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Please contact us for more details.**

Colne needs you to join the Board!

Do you want to have a seat at the table and help decide the way Colne delivers its services? If the answer is yes then get in touch.

Colne is actively looking for residents to join its Board which is made up of other residents, local business people, members of local councils and others who are passionate about social housing.

We have people with different levels of experience and a good mix to cover our area from mid to north east Essex. We are particularly looking for tenants who live in the Tendring area to join us. If you are interested in finding out more about what a Board member does and how you can be involved then please contact Mark Powell Davies on 01206 244700.

Estate Reps

Can you spare some time each month, letting your housing officer know what is happening in your area, and how our contractors are performing? If so, we would like to hear from you.



Have you considered becoming an estate rep? Call 01206 244700

Putting you in the driving seat

A new national tenant helpline has been launched as part of the Tenant Empowerment Programme (TEP). The scheme is run by the Housing Corporation and actively supported by Colne. You can call the helpline free of charge on 0800 844111 to access advice on all aspects of tenant involvement. In addition to the helpline, the TEP scheme also offers a range of free training courses. For more information, please contact Martin Buddery on 01206 244700.

WIN £30 of High Street Shopping Vouchers

You'll find a questionnaire with this edition of C-Mail asking your views on our office opening hours. Like all organisations we need to make sure customers can get in touch with us easily - how often and when we are open for business has a big part to play! Please take a few minutes to let us know your views - and you'll also be in with a chance of winning a £30 gift voucher!

Are we making sense?

To make sure our booklets and leaflets make sense to everyone, and that we use plain English, we have enlisted the help of our residents.

Our new 'proof-reading' panel will check all of our publications, including C-Mail, to ensure we make everything easy to read and understand.

Once approved by the panel each publication will be stamped with a "Resident Approved" logo. This will assure other residents that it has passed the panel's test and is free of jargon or confusing terminology.



RIGHT: Mike Grey shows us the new Resident Approved logo

CHS-mail

Colne Housing Newsletter

Summer 2006 / Issue 19

Fun in the sun

Tug of war, three legged races and a bouncy castle are just some of the things on offer at this year's Summer Fun Day organised by Colne residents at Fairclough Avenue in Clacton.

As well as local families, the police and fire and ambulance crews will also be taking part in what's set to be the biggest and best fun day yet.

The event is being organised again this year by members of the Fairclough Avenue Residents' Association (FARA) and will start at Rush Green recreation ground at 11am on the 19th August.

The fun and games will continue until 2pm. There will then be a short break while preparations get underway for the afternoon session starting at 3.30pm at the Maldon Way Community Centre with a disco and BBQ for all ages. There is also additional fun when FARA members take on the West Division of Clacton Police in a netball competition, featuring both men and women.

Founder and Chairperson of FARA, Sara Rundel, said: "We are busy getting all the preparations done for the big

day. If last year is anything to go by, this will be a tremendous day for those who live on the estate and I am really pleased that the local police, fire service and ambulance crews are taking part and joining in the fun. This is really a community activity and shows what can be done when everyone pulls together. We are looking forward to a great day!"

Money raised from the day through a raffle and a modest entry fee will go towards paying for a trip to East Mersea Youth Camp for children from the area and also a another day trip later in the year.

TOP RIGHT: Sara Rundel shows off her posters for the Fun Day

RIGHT: What's on offer at the Fun Day



Ipswich Town FC plays host to Residents' Conference



Championship club Ipswich Town is the venue for this year's New Alliance Residents' Conference which takes place on 18th October.

The annual event is organised by Colne Housing, Suffolk Housing in Bury St.

Edmunds and Cotman Housing in Norwich.

Any Colne resident is welcome to attend and will have a great day at the Blues ground. As well as hearing from other residents, delegates will learn about how they can get involved in helping to run their local communities, how young people are a vital part of neighbourhoods and issues surrounding domestic violence.

One of the highlights will be a tour of Portman Road and a chance to see the sights of one of East Anglia's top sides and former FA Cup and UEFA Cup winners (who will of course be visiting Layer Road this season!).

