

Waveney Tenants Magazine

Produced by tenants for tenants

Winter 2014/15





Dear All,

How time flies, another year under our belts and another year looming! Hope you're all prepared and looking forward to the festivities and fresh year ahead. In this winter Christmas edition you'll find our prize word search has turned into a special Christmas Spot The Difference cartoon, lovingly crafted by our own lan G Robb so why not enjoy giving it ago.

We have our usual range of articles including one on page 4 about Discretionary Housing Payment, which maybe of help to some of you out there struggling with your rent. We are almost two years into the bedroom tax and many are still finding it hard to keep their heads above water.

I pay the bedroom tax myself and know you have to scrimp and make sacrifices. Several months of cold winter and the choice between heating or eating do tend to focus the mind on that one! So my advice to anyone out there is check out if you qualify for this extra help. On page 3 we are appealing for more of you to get involved in tenant participation and your local communities. It's your chance to get your voice heard and help to ensure your landlord WDC gives efficient and fair service to you, their customers. There are lots of different ways you can do this, so please give it some thought. There is an article on page 6 about Carole Crane of Beccles, who has been progressively getting involved in the area and has recently joined the Waveney Tenants Forum and now gives her area a voice. Carole is looking for other Beccles residents to join her so why not check out page 6.

We'll see you again in the spring along with the sun so keep warm and keep well and have a great forthcoming year.

Regards
Ali Smith, Editor

WAVENEY TENANTS FORUM

Retirement of 2 members "A BIG THANK YOU"

Just recently we have seen the retirement of 2 long standing members from the Waveney Tenants Forum, and would like to take this opportunity to show our appreciation for attending and representing people in their community.

Margaret Smith and Alice Clarkson from Lawson Court have regularly attended the Forums and we wish them a long and healthy retirement.

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difference in your community and would like to join the Tenants Forum please contact Charlotte on 01502 523173.

Pictured above Margaret and Alice being presented with flowers from Charlotte.

Kevin Barrett, Service Manager, Housing Maintenance

A £45 CANVAS PRINT

We're looking for great photos submitted by our readers' to use on the cover of our magazine. To enter, simply send us a great Spring themed photo that we could use on the next cover to charlotte.read@waveney.gov.uk. The Editor and Editorial Board will choose the winner who will receive a 12" x 16" canvas print (worth £45) of their winning photo to hang on their wall.

Canvas Print prize is kindly sponsored by Red Hot Media Ltd - www.redhotmedia.co.uk





New Leaf, New Year, New Members

Want a hobby or new interest this year? Why not get involved with the Waveney Tenants Movement! If you read the magazine regularly you'll know it's put together by tenants just like you, with the help of a couple of Housing staff.

You will probably know there are tenants that represent you on various boards and working groups. The more observant of you will have spotted that the same faces pop up in more than one role (too many hats, not enough heads). I

have a few different hats myself and we would love for more of you to get involved. If you read the tenants magazine regularly chances are you're already pretty interested in what's going on, so why not take the next step, come along and find out more. You can give a voice to your area and let your landlord know what you think about your home. This helps them give a better service to all tenants. The Tenant Forum is a good place to start. It's very welcoming and lunch is provided! There are now

Tenant Associations in many areas and you can find their numbers on the back page. It would be good to meet fellow tenants who would like to join us on whatever level. So if you're thinking of trying something new this year, why not come along? It's easy to get involved. Call Charlotte Read, Tenant Involvement Officer, on: 01502 523 173.

Ali Smith, Editor

Don't pay for debt advice and help when you can get it for free

As a Rent Arrears Officer, I am coming across an increasing number of people who are paying a company to help them manage their debts. These costs range from £40 to £180 per month and this money could be used to reduce and clear arrears. When you pay a company to help you with your debts, a large amount of this money is going to the company and not towards what you owe your creditors.

Your Rent Arrears Officer can assist you with getting help with your debts at no cost to you, and help you stay in your home. The Housing team work closely with the Citizens Advice Bureau and Flagship Housing Support Team, and can refer you to the relevant agency to get you the

advice that you need.

This can be short term support to help you get back on track or long term if you feel you need more intensive assistance. Tenants often feel this reduces the stress of juggling their money and knowing who to pay when they cannot afford to pay everyone.

It is never too late to ask for help if you need it. Your Rent Arrears
Officer can make an appointment to discuss your arrears at your home and then refer you for help to the most suitable agencies. So don't waste your precious money on these agencies when we can make sure you get it for free.

