



Waverley Homechoice

We all need a different type of home at different times of our lives. Our circumstances and housing need changes from our first home, a studio or one bed flat; a family house with children and as we get older to a more manageable bungalow.

“Homechoice” is the new way of finding the right home. It gives you the choice of properties available from both the Council and Housing Association landlords. You decide whether to bid for a new home.

In this edition we talk to some families who have recently moved for different reasons. We show how the Tenant Cash Transfer Grant can help tenants to move from larger family homes.

This means another family can then bring up their children in a home of the right size.

Tenants will have recently received their rent cards for 2007/08 with an average rent rise of 3.9%. We spread the rent charge over 52 weeks but because there are 53 weeks this financial year there will be nothing to pay on Christmas week.

Monthly Direct Debit is a great way to pay your rent and more and more tenants are now doing this. Our rent team is there to help you so, if you have problems please talk to them!

You will find ‘Have your say, your way’ the new Tenant Participation Compact with this Waverley Homes. Can you please keep it with your Tenants

Handbook so that you can refer to it in the future.

I’d also like to give a big thank you to everyone who has returned a survey form over the last few months. We’ve been finding out about your views on Decent Homes, Anti-social behaviour, tenant satisfaction and leaseholder services. Your views are extremely important to us as they help us improve our services to you.



David January
Director of Housing

Have your say, your way

With the help of tenants the Council has reviewed the way we consult you. The 2007 “Tenants Participation Compact” shows how your views have developed the housing services and the many ways that you can become involved. Please keep this booklet. Over the next three years we aim to:-

- Improve communication
- Create more flexible ways to participate – to improve services and influence communities
- Support tenants to get involved

You can “Have your say, your way” by getting involved in a range of ways through:-

- The Tenants Panel (AGM – Monday 30th April)
- Local meetings
- Neighbourhood Panel meetings with the Police
- Conferences, workshops and seminars
- The Tenants Consultation Group
- Focus groups
- Estate walkabouts (see back page)
- Contract monitoring groups
- Service satisfaction surveys
- Surveys
- Reading Group
- Surrey Wide Involvement Group

Contact Neil Deans 01483 523149 for more information.



Please keep this booklet with your Tenants Handbook

IN THIS ISSUE

- Page 1**
Right Home Right Time
Have your say, your way
- Page 2**
Moving Home
Transfers - Homechoice
Mutual Exchange - Home Swap
Tenant Cash Transfer Grant
Disabled Adaptations Transfer Grant
When Tenants Move!
What Tenants think about their new homes?
- Page 3**
What is Waverley Homechoice
When and Where vacancies advertised
When and How bids made
When and How offers made
Feedback
Moving to another area - HomeSelecta
How are we doing with letting homes
- Page 4**
How to pay your rent
Blooming Marvellous
Enter the Garden Competition
Leaseholders Survey
Estate Walkabouts

Moving home

TENANTS LOOKING FOR THE RIGHT HOME!

TRANSFERS – HOMECHOICE

There are over 500 tenants on the Council's waiting list looking for another home. This is 20% of all applicants wanting a new home with the Council or Housing Association landlords in Waverley.

When tenants fill in an application form for the Council's Housing Register they join Waverley Homechoice and are given:-

- a unique registration number
- their band - A, B, C, D or E, and
- their priority date – usually when they originally applied for housing

Waverley Homechoice is the new way that homes will be allocated in future and this is explained on page 3.

MUTUAL EXCHANGES – HOME SWAP!

Another way tenants can move is by swapping their home with another Council or Housing Association tenant – this can be within Waverley or anywhere in the country. Just find another tenant who'd like to swap homes with you!

Tenants who are on the Housing Register can also put their home onto the Mutual Exchange Register. The lists of properties can be looked at in the locality or Council offices. If you find a swap you have to agree to take the property as seen and cannot receive the Tenantcash Transfer Grant.

Remember you need the Council's agreement before you can do a mutual exchange. For more information please speak to the housing management team. This scheme helps tenants who are in lower transfer bands or have very recent priority dates.

Contact: 01483 523169 or e-mail housing.management@waverley.gov.uk

TENANT CASH TRANSFER GRANT

The Council gives a Tenants Cash Transfer Grants to tenants when they move into a smaller home. This is to help tenants move and make more two and three bedroomed houses available for families who need them.

