

November 2015 • Issue 33

A newsletter by residents for residents



Phoenix

Our community in our hands

community news



Save the date Visit our winter wonderland on 12 December! [Page 3](#)

Let's talk! We want your views on building a better future [Page 6](#)

Roots into Work Get help and advice to grow your career [Page 10](#)



Welcome...

Welcome to Community News

Thank you for picking up the November issue of Community News. We hope you enjoy your read!

Things have been very busy recently, with lots of events taking place in the past few months and the release of our 2014/15 Annual Report. For this year's interactive digital report, we're asking you to share places that are important to you. Let's put Bellingham, Downham and Whitefoot on the map! Visit www.report.phoenixch.org.uk and share your favourite places.

The winter Community Links gathering is taking place in December. Will you be there? Kids will have the chance to meet Santa and you'll get the chance to have your say on Phoenix's future plans.

We met many people at the AGM who said they wanted to play a part in Phoenix. There are so many ways to do this, whether it's joining our communication group, scrutiny panel or policy working group. What are you waiting for? Get in touch with us today and get involved!

Best wishes, from the Residents Communication Group

Contents

- 3 Community Gathering**
- 4+5 Round the houses**
- 6+7 Focus on...
Our corporate plan**
- 8 My home**
- 9 My Phoenix**
- 10 My neighbourhood**
- 11 Money matters**
- 12 Noticeboard**

WIN!

'Spot yourself!'

Do you know this chirpy chap? He's just won a £25 shopping voucher!

If you're his parent or guardian please get in touch.

For more images of all our events please visit our website.



How to keep in touch



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

Please note: it is now free to call 0800 numbers from both landlines and mobiles. Please do not use our old 0844 number as you may be charged.



Email: correspondence@phoenixch.org.uk



Web: www.phoenixch.org.uk • www.thegreenman.com



Twitter: @phoenixtogether @greenmanhub for all the latest news and opportunities



Facebook: www.facebook.com/TheGreenManSE6



www.flickr.com/phoenixch



Youtube: www.youtube.com/phoenixtogether



Visit: by appointment from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday at The Green Man, 355 Bromley Road, SE6 2RP

Staff training: emergency phone service only, 2-3pm every other Tuesday

Please note, we will be closed from midday on Christmas Eve until Tuesday 29 December and on New Year's Day. An emergency phone service will operate during on these days.



Phoenix Community Housing Association (Bellingham and Downham Limited) is a Community Benefit Society, number IP30057R. VAT number 162 4926 03. Homes and Communities Agency number L4505.

Cover: Residents Margaret McCarthy and Sheila Pinder at our 2015 AGM in September.



Winter Fun



Winter Wonderland

Enter a winter wonderland at December's Community Links gathering.

Join us at The Green Man on Saturday 12 December from 12pm-3pm for loads of festive fun!

You'll be transported to Lapland, get the chance to meet real-life reindeer, feast on Christmas treats and visit Santa's grotto. Children under ten will receive a free present.

We've also got some really important things to talk to you about. The government is making some changes that could affect the services we offer you.

We'd like to hear your thoughts on our future plans and what you think we need to prioritise. For more information see page 6 and look out for your Winter Community Links Gathering invitation.



3 iPad Minis to be won!

RSVP - Book your spot early to avoid disappointment!

We're really looking forward to it - see you soon!





Round the houses



Space Invaders descend on Phoenix

In 2014-15 Phoenix responded to 7,167 fly-tipping reports, costing us £118,000

Dozens of young people worked throughout the summer holidays to revamp underused green spaces across our area. By working with local people to create spaces that we can all use and feel proud of, we hope to deter fly-tipping and anti-social behaviour.

Space Invaders, a joint project between Phoenix and adventure learning charity Wide Horizons, received £50,000 funding from the Big Lottery Fund last November. Following pop-up consultations, young people worked with design agency Make:Good to come up with designs for each of the sites based on the ideas that residents had shared.

We're really impressed with the finished results which include bug hotels, new planting and seating, some funky patterns and even a gallery space. What do you think?



Makeover mission: Complete

Residents, staff and our contractors, Mulalley, came together this autumn to celebrate the grand opening of a new and improved communal garden and outdoor space at Dunfield Gardens.

