

through the keyhole

Official Newsletter of
Cynon Tâf Community Housing Group

AUTUMN 2009

🔑 30 YEARS DELIVERING GOOD QUALITY HOUSING LOCALLY



On 2nd July 1979 Cynon Tâf Housing Association started operations. Our Chief Executive David Lewis has been at the head of the organisation since the first day.

He has steered the organisation through many successes and overseen the amalgamation of Cynon Tâf with Pontypridd & District Housing Association in 2007

to form Cynon Tâf Community Housing Group. David is the longest serving Housing Association Chief Executive in Wales.

To mark the occasion Chris O'Meara Chief Executive at Cadwyn Housing Association, who had worked closely with David during the early days of Cynon Tâf, paid a surprise visit to present David with a memory book of photographs which had been prepared by members of staff. Board Members and staff attended the lunchtime presentation to mark this special occasion. David was very touched by this surprise presentation.

🔑 OUR CHAMPION

Our Contracts Officer Edwin Demery recently competed in the British Cycling (Masters) Track Championship which was held in Newport. He won three gold medals in the 200 metre Individual Sprint, the 10 kilometre Scratch Race (Mass Start) and the 10 kilometre Points Race.

He also won a bronze medal in the 500 metre Time Trial. Edwin is due to take part in the World Masters Track and Road Cycling Championship in Australia in October to defend the titles he won four years ago in Canada. Well done and Good Luck Edwin!

🔑 Welcome to our new Director of Finance and Resources



Irish born Jo Williams joined us as our new Director of Finance and Resources on June 1st. Jo has worked as a finance professional in the public sector, mainly in South Wales, since 1992. She is a Fellow of the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) and has a Masters in Business Administration (MBA) from the Open University Business School.

She is looking forward to leading the 'back office' side of the group covering Finance, ICT and Corporate Services and working as a senior management team member in achieving our corporate objectives.



🔑 TENANT FEEDBACK AND COMMENTS

Thanks to everyone who responded to our quarterly questionnaire concerning our review of Tenancy Management procedures, the problems you may have encountered and whether you reported it, and if so who to. We received 35 replies and you told us 31% had experienced problems with noise or loud music, 43% had experienced problems with litter or rubbish. The majority of people who replied stated that they had not reported these issues.

Congratulations to Mr Williams from Aberaman who won the £20 Argos voucher.

“The problems I had were sorted out quickly and efficiently”

“WITH ALL THINGS TAKEN INTO PERSPECTIVE, I DON'T THINK I WOULD FIND A BETTER LANDLORD IN THIS COUNTRY”

“Text messages from the organisation would be ideal for repairs to confirm the times and dates.”

“OUR HOUSING OFFICER HAS BEEN WONDERFUL AND VERY HELPFUL”

🔑 IT'S ABOUT TIME!



LOTTERY FUNDED

The time banking initiative continues to be successful in various communities across the Cynon Valley.

The Health Bank in Cwmaman runs healthy living classes ranging from Yoga to Walking groups, and are going from strength to strength. The time credits received by these groups can now also be used in The Cwmaman Institute in the gym and at the cinema!

In Cwmbach, work has been successful in helping Cornerstone Church's well established coffee morning group start up a walking group that is time banked. The group meet each Monday and since being established in June, have had support from Communities First who have kindly supplied the walk leader. Work is also being done to help a relaxation class and a newly established evening Aerobics class to also receive time credits, as a thank you for participating.

Tre Telynog Environmental Group's awareness day in July was intended to highlight the importance of caring about our local communities. Mark Gillette, chairman of the group, showcased his work with young people from the Tre Telynog estate, where litter picks and Carbon Footprint awareness

training formed the basis of a successful year. All group members have received time credits for donating their valuable time in aiding the community activities and also helping to organise the event that both Cynon Taf Community Housing Group and Communities First have supported.

'Beyond The Horizons' time bank based at New Horizons the mental Health charity based in Aberdare, also continue to award time credits for activities based around learning and development of its members. The project has been running since late May 2009, and members are already enjoying arts and crafts classes, creative writing and running the New Horizons centre each Friday. In return they have used their time credits to invest in further learning opportunities. Creative and innovative projects continue to be supported by the Time bank Coordinator.

