

Homeowners News





Welcome

Welcome to the Autumn edition of Homeowners News. It contains up-to-date information on matters that affect you as a Homeowner and also provides interesting and useful information.

In this edition we tell you about our:

- Strategic Review and how it may affect you
- progress to improve some of our services
- plans to continuously gather customer feedback on the quality of the service we provide you
- our private new homes development company, Arc Homes
- where to get advice on matters to do with your lease.

We're pleased to welcome new homeowners at:

Westford Grange, Wellington

Leighton Drive, Creech St Michael

Fowen Close, Street

Hamstone Terrace, Stalbridge



Many of you requested for this newsletter to be published on the website. If you would like to receive a paper copy, please don't hesitate to request one from us.

We hope you find this edition interesting and we always welcome your feedback.



Take on the future

We wrote to you recently to explain our plans to create more funds for investment in local communities and for building new homes. This information has been published on our website together with a link to the letter which was sent to you back in June.

We said we'd keep you up-to-date on the progress, so here it is:



Re-focus our area

As part of our Strategic Review we're going to refocus our operating area to deliver a more local cost effective service. This means we'll no longer build homes outside Somerset and the West of England, and will gradually transfer our homes in Wiltshire, Hampshire, Dorset and some parts of Gloucestershire.

We're talking to a number of other Housing Association's to explore the best options for either swapping homes or transferring our responsibilities under a management agreement.

If you live in Swindon and Wiltshire, some parts of Gloucestershire and Hampshire, we can now tell you that we're in detailed discussions with Sovereign Housing Association to swap our homes in return for Sovereign's homes in Somerset. If you're a homeowner in these areas you won't be affected, as there's no requirement for us to transfer ownership in these locations. Instead we'll be receiving a small number of Homeownership properties from Sovereign, and will also enter into a management agreement to provide management services to some homeowners in Somerset where Sovereign will retain the freehold interest in these homes.

Negotiations in the other areas affected by our Strategic Review are at an early stage and we're not able to give any further details at this stage. We will of course keep you informed at our earliest opportunity.

We plan to relocate to a new office being built in Weston-super-Mare in April 2013. All regional offices will close to allow the whole team to operate from the new office. Details of when each area office is closing will be published to our website as soon as it is known.

If you would like any more information about this or any part of our proposals, please call your Homeownership Officer or have a look on our website

www.nectarhomes.co.uk/information/takeonthefuture



Homeowner Survey

We carried out a satisfaction survey in Autumn 2010, and told you the results in the Spring edition of Homeowners News 2011.

We plan to repeat this survey before Christmas this year and we're discussing details with a consultant specialist in carrying out this work. As last time, the survey will seek responses from a cross section of our customer base, and if you're contacted we would be extremely grateful if you'd help us in this process.

The results from the last survey provided us with invaluable information, and also brought forward a large number of individual queries which we've been able to resolve. We hope you'll see the benefit of assisting us in this process and we look forward to your feedback.

In addition to an annual survey, we've added an online survey to our website which invites buyers of brand new homes to tell us about their experience of buying through Nectar. We have had a good number of responses so far and have received extremely positive comments across a range of indicators including the standard of advice we give you, speed of service and support from our HomeBuy Sales Team. If you're a new homeowner, we'd be extremely grateful if you could visit our website and complete the survey www.nectarhomes.co.uk/homeowners/newhomeownersurvey

Annual Report

Last year we produced an Annual Report giving you key facts about Nectar Homes, our services and performance achieved. This was the first report of its kind and was produced in response to a requirement from the Tenant Services Authority to keep our tenants informed. There was no requirement to produce a report for homeowners but we felt it would be useful to see how such a report would be received.

This year we approached the Homeowners Panel (the consultative group of Nectar Homes Customers established to make decisions on behalf of all homeowners) to see whether or not you want us to produce a report for this year. The vast majority of panel members said no on the grounds of cost and a general lack of interest in the contents. We have therefore acted on the wishes of the Panel, but if you would like to make any further comments on this subject please let us know.



Service Charges

Service charges can be confusing at the best of times so we'd like to bring you up-to-date with progress this year.

In June, we consulted you about communal and day to day repairs costs incurred for your block and/or your estate between April 2010 - March 2011. We also provided you with a copy of your Building Sinking fund schedule.

In August, we sent shared owners their annual rent review notices which took effect from 1 October 2011. We also notified appropriate Housing Benefit departments where we receive a benefit entitlement on behalf of our residents.

