

HOUSING TIMES



Many of you who attended this year's conference told us that this was the best to date. Even though this year's conference was later than usual we had extremely good weather and an exceptional turn out of over 120 tenants and leaseholders.

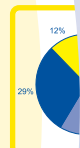
Without doubt the main attraction for many of our Asian delegates who attended were our guest speakers, Rt. Hon Baroness Uddin and T.V. presenter Roni Mirza. Both speakers, well known for their passion on community involvement and community leadership, gave inspiring speeches and held lively debates.



Each year we try to make the conference not just enjoyable and informative, but also use this opportunity to let our tenants and leaseholders know about new initiatives from Government or in Housing across the country. One of the workshops was dedicated to two of these new initiatives, Choice Based Lettings, a new way of allocating housing which will give tenants a greater say on where they would like to live. The other initiative is a reward scheme for tenants who stick to their tenancy agreement and meet certain other criteria (see page 5).



YOUR FEE



YOUR FEE



HOUS



HOUS

LET'S TALK RUBBISH

From January 2008 St Albans Council will be rolling out a new refuse and recycling collection service across the District and there will be important changes to how your refuse is collected.



CHANGE 1

For householders the first change will be how the rubbish is collected. From February, householders will need to place their refuse sacks at the front boundary of their property and not at the rear or by back doors.

(If any resident feels that they may have significant difficulty in moving their refuse to the front boundary of their property they should contact the Council in writing or Mr A. Challender, Waste Management Officer on 01727 819285 or email a.challender@stalbans.gov.uk. Each request will be individually assessed in order for the existing arrangements to continue.)

CHANGE 2

Instead of receiving the usual 2 refuse bags following weekly collections, householders will now receive a bulk delivery of approximately 80 bags on a roll. This bulk delivery is part of an improved recycling service and will be phased in over the coming year.

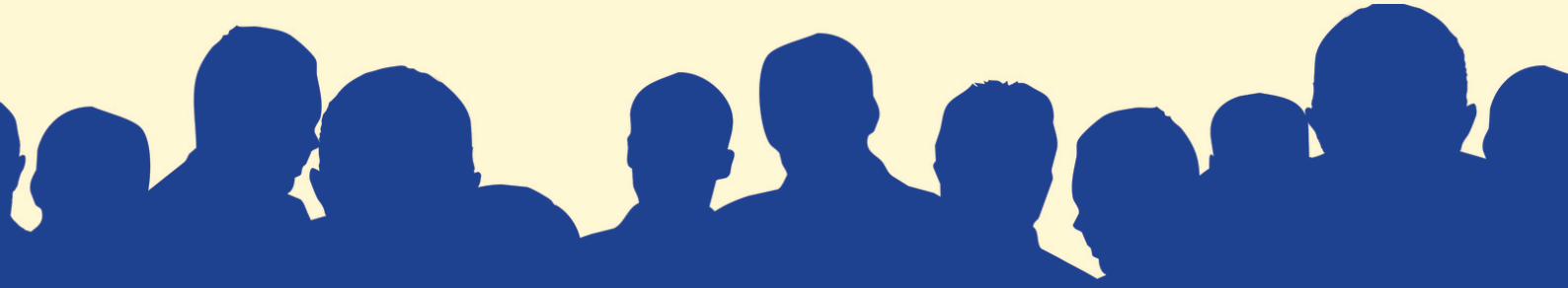
CHANGE 3

Following the many requests we have received to step up the glass collection across the district, from January glass collection will be extended to all households who do not currently have this service.

If you currently do not have glass collection in your area look out for the delivery of your glass collection box.

Further information giving details of the changes to refuse, recycling and collection days will be sent to all households shortly.

