

Phoenix *Flyer*

A newsletter by residents for residents



All information correct at time of printing. Please visit www.phoenixch.org.uk for up-to-date information.



Stepping up as Chair of the Board

Phoenix resident and previous Vice Chair of the Board, Carmen Simpson, will be stepping up as Chair and has taken the time to reflect on her next steps with Phoenix.

I have worked in social housing for over 25 years. My last job was as a Resident Engagement Officer for Southwark Council.

I was part of setting up a Tenants and Residents Association which gave residents a say in the management of their homes and access to working with their local authority. I've also worked with Tenant Management Organisations to bridge the gap between tenants and their landlords, which was challenging but also very rewarding work.

I've lived in the North Downham area for over 20 years and have seen many changes in that time. Originally, I was a Lewisham Council tenant before becoming a Phoenix resident after the stock transfer in 2007. I remember having the same trepidations and concerns as many of the other residents in the stock transfer: will they hike the rent up? Will I still get my repairs done? Will my needs as

a resident be heard? Phoenix made over 100 promises to us, and I'm pleased to say that everyone was fulfilled. Transferring from the Council to Phoenix was like day-to-night. It felt exciting to be part of something new and joining an organisation that would be run by its residents.

I'd always wanted to get involved with Phoenix and once I retired in 2015, I finally had the time and capacity to do so. I decided to see how I could get involved by looking at Phoenix's website and found that there was a vacancy for a resident board member. I applied and went for an interview. The interview panel fed back that I had a great interview but wasn't quite ready to join the board.

They recommended that I join the Phoenix Gateway Committee to gain a greater understanding of how the board worked and what Phoenix was about. So, I did. I learnt a lot and really gained an insight into how Phoenix is run and the role of its board. After three months on the Gateway Committee, I was appointed as a tenant board member.

At the time, Anne McGurk was due to become Chair and approached me about becoming her Vice Chair.

At first the prospect of becoming

Vice Chair was daunting but Anne mentored me in preparation for my appointment. I felt I had something to bring to the board, not only my 25 years of experience working in housing, but as a resident voice. I also felt proud to represent my heritage, bring some much-needed diversity to the board and help reflect the diversity of our residents and community.

Anne has been a great mentor over the years and a great support to all the board members. Working with her has shown me the serious responsibility of being Chair and the compassion she's shown for Phoenix residents and staff has been inspiring.

I am honoured to be stepping up as Chair and look forward to working with my fellow board members to continue to build on the great foundation laid by our past two amazing chairs.

As Chair, I hope to embed our new Grove Park residents into the Phoenix way, offering opportunities to enable them to have an equal voice by being represented at all levels of engagement. I am excited by the future of Phoenix and its potential to lead the housing sector with its resident-led model.



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www.phoenixch.org.uk



0800 0285 700

Blooming marvellous!

Congratulations to the winners of Phoenix in Bloom 2021! Thank you to all our passionate and green-fingered residents who took part in our annual gardening competition, which celebrates the contribution of residents to make our community beautiful.

Thank you to our special guest judges: Patricia Newman-Sheaf, Eileen Davies, and Phoenix Grounds Maintenance Supervisor Ben Moss. **To check out this year's winning entries, visit our website.**



What happened at this year's AGM?

Phoenix's tenant Chair, Anne McGurk, has stepped down at this year's annual general meeting (AGM) after five years championing resident involvement and leadership as Chair of the Board.

Anne said: "It has been a pleasure to see Phoenix grow as the tenant Chair of Phoenix for the past five years - from completing our decent homes standard and starting our development programme, to the growing resilience of staff and residents who championed our model during the pandemic."

Tenant Board Member, Peace Ayiku-Nartey, also announced that she will be stepping down from the Board. Peace said: "It has been a joy to be on the Phoenix Board. I would encourage all residents to think about how they can use their voice to ensure we are always resident-led."

19 resident shareholders participated in the Phoenix Community Housing AGM this year. 16 residents voted by



proxy and a small number of shareholders attended the meeting in person at The Green Man.

Residents also put questions to senior management around creating a community we're proud of, fly tipping, resuming in-person resident groups and the re-opening of The Fellowship.

To read a full summary of this year's AGM, please visit our website.

Events

Proud to be

Wednesday 27 October

Join us for an online discussion about what makes us proud to be us, as part of our Diversity and Inclusion Policy. See enclosed leaflet for more information.

Phoenix Academy

Starting in January

Phoenix's 'School of Social Housing' returns with level 1 qualifications in Housing. Enrolments are now open. Contact us for more information.

Introducing Phoenix's new Chief Executive Denise Fowler

We are delighted to announce the appointment of Denise Fowler as our next Chief Executive. She will join Phoenix in early 2022 to succeed Jim Ripley, who has been the Chief Executive of Phoenix since our creation in 2007 as one of the UK's few resident-led housing associations.