Elizabeth Allen, Rent Arrears Officer

USE IT OR LOSE IT

As some of you may, or may not know we have our Housing Officer and Rent Officer, Angie Woodrow and Myles O'Connor, at our Whitton Office, on The Green, every Wednesday between 11 am and 12 noon.

They can deal with all your housing enquiries, rent, benefits, repairs, neighbour disputes, exchanges and many other issues.

The trouble is not many people go there with housing problems which is a pity as this is a very useful source of information and guidance.

The Whitton Tenants and Residents Association encourage Whitton residents to use the service or we may lose it.

Shirley Jenkins, Chairperson of Whitton Tenants & Residents Association







If you are receiving Housing Benefit, and this doesn't cover your full rent, you can ask Waveney District Council for extra help. They can help with an extra payment called "Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP)". This payment can top up your Housing Benefit to cover your full rent. To be eligible for this payment you need to be in financial hardship, usually this means you spend more a week than you have coming in. To apply you need to complete and return a full application form which is available online at www.waveney.gov.uk.

Thinking of moving to smaller or cheaper accommodation?

If you are moving home because

your current property is larger than you require and your Housing Benefit is reduced because of this, Waveney District Council can help you pay for your removal costs. They can help with the cost of removals by awarding a 'DHP'. To be eligible for this you need to be in a position where you cannot afford to pay for the cost of removals yourself.

If you are thinking of moving into a private rented property because your Housing Benefit is restricted at your current property due to having a spare room, Waveney District Council can help again with the cost of your rent deposit and rent in advance if you can not afford these. Our Housing Team though would advise you strongly to think before giving up a Secure Tenancy – please speak to your Housing Officer before making a decision. There are certain

conditions that must be satisfied to be eligible and the rent must be within the Local Housing Allowance rates. Information regarding Local Housing Allowance can be found on Waveney District Council's website www.waveney.gov.uk.

Are you receiving Housing Benefit and starting work?

If you have found work and you are worried about making up the shortfall in your rent whilst waiting for your first pay, Waveney District Council can help by awarding a 'DHP'. To be eligible you must be in receipt of at least 50p Housing Benefit per week once you have started work. Waveney have launched a new short form to help you apply for this assistance, the short form is available online at www.waveney.gov.uk.

Peggy will never be forgotten

Residents of Jacobs Court gathered together and wanted to commemorate in some way a long serving resident of the Court.

Mrs Peggy Fenn who had been a resident of Jacobs Court since 1981, sadly passed away earlier this year and was a big part of the local community. She was committed to offer her support to the local brownies and was a long standing member of St Andrews Church in Lowestoft. The residents wanted it recognised that Peggy was always on hand to support them if they encountered any problems.

This bench kindly donated by Crown and Brewers has already been put to good use and the residents are very grateful that they have it to use in her memory.

Angela Bruce, Housing Officer



Pictured above Left to Right,

Graham Turner (WDC) Angela Bruce (WDC) Belle Pelka, Gary Battle, Nina Battle(Residents) Dave Hooper (Crown)

Front; Sharna Thompson (Resident), Ed Pearce (Brewers) and Ben Rothwell (Crown)





Christmas - A Christian Perspective

Looking back, there didn't seem to me to be much similarity between a gathering on the shoreside or the river Jordan on a hot day 2000 years ago, no doubt with flies and mossies, and a water tank in a wooden shack that served as a church in a backwood in rural Essex on a frosty morning in a year too far back for me to remember.

That morning I was baptised by full immersion in cold water by the local pastor, which was a bit of a surprise as I wasn't expecting it, and wasn't ready for it. I had been a member of the "Bums-on-Pews" club for years, but now things would never be the same again, because life was about to start giving me a buffeting I sometimes thought I didn't deserve.

I was about to learn what it really means in terms of attitude in a number of areas, to take the faith seriously on behalf of my offspring and everyone else I was to be acquainted with and mean something to.

There lies the problem.

Whether you are a catholic or a protestant, Christianity is a faith — Not a religion, or a doctrine or cult, and it wholly embraces the teachings of Jesus Christ — Not an easy path to follow. Hence the mess we're in. OK I just felt that you might need to know a few basics about the bloke writing this article.

