Celebrating 10 years at Newburn House

Resident Scrutiny Panel update

Student designs mural for Spring Tinnings site

INSIDE

Residents’ Business Plan 2014-16

Pets win prizes competition
Welcome to the first issue of G2 for 2014.

This issue features articles from several of the key resident groups – including the Residents’ Scrutiny Panel and the Resident Inspectors, who tell us what they have been up to lately on behalf of GreenSquare residents.

In the centre of the magazine, you will find a copy of the 2014-16 Residents’ Business Plan – the two-year plan that has been put together by residents and identifies what you have said you want us at GreenSquare to focus on over the next couple of years. This can be pulled out from the magazine for you to keep.

Finally, I am delighted to announce that at the end of last year (2013) GreenSquare was placed seventh in a list of the top 50 UK social landlords, which is a fantastic recognition of our commitment to putting residents at the heart of everything we do – a commitment that remains strong as 2014 gets underway.

I hope you enjoy this issue!

Ann Cornelius, Executive Director (Customers & Communities)

Whatsoever! & WhatNow!

Whatever! (for people aged between 16-24 years old) and WhatNow! (for people aged 25 or over) are exciting schemes available to GreenSquare residents. They help to improve people’s employability, practical skills, confidence and experience in the workplace.

GreenSquare resident Russell Holden took part in the What Now! project. He explained: “I recently completed a 13 week placement with GreenSquare’s Property Services, which was then extended for a further 8 weeks. My role involved working with GreenSquare’s caretaker Dave Bird and assisting him with his maintenance jobs throughout the area.

‘At the beginning of my placement, I wasn’t particularly confident in the position but through Dave’s fantastic mentoring and gaining hands-on, practical experience, I soon gained my confidence. I learnt important customer service skills and carried out tasks that I had never done before, and was taught the correct way to approach them each time.

‘I would absolutely recommend this scheme to others – it has placed me in a much better position to apply for full-time roles, which is currently what I am doing.’

“I would absolutely recommend this scheme to others – it has placed me in a much better position to apply for full-time roles”

The What Now! and Whatever! projects are open to all GreenSquare residents who are not currently in full-time employment or education. If you’re interested in finding out more, please email sue.williams@greensquaregroup.com or contact us using the details on page 16.

“Whatever! resident Russell Holden took part in the What Now! project.”

Whatever! & WhatNow!

We’re delighted to announce that GreenSquare has been placed in the top 10 in a list of the UK’s top 50 social landlords compiled by leading industry magazine 24Housing and the Housing Quality Network (HQN).

It was decided on by a panel of expert industry judges, who compiled the top 50 list of the best performing housing providers in the country. The final order of the top 10 was left to a public vote and thanks to people taking the time to vote for us, GreenSquare has been named as number seven!

“We are delighted to have been able to provide such a fantastic service”

At the end of last year, 60 people attended an anniversary celebration at Newburn House. Hazel Rutland, Project Co-ordinator for Newburn House, said: “We were pleased to welcome back some of the women who have stayed here in the past and it was great to see so many representatives from the agencies we have worked with over the years.

“We are proud to say that over the past ten years, we have successfully provided safe accommodation for 52 women. We are delighted to have been able to provide such a fantastic service and we hope that we’re able to continue for the foreseeable future.”

Pictured top: past and present residents of Newburn House. Pictured right: cutting the cake at the recent anniversary event.

Residents’ Business Plan 2014-2016

PULL-OUT SECTION

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In this section we feed back on action we have taken in your area as a direct result of comments and requests from you.

We were asked to provide recycling bins at Dickens Avenue flats in Corsham because the normal rubbish skips were kept at the front of the block and were unsightly. We removed a gate to allow easy access for the bins and contacted Wiltshire Council to change the collection point. We also organised the delivery of recycling bins for glass, paper and tins.

We asked the Dog Warden for help at Rosemary House in Lacock because people were allowing their dogs to foul on the communal areas. He hand delivered letters and spoke to many of the residents about being responsible dog owners. If you are having problems happening where you live, you can call the Dog Warden at Wiltshire Council on 0300 456 0100.

We received a complaint that the leaseholder of a flat was allowing his dog to foul on the communal areas. He had been provided with dogs fouling where you live, you can call the Dog Warden at Wiltshire Council on 0300 456 0100.

We contacted the leaseholder and explained that not only was this unsightly but it was also a fire risk, which resulted in the balcony being cleared and the door can now be shut.

A caravan was dumped on one of our garage sites and was obstructing our tenants’ garages. We traced and contacted the owner and made sure he got it moved quickly and also cleared up the rubbish that had been left around it.

You said that a disabled parking bay was needed in Little England and this has now been provided.

You told us that there were some issues with anti-social behaviour in Larkham Rise – we have been working with the police and Guinness Trust to have a new community event planned for 2014.

You reported serious cases of anti-social behaviour at Greenway Court, Little England, Gowleaze and Field View – we worked with residents and the police to eject anti-social tenants in these areas.

You told us that the bins at Sheldon Road have no space for garden tools and equipment. We are currently installing garden sheds and looking to develop a community garden project in spring 2014.

We received a complaint that the leaseholder of a flat was allowing his tenant to fill the balcony area with rubbish, which meant that the door to the balcony from the landing could not be closed. We contacted the leaseholder and explained that not only was this unsightly but it was also a fire risk, which resulted in the balcony being cleared and the door can now be shut.

You said that Greenway Court was looking generally untidy with overgrown shrubbery, so we arranged for a clean up day to be held in January.

You told us that the bin stores in Gowleaze are regularly overflowing with rubbish from residents who do not live in the flats. We have been liaising with the management company and have agreed to contribute towards some lockable doors that are due to be installed this spring.

You said that a disabled parking bay was needed in Little England and this has now been provided.

We recently ran a Facebook competition asking residents to send in pictures of their cute pets for the chance to win £25 pet shop store vouchers.

From pugs and poodles, kittens and tabbies, to rabbits and guinea pigs – any pet was able to enter! Well done to the winners:

**CUTEST PET**

**1ST PLACE** Bob (featured on front cover)

**2ND PLACE** Smokie

Find us on Facebook

**fb.com/greensquareavon**

Remember to ‘like’ our Facebook page for the chance to take part in future competitions we run and to find out more about what’s happening where you live.

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### Who's Who

- **Chippenham and the surrounding villages**
  - Neighbourhood Manager – Heather Stewart
  - Customer Managers – Terri Yewkins, Sian Criddle and Gemma Castle-