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Residents celebrate 'Coming of Age'



Residents and staff at Chatteris conference



Residents and staff at March conference



Residents recently celebrated the work of Roddons at 'Coming of Age' conferences.

Four events were held in each of the market towns – March, Chatteris, Wisbech and Whittlesey. The theme of 'Coming of Age' was used to mark the final stages of the five years of promises which formed part of the original Roddons transfer.

Residents were greeted by staff and Tenant Board members and given a goodie pack which provided information about resident involvement and a programme for the day.

Board Chair Brenda Reynolds welcomed everyone and introduced Christopher

Smith Managing Director of Roddons. Christopher along with members of the Senior Management Team, gave a presentation with an overview of the past 4 years and the future. There was also a fun and informative quiz about our services, where residents won prizes for guessing the nearest to the correct answer.

Residents took part in a networking session which gave them the chance to talk with other involved residents, Resident Scrutiny Panel members and staff during a mid morning break.

Sally Taylor the Resident Involvement Officer said

"Residents thoroughly enjoyed themselves and felt that holding four local conferences was a really good idea. Attendance had increased from last year."

All residents who attended were treated to a special Roddons celebration cake, free prize draw and various 'give-a-ways'.

Residents took part in an exercise to help us understand what service issues are most important to them. The results of this will be published in the next issue of Home Matters, as requested by residents who attended the conferences.



Roddons Resident, Mrs Prendagast

Anna Prendagast, a resident who attended her first conference said: *"It was excellent, much more than I expected. The Managing Director of Roddons and Senior Management answered any questions. Nobody was too busy or too high up in the company to talk to you – everyone was approachable"*.

Easter opening times

Our Easter opening hours are:

Thursday 5th April: 8.30 – 17.00

Friday 6th April to Monday 9th April: Closed

Tuesday 10th April:

Normal working hours
For repairs and anti-social behaviour emergencies please call the Roddons number as usual – 0300 333 6557 or 0800 111 6447 and continue to hold and you will be transferred to our out-of-hours operators.



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



Watch those pounds in 2012

Put down those crisp breads and leave the lettuce leaves to the rabbits because we're talking about the kind of pounds you DON'T want to lose – the ones in your pocket!

The start of a new year is a great time to make **positive changes** to your life and there's nothing more satisfying than **saving some money** on your gas and electricity bills.

You can compare all of the energy suppliers and plans using the online calculator at www.myhomeenergyswitch.org.uk or by calling 0800 0515346. It's so easy and will only take a few minutes of your time. If you do decide to switch suppliers, My Home Energy Switch will take care of everything for you so you just have to **sit back and enjoy the savings!** There is no interruption to your supply and you could save up to £530 per year.

For more money saving tips log on to www.circleenergy.org.uk



NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Happy New Year and welcome to the first edition of Home Matters for 2012.

We have heard from a couple of residents that the last issue of Home Matters had been ripped in the packing process before it reached you. We have looked into this problem and would like to apologise if your copy had been damaged.

Look out for a new look Home Matters coming to you later this year. We will be re-launching this publication following feedback that residents across the Circle Group gave us last year.



News from the Resident and Service Users Panel



Government's change to the way social housing is provided affected a lot of RASP's discussions last year. With RASP being the only residents' body which stretches across the whole Circle Group, we raised the main concerns of residents and service users. These concerns included rents, security of tenure, under-occupation, welfare reform and housing benefit.

We've discussed issues like fuel costs, contents insurance and financial inclusion and asked Circle to ensure we develop the right support systems and we'll no doubt be coming back to all of these areas.

Some members were more involved in aspects of the Repairs and Maintenance review and others spent time considering the wording of the rent increase letters. We've tried to make sure leaseholders are considered as well and have discussed important questions like gas servicing, insurance and repairs to communal areas.

Dealing with all these complex questions and aware that RASP must be up to the job of providing scrutiny across the Group, we have been looking at the structure of RASP itself. RASP is more clearly focussed, independent and has open and transparent terms of reference now. Unfortunately

that means some of our members who sit on local partner Boards will be stepping down, but we know they will still play a valuable role in providing a residents' voice in the Group.

2011 was a busy year and a year of change – but you can say that about the whole of the social housing sector. I think we have made some important steps forward during the year and we've got a clear view where we want to go in the coming year to represent your views.

Alison Hill
RASP chair

Business Transformation | update

As part of a review of our Repairs and Maintenance service, in the last edition of Home Matters we asked for your ideas on how you would improve our service. This was in our leaflet *Repairs and Maintenance – What Do You Think?*

Thanks to all of you that responded. Your input is really appreciated and will feed directly into our review. We'll be contacting some of you over the course of the next few weeks. If some of you have ideas but have not been in touch yet, there is still time to tell us what you think by emailing listening@circle.org.uk

Leaseholders and Shared Owners



Introducing the new Circle Living Service Improvement Panel



Top Row / Left to Right: Alison Hill, Barbara Shellard, Vanessa Jackson, Esther Griffies-Weld.