For larger household items there is a **SPECIAL REFUSE COLLECTION SERVICE**. This service is provided by the Council for collection of bulky items from your home (eg furniture, carpets, white goods, etc). There is a charge of £23.50 for up to 6 items or FREE if you are on Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit, Job Seekers Allowance, Income Supporting, Working Tax Credit, Pension Credit. **If you would like more information or the Special Refuse Collection leaflet contact Client Services on 01727 819285.**



GOING PUBLIC BUT WORKING UNDERCOVER - *S.A.M.S. (St. Albans Mystery Shoppers)*

This elite group of highly trained tenants are licensed to.....check and scrutinise. From January 2008 this '00' team will be checking on the quality of the services you receive from the Housing Department. Only one person in the Council knows their true identities so they can work undercover, moving swiftly around the district to investigate and find the facts. Are we delivering our promises in Housing?

S.A.M.S. will be looking at areas such as repairs reporting, customer satisfaction, telephone manner, helpfulness,

response times for handling queries from (a) telephone calls, (b) letters, (c) emails and (d) face to face visits at the Council's Offices. S.A.M.S will report back their findings in the Housing Times.

If you would like the team to investigate an area of service in the Housing Department or you would like to join SAMS on a future mission contact Jenny Owen, Tenant Participation Officer on 01727 819387 or email j.owen@stalbans.gov.uk

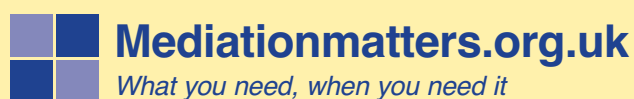
DIFFICULTIES WITH NEIGHBOURS?

Have you heard that 3 heads are better than 2?

Most of the time we wonder what we would do without the help and support of our neighbours but sometimes disagreements can happen and this can be a very difficult time for everyone concerned. Issues like car parking, children, noise and rubbish can escalate from minor disagreements to heated disputes and that is when you need a cool level headed person to talk to.

Mediation Hertfordshire is an independent mediation service and they could provide the answer. Mediation Hertfordshire's mediators will not take sides, judge or blame but will try to help by exploring available options and helping everyone concerned to reach an agreement that everyone can live with.

The service is free and confidential for all residents of St. Albans.

