

Caerphilly Homes

Summer Issue 8

Awards double whammy!

Following the success of our previous Celebration Evenings, this year's event will be bigger and better than ever with a new section of the awards dedicated to those green fingered tenants amongst us!

Blooming marvellous...

We are very excited to announce the launch of our first ever tenant gardening contest. There are three categories tenants can enter:

- Best garden
- Best hanging basket / pot / container
- Best community garden



Transforming Lives and Communities Awards

Now in its third year, our Transforming Lives and Communities Awards recognise those people making a real difference to the lives of tenants and local communities.

This year's categories are:

- Transforming Lives Award:
 - Individual
 - Group
- Transforming Communities Award:
 - Individual
 - Group
 - 'The Extra Mile' Employee Award

To enter any of the above award categories, or for more information on the criteria, please contact Chloe Thomas, Programme Support Assistant, on 01443 866493 or by emailing thomac13@caerphilly.gov.uk

The closing date for all award entries is Friday 8th July 2016. Winners will be announced at a celebration event in September.



Caerphilly Homes
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How to contact us

Eastern Valleys Area Housing Office

Tel: 01495 235229

Email: eastvalleyaho@caerphilly.gov.uk

Upper Rhymney Valley Area Housing Office

Tel: 01443 873535

Email: urvaho@caerphilly.gov.uk

Lansbury Park Neighbourhood Housing Office

Tel: 02920 860917

Email: lansburyparknho@caerphilly.gov.uk

Graig y Rhacca Neighbourhood Housing Office

Tel: 02920 853050

Email: graigyrhaccanho@caerphilly.gov.uk

Report a repair

Tel: 01443 864886

Email: DLOPBE@caerphilly.gov.uk

Emergency repairs (when offices are closed)

Tel: 01443 875500



If you think there is a gas leak in your home, telephone the emergency service

Wales and West Utilities on 0800 111 999

Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) team

Tel: 01443 866497

Email: whqsenquiries@caerphilly.gov.uk

Rents section

Tel: 01495 235600

Email: rents1@caerphilly.gov.uk

Housing benefit

Tel: 01443 866567

Email: benefits@caerphilly.gov.uk

Housing allocations and advice

Tel: 01443 837552

Email: housingadvice@caerphilly.gov.uk

Tenant and community involvement team

Tel: 01495 235011 / 235557

Email: tenantinvolvement@caerphilly.gov.uk

Floating support team

Tel: 01495 235574

Email: floatingsupport@caerphilly.gov.uk

Private Sector Housing team

Tel: 01495 235216 / 235252

Email: privatesectorhousing@caerphilly.gov.uk



Don't dump it!

Our officers and other teams from the council regularly monitor local estates; recently we've found some areas where bulky items are being dumped in streets and outside properties. This is attracting further tipping and making these areas unsightly for everyone who lives there.

If you see anybody disposing of waste irresponsibly please report it to Caerphilly Streetpride on 01443 866566 or report it online at www.caerphilly.gov.uk/contact-us/Online-Services.

The council will collect three piece suites, armchairs, beds and mattresses free of charge. Other items are charged at the following rate: 1 – 3 items £15; 4 – 6 items £20. Or you can dispose of them free of charge at one of the 6 civic amenity sites.

If you are experiencing difficulties disposing of unwanted items and would like some further advice please contact Public Services Customer Care on 01443 866533 or by emailing publicservices@caerphilly.gov.uk or contact your housing office.

Recharge Policy update

In your last newsletter we told you about our Recharge Policy and the circumstances in which you could be recharged. We'd now like to tell you why we've introduced the policy and, as a result of an increase in costs from April 2016, how much you could be charged.

The council, as a landlord, has an obligation to keep its housing stock in good repair. We will do this when repairs are reported, with no cost to the tenant, providing the repair is a landlord responsibility and is required as a result of fair wear and tear. This normally means where the fixture or fitting has worn out or come to the end of its natural life.

