

# HousingTimes

Summer 2016

## Pay to Stay is coming

Pay to Stay – higher rent for high income tenants

The 'Pay to Stay' scheme forms part of the Government's Housing and Planning Act 2016. Under the scheme we have to charge high earning tenants a higher rent with the difference between the existing rent and the higher rent being paid to the Government to help reduce the deficit.

Some of our tenants have a household income that exceeds £31,000 per year. This means they will be affected by the 'Pay to Stay' scheme. We don't know the full details of the scheme at this stage but we do know that:

- The new 'Pay to Stay' scheme is due to start in April 2017.
- In St Albans District, the scheme will affect tenants whose combined household income exceeds £31,000.
- Adult children living at home are not included in the calculation – the scheme will apply only to the main tenant and their partner – whether married or not.
- Tenants will pay an extra 15p for every £1 that their income exceeds the £31,000 threshold, up to a maximum of the market rent for the property.
- Tenants who fail to disclose details of their household income will have to pay the full market rent for their home.
- We will need to pay any extra rental income collected through the scheme to the Government. Later this year we will be writing to tenants who may be affected once we know more about how the scheme will work.



# New Homes Update

New housing developments help us to meet the demand for Council and Housing Association managed homes in the District. We currently have a number of development schemes underway.

## Using derelict garage sites for new homes

In recent years we have been working with housing association partners to develop homes on former garage sites including those with problems of anti-social behaviour and vandalism.

**Telford Road, London Colney** – We are working in partnership with North Herts Homes to deliver three shared ownership and four social rented properties.

**Cotlandswick, London Colney** – Again in partnership with North Herts Homes we are considering the redevelopment of a garage site in Cotlandswick for two shared ownership and five affordable rent properties.





**Batchwood Garage sites** – This covers various sites in Blundell Close, Ladies Grove and Partridge Road. Work is expected to start later this year to deliver twenty five homes for social rent across the three garage sites. These properties will be built by the Council and are expected to be completed in winter 2017.

**Sandridge Garage sites** – Planning permission has been granted to develop twenty three homes on the former garage sites at Langley Grove and St Leonards Crescent. Sheltered Housing We are also redeveloping some of our sheltered housing.

**Victor Smith Court, Brickett Wood** – We expect to complete the redevelopment later this year. It will provide eighteen sheltered housing units for social rent. The new name for the development is Choristers Court.

**Betty Entwistle House** – The planning application is due to be submitted this summer for the redevelopment of forty one mixed age flexi care units. There will be a mixed provision of shared ownership and affordable rent.

**Linley Court** – This is currently being used as temporary accommodation until building work begins. The site is to be redeveloped by Aldwyck Housing into twenty eight 1 and 2 bedroom flats for rent.



## IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR PEOPLE CLAIMING HOUSING BENEFIT & COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT

If you receive Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Support, the amount you get is based on the information which you give the Council. You must tell us about any changes in your circumstances.

### The sorts of changes you need to report are:

- If your income, or the income of anyone in your household, goes up or down.
- If your savings go up or down.
- If anyone moves in or moves out of your home.
- If you move home or your rent changes.
- If you are going to be away from your property for more than 13 weeks.
- If your children leave school or start work.
- If you start or stop receiving any other state benefit such as Income Support, Job Seekers Allowance, Employment Support Allowance, Tax Credits, Child Benefit, Pension Credit, Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payments.

It is your responsibility to keep us informed about your financial circumstances. Telling another Government department is not enough. If you fail to tell the Council about a change, you may lose out on help to which you are entitled. If you deliberately don't tell us about a change that would mean you receive less help, the Council may take action against you and claim back money owed.

This could include Court Action.

For further information contact us at:

[benefits@stalbans.gov.uk](mailto:benefits@stalbans.gov.uk) or on 01727 819220

REPORT  
BENEFIT  
FRAUD

If you know someone claiming benefits to which they are not entitled, you can report this in strictest confidence by telephoning the National Fraud Hotline on 0800 854 400. Your call is free and you do not have to give your name and address. Lines are open Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm. Alternatively you can report it online at [www.gov.uk/report-benefit-fraud](http://www.gov.uk/report-benefit-fraud)



**St Albans**  
City & District Council



# Improving local homes

Each year, the Council invests in improvement works to local homes. These include things like re-roofing properties and replacing doors and windows.

These works are identified and prioritised through our Stock Condition Surveys which tell us about the state of our properties. We work to an improvement programme covering 3-5 years.

Once necessary improvement works are identified, our surveyors contact tenants and leaseholders about what the plans are.

If leaseholders are required to contribute more than £250 toward the works, we have a legal duty to consult formally with them.

We expect to carry out a number of planned works to the blocks of flats we manage locally. A programme of works for the next 5 years is available via the leasehold section in the Housing pages on our website. You can look up your address and see what improvement works will be carried out over the next 5 years in your area. For more information please email [clyde.green@stalbans.gov.uk](mailto:clyde.green@stalbans.gov.uk) or call **01727 819489**.



