Autumn 2018 issue!

Be part of it!

Could it help make your life easier too?

Top 10 Tips to beat condensation
Who is your Tenancy Officer?
BRAND NEW – Your Letters & Puzzle Page!

REAL PEOPLE’S STORIES
HELPFUL HINTS & TIPS!

CARELINE SAVES THE DAY

Could it help make your life easier too?

MEET THE ESTATE SERVICES TEAM
looking after communal areas

AND LOTS MORE...
The Southend Communities Outreach Group are pleased to invite 100 children to their Christmas Party which will be held at Room 24 Southend on Sea on Wednesday 12th December 2018.

Only 100 places are available and these will be provisionally allocated on a first come, first served basis.

In order to help towards costs, there will be a small charge of £1.00 per child, which is payable upon return of the booking form.

The party starts at 4.30pm with food being served at 6pm; and with a visit from Father Christmas it is sure to be a fun filled afternoon. The party will then finish at 6.30pm. Party with Sid will be in attendance.

Children must be aged between 0-12 years old. Parents are asked to stay at the party with their children.

If your child would like to attend please return your form by Friday 16th November with relevant payment. Cheques should be made payable to Southend Communities Outreach Group
Cash to be paid in person at the Reception, Civic Centre, Victoria Avenue, Southend on Sea, Essex, SS2 6FY. Please ask for Sue Rickard in the Support Services Team

If you would like any further information please contact Shirley O’Reilly on 07876 116552.

South Essex Homes manages and maintains homes in Southend-on-Sea on behalf of Southend Borough Council; whilst continuing to improve services, involve our customers and build strong communities.

We have a high calibre Board made up of 10 other non-executive Directors and are looking to recruit a tenant of Southend Borough Council, as a Board member with the ability to build effective relationships internally and externally and a strong commitment to best practice in governance.

We are particularly interested in people with skills or knowledge relating to business acumen, financial awareness or housing experience - which will help us to evolve and ensure our organisation continues to develop and improve in a changing environment.

We anticipate that people interested in this role will be passionate about making a contribution, can take on an ambassadorial role and be a strong team player, whilst embracing the future ambitions of South Essex Homes to provide good value, quality housing.

This vacancy is a paid voluntary position, which would actively enhance any job opportunities for the successful candidates in the future.

South Essex Homes in partnership with Southend Tenants & Residents Federation welcomes applications regardless of race, sex, age, disability or marital status.

For an informal discussion, please contact Beverley Gallacher on 01702 212649.
The application pack is available on the South Essex Homes website or can be requested by email to beverleygallacher@seh.southend.gov.uk. Closing date: 5th November 2018.

I would like my child(ren) to attend the Children’s Christmas Party at Room 24 - 12th December 2018

Name: Gender: Age:
Name: Gender: Age:
Name: Gender: Age:
Name: Gender: Age:
Are there any special dietary requirements?

Parent’s Name:
Telephone:
Address:
Postcode:
Email:

Return with £1.00 per child to Southend Communities Outreach Group via Sue Rickard, Community Development Team, Civic Centre, Victoria Avenue, Southend on Sea, Essex, SS2 6FY
We thought it was about time that we refreshed the look of our residents’ magazine and we hope you like the result!

We want to bring you even more news, views and info through Insight. We know that what interests people most of all is other people, so we would like to invite you to get involved and send in your letters, photos and stories. And to say thank you for contacting us, we will give a £10 shopping voucher for every reader submission that we print in Insight!

What are you waiting for?! You can contact us by email to communications@seh.southend.gov.uk, by post to FREEPOST SOUTH ESSEX HOMES or by a direct message via our Facebook page.

Now grab yourself a cuppa and have a flick through our magazine, which is packed with the usual variety of stories with a few new features to boot – including a word search on page 19.

Happy reading!!

Julia

I am pleased to welcome you all to the new-look Insight magazine.

