

November 2016 • Issue 37

A newsletter by residents for residents



Phoenix

Our community in our hands

community news



Festive fun! Come along to your Christmas Community Links
Introducing... Your new tenant Chair
Focus on... Allocations and lettings



Welcome...

Claim your calendar!

Every year we produce a special calendar for Phoenix residents. If you'd like to receive a 2017 Phoenix table top calendar, please contact us. Numbers are limited, first come first served!



Welcome to Community News

Thank you to everyone who joined us at our Phoenix AGM in September and to all of you who gave feedback on this year's annual report.

We worked hard to produce a report that everyone would enjoy and find informative. We received feedback from 150 residents and had lots of positive comments about the real stories and historical images that were included. More than 90% of you said the report was well designed and improved your understanding of Phoenix. We also received useful feedback to improve future reports.

If you'd like to learn more about the history of our homes and the area, visit our website to view the digital version of our report.

This issue of Community News is jam packed and brings you important news about changes to our Board on page 5, as well as information about our Community Links gathering on December 3.

We hope you enjoy the newsletter. Please get in touch if you have ideas for how we can improve your newsletter or would like to get more involved with our group.

Best wishes, from the Residents Communications Group



WIN! 'Spot yourself!'

If this is you, pictured arriving at our Annual General Meeting in September, please contact us to claim your £25 prize!

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Cover image - Fun for all at Summer Fun, August 2016

Seasonal opening hours

Our usual opening hours and telephone service will be reduced during the Christmas period and we will only offer emergency repairs. Our emergency out of hours phone service will operate throughout the period.

Friday 23 December	Open from 9am – 2pm
Saturday 24 December – Tuesday 27 December	Closed
Wednesday 28 December	Open from 10am-4pm
Thursday 29 December	Open from 10am-4pm
Friday 30 December	Open from 10am-4pm
Saturday 31 December – Monday 2 J anuary	Closed
Tuesday 3 January	Normal hours resume



Phoenix Community Housing Association (Bellingham and Downham Limited) is a Community Benefit Society, number IP30057R. VAT number 162 4926 03. Homes and Communities Agency number L4505.



Community Links

Phoenix residents, join us at
your Christmas

community links gathering

The Green Man
Saturday 3 December 12-3pm

- ★ Meet our teams
- ★ Get involved
- ★ Festive nibbles
- ★ iPad mini to be won!
- ★ Free entry!

RSVP

Book your
place by
Monday 28
November

Enter the
snow-zone
and try our
snowboarding
simulator

Meet Santa
and his reindeer,
with a free
gift for kids
under 10

Visit our
festive
fairground!

Play feed
the snowman
and hook
a bauble





Signed, sealed, delivered



Six residents were awarded a top housing qualification after completing a course with support from Phoenix.

All of the students had previously completed the Phoenix Academy and received bursaries from Phoenix to complete the course

from the Chartered Institute of Housing. They also volunteered at Phoenix events and in our offices to develop their skills and learning.

The next Phoenix Academy will begin in 2017. If you'd like to sign up to our 10 week school of social housing and get more involved in what we do, please contact us.

Diversity on display

Hundreds of residents joined together at our annual Diversity Day celebration in October. Thanks to funding from the Big Lottery Fund, this year's event was bigger and better than ever before and included a talk and question and answer session with Team GB Paralympian Tania Nadarajah.



Team GB Paralympian Tania Nadarajah

Catch of the day

Chat & Chips attracted 114 households who didn't attend any of our events last year

Thank you to the hundreds of residents who joined us for Chat & Chips this summer! Our teams visited nine spots across our area to hear what you think of our services and plans for the future.

Hayley Howley said: "I've spoken to a few people who live near me that I've never met before and that was nice, thank you!"



Residents enjoy Chat & Chips

Toast to the Fellowship



Apprentice Ademir Netto and resident Fiona Kelly talk to Tracey Crouch MP at the Fellowship Inn

We're delighted that the Lottery has confirmed £4million of funding for our restoration of the Fellowship Inn in Bellingham. Heritage minister Tracey Crouch MP visited the pub to announce the good news in October and learn more about our plans.

The restoration of the pub will include a new cinema and live music venue. Our plans will also create 70 new jobs and apprenticeships.

Works will begin next year. To find out more and to get involved, please get in touch.



