

Neighbourhood Matters

Issue 19: **Spring 2024**



Star Awards Entries open

Communal Hall refurbishment underway

Easter walkabout and clean up a success



Cover photo: Grand opening of 29 new homes in Bridgwater

Cheddar, Axbridge and North Sedgemoor Villages

Burnham-on-Sea, Highbridge, Brean and Berrow

Hamp, North Petherton, South Bridgwater Villages and La Ciotat

Sydenham and the Levels


Woolavington, Puriton and Polden and Parrett Villages

Bridgwater Central and West Bridgwater Villages

Corporate News


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Don't forget to follow us on social media and check our website!



Hello...



A very warm welcome to our spring edition of Neighbourhood Matters. We've had a busy start to the year, and we are delighted to share our news.

One of our key corporate objectives is Affordable Homes, and in April we were delighted to take management of 32 new homes in Bridgwater and North Petherton. At a time when the cost of living is still a real challenge, it is good to know that these attractive new homes will also be energy efficient and set at an affordable rent. We are already well underway with a further 33 new homes in the Hamp area and are looking forward to completion at the end of the year.

Last year the Regulator of Social Housing introduced a range of Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) to enable customers to better understand their landlord's performance and hold them to account. At Homes in Sedgemoor, we undertake monthly customer surveys to find out what you think of our services and identify the areas for improvement. This year I am really pleased that you have found our performance to be high across nearly all service areas. We are not complacent, however, and want to do more.

Customers are at the centre of all that we do and your views are essential for shaping services and driving improvements. There are lots of ways to get involved and make a difference. In addition to our Sedgemoor Tenants Assurance Committee (STAC), we also hold regular scrutiny panels and service improvement meetings that look at specific areas and

make recommendations for improvement. We hold regular estate walks with customers and a range of activities to improve estates or community areas such as litter picks. Our Making A Difference (MAD) fund is available to help residents with community projects in their locality. Coffee mornings and other social events are also a great way to meet people and get to know more about us and what we do. Please get in touch if you would like any more information.

As an organisation we are keen to enhance technology to improve services and enhance customer experience. We have therefore been working hard with customers to develop an easier way of reporting repairs. We have now launched our new online system (VerseOne) that allows repair appointments to be booked and tracked online. Existing arrangements for reporting a repair will continue for those who prefer to use the current system.

You will see that nominations are now open for this year's Star Awards. These brilliant awards are designed to recognise and celebrate the importance of community and those individuals who do those special things or do above and beyond in their daily lives. The awards ceremony will be held in October.

I hope you enjoy reading this issue of Neighbourhood Matters.

Naomi Macey
Director of Asset Management and Safety

Garden Competition 2024 Open



Scan me
to enter!

We're excited to announce that entries into our 2024 Garden Competition are now open!

This year's event, entitled The Good Life and the Wildlife, has numerous categories to suit every type of gardener. We've the Sustainable Fruit and Veg category, to demonstrate your "grow your own" prowess, then we've the small garden category, to showcase your space, no matter how limited. If space isn't an issue, enter our large garden category and wow us with your planting and design.

We're looking at creativity and how you transform your space and we've got the Pots and Planters category which might suit those with a patio or small outdoor area, and then we've got the Communal Garden category to really showcase your teamwork with friends and neighbours.

This year we also have the Junior Gardener category, for those budding (get it!) gardeners under the age of 16.

Whatever your outdoor space looks like, we have something to suit you, and it's really easy to enter.

All you have to do is contact our Community Enabler Team on 0800 585 360, email them at community.engagement@homesinsedgemoor.org or fill out the form on our website at www.homesinsedgemoor.org.

The deadline for entries is 5pm, Monday, June 3.

Winners from 2023

Communal Garden Winner

Mrs Llewelyn



Large Garden Winner

Mr & Mrs Beavis



Pots, Planters, and Hanging Baskets Winner

Mrs Watts



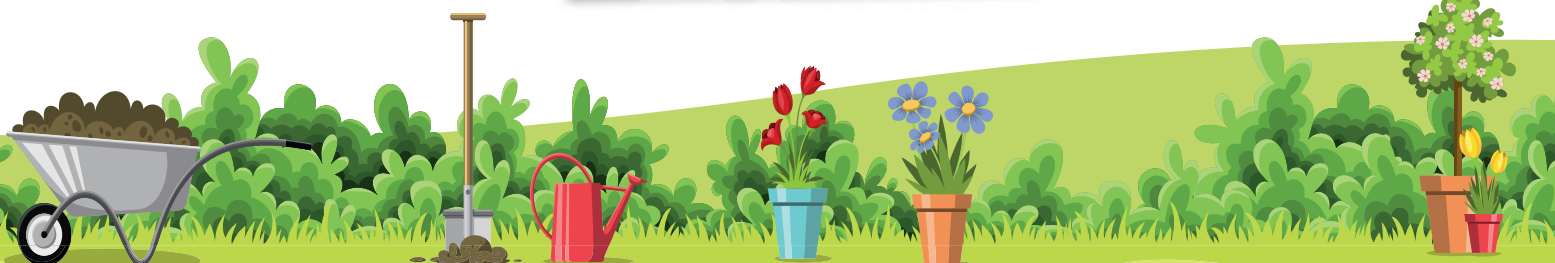
Small Garden Winner

Mr & Mrs O'Brien



Sustainable Foods Winner

Miss Raven



Easter litter pick

Ten bags of rubbish were collected when our Community Enabler Team organised a litter pick for families on the Hamp estate, in Bridgwater.

