



RIG planning for the future...
Page 2



Open all hours
Page 3



How are we doing?
Page 4

Introducing our new benefits advice service

We are pleased to announce a new benefits advice service available to all our residents.

Hony Premal Income Manager says "In the current financial climate we want to make sure you have access to the help and advice needed to not worry about money unnecessarily. By having specialist members of the team we can help you to make sure you are getting all the benefits you are entitled to."



Debbie Hills,
Welfare Benefits Advisor

Debbie Hills joined our Income Team in October 2010. She can provide you with welfare benefits advice and support including help filling out claim forms, making appeals and attending tribunals to support residents claim their appropriate benefits.

Debbie can guide you through the benefit claims process, liaise with government and council departments on your behalf and help you challenge decisions that may be unfair.

We encourage you to get in touch with us for a benefit check. This is quick and simple to arrange, with most checks being completed by telephone or email in the first instance.

You can call Debbie during office hours on 01306 505570 or you can e-mail deborah.hills@mvha.org.uk. The service is free and confidential to all residents of Mole Valley Housing Association.

Top tip from the Income Team

Don't forget about your Winter Fuel Payment. This is a yearly tax free payment to help you keep warm in winter. If you have reached the qualifying age (born on or before 5 July 1950) you may get a winter fuel payment – this can be between £125 – £400 depending on your situation.

This is different to Cold Weather Payments which you may get for each week of very cold weather in your area.

If you think you qualify for a Winter Fuel Payment, then you can get an application form by calling the Winter Fuel Payment Helpline on 0845 9 15 15 15. To claim for the 2010/11 payment The Pension Service need to have received the form on or before 30 March 2011.

We are also working with the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) to provide free financial and benefit advice to our residents. Janet Blair, CAB Advisor runs weekly sessions from Regent House.

While Debbie can provide help with claiming benefits, Janet is able to help with multiple debts.

She can help residents negotiate fair repayment terms, provide advice on managing a budget and help you claim all that you are entitled to. This service is free, confidential and impartial.

You can make an appointment with Janet by calling Customer Services on: 01306 505555 or contact Janet directly on 07818 340660.



Janet Blair,
CAB Advisor

This magazine is printed on paper which is obtained from sustainable sources. Please recycle after use.

 recycle now

Need help with your finances this New Year?



There is plenty of free money advice available and organisations that can help you. These include:

The Citizens Advice Bureaux: www.citizensadvice.org.uk or www.adviceguide.org.uk

National debt line, www.nationaldebtline.co.uk or call 0808 808 4000

The Financial Services Authority: Visit www.moneyadviceclear.fsa.gov.uk/publications or call 0300 500 5000 for a range of free guides on topics including budgeting and borrowing money.

Debbie Hill on 01306 505555 or Janet Blair on 07818 340660

Don't be tempted by loan sharks, they will only add to any financial problems. If you are approached by a loan shark call the loan shark hotline on 0300 555 2222



Message from the MD



You can also read about the work of the Mole Valley Resident Involvement Group and Leaseholder Forum. These groups do fantastic work on behalf of all our residents. They are doing well at attracting members but the more the merrier as they say – so if you would like to be involved then please get in touch.

Finally, we are always trying to make sure that access to our services is as easy as possible. Now that many more residents are using computers and smart phones, we are developing our on-line services, but that is not for everyone so please let us know what you think!

With best wishes

David Searle

Managing Director
Mole Valley Housing
Association

Welcome to your winter edition of Home Matters and a very Happy New Year to you all.

We are very aware that some of the Government's recent proposals around benefits may, in time, lead to increasing money worries for some residents. In this edition we talk about our new Benefits Advisor and the work we do jointly with the Citizens Advice Bureau. Please do not hesitate to let us know if you need any help or advice.

Did you know...

that the Repairs Team now offer appointments for Wednesday evenings and Saturday mornings.

This service is proving to be very popular, particularly with those residents who work during the day.