Tenants can receive £1,000 when moving from a two bedroomed property or £1,200 for moving from a three or four bedroomed property to a one bedroomed property

Tenants willing to move to a smaller property are put in Homechoice topbands and A or B.

DISABLED ADAPTATIONS TRANSFER GRANT

Where tenants live in family housing and need a major adaptation such as a stairlift or level access shower they can receive a grant of £1,200 to move.

It is not sensible to adapt family homes as the adaptations have to be removed in the future when young families move in.

Housing officers will offer practical support and help to individuals or couples to move, if they are living in family homes and realise they will need disabled adaptations. A move to a smaller home is often much better in the long run.

Tenants needing to move because they need disabled adaptations are put in Homechoice band A.

WHEN TENANTS MOVE!

Before you move a housing officer will visit to check your home and advise you of any work you need to do before leaving. You will need to leave your home clean, make sure that no rubbish or furniture is left behind in the house or garden and make sure your rent account is up-to-date. You will be recharged if the council has to clear any rubbish or furniture.

The housing officer will also take photos of the outside of your home, to put on the Homechoice adverts. We may also ask to take photos of the inside of your home or garden for the advert. Where possible we will also ask you to allow potential new tenants to view the property before you move out.



New housing association homes in Wrecchlesham Road

What do tenants who have recently moved think about their new home?



INTERVIEW WITH MRS L OF BLUNDEN COURT

'I moved to Blunden Court from a 3-bed house with a large garden in Shamley Green. I registered on the housing need register at Christmas and moved in February. I moved because I couldn't cope with the garden and I had trouble keeping the house warm enough. My husband and I were the first people to move into our 3-bed property over 40 years ago.

I choose Blunden Court as I used to attend the day centre there. I visited and looked at my new flat. The people are very friendly here and I join in the bingo The gardens are well maintained. I come and go as I please, there are no restrictions whatsoever. I hope to remain here for the rest of my life.'

INTERVIEW WITH MRS W OF WITLEY

Overcrowded - moved to 3-bed house.

Mrs W, her husband and daughter moved into a new 2 bed house in Godalming - a modern house with a small garden. This property suited the family at that stage.

As their family grew so did there need for larger accommodation. In 2002 they had their 3rd child and were finding it difficult to cope with only 2 bedrooms.

After a considerable wait they were allocated a 3-bed property in 2005. This house now suits their needs with adequate living space and a large garden

'We are very happy here.' says Mrs W

What is Waverley Homechoice?



This is the Council's new way of letting social housing. Empty properties will now be advertised and applicants can register their interest in them – this is known as "bidding".

You will only be offered a property if you have bid for it, so it is very important that you know about this new system. You can choose which property you want to bid for from among the properties advertised.

Your bid will be ranked against others who have also bid and the property will normally go to the applicant with the highest band and the oldest priority date.

When you register for a transfer you will be given a card on which you can keep the information you need to make a bid.

WHEN AND WHERE ARE THE VACANCIES ADVERTISED?

Every week from midnight on Wednesday to midnight on Sunday vacancies are advertised:-

- www.waverleyhomechoice.org.uk
- the advertising hotline on 01483 523456
- newsletters and notices at the Council's offices in Godalming, Farnham, Haslemere or Cranleigh
- Citizens Advice Bureaux offices during normal office hours

Each advert has a property reference number which you will need if you want to bid. The advert says who is eligible to bid for example: "only applicants in Bands A, B & C".

WHEN AND HOW ARE BIDS MADE?

For each week's vacancies you can make bids from midnight on Wednesday to midnight on Sunday by using and following the instructions on:-

- www.waverleyhomechoice.org.uk
- phoning the bidding line 0845 602 4955
- texting 0778 148 6687

When you bid you will be told where you are in the bidding order. You can check this at any time up until midnight on Sunday.

You can only make up to three bids each week. So if you find that you are low down on the bidding list for one property you can withdraw your bid and bid for another.

WHEN AND HOW ARE OFFERS MADE?

We will contact you, usually during the week following the close of bidding for that property. If you have rent arrears or have a history of anti-social behaviour we won't be able to offer you the property.

We will arrange for you to view the property, as soon as possible, before you decide. You can refuse the property after you have seen it and there's no penalty for refusing.