Families and involved customers joined us to help clean up the community, and every child that attended received a hand-knitted chick and Easter egg.



The knitted chicks were kindly donated by North Petherton Knit and Natter Group, Susan Harvey of Knitted and Crochet Blankets in Bridgwater, and Homes in Sedgemoor customer Mrs Brook.



If you know of a litter pick group in your community, we'd love to get involved! Contact our Community Enabler Team at community.engagement@homesinsedgemoor.org or call 0800 585 360 to see how we can support your event.



La Ciotat gets fresh new look

We're pleased to be giving the car park and communal paths at La Ciotat House a makeover.

Work is due to begin in May to re-tarmac the car park and re-paint the lines for residents living in the block of flats.

We are also looking forward to tidying up the communal paths and areas by cleaning and pressure washing the concrete and walkways.

This follows works inside the block of flats where we have modernised the communal areas with new carpets on all floors, put in new suspended ceilings with white lightweight tiles and installed a new fire system.

If you have any questions about the car park works, which are scheduled to take around a week, please contact our Customer Services Team at customer.services@homesinsedgemoor.org or by calling 0800 585 360.



New carpet brightens room

Cheddar, Axbridge and North Sedgemoor Villages

After consultations with customers at Wellington Place, the communal room now boasts a new carpet.

Housing Officer Gary worked closely with customers who are very happy with the new look and said it makes the room look more welcoming.

During the works, we were also able to reduce the amount of furniture in the room, making it safer and more useable.



Communal hall refurbishment underway

Burnham-on-Sea, Highbridge, Brean and Berrow



The refurbishment works will cost in the region of **£220K**

Following work last year at West Bow House with a total overhaul of its communal room, works have now started to upgrade the communal hall at Chichester Close.



MD Group is currently working hard to make the space more modern, while developing the adjacent garages into a more useable area. The upgraded hall will have new furniture, wheelchair accessible entrances, a quiet room, a new craft room, and a fully modernised kitchen.

The refurbishment works started in April, following a review of the Sheltered Housing Service.

While works are underway customers can use Rosewood Close communal room on a temporary basis.

We look forward to completing the works, and providing a modern communal hall which is fit for the future.

Upcoming community events

Upcoming community events

Our Community Enabler Team is looking forward to supporting a number of events over the summer, including:

- Sydenham Improvement Group/Pantry's Summer Teddy Bears' Picnic on Sunday, June 23, 2024
- Victoria Park Community Centre's Front Garden Festival on Saturday, June 8, 2024, between 12pm-6pm.

If you know of any events in your local area that the Community Enablers can support, please contact us at community.engagement@homesinsedgemoor.org.

Coronation House improvements

Our customers are our priority, and when we heard they felt improvements could be made at Coronation House, in Sydenham, we were quick to act.

After some customer feedback about the cleaning and caretaking at Coronation House, we visited the area and swiftly put in place an action plan for a clean-up operation.

Working in partnership with contractor Clean Surrounds, we improved the customers' environment by assigning specific issues to certain officers. The outcome is that cleaning

has increased to three sessions a week, including the outside area. A new waste management process for customers has now been agreed and the Compliance Team shared their feedback around improvements at Coronation House.

One of our Housing Officers also organised to be on site regularly, with a positive outcome.

The work is already having a positive impact to the area, with customers reassured that we listen to their concerns and act upon them where we can.



Independent Living Service

Our Independent Living Team organises weekly engagement sessions for customers living in supported accommodation, which are held in the communal halls and rooms.

Independent Living Service customers are invited to attend the sociable and informal meetings to talk with the team for as long as they would like.

Find your local event, and pop along:

Mondays

- 11am – 12.30pm at Walter Barnett (fortnightly)
- 1.30pm – 3pm at Chichester Close (when refurbishment completed)

Tuesdays

- 10am – 11am at Wellington Place
- 1.30pm – 3pm at Dunwear House (fortnightly)
- 1.30pm – 3pm at West Bow House (fortnightly)
- 1.30pm – 3pm at Rosewood
- 10.30am – 12pm at Baymead

Wednesdays

- 10.30am – 12pm at Meads Court
- 2pm – 3pm at General Higgins House

Thursdays

- 11am – 12.30pm at Francis Bastin (first of every month)
- 10am – 11am at Penn Close



New system makes repair reporting even easier

We've been working on a new system that will make our customer experience even slicker.

Together with VerseOne, we can now put more control in the hands of our customers, to book repairs and to track progress.

Through the VerseOne system you can book an appointment, then track an engineer and chat to them on the day of their appointment via LOCALZ.