Heritage Minister Tracey Crouch MP



Round the houses

Phoenix-on-sea

Fifty residents enjoyed a day beside the seaside in August. The trip to Margate included a visit to the famous golden sands and Dreamland amusement park.

Events like this are aimed at bringing our community together and are an opportunity for you to meet your neighbours and our teams.

New resident Junior Christian said: "I didn't realise that Phoenix did things like this. I've really enjoyed the day and would definitely come again."

Daytripper?

Our Gateway Local Team's next trip will be to Bluewater Shopping Centre on Wednesday 14 December. If you'd like to take part, contact us to book your place!



Fun and games

More than 1,200 residents enjoyed five days of fun-packed activities at our Summer Fun programme this year. Activities took place across our area and were designed to inspire children and young people to try their hand at new creative activities.



Green light for new homes

We've received planning permission to build new homes in Downham. Our plans, approved by Lewisham Council in late July, will see four new houses built on Woodbank Road. Previously four terraced houses stood on the site, but they were demolished in the 1980s.

Work to build 22 new flats at Forster House on Whitefoot Lane will begin in early 2018 and the 60 new extra care homes that we are building at Hazelhurst Court will be ready next summer.

Changes to our Board

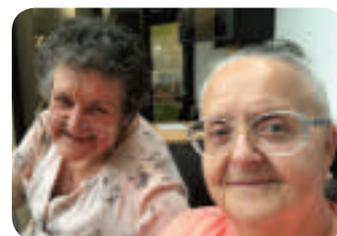
We're very pleased to introduce tenant Anne McGurk as our new Board Chair. Anne was elected to the role at our Board meeting in September 2016, after Pat Fordham MBE stood down from the role after nine years.

Pat will remain a Board Member for the next 12 months and was given a standing ovation by fellow Board Members to thank her for her work.

Our rules say that both our Chair and Vice Chair must be tenants. We are one of only a handful of housing associations in the country that are truly led by residents.

Fellow Phoenix tenant, Carmen Simpson, was elected to be our Vice Chair and Cllr Jonathan Slater has joined the Board as a Lewisham Council representative.

You can find more about Anne, and her hopes for Phoenix, on page 9.



Anne McGurk (left) and Pat Fordham MBE at our AGM in September



Focus on... Allocations and lettings

How are we doing?

In each issue of *Community News* we focus on a different area of our work. This time we look at how our properties are allocated to new residents and how we prepare properties for reletting.

There is a major shortage of social housing across London. Over the last five years, the number of homes for social rent becoming available to let in Lewisham has almost halved, while the need for housing has increased by 87%.

As a result, there are currently over 9,250 households on the housing waiting list in Lewisham. Homelessness in Lewisham has also increased, and more than 1,700 households were living in temporary accommodation in 2015-16.

What's happening?

Last year, 203 Phoenix properties became empty.

When we compare these empty properties to all of the properties that we own, our tenancy turnover is 3.78%. This is lower than in previous years and may be a sign that we have a stable community that people enjoy living in.

The allocation of homes that become available for letting is managed by Lewisham Council. Properties are offered to households based on need and priority, and preference is given to particular groups, for example people that are homeless or need to move for medical reasons.

Earlier this year, Lewisham Council announced that they would be reviewing their allocations policy, and we gave our views on the changes that they suggested in September 2016. The proposed changes are designed to help the council to allocate social housing fairly and to manage expectations for housing in the borough.

What we're doing

When our properties become available we work hard to get them ready for new tenants as quickly as possible.

We saved £13,000 last year, by reducing the amount of time our homes stood empty. That's the equivalent of housing someone for 2.4 years. Only 14 homes were empty at the end of last year, and 72% of homes (162) were accepted by the first household that was offered the property. This is good performance compared to other landlords and the money we lose in cash due to homes being empty is one of the lowest in the country.

The cost to Phoenix to relet a property is £62.56 a year, for all of the homes that we own. Compared to other housing associations this is low and Phoenix is performing well in this area. However the average cost of carrying out works to bring our homes back to a lettable standard for new tenants is high at £5,657 per home that is empty. These costs are high because of the condition some tenants leave their homes in when they move as well as the high standard we aim to bring our empty homes up to.

