



streetwise

Issue 33 Summer 2011

Keeping Woking tenants, leaseholders and Woking Borough Homes' tenants informed

Localism Bill

In December 2010, the Coalition Government published its 'Big Society' proposals outlining a shift in power from central government to local authorities and communities, known as the 'Localism Bill'.

Overall, the main objectives of the Bill are to:

- provide new freedoms and flexibilities for local government
- provide new rights and powers for communities and individuals
- make the planning system more democratic and more effective
- ensure that decisions about housing are taken locally.

In this article, Streetwise summarises some of the proposed changes/reforms relating to social housing which may, if agreed by Parliament, lead to changes in the future.

Proposals

The Localism Bill proposes reforms that will mean more decisions about housing are taken locally, and make the system fairer and more effective.

Social housing tenure reform

Currently, social landlords (local councils and housing associations) are normally only able to grant lifetime tenancies. Sometimes this can mean that people acquire a social home at a moment of crisis in their life, and continue to live there long after their need for it has gone. Meanwhile there are people waiting for a social home who face much more difficult circumstances.

The Government has made it clear that all current social tenants will keep their current tenancy arrangements. Anyone who has a

lifetime tenancy today will keep that lifetime tenancy. However, proposals in the Localism Bill will allow for more flexible arrangements for people entering social housing in the future. Social landlords will be able to grant tenancies for a fixed length of time. The minimum length of tenancy will be two years, and there is no upper limit on the length of tenancy. Councils will continue to be able to offer lifetime tenancies if they wish.

Social housing allocations reform

At the moment almost anyone can apply to live in social housing, whether they need it or not. As social housing is in great demand and priority is rightly given to those most in need, many applicants have no realistic prospect of ever receiving a social home.

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The Bill will give local authorities greater freedom to set their own policies about who should qualify to go on the waiting list for social housing in their area. This means that they will be able, if they wish, to prevent people who have no need of social housing from joining the waiting list. Authorities will continue to be obliged to ensure that social homes go to the most vulnerable in society and those who need it most.

National home swap scheme

There are lots of reasons why people move house: to take up a new job, to be nearer to family members who need care, to give a young family more space to grow or to find a smaller, more manageable home in later life.

The Localism Bill will pave the way for a national home swap scheme. This would enable people who would like to swap their social home to access details of all other tenants who may be a suitable match.

Reform of social housing regulation

The Bill will reform the way that social housing is regulated. It will provide social tenants with stronger tools to hold their landlords to account. Landlords will be expected to support tenant panels – or equivalent bodies – in order to give tenants the opportunity to carefully examine the services being offered. The Bill will also abolish the Tenant Services Authority and transfer its remaining functions to the Homes and Communities Agency.

The Bill will also change the way that complaints about social landlords are handled. Currently, there are two separate ombudsmen (the Local Government Ombudsman and the Independent Housing Ombudsman) handling social tenants' complaints about their landlord. In the future, a single watchdog (the Independent Housing Ombudsman) specialising in

complaints about social housing will ensure greater consistency across the sector.

The proposals described in this article are subject to Parliamentary debate. They can only be put into practice when Parliament agrees to them. Over the coming months, the proposals will be discussed at length by the House of Commons and then the House of Lords.

Streetwise will provide further updates about the Localism Bill as and when new information is available.



Self-financing proposals

In February 2011, the Government published further details under the Localism Bill regarding its proposal to scrap the existing housing subsidy system and implement self-financing.

Under the current system Woking Borough Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is required to pay approximately £6 million to the Government each year. Under the new arrangements the Council would make a one-off payment to the Government of around £95 million, but would no longer have to make the annual negative subsidy payments.

Like most other councils, Woking would be required to borrow in order to fund this one-off payment. However,

the HRA could be better off under the new proposals as the annual cost of borrowing these funds could be less than the current subsidy payment made to the Government each year.

Self-financing still has yet to be approved by Parliament as part of the Localism Bill. Woking Borough Council will not know the definite impact on the authority until the Bill is passed and the final details are released. If the Bill is passed, the self-financing regulations will be enforced upon the Council and it will need to adopt the necessary procedures to comply with the new system. All councils that own housing stock would be entered into the new system under the powers of the Localism Bill.

Tenancy Audits

Since the last issue of **Streetwise**, additional **Tenancy Audits** have been carried out in the **Horsell and Sheerwater** areas of the **Borough**. The primary reason for conducting the **Tenancy Audits** is to safeguard the **Council** against **tenancy fraud**, such as, identifying properties where the legal tenant no longer occupies the dwelling.



Tenancy Audits also give tenants, who would not ordinarily contact their housing officer or benefits officer, the opportunity to express their views about issues which concern them such as benefit claims, anti-social behaviour in the neighbourhood or repairs. The audits also help us to understand your priorities and how best we can shape the service to suit your needs. In the past when a tenant has been offered a property we did not automatically ask for their next of kin details. From now onwards, it is helpful for us to gather this information to help us deal more effectively with emergency situations, if they arise in the future.

