Open Door

Autumn 2019, For the Tenants & Leaseholders of Cambridge City Council
Contents

Open Door ........................................................................................................................................... 1

Welcome to the Autumn edition of Open Door .................................................................................... 5

100 years of social housing .................................................................................................................... 7

Applying to stay in the UK after Brexit ................................................................................................. 8

The Housing Budget - What your rent was spent on ........................................................................... 10

  How was the budget re-invested back into tenants’ homes? ............................................................ 11

  Is your rent good value for money? .................................................................................................... 11

Design your future – the Local plan ...................................................................................................... 12

2020 Resident Elections ......................................................................................................................... 13

  Resident rep elections ......................................................................................................................... 13

  How to stand as a candidate ............................................................................................................... 14

  Key requirements of the role ............................................................................................................. 14

Other roles for you .................................................................................................................................. 15
Keeping leaseholders well informed ................................................................. 40
Can you spot local drug dealing? ........................................................................ 42
To contact the Council ......................................................................................... 44
  Council’s contractors ......................................................................................... 45
Welcome to the Autumn edition of Open Door

This year we are celebrating the 100th anniversary of social housing in Britain. Our article on ‘100 years of social housing’ describes some of what has been achieved for social housing in Cambridge and elsewhere in that time. In this edition you can also read how the housing service is funding improvements to your estates through the Estates Improvement Scheme. The choice of improvements is resident-led: you can read one resident’s response to the first project.

We also offer some information and government guidance for EU nationals on the EU Settlement Scheme after Brexit. Our annual housing budget report shows you the headline figures from the past year. You'll see how your rent was reinvested back into the various parts of the housing service, and how it compares to rents for the same kinds of property on the open market here in Cambridge.

In 2020, Council tenants and leaseholders will have the opportunity to elect six resident representatives onto the Council’s Housing Scrutiny Committee. With the same voting rights on the committee as City Councillors, these resident reps are involved in major decisions about your housing service. In this edition, find out more about the election and see how you could stand as a candidate yourself.

To help get ready for the colder months, we bring you important information explaining what to do if you have a problem with your heating system. You can see which repairs around your home are the tenant’s responsibility, and which are the Council’s. An article reminds you about the importance of the electrical safety inspections that the Council has to carry out in order to keep your home safe. And you may also be interested in the low-cost deal that the Council has secured for tenants to insure the contents of their
home.

You can read about the publicity campaign and prosecutions that have been tackling illegal dumping of litter or waste in public areas. And we bring you information about fire safety in council homes.

In our Local Focus feature, you can read how the Council is facilitating access to high-speed fibre broadband on council estates around the city. Those pages also explain what to do if you find yourself in food poverty: help is available near you.

Out and about on the estates, this year’s Residents’ Garden Competition was again a great success. Both the article and our cover picture show you some of the amazing gardens that tenants and leaseholders have created. Our article on Streetlink shows what to do if you see people rough sleeping outdoors during the cold months ahead.

On the back cover, you can see what your Neighbourhood Policing team has been doing to keep your locality free of crime and anti-social behaviour, and how you can help them achieve that.

With best wishes, David Greening

Why not receive Open Door by email instead of on paper? It’s easy to read on any device with wifi, saving paper and carbon footprint. To receive it by email instead of post, visit http://camcit.co/2jsJMQX

One copy of Open Door is sent to each council home. To ask to receive a second copy
100 years of social housing

2019 is being celebrated as the 100th anniversary of social housing in this country. Some public housing was being provided by charities and wealthy donors since the nineteenth century. But the end of the First World War saw the first nationwide programme of social housing, with much improved standards. The era of the council home really started with the influx of soldiers, sailors and airmen returning from the First World War. The government considered that the soldiers should not return to the slums of the pre-war era. And there was broad support across society for this idea of providing ‘homes for heroes.’

So councils built 500,000 homes over the next three years. Large-scale, state-funded council estates with low rents became a national norm for the first time. This lasted until the 1970s, when councils were still building 40% of all new houses in the country. But the policies of successive governments then reduced this dramatically so that by 2017, councils were building only 2% of new housing. In 1979, the ‘Right to Buy’ gave council tenants financial support to buy their homes. In just the first seven years of the policy, a million council houses became privately owned. In England, housing associations now own 2.5 million social housing homes, while councils own a further 1.6 million.
Working families and young professionals, especially, are suffering a housing shortage today. Many experts believe that councils could play a big role in tackling the current housing crisis, just as they did a century ago. A recent survey found that 60% of people want new social housing built in their area.

In this region, the shortage is even worse, with in some places up to 40 bids for every social housing home that’s available to rent. And the average price for buying a home in Cambridge is now over £400,000. So both social housing rentals and home ownership are out of reach for many.

Fortunately, Cambridge City Council has embarked on a major house building programme to provide both social housing for rent, and affordable housing for shared ownership or outright purchase. With its partners, the City Council is currently committed to building 500 new council homes, using the Council’s own funding plus £70m from government. The Council’s aim is to have at least started to build all these 500 social housing homes by March 2022.

And see inside to read about the £5 million Estates Improvement Scheme that the City Council is running to improve its existing estates.