Transport is available to and from the venue. If you would like to attend the Residents' Conference on 18th October then please call Martin Buddery on 01206 244700.



Keith Peirson , Property Services Manager

Colne properties in safe hands with new Property Services Manager

There's a new face at Colne. Keith Peirson has been appointed as the new Property Services Manager to take on responsibility for maintenance of the Society's homes.

Keith previously worked as Estate Services Contracts Manager for Circle Anglia Housing Association, and brings with him some 15 years experience in the social housing field.

Keith is committed to affordable housing

and is a board member of South Midlands and Greater London Housing Society where he sits on the Maintenance and Finance committees. He has also helped restructure the Board of Management of the Heron Wharf Group of companies where he was a Director of Heron Wharf (Phase 2) Management Company Limited and Heron Wharf Residents' Association.

Familiar faces from Colne's partners

Many of you will know our maintenance people who make regular visits to your homes to ensure they are kept to the high quality you expect. We thought it would be nice to feature some of the longest serving employees, and through C-Mail, recognise the service they have given to Colne and you.

H&E Installations *Shawn Page*

H&E Installations have been working with Colne for more than ten years, installing gas heating and hot water systems in Colne properties and carrying out day to day maintenance. The company also carries out the annual safety check and service to Colne's 1,100 properties with gas boilers.

Shawn has been working for the company for ten years. He began working on the administration side and worked his way up to become Managing Director. He is also a qualified heating and plumbing engineer.



Roalco Ltd

Reg Pentney

Reg has been working for Roalco for around five years carrying out day to day maintenance to all of Colne Housing Society's buildings and homes. Reg carries out jobs such as changing locks and repairing window hinges and works on all of

Colne's properties, including sheltered housing. As a familiar face around the Society's homes Reg is often requested personally by residents.

Bowling Garrard Electrical

Neil Hutchings

Neil has been working for Bowling Garrard for more than 20 years and the company has been contracted to Colne for more than 30 years.

Neil is responsible for maintaining the electrical equipment in all the Society's offices and homes and carries out jobs like installing sockets and dealing with electrical faults.



Helping to build important bridges in a new community



Jo Wheatley

A Colchester based community group has devised a unique method of working that could help build important bridges between a new and old community in the town.

Community Action in Myland (CAM) is a new project set up to help with the expansion in the north of Colchester.

Formerly known as CONEC, the group was first based at the Hythe where it carried out similar work, helping those moving into new housing developments create friendly neighbourhoods.

Now, despite losing its Housing Corporation funding, CAM is setting out to work in Myland, north Colchester over the next two years, with the aim of helping residents and community groups improve the area.

Jo Wheatley is CAM's full time community development worker. It was her work with a former colleague on the CONEC team which she believes is going to give CAM its unique edge.

She said: "We devised a way of reviewing our work that helped us so much that I have decided to share the technique in the hope that it will also help newly formed community groups

to work more effectively."

The idea behind the "self reflective" technique is to help community groups draw up a list of their values, and aims.

Then the group is encouraged to listen to its members and others and reflect on whether what it does meets with its values.

Establishing new community groups in the Myland area of north Colchester is vital if the new development of housing is to be transformed into a workable community.

Jo said: "We have conducted a survey of residents' needs and the results will guide our work over the next two years. There are still very basic and obvious facilities and amenities that are missing, and I hope our community group can help to address these.

"For example, we are lacking space for young people to meet, shops and other services. We shall work hard to get these established."

CAM is a joint project being funded by Colne, Estuary, Suffolk Heritage, Places for People and Colchester Borough Council. Jo can be contacted Monday to Thursday on 01206 864619.

Customer Satisfaction Survey Letters – The results

We've had a tremendous response to our Repairs Satisfaction Survey letters, with the number being returned increasing steadily. A prize draw is held every month where tenants can win a first prize of £30 of High Street Vouchers, and two runners up prizes of £10 of High Street Vouchers each. In June 2006, tenants reported an overall satisfaction rate of 98% (where the service was acceptable to excellent). 44% said our service was "excellent", 44% said it was

"good", and 10% said it was "acceptable".