The new system enables you to:



Book a repair at a time that suits them



Request a repair via the tenant portal and have full visibility of its progress.



Advise us of other issues, such as damp and mould problems

Repairs will log automatically in our system and in our main repairs contractor's system. Some repairs will need to be logged manually by Customer Services, but you will still be able to report them online and where we do not offer repairs for certain jobs (e.g. replacing a toilet seat), there are self-help guides and videos.

You will still be offered same day appointments, but these will be via the Customer Services Team.

Rik Saunders, Property Services and Investment Manager said:

“This system offers customers even more convenience when booking and monitoring repairs, giving them the whole package from start to finish at the click of a button. It really brings repairs reporting into the 21st century.”

CUSTOMER
DRIVEN



Web chat service

Did you know we have someone ready to answer your questions just at the click of a mouse?

Unlike some web messenger services, members of Homes in Sedgemoor's Customer Services Team are at the end of the line ready to help you – no robots!

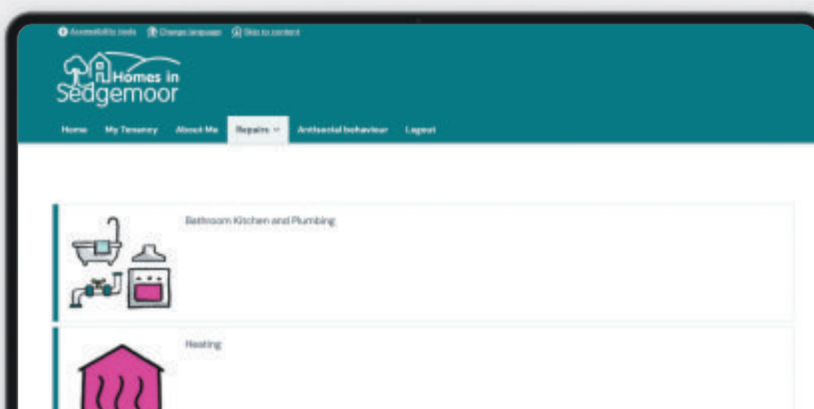
The web messenger means you can get a quick response to frequently asked questions and can save you time.

You'll find the service on our website homepage.

Just click and ask away!



The new VerseOne system



Making a Difference Fund

The Making a Difference (MaD) Fund was created to help develop estates and the environment with projects that benefit the community.

Our customers, leaseholders, resident groups, voluntary groups, community groups and registered charities can all apply to for MaD funding, with a value of up to £500.

We welcome applications from organisations that have a particular project that is targeted towards the local area.

For more information and to apply, visit our website at www.homesinsedgemoor.org.

The fund has three main aims:

1. Develop Estates and the Environment

Projects that benefit the environment for example landscaping land, recycling schemes, green/ecological projects. Projects that develop estates, for example community clean ups, and projects that prevent anti-social behaviour.

2. Improve Life Chances

Support groups, advice networks, debt/budgeting

support, life skills, healthy living and wellbeing projects, fitness, energy efficiency advice and workshops.

3. Create Communities

Local community projects, for example play schemes, social inclusion initiatives, resources for projects, community events, projects for the elderly, volunteering opportunities, support for families in the community.

Service Improvement Group reviews communications

We held a great meeting with our Service Improvement Group (SIP) looking at our communications materials, including our newsletter.

As well as the newsletter, the group looked at our Annual Report, calling cards, social media offerings, the opportunities of launching a twice-yearly customer e-bulletin and our use of images and graphics, discussing what works well and what could be improved.

We were really pleased to hear the positive feedback from the group, and are excited to implement some changes to the materials we produce, including changing the size of our calling cards from A5 to A6 to be both more appealing and environmentally friendly.

A discussion was also had around going paperless for our newsletter.

While we all agreed it was important that a print copy of the newsletter is always available, SIP members were keen to ensure we were being proactive in our commitment to being sustainable, and felt it was time to launch an opt in, opt out paperless service. We will be looking at the best way to implement this over the coming months, and will share our plans with you in the winter edition of this newsletter.

We also received positive feedback around our social media offerings, with the group keen for us to explore Instagram to appeal to more customers. So keep an eye out for our new account!

Your feedback is important to us, to share your thoughts on our marketing materials visit www.homesinsedgemoor.org.

Did you know?

SIP meets every month to test and review services that we deliver in your communities. The panel of ten customers has so far reviewed a number of areas of the business including our empty home inspections, our customer welcome pack and our Safeguarding and Hate Crime Policies. If you would like to get involved, contact our Community Enabler Team via email community.engagement@homesinsedgemoor.org or call 0800 585 360.



Get Involved with Homes in Sedgemoor

Our Sedgemoor Tenants Assurance Committee (STAC) ensures that customers are fully invested in Homes in Sedgemoor and offers a platform for them to have a voice.

We actively encourage anyone who wants to be involved to get in touch as this can be hugely rewarding, and we offer opportunities to suit everyone.

Watch our video of Craig, our STAC member, on our website explaining what it involves and why it's such a great thing to be involved with!

Details on how to get involved can be found on our website, on the same page as Craig's video, at www.homesinsedgemoor.org/your-home/get-involved.

