

John's winter tips are a winner!

John from Hayles Street in London was one of the winners in our winter tips competition. He gave us three great ideas.

Thank you to everyone who took part. We received some great tips from residents for keeping warm, saving energy and keeping condensation away.

We share a few tips here and you can find the rest on our website at: www.kenistonha.co.uk/about-us/publications/other/winter-tips

John's tips for keeping warm

- Electric blankets are very economical to run – from 1p to 3p an hour. They now have timers, so if you go to sleep with the blanket on it can be set to switch off automatically. Blankets can also be washed in the washing machine in the spring and put away for next winter.
- Ensure your letter box closes correctly or a cold draught will make your home very cold. Have a word with delivery operatives and encourage them to push papers right through.
- And wear your fluffy hoodie! They really do keep you warm.

More energy-saving tips from residents

- Use an app to monitor your usage.
- When buying a new appliance, consider a more energy efficient product.
- Turn on lights only in the room that you are using the most.
- Don't keep electrical appliances on standby mode. Turn off at the socket.
- Wash clothes at a lower temperature and avoid doing half-loads.
- Set your heating thermostat effectively.
- Lower the flow temperature on your boiler. *(There is a handy tool, explaining how to check and turn this down, at: moneysavingboilerchallenge.com/walkthrough).*
- Turn down (not off) radiators in rooms that have the least use.



Above: John from Hayles Street wearing his hoodie prize.

- Close curtains/blinds at night.
- Spend less time in the shower.
- Don't over fill the kettle. Only heat the water you require.
- Use an insulated flask to keep your water hot for many hours to avoid heating the water repeatedly.
- Switch to energy-saving lightbulbs.

Continued on page 2

Energy-saving tips from residents

Continued from front page

- Use the Citizens Advice Bureau's cost-checker tool at: www.citizensadvice.org.uk/consumer/energy/energy-supply/get-help-paying-your-bills/check-how-much-your-electrical-appliances-cost-to-use

There are lots more tips at www.moneysavingexpert.com/utilities/energy-saving-tips

Cost-of-living crisis: extra help to pay bills

People on benefits with low incomes, will get three cost-of-living payments, adding up to £900, over the next year. The payments will be made in the spring and autumn of 2023, and the spring of 2024.

If you get disability benefits, you will get an additional £150 in the summer of 2023.

Older people will get an extra £300 on top of their normal Winter Fuel Payment – paid in November or December 2023.

If you are struggling to pay, there are steps you can take.

- Contact your energy provider to agree a plan you can afford. Ask them if they offer hardship grants.
- Go to www.turn2us.org.uk to search for grants from charities. You can also use their benefits calculator to check you are getting all the benefits you can claim. Phone 0808 802 2000 for further advice (9am-5pm, Mondays-Fridays).
- If you are in crisis, apply to your Council's hardship fund.

Office re-opens for pre-booked appointments

Since 3 April 2023, we have offered pre-bookable office appointments if a phone call or home visit aren't suitable. Please note that we do not provide walk-in appointments.

To meet a member of staff, you first need to phone us on: 01689 889700 or email: enquiries@kenistonha.co.uk, to make your appointment.

Please don't be offended if we ask why you need to meet us – we will just be making sure you see the best person to help you.

We aim to provide you with an appointment within seven working days. But if your matter is urgent and can't wait that long, please make this clear when you contact us.

Why pre-bookable only?

Since the pandemic, we have adopted a hybrid working policy, which means that our staff work partly from home and partly in the office.

The last three years have shown us that most issues can be solved over the phone or in your home, so we think office appointments that must be pre-booked are a



Visiting the office – some do's and don'ts

- Please don't visit the office if you are feeling unwell or have any symptoms of Covid-19 or a common cold.
- Note that we only allow two adults per household – because our reception area and meeting room are quite small.
- Please respect our personal space and always treat staff with respect.

good approach for us to take. However, we will monitor how well this works and review things in six months' time.

Summer photoshoots

We will soon be updating our stock of photos for Sunningdale Court, Burnhill House and Perryfield House.