Most tenants keep their homes in good condition, but there are some who cause damage deliberately or through neglect. Where such jobs are needed, we call these 'rechargeable repairs'. We don't want the tenants who look after their homes to share the costs of repairs for those who do not.

Where a repair is found to be the tenant's responsibility, the tenant does have the option of undertaking the repair themselves. This is monitored in order to ensure the repair is completed to the required standard. Where ever possible the tenant will be advised that a repair is rechargeable prior to the work being undertaken.

The council offers all tenants an insurance policy that covers certain repairs that the council is not responsible for. Tenants also have the option of paying an additional premium to cover accidental damage. For more information contact 01443 815588 or 01495 226622.

The costs that applied from April 2016 are:

- **No access - £27.70 (no VAT payable)**

This charge is payable for failed appointments and covers a percentage of the operative's time, transport and administration for processing the work.

However, if we fail to attend an appointment at the agreed time tenants can request compensation from us; this will be based on standard charge and tenants will need to evidence.

- **Out of Hours calls (Stand-by) - £86.88 including VAT**

A call out charge is payable for attendance out of hours to reports of accidental or criminal damage. It is based on the costs for employing the operative for this service, plus transport and administration. Material costs are not included in the call out charge and will be calculated separately.



- **Small repairs - £42.99 including VAT**

Examples of a small repair include the replacing of door locks, repairing of a leaking tap or leaking toilet. The cost includes travel to the property, all materials and labour costs and up to 1 hour of the operative's time to complete the job.

- **Medium repairs - £85.97 including VAT**

Examples of a medium repair include the replacing of toilet pans or one internal door. The cost includes travel to the property, all materials and labour costs and up to 2 hours of the operative's time to complete the job.

- **Large repairs - £171.94 including VAT**

Examples of a large repair include the replacing of a wash hand basin or kitchen unit. The cost includes travel to the property, all materials and labour costs and up to 4 hours of the operative's time to complete the job.

The following repairs will attract additional material costs due to them being high value items: Small repair – electric showers and gas or electric meter doors; medium repair – kitchen and bathroom extractor fans. Larger repair works over 4 hours will be calculated either using the council's agreed Schedule of Rates or through a quotation if the work needs to be completed by an external contractor.

Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) internal improvements.....what to expect



The WHQS is a set of standards, introduced by Welsh Government, which all local authority and housing association homes in Wales must meet. Part of these standards are around making sure homes have up to date kitchens, bathrooms, electrics and heating systems.

Not every home will need all of these improvements carried out, as some will already meet the standard.

A surveyor will call to your home to assess whether a new kitchen and bathroom is needed; electrical and heating

surveyors will also visit separately to carry out inspections. If any works are needed to your home, we will write to you confirming this after the surveys have been completed. Other staff may also visit your home to allow us to provide all the information required by our contractors when works are necessary.

If your home does need improvements carried out, we'll contact you again before work is due to begin to allow you plenty of time to get ready for the work. One of our Tenant Liaison Officers (TLO) will also visit to make sure that you know exactly what to expect when the work begins. Your TLO will be your main point of contact before, during and after the work.

Please remember – all genuine council staff and contractors working on our behalf carry identification and will not mind if you ask to see it. If you are ever in doubt do not let them into your home and contact us immediately.

If you have any questions about the WHQS improvement programme please call us on 01443 866497 or email whqsenquiries@caerphilly.gov.uk

Tenancy Enforcement Team - tackling anti-social behaviour, transforming lives.....

A family of 5 have recently found themselves being evicted from their council property following a catalogue of incidents of anti-social behaviour.

During the 3 years they'd lived in their home, there had been repeated complaints received regarding the unacceptable behaviour of the parents. Incidents included late night drunken arguments, excessively loud music being played at all hours, intimidation of neighbours, the use of foul and abusive language, and threatening behaviour. Various support referrals were made in an attempt to work with the family in order to alter their patterns of behaviour.