Where Tenancy Audits have been carried out our records are now much more accurate. If you are in receipt of Housing Benefit it is very important that you notify the Council's Housing Services Team of any changes to your circumstances as soon as they happen as it may effect your benefit entitlement. One recent case where we had not been notified of a change in circumstances resulted in a substantial repayment of benefit by the claimant.

Let us know your views

The Tenant Representatives would like to invite all tenants to the **Tenant and Leaseholder Forum Annual General Meeting** on Thursday 6 October 2011 at Woking Borough Council, Civic Offices, Gloucester Square.

Refreshments will be served in the Committee Room at 6.30pm where you will also have the chance to meet your Tenant Representatives, officers from Tenant and Leaseholder Services and other tenants. The meeting will then start promptly at 7pm.

Leading the meeting will be Lawrence Dey, Housing Services Manager, who will talk about our plans for the coming year and highlight the challenges that we face. Other Council and partner officers will also be on hand to discuss any issues that matter to you.

For more information about the AGM and how you can become involved, contact the Tenant Representatives on **01483 822809** (24-hour answerphone) or email **trwoking@ntlbusiness.com**

Update from your Tenant Representatives

Market testing for Housing Management

Hopefully, by now you will have read the newsletter sent out to every tenant regarding the market testing for managing our housing stock. To date, your Tenant Representatives have been very involved in this process and will continue to monitor the specification and tender procedures, which will take place later on in the year.

Obviously, the content of the specification is very important as it will set out the requirements and standards of service for years to come. As Tenant Representatives, we have asked many questions on behalf of the Borough's tenants and leaseholders to find out what the specification will cover, i.e. rent, repairs (time taken), grounds maintenance, heating issues, use of laundry rooms in sheltered accommodation, etc. (By law, the specification is required to be advertised so interested social housing managers can respond.)



If you have any queries, please let us know so that we can add them to our list of questions. You can contact us, your Tenant Representatives, by phone on **01483 822809**, or by email at **trwoking@ntlbusiness.com**

This matter concerns all tenants, so please do not hesitate to let us know your views.

The Council's cleaning contractor is responsible for cleaning flats and maisonettes and all the communal areas, such as stairwells, walkways and bin stores. The Council is keen to know what tenants and leaseholders think about the cleaning service currently provided.

Please let us know what you think of the levels of cleaning in your block. Are they good, okay, bad or poor? Please give your ratings and comments to Helen Hilderley on **01483 743620** or by email at **housingreview@woking.gov.uk**

Update on Value for Money Review of Housing Management

In March 2011, we contacted all tenants and leaseholders via a special newsletter, which provided an update on the Value for Money Review of Housing Management.

The review will involve preparing a service specification for the management and maintenance of your home. The outcome of the review will determine whether an external organisation can provide you with better value for money for providing these services.

As part of the first stage of the review during May 2011, the Council will place an advert in the nationally recognised housing journal, 'Inside Housing' and advertise within the 'Official Journal of the European Union' (OJEU) which is a requirement under EU procurement law. The OJEU advert will seek expressions of interest from potential service providers to deliver the management and maintenance services for your home.

A 'Pre-Qualification Questionnaire' (PQQ) will need to be completed by any prospective service provider, in order to establish whether potential bidders have the necessary skills, experience and capacity for providing housing management services required by you.

This first stage will select a number (between five and seven) of 'capable' service providers who will then be given the opportunity in the future to tender for the delivery of the services. The deadline for providers to submit their completed PQQ application is the end of June 2011.

The next stage will be to invite formal tender submissions from the most suitable and qualified providers based on a specification developed in consultation with tenants and leaseholders. This would take place over the summer.

The final stage of the review will be to evaluate the results of the tender exercise to determine whether better value for money can be achieved.

How can I find out more?

If you have any further questions about the value for money or the market test exercise, please email **housingreview@woking.gov.uk** or phone **01483 743620**.

The future of housing in Woking

Thank you to everyone who took the time to get involved in the Housing Strategy consultation, which considers the Borough's future housing vision, objectives and key actions over the next five years.

During autumn last year, Woking Borough Council conducted a broad and far-reaching consultation with key stakeholders, local organisations and over 1,300 residents, who made their views known on a variety of housing issues.

Several consultation methods were used, including questionnaires, in-depth interviews and facilitated focus groups, and the Council would like to thank everyone who took the time to participate in this valuable exercise.

Amongst other things, the consultation highlighted a shortage of accommodation, including affordable and family housing, as well as a lack of options for people

who require supported living such as young homeless people.

In the future, people want to see more affordable housing, older persons' accommodation (for those aged 60+) and shared ownership schemes, while ensuring that communities are mixed, safe places where people want to live.