**Applying to stay in the UK after Brexit**

This information was correct at time of writing, but the Brexit situation and rules may change before you read this. This article cannot constitute legal
advice, which you should get if you need it. Use the information sources at the end of this article to check what exactly your own rights will be after Brexit.

If you are an EU, EEA or Swiss citizen living in the UK, you and your family can apply to Britain’s EU Settlement Scheme to stay living here after Brexit. If successful, you will receive either ‘Settled’ or ‘Pre-Settled’ status. To be eligible to apply for ‘Settled’ status, you must be able to prove that you have lived in the UK for at least 6 months in any 12-month period for 5 years in a row. Irish citizens and those with 'Indefinite leave to remain in the UK’ can stay here without applying.

The Settlement Scheme is open for applications. There is no fee, and the current deadline is 30th June 2021. All applications to stay will require proof of your identity and proof that you are resident in the UK. You will need a valid passport or national identity card, and a digital photo of your face.

Note that if the UK leaves the EU without a deal, the deadline for applying to stay will then be 31st December 2020, and only those living in the UK before it leaves the EU could apply to stay.

Those who need help filling in their application can phone a national helpline at 03333-44-5675. They will arrange an appointment with a support organisation near you (such as Cambridge Central Library, Cambridge Online or Cambridge Ethnic Community Forum). But you must contact the national helpline first - you can’t just go direct to the local support.

Your local appointment to help you make your Settlement Scheme application will be about 45 minutes long. Note that the local support organisation cannot give you individual legal advice or guidance about the EU Settlement Scheme. They can only help you to make your application.

The government provides extensive guidance for residents online at www.gov.uk/brexit. It is available in all 26 EU languages. Guidance is also available over the phone from the
government’s EU Resettlement Resolution Centre at 0300-123-7379.

You can sign up online at the www.gov.uk/brexit website to receive automatic notification if the situation or guidelines change.

The Housing Budget - What your rent was spent on

£101 was the average weekly rent paid for a council home in Cambridge city in 2018/19. This is how all the parts of that rental income were reinvested back into the Housing Service:

£31 was invested in improving bathrooms and kitchens, building new homes, etc.

£25 for day to day repairs, preparing properties to re-let, etc.

£20 for paying interest on Housing’s £213 million debt

£12 was set aside for building new council homes or repaying debt in the future

£8 for managing properties and estates, and tackling anti-social behaviour

£5 for other costs involved in providing social housing as a Council
How was the budget re-invested back into tenants’ homes?

71% went on building or buying affordable housing

16% on ‘Decent Homes’ improvements to things like kitchens, bathrooms, doors and windows

9% on improving sheltered housing

3% on other investments to improve council homes

1% on IT, equipment, vehicles, etc.

Is your rent good value for money?
The average weekly rent for a council home in Cambridge city in 2018/19 was £101.

The average weekly rent for an equivalent home on the open market was £282. (This figure comes from official government statistics.)

**Design your future – the Local plan**

Finding it difficult to rent or buy a good property? Worried about transport and amenities, or about climate change and pollution?

The Local Plan is a long-term plan for Cambridge that will shape all of this. What kind of new homes get built and where; how buildings, streets and spaces are designed; where businesses can grow... It will affect us all.

A new Local Plan is being created for the Greater Cambridge area - but it needs your input. With many ways to get involved from early 2020, online or in person, be part of this big conversation.

Open Door will bring you updates, and for more information, visit www.greatercambridgeplanning.org
2020 Resident Elections

Resident rep elections

In June 2020, an independent company will be hired by the City Council to run citywide elections to elect five council tenants and one council leaseholder to sit on the Council’s Housing Scrutiny Committee.

These resident representatives are elected every four years by you, the Council’s tenants and leaseholders.

Cambridge City is one of the only councils in the country that has council residents voting on the Housing Scrutiny Committee alongside elected City Councillors, helping to make high-level decisions about your council housing.

Your elected resident representatives play a crucial role in helping to shape the housing service. They ensure that residents are at the heart of decision-making.

All five tenant representative positions and the one leaseholder representative position will be up for election in June 2020. Voting papers and information about the candidates will be sent to every council home in the city.

The Council very much hopes that you will vote, but also that you will consider standing as a candidate in the elections yourself. The Housing Scrutiny Committee needs people
from every background. No prior experience or formal qualifications are needed. The elected residents receive an allowance for their time.

**How to stand as a candidate**

The application stage for the Housing Scrutiny Committee election is open from 1st December 2019 to 31st March 2020.

It requires you to complete an application form and write a short statement outlining why you wish to stand for the role. Help is available for anyone who would like assistance to complete their application.

Once the application stage has closed, candidates will be listed on a ballot paper which will be posted to all city council tenants and leaseholders in June 2020. This ballot pack will include the short statement and photo submitted with each application. This enables voters to read about the candidates and select their first choice. Once the voting stage has closed in mid-July 2020, the successful candidates will be announced.

