

Residents Have Their Say!

Looking back at October's Residents' Event

The event at York Hall last month was a lively day, with some great feedback from residents.

At our Residents' Event, 'Have Your Say' residents looked back over the past year, since Tower Hamlets Homes was formed, and had their say on what they thought should happen next. Chief Executive, Gavin Cansfield told Open Door: "The day was about being honest with residents, letting them know what we have done so far but also how far we need to go.

These types of conversations, especially about housing, can often be really hard, but residents and staff really got stuck in, working together to shape what we do next."

The event was packed with workshops, covering everything from tackling anti social behaviour to much needed home improvements, as well as leaseholder issues and developing the standards residents can expect when they use our services. Feedback from the day showed residents found it useful and want to see us keep delivering on what we promise.

Gavin said: "Being a year on the job, I'm pleased to say performance is improving and 8

out of 10 residents (82%) now rate the overall quality of our services as fair to excellent. We also think neighbourhoods are starting to look cleaner - our new monthly tracker survey shows nearly 8 out of 10 (77%) of you agree that our caretaking service is fair or better."

Gavin continued: "This is real progress but we know there's still a way to go and the improvements we need to make to get there - like stepping up our presence on estates - and want to make them."

Residents told Tower Hamlets Homes that renovations to kitchens and bathrooms were a real priority for them and leaseholders said they wanted their bills to be upfront and honest - in particular about how repairs are invoiced. Residents

also gave us a list of what areas of the service they would like to get more involved in.

Poplar resident Carol said: "It was good meeting different people and staff. I'd like to see more."

We are already planning our next Residents' Event, and there will be plenty of other neighbourhood based events coming up to take part in. If you missed out this time - we hope to see you next time. We will keep you posted well in advance.

As Open Door went to print staff were busy turning resident suggestions from the event into our "to-do list." We'll feature feedback from the event and what we're doing about it next issue.



There's still time to Go Green and pick up your environmentally friendly bag from your Neighbourhood Housing Office!

New news for you!

As part of our commitment to keeping you informed about what's going on we're going to let you know what's happening in your neighbourhood. We want to let you know about who's who in your neighbourhood team, provide you with information about your local services and neighbourhood, as well as useful numbers to get in touch. The new newsletter will compliment your monthly copy of Open Door and means we will be able to feature more of the best news from around the neighbourhoods.

Inside this issue...

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Dear Resident

Looking back over the past year with residents and discussing 'what's next' at our event last month proved really worthwhile. I didn't want the day to be a one-way talk-fest, and I'm glad we've got a "to-do list" to go away and work with.

The event was really about not assuming that we know what it's like to live in your neighbourhoods or what improvements we think are adequate. It was about hearing

from you, getting real accounts of what it's like to live on your estates, what it's like working with us and what we can do together to improve things.

I'd like to thank the residents who took time out to come along and give us valuable feedback which we will be using to improve our services to you. The day was also about developing an understanding that we are in this together. We want to make a visible impact in your neighbourhood and help



improve residents quality of life and we want you to be a part of the journey.

Gavin Cansfield
Chief Executive

New affordable homes to be built

The green light's been given for 17 new council homes to be built in Tower Hamlets and managed by Tower Hamlets Homes. Most of the homes will be three or more bedrooms to help meet the demand for larger homes and tackle



overcrowding. The new homes aim to be completed by March 2011.

The successful bid for £1.7 million from the Government to build the affordable homes is part of the biggest council house building programme in Tower Hamlets for almost two decades.

Gavin Cansfield, Chief Executive told Open Door: "This is great news. The new homes will really help address some of the overcrowding pressures residents face."

Tower Hamlets was one of 49 councils that successfully bid for a share of the £127 million fund and the Council will match the Government's investment to build two 2-bedroom flats, twelve 3-bedroom flats and three 4-bedroom flats with the funding. The successful bid is part of the strategy to tackle overcrowding and these homes could well be the first of more to come.

Watch out, there's a thief about!

