

The Link

NEWS FOR TENANTS AND LEASEHOLDERS • SUMMER 2011

NEED A REPAIR?

Help us to
help you



BRUSH UP ON YOUR
HOME SKILLS
Classes starting
soon



SUMMER
IS ON ITS
WAY!

Get the most out of
summer 2011

PLUS...

Competitions and
much more!



WITH SO MUCH GOING ON IN DARTFORD,
SUMMER 2011 IS SET TO SIZZLE



Welcome to *The Link!*

Coleman's Column

We're beginning to see the signs of summer including the glorious sunshine and blooming flowers. It's nice to get out in the warmer weather and with the new and improved park in the town centre you can spend the whole day enjoying the outside space.

Remember when you are at home with windows and doors open that there are others around you, please be considerate, it may be that your neighbours aren't interested in your loud music. Also, the opportunist thief will be very interested in your possessions in the lounge while you are in the garden soaking up the sun.

This time of year is also a great time to brush up your DIY and gardening skills so why not get a few helpful tips (and some freebies) by checking out our home skills workshops (page 6). For anyone who is a little less mobile why not get some exercise in the comfort of the communal lounge at one of the exercise classes run by the supported housing officers.

Finally don't forget our annual Dartford Festival on 16 and 17 July. In its 75th year, I'm sure the weekend will be a fun packed and enjoyable one for all who attend.

Wishing you an enjoyable and safe summer.



Clr Pat Coleman
Cabinet Member for Housing



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SIT DOWN AND GET FIT!

EXERCISE CLASSES FOR SUPPORTED SCHEMES

The ever popular chair based exercise classes are still a hit for residents wanting to get some exercise without needing to skip down to the gym and jump on the treadmill. Supported housing officers delivering the classes are helping to promote health and well being and these classes are a great way to socialise with other residents.

The classes are open to everyone within supported housing schemes. If there isn't a class where you live you are more than welcome to join a class in a nearby scheme.

Classes currently take place at Farrell Court with further ones planned for Thatcher and Crusader this summer. For more details, or to get a class set up in your scheme, please speak to your supported housing officer or call 01322 343366.



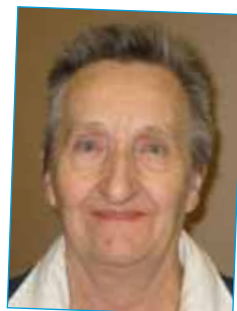
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IF YOU KNOW SOMEONE WHO CANNOT READ THIS BUT WOULD LIKE TO KNOW OF ITS CONTENT, WE WILL DO OUR BEST TO PROVIDE A COPY IN A SUITABLE FORMAT.

ONE LAST GOODBYE TO ANN COMFORT



Sadly we lost a valuable member of our Residents Forum and more importantly a great friend when Ann Comfort of Patterson Court, Temple Hill passed away on 20 March.

Ann was a wonderful woman who always thought of others before herself. Working on behalf of everyone, Ann worked hard to better services and the community for all of her fellow residents.

Ann's work with residents' groups began back in the 1970s, while she lived at Phoenix Place. We know that she was actively involved with the Council for over 20 years. Chairman of both the Temple Hill Residents' Association and the Tenants' and Leaseholders' Forum, at some point in her volunteering career, Ann didn't need any encouragement to get stuck in. She was a natural.

Improvements which have taken place over the years are a tribute to Ann, and other residents like her, unpaid but hard working and loyal servants of their communities.

Ann was one of a kind and offered so much to so many without wanting anything in return but a thank you, Ann is dearly missed by everyone who was blessed enough to know her.

TENANTS' AND LEASEHOLDERS' ANNUAL REPORT

HAVE YOUR SAY ON COUNCIL SERVICES

It's that time of year again when we need your help to write the tenants' and leaseholders' annual report.

The report shows how the Council is measuring up to the seven national standards set out by the Tenant Services Authority. The standards include areas such as how you can contact us, complaints, repairs and maintenance, anti-social behaviour, quality of estate areas, resident involvement activities. This is **your** report and what you think matters to us so please give us your ideas on what you want included.

You don't need to spend lots of time at meetings (although if you want to pop along we'd be happy to see you!). If you'd rather be sent some information to read in the comfort of your own armchair then that's what we can do. You can send back your views to go into the report by post (freepost), email or telephone whichever is most convenient for you. We can also visit you at home or with a group of your neighbours in a place near to where you live.