Our photoshoots are likely to take place in July and we always like to feature residents in our promotional photos. If you are happy to take part, please email lynnruss@kenistonha.co.uk or call 01689 889700. If you take part, we will give you a shopping voucher as a thank-you for giving us your time.

Better homes, better neighbourhoods

Residents at four of our schemes are enjoying improvements thanks to our 'better homes, better neighbourhoods' fund.

Residents, as well as staff, can put forward suggestions for our Better homes, better neighbourhoods fund. If you would like an improvement made at your housing scheme, speak to your Housing Officer.

Nethewode Court

The bank area at the front of Nethewode Court used to be overgrown, hard to maintain and a trap for litter. It has now been improved with new landscaping.



Before

I'm really pleased with the bank, as it is much tidier and has deterred people from dumping rubbish there.



After

Burnhill House

Residents at Burnhill House were worried about security, so they successfully applied to the fund for a contribution towards new gates.

They are such an improvement, and you instantly feel more secure. They don't look out of place either.



Perryfield House

Residents asked for gates to be installed for added security. A contribution from the fund made this possible.

New tree for Silver Court/Byers Court

To celebrate the late Queen's platinum Jubilee, we signed up to the Queen's Green Canopy initiative and pledged to plant two new trees.

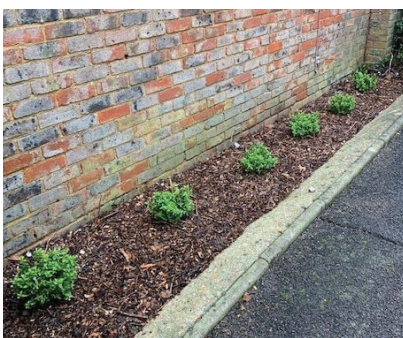
Our Operations Director, Sue McDonnell, is pictured beside the tree we planted in the communal gardens at Silver Court and Byers Court.

A tree has also been planted at Perryfield House and will feature in the summer issue. Both have a commemorative plaque.



Darrick Wood

The gardeners at Darrick Wood have spruced up two areas with new planting and bark. The bark chip was produced from the chipper that was also purchased using the better homes, better neighbourhoods fund.



Development update: We have been working closely with the London Borough of Bromley to make our development of new homes at Darrick Wood the best it can be.

Planning officers are considering our application and we expect it to go to the Planning Committee soon. Bromley Council will tell residents when the date is decided.

Profile: Board member, Stephen Hoad

Stephen Hoad joined Keniston's Board just over a year ago.

Stephen is the Property Director for the Diocese of Rochester – The Church of England in Kent, and a Fellow of the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors. Prior to working for the Diocese, Stephen worked in both consultancy and housing roles for over 20 years. We spoke with Stephen recently to find out more.

How have you found your time with Keniston?

"I'm really enjoying it. I am passionate about housing, and this is my first board position. I am always learning and am grateful to Keniston for giving me the opportunity."

Stephen is a born and bred Bromley Borough resident. He was looking for a board opportunity in his local area and liked the look and feel of Keniston. He works with community-based churches, and they are very similar in their values and outlook.

What makes you a good fit for Keniston?

During his years in housing, Stephen worked alongside residents in the delivery of Decent Homes and planned maintenance programmes. He saw the challenges that residents faced and enjoyed working and involving them at a local level, finding it very rewarding.

"With all the different initiatives we brought in, I loved seeing the difference that these programmes made in their lives; really seeing the impact of the work we did."

Stephen tells us that the greatest achievement of his career was

building the first new Church of England church in London for 40 years. The Engine Room at Tottenham Hale isn't just a church. It's a community hub with a nursery, community centre, youth club and café. It's a real social value project that he is very proud of. And he is about to embark on building the first new church that the Diocese in Kent has seen in over 20 years.

"I am thrilled that The Engine Room has been able to provide a new youth club. I was a youth worker in my spare time for a number of years. I mentored young people from 16 to 21 years of age. We would give them career guidance, provide activities, and take them on day trips. We once took the minibus to Bluewater to go to the cinema but found that we had been clamped when we came out. Somebody wasn't paying attention to the parking signs! That was a long night."