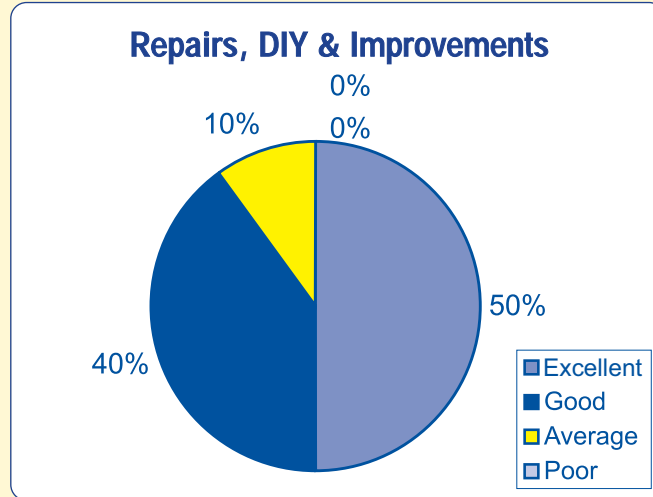


3 Halsey Drive
Hemel Hempstead
Hertfordshire
HP1 3SE

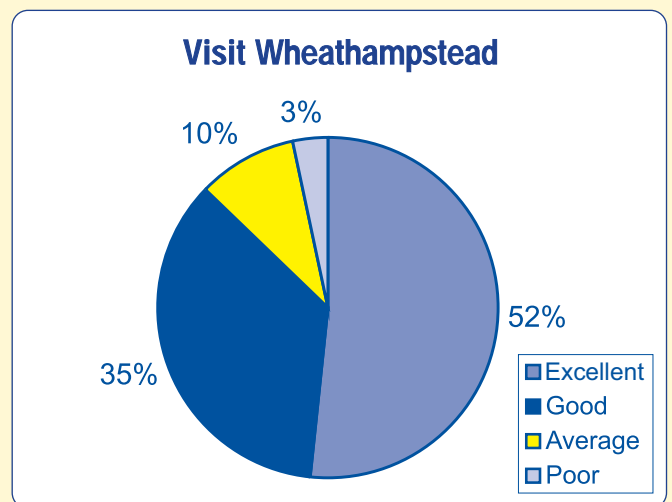
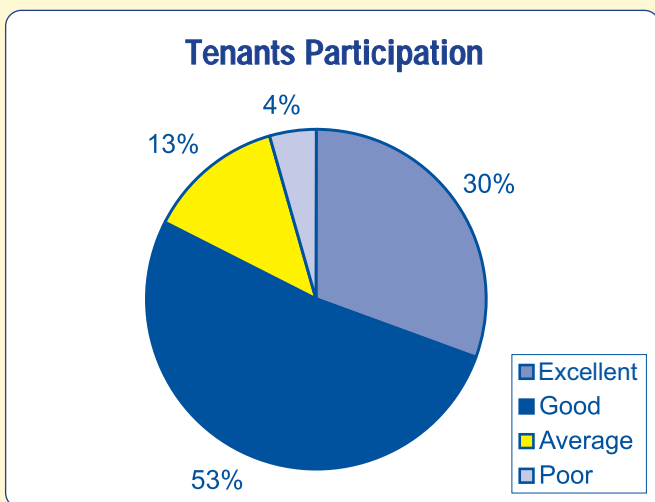
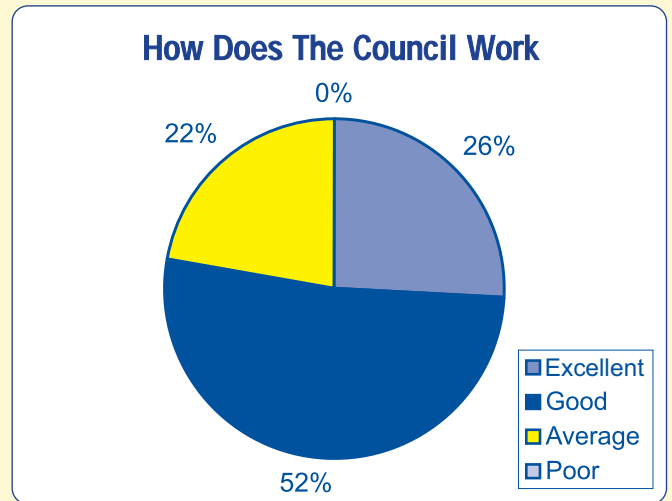
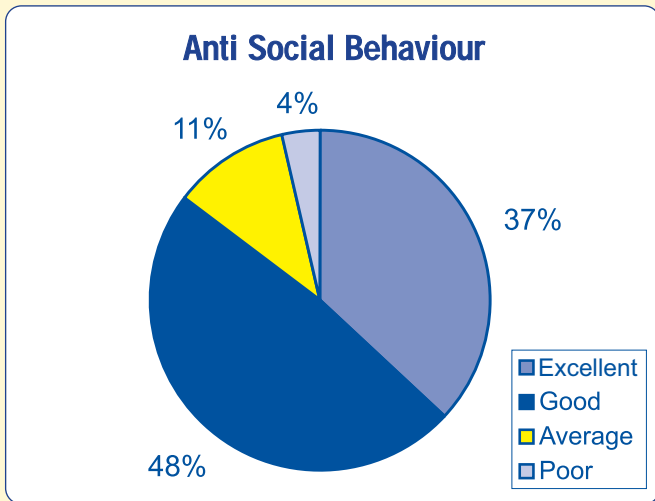
T. 01442 268044/243402
E. help@mediationmatters.org.uk

RESIDENTS' CONFERENCE

Feedback from this year's conference shows Repairs, DIY Improvement workshop was a clear favourite with everyone. This workshop was full of useful hints on home decorating and DIY ideas and everyone in the workshop had an opportunity to have a go at some of the DIY tips under the direction of expert tradesmen.



