

November 2017 • Issue 41

A newsletter by residents for residents


Phoenix

Our community in our hands

10
YEARS
TOGETHER



community news



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Welcome...

Have you got a story that you would like to include? We'd love to hear from you. Please get in touch or send your story to info@phoenixch.org.uk

Welcome to Community News

We hope you enjoyed our 2016-17 annual report, We're Planning a Party. Although there was a lot of work involved, we had fun putting it together.

A few of you asked whether there was an actual party taking place – the answer is yes! We'll be celebrating our 10th birthday in many ways over the next few months, starting with an exhibition at The Green Man opening on Friday 17 November and again at December's Community Links event on Saturday 2 December. You can find out more about both in this issue of Community News.

Phoenix was created by residents, and for residents. So when we celebrate our 10th birthday, we're celebrating 10 years of our community and resident leadership.

We'd love to hear your memories of life before Phoenix, and your stories and see your pictures of the years since 2007.

And if you want to get involved with Phoenix in any way, including joining us on the Residents Communications Group, please get in touch. We have members who come to meetings, and some who take part by email. It's very relaxed and there are no obligations. We'd love to have you as part of our group.

Best wishes, from the Residents Communications Group



WIN! 'Spot The Difference!'

Can you spot the **6 differences** from this picture of Chief Executive Jim Ripley and founding Chair Pat Fordham at Phoenix's first birthday?

If you think that you've spotted them all, please contact us by Friday 24 November for your chance to win a £25 prize.

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Seasonal opening hours

Our usual opening hours and telephone service will be reduced and we will only offer emergency repairs during the Christmas period. Our emergency out of hours phone service will operate throughout the period.

Friday 22 December	Normal hours. Emergency repairs only.
Saturday 23 – Tuesday 26 December	Closed
Wednesday 27 December	Open from 10am – 4pm
Thursday 28 December	Open from 10am – 4pm
Friday 29 December	Open from 10am-4pm
Saturday 30 December – Monday 1 January	Closed
Tuesday 2 January	Normal hours resume.



Cover Image – Mikey from the YMA, photographed by Chris O'Donovan for our 10 Years Together celebrations

Phoenix Community Housing Association (Bellingham and Downham Limited) is a Community Benefit Society, number 30057R. VAT number 162 4926 03. Homes and Communities Agency number L4505.

Phoenix residents

CHRISTMAS

COMMUNITY LINKS GATHERING

Saturday 2nd December
12pm - 3pm



Book your place by 29th November

Meet Santa & his reindeer

Children - come as a nativity character for a special performance

Christmas hamper & iPad to be won


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Community Links

The Green Man, 355 Bromley Road, SE6 2RP

☎ 0800 028 5700

✉ communitylinks@phoenixch.org.uk

🌐 www.phoenixch.org.uk

📱 @phoenixtogether

10
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TOGETHER


Visit and take a selfie at our pop up gallery celebrating 10 years of Phoenix



Round the houses



New faces at the top

There are two new members of our Board: Gail Nicholas and Donna Hughes. Gail, who many of you will know, has been a very active part of the community and involved with our Residents Communications Group and Phoenix Gateway Committee.

Donna, our new Leaseholder Member, said, "I relish the opportunity to deliver the underlying ethos of Phoenix Community Housing; the empowerment of our residents." Congratulations to the two of them, and we look forward to their contribution to making Phoenix even better.

And our thanks go to Pat Fordham MBE and Pat Crawford, who stepped down from the Board after nine years.

We build

There's a major shortage of affordable housing across London and we're playing our part to tackle this problem by building new homes.

Building works for 22 new affordable homes at Forster House, adjacent to our existing properties there, are now underway.

Construction firm Saltash were chosen as our contractor earlier this year and we expect that the new homes will be ready in 2019.

Works will also start soon on Woodbank Road, where we have appointed contractors Thomas Sinden to build a terrace of four houses. These will be available at an affordable rent and ready to move in to in 2019.

For more information on these and other planned developments, visit our website.



Join the Phoenix Gateway Committee

Applications are now open for residents interested in joining our Phoenix Gateway Committee. This is an opportunity for you to represent the views of tenants and leaseholders to our Board and to provide advice to Phoenix.

Any shareholding member can apply, and we'll provide training and support to successful applicants.

Applications close on 10 November, visit our website or contact us for more information.



I'll have an iPad to go...

Resident Barbara Robb (above left) was one of the first people to borrow an iPad as we launched our Takeaway Tech scheme in October.

We've 10 iPads to loan out for four weeks at a time as part of a scheme funded by the Mayor of London. Residents named the Phoenix part of the scheme 'Takeaway Tech' and everyone we've talked to seems enthusiastic about it.

If you like the idea of spending a month getting to grips with the latest in digital technology, register your interest by emailing info@phoenixch.org.uk or pop along to our Digital Drop-in, every Wednesday 10am-12noon at The Green Man.



