

Caerphilly Homes

Issue 5

Winners of the Transforming Lives and Communities Awards

It's been an exciting few months in the Caerphilly Homes calendar, one of highlights was launching our first Transforming Lives and Communities Awards.

There were 4 award categories; all aimed at recognising those people who are helping transform the lives of our tenants and local communities. Winners were announced as part of a celebration evening held in Penallta House on 8th September.

Cllr Gerald Jones, Cabinet Member for Housing, hosted the evening and winners were presented with their awards by some of our suppliers, who generously sponsored each category.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to place nominations and congratulations to all winners and runners up.



- **Young Person of the Year** (Sponsored by Seren Electrical)
Winner - Cherie Potter
- **'The Extra Mile Award'** (Sponsored by Robert Price Builders' Merchants)
Winner – Natalie Hughes, Runner up – Richard Thurstan
- **Transforming Lives Award – Individual**
(Sponsored by Quinn Radiators)
Winner – Sonia Hicks, Runner up – Keith Williams
- **Transforming Communities Award – Group** (Sponsored by Nuaire)
Winner – Caerphilly Tenants, People & Communities
Runners up – Caerphilly Churches Night Shelter and Tarragan



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Some winter tips for your home

Preventing condensation

Condensation is the most common cause of damp. Condensation happens when there is too much moisture in the air at a given temperature.

The moisture that forms condensation comes from normal daily activities such as cooking, washing and drying clothes, washing dishes, showering and simply breathing.

Condensation occurs at any time but mainly during cold weather; it doesn't matter whether it is raining or dry. It appears on cold surfaces and in places where there is little movement of air. Look for it in corners, on or near windows, in or behind wardrobes and cupboards.

You can help prevent condensation in your home by following these simple tips:

- If you use a tumble dryer, it must either be condensing type or vented outside. Opening the windows to allow some ventilation will also help.
- Condensation usually forms on external walls as they are colder, because of this you should try to keep furniture away from outside walls if possible.
- Ventilation should be used when bathing/showering or cooking, by using an extractor fan or opening a window.



- When cooking on the hob, lids should be on saucepans – this helps to hold in steam and will also save you some money!
- Where security allows, bedroom windows should be slightly open at night to allow moisture from breathing to leave the room.
- Avoid drying clothes on radiators as this produces a lot of moisture in a short space of time. Using a clothes horse or drying frame in the bathroom with the window open, if security allows, or the fan on can reduce this.
- Open your windows for a short time each day to turn the air over in the house and wipe off any condensation which forms on the windows each morning.



Burst pipes

Most pipes in our homes are well insulated, however, in very cold spells they can freeze and burst. There are some things you can do to try and stop this happening:

- Keep heating on a low setting.
- Open the attic hatch slightly to warm the roof space.
- Run taps and flush toilets to check pipes aren't frozen.
- If a tap runs dry the pipes are frozen. Turn the water off at the mains.
- If you are leaving your home for a few days, leave the heating on a low setting.
- If you are leaving your home for a longer period during the winter, please let us know. We can arrange to drain down any water storage tanks and show you how to turn off your water when you go.

Cash boost for allotment group



A community-run allotment in Bargoed has been given a much needed cash boost through our Community Improvement Fund.

Oaklands Hall Allotment Association received almost £5,000 from the fund, which they've used to fund the refurbishment of two communal buildings at the site. The newly refurbished buildings will now host a number of community activities and events throughout the year.

If you're a community group based in the Caerphilly county borough whose work benefits local residents then you could be eligible for funding.

The Community Improvement Fund offers capital grants of up to £5,000 for projects which aim to transform homes, lives and communities; such as:

- Improving the appearance of estates
- Community gardening projects
- Play areas
- Projects that bring communities together

To find out if your project could be eligible for funding contact Owain Morgan on 01443 866493 or by emailing morgao@caerphilly.gov.uk



Tenant Information Exchange

The exchange meetings are open to all tenants and are held every 6-8 weeks. This is an opportunity for tenants to find out what's happening in the different tenant groups and to pick up information on topical housing issues. If you'd like to be on the circulation list (it doesn't commit you to attending) please contact us on 01495 235025 / 235557 or by emailing tenantinvolvement@caerphilly.gov.uk

The way council housing is financed is changing



The current arrangement for funding council housing is called the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Subsidy system. It's complex and involves the UK Government making annual financial decisions that affect the finance available to maintain and manage council owned homes.