An elderly resident from Stepney was targeted last month by an organised gang posing as officials from the water board. They talked their way into the 86 year olds home and robbed her. There have been 26 similar burglaries across Tower Hamlets, apparently by the same gang. Make sure that callers are

who they claim to be by following these simple steps:

- Use your spy hole and chain to check to see who the caller is before opening the door.
- Always ask callers for proof of identity. Genuine tradesmen - and all Tower Hamlets Homes staff and contractors - carry identification with their



photograph on. Check this carefully. If you are unsure, phone the company the caller claims to represent.

- If you are still worried, dial 999 immediately and ask for the police.

For more information about bogus callers visit the Police's website. www.met.police.uk/crimeprevention/bogus.htm

ASB round up

On patrol in Bethnal Green!

Joint enforcement patrols with the Police and our Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) Officers are making a difference to Bethnal Green residents.

In September, our patrols made more than 36 night time visits to 15 blocks in Bethnal Green. The patrols made three arrests and issued more than 54 verbal warnings in Bethnal Green alone.

At Key Close, the patrols found 5 youths in the stairwell smoking and making noise. The police made one arrest for possession of cannabis.

The joint police patrols take place most weekends Thursday to Saturday and go to where residents tell us anti-social behaviour is taking place.

ASB manager, Claire Demmel, told Open Door: “The

joint patrols with the police are all about letting residents know we’re doing everything we can to tackle these problems. The patrols are starting to make a real difference to residents.”

Everyday hero!

Michaela French, ASB officer received thanks from an O’Leary Square leaseholder: “I just wanted to say thanks for your prompt reply, your actions so far and your clear commitment in dealing with this issue. This is very much appreciated, believe me. The fact that the police were present has sent out a very important signal to residents and perpetrators.”

Everyday hero Michaela



commented:

“In my job getting back to residents so they know what’s happening is really important – it means they have confidence that we’re dealing with their problems.”

Fed up – speak out!

If you are experiencing ASB in your neighbourhood, don’t put up with it – give the ASB team a call on: ☎ 0800 917 5918.

If you see crime being carried out, report it to the Police straightaway.

Domestic Violence - don't suffer in silence

The police deal with an average of 11 incidents of domestic violence every day in Tower Hamlets. Domestic violence is any incident of threatening behaviour or abuse between people who have an intimate relationship. It can be physical, sexual, emotional or financial. November 25 marks International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. If you are experiencing domestic violence don't suffer in silence - give the confidential domestic violence helpline a call ☎ 0800 279 5434 to see how they can help you.

Event feedback

Setting up our Respect forum

At October's Residents' Event 45 people took part in our ASB workshop and 16 volunteered to join our new Respect Forum to help develop our procedures for tackling anti social behaviour to make sure we deliver a great resident focused service. The Respect Forum will have tenants and leaseholders, as well as victims of ASB and perpetrators working together to improve the way we do things. Residents at the event also said that they would prefer to have one ASB Officer dealing with all categories of ASB in their Neighbourhood.

Tree O'clock Go green and be part of a Guinness World Record

Join us in our attempt to plant the most trees in one hour on Saturday 5 December 2009 from 11am to 12noon. As part of National Tree week, the BBC's Breathing Places campaign brings you Tree O'Clock, a record breaking attempt to plant trees across the country. We've made the pledge to help out so why not join us in early December

planting trees and help set the Guinness World Record for the most trees planted in one hour. Please contact your Neighbourhood Housing Office to sign up or find out more.



BETHNAL GREEN **chat**

East End Film Group launch film about local characters

A group of Tower Hamlets Homes residents showcased their documentary film trailer about East Londoners last month [6 October]. The group of documentary enthusiasts who call themselves SOFA – Society of Factual Artists – are researchers for a documentary film project commissioned by Tower Hamlets Homes.

Guy King, the documentary director told Open Door: "A lot came out of the night. A lady who recently moved into the neighbourhood was at the event and enjoyed it so much she

asked if she could join SOFA."

SOFA member and resident of Ocean Estate, Onyeka Igwe, said: "So far I've learned a lot from the mentors of the group. It's also been a really good opportunity to find out more about the area I live in."