You may have heard in the news about the social housing green paper, in which the government has stated the importance of tenants’ and residents’ voices and views being heard and taken into account. While we will look very carefully at what eventually forms part of a new Housing Act; we believe that our ongoing relationship with you, and all the residents we provide services for, will stand us in good stead to take account of any government guidance.

The green paper contains other key themes including the potential for a substantial update of the Decent Homes standard and an acknowledgement that the supply of genuinely affordable and social rent homes must be increased.

The sentiments of this green paper are very much reflected in our own report on resident involvement and engagement, which was approved by our Board earlier this month. That was a really important point in time – where the Board was able to reflect on and endorse an updated and refreshed approach to resident involvement and consultation, which importantly was informed to a large degree by residents themselves, in particular through the Resident Scrutiny Form and the Southend Tenants & Residents Federation.

At a no less critically important level, discussions continue with Southend Borough Council on the details of a new long term agreement with South Essex Homes to continue and develop the work we do for you and your homes. I anticipate being able to give you more information about this matter in our next issue of Insight in the New Year.

As always, with the Autumn issue of Insight being the last of the calendar year, may I be the first to wish early compliments of the festive season to you, your friends and family.

Best wishes
Mike
Mike Gatrell, Chief Executive of South Essex Homes

For all telephone enquiries freephone
0800 833 160
For general correspondence write to us at: Insight Magazine, South Essex Homes, Civic Centre, Victoria Avenue, Southend-on-Sea, SS2 6FY
Email: julia.pack@seh.southend.gov.uk

Contact us via Facebook during office hours – simply search for ‘South Essex Homes’ to find and like our page!
For general information about our services, please visit our website at www.southessexhomes.co.uk
The days are getting shorter and colder, the leaves are turning from green to brown and the shops are stocking advent calendars already - all signs that autumn has arrived.

This time of year, many of us also celebrate Halloween and Bonfire Night. While these events can be great fun, they don’t come without their dangers and problems for some.

**Halloween – 31st October**

If you are going trick or treating, be sure to only knock at the homes of people you know or those that are decorated for Halloween and make sure children are supervised by an adult at all times.

Please respect your neighbours. Remember that some people choose not to take part in Halloween for a variety of reasons and some older or vulnerable people may get very scared by the costumes or unexpected visitors.

**Bonfire Night – 5th November**

It can be lovely to snuggle up in your winter woollies to ‘ooh’ and ‘ahh’ at some colourful fireworks, but the best way to stay safe is to attend an organised display rather than host your own firework party. There are some excellent displays every year across the Southend area, so check out social media or local newspapers for details of what’s happening near you!

However, if you do want to host your own display, it is vital that you take the proper precautions to keep you and your guests safe! The following advice is issued by Essex County Fire & Rescue Service:

- Only buy fireworks marked BS 7114 (this means they reach the British safety standards).
- Don’t drink alcohol if setting off fireworks.
- Keep fireworks in a closed, non-flammable box.
- Follow the instructions on each firework.
- Light them at arm’s length, using a taper.
- Ensure you are letting them off in a safe area, a suitable distance away from your home and neighbouring properties.
- Stand well back.
- Never go near a firework that has been lit. Even if it hasn’t gone off, it could still explode.

Never put fireworks in your pocket or throw them.
Always supervise children around fireworks.
Light sparklers one at a time and wear gloves.
Never give sparklers to a child under five.
Don’t set off noisy fireworks late at night and never after 11pm.

And last but by no means least - keep pets indoors!

It’s not just dogs and cats that are scared of the big bangs – small pets such as rabbits and guinea pigs need extra care. If they are usually kept outside, bring them or into a shed or garage.

Have fun!
Time to test your heating!

With summer coming to an end and autumn just around the corner, now is a great time to test your central heating, just in case another beast from the east decided to visit Southend!

Turn on your boiler and check that the radiators get warm and heat your rooms.

Let us know sooner rather than later if you think there is a problem and make sure you allow us entry when carrying out gas safety checks.