Investigations were carried out jointly with Gwent Police, and the father was made subject to a Restraining Order and a 2 year suspended prison sentence. Further, both parents were made subject to a Noise Abatement Notice, and, a successful application was made for a Suspended Possession Order (SPO). It was decided that this was the favoured option, in order to work with the family and try to help them sustain their tenancy.

However, within 6 weeks of the SPO being granted, further complaints were received. Audio evidence was captured which showed both parents continuing to use offensive language, threats, and playing excessively loud music. The decision was duly taken to apply for a Warrant of Eviction, which was successfully executed on 9th December 2015.

After the eviction the victim family spoke of how their lives had been totally transformed. They said they now feel able to sleep soundly at night, without living in fear of what would happen next with their neighbours. One member of the victim family commented that their life was so blighted by living next door to such behaviour going to work was like having a rest because of the extent of the upset caused to them and their family.

If you are experiencing problems with neighbours contact your local housing for support and advice, or report it online at www.caerphilly.gov.uk/Services/Housing/Current-council-tenants

Homes to rent in Rhymney

We have a number of homes available to rent in Rowan Place, Rhymney; an area currently being transformed thanks to a £4.2 million regeneration programme.

We're carrying out extensive internal and external improvements to homes in Rowan Place including new roofs, rendering, kitchens, bathrooms and heating systems. Residents are also being consulted on plans to transform the general appearance of the area, including improved street lighting and environmental improvements.

The Rowan Place programme has also benefitted from an additional £1 million from Welsh Government's Vibrant and Viable Places Tackling Poverty Fund. As well as being used to engage the community in environmental improvements to Rowan Place, part of this grant was also used to fund the refurbishment of Hafod Deg Resource Centre; a multi agency facility on Rhymney High Street offering a range of support services for local people.

Cllr David Poole, Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Housing, said "Since the council embarked on the Rowan Place regeneration programme in October 2014, the area has seen a remarkable transformation. The multi-agency approach that's being taken on this project, along with the additional funding provided by Welsh Government, is also having a significant impact upon the lives of local people. The newly refurbished facility at Hafod Deg, for instance,



is providing residents with a range of much needed services right on their doorstep.

The renovated flats that are available to rent in Rowan Place have all been finished to an extremely high standard and I would urge people to contact the local housing office to arrange a viewing."

Homes currently available to rent in Rowan Place are all 2 bedroom flats. Each flat has its own private garden and is close to local transport links, shops and amenities.

To find out more about the homes available to rent, or to arrange a viewing, please call the Upper Rhymney Valley Housing Office on 01443 873535 or by emailing urvaho@caerphilly.gov.uk. We welcome enquiries from people not currently on the housing waiting list.

E-cigarettes – fire safety



You've probably seen lots of stories in the news recently about the dangers of e-cigarettes. If you do use them, here are some handy tips to help you stay safe.

- Never leave e-cigarettes in charge unattended for long periods
- Do not mix parts of different e-cigarettes
- Only use the charger supplied
- Make sure you buy your e-cigarette from a reputable source
- Check the e-cigarette carried CE certification

- Test your smoke alarm regularly
- Contact Trading Standards if you have any e-cigarette safety concerns

How to charge e-cigarettes safely

- Always use the correct charger and follow the manufacturer's instructions
- Never charge a battery that's been damaged, dropped or is stuck
- Never plug a charger into a non-approved mains power transformer
- Check your battery has overcharge or overheat protection
- Don't overcharge; remove the battery from charge when complete
- Never leave a charging battery unattended
- Don't use if wet
- Do not overtighten the atomiser when connecting it to the charger



Improving services – what could you do?

