Hello

and welcome to the summer issue of Insight!

It’s been an eventful few months what with World Cup and Wimbledon fever sweeping the nation – not to mention the hectic time we’ve had right here in Southend! You’ll read on the opposite page all about the major incident that kept us all here at South Essex Homes busy back in June.

Southend is a fascinating town full of people from all walks of life and different cultures. My own family have lived in the borough since the 19th Century but I often find myself wondering how other residents have come to live here. Often the most interesting stories come in the most unlikely places and I was lucky enough to meet Luise Davies recently, a resident of one of our sheltered housing schemes, and you can read all about her extraordinary life from page 4.

If you’re struggling to make ends meet then I would encourage you to read our article on page 7, where you can start on your journey to becoming debt-free!

And if you’re green-fingered and have a garden or even a window box that you are proud of, why not enter our Garden in Bloom competition this year? You can find full details of categories and an application form on the back cover.

Best wishes

Julia Pack
Marketing & Communications Co-ordinator (and Editor of Insight)

As we reported in the Spring issue of Insight, dozens of residents took part in the Big Conversation event we held back in March.

The way we approach resident involvement in general is being reviewed to ensure we are moving with the times and providing a service fit for 2018. Specifically we have been asking questions about the future roles of Block/Street Voices, Focus Groups and the priorities of the South Essex Community Hub.

It was agreed that certain Focus Groups should become more like ‘task and finish groups’ – so in other words they meet to discuss specific projects and see them through to completion, rather than meeting to discuss more general matters without set targets. There is also the option of merging some groups.

Exactly how this will be achieved and what Focus Groups will look like in the future is still being decided. The Resident Scrutiny Forum have looked into this issue and made recommendations and we are working with our Board in order to seek views from a wider audience and decide the best way forward for this and also for the Street/Block Voices.

Whilst these discussions are ongoing, we are keen to hear from anyone who has an opinion on the Focus Groups and Street/Block Voices. You can access an online survey via our website homepage www.southessexhomes.co.uk. Alternatively you can email your thoughts to suerickard@seh.southend.gov.uk or write them down in a letter to Sue Rickard, Support Services Team, FREEPOST South Essex Homes.

Well done to residents and staff at Great Mead sheltered scheme in Shoebury who raised the fantastic sum of £162.40 for Essex & Herts Air Ambulance during a fundraiser in June.

GREAT GREAT MEAD!
Blackdown major water leak

As you may have read or heard through the local media or word-of-mouth, one of the tower blocks we manage suffered a major water leak back in June.

Problems with the water supply at Blackdown in North Road, Westcliff, were first reported on the morning of Thursday 14th June. The water leak had flooded the basement of the building, which included the lifts pits and had caused the lifts to be out of service.

When it was established later that afternoon that the water leak wasn’t going to be fixed immediately, South Essex Homes started knocking on doors informing residents of the situation and offering bottled water. Letters were also delivered through every door that evening advising them that alternative toilet facilities and more supplies of water could be found at the nearby Balmoral Centre.

A response to the issue was coordinated by the Emergency Planning Unit at Southend Borough Council to ensure that local agencies worked together to find a solution and support residents.

By Friday afternoon one of the lifts at the block was operational again and on Saturday the second lift was fixed and a temporary fresh (but non-drinking) water supply was made available to flats on floors 4 and above, sourced directly from the hydrant, thanks to advice received and the loan of equipment from Essex Fire & Rescue Service.

By then the scale of the problem became more apparent and the contractors drafted in a larger team and more equipment in order to tackle the issue on Monday morning, 18th June. They had managed to source water from the original water tanks by bypassing the damaged pipework and fresh water to the first 3 floors was restored in the early afternoon and drinking water to all of the block by 9pm that same day.

A resident of the block, who has two sons age 4 and 6, said: “Obviously it has been very difficult but it’s just one of those things – you don’t realise how much you use water until you haven’t got it! My personal view is that the council and South Essex Homes have been really helpful and have done as much as they possibly could in a bad situation to keep us informed of what’s going on. If anything it’s taught us to get back to basics and we’ve learnt a lesson in how not waste water, so something positive had come out of it.”

Cllr John Lamb, leader of the council, said: “This was a very difficult situation for everyone involved, and I would like to thank the local community for their patience and understanding. I would also like to praise South Essex Homes staff and contractors and our own council staff who worked well together at all hours to provide the support that the community needed and also to resolve this as quickly as possible and return a water supply to the building.”

Chris Vaughan, one of the Directors at South Essex Homes said: “Whilst lessons can of course be learned from this experience, I am extremely proud of the way our staff members pulled together to and worked with residents to respond to this unprecedented emergency situation and acted with the best interest of residents in mind. It was a brilliant example of partnership working with a coordinated response to the problem as the escalating scale of the leak became apparent.”

Chris continued: “I would like to express my thanks to our colleagues at the partner agencies who assisted us - Southend Borough Council, Essex Fire & Rescue, The Balmoral Centre, and of course our own staff.”

“Most of all I would like to thank the residents who were extremely patient, understanding and helpful to us and each other throughout the whole process.”
Luise’s story starts in Leningrad, Soviet Union (now St Petersburg), where she was born in May 1928 to her German mother Helene Boegenhold and her Ukrainian father Anton Posvistak.