SOFA came into existence less than six months ago and is made up of documentary enthusiasts from Tower Hamlets Homes who are passionate about the East End. The film was a mix of sample footage they collected over the last few months of



interesting locals and landscapes.

Guy plans to start filming his documentary about Tower Hamlets Homes residents later this month, if you are keen to learn how to research for a documentary and to find out more about the industry, please contact Melissa Lathouras on ☎ 020 7364 7359 or melissa.lathouras@towerhamletshomes.org.uk.

Stay safe this bonfire night

The days are getting shorter again but at least we can look forward to Bonfire Night. The safest way to enjoy fireworks is go to a public display. This year's organised firework display is on **Saturday 7 November 2009** at Victoria Park - events in the park start from 7:30pm.

Please remember **NO BONFIRES** are allowed on Tower Hamlets Homes estates but if you do decide to have your own firework celebration please follow the firework code and respect your neighbours – don't let off fireworks late at night.

Keeping you safe and sound

We're working with the London Fire Brigade and the Police to ensure that residents have a safe and enjoyable time but please remember that during the firework season it is more likely



that rubbish bags, recycling boxes and bulk rubbish items will be used as fuel for a fire. Please keep yourselves and your community safe by following this advice:

- Don't leave items outside your front door, in communal areas or outside bin rooms.
- Call Streetline on ☎ 020 7364 5004 to get bulk items and furniture removed.
- Report people who are acting anti socially with fireworks on the ASB Hotline: ☎ 0800 917 5918.
- Report unlicensed firework traders to trading standards on: ☎ 020 7364 5008.



Many voices help improve services

We held meetings in September in Bethnal Green for tenants and leaseholders to share their ideas on what services they want to see from us. Resident Engagement Manager Maggie Taylor said: "It's great working with residents and hearing what they have to say about the services we're delivering. It's a real chance to shape the services residents want and to tackle local issues." The meetings provided residents the opportunity to network and strengthen links with other residents, Tower Hamlets Homes and local organisations.

BETHNAL GREEN chat

News for residents living in **Bethnal Green**

Caretakers polish up their qualifications

We aim to give all our front line staff the skills they need to deliver great services. Over the past year 70 of our caretakers successfully completed the British Institute of Cleaning Science (BICSc) qualification, the gold standard in professional cleaning. Bob Goodbody, Head of Caretaking and Estate Services told Open Door: “The training has already made a real difference to how our caretakers work and will help us continue to improve our cleaning service.”



Bethnal Green repair days

Since August, our contractors have been in your neighbourhoods carrying out your outstanding repairs, starting with Boundary, Chicksand, Christchurch, Cleveland, Collingwood and Rogers estates. Residents told us about repairs in their homes - 33 were carried out on the Days, with 40 needing further inspection or completed afterwards.

The Repair Days also took care of 131 outstanding communal repairs, mainly clearing and fixing gutters ready for winter. Staff from your Neighbourhood



Housing Team are also on hand on the day, bringing more services closer to your home.

As Open Door was going to print Approach, Wellington, Cranbrook and Digby Greenways Repair Days were taking place and there are 13 more to come in Bethnal Green - so every resident will have access to one. Why not come along to yours and tell us your repair needs?

Avebury	17/11/09	Tuesday
Granby	01/12//09	Tuesday
Hereford	01/12/09	Tuesday

Cranbrook and Rocky Park Community Gardens

Last month, Peter Marsh the Chair of our new regulator the Tenants Services Authority, joined us for a walk about on the Cranbrook and Teesdale estates. He met with residents like Margaret Cox from Teesdale and Dillon Toyne from Cranbrook, as well as Chris Creegan, our Board Chair. Peter took a look at the Cranbrook Community Centre, as well as the Cranbrook and Rocky Park community gardens. Chris Creegan, our Board Chair said: “Peter was impressed with the work we’ve been doing to involve residents in our decision making. He was also really interested in our plans to localise our service to neighbourhoods.”



