The South Essex Homes
Resident Newsletter

Spring 2019 issue!

Be part of it!

Project 49 give Bishop House a makeover!

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NEW REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE CONTRACTOR

Repairs and maintenance of buildings managed by South Essex Homes is now being carried out by Morgan Sindall Property Services.

Repairs and maintenance specialist Morgan Sindall Property Services has been selected to deliver property maintenance services for the council’s portfolio of more than 6,000 homes and 1,200 garages. They have taken over from Kier, who previously held the contract.

The new five-year contract started on 1st April 2019 with the potential to be extended for a further five years.

Under the contract, Morgan Sindall Property Services will deliver repairs and maintenance services including day-to-day repairs; emergency repairs and refurbishment of void properties.

Residents will benefit from the introduction of Morgan Sindall’s advanced works and asset management IT system enabling them to choose appointment at a time convenient to them. The system has smart scheduling capabilities so can work out the most efficient appointment based on the time, location and travel of the most appropriate tradesperson. These are known as ‘go-green’ appointments and for every ‘go-green’ appointment chosen and kept, the company will put £1 into a community fund.

The extensive information accessible through the new IT platform will also make it easier for South Essex Homes to organise and book repairs as well as monitor the overall operation of the contract to ensure that residents are receiving a high-quality service. Residents will also be able to book and change repairs online through a new resident portal scheduled to be introduced later this year.

A highly customer-focused approach, will include special arrangements to support the needs of vulnerable residents living in sheltered or supported housing. Morgan Sindall Property Services will also introduce a customer service manager, providing a single point of contact for resolving any resident care issues.

Just prior to the launch of the new contract Sarah Lander, Assistant Director (Operations) at South Essex Homes, said: “Southend Borough Council and South Essex Homes are pleased to announce that Morgan Sindall will be delivering repairs to the Council’s housing portfolio from 1st April. We are confident that residents will be pleased with the level of service they receive and that repairs will be carried out quickly and efficiently. This partnership will also see new opportunities for our residents and communities, and we look forward to seeing how these develop for the benefit of residents across the Borough.”

In addition, the new arrangement will open up a wide range of job and training opportunities for local people, supporting ten apprenticeships and delivering 45 work placements for adults and school students over the contract term. Morgan Sindall Property Services will also create SEProspects, an initiative enabling South Essex Homes’ residents to undertake pre-apprenticeships providing practical skills, training, work experience and the chance to be mentored by experienced team members.

Residents will also benefit from help with CV writing and job-hunting as well as digital skills training, including sessions on using Microsoft Office, email and social media.

Alan Hayward, Morgan Sindall Property Services managing director, says: “We are delighted to be bringing our expertise in delivering integrated property maintenance services to this new contract with South Essex Homes. Supported by state-of-the-art technology, our skilled teams are committed to a ‘right first time’ approach, with our focus always on providing the highest standards of customer care. Our new partnership with South Essex Homes will also see us making a substantial investment in the community through the creation of training and employment opportunities for residents.”

Morgan Sindall in the community

On one day every month, Morgan Sindall will be providing services to residents in the community.

- Employability sessions at The Victoria Hub (in The Victoria shopping centre, Southend) from 10am-4pm every other month starting on Monday 3rd May with the next session being on Wednesday 3rd July. Here they will be covering CV writing support, apprenticeships, job search help and confidence assistance.
  www.hubproject.co.uk/victoria-hub/

- On alternate months to the Hub sessions, Morgan Sindall will be providing Digital Inclusion support at sheltered schemes (one scheme visited in the morning and then a different one in the afternoon.) The schemes will be grouped with others in close proximity, with all schemes to be rotated through. The first of these sessions will take place on Wednesday 12th June and scheme residents will be advised when they will be receiving a visit.

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Spring has well and truly sprung here in Southend and I hope you are enjoying the improved weather as much as I am. In this issue we get to meet another inspirational tenant – as local artist Linda Hibbin shows us around her incredible flat, which is more like an art gallery! There is the usual variety of articles and information which I hope you enjoy reading.

Please get in touch if you have any stories or photos you wish to share, or any questions you want answered – don’t forget that we give away a £10 voucher for each of your stories we print!