Bottom / Right to Left: Jason Pearce, Orfhlaith Ni Mhordha, Natalie McGregor, Andy Townsend

The new Service Improvement Panel (SIP) offers Circle Living customers a chance to shape how services are offered and improve standards.

The SIP is chaired by shared owner Natalie McGregor and supported by Circle Living's Customer Liaison Team. It reviews performance data and services received by Circle Living customers, with recommendations going to the Circle Living Board. The SIP will monitor follow up actions to ensure improvements are made to the services.

All Circle Living customers can apply to join the Panel, which meets regularly and members receive training and support. Members must complete an interview before being accepted on to the panel.

If you would like to contact the panel direct to find out further information or raise concerns, you can email: ServiceImprovementPanel@circle.org.uk

To apply to become a member of the panel please contact Jenna Jones on 01603 595125 or email jenna.jones@circle.org.uk

facebook

You can now follow Circle Living on Facebook!

facebook.com/circleliving.circleanglia or search 'Circle Living'

Struggling with your finances?



Christmas may be over but you may be left with a big debt after overspending.

It is easy to spend too much in the run-up to Christmas and with everyday bills, you could find yourself struggling for money. However help is at hand and facing up to debt is the first step.

Fenland Citizens Advice Bureau was awarded £42,000 from the Roddons Community Fund earlier this year to fund a specialist Money Advisor for two years.

Money Advisor, Helen Wicker is based at the CAB in Church Mews, Wisbech but spends one day a week working at Community

House in Southwell Road, Wisbech.

Helen can provide you with help and support, with an appointment and drop-in service running every Wednesday from 9.30am-2.30pm. The service has now become even easier to access with a video-conferencing facility available from Community House to the CAB office.

Community House also has a CAB Advice-hub which is a touch-screen kiosk with links to advice on debt, employment, health, housing and benefits. This is available in Portuguese, Lithuanian, Russian, Latvian and Polish as well as English.

Helen can also hold group

workshops around managing finances. The project will also provide interactive sessions for Year 11 pupils on money management, budgeting and credit.

In addition to this project, Roddons has a Money Matters Officer who can offer help and advice on managing finances.

For further information please contact: Community House on **01945 580309** or Fenland CAB on **01945 474665** (debt advice only). For advice on any other issues please telephone the CAB general helpline on **01945 464367**.

Don't bury your head in the sand – seek advice before matters get out of hand!

Have your say by becoming a mystery shopper

Would you like to help improve our services?

All you need to do is become a mystery shopper. This involves using our services, recording your findings and then feeding back your findings to the Customer Insight Team.

As a Mystery Shopper you will:

- Be expected to review our services 3 times a year
- Have the opportunity

to review such areas as Customer Services, Repairs, Lettings and Estate Management

- Review the services using different methods, e.g telephone, visit or email
- Receive Love 2 Shop vouchers for each fully completed review form you return
- Gain a sense of self satisfaction and meet other involved residents



- Be offered help and support at all stages of the review process.

If you would like to become a Mystery Shopper, we would like to hear from you.

For more information contact Jenny Bamford or Jamie Howard in the Customer Insight Team, on 0800 111 6447 from a landline or 0300 333 6557 if you are calling from your mobile. Or email jenny.bamford@circle.org.uk or jamie.howard@circle.org.uk.

Sheltered residents get digital >>>>>>>>

Feedback from some of our older residents in sheltered schemes has shown that these residents were not aware of the services they can access through our new digital channel. Therefore we

invited residents to Fleming Court in March, to watch a demonstration of the Circle Digital channel which was launched last year. The channel can be accessed through Virgin, Sky, Wii or an "App" on a mobile phone and allows residents to report a repair or request a

service. Sheltered residents at the digital conference were given the opportunity to try the channel with staff on hand to offer guidance and support. The conference aimed to increase residents understanding and confidence to access our services in this new way.

Resident gardening group

This year's Gardening Competition was so successful that several of the residents who entered have decided they would like to form a gardening group.

Gardening tips were shared by our green-fingered residents, when they attended the celebration afternoon tea which was held for everyone who entered the competition.

The overall winner of the competition was Terry Saunders of Springfield



Road, Parson Drove (pictured with Managing Director, Christopher Smith).

Anyone who is interested in joining the Gardening Group should contact Wendy Coles, Community & Projects Officer.

