In this issue...

- Update on major projects
- Welfare reform - one year on
- Rent Matters
- Are you satisfied with your housing service?
- Get outdoors, get gardening
- Cooking with our resident Tahira

Building a world-class city for everyone
At the time of writing, colleagues in our team were busy working with other City Council departments and other agencies responding to the problems caused by flooding.

This year, will be a busy time for us; we are delivering over 100 new council houses, unprecedented levels of investment in our existing stock and continued service improvements that have been suggested by you, our customers.

I would like to thank you all for the fantastic response we had from the rent consultation and ‘Have your Say’ forms.

You can read more about what you told us in this issue.

Stephen Clarke
Head of Housing & Property Services

Congratulations!
The winners of the Have Your Say prize draw for a £25 shopping voucher are Mrs E Pittick, Barton and Mrs V Bermingham, Headington

There are a number of hidden daffodils throughout this Spring edition of Tenants in Touch.

You could be the lucky winner of a £25 shopping voucher if you spot them all and email your answers to: tenantinvolvement@oxford.gov.uk

Please put Spring Competition in the subject line of your email.
We have eight tenancy management officers. Alan Chandler who you met in the last issue, looks after older people’s accommodation. The other seven look after our housing stock in the rest of the city.

In this issue, we meet Anthony Webber who is the Tenancy Management Officer covering East Oxford, Cowley (including Hockmore Tower), Donnington Bridge, Boundary Brook, St Clement’s and the central area of the city.

He manages the tenancy from when the new tenant moves into our council property, deals with any changes to the tenancy and household, carries out periodic tenancy update visits, manages mutual exchanges, successions, attends evictions, and refers to other internal and external departments and bring tenancies to an end following the death of a tenant.

Anthony worked in the Housing Benefit team before moving to Housing. His current patch covers 1200 properties.

“I manage two areas of Oxford and they have quite different properties and different cultures which results in a variety of work.

“Over half of the East Oxford patch is made up of houses, compared to a fifth of the city centre which is predominantly flats and maisonettes. The population in the city, is much more dense that that of East Oxford.

“East Oxford/Cowley has an older council tenant population due to large numbers of people who moved here for employment at the ‘Cowley works’ site. Under-occupancy is now common because a large number of those families have had children who have grown up and left home.

“There has been a noticeable increase in the number of mutual exchanges across the city since the Welfare Reform Act because families with children who have left the household have been affected. City-wide there have been an increase in mutual exchanges of 24% since the Act came in, many of which have been on my patch.

“I was involved in relocating our tenants from Bullstake Close temporarily, during the floods we had earlier this year.

“We moved those who were at immediate risk of flooding to other parts of the city, and ensured the welfare of those who stayed.

“Being able to make a small positive difference to someone's life is very rewarding.”

You can contact Anthony on 01865 249811 and ask for the Tenancy Management Team.
Satisfaction Survey Success

Last summer we carried out a Tenant and Resident Satisfaction Survey (STAR). We surveyed more than 700 tenants. We compared the key findings from this survey against previous years and found that overall satisfaction with the housing services we provide has increased by 8% since 2006. We asked you about...

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<td>Dealing with Anti-Social Behaviour</td>
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**Repairs and maintenance**

A high proportion of you are very satisfied with all aspects of the service. We want to understand why around 6% of respondents are unhappy with this service. You can help us by filling out and returning the repairs satisfaction forms whenever we carry out work in your home.

**Contact and Communication**

Results are very positive for the helpfulness of staff (87%), the ability of staff to deal with your query quickly and efficiently (86%) and that your query was dealt within a reasonable time (86%).

We have made improvements to our Contact Centre and the team can answer most queries directly. When queries are more complex and involve more than one service, it can take longer to get the information needed.

**Estate services**

Satisfaction levels here are very positive. Around 80% of you are satisfied with the grounds maintenance service and overall estate services. 42% of you also indicated an improvement in your estate over the past three years.