Of the 212 new lettings that took place last year, 21% were to existing Phoenix tenants. This is an increase in previous years and means that more Phoenix tenants have been able to move and remain Phoenix tenants.

When we identify an empty home that is offered to a Phoenix household who is currently under-occupying their home, this means



that another larger property is available for another household. This releases another home and it means that more people move, as a result of one empty property. This is called a chain letting and we have encouraged Lewisham to make changes to support more chain lettings.

We also want to build new homes to help tackle the housing shortage in our area. The 60 new extra care homes that we are building at Hazelhurst Court will be ready next year and we have planning permission to build a further 34 homes.

Find out more

We will be updating our Phoenix Allocations and Lettings Policy to reflect the changes in Lewisham's policy and there will be opportunities for Phoenix residents to get involved and give their views before the end of March 2017.

Please do get in touch if you'd like to get involved or have any questions.



Remember,
to call Phoenix, always
ring 0800 0285 700 -
this number is free from
any UK landline
or mobile.



Have yourselves a merry little Christmas

With Christmas just around the corner, it's easy to feel pressured into spending money we don't have, but you don't have to spend sleigh-loads to have a merry time!

From making your own gifts, to setting a budget and sticking to it, there are lots of tips and tricks to help you enjoy the festive period, whatever your budget. Visit www.moneyadvice.org.uk for help to manage your festive finances!

Whatever you have planned over Christmas and New Year, please remember to prioritise your rent. If you're worried about your rent or service charges and are struggling to make a payment, please contact us.



Back to work – Gary's story

Our Roots into Work programme helped 47 residents into work last year. We offer personal advice, support and access to training and work placements that will help you take the next steps into work.

Gary McKenzie is just one of the people we've helped.

"As a single parent, it was difficult to balance work and my children, but now that they're older – I wanted to get back to work. Roots into Work helped me to update my CV, prepare for interviews and introduced me to local employers. I'm now back in to work and it feels good!"

Take your first steps towards getting back into work and come along to our Job Club, every Tuesday at the Green Man from 10am-1pm.

Top tips for telephones

Resident Doreen Scott contacted us after getting a nasty surprise from her telephone bill.

She was charged more than £15 after making just two calls to a well-known directory enquiry service!

If you need to check a telephone number, you could save a small fortune by dialling 0800 118 3733. This service is entirely free to call from any UK landline or mobile, so there's no risk of running up a big bill.

Kids go free

Children under 11 can now travel for free on all national rail services across London, with a Zip Oyster photo card.

For more information and to apply online, visit www.tfl.gov.uk

Stay warm this winter

If you receive guarantee credit as part of your state pension, you could get £140 off your electricity bill through the Warm Home Discount Scheme. The money isn't paid directly to you - it's a one-off discount on your electricity bill between October and April.



Extra help is also available for people over the age of 63. If you were born on or before 5 May 1953, you could be eligible for a tax-free Winter Fuel Payment of between £100 and £300 to help pay your heating bills.

Contact us to see if you're eligible for these or other government benefits, or to make a claim.

Warm Homes, Healthy People

Warm Homes, Healthy People offers free tailored support to residents at risk from cold weather. Delivered by Lewisham Council and Groundwork, support can include a home energy visit, grants and discounts and lots more. If you are a low income family, have children under five or have a health condition, please get in touch.





Keep Gas Safe

Every year we complete a gas safety check at all of our tenanted properties, along with an annual service of any gas appliance that belongs to us. This is our legal duty.

What happens during a gas safety check?

Our Gas Safe registered engineers will complete a nine step check that tests the:

- safety of your gas connections
- emergency control valve
- gas fuelled heating and hot water services, and
- gas cooking appliances.

It will normally take around 30 minutes. Our engineer will explain the results of the gas safety

check and provide you with a copy of your gas safety certificate.

Gas leaks can be fatal and your gas safety checks and service protects you, your family and your neighbours.



Thank you for helping us to keep you gas safe!

Last year we achieved a 100% gas safety record, but there were 2,182 missed appointments. Please let us know as soon as possible if your appointment isn't convenient so we can reschedule for another time.



Just what the doctor ordered

Do you have a question or feedback for the Phoenix Repairs Service? Come along to our new repairs surgery at The Green Man to speak directly with the repairs team.

We want to know what the Phoenix Repairs Service does well and where we can improve. We value your feedback.