The UK Government and Welsh Government have reached an agreement that will allow councils in Wales to leave the centralised HRA subsidy system. This will mean that they will become responsible for financing their landlord services and housing investment from their income and is referred to as council housing becoming 'self financing'.

The new arrangements will mean that from April 2015 councils will no longer have to pay £73 million from tenants' rents to the UK Treasury each year. Instead, councils will make a single one-off payment to the UK Treasury on 31st March 2015 and this will replace future yearly payments of £73 million. Councils will need to borrow to make the one-off payment, but the yearly cost of this borrowing will be less than £73 million. This will mean that councils will have more to spend on their homes and housing services each year.

Under the new arrangements councils will have more freedom to focus on what is needed locally and how to make the best use of their income from rents.

The new arrangements will mean that from April 2015:

- Councils will be able to invest all the rent they collect in council homes and housing services
- Any additional revenue generated by more efficient housing services can be invested back into homes and services
- It will be much easier for tenants to be involved in decisions about their homes and local area because council housing finances will be controlled locally and not by the UK Government
- Councils will be able to undertake proper planning for the future with certainty

The changes will **not** affect:

- Your rights as a tenant – such as the right to repair and the right to buy
- Your landlord – self financing does not change your landlord in any way
- Your rent – the level of rent you pay will continue to be a decision for your council

Results of Task Group elections

A big thank you to all who returned their voting papers in August. More than 1,500 ballot papers were returned - a big increase on the return in 2012. Your Task Group representatives until 2017 are:

Eastern Valleys



Anna Lewis



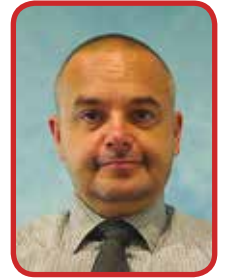
Dianne Moore



John Moore



Clive Davies



Max McDermott

Lower Rhymney Valley



Gemma Green



Sandra Jones

There was no vote in Upper Rhymney Valley as there were two candidates for two places so no election was needed.

The Chair and Vice Chair positions alternate between councillor and tenant representatives. The Chair this year is Councillor Dianne Price and the tenant representatives nominated Clive Davies as Vice Chair.

New Tenants & Residents Association in Lansbury Park

A small association has been established covering Trevelyan Court in Lansbury Park. Members of the association have been very busy transforming their court by planting up borders, preparing tubs and

baskets and painting some of the boundary walls. The project was previously awarded a Pride in Your Place award.

Armchair Reviewers

We have a good group of armchair reviewers but there is always room for more. If you would be happy to review some of our publications, including the newsletter, from the comfort of your armchair please let us know.

For more information contact our Tenant and Community Involvement Team on 01495 235011 / 235557 or by emailing tenantinvolvement@caerphilly.gov.uk

Have Your Say on the New Policy for Social Housing

The council is working in partnership with local housing associations to streamline and simplify the way people apply for social housing in Caerphilly county borough.

This work has continued over the summer, involving partners working on the development of a common housing register and producing a draft common allocation policy. We expect to introduce the new register and policy by the summer of 2015.

We are now consulting with local people and organisations on the draft version of the policy. The consultation exercise will start in late October / early November and will last for 12 weeks. During this period, we are seeking to talk to as many people as possible about the changes. When the consultation period closes, we will consider all responses and finalise the policy. The council will ratify the policy and ask each of the housing associations to sign up to it.

A copy of the policy will be made available to view on the council's website throughout the consultation period. We will also make it available in hard copy in a number of council offices. For more information please visit www.caerphilly.gov.uk or call 01495 235216 or email privatesectorhousing@caerphilly.gov.uk



Congratulations to Kayley Davies, from Pontlottyn, who won £50 in our survey prize draw! Kayley's name was drawn at random after taking part in a survey on allocations, which asked about people's experiences of applying for housing in the county borough.

Lights, camera, action....Lets get happy!



Over the summer we helped a group of tenants with their plans to make a film. Most of the filming took place in Trinant, where the community really came together to help make it a success. There was singing, dancing, wigs, feather boas and lots of fun!

We'd like to say a big thank you to everyone who got involved; we had a great time working with you all! Also our thanks to Young Wales who made the film and Artyfish for the choreography.