Bethnal Green Decent Homes Pilot surveys

Work continues developing the Bethnal Green Decent Homes pilots, involving residents in Donegal and Sovereign Houses on Collingwood estate and Lister and Treves Houses on Chicksand estate.

Surveying firm, Savills will be contacting residents in the pilot blocks until the end of

November to carry out surveys of your homes repair needs. The surveyors will carry an identification card – please check it carefully before letting them in so they can get an up to date report on the condition of your home.

Leaseholders should receive a formal consultation letter this month, if you have any comments please let us know within 30 days. The works to bring the blocks up to the Decent Homes Standard are due to start early next year.

Money Matters

Pay by Direct Debit and take the hassle out of paying your rent

Direct Debit is the quick and easy way to pay your rent and means:

- No queuing in Post Offices, banks or shops
- No worrying about carrying cash around
- No late or missing payments
- Helps you to stay in control of your money
- Pay for your rent and clear your arrears
- Choose to pay monthly on the 5th or 20th of the month



Direct Debits also help us improve our efficiency, reduce costs and help us to save money that we can put back into your services. If you want to pay your rent by Direct Debit or want to discuss your payment options please contact your Rents Team on ☎ 020 7364 2200.



Did You Know?

Since April we have evicted 10 families for rent arrears. We have also sent nearly 700 Notices of Seeking Possession on tenants who have failed to pay their rent or who have broken agreements to clear their rent arrears. Receiving a Notice of Seeking Possession is the first step in the legal process that can lead to applying for a Court Order for possession of your home and can lead to your eviction.

If you have received a Notice of Seeking Possession or if you are worried about rent arrears please get in touch with your rents team on:

☎ 020 7364 3333.

How are we doing? Monthly tracker

84.3%

How useful's our website?

More than 8 out of 10 residents found our website useful. Our monthly tracker survey shows about half of residents use the internet and 1 in 4 residents have used our website in the last year (26%). Why not visit our website and see what we have to offer?

99.84%

Your Gas Safety

Nearly every home we manage has now had their gas safety service. This is our best ever performance and means only 16 homes haven't had their check. When you receive an appointment for your annual gas service please help by letting the engineer in to do the work or contact them on the phone number given to rearrange.

18 mins

Waiting times at your Neighbourhood Housing Office

More than 20,000 enquiries were made by visitors to our Neighbourhood Housing Offices during April to August and we saw customers within an average waiting time of 18 minutes. Our August performance improved with a waiting time of 13 minutes but technical problems with the payments system and parking permits meant we missed our target of 10 minutes.

27 seconds

Repairs call waiting times

The Repairs Help Centre received over 51,000 calls from April to August. On average we answered your calls within 27 seconds, within our target of 30 seconds. More than 8 out of 10 callers (82.9%) were satisfied with the time it took to answer their calls.

notice board

Save time – do it online

Free access to computers

Did you know you can get free access to computers in your local Idea Store or library? There are nine Idea Stores and libraries in Tower Hamlets so there's never one too far away. You can find out about your nearest Idea Store online at www.towerhamlets.gov.uk. You can also use a computer for free at your local One Stop Shop to visit the Tower Hamlets Homes website.

Instead of leaving the house to visit your Neighbourhood Housing Office during these winter months, why not pay a visit to our website and take a look at our range of services available online? They're quick and easy to use, leaving you with more time to do whatever you need to!

Online services available at your fingertips

- Report a repair
- Pay your rent
- Pay your service charges
- Report anti social behaviour
- Ask us about a service such as improving your home
- Give us a comment or compliment about our services, or make a complaint
- Report housing fraud
- Apply for a cash grant for community projects from our Making a Difference Fund

We're adding new services all the time so why not pay us a visit www.towerhamletshomes.org.uk.

Computer courses

Our free courses are a beginner's guide to computers so you'll be surfing the web before you know it! We're planning to run them in the new year at your Resident Resource Centre. Why not give the Engagement team a call to register your interest 0800 7836845.

Leaseholders' Focus Group

The Leaseholders' focus group is open to all our leaseholders and freeholders. It's a great way for you to get involved and have your say, so why not come along to the next group Thursday 26 November at the Toby Club, Vawdrey Close (off Cleveland Way), London E1 4UA from 6pm to 8pm. We'll be discussing cleaning and caretaking.