Denise Fowler said: "I am beyond thrilled to be selected as Phoenix's new CEO. I am a long-time admirer of the Phoenix model. This is a truly resident-led organisation with fantastic levels of community engagement."

I grew up in South London, on estates very similar to those managed by Phoenix, and still live locally. Finding a safe secure affordable home transformed my life. I want to play my part in ensuring that at Phoenix we continue to work together to build a better future for everyone in this community."

News in numbers



At the end of August 2021...

218 Leaseholders were in arrears for major works service charges

2067 Tenants were in arrears owing over **£1.8m** (Struggling to pay your rent? Turn to page 4.)

From April-August 2021...

Phoenix funded **114** appointments for residents with the Citizens Advice Bureau

Phoenix staff resolved **1428** queries about rent, service charges or payments and **398** queries related to benefits and financial well-being

Your Community Chest projects

Each year we award £100,000 of Community Chest funding to local community projects that benefit our community. Here is more information on some of this year's projects available to you:

Bellingham Dances

Free Dance Sessions for 12-18 year in Bellingham from January 2022.

Work with a professional dance artist to develop new dance skills, make friends, have fun and feel good.

Email youthprogramme@trinitylaban.ac.uk

Spontaneous Productions Theatre

Sydenham based not-for-profit theatre show SAFE, exploring the impact of knife crime and gang culture on young people, will be touring local schools and youth clubs and staging free performances in spring 2022. **Find out more www.spontaneousproductions.co.uk.**

Wuntanara

Free African Drumming workshops for Phoenix residents at St Johns Church on the Bromley Road. Workshops are open to all, no experience required. You'll be taught to play by a Guinean Master Drummer.

Contact 07909964106 or email info@wuntanara.com.



Healthy Living Therapies

Free massage for Phoenix residents at Hazelhurst Court on Thursdays and St Lukes Church, BR1 5JR on Fridays.

Contact 0208 6178 820 or email info@t4h.org.uk.



Need somebody to talk to?

We all have times in our lives where we need somebody to talk, especially over the past year. That's why we've teamed up with Health Assured, the UK's trusted independent health and wellbeing provider, to offer our residents emotional support and practical guidance.

The free service offers 24/7 access to counsellors who will listen to you and help talk through any issues you may be facing. You can also access legal advisors who can provide advice and guidance on issues like writing a will, work issues, divorce, probate costs, motoring issues and immigration information.

To access the service, call 0800 917 6470 and say Phoenix Community Housing – Residents Gateway. Our reference number for the service is HA 179596.

A qualified counsellor or legal advisor will answer and ask for your contact details which will be kept securely and won't be shared with Phoenix.

Getting green and saving money!



Here at Phoenix, we're committed to going green and reducing our carbon footprint. Recently the government set a legal requirement for the UK to be Net Zero Carbon by 2050 which will have an impact on how our homes are insulated, heated, and ventilated in the future. That's why we will be carrying out energy surveys of all Phoenix homes on our behalf. The surveys will help Phoenix to plan for future works to meet the new government target and make your home more energy efficient.

Not only will this benefit the environment but also your wallet! Increasing the energy efficiency of your home means you'll be spending less on your energy bills.

If you have any queries about the surveys or want to find out more, please visit our website or contact us on 0800 0285 700.





Have peace of mind this winter

Winter weather can have devastating effects on our homes, whether from gale force winds, rainwater flooding, or frost causing water pipes to burst.

Our pay as you go, home contents insurance scheme, which is underwritten by Aviva Insurance Ltd, offers cover for damage to your home contents caused by storms or floods, falling trees and branches, as well as fire, theft and more.

We hope that you will never suffer a flood or water damage, but these things can happen. We recommend all tenants and leaseholders take out

home contents insurance, whether through our scheme or with another provider.

Please remember you are responsible for replacing your home contents and belongings. Contents insurance is designed to help protect your possessions and personal belongings.

For more information, please contact us.

Reminder

Post Office card accounts are closing from November 2021, and you will need to set up a new bank account.

If you are not sure which bank account is best for you, you can call the DWP on 0800 085 7133 or Money Advice Line on 0800 138 777.

Visit www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en for more information.



Pay your rent before it's spent!

It is important that you prioritise paying your rent in advance. This means if you pay your rent weekly, you will need to pay one week in advance and if you pay your rent monthly, you will need to pay one month in advance. Paying your rent in advance means that:

- you are meeting the conditions of your tenancy
- you are unlikely to fall into arrears
- you have a safety net if your circumstances change
- you could improve your credit score.

If you're worried about struggling to pay your rent in advance, please contact us for support.

Our Financial Wellbeing team can help you set up a payment plan and claim benefits that you may be entitled to.



Focus on: making our services more accessible

At Phoenix, we value and are committed to promoting diversity and inclusion.