Condensation can be made worse by poor ventilation and not heating the property to an adequate temperature. Heat your property to recommended levels – which are 21°C in habitable rooms and 18°C in other rooms.

Remove the condensation from your windows using a cloth. Open your windows or use extractor fans to ventilate your property.

Close kitchen and bathroom doors when cooking or bathing to prevent steam going into colder rooms. Leave the window open or a fan on, if fitted, for up to 20 minutes afterwards.

Wipe down surfaces when moisture settles to prevent mould forming.

Allow air to circulate around furniture and cupboards and don’t block air vents. Move furniture a few inches from the wall.

Wipe down surfaces when moisture settles to prevent mould forming.

Dry clothes outdoors whenever possible.

Cover pans when cooking. This not only reduces condensation but saves energy costs as the contents of the pan are heated through more quickly.

When decorating bathrooms and kitchen, use paints suitable for these areas to prevent damage to walls. Please note that specialist paints such as these can become ineffective if covered with other types of paint or wallpaper.

Leave open any trickle vents in your window frames, if fitted.

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Dry clothes outdoors whenever possible.
Whilst enjoying my bus ride to Chelmsford, I had that sudden sinking feeling I had forgotten something but what was it? My journey was only just beginning and it was as I approached Southend Airport that I remembered - the hob! I had left the cooker on with my potatoes cooking in a saucepan for my tea later that day!

“What to do?” I thought, and panicked! Without a mobile phone, I quickly decided to get off the bus and make a call. One of the offices at the airport kindly lent me the use of their telephone and I called the Careline phone number.

“The Housing Officer at Kestrel is off duty, but leave it with me and I’ll see what I can do”, the kind lady on the phone informed me.

I decided to return home with my head full of nightmares of the fire brigade turning up, my home filled with smoke, or worst still a fire - not to mention the embarrassment!

Before too long I arrived back to my home in Shoebury to find no blue flashing lights but instead some perfectly cooked potatoes and a cooker that had been safely turned off. As it turns out, Careline had made contact with the Housing Officer who was on duty for that area and was nearby, so she

I was so relieved to know that Careline had done this for me
collected the master key for my flat (through the secure keysafe scheme operated by South Essex Homes and Careline) and turned off the cooker.

I was so relieved to know that Careline had done this for me and that they were efficient in their response. I think it was a great saving that the fire brigade were not called out and that staff are aware of how to save public money. I wanted to say well done for the action they took and for saving money at the same time.

Peace of mind can be cheaper than you think...

Southend Careline specialises in an emergency alarm service operating 24 hours a day, 365 days a year - helping residents across Essex to stay safe in their own homes and offering reassurance to them and their loved ones.

All packages come with the rental of a Base Unit plus a wearable pendant (neck cord and/or wrist strap), as standard.

We also offer advanced assistive technology packages with additional products such as bed and chair sensors, door exit sensors and flood, temperature and carbon monoxide detectors - to provide residents with even greater peace of mind.

The independent living service offers a fast, easy and reliable way for users to get help, whatever the time of day or night - making it ideal for people who are frail, disabled, live alone or suffer from a medical condition.

Our standard package costs just £13.26 + VAT per month

Call us on Freephone 0800 833162 or send an email to careline@seh.southend.gov.uk

Peace of mind can be cheaper than you think...
Our eleven Tenancy Officers are each allocated a ‘patch’ of the town, with each patch containing a similar number of households. It is the Tenancy Officer’s job, together with Tenancy Assistants and other frontline teams, to manage the tenancies of the people living within their patch to ensure you get the relevant support.

We have recently changed the boundaries of our patches and thought it would be useful to share this information with you along with the Tenancy Officers’ details.

The map on this page roughly shows how the patches are broken down, so look for your area on the map, then refer to the corresponding coloured text box below for the name of your officer and a complete list of the roads that their patch covers.

If you ever need to contact us regarding any issues with your tenancy, you can email your Tenancy Officer direct. You can also contact them via our Contact Centre on 0800 833160 or call the office directly on 01702 212209 or 01702 212210.

