Welcome to Saffron news

Key topics inside this issue...

We have an update from our Community Foundation Team.

You can find out where we are building new homes.

We spend a day with one of our Customer Contact Advisors.

Your chance to win some Love2Shop vouchers by entering our Word Search competition.

Enter for a chance to win £20 Love2Shop vouchers

James Francis
Chief Executive Officer
### Key dates

Keep an eye out on our Facebook - Saffron Housing Trust and our Twitter page @saffronhousing for useful tips, information and ways we get involved with the below dates.

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<td>Mental Health Awareness Week</td>
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<td>Suffolk Day</td>
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In January we have officially launched our Community Foundation Programme. A key priority is to create and sustain ongoing relationships with our tenants across Norfolk and Suffolk. The new Community Foundation aims to create new initiatives and partnership working with other local organisations such as charities and local authorities to help tenants lead better lives and create places people want to live.

The Foundation is based around six themes providing a holistic offering to truly make a difference:

- Assisted Gardening and Decorating Scheme
- Apprenticeships and Employment
- Customer Training Programmes
- Community Project Grants and Improvement Grants
- Staff Volunteering
- Help and Support

The launch event was an opportunity to outline Saffron’s ambition of the Community Foundation Programme and to create partnerships to help shape what it will look like as it evolves.

Emilie Hildreth, Community Foundation Manager at Saffron, said: “A lot of the publicly funded tenancy support services have recently been cut or have gone altogether, leaving more vulnerable people without any help. Social and health agendas are increasingly playing key parts of landlords’ responsibilities. We want to be more than just a landlord and are committed to the communities where we work and, through the work of our Foundation, want to enhance the life chances of our customers.”

We are working with our older people within our communities to increase activities which are encouraging wellbeing and the reduction of loneliness. One such Community group is Friends of Churchill Place. they have been supported by Saffron and encourage to start up a range of activities including fish and chip lunches, darts, music evenings and meals such as Christmas dinner.

Lorna King a member of the group said: “Setting up friends of Churchill place last year has made such a difference to our community, it has enabled many of the neighbours to get together for different events each week giving us all something to look forward to instead of spending a lot of time on our own indoors. We now have a thriving friendly neighbourhood and everyone joins in with new ideas weekly.”

Within the organisation, Saffron is also looking for volunteers to...
sit on a new ‘Grants Panels’ for its Community Project and Improvement Grants. The panels will consist of staff across different departments and representatives from Saffron’s Customer Voice group as well as independent advisors.

The Panel will decide which projects are awarded Saffron’s fund, looking at criteria such as sustainability and demonstrating social value amongst communities throughout Norfolk and Suffolk.

The Community Foundation are already helping to make a difference in Wymondham after donating £3,000 towards a Community Van for the Wymondham Community Kitchen.

This is the first donation for the Foundation and included donations from other organisations including Wymondham Town Council, East Anglian Motor Auctions, and South Norfolk Council. The new van will help the Wymondham Community Kitchen play their crucial part in helping serve the local community.

Wymondham Community Kitchen said how thankful they are: “We are extremely grateful to the organisations that donated, they too have played a crucial role in helping the community.”

Grants up for grabs!

Community Improvements Grants – awards up to £10,000
These grants are aimed at activities or physical improvements which primarily benefit Saffron Tenants or Saffron Communities.

Activities will be supported or championed by Saffron Employees and funding could cover a venue for an event, volunteer expenses, equipment and resources, refreshments, publicity and marketing.

Examples of the types of event:
• community clear up days
• litter picking
• neighbourhood improvements including new bin store areas and enhanced safety and security measures
• gardening projects
• competitions or events

We will prioritise ideas and activities which:
• enhance local areas and communities
• include those who are hard to reach
• encourage new participants and address social isolation
• address gaps in local provision
• make the best use of other local services, partnerships and networks
• enhance life chances

Community Project Grants – awards up to 5,000
These grants are aimed at local groups and not-for-profit organisations who share our vision for place-shaping and creating positive futures.

We will support schemes which develop new ways to reach and include Saffron Tenants and the wider community.

We are looking for schemes and projects which will:
• encourage community engagement and cohesion
• promote and enable training and education-based activity
• reduce social isolation in all age groups
• promote Saffron community rooms
• increase engagement in activities with underrepresented groups

We will prioritise schemes and projects which:
• make the most of existing provision
• include those who are hard to reach
• encourage new participants and address social isolation
• address gaps in local provision
• make the best use of other local services, partnerships and networks

If you have any suggestions or projects for the Foundation please email communityfoundation@saffronhousing.co.uk
Behind the scenes we have been working hard to create the perfect ‘pitch’ to Saffron. We have presented our ideas and pledge to James Francis, CEO and the Saffron Board.