The repairs surgery takes place every Tuesday at The Green Man, from 10am to 12 noon.

Please contact us to book an appointment.

Who's on your doorstep?

Beware bogus callers

There have been some reports of bogus callers in our area. These are people who trick their way into people's homes to scam or steal.

Whenever a member of Phoenix staff or one of our contractors visits you at home, they will show you their photo ID card and give advance notice of their visit whenever possible. If you are uncertain about the identity of anyone who claims to be from Phoenix, call 0800 0285 700.

For more information about staying safe, please contact Lewisham Safer Neighbourhood Team on 020 8721 2486 or visit www.friendsagainstscams.org.uk

Improving leasehold experience

Thank you to everyone who joined us at our Leasehold Open Evening in October.

We want to improve our service to home owners. At the event we asked how we can improve leaseholders' experience of Phoenix. You told us that you want to receive a quality service that provides good value for money, and that involvement opportunities should be flexible, predominantly online and optional.

We'll be launching a leaseholder service review group in the New Year.

Please contact the Home Ownership team for more information and to get involved.

Fenced in?

We want you to enjoy your gardens and outside space and understand that fencing plays an important part in this.

However, fencing is expensive and we've recently reviewed our approach to fencing replacement and repairs.

We prioritise fencing jobs where there is a risk to the security of someone's home or when the resident is vulnerable.

When fencing is replaced, we will use chestnut fencing and include two boundary privacy panels. For more information about our new fencing policy, or to request a repair, please contact us.



If you would like to share your memories with us, or you know someone with a story to tell, please get in touch.

My Phoenix – Anne McGurk

We feature a different Phoenix resident in each issue of Community News. Anne has been a Phoenix tenant for eight years and joined the Board in 2013. She was elected Chair of our Board in September 2016.

How long have you been a Phoenix resident?

I moved into my flat eight years ago, just after the new kitchens and bathrooms had been fitted.

I've spent most of my adult life in Lewisham, and was Head Teacher at St John's Primary School, so I know the area well.

What's the best thing about living in the area?

The best thing is knowing that people are here to help. Phoenix has its ear to the community and works to deliver what the community needs. There's a lot of support for residents to find work, to learn new skills and to benefit from other opportunities. Very rarely is anyone turned away.

How did you get involved?

I got involved after one of my neighbours encouraged me to attend a resident meeting, I was a member of my Local Area Panel and the former Residents Group.

Pat Fordham MBE (Phoenix's outgoing Chair) set an incredible example. She is incredibly skilled and knowledgeable about housing and the area. She knocked my socks off! She knows how to reach people and to get them involved and I couldn't help but get drawn in. Pat has left an incredible legacy for Phoenix. I want to continue her work and pass her message of action and involvement to younger residents.



Anne at our Annual General Meeting, September 2016



Anne speaks to Sadiq Khan before he was elected Mayor of London, March 2016

What would you change?

The world we operate within is changing. We need to make sure that Phoenix is prepared and equipped to deal with these changes, but our residents must remain at the heart of what we do.

I would love to see more employment opportunities for more businesses to move into the area.

What are your hopes for the future?

My hope for Phoenix is to make ourselves ready to meet the challenges of tomorrow and that we involve our young residents.

I'm pleased that we're offering more opportunities for younger residents to get involved. They are our future and it's critical that they have the chance to have their say and make an impact.



Congratulations to this year's Phoenix in Bloom winners! (pictured right with Board Member and Bellingham Councillor Alan Hall) We received more entries than ever before and our resident judges (picture left) saw some wonderful gardens.

Don't sleep on it!

If you're tired of your mattress and looking to get rid, use Lewisham Council's free mattress recycling and sleep soundly!



Lewisham can also collect and remove large items like dishwashers or furniture for a charge. Call 020 8314 6000 or visit www.lewisham.gov.uk for more information and to book your collection.

Last year we cleared 573 tonnes of fly tipping from our estates. That's equivalent to the weight of 573 giraffes, 5,052 washing machines or 17,787 double mattresses!

Fly tipping is illegal. If you spot someone dumping rubbish in our area, please report this to us by calling 0800 0285 700 with as much information as possible, including:



- when and where the fly tipping happened and what was dumped
- a description of any vehicles involved, including registration numbers.