Scan me to get involved!



Scrutiny Panel Recommends improvements

We are committed to holding two scrutiny events every year, where our customers review our service delivery within a certain area as determined by STAC.

For the last financial year, we looked at our Complaints Handling process, and Grounds Maintenance service.

Following the successful meetings, we came away with a number of actions which have either already been implemented or will be in the near future.

The actions include:

Complaints Handling Scrutiny actions:

1. We must ensure clarity and better understanding of requests being made –

all customers expressing dissatisfaction are now asked if they would like to log an initial complaint for further investigation and response.

2. Improved communication – this is key but it is often an area where we need to improve. Customers can log a complaint by whatever channel they prefer but responsible officers must then ensure timely updates are provided.
3. Ongoing and regular training must be held for all customer facing colleagues to ensure everyone is aware of how to log an initial complaint and are empowered to resolve at first point of contact wherever possible.

Grounds Maintenance Scrutiny actions:

1. Hold monthly local patch team meetings to monitor and feedback on any issues.
2. Ensure recycling facilities at sites are fit for purpose and request additional bins as needed to deter fly-tipping.
3. Estate walks to be used to identify areas for improvement and untidy gardens to be handled by the Housing Team.

Overall, from both sessions, we have agreed that the website is to be updated to include a scrutiny section, and a form to be added to log a complaint or report an issue.

Remembering former Chair - Chris Moseley

We are very sad to hear of the passing of Chris Moseley in January after an extended period of sickness.

Chris lived in social housing for almost 50 years and was always a strong advocate for tenants. As a very proud tenant himself, Chris became involved with Sedgemoor District Council as his landlord and then Homes in Sedgemoor, since moving to the area some 25 years ago.

He dedicated much of his time and energy to becoming a key player within the tenant body at Homes in Sedgemoor, and was instrumental in influencing tenants to vote in favour of the setting up of the Arms-Length Management Organisation in 2007.

Since then, Chris worked at every level of our tenant participation structure, from Chair of the Board, Board member and shadow Board member, to Chair of the Tenants Forum and member of many committees and task groups where he continued to make a difference and inspire others with his focus and enthusiasm.

As an early adopter of the “Benefit to Society” campaign within Homes in Sedgemoor, Chris promoted a positive image of tenants, presented at conferences and undertook radio interviews to support the campaign. He was also actively involved with “See the Person” that promoted and championed the ongoing battle against the misrepresentation of tenants in the media. This included lobbying at the highest levels in government including visits to Westminster.

In 2020, Chris was proud to have his work recognised when presented with the TPAS Lifetime Achievement Award.



Missed appointments

Our contractors have the important role of checking safety elements of properties, including gas checks, general safety assessments and repairs.

Unfortunately, many appointments made with our contractors are not met, due to customers not being able to let them in when they arrive. Out of 413 appointments with Liberty dealing with gas appointments, 36% were not able to get into the property.

If appointments aren't met, this has a serious impact on the service we offer, your safety and it could also hinder customers' chances of getting new appointments quickly.

If you need to rearrange an appointment with an operative, call our Customer Services Team on 0800 585 360 and they will find a time and date to suit you.



We're delighted to announce once again that nominations for our hugely anticipated STAR Awards are now open.

The headline sponsor for the 2024 event is MD Group who have been staunch supporters to Homes in Sedgemoor (HiS) over the years. A big thanks to them, as well as our category sponsors Envirocall, Environtec and Impart Links, and our ceremony sponsors Southwest Frames, G&S Scaffolding Solutions, CEF and Resource who have all made the awards possible.

The awards are an opportunity to celebrate our community and the achievements of customers and individuals involved with HiS.

This year's STAR Awards will take place in October and recipients are nominated by the community, with categories including:



Nominate someone who has gone above and beyond the call of duty in your community. Perhaps they've done something extraordinary within your local area or set up a community initiative that helps others. This award celebrates acts of bravery, extraordinary kindness, and all-round brilliance.



Nominate those whose little acts of kindness make the biggest difference to people's lives. Those special people who help others without expecting reward, or who've done something amazing under the radar.



Recognising extraordinary groups who are making a positive change in the community. This could be by setting up events that bring people together or providing a service supporting others in the local area.



Celebrating our younger generation (u18), this award looks to recognise those who rise up and show outstanding promise. Maybe it's a young person who has done something to enhance their local environment, someone who always puts others above themselves or is a young carer.

You can nominate your Stars online at www.homesinsedgemoor.org or by contacting our Customer Services Team on 0800 585 360 or at customer.services@homesinsedgemoor.org.

Once again, MD Group is delighted to be the headline sponsor for the inspirational HiS STAR Awards 2024. We previously sponsored this event and look forward to celebrating the fantastic work that residents are doing for their local community.

At MD Group, we are proud of what we do. One of our core values is to help the areas we work in thrive, by delivering social value that provides sustainable local employment, apprenticeship programmes, training opportunities and investment for initiatives that benefit the local communities.