Tenant involvement is key to helping us improve services for everyone. We have a number of groups and activities available for you to get involved – take a look at the table below to see which ones may suit you.

| | |
|--|---|
| Tenant Information Exchange (TIE) | An informal get together open to all tenants, where you can find out more about housing services and meet other tenants from around the county borough. Meetings are held every 6 – 8 weeks for 2 – 3 hours; there is usually a specific topic or theme. |
| Armchair Reviewers | Do you have commitments at home or circumstances that make regular attendance at a group or meetings difficult? The Armchair Reviewers could be perfect for you! They're tenants who give us feedback on this newsletter and other communications we send to tenants. Reviewers complete a short survey and are entered into a draw each time they return a survey to win £25 in shopping vouchers. |
| Caerphilly Service Improvement Monitors (CSIMs) | Do you like talking to people? Can you be fair and see both sides of a story? Can you spare 2 – 3 hours a month? Then come and join our CSIMs. The CSIMs carry out telephone satisfaction surveys with tenants who have recently had work completed under our Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS) programme. |
| Mystery shoppers | If you prefer to go undercover, then think about joining our mystery shoppers who test the services that Caerphilly Homes provides. This could be through telephone calls, letter, email or in person. |
| Housing Improvement Partnership (HIP) | If you would like to know what experiences tenants have of different housing services, this might be the group for you. Members of the group look at evidence of tenant experiences one specific area of housing, eg our tenancy support service, review that evidence and tell us what tenants want and value from the service. Reviews are usually done over 5-6 half day sessions spread over a 2 month period. Our aim is 2 reviews a year; so it's a regular commitment for a shorter period of time with a longer break between reviews. The next review will start in the autumn so now would be a good time for new people to join! |
| Sensory loss group | This group was set up to look at ways that services could be improved for tenants with sight and hearing loss. The group is involved in monitoring progress made on recommendations made in a good practice guide which was published last year. The group meets quarterly for 2 hours. |
| Focus groups | Sometimes we bring tenants together for a one-off session to ask for their views. For example, last year we held sessions on rent policy. |
| Tenants and residents associations | Associations are independent groups of volunteers who come together in the area in which they live to improve their local community and often help to provide community activities. |

To find out more about any of the above groups, or for information on other events taking place please contact our Tenant & Community Involvement Team:

Tel: 01495 235011 / 235557 Email: tenantinvolvement@caerphilly.gov.uk

Caerphilly Homes Task Group Update

Vacancies on the Task Group were recently filled. As there was only one nomination for the Upper Rhymney Valley no election was required; the new member for this area is Jeff Smith, a tenant in Aberbargoed. Following an election, the

new member for the Lower Rhymney Valley is Yvonne Bryant from Caerphilly. Thanks to Max McDermott and Gemma Atkins, the outgoing representatives in those areas, for their contributions to the Task Group.

Important information that may affect your housing application

The way people apply and are assessed for social housing in the Caerphilly county borough will change. A Common Housing Register will be introduced by December 2016 which means that all 7 housing associations, with homes in the county borough, will close their waiting lists to create a single waiting list. This list will be managed by Caerphilly County Borough Council.

If you have a current housing application and want to remain on the waiting list you will be transferred across to the Common Housing Register. However, in order for us to do this, we will need to assess your application in line with the Common Allocation

Policy. This means that we may need some additional information from you.

You should receive a letter from us, if you haven't already, with a short application form for you to fill in. It is very important that you complete and return this within 21 days from the date of the letter; if you don't then you may not be transferred to the Common Housing Register and may not be considered for rehousing.

If you have any questions or need any help completing the form please contact our Allocations Team on 01443 873587 or by emailing housingallocationsandadvice@caerphilly.gov.uk

Delivering affordable housing – Aberbargoed

The council has an obligation to carry out an assessment of need within the county borough. This assessment is known as the Local Housing Market Assessment. The latest assessment has identified the need to build 526 affordable homes each year within the county borough. In an attempt to address this need, we work with a number of Housing Association partners to address the shortfall in housing supply.