Her mother had been married previously, so Luise had an older half-sister called Alexandra (Lexi for short) who at the time Luise was 12 or 13 years old lived half an hour away from them with her husband and children.

Luise and her parents lived a normal life in a flat which was opposite a bridge overlooking the Winter Palace, which was the home of the Tsar of Russia. Her father worked in a chocolate factory which had been making confectionary to sustain the troops during the war. Her mother worked in a court house and would go and meet her father when they finished work.

She recalled: “My father would sneak chocolates into his big boots and when they got home, mum would pull his boots off for him to see what he’d got that day. One day when my father was at work, the factory alarms sounded. German planes were dropping bombs on a bridge near where we lived. I ran home as fast as I could – my legs were running by themselves! I ran into our building, and up to the top of the stairs, where I crashed into a door, and collapsed, terrified!”

It was September 1941. Luise was just 13 years old, and Hitler had ordered the Siege of Leningrad – a military blockade to prevent energy, water, utilities or food supplies from entering the city.

The Siege of Leningrad went on to last for almost 900 days and caused the greatest destruction and loss of life ever known in a modern city.

During that time, according to different estimates, between 500,000 and one million residents of that historic city died from starvation and hypothermia. But some think that the true figure was even higher.

When the Siege started, everything changed for Luise and her parents. Residents of the city were rationed just one slice of bread a day to eat. Luise recalls: “We had to queue for our slice of bread and sometimes we’d be queuing for 2 days only to get to the front to find there was nothing left.

*There was no clean water available so we had to break ice off the frozen river so we could have a drink.

*People were so desperate for food that they ate cats and dogs – there were no animals to be seen wandering around. I recall one time seeing a horse pulling a sleigh very slowly before it collapsed and people came running towards it with knives and immediately began butchering it before it had even died. It was shocking but people were desperate.”

One day in January 1942, Luise got home to their flat to find her mother slumped against the fireplace with her head down. Luise explained “I ran to give her a hug but she was cold and stiff, she was already dead. I recall my father later pulling her body along on a child’s sledge that I used to play on. My mother was buried in a mass grave that was already full of corpses. People were dying in large numbers every day so mass graves surrounded the city.”

After her mother’s death, her brother-in-law, who was a diver in the Navy, found a way to get Luise out of Leningrad across the frozen lake to a train station, from where trains were leaving and taking people to the countryside where there was plenty of food. She travelled with her sister Lexi and her family for many weeks on a goods train and ended up in Crimea.

Meanwhile, Luise’s brother-in-law returned to Leningrad to collect her father who had stayed behind, but sadly found that he had passed away some days earlier.

Luise’s train journey continued, very slowly over several weeks, stopping at Krasnodar along the way. Country people would come running up to the train bringing food, throwing apples and pears onto the train for those they knew were fleeing Leningrad. During one stop, Luise recalls a close shave: “I had gone to the nearby market to get some potatoes (which people were able to cook by the side of the tracks) but when I returned, the train was pulling away! I had to run alongside the train and a man grabbed me by the scruff of my neck to drag me onto the moving train! Lexi was on another part of the train and thought I’d been left behind as it was a while before I found her again.”

The Germans stopped the train during its onward journey and were checking passports looking for spies. As Lexi’s father had been German, she had a German passport and name so was separated from Luise. Jewish passengers were separated from the rest, and to the horror of the other passengers, the soldiers shot and killed as many as they could, but some managed to escape, and were helped by local people.
When they arrived at their destination of Caucasus, Luise was taken in by local village people but still managed to keep in touch with Lexi.

Luise said: ‘Thankfully, on the journey, I made friends with a Russian family, an older lady and her son and daughter. They looked after me and we stayed together for some time, they saved my life really. While I was there they taught me to ride a horse and how to swim.’

Luise stayed there until they were sent to a Prisoner of War labour camp. She said: ‘I could speak German as my mother had taught me. One of the wardens at the camp was a very kind man and he was intrigued when he overheard a Russian girl speaking his language. He wanted to help me out so sought permission from the German government for me to travel to Frankfurt to help his wife look after his young twins. His wife went to great trouble to trace my mother’s family and contacted them to tell them where I was and it turned out my maternal grandmother was still alive! Soon afterwards, my Aunt arrived in Frankfurt having gained permission to take me back to live with my family, who I’d never met before, just outside Hamburg.’

On the journey to Hamburg, the train they were on was attacked by English planes. Several people were killed alongside the trainline but the train itself continued on its journey and Luise considers herself lucky to have survived it.

Life improved dramatically once she began living with her family. She got a ration card so she could eat and before long she was putting on weight and getting back on her feet. Things soon settled into a new routine but she never did get to go back to school.

Fast forward a few years to when the English arrived and took Germany - Luise was working as a waitress in a restaurant and was delighted as she got a free...
meal every day. “One day I was playing billiards when a British soldier came in, having been out celebrating with his friends, and tried to join in our game. He was far too drunk and fell onto the table and ruined our game before his soldier friends carried him away.

“The next day, he came back in to apologise and asked me out for lunch. For me this was a great honour, as there was still a lack of food but as a British soldier, he had means of getting more food than I could so of course I accepted! We carried on seeing each other after that but couldn’t be seen together publicly. When his regiment moved away from Hamburg, we kept in touch and I soon followed him to Munster and worked in a bar there.”

