

# Hounslow Homes news

www.hounslowhomes.org.uk

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.....Call your Customer Service Centre on freephone 0800 085 6575 for all your council housing queries.....

## New reception office hours

Research has shown that Hounslow Homes' reception areas are rarely used between 8.45am and 9am. In response to this, reception areas will now open from 9am. There has also been a change to the days that the Brentford and Chiswick offices are open. Opening hours from 1 October 2007 are as follows:

### CHISWICK (Town Hall):

Monday and Tuesday - 9am to 5pm

### BRENTFORD (58-59 High St):

Wednesday, Thursday and Friday - 9am to 5pm

### ST CATHERINE'S HOUSE (2 Hanworth Road):

Monday to Friday - 9am to 5pm

### CIVIC CENTRE:

Monday to Friday - 9am to 5pm



As from 5 November 2007, Hounslow Homes' will be opening a new reception area at the Langdale Centre (Monday to Friday - 9am to 5pm):

### The Langdale Centre

240 Summerwood Road

Isleworth, Middlesex TW7 7QN

A limited reception service will remain at the Civic Centre.

If you need to contact Hounslow Homes before 9am you can call our Customer Services Centre on freephone: 0800 085 6575 (between 8am and 8pm.)

For emergencies between 8pm and 8am please call the emergency line 0208 583 2222.

Please note the Customer Service Centre is no longer open on Saturday mornings.

See page 3 for the new hours of the Money Advice and Housing Benefits service.

If you would like a copy of this publication in another language, large print or Braille please call 020 8583 2299 or minicom on 020 8583 3122

### Inside this issue

- Residents involvement questionnaire
- Soccer leaflet

## Your thoughts count

In the last edition of Hounslow Homes News (July-August) we enclosed a questionnaire that asked for your thoughts on how we can save money. This is because our funding from the government has reduced and we need to make £5m savings over the next few years.

Your views are very important to us and are already being considered. We are looking into various options for changing some front line services and will let you know the full outcome of the consultation exercise in the near future.

### Making savings

We do not want to reduce the quality of service you receive and have already saved money by moving our staff to cheaper accommodation and re-organising some of our "back office" functions. However, some impact on services is unavoidable and we have been discussing the best way forward with the Council, and representatives from the Hounslow Federation of Tenants' and Residents' Associations (HFTRA). It is also likely that some service charges will be introduced. For more information on service charges and how they work see page 2.

### A bright future

Once our plans have been implemented the financial future of Hounslow Homes will be in good health. We remain determined to ensure that

you receive excellent services that also represent value for money.

We will keep residents fully informed about any changes we make through regular articles in Hounslow Homes News, so please watch this space!



## All together now

### New residents' association unites Ivybridge

The Ivybridge estate in Isleworth has received a huge boost with the formation of the United Residents' Association of Ivybridge. Former residents' groups have come together to form the new association, which chair Tina Howe says will provide a powerful voice for the community.

"It's a very exciting time," says Tina. "Now that the estate is united under one association we will waste no time in seeking improvements that benefit everyone."

The association, which is also setting up a youth arm, will look to establish strong links with local organisations like Brentford Football Club, the Rugby Football Association and Thames Water.

Committee member Tony Smith, an Ivybridge resident of 27 years, shares Tina's enthusiasm.

"A residents' association should represent everyone's needs," he says. "There were too many politics involved before. We are looking forward to the whole estate pulling together."

To find out more about the United Residents' Association of Ivybridge please contact: Ron Robinson, Association Secretary on 0208 843 7131.



Tower of strength. Tina and Tony, the chairs of former residents' associations NITA and Ivytag, look to a bright future for Ivybridge.

## Leaseholders Log

The following news updates are for leaseholders of Hounslow Homes

### New building Insurance contract.

Following a recent tendering exercise, Ocaso SA will be providing comprehensive building insurance for leaseholders for the next five years. The cover will be very similar to our previous insurers, but lessees will find premiums from October 2007 are lower.

### Payment initiatives

The Direct Debit option for paying annual service charges has proved very popular. 20% of leaseholders now pay their monthly charges in this way. We expect to introduce Direct Debit arrangements for insurance and major works later this year.

### On the move

The Home Ownership Unit will be leaving 21 High Street soon to return to St. Catherine's House. No date yet, but leaseholders will be notified when it happens.