We are investing around £500,000 in estate improvements, including parking areas and grounds maintenance. We are working with the Communities Team and Councillors to carry out a programme of estate walkabouts involving staff from community safety, housing, repairs and street scenes teams. These walkabouts will help to identify areas where can make more improvements.

**Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB)**

Although only a relatively small proportion of you have reported ASB, the customer service results are generally quite low. Cases can be complex and involve other partners and different teams. The Anti-Social Behaviour Investigation Team (ASBIT) has changed how queries and reports are dealt with, introducing new service standards to work to.

We use your feedback from STAR to improve how we provide your services. The change in how we deal with anti-social behaviour is just one of the ways that you have achieved this.

The next STAR form is being posted out in the summer. If you are selected to take part please make it count, complete it and send it back to us.
Helping residents affected by flooding

Oxford was affected by flooding twice during the winter. Ann Phillips, Tenancy Manager, tells us how her team helped tenants in the city.

“There were two main areas that were affected – Bullstake Close in Botley and houses around the Abingdon Road area.

“We had a team of officers contacting tenants to ensure that they were safe, we arranged temporary accommodation for our vulnerable tenants who wished to move and shopped for some tenants who were not able to leave their home.

“It was a joint Council effort. We worked with the Community Response Team and Environmental Development to make sure our tenants were kept informed.

“Our colleagues in Direct Services delivered sandbags or made them available to tenants as well as operating flood barriers and pumping water.

“I hope that our tenants have felt reassured that we did all we could to try to prevent flooding in the city.”

Tenant & Leaseholder Services to Move Locally

The Oxford Tenants’ Resource Centre located at Horspath Road is due to close on Monday 31 March.

The Tenants Resource Centre was not being used to its full extent and was costing just under £35,000 a year to run. This meant that the centre was not providing value for money.

Tenants were consulted about the proposal to close the centre. Services are better placed within the community as they can meet the needs of tenants and leaseholders at a local level.

Simon Warde, Acting Resident Involvement Manager, says: “Tenant and leaseholder involvement is vital in helping to improve a whole range of services we provide.

“The Tenants Resource Centre has been a good facility, but over recent years has not been utilised a great deal by our tenants and leaseholders. This has therefore meant that the centre is no longer providing value for money.

“The results from the consultation concluded that these resources need to be in the centre of the communities where they will be most effective in shaping future work in meeting local needs.

“These centres will provide a vital role locally as a place where people can go to take part in a range of activities, take part in training and meet people”.

If you are a tenant or leaseholder and are interested in getting involved to develop your housing services, contact:
Tenant Involvement, Phone 01865 249811
Email tenantinvolvement@oxford.gov.uk
Affordable Homes Programme

113 new Council Homes will be delivered as part of the Affordable Homes Programme (2011-15) which is being developed in partnership with the Homes and Communities Agency.

Demolition started in February at Bradlands House

The new building will provide a controlled entry system for security and high standards of thermal insulation so energy costs should be lower. There is a lift to each floor. Each flat has a walk in shower. Communal facilities include a laundry area, assisted bathing rooms, hairdressing room, mobility scooter store, lounge and quiet areas.

Construction work is well underway at Minchery Farm. The development is based around a communal green space and provides communal growing space.

Local residents are heavily involved with the Bury Knowle project. The new homes are being built in a Conservation Area which means there are special conditions about parking and landscaping.

Work to prepare the sites at Leiden Road and Cardinal Close started in March. The artist’s impressions show how we expect the new homes to look when the work is complete.

All the homes will be advertised and allocated through our Choice Based Lettings Scheme. For full information visit www.oxford.gov.uk/cbl

Barton Park Update

Planning permission was granted in September 2013 for the development of up to 885 homes (354 of these will be Council Houses) to the west of Barton, along with a new park, improved allotments, and a community hub including a primary school, sports facilities and a foodstore. At the same time, through work with the school children at Bayards Hill Primary School the name – Barton Park – was selected for the development.