That soldier was Roland Davies, who Luise married in 1947. When Roland’s time in the army was up, he had to return to the UK while she waited for permission to join him. She then travelled to Harwich from the Hook of Holland and came to live in Roland’s mother and father’s house in Ilford, Essex, along with his brother and sister-in-law.

“I remember crossing the North Sea and first seeing the green grass of England, which I thought was so beautiful as I’d never seen anything quite like it. When I arrived at Liverpool Street station I felt safe and as I got on the train to Ilford I knew then that my troubles were behind me. I was so thrilled to look out the window and see what England was like – I just knew that I was going to spend the rest of my life here.

“Communication was limited when I reached Ilford as I didn’t speak the language, but they were very kind and patiently tried to teach me English. My mother-in-law was a really good cook – food was still rationed of course but she would buy marrowbone from the butcher and cook it to make things like jelly and dumplings – I will always remember how lovely her dumplings were!”

Luise and Roland soon discovered that they had a baby on the way. Sadly though her father-in-law, who was suffering with chest troubles that he’d contracted during his service in World War I, was very weak and he passed away before their son, Michael was born.

The young family continued living in Ilford until Michael was 10 and his grandmother was very much involved in bringing him up, as Luise went back to work in the early 1950s as a shop assistant in Dorothy Perkins. Michael was also very close to his uncle, a keen tennis player who always made time to play with his nephew. In 1959, they moved into a newly built house in Thundersley. Roland worked in the Civil Service.

Today, Michael lives locally with his wife and has two grown up sons. Sadly, Roland passed away in 1997.

Luise has lived in Adams Elm House in Leigh, which is managed by South Essex Homes, since November 2011. She said: “I am very happy here, especially on Fridays when my son comes in to make tea for everyone!”

With the help of her son Michael, Luise has documented her experiences in a book which has recently been published – ‘Just Another War: How I survived the Siege of Leningrad’.

Luise added: “I have never been back to Russia for a variety of reasons, but I did used to visit my family in Germany and Lexi ended up settling in Hamburg with her family.

“I have had a very troublesome life and have some memories that I would rather forget. Whilst writing the book has brought some of those memories back to the surface, I have also been able to remember some better memories including some from my happy childhood.”

The description of the book reads:

Told in her own words, ‘Just another War’ is the gripping account of one person’s experiences during that terrible period in the history of that city, and how she survived, narrowly avoiding death from the effects of prolonged starvation, and the intense cold of the Russian winter. This book also reminds the reader of the awful suffering inflicted on huge numbers of people by leaders who appear to be unconcerned about the consequences of their misguided ambitions - a scenario which, regrettably, we see repeated time and again, in the annals of human history. But, despite the tragedy of this dark episode, it is a story of survival and determination to continue living, in the face of the loss of loved ones, and how the kindness and concern of others shines through, providing hope for the future.

‘Just Another War: How I survived the Siege of Leningrad’.

The book is available to buy via Amazon, where you can find it by searching ‘Luise Davies’.
Introducing our all-new Support Services!

As of the start of July, we have improved the way we provide our support services to residents.

The Support Services team is overseen by Group Manager Traci Dixon and has two main strands; Southend Careline and general Support Services including Sheltered Housing.

**Deborah Hill-David** is the new Careline Services Manager. Her team of Careline Service Officers work around the clock, 365 days a year, to manage calls and enquiries to the Southend Careline service.

**Southend Careline** has welcomed a surge of new clients since the start of 2017 since companies offering similar services elsewhere in Essex have closed down. This has seen our customer base grow from under 3000 to more than 5000 in just 18 months. Despite these additional demands, the service has been able to retain its Telecare Services Association accreditation, which evidences the excellent service this team provides.

We are keen to continue providing a top quality service to Careline customers and this new team structure has been introduced to ensure we can do just that.

**The Careline team is relocating!**

The Southend Careline team will soon be moving from their current base at Nicholson House to our offices in Mendip Road, Westcliff next to St Cedd’s church. This new office will be open to the public so please do pop in if you want to see a demonstration of the products that are available to make you or your loved ones feel safer in their own homes.

**Stuart Long** becomes the new Support Services Manager. There are two teams working under Stuart; Sheltered Housing and Support Services.

**Sheltered Housing** – our larger sheltered housing schemes will continue to have a dedicated Sheltered Housing Officer (SHO) based at the scheme building during office hours. There will also continue to be a smaller team of floating SHOs, who visit each of the smaller schemes on a daily basis. The difference under this new structure is that the SHOs now have additional support of their colleagues in the Support Services team.

**Support Services** – the Officers in this team were previously known as the ‘Community Development Team’ and the ‘Temporary Accommodation Team’ and they will be working across the borough offering help on issues for the benefit of all residents, including those most vulnerable residents living in temporary accommodation, on a variety of key issues such as:

- worklessness / benefit dependency
- financial inclusion / fuel poverty
- community cohesion / food poverty
- social isolation / digital inclusion
- health and wellbeing
- tenancy sustainment
- anti-social behaviour
- living independently in a home that meets their needs

They will fully utilise available resources such as The Hub (see page 15 for more information) and will constantly be looking for ways to access government and community grants that are available to support residents through such issues.