So come on let us know what **you** really think about how the Council is performing, what is important to you and help us design the report in a format **you** are happy with.

YOU DECIDE WHAT GOES IN

To find out more call 01322 343682 or email rio@dartford.gov.uk

HOW ARE WE MEASURING UP?	2010/11 Target	2010/11 Quarter 1	2010/11 Quarter 2	2010/11 Quarter 3	2010/11 Quarter 4
Average days for void turnaround	22	25.14	24.74	24.38	24.12
Percentage of rent collected due in the year	99.5	100.19	98.25	99.43	99.3
Percentage of urgent repairs completed in time	99	89.7	88.9	91.5	93.1
Percentage of non-urgent repairs completed in time	99	87.0	80.4	84.8	87.3
Number of housing related ASB cases	-	36	27	23	15

WHAT'S ON OFFER AT YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY CENTRE?
On both Temple Hill and Tree Estate regular activities like keep fit, zumba, boxing and bingo take place each week at your local community centre. Why let everyone else have all the fun?

You can also organise some fun yourself by hiring a room in your local community centre for anniversaries, birthdays, weddings, dinners, dances and other social events.

To find out more contact:

- Temple Hill
Tel: 01322 343902/343066
- Tree Estate
Tel: 01322 343434

Rooms are hired at reasonable rates and subject to availability.



DARTFORD BOROUGH RESIDENTS FORUM PUBLIC MEETING
Tuesday 12 July at 6.45pm at Temple Hill Community Centre, Temple Hill Square, Dartford DA1 5HY

The guest speaker will be John Fowler from Kent Savers.

Residents attending the meeting will be entered into a free prize draw to win £50 of High Street vouchers.

Refreshments are available from 6.30pm.

For more information about the DBRF email rio@dartford.gov.uk, visit www.dartfordhousingresidents.org or call 01322 343682.

EASY READ GUIDES

Easy read guides are now available for:

- Kent Homechoice
- Dartford Borough Council's Tenancy Agreement
- Dartford Borough Council's Repairs service

The guides, developed to make housing information accessible to people with learning disabilities, are available via www.dartford.gov.uk/housing or by calling 01322 343625. A further anti-social behaviour reporting toolkit is also being developed for people with learning disabilities and other vulnerable groups to access and will be available soon.

The Council has signed up to the 'Kent Housing Action Plan for People with Learning Disabilities', where the main objective is to improve the housing options for people with learning disabilities. This is a joint partnership between the Council, the Locality Learning Disability Team in Kent County Council Social Care, and other organisations working with people with learning disabilities. One of the action points is to make information about housing accessible to people with learning disabilities which has led to the development of the easy read guides. Other action points include holding a regular meeting with key professionals to talk about housing, carrying out a housing needs survey and delivering training.

A training event being held in June will help make people with learning disabilities and their parents/carers more aware of the different housing options open to them. For further information call 01322 343625.



NEED A REPAIR?

We know your repair is important to you and so to get it fixed as quickly as possible it's important that you follow the advice below.

WHAT YOU NEED TO TELL US...

- **Where you live**
Tell us your full address so we know where to send the contractor.
- **Who is the lead tenant**
Let us know who is the lead tenant so we can check we aren't breaking confidentiality regulation.
- **How to contact you**
Provide us with your up to date contact details so that we can talk to you about your repair. That's both home and mobile numbers so that we can keep you up to date about work on your repair. An email address is handy so that we can contact you by email in the future.
- **What's wrong**
Give detailed information about the repair. Information such as how urgent the problem is, its exact location, how it affects the property and when the problem began allows us to book the right contractor for your repair.
- **Is it affecting anything else?**
Let us know if the problem is causing issues elsewhere in the property or even another property. e.g. A water leak that is affecting the ceilings downstairs.
- **Can we get to the problem?**
Tell us if anything needs to be moved or if scaffold needs to be erected to get to the repair, etc. The contractor must be able to easily access the area where the repair is needed.
- **When is someone home?**
Tell us when someone is home so we can make an appointment to call.
- **Children to collect?**
Let us know and we can arrange for an appointment outside the school run times.
- **Before your contractor arrives**
Make sure the area that the contractor needs to get to is clear so that they can complete the repair as quickly as possible. If there is anything you cannot manage by yourself let us know when you report the repair and we will see how we can help.

To report a repair, follow the above advice before you call and in preparation of your repair.

