INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

BUSINESS AS USUAL

Thanking our key workers

AND LOTS MORE...

• Our response to Coronavirus
• Re-launching the Southend Tenants & Residents Federation

REAL PEOPLE’S STORIES

HELPFUL HINTS & TIPS!

PUZZLE PAGE SPECIAL!

Helping to keep your mind active

Word Scramble Answers:
BEACH / BUCKET / SPADE / PARK / HOLIDAYS / PICNIC / PIER / CAMPING / SUMMER / SHORTS

Crossword Answers:
Down: 1. BARGAIN  2. BASS DRUM  5. DOZEN  8. RUNNER UP  10. KEEPS  11. LEAST

and lots more...
These are very challenging times for us all, and while the government’s advice is to stay home, for some people, home is not a safe place.

If you are living with domestic abuse and feel even more isolated and at risk please remember there is help available.

If you are experiencing domestic abuse and would like some information, advice or support, please contact the local Southend service on 01702 302333.

Other services you can access if you want to speak to someone either by telephone or online:

Compass Helpline – 24hrs a day
0333 0333 7444 or via self-referrals
www.essexcompass.org.uk/self-referral

Women’s Aid chatline
https://chat.womensaid.org.uk
Open Mon to Friday 10am to 12pm

If you are in danger, please call 999.

If you are afraid of further danger and escalation of harm if you are overheard calling 999 in an emergency, you can use the Silent Solution. When somebody calls 999, an operator will ask which emergency service is required. If the caller is unable to audibly signal to the operator, the call will be forwarded to an operating system. If 55 is pressed by the caller, the system will detect this. The operator will then transfer the call to the relevant police force as an emergency.

TENANT BOARD MEMBER

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 Simon Putt on 01702 212624.

The application pack is available on the South Essex Homes website or can be requested by email to carolcooper@seh.southend.gov.uk.

Closing date: Friday 26th June 2020.

Please note: subject to the responses received, the Coronavirus situation and the ability to hold interviews, candidates will be advised of the subsequent interview process and time in due course.

DOMESTIC ABUSE

If you feel at risk of sexual violence or abuse, or you are a survivor of abuse and are experiencing heightened mental health issues there is help and support available to you.

DON’T SUFFER IN SILENCE

STAY SAFE AT HOME

Protecting and Safeguarding Essex
For this edition of Insight I might have expected to talk about the new partnership agreement which began in May. I might too have expected to write with my reflections on the first year with our new repairs contractor, Morgan Sindall Property Services. Perhaps I might have expected to update you on fire safety and a proposed new Fire Safety Act or a number of equally important topics. But...there really is only one topic that occupies all our thoughts at present and that of course is the impact that Coronavirus (COVID-19) is having right around the world, in this country and, in our particular context, across the borough of Southend.

For South Essex Homes and our partner organisation South Essex Property Services (SEPS), this has meant that with almost no notice we have had to fundamentally change the way in which we work and provide services for you across most of our teams.

This means for example that we have nobody working from the Civic Centre in Victoria Avenue, where usually we would have 100 or so colleagues working on issues ranging from assisting tenants moving into new properties, supporting vulnerable people, planning major improvements to your homes, managing rent accounts, liaising with leaseholders and a multitude of other functions. These are all now having to be dealt with by people working from home in very different circumstances and facing a set of new challenges in order to be able to do that.

Of course some of the things we do mean that a number of teams are still on the frontline. This includes our CarelineSOS staff, cleaning and caretaking teams, neighbourhood patrols and Temporary Accommodation teams - and they really are feeling the strain of providing frontline services while observing social distancing.

Despite the most major upheaval in working terms that any of us have probably experienced, I am immensely proud to say that we are still able to provide you with the full range of services we always have done. Although this may be at a distance or at home, every member of our team remains committed to do their very best to provide advice, assistance and support to you and your families, whatever your circumstances.

If you feel in need of specific advice, support and assistance at this time, please do not hesitate to contact South Essex Homes on 0800 833160 or the Southend Coronavirus Action helpline on 01702 212497.