We’ll be back with the next issue in late July. 😊

Best wishes
Julia

Message from Mike

Hopefully you will have recently received and read the fire safety update sent to all residents to explain the current situation in relation to this key issue. As we have explained in recent editions of Insight, fire safety has and will continue to be a key focus for our organisation. Your safety is paramount and we will continue to do our utmost to ensure appropriate measures are taken and are in place to maintain the highest levels of fire safety. This and future editions of Insight will continue to keep you updated on this vitally important issue.

The beginning of April saw a very significant development when we said goodbye to our previous repairs and maintenance contractor, Kier and began our new relationship with Morgan Sindall who have taken over this important area of work. You should not only begin to see Morgan Sindall’s vans around the town but there will be more modern ways of working introduced as part of the new contract and Insight will update you on these exciting changes in coming editions so please watch this space.

The initial, extended, agreement between South Essex Homes and the Council which sets out our role and responsibilities to manage and maintain your homes and your tenancies is coming to a close and we are in active discussion with the Council about the detail of a new agreement which we anticipate commencing later this year. I will share details of the new agreement with you once the new arrangements have been finalised.

Finally, I am pleased to report that our commercial subsidiary, South Essex Property Services, have had a productive past year and have continued to extend their work for the Council and other organisations particularly around facilities management, security and cleaning services. The success of SEPS will directly contribute to South Essex Homes being able to continue to provide the best possible services it can for local residents.

As I write these notes for Insight, it is nice to see the sunshine and Spring blossom appearing and I hope you will all be able to enjoy a really great Spring and early Summer and I look forward to updating you on progress with South Essex Homes in the next edition of Insight.

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: juliapack@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

INSIGHT 3
On behalf of Southend-on-Sea Borough Council, South Essex Homes, manages in the region of 6500 properties across the borough. This includes flats, houses, maisonettes and sheltered schemes. Of these approximately 10% are leasehold properties.

Who are Leaseholders?

There are generally two types of leaseholders in the borough:

1) Former Tenants who purchased the property through the Right to Buy Scheme

2) Leaseholders who bought the property on the open market

Leaseholders who purchased the property on the open market may have bought this from the tenant who exercised the Right to Buy, or, if the property has been sold a number of times, the previous leaseholder before them.

In addition some leaseholders will reside at the address whilst others may let the property to tenants.

Similarities with other residents

Like with other neighbours at the block, leaseholders have similar obligations to adhere to. This includes:
- Being responsible for the conduct of others living at their address (including their tenants)
- Not causing a nuisance to other residents
- Getting permission before they conduct certain alterations or improvements within the property
- Ensuring individual gardens are kept in good condition
- Making sure the inside of the home is clean and in good condition

Leaseholders’ Obligations

Unlike other residents, leaseholders are responsible for conducting all of their own repairs and maintenance within their flat. This includes internal wiring, central heating, replacing kitchens and repairs to internal piping including bathrooms.

Services Charges and Major Works

Leaseholders are also responsible for paying a percentage contribution for works at their block. This includes day to day repairs, costs towards communal electricity, the caretaking service and Grounds Maintenance to name a few examples. In addition they are required to pay their percentage contribution towards the costs of large expenditure. This can include roof replacement, window renewals, redecoration and replacement lighting projects.

Unlike other residents who pay service charges in a pooled scheme, these charges relate specifically to their block, as described in the lease. The service charge costs between blocks vary depending on their size. Leaseholders in tower blocks pay an annual service charge in the region of £1500-£2000 whilst those in a smaller block may typically pay £500-£750. Again, the costs of major works will also vary between blocks.

The Lease

When a tenant purchases the flat or maisonette through the Right to Buy scheme a lease is granted for a term of 125 years by the Council. The lease sets out the agreement to pay towards service charges and major works. It also describes the property being granted to the leaseholder and includes a plan of the block and the location of the flat. The responsibilities for who maintains certain areas are also defined and it also list the regulations which the leaseholder and the freeholder must adhere to.

Right to Buy

From the 6th April 2019 the maximum Right to Buy discount rose to £82,800 in this area.

