Enter our competition on page 15

Water Safety information on page 12

We welcome our new CEO on page 5
Welcome to Saffron News

We say goodbye to Yvonne Arrowsmith and welcome James Francis as our new CEO.

We spend a day in the life of one of our Multi-Trade Operatives.

Welcome to our spring issue of Saffron News, we hope you enjoyed the last magazine and the new look that was introduced. We will continue to create a magazine that is interactive and informative for you.

This will be my last article for Saffron News, as I hand over the reins.

We welcome our new CEO James Francis on page 5. Hear from him and find out what his thoughts are as he gets ready to take on his new role as CEO.

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Find out more information about the Community Alarm Service (lifeline) we provide.

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On pages 8-9 we spend a day in the life of one of our operatives. We followed them around, asked questions and saw what a typical Saffron day is for them.

And finally on page 15 we have our wordsearch competition for you, with another chance for you to win some Love2Shop vouchers. Thank you to everyone that took part in the last competition we had a lot of entries so good luck for this time round.

Enjoy your read and have a lovely Easter.

Yvonne Arrowsmith
Chief Executive Officer
So it’s almost time for me to sign off as Interim CEO at Saffron. I will have been here 10 months when I leave and wanted to tell you about the exciting things we have been doing in that time. When I arrived, Saffron had been through a difficult time, with a lot of changes at leadership and no clear vision of what we wanted to do.

Over the past 10 months we have agreed a new corporate strategy which you can read on our website, which recommits us to Norfolk and Suffolk. It sets clear targets for us to improve our services to you over the next 3 years, to reduce our costs and to make sure that you live in homes that you can be proud of.

We have welcomed Hannah Harvey as our new Executive Director of Operations, she is responsible for our housing services, our repairs and maintenance service, customer contact and our supported housing.

And now we are ready to welcome James Francis as the permanent CEO. James will bring experience and energy to the role and I am sure will be getting out and about to meet as many of you as possible in his first few months.

So as I bid farewell, I want to wish Saffron, its staff and customers all the best for the future. Saffron is a good organisation that is well on its way to becoming a great organisation.

James tell us a little bit about your career background

Fruit was a common theme in my early experiences of work. I had jobs sorting and packing apples in a factory on the Norfolk / Suffolk border and keeping fruit and vegetable shelves well stocked in a local supermarket. This was all before spending eight years in accountancy. Accountancy taught me a lot about business, customer service and being accountable and I wanted to find a way of using these skills for a purpose that I believed in. That is when I joined the social housing sector.

I have spent the last thirteen years helping social housing organisations provide the best possible homes and services and reach as many people in housing need as possible. I will join Saffron from Southern Housing Group, where I am a Board member and look after Finance, IT, HR and Governance.

What do you see as your biggest challenge in the role?

Meeting the demand for the homes and services we provide. It’s a nice challenge to have and it is so important that our focus on existing homes and services is not compromised to achieve it.

What would be one pledge you would like to tell our tenants?

I am very proud to have been asked by the Board to lead Saffron forward. I will be visible, positive and inclusive in providing you with the best possible homes and services.

What are your thoughts of Saffron so far?

I take up the role on 13th May so it’s early days. My sense is that we are at base camp. The organisation has worked really hard to reach this point and create a clear route forward – one which will be both challenging and rewarding. Staff have been friendly and welcoming and the approach to customer involvement that was set out in the last issue of this magazine is very encouraging.

What do you hope to achieve?

Every single year East Anglia generates thousands more households for whom running a warm and secure home is simply unaffordable. I want Saffron to play a major part in alleviating this housing need and – in doing so – create a fairer society.
HouseMark is one of the largest membership organisations in the UK for social landlords. They offer solutions and opportunities for us to improve our performance. HouseMark provides a framework for a customer perception survey known as the STAR (Survey of Tenants and Residents) survey, a widely used tool by many housing associations.

The survey consists of a series of questions which tell us how satisfied customers are with our services and enables us to compare ourselves with other housing associations too. This helps us to identify areas where we may need to make improvements.

Previously we have commissioned a company to carry out monthly STAR surveys, by contacting a randomly selected sample of customers over the phone, but from this year we will have a dedicated team carrying these out on an annual basis. As well as completing the surveys over the phone we are also looking to include other methods too, such as online. We will be looking to obtain a similar number of surveys but in a much shorter timeframe.

The core questions relate to satisfaction with:
- Saffron’s services
- The quality of your home
- Your neighbourhood
- Your rent being value for money
- Your service charges being value for money
- The repairs to your home
- How well we listen and act on your views

Please help us by answering the STAR survey, by doing so it gives us real insight into how satisfied you are and what really matters to you.

We welcome your ideas about how Saffron could make improvements to services.

Saffron Housing Trust – Board Vacancy

Saffron is managed by a Board of 12 non-executive directors and three of these are nominated by Customer Voice. The Board’s job is to provide leadership to shape the management of Saffron and the services provided. The Board is responsible for setting Saffron’s policies and objectives and making sure the Trust’s performance meets their expectations.