Best wishes

Mike

Mike Gatrell, Chief Executive of South Essex Homes
We have adapted the way we provide services to you during the Coronavirus pandemic. Here is a brief summary from teams around the organisation to explain what is carrying on as usual, what has changed and what has been delayed.

Please be aware that this is correct at the time of print but is subject to further change if and when needed.

**Property Services Team**

**What is carrying on as usual?**
- Emergency repairs only
- Annual gas safety servicing
- Property refurbishment to empty SBC properties

**What has changed?**
- Office-based staff are working from home

**What has been delayed?**
- Routine repairs
- All non-essential repairs have been postponed
- Capital works projects
- Stock condition surveys

**Estate Services**

**What is carrying on as usual?**
- The focus of our cleaning and caretaking teams has shifted more towards sanitising and Health & Safety related works in general.
- Our Maintenance Technicians are concentrating on inspecting the communal Gerda doors in the Tower Blocks, this is to ensure that the inspection programme continues to keep the doors well maintained in case of fire.
- The Security Teams have been continuing to provide cover at their allocated buildings.

**What has changed?**
- The Grounds Maintenance Teams are still operating at a reduced rate so they are only cutting the grass and attending to emergency jobs at the moment.

**What has been delayed?**
- There may be slight delays for non-essential cleaning due to having a slightly reduced workforce combined with social distancing measures.

**Specialist Income Management Team & Leaseholder Services**

**What is carrying on as usual?**
- Account monitoring and arrears recovery (including former tenant arrears)
- Processing of payments including Direct Debits
- Rechargeable Works invoices and recovery
- Credit Refunds
- Leaseholder enquiries & LPE1 forms
- Right to Buy applications

**What has changed?**
- Office-based staff are working from home
- Visits and office interviews are being carried out over the phone

**What has been delayed?**
- Court proceedings
- Property valuations for Right to Buy

**Tenancy Services Team**

**What is carrying on as usual?**
- Urgent viewings and sign ups (where vulnerabilities are identified)
- Gas Safety Checks
- Enquiries and complaints
- Verifying Universal Credit claims
- Void works where possible and monitoring empty properties to ensure still secure
- Arrears recovery
- ASB complaints

**What has changed?**
- Office-based staff are working from home where they are able to continue most general administrative functions.
- Various meetings, interviews and ‘visits’ are still being carried out wherever possible – but over the phone rather than in person.

**What has been delayed?**
- Court proceedings
- Property valuations for Right to Buy
- Various applications and ‘visits’ are still being carried out wherever possible – but over the phone rather than in person.
- Mailings and physical communication

**CarelineSOS**

**What is carrying on as usual?**
- Everything is generally carrying on as normal at Careline

**What has been delayed?**
- Advertising and promotions

**Estate Walkabouts & Property Inspections**

**Any non-essential visits to any properties**

**Mutual Exchange applications**

**Undertaking successions and assignments – due to being unable to complete and witness signatures.**
**Support Services Team**

**What is carrying on as usual?**
The team continue to deliver a full range of support services but this is being undertaken differently.

**What has changed?**
Contact with sheltered and hostel residents is all done remotely over the phone. The daily calls are providing reassurance and checking welfare and that support is in place for residents in sheltered and temporary accommodation.

Support Services with assistance from colleagues from other teams across South Essex Homes are contacting residents who are over 70 in general needs accommodation to offer support.

We are working with SAVS, Southend Borough Council and SECH to continue to provide support for our residents who are shielding. Providing first response for food parcels and practical help but also utilising the volunteer pool to match resident to volunteer for the duration of lockdown.

In hostels we have focused efforts on getting empty units ready for reoccupation.

**Corporate Resources**

**What is carrying on as usual?**
Note taking for online meetings, answering enquiries from MPs and Councillors and providing Board support.

The team is continuing to deal with enquiries, complaints and freedom of information requests.