Green scene

Over the next couple of months we'll be visiting all 500 of our green spaces to photograph, record and assess the condition of the open spaces in our area. This will include communal gardens and estate greens and the information will help us to plan improvements across our area in the future.

The surveys will be completed by a specialist company. Their staff will wear ID badges and will not require access to properties or private gardens.

For more information and to give your views, please get in touch!

Become a Young Maker

Aged 13-19?



The Young Makers' Agency (YMA) is a chance to bring your ideas to life. It's about young people working together to create and develop projects that will have a real impact on the south Lewisham area.

Want to get involved? Become a Young Maker and come to the YMA HUB each week, a space for you to hang out, plan and create.

YMA HUB | TUESDAY (TERM TIME) | THE GREEN MAN | 5-7PM

07515 605198

YMALONDON

@YMALONDON

youngmakers.org.uk

Delivering value for money

Value for money is at the heart of all of our work. This means balancing quality and cost in everything that we do so that we can provide high quality services.

This year we achieved value for money savings of £1million, and we've worked with residents to produce an overview of our value for money statement.

Visit our website or request a copy of our value for money overview to learn more about how we spend our money. Everyone can be involved and if you have ideas to help us save money, please contact us.

VALUE
FOR
MONEY



Our monthly Techy Tea Parties are the perfect way to improve your digital skills. Enjoy a cuppa and slice of cake while our friendly volunteers help you to make the most of phone, tablet or laptop.

TECHY TEA PARTY

ON:

Wednesday
16 November, 1-3pm
Wednesday
14 December, 1-3pm
Wednesday
18 January, 1-3pm

WHERE:
The Green Man,
355 Bromley Rd
London, SE6 2RP

Prizes and
goodies to
be won!



Noticeboard

What's on at The Green Man? Visit www.thegreenman.com for all of the latest classes and courses on offer!

Thank you Cherry Ward!

Resident Helen Whiteley wants to say a big thank you to all of the staff on Cherry Ward at Lewisham Hospital. Helen says: "Thank you for being so good to me and other patients when I was unwell, you are wonderful!"

Christmas market

**Saturday
26 November
9am-2pm
at The Green Man**

Our annual Christmas Market returns to The Green Man. Pop along from 9am-2pm to meet local traders, enjoy free festive refreshments and for a spot of Christmas shopping.

Volunteer to support local parents

Become a volunteer buddy with the Parent Support Group. Full training provided.

Contact Anne Williams on 07908 101 767 or visit www.psg.org.uk

Power up and become an energy champion!

Receive 21 hours of accredited training and become a SELCE volunteer energy champion!

Contact Alex on 020 8269 4882 or visit www.selce.org.uk

STOP PRESS!

Fancy getting fit for free? Make your way to our new outdoor gym on the green space between Scarlet Road and Battersby Road. There's lot of equipment for you to try, including a cross trainer and bike machine!

He's behind you!

Chaplin's are bringing 'The Magic Castle' a special Christmas show for kids to The Green Man on Friday 9 December. Set in Happy Town the panto follows heroine Betty Banana and her friends, and the show is packed full with adventure, songs and laughter. Tickets cost £5, to book call 020 3121 0210.

Step back in time

Join us at a special 1910s tea dance this December to discover more about the hidden World War One heritage of our community.

Phoenix residents have been working with local schools and the Working Party Theatre Company, as part of the Past, Present, Future project, to produce a piece of community sound art. The tea dance will include refreshments, performances and reminiscence.

The event will take place at The Green Man on Wednesday 14 December. Spaces are limited, so please contact us to book your place!

Stay in touch



By phone: 0800 0285 700 from 8am-5pm, Monday to Friday (and for emergency calls at all other times)

Please note: every other Tuesday, 2-3pm, we have an emergency phone service only as a result of staff training.



Email: correspondence@phoenixch.org.uk



Web: www.phoenixch.org.uk



Twitter: @phoenixtogether @greenmanhub



YouTube: www.youtube.com/phoenixtogether



Visit: The Green Man, 355 Bromley Road, SE6 2RP

The Green Man will close at 2pm on Friday 23 December and will reopen on Wednesday 28 December. From Wednesday 28 – Friday 30 December, The Green Man will open from 10am-4pm. We will be closed for the New Year's bank holiday on Monday 2 January 2017.