Contact details for the repairs team:

- Call: 01322 343800
- Speak live online: www.dartford.gov.uk/housing/interactive.htm
- Email: repairs@dartford.gov.uk

See back page for further contact details.





SUMMER IS ON ITS WAY...

With hopefully a long hot summer ahead, there's lots to do in the Borough...

• DARTFORD FESTIVAL - 16 & 17 JULY

The Dartford Festival is celebrating its 75th anniversary this year and the weekend promises to be more fun-filled than ever before. Gareth Gates will be performing on the Saturday and more big names are being added all the time! Visit www.dartford.gov.uk/festival for updates.



• SUMMER SIZZLERS - THROUGHOUT THE SUMMER HOLIDAYS

Wondering how to keep your children occupied during the long summer holidays? Help is at hand with Dartford's annual Summer Sizzlers children's activity programme. Look out for the leaflet being distributed via your child's school or head to www.dartford.gov.uk/summersizzlers

• CONCERTS AT THE BANDSTAND - EVERY SUNDAY UNTIL 28 AUGUST

Now in its second summer season, free concerts at the Bandstand in Central Park are taking place every Sunday from 2pm to 4pm until 28 August. For a full programme, pick up a leaflet or visit www.dartford.gov.uk/centralpark

ESTATE INSPECTIONS

From clearing litter, fixing broken handles, cutting hedges and fixing guttering – we're working through your 'to-do' list!

If you have something bugging you then why not help us by coming and pointing it out on an estate inspection.

JULY 2011

Date:	Time:	Area:	Meeting point:
6 Jul	10am	Temple Hill	Hilltop Gardens Sheltered Scheme
13 Jul	10am	Temple Hill	Paterson Court
20 Jul	10am	Temple Hill	Bridges Drive
27 Jul	10am	Sutton-at-Hone/ Hawley	Church Road Flats

AUGUST 2011

3 Aug	10am	Longfield (10am) & Southfleet (11am)	Fawkham Road Flats/Ingress Terrace
10 Aug	10am	Alamein Gardens	Community Hall
17 Aug	10am	Galley Hill/ Greenhithe	1-6 Gilbert Close/Davidson House

SEPTEMBER 2011

7 Sept	10am	Joydens Wood	Steadman Close/Joydens Wood Road
14 Sept	10am	Bean	45-61 Beacon Drive
21 Sept	10am	Darenth	Leonard Judge House Flats
28 Sept	10am	Wilmington	High Road Flats

• TACKLING DOG FOULING IN DARTFORD

• Dog fouling has been identified as a major concern for residents around the Borough and although 650 dog bins are provided, irresponsible dog owners are still not picking up after their dogs. To find out where bins are in your area call 01322 343434.

• No excuses – the bags are free! Dog owners can pick up biodegradable pick up bags from Parish Councils, Swanscombe cash office or the Civic Centre to use to clear up their dog's mess.

• To report someone who doesn't clear up after their dog(s) you should call the council on 01322 343088 and provide the following information:

1. Regular walking times of the offender
2. Description of them and their dog
3. Their address, if known

• Everyone who is caught allowing a dog to foul and doesn't remove its mess, will receive an on the spot fine (fixed penalty notice) – this can cost the owner up to £1000.

• Schools or community groups can benefit from talks about responsible pet ownership. Call 01322 343088 for further details.

• If your pet needs micro-chipping – get yourself along to Dartford Heath on Saturday 30 July where you can get your pet micro-chipped for the discounted price of £10. This is about a third of the usual price and isn't much to ensure your pet gets returned to you if it strays.

• NEW POLICE COUNTER AT CIVIC CENTRE

• Kent Police have now opened their own counter at Dartford Borough Council's reception desk in Dartford's Civic Centre.

• All the front counter services, previously available from the Police station in Instone Road, can now be accessed via the new Kent Police Contact Point in Home Gardens.

• The Counter will be attended by staff from 8am to 8pm every day except Sunday when it will be open from 10am until 6pm. The contact number for non-urgent reports of crime or for enquires is 01622 690690. If you have an emergency always dial 999.

STAY OUT OF TROUBLE GET MONEY SAVVY WITH OUR POUND FOR POUND TRAINING!



Tenants wanting their money to stretch further can learn how to do this in a new training session.

The half day course will help tenants learn about

- budgeting
- maximising income
- types of credit
- tips on making money go further
- plugging spending leaks
- bank accounts
- clever saving

Each tenant who attends will take away a pack filled with information about being savvy with their money. Courses take place at various times/dates to cater for people's individual circumstances. The course is for tenants of Dartford Borough Council and free refreshments will be provided.