Keep track of any changes on our website.
THOMAS HARE
thomashare@seh.southend.gov.uk

BARRINGTONS
CHILTERN
LANCASTER GARDENS
MALVERN
PENNINE
QUANTOCK
SUTTON ROAD 5 - 29a

OLAIDE BALOGUN
olaidebalogun@seh.southend.gov.uk

ANSON CHASE
ASHANTI CLOSE
BULWARK ROAD
CARMANIA CLOSE
CENTURION CLOSE
CROUCHMANS
CUNNINGHAM CLOSE
DANE STREET
DELWAER
CRESCENT
EAGLE WAY
ELM ROAD
EXETER CLOSE
FRASER CLOSE
FRIARS STREET
GEORGE STREET
GREAT MEAD
JOHN STREET
KESTREL HOUSE
KINGFISHER CLOSE
LONGMANS
ROPERS FARM
COTTAGE
SANDPIPER CLOSE
SHOEBURY AVENUE

LAUREN ANDERSON &
JOE OSBORNE (job share)
laurananders@seh.southend.gov.uk
joeosborne@seh.southend.gov.uk

APPLETREE CLOSE
ARCHER AVENUE
ARCHER CLOSE
BEWLEY COURT
BOYDEN CLOSE
CANTERBURY AVENUE
CHAINGATE AVENUE
CHRISTCHURCH COURT
ELDBERT CLOSE
LINCOLN CHASE
LONGBOW
NEWINGTON AVENUE
NEWINGTON CLOSE
NORMAN HARRIS HOUSE
NURSERY PLACE
PHILPOTT AVENUE
SHERWOOD WAY
SOUTHCHURCH AVENUE
VALLANCE CLOSE
WELCH CLOSE
WHITTINGHAM AVENUE
WICKMEAD CLOSE

DALE TOMLINSON
daletomlinson@seh.southend.gov.uk

AVON WAY
BLYTH AVENUE
BROADWAY
BUNTERS AVENUE
CAULFIELD ROAD
CHELMER WAY
CROUCH WAY
DELWARE ROAD
GOLDMER CLOSE
LONGSAND
MAPLIN WAY/THE BUNGALOW
NESS ROAD
SAXON GARDENS
SEA VIEW ROAD
ST AUDREYS COURT
STOUR CLOSE
VIKING COURT
WEST ROAD
WOOLPACK

HAYLEY
HAMilton
hayleyhamilton@seh.
southend.gov.uk

BARRINGTONS
CHILTERN
LANCASTER GARDENS
MALVERN
PENNINE
QUANTOCK
SUTTON ROAD 5 - 29a

SHANE
TOPSFIELD
shantopsfield@seh.southend.gov.uk

BETJEMAN MEWS
BRONTE MEWS
BROWNING AVENUE
BYRON AVENUE
CARNARVON ROAD
CEDAR CLOSE
CHESTNUT GROVE
CROWBOROUGH ROAD
DICKENS CLOSE
DYDEN AVENUE
EAST STREET 81 - 224
ELIOT MEWS
KEATS HOUSE
KIPLING MEWS
MAPLE SQUARE
NICHOLSON HOUSE
RUSKIN AVENUE
SHELLEY SQUARE
ST BENETS ROAD
SUTTON ROAD
SYCAMORE GROVE
TENNYSON AVENUE
TENNYSON AVENUE
TOWNFIELDS
WORDSWORTH CLOSE
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

Nomination form:

Nominated Person

Their address or department

Their telephone number (if known)

Your name

Your telephone number

Please include details of the nomination on a separate sheet of paper

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We’d like to take this opportunity to invite residents to join us for some upcoming events!

Firstly, the Children’s annual Christmas Party is taking place on 12th December and you can find full details and an application form on page 2 of this magazine.

We are also planning a trip to Clacton next summer – and you are all welcome to join in the fun! Further information and an application form can be found below.