### Business Improvement Plan

We are committed to improve the services we provide to leaseholders and to keep leaseholders better informed about projects that will affect their blocks and estates and the associated costs. We now have an Improvement Plan to keep us on track and ensure that leaseholders' interests and concerns are given a high profile.

We will give you details of the Plan in future newsletters. If you want to know more right now, or if you have any suggestions on ways we can improve our services to you, please contact [ownership@hounslowhomes.org.uk](mailto:ownership@hounslowhomes.org.uk) or call 020 8583 4006.

## Service charges explained

**You should have received a full explanation of service charges in the questionnaire enclosed in the last edition of Hounslow Homes News. Here is a summary of that information.**

### Why are we thinking of introducing service charges?

They will help increase our income and efficiency across the organisation.

### What services will be subject to charges?

Service charges could be levied for those services that some tenants receive but other tenants do not. Examples include: grounds maintenance, communal lighting, caretaking, concierge and neighbourhood warden services.

### When will we receive more information?

Final decisions regarding both the introduction of service charges, and the delivery of front line services, will not be taken until early next year and would not come into action until April 2008.

**For more information please contact Hounslow Homes on freephone: 0800 085 6575.**

## HFTRA NEWS



**The last edition of Hounslow Homes News included a questionnaire, which asked for your views on service charges and the delivery of front line services. Your input will play a**

**significant role in helping Hounslow Homes decide how to shape its services. HFTRA are also providing a voice for residents in formal discussion groups with Hounslow Homes and the London Borough of Hounslow. Thank you to those of you who returned the questionnaires - the bigger the response the greater the impact made by residents. I hope to**

**be able to report back to you on the results of the consultation exercise in the next edition of HHN.**

Congratulations to Tina Howe and the residents of Ivybridge who worked so hard to form a new residents' association on the estate. I am sure the new United Residents Association of Ivybridge will be a great success and will waste no time in tackling the local issues that really matter to the community.

I would also like this opportunity to bid a fond farewell to Chris Boucher who is stepping down from his position on the Hounslow Homes' Board. Chris has been a Board member since the organisation's inception. Thank you for your efforts Chris and good luck with your future plans.

**Julie Brooker**  
Chair of HFTRA

## Message from the lead member



**When the new administration took office in Hounslow and I assumed the Housing portfolio on the new Executive, my first priority was to realise the aspiration which had inspired me to get involved in community politics in the first place -**

**ensuring that all our residents have equal and unfettered access to the process of participation whatever their views or allegiances.**

Following the review of the Management Agreement I was able to make the necessary tweaks to ensure that, on our estates, this would become a reality.

One consequence of this work of which I'm fiercely proud is the formation of a new, united residents' association on Ivybridge, which brings an end to years of conflict on the

estate and with it the promise of a stronger voice for our residents than ever before. I wish Tina Howe and her team every success.

Less alluring is the challenge we all face on the financial front following the completion of the Decent Homes programme and the cut in government funding which we will receive.

Hard decisions need to be taken, and we've had to consider the option of "depooling" - service charges to you and I - which most other London boroughs

already collect.

We have consulted with HFTRA, as well as directly with our tenants, and though nothing has yet been ruled in or out I am determined that we will listen to you, and provide you with the service you require at the price you are prepared and able to pay.

**Cllr Phil Andrews,**  
Lead Member, Housing and Community Safety



## Hello under there!

These three young happy chappies found the best seat in the house at the the Highfields' estate fun-day in August.

## A key issue

All fob and door entry keys have been moved to the Brentford Office (58-59 High Street). Tenants will no longer be able to purchase them from other area offices and they should order them through the Customer Service Centre 0800 085 65 75.

# Magnificent mural halts traffic!

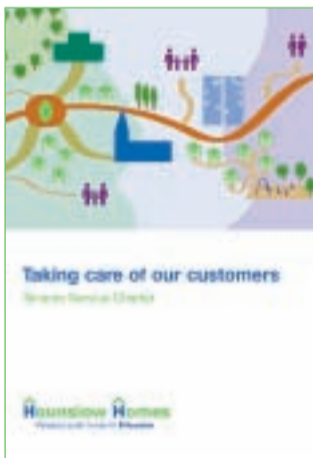


**A** spectacular new mural inspired by the Charlton House Residents' Association in Albany Road, Brentford, is leaving passers-by open-mouthed in admiration.