The Customer Satisfaction Survey letters were introduced at the beginning of April to provide information about repairs that have been reported. The letters also help us to gain a clearer understanding of our tenant's views regarding the repairs service we offer, in order for us to improve our service. There is also the opportunity for tenants to tell us more about their particular needs.



Debbie McAndrew from Colne's Customer Services team, checking the results

Careline switch to Invicta

The last few months have seen a change for some of our sheltered housing tenants and for residents who use our "out of hours emergency repairs service." We have recently switched from our old provider, Kings Lynn Careline, to Invicta. The switch over took place after rigorous competition to find a successor for Kings Lynn Careline, who were not continuing to provide

this service. Invicta are a successful organisation specialising in providing support and assistance to housing association residents. We hope that residents have found the switch over to be a smooth one and have not noticed any disruption to our service.

As a reminder, emergency repairs can be reported outside our normal office hours on 01732 781979.



Making it easier for you to pay your rent

If you pay your rent, or any other bills, via allpay.net then there's good news because there is an even simpler way to settle your account.

Allpay.net has linked up with the payment network e-pay.

It means that you now have even more choice in where you can pay rent and other household bills.

The e-pay network, which already provides mobile phone top-up services, is situated mainly in convenience stores, petrol stations and newsagents. It provides long opening hours and you can now use it to pay your rent at your convenience.



Where you see this sign, not only can you top up your mobile phone but you can also pay your rent with your Colne Housing AllPay swipecard.

You now have even more choice in where you can pay rent and other household bills.



Sprucing up for Summer!

As many residents will already know, the Society's painting contractors, COLDEC, are currently out and about carrying out painting work to external windows and doors, hallways in blocks of flats, and fencing and railings. The contract is due to continue for the remainder of the summer and should end by the third week of October.

Many thanks to those of you who have already sent in your painting contract questionnaires; we really do appreciate your comments.

We are currently replacing boilers and heating systems at our sheltered housing schemes in Highwoods, Colchester and Stanway. We will also be replacing the warden call systems

at most of our sheltered housing schemes this year. Details will be sent to those residents affected when the works go out to tender in September 2006.

We are also in the process of finalising this year's £80,000 budget for updating kitchens and bathrooms at various properties. We will continue this programme in 2007.

If you have a particular concern about the condition of the kitchen or bathroom in your home, then contact your housing officer who will visit and explain how Colne puts together its kitchen and bathroom replacement programme.



We are also in the process of finalising this year's £80,000 budget for updating kitchen and bathrooms.

COLDEC staff working on properties in Greenstead, Colchester

You told us – we delivered!

Colne is always keen to hear from residents about issues that concern them, and where possible the Society will do all it can to respond positively. C-Mail is starting a regular feature called ‘You told us – we delivered’ where we will report on what we’ve achieved following consultation and requests from you. Here are some recent examples:

Timber Hill, Colchester – Fencing: Tenants asked for new fencing in the area and Colne agreed. The result is improved fencing for the estate where many young families live.



Fairclough Avenue, Clacton:

The Residents’ Association asked Colne to help with funding to start up the association, help with training and equipment and financial support for insurance cover. All this was agreed by Colne and now there is a thriving Residents’ Association that represents tenants’ views.

Nelson Place, South Woodham Ferrers – landscaping:

A large number of residents replied to a postal survey asking for more landscaping and tree planting. Colne agreed to invest the money. Alterations have already taken place with improved landscaping design and future improvements are planned.

Ironside Walk, Manningtree, new Sheltered Housing Assistant:

Residents were involved in writing the job description to ensure it accurately reflected what they wanted. Many of them also met with the applicants on the day of

the interviews to give their feedback to Colne. As a result there is a new Sheltered Housing Assistant, Susan Emmett, at Ironside Walk. Resident involvement



Susan Emmett

here was crucial in making sure we got the right person for the job.