## Your Housing Team

Area	Housing Income Team Manager – (vacant post – recruitment underway)	Neighbourhood Management Team (Manager Sue Carroll) <a href="mailto:susan.carroll@stalbans.gov.uk">susan.carroll@stalbans.gov.uk</a>
Batford, Harpenden, Southdown, Pimlico, Redbourn, Sandridge, Newgate Close, Hatfield Road, Thirlestane	Jenetta Barker <a href="mailto:jenetta.barker@stalbans.gov.uk">jenetta.barker@stalbans.gov.uk</a>	Macie McCormack <a href="mailto:macie.mccormack@stalbans.gov.uk">macie.mccormack@stalbans.gov.uk</a>
Batchwood, New Greens, Camp area, Tudor Road, Valley Road area	Julia Thacker <a href="mailto:julia.thacker@stalbans.gov.uk">julia.thacker@stalbans.gov.uk</a>	Rosie Alphonse <a href="mailto:rosie.alphonse@stalbans.gov.uk">rosie.alphonse@stalbans.gov.uk</a>
Sopwell, City Centre area, Telford Court, Wheathampstead	Kellie Kelley <a href="mailto:kellie.kelley@stalbans.gov.uk">kellie.kelley@stalbans.gov.uk</a>	Jackie Beaney <a href="mailto:jackie.beaney@stalbans.gov.uk">jackie.beaney@stalbans.gov.uk</a>
Bricket Wood, Chiswell Green, Colney Heath, London Colney, Dellfield, Marshalswick, Park Street, Smallford	Diane Harlow <a href="mailto:diane.harlow@stalbans.gov.uk">diane.harlow@stalbans.gov.uk</a>	Samantha Sandiford <a href="mailto:samantha.sandiford@stalbans.gov.uk">samantha.sandiford@stalbans.gov.uk</a>

All staff can be contacted via the duty phone line **01727 819301**.

# Changes to Housing Benefit

## The 'Benefit Cap' is reducing

In 2013 the Government introduced the '**Benefit Cap**'. This restricted the total amount of 'out of work' benefits a household can receive. Out of work benefits includes things like Housing Benefit, Job Seekers Allowance, Income Support, Child Tax Credit and Child Benefit.

This cap is currently £26,000 per year (or £500 per week) for couples or claimants with dependent children. This means, with a few exceptions, households may not currently receive more than £500 per week in benefits. This cap actually only affects a very small number of households in the District. Those families tend to be living in privately rented accommodation and in receipt of high levels of Housing Benefit and Child Tax Credit.

The Government has announced that from autumn 2016, this cap will be reduced to **£20,000 per year (or £384.62 per week)** for couples and claimants with children living outside of London. For single claimants living outside London with no children the cap will be £13,400 per year (or £257.69 per week).

This change is likely to mean more households will be affected by the cap, **including people getting Housing Benefit and living in Council accommodation**. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has identified who is likely to be affected by this change and has already written to these households. This letter explained what options are available to people who will be subject to this new lower cap.

The Benefit Cap does not apply if you (or, if applicable, your partner) are working and getting Working Tax Credit. To be entitled to Working Tax Credit you have to be working at least 24 hours per week, or 16 hours per week if you are a lone parent. For single people without children, you have to be working 30 hours per week to be entitled to Working Tax Credit. If there are barriers that are stopping you moving into employment, the DWP will be able to help you with this. For example, you may be entitled to help with child care costs. They may also be able to help with training, work experience and finding suitable employment.

The Benefit Cap also does not apply if you, or a member of your family, is disabled and in receipt of certain disability benefits. Following a recent court case it may also not apply if you are a Carer and are getting Carers Allowance.

Over the next few months the Council's Housing Department will be working closely with the DWP to help support affected households. We may write to you or visit you in your home to discuss what impact the cap will have on your housing benefit payments.

If you would like to discuss whether you will be affected by this change, please do not hesitate to contact the Council's Benefits Team. If you have already received a letter from the DWP and are worried about your rent payments, or you think the cap shouldn't apply to you, speak to us now. We can be contacted at [benefits@stalbans.gov.uk](mailto:benefits@stalbans.gov.uk), 01727 819427.





Being rolled out to  
homes in July / August

# Coming Soon

## New and improved recycling and waste services

### Why are we improving the service?

We'd like St Albans District to be a shining example of community recycling. **Our aim is to increase local recycling rates to more than 60%, and make it easier and more convenient for residents to recycle.**



### What happens next?

Watch out for a leaflet being delivered to homes shortly to tell you all about the changes and what to do and when.

In conservation areas where there are special arrangements (no bins), there is no change to your service, except new weekly food waste, textiles and small electricals collections. No need to separate your plastics and glass.

Residents in flats will have different arrangements. Look out for a separate leaflet being delivered to you during July / August.

### How the new bin delivery will work:



#### Step one

Your black landfill bin is emptied. At the same time your **new** brown landfill bin and **new** green food caddy will be delivered.