This information is now being fed directly into the development of the Borough's new Housing Strategy to 2015, which will be available this summer.

Full results of the consultation are now available at www.woking.gov.uk/housing/policies/strategies/hstrategy10-15

Home Office consultation on anti-social behaviour measures

The Home Office has recently completed its consultation on its anti-social behaviour (ASB) plans, including streamlining the tools available to social landlords, councils and the police to tackle anti-social behaviour. Ministers want to scrap ASB orders and injunctions and replace with two new tools, which aim to bring together restrictions on future behaviour and support to address underlying problems.

The Home Office wants to make tackling ASB simpler, more accessible and more effective. The Home Office's consultation ended on 3 May and we will bring you more details of the Government's proposals when they are available.



Annual Report 2011

The Tenant Services Authority (TSA) developed the regulatory framework for local authorities and housing associations to deliver services to tenants in accordance with a common set of National Standards which cover every aspect of the housing service.

As part of this framework, social landlords are required to prepare an Annual Report to tenants. The purpose of the report is to set out how the Council is delivering its services in line with the National Standards, by outlining

how well it is performing in relation to its agreed annual 'local offers' or objectives.

The Annual Report for 2011, scheduled to be published in October, will be made available to all tenants and leaseholders later on in the year. In the meantime, you can view 2010's Annual Report on the Council's website at www.woking.gov.uk/housing/tenants/participation/report

Alternatively, you can obtain a hard copy of the report by contacting Tenant and Leaseholder Services on **01483 743620** or email t&l@woking.gov.uk

Hometrak update



Monthly statistics

The Hometrak usage figures from July to December 2010 are as follows:

Bids received = 13,618
Total number of properties let = 130

- Council = 84
- Housing Association = 37
- Woking Borough Homes = 9

Number of applicants waiting to be housed on the Housing Register = 2,718

Hometrak is the Council's online tool for allocating homes to people on the Housing Register. It enables you to bid for homes that meet your needs and preferences.

Housing Allocations Scheme

In April, the revised Housing Allocations Policy came into effect. Applicants affected by the changes were sent a letter confirming their eligibility details.

One of the main changes affecting everyone on the Housing Register is that applicants can now only bid during the first week of the fortnightly cycle.

For more information about the Hometrak service, visit www.woking.gov.uk and click on the 'Services gateway' section of the homepage. If you require help on how to use the service, such as bidding, please contact the Housing Needs Team on **01483 743833** or call the Council's customer contact centre on **01483 755855**.

National performance indicators

Performance indicator	October 2010	November 2010	December 2010	January 2011	February 2011	March 2011
Letting of empty properties						
Total number of days to re-let general needs properties	22.7	23.6	23.5	25.3	25.1	25.4
Total number of days to re-let sheltered and supported properties	16.4	17.3	17.8	20.1	19.5	18.3
Rent arrears						
Rent arrears as percentage of annual debit (target 1.39% by 1 April 2011)	1.35%	1.26%	1.38%	1.29%	1.25%	1.17%
Rent collected as percentage of rent due	97.76%	97.83%	97.97%	98.58%	98.69%	98.80%

These national indicators are collected every month so that the Council and government inspectors can monitor the level of service we provide. For more information, contact Tenant and Leaseholder Services Manager on **01483 743828**.

Emergency and useful numbers for you to cut out and keep

Emergency numbers

Electricity (EDF Energy)
Power failure/emergencies
0800 783 8866

Floodline
0845 988 1188

Gas
Gas leaks and emergencies
0800 111 999

Heating (Quadron)
0800 980 3382

Social Services
0845 600 9009

Water
(Veolia Water Central)
Leaks and burst pipes
0800 376 5325

Woking Repairs Service
0800 521 555

Useful numbers

Dispensing chemist
(Boots Pharmacy, Woking)
01483 761648

NHS Direct
0845 4647

St Peter's Hospital
01932 872000

Woking Citizens' Advice Bureau

0844 375 2975 (landlines)
0300 456 8371 (mobiles)

Woking Community Hospital

01483 715911

Woking Borough Council
01483 755855

repairnews

What did Woking Repairs Service do in 2010?

Woking Repairs Service is the in-house team who undertake the day-to-day repairs to your home.

The team comprises of:

- 1 Maintenance Manager
- 1 Deputy Manager/Surveyor
- 4 Administrators operating the repairs freephone number
- 2 Repairs Operative Supervisors
- 10 Repairs Operatives trade specialist and multi-trade skills.

In 2010, the team processed and completed 8,342 repairs:

- 870 repairs were completed on the emergency out of hours service
- 1,325 repairs required a daytime emergency response
- 6,147 repairs were routine repairs

- 47% plumbing or drainage related repairs
- 26% carpentry and fencing
- 24% electrical
- 3% trowel trades.