The team has been liaising with the Council’s ICT team to make sure staff can successfully use laptops/other technology to work remotely from home.

We are doing our best to ensure that communication is happening throughout the organisation at all levels to ensure the wellbeing of our residents and staff through these difficult times.

**What has changed?**
All staff are working from home

**What has been delayed/postponed?**
A small number of enquiries may require longer to deal with than our usual response timescales (in all these cases the residents will been advised).

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**WHAT A LOAD OF RUBBISH**

We are seeing a huge increase in bulky rubbish being dumped on our estates. Our Caretakers are doing their best to deliver essential services throughout the lockdown period but the selfish actions of a few individuals are putting additional unnecessary pressures on our already-stretched staff.

Dumped items can pose a huge fire risk and extra Caretaking visits could lead to increases in service charges for all residents in the future.

We can only put a stop to this if you let us know who is dumping these items. So please don’t be worried to name names, we will not reveal the source of any information – but if we can prove who’s doing the dumping, we can take necessary action against those responsible so THEY will pay for any additional work we have to do, NOT YOU!

Please report information to us at sehcustomerservices@seh.southend.gov.uk.

We ask all residents to play a role and help one another, and us, as much as you can.

If you are having a clear out while you’re staying safe at home, please:

- Dispose of rubbish safely and correctly
- Do not block shared areas including stairwells with rubbish, this is a severe fire risk
- If you have a large item[s] to be removed, please visit the bulky waste collection service offered by Veolia, this can be done online at www.southend.gov.uk
  Do not remove this item from your home until you have arranged for it to be collected.
  Due to Coronavirus (COVID-19) there may be a delay.
- Please report any residents you witness dumping rubbish or items to sehcustomerservices@seh.southend.gov.uk where necessary action can be taken and they may be prosecuted.

Further information about recycling, waste and street cleaning services, can be found on Southend Borough Council website.
MAKING THE BEST OF IT...

Helping those in need
Recently, Southend Borough Council’s Community Engagement Team asked us to review the needs of a gentleman who they had contact with throughout last week, leading to two food parcels being dispatched and referrals made for dementia and social care.
Our further work with him identified that he needed a fridge freezer and we were able to arrange for one to be ordered for him and delivered to his door using a grant from the Essential Living Fund.
This is a great example of working as part of a wider team to provide a complete service for our most vulnerable residents.

Good Samaritan
In April, a very kind lady who lives across the way to Nayland House kindly prepared bags of fresh provisions for all the tenants of the sheltered housing scheme in Manners Way, Southend.
The lady left several bags containing plenty of fresh fruit, vegetables and eggs at the main door to Nayland House. Two of the tenants collected them and delivered a bag to each of the flats, leaving them outside each front door. Coral, the SHO, then called through to tenants asking them to collect them.
The kind lady wouldn’t give her name and didn’t want any money. What a lovely gesture. 😊

Raising a S.M.I.L.E. for children at hostels
Staff in our Support Services Team teamed up with the charity S.M.I.L.E. to ensure that every child living in hostel accommodation in Southend over the Easter weekend received a chocolate egg.
S.M.I.L.E. (who provide essential support for families living in poverty or financial crisis in London and Essex) had kindly donated presents for children at Christmas and they didn’t disappoint yet again – providing 100 Easter eggs which our team delivered to doorsteps ahead of the Easter weekend.
Huge thanks to S.M.I.L.E. and well done to the staff who arranged delivery. 😊

Easter Bunny
The Easter bunny also arrived at Nayland House over Easter! A thoughtful tenant and her daughter bought everyone an Easter egg and left it at their doors. The few they had left over they put out for the carers who visited the scheme.

Rainbows on display...
Whilst we wouldn’t normally approve graffiti, we love the chalk image thanking all key workers, which someone has drawn on the side of a garage block in Shoebury.
We’ve also been sent a lovely image of rainbows on display on the patio doors facing the road at Trafford House thanking care workers and the NHS.