We wanted to make sure that the topics that we will be looking at had set key area’s and agreed that all work that we would be looking at going forward would incorporate three themes:

Inclusivity – To ensure that any changes are consistent and include every tenant depending on their needs.

Communication – This needs to be consistent throughout the company. To accord with the Together with Tenants Charter it should be clear, accessible and timely.

The Saffron Experience – everyone is receiving the same experience and the response from every department should be meaningful and accountable.

We have set targets with Saffron for when we will expect documents to analyse e.g. KPI’s, customer satisfaction, complaints and many more.

Both Saffron and the Board are very impressed with what we have set out and already achieved as a group, including:

- Task and Finish sessions and working groups
- Tested the new customer portal along with other tenants
- Helped in the Older Persons strategy review – along with other tenants and staff
- Reviewed a number of policies
- Looked at the old local standards and the new Saffron standards
- Attended the launch of the Saffron Community Foundation

We have also reviewed the results of the star survey and complaints that are sent into Saffron and based on that information, over the coming year we plan to look at the following areas:

- Repairs
- Communications
- Complaints
- Holding pop-ups and roadshows to meet tenants and find out what issues they are facing
- Getting tenants involved in Surveys and Task & Finish sessions.

Saffron have already asked for our support and guidance on a number of items and has implemented our feedback where they can. We will continue to share our outcomes and feedback with all staff at Saffron so we can keep communication open and active.

We are all very excited about plans we have and will be keen to share and ask for support from you all to try and collectively earn the trust of all our tenants.
Due to the expansion of the role of Customer Voice, we are looking for a volunteer to join the team to work with us to achieve our objectives and improve services.

Saffron are fully committed to involving and engaging our customers in all that we do. We are an ‘Overarching Group’ of volunteer Members and we need you!

Our role is to

- Oversee the involvement of Saffron customers in decisions that affect the services they provide
- Review Saffron’s performance and work with us to make improvements
- Agree the annual customer consultation plan
- Review customer facing policies and have input into service strategies
- Nominate three Non-Executive Directors for the Board.

Experience of this type of role is not necessary. What we need is your knowledge, feedback and understanding of the issues affecting you, your home and your community.

Saffron offer full training and support, and all reasonable expenses are covered.

For an informal chat in the first instance, and to obtain an application form, you can contact the Customer Voice Team by emailing info@saffroncustomervoice.co.uk

You can be the one to make a difference!

Your Voice is your opportunity to sign up for more ways to get involved with Saffron.

When you sign up you will receive emails about upcoming events such as Task & Finish groups, Focus Groups and online/telephone surveys. It’s a great way to have your views and opinions heard and help shape the future of Saffron.

Sign up by emailing getinvolved@saffonhousing.co.uk to make sure YourVoice is heard!
Saffron Facts (2019-2020)

6,382 Homes

56 Craftworkers not including agency or apprentices

47 Apprentices

Since 2004 Saffron have had

80 Homes under construction including Rented, Shared Ownership & Shared Equity

The below needs updating after 1st April

Improvements

1016 of our properties were surveyed

118 Bathrooms

279 Central Heating

113 Roofs

112 Kitchens

123 Doors

140 Windows
Below you can see where we are building across Norfolk from the 1st April 2020, how many properties are on site and if they are rented or Shared Ownership.

Keep an eye out on our properties currently available page on our website and make sure you are registered with the Home Options scheme via your local council.
A day in the life of....

James Carter
Customer Contact Advisor

We took a day out of our usual routine to spend time with James to see what a typical day is like for him and we asked a few questions along the way.

1. How long have you worked for Saffron?

I have been with Saffron for three years one month, I started on 13th February 2017.

2. What do you do in your role and do you enjoy it?

I am one of the first points of contact in the Customer Contact Team, responding to enquiries from all Saffron customers by email, phone and face to face.

3. How many staff members are in your team?

We currently have two Customer Contact Managers and ten Customer Contact Advisors.

4. How do you provide good customer service within your role?

Excellent listening skills and problem solving abilities with a happy can-do attitude combined with empathy and professionalism – I treat everyone how I would want my Nan to be treated.

It’s in my nature to be helpful. I love my role as I’m passionate about delivering excellent customer service.
5. What does a typical day look like for you?

On average we deal with 260 calls a day and 60 emails the variety consisting of diagnosing and logging repairs, taking rent payments, lettings enquiries – no day is the same.