If you are interested in applying as a candidate or would like to find out more about the role, please contact Resident Engagement Officer Emily Watts at 01223-458323 or email resident-involvement@cambridge.gov.uk

**Key requirements of the role**

Applicants must:

• be a Cambridge City Council tenant or leaseholder
• agree to represent the interests of all City Council residents, not just their own area or their personal agenda

• confirm that their rent and any service-charges due are paid up to date

• sign and keep to a Code of Conduct

• be able to attend 12 meetings per year, equating to approximately 32 hours of time in all

• attend 4 of the year’s meetings at fixed times on weekday evenings (the remaining 8 can be arranged flexibly around resident reps’ availability)

• prepare for the meetings, reading committee reports and relevant paperwork (the 4 annual Committee meetings require the most reading, often several hours to read a full agenda)

• undertake relevant training provided for free by the Council

**Other roles for you**

If you don’t want to be a high-level resident rep, there are other rewarding roles available instead, including...

• the Residents’ Panel: influencing council housing policies and decisions, they meet at least four times a year in the evenings at the Guildhall

• Residents’ Associations and Community Groups on council estates across the city; or if you’d like to set up a new one, funding and support are available

• Asset Management & Voids Group, who scrutinise the work of the Council’s maintenance and assets service
• Resident Inspectors & Green Inspectors, who inspect work done on council estates

For more information, please contact Resident Engagement Officer Emily Watts at 01223-458323 or email resident-involvement@cambridge.gov.uk

**What your resident reps say**

‘Dear fellow tenants and leaseholders... I’m Christabella Amitanye, one of your tenant reps on the Housing Scrutiny Committee. It’s been a pleasure being your elected tenant representative this year. The journey has been totally insightful, informative and incredibly educational for me.

I must confess how daunted I was in my first Housing Scrutiny Committee meeting. It discussed housing budgets and incomes. But the other resident reps were very supportive in helping me manoeuvre my way through the documents.

Before applying, I had no clue what to expect! I thought I’d be in meetings with the City Councillors just to answer a simple ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ on behalf of tenants. But how wrong I was! Instead, it’s been a mind-blowing journey:

• poring over Housing budget accounts (lots of interesting numbers)

• helping Councillors make critical decisions on how best to transform the city to benefit all its inhabitants

• hearing housing strategy proposals and effective ways to tackle homelessness in Cambridge

• we six resident reps making crucial contributions towards gas and electrical checks on behalf of tenants

• discussing how some tenants’ mental health problems might be triggered by some housing decisions, and ways to solve or avoid these issues
• contributing to the procurement process for council contractors

I encourage tenants and leaseholders to grab this opportunity to make a real difference to your communities. Make sure you vote - and why not stand as a candidate yourself?

For me, my faith teaches me to care about my neighbours as much as I care for myself. And what better way to serve others than to represent them through this role?

For any questions about the roles or applying, you can also contact us resident reps directly via our email address at hsc.residents@gmail.com’

Though he has a demanding full-time job as a medical professional with youth offenders, tenant rep Jean-Louis Ayivor came forward to represent his fellow council tenants on the Housing Scrutiny Committee. Jean-Louis explains... ‘Despite the challenges of having a full time occupation and being one of the newest members, I have had many positive, insightful experiences in the role. They continue to reaffirm my decision to apply to become a member of the Scrutiny Committee.

In this edition of Open Door, you can read about the government policies which, 100 years ago, started clearing the slums, replacing them with quality homes at reasonable rents for the war- heroes returning from World War One. Today, good quality social housing is as badly needed as ever. When well run, it can also help tackle social problems such as domestic violence and anti-social behaviour.
I would really encourage you to consider standing for election for this important role. And at the very least, remember to vote when the election papers are sent to your home in mid-2020.

Best regards, Jean-Louis’

**Local Focus ~ Free & low-cost help in your neighbourhoods**

**Fibre connectivity, coming soon citywide**

Cambridge City Council are working with digital companies to install fibre optic infrastructure into the residential and commercial buildings that are owned by City Homes across the city.

This initiative is all part of the government’s ambition to increase high-speed digital connectivity across the country. The aim is that social housing tenants will receive the best internet experience available in the UK today.

Good quality, high speed broadband is of great assistance for education, employment and reducing isolation. As more and more public services are starting to be delivered online, having access to fast, reliable, affordable internet is essential.

This is part of the Council’s drive to increase digital inclusion among its tenants, by working in partnership with firms whose gold standard services have been tried and tested by other councils. The two companies the Council is working with so far are City Fibre and Hyperoptic: they plan to install the necessary wiring in public areas near you over the next two years.
This means it will make it easier for you to access a super-fast fibre connection. This infrastructure can help tenants and leaseholders by increasing competition and giving you more options of where to source your internet. There is no obligation for residents to change their provider - it just increases the options available to you. If building works for these fibre optic cables are going to happen near to the access of your address, the relevant company will put a flyer through your door to make you aware and outline who to contact if there is an issue.

**Want to swap your home? Around town - or around the country!**

![HomeSwapper](https://example.com/homeswapper.png)

Would you like to swap your home for another social housing home, either in Cambridge or elsewhere around the region or country? An easy way to start the process is to join HomeSwapper.

Homeswapper is a council-approved website where social housing tenants can share information both about the type of home they are looking for (location, size, rent level, amenities nearby, etc.), and about the home they have to offer.

Joining HomeSwapper is simple, and free to Cambridge City Council tenants. To register for HomeSwapper, you just need to be a social housing tenant. And as your landlord, Cambridge City Council has an arrangement with them that means the service is free for you to use.