On your bike!
JBR Essex Triathlon Club recently asked all their members to cycle on their turbo trainers in their own homes for charity. The aim was to cycle collectively 5000 kilometres and raise £2000 for the NHS Southend Hospital charity trust.
The club members – including our very own Vanessa Elgar from our CarelineSOS team – broke their collective target by cycling an astonishing 7961 kilometres and they managed to raise an incredible £3731.05.

Well done to all involved!
If you are struggling to pay your rent due to the effects of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) or for any other reason, please contact your Tenancy Services Officer on 0800 833 160 or the Specialist Income Management team on 0800 0234 057 and we will do our best to help you in this unsettling time.

**Direct Debit**

You can pay your rent weekly (on a Monday) or monthly (on the 1st, 15th and 23rd of the Month) by Direct Debit if you have a bank account.

You can set up a Direct Debit over the telephone by contacting us on 0800 833160. You will need to have your bank account details ready when you call.

**Recurring Card Payments**

This is where we take pre-arranged payments from your debit or credit card.

- 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 using this method, please speak to your Tenancy Officer or our Specialist Income Management Team by calling 0800 833 160.

**Online payments**

You can pay online via Southend Borough Council's Online Payments facility. You will find the link to this on our website www.southessexhomes.co.uk/payrent

**Online banking**

If you use online banking, you can make a bank transfer or set up a standing order to pay your rent.

Please include your Payment Reference Number as the reference and send your payment to:

ACCOUNT NAME: General Account of Southend-on-Sea Borough Council
SORT CODE: 20-79-81
ACCOUNT NUMBER: 20145904

**By telephone call**

- **Automated 24 hour service:** Dial 08702 406650 and follow the instructions given - you will need to have your Rent Account Payment Reference number and your debit or credit card details. Calls to this number are charged at 1 pence per minute. There may also be additional charges incurred from your own telephone provider.

- **During office hours** you can also make a telephone payment via our Customer Contact Centre on 0800 833 160.

**By mobile phone**

Mobile phone users are able to pay 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

If you have a Smartphone, you can download the ‘allpay’ App for free directly from the Apple App Store or Google Play.

For more information, visit: www.allpay.net/allpay-payment-app

Tenants with other mobile phones can pay by text message.

To use this service you must first register on the website www.allpayments.net/textpay/login.aspx, then follow the instructions provided.

Once you have created login details you can text your payment.

If you would normally use more traditional ‘over the counter’ methods to pay your rent, you will need to find a new way to pay if/where it is not possible for you to visit Post Office counters or ‘PayPoint’ retailers.

We offer lots of options for you to pay your rent, so please find a summary below of each of the payment methods which are available for you to access from the comfort of your own home.

The Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) provides useful information regarding the claiming of benefits through the COVID-19 pandemic.

People making new claims for Universal Credit will no longer need to call the DWP as part of the process and instead new claimants are encouraged to claim online.

A bolstered frontline team will proactively call claimants if they need to check any of the information provided as part of the online claim, as well as messaging them on their online journal to confirm details.

If you have questions about how to go about claiming benefits during the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, please refer to the useful webpages prepared by the Department of Work & Pensions which is kept updated according to the latest developments - www.understandinguniversalcredit.gov.uk/coronavirus/
LOCKDOWN LARDER

Being at home more than usual has led many of us to dust off our rolling pins and get inventive in the kitchen. But without being able to pop to the shops so easily, it can be difficult to come up with new ideas using the ingredients already in your cupboards and fridge.

Southend resident turned celebrity chef, Jack Monroe aka ‘The Bootstrap Chef’, has kindly agreed for us to share recipes from her website - www.cookingonabootstrap.com - which turn low cost store cupboard staples into tasty food for you to make and enjoy.

Here are a few of our favourites – if you like these why not check out her website for more inspiration?

**BREAKFAST**

Peanut Butter & Banana Superpower Muffins
2 really rather ripe bananas
100g peanut butter
1 tbsp oil (vegetable or sunflower)
2 tsp sugar [10g]
A pinch of salt
1 tsp baking powder [4g]
150g oats
A few squares dark chocolate, grated (20g)

First use a little oil to grease your muffin tins – and set to one side. Preheat your oven to 180C.