We are therefore 'proud' to sponsor the STAR Awards 2024 and wish all those nominated the best of luck, and we look forward to meeting the finalists.

Matt Constable
Business Development Director
at MD Group

Thank you to all our sponsors!





Bigwood and Staples grand opening

Completion of a £4.3 million housing development in Bridgwater, has been celebrated. The former Bigwood and Staple Printworks site in town now boasts 29 homes for rent.



Affordable, sustainable and multi-functional homes that will support adults with learning disabilities, families and individuals across Bridgwater were officially opened in April, by Leader of Somerset Council Bill Revans.

Cllr Revans was joined by fellow councillors, Homes in Sedgemoor staff and board members to cut the ribbon for the official opening of the £4.3 million development at the old Bigwood and Staple Printworks site.

A mix of 29 new homes are now available as social rental properties, and Homes in Sedgemoor hosted the opening ceremony at the site with celebratory cake and fizz for all who attended.

Cllr Revans said:

“What I really love about these houses is some of them are going to be allocated to adults with learning disabilities, who will have an ideal place to live, to be looked after, to take part in the community, to live independently and that’s exactly what we want to do with our housing stock in Somerset.”

The new homes come with single parking spaces and landscaped surrounds, external cycle storage and bin stores.

As well as welcoming new tenants to their first affordable home they are also suitable for those who wish to downsize to a smaller, more energy-efficient property, freeing up a bigger home for a family that needs it. The homes will also target individuals, couples, those wishing to work from home, or perhaps those who have a need for overnight carers.

Peter Hatch, chief executive of Homes in Sedgemoor said:

“The new homes at the former Bigwood and Staples site meet a wide variety of needs for families and individuals in Bridgwater looking for safe, affordable and environmentally responsible properties. We are delighted to have been able to work together with Somerset Council, Homes England, Abracore and LOHC on this project and today marks a very special day for the community and everyone that’s worked so hard to get this project over the finish line.”

Cllr Frederica Smith-Roberts, Lead Member for Communities, Housing and Culture, added:

“These are such fantastic properties, they are built to such a high standard and will have lots of benefits to the tenants, solar panels, being built to high EPC ratings and they’re just really perfectly centred in the centre of Bridgwater.”



Penlea House update

Work has commenced on the second floor of Penlea House, and we are continuing to preserve the development's historical character by reusing some of its original features.

The structure of the ground floor at Penlea House is now complete and windows and external doors are being fitted and work internally has commenced.

The development, off Rhode Lane, will see 33 new low-environmental impact apartments to let once the project is complete.

Despite encountering a few challenges, we remain on track for completion around October.



Safe homes to provide refuge

We are pleased to be taking on the management of 13 properties to provide safe homes for displaced persons.

Somerset Council has been provided with £3.5m from the Government's Local Authority Housing Fund (LAHF) to buy 31 homes to house displaced persons from Afghanistan and Ukraine.

Duncan, Development Manager at Homes in Sedgemoor, said:

“ We have been working alongside Somerset Council to identify and purchase properties, which will provide sustainable housing for those unable to secure their own accommodation who are here under official resettlement schemes.

“ Homes in Sedgemoor is pleased to be managing 13 of the 31 homes identified and purchased by the council.

“ We look forward to welcoming new customers into the homes.”

These homes will be re-let to people on the council's housing waiting list when they later become vacant.

The funding has been allocated from the Government's £500m LAHF.

Development Page on Website

You can now read updates about the many developments overseen by Homes in Sedgemoor on our new dedicated website page. This is an area where you can see the progress over time on some of our major development sites, including Bigwood and Staples, Penlea, Cricketers Farm and Sydenham Garages.

There are video updates and images to show what stage the developments are at.



Home retrofitted with low carbon technologies

SUSTAINABILITY
BY DESIGN



Homes in Sedgemoor is part of an exciting initiative moving towards a greener future involving Somerset Council, Somerset Independence Plus, and Evolve Home Energy Solutions.

As part of new sustainability measures a property at Mill Walk, Woolavington, was selected to be retrofitted with state-of-the-art low carbon technologies to help it achieve a near zero emissions output status. This works hand in hand towards the Government's Net Zero target for 2050 and similar initiatives will be rolled out across poorer performing housing stock.

This two-bedroom bungalow initially held an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating of G, indicating a very low score for energy performance and heat retention and signifying a real necessity for improvement.

To address the persistent challenges associated with the energy performance of this property, Somerset Council chose to implement energy-efficient measures and incorporate cutting-edge low carbon technologies.

Rik, Property Services and Investment Manager at Homes in Sedgemoor, said:

“The transformation of this home through retrofitting with advanced low carbon technologies marks a significant stride towards a more sustainable and energy-efficient future. The deliberate efforts to enhance energy performance not only contribute to environmental conservation but also exemplify our commitment to creating homes that are both environmentally responsible and comfortable for residents.”

“As we witness the positive impacts on energy efficiency, reduced carbon footprint, and improved overall living conditions, we celebrate a successful example of how innovation in home retrofitting can contribute to a greener and more sustainable lifestyle.”