Round the houses



Home Sweet Hazelhurst

Building works at our first residential development are now finished, and the first residents are preparing to move in to their new homes.

We've built sixty care homes at Hazelhurst Court, specially designed and built for older people. Building works began on site in 2015 and we expect residents to move in from late October.

The homes are modern and spacious, and the scheme includes a café, hair salon, landscaped gardens and a courtyard.

Care will be provided to residents with an identified care need by Notting Hill Pathways. We're pleased to report that the staff team will include a number of Phoenix residents, recruited at our job fair in July.



A brighter today

Our reception area has had a makeover with a new look to welcome you to The Green Man.

We've been consulting with residents to help us improve the use of the space in our reception area and the first phase is now complete with new bright furniture intended to create a welcoming feel for our visitors. There are also colour privacy pods and a new location for the reception desks.

Let us know what you think of the new arrangement, and any ideas you have to help us keep improving the space.

Workers in at the Inn

If you've walked past The Fellowship in the last few weeks, you will have noticed that our lottery funded restoration has begun.

Ash Contracting Ltd were appointed to do the work after a competitive tender process, and will spend around 12 months bringing one of our local landmarks back to its full glory.

In 2018, the Fellowship is due to reopen containing an 80-seat cinema, a pub, a theatre and performance venue, a microbrewery and a music hub. We'll keep you updated as works progress.

Focus on... rent arrears and eviction

How are we doing?

We explore a different area of our work and performance in each issue of Community News. This time we look at rent arrears, how they can threaten your tenancy and the help that's available if you're struggling to pay rent in advance.

What's happening?

Arrears build up when rent isn't paid in advance. Paying your rent in advance is part of your tenancy agreement with Phoenix. Even small amounts of rent arrears can become a big problem over time.

In a few cases, rent arrears can be the road to eviction, but there's a lot of help available from Phoenix before overdue rent becomes a threat to your tenancy.

If you only have a small amount of arrears, a small adjustment can clear them, and you won't need to worry any more. If that sounds like your situation, get in touch using the details below and clear them today - don't let your arrears grow.

There were 16 evictions due to rent arrears between 1 April 2016 and 31 March 2017, four less than the previous year but we want to see this go down even further. During the same period Phoenix helped residents obtain £602,000 in additional income.

In the last financial year current rent arrears of rent due was 4.83%, higher than most other London housing organisations with less than 15,000 homes.

What are we doing?

If you have rent arrears we will write to you and ask you to contact us. Please don't ignore this letter.

Our financial inclusion team is here to help any resident experiencing financial difficulty. The sooner you get in touch about problems that you are experiencing, the more effectively we can help.

We can help you to maximise your income and refer you to other organisations for specialist advice.

Tony Agienoji, from our Income Team, helped a resident to turn things around in just three months. Tony said: "They had £5,200 arrears on their account and we had an eviction date.

"The resident wasn't responding to telephone calls, letters or anything. They'd buried their head in the sand.

"We finally managed to get the tenant talking. I said, what is the problem? Their mental block had to do with anxiety and not being able to cope, so the letters piled up.

"I wrote an appeal letter on their behalf to housing benefit, and got them to bring all their documents into the office.

"I looked up some sections of the legislation to challenge and eventually they agreed to award their claim from the date it was previously cancelled.

"Then I realised that the resident tenant had been wrongly charged the spare room subsidy. We challenged it and it ended up clearing what was left of the arrears.

"If everything goes well, by next month the tenant will be a minimum of four weeks in credit on her account. We're going to talk once a week on the phone to see how things are going."

Don't struggle in silence

We don't want to evict anybody, but pretending that it can't happen to you is the most dangerous way to approach your tenancy. That's what's at stake if arrears build up.

If you need help, struggling in silence will only make things worse. Getting in touch means we can talk to you about the options available.



Don't ignore rent arrears. If you have a question about your rent, need help or want to clear arrears, contact info@phoenixch.org.uk or call 0800 0285 700



Christmas is coming... take a deep breath

Some of us can't wait to get the Christmas season underway, others groan when they see the tinsel out before we've even got to Bonfire Night. Whichever camp you fall into, there's often pressure to spend a lot, even when we don't have the cash to spare.

Fortunately, there are lots of terrific tips out there to help you find smarter ways to get to January with both your family and the bank manager happy.

You could start by:

- **drawing up a budget and list of everything you plan to buy beforehand**
- **thinking about making some of your own gifts**
- **maybe even giving pledges of your time.**



A good place for help is www.moneyadvice.service.org.uk

And remember, bills and regular payments, including your rent, don't disappear in December and January. Make sure you have the money to pay your rent on time and in advance. If for any reason you are worried about your rent or service charges, or you're having trouble keeping up with your payments, please contact us as soon as possible.