Next Steps >>>

- A series of consultation events regarding the design of the new park and open spaces within the development will take place within the next month
- A new website is under construction to market the development to housebuilders and in turn to potential homebuyers
- Details of the design of the new homes and landscaping of the public open space will follow in a series of additional planning applications from housebuilders
**Blackbird Leys Regeneration**

The £20m regeneration programme includes building over 100 new homes and investing £2m in the refurbishment of Evenlode and Windrush towers (see Tower Blocks Refurbishment for details).

The first phase of work comprised of the £130,000 revamp of the Blackbird Leys Park play area and attainment of Green Flag status for the park, the completion of the skate park at Fry's Hill, the improvement of parking facilities and protection of grass verges in five zones across the estate, a community-led tree planting event at Spindleberry Park, the revival of the Leys Festival following investment from Oxford City Council and Blackbird Leys Parish Council, and the construction of a new £430,000 pavilion which will provide a home for two community football teams. The competition pool is set to open in December 2015.

**Next Steps >>>

- New outdoor gym stations at Blackbird Leys Park with a fitness trail connecting to Gillian's and Spindleberry Park
- The establishment of a Friends of Blackbird Leys Parks group
- Additional improvements to Spindleberry Park
- Continued investment in the Leys Festival (to volunteer, email: jane.gallagher@oxonplay.org.uk)

**Great Estates Programme**

You told us: there was an increase in parking pressure. People are finding it hard to park close to their homes and some people have had to park on pavements and grass verges.

What we did: This last year has seen over £600,000 of investment in providing new car parking schemes at parking hot spot locations across the city.

Verges have been protected at Ashurst Way, Rose Hill on both sides of this gateway road into the estate by installing a concrete grass system. This system not only protects the surface but allows grass to grow on the verge to give a sound green surface that vehicles can park on.

In November 2013 planning approval was gained for seven schemes around the city:

Blackbird Leys Road was completed in January. The works provided high quality parking for 18 vehicles, including a disabled parking bay, were completed to Highways standards with block paving and raised kerbs enhanced by new shrub beds and tree planting. Bollards were also installed to protect the surrounding grassed areas. These areas have also been topsoiled and seeded to encourage grass growth.
Work in Monk’s Close, Blackbird Leys was completed in February providing 15 spaces for residents parking again to the same specification as at Blackbird Leys Road. New shrub beds, tree planting and bollards were also installed.

Redmoor Close, Littlemore provided 13 off road parking spaces. At this site the Parks’ Tree team replanted a significant Cotoneaster shrub which was something that you wanted and ward members asked the team to try to do.

Normandy Crescent, Lye Valley was completed in March with two sites giving a total of 30 new off road car parking spaces again with block paving to Highway standards along with new shrub beds and trees.

Next Steps >>>

- Chillingworth Crescent, Wood Farm will be completed during April giving this very pressured area 16 new spaces on two separate sites.
- The programme is set to continue through 2014/15 with capital funding of a £500,000 available.
- Schemes are being prepared for planning approval at a number of sites across the city. They include Mason’s Road, Wood Farm where consideration has been given to an adjacent great crested newt habitat, Fox Crescent and Chatham Road, Pegasus Road Blackbird Leys, the Croft Road area and on Barton Estate
- As well car parking schemes, the Great Estates Programme will include other communal area projects such as communal drying area refurbishment and communal area improvement such as hard surface and path replacement with associated planting schemes similar to ones recently completed in Peat Moors on the Slade and Ashurst Road, Rose Hill. A further £300,000 has been set aside for these works.

Tower Blocks Refurbishment

Following feedback from last November’s local public consultations and an external design review by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment, the Council has now extended the scope of the Oxford Tower Blocks project to include new designs for the entrance lobbies and also the external areas of the blocks.

These proposals will improve storage, waste management, recycling facilities, cycle storage, car parking and pedestrian access for local residents.

Under the latest proposals each block had two colour options for the external appearance design.