A regular favourite, back again by popular request, was Neil Kieran ASBO Officer's workshop on Anti-Social Behaviour. Other workshops were Tenant Participation, and How the Council Works. But only one workshop managed the 'Oooo' factor and that was the coach trip to Wheathampstead to look at new bungalows built for tenants with mobility needs. This workshop created a lot of interest from tenants at the conference and as a result we will be featuring regular updates on new developments. (See page 6 for current development news)



VOICE FEEDBACK

IT'S ALL ABOUT CHOICE – YOUR CHOICE

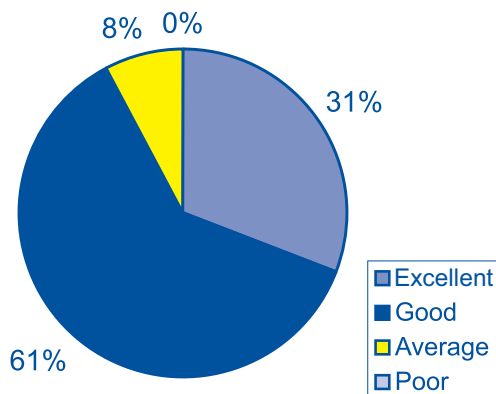
Choice Based Lettings Schemes - a way of allocating social housing by giving tenants a greater say over where they live. Choice Based Lettings has been widely welcomed by tenants and local Councils where this has been implemented.

How does it work? – the scheme allows people to apply for advertised social housing vacancies (this could be in the local press, on an inter-active website or in special newsletters). Applicants can see the full range of available properties and apply (bid) for any home which is suitable for their needs. (eg a single person will not be entitled to bid for a 3 bed-roomed property).

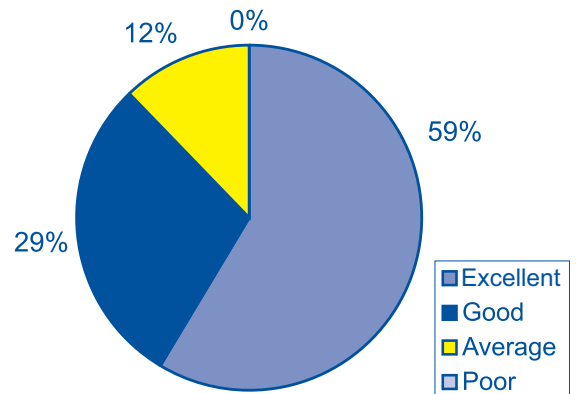
To make the most of the Choice Based Lettings Scheme St. Albans will be a part of a local consortium with Watford, Three Rivers, Hertsmere and Welwyn/Hatfield.

If you would like an information leaflet OR would like to be invited to the forthcoming consultation events contact Housing Admin on 01727 819411.

Choice Based Lettings



Refreshments/Bufferet



Tenants Reward Scheme

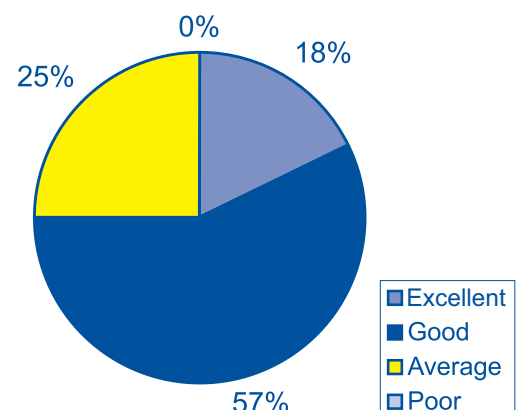
What a great idea for the Housing Department to say 'thank you' to our responsible tenants, who keep to their tenancy agreement, look after their homes and gardens with loving care.

To help us set the right rewards for this scheme we have enclosed a short questionnaire. Please complete and return to the Housing Department using the Freepost address on the questionnaire. You decide how much and how often we should run this reward scheme.