If you are interested in purchasing your Flat through the Right to Buy Scheme please visit the following websites for further information or call 0800 833 160

https://www.gov.uk/right-to-buy-buying-your-council-home

www.southessexhomes.co.uk and search for ‘right to buy’

If you are a secure tenant who lives in a house you can enquire about the scheme using the above information. Our houses are sold on a freehold basis. Here, you will be responsible for all maintenance once it is sold.
My Rent Rewards goes LIVE on the 19th JUNE 2019.

My Rent Rewards is working with South Essex Homes to save you money on your rent simply by doing your same old shopping. We are working with over 2000 high street and online shops to help you pay less rent every month.

All you have to do is download the My Rent Rewards app from Google Play or Itunes App Store and start saving money.

My Rent Rewards also offers card linking – meaning when you tap your card in any of our partner stores again you will pay less rent.
The front door opens to an entrance hallway, the bare brick walls of which are adorned with mosaics, paintings and quilt-work of varying size and subject matter – each piece is individually crafted around a theme, colour or feeling. Some are funny, some are poignant, some tell a story while others are fanciful – but no two are the same!

Dressers contain further pieces, from the fun and cute ‘Sockies’ to striking and ornate mosaic cats.

Stairs lead up to Linda’s first floor flat and to the side of each step sits an individually decorated glass bottle glowing with fairy lights. Twinkling lights also line the walls to set off the artwork and lead the way upstairs where you are greeted with a beautifully decorated tree as more and more amazing pieces keep grabbing the eye’s attention. And this is all before you enter the living space!

Linda was born and bred in Kent, where she attended Art College after school. Some of her early jobs after college included working as a NVQ Assessor and as a freelance pet portrait artist – examples of this work can be found on display in her lounge and hallway.

After around seven years working in a library, Linda left work to have her two sons, Stephen and David. It was at this point that she began her craft work and it all started with enamelling.

Linda said: “I sold pieces at craft fairs, back when craft fairs were a new concept, and had some exhibitions in the Medway area. At the time I was sharing a studio space with a sculptor, where I held lessons for local people”.

Linda took her craft classes out into the community and held them at various locations and to different audiences ranging from homes for older people, through to summer activity camps for children from the most disadvantaged areas of Gravesend.

She went on to work as an Adult Education teacher, which included a stint teaching Art to offenders in a high security prison. "That was really good fun!" Linda quipped, "They really liked a joke and of course it was a rare thing for them to see a woman so my classes were very popular.

“My attitude is that there’s something creative to be found inside everyone – it’s just that the creativity needs to be teased out of some people more than others! More often if people don’t think they’re creative it’s due to a lack of confidence; perhaps Art wasn’t taken seriously when they were at school, or they have a low self-esteem and don’t see the value in their own ideas”.

When Linda became a single parent, she worked for the Carers’ National Association and other organisations supporting carers and set up projects, several of which were partly funded by Kent County Council.
After Linda got re-married to a florist, she managed her husband’s shop for a while and learnt floristry while she was at it. Then following the breakdown of that relationship, Linda made the move to Southend around 15 years ago to be closer to her son Steve.

When she moved to Essex, Linda joined the University of the Third Age (U3A) in order to meet local people and she soon became involved in teaching Art and Craft to groups. She signed up to a beginner’s course in mosaic at Southend Adult Community College but didn’t even finish the course – she was so fired up and keen to get started making her own pieces, and she hasn’t stopped ever since.

She now lives in her one-bedroom flat in Shoebury with her Jack Russell cross Poppy, who has since become the star of a series of self-published children’s books Linda has written and illustrated. The books follow Poppy’s adventures where she is often hunting for lost items and getting into general mischief! Linda’s ‘Sockies’ – characters she has created using colourful odd socks – also feature in her stories and poetry.

Linda’s first ever piece of mosaic work – a village scene in blues, greens and yellows – can be found in her kitchen along with various mosaic jugs and vases. Even the bathroom has received the Linda treatment!

“It’s so exciting and I’m always getting new ideas and trying out new things. My latest phase involves the decoration of polystyrene heads with mosaic and jewels – and every piece has a name and persona”.

Through the U3A, Linda has made a few good friends who have been a great support to her and they often get together at Linda’s house to create craft and have a natter.

