

Housing Times

Spring 2020

Tenant Forum
17th March –
see page 3

New Council Housing in St Albans

The Council's housing department has received £1.26m of government funding to contribute to the development of 42 new Council homes.

Warner House in Cell Barnes Lane, St Albans is a development of 12 one-bedroom and 12 two-bedroom apartments. These will be available to applicants on the Housing Register over the age of 55 (*see page 4*).

Mereden Court in Tavistock Avenue, St Albans is being refurbished to provide 14 one-bedroom and 4 two-bedroom apartments. These will be available to all applicants on the Housing Register.



Both developments are expected to complete in the Summer of 2020.

In addition, 28 new properties have been completed at Hawking's House, Valley Road, St Albans. These apartments will be managed by Catalyst Housing and let to applicants on the Housing Register.

Meet Cllr Jacqui Taylor the Portfolio Holder

Cllr Jacqui Taylor was appointed Portfolio Holder for Housing Services after the local elections in May 2019. She is originally from Sheffield but came to live in St Albans over 15 years ago with her now husband who grew up here, attending Cunningham and Townsend schools.



She says that since moving to St Albans she has never owned a car and so has spent a lot of time walking around the streets and observing first-hand some of the problems and issues affecting the local community.

This led to her contacting her local councillors to raise issues. They in turn suggested she get active locally and consider standing for the Council herself.

Jacqui's aim as Portfolio Holder is to support the Council in delivering more good quality social housing, make sure existing housing is maintained to a good standard through well planned housing investment and also to do more about rough sleeping, homelessness and their underlying causes.

Call for Landlords

Mosaic Lettings is a council-run lettings service with additional benefits for landlords. The service is run by St Albans City and District Council.

It works to provide good homes in the private-rented sector for local people and is keen to hear from landlords.

The extra benefits available to landlords include no tenant search fees, no monthly charges, and no set-up costs.

There's a £200 bonus when you let a property, free tenant background checks, free inventory, and free regular inspections undertaken by professionals.

Mosaic Lettings will also provide a bond deposit equivalent to two months rent, and will cover an additional two months rent if the property is void and re-let through Mosaic Lettings.

Interested landlords should contact the team at mosaic.lettings@stalbans.gov.uk or 01727 814674.



Discretionary Housing Payments

Are you in receipt of Housing Benefit or Universal Credit but are in arrears or struggling to pay your rent? If so, you may be able to apply for a Discretionary Housing Payment.



A Discretionary Housing Payment is an extra payment to help people who are struggling to pay their rent. They are used to help prevent homelessness and eviction and you don't normally have to repay them.

To be considered, you will need to be in receipt of Housing Benefit or the housing element of Universal Credit.

The payments are intended to be short-term awards and usually paid for a maximum of 3 months.

It could be that you are affected by the Benefit Cap or the Bedroom Tax. A Discretionary Housing Payment may be awarded while you look for work or downsize to a smaller property.

Depending on circumstances we can also award such payments to cover rent arrears. Various rules and criteria apply.

To apply, complete a Discretionary Housing Payment form available on our website, or telephone **01727 819220** and we can email you or send one in the post.

Can you help us to improve the Housing Service?

Our Residents are the best people to tell us what works well and how we can do better.

We want to work closely with tenants and leaseholders in looking at the way we deliver services: if our focus is on the right services and whether we are efficient, effective and deliver value for money.

Residents have the chance to give us honest views and opinions about the services provided to Council tenants and leaseholders.

Resident Engagement is a two-way process so that residents and staff share information and work together to make the right choices and decisions. This means residents being able to influence policies, procedures and outcomes. Successful partnerships can lead to improved and cost effective services.

Have your say by joining the Tenants Forum

The Tenants Forum works hard on your behalf but recently membership has dwindled. This means that the tenants' voice is not as loud, your opportunity to tell us what you think is being missed and above all, the chance to make a real difference is being lost!

The Tenants Forum is looking for new members who can help to scrutinise the Council's landlord services. Please do come along to any of our meetings:

The Forum is meeting on the following dates:

Tuesday 17th March 2020 2.30 - 4.30pm

Tuesday 16th June 2020 10.30 - 12noon

Thursday 17th September 2020 2.30 - 4.30pm

Thursday 17th December 2020 10.30 - 12noon

Tea/coffee and light refreshments are available half an hour before the meetings start.

Not sure and would like to know more first?