People with experience of Saffron’s services are a vital part of the Board. Customers bring personal experience and a different pair of eyes to decisions the Board takes. This year, the Board has one vacancy for a member nominated by Customer Voice.

Don’t worry if you haven’t been on a Board before, full training and support is given. What is more important, is a passion to make Saffron a better business delivering high-quality services to all of its customers.

The Customer Voice Group, which nominates people with experience of Saffron’s services to the Board, is holding an Open Evening on 20th May 2019, so customers interested in becoming a Board Member can find out more about what it takes.

So if you would like to make a difference and help shape Saffron’s future, why not come along?

If you wish to know more or would like to come along to the Open Evening, please email getinvolved@saffronhousing.co.uk, call 01508 532032 or write to the Customer Involvement Manager.

Customer Voice

We are a new group of dedicated volunteers that have been put together by Saffron to drive improvements to their services.

We went through a rigorous interview process and Saffron have successfully recruited Lauren, Penny, Neil, Jonathan, Fiona and Jill.

We have attended various inductions to gain an insight and understanding of Saffron’s operational areas.

As a group we will be looking at Saffron’s performance and targets for the year ahead, as well as forming an annual consultation plan.

Going forward we will be calling upon some of Saffron’s customers to work with us to help and promote good practice as well as recommending necessary changes to the board. This is known as “Task and Finish Groups”.

We look forward to working in partnership with Saffron and its customers, rebuilding a trusting and positive relationship for all involved.
1. How long have you worked for Saffron?
I have worked for Saffron for 7 1/2 years. I started with work experience when I was still at school, then went on to achieve my Level 2 in plumbing at City College. I spent the next 2 years as a multi-skilled operative apprentice at Saffron, in which I achieved apprentice of the year. I then went on to achieve my NVQ in domestic plumbing and heating and have been working as a fully qualified operative for 4 years now.

2. How many operatives does Saffron have?
We have 11 Multi-Trade, 9 Electricians, 5 Carpenters, 9 Heating Engineers, 7 Grounds Maintenance Operatives, 7 Maintenance Builders, 4 Plumbers, 5 Painters, 1 Caretaker and 5 Apprentices.

3. Would you recommend an apprenticeship?
Yes absolutely it is a great way to learn on the job and get paid as well.

4. What do you do in your role?
I currently work as part of the voids team repairing empty properties back into a liveable standard, so that can be anything from replacing bathrooms to renewing doors to replacing windows.

A void property is a property that could either be awaiting a new tenant to move in or before a tenant moves in it might need some work doing to it.

5. Do you enjoy your role?
I do really enjoy my role as every day is something different and presents new challenges.

6. Have you always worked in the voids team?
I used to work on day to day repairs for tenants but for the last 2 1/2 years I have worked on void properties.

7. The operatives take it in turns to be on call, how does on call work?
We have an on call rota. You can get called out at any time of the night and it can vary from non-stop call outs to hardly anything throughout the night.

8. Do you have any top tips for tenants?
Do not leave it too late to report repairs to us. For example a dripping tap if reported as soon as possible, would be a simple quick fix but, if left, might need further work and parts replaced. So making sure you report the repair quickly would benefit the tenant and us.

9. Do you think Saffron is a good place to work?
Yes it’s a great environment to work in and you get great benefits as well like pension and health care so I would always recommend working here. Everyone pulls together as a team, and we are like one big family.
Mr Curtis, a retired Computing Engineer enjoys socialising and game shows. He has had a Lifeline Alarm Button for 2 ½ years. A bout of vertigo prompted him to get a Lifeline as he became unsteady on his feet and is prone to a fall.

How the Contact Care Lifeline Alarm works:

When you push the red button, it sends a radio signal to the Lifeline that is attached to the telephone line, the call goes through to the Control Centre where your details will appear on their screens. The experienced call handler will speak to you, through the Lifeline, to find out what has happened and what help you need. If you do not respond to them they will call you back on your telephone, if this is not answered the call handler will call your nominated contacts or the emergency services, depending on the circumstances.

Even if you’re unable to speak to them, because they know who you are, they can still call your contacts and ask them to check you’re safe. They’ll never leave a call unanswered.

If you, a family member or friend would benefit from having a Lifeline just give us a call on our Freephone telephone number 0800 917 4680 and we will answer any questions you have and get the installation booked in.

The alarm will cost £3.70 per week or £16.03 (excluding VAT) per month and an installation charge of £30

You will need a phone socket in the vicinity of an electricity socket (not across a hallway or doorway from each other). We also need details of at least two emergency contacts. These may be neighbours, friends or relatives but they must live locally and have a key to your home (or your key safe code).

Testimonial

“I have pressed my Lifeline Alarm Button a number of times during the day and night, after becoming unwell and falling. The people at the call centre are really nice and have always got me the help I needed. Without them I don’t know how I would have got up. It’s really reassuring knowing they are there.”

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He has had a Lifeline Alarm Button for 2 ½ years. A bout of vertigo prompted him to get a Lifeline as he became unsteady on his feet and is prone to a fall.
Who’s entitled to buy their property under the right to buy?