Various other projects across the valley also continue to flourish from Intergenerational projects with schools and sheltered housing complexes, and smaller projects. As the project moves into its third year shortly, watch this space for further exciting developments in your communities.

If you are interested in accessing local time banking initiatives, please do not hesitate to contact Nia Hopkins, Timebank Co-ordinator on 07500884508.



MAINTENANCE NEWS

Maintenance Restructure / Changes in Maintenance

The maintenance department is being restructured in September. There will be two dedicated maintenance administrators who will take all repair calls. The telephone number will remain the office number and all heating/gas calls should still go directly to Carillion.

The maintenance administrators will also be dealing directly with our Maintenance Officers and our Handypersons. By separating this area of work, communication between administrators and maintenance officers will be improved. We continue to review our services to ensure effective working and value for money.



Gas

As you aware it is now law that we have to service your gas central heating system every year. We would very much appreciate if you would take all possible steps to ensure that you allow our contractors Carillion Planned Maintenance, into

your property to service your heating system on the first arranged appointment.

Failure to allow access first time creates a lot of work for both the contractors and the Association and could result in you going to Court for failure to provide access.

The Association has also had a number of house fires this year and we cannot stress how important it is that our contractors are able to get in to your home to service your systems and smoke detectors when required. Please see the enclosed Fire Safety in the Home leaflet.

We would also like to take this opportunity of thanking those who have allowed access on the 1st attempt. This has helped us to ensure that our properties are in safe condition.

Ventilation

It has been noted that some air vents in properties are being blocked due to draughts. We are concerned about this as the reason these vents are installed is to reduce the danger of harmful gas such as carbon monoxide poisoning. Under no circumstances should you block these vents.

Smoke Detectors

We want to inform you that the gas engineer should also be testing your smoke detectors and cleaning and testing your extractor fans. Please ensure that this work is carried out as part of your annual service.

MYSTERY CUSTOMER REPORT

We have 144 mystery customers (which represents 7.8% of our tenants) 38 of our mystery customers were visited between October 2008 and March 2009.

The majority of our mystery customers had rung to report repairs. 95% were happy with the standard of work carried out, with the remaining 5% raising issues which have now been resolved. 100% stated they were happy with the overall service provided.

Other reasons for contacting us included queries about gardens, gas safety and rent payments. Some suggestions on service improvements were also recorded.

Gas supply

In order to carry out a gas safety check/service your home must have a gas and electric supply. If you have a service planned and you are aware that either your gas or electric is off, please ensure that you contact Carillion or the Association immediately as your service cannot be carried out.



TENANTS' FORUM NEWS



We encourage all tenants to be involved with the Association. We realise your time is valuable but any time you are able to spare will be appreciated.



At the last meeting held in July the Forum discussed the Tenant Participation Advisory Service and Welsh Tenants Federation conference which will be held in November and

continued attendance at the RCT Tenants and Residents Federation. The Forum also discussed the recent trip to Bath and the survey concerning information leaflets and the proposed content of the new Tenants Folder.

All who attended agreed it was an innovative and interesting way to carry out a consultation exercise and were looking forward to any future consultation trips!

John Galozzi, Training Officer with Dragonsavers Credit

Union gave an interesting and informative presentation providing an overview of the role of Dragonsavers and the Financial Awareness training available.

Why don't you come along and be part of the Tenants' Forum. The next meeting will be held at **11am on Wednesday 11th November 2009** at our office in Abercynon. We can also arrange transport for you.

If you would like more information about becoming involved please ring Ann Costanza on 01443 743204.



CONGRATULATIONS



Congratulation to Mr & Mrs Keywood from Aberaman who celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary on 5th September 2009.

They met at a dance in the Nixon's Hall Mountain Ash and following their marriage lived in Mountain Ash until

they moved to Aberaman 11 years ago. They have 5 children, 14 grandchildren and 8 great grandchildren. Their advice on having a happy marriage is to ensure there are 'no bosses' in a marriage.

CYNON TÂF COMMUNITY HOUSING GROUP ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**All tenants are invited to
THE ANNUAL MEETING
on Tuesday 22nd September 2009
at 6.30pm at Abercwmboi Rugby Club, Abercwmboi**

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