During consultations held in March, members of the local community and residents were asked which colour option they preferred and their views on the proposed designs for the entrance lobbies and external areas.

Next Steps...

- Detailed designs of concepts
- Contractors to cost and design elements of project
- Further resident engagement consultation

For full details on the tower block refurbishment project and how you can get involved can be found at: www.oxford.gov.uk/towerblocksrefurb
More than 950 council and housing association tenants in Oxford were affected so we set up a dedicated Welfare Reform Team to help tenants to deal with the change. The team is now also working with social and private tenants affected by the benefit cap, which came in last July. More than 150 families were affected, with some of them losing £300 per week from their Housing Benefit.

The Welfare Reform Team has advised more than a thousand tenants who have been affected by these changes, and given in-depth support to 229 households.

### How the Welfare Reform Team Can Help You

We can give you short term financial help through a discretionary housing payment (DHP) to top up your rent. We have agreed more than 450 DHP payments since April. We expect you to work with us to find your own long term solution so you will not need a DHP in future.

We are working with partners who can help you if you want to increase your income by finding a job or increasing your working hours. They can help with training, finding work and applying for jobs. So far our partners have helped 48 people into work. If you need help with managing debt, we can refer you to a CAB money adviser.

If you are affected by the benefit cap, you will be exempt if you get a job and claim Working Tax Credit. Please contact us if you would like help finding work.

There are some exemptions to the bedroom tax. You may have read about the loophole for tenants who hadn’t moved and had been getting housing benefit since January 1996. The DWP has now closed this, but we found that nearly 50 tenants in Oxford were underpaid housing benefit. Please contact us if you think this loophole applied to you and we haven’t already been in touch.

You may be allowed “spare” bedrooms if you are a foster carer, if you need a bedroom for a regular carer to stay, or if you have disabled children who cannot share a bedroom.

We found more than 60 tenants who could claim for more bedrooms. We have also helped a number of tenants to move to a smaller home, and ran a series of mutual exchange “speed dating” events last year.

At the end of December 2013, there were just over 700 tenants affected by the bedroom tax in Oxford. If you have succeeded to a tenancy which started before 1 January 1996, and neither you nor the tenant you succeeded had breaks of more than a year in your housing benefit claims, please contact the Welfare Reform Team.
Oxford City Council is looking for tenants to help us shape our services. Get involved and join a local tenant association, a focus group, a Local Offer Group or the Tenant Scrutiny Panel.

Celia Matthews, Chair of the Tenant Scrutiny Panel, tells us more about tenant participation.

“The Tenant Scrutiny Panel keeps an eye on the performance of Oxford City Council, including services such as repairs and tenant housing issues.

“Tenant scrutiny is led by tenants and it is independent.

“The panel members ask for information and make decisions based on this.

“The panel needs more tenants, more voices, and more opinions. Help us work together and make changes by putting your name forward for joining the panel.”

Want to have a say on our services?

Tenant Involvement Branding

We will be introducing our new branding at every point of contact we have with you. The way we interact with you and the extent to which we deliver on our promises says a lot about who we are and what we stand for.

A brand is a promise to deliver a certain set of benefits, both rational and emotional. This includes our reputation and what and who we represent in our community.

Let us know what you think about our new branding by emailing tenantinvolvement@oxford.gov.uk

If you are interested in becoming a mystery shopper, contact tenantinvolvement@oxford.gov.uk or call 01865 249811

Mystery shopping

Make a difference and tell us how we can improve our services to tenants by becoming a mystery shopper.

Mystery shoppers help raise the standards of Council services and gain new skills which could help you when applying for jobs and training.

Volunteer tenants are trained to make anonymous phone calls and undercover visits to the Council to find out how good staff are at helping with your issues.

Becoming a mystery shopper

If you want to be a mystery shopper, training takes a day and you will learn telephone interview techniques and take part in role play exercises.

Shoppers fill in questionnaires about their calls, emails, visits or website checks. Any problems they uncover are flagged up with the Head of the relevant service. One round of mystery shopping usually consists of 10 ‘shops’ within a month.