Unfortunately we can't let everyone who bids know that they haven't got it. So if you don't hear from us in a week or so, it means you have not been successful.

FEEDBACK

We provide information about all the properties that have been let - the successful applicants band and priority date. You can compare these details with your own band and priority date and decide whether to bid in a different area..

HELP!!!

We've set up a helpline 01483 523121 and staff in all our offices are trained to help you to use the system.

CONTACT DETAILS:

Transfer applications/enquiries: **01483 523018** or www.waverley.gov.uk/housing

Waverley Homechoice:

- www.waverleyhomechoice.org.uk
- advertising hotline: **01483 523456**
- bidding phone line: **0845 602 4955**
- bidding by texting: **0778 148 6687**
- Helpline: **01483 523121**

Housing Advice/Options: **01483 523452**

Moving to another local area



We are working with Rushmoor, Guildford Borough Councils and Hart District Council. We have all agreed to put 10% of our vacancies into a pool which any applicant from any of the 4 areas can bid for. This is a new scheme called HomeSelecta. You will find these on Homechoice and bid in the same way.

How we are doing with letting homes?

This edition of 'performance corner' looks at Waverley's performance in letting properties. The information has highlighted the progress, which has been made by Waverley in letting homes. The introduction of Waverley Homechoice is likely to ensure that performance continues to improve.

Table 1

The table below highlights the high level of satisfaction among new tenants in regard to the quality of the repairs and maintenance work completed before they moved in. Although satisfaction levels dropped slightly in 2005/06 the results for the first three quarters of 2006/07 have been very positive.

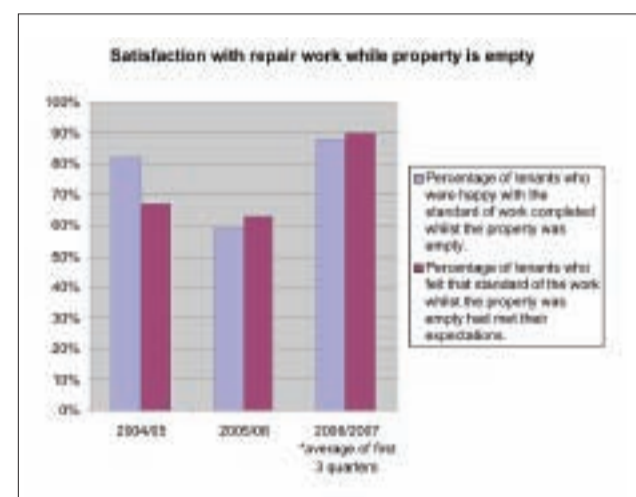


Table 2

The table below shows the average number of days in takes to re-let a home. There are a number of factors, which can affect the re-let times; such as the repairs needed and finding a tenant.

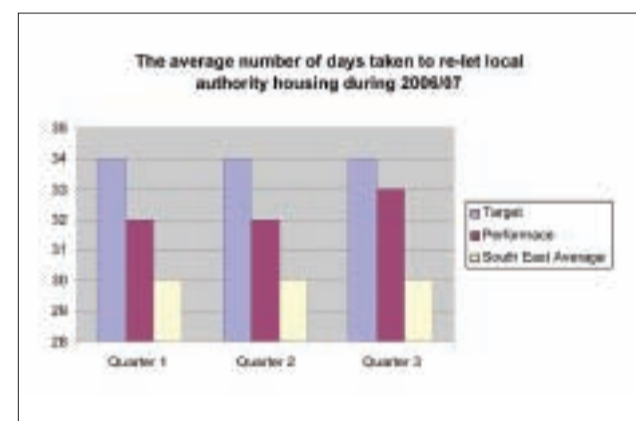
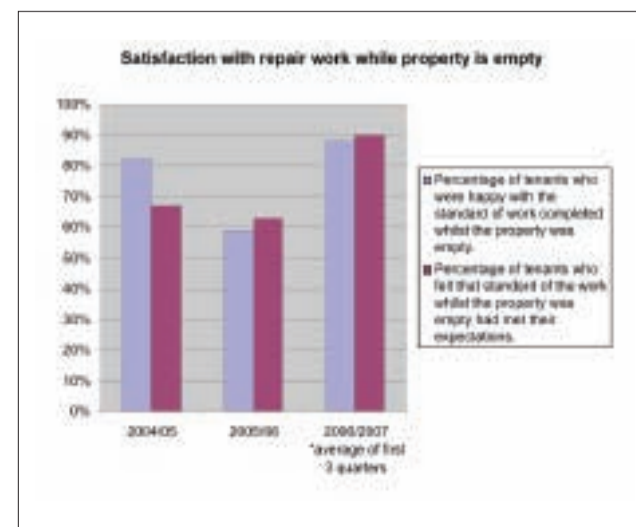


Table 3

The table below shows the average time taken for work on an empty home to be completed and ready for a new tenant to move in. Performance in this area has improved throughout the year.