Only former tenants of South Norfolk Council who had a right to buy their property and transferred to Saffron on 17th May 2004.

Any other tenants may have the right to acquire (discount = £9,000) depending on where they live and length of tenancy, contact Emma Tooke, etooke@saffronhousing.co.uk 01508 532023 for details.

Please note the Voluntary Right to Buy pilot ended in 2016 and is no longer available.

What is Legionnaires’ disease?

Legionellosis (or Legionnaires’ disease) is the name given to the pneumonia-like illness caused by inhalation of legionella bacteria in airborne water droplets (aerosols). It is potentially fatal and everyone is susceptible to infection. The elderly and those with an existing weak immune system are the most susceptible to contracting the disease. Men are 3 times more likely to contract Legionnaires’ disease than women (which suggests man-flu is real!). Healthy children are the most unlikely.

Where are legionella bacteria found?

Legionella bacteria are common in natural water sources such as rivers, lakes and reservoirs (even damp soil or compost), but usually in low numbers. Since legionella bacteria are widespread in the environment, they may also contaminate and grow in purpose-built water systems such as domestic hot and cold water systems.

How does legionella thrive and proliferate?

Any water system that has the right environmental conditions could potentially be a source for bacteria growth. There is a legionella risk in the water system if:

• Water is stored as part of the system;
• The water temperature in some part of the system is between 20–45°C;
• There are sources of nutrients such as rust, sludge, scale and organic matters;

Legionnaires’ disease can only be contracted by inhalation of contaminated aerosol droplets, NOT by drinking contaminated water or from person to person (it is not contagious).

The risk of Legionella posing a threat in the home is very low; water here is generally stored and used in such a way that bacteria does not have time to grow to dangerous levels. Water is usually kept in small amounts at a temperature above 45°C or below 20°C and is used on a daily basis.

Saffron carry out inspections on our properties as part of the Total Property Management (TPM) process and at void stage – any potential hazards are addressed. These can include debris in tanks, missing tank lids or insulation.

Domestic water system checks

Keep hot water stored at between 50°C and 60°C. This is the temperature that the thermostat on your hot water cylinder (where applicable) will have been originally set to. Combi-boilers do not need a storage cylinder as they deliver hot water directly to the taps.

Is there a build-up of lime scale on the taps or showerheads? These areas can harbour and nurture Legionella bacteria.

Make sure taps are turned on for at least three minutes each week. This includes external taps and hoses. Are there non-Legionella issues? Scalding? Hot and cold taps the wrong way round? Loose fittings, dripping outlets?

If the property has been left empty for more than 10 days, for instance whilst you’re away on holiday, run all the taps and showers for at least 3 minutes and flush the toilet. A plastic bag tied over the showerhead, with a corner cut out, is a good way of ensuring aerosols do not get airborne (or remove the showerhead). This should happen at least every 10-14 days if the property remains empty.

Do you want to get out more?
Meet new people? Rekindle a hobby or interest?

Do you need practical information and advice around money, transport, health and care or housing issues before you feel ready to take part?

Better Together brings people together and offers information, advice and support to help you make the most of activities and opportunities in your area.
No more cash & cheque payments.

From 1st April 2019 we no longer accept cash or cheque payment at Saffron offices in Long Stratton.

Following the introduction of our new payment system, we are offering a wide range of payment methods to our tenants. For more information on how to pay your rent, please visit our website at: www.saffronhousing.co.uk

The cash or cheque payment facility will be available at the Post Office or PayPoint outlets. You will need to have your payment card with you when paying at the Post Office or PayPoint outlets.

You can pay by direct debit if you are not in receipt of any housing benefit or universal credit. Payment dates will be either weekly or the 15th of each month.

If you wish to pay on the phone, you can call us on 01508 532000 and select option 1 for the automated payment line which is available 24/7 and you will not need to queue.

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Easter office hours

Saffron offices will be closed on Friday 19th April and re-open at 8.45am on Tuesday 23rd April.

If you need emergency repairs during this period please call 01508 532000.

Have a lovely Easter!

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Wordsearch

Find all 10 words from the list below, then return it along with the completed entry form for a chance to win £20 Love2Shop voucher.

- Easter
- Spring
- Daffodil
- Eggs
- Chocolate
- Chick
- Rabbit
- Lambs
- Crocus
- Family

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Name: ..........................................................................................................

Address: ...................................................................................................

Telephone: ..............................................................................................

Send your completed entry form to: Communications & Marketing Team,
Saffron Housing Trust, Saffron Barn, Swan Lane, Long Stratton, NR15 2XP

Closing date: Monday 1st July 2019

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Thank you to everyone who entered our word search competition in the October issue of Saffron News. We are happy to share the lucky winner of the Love2Shop voucher is …

Mr Reynolds!!!
South Norfolk On Show

SUNDAY 30 JUNE | 11am - 4pm
South Norfolk Council Offices, Long Stratton, NR15 2XR

FREE ENTRY
For more information visit south-norfolk.gov.uk/onshow