Please contact Sue Carroll at susan.carroll@stalbans.gov.uk or telephone her on **01727 819567**, she will be happy to chat with you and answer any questions you have about the Forum.



Have you been impacted by a crime? If you have, you could access free and confidential support from one of our trained Case Managers at Beacon Victim Care.

We are an organisation that works within Hertfordshire to support victims, witnesses and anyone impacted by a crime, whether this crime is reported to the police or not. Crime can impact people in lots of different ways, and we know that sometimes it can feel difficult to cope with what has happened. To help with this we can offer:

- Practical support and information
- Emotional support and someone to talk to in confidence
- Liaison with other organisations
- Signposting to other helpful agencies, and referrals to specialist support
- Restorative Justice.

If you would like to get in touch with us to find out more, you can call us on **0300 011 5555 (Option 3)** from 8 - 6pm on Mondays-Fridays, and 8am - 8pm on Wednesdays. Alternatively you can email us on Info.Hertfordshirebeacon@catch-22.org.uk.

Work continues on new Council Homes

Work is progressing well on 24 new build apartments on the former Wavell House site which will be let to applicants from the Council's Housing Register.

The roof finishes are now complete and the external rendering is well advanced. Work has started on the inside of the building and the internal walls are now in place.

Warner House is named after Edward Warner, who was born and raised in St Albans and was awarded the Victoria Cross for gallantry during the First World War. It is due for completion in the summer of this year.

Our contractor on the site, Jarvis Contracting Limited, worked with Cunningham Junior School to run a 'Design your Dream Home' competition. The response was very positive, over 40 entries were received with prizes awarded for first, second and third place by Jarvis.

The three storey building will consist of 12 x 1 bed apartments and 12 x 2 bed apartments for rent and will have lift access.



Manage your Rent and Council Tax Online!

Did you know you can now manage both your Rent and Council Tax Online?

If you've signed up for your 'MyStAlbans' District Account you can view the balance of your Rent and Council Tax accounts and make payments too.

There are many other services available through 'MyStAlbans'. The Council is adding new ones all the time.

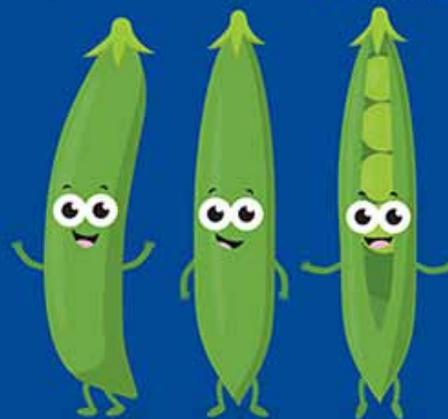
For example, you can see what payments you have made in the past and download a copy of your Council Tax Bill. You can see how your rent has been calculated and make an application to extend or modify your home or rent a garage. You can contact your housing officer to report any issues and concerns you may have. You can also choose to receive your Council Tax Bills electronically, which helps save trees! You can also find out when your bin is due to be emptied, who your local Councillor is and how to contact them, view planning applications in your area, and much more!

Sign up today at: <https://stalbands.force.com/mysadc/s/login/>

MyStAlbans

District Account

It's **easy peasy** to sign up for your personal **MyStAlbans** District Account



If you are already a council tenant and are interested in moving to Warner House or another smaller property you may be entitled to benefit from our Tenants' Incentive Scheme.

We will pay a grant of £1,700 if you make all your own arrangements and an additional £250 if your current property is left in a good condition.

There are various other options for tenants using the incentive scheme, including removals, redecoration and carpeting.

If you would like any more information about Warner House or the Tenants' Incentive Scheme please contact Rebecca Hillman, Principal Strategic Housing and Development Officer (email rebecca.hillman@stalbands.gov.uk or telephone **01727 819586**).



Temporary Accommodation – making the best use of money

The Homelessness Reduction Act, introduced in April 2018, has resulted in an increase in people approaching the Council as homeless. Many of the households we accommodate in temporary accommodation now stay with us longer.

This has meant the Council's Housing Support team have had to work extra hard to ensure we get Council-owned temporary accommodation ready for occupation as soon as possible.

We avoid placing families in bed and breakfast accommodation wherever possible as these tend not to have kitchens which makes normal life difficult, and expensive, for people. A prompt turnaround of our properties helps minimise their use, as does close working relationship with Housing Associations.