How have we performed?

Monitoring our repair service on a regular basis is crucial so that we can see what we are good at and what we need to improve. Your Repairs Panel has decided which performance statistics they would like to see every month. At the Repairs Panel meetings, we discuss the performance and consider ways to improve our service to the customers. Here are details of how we are doing.

Repairs Panel monitoring			
Responsive repairs monitoring	April 2009	April 2010	April 2011
% urgent repairs completed in target	91%	92%	93%
Average number of days to complete repairs	12	13	7
Total number of repair orders issued	8,807	9,518	9,153
Average cost of a repair	£93.58	£103.81	£102.36
% repairs completed in target	88%	88%	90%
% orders with appointments	82%	86%	86%
% customer satisfaction level	90%	92%	92%
Number of emergency repairs requested	2,195	1,866	2,180
% of our properties not decent	1.95	1.82	1.77
Number of repair recharges invoiced to tenants	204	131	169

Changes to the way we collect repairs customer satisfaction

Receiving customer feedback is extremely important to us. It enables us to monitor our performance against the service standards and national targets, and identifies areas that need to improve.

We need your input, but are respectful of the fact that you are all busy. In the past we have sent questionnaires with each and every repairs order, together with a pre-paid return envelope. Unfortunately this method is expensive and labour intensive to process and the returns were less than 8%.

Therefore, we are now trialing a telephone satisfaction survey. Our repairs helpdesk will contact you directly

once the repair has been completed and will ask you five simple questions.

- 1 How did you report the repair?
- 2 Were you offered an appointment and was it kept?
- 3 Was the work completed in the first visit?
- 4 Were you satisfied with the overall experience?
- 5 Any other comments?

We will analyse the responses on a monthly basis and report our performance through the Repairs Panel and in future newsletters.

Local Offers and 1st Time Fix

In response to the Local Offers Framework, you considered that a 1st time fix was a priority for the repairs service.

What is a 1st time fix?

“The measure of a repair’s effectiveness over a prescribed period of time.”

Our aim is to achieve a zero defects position on all completed repairs.

We will monitor our repairs over a 12-month period and report any reoccurrence of defects on works completed.

This approach will improve the service by:

- 1 ensuring the workmanship is to a high standard
- 2 ensuring that materials are of a suitable quality
- 3 ensuring that we provide a long-term repair solution and reducing frequent failures
- 4 identifying future planned works.

A trial period will commence from April 2011.

Statistical data will be collected monthly, analysed quarterly and reported to tenants annually.



Pride Project

What did the Pride Project achieve in 2010?



Mansell PLC, our planned maintenance partners, have had an active year. They manage our void and cyclical maintenance programmes.

The team comprises of:

- Project Manager
- Senior Site Manager
- Quantity Surveyor
- Tenant Liason Officer

Our contractors

- Quadron Services
Gas services and heating
- DSL installations
Disabled aids and adaptations
- Arton Monoseal
Asbestos surveys and void repairs
- GS Harding
Void repairs
- Lektron
Electrical inspection and projects
- SPS
Decorating

In 2010, the Pride team completed:

- 36 properties were adapted for disabled tenants
- 259 void repairs
- 184 new individual boilers were installed
- 2,810 gas and boiler services
- 2,717 heating repairs
- 408 out of hours heating repairs
- 4 communal boiler replacements
- 35 communal areas emergency and internal lighting upgrade
- 102 cyclical electrical inspections.

Get ready, steady, pedal for Woking Tour Series!

Tuesday 14 June 2011

The battle of the bikes is back for a third year when the Tour Series returns to Woking on Tuesday 14 June.

The thrills and spills of the professional racing start at 5pm with the women's Johnson Health Tech Grand Prix Final, followed by the prestigious men's Tour Series at 7pm.

Expect to witness blood, sweat and gears as some of the UK's top professional cyclists battle it out at break-neck speeds in the hope of wearing the much-coveted leading team's jerseys whilst enjoying their victory on the Woking winner's podium.



In the lead up to the races from lunchtime until 5pm, visitors to Woking Town Centre will be treated to:

- daredevil tricks by VooDoo Bike Stunt Team
- cycle skills coaching sessions
- opportunities to meet some of the professional riders for autographs and pictures
- and, much, much more.

The Tour Series is a calendar of eight professional cycle races based on short, exciting town and city centre circuits at venues across the UK.

For more information about this exciting event, including how to win a pair of VIP tickets, visit www.cyclewoking.org.uk/tourseries

Operation Quake: Barnsbury

During March, Barnsbury residents and local agency partners joined forces to take a stand against anti-social behaviour and crime during an 'Operation Quake' day in the Barnsbury area.