Training is free and you will be paid expenses, as well as receiving up to £40 High Street shopping vouchers of your choice for successfully completed shops.

GOOD NEWS

Improved signs have been put in our reception areas, thanks to our Mystery Shoppers

If you are interested in becoming a mystery shopper, contact tenantinvolvement@oxford.gov.uk or call 01865 249811
In December and January we consulted with you about the annual rent increase and what you thought the priorities were for your homes.

The response rates were the highest for a number of years, with almost 300 tenants sending in the survey form.

The majority of responses show support for the rent increase and the Council's priorities for spending.

Your responses were included in our report to the City Executive Board in February and Councillors agreed the rent increase and spending proposals at Full Council.

The average rent increase was 5.42%, which represented an average rise of £5.25 per week. This came into effect at the beginning of April. The average weekly rent per property is now £102.08.

Service Charges

These charges only apply to tenants living in flats and cover the cost of communal services.

Service charges have increased by 3.7%, the September 2013 Retail Price Index inflation rate plus an additional half a percent.

We have also reduced the weekly service charge subsidy by £1 from April 2014.

You should have received a formal notice about the new rent and service charge and a letter listing all the charges together with any housing benefit. The statement tells you exactly how much you need to pay.

How to contact us - Your Housing Services in specialist teams

You can contact any of these specialist teams though the Customer Services Contact Team on 01865 249811 or drop in to one of our Customer Services Centres at St Aldate's Chambers or Templars Square.

- **Landlord Services Team – Tenancy Management**
  email: landlordservices@oxford.gov.uk

- **Housing Needs Team**
  email: housingneeds@oxford.gov.uk

- **Community Safety Team – Anti-Social Behaviour**
  email: communitiesafety@oxford.gov.uk

- **Tenant Involvement Team**
  email: tenantinvolvement@oxford.gov.uk

- **Strategy & Enabling Team**
  email: strategyandenabling@oxford.gov.uk

- **Direct Services – Repairs and maintenance**
  email: contactcityhomes@oxford.gov.uk

- **Rent Team**
  email: rentsteam@oxford.gov.uk

To use our online services visit www.oxford.gov.uk

To talk to our Customer Services Team:

01865 249811 from 8.00am to 6.00pm, Monday to Friday.

The Council has two Customer Services Centres.

Call ahead to make an appointment on 01865 249811 or drop in and wait to see a Customer Services Officer.

We are open; 9.00am - 5.00pm Monday - Thursday and 9.00am - 4.30pm Friday
Garden Revival

We’re introducing an exciting new initiative called Oxford City Garden Revival to improve the shared garden spaces of your flats.

We want to make them local spaces for local people to enjoy.

Spending time outdoors is really important and can greatly help improve your wellbeing and mood. We really want to work with you to design a garden space that suits your needs.

We’re also keen to help set up and support Garden Clubs where you live. We would provide you with some plants, flower beds, tools and storage, so that you can maintain some of your own areas.

Did you also know that you could save money shopping by growing your own vegetables, so why not plant some carrots, cabbage or potatoes?

You don’t need to be an expert gardener, you can learn as you go along. We can provide you with some advice and handy tips to get you started.

This summer we are running free Gardening Training for beginners, so why not register and have a go?

Over the last eighteen months we have successfully completed projects at:
- Ashurst Way
- Peat Moors
- Cardinal House
- Normandy Crescent
- Rose Hill Flats
- Craufurd Road

If you want to:
- Learn more about Oxford City Garden Revival
- Get your shared garden on our list of planned work
- Register for our free Gardening Training course

Please contact our Garden Revival Project Manager Simon Warde
Tel: 01865 252839
Email: swarde@oxford.gov.uk

Help

CREATE a community garden with your NEIGHBOURS

Web: www.oxford.gov.uk/getinvolved
Follow us on Twitter: @OCC_Involvle
Like us on Facebook: Oxford City Tenant Involvement
Oxford in Bloom
With gardening in mind, why not enter this year’s Oxford in Bloom competition?