Cosy home, fuller wallet

As the nights start drawing in and the days get cooler, it's time to make sure you are getting the best energy deal to keep warm and snug this winter.

A few minutes on the internet searching for a cheaper energy tariff could save you hundreds of pounds. If you're on a low income or in receipt of benefits, you may be eligible for the Warm Homes Discount. A quick check with your energy supplier could put £140 of credit on your electricity account!

Do you want help in finding the best deal or seeing if you're eligible for Warm Homes Discount? Information regarding smart meters or debt advice concerning energy accounts or just general energy advice on keeping warm and spending less? Then drop into The Green Man, Phoenix's energy advice desk will be there to offer advice and assistance every Wednesday morning throughout winter.



Changes to your benefits

needn't be a "scary thing"



Universal Credit: we're here if you need help

By the end of 2018, Universal Credit is due to replace Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income-related Employment and Support Allowance, Income Support, Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit with a single monthly payment.

Anyone who makes a new benefit claim or has a significant change in their benefits, will go straight onto Universal Credit. The changes will mostly affect people of working age, but if you're part of a couple where only one of you is pension age, it might be worth checking.

We appreciate that you might be worried about these changes, so we're here to help. If you need any support or advice, please contact us.



My home

Trash talk

As questions at our AGM made clear, flytipping is one of your biggest concerns. Clearing it up also costs a lot of money that could otherwise be spent on improving our area - £160,000 last year.

To help deter flytippers, we've installed CCTV cameras across our area, so that we can successfully prosecute anyone spotted illegally dumping rubbish. But to do this, we need you to report flytipping incidents as soon as possible, and tell us if you know of any individuals or companies who are regularly flytipping in the area.

You can report incidents by calling 0800 0285 700, or take a picture of the rubbish and email it to us with the exact location.

If the flytipping is on the pavement of a main road or not on Phoenix property, please report it to Lewisham council through their website, www.lewisham.gov.uk.



AD it up

We've got a new contractor, AD Construction Group, working on some of our homes until March 2018. They will be doing work inside and outside properties to bring them up to Decent Homes standard. If they are due to work on your home, you should already have received a letter.

Don't forget...

Before letting anyone into your home, carefully check their ID. We will let you know if we are sending any non-Phoenix operatives to your home. If you are in the slightest bit of doubt, call us on 0800 0285 700.



If you have any parking issues on public highways, rather than on our estates, please contact Lewisham Council on 020 8787 5397.



Drive on

We're rolling out a new parking management system across the Phoenix area from December.

We hope that the new parking system will make it easier for residents and their visitors to park close to home. It has been designed based on resident feedback and a pilot scheme in 2016.

The roll out will begin in December, and we will write to residents with more information as the scheme reaches their area. We will begin at Falkland House, Millcroft House, Langthorne Court, Melfield Gardens, Randisbourne Gardens and St Amunds Close and will prioritise those hot spots and estates where residents have told us parking is difficult.

Two resident parking permits will be provided free of charge to each household for taxed and registered vehicles. Visitor permits will be available for a small charge. Where additional permits are required, we will review applications on a case by case basis.

The parking management system will be managed by Wing parking, and they will issue parking charges when a valid permit is not displayed.

The new plans will apply to land and parking areas managed by Phoenix, and not the public highway which is managed by Lewisham Council.



Ch Ch Changes

We've made changes to how we deliver our grounds maintenance services. From 1 December, residents will receive services from our new in house estates team, rather than a contractor.

This will help to deliver a more flexible and quality service to residents, while delivering value for money.



Say hello to our new Home Surveyor

We've listened to your feedback on our stock condition survey process and because of this we are making some changes.

When our contract with Baily Garner ends, we are bringing this service back in-house. From 1 December 2017, we will have a new Home Surveyor, Helen Shepherd. Helen will contact you when your property is due for a survey and will come to your home to carry this out.



Don't chance it - test your heating and hot water

We're asking all Phoenix residents to test their heating and hot water so that we can spot and fix any problems before the weather turns colder.

You should:

- turn on your heating for at least 30 minutes
- turn on all radiators and check that they're heating up
- check that none of your visible pipes are leaking
- run your hot water and check that it heats up and stays hot, not changing from hot to cold.

If these checks give you any concerns, please report them straight away by calling Phoenix Repairs Service on 0800 028 5700 so we can arrange for an engineer to visit your home.

Don't chance it – make sure your heating and hot water are working before you need them most.



If you'd like to volunteer to help other residents to get to grips with the digital world, please get in touch with us.

My Phoenix – Tracy Blundell

We feature a different Phoenix resident in each issue of Community News. Tracy's currently doing work experience with our Community Regeneration team. After completing a European Computer Driving Licence course with us, she's volunteered at our Digital Drop-in and has helped to support residents who've had changes in their housing benefits.