The Support Services team will be providing assistance to sheltered housing residents at their schemes in support of their SHO colleagues. This will involve those residents enjoying greater access to support on issues such as those listed above and Officers will work with other local organisations, such as Age Concern Southend, to bring support services directly to our older tenants. These Officers will also be on hand to provide cover over periods of SHO staff sickness and annual leave.
At June’s meeting of the STRF, we decided on the committee for the year ahead:

- Chair - Shirley O’Reilly
- Vice Chair - Sandra Smith
- Treasurer - Jean Pickering
- Secretary - Erica Donnelly
- Committee members
  Peter Somerville
  Kath Fewster
  Patrick Nightingale

On behalf of everyone on the STRF, I would also like to say a big thank you to Diane Nicholls and Glenn Ashdown for all they have done for the Federation committee in the past.

Best wishes
Shirley O’Reilly
Chair of the STRF
Email: Shirley.oreilly@strf.org.uk
Call: 07876 116552
Visit our website: www.strf.org.uk

Gold Award
Have you had contact with an Officer of South Essex Homes, or maybe a contractor who has gone that extra mile to provide you with excellent service? This would involve the officer or contractor dealing with something that is not normally part of their every day job.
Or perhaps you have a good neighbour who helps you or others around you who are less able than themselves?

If so, then why not nominate them for a Gold Award?
We’ll need information on what the person does that’s beyond the call of duty. If possible, please also get other people to sign to show their support of your nomination. Please complete the slip below and attach it to a letter detailing your nomination. Once received, we will put your nomination forward to the panel made up of Southend Tenants and Residents Federation and the Tenants Voice Association for consideration. The winners will be awarded a certificate and £25 shopping vouchers.

We look forward to hearing from you. Please forward this slip to:
The Chair of the STRF, 75 Southchurch Avenue, Southend on Sea, Essex SS1 2RS
Or e-mail: shirley.oreilly@strf.org.uk
Mobile: 07876 116552

Don’t forget, we have a busy programme of events over the summer holidays to keep the whole family busy. Why not come and join us?!

Weds 1st August
11AM-3PM, QUEENSWAY ESTATE, AROUND THE STOREHOUSE

Weds 15th August
11AM-3PM, KEATS HOUSE, SHELLEY SQUARE, SOUTHEND

Fri 31st August
12PM-4PM – THE BALMORAL CENTRE, SALISBURY ROAD, WESTCLIFF

Visit our website: www.strf.org.uk
Better Queensway consultation findings published

Findings from the Better Queensway consultation, where members of the local community were invited to have their say on proposals for regenerating the Queensway area in central Southend-on-Sea, have been published.

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council is developing proposals to create a new residential-led development made up of high quality housing, commercial space, improved public areas and a new road network. The scheme will transform the site into a lively community of around 1,300 homes, including affordable housing, and making life better for both existing and new residents.

The public consultation took place between 8 November and 15 December 2017. A resident preview event and two public events were held, with over 300 people attending and 120 people in total providing formal feedback.

Cllr James Courtenay, cabinet member for growth says: “Better Queensway is the biggest, most ambitious regeneration project in the area and the consultation demonstrated broad support for the principle of development on the site. We would like to thank everyone who attended our public events and provided feedback as part of the consultation.

“Many of the points raised during the consultation have been incorporated into the objectives for selecting a development partner, meaning they will be part of the selection criteria. We have started this process and a shortlist of potential development partners will be announced in due course.”

Some of the key issues raised during the consultation and Southend-on-Sea Borough Council’s response is in the table below. The full report on the consultation and a summary leaflet can be downloaded at: www.betterqueensway.co.uk

### YOU SAID

- There was general support for new housing, particularly affordable housing provided it is genuinely affordable, and for a mix of homes for families and single people.
- Consultation responses demonstrated there is significant support for high quality public space, which is safe, secure and well maintained.
- Respondents recognised the opportunities that the development could bring in terms of skills and jobs, but including commercial space within the development was not as high a priority as other elements of the scheme.
- Integration with the existing community and increasing safety in the area was a key theme in the consultation responses. People recognised the opportunities the development could bring for achieving this.
- The transport aspect of the Better Queensway scheme raised concern amongst the community, particularly the implications of the changes to the wider road network and the general impact on the town.

### WE DID

- Southend-on-Sea Borough Council would like the minimum number of housing units for the development to be more than the existing 441 units.
- A requirement of a development partner is to ensure the space is well designed, fosters a sense of community spirit and gives a new lease of life to the area.
- The Council will also ensure commercial space is not a dominant feature of the development and will seek to complement the high street rather than compete with it.
- This supports the wider aspiration for the development – that Better Queensway should be a safe, vibrant, sustainable community that impacts positively on the economic and social wellbeing of the whole area.
- After considering all the feedback, Southend-on-Sea Borough Council has agreed that the subsequent design for the transport scheme will be carried out with the future development partner to ensure the road scheme and housing development fit together in the best possible way. Full responses to matters raised can be found in the consultation report.
The Board Report

Get to know the Board of South Essex Homes

Name: Meg Davidson

Can you tell us a bit about your background please?

I grew up in Birmingham before going to University in London where I studied Latin & Greek. My parents were both lecturers of those subjects at Birmingham University so there was no escaping it in our house! I then had a bit of a change of scene when I took my postgraduate course in Glasgow, where I was based for two years and even managed to acquire a bit of a Scottish accent.