Oxford in Bloom is a free competition open to all residents, businesses, schools and colleges, childcare providers, community and residents groups in the city.

There are prizes on offer (from £25 to £100) in categories including all size gardens, patios or balconies, hanging baskets, planters, raised beds or grow bags. Judging takes place in July and the results will be announced in September.

By entering you will also be supporting the city’s entry into the Regional Thames & Chiltern in Bloom entry.

To enter or to find out more, visit www.oxford.gov.uk/oxfordinbloom, or email parks@oxford.gov.uk

Volunteering
Volunteer to make a real difference to your own life and the lives of those around you.

If you have the time to spare, it is a great way to learn new skills, meet new people, have fun and can lead into full time, paid work.

There are many opportunities available at Oxford City Council Parks & Open Spaces including:

- **Coppicing** of hazel on the ancient Shotover Hill and nearby woodlands, to maintain an ancient tradition of woodland management that has been taking place over hundreds of years in this area

- **Gardening**: Work alongside our resident gardeners, weeding, pruning, planting edging whilst learning about plants and horticultural practices.

- **Countryside management**: Help with scrub clearance, health-land restoration maintenance of fences, bridges and paths.

- **Events**: Run or even plan events and open days that promote the work being carried out on various sites.

- **Friends group**: Form or join a group of local residents, businesses or stakeholders to support your local park and open spaces.

- **Surveying**: of plants and wildlife to provide information on the results of work carried out, with regard to whether it was successful or not.

- **Tree Planting** to create new copses and woodlands to give a wide range of areas of differing ages so providing many different habitats for wildlife

- **Photographing** locations, flora, fauna or other topics.

For more details, contact: Parks & Open Spaces, Cutteslowe Park, Harbord Road, Oxford, OX2 8ES

T: 01865 249811  |  E:parks@oxford.gov.uk

www.facebook.com/oxfordparks  |  www.oxford.gov.uk
We want to create a Tenants and Leaseholders cookbook full of your recipes which are fun, cheap and simple to make.

Send us a list of the ingredients and a panel of our Tenant and Leaseholder volunteers will then select the best recipes, based on nutritional value, difficulty level and price.

Need some inspiration?
Here is a recipe from Tahira (pictured on our front cover) who lives on Wood Farm. Tahira teaches basic IT, a beauty course and cooking.

Tasty Vegetable Kebabs

*Preparation time and cooking time:* 30 to 35 minutes

*Quantity:* 25-30 kebabs (depending on how big you make them).

*How to cook:*

1. Boil all vegetables until soft
2. Mash them in a bowl
3. Add the spices and mix together to make a smooth dough
4. With your hands, make round shape kebabs with the mixture
5. Put your breadcrumbs in a bowl.
6. Beat the two eggs and put them in another bowl.
7. Roll each kebab in the breadcrumbs first and then into the beaten eggs.
8. Lay the kebabs on a plate ready for cooking.
9. Put some oil in your frying pan on a low heat.
10. When the oil is hot enough, put some of the kebabs in the frying pan and cook until golden brown on both sides.

*Serving suggestion:*
Spread all of the kebabs on a lettuce and tomato salad and serve with tomato ketchup.

**Ingredients:**

- 1 pack of frozen mixed vegetables
- 1 pound of potatoes
- A bag of fresh spinach leaves or frozen spinach
- 2-3 cups of breadcrumbs
- 2-3 cups of oil
- 2 eggs
- ½ teaspoon of Garam Masala (spice mix from all supermarkets)
- Pinch of salt
- 1 teaspoon of red chilli powder (to taste)
- 1 teaspoon of cumin seeds

**ALL COOKS WHOSE RECIPES ARE INCLUDED IN THE BOOK WILL GET A £30 SHOPPING VOUCHER**

Email your recipe ideas to: tenantinvolvement@oxford.gov.uk
Tenants in Touch Building a world-class city for everyone

With Easter and May school holidays fast approaching, entertaining children can require a great deal of planning. Oxford City Council has a timetable full of activities for children and young people.