Kind regards

Shirley O’Reilly
Chair of the STRF

Southend Communities Outreach Group (SCOG) are organising a day trip to Clacton next summer!

The coach trip will take place on Thursday 22nd August 2019 and will cost £6 per person.

If you’d like to come along please cut out and complete the slip below and return it to Shirley O’Reilly, SCOG, c/o Sue Rickard, South Essex Homes, Civic Centre, Victoria Avenue, Southend-on-sea, SS2 6FY. Please enclose a cheque made payable to Southend Communities Outreach Group for the relevant amount.

All are welcome but unfortunately as we were unable to book a disability coach, everyone attending will need to be able to walk on or off the coach and there will be limited storage space for wheelchairs.

Booking Slip – Clacton 22nd August 2019

Lead Name:

Address:

Postcode:

Telephone number:

Age:

Additional passengers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
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Do any of your party have mobility issues? Yes / No

If so, please detail them here:

(If there are any additional guests in your party, please enclose name and age details on a separate piece of paper and attach to this form before sending)
This is where we take pre-arranged payments from your debit or credit card.

We agree the amount and frequency of payments with you at the start of the arrangement and this will not be altered without prior permission, so this method is ideal for ongoing rent payments. We can even set up regular payments for a fixed period of time to clear a debt - such as 10 payments of £10 to clear a £100 debt.

Why choose Recurring Card Payments rather than Direct Debit?

• We can take payments on any day and at any frequency (for example - monthly on any date of the month or weekly on any day of the week)
• Your bank will not charge you if you have insufficient funds to make a payment

In order to set up payment or to discuss alternative payment methods, please speak to your Tenancy Officer or our Specialist Income Management Team by calling 0800 833 160

Unfortunately, due to unforeseen circumstances around the time of Insight production, we are unable to bring you Leasehold Matters in this autumn issue. Jan Tate will be back in January for the winter edition, to share more news and advice for our leaseholders.

Thank you for your understanding.
On a windy September morning, Insight went to visit two members of our Estate Services Team – which we have fondly renamed ‘The E Team’.

Here at South Essex Homes HQ, we have received a number of compliments from residents about improvements to the Delaware Road area and its blocks, so we went to see all the hard work for ourselves....

Jamie and Mark, both caretakers, have recently been appointed to work in the Shoeburyness area and have been working their socks off to make the area look spick and span.

When Insight met up with them, they were jet-washing the stairwells having just completed a litter pick of the area, which is undertaken every day. In addition to their regular tasks, they have also recently carried out deep cleans of the blocks, ensuring the stairwells are ‘sterile’ (see bottom of page), and have relocated the bins to ensure they are away from the buildings, in order to be less of a fire risk.

Jamie, who has worked for South Essex Homes for 3 years said:
“I really love my job; we get to do something different every day”.

The dynamic duo also ensure that any bulk rubbish items are taken away, they carry out gardening and weeding of the area, clean garage sites and make sure the community is looking neat and tidy!

Mark added: “We work well together and have enjoyed getting to know the residents here”.

The residents we met were impressed too. Tracey Witt and Rosemary Barnes were keen to tell Insight:
“There is a definite improvement here, it is much cleaner and they are both very polite and nice people”.

Keep up the good work guys and we will meet more of The E Team in the next issue!

Keeping communal areas ‘sterile’ simply means keeping them completely clear at all times – which is a requirement of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, meaning that this is a legal obligation.

Communal (shared) areas must be kept clear of ALL items including door mats, plant pots, bikes, shoes, rubbish, pictures hanging on the wall – the list could go on. That is because such items could cause a fire to start or to spread, or they may create an obstruction for people trying to flee in an emergency.

The Grenfell fire tragedy back in June last year is a stark reminder that
unfortunately sometimes incidents can happen with great consequence – so while this ‘zero tolerance’ approach may seem a bit strict, it’s for the safety of our residents and their families.

We fully appreciate that keeping areas ‘sterile’ may mean the communal spaces of blocks aren’t very homely.