Mash your bananas into a mixing bowl, and add the peanut butter and oil. Stir vigorously to mash the bananas, blend it all together into a smooth creamy consistency. Blitz most of the oats in a blender (if you don’t have a blender, put them into a freezer bag, tie the top tightly but with no air trapped inside, and bash a lot with a rolling pin or similar weighty object until most of the oats are broken up into little pieces).

Tip the oats, whole and broken, into the mixing bowl. Stir in the baking powder, salt, sugar and chocolate. It might not look like traditional cake batter, but that’s okay, it’s not supposed to.

Spoon it into the muffin tins, filling each two-thirds of the way full, and pop into the oven for 15-18 minutes, until risen and cooked through.

Then – and this is super important – leave them in the muffin trays for just over 5 mins to cool and firm up.

**LUNCH**

Mug Marmite Mac n Cheese for 1
75g pasta
250ml water
2 tsp butter
30g cheesy spread or any mature cheese, grated
½ tsp (2g) Marmite or other yeast extract

Tip your pasta into a mug, and cover with cold water. Cover with cling film and pierce several times, or balance a small microwavable saucer on top.

Stand it in a bowl or jug and cook on full power for 2 minutes, then remove the mug. It’s usual for water to bubble up over the sides and drench the bottom of your microwave, so to save cleaning it up and topping it up again, which will slow your cooking time down, just tip the water back into the mug.

Give it all a good stir and leave to stand for a minute. Repeat this step twice more, until your pasta is soft and swollen. You may need to add a splash more water here or there, which is fine – not all microwaves, nor pasta, were created equal.

Add your butter, stir in the Marmite, and grate the cheese over. Cook for one more minute on full power, stir well, and serve.

**DESSERT**

Carrot Cake Rice pudding
2 large carrots
410g evaporated milk, or thereabouts
500ml whole milk
2 tablespoons sugar
120g long-grain rice
a few pinches of grated nutmeg
25g butter or equivalent
2 tablespoons honey or golden syrup

First preheat your oven to 180C, and ensure there is a shelf in or just below the centre of the oven.

Grate the carrots and toss them into a blender with the evaporated milk, whole milk and sugar, and blend until smooth. Tip the rice into the bottom of an ovenproof dish, and pour the milk and carrot mixture over the top.

Bake in the centre of the oven for 30 minutes.

Remove and stir, then grate over the nutmeg, dot with the butter and drizzle the honey over the top. Replace in the oven to bake for a further 30 minutes. Delicious served hot or cold.
Southend Tenants & Residents Federation

Do you live in a Southend Borough Council property managed by South Essex Homes or in a Leaseholder’s property? Then you are a Member of the Federation!

The Federation is made up of Southend Borough Council/ South Essex Homes residents and leaseholders, as well as any person with the right to reside within their property, allowing all of the family including children to get involved. These are the only restrictions on who may attend the Federation meetings, to which everyone will receive a warm welcome.

These meetings will be held on the last Tuesday of each month at 10am, on the first floor of the Civic Centre.

Refreshments will be available during the meetings.

At each meeting there will be a guest speaker from South Essex Homes, Southend Borough Council or another organisation in the borough, who will be there to give advice and help on a chosen subject and to answer questions from those in attendance. At the end of each meeting there will be the opportunity to suggest a speaker or organisation that you would like to see or hear from at future meetings.

Resident Led Project

This is a project that is for residents to improve their neighbourhood/area where they live. These are examples of things that have been approved in the past:

- Security lighting for safety
- Fencing to make it look tidy
- Signage to help direct people.

If you feel you have a worthwhile project, then apply by ringing the free phone number 0800 833 160 and request a Resident Led Project application form or come along to one of the Federation meetings and speak to us.