When registering on the Homeswapper website, you answer some questions about your home - and about the home you want. This creates your ‘home advert’, and also lets you view a range of homes you might like.

‘The Home You’ve Got’ section of the website lets you show other swappers what your
home is like, to see if it interests them. Swapping homes with another social housing tenant (whether they are in Cambridge or elsewhere) is called a ‘mutual exchange’. It must be approved by the Council.

You can download the Council’s application form for doing a mutual exchange on this webpage: www.cambridge.gov.uk/swap-or-downsize-your-council-home

To keep social housing fair, there are some rules governing mutual exchanges, as there are when you first apply to become a council tenant. For instance, you won’t be allowed to move to a social housing property that the council considers too large for your needs, or to exchange homes while you have rent arrears.

For more information, visit www.homeswapper.co.uk

Help for food poverty, near your home

Healthy Start Vouchers - If you are pregnant or have a child under 4, you could be entitled to these vouchers for free vegetables, milk or vitamins. They can be worth up to £900 per child!

Cambridge City Foodbanks -

Church of the Good Shepherd, Mansel Way, Arbury, CB4 2ET, Thurs, 11am-1pm

C3 Centre, Coldhams Lane, CB1 3HW, Fri, 10.30am-2pm
Chesterton Methodist Church, Green End Road, Chesterton, CB4 1RW Tues, 10.30am-12.30pm

Church of Our Lady & the English Martyrs, Hills Road, CB2 1JR, Wed, 10am-12 noon

Church of Our Lady & the English Martyrs, Hills Road, CB2 1JR, Wed, 10am-12 noon

St Paul’s Church, Hills Road, CB2 1JP Mon, 4-5.30pm, Fri, 2.30-4.30pm

14 Alpha Terrace, Trumpington, CB2 9HT, Fri, 11am-1pm

(ou must always get a Foodbank Voucher before going to a food bank. Vouchers are available from places like GP surgeries, churches, community centres, etc. To see where you can request a voucher, visit https://cambridgecity.foodbank.org.uk or email info@ccfb.org.uk or phone 07772-538628.

Food Cycle’s free meals - Wesley Methodist Church, Christ’s Pieces, CB1 1LG Saturdays, 12.30pm. Email cambridge@foodcycle.org.uk

Low-cost Meal Clubs –

Wednesday Club, 12.30-1.30pm, C3 Centre, Coldham’s Lane, CB1 3HR

Mondays Simple Supper (£2), 6pm Thursday Lunch Club (£3), 12.30pm Both at St. Paul’s Church, Hills Rd, CB2 1JP
Support for parents & kids - In Abbey

The Fields Children’s Centre - Support, advice and activities for expectant parents or families with children up to 5 years old. Advice on child development. Adult education classes, parenting classes, family support and information on returning to work.

Free childcare for some 2-year-olds - Some toddlers can have free childcare at The Fields Children’s Centre in Abbey (depending on household income, receiving certain benefits, certain health conditions, etc.). To see if you’re eligible, visit www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/residents/children-and-families/childcare-and-early-learning/free-childcare-for-2-year-olds

Free childcare for all 3- & 4-year-olds - 15 hours of childcare per week for 38 weeks of the year. Some working parents are also eligible for a further 15 hours per week for free.

For all the above, visit www.thefields.cambs.sch.uk/ChildrensCentre, email office@thefields.cambs.sch.uk, tel 01223-518333, or visit The Fields Children’s Centre, beside Abbey Meadows School, Galfrid Rd, CB5 8ND

Free clubs for kids & youth - C3 Community Hub, Coldham’s Lane, tel 01223-844415, email hallo@thec3.uk; East Barnwell Community Centre, Newmarket Road, tel 01223-211945; Barnwell Baptist Church, Howard Road, tel 01223-292454

In Romsey - Romsey Mill can give free support to young parents, with home visits, ante- and post-natal classes, child development advice, support to move into education or
Get help to use NHS services online - At the Meadows centre

Cambridge Online can give you free one to one training and support on how to access NHS services over the internet. This training and support is available free at the Meadows Centre in Arbury. They can help you learn to use the NHS website and NHS apps, as well as booking medical appointments or ordering repeat prescriptions online.

With their support, you’ll learn how to use the internet to:
- book or cancel appointments with a GP or nurse
- order repeat prescriptions
- view parts of your GP record
- view information about your medications, allergies, vaccinations, previous illnesses and test results
- view clinical correspondence such as hospital discharge summaries, outpatient appointment letters and referral letters

These and many other NHS services online are available free to everyone who is registered with a GP. These services can be particularly useful to older people, the disabled and those with mobility problems, especially in times of bad weather. It means you don’t have to travel about so much to manage your health services, appointments and prescriptions. So learn to make the most of these free online NHS services by dropping in to the friendly, free learning sessions at:
The Meadows Community Centre, 1 St Catharine’s Road, CB4 3XJ (Busway Bus B from the city centre) on Tuesdays & Fridays, 10am-noon. No appointment needed - just drop in.