Solar PV

Six 450w panels have been installed, including a 5.4 kWh system which is expected to generate 2812 kWh per year.



Room in Roof Insulation

Room in roof insulation, paired with Internal Wall insulation, provides a great level of thermal insulation.



High Heat Retention Storage Heaters

Cost efficient storage heaters were installed which accumulate and store heat during the evening, when electricity rates are lower, which is retained until customer-selected intervals.



Cavity wall extraction and refill

The existing fibre insulation was extracted and replaced with an EPS bonded bead product, proven to be more effective than the older standard fibre insulation.



Future-proofing properties

Building a Sustainable Future

Thanks to funding under the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF), properties with a need for heating solutions that are more efficient and sustainable, can receive installations such as solar panels, electric heating and insulation.

One customer who has benefited from the fund is Marie, of Valley View, Wedmore. Marie's property was unsuitable for other heating alternatives, and the solid fuel system that she was relying on was both uneconomical and caused high emissions.

She had solar panels and electric heating installed and the solid fuel appliance was removed, in line with the Government's decarbonisation strategy.

The SHDF is set aside to improve the sustainability credentials of up to 90,000 properties nationwide.

Marie said:

“ I'm loving not having to get up every five minutes to put wood on the fire, the house is now an even temperature throughout.

“ Despite the initial inconvenience when it was installed, I'd really recommend it.

“ The controls from the heating are really good, I've got an app so it's really easy to control even when I'm not at home. Same with the solar app, to see how much we're using and how much is going back on the grid. It means it's not only better for the planet, but it's also saving me money.”

The criteria for works is based upon the property's EPC rating. We are making our way through all eligible properties, starting with those with the greatest need. All works will be completed by 2030.



Update from our Chair

Hi everyone,

I am pleased to note that the evenings are now longer and brighter days are coming our way. The season brings with it the end of another financial year which was the first for HiS with Somerset Council (SC) as our owner. It has been another successful year, despite the challenges faced by society in general, especially the ongoing cost of living crisis.

We have enjoyed a very positive first year with SC and made great progress working in partnership on behalf of customers and communities.

Our operating environment is being subject to great change, with the introduction of a new regulatory regime of inspections via the Regulator for Social Housing, meaning that SC will be inspected in the next four years. Board has been very active recently with some key business areas such as our People Plan, Budgets, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Risk and completing our internal governance framework review.

We know that there will be ongoing financial challenges for many of our customers with rent increases and other related cost increases. In response, Board

Board Update

has approved a programme to offer additional support to those customers in greatest need as a result of the weekly charge increases.

On behalf of Board, I would ask that if you are struggling, please ask for help and colleagues will do their very best to support you.

Best wishes.

Paul Stephenson



Walkabouts

Walkabouts are a great way for us to interact with our customers, to gain feedback and monitor community areas. We hold regular walkabouts which help to identify issues and resolve any problems swiftly.

Some of the improvements that have been made following the walkabouts include:

- Dangerous old washing lines were removed and are now due to be replaced at Middle Stream Close.
- We arranged for Clean Surrounds to respond to issues concerning any rubbish left in the Highbridge and Hamp areas following reports of fly-tipping.

We would ask customers to keep their gardens tidy, so the community continues to be a great place to live. If you are struggling with removing waste from your garden, Somerset Waste Partnership may be able to help you. You can call them on 01823 625700. If you need further information on tidying your garden, contact our Housing Team on 0800 585 360.



Join us for your local walkabout!



<p>June 6, 10am Co-op, Parkway, Sydenham (Dunwear)</p>	<p>June 11, 10am Morland Shops, Morland Road, Highbridge</p>	<p>June 18, 10am School Fields, Cannington</p>
<p>June 27, 10am St Mary's Church Hall, Nether Stowey</p>	<p>July 9, 10am ReCreation, Rhode Lane, Hamp</p>	<p>July 11, 2pm St George's Hall, Kendale Road, Bridgwater (Newtown)</p>
<p>Aug 1, 2pm Westover Green, Bridgwater</p>	<p>Aug 1, 2:30pm Westfield House Bridgwater</p>	<p>Aug 14, 10am Fish and Chip Shop, Bitham Walk, Woolavington</p>
<p>Sept 3, 10am Morland Shops, Morland Road, Highbridge</p>	<p>Sept 10, 10am Crossways Inn, Withy Road, West Huntspill</p>	<p>Sept 17, 10am Co-op, Parkway, Sydenham (Dunwear)</p>
<p>Sept 19, 10am Co-op, Parkway, Sydenham (Fairfax)</p>	<p>Oct 2, 2:30pm Penn Close, Cheddar</p>	<p>Oct 8, 10am Rosewood Hall, Rosewood Close, Burnham-on-Sea</p>
<p>Oct 17, 10am ReCreation, Rhode Lane, Hamp</p>	<p>Nov 5, 2pm Westover Green, Bridgwater</p>	<p>Nov 5, 2:30am Westfield House Bridgwater</p>
<p>Nov 7, 2pm St George's Hall, Kendale Road, Bridgwater (Newtown)</p>	<p>Nov 13, 10pm Fish and Chip Shop, Bitham Walk, Woolavington</p>	

Fire evacuation simulation at Bridgwater tower block

We worked in close partnership with Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service to stage a simulated evacuation of Westfield House, Bridgwater.

