



Dudley Federation

of Tenants and Residents Associations



Newsletter
September
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2013



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Prize draw for Direct Debit payers

Martin Smith and Phyllis Rowley from Dudley Federation were invited to witness the first prize draw for people signed up to pay their rent by Direct Debit. On August 15th they went to the Harbour Buildings on the Waterfront to meet Kim Hudson who was overseeing the draw. The winner is chosen randomly by computer each month, winners will be printed in Home Affairs and on the Dudley Council website. The winner will have the choice of supermarkets in which to spend their prize money.

If you are interested in seeing how the draw is done, get in touch and we can arrange for you to go along with a DFTRA member.

Sign up to Direct Debit and have a chance of winning £100

By simply paying your rent via Direct Debit during July 2013 to June 2014 you will be automatically entered into the monthly free prize draw to win £100 of supermarket vouchers.

There's a 1 in 3000 chance of winning—that's better odds than the lottery!

Terms and conditions apply, for details visit www.dudley.gov.uk/rents/

**Call our Direct Debit team on 01384 815024
to set up over the phone**



Another chance to win £100

If you sign up to free housing service's alerts before 4pm on 30th November 2013 then you will be entered into a free prize draw.

The housing alerts system notifies tenants and residents living on council estates via mobile phone or email when their next tenants and residents association meeting or forum is taking place. They will also receive other useful housing information to keep them up to date with their services.

To sign up to the new service:

visit our **website** at www.dudley.gov.uk/housingalerts

ring **01384 815168**

or **text** your **name, house number** and **postcode** to **07797 870352**

(the initial text will only cost your standard rate).

*terms and conditions apply - see our website for information. Existing users will automatically be entered.

Consultation on council tax reduction scheme

Dudley borough residents can now have their say on the council's council tax reduction scheme (CTR) for April 2014.

The consultation, launched on Monday July 29, asks residents if Dudley Council should make changes to its current scheme or continue with the same scheme to protect low income households.

In 2012 the government abolished the national council tax benefit scheme and replaced it with local schemes, in Dudley this is the council tax reduction (CTR) scheme.

The national changes meant a loss of around 10 per cent in government funding, approximately £2.4million in Dudley. Following public consultation the council decided to protect all low income families from any cuts in their council tax benefit.

However, Dudley like other councils face on-going reductions in its funding and now has to decide whether to make savings by changing its CTR scheme for 2014/15 or to continue with the same scheme to once again protect low income households.

Dudley Council's cabinet approved three options for the consultation in June this year and people are now being asked to choose from:

- **no change in the amount of council tax reduction given by the council.**
- **an 8.5 per cent cut in the amount of council tax reduction given by the council.**
- **a 20 per cent cut in the amount of council tax reduction given by the council.**

A higher percentage cut in CTR means more council tax to pay. Cabinet formally recommended 8.5 per cent as the preferred option, with some protection for vulnerable groups, but no decision will be taken before the public consultation is complete.

Pensioners must be protected from any changes to the scheme, but the consultation also asks if any other vulnerable groups should be protected if the scheme is changed.

The consultation can be completed at:

www.dudley.gov.uk/resident/your-council/benefits

Alternatively copies of the consultation leaflet which includes the questionnaire, are available at Dudley Council Plus and all borough libraries.

The consultation will close on 18 October 2013 with a final decision on any new scheme for April 2014 being made later this year.

PDSA Pet Health Check Event

During July DMBC's High Rise Living Forum joined forces with the PDSA to organise a four day pet health check event. The locations were chosen to give residents in high rise with dogs the opportunity to receive free on site advice. Events were held at Highfields Estate, Arley & Compton Courts, Vicarage Prospect and The Chapel Street Estate.

A total of 119 people attended over the four days with 101 dogs receiving a free health check. The checks covered body condition, teeth & gums, eyes& ears, coat condition and general fitness. Over £50 was collected in donations for the PDSA and in addition 28 treatments were carried out which incurred a nominal charge.