Benefits to you – joining the scheme is free and automatic if you meet the following conditions : -

- Be a Secure or Introductory Tenant.
- Have a clear rent account (or maintained an agreement to clear any arrears for at least 13 weeks).
- Not owe any outstanding monies to other Departments within the Council.
- No Court Order for breach of Tenancy or Anti-Social Behaviour.
- Allow the Council's service engineers access to your property for annual gas service.

Tenants Reward Scheme



Housing Development News

St Albans Council working in partnership with local housing associations to provide much needed affordable housing in the district.

WHAT'S IN DEVELOPMENT NOW ?

Area	Units and tenure	Bedrooms	Type	Completion	Housing Association
Smallford	3 (General needs)	3 Bedrooms	House	December 2007	Hightown Praetorian and Churches Housing Association
Camp	2 1 (Shared Ownership)	1 Bedroom 3 Bedroom	Flat House	December 2007	Hightown Praetorian and Churches Housing Association
Camp	2 (General needs)	3 Bedrooms	House	December 2007	Hightown Praetorian and Churches Housing Association
Redbourn	4 3 (Shared Ownership for key workers)	1 Bedroom 2 Bedroom	Flat Flat	January 2008	Circle Anglia Housing Association
Harpenden	3 1 (For Teachers and key workers)	1 Bedroom 3 Bedroom	Flat House	NOW AVAILABLE	Rothamstead Research and Lawes Agricultural Trust

WHAT'S IN DEVELOPMENT SOON ?

Area	Units and tenure	Bedrooms	Type	Completion	Housing Association
Hatfield Road St Albans	8 Specially designated for elderly persons	1-bedroom	Flats	Watch this space	Aldwyck Housing Association
Across the District	Looking to convert unused shop units into temporary accommodation for disabled persons			Watch this space	
Across the District	Converting unsuitable temporary accommodation units into self-contained flats for temporary accommodation			Watch this space	
Across the District	Looking for potential sites to build accommodation for young people with physically or learning needs			Watch this space	
St Albans City Station Car Park	107	1/2 bedrooms	Flats & Houses	2009	
Park Street Formerly Kwik Save site)	64	A range of sizes	Flats & Houses	Watch this space	

If you would like more information on any of the above project please contact Mr David Reavill, Development Officer on 01727 819382 or email d.reavill@stalbens.gov.uk

ESTATE LEVEL AGREEMENTS

During the last few months Housing Officers have been holding meetings and walkabouts across the district, they have been meeting with tenants and leaseholders, taking note of your comments and suggestions for estate improvements to your local area. So what has the Housing Department done with all these suggestions? The charts below show what improvements we have already completed and improvements waiting to start.

Estate Agreements can and do improve your local area. If you have not attended a walkabout or meeting before, come along to the next advertised event. It's not necessary to walk the whole area with us, you can join us for as much or as little of the walkabout as interests you.

Minor Estate Improvements completed

Improvement Work	Location of work	Cost
Lockable metal posts	Albert Street/Pageant Road	£1,160
Garden Shed for shared use	East Lane, Wheathampstead	£1,133
Timber bollards	Birchwood Way, Park Street	£588
2 parking bays	Birchwood Way, Park Street	£3,350
Lockable post	Church Street	£165
Bollards and metal post	Beeching Close garages – Harpenden	£1,300
Construct footpath	Berners Drive – Cottonmill	£1,200
Enclose existing fence	Beeching Close garages - Harpenden	£495
Security lighting	Bowling Close - Harpenden	£92
Post to protect grass verge	Nicholas Close - New Green	£337
Construct footpath	Gorse Corner - Southdown	£1,500

Minor Estate Improvements due to start shortly

Improvement Work	Location of work	Est.Cost
Barrier	Sleapshyde Lane garages - Smallford	£ 350
Construct new path	Lower Luton Road - Wheathampstead	£2,000
Construct barrier behind play area	Riverside Road - Cottonmill	£3,000
Height Barrier	Telford Road garages - London Colney	£350
Parking Bays	Tassell Hall - Redbourn	£6,500
Erect fencing	Broom Corner - Southdown	£2,000
Lockable posts	Mount Pleasant - City Centre	£1,000
Rotary dryers	Queens Court –Hatfield Road	£500
Timber bollards	Fairhaven – Park Street	£500
Height Barrier	Drakes Drive - garages	£350