#### Step two

Your old black landfill bin is **now your recycling bin** for plastic, cans, foil and glass bottles and jars.



#### Step three

The following week your black recycling bin is emptied along with your paper/card recycling box, new food caddy, green garden waste bin, a carrier bag containing small electricals and a carrier bag containing textiles.



#### Step four

The following week your new brown landfill bin, new food caddy, a carrier bag containing small electricals and a carrier bag containing textiles will be emptied.

[www.stalbans.gov.uk/wasteandrecycling](http://www.stalbans.gov.uk/wasteandrecycling)

Need more information?

Email [wastemanagementservices@stalbans.gov.uk](mailto:wastemanagementservices@stalbans.gov.uk) Call 01727 809019

Working in partnership

# New and improved recycling and waste service

New recycling and waste collection services are being rolled out during July / August

## New service for houses

Plastics, cans, foil,  
glass bottles and jars



**NEW  
USE FOR  
EXISTING  
BIN**

There'll be no need to separate your recycling any longer (except paper and card). Simply put it all in your big black bin, which will be for recycling.

Landfill  
waste



**NEW**

We're replacing your black landfill bin with a new slimmer brown bin for waste that can't be recycled.

Paper  
and card



**NO  
CHANGE**

Garden  
waste



**NO  
FOOD  
WASTE**

Food  
waste

**NEW  
KERBSIDE CADDY**  
Lockable lid to keep smells in and flies out.



## New service for flats

Food  
waste



**NEW**

We are introducing a new weekly food waste collection. Empty your new sink-side caddy into the food waste bins when they arrive in your bin area.

Plastics, cans, foil,  
glass bottles and jars



**NEW**

There's no need to separate the rest of your recycling any longer (except paper and card).

Paper and  
card



**NO  
CHANGE**

Landfill  
waste



**NO  
FOOD  
WASTE**

In conservation areas where there are special arrangements (no bins), there is no change to your service, except new weekly food waste, textiles and small electricals collections. No need to separate your plastic and glass.

**Small electricals  
and textiles**

We will also start a weekly collection service for small electrical items, batteries and textiles. Please keep separate in plastic carrier bags and put out next to your bins on collection day.

**Batteries and  
small electricals**



**Textiles**



## Need more information?

Visit [www.stalbans.gov.uk/wasteandrecycling](http://www.stalbans.gov.uk/wasteandrecycling)

Email [wastemanagementservices@stalban.gov.uk](mailto:wastemanagementservices@stalban.gov.uk) Call 01727 809019



## Useful contacts

**Reporting Repairs** – daytime

[h.repairs@stalbans.gov.uk](mailto:h.repairs@stalbans.gov.uk)

01727 819256

**Reporting Non Emergency Repairs** – out of hours

[h.repairs@stalbans.gov.uk](mailto:h.repairs@stalbans.gov.uk)

01727 819493

**Emergency Repairs** – out of hours

01727 811155

**Property Improvements**

[h.repairs@stalbans.gov.uk](mailto:h.repairs@stalbans.gov.uk)

01727 819489

**Housing Transfers**

[edward.kelly@stalbans.gov.uk](mailto:edward.kelly@stalbans.gov.uk)

01727 819613

**Housing Options**

[contactus@stalbans.gov.uk](mailto:contactus@stalbans.gov.uk)

01727 819355

**Lettings**

[matthew.barnes@stalbans.gov.uk](mailto:matthew.barnes@stalbans.gov.uk)

01727 819480

**Housing Management** – tenancy and rent enquiries

[housingmanagement@stalbans.gov.uk](mailto:housingmanagement@stalbans.gov.uk)

01727 819301

**Housing Benefits**

[benefits@stalbans.gov.uk](mailto:benefits@stalbans.gov.uk)

01727 819283

**Garages**

[h.repairs@stalbans.gov.uk](mailto:h.repairs@stalbans.gov.uk)

01727 819256

**Mutual Exchanges**

[housingmanagement@stalbans.gov.uk](mailto:housingmanagement@stalbans.gov.uk)

01727 819301

**Citizens Advice**

01727 859565

**Leasehold management**

[colin.fernandes@stalbans.gov.uk](mailto:colin.fernandes@stalbans.gov.uk)

01727 819578

## Repairs: Your Feedback

Please help us to improve our housing repairs service.

Over the next year we will be making various changes to the service including online repairs reporting and improvements to the telephone service.

In recent years we have seen a reduction in the number of customer satisfaction surveys being returned to us. We have therefore decided to pilot a new way of getting feedback from our tenants and leaseholders.

Our customer call team is now calling 10% of our tenants and leaseholders who have had a housing repair in the previous month. They are seeking feedback about the repair and the service offered by our contractor and our in-house team.

We will use this feedback to shape our service in future.

If you would like to provide feedback about the housing repairs customer experience please email

[h.repairs@stalbans.gov.uk](mailto:h.repairs@stalbans.gov.uk)