The mural has had motorists slowing down and even leaving their cars to get a closer look! It depicts local landmarks like Brentford Football Club, the Steam Museum and the River Thames and was skillfully created by young people from

Haverfield and Brentford Towers as well as residents from Charlton House itself. Hounslow Homes' Tenant Participation Officer, Eileen Gladwell said: "It really is a stunning piece of work of which the local community can be immensely proud.

It has to be seen to be believed." Replacing the existing 30-year-old weather-beaten mural, the new design also received invaluable support from Westplay and Thames Community Foundation as well as the Watermans Art Centre and the local Area Forum.



## How to **access** Hounslow Homes **service charter**

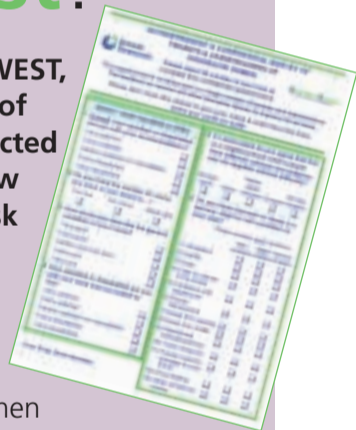
**R**ecent consultation showed that some tenants are not familiar with the Tenants Service Charter - our Service Standards' booklet.

The booklet highlights Hounslow Homes' aim to maintain high standards in customer care and is available from any of our housing offices, or on request to our Customer Service

Centre by phoning 0800 085 6575. It can also be accessed via our website [http://www.hounslowhomes.org.uk/tenant\\_charter\\_2006\\_final.pdf](http://www.hounslowhomes.org.uk/tenant_charter_2006_final.pdf)

## All set for the **KWEST test?**

**Independent assessors, KWEST, will be sending a number of surveys to randomly selected residents over the next few weeks. The surveys will ask about the services you receive from Hounslow Homes and what it is like living in your community.**



The information received is then collated by KWEST and the results presented to Hounslow Homes. These results are published and comparisons are made with:

1. the results of last year's survey and
2. how you view us in comparison with how other Arms length Management Organisations' (ALMOs) customers assess their services.

We use this information to identify how we are performing and how we can improve our services further. Please take the time to complete this important survey if one lands through your letterbox.

## Cheaper rent with **Direct Debit**

**I**f you start paying your rent by Direct Debit (and continue to do so for at least one year) your rent account will be credited with £35 immediately. You can also receive a £25

credit if your preferred payment method is via a Standing Order. Over 300 tenants have already taken advantage of this offer.

Direct Debit means we

spend less money on collecting your rent and more money on providing services. Direct Debit also means that your rent is automatically paid from your bank so no more standing in post office queues!

If you are interested in switching to Direct Debit (or Standing Order) please contact the Income Section on 020 8583 3806 or freephone: 0800 085 65 75.

## Up for a **cuppa?**

Members of the Sutton Lane Residents' Association got together at the end of August to enjoy morning tea and cake. This is set to become a regular event on the last Friday of each month.



### **New opening times for Money Advice and Housing Revenues and Benefits**

**As of 1 October 2007 the above services will operate the following hours at Hounslow Homes' Neighbourhood Offices.**

#### **Chiswick Town Hall**

**Revenues and Benefits:** Monday, 9am-5pm, by appointment only

**Money Advice:** No service

#### **Brentford (58-59 High Street)**

**Revenues and Benefits:** Thursday, 9am-5pm and Friday (appointments only), 9am-4.45pm

**Money Advice:** Thursday and Friday, 10am-1pm

#### **St Catherine's House (2 Hanworth Road, Feltham)**

**Revenues and Benefits:** Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm. Thursdays by appointment only.

**Money Advice:** Monday, 10am-1pm, Tuesday, 1.30pm-4.30pm

#### **Langdale Centre, Ivybridge estate, Isleworth (from 5 November 2007)**

**Money Advice:** Thursday, 10am-1pm

**Money Advice (Civic Centre):** Tuesday 1pm-4pm

**To arrange an appointment with Housing Revenues and Benefits please call 0208 583 4242.**