If you would like to arrange an appointment, please contact the Repairs Team on 01306 505555 (choosing option 1).

Did you know...

you can request a shower over bath if you do not currently have one and are not included in the planned programme for bathroom replacement?

To take advantage of this service call the Repairs Team on 01306 505555 (choose option 1) and ask to be included in the shower over bath programme. We will arrange for a survey to be carried out to check it is possible to fit a shower and then book in the works for a convenient time.

Note from editor

Happy New Year and welcome to the Winter edition of Home Matters.

Did you know you can get involved with the production of this newsletter? We welcome residents to join our editorial panel where you can help to decide what articles go in to the newsletter. If you would like to get involved contact the Resident Involvement team on 01306 505555 or email residentinvolvement@mvha.org.uk

If you wish to opt out of receiving this newsletter in paper format and receive it via email instead simply log on to www.circleanglia.org/optout and fill in the short form.



Resident Involvement Group planning for the future...



Over 50 residents and board members came together at Denbies on Saturday 13 November to take part in the second MVHA residents' action planning day.

The aim of the day was to ask residents to review and agree the priorities for getting involved with MVHA next year.

Residents said they wanted to see MVHA improve its communications with residents, including using texting and social networking like Facebook and Twitter.

They put forward suggestions

to improve resident involvement including training for residents to support them in this work and holding events that included children.

The event was co-hosted by the Resident Involvement Group (RIG) and MVHA's resident involvement team with many board members including the Chair, Alan Catterick, lending support to the event. RIG and MVHA will use the information gathered from the planning day to create an action plan for the coming year. This will be published in the Spring 2011.

Grounds maintenance and cleaning of communal areas update

All residents will have received individual letter regarding these new services. Any queries please contact Leila Jordan on 01306 505525.





Open all hours

Our regular office hours are Monday to Friday (8.30am – 5pm) but you can now get in touch any time of day via our website.

You can report repairs (non emergency ones!), view your rent account, view your leaseholder account, report anti-social behaviour and make payments for rents and service charges – all online!

Visit www.mvha.org.uk to find out more. If you do have an emergency, you can contact us 24 hours a day by calling 0800 6349876.

However, we understand that some of you may prefer to call or visit so we are currently reviewing our opening times.

Do you feel that it would be useful for MVHA to be open to customers later than 5pm some evenings or before 8.30am some mornings?

What do you think about MVHA being open on a Saturday morning?

Thinking about your contact with MVHA over the last year, how likely are you to want to access services and staff outside of our current office hours?

If you would like to give us your views on the times and different ways you can access

MVHA staff and services, please contact Maggie Newland on 01306 505504, email maggie.newland@mvha.org.uk or write to us at Regent House, Station Approach, Dorking, Surrey RH4 1SJ.

Do you pay your rent by Direct Debit?

In the last edition of Home Matters we highlighted some possible changes to the £10 direct debit incentive that is credited to the rent accounts of all those residents that pay their rent, without problems arising, over the year.

We now propose to send any qualifying residents a £10 voucher, starting in April 2011, as a “thank you” for paying your rent by direct debit, rather than crediting your rent account with this sum. Some residents have said they really don’t benefit from the £10 being credited

to the rent account and this way you can receive the benefit more directly.

If you have any objections to this proposal, please do let us know. Please contact Honey Premlal on 01306 505584 or via e-mail at hony.premlal@mvha.org.uk

Everybody needs good neighbours

In October 2010 residents from 24 homes at The Oaks in Dorking joined together to sign up to a Good Neighbour Agreement. This voluntary agreement was prepared by us, and designed to encourage respect, partnership and community spirit.

Residents agreed that signing up to the agreement would help them to create a better place to live. The agreement promotes respect and an understanding between residents and it also encourages them to get involved in local initiatives including a new approach to

tackling anti-social behaviour (ASB).

James England, Area Housing Manager, said: “The Good Neighbour Agreement is an important part of our work to help strengthen communities. We are passionate about enhancing the Life Chances of our residents and it is important that we all work together. Residents have identified the things that are important to them and have helped shaped the agreement. This will certainly have a positive impact for the community at the Oaks.”