Activities for older people

Newsflash! The Sheltered Scheme Residents’ Group, welcoming all tenants of the Council’s sheltered schemes citywide, will meet on 20-1-2020, 2-3pm, at Brandon Court, Prospect Row, CB4

Community activities for East Chesterton seniors -

Free Coffee Morning, Mondays, 10.15–11.30am, St Andrew's Hall, Church Street. Rachel Clarke, phone 01223-306150, email rachel@standrews-hall.co.uk

Free Coffee Morning, Tuesdays to Fridays, 12–2pm, Whitefriars, High Street, Chesterton, CB4 2EU; Denise Daniels, phone 01223 -457199, email denise.daniels@cambridge.gov.uk

Meals from £2.50, Tues to Fri, 12-2pm, at Food 4 Food Community Café, St Andrew’s Hall, Chesterton. Phone 01223 272953, email food4food@wintercomfort.org.uk

World Folk Dance for the over 50’s, 2nd & 4th Tuesday of the month, 1.45–4pm. Brown's Field Youth & Community Centre, 31a Green End Road, phone 01223-420309

Over 60’s Social Club, St George’s Church Hall, Chesterfield Road. 3rd Tuesday of month £3.50 per meal. Phone Ann Baker at 01223-423367

Sunshine Group for over 55s, 1st Monday of the month, 2–4pm, Brown’s Field Youth & Community Centre, 31a Green End Road, phone 01223-420309
As explained in your Tenancy Agreement, certain repairs to your home are your own responsibility. It is important not to call the Council to your home to do these repairs, as you could be charged a call-out fee.

You, the tenant, are responsible for the following repairs to your property. So please check this list carefully before requesting a repair - if you are responsible for it, the Council will not come to do it.

**Tenant’s responsibilities...**

- √ repairing any fixture or fitting put in by you or a previous tenant
- √ internal doors and associated fixtures and fittings
- √ window glass
- √ decoration of the inside of your home
- √ replacing fuses and light bulbs
- √ changing tap washers
- √ shelves (unless they are part of the structure)
- √ replacing broken toilet seats
- √ replacing plug and chains on sinks and baths
√ replacing shower curtains
√ clearing blockages to baths, basins and toilets
√ cleaning mould in the home
√ internal plaster work, including repairing cracks
√ dealing with infestations such as ants, wasps, bees, rats, mice, etc
√ gaining entry to your property if you are locked out
√ replacement locks if your keys are lost or stolen (this is covered by a Home Contents Insurance Policy that tenants should use to protect their belongings - see this article for an example)
√ replacing gate fittings (unless it’s a communal gate)
√ repairing or replacing washing lines (unless they are communal)
√ repairing back garden paths
√ clearing drains and gullies
√ side gates, and fencing that is not on the boundary of the property
√ TV aerials
√ chimney sweeping (if you use solid fuel)

For more information visit www.cambridge.gov.uk/who-is-responsible-for-repairs-and-maintenance or phone 01223-457070.
Electrical inspections: your role

What you must do

As your landlord the City Council needs to carry out electrical inspections and fixed wire testing in your home, to keep you and your property safe. The only way to be sure you are safe is through the Council’s annual electrical inspection of your home.

The Council is legally obliged to do an annual electrical inspection and testing of the fixed wires in your home. As part of your Tenancy Agreement, you must allow the Council access to your property to do this inspection.

The Council will write to let you know when your electrical inspection is due. If you know your yearly inspection is due, you could phone the Council’s contractor, TSG, at 01223-828777 to arrange an appointment for a time that suits you.

You must make every effort to be home at the agreed time and let staff in to do your electrical inspection. If you fail to agree a time for your electrical inspection or you are not there when staff come to do it, you are putting yourself, your household and your neighbours at risk.

For more information, phone the Council’s contractor, TSG, at 01223- 828777.
Home contents insurance: why do I need it?

As a landlord Cambridge City Council does not cover your contents as part of the tenancy agreement.

It’s a good idea to consider what a home contents insurance policy would cover you for, in order to help you make an informed decision on whether you need one.

Contents insurance is designed to help protect your possessions. To help you decide whether home contents insurance is right for you, Cambridge City Council have teamed up with Thistle Tenant Risks and Allianz Insurance plc, who provide specialist Tenant’s Contents Insurance policies. They provide a ‘pay as you go’ home contents insurance scheme that can offer you insurance for the contents of your home including cover for items such as furniture, carpets, curtains, clothes, bedding, electrical items, jewellery, pictures and ornaments.

Benefits

• No excess to pay if you make a claim

• All postcodes are included at no added cost

• You can pay weekly along with your rent

Extras

By paying an additional premium, you can extend the insurance to include:
• extended accidental damage cover within the home (for example, if you were to spill paint while decorating, or knock over an ornament)

• personal possessions cover, including mobile phones, anywhere in the UK

• wheelchairs and hearing aids

• garden hut, garage and greenhouse structures

How do I get further information?

You can apply online at www.cambridge.gov.uk/home-contents-insurance

Or for more information, you can phone the Council at 01223-457070.

Winter heating problems

Your heating is essential in the winter months, so what to do if it stops working?