You can see the final film on YouTube: <http://youtu.be/5E3ICzBy7FA>

A smarter way to save

Did you know that you can access a range of useful financial services through a local organisation called a credit union?

There are 3 Credit Unions in the county borough:

BAG Credit Union - 01443 838605

(covers Ystrad Mynach north into the Upper Rhymney Valley)

Islwyn Community Credit Union – 01495222832
(covers Islwyn area plus parts of Ystrad Mynach)

Smartmoney Cymru – 02920 883751

(covers whole area)

Once you become a member of a credit union you can access loans with competitive interest rates and join savings schemes. You could also help run a credit union by becoming a volunteer.

Don't miss your asbestos survey!

When our Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) improvement programme reaches your area, you will receive a letter from us to tell you that an asbestos survey needs to be carried out in your home and the name of the company who will carry out this survey.

This survey must be carried out in every property as part of health and safety requirements; it does not necessarily mean there is any asbestos in your home.

The asbestos surveying company will contact you direct to make an appointment. **This asbestos survey is very important, as we cannot carry out improvements to your home until it has been completed – so please make sure you're at home for the appointment.**



Surveys usually take around 2 hours to complete and will involve inspections of all areas including lofts, walls, floors and ceilings throughout the whole property. Where improvements are being made to kitchens and bathrooms, they will also need to access beneath bath and kitchen units. All surveyors will wear company uniforms and will display company ID which includes their name and photograph.

Winner of our newsletter competition!

Congratulations to Mr Jones from Blackwood who was the lucky winner of a signed Newport Gwent Dragons' jersey!

Mr Jones' name was drawn at random after he entered the competition in our last Caerphilly Homes newsletter.

Thank you to Robert Price Builders' Merchants, jersey sponsor and our single source supplier, for kindly donating the jersey.



Housing Improvement Partnership (HIP)



A new project will be starting in January to involve tenants in improving housing services.

A separate flyer has been enclosed with this newsletter, if you can spare a few hours a month this might be the project for you!

For more information contact the Tenant and Community Involvement Team on 01495 235011 / 235025 or by emailing tenantinvolvement@caerphilly.gov.uk

Thinking of doing some DIY? Please ask us first!

We're more than happy for you to make improvements to your home, but before you start any work please write to your local housing office to ask for permission; this is called landlord's consent.

The type of work you need consent for:

- Laminate flooring
- Internal doors
- Electrical, eg adding more sockets or changing light fittings
- Sheds
- Decking / patio
- Fencing
- Hardstanding for cars
- Permission for caravans

Once we've received your written request we may need to visit you, but in most cases once we've received all the information we need we will send you the conditions you will need to agree to. It is important that you return the Form of Agreement before you start the work.

If the improvements are likely to affect your neighbours it's important that you consult with them



before starting the work to make sure they have no objections. If you don't do this and we receive any complaints, you may have to remove the alterations.

If your improvements need Planning or Building Regulation approval you will have to apply for this yourself before you can proceed. When you've done this you will have to provide your housing office with copies before we can give you permission to go ahead.

If you are a leaseholder, the list of work you need consent for is different. Please contact the Leaseholder Services Officer on 01495 235387 or by emailing tenantinvolvement@caerphilly.gov.uk for more information.

Handyperson Scheme

Are you a council tenant aged 60 or over or registered disabled?

Do you have odd jobs that need doing and can't do them yourself?

Our new handyperson service could help!

It's excellent value for money and carried out by a member of our maintenance team equipped with their own tools. You could use the handyperson service for things like fitting curtain tracks or poles, hanging curtains, trimming internal doors, fixing shelving, assembling flat-pack furniture, hanging pictures and mirrors.

For more information on the handyperson service, contact your local housing office:

Upper Rhymney Valley Area Housing Office

Tel: (01443) 873535

Fax: (01443) 873533

Email: urvaho@caerphilly.gov.uk

Eastern Valleys Area Housing Office

Tel: (01495) 235229

Fax: (01495) 235036

Email: eastvalleyaho@caerphilly.gov.uk

Lansbury Park Neighbourhood Housing Office

Tel: (02920) 860917

Fax: (02920) 881815

Email: lansburyparknho@caerphilly.gov.uk

Graig y Rhacca Neighbourhood Housing Office

Tel: (02920) 853050

Fax: (02920) 868997

Email: graiyghaccanho@caerphilly.gov.uk