It is vital to delivering our vision and in recognition of this, consideration is one of our values.

Equality and Diversity is driven from the top, informs our plans, shapes our culture (the way we do things), and is supported through staff training, development and engagement.

We are committed to treating all residents with fairness and respect and providing services that do not discriminate.

To help us deliver on these commitments, rather than having a specific policy on equality and diversity, we ensure they are embedded in every policy and procedure through an assessment of the equality impact of changes as part of our policy review process.

We have completed three Equality Impact Assessments since April 2021. These assessments help us to identify and address any areas where our policies or services may not be accessible to all the different groups of people in our community. For example, providing large print materials for residents with sight

impairments, audio guides for those with hearing impairments, and adapting homes for those with mobility issues.

In January, our Board approved a new policy on making reasonable adjustments. Reasonable adjustments depend on your needs and could mean changing an appointment time to when a carer can attend too, providing alternative accommodation if a complicated and disruptive repair is being done or completing an adaptation.

The new policy provides guidance to staff to help make sure we meet everyone's individual needs if they have a disability. For example, providing information to you in different ways or completing works in your home to help you manage a disability.



We cannot always meet all requests, but we will always consider them, taking into account the impact on you, the cost and our ability to meet your request. A copy of the new policy is available on our website or by contacting Customer Services. Thank you to the residents who worked with us to develop the new policy.

A summary of our residents...

In June 2021 the information on our databases showed:

Tenants living with a disability

Disability	Tenants
No disability	46.5%
Hearing impairment	0.8%
Visual impairment	0.7%
Mobility impairment	6.6%
Dexterity impairment	0.4%
Mental health problem	3.5%
Progressive/permanent medical condition	4.7%
Multiple disabilities	6.3%
Wheelchair user	0.1%
Physical co-ordination	0.3%
Learning difficulty	0.5%
Literacy problem	0.4%
Unknown	27.3%

Homeowners living with a disability

Disability	Tenants
No disability	7.7%
Hearing impairment	0.1%
Visual impairment	0.1%
Mobility impairment	0.6%
Mental health problem	0.1%
Progressive/permanent medical condition	0.4%
Multiple disabilities	0.2%
Learning difficulty	0.1%
Unknown	90.5%

If you have a disability and have not told us, please let us know so we can update our records including how we need to adjust our services to meet your needs.

Community

Communication is key!

Join our Resident Communications Group and help us manage how we communicate with Phoenix residents. Review letters, feedback on our Annual Report, put forward ideas for the next newsletter, and more!

To find out more and join, email communications@phoenixch.org.uk

Thank you

Thank you to the 669 residents who have signed up for our new resident portal! On the portal you can access your information, make payments, keep up to date with news in your area, contact us 24/7 and book repairs online.

Congratulations to our prize draw winner Vicky Adams who signed up to the portal within the first 24 hours and has won an iPad!



Haven't yet registered your account?

Visit <https://my.phoenixch.org.uk/user/register>

Staying safe this festive season

As we head into festive season, we want to remind everyone to stay safe. Here are our top tips for staying safe around fireworks and bonfires:

-  only adults should handle fireworks
-  light fireworks a safe distance away from people and buildings
-  never go back to a lit firework
-  dispose of fireworks safely after use
-  children and young people should be supervised at all times
-  only buy fireworks that carry the CE mark
-  read and follow the instructions for each firework
-  store fireworks sensibly, in their boxes, and away from any naked flames
-  don't light bonfires near wooden fences and sheds
-  petrol, Paraffin or meths should not be used on fires
-  keep a bucket of water or sand handy, in case of an accident
-  always make sure a fire is out when celebrations are finished.

Get set for winter

Before the weather gets really cold, it's a good idea to test that your heating works. Put your heating on for 15-20 minutes per day and if there's no heat from the radiators, please call us.

If there is no heating and no water, please check that there is enough money on your gas meter and that there are no issues with the gas supply to the boiler. In most cases resetting the boiler will work, especially for a F75 error code.

If you have a frozen pipe and you can safely access it, hold a hot water bottle on the frozen pipe, and this will gently defreeze it.

If you have a burst pipe in your home, turn off the water supply at the stop cock (which is usually located under the kitchen sink or in a cupboard) so that the water can be shut off and then contact us on 0800 0285 700.



Christmas opening hours

The Phoenix Repairs Service will carry out emergency repairs only during this time and our out of hours service will continue as normal.

24 December: 10am – 4pm

29 to 31 December: 10am – 4pm

27 and 28 December: Closed

3 January: Closed



INVESTORS IN PEOPLE™
We invest in people Gold



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Phoenix Community Housing (Bellingham and Downham Limited) is a Community Benefit Society, number 30057R. VAT number 162 4926 03. Regulator of Social Housing number L4505.