You can be charged a £75 call-out fee if you get the Council’s repair service to do a visit that they consider was not actually needed. So before phoning to request a heating repair, you need to do the following checks first:

√ Is your time-clock display screen switched to the ‘ON’ position?
√ Try turning up the room thermostat: you may need to turn this up high initially to see if the heating comes on (don’t forget to turn it down again afterwards)

√ Does your gas meter have credit, and is it displaying as ‘ON’? (the screen of pre-payment meters displays ‘On’ or ‘Off’)

√ Try re-setting your prepay meter by removing the card and reinserting it (if you have a Smart Meter, you have to contact your gas supplier to reset it - that cannot be done by the Council’s repair service)

√ Try pressing the ‘Re-set’ button on the boiler: it usually has a flame with a cross through it

If, after doing all these checks, your heating is still not working, then check your boiler’s screen for an ‘error code’. Write down this error code and give it to the council when requesting a repair. It will help the repair service to send the correct parts and get the repair done on the first visit, minimising inconvenience to you.

If it’s not a genuine emergency and it is believed you exaggerated to get a repair visit out of hours, you can be charged at least £75 for the unnecessary out of hours visit. Examples would be where repair staff arrive and find:

• there is no credit on the gas meter

• the problem is just a lack of hot water only

• a reported leak could easily have been contained by the tenant until normal working hours, eg. with a bucket

• central heating isn't working but there is other temporary heating in the property or a working gas fire
**Emergencies outside normal working hours**

To request an 'out of hours' emergency repair visit, you can phone 0333-207-0766. But only the following situations justify an emergency visit. Ensure one of the following conditions apply, or else you may be charged for requesting an unjustified emergency repair visit:

- you have no heating of any sort in the property (up to 10pm, temporary electric heating will be delivered to you)

- you have a water leak that cannot be contained, eg. with buckets (your system will be drained by staff to stop the leaking)

- there is a gas leak or smell of fumes (this can also be reported to Cadent at 0800-111-999)

Note that staff may not be able to do a full repair during an emergency visit. But they will make safe, for instance by turning everything off. A repair visit is usually needed as well on the next working day.

To request a routine heating repair, phone 01223-457060 or visit www.cambridge.gov.uk/request-or-report-a-housing-repair. For repairs to gas heating more than a year old, phone the Council’s contractor Mears at 03332-070766.
The Council’s tenants and leaseholders entered a wonderful array of gardens for this year’s Residents’ Garden Competition. Some of the many gardens entered are pictured here, as well as the one featured on the cover of this edition.

The judging team toured each of the gardens individually, and very much enjoyed meeting all the gardeners in their home settings.

Benefits from gardening that residents described included relaxation, health and fitness, growing food and herbs, creating an outdoor living space, offering a haven for wildlife free of herbicides and pesticides, and just enjoying the fresh air and seasons.

From bee hotels to organic veg plots, the judges were impressed by the pride and care that all the entrants put into their gardening.

There’s a category to suit everybody, so why not enter your own gardening space - no matter how tiny it might be - for next year’s competition? The closing date for submitting
your entry form will be in early summer 2020. For more information about entering, visit www.cambridge.gov.uk/tenant-and-leaseholder-garden-competition, email resident-involvement@cambridge.gov.uk or phone 01223-458323.

**Some of 2019’s Winning Gardens...**

Environmental ~ Bridewell Road

Nature & wildlife ~ Gunhild Close

Kitchen Garden ~ Ramsden Square

Community Garden ~ Hanover and Princess Courts

New Garden ~ Brooks Road

Established Garden ~ Ross Street

Baskets & Tubs ~ Wulfstan Way

Tallest Sunflower ~ Ramsden Square

Communal Garden ~ Fernwood

Judges’ Favourite ~ Rawlyn Court

**Estates Improvement Scheme**

In the Spring 2019 edition of Open Door, you saw that your housing service has created an Estates Improvement Scheme, funding improvements to the communal areas of council estates. This new fund will provide £1 million each year for 5 years, solely for improvements rather than for planned maintenance. Suggestions for improvements
come directly from residents, so it’s time to show you one of the first schemes completed.

At Saint Bede’s Crescent, residents requested a new metal-framed pergola in their communal garden area, to replace the old wooden structure which had begun to rot and break. Below you can read what one of the residents involved had to say. And if your estate has an idea for an improvement, please email resident-involvement@cambridge.gov.uk or phone 01223-458323.

A new pergola for St. Bede’s

Local resident Ron Taylor had this to say: ‘Our new pergola is warmly welcomed by residents of St Bede’s Crescent. The wounded Wisteria climbing plant has had some major surgery and is now restored on the frame. Over the years the Wisteria has been an outstanding feature of this attractive estate. It’s just a matter of time until it’s restored to its former glory. Many thanks to the Council Officers who helped in the restoration project.’

There are lots of other proposals in the pipeline for delivery across the city. They vary from installing new bike sheds to making changes which aim to tackle anti-social behaviour. If you have suggestions for improvements to your estate, please email resident-involvement@cambridge.gov.uk or phone 01223- 458323.
Don’t get fined for illegal dumping

Fly tipping means the illegal dumping of any items. It is a crime. Size and amount don’t matter - whether it’s a bag of rubbish or a truck-load of furniture. Fly tipping crime includes leaving any waste beside - rather than inside - street bins or recycling bins. It also includes leaving items outside closed recycling centres or charity shops.