I then moved back down south to take up a job running the library and information services at Luton and Dunstable Hospital. I managed the Postgraduate Medical Centre Library for doctors (in the days before the internet of course!) and a branch of the public library which involved a book trolley service around the wards for patients.

It was there where I met my husband Ken in 1983, who came to work as the Deputy General Manager of the Hospital. We were married two years later and went on to have our son Ben, who is now 31.

A couple of years later, just six weeks before I gave birth to our daughter Jenny, we moved up to Lincolnshire when Ken got a new job as a Hospice Manager. I was busy looking after my young children but was able to take on a job share to set up the Lincolnshire Health Information Service. I suppose you could say it was a bit like NHS Direct, supplying information in plain English to residents. We worked from an office in Lincoln, but on occasions we took the service out to the further flung parts of Lincolnshire, using a converted double decker bus. It had "Health Bus" emblazoned on it, but unfortunately it was very old and pumped out some nasty looking exhaust fumes – so not all that healthy!

Unfortunately that job was not very secure, as it was on a rolling six month contract, so after that I undertook some freelance work doing various bits and pieces and I also applied and was accepted to become a Magistrate. I ended up serving as a Magistrate for 20 years throughout my time in Lincolnshire which was most interesting.

The chance came up to be on the Board of my family’s engineering firm, which had been set up by my grandfather, and there began my first experience of being on a company Board. I soon found out about the differences between the public and private sector – which each pose very different challenges. The run up to the year 2000 will always stick in my head – we thought the world was going to end with Y2K! During my time on that Board the company was trying to widen its customer base and in doing so attracted the attention of a large company who went on to buy the business but it took several years to wind the residual company up, sort out the pension fund and the like.

It was around that time that I got involved in local politics and I was elected to West Lindsey District Council. It is a very rural area and I represented an area containing ten settlements of varying sizes over a large area. I’d often have 40 mile round trips to meetings which was challenging as you can imagine – much different to Southend!

What led to your move to Essex?

The parts of our lives that linked us to Lincolnshire began to come to an end – jobs ended, and my dad went into a care home. Around the time that dad died, my daughter came to Southend for University at the East 15 Acting School, so she was the trailblazer for our move to Southend really! Rather than being the family’s northern outpost, we decided to follow Jenny by relocating to Southend along with Ben in the summer of 2013.

We immediately loved living by the sea and the weather down here is so lovely compared to where we’ve lived previously. To start with it felt like we were on holiday but it was like we had a blank sheet here, a fresh start. While I was still finding my feet, I worked with Healthwatch Southend which is independent from the NHS but acts as a consumer voice – gathering views and experiences and feeding it back, to try and influence how health services are provided in the town. This was a very useful experience as it enabled me to get to know the area.
...and how did you get involved with the Council and South Essex Homes?

I was living in Prittlewell and had only been here a few weeks when I was asked if I would like to stand for election to the Council. I was elected to represent Prittlewell Ward in 2015 so have just entered my 4th year on the Council and my 3rd year as a Council-appointed member of the South Essex Homes Board.

This is a very different company with a different purpose to what I’d been used to dealing with before, but my previous experience of being a non-executive director has proved very useful. The five Independent members of the Board bring specialist knowledge to the table whereas Councillors add a useful local knowledge as well as providing a strong link to Southend Borough Council, who of course own South Essex Homes. Cecil Court and Stephen McAdden House are in my ward so a number of the residents I represent are tenants of the homes managed by the company.

It is extremely interesting being a Board member and I’ve witnessed an awful lot happening in the last three years especially the transformation of our subsidiary company, South Essex Property Services. These are certainly rapidly changing times but the successes we’ve already seen are tribute to the hard work of the staff who work so well as a team.

I think it’s been advantageous being a newcomer in the area as I’ve seen things with fresh eyes. I think if you’ve always lived somewhere, you get used to it, but I’ve been able to point out issues with inadequate road signage for example, which may be confusing for visitors to the town.

What does your day-to-day work involve?

A lot of my work is done from home – I get emails and phone calls at all times of day and night including weekends. The work is quite flexible which I can fit around my home and family commitments but does involve some rather long Council meetings which are often known to go on past midnight. Not so bad this time of year but there was one time where we were in a meeting gone midnight in the middle of winter when the heating in the Council Chamber stopped working!

All Councillors get assigned to various committees as part of their duties and I am the Chair of the Council’s Audit Committee.

There are some highlights to the work we do – for example I went to the official opening of the Poppies: Wave exhibition in Shoebury last year. The sun was shining, the setting was idyllic and we were lucky enough to get up close to the beautiful artwork – it really was a treat.

As Councillors, we do of course tend to hear more about the problems people have and we are aware that we very rarely hear the compliments, so we learn to take a balanced view on things. A definite advantage of being on the Board is that I get to know people and see how things work from the other side and I have always found South Essex Homes’ staff very helpful and keen to resolve any issues that arise. As a Board, we are always looking for ways to ensure residents get their voices heard but we need to raise questions – for example, whilst we don’t want to lose good channels of communication, could they be more streamlined? And how do we communicate with hard to reach groups?

What do you like to do outside of your work?

When I am not working I enjoy playing the flute and I play in a couple of local amateur groups. We have played some concerts at the Priory Park bandstand but I’ve also travelled further afield with my music and performed in Ostend and Ypres.