Our Leisure centres will be running a wide range of sporting activities, including:

- Ice skating at Oxford Ice Rink - both learn to skate courses and fun sessions
- Outdoor swimming in the heated pool at Hinksey (May-Sept only)
- Swimming indoors with learn to swim, swim improvement courses and fun inflatable sessions
- Badminton
- Table tennis
- Junior gym sessions
- Plus much more!

For details visit: www.oxford.gov.uk/leisure or call your local centre: 0844 893 3222

The Museum of Oxford
Transport through Time family gallery trail £1
Saturday 5 April – Friday 6 June 10am – 4.30pm
Monday - Saturday
Follow the trail around the Explore Oxford galleries to discover transport and travel through the ages. Suitable for all the family.

Victorian Voyage Family Day FREE
Thursday 17 April
10.30am - 3.30pm
Fun family workshop exploring what travel and transport was like for the Victorians. Meet our visiting Victorians and find out how people in the past used the canals and the astounding changes that came with the building of the Great Railway. Make a simple model of a steam train to take home with you.

Family Day FREE
Thursday 29 May
10.30am - 3.30pm
Join us for lots of free family fun in the museum’s learning centre.

For full information on What’s On in the museum visit www.oxford.gov.uk/whatson

Holiday Playschemes
There are a number of different schemes in Oxford that run during school holidays:

- Sessions at local nurseries for school-aged children
- Holiday playschemes running at local schools
- Sports-based schemes at local leisure centres
- Shorter, activity-based sessions

The times and days of the week they run vary.

For details of any other activities available, visit the Family Information Directory at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk

Young Volunteers aged 16-25
Not only do you gain fantastic experience in the heritage and museum sector but you can also get awards for your volunteer hours through vInspired.

Head to www.vinspired.com and set up a profile before applying to volunteer at the Museum of Oxford. It couldn’t be simpler!

Then collect volunteer hours and receive nationally recognised awards for your efforts.

For more details, contact:
Museum of Oxford Town Hall, St Aldate’s, Oxford, OX1 1BX
T: 01865 252334 | E:museum@oxford.gov.uk
www.facebook.com/museumofoxford

There are many other volunteering opportunities available at Oxford City Council. To register your interest, visit www.oxford.gov.uk/volunteering

SCHOOL HOLIDAY DATES Easter 7-21 April 2014 | May 26-30 May 2014

THINGS TO DO

Holiday Playschemes
Do it online

With more and more ways of getting online - at home, on your phone, at a library - it is even easier to access our services.

Visit our website to find lots of information and to easily do many of the things you might phone or visit us for.

Pay for it
Rent, Council Tax, parking penalty charge notice and more.

Report it
Abandoned vehicles, graffiti, fly tipping, missed bin collection and more.

Apply for it
Garages to rent, Benefits, Council housing, HMO licensing and more.

Compliment or complain
Complaints about a Council service, feedback form, Local Government Ombudsman and more.

View a consultation
Current and closed consultations and more.

Housing
To find information about our housing services visit www.oxford.gov.uk/housing

Paying online
It’s easy to pay online at www.oxford.gov.uk. Visit the ‘Do it online’ section and click on £ Pay It. Choose what you want to pay and then follow the instructions.

You will be emailed confirmation of your payment

Paying by direct debit
Paying rent by direct debit will save you time and help make life easier. You could even win some prizes!

Simply call 01865 252800 to set up your payment by direct debit.

It’s easier and quicker:
- No cheques to write, letters to post
- No queues
- Your bank or building society does all the work and you stay in control

Every quarter one tenant switching to pay by direct debit receives a £25 shopping voucher reward prize

Love2shop
The high street gift voucher
Recycling

Over the past year, the Recycling Team have been working hard to improve the recycling facilities in all Council owned flat sites. All residents are now able to recycle their paper, card, cans, plastics and glass in the blue recycling bins.