What are your interests outside of work?

"Lego! If I am not building big projects at work, I am building big projects indoors."

Stephen's a huge fan of Lego and he's been getting his kids into it



as well. They love queuing up for the latest sets to be released.

When not building Lego, Stephen enjoys spending time with the family. He also loves travelling; enjoying different cultures and food.

Stephen will be working his way round all of the Keniston schemes in due course. "I am looking forward to attending some walkabouts soon and meeting with residents. I want to listen to your views, so please do come and say hello if you see me."

New Board members

We warmly welcome our newest Board members, **Ian Pinches and Elizabeth Emmanuel.**

Ian is the new Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee. He has worked in the public sector for almost 20 years and brings a depth of relevant experience to his role at Keniston.

Liz is our new Resident Board member. She lives at Nethewode Court. "I am actively involved in my local community and have the passion to make a difference and influence positive change. Now is the time to use my skills and expertise to serve my community at large."

We will include Board member profiles of Ian and Liz in our summer edition.

Learning from complaints

Between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2023, we received eight complaints from residents.

Four complaints were about repairs, which were all resolved at stage 1 of our process. They included replacing old appliances and awarding compensation where our high standards were not entirely met.

Four complaints were about housing services – specifically around our policies. Three of these were resolved at stage 1, with one being awarded compensation for

a service delay. The remaining complaint is now being investigated by the Housing Ombudsman Service, because the resident was not happy with our initial response.

In each case, we apologised for a reduced standard of service, or we explained why things were done in a certain way. We took failings back to contractors, to make sure things will improve for the future.



For further information, you can view our complaints policy or the 'Making a complaint' leaflet on our website. If you need a paper or digital copy of anything, please let us know.



Estate satisfaction

Every other year, we send out an estate satisfaction survey asking you about the services we provide such as cleaning and gardening.

To continually enhance our service, it is important to have your feedback, so that we can identify where there is room for improvement. If you have an email address on our system, you will be sent an online survey. Those without email will receive a paper copy. All participants are entered into a random draw to win a £10 shopping voucher.

Join us for an estate walkabout

You are welcome to attend any of our estate walkabouts throughout the year.

The dates are on our website, or you can contact Customer Services for a list to be sent to you.

Right: A recent Merrow Estate walkabout.



May elections?

Photo ID needed!

From 4 May 2023, voters in England will need to show photo ID to vote at polling stations in some elections.

To start with, this will apply to: local elections; police and crime commissioner elections; UK parliamentary by-elections; and recall petitions. But, from October 2023, it will also apply to UK general elections.

You can find the full list of accepted ID on the Electoral Commission website at: www.electoralcommission.org.uk

If you don't have any of these accepted forms of photo ID, you can apply online or through your local authority for a free Voter Authority Certificate.

When applying for a Voter Authority Certificate, you will need to provide your: name; address; date of birth; and National Insurance number.

The
Electoral
Commission



No ID? You can apply for free voter ID

Find out more at

electoralcommission.org.uk/voterID

or call 0800 328 0280



Unreasonable behaviour

Our staff and contractors have the right to work without being subjected to unreasonable behaviour.

We recognise that in times of distress people may act out of character, and we will not automatically view behaviour as unacceptable just because a customer is forceful or determined, but will take a measured approach. Examples of unreasonable behaviour may include: abusive or offensive language, unmanageable demands, unreasonable persistence, threats to health, safety or wellbeing made in person, over the telephone or in written communication. More details on our procedure can be found in our information leaflet 'Unreasonable behaviour'. View on our website or ask us for a copy.

Keeping mould at bay

We recently published a new information leaflet called 'Preventing mould'. It is full of useful tips to keep away damp, condensation and mould. The leaflet is on our website, or you can ask us for a copy.

Starters and leavers

We welcome **Paul Alderson** as our new Rent Income Officer. Paul has previously worked with us in various roles, so he knows both staff and residents well.

Sheltered scheme activities

Residents at our sheltered schemes often take part in training or social events. If you would like your event featured in Talkback, please contact Lynn Russ.

Below: Christmas at Darrick Wood.



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