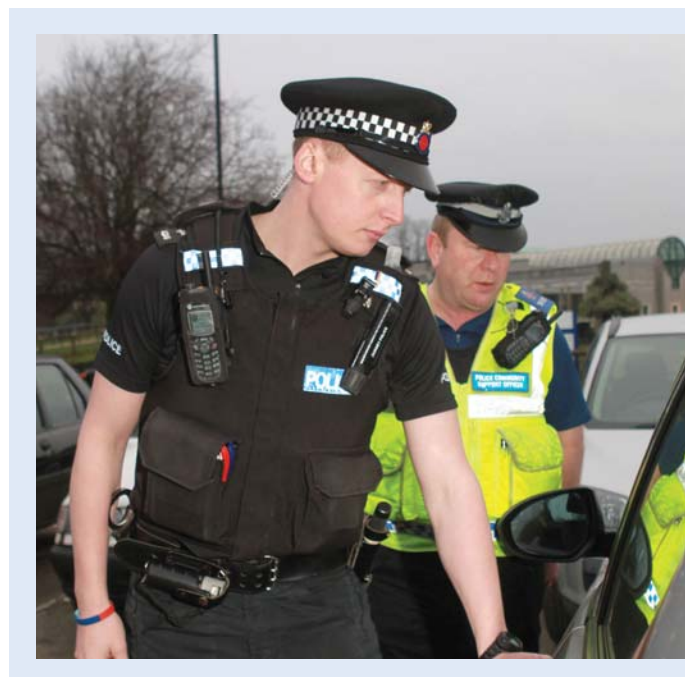
Operation Quake is a multi-agency partnership initiative run in conjunction with local communities and partners, including Woking Borough Council, Surrey Police, Surrey County Council and Surrey Fire and Rescue.

The Barnsbury operation kicked off with a general spring clean of the area, which included the removal of graffiti and litter, particularly at the rear of the shops. In total, Serco removed nearly a tonne of rubbish from the area! The tidy up continued with the removal of an untaxed vehicle from a public area, and a local dog

owner was given a fixed penalty notice for persistently not cleaning up after their dog.

During the day, representatives from the partner organisations also got out and about in the area to promote positive engagement with the local community, identify additional issues and deliver key safety advice on safer travel and fire and crime prevention.

Overall, the Barnsbury operation achieved positive engagement with many local residents and, as a result, enabled the Police to gather a number of intelligence reports regarding nuisance individuals.



About Operation Quake

The Operation Quake initiative works with communities and partners to identify key anti-social behaviour and crime issues affecting a local area and engages with the community to target and solve these problems. Each operation is tailored to the needs of the individual community and can take one day or up to a week to deliver.

Past operations have included: litter picks, removal of abandoned cars and graffiti, enforcement of dog fouling problems and anti-social parking (in particular outside schools), vehicle speeding and tax checks, promotion of security information to local residents regarding their homes or cars, test purchasing for underage sales of alcohol and tobacco, and safer travel messages to school children and parents.

Future Operation Quake days are scheduled for Old Woking, Woking Town Centre and Knaphill.

Spotlight on your local centres

There are four Centres for the Community in Woking, which act as a hub for local residents to meet, socialise and take part in a range of activities. Streetwise spoke to two of the centres – St Mary's and Parkview – to find out what they have to offer.

St Mary's Centre for the Community

St Mary's is a charming old school building with bags of character, located in the heart of Byfleet village. The centre's team of friendly staff is always on hand to deliver a warm welcome and assist visitors.

Donna Banville, Operations Manager, said: "St Mary's is the perfect place for people to come, unwind and enjoy themselves. There's so much going on here – from Tai Chi relaxation sessions to tea dances. Our activities really do cater for everyone."

Other activities on offer include: short mat bowls, aerobics, Pilates, Yoga, line dancing and dance practice. The centre also provides an array of health and beauty services, such as a hairdressing, private chiropody, manicures and weight management sessions.

The centre's café is the perfect local venue to catch up with friends and sample its daily homemade lunch specials.

Phone: 01483 743877
Email: stmary's@woking.gov.uk
Address: Stream Close, Byfleet, Surrey
 KT14 7LZ



Donna Banville



St Mary's Centre

Parkview Centre for the Community

Parkview, in Sheerwater, is a bright and welcoming centre for the whole community. Since opening in January 2009, it has welcomed thousands of local residents through its doors and continues to do so by encouraging people in Woking to use its facilities.

Jonny Moles, Parkview Manager, said: "We want the centre to be a place where people can come to relax and take part in activities. Whether you are looking to improve your fitness, learn a new skill or take advantage of some of the excellent well-being services on offer – Parkview really has something for everyone."

Activities available include: Yoga and Pilates, fitness training, dance classes, nutrition and cookery classes, podiatry, massage therapy and English language classes.

It is also home to the University of the Third Age; a charity which offers interest groups for the over 50s. The hugely popular University runs lectures on subjects such as photography, genealogy and archaeology.