ES HIGHRISE LIVING

it's great!

Clent & Claverley Courts

Why not consider high rise living?

We currently have a number of 2 bedroom apartments at Clent & Claverley Courts which are available for rental immediately.

You don't even need to be on the Dudley Council housing waiting list to apply. (subject to eligibility)

There are many benefits to high rise living which you may not have considered:

- **Very cost effective as rent is from as little as £66 per week (July 2013)**
- **Repairs, maintenance and service charges are all included in the rental**
- **Dedicated housing manager and estate assistant**
- **Active tenants and residents association**
 - Events
 - Activities
 - Have a say on the running of the estate
 - Strong community
- **Easy commute to the cities of Birmingham and Wolverhampton**
 - Good road network
 - Good public transport links
- **Distances**
 - Less than 1 miles from Dudley High Street
 - Less than 3 miles from local train stations (Tipton, Dudley Port, Cradley, Coseley and Old Hill train stations all within 3 miles)
 - Dudley bus station less than 1 mile away
 - 3 miles from Brierley Hill
 - 4.5 miles from Junction 2 of M5
 - 5 miles from West Bromwich
 - 6 miles from Halesowen
 - 6 miles from Stourbridge
 - 6.5 miles from Wolverhampton
 - 11 miles from Birmingham
- **Safe and secure living**
 - Door entry system installed
 - Free gas safety checks for properties
 - CCTV monitoring
 - Daily block inspections
 - Fire safety inspections and policy in place
- **Close to local amenities**
 - Dudley Town Centre less than 1 mile away
 - Merry Hill Shopping Complex in close proximity including shops, cinema and restaurants
 - Leisure centre within 2 minute walk
 - Near to canal network for walking and cycling
 - Castlegate Complex close with cinema, bowling and restaurants
 - Close local entertainment facilities include Dudley Zoo, Black Country Living Museum, Canal Trust, Himley Hall, Dudley Museum & Art Gallery, Redhouse Glass Cone, Broadfield House, Ruskin Glass Centre
 - Local shops close by for daily essentials
- **Added extras**
 - Gas central heating in most properties
 - Ample parking
 - Garages for rental (subject to availability)
 - Recycling facilities
 - Panoramic views of Clent, Malvern, Mendips and the town centre vista
 - Lifts to floors
 - Large maintained grounds with facilities
 - Rubbish chutes - no carrying rubbish outside
 - Close to local park
 - Lower energy bills
 - Communal areas to meet fellow residents
 - Digital television
 - Double glazing
 - Fitted kitchen and bathroom

**For more information
telephone 01384 814183
and ask to speak to the
Dudley at Home team**

Dudley
Metropolitan Borough Council

Breaking the Barriers of Silence

The Unique Women of Excellence organised a one day breast cancer awareness session during the Ethnic Minority Cancer Week on July 11th 2013 at Dudley Leisure Centre. The event was specific for women from African nations and helped to raise awareness of breast cancer while considering cultural issues. This was a great opportunity offered to both Women from African nations and healthcare professionals such as Dudley Public health Staff who have supported the event by providing relevant information material for the day.



The NHS Breast Screen Health Advisor gave a talk on the importance of regular breast checks from the age of fifty. Sue Barker shared her life experience with breast cancer and the measures she took to combat it. Sue now watches what she eats and sells and recommends Forever Living Products for boosting the immune system. The Health Exchange team informed the women to manage their diet and

exercise through a health exchange program. The event closed with a 45 minute exciting Zumba Taster Session from Kelly Powell. The ladies enjoyed this session and have asked for more sessions to be organised in the future.

One participant said, "I have learned that diet and physical exercises can reduce the risk of cancer. Speaking with the health exchange team at this event I will try to stay healthy by making health food choices and also do some exercises when I can." This is a clear promise that the event challenged participants and made them aware that breast cancer does not discriminate.