6. Do you get to know our tenants?

We are always here to help and our tenants are happy to share their day to day lives with us and have good chat on the phone. Hopefully in the future with the Community Foundation grant applications coming this year we will be able to signpost them to help their communities.

7. Do you have any top tips for our tenants?

When I first started the Contact Team was in its infancy and tenants were experiencing long wait times in their calls being answered. Things have improved massively. The average wait time is no more than a minute.

A few things tenants might not know is:
- We have a queue buster, after a minute wait you can pick that option – your call will remain in the queue and Saffron will call you back at no cost to yourself. Callbacks on average take no more than 20 minutes.
- We do cover the phone 24/7 365 days a year – if you do have an emergency outside of office hours please do call as we have an out of hours service which can help.
- If you have made a repairs appointment and you can’t be in, please do let us know so we can rebook the appointment for you. Time wasted travelling to a missed appointment can be better spent completing a job for someone else.

Look out for the next issue of Saffron News where we will be following another one of our staff members for the day.

“It’s in my nature to be helpful. I love my role as I’m passionate about delivering excellent customer service.”
Back in February you will have received your annual rent letter which may have included information about your rent increasing.

To help understand the rent increase we have created a video which can be found on our website here at www.saffronhousing.co.uk/residents/make-a-payment/the-rent-increase-explained.

We have also put together some frequently asked questions below to help answer any questions you might have.

Please note the rent totals included in your rent letter do not take into account any Housing Benefit/Universal Credit you may be entitled to.

1/. Why is there a rent increase now?

The government guides any changes in rent made by all HAs, which includes Saffron. There has been a reduction enforced by the government for the past four years, but they have recently announced that they have permitted all housing associations to raise their rents.

2/. Who will be affected by the 2.7% increase?

The majority of rents will be increased by up to 2.7%.

However, in an effort to keep homes affordable we will not be applying the increase if your rent is currently higher than the local housing allowance – a measure used to calculate housing benefit. This applies to over 500 households.

3/. How much does the increase equate to?

The amount will vary, but in general terms, for a two-bedroom property on average, your rent may increase by:

- £2.23 per week for tenants in a social rented property
- £2.93 per week for tenants in an affordable rented property

4. How do I calculate my new monthly rent?

This financial year, 6th April 2020 to 4th April 2021, is a 52-week year compared to the financial year 1st April 2019 to 5th April 2020 which was a 53-week year.

To calculate your new monthly amount, you will need to subtract any HB/UC/Saffron rebate you may be entitled to from the new Gross weekly amount, then multiply this by 52 weeks and divide by 12 payments.

5/. What is Saffron going to do with the extra money?

The information we have on your home tells us that we want to increase the amount of money we spend on maintaining and improving them.

The rent increase will generate just over £750k for Saffron. Based on our assessments and priority, we will use it to make improvements to your homes over the next year.

6/. Who can help me if I have concerns?

Once you have received your rent letter and you know what any changes will be to you, you can contact Saffron and speak to a member of our team in the usual way – by calling 01508 532000 or emailing info@saffronhousing.co.uk

If you live on a supported housing scheme you can speak to your support coordinator.
However, you may need to consider how you are going to budget for the rent increase. If you are struggling to pay your rent, you may want to apply to see if you are entitled to any support from Universal Credit. Benefit eligibility is partly relative to your household income not just your work status.

There are a number of organisations who can also help you with money advice and support:

**Pay by Direct Debit**

Direct debit is available if you do not receive housing benefit or universal credit, which is paid direct to Saffron. If you have access to a computer, you can fill in and return the direct debit mandate found here to rentssaffronhousing.co.uk by email.

Alternatively, you can either print off and return the mandate to us or contact us on 01508 532000 to request a mandate be posted to you.

Payment dates will be either weekly or the 15th of each month. You must continue to make payments yourself until you receive confirmation from us that your direct debit instruction has been processed. If you currently pay by standing order and you would like to change it to direct debit, it is your responsibility to cancel the standing order with your bank.

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Solo housing collaboration
Coronavirus information.
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.

- Daffodil
- Egg Hunt
- Tulips
- Bunny
- Spring
- Chocolate
- Showers
- Bloom
- Lambs
- Chicks

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

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

Closing date: Monday 6th July 2020

A big thank you to everyone who entered our wordsearch competition in the October issue of Saffron News.

Congratulations to Ms Cassimo who was our winner.

The next winner could be you so make sure you get your entries in.
Contact Care Lifeline Alarms

A Contact Care lifeline provides you with help and reassurance at the touch of a button, 24 hour monitoring 365 days a year.

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