We are fast approaching, December 25th – the second most important date in the Christian calendar. For many of us the run up to the Christmas celebration (After the rough and tumble is over) can be a time for reflection upon life's rich mosaic.

As we remember and celebrate the arrival of Jesus Christ into the care of Mary and Joseph we are ever mindful of the immeasurable value of families and the family unit in these troubled times.

Some families in the UK will have real cause for celebration this year. Perhaps the safe arrival of a healthy baby, or an offspring shortly departing to university sometimes with a feeling of mild relief or perhaps graduating with an honours degree. Maybe simply that the main breadwinner has secured a job. For some families on the other hand perhaps the distress and trauma of faltering relationships resulting in breakup.

Perhaps for a close knit loving family the aching sadness of a lost loved one. On a wider scale we think of children, wives and Mothers who have lost a Father, husband or son during the ongoing Military exploits abroad, and long for the hurt to subside.

"Smile, hold hands around the gaping hole, hug each other and carry on that's how it goes"

Of course, we always end with a prayer... so here we go:

Loving Lord, we ask for your blessing and protection on us and upon our families both broken and sound everywhere at this Christmas time.

ONe ask your blessing upon all selfless individuals, tirelessly working with kindness and compassion to bring the joy of the Christmas message to all those in need, - the lonely, the sick, the terminally ill, the persecuted, the destitute, not forgetting those with special needs who perhaps do not understand.

Lord, this Christmas help us to love one another the way you always intended us to.

Amen

Written by Brian Parsons, Tenant Contributor





We have raised before in this magazine that tenants of the Council do sometimes quit their home leaving debts. Did you know for instance that at the end of last year we were owed £228,000! This is of course money that should be invested in

our housing and improving where we live and so it really does impact on all of us.

The Housing Team have been aware of this issue for a while and a part-time Former Tenant Debt officer is now employed to start recovering money due to us. Dean Stirling has been doing the job since April and already we have reduced this debt by £50,000.

There is a lot more to do, but I think one of the messages we need to send is that if you are quitting your home please make sure your rent is paid right up to the date the keys are handed back to the Council. They will be following up to get the money back, which could include costs being imposed on you.

Anna Trindall, Tenant Contributor





Residents of Beccles are lucky to have a new Tenants Representative giving a voice to the area! Carole Crane has lived in Beccles for the last five years, taking a pro-active interest in where she lives. Since moving into Clerks Piece, Carole has taken responsibility for keeping the green in pristine condition (see letters page) disappointed at the standard Norse are delivering. She's even gone so far as to buy an expensive petrol mower, so she's got the right tool for the job.

Dedicated Carole does edging paths for the elderly, to ensure their safety. Beccles in Bloom helped her to get some trees for the green and Carole planted some poppies around them to commemorate WWI enriching the area for all to enjoy. She spent her childhood as a child of the military, her father serving twenty-six years as a soldier, which is why she likes things to be of a high standard. For most of her working life she was a pub landlady in both London and Bedford, now retired she's taken a progressive interest in tenant issues. Carole recently became Chair of the Beccles Tenant's Association. She has now joined the Tenants Forum so she's well informed of housing issues and represent the tenants of Beccles at a higher level. There is no doubt Carole is doing sterling work which is of great benefit to her fellow residents. She's a very welcome addition to the tenant movement, so keep up the good work Carole and welcome to the team.

Ali Smith, Editor





Tenancy Fraud is where someone who should be living in a flat or house isn't because they are using it to get benefit or are renting it out to others at a higher rent and making money for themselves. We do not know how much of this goes on in Waveney but we are on the case. The Housing Team are co-funding with other councils a special team to help catch those people who are defrauding the Council.

David Howson in the Housing department told us "we need to do this, not because we know that there is a lot of fraud going on but because even one case is depriving someone of a home and may be costing the taxpayer a lot of money".

The Council needs to know if you suspect that either someone is not living in the property and using it just to collect post etc. or if you think the original tenant has gone and they have sublet to someone else, which is not allowed under the tenancy agreement.

Help us help the Council to reduce tenancy fraud by contacting your Housing Officer (listed at the back of the magazine) or contact the tenancy fraud team on 01502 523333.

Sue Fletcher,Social Housing Fraud Team





Tenant Scrutiny Panel update

Waveney Tenants Scrutiny Panel has finally come to the end of its first investigative project – the sorting out of the Housing Department's Voids – that is the time it takes for when a council house or flat becomes vacant to when a new tenant moves in.