The law requires everyone to dispose of their household or business waste legally. The Council investigates reports of fly tipping and takes legal action against offenders. Offenders face a fine of £400, or a court may impose an unlimited fine. This is the case even if somebody else does the dumping on your behalf.

How to dispose of your waste correctly:

• Use the Council’s kerbside waste and recycling collections

• Use the Household Waste Recycling Centre at Milton or a local recycling point

• Use the Council’s service for getting bulky waste collected

• Sell or donate your unwanted items

• Bring unwanted items to one of the Council’s Community Environment Days in your neighbourhood (find out more at www.cambridge.gov.uk/community-environment-days)

• Use a licensed waste carrier or skip company to collect your rubbish
To protect yourself, the Council suggests that you should suspect all waste carriers until you have checked them out. Do not let them take your rubbish until they provide proof of registration and make a note of their vehicle’s registration plate. You should also take steps to check whether your waste carrier is registered on the Environment Agency website.

Ask them how your rubbish will be disposed of and seek evidence of this. Make sure they give you paperwork. You should ask for a proper invoice or receipt, including the waste carrier’s contact details and a description of the waste. Refuse any unexpected offers to have your rubbish taken away, in case they are an illegal operator.

For more information, visit www.cambridge.gov.uk/report-flytipping or email wasteandstreets@cambridge.gov.uk or phone 01223-458282.

Fire safety

Did you know you’re over seven times more likely to die in a fire in your home if you don’t have smoke alarms in working order?

A smoke alarm is the single most important thing you need in your home! Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service advises residents to fit a smoke alarm to the ceiling of every floor of your home, as part of the #FireKills campaign.
Smoke alarms will alert you to a fire and give you precious minutes to escape to safety. They should be in a fixed location where you can hear them when you are asleep, but not in a kitchen or bathroom. It should be situated at least 30cm from walls and light fittings. Make sure your smoke alarms are not directly above or next to heaters or air conditioning units as this can prevent them from working properly.

All smoke alarms should be tested regularly, at least once a month, to ensure they are working. This is a fun activity that children in the home can get involved with. For more information, visit www.cambsfire.gov.uk/home-safety

Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service also provide free Safe and Well visits for vulnerable residents, which provide information about fire safety as well as alcohol use, staying warm and well, and safety from crime. If you know someone who could benefit from a visit, please visit www.cambsfire.gov.uk/ home-safety/safe-and-well-visit

Street link

StreetLink is a link-up service that is helping to end rough sleeping. It enables you to bring an individual rough sleeper to the attention of local services that can help them.

To send support services to an adult whom you have seen sleeping rough, visit www.streetlink.org.uk This will help those services to find the individual and give them the support they need.
If you think a rough sleeper is under 18, call the police rather than contacting StreetLink. Or if an adult rough sleeper is in immediate danger or needs urgent care, phone 999.

You can contact StreetLink via their website, mobile app and phone line. The service can get busy so use the website or mobile app if possible. Otherwise, you can phone them at 0300-500-0914.

In addition, Cambridge City Council has a specialist Street Outreach Team. They talk to individuals who are sleeping rough and help them find emergency accommodation or support them to return to areas they have come from. The Council also funds a programme of extra help and support for rough sleepers during the coldest months of the year.

If you or someone you know is faced with sleeping rough in Cambridge, contact the Council’s Housing Advice Service at 01223-457918 or their Street Outreach Team at 01223-366292. For Streetlink, visit www.streetlink.org.uk, download their app, or phone 0300-500-0914.

**Communal repairs for leaseholders**

Your lease explains which repairs to your leasehold property are your responsibility, and which are done by the Council. In general, the Council repairs the structural and communal parts of the building you live in. You have to pay your share of the total costs of these repairs to your block.

But it is very important to request repairs to communal and structural areas as soon as you see they are needed. The longer they are left, the more the building deteriorates and the more expensive the eventual repair. And the sooner they are repaired, the less your portion of the repair will cost.
You can request these communal repairs online or by phoning the Council at 01223-457060. For out-of-hours emergencies, phone 0300-303-8389. The Council will usually repair:

• structural faults to the walls, foundations, chimney stack, roof and gutters

• shared areas such as stairways and corridors

• shared drains, gutters and pipework, paintwork in shared areas

• shared outside sheds and stores

• shared services such as lifts, door-entry systems, rotary driers, play areas, lighting and shared laundry equipment

You are usually responsible for maintaining:

• all services – including water, gas, electricity and telephone – from where they enter the property

• all glazing

• all electric and heating circuits, systems, fittings and meters

• all plumbing pipework

• all fittings and sanitary ware inside the flat (other than shared pipes and drains)

• the front door, including the letterbox and handle

• any boundary hedges or fences indicated in your lease
As well as doing communal repairs when you report that they are needed, the Council also aims to check all its leasehold properties every seven years for:

- repairs needed to the outside of the property, including the roof, gutters and pipework, brickwork, and shared doors and windows
- redecoration of external walls and interior shared areas
- repairs to environmental features including fencing

The Council consults you before doing any work that would cost you more than £250.