We are therefore looking to launch a new initiative with our friends and colleagues at Project 49 - to add interest to these shared areas by creating artwork directly on the walls using flame-retardant paints.

If you know of a communal area that would benefit from a bespoke piece of wall art or if you have any ideas of what the group could paint, they would love to hear from you!

Please contact our Support Services Team on 0800 833160 and Insight will keep you posted on the progress of this project!
Top Banana
Fed up with your bananas going mushy?
Wrap the bottom of your bananas with cling film to keep them from going brown so quickly!

Bye Bye to unwanted hair
Use a tumble dryer sheet to collect unwanted pet hair from your furniture. A quick and easy way to grab hold of hair for easy disposal!

Easy Peasy Lemon Squeezy
To give your microwave a cheap and effective clean, fill a microwave safe bowl with hot water, and place half a cut lemon in the bowl. Set the timer on the microwave until the water starts to boil. Keep the door of the microwave closed while the steam inside the microwave dissolves the grime and grease. You can then clean the tray and wipe the dirt from the inside with a cloth.

Shine on
Rub your taps and oven hob with baby oil – removes stains and no scrubbing required!

Just add water
Fabric softener and water makes a nice and cheap fabric spray as well as a super wallpaper stripper.

A neat shelf is a happy shelf
Fold your duvet cover and put it inside one of the matching pillow cases (along with any additional cases) for a neat and tidy shelf. Next time you change the bed you won’t be hunting around for a missing pillow case!

*Always be careful when carrying out household hacks for the first time!

Please send in your own household tips!
Each printed hack will receive a £10 voucher – send in your photos to us (all photos must be your own)

Via our Facebook page – search ‘South Essex Homes’ By text or WhatsApp: 07785631966
By post: FREEPOST South Essex Homes  By email: communications@seh.southend.gov.uk
Since South Essex Homes was established back in 2005, we have facilitated a number of Focus Groups which have given our residents the opportunity to have a real influence on how various services are operated.

We have also encouraged people to act as Street Voices or Block Voices – whereby they act as a spokesperson for their area by gathering the views of their neighbours and raising issues on their behalf plus they help to disseminate messages from South Essex Homes to all residents of their block or street.

Earlier this year, we held a Big Conversation event where the future of both Focus Groups and Street and Block Voices were discussed. This has also recently been audited by the Resident Scrutiny Forum (RSF) and recommendations were put forward.

Since then, the Chair of our Board asked for further consultations to be carried out and meetings were held in July between the RSF, Southend Tenants & Residents Federation (STRF) and members of the Board. The consequent recommendations were presented at the meeting of the Board in early October and it was decided that:

- **Focus Groups would continue for the areas of:**
  - Income Management
  - Leaseholders
  - Sheltered Housing
  - Planned Maintenance & Repairs

- **The following Focus Groups would merge into one:** Anti-social Behaviour, Resident Involvement, Tenancy, Estate Services and Communications. This new merged group will now hold a bi-monthly meeting to act as a Task & Finish Group, dealing with issues raised by residents and staff members.

- **All Focus Groups would be outcome-focussed and, rather than being seen as an outlet for complaints, the groups will focus on how improvements can be delivered by the company.**

- **Focus Group members will need to use their own transport or public transport to get to meetings. Taxis will only be provided in very limited circumstances.**

- **Resident Block & Street Voices will be re-aligned under the STRF and they will report to the Fed on outcomes and progress. All people in this role will be DBS checked.**

A new Resident Involvement Strategy will soon be produced to support greater resident empowerment in line with the new Government green paper.

A programme to install Wi-Fi at all of our sheltered housing schemes is almost complete. Many residents of our sheltered schemes have ‘Smart’ mobile phones, tablets or laptops - so the introduction of Wi-Fi will enable them to access free internet connection through their devices. Their visiting friends and family are also welcome to make use of the Wi-Fi in communal areas.