The event also raised interests from participants to have this type of event or physical activities regularly so that people can be fully aware of the issues of cancer and take appropriate measures to reduce the risk. Another participant mentioned: ***"After listening to the testimony from the Cancer survivor, I understand that cancer can be beaten and the chances to overcome it are much better when you***

get the information about what you should do at the earliest stage. I think we need more information sessions so that we can even discuss this with our daughter at home and even our friend who did not attend the event." There was a feeling of satisfaction expressed by participants who believed that it was a very good opportunity to meet with professionals at the event and outline the support available in the community.



Sign up to save money on energy bills

Council bosses are urging people to register on a scheme that could help them save money on their fuel bills.

Dudley Council has launched Dudley's big switch which could secure discounted tariffs from energy providers if enough people sign up.

The big switch is part of a national collective energy switching scheme, where councils across the country go to auction to see which energy company will offer the best tariff for their residents.

The more people that register on the scheme, the greater the opportunity for a better deal from the energy providers.

The scheme is free to join but there is no obligation to switch if people are not in line for a saving.

Councillor David Sparks, leader of Dudley Council, said:

"With increasing fuel prices and the financial pressures many people face, we are really keen to encourage as many borough residents to register on this scheme and collectively save money on their energy bills.

"“People are at the heart of our vision for a community council and I would urge everyone to register and see if they could save money. The more people who register their interest, the greater the chance of us securing a lower fuel bill for people.”

Thousands of people across the country have already saved money by joining collective energy switching schemes.

Dudley Council launched a pilot scheme earlier in the year and went to auction in June. As a result, the highest potential saving was for dual fuel monthly direct debits (online) of £100 per year.

The next auction will take place on Wednesday October 16; people need to register by October 15 at the latest.

People can register online at www.dudley.gov.uk or by visiting or calling Dudley Council Plus on 0300 555 2345. People need to have details of their energy usage (latest energy bill) to hand in order to complete the registration process.

A company called iChooser will act as an intermediary between Dudley council and the energy suppliers.

Earlier this year the council announced plans for 'community council' status with the aim of working closer with the community and encouraging people to improve their communities across the borough.

DFTRA Update

Office updates



The office is open to all TRA members Tuesday to Friday from 9.30am to 12.30pm. To visit outside these times please call to arrange a time that is best.



Leaflets—Please contact the Participation Development team a few weeks before your general meetings to order leaflets, they will then send us the order.



Improvements to the office are on going and Social Media training will soon be held in our Resource Hub, please email Kim.Avantaggiato@dudley.gov.uk if you are interested.

Partnership meetings

We continue to attend partnership meetings regularly to keep up to date with information and raise any concerns from members. We are also involved in the new engagement structure which we will be moving forward with. Project group now set up and shortly the new group will be visiting other federations from around the UK who have been involved in similar projects to get ideas and inspiration.

On 7th August Martin Smith took Butterfield Court TRA member Carol Johnson to a meeting at the Repairs Management Centre where she was able to meet the staff, see the call centre, see how calls are managed and also had the chance to raise some issues that she had. We would encourage other members to attend meetings alongside DFTRA representatives as we feel it is useful and a positive step towards getting our members more involved in the council's structure and allowing them to have a bigger voice.

Some of the regular partnership meetings that we attend are:

- Gas partnership (PH Jones)
- Electrical partnership (Dodds)
- Voids (Lovell and Keepmoat)
- Joint Action Group (Dudley and West Midlands Police)
- Waste Management (Building Services)
- Painting (C7)
- CCSS (Specialist electrical)
- Lifts (LES)
- Specification Core Group (Building Services)
- Fire Champions (Housing)
- Welfare Reform (Benefits)
- Adaptations Core Group (Building Services and Occupational Therapy)

If you are interested in attending a meeting, please contact us.

Dudley Federation of Tenants and Residents Associations

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