To discuss a repair, phone 01223-457070 or -457060 or email via www.cambridge.gov.uk/request-or-report-a-housing-repair

**Keeping leaseholders well informed**

At the Leaseholder Consultation Meeting on 16th October, a decision was made to change from 3 meetings per year (in April, July and October) to one annual evening meeting in October. This was because of leaseholders’ low attendance at recent meetings. The new meeting will come after leaseholders receive their ‘actuals’ statement. It will allow them to raise any concerns they may have about leasehold issues, from maintenance works to communal repairs, service charges to anti-social behaviour problems.
The date for the annual meeting will be included with your actuals statement, publicised in Open Door and sent to those on the email circulation list. For estates where large-scale planned works are being undertaken, there will continue to be resident meetings but these will be on issues impacting that area. But for any queries throughout the year, officers and your leaseholder representative are always on hand to help, using the contact details below.

Meanwhile, your leaseholder representative has been elected by council leaseholders citywide to represent them at the Council’s Housing Scrutiny Committee, with equal voting rights alongside City Councillors. This election occurs every four years and is coming up soon in 2020. For more information, or to stand as a candidate yourself, see this article in this edition.

The Council has also recently developed new webpages for council leaseholders at www.cambridge.gov.uk/leaseholders

You can consult these pages for any queries you may have, or email leasehold.services@cambridge.gov.uk or phone 01223-457835.
Can you spot local drug dealing?

Your Neighbourhood Police Team work closely with the City Council to help solve local problems that are having an impact on your safety and quality of life. An example is what’s known as ‘county lines’ drug dealing.

This involves criminal groups using people as ‘drug runners’ to move drugs into new areas for them. Often under 18, runners travel by coach or train to deal drugs for these criminal bosses. Runners get a small profit but carry most of the risk.

Signs to watch for in a young person:

• a sudden, unexplained increase in funds (or items like clothes, trainers or phones they couldn’t previously afford)

• having more than one phone

• receiving far more calls and texts than usual, at all times of the day

• spending two or three days away, returning tired or withdrawn

• having unexplained cash, small money bags or weapons

Signs to watch for in a property:
Drug dealers sometimes take over a property with runners for just a few days. Possible signs include:

- a property suddenly busier, with lots of unfamiliar people making brief visits
- absence of the person supposed to live at the address, or them being present but seeming withdrawn or scared

The charity Fearless gives further advice and information on the subject at www.fearless.org

Meanwhile, recent neighbourhood policing successes in Cambridge include:

- regular patrols in Orchard Park after burglaries in July: stop searches and a search warrant led to two arrests
- arrest of a known aggressive beggar from the north of the city, leading to an 8-month prison sentence
- working with Romsey Mill and other youth organisations to prevent anti-social behaviour and safeguard young people during the school holidays

You can contact your local policing team by:

- speaking to them in person when they’re out and about
- phoning 101
- reporting online at www.cambs.police.uk (often the quickest method)
- reporting online anonymously at crimestoppers-uk.org
- visiting www.cambs.police.uk/your-area
To contact the Council

Payments by phone: phone 01223-457779, with bank card

Rents, tenancies, lettings, renting a council garage: phone 01223-457070, email cityhomesgarages@cambridge.gov.uk

Repairs: phone 01223-457060; phone 0300-303-8389 for out of hours emergency repairs

Council Tax: email revenues@cambridge.gov.uk, phone 01223-457790

Housing for Older People, Visiting Support Service & Community Alarms: email independent.living@cambridge.gov.uk, phone 01223-457199

Home-Link lettings: visit www.home-link.org.uk, phone 01223-457918

Report tenancy fraud: email fightfraud@cambridge.gov.uk, phone 0800-328-0572 (confidential Freephone)

Report anti-social behaviour: email asbsection@cambridge.gov.uk, phone 01223-457950

Racial harassment: phone 01223-457967 or 07973-883261

Housing & Council Tax Benefits: email benefits@cambridge.gov.uk, phone 01223-457775
Bins, recycling, street-cleaning: visit http://bins.cambridge.gov.uk, phone 01223-458282

Open Door: email opendoor@cambridge.gov.uk; write to Open Door, City Homes, 171 Arbury Road, Cambridge CB4 2YG

Council emergencies outside office hours: phone 0300-3038389

Homelessness & temporary accommodation, outside office hours: phone 03300-538-109 (same cost as a normal landline)

General enquiries & complaints: email enquiries@cambridge.gov.uk, phone 01223-457000 (9am-5.15pm, Monday to Friday), visit www.cambridge.gov.uk/compliments-complaints-and-suggestions.

Council’s contractors

Mears gas servicing: Freephone 03332-070-766, including out of hours; for leaseholders’ gas emergencies, phone 0800-111-999

TSG Services: email enquiries@tsgplc.co.uk, phone 01223-828777

Churchill communal cleaning: email helppoint@churchillservices.com, phone 0845-345-1576 or 01582-760055, Mon-Fri, 8.30am-5.30pm

Fosters: email info@fpm-ltd.co.uk, phone 01945-586999

Domestic Abuse National 24-hour Helpline: phone 0808-2000-247 (Freephone, no cost), visit www.nationaldomesticviolencehelpline.org.uk