When it comes to buying goods and services, and paying for accommodation, the way we buy such things means we are able to get best value for money, and focus our resources where they are most needed.

Retirement Housing in the District

The Council's retirement housing is located in Redbourn and London Colney. Our self-contained one-bedroom and studio flats have kitchens and bathrooms designed with older people in mind. Central Heating and hot water are supplied from a communal boiler for which a small weekly charge is payable.



Gertrude Peake House, Redbourn.

Every flat contains an alarm system to summon help in an emergency. There is also a controlled door entry and fire alarm system fitted for added safety.

All available sheltered accommodation in the District is advertised through St Albans Home Choice Website at www.stalbanshomechoice.co.uk. Applicants can 'bid' for properties using the Choice Based Letting system.

St Albans Prospex –

Training opportunities for local people.

The St Albans Prospex scheme is run by the Council's repairs contractor, Morgan Sindall Property Services. As part of their contract with us, they provide training for local residents. The Prospex course, for example, involves three weeks classroom-based activities and three weeks 'on the job' experience. During the last Prospex course, three people were offered apprenticeships with the company as a result of the scheme.

The company also offers digital workshops for residents wanting to learn about getting on to the internet, as well as sessions for parents about internet safety for children.

To express an interest in future opportunities please email csr@morgansindall.com



Warner House painting competition

Our contractor, Jarvis, worked with Cunningham Junior School to run a 'Design your Dream Home' competition. Over 40 entries were received with Jarvis awarding prizes for first, second and third place.



Concerned about a Rough Sleeper?

The Council works with a number of partner agencies to provide help and support to rough sleepers at times of cold weather.

This winter, extra beds are being provided to rough sleepers throughout the winter up to the end of March. In addition to providing a bed for the night, rough sleepers are provided with tailored housing advice to help them move on to secure accommodation.

There are a number of ways people can help rough sleepers. See our 'Concerned About a Rough Sleeper' leaflet for details (available on our website).

Concerned about someone sleeping rough?

Download the **StreetLink** app or visit the website at www.streetlink.org.uk to make an alert and help connect them to local services for support

StreetLink
www.streetlink.org.uk



Your Housing Team

Area	Housing Income Team Manager Lina Clifford lina.clifford@stalbans.gov.uk	Neighbourhood Management Team Manager Sue Carroll susan.carroll@stalbans.gov.uk
Batford, Harpenden, Pimlico, Redbourn, Sandridge, Southdown	Jenetta Barker jenetta.barker@stalbans.gov.uk 01727 819498	Macie McCormack macie.mccormack@stalbans.gov.uk 01727 819387
Batchwood, Newgate Close, New Greens, Thirlestane, Tudor Road, Valley Road area, Wheathamstead	Julia Thacker julia.thacker@stalbans.gov.uk 01727 819383	Rosie Coke rosie.coke@stalbans.gov.uk 01727 819525
Bricket Wood, Chiswell Green, City Centre area, Hatfield Road, Park Street, Sopwell, Telford Court,	Samantha Sandiford samantha.sandiford@stalbans.gov.uk 01727 819404	Jackie Beaney jackie.beaney@stalbans.gov.uk 01727 819554
Camp area, Colney Heath, Dellfield, London Colney, Marshalswick, Smallford	Errol Curniffe errol.curniffe@stalbans.gov.uk 01727 296124	Ella Malyon ella.malyon@stalbans.gov.uk 01727 296131

Useful contacts

Reporting Repairs – daytime
Monday to Thursday 8.45am to 5.15pm
Friday 8.45am to 4.45pm
stalbansrepairs@morgansindall.com
01727 819256

Emergency Repairs – out of hours
01727 811155

Housing Options – including Transfers & Allocations
housing.options@stalbans.gov.uk
01727 819355

Housing Management – Tenancy
housingmanagement@stalbans.gov.uk
01727 819534

Housing Benefits
benefits@stalbans.gov.uk
01727 819220

Housing Support/Temporary Accommodation Team
temp.team@stalbans.gov.uk
01727 819397

Housing Income
housingincome@stalbans.gov.uk
01727 819301

Garages
garages@stalbans.gov.uk
01727 819266

Citizens Advice
03444 111444

Leasehold management
leaseholders@stalbans.gov.uk
01727 819578

Disability Adaptations/Facilities Grants
dfgapplications@stalbans.gov.uk
01727 814667 & 01727 819446