It has been a hard journey, but a fruitful one. The panel of nine tenant volunteers went through extensive training and along the way we had considered a number of possible projects to begin with. Voids seem to be something we could get our teeth into, and so the Panel decided to jump into the deep end and start at that point.

Because Tenant Scrutiny Panels have governmental support – they were set up to challenge the Housing Service –

the training was extensive. This also meant travelling as far afield as Nottingham as well as making contact with other Tenant Scrutiny Panels as far away as Welwyn and Hatfield and other local authorities and housing associations.

So . . . Voids? We're all guilty of it – a slight damage to a door here, the odd repair that we never got round to reporting to the Council there – when you move eventually it adds up and takes time to repair and make new. However, there are also those who do a moonlight flit, taking all including electrical fittings et al!



Eventually, the Scrutiny Panel presented three recommendations to Hobbits – not the Lord of the Rings kind but HoBTS – the Housing Benefit and Tenant Services Consultation Group – at the Town Hall Chamber on Monday 21 July, and these were:

- I. That the Council employ a specialised person to deal with recharges for damage and clearances. Little evidence had been seen of any recovery action taking place at present, and this recommendation would ensure that those leaving a property would be aware they were held accountable for the state of the property they were leaving.
- 2. Some sort of incentive for tenants to leave properties in a good state of repair should be considered. This might include financial incentive to assist a tenant in their removals provided, of course, that the property was left in an acceptable state of repair.

3. Unannounced inspections be carried out by Housing Officers from the service of the notice by the outgoing tenant up to the date of moving out where possible.

So what's next? The Scrutiny Panel's spotlight now turns onto Waveney Norse, and in particular its Parks and Gardens service. And this is where You come in. What has been your experience – good or bad – with Waveney Norse? What about the grass cutting? Or anything that Waveney Norse is involved in?

Contact Waveney Tenant Scrutiny Panel's chair Julie Kirk in strict confidence by email: jools_cares@mypostoffice.com or phone her on 07521 503130 or 01502 537875.

lan G Robb, Vice Chairman Scrutiny Panel



FUN on the Beech

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Members of the Beeches Estate Residents Team held a fun day in September. It was the second time our little dedicated group pulled together to provide entertainment for the community. We held a jubilee party a couple of years ago but this was our first attempt at raising some money. It was a lot of hard work

collecting jumble, bric-a-brac, and lugging it about. On the day we pulled together and things went pretty well. We raised $\pounds 200$ for Macmillan Cancer Support through our cake sales. The event was made possible because of Councillor Keith Patience's locality budget, supplied courtesy of Suffolk County Council, and the support and generosity of Gasway, Housing's gas contractor.





Waveney District Council
Serving the Community

Housing Department and Council Offices

Christmas & New Year Clasures

Wednesday 24th December - Christmas Eve Offices will be closed to the public at 3pm

Thursday 25th December – Bank Holiday – OFFICES CLOSED

Friday 26th December – Bank Holiday – OFFICES CLOSED

Monday 29th December – Normal Office Hours

Tuesday 30th December – Normal Office Hours

Wednesday 31st December – New Years Eve Offices will be closed to the public at 3pm

Thursday Ist January 2015 - Bank Holiday - OFFICES CLOSED

Friday 2nd January - OFFICES CLOSED

If your community is putting on an event Gasway are happy to support you. They made the day fun by turning up with four great games for the kids to play, including the very popular Splat the Rat. The weather wasn't all that great but everybody who came along enjoyed the event and most importantly the kids had a good time. We will hold an event again next year, hoping for better weather and to meet some more of our community members. Anybody out there who is interested in joining the residents team can ring me (Ali Smith) on 01502 574802 and get involved. I'd like to say a big well done to all our members who gave their time to make the event a success and many thanks to Gasway and Councillor Patience.

Ali Smith, Editor





Dear Editor,

I would like to thank the Council's electrical team, especially Matt Hunter and Anthony Draper, for rewiring my bungalow. They did a terrific amount of work on my home and took great care to keep the dust and disruption down to a minimum. I am very pleased with the end result!