Recycling in Oxford is improving month after month. A big thank you to everyone who has been trying to recycle as much of their waste as possible. The roll-out has been so successful, we’re now going to be able to provide food waste recycling to council owned flats sites too.

Further information can be found at www.oxford.gov.uk/recycling

Recycling Project: The tin can

This is a great way to use an item you would normally throw away. Everyone loves a homemade project that costs next to nothing to create.

How to do it:
Take the tops off with a tin opener and sand down any sharp edges with sandpaper. Wash and dry thoroughly before use.

Decorate a can with paints, wallpaper, wrapping paper to create:
- A plant pot
- A pen or utensil holder
- A toy rocket for a child
- A pastry cutter

Email your recycling project ideas to tenantinvolvement@oxford.gov.uk
FREE TV Licence reminder for over-75s

TV Licensing would like to remind residents aged over 75 that they are entitled to a free TV Licence that will cover their whole household.

Although it is free, you do still need to apply for the licence. To find out how to apply, call 0300 790 6073 or visit www.tvlicensing.co.uk.

If someone is 74 and needs to renew their licence, they can apply for a short-term licence that will cover them until their 75th birthday or claim a refund on an existing licence for the months since they reached the age of 75.

TIME TO TEST

You are at least four times more likely to die in a fire in your home if you have no working smoke alarm

Why not test your smoke alarms on the first of every month? Then you know that they are working and you can tick it off your ‘to do’ list – before it’s too late.

Over 200 people in England die each year in fires in their homes. These are often caused by smoking materials, cooking accidents, candles and faulty electrical appliances – especially heaters – and wiring.

These simple steps can reduce the risk of fire and keep everyone safer:

- Fit smoke alarms on every level of your home
- Test them on the 1st of every month and never take out the batteries
- Plan your escape route and make sure everyone knows it
- Put cigarettes out – right out – and never smoke in bed.
- Take extra care in the kitchen and never leave cooking unattended
- Make a bedtime check last thing at night to reduce fire risks – eg unplug heaters
- Never try to tackle a fire yourself

If a fire breaks out in your home. Get out, stay out and call 999

www.gov.uk/firekills
Have Your Say

Tell us what you think and you could win a £25 shopping voucher!

You can use this form to tell us what you think about our services – what is working for you and what would you like us to do differently?

There is no need for a stamp – just fill it in, fold it up, put it in an envelope, write the FREEPOST address on the front and pop it in the post!

Please put in an envelope and post to:
Strategy and Enabling Team
Oxford City Council
FREEPOST OF10,
PO Box 10,
OXFORD
OX1 1BR

You can also email us at haveyoursay@oxford.gov.uk

Remember to leave us your name, address and contact details if you want us to reply.

Our free prize draws are open to all Oxford City Council tenants and leaseholders aged 18 years or over, but not to Oxford City Council employees. The draw will be conducted under independent supervision. The lucky winners will be personally notified and announced in the next issue. The promoter’s decision is final; no alternative prize will be offered.
Tenant involvement is about starting a conversation between you, the tenant or leaseholder, and us, the Council, about shaping the services we provide to you.

By getting involved, tenants and leaseholders are able to:

- Review, shape and monitor how services are delivered.
- Help us identify what works well, not so well and where we need to improve services.
- Have a say in what is important to you.

There are many ways you can be involved from the comfort of your home to running your own community group.

A range of free training and funding opportunities to support tenant involvement is also available.

Find out how you can get involved with Oxford City Council:

Telephone: 01865 249811
Email: tenantinvolvement@oxfordcity.gov.uk
Web: www.oxford.gov.uk/getinvolved
Follow us on Twitter: @OCC_Involve
Like us on Facebook: Oxford City Tenant

Or write to:
Tenant Involvement
Oxford City Council. 109 St Aldate's Chambers, St Aldate's, Oxford. OX1 1DS