You said, We did

Your feedback is important to ensure we continue to make improvements to our services. The Customer Insight Team review all feedback received from complaints,

compliments, customer journey mapping, mystery shopping and tenant inspections. Below are two ways in which we have learnt from your complaints:

You said –
The standard of grass cutting in my area was poor.

We did –
We are committed to providing a quality service and will make extra checks during estate inspections to ensure expected standards of service are maintained.

You said – The standard of workmanship carried out on my new property was poor and there was no communication regarding when and who would resolve the issues.

We did – A dedicated staff member will now lead on the coordination and monitoring of defects in new build properties. This will improve communication and ensure any defects are resolved promptly.

Make sure you are safe this winter



In the cold weather you will need your gas boilers and gas fires to keep you warm. This increased usage can put pressure on gas appliances and could lead to them breaking down when they are needed the most. It is vital you have your gas appliances regularly serviced and safety checked. To find out more log on to: www.gassaferegister.co.uk

What's On – dates for your diaries...

Drop In Session at Roddons offices (opposite TESCO) EVERY THURSDAY 10AM – 1PM

Come along and have a chat, **FREE** cuppa to see what is going on in your area... **Everyone Welcome**



January 2012

- 10 – Sheltered Forum – 10am Quaker Way, Chatteris
- 11 – Whittlesey Association – 3pm St Marys House
- 18 – Whittlesey Chatting Café – 10.30am Library
- 19 – Benwick Association – 8pm – 20 Chapel Gardens
- 30 – Chatteris Chatting Café – 10.30am Library
- March Association – No meeting in January
- Thorney Toll Association – No meeting in January

February 2012

- 13 – Wisbech Association – 10am Onyx Court
- 13 – March Association – 2pm Fleming Court
- 15 – Whittlesey Chatting Café – 10.30am Library
- 16 – Thorney Toll Association – 7.30pm Village Hall
- 16 – Benwick Association – 8pm – 20 Chapel Gardens



March 2012

- 12 – Wisbech Association – 10am Onyx Court
- 12 – March Association – 7pm Bradshaw Court
- 15 – Thorney Toll Association – 7.30pm Village Hall
- 15 – Benwick Association – 8pm – 20 Chapel Gardens
- 21 – Whittlesey Chatting Café – 10.30am Library
- 26 – Chatteris Chatting Café – 10.30am Library



April 2012

- 11 – Whittlesey Association – 3pm St Marys House
- 16 – Wisbech Association – 10am Onyx Court
- 16 – March Association – 2pm Fleming Court
- 18 – Whittlesey Chatting Café – 10.30am Library
- 19 – Thorney Toll Association – 7.30pm Village Hall
- 19 – Benwick Association – 8pm – 20 Chapel Gardens



Roddons Youth Group meet regularly, organise events and trips. If you are interested and want to know more ring Sally Taylor.

For further information on any of the above contact Sally or Jackie in the Resident Involvement Team on 0800 111 6447 or 0300 333 6557.

How are we doing?

Performance April – September 2011

Homes with a current gas safety certificate



Roddons takes gas safety very seriously and has been working hard to ensure that all properties have a current safety certificate.



Tenant satisfaction that their views are being taken into account



83.1%

Tenant satisfaction with views being taken into account remains steady. 175 tenants were asked for their views and 145 were satisfied or very satisfied.

731 residents are now paying their rent by direct debit. Please contact the Income Team if you would like to pay your rent using this easy and convenient method.

Satisfaction with your neighbourhood as a place to live



We have conducted a review into the Estate Management Service and recommendations have been made to improve how we deal with issues such as fly-tipping and litter. We are developing a programme of estate improvements, in consultation with residents and are keen for residents to be involved in estate inspections to enhance the service to their area. Please contact your Neighbourhood Officer if you have an issue in your neighbourhood or would like to join your Neighbourhood Officer on an estate inspection.

Rent and service charge collection



98.6%

The income team have been undertaking a door knocking exercise to encourage tenants not receiving Housing Benefit to have a calculation done to see if they qualify. This will help to maximise income and help to reduce arrears.

Christmas events



Scheme Manager, Geraldine Grimsey from Onyx Court, spread the festive spirit by inviting residents from properties surrounding our former sheltered housing scheme at The Dale, to join their Christmas lunch. These

residents no longer have any communal facilities to host such an event so Geraldine brought everyone together to enjoy the festivities.

After lunch residents enjoyed a live musician with songs from the 60s and 70s and Wendy Mitcham gave a flamenco

dance demonstration. Residents enjoyed the afternoon, one resident commented "it makes it feel more like Christmas when everyone joins together as when you get old some times the days and nights seem a lonely time."

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 0300 333 6557 and we will do our best to help.