

Issue 1

F **TENANT** FOCUS

Your regular housing updates

Summer 2022



Welcome to Tenant Focus

Welcome to the first edition of our quarterly digital Tenant Focus newsletter.

For our first edition, we wanted to highlight the hard work and dedication of our volunteers and staff working to make your local neighbourhoods even better.



Volunteer Spotlight: Eric Shipton

Eric is a long-standing member of Sutton Housing Liaison Board (HLB), serves as the chair of the Performance Monitoring Subgroup (PMG), and has recently been elected as the new City Housing Liaison Board (CHLB) Chair.



Why did you decide to volunteer?

I was grateful for the help I received from the council when I became a tenant and I wanted to give something back to others in need.

Have you had any highlights of your time?

I thought the work the council did to consult tenants on the installation of sprinklers in high-rise blocks was excellent. They kept tenants continually updated and answered all questions openly and honestly to alleviate concerns. I was a member of ARCH at the time and out of the 35 Local Authority members, Birmingham was leaps and bounds ahead of everyone else with the information produced for tenants.

How well do you feel the movement had managed to adapt to Covid, and do you feel there are any lessons learned here for the future?

The use of technology to stay connected during the pandemic is something we need to build on and take advantage of. There will always be a place for face-to-face meetings, they provide social interaction, and a lot of our

members are elderly so this is vital to reducing social isolation, but there are other ways of interacting with people.

What do you see as the challenges for tenant engagement going forward?

It's hard to get new members, especially younger people. Engagement needs to adapt itself to encourage younger people to want to take part, to be worried about their communities and housing.

What would you say are key issues from tenants that you hear from those you have worked with or represented?

We need more social housing, and tenants want to feel safe in the area where they live and in their property. The council needs to listen to tenants and act, and tenants need to be consulted and involved at an early stage.

Finally, why should more tenants get involved?

They should get involved for the simple reason, they're protecting social housing for their children and their grandchildren.





Staff Spotlight: Jennifer Carter

Jennifer is the TPO for the Edgbaston district which covers the Quinton, Harborne, Edgbaston and Bartley Green wards (around 7,000 properties).

What variety of events may people encounter you, who aren't already involved in a group?

Carrying out litter picks, walkabouts, organising conferences or open days, park events, and drop-in sessions are a great way to start a conversation with residents and encourage them to get involved. It's not everyone's preference to join a more formal group, preferring instead to attend a one-off event.

What could BCC improve on going forward?

While customers want to be heard, they also need to see evidence that their voice does matter and can make a positive change. If there is a delay due to lack of resource or other issues that have arisen, we must be open and honest.

Have you had any experiences of resolving issues for tenants that have felt rewarding?

Projects where I can use our budgets to improve the safety of

a block with new security doors, or to clean up a fly tipped area behind houses to allow for tenants to garden and children to play are always rewarding. It makes me feel like my job is worthwhile as I'm able help residents enjoy a safe, healthy and green environment.

What do you feel are the lessons learned from the pandemic?

Social media and virtual technology is a way forward, but tenants need training and equipment to be able to use this and gain confidence. Moving forward I think we also need to remember that there are other options where we could safely

meet to engage, or to connect with residents who cannot use social media. We live in a diverse community and tenant involvement is about engaging with people at the level that suits them.

What do you see as the challenges for tenant engagement going forward?

The biggest challenge is apathy – if residents are not seeing results, it will lead to frustration. When residents put forward any requests that may be important to them, we need to be transparent and clear of the outcome. As I said, communication is key.

Tenant Participation Advisory Service Review

The TPAS (Tenant Participation Advisory Service) recently reviewed our tenant engagement service. This review looked at the ways in which we currently engage with council tenants and leaseholders, ensuring that we are up to date and providing the best service possible. BCC is currently working with TPAS to plan any necessary changes, while keeping current volunteers informed and involved in the process.