**How do I connect?**

Details of the Wi-Fi network and password are available from your Sheltered Housing Officer or are displayed on the noticeboard. At the time of Insight going to print, the majority of our schemes have had Wi-Fi fitted and the outstanding ones were due to be completed very soon. The old PC computers that were situated in some communal lounges are being removed as they have become defunct.

If you need any help connecting your device to the Wi-Fi, your Sheltered Housing Officer will be happy to assist.
Please tell us about your background

I grew up with my parents and brother living in a Victorian terraced house in Portsmouth – it was extremely basic with no heating, a toilet at the end of the garden and a tin bath hanging on the wall! My dad was in the Navy and in 1957, when I was 9, he was posted to Malta for a while so that was very different to what I was used to. The Royal Naval School I attended there was wonderful and earlier this year I returned to the island for the first time (see photo at top of page). As well as visiting our old flat, I managed to find the school after some research, as it has since changed name. The caretaker there showed me around and whilst much of it had changed and the building had been added to, I instantly recognised the old school hall and the memories came flooding back!

After our return to Portsmouth, when I was 12 we moved out of our old house which in fact was then demolished as part of a so-called ‘Slum Clearance Programme’ and was replaced with new Council housing. I think my parents had come into a bit of money so we moved to the other side of Portsmouth Harbour to a new detached house – that change was quite a shock to the system and it felt like we were living in pure luxury! Already determined to study for my O Levels and A Levels, at the age of 13 I made my own enquiries to switch to a new school that gave me access to those qualifications and I would ride my bike every day to catch the Gosport ferry to school.

What was your path to becoming a Professor?

After my A levels, I went to The Polytechnic in Central London, which is now the University of Westminster, to study Economics before completing my Masters in Economics related to Planning at University College London. I went on to get my first job at the College of Estate Management in Reading. I married my wife Dianna in 1972 and we have two children – Russell, now 42, and Natasha, now 41. I've spent most of my adult life in the East Midlands – living in Leicester for 27 years and Nottinghamshire for 12 years.

I've been interested in housing since I was young, so I studied for my PhD in Housing Policy part time in Leicester, where I looked at the economics of housing in six European countries, and that has formed the basis of my career ever since.

I worked as a lecturer and professor at Leicester Polytechnic – which is now De Montfort University – a role which, between 2005 and 2011, I dropped to part time in order to split my time between home and the city of Delft in The Netherlands. There I was co-writing a book called ‘Bridging the Gap’ about the relationship between social housing and the private rented sector in both England and the other European countries I have researched.

At the age of 65, I was due to retire. However, an opportunity arose at the University of Cambridge that I simply...
Having bred budgerigars as a teenager, Michael isn’t a stranger to feathered friends but he was perplexed to find a lifeless budgie on a London street back in July!

He explained: “I was returning home from the Anti-Trump Rally in central London and got off the bus to see a budgie on the pavement and I thought he was dead. I picked him up and realised he was still alive so took him home, made a makeshift cage and nursed him back to health...just three days later he was fine!”

Now named Sorin and living in a brand new cage, Michael and Dianna have recently bought a partner for him called Saffron and they hope to breed from the pair.
Dear Julia

With regards to my rent and water rates, can I pay direct to a water company rather than through South Essex Homes? How do I go about this?

If you wish to pay for your water and sewerage charges directly to the water companies rather than through South Essex Homes, you have the right to do so. This isn’t something we can do for you, you would need to make the relevant enquiries yourself.

The first step is to contact Essex & Suffolk Water (the local water provider) on 0345 7820 333 who will let you know if you can have a water meter in your home. If a meter can be installed you would only be charged for the water you use and they will be able to provide you with a ‘ready reckoner’ – an idea of what your metered charges might be based on your normal water usage.

Not all homes will be eligible for a meter, for example if you live in a high rise block of flats. If your home is not eligible, Essex & Suffolk Water may offer you the ‘assessed measured charge’ or AMC. This is where the company will look at how many people live at your home and you will pay in accordance with the estimated water usage of a household the size of yours.