Linda, who has two grandsons Kyle (21) and Tyler (20) and 9-year-old granddaughter Elicia, finds her inspiration in a variety of places: “The mosaic pictures in the hallway were largely inspired by my cup collection! I had acquired a number of cups that amused me for their funny pictures or slogans but seeing as I didn’t need that many cups, I thought I’d put them to different use. I have used them as a centrepiece for several of my mosaics along with other bits and bobs I’ve bought cheaply online or acquired over the years. People I know often pass their old junk costume jewellery onto me as they know that odd items spur ideas in me - I even took a cast of my own teeth home from the dentist that I’ve since used within a mosaic!”

At the moment, Linda makes pieces to add to her own collection but she has got a shop on Etsy – an online marketplace for handmade items – and would like to start selling pieces to make more room for new ones!

“I work quickly which is a real advantage – making craft is what keeps me sane! Sometimes I have the TV on in the background but I never sit and do nothing, I’m always making something.

“I would recommend crafts to anyone, as a great way of keeping busy and being productive – for mosaic work you do need strong hands and good eyesight but if anyone would like to give it a go I would be more than willing to help them out!”

If any resident groups or individuals are interested in arranging Art and Craft sessions with Linda, please contact Julia Pack using the details on page 3.
Anita McGinley has recently taken up a new role of Housing Community Safety Manager here at South Essex Homes.

However she is by no means new to the organisation – you may well recognise her name because for several years Anita managed the Southend Multi Agency ASB Response Team (SMAART).

Anita’s main focus is to ensure that South Essex Homes is engaging with partner agencies within the Community Safety agenda.

First and foremost her role has been to complete a review of the CCTV across the properties that we manage on behalf of Southend Borough Council. This review will allow us to maximise the CCTV to its best advantage and furthermore ensure our compliance with relevant legislation.

The national CONTEST Strategy around counter-terrorism includes four work streams – Prevent, Pursue, Protect & Prepare. Under the ‘Prevent’ element, Anita ensures that South Essex Homes is doing all that is reasonable to identify any risks posed to our residents and ensure safeguarding measures are in place.

Additionally, Anita has been working with our Regulation Compliance Officer to revise our Violence to Staff process. She explained: “Whilst we appreciate that residents can find themselves in difficult and challenging circumstances, we are confident that our staff provide the best service they can for both the resident and the organisation and at no time is it acceptable for staff members to be abused. This of course also applies to abuse against other residents and we work very closely with local agencies including Essex Police to keep everyone safe.”

Anita recently presented at the national Resolve ASB Conference alongside Inspector Ian Hughes from Southend Police all about the partnership working here in Southend. This photo was tweeted live from the event in April.

This round of estate inspections is coming to an end and the walkabouts will resume again in late summer / early autumn.

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Homelessness has been a problem on Britain’s streets for centuries and here in Southend it unfortunately remains an ongoing issue.

There are good services available to help those who find themselves without a roof over their head in our borough, however of course there are those who don’t want to engage with the help that is available to them or those who simply want to be left alone.

Although recent figures do suggest the situation is improving locally - as residents of the town, especially when visiting the town centre, you are likely to have passed people sleeping rough in shop doorways or down side streets. Many of you are likely to want to be able to help these people, but find it difficult to know what to do for the best.

Ultimately, it is your own decision whether to give money or food to someone but there are several other ways to make a difference that might have a longer-term positive impact. The best thing to do is to use the StreetLink service, which will link the person up with local charities that can provide the best type of support.

What is StreetLink?
StreetLink is a website, mobile phone app and telephone service through which people can take positive action when they see someone sleeping rough by sending an alert that connects that person to local services for support.

StreetLink is an effective way to take positive action that has longer-term results. It can enable services to reach rough sleepers more quickly; this has positive impacts on their safety and wellbeing.

How does it work?
The member of the public provides details about the rough sleeper’s location and general appearance, which are sent to the correct, independent local homelessness outreach team, so they can locate the individual and connect them to support services. The person sending the alert initially receives details of the action the outreach team normally takes when they are told someone is sleeping rough, which will vary locally.

StreetLink also finds out what has happened as a result of the alert within 14 days and, if requested, provides the member of the public with an update.