There are a number of homes currently under construction in the county borough; one of these schemes is being delivered on the site of the former Aberbargoed Infant's School. The council's Cabinet approved the sale of this site to United Welsh Housing Association in 2014 for the development of 26 affordable homes. The development consists of 1, 2 and 3 bed homes together with 2 and 3 bed wheelchair accessible bungalows.

The properties are being built to Level 3 of the Code for Sustainable Homes standard (which measures the energy efficiency of new homes); each home is highly insulated which will mean a lower carbon footprint and lower fuel bills for residents. The homes are scheduled to be handed over in June 2016.

The total project value is £2,633,608.00 and the council was successful in securing £1,931,977.52 of Welsh Government's Social Housing Grant to assist with the delivery of this development.

Cllr Keith Reynolds, Leader of the council, said "We believe that everybody has the right to good quality affordable housing and we're delighted that construction of the new development is now well underway"

Cllr David Poole, the council's Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Housing, added "Delivering affordable housing is an important priority for the council and I am delighted that this scheme will provide the opportunity for more local people to access good quality, energy efficient homes. The development has also provided training opportunities and employment opportunities for local people."



The former school



The site under construction

WHQS Improvement Programme

Where and When?

This chart shows when the work will take place and in which area. Internal works could include new kitchens, bathrooms, heating and electrical rewiring in some homes. External works could include, for example, new doors, guttering / downpipes and roofing works. The work will vary from property to property – with some needing more than others to bring them up to the Welsh Housing Quality Standard (WHQS).

The programme is very complex and things can sometimes change. You may already have noticed some date changes from programmes you've been given before; we are sorry for this, but these changes have been caused by a number of factors. We will give you plenty of notice before work starts in your area. Please note - this programme does not include sheltered housing schemes, as these will be dealt with as a separate programme.

| COMMUNITY | INTERNAL | EXTERNAL |
|--------------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|
| ABERBARGOED LOWER | 2016/17 | 2017/18 |
| ABERBARGOED MIDDLE | 2016/17 | 2017/18 |
| ABERBARGOED UPPER | 2017/18 | 2018/19 |
| ABERTRIDWR | 2016/17 | 2014/15 |
| ABERTYSSWG | 2017/18 | 2016/17 |
| ARGOED | 2015/16 | 2014/15 |
| BARGOED | 2018/19 | 2016/17 |
| BEDWAS | 2016/17, 2017/18, | 2014/15, 2015/16 & 2016/17 |
| BLACKWOOD | 2018/19 & 2019/20 | 2017/18 & 2018/19 |
| BRITANNIA | 2015/16 | 2017/18 |
| BRITHDIR | 2016/17 | 2015/16 |
| BRYNCENYDD | 2014/15 | 2015/16 |
| CAERBRAGDY | 2017/18 | 2018/19 |
| CASCADE | 2015/16 | 2018/19 |
| CEFN FFOREST | 2015/16 | 2018/19 |
| CEFN HENGOED | 2015/16 & 2017/18 | 2015/16 & 2018/19 |
| CHURCHILL PARK | 2016/17 | 2018/19 |
| CLAUDE ROAD | 2017/18 | 2016/17 |
| CROESPENMAEN | 2017/18 | 2015/16 |
| CROSSKEYS | 2017/18 | 2019/20 |
| CWMCARN | 2017/18 | 2019/20 |
| DERI | 2016/17 | 2017/18 |
| FAIRVIEW | 2015/16 | 2017/18 |
| FLEUR-DE-LYS | 2015/16 | 2017/18 |
| FOCHRIV | 2018/19 | 2016/17 |
| GELLIGAER | 2017/18 | 2015/16 |
| GELLIGROES | 2016/17 | 2015/16 |
| GILFACH LOWER | 2018/19 | 2016/17 |
| GILFACH PHASE 1 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 |
| GILFACH PHASE 2 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 |
| GILFACH PHASE 3 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 |
| GRAIG Y RHACCA | 2015/16 & 2016/17 | 19/20 |
| HENGOED | 2014/15 | 17/18 |
| HEOL TRECATELL | 2017/18 | 14/15 |
| HIGHMEADOW | 2014/15 | 15/16 |
| LANSBURY PARK | 2014/15 & 2015/16 | 17/18 |
| LLANBRADACH | 2016/17 | 17/18 |
| LLANFACH | 2014/15 | 16/17 |
| MACHEN | 2017/18 | 18/19 |
| MAES MABON | 2016/17 | 19/20 |
| MAESYCWMMER | 2018/19 | 17/18 |
| MARKHAM-HOLLYBUSH | 2015/16 & 2016/17 | 14/15 |
| MORRISVILLE | 2015/16 | 16/17 |
| NANTDDU | 2016/17 | 14/15 |
| NELSON | 2015/16 | 19/20 |