The makeover is part of a new environmental scheme at Phoenix to create more attractive and safer neighbourhoods for residents to enjoy.

The space has been transformed and features new play equipment, a unique seating area and a safer road layout.

Resident Elaine Jones said "I can't wait to get out there and start enjoying it!"



Gardeners grow for gold

Awards were dished out to green-fingered winners at Farmstead Road Community Gardens.

Phoenix in Bloom, now in its fifth year, celebrates all the hard work that our residents put into making their homes look blooming brilliant.

More residents than ever before entered this year's competition. Our judges had to make lots of close calls!

Well done to everyone who took part and to residents on our judging

panel who volunteered their time.

Maria Ali, one of the winners, said "Phoenix in Bloom is about ordinary people who love gardening. It's lovely that Phoenix highlights and celebrates these kind of things."

Winners and runners up in the six categories received garden centre vouchers and certificates during the ceremony.

You can find the full list of winners on our website.



Round the houses

Summer Fun success

Hundreds of children and families came to our Summer Fun events and had the chance to build and play a community-inspired crazy golf course, make their own ice-cream, meet some creepy crawlies and become resident-DJs on our pedal-powered boombox.

Resident Jade Jones said "It's great that Phoenix put things on like Summer Fun. And even better that they're all free!"

Thank you to all who came. We had a fab time and we hope you did too!



Annual General Meeting



It was brilliant to see over 120 share-holding residents at our 2015 AGM.

We were also pleased to welcome Chief Executive of the Chartered Institute of Housing, Terri Alafat, to our AGM this year. She was clearly taken by our resident-led model, calling us 'special' on many occasions! Residents listened as she spoke about

the changing political landscape and the upcoming challenges and opportunities within UK housing.

At the AGM residents voted on actions for the coming year. As a resident-led housing association, events like this give you the chance to be heard and steer Phoenix. We need you and really appreciate all you have to say!

Fellowship Inn update

More than 1,300 people took part in our public consultation on The Fellowship Inn. We set up shop in Bellingham, made early starts to catch commuters at local train stations and popped up at community gatherings. Altogether 1,321 people gave their views on the project and what they'd like to see happen in the future.

Our plans include a cinema, live venue and much more. We've been astounded by the reaction and want to say thank you to everyone who took part!



- • • • • **YOUNG PERSON?**
- • • • • Are you fed up with what people think you should like and be doing?
- • • • • Do you think you could improve the community for you and your friends?

Be heard! We are setting up a youth agency to create and deliver exciting new projects in the area. If you want to be a part of it please get in touch.



The new government's summer budget in July 2015 will bring Phoenix quite a few changes.

The good news for tenants is that over the next four years you'll benefit from a 1% year on year reduction in rent.

For us at Phoenix, the news about reduced rent was completely unexpected. The drop in our yearly rental income will amount to just over £4million by 2020, which means we'll need to reconsider some things that we had planned for in the future.

But, first things first, let's just clarify, we are not in any financial difficulty and by putting the necessary plans in place now, we'll be financially sound for years to come.

You may remember in 2013, when we moved to The Green Man, we all came up with a new vision:

“To work together to build a better future for our Phoenix Community”

The Board also set four strategic priorities:

1. Resident leadership and ownership
2. People and services
3. Homes and environments – opportunities for local people
4. Sustainability – doing the best with what we've got

Realistically, because of this reduction in rent and government

plans to extend right to buy, we are not going to be able to achieve everything we originally set out to. Because of this we believe it's more important than ever before for us to embrace our gateway model and work together to plan where we go from here.

What do you think could be done differently?

Here are some money-saving and income-generating ideas that we've had:

- Send less by post and email information to residents instead
- Re-tender services to get better value for money
- Raise more money for community events through external sponsorship
- Market our Phoenix Repairs Service to other landlords
- Spend less on decorating homes when they are empty and provide new tenants with decorating vouchers instead

- Build homes for outright sale or homeownership to fund homes for rent
- Review and consult with residents on the scope of environmental works

So, what do you think?

Are these ideas any good?

Got something we've not thought of?

Please let us know! We'll be holding sessions at our Winter Community Links Gathering on Saturday 12 December for you to find out more and have your say.