The service can get busy so wherever possible we advise people to use either their website www.streetlink.org.uk or mobile app, but if you cannot access the internet you can also get in touch via their phone line on 0300 500 0914.

What if someone’s sleeping rough inside your building?
People with no home to go to may try to seek out somewhere warm and dry to sleep, so it is possible that they may try to enter the communal areas of blocks of flats, including those managed by us here at South Essex Homes.

If, as a resident of a block of flats, you come across someone sleeping rough in a shared area, then please contact Streetlink in the first instance.

You may also then choose to let our Contact Centre know by ringing 0800 833160. We manage a team of Security Officers who patrol the Council’s blocks throughout the daytime and into the early hours of the morning, who can respond to reports of rough sleepers and move people on if necessary. Please also use this number to report any mess left behind by people sleeping rough, so our Caretaking team can take appropriate action.

You can help prevent people entering communal areas by taking the following precautions:

- If someone rings your door bell, only buzz them in if you know who they are
- Before you enter the building, look around for people who are hoping to follow you in
- Do not challenge anyone sleeping rough or attempt to physically remove them yourself – those responding to Streetlink reports are trained to approach people safely
A splash of colour has brightened the walls of sheltered scheme Bishop House with thanks to Project 49.

Using stencils and paint, a Matisse inspired mural has been painted on the communal hallway wall, with residents commenting on how much they like the design and colours used.

This is the first time the group have worked on a project inside and it took four weeks to complete.

Project 49 is community based resource run by Southend Care Ltd providing innovative services for adults with learning disabilities in the Southend on Sea area. Other art projects they have worked on include mosaics and replicating logos.
As John Keats the poet himself said ‘A thing of beauty is a joy forever’ and if you popped down to Keats House, Southend on a Thursday morning, you would discover how art is giving joy to the residents that live there. South Essex Homes is working in partnership with local charity ‘The Art Ministry’ to host free weekly art and craft classes. As Allan Webb, Trustee of the charity explains: ‘The overall aim of this project is to improve the health and wellbeing by participant engagement through a creative process and by doing this achieves:

• An increase in socialisation, giving residents a common interest to talk about and encourages them to come out of their homes into the communal areas;
• A boost in self-confidence and increase in self-esteem through trying new things for the first time, or re-visiting something they did at school and maybe discovering talents they never knew they had;
• A sense of pride over what they have created.

“The group try out a range of different art and craft methods including painting, drawing, technical drawing, pottery, acrylics, water colours, salt dough and felt tips to mention a few.”

The two group leaders, Clare and Allan, support and develop the residents and their love for what they do is clear to see. This is also mirrored on the faces of Martin, Paul and Ozzy, who share stories from their past, a few laughs and jokes and a real pride in what they are creating.

The residents have a range of skills and are all offered encouragement to create their own work.

It also gives the residents a chance to reflect on their own lives, in a safe environment, by upcycling and using memorabilia they have a connection or memory of, including the use of old records, annuals and clippings about a particular band or football club to create collages and new art work.

A collection of their handiworks have been displayed at local galleries including the Beecroft Gallery in Southend.

The Art Ministry is looking to extend the project to other schemes across the Borough and to invite residents from the surrounding area into schemes.

Residents at Sheltered Scheme, Kestrel House have been benefitting following a ‘makeover’ in the communal kitchen. Thanks to the hard work of residents, Finola and Helen, who applied for a community grant via ASDA, the kitchen has been given a new lease of life with new appliances and accessories.

Barbara Lambert, also a resident at Kestrel House added: ’I would like to commend both Finola and Helen for all the good work they are doing to make Kestrel House a happy place to live in, they are arranging Breakfast get-togethers and other events throughout the year’.

The feedback from residents so far has been very positive and the kitchen is also used every month for ‘Breakfast mornings’ where they can tuck into a tasty sausage or bacon roll, and a cuppa, for a discount price. The dynamic duo are also planning lots of other events throughout the year including the Beecroft Gallery in Southend.

If you have events happening in your area, please get in touch... we love to see your photos and hear your stories!
Here in Southend, it takes 309 days for a child to be placed with adoptive families compared to a national average of 486 days. And 107 days between a local authority receiving a court order to place a child and deciding on an adoptive family match, compared to 201 days nationally.