If you do choose to pay directly, you will also need to set up a separate account with Anglian Water to directly pay for your sewerage charges. You can contact them to find out more on 01522 341136.

Please note, if you would prefer not to have a meter installed it is still possible to switch to direct billing. In this case you would continue to pay for your water based on the ‘rateable value’ of your property. ‘Rateable value’ is the way Essex & Suffolk Water calculate water charges for South Essex Homes residents and whilst it is a recognised method of charging for water, it has no relation to the volume of water actually used. If you choose this method your charges would remain the same.

If and when you switch to paying direct, Essex & Suffolk Water will notify us and we will remove the water charge from your rent.

Please be aware that whilst some people can make a saving by switching, sometimes using a meter or paying the AMC can be more expensive than the current rate you pay to us, so please make sure you do your homework before making a decision.

Dear Julia

I’d really like to learn how to use a computer and get onto social media to use Facebook but I have no idea where to start. I have a ‘smart’ phone but I can’t use it – I feel like the phone is smarter than me!

Fear not, help is at hand! You can visit one of our Hubs, either in Southend or Shoebury and the staff there will be able to help you get online. They will show you how to use step by step tutorials that you can go through at your own pace. Alternatively you can visit your local library, they may also have classes.

We wish you the best of luck and before you know it, you will be surfing the wide world web! For more information about the Hubs, visit www.hubproject.co.uk or call 01702 469212.
Dear Julia

I thought I’d write to you with an update since the article you printed in Insight last year. Since it was formed, piertalk has gone from strength to strength and we have lots of popular events running for our members.

Some of our events include local Wednesday Walks, Scrabble Mornings and regular meet ups where we have a chat, a drink and decide what we would like to do.

Monthly events include a Mystery London Walk, a Book Club, a Quiz and we have recently started groups for those wishing to learn to play Mahjong, Whist and Rummikub. We also held our first birthday party in the summer, which the Mayor attended, and have several Christmas events already arranged.

We are now arranging small holidays away in the UK; some members went to Liverpool in June and some of us are going again in October, plus we have visits to Birmingham and Glasgow planned.

We offer friendship to all in the local community. We have no age limit and everyone is made welcome. Please don’t be alone when you can be out with piertalk.

If anyone would like further information please visit the website www.piertalk.com or contact Linda Prince:
Email: totonelson@hotmail.com
Tel: 07474 119899

Best wishes

Linda Prince
Sherwood Way

Hi Linda! Thanks so much for the update and congratulations on the success of piertalk. A £10 shopping voucher is on its way to you! Best wishes,

Julia

AUTUMN WORDSEARCH...

Can you find these 20 words which we associate with the autumn season?

ACORN
AUTUMN
BONFIRE
CHESTNUT
FIREFWORKS
FROST
HALLOWEEN
HARVEST
LEAVES
MARSHMALLOWS
NOVEMBER
OCTOBER
ORANGE
PUMPKIN
RED
SCARECROW
SEPTEMBER
SKELETON
SPARKLER
YELLOW
When they were first built, the tower blocks we manage were fitted with reversible windows to make them easy to clean. Recently, however, we have been fitting these windows with restrictors so they can no longer be fully opened. Most of the blocks have now had this work completed but, for those who haven’t, we will be doing so in the near future.

Whilst this has been done in the interest of safety, it does mean that the outside of the windows can no longer be cleaned from the inside of the property.

Therefore from now on, South Essex Homes will be providing a window cleaning service at all our blocks twice a year.

Most of the town centre blocks will have already been cleaned by the time Insight is published but you can find the schedule for the remaining blocks below. The schedule for the first 2019 round of cleaning will be printed in the next issue of the magazine.

Residents please be aware...

Rope access window cleaning is very weather dependent and as such this schedule is liable to change in the event of adverse weather conditions.

Residents are kindly asked to please keep windows closed, where possible, during the period of the clean.