At the event we'll also be on hand to discuss any concerns you have about your household and new government policies.

We'll also be sharing the results from our recent resident satisfaction survey at the event.



Over 1,000 tenants and leaseholders completed our recent resident satisfaction survey - thank you!



Let's talk

Government plans that you can come and talk to us about:

- The reduction of the household benefit cap from £26,000 to £23,000 for people living in London.
- The freezing of working-age benefits (including tax credits and local housing allowance) for the next 4 years.
- How households earning over £40,000 in London may be required to pay market rate rents.
- Those aged 18-24 on Universal Credit will have to apply for an apprenticeship, gain work-based skills or go on a work placement 6 months after the start of their claim.

We are here to help you. Please talk to us if you have any concerns on any of the things discussed here or other money-related queries.



Over the next year we'll need to make £573,000 of savings.

This is the same as:

½ of what we spend on empty properties each year

Or

All that we spend on abandoned vehicles, fly-tipping and training



Fire Safety when celebrating

With winter on the way it can only mean one thing – party time!
And whether it's fireworks or fairy lights, we want you to stay safe.

Did you know?

- Sparklers get five times hotter than cooking oil
- A firework can reach speeds of 150mph

Top tips when using fireworks

- Never go back to a lit firework – even if it hasn't gone off, it could still explode
- Never throw fireworks or put them in your pocket
- Always keep a bucket of water nearby
- Supervise children at all times
- Always read the instructions (with a torch, never a naked flame)

Fairy lights, candles and decorations may look pretty but they come with risks.

Did you know?

- 1,900 accidental fires in the home are started every year in the UK from candles

Stay safe

- Unplug fairy lights when you leave the house or go to bed
- Check fairy lights are in good working order and replace any bulbs that blow
- Keep candles well away from Christmas trees, greeting cards and decorations.

You've got mail



You may have spotted a new face hand-delivering your gas safety appointment letters. Karen, a Phoenix resident, has set up a social enterprise called Moose Mail. We hope using this for some deliveries will save Phoenix thousands of pounds each year in postage costs!

We're always looking for ways to improve value for money. If you have a suggestion, please get in touch.

Pet Corner

Most owners assume their pet will never go missing.

An average of six stray dogs come through Battersea Dogs & Cats Home's doors every day. Identification is extremely important for dogs and it is a legal requirement that they wear a collar and identity disc.

Microchipping is an effective and widely recognised method of permanent identification and will be a legal requirement from April 2016. Battersea also microchips all its dogs before they go to new

homes. It's important to keep your details updated with your microchip provider, so you can still be contacted should you move house or change telephone numbers.

To reduce the risk of a lost pooch never leave your pet tied up outside a shop alone as they may be taken for a lost dog, or stolen. And always ensure your dog's vaccinations are up to date before allowing them outside.

FREE dog chipping event

Hey, dog owner! Get your pooch chipped for FREE at Bellingham Green on Saturday 7 November 11am-3pm.





My Phoenix – Nell Shepherd

Nell Shepherd has lived in the Phoenix area for over 70 years. During that time she has seen many changes to the neighbourhood.

How long have you been a Phoenix resident?

I've lived in the area for years. I've been in my current flat for 24 years. We didn't come from far - before that me and my husband lived above in the top floor flat! I don't have a big family but my niece comes round to visit every week, which is nice.

What are the main changes you've seen?

I've seen many changes around this way. There are plenty of shops on Downham Way, but they've changed over the years. The launderette's gone and there's the new Co-op. There used to be lots of houses on that site, but unfortunately they got destroyed in the war.

The Downham Tavern has been there for a long time, the 30s I think, but it's quite different now. The old building was lovely and very big, completely different from what it is now. It had a dance hall, beautiful lounge rooms and the longest bar in Britain – and my dad helped to build it!

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

The community. I really like the Downham area, it's my home.

I have lots of lovely memories of living here with my husband and tending to our big garden. He loved gardening. We were in it all the time - it was beautiful!



The original Downham Tavern.

What would you change?

I don't get out as much as I used to. It would be nice to see more people and have more things closer to home that I can get involved in.

But all in all, I like where I live. I don't see much need for change.

What are your hopes for the future?