Having never lived by the sea before moving here, we enjoy spending time by the coast and we are lucky to have so many lovely parks in the borough.

I volunteer in the warehouse for Southend Foodbank and we are involved with the local SAFE (Supporting Asperger Families in Essex) group. Our son has Asperger Syndrome and there is so much support available for children and families in Southend – perhaps not as much for adults but this is something I’m keen to see developed.

My daughter Jenny and her husband Steve had a daughter last year – little Hannah will be one in August. It’s fair to say that Ken and I qualify as doting grandparents!
Welcome to the Summer Edition of Leasehold Matters, the page in Insight devoted to Leaseholders. Following from the Big Conversation in March, the Leasehold Focus Group is interested in hearing your views on how you would like the group to operate. This includes focusing on issues which are important to you and whether other methods of operation would be beneficial to the service. The members would be grateful for your feedback.

Below is a brief survey which will assist the Focus Group and South Essex Homes in providing an effective service to Leaseholders. If you could complete this and return in the pre-paid envelope supplied, that would be greatly appreciated (NB: an envelope is only included in the leaseholders’ mailing).

All completed forms will be entered into a prize draw with a chance to win £20 worth of shopping vouchers.

Many Thanks
Jan

Leasehold Focus Group 2018 Survey

1) **As a Leaseholder, what are your main priorities for South Essex Homes to deliver an effective service?** Please rate your three most important factors in numerical order with 1 being the most important.

- [ ] Providing Value for Money
- [ ] Ensuring Caretaking and Grounds Maintenance is completed to a high standard
- [ ] Completing communal repairs to a high standard
- [ ] Completing major works e.g. roof renewal to a high standard
- [ ] Ensuring residents live in a safe environment
- [ ] Ensuring queries are dealt with in a timely manner
- [ ] Being easy to contact via a number of methods e.g. email, telephone etc.
- [ ] Other (Please Specify)

2) **Would you prefer the Leasehold Focus Group to focus on specific issues until they are resolved or a variety of general issues regularly?**

- [ ] I would prefer the group focus on one issue at a time
- [ ] I would prefer the group to continue dealing with a variety of issues

3) **Would you prefer the Leasehold Focus Group to continue in its current format or would you prefer more leasehold representation across other resident involvement groups?**

- [ ] I would prefer the focus group to continue in its current format
- [ ] I would prefer members to be represented in other parts of the organisation

4) **Would you like leasehold representatives to attend pre-contract meetings?**

- [ ] Yes, I would like this option to be explored
- [ ] No, continuing with the current arrangements only

5) **Would you like the Leasehold Focus Group to continue arranging events for leaseholders?**

- [ ] Yes I believe this is important
- [ ] No, I do not attend these events

Thank you for completing the survey.

To be entered into the Prize Draw please fill in your details below and return in the pre-paid envelope supplied

Name __________________________

Property Address __________________________

Contact Number __________________________

The Leasehold Focus Group are always happy for new members to join if you are interested in attending the group’s meetings please tick this box: [ ]
Estate Inspections

Estate Inspections are now held throughout the year and involve officers from South Essex Homes surveying each area of the town which include properties managed by us, looking for any issues that require our attention. Residents are welcome to come along on these inspections to see this process in action and point out problems that they are aware of.