We will shortly consult you about your annual service charge payable April 2012 - March 2013. We think it's important you have the opportunity to comment on the charges before they're confirmed and to enable you to do this, we'll include a service charge schedule detailing the proposed charge from April 2012. We ask you contact us within 30 days of the date of your letter.

For examples and detailed explanations about the calculations please refer to "Your Services Charge Charges Explained Booklet 2011" which was sent to you. You can also find a copy of this booklet on our website: www.nectarhomes.co.uk

Gritting in Winter Weather

With winter only just around the corner, we'd like to remind you that we don't grit the roads and pavements at the majority of our schemes. We took this decision a long time ago because the costs associated with gritting are very high, especially when you take into account the problems of accurately forecasting when the cold weather will hit us. If gritting is carried out at your scheme it will be because a resident or Estate Supervisor volunteers to in their own time.

We hope that snow and ice won't cause you any exceptional problems this year but if you have any concerns, please let us know.

We decided that we'd look at this policy again for our leasehold schemes for the elderly. Earlier this year we consulted homeowners living at Summerlays Court Bath, Old School Place Wells and Merlin Court Bristol to see if they'd like us to grit this winter. Residents living at Summerlays Court and Old School Place declined but residents at Merlin Court want us to grit. As we already undertake this service for residents of our sheltered schemes, Merlin Court will now be included in these arrangements.





Reserve Fund Update

Since the meeting of the Homeowners Panel in April a great deal of work has gone on behind the scenes to look at improvements required to our asset management database, our financial accounting and our rent and service charge management database.

The proposals we wish to make to those of you with reserves funds have now been clearly defined and, we hope to be in a position to start proper consultation shortly. Before this can happen the latest position will be discussed with the Homeowners Panel at a meeting to be arranged this Autumn.

Gas Servicing

You'll already be well aware of the dangers that gas boilers and other equipment using a gas supply can present, if not regularly and properly serviced. We're in the process of negotiating rates with the contractors who service our properties, so you can benefit from the economies of scale and reasonable prices that we achieve for ourselves. Prices and contact details will shortly be published to our website which will enable you to go direct to the contractor to arrange your service. If you can't wait this long and would like details straight away, please contact your Homeownership Officer.

Anti Social Behaviour Policy

We've developed a joint Anti Social Behaviour policy with Knightstone Housing Association, for both tenants and homeowners. Everybody has the right to live peacefully in their homes and our policy sets out the action we'll take to address reports of anti social behaviour.

The policy applies to all Knightstone residents and Nectar Homes homeowners whether they are victim or perpetrator of anti social behaviour. It also applies to members of the public who wish to report anti social behaviour caused to them or by them involving our residents or homeowners. The policy sets out in great detail how we'll approach these incidents and also highlights the circumstances where costs may be passed onto a homeowner. For more information please visit our website www.nectarhomes.co.uk/information/policies



Spotlight on Arc Homes

Arc Homes has been established by Arcadia Housing Limited to compliment the development activities of Knightstone Housing Association, who develop affordable housing within the Arcadia Housing Group. The principle activities of Arc Homes are to provide new homes for sale or market rent and to reinvest the profits from into building new affordable homes for rent and sale.

Arc Homes are passionate about building homes and creating sustainable communities. Three exciting new schemes are currently being built in Bristol and Taunton. The first of those schemes, The Groves in Bristol, is nearly finished with homes available from as little as £120,000 for a two bedroom terraced house. For further information please visit www.atthegroves.co.uk

In Taunton we have two contrasting high quality developments of luxury apartments in the town centre, and a mix of houses and apartments on the edge of Taunton in an area known as Silk Mills. Further information can be found on our website www.arc-homes.net



Legal Advice for Leaseholders

If you have concerns or issues relating to your leasehold property the Leasehold Advisory Service may be able to help you. It's an executive non-departmental public body, funded by Government to provide free advice on the law affecting residential leasehold properties in England and Wales. They'll be able to help you with:

- the complexity of your Lease Agreement
- the understanding of jargon and general legalese
- specific advice on the law affecting flats and leasehold property.

Visit www.lease-advice.org for more information.



Contact details



Homebuy Sales Team

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Email: mail@nectarhomes.co.uk

If you have an idea for a story in the newsletter, please let us know. We'd love to hear from you.

Homeownership Management Team

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