely. Find out how to reduce the risks caused by electrical decorative lighting and what lights to use inside and outside your home.

Using candles safely in your home
It only takes one candle to put your home at risk – always take care when using them.

Lit candles – where to put them
You should take care where you decide to put candles in your home. Candles are best placed:
• on a heat-resistant surface – be especially careful with night lights and tea lights, which get hot enough to melt plastic;
• in a proper candle holder, so they don’t fall over;
• out of the reach of children and pets;
• out of draughts and away from curtains, other fabrics or furniture, which could catch fire;
• with at least 1 metre (3 feet) between the candle and any surface above it;
• with at least 10 centimetres (4 inches) between any two candles;
• away from clothes and hair – if there’s any chance you could forget where a candle is and lean across it, put it somewhere else; and
• make sure you put out candles before moving them and don’t let anything fall into the hot wax, like matchsticks.

Putting candles out
Never leave a candle unattended. Make sure you:
• put out candles before you leave a room and before you go to bed;
• never leave a burning candle or oil burner in a child’s bedroom;
• use a snuffer or a spoon to put them out – blowing them can send sparks and hot wax flying; and
• double-check that they are completely out and not still smouldering.

Candles and decorations for celebrations – fire safety
Candles and night lights are often used in celebrations for Christmas, Diwali and other festivals. Make sure you don’t put candles in, or by, a Christmas tree, plants, flowers or other foliage. You should also take care to keep ribbons, festive decorations made of tissue paper or cardboard, and greetings cards away from heaters, lights, fireplaces and candles.

Decorative lights and electrical safety
Fairy lights and Christmas tree lights don’t get used very often, so you should make sure they are in good working order before using them:
• check that lights aren’t damaged or broken and look out for loose or worn wires;
• check that the fuse in the plug is the right size – the lights’ packaging should tell you the maximum size of fuse you should use;
• don’t overload sockets;
• replace any bulbs that blow;
• switch the lights off when you go to bed or leave the house; and
• don’t let the bulbs touch anything that can burn easily, such as paper or fabrics and other Christmas tree decorations.

If you are unsure about the safety of last year’s Christmas lights, don’t use them.

Indoor and outdoor decorative lights
For indoor lighting you could use light-emitting diode bulbs – they are usually called LED lights. LED lights work at a lower voltage than traditional bulbs so there is less risk of electric shock.

You can also buy Christmas lights with a low voltage transformer. The transformer reduces the normal voltage so the lights are safer to use.

If you want to use decorative lights outside, you should make sure they are designed for outdoor use only and are connected through an RCD-protected socket. A residual current device (RCD) protects against electric shock by disconnecting the electricity if the current is uneven.

You should make sure you know where your fuse box is, so that you can turn it off quickly in an emergency.

Don’t forget to test your smoke alarm
It can buy you valuable time to get out, stay out and call 999. You’re more than four times as likely to die in a fire if your smoke alarm is not working, so it’s clear that the simple act of testing your alarm is a vital part of any household routine. For more information visit the Fire Kills campaign’s Facebook page at www.facebook.com/firekills
Puzzle Page

Fancy something to do to wile away an afternoon or busy your mind whilst you enjoy a cup of tea?

Wordsearch

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A B A N A N A B T N A R R U C K C A L B
B L U C D F G R E D C U R R A N T R E C
N U A E G H J K L N O M P Q R T S U V W
D E L P P A P N A P Y R E A B I Y C M E
E B A F I O O E V R A C S T F R W A N I
K E L M N M M R N O P P S R A N I W B
B R A B E C U E D F H G O E K D T A K E
Y R B L A L H B G E G F B G A N H I O J
K Y L M P C N R O R P W Q R E C R U S T
W R A E P X A Y A O A X I M Y O H A B C
D F E G L P H I R J N E C T A R I N E
K M N L E O E P T A Q L A V O C A D O V
W K O U D F M S M C N O T P B P E L R
A B C D R E I F H G I J G K E L R M E N
O L P U R S T G U E V W Y N Z X I M M M
N R I R R Y E B S A T S U M A S C L E M
O T P M R S U V T W Y B E R Y M O N D A
R Y R E B P S A R Y R R E R A T S T U
V X Y W Z B A C D E Y Y R R E B N A G O L
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Find the words below in the grid above, send your completed wordsearch to us by 25th January 2013 and we will enter you into a prize draw for a £10 gift voucher!

Good Luck.

POMEGRANATE  RASPBERRY  MANDARIN
APPLE  BLACKCURRANT  MELON
CHERRY  CLEMENTINE  APRICOT
BANANA  FIGS  GRAPEFRUIT
PINEAPPLE  BLUEBERRY  MANGO
LEMON  REDCURRANT  PEACH
STRAWBERRY  SATSUMA  PEAR
LOGANBERRY  LIME KIWI
ORANGE  PLUM  NECTARINE
AVOCADO  GRAPE

Are you a budding puzzler?

Are you a budding puzzle compiler? If you would like to try your hand at creating crosswords or wordsearches for publication in Open House, please send them to us at Ivy House. For every one we use we will send you a £10 gift voucher.

Send us your entries!
Please send your completed entries to:
Eastbourne Homes Ltd,
Ivy House, 3 Ivy Terrace,
Eastbourne, East Sussex,
BN21 4QU.

Autumn issue winners
• Wordsearch winner – Mr Baker, Hampden Park
• Handyperson prize draw – Mr Pope, Langney

Well done!
Thanks go to Pauline Harrop for supplying this issue’s wordsearch. A gift voucher is on its way to her.
How can STEPS help me?

If you are aged 65 or over STEPS can support you to stay living independently.

STEPS can visit you at home and help you work out what support you personally need to keep living independently.

We can support you to:
- Claim any welfare benefits you are entitled to
- Liaise with your landlord or mortgage company
- Understand your tenancy or mortgage arrangement
- Find more suitable accommodation
- Set up or change utility suppliers
- Take part in healthy living activities
- Obtain specialist debt advice
- Find out about local groups or activities in your area
- Ensure your home is safe
- Resolve disputes or other issues with your neighbours

You may need housing support from STEPS if you:
- Are finding it difficult to live independently; or
- Are living in a property that is not suitable; or
- Are at risk of losing your home; or
- Have rent or mortgage arrears or other money or debt issues; or
- Are homeless or in temporary accommodation

STEPS is funded by East Sussex County Council and provides a free, confidential, short-term service.

You can contact STEPS in Eastbourne, Lewes or Wealden:

**Phone:** 01323 436 414
**Text:** 07970 668 106
**Email:** referrals@stepseast.co.uk

Or if you live in Hastings or Rother:

**Phone:** 0200 123 2422 (local rate)
**Text:** 07944 140 016
**Email:** referrals@steppwest.co.uk

To find out more about STEPS, visit the website at stepseast.co.uk or phone 01323 436 414.

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We have access to interpreters and can provide information in a variety of formats.

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