Leaseholders Section

Early in 2007 we sent a questionnaire to all our leaseholders in the district and as result we will be adding a regular section for leaseholders. This section will be used to inform leaseholders of issues, and changes within the Housing Department. In the coming editions we will address some of the main issues you have highlighted in the leaseholders' survey.

If you have other topics or queries that you would like included in the Housing Times, please contact Mrs Louise Wallis, Senior Management Officer on **01727 819414** or email **l.wallis@stalbans.gov.uk**

Important information for leaseholders

You may already be aware that starting in 2008 and ending in 2012, TV services in the UK will go completely digital. This will happen a region at a time in the UK as the existing 'analogue' signals are switched off and replaced with a 'digital' signal. Any television set not converted to receive 'digital' when the switchover takes place will no longer receive TV programmes.

As it is the responsibility of the Council to renew all communal TV aerials systems across the district. Formal consultation will be starting early in the new year with leaseholders. Early consultation will allow the Housing Department to plan well and be cost effective in procuring new equipment. Your involvement during the consultation period will be invaluable so keep a look out for further information in the new year.

Direct dial to the housing services

All numbers have the area code of 01727 to be used if dialling from outside St Albans.

Reporting Repairs
daytime.....819256

Reporting Repairs
out of hours819493

Emergency Repairs
out of hours811155

Transfers819262

Housing Register.....819480

Homelessness819408

Lettings.....819585

Rent Accounts819414/5/7/8

Rent Arrears819414/5/7/8

Tenancy Problems.....819414/5/7/8

Garages.....819256

Mutual Exchange.....819414/5/7/8

Retirement Housing.....836093

Ethnic Minority Issues819463

Or you can fax your
enquiries to.....819493

Useful Addresses/Telephone numbers

Housing Services
Council Offices, Civic Centre,
St Peters Street, St Albans AL1 3JE
Telephone: 01727 866100

Dog Wardens
Tel: 01727 819371

Emergency Number
Outside of the normal working hours
Tel: 01727 811155

Overview and Scrutiny Committee Community Services

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee meets regularly throughout the year as does the Housing Liaison Consultative Forum. Members of the public are welcome to attend.

The Committees meet at the District Council offices, unless otherwise notified.

Dates of forthcoming meetings

Overview and
Scrutiny Committee
Community Services

15 January 2008 7.00 p.m.
5 March 2008 7.00 p.m.

Housing Liaison
Consultative Forum

31 January 2008 7.45 p.m.

Information

Who are your Councillors?

Portfolio Holder for Housing - Councillor Aislinn Lee

Housing Liaison Members:

Councillor Joyce Lusby (Chair)
Councillor Ian Day
Councillor David Poor

Councillor Albert Pawle
Councillor Janet Smith

Send us your news and views



Have you got something to say or a story to share with others? Have you got a grumble, or perhaps a compliment?

If so, please write to us at The Housing Department, St Albans City and District Council, Council Offices, Civic Centre, St Peters Street, St Albans AL1 3JE Telephone: 01727 866100

اس میگزین کے مضامین کے اپنی زبان میں ترجمہ کے بارے میں اگر آپ ایک کونسل آفیسر سے بات
کرنا چاہیں تو براہ مہربانی ٹیلیفون نمبر 01727 819463 پر ممتاز رحیم سے بات کریں۔

আপনি যদি এই ম্যাগাজিনের বিষয়-বস্তুর বাংলা ভাষায় অনুবাদ নিয়ে
কাউন্সিলের কোন একজন অফিসারের সাথে আলাপ করতে চান,
তাহলে মমতাজ রহিমকে 01727 819463 নম্বরে ফোন করুন।