Simon Leftley, Deputy Chief Executive for People, said: “Our adoption teams are fantastic and work with tireless dedication to make sure each child is matched with the right family to create a permanent home for them, as soon as possible. I am pleased their hard work has been recognised and want to thank them for their commitment to make such positive changes for these children.”

A 44-year-old mum from Basildon, who wishes to remain nameless to protect her children’s anonymity, said the adoption process with Southend-on-Sea Borough Council could not have gone quicker or more smoothly.

She said: “I went through early menopause at the age of 24 so my husband and I always knew we would have to adopt. It’s nerve-wracking calling up and admitting ‘I can’t have children, can you help me?’ but from that first point of contact, the team at Southend Council were so welcoming and friendly and warm. The application is a thorough, and sometimes invasive process, and you really have to wear your heart on your sleeve, which I found easier because the adoption team were helpful and supportive. They really want to get children matched with the right parents, get them out of care and into their forever homes.”

She is so impressed with the help and support the adoption team have given their family that she offered to become a mentor to couples going through the process and speak at the workshops for prospective adopters. There she talks about the experience she and her husband went through, from an adoption introduction event in March 2015, two workshops, approval board and match meetings, until their children came home in December 2016.

Jo Hines, service manager for placements and resources, has learnt much during her 20 years within adoption and appreciates there is more to the service than simply matching a child and family. There is an ongoing need for support.

Jo explains: “For example, if a child has been neglected, they learn they are not worth looking after and that they don’t deserve love or care or kindness, and that implicit messaging can have a long-lasting and damaging affect.

“It’s why it is important when an adopter family comes forward to explore adoption, whoever supports them initially is normally the person who ends up being their case worker. This allows for a strong professional connection to develop which I believe is a protective factor and contributes to why the team perform so well. There is a continuity of care and

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council’s adoption team has been praised for reducing unnecessary delays and improving the outcomes for children in the borough. The performance of the adoption team has placed them in the top three nationally.

She said: “It still makes me emotional to talk about it; it was the most wonderful day. All we said is that we wanted siblings and we got two children. The adoption team really couldn’t have done any more for us and even now, four years on, I know if I need anything, I can ring our social worker or speak to anyone in the team and they’ll help. They’re brilliant.”

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those relationships are long-lasting. I helped one family through five adoptions because even as a manager, I have that pre-existing relationship and that trust.

“It’s all about the child and what works for them. We find a family for each child. Not a child for a family. And in order to get the right matches you have to understand the families who are adopting. My team will take out-of-hours calls and go above and beyond every day for their families, and I’m incredibly proud of them.”

It is the team’s hard work and the good working relationships within the entire children’s services team, which has led to their excellence performance nationally in the adoption scorecards. Jo says their honesty with adoptive parents and the support given, means they are able to provide a more well-rounded service.

She explains: "We are honest from the outset and say this is going to be difficult. Parenting is the hardest job in the world. We encourage our families to stay in touch with their social worker because if we can know the family in happy times, it helps us give them better support when they’re in crisis. A three year old child will have different needs to that of a 12 year old and so we always say come back to us if you need support – some don’t, but many do.”

The team worked with Cornerstone Partnership to develop a virtual reality programme to help adoptive parents, social workers and other stakeholders, truly appreciate what some of the children may have experienced. After piloting the virtual reality film, it has gone on to win awards for the 360-degree experience it gives, as you view the world from the perspective of a neglected and abused child.

Jo adds: "It allows people to feel it, instead of just talking about it. It’s a very powerful tool and we have to carefully prepare those who take part. Often our adopters have a very nice background and were raised in stable secure families themselves, so although they have been told, they can’t really appreciate what their child has been through. Using the VR is a way of reminding them in challenging family times, that their children are reacting to their past not always to their present situation and families need to develop the capacity to empathise with this. A lot of people who use the VR comment ‘I never thought it would be like that.’"

The team always need more adoptive families. Jo is keen to state that even those people who have had a passing thought about it should give the team a call for more information. She said: "We don’t expect you to know what you want to the end result to look like, but we ask that those who have considered adopting call us to find out more or attend one of our monthly information events. Often parents come along to an information event undecided, or thinking they want to adopt a young baby girl, then in the end may want to adopt an older sibling group. We just want people to keep an open mind.”