Also on-site is the Parkview Café which is an ideal drop-in point for people to catch up with friends over a cup of tea and delicious slice of cake.

Phone: 01483 743974
Email: parkview@woking.gov.uk
Address: Off Blackmore Crescent, Sheerwater, Woking
 GU21 5NZ



Jonny Moles



Parkview Centre

Other Centres

Find out more about the Borough's other Centres for the Community – Moorcroft and The Vyne – in the next issue of Streetwise.

Moorcroft

Phone: 01483 743373
Email: adele.hall@woking.gov.uk
Address: Old School Place, Westfield, Woking
 GU22 9LY

The Vyne

Phone: 01483 743558
Email: vyne@woking.gov.uk
Address: Broadway, Knaphill, Woking GU21 2SP

Planning a party or get-together?

If you are planning a family party or get-together, or would like to run regular activity sessions, make sure you consider your local Centre for the Community as a potential venue. All the centres are available for hire at competitive rates.

Food Hygiene Rating Scheme – check out local ‘scores on the doors’

The Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (launched June 2011) is a new national scheme that allows the public to view the official local authority hygiene ratings for local food businesses, such as take-aways, clubs, pubs and restaurants.



So, from now onwards, when you are choosing somewhere to eat, the scheme will provide you with key information about hygiene standards.

Following a food hygiene inspection by Woking Borough Council’s Environmental Health Officers, each local food business has been given a rating from zero (very poor) to five (excellent), based on the three main areas of the Food Standards Agency (FSA) Code of Practice:

- Confidence in the management of the business. For example, past records when complying with the law and general attitude.
- Food hygiene and safety procedures, including food handling practices and temperature control.
- The structure and condition of the premises. This includes cleanliness, layout, lighting, ventilation and washing facilities.

To view all local food premises’ hygiene results, visit www.food.gov.uk/ratings, or look out for stickers displaying each rating on food premises’ windows across the Borough.

Tenant Inspectors

A volunteer group representing Woking Borough Council tenants and leaseholders, known collectively as the Tenant Inspectors, has been appointed to carry out assessments of local housing services to assist the Council in ensuring that the standards agreed with the Tenant and Leaseholder Forum are met.

The inspectors provide a customer perspective on how well the Council’s Housing Services are performing. This includes what works well and what could be improved.

The first inspection looked at the standard relating to day-to-day repairs, and the report made recommendations which the Council has addressed.

The inspectors have now started their second inspection on ‘after allocations’. After allocation is the process which follows after a tenant has accepted a council property.

The inspection team uses various different approaches when doing an inspection, such as, mystery shopping, surveys and desktop reviews of documents. They also ask the Council to contact tenants, to find out more about their experience when they visited the Council to sign their tenancy agreement and collect the keys.

Please help the tenant inspectors. If you are sent a survey or contacted by them, please help by answering their questions. The information you give to the inspectors means that they can then make recommendations to improve the services you receive.

If you would like to know more about the Tenant Inspectors, please contact Helen Hilderley on **01483 743620** or email helen.hilderley@woking.gov.uk



Food caddies

Following the successful introduction of weekly food waste services during 2010, the Council has been busy delivering more food waste caddies to those households (mostly flats) not included in the first phase.

Most residents living in flats have now been provided with a small silver caddy for storage indoors and a brown-lidded wheeled bin has been delivered to shared bin areas.

By following the simple steps below you can help us to divert all your food waste from landfill.

Step 1: Store the small silver caddy in a convenient place in your kitchen and line it with a compostable liner or newspaper. Put all your food waste into the silver caddy instead of your kitchen waste bin.



Step 2: When your silver caddy is full, tie the liner or wrap the newspaper and remove the food waste from the caddy. Take this to the brown-lidded wheeled bins, located in your bin area.

Don't put your silver caddy into the bins or present it for collection.

Around 5,000 flats are now using the food waste collection service.

This service enables everyone to divert all their food waste from landfill – regardless of the volumes. Individually, you may feel your food waste is a small amount but, borough-wide, this can equate to around 14 tonnes per day!

If you have received the containers but have ideas on how the service could be improved, or if you have not yet received the containers and would like to assist in the development of food waste collections in your area, please phone **01483 755 855**.

Special thanks: Streetwise would like to say a special thank you to Editorial Panel member, Sharon Tongue, for her research on this subject.



Registering a death – tell us once

From June 2011, when someone sadly dies, Surrey County Council will be able to make it easier for you to inform council and government departments that need to know about the death.

Following a bereavement, it is required by law to formally register the death with the local Registrar (Surrey County Council). However, from this month onwards, the Registrar will also be able to offer relatives the 'Tell us once' service at its offices across the county.

With your permission, the Registrar can inform the relevant council and public services that need to know about the bereavement. It is hoped that the 'Tell us once' service will make things easier and reduce some of the stress for the bereaved.