The table below contains the dates and locations of the inspections that are due to take place over the next few months. If you would like to come along, please meet us at the start point at the stated time. We appreciate your input and look forward to seeing more residents take part in estate inspections throughout 2018. For more information about estate inspections please call us on 0800 833 160.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>START POINT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>05/09/2018</td>
<td>9:30am</td>
<td>Nestuda House</td>
<td>Outside Nestuda House Main Entrance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05/09/2018</td>
<td>10:00am</td>
<td>Beaver Tower</td>
<td>Outside Beaver Tower Main Entrance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06/09/2018</td>
<td>9:30am</td>
<td>Kingfisher Close, Sandpiper Close, Eagle Way, Fraser Close, Cunningham Close</td>
<td>Outside Kingpiper Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06/09/2018</td>
<td>9:30am</td>
<td>Cedar Close, Maple Square, Dickens Close, Shelley Square, Wordsworth Close</td>
<td>Cedar Close Car Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06/09/2018</td>
<td>9:30am</td>
<td>Riverstone, Mornington House</td>
<td>Outside Riverstone Main Entrance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/09/2018</td>
<td>9:30am</td>
<td>Shannon Close, Little Fetches, Bellhouse Lane, Leighwood Avenue</td>
<td>Shannon Close Car Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13/09/2018</td>
<td>9:30am</td>
<td>John Street, George Street, Dane Street, Longmans</td>
<td>Corner of George Street and Dane Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13/09/2018</td>
<td>9:30am</td>
<td>Anson Chase, Ashanti Close</td>
<td>Corner of Anson Chase and Bulwark Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13/09/2018</td>
<td>9:30am</td>
<td>Saxon Gardens, Viking Court, Wool Pack</td>
<td>Outside Viking Court Main Entrance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13/09/2018</td>
<td>9:30am</td>
<td>East Street, Sutton Road, East Street Naval, The Brambles, The Mulberries</td>
<td>Outside St Melitus Hall, Sutton Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13/09/2018</td>
<td>9:30am</td>
<td>Bradford Bury, Rothwell Close, Eastwood Old Road, Westwood</td>
<td>Outside Bradfordbury Community Hall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14/09/2018</td>
<td>10:30am</td>
<td>Eaton Road, Senier House</td>
<td>Corner of Eaton Avenue and Herschell Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19/09/2018</td>
<td>9:30am</td>
<td>Avon Way, West Road</td>
<td>Outside 2-30 Avon Way Main Entrance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20/09/2018</td>
<td>9:30am</td>
<td>Keats House</td>
<td>Outside Keats House Main Entrance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20/09/2018</td>
<td>9:30am</td>
<td>Delaware Road, Delaware Crescent, Ness Road</td>
<td>Outside Thorpepedene Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21/09/2018</td>
<td>9:30am</td>
<td>Blyth Avenue, Bunters Avenue, St Audreys Court</td>
<td>Corner of Blyth Avenue and Delaware Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27/09/2018</td>
<td>9:30am</td>
<td>Hunters Lodge, Norfolk Avenue, Trafford House</td>
<td>Outside Hunters Lodge Main Entrance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28/09/2018</td>
<td>9:30am</td>
<td>Great Mead, Kestrel House, Crouchmans</td>
<td>Outside Great Mead Car Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/10/2018</td>
<td>9:30am</td>
<td>Malvern, Chiltern, Pennine, Quantock</td>
<td>Outside Malvern Main Entrance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04/10/2018</td>
<td>9:30am</td>
<td>Yantlet</td>
<td>Outside Yantlet Main entrance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05/10/2018</td>
<td>10:00am</td>
<td>Snakes Lane</td>
<td>Corner of Brendan Way and Snakes Lane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09/10/2018</td>
<td>10:00am</td>
<td>Southchurch Rectory Chase</td>
<td>Outside 7-12 Southchurch Rectory Chase</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10/10/2018</td>
<td>10:00am</td>
<td>Mendip Road, Mendip Crescent, The Mendips</td>
<td>Outside West Office, Mendip Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/10/2018</td>
<td>10:00am</td>
<td>Bruton Avenue, Dunster Avenue</td>
<td>Meet at corner of Bruton/Mendip Crescent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16/10/2018</td>
<td>10:00am</td>
<td>Sherwood Way, Archer Avenue</td>
<td>Corner of Sherwood Way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17/10/2018</td>
<td>10:00am</td>
<td>Martock Avenue, Cheddar Avenue, Treelawn Drive</td>
<td>Meet at old South Essex Homes West Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18/10/2018</td>
<td>9:30am</td>
<td>Rochford Road, Danbury Close</td>
<td>Outside entrance to garage site next to 126-148 Rochford Road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18/10/2018</td>
<td>9:30am</td>
<td>East Street Leigh</td>
<td>Outside 2-8 East Street Leigh</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Are you confused with your finances and struggling to stay afloat?
Do you need support to help get on top of your debts?
Don’t bury your head in the sand… help is available!

There are many services available both nationally and locally to help people in debt. We understand that sometimes it can feel like there is no way out of it, but there is, and by sharing and facing up to your financial problems, you can set yourself on the road to sorting them out.

Our Support Services Team are on hand to talk through your issues as a first port of call and they can refer you to specialist services that can help you.

You can call our friendly team on **01702 212650**
Or for general practical advice about dealing with debt, visit [www.stepchange.org](http://www.stepchange.org)

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**STOP LOAN SHARKS**

Whilst you wouldn’t expect to find any man-eating sharks hanging around the end of Southend Pier, you could be living next door to a shark of the human kind. A loan shark, that is!

A loan shark is someone who lends money without the correct permissions. These permissions are granted by the Financial Conduct Authority. Just to be clear, borrowing from an illegal money lender does not mean that you have broken the law. It’s the lender that has done this.

If you, or anyone you know, can answer yes to any of the questions listed below, it’s likely you’ve borrowed from a loan shark.

- Have you been offered a cash loan?
- Taken a cash loan but weren’t given any paperwork?
- Have you been threatened when you couldn’t pay?
- Has your bank card been taken from you as a security?
- Does what you owe keep growing even though you are making payments?

For anyone impacted by the activities of a loan shark, there is help available. And, the best place to get this help is by contacting - in complete confidence - the Illegal Money Lending Team (IMLT).

Loan sharks rarely, if ever, give any paperwork and if payments are missed they often use intimidation and violence to get money from their ‘clients’.

The Illegal Money Lending Team (IMLT) is there to help. If you have any information, however small, on loan shark activities they can help and are waiting to hear from you now.

The IMLT can be contacted (in complete confidence) 24 hours a day, seven days a week:

**By telephone:** 0300 555 2222

**By e-mail:** reportaloanshark@stoploansharks.gov.uk

**By texting to:** loan(space)shark(space) + your message to 60003

**On Facebook:** https://www.facebook.com/StopLoanSharksProject/?fref=ts

**Website:** [http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/stoploansharks](http://www.birmingham.gov.uk/stoploansharks)
This issue’s message from the Senior Management Team comes from one of our Directors, Chris Vaughan.

Here at South Essex Homes, we continue to closely watch the progress of the public inquiry into the Grenfell tragedy, secure in the knowledge that our properties do not suffer from the problems identified as the primary causes contributing to that awful event. However, if the inquiry identifies necessary actions that we have not already taken, we will be swift to act. The safety of our residents remains firmly in the forefront of our thoughts, minds and actions.