I hope the children's events that Phoenix puts on each year continue on the green outside my house. I like getting to see what's going on.

Mainly, I hope that the community spirit continues to go from strength to strength.



Roots into Work – Support and advice to help you grow

Roots into Work is Phoenix's bespoke work and training programme. We can offer one-to-one advice to help you find a job that is right for you.

Whether you are unemployed or looking for a change, we can help you to enhance your skills and build your CV. Roots into Work will support you to grow your confidence, experience and skills.

Our services include:

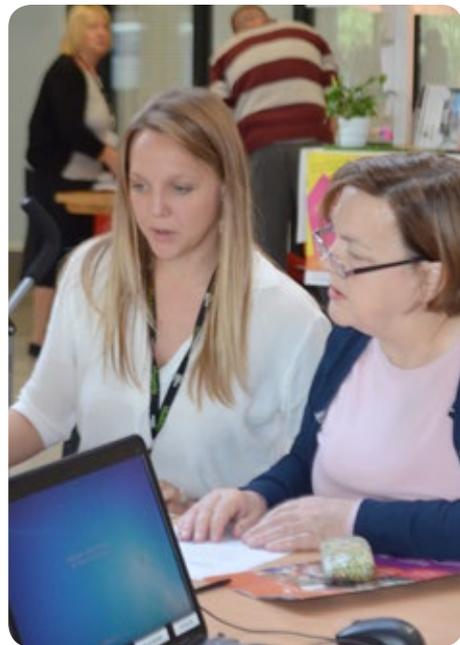
One-to-one advice: Know where you want to be, just not quite sure how to get there? At these meetings we'll listen to your goals and work with you to develop your career.

We can help you get your CV up to scratch and arrange for suitable training and work placements to build your experience.

Job Club: Our weekly Job Club is friendly and informal. You'll be able to access the internet for free to search for jobs, and we can assist you to complete online application forms.

The Job Club's relaxed drop-in sessions take place every Tuesday at The Green Man, between 10am and 2pm.

If you think you'd benefit from this programme, please get in touch. You can call us or email rootsintowork@phoenixch.org.uk



Marvey's story

After attending a training course with our partners Building Lives, Bellingham resident Marvey Emmanuel successfully applied for a Repairs Apprentice role here at Phoenix.

Here's his story:

"I'd been working night shifts in retail and had also done a bit of part-time labouring when I saw an advert for the Building Lives Academy. I saw it as a chance to learn a trade and hopefully get onto a work placement.

"It was great experience, I got the opportunity to work on a proper construction site and earn a multi-skills qualification at the same time. The advisers were always on

hand and gave me lots of good advice. They also put me in touch with Phoenix and I joined the Roots into Work programme.

"I got loads of CV and interview tips and was encouraged and supported to apply for a Phoenix Repairs Service Apprenticeship role – which I got!

"I've learnt so much in such a short amount of time and am still developing. I'd strongly advise people to get involved in the great schemes that are on offer within the community. The Building Lives Academy name says it all – it builds lives, and mine is getting better each day!"



The Building Lives Academy is a training centre dedicated to providing Lewisham residents with a route into construction. We work with Building Lives and Lewisham Council to offer multi-skilled qualifications to around 150 Lewisham residents each year.



Money matters

Struggling to heat your home?

The Warm Homes Discount scheme offers a one off payment of £140 towards electricity bills. Contact your energy supplier to see if you qualify.

Pensioners receiving Guarantee Pension Credit will already get this discount.

Our two cents when it comes to rent this Christmas



Christmas may be a time for giving, but don't go for broke. It's easy to feel pressurised into spending money that you don't have. You may even be tempted to spend your rent money on the festivities. Don't put your home at risk – make sure you prioritise your rent.

Here's how to be savvy this holiday season and avoid a debt hangover in the New Year.

1. Plan how much you can spend and stick to your budget.

- Work out how much you really can afford. If it's not

enough for all the presents you want to buy, look for cheaper alternatives or consider buying fewer gifts.

2. Shop online to find the best deals

- There are loads of price comparison websites that you can use to compare prices and make sure you get the best deal. Keep an eye out for online discount codes too, which could save you even more money.