| COMMUNITY | INTERNAL | EXTERNAL |
|----------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| NEW TREDEGAR | 2019/20 | 15/16 |
| NEWBRIDGE | 2017/18 | 19/20 |
| OAKDALE | 2016/17 | 14/15 |
| PANTSIDE LOWER | 2014/15 | 17/18 |
| PANTSIDE UPPER | 2014/15 | 17/18 |
| PENGAM | 2015/16 | 17/18 |
| PENLLWYN LOWER | 2016/17 | 17/18 |
| PENLLWYN UPPER | 2017/18 & 2018/19 | 15/16 |
| PENPEDAIRHEOL | 2018/19 | 18/19 |
| PENTWYNMAWR | 2016/17 | 15/16 |
| PENYBRYN | 2018/19 | 18/19 |
| PENYRHEOL LOWER | 2018/19 | 2016/17 & 2017/18 |
| PENYRHEOL UPPER | 2019/20 | 2016/17 & 2018/19 |
| PERSONDY | 2015/16 | 2016/17 |
| PHILLIPSTOWN | 2019/20 | 2015/16 |
| PONTLOTTYN | 2015/16 | 2016/17 |
| PONTYMISTER | 2018/19 | 2016/17 |
| PONTYWAUN | 2018/19 | 2016/17 |
| PORSET PARK | 2018/19 | 2019/20 |
| PWLLYPANT | 2013/14 | 2016/17 |
| RHYMNEY NORTH | 2014/15 | 2017/18 |
| RHYMNEY SOUTH | 2014/15 | 2019/20 |
| RISCA | 2018/19 | 2016/17 |
| RUDRY | 2017/18 | 2016/17 |
| SENGHENYDD | 2013/14 | 2016/17 |
| SPRINGFIELD | 2016/17 | 2015/16 |
| THOMASVILLE | 2013/14 | 2016/17 & 2018/19 |
| TIRPHIL | 2016/17 | 2015/16 |
| TIRYBERTH | 2015/16 | 2018/19 |
| TRAPWELL | 2017/18 | 2016/17 |
| TRECENYDD | 2014/15 | 2016/17 |
| TRELYN UPPER | 2014/15 | 2017/18 |
| TREOWEN | 2017/18 | 2019/20 |
| TRETHOMAS | 2015/16 | 2018/19 |
| TRINANT | 2017/18 | 2016/17 |
| TWYN GARDENS | 2016/17 | 2018/19 |
| TY ISAF | 2014/15 | 2018/19 |
| TY NANT | 2013/14 | 2016/17 & 2018/19 |
| TY-SIGN LOWER | 2018/19 | 2016/17 |
| TY-SIGN UPPER | 2015/16 & 2016/17 | 2018/19 |
| WATTSVILLE | 2015/16 | 2016/17 |
| WAUNFACH | 2017/18 | 2016/17 |
| WESTEND | 2015/16 | 2016/17 |
| YNYSDDU-CWMFELINFACH | 2018/19 | 2015/16 |
| YSTRAD MYNACH | 2014/15 | 2018/19 |

Whilst we do our best to make sure that the information in this newsletter is accurate, we can sometimes get things wrong; please always check with us first!