This free of charge service is able to inform the following services:

- Council Tax
- Electoral Register
- Housing and Council Tax Benefit

- Social Services (adult)
- Blue Badge
- Libraries
- Department for Work and Pensions (State pensions and benefits)
- HM Revenue and Customs (tax credits)
- Identify and Passport Service (passport)
- DVLA (driving licence).

For more information, ask at your local council office, library or registrar's office or visit **www.surreycc.gov.uk**

'Tell us once' is a government-backed initiative, delivered by Surrey County Council and the 11 district and borough councils in Surrey.

Dates for your diary

Saturday 23 July – Sheerwater Festival

Make a date with all the family to visit the Sheerwater Festival at the end of July. The free family fun day includes funfair, football competition, food stalls and much, much more.



This annual charity event, organised by voluntary Sheerwater community groups and residents, is topped off with a spectacular fireworks display.

Times: 12pm to 4pm (fun day)
Evening (fireworks)

Address: Sheerwater Recreation Ground, Off Blackmore Crescent, Sheerwater, Woking GU21 5NZ

For more information, contact Bob Morgan, Community Development Officer, on **01483 743340** or email bob.morgan@woking.gov.uk

Sunday 14 August – Olympic Cycle Road Race Test Event

Watch top international cyclists battle it out for pole position right on your doorstep! Earlier this year, the London 2012 Organising Committee (LOCOG) announced that the 2012 Olympic road cycle races will pass through a number of Surrey Boroughs, including Woking.

On Sunday 14 August, 100 riders have been invited to a 'test event' to check the whole route starting and finishing in London, and taking in 130 miles of Surrey roads, including **Byfleet and West Byfleet**. (Please note: this will include some temporary on-the-day road closures, which will be publicised over the coming months.)

Get ready for 2012!

The actual Olympic road races will take place on **Saturday 28 July 2012** for the men's event and **Sunday 29 July 2012** for the women's events – the first and second days of the Olympic Games.

For further information about the events, visit www.gosurrey.info

'Scoop the poop' this summer!

Longer days and warmer weather generally attract more families and young people to sit back and relax in the Borough's open green spaces. And, with many young people and youth groups relying on these areas for outdoor activity spaces, it is no wonder the



Council's Animal Warden, Neville Cast, is warning all dog owners to 'scoop the poop' this summer.

Neville Cast, said: "Most dog walkers are responsible and do clean up after their dogs, however, there is a minority that don't. We provide designated bins across all of our recreation grounds for walkers to dispose of their dogs' deposits. There's simply no excuse for anyone not to clear up after their dog."

Figures alone reveal the size of the problem – at one particular recreation ground within the Borough, 48 separate 'deposits' were removed by environmental partners, Serco, in a single weekend.

The issue of dog mess is increasing across the Borough. Dog owners are advised that, under the Woking Borough Council Dog Fouling Designation Order 1999, it is an offence not to clear up immediately after a dog in their charge has fouled on public land. Anyone caught not 'scooping the poop' could face an on-the-spot fine of £50, and a fine of up to £1,000 if prosecuted.

To report incidents of dog fouling, please contact Woking Borough Council's Animal Warden on **01483 755855**, or email neville.cast@woking.gov.uk

Last chance to enter Woking in Bloom!

Green fingered tenants and leaseholders are being reminded that the closing date for the annual Woking in Bloom competition is 4 July 2011.

So, if you are potty about plants and regularly tend to your patch, remember you still have time to join in the floral fun by entering one or more of the seven categories, including: best large and small front gardens, best hanging basket, best tub or container, and best kept community (shared) garden.

Entry is free and there are some great prizes on offer. Judging will take place in July and all winners will be invited to attend a presentation in September.



Entry forms are available at the Civic Offices, local libraries and online at www.woking.gov.uk/wokinginbloom

Summer crime prevention advice

by Woking's Crime Protection Advisor, Mark Saunders

If your doors are insecure, your home is insecure too.

Make sure doors and door frames are strong and in good condition. Fit robust deadlocks conforming to British Standard BS3621 on your front and back doors and keep them locked at all times – even when you are at home.



Check your windows

- Ensure your windows and window frames are in good condition.
- Fit window locks – thieves hate attracting attention by breaking glass.
- Always lock your windows when you leave home and double-check that French windows and patio doors are secure.
- Ensure sliding patio doors that slide on the outside cannot simply be lifted up and off the runners by potential offenders.

Lighting-up time

Making potential thieves feel exposed when approaching your property can help reduce the risk of a burglary. The best option is low wattage lighting that comes on automatically at dusk and goes off at dawn. Locate lights carefully so they don't create dark shadowed areas that could provide hiding places for thieves. Using economy light bulbs costs less than 1p per night and you can control the on/off cycle by using a timer.