Tracy facing our questions

How long have you been a Phoenix resident?

I lived around here since before Phoenix started. I came here in 1998, so that's 19 years. I grew up in Kidbrooke, then my mum moved to Catford, but she was having problems in the house that she was in – it was private – so I got this place, and she moved elsewhere.

What changes have you seen?

A lot, a lot. They've done the decent housing, so kitchens and bathrooms have been decorated and fitted – we had all that done, and I'm happy with it. Estate-wise, there's been a lot of changes - on the corners near where I live they've put in those little stones and plants. It's better than it was before.

What's the best thing about living in the Phoenix area?

They provide a lot around the area,



Tracy with our residents and staff celebrating a win at the 2017 Tpas Awards

so you get out and you meet new people and make new friends. Phoenix do a lot for the community and for the residents. I do voluntary work in The Green Man, I enjoy coming here. If I had the choice to live anywhere, I wouldn't move out of the area, I wouldn't move at all.

What would you change?

I don't think I'd want anything to change... Other than the road up where I live, it's just a complete nightmare. The road itself is lovely, but now it's cars everywhere and vans. That's the only thing that puts me off the area, but it's nothing to do with Phoenix.

I can't think of anything about Phoenix I would change, to be honest, I think they've done everything they could do. The only

thing, maybe, is a bit more for the kids, like youth clubs or something like that, but I wouldn't change anything they've already done.

And we've got the park, Bellingham Green. I think maybe there should be a bit more for the older kids to do in the park.

What are your hopes for the future?

Just for Phoenix to carry on with what they are doing, and hopefully new stuff will come out at the end.

Phoenix provide a lot regarding job searches and apprenticeships. I'd like, in time, to get a job working for Phoenix – because I do voluntary work here at the moment and really enjoy it, so hopefully one day I can find a job here.

Find out about our training programmes and work experience opportunities by visiting our website



This December we'll be celebrating Phoenix's first decade as London's first resident owned and led organisation.



Phoenix was created by residents, for residents and we've come a long way since we started.

We're proud of what's been achieved since tenants voted to transfer ownership of their homes from Lewisham Council to Phoenix in 2007, and we want to celebrate everyone who has played a part in our story so far.

To mark our birthday, we've worked

with residents to create a special photographic exhibition that explores our journey and future plans.

The exhibition will be open on weekdays at The Green Man from Friday 17 November to Friday 8 December and on Saturday 2 December as part of our Winter Community Links.

We hope to see you there!

10 YEARS TOGETHER



We'd love it if you could share any pictures of your homes or the community in the years since 2007. Our celebrations are all about you, so let's see some of the people and times that have made Phoenix special.



Noticeboard



Help raise money for guide dogs

Resident Kim says: Would you like to volunteer for a good cause? Guide Dogs Bromley needs people to help raise money to support the vital services that they provide. For more information, go to guidedogs.org.uk/supportus/volunteering or email infoBromleyGuideDogs@mail.com.

The Green Man Christmas panto

Goldilocks and the Three Bears
Friday December 15, 6.30pm
Tickets £6 per person in advance only

For tickets and info, call 020 3 121 0221 or 0210

BECK BEAT POETRY

Resident Deidre says: We are a small eclectic group of poets and we would like to enlarge the group. While waiting for the Fellowship Inn to give our voices a local sound, why not on the 1st Friday of every month, come to St. Georges Church Hall, Studio floor 1, 7 Albermarle Road, BR3 5HZ. Come and pay £1.00 to either listen or put your name in the hat. All welcome.



Fun at The Fellowship

There are lots of arts and heritage activities for everyone to get involved with at The Fellowship Inn, thanks to the Heritage Lottery Fund.

For regular updates on all the exciting events and activities, join our Fellowship mailing list online or follow us on Twitter.

Become a digital heritage hero

Keen to explore your family history but not sure where to start? We want to support digital beginners to learn how to use the internet to research and discover your family tree.

We're looking for volunteers to

become digital heritage heroes. We'll train you in basic online family history research and support you to share these skills with others.

The project will begin in January 2018, contact the Fellowship team for more information and to apply.

Go behind the scenes

As part of our project, The Working Party are making a film about Bellingham. If you're an aspiring film-maker or would just like to see how the project works, please get in touch. There are lots of opportunities for residents to get involved!

Stay in touch



By phone: 0800 0285 700 from 8am-5pm, Monday to Friday (and for emergency calls at all other times)

Please note: every other Tuesday, 2-3pm, we have an emergency phone service only as a result of staff training.



Email: info@phoenixch.org.uk



Web: www.phoenixch.org.uk



Twitter: @phoenixtogether @greenmanhub



YouTube: www.youtube.com/phoenixtogether



Visit: The Green Man, 355 Bromley Road, SE6 2RP

Please see Page 2 for Seasonal opening hours