Thank you all so much

Regards

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Annet Soanes, Willingham St Mary

My New Kitchen

Well the workmen have nearly finished my kitchen Another few days and it's done They have made a lovely job of it And the problems have been overcome,

All the things that were taken out of the kitchen Are not going to go back again There is far too much stuff in the lounge now Next time it will be that same old refrain,

I don't do much cooking these days All I need is a frying pan and a griddle A small pan to boil vegetables in That has a dividing thing in the middle,

In a drawer will be a few knife forks and spoons I will keep one or two plates and of course Percy's dishes Mixing and bread making machines and every kind

Will all go to charity, these are my wishes,

I won't part with my Bibo machine The slow cooker or microwave You never know I might cook a meal in it And then a few pounds I will save.

by Marjorie Pearson Resident Reydon

I feel very strongly about my subject and know many more of you do too "NORSE". I mind passionately about the surroundings that I live in and I can't think of one reason why we all don't have the pleasure of that. Lawns and greens are left in an absolute shocking state, some being forgotten completely and others gone over in such a flash they miss half of it. I got so disgruntled with the shabbiness of their work that I purchased the tools that are required to do the job myself, knowing not just me but other residents would benefit. The only other option I had was to look out my window each day to ugliness and carnage and I feel this is totally unacceptable. I have added two photographs that I have taken one is the green I take great pride in and

do myself the other being the shabby work of Norse. Beccles in Bloom were very kind and when I requested trees for the greens they provided them and we are all very grateful to them. Poppies I planted in one bed to remind us all of our heroes who enable us to sleep at night. My last

say on this matter is Norse - there is an old proverb "A job worth doing is worth doing well."

Carole Crane

Beccles





One winner for each edition but we're always interested to hear from you!

Please send your submissions to:

Charlotte Read, Tenant Support Officer, Waveney District Council, The Depot, Rotterdam Road, Lowestoft, NR32 2EF or email:

Charlotte.Read@eastsuffolk.gov.uk

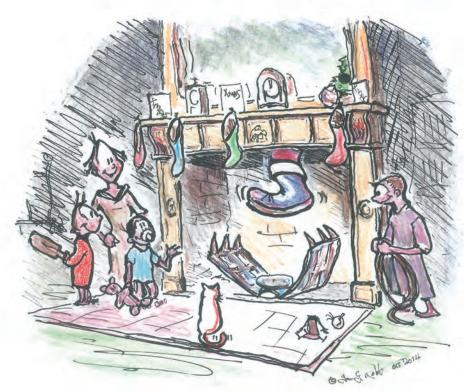






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Word Search Competition Winner

The summer edition of the Tenants News Magazine word search competition was won by Miss J Coleman who received a £50 Jewsons voucher sponsored by Jewsons.



Find and circle all six differences, fill in your details opposite and send the whole page to:

Waveney Tenants Magazine, c/o Charlotte Read, Waveney District Council, Rotterdam Road, Lowestoft, NR32 2EF.

Entries should arrive no later than 28th Febrary 2015.

The winner, who will be picked at random, will receive a £50 Jewsons Voucher

Employees of the Council and members of the Editorial Board are not eligible to enter.

Name:	
Address:	
Postcode:	
)



What's in a name?

Have you ever wondered why certain roads in Lowestoft are named the way they are?...
I certainly have but here are a few you might not know about.

Telesia Court

Named after an Armed Fishing Smack Telesia in WW I

Castleton Close

Named after Claud Castleton Lowestoft VC winner

Tom Crisp Way

Named after skipper Thomas Crisp, Lowestoft VC winner... one of only two fishermen who got the VC in WWI

Portsch Close

Named after Robert H Portsch, pilot of a B-17 flying fortress that crashed in Carlton Colville in March 1945

Seavert Close

Named after Staff Sgt Douglas Seavert, Radio Operator of the above B-17, who bailed out of the stricken aircraft over Dell Road School.

Fortress Way

Named after the B-17 Flying Fortress

Ohio Close

Named after the US State from which Staff Sgt Seavert came from

Rodber Way

Named after England Rugby international Tim Rodber

Bloomfield Close

Named after the home town of 2nd Lt Robert Portsch

Anna Trindall, Tenant Contributor

Our Sheltered Schemes are "BLOOMING LOVELY"

Residents at our sheltered homes schemes with support from scheme managers and Adrian our caretaker are really giving the schemes a feeling of home along with a beautiful array of colour and well groomed beds and planters.

Volunteers from the schemes give their time and expertise to brighten up not only their homes but also other residents and communal areas for all to benefit and appreciate.

Whilst on a recent visit to Whitton Court in Lowestoft, a visitor commented on how well the scheme looked and how the beautiful colours made it really inviting.