Leaseholders and Shared Owners

Check your gas!



As a homeowner you have a responsibility to yourself and other residents to ensure your gas fittings and appliances are safe. All of your appliances and gas fittings should be regularly checked by a Gas Safe registered engineer to ensure safety and efficient operation.

Mole Valley Housing Association in partnership with Quality Heating Services is able to offer leaseholders preferential rates for gas appliance servicing and associated minor repairs. This arrangement would be between you, as a leaseholder and Quality Heating Services.

If you would like more details about this service and the costs involved please contact Quality Heating direct on 0808 156 1518.

Leaseholder Forum dates

26th January 2011

30th March 2011

25th May 2011



For more information contact the Chairman Jason Pearce: jcptraining@btinternet.com or info@mvha.org.uk. Tel: 07717 299404.

Meetings are held at Regent House, Station Approach, Dorking on the last Wednesday of every other month at 7– 9pm.



Oaks residents after signing the agreement



James England, Area Housing Manager signing the agreement on behalf of MVHA

How are we doing?

We have “performance indicators” in place to ensure that we are delivering great services and value for money from the rent we receive from our residents. The details below provide a flavour of how we are performing against some key indicators.

- **100% of our properties have a valid Gas Safety certificate. Our target is 100%.**



100%

- **With a lot of hard work from the Income and Housing Management Team on rent and arrears collection, and a good payment record for most residents, we have exceeded our target of 97.9% and collected 99.3%.**

99.3%

We will continue to focus on supporting residents affected by the current economic difficulties.

- **98.8% of routine repairs were completed in time. Our target is 98%.**



98.8%

Thank you for all your help and assistance with this. Remember to be safe and please continue to let us in to service and check your boiler. If we are not allowed access, this means you may be putting lives at risk. Faulty or un-serviced appliances can give off a deadly colourless, odourless gas called carbon monoxide.

- **Residents satisfied with the services we provide. Our target is 87%.**

82.7%

84.6%

- **There has been a dip in the number of complaints being resolved at first contact, currently only at 84.6%, which is down on last year when the figure was 92.3%. Our target is 95%.**

Our focus is always on improving how we deal with your complaints and this will continue. Improvements have been made over the last year and we are currently focusing on how to ensure we resolve your complaints when they are first brought to our attention.

Please don't hesitate to tell us when you are not satisfied with our services. Your feedback helps us to understand where improvements are needed.

Although we may not have met all our own challenging targets, we are working hard to ensure we can meet as many of them as possible throughout the year, and aim to improve both satisfaction and performance at all times.

Update on our local offers

Despite the changes being introduced by the Government, the standards and local offers which the Tenant Services Authority (TSA) introduced, are going to stay. We have been busy working with residents on our three local offers.

Anti-social behaviour (ASB) offer. Residents said they wanted us to set up a Mole Valley wide local offer for ASB. We're currently working with other landlords in the district to progress this. If you'd like to take part then please contact Martin Reddick, Senior Area Housing Manager on 01306 505522 for more information.

Mole Valley standard for major works offer. Residents have reviewed and agreed the choices on offer. As we go to print we are going to look at the performance standards for our contractor. If you would like to take part in setting this offer please contact Ken Lee, Property Manager on 01306 505545.

Lettable Standard offer. Residents have started work on reviewing the lettable standard. This sets out what residents can expect of their new home, when they take up a new tenancy with MVHA. The group has looked at standards and costs and how these compare with other housing providers in Circle Anglia. If you'd like to take part in this work, please contact Claire Elworthy, Voids & Allocations Manager on 01306 505511.

All three local offers have to be agreed with residents and be in place by 1st April 2011. We will then work with residents to see how we perform against the standards that have been agreed.

If you require this publication in large print, audio, Braille or an alternative format, or you need this document translated into a different language, please call 01306 505555 and we will do our best to help.