The training exercise brought fire crews from across the county to embark on an evacuation drill at Somerset's highest residential block. The simulation saw six vehicles and crews from Bridgwater, Taunton, Cheddar, Nether Stowey and Burnham-on-Sea attending.

Neil Richards, Fire Safety Team Leader at Homes in Sedgemoor, said:

“ This simulation of a real fire situation is an invaluable way for us to check our fire safety arrangements and ensure we have everything in place to keep residents safe in all eventualities.

“ Working with the fire service on such a rigorous drill will make us all better prepared in the event of a fire. Whilst we hope this will never happen, the simulation exercise with the fire service is a great opportunity to ensure that we are delivering the highest standards possible.”

Residents were informed in advance of the drill and were an integral part in the success of the simulation, which involved a whole building evacuation.

An evacuation centre was set up in a neighbouring communal hall, where evacuees were able to have tea, coffee and other light refreshments.

Peter Hatch, Chief Executive at Homes in Sedgemoor, said:

“ Having built up an excellent working relationship with Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service, Homes in Sedgemoor was delighted to support this hugely important high rise training exercise.

“ Ensuring our customers' safety is our number one priority and we hope that this exercise provides even more reassurance to residents.

“ A huge thank you to the residents of Westfield House who gave up their evening to participate and to both Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service and the Homes in Sedgemoor team who joined in the exercise.

Legionella flushing

Every week, contractors working on behalf of Homes in Sedgemoor carry out a process to flush all outlets within our communal blocks.

This helps prevent the build-up of bacteria and ensures we avoid legionella in the system.

Any customers who have outside taps or have a water butt in their back garden are also reminded to flush these at regular intervals to help prevent the presence of legionella. This is particularly important after the winter period when hosepipes and taps have been unused or laid dormant for any length of time.

Fire doors installation project

Fire doors play a massive part in the safety of our customers' homes.

We continue to assess our fire doors, both external and internal, and our fire risk assessors are currently installing around 200 external fire doors where properties have a shared landing, to put in place even more preventative safety measures for our residents.



Lessons Learned

We are always learning, and are committed to putting our customers first. When we receive complaints we look at how we can do better, and continue to evolve and do more off the back of them.

We have logged a total of 140 initial complaints for the last financial year, compared to 131 for the year before. Although we have seen a slight increase in the volume of complaints, there has not been an increase in the amount that are upheld as a service delivery failure – just under 50% upheld or partially upheld for the year.

It is important that we use all complaints received to improve our service delivery wherever possible. The main areas where customer complaints have been upheld include delays with repairs or planned works and poor communication between our contractors and customers.

We realise that there is higher demand for heating and hot water breakdowns during the winter months, and our contractor Liberty has now actively employed more local engineers to ensure that customers are not being left for

an extended period without a working system. In the event of parts being required, temporary heaters are provided, and we reimburse for additional electricity costs at a rate of £5/day.

We are pleased to advise that our new online repairs logging service is now live, so you can request a repair and book an appointment, so this should ensure a more flexible service, although our Same Day Repair service is still available as well.



Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code

This is now statutory meaning that we must comply with the Housing Ombudsman code and ensure that our policies and processes are aligned to its requirements. One key change is that customers now have up to 12 months to log a complaint with their landlord following an unresolved issue. Our self-assessment form is available on our website.

Compliments from customers

Thank you to all customers who have contacted us to pass on their appreciation and thanks for works completed or help and support given by our teams.

We ensure that all compliments received are shared within our internal newsletter and will also be on our website for the coming year.

Some compliments recently received include...

Mrs S said of one of our team members: “Lovely lady, was so kind and helpful especially for a Monday morning got the repair booked in quickly for my mum and wished us a lovely day.”

Miss C says she loves her flat and said she is very grateful for it and all HiS do for her!

Mr B said: “Your engineer came today, and fitted an extractor fan, very nice and happy to explain what he was going to do, and cleaned up after the work was done, thanks to him and for your service.”

Mrs P said after having a new fence installed: “Thank you from the bottom of my heart it’s beautiful and I now feel safe.”

Mrs M: “Adam was very efficient and left the place very tidy once he’d finished.”

We would love to hear from you if you want to share a good news story and maybe feature in a newsletter.

Tenant Satisfaction Measures results

We produce monthly Tenant Satisfaction Measures (TSMs) performance reports which show how we're performing.

TSMs are set by the Regulator of Social Housing for assessing how well social housing landlords, including ALMOs like us, in England are doing at providing good quality homes and services.

This data helps us to identify our areas of strength and weakness, enabling us to improve services where needed.

We share our latest TSM results in your customer newsletter and on our website at www.homesinsedgemoor.org.



Scan me to view our latest TSM results!