Fit a burglar alarm

A visible burglar alarm will make a potential intruder think twice. Use it whenever you leave the house and when you go to bed – most alarms can be set to go off in a particular part of the house (downstairs only, when you are upstairs, for example).

Internal security advice

- Do not leave car, door or window keys on view. Never leave keys within reach of a letterbox or a window.
- Never leave spare keys in an obvious place, such as under a flower pot or a doormat. Leave them with a trusted neighbour or relative instead.

- Move valuable items away from windows and put them out of sight.
- Register valuable property at **immobilise.com** or keep an inventory including description, serial number and photograph of each item.
- Use an ultraviolet pen or forensic coding product to 'property mark' all valuable items with your postcode and house number. This makes them uniquely identifiable. Place signs or stickers around your home to make it clear that your property is marked.
- Do not keep large amounts of cash at home. If you have to do so, use a home safe that is stored out of sight.
- When moving into a new house, change the locks to avoid strangers having a set of your new keys.

Going away?

Around half of all burglaries happen in empty homes. The best deterrent is to make your home look occupied while you are away, by using automatic timer switches to turn interior lights on and off. Also ask a trusted neighbour to park their car on your drive occasionally and to open your curtains in the mornings and close them in the evenings.

Also take the following precautions.

- Don't discuss holiday plans in the presence of strangers – and don't post details on social media websites.
- Mow the lawn and tidy the garden.
- Cancel milk, newspaper or other regular deliveries.
- Lock sheds, garages and windows.
- Place important documents in a home safe or deposit them in a bank.
- Ask a neighbour to collect your mail, or use the Royal Mail 'Keepsafe' service.
- Give contact details to a neighbour in case of emergency – and ensure they know your return date.
- Ask your local Neighbourhood Watch scheme to keep an eye on your home while you are away.
- When travelling to your holiday destination, don't display your home address on your luggage tag.



Reducing shed, garage and garden crime

Burglars aren't only interested in the valuables inside your house. Equipment kept in a garage, shed or garden can be just as tempting (and is sometimes used to break into a house). Many houses are securely alarmed but garages and sheds are often left insecure and therefore offer 'easy pickings' for a criminal.

By following the advice given below you could deter potential burglars and help keep your property safe.

Sheds, garages and outbuildings

- Use good quality fixings and a padlock to secure shed and garage doors.



- To prevent a burglar from unscrewing door hinges, use anti-tamper screws or smear hard setting glue on the screw-heads.
- If possible, lock any windows or fit internal bars or grilles.
- Install either a mains-powered or battery-powered shed alarm – available from DIY stores.

Tools and equipment

- If possible, secure lawnmowers and other valuable equipment to a shed or garage wall.
- Lock tools away when you aren't using them.
- If possible, fit a lockable wire-cage for storing expensive items inside your shed.

In the garden

- Lay crunchy gravel on the approach to your house if possible. Thieves hate drawing attention to themselves by making a noise.
- Your wheelie bin could be used as a climbing aid or even as a means of transporting stolen property. Secure it by padlocking it to a wall bracket or drainpipe or position it away from the accessible windows.
- Securing the perimeter of your garden will help to protect your property. Plant low hedges or install low, good quality fencing – it will make a potential burglar feel exposed and perhaps think twice.



- A good option is trellised fencing which doesn't obstruct visibility and is difficult to climb over.

Let nature help

Nature can help provide an effective (and attractive) deterrent to anyone thinking of entering your garden.

- Select your plants carefully. Holly and hawthorn are particularly difficult to get through.
- Protect drainpipes with anti-climb paint or a climbing rose to deter access to windows and flat roofs.
- Plant prickly, deciduous shrubs next to walls or fences as an effective barrier for anyone attempting to climb in.

Electric timers

As outlined in the neighbouring article, using an electric timer can act as a preventative measure when leaving your property unoccupied for periods of time. However, if you're thinking about using a timer or currently use one, it is important to double check or consider the top tips below.

- Always read the instructions that come with the timer.
- Only use indoors unless stated otherwise.
- Do not use with any appliance which exceeds the capacity of the timer.
- Always ensure that the plug of any appliance is fully inserted into the timer.
- Make sure the mains socket the timer is plugged into is in good working order.
- If you need to clean the timer, remove from the mains and wipe with a dry cloth – do not immerse in water or any liquid.
- Fan heaters and heaters with exposed elements should not be left unattended. It is recommended that these appliances should not be connected to timers.
- Remove any clutter surrounding the timer.

Remember: If leaving your property unattended for prolonged periods of time, always ask a close friend or neighbour to keep an eye on the property. And, where possible, ask them to drop-in and check the timer and electrical appliances.

Special thanks: Streetwise would like to say thank you to Paul Salt, Tenant Representative and member of the Streetwise Editorial Panel, for his suggestions about electric timers.

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01483 755855 (9am to 5pm)

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