Drop us a line if you'd like to come along – by phone 01322 343682, email rio@dartford.gov.uk or complete the form on the right and return it to FREEPOST (DT26), the Link, Housing Services, Dartford Borough Council, Civic Centre, Home Gardens, Dartford, Kent DA1 1DR.



HOME SKILLS

What to brush up on your home skills? Protect your home from burglary? Learn how to make tasty food on a low budget? Improve your decorating & gardening skills? Save up for that holiday?

Dartford Borough Council is launching its first ever home skills workshops. These informal workshops, held in Dartford town centre, will see visiting trainers from Kent Fire, Community Safety Unit, the Community Chef and the Council's Contractors. If that's not enough to tempt you then we've got as much tea and cake as you can manage AND if you finish the course you will get a certificate and shopping vouchers.

The four week course starts 6 September on Tuesday mornings from 10am to 12.30pm. If you're interested contact 01322 343682, email rio@dartford.gov.uk or complete the slip below and return to the FREEPOST address above.

I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE PART IN A HOME SKILLS OR POUND FOR POUND TRAINING...

Name:

Address:

Contact tel:

Email:

Preferred day (*please circle*):

Mon Tue Wed Thu Fri

Preferred time (*please tick*):

Morning (9am to 1pm) Afternoon (1pm to 5pm)

Other (please write here)

I would like to take part in:

Home Skills training Pound for Pound training

Refuse & recycling collections over the August Bank Holiday 2011

To minimise disruption to collections over the August Bank Holiday period, we will be working on Saturday 3 September.

Normal collection day:	Revised collection day:	
Mon 29 August	Tues 30 August	ONE DAY LATER
Tues 30 Aug	Wed 31 August	ONE DAY LATER
Wed 31 August	Thu 1 September	ONE DAY LATER
Thu 1 September	Fri 2 September	ONE DAY LATER
Fri 2 September	Sat 3 September	ONE DAY LATER

Collections return to normal on Monday 5 September. Please make sure your bins are available for collection from 7am on the right days.



Have you signed up for the new garden waste collection service yet?



For more information contact us on 01322 343290 or visit www.dartford.gov.uk/recycling



DARTFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL

SPOTLIGHT ON FINANCIAL ABUSE

DOMESTIC ABUSE ISN'T ONLY PHYSICAL VIOLENCE

Domestic abuse isn't only physical violence but can also take on other forms such as, psychological, sexual, financial or emotional abuse. It happens between adults who are or have been in a relationship together or family members regardless of gender or sexuality.

Financial abuse is when someone uses money or possessions to control their victim. It doesn't just affect the elderly, and may be found on its own or alongside other forms of abuse.

Some of the signs of financial abuse are if someone, including a partner;

- takes your money or belongings
- runs up debts in your name
- stops you from getting a job or making you work long hours to support his/her spending

- spends money selfishly and recklessly
- makes you ask for money when you need it or limits you to an allowance
- hides information about family finances from you
- denies you or your children basic needs e.g. food, clothes, heating, bus fares

If you think you are facing financial or any other type of abuse then the most important thing is that you tell someone. Domestic Abuse is unacceptable and there are lots of organisations that can help including the National Domestic Violence Helpline on 0808 2000 247 (for women) or Men's Advice Line on 0808 8010 327.

WHY WEIGHT FREE 12 WEEK PROGRAMME

Want help to lose weight? Why wait?

Sign up for the 'Why weight' plan today

It's free and will give you the tools to manage your weight more effectively.

This 12 week programme includes:

- Weekly weight and waist check
- Gentle exercise classes
- Healthy eating advice
- Ongoing personal support (continues after the 12 week programme)
- Men-only programmes are also available.

For more information call the healthy living team on 01322 311265 or email info@hcldartford.co.uk

Making healthier choices easier in Dartford



West Kent



GARDENS RUNNING WILD!

It's that time of year when grass grows the second it's cut and the weeds are just as fast at filling up the garden! However, tenants must keep on top of their gardens or be breaking tenancy conditions. Tidy gardens aren't only a term within tenancies but are vital in keeping local communities nice places to live.

Tenants not maintaining their gardens will find action taken against them and can be charged in the region of £500 for clearing up the mess. Further action can be taken in serious cases. Anyone having trouble maintaining their garden should speak with their housing officer to see what advice we can offer.