TSM	YTD Feb 2024	Target
Satisfied with the service provided by Homes in Sedgemoor as a landlord	81%	84%
Satisfaction that the landlord listens to tenant views and acts upon them	73%	73%
Satisfaction that the landlord makes a positive contribution to neighbourhoods	79%	60%
Satisfaction that the landlord keeps tenants informed about things that matter to them	85%	70%
Agreement that the landlord treats tenants fairly and with respect	87%	75%
Complaints relative to the size of the landlord	33.3	25.67
Complaints responded to within Complaint Handling Code timescales	100%	95%
Satisfied with our approach on how we handle complaints	38%	75%
Antisocial behaviour cases relative to the size of the landlord	26.5	21.08
Satisfaction with the landlord's approach to handling antisocial behaviour	72%	60%

TSM	YTD Feb 2024	Target
Satisfaction that the home is well-maintained	84%	70%
Satisfied with how we keep communal areas clean and well-maintained	73%	75%
Satisfaction with repairs	83.1%	81%
Satisfaction with time taken to complete most recent repair	83.4%	75%
Of repairs that are completed within the target timescale	89.7%	95%
Of homes that do not meet the Decent Homes Standard	0.2%	0%
Satisfaction that the home is safe	87%	88%
Gas safety checks	99.8%	100%
Fire safety checks	100%	100%
Asbestos safety checks	100%	100%
Water safety checks	100%	100%
Of lift safety checks completed	100%	100%

A year of results

For the first year of completing customer perception surveys as outlined by the Regulator of Social Housing, we are pleased to have an overall satisfaction score for the year of 82%. Although this is slightly off our target score of 84%, this is still a fantastic score, showing that the majority of our customers are happy with our service delivery.

Across the year, you can see from our results that we have achieved good satisfaction scores across

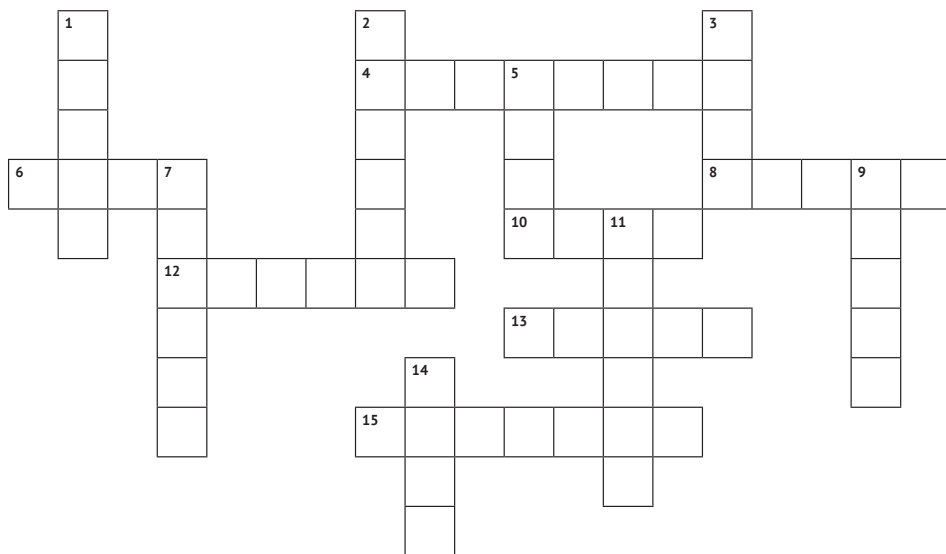
most service areas, and we have been in the upper quartile when benchmarked against other housing providers via Housemark.

We now have a new partner, Acuity, who will be carrying out the surveys on our behalf as from April 2024, so if you are contacted then please do take part and provide us with your feedback.

Competition Time!

Enter our Spring crossword.

Find all 16 words from the list, then return it along with the completed entry form.



Across

4. Rain or sun protection.
6. Flying a _____ is the perfect windy day activity.
8. What snow does in Spring.
10. Where a bird lays its eggs.
12. A brief period of rain.
13. First month of Spring.
15. Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter.

Down

1. Fourth month of the year.
2. A small accumulation of water.
3. Not cold or hot.
5. Drops of water that fall from clouds.
7. The day kids hunt for eggs.
9. A Spring flower.
11. The season after winter.
14. They make honey.

Please complete your details for a chance of winning a £25 voucher.

Send your completed entry form to: Homes in Sedgemoor, Bridgwater House, King Square, Bridgwater TA6 3AR, email customer.services@homesinsedgemoor.org or message us on Facebook.

Closing date: **Monday, July 29, 2024**

Name:.....

Address:.....

.....

Telephone:.....

Congratulations

To Mrs Hancock, David and Marilyn, all of Bridgwater, who won the Winter Newsletter competition. We hope you each enjoy your £25 voucher!

Congratulations

To Mr Broom, of Pawlett, who won a £50 One4all gift voucher for taking part in one of our surveys.

HomesinSedgemoor @HomesSedgemoor

customer.services@homesinsedgemoor.org

www.homesinsedgemoor.org 0800 585 360 / 01278 552400

Homes in Sedgemoor, Bridgwater House, King Square, Bridgwater TA6 3AR

Don't forget to follow us on social media and check our website!