3. Get creative and make your own presents, gift wrap and cards!

- Trust us, just Google 'make your own...' and you'll be presented with hundreds of cheap and easy ideas.

Benefit changes – what's happening and when?

There are more changes on the way to the benefits system. What are they and how do they affect you?

'Universal Credit' is being rolled out by the government nationwide. A range of benefits will now be combined into a single 'universal credit' payment.

The benefits included are:

- Jobseeker's Allowance
- Housing Benefit
- Working Tax Credit
- Child Tax Credit
- Employment and Support Allowance
- Income Support



We expect that more than 2,000 residents will be affected in some way by the full roll-out of Universal Credit. Keep a look-out for more information.

What you need to do

Universal credit is being introduced later this year in Lewisham - but to start with this will only be for new benefit claimants.

If you are already claiming benefits, then you don't need to take any action at this stage.

Please note, however, that you must claim universal credit online.

If you require any support when it comes to getting online please get in touch.

Find out more

We'll be updating residents with further changes to benefits and how this may have an impact on your household in future editions of Community News and on our website.

There is also lots of helpful information about benefits on the government website, www.gov.uk

Credit's due

Many social housing tenants find it hard to get affordable credit such as loans, bank accounts or credit cards because they don't have a good credit history. A credit file is a personal history of the credit that an individual has had.

We think this is unfair and believe that tenants should get recognition for paying rent on time, just as homeowners do for paying their mortgage.

Because of this we are working together with the Big Issue Invest and the UK's largest credit rating company Experian to bring you a new scheme that will allow you to build your credit history.

By sharing your rent payments with Experian each month, not only will your credit score grow, but it will also help to prove your identity, making it easier for you to open or change bank accounts, shop online, receive better mobile phone rates, gas and electricity rates or obtain cheaper credit.

We will be writing to tenants shortly about the scheme. If you would like to opt out please let us know.



Noticeboard

Downham Celebrates returns to the Downham Health & Leisure Centre, Moorside Road, BR1 5EP

Saturday 12 December, 11am -4pm

Christmas stalls and lots of free activities on offer!

0800 & 0808 numbers are now free from a mobile phone! Please don't use our old 0844... number - you will be charged!

FREE Phoenix calendar

Request your FREE Phoenix calendar! The Resident Communications Group have designed a smashing community calendar featuring memorable moments from the year gone by.

The calendar will be available from December. Contact us or email communications@phoenixch.org.uk to request your FREE copy!

Spring Wedding Fair

Getting hitched?

More details on The Green Man's spring wedding fair coming soon!



Downham & Whitefoot Community Choir

The choir is open to anyone who enjoys singing - no need to audition!

(Tuesdays) at St Marks Church, Downham, 6-7pm
(Saturdays) at Wesley Halls, 11.30am -12.30pm

Contact Hannah on 079 8542 0984 for more details.



What's on at The Green Man

Mondays

10am – 2pm

Green Man Monday market

12pm - 1pm

60+ exercise class

Contact Christina at 60UP on 020 3667 3704

4pm -7.15pm

Young People's Theatre

For more info call Greenwich and Lewisham Young People's Theatre on 020 8854 1316

Tuesdays

10am - 11am

Free Fitness class – general fitness for all ages and abilities

For more info call Terry on 07732 098285

10am -2pm

Free Phoenix Job Club

Thursdays

2pm – 4pm

Free Bingo in the barn

6.30pm – 8pm

Beginners Tai Chi sessions.

For more info call Matt on 07989 209558

Fridays

12pm – 1pm

Fab Fridays – 60+ social and recreational group.

Contact Christina at 60UP on 020 3667 3704

Top of the class

Interested in social housing? Want to get more involved in Phoenix and how we are run? Spaces for the Phoenix Academy 2016 are now open. If you'd like to get involved, please get in touch!

23 residents graduated in 2015 and 23 in 2014. Many graduates went on to get more involved in Phoenix, started volunteering and were able to improve their CV's.



CHRISTMAS MARKET at The Green Man

Pop on down to our Everything Festive Christmas Market extravaganza!

Saturday 28 November 9am – 2pm

Lots of goodies on offer. Stalls are available for £5 – contact Keren on 020 3121 0210 if you'd like to take part.