To report an untidy garden or to find out if you can get help with your garden call your housing officer on 01322 343133.

KEEP IT DOWN THIS SUMMER!

Residents enjoying the fresh air this summer are reminded to be considerate to their neighbours when playing music at home. Whether you're inside with the windows open or outside enjoying the warm weather keep your music to an acceptable level. We aren't trying to spoil your enjoyment of the summer months but want to remind you that your idea of great music may not be the same for your neighbour wanting a quiet afternoon at home.

Note: Keep your windows and doors closed when you aren't about as opportunist thieves will be looking out for people who leave their doors and windows unattended.

CONGRATULATIONS...

...to the winner of the anagram competition in the last edition! Ms S won £25 of High Street Vouchers by correctly rearranging the five different words in the competition sponsored by Jardine Lloyd Thompson.

To access specialist and affordable insurance Dartford Council tenants and leaseholders can contact Jardine Lloyd Thompson Tenant Risks Group on 0845 6017007 and quote Dartford.

Contact us...

You can contact Dartford Borough Council via its main switchboard on **01322 343434** Monday to Friday between 8.45am and 5.15pm (4.45pm on Fridays).

At any other time, call the emergency out of hours line on **0845 634 1212**.

You can also visit our website www.dartford.gov.uk or write to us at:

**Dartford Borough Council
Civic Centre
Home Gardens
Dartford
Kent DA1 1DR**

Council switchboard:
01322 343434

Emergency out of hours:
0845 634 1212

Benefits:
01322 343705

Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB):
01322 224686

Community centres:
01322 343902/343066
community.centres@dartford.gov.uk

Community Safety Unit:
01322 343000
www.safedartford.gov.uk

Council tax:
01322 343700

Housing repairs:
01322 343800
www.dartford.gov.uk/housing/interactive.htm
repairs@dartford.gov.uk

Allocations:
01322 343907

Propertyline:
01322 343100

Kent Homechoice bidding line:
0906 294 0020

Domestic Abuse Information Line (Kent and Medway):
0845 603 6813

Housing options & advice:
01322 343814/343082

Rents team:
For help with rents, payments and arrears

01322 343134
www.dartford.gov.uk/housing/interactive.htm
rents@dartford.gov.uk

Housing management team:
For help with tenancy issues, anti-social behaviour, etc
01322 343133

Housing services:
housing.services@dartford.gov.uk

Leaseholder service charges:
01322 343368
leaseholders@dartford.gov.uk

Payment line:
01322 343760

Refuse, recycling & cleansing:
01322 343290

Resident involvement officer:
Louise Gray:
01322 343841

Right to buy:
01322 343832
righttobuy@dartford.gov.uk

Senior supported housing officer:
Terry Smith:
01322 343366

Supported housing:
supported@dartford.gov.uk

Text service:
Text REPAIR, CHASE or RENT followed by your surname, first line of your address, when you are available and details of the service you require to 07881 668706.

Emergencies should be reported verbally via the office or out of hours contact numbers above.

Examples of text:

- REPAIR Mrs Smith 65 Tintagel Manor in all day Tuesdays blocked toilet
- CHASE 47 Cooke Street repair front door
- RENT Mr Smith 45 Main Street check payment amount

PAY BY DIRECT DEBIT AND WIN A PRIZE!

Paying your rent has never been easier! You can pay on the 1st, 9th, 16th or 23rd of the month and all you have to do is fill out a form and we'll do the rest.

All tenants and leaseholders paying their bills by Direct Debit are entered into a monthly prize draw for a pair of Orchard Theatre show tickets. Payments are automatically adjusted each year to take account of any changes to the amount you need to pay and you can keep track of your payments through your bank statement.

If you would like to pay your rent by Direct Debit, please download a form from our website www.dartford.gov.uk/housing or contact the rents section on 01322 343070/343570.

PRIZE DRAW WINNERS

Congratulations to the lucky winners of the February, March and April draws. Mr L, Mr R and Mr & Mrs B all won tickets to shows at The Orchard Theatre, Dartford.

Dartford Borough Council competition rules apply, a copy is available from Dartford Borough Council.



The Orchard
An HQ Theatre



THE NEXT ISSUE OF THE LINK WILL BE WITH YOU IN SEPTEMBER.

RECYCLE ME!

Finished reading the Link? Put me in your recycling bin or pass me on for family or friends to read...