Local updates

North

- In Sutton, the TPOs supported the residents at Park Court, Boldmere Road to hold an event to celebrate VE Day.
- Tenants on Woodington Road with the support of the TPO helped dig out the brambles which were massively overgrown. The HLB paid for weed spraying equipment to ensure they didn't grow back.
- Benches and garden furniture have been installed in several communal gardens to allow residents to enjoy getting outside in a Covid secure way.

East

- We worked with tenants at a low-rise block of flats on the Warwick Road by painting the front entrances to their flats to improve their appearance. The tenants also achieved an Advancing award from It's Your Neighbourhood.
- At Bakeman House, new directional signs were installed to help with the delivery of parcels to the flats, and new bins were installed at the block along Berkley Road to keep it clean and tidy. New fencing and

bin stores were installed at the block of flats on Edenbridge Road to improve their appearance for residents.

South

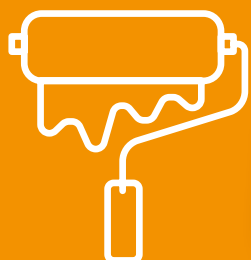
- Local Selly Oak HLBs worked with the Maypole Youth Centre on their online Digital Project to support young people. They also supported the work of the Spearhead Trust and Manningford Hall in funding food parcels for local people during lockdown.
- Work was undertaken to clear accumulated rubbish from the rear gardens on the blocks of flats on Rilstone Road in Edgbaston, as local children had nowhere safe to play during lockdown.
- In Northfield, local volunteers and HLB members obtained funding to purchase litter pickers, which has resulted in the setting up of a Wednesday Litter Picking Group and the introduction of a successful weekly rota to empty over 30 litter bins in the areas surrounding Balaams Wood and the nearby River Rea. This participation resulted in nearly half a ton of rubbish being collected each Wednesday.

Central

- In Ladywood, work to promote awareness of the Clean Air Zone has continued, ensuring tenants register their vehicles and are aware of the charging policy upon entering the city centre.
- Ladywood supported the Karis Project who carry out many engagement projects involving tenants and residents in the North Edgbaston Ward. In 2020, the 'Birmingham South West Group' commissioned a mural made up of thousands of hand-laid mosaic flower tiles. These wrapped around the Karis Medical Centre, Edgbaston, to thank the NHS, and those who work at the centre, for supporting local residents during the pandemic.

To see all of BCC's tenant engagement activities, please see our leaflet on 'How tenants and leaseholders can get involved in their neighbourhood'.

If you would like to get involved in your local area, please fill in the Resident Involvement Questionnaire by visiting birmingham.gov.uk.



Entrance before



Entrance after



New signage for Bakeman House



News updates

Virtual Meetings

During the Covid 19 pandemic, face-to-face meetings were disrupted. Thankfully, many groups have been able to adapt to virtual meetings to ensure that volunteer groups, and the important work that they do, can continue.

City Housing Liaison Board (CHLB)

At their recent AGM in November, the board elected their new Chair (Eric Shipton from Sutton Coldfield HLB) and Vice Chair (Malcolm Nicholls from Druids Heath HLB).

Tenant Hall Management Committee

The newly established Tenant Hall Management Committee held its first meeting in December 2021.

Association of Retained Council Housing (ARCH)

A new tenant rep was needed to represent Birmingham tenants at the national level. As such, the vacancy was promoted and Malcolm Nicholls was confirmed as the new ARCH rep.

[birmingham.gov.uk/news/20006/housing](https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/news/20006/housing)



BIRMINGHAM IN BLOOM

**This year's
competition is
now open for
entries**

The In Bloom categories are open until 29 July 2022, and the Neighbourhood Recognition categories are open until 31 August 2022.

For more information on categories and how to enter, please visit our website at:

birmingham.gov.uk/info/20006/housing/1134/birmingham_in_bloom

**A BOLDER
GREENER
BIRMINGHAM**



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