Blooming marvellous

Spring has now sprung. It's time to venture out into the garden and open the shed. For the green-fingered tenants, it's time to enter Waverley's Housing Garden Competition



There are two categories to enter: Small Garden and Large Garden. There are garden centre gift voucher prizes: First prize wins £100, second prize wins £50 and third prize wins £30.

Simply complete the enclosed form.

Good Luck!

Leaseholder surveys

We sent leaseholders two surveys last September to ask the best way to contact them and what they thought about our service. We had a 35% response rate. Thank you to all of the leaseholders who responded.

We've learned that many leaseholders don't know about the services we provide or how to contact the right person to deal with an enquiry. We will review our leaseholder leaflets and provide a new set to each leaseholder in May 2007. We aim to provide better information for leaseholders!

We were particularly grateful for the general comments made in the survey responses. We cannot respond individually as the survey was anonymous but we read all the comments and will learn from the points you made.

For any further information on the surveys or leasehold matters generally, contact Doug Hamilton, Home Ownership Officer on 01483 523031.

How to pay your rent?

DID YOU KNOW THERE ARE 7 WAYS THERE ARE TO PAY YOUR RENT?	
Direct Debit	Ask the Rents team for a direct debit form or download one from www.waverley.gov.uk and then we can collect your rent from your bank or building society monthly.
At any of our offices	You can pay by cash, cheque, debit or credit card – make sure you have your Rent Card or Rent Account Reference
By post	Send your Rent Card and cheque (please put your Rent Account Reference on the back of your cheque) made out to Waverley Borough Council to Director of Finance.
By phone	Phone the 24 hour automated telephone payments service on 01483 861498. You will need your Rent Account Reference and debit or credit card details
At the Post Office	By Transcash our Girobank number is 3193128. Write your Rent Account Reference and address on the back of the form. Please note: it takes 7 days to reach us and The Post Office charges for this service.
Your Telephone or Internet bank	You will need our bank details HSBC Bank plc, Sort code: 40 22 12, Account number: 21369121 please use your Rent Account Reference
On-line	You can pay online at www.waverley.gov.uk/payments You will need your Rent Account Reference and debit or credit card details

HOW TO FIND YOUR RENT ACCOUNT NUMBER

The Rent Account Reference is the ten-digit number, beginning with 500, printed on your Rent Card or any correspondence from the Council's Rents Team e.g. 5003175206. If you cannot find it, or are unsure contact the Rents Team.

If you have any problems paying the rent contact the Rents Team immediately they will be able to help you spread the payments, apply for housing benefit or refer you to a debt advisor.

Contact the Rents Team on 01483 523136 or rents@waverley.gov.uk

Estate walkabouts

The Housing Department has recently introduced walkabouts for most of our estates. Every three months the Housing Management Officer arranges a walkabout with a Maintenance Inspector, someone from Grounds Maintenance, Environmental Services and the Community Housing Officer and together they walk through the estate.

They look out for any problems, repairs, and grounds maintenance issues – in fact any aspect of estate management that they or residents think needs attention. We are keen to have local tenants and leaseholders along to help us keep estates clean, safe, and secure places to live.

If you would like to join in, please contact your Housing Management Officer. You can ring us on 01483 523069 to find out which estates are covered and when the next inspection is due.



Published by Waverley Borough Council
 The Burys, Godalming, Surrey GU7 1HR
 Telephone: 01483 523333
 Website: www.waverley.gov.uk/housing.
 Send any comments or ideas for future editions to Mr Neil Deans e-mail: ndeans@waverley.gov.uk
 Mr Neil Deans, Housing Department, The Burys, Godalming, Surrey GU7 1HR