The residents of Whitton Court applied for an Environmental Grant, and were successful in purchasing a greenhouse, plants, and tools and now they are growing their own plants for next season.

Residents at Crick Court in Southwold and Plaisir Place in Lowestoft are also keen to brighten up the appearance of their community.

Kevin Barrett, Service Manager, Housing Maintenance

ENVIRONMENTAL GRANT AWARD MONEY

To improve the area where you live for the benefit of tenants

Seeding, planting, hard landscaping, car parking, play equipment, trees, equipment for community projects etc

Would your estate, street, community benefit from some fresh investment?

Then why not apply to the Environmental grant award?

Got a Community project in mind?

Then get in touch with your housing officer!









TENANTS' SERVICES CONTACTS

An update of useful names and contact numbers

	Housing Management		
	Principal Services Manager	David Howson	01502 523146
	Senior Housing Officer	Peter Fitzpatrick	01502 523424
	Housing Officers	Val Richardson	01502 523 166
	Flousing Officers	John Barber	01502 523128
		Angie Woodrow	01502 523121
		Angela Bruce	01502 521125
	Rent Arrears Officers	Elizabeth Allen	01502 523120
	Tierre and Officers	Leah Anderson	01502 523165
		Kirsty Ayers	01502 523169
		Tracey Fitchett	01502 523122
		Myles O'Connor	01502 523126
	Nuisance Enforcement Officer	Mike Hill	01502 523127
	Accounts & Systems Administrators	Wendy Harden	01502 523423
		Steven Baker	01502 523123
	Sheltered Housing & Allocations Officer	Jayne Sissen	01502 523480
	Tenant Involvement & Support Officer	Charlotte Read	01502 523173
٦	Housing Repairs		
	Principal Services Manager	John Brown	01502 523592
	Service Manager (Housing)	Kevin Barrett	01502 523572
	Operations Manager Building	Graham Critoph	01502 523455
	Projects Officer	Graham Turner	01502 523463
	Gas Co-ordinator	John Walchester	01502 523589
	Stock Condition Surveyor	Danny Rushmere	01502 523586
	Housing Maintenance Inspectors	Michael Knights	01502 523587
	. To do the first term of the	Darren Smith	01502 523456
		Mark Osborne	01502 523486
	Support Services Supervisor	Rosie Lambert	01502 523577
	The Call Centre Team/Enquiries Call Centre		01502 523593
	Technical Assistant	Mark Norman	01502 523464
	Out of Hours Repairs		01502 515435
	Supervisors		
	(Electrical)	Mark Thurston	01502 523479
	(Plumbing)	Derek Fairhead	01502 523495
	(Voids/Brick & Path Laying)	Les Blowers	01502 523588
	(Kitchens & Painting) service team	Ian Ellwood	01502 523581
	Quality Monitoring Officer	Barry Varden	01502 523489
	Support Services Officer	Andrew Duncan	01502 523496
	Estates Caretaker	Adrian Brown	07788 958680
	Useful Numbers		
	Police - Non Emergency		101
	Marina Centre		01502 562111
	Waveney Norse		01502 527100
	Tenant and Residents Associations		
	Beeches Estate Tenants & Residents Association	on	01502 574802
	Gunton Estate Tenants & Residents Associatio	01502 564601	
	Halesworth & Holton Tenants & Residents Association		07785 798592
	Beccles Tenants & Residents Association		01502 219100
	Whitton Tenants & Residents Association		01502 584973
	Shadingfield & Willingham Tenants Representa	ative	01502 575259

Satisfaction Survey April – November 2014

These figures are the outcome of the monthly random survey carried out by an independent company on our behalf. The data in green is the percentage of tenants satisfied and the data in the red box is the percentage of tenants dissatisfied. The figure does not add up to 100% as some people did not express a view either way.

A monthly survey of 100 tenants takes place by an independent company to find out what you think. You were asked:

How Satisfied were you with the service provided by the Housing Team?



How Satisfied were you with the quality of your home?

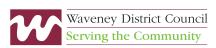


How Satisfied were you with the maintenance to your home?



How Satisfied were you that your views were acted upon?





Published by Waveney District Council Housing on behalf of Waveney Tenants Forum.

Housing Services, WDC, Lowestoft, NR32 1HS Tel: 01502 562111 Website: www.waveney.gov.uk