Since Mike’s last message, we have reached and passed the implementation date for GDPR and I am pleased to say that we are well prepared and our management teams have been trained to take on board all aspects of the new legislation. Like many organisations we still have minor things to do and we are well prepared to meet these requirements on an ongoing basis.

Again like many other public sector organisations, we have been required to make efficiency savings causing us to embark on a staff restructure. The restructure is almost complete as I write and throughout our deliberations we have borne in mind our obligations to provide quality services to residents. Our staff are committed to providing a great service and our residents frequently tell me of the good service that they have received from individuals. I would like to take the opportunity now to publicly thank all of our staff for keeping the needs of residents in their hearts throughout the difficult times during change, thank you.

As we move into the height of summer, we look forward to a continued bright and warm season and a boost to the all-important summertime economy of Southend-on-Sea. I’d like to wish you all a very pleasant summer.

Best wishes
Chris Vaughan

South Essex Community Hub is a charity that has been developed to be community led, respond to community need, promote community resilience and is focused on supporting vulnerable residents of all tenure. The Hub project continues to develop the holistic services it provides, working with the following partners: Age Concern, Family Mosaic and Southend Vineyard. Since the Hub was opened in June 2015 it has engaged with over 14,000 people.

The Hub Project

- Supports people at risk of losing tenancy/income, providing interventions to support self-sufficiency and independence.
- Provides specialist advice and support services as well as signposting to other services.
- Digital Inclusion work providing free computer access and training, supporting people to be independent and active.
- Provides community spaces for people to access online services with partners based in the community hubs.
- Promotes volunteer opportunities through our volunteer service, matching people with opportunities within the borough.
- This volunteer service promotes volunteering across the community and delivers training and support for volunteers.
- We provide free pre-ESOL learning, with classes open to the community helping secondary English speakers integrate with the community and connect with services in the Hub.
- Supports vulnerable people to access free counselling service.
- Developing new activities that are community led.

The Hub Project has a main centre in central Southend with additional satellite hubs in Shoeburyness, Cluny Square, Westcliff and Woodgrange Estate. The main Hub Victoria operates Monday-Friday from 10am-4pm, Shoeburyness Tuesday-Thursday 10am-4pm, Cluny Hub Every Tuesday 10am-12pm, Westcliff Library Tuesdays 10am-4pm, Woodgrange Hub 1pm-4pm.

Locations
Hub Victoria: Victoria shopping centre, 324-325 Chartwell Square, Southend-on-Sea, Essex SS2 5SP
Shoeburyness Hub: 151 West Road, Shoeburyness, Southend-on-Sea, Essex SS3 9EF
Cluny Hub: 1 - 3 Cluny Square, Southend-on-Sea, Essex SS2 4AF
Woodgrange Hub: Centre Place, Prospect Close, Southend-on-Sea, Essex SS1 2JD
Westcliff Hub: Westcliff Library, 649 London Rd, Southend-on-Sea, Westcliff-on-Sea SS0 9PD
**Garden in Bloom**

**COMPETITION 2018**

South Essex Homes and The Estate Services Focus Group would like to invite you to enter the 2018 Garden in Bloom competition.

If you are interested in participating, please complete and return the entry form below to ‘FREEPOST South Essex Homes’ by 10th August. You can send us images of your garden at its best along with your application if you wish – you can enclose photographs or a memory stick/CD so we can download the pictures electronically. If no pictures are submitted with your application, we will contact you to arrange a suitable time for someone to come to your home to take photos of your garden to be passed on to the judging panel. The Estate Services Focus Group will finalise winners at their meeting in September.

Anyone living in any South Essex Homes property can enter! The awards will be judged on impact, overall design including use of space, colour, originality, upkeep and presentation. There will be three awards awarded in each of the main categories – gold, silver and bronze.

**ENTRY FORM**

**Tenant and Leaseholder Categories**

- [ ] Best Front Garden
- [ ] Best Back Garden
- [ ] Best Hanging Baskets
- [ ] Only one entry per garden

**Ages 3-7**

- [ ] Mini Vegetable Plot or Pot
- [ ] Tallest Sunflower

**Ages 8-15**

- [ ] Mini Vegetable Plot or Pot
- [ ] Tallest Sunflower

**Individual Flat in a Block Categories**

- [ ] Best Window Box (only where fitted)
- [ ] Best Balcony Pot
- [ ] Best Vegetable Pot

**Pictures of your garden**

What are you enclosing with this form?

- [ ] Photographs
- [ ] USB stick
- [ ] CD
- [ ] No pictures submitted – South Essex Homes will contact you to take photos during August

**NOTE:** Please ensure all items you send us are clearly labelled so they do not become detached from your application and so we can return them to you (if desired) after judging has taken place.

Please keep the top half of this application form for your information.

Return completed form to: Freepost, South Essex Homes

**Closing Date for applications of interest is Friday 10th August 2018.**

- The competition is for anyone living in any South Essex Homes property including residents in tower blocks.
- Each applicant can only enter one category.
- Only one entry will be accepted for each communal area.
- The Estate Services Focus Group will finalise winners at their meeting in September.

Please contact South Essex Homes for more information about the competition on 01702 212650.