Board News

Next Board meeting is Tuesday 10 November at Keddlestone Walk Community Centre, Hollybush Gardens, Bethnal Green, E2 9RP from 6.30pm please visit our website.

New hotline for carers

A new telephone advice service for carers has been launched. Lines are open 8am to 9pm Monday to Friday and 11am to 4pm at weekends. Or visit their website www.nhs.uk/CarersDirect.

Getting in touch

It's never been easier to contact your housing services. Tower Hamlets Homes will deal promptly with your enquiry whether you prefer to telephone, visit or use our website.



How to contact us

Service 24/7

Whether you want to report a repair, pay rent, get involved or just find out more about Tower Hamlets Homes, our website is available 24 hours a day. Log on to www.towerhamletshomes.org.uk

If you don't have a computer at home you can access the internet for free at the council's Idea Stores.

General Housing Enquiries

Customer Contact Centre Telephone
☎ 020 7364 5015

The Centre is open from 8am to 8pm Monday to Friday and from 8am to 4pm on Saturdays

This is the number to report local housing issues such as caretaking and parking to tenants' rights and responsibilities and anti-social behaviour.

Housing Repairs

☎ 0800 376 1637 – 24 hour helpline
☎ 0800 376 1638 – 24 hour helpline
Bengali/Sylheti

Homeseekers' Bidding Line

☎ 0845 270 2400 – 24 hour helpline

Face to face contact

Bow Housing Office
Gladstone Place,
1 Ewart Place (off Roman
Road), London E3 5EQ

☎ 020 7364 3335

Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm

**Bethnal Green
Housing Office**
1 Rushmead,
Bethnal Green,
London E2 6NE

☎ 020 7364 3880

Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm

Poplar Housing Office
15 Market Square,
Chrip St,
London E14 6AQ

☎ 020 7364 5120

**Stepney and Wapping
Housing Office**
Cheviot House,
227-233 Commercial Road,
London E1 2BU

☎ 020 7364 3844

ASB – mini A-Z

Anti Social Behaviour

(24hr Freephone hotline) ☎ 0800 917 5918

Domestic Violence

(24hr National help line) ☎ 0808 200 0247

Hate Crime

☎ 0800 138 0521

Noise Patrol

☎ 0207 364 5007

Have you got news for us?

We want to give our readers what they want... but we need your help!

We want your stories, photos, achievements, letters, tips, poems or even your favourite recipe! Tell us about yourselves, we can't wait to hear from you and we'll print the best contributions.

Stories big or small it doesn't matter, send your ideas to: communications@towerhamletshomes.org.uk or give us a call on ☎ 020 7364 7173.

We can now provide our information on request in large print, audio and in our main community languages. Support is also available in helping to learn English.

আমি এই খবর জানতে চাইতে পারি বড় আকারে। যদি আপনি বাংলা ভাষায় খবর দেন, আমরা সেখান থেকে খবর নিয়ে বাংলা ভাষায় প্রকাশ করতে পারব।

આમ જીવન જોઈને વિગતો મોકલવાની સુવિધા આપવામાં આવી છે. આપણે અન્ય ભાષાઓમાં પણ સહાયતા આપી શકીએ છીએ. આપણને અંગ્રેજી શીખવામાં પણ મદદ કરવામાં આવે છે.

這方面的資料你是非常需要的，如果你需要進一步解釋，或翻譯的資料，請儘早與下頁提供的辦事處聯絡。

ĐỂ QUẢN TRỊ THÔNG TIN VÀ HIỆU QUẢ CÔNG VIỆC LÀM THỰC HÀNH NẾU QUÝ KHÁCH ĐƯỢC SỬ DỤNG CHỖ TRỌNG VÀ THÔNG MỘT PHƯƠNG TIỆN THÔNG TIN XIN LIÊN LẠC NGAY VỚI CÁN BỘ PHÒNG QUẢN LÝ PHÒNG SỬ.

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