New Careline

As you will read elsewhere in this issue of C-Mail, a new provider for Careline has been appointed. This was a direct result of consultation with residents in two of the Society’s sheltered schemes. Feedback from our tenants was vital in deciding the type of service to be provided.

These are just some of the things we have achieved together. Let us know if we can help improve the area where you live.

Do you have a neighbour who is a real winner?

Never mind the Oscars, we are launching our own top award for our residents who are simply the best!

We are proud to announce our new Good Neighbour Award which will be given annually to the person who has made an exceptional contribution to their community.

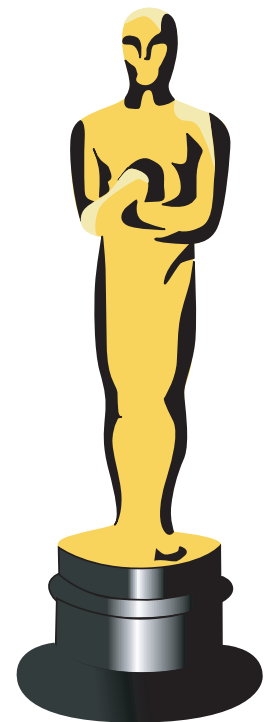
How do we find the winners? Well that’s down to you! All we need you to do is to nominate someone you know who works hard for their neighbours and goes the extra mile to help improve the area where you live.

To nominate someone, please contact us with details of who the person is and why you are

putting them forward for the Good Neighbour Award. You can either telephone your housing officer or write to Sally Thirkettle, Housing Manager or Clare Peart, Supported Housing Manager at the Society’s offices.

The successful candidate will be announced each year and will receive an award of high street store vouchers as well as the accolade of being a Colne Good Neighbour.

Please contact us now with your nomination, but remember you mustn’t tell the person you are nominating them!



“Nominate someone you know who works hard for their neighbours and goes the extra mile to help improve the area where you live.”



Got a problem in your area? Give the Hotline a call!

It's important we know how you feel about Colne's services, and what we can do to improve. To enable us to do this we need you to have your say. To help make sure this happens, we have set up the Residents' Forum.

Colchester and Essex is famous for its Roman heritage, and 2000 years ago the Forum played a vital part in citizens lives; a place where they could meet and discuss issues of the day.

Two millennium later the concept hasn't changed, and we hold forums four times a year which give you the chance to air your views on a variety of topics of your choice.

For example, the last Residents' Forum discussed estate maintenance, the tenant loyalty scheme, best value review of tenant involvement and estate surgeries.

Future meetings will talk about how Colne deals with anti-social behaviour, customer service standards, our repairs and maintenance service and estate improvements.

The Forum is open to all residents and we would like you to come along and talk about the issues that matter to you.

The next meeting will be on Wednesday 6th September at 11am at Colne's offices in Colchester. We help with travel expenses, and can arrange transport if required.

If you would like to come along then please contact Sally Thirkettle on 01206 244700.



Community Hotline

A new Community Hotline is being launched to help residents report any problems in their area that need fixing.

The 24-hour service will enable residents to let Colne know about issues such as graffiti, dumped rubbish or abandoned cars. You can also let us know if our gardeners or cleaners have missed anywhere.

All you have to do is call the hotline number on 01206 244744 and leave a message on the answerphone. All calls will be monitored every day between Monday and Friday and a response will be sent to the caller within five working days – remember to leave your details so we can contact you.

Remember the hotline number is 01206 244744.

Anti-social Behaviour Hotline

Worried about crime or anti-social behaviour? Residents living in the Tendring District Council area can now call the Anti-social Behaviour Hotline on 0845 605 2222 to report any incidents of concern. Tendring District Council residents can also email their concerns to anti-social-behaviour@tendringdc.gov.uk or visit http://www.tendringdc.gov.uk/crimeanddisorder/ASB/anti-social_behaviour for more information.

Of course, Colne residents can also contact their housing officer if they have a problem with anti-social behaviour in their neighbourhood, and we will work closely with the Police, Street Wardens and the local council to improve the situation.

“If you are losing sleep due to problem behaviour, you can take action.”