If you would like to find out more about adopting, please call the Council’s Adoption team on 01702 212004 or email adoption@southend.gov.uk

If you want to find out more we have an informal drop-in event on 12 April, at the Civic Centre, in Victoria Avenue, Southend-on-Sea, between 9.15am and 11am, and an information event where you can meet social workers and adoptive families, on 11 May between 10am and 12 noon.

More information, including links to useful websites, can be found here: https://www.southend.gov.uk/info/200443/adoption/281/adoption
Spring has arrived and for many of us this can mean one thing – time for a spring clean!

Read all about it!
People have been using newspaper to clean windows for decades – but it really does work! Use with spray window cleaner and wipe the newspaper in a circular motion until the liquid is absorbed for a streak free shine.

Ding – and the job is done!
Disinfect your sponge by putting it in the microwave on high for a minute – make sure you squeeze out the water first.

Spick and Span
Use your dishwasher to disinfect items such as toys, oven shelves, fridge drawers but remember not to put anything in there that might melt, they do get very hot!

When life hands you a lemon...
Use it to clean your shower doors – especially great for those stubborn stains that won’t come off.

Mirror Mirror on the wall
Want to get streak free mirrors? A simple way to get clean mirrors is to use a wet sponge and a small dab of washing up liquid to clean the mirror then use a microfiber cloth to make it shine.

A tasty toilet?!
Need to give your toilet a clean and ran out of bleach? Cola can do the trick - simply pour it down the bowl and away you go!

*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
Similar to the way renewal dates for a vehicle’s M.O.T. are carried over, this will mean that your gas service renewal date will remain the same year-on-year but the service itself can be carried out up to two months before the renewal date.

Previously, the renewal date would have changed to 12 months from the date of the actual service.

**EXAMPLE**

Gas service renewal date is 1st July 2019 but the Engineer visits to carry out gas service on 1st June 2019. Under the previous system, the next service would be due by 1st June 2020 but from now on using the new system, the next service is due by 1st July 2020.

Benefits to the resident are that your gas service can be done within a 2 month window before your renewal date without then bringing forward the renewal date for subsequent years.

It is important to note that servicing must not be done any later than the renewal date.

This system enables us to do more servicing in the summer months and repairs will be less urgent as weather would be warmer.

**SPRINGTIME WORDSEARCH...**

We have hidden 20 springlike words in the wordsearch - can you find them all?

**EXAMPLE**

APRIL  BUDS  SEEDS  BANK  CHICK  SHOWERS  HOLIDAY  DAFFODIL  SPRING  BEE   EASTER   SUNSHINE  BLUEBELL   EGG   TADPOLE  BLOOM  LAMB  BLOSSOM  MAY  UMBRELLA
Jenny would have really missed watching telly...
If she hadn’t had Tenants Content Insurance.

Having home contents insurance can’t prevent floods, thefts or fires from happening, but it can help you get back on your feet.

- Pay-as-you-go
- No excess
- Choose to pay with your rent
- Choice of payment methods paying weekly

**Insure your belongings**

It’s our responsibility as your landlord to insure the structure of your home but this doesn’t include what’s inside, like your furniture and personal possessions.

As a tenant of South Essex Homes you are eligible for a home contents insurance scheme, created just for South Essex Homes starting from just £0.85 a week or for £10,000* standard cover.

There’s no long term commitment, it can be cancelled at any time and there’s no excess to pay if you need to make a claim.

**Call: 0800 023 4057**

[www.southessexhomes.co.uk/contentsinsurance](http://www.southessexhomes.co.uk/contentsinsurance)

Connect: with your local housing officer

*Lower sums insured at lower rates are available for over 60’s.
Terms and conditions apply, contact above.
Price includes Insurance Premium Tax (PT) charged at the appropriate rate.
The policy is underwritten by Aviva Insurance Limited, Aviva Insurance Limited, Registered in Scotland Number 2116. Registered Office: Pitheavlis, Perth PH2 0NH. Authorised by the Prudential Regulation Authority and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority and the Prudential Regulation Authority.
FP ENT 2189 RR SEH

Please note, the situations depicted are fictitious examples and the people are represented by models.