Street and Block Voice

Resident Block & Street Voices are aligned under the STRF and they will report to the Federation on outcomes and progress. The Federation in partnership with South Essex Homes’ Support Services Team, are looking for residents who would like to be a Street or Block Voice. These residents would 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.

To be Street or Block Voice, you would have to adhere to a set of guidelines that are set by the Federation and South Essex Homes. They are to protect the Street or Block Voice as well as the residents. These will be on the application form for you to agree to. The form can be obtained by calling 0800 833 160 and asking for the Street and Block Voice application form.

If you would like to obtain information on how this would work where you live, what is expected of you or anything else that will help you decide if this for you or not, then come along to the Federation Meeting and talk to us, where we can give you guidance and help before committing to the roll.

Focus Groups

These are for the areas of Income Management, Leaseholders, Sheltered Housing, Planned Maintenance & Repairs.

The following Focus Groups merged into one: Anti-social Behaviour, Support Services, Tenancy, Estate Services and Communications. This new merged group will now hold 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. These groups will report to the Federation at regular intervals determined by the Federation.

Residents Information Day

On August 28th 2020 (subject to the Government’s Coronavirus restrictions allowing) the Federation are running a Residents’ Information Day open from 10am until 4pm.

This event will be held in Room Twenty-One directly beside the bottom of the Pier Lift along Western Esplanade, (left as you come out of the lift).

There will be tea, coffee and squash available during the day.

On the day different departments of South Essex Homes, our main contractors and Resident Focus Groups will be in attendance giving advice and help. Those that have agreed to attend so far are Tenancy, Leaseholders, Finance, Support Services, Health & Safety/Fire Safety, Morgan Sindall, Aaron Services, The Residents Scrutiny Group, Disability Group and of course your Federation as well as outside agencies.

We do hope to see as many of you that can get to the event, as it should be a very interesting and informative day.

Federation Raffle

The Federation are organising a raffle that is in aid of the Neptune Children’s Ward, Southend Hospital for much needed equipment that the children need to continue their schooling while receiving their treatment.

The Federation will be selling these tickets from the end of May if it is possible to do so. The 1st, 2nd & 3rd prizes will be on the tickets as we may get fantastic prizes to present to the winners. We already have many great prizes that have come from our contractors and residents alike.

Keith Ducker, Chair of the STRF, said: “If you have anything that would make a raffle prize for this great cause, then please contact me for collection of the item. The more items we have donated to us to give away as prizes, means the more we can raise for the children.”

The winners will be drawn at the Residents Information Day on the 28th August 2020.

Federation Meetings

Finally remember that you are very welcome to come along on the last Tuesday of the month to meet us and likeminded residents on the 1st floor of the Civic Centre.

We would like to see fresh faces, associations and residents’ groups attending the Federation meetings and to act as Street and Block voices.

You can contact Keith Ducker, Chair of the STRF by emailing him at info@strf.ork.uk or if you want a chat, you can call him on 07944 551579.

Keith Ducker
Chair of the STRF.
Spot the difference

There are 15 differences - can you spot and circle them all?
Fill in the grid with numbers 1 to 9 making sure no number is repeated in every row, every column and within each mini grid.

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**Quick Crossword**

Across
3. Cooking vessel (8)
4. Flower wreath (7)
6. Glance (4)
7. Pal (6)
9. Perhaps (5)
10. Water boiling device (6)
12. Row of bushes (5)
13. Mineral water spring (3)
14. Settee (4)

Down
1. Excellent buy (7)
2. Percussion instrument (4,4)
5. Twelve (5)
8. Person finishing second (6,2)
10. Retains (5)
11. Minimum (5)

**Word Scramble Answers:**

- B E A C H
- B U C K E T
- S P A D E
- S P A
- P A R K
- H O L I D A Y S
- P I N C I
- P I E R
- C A M P I N G
- S U M M E R
- S H O R T S

**Crossword Answers:**


Down: 1. BARGAIN  2. BASS DRUM  3. ADOZEN  8. RUNNER UP  10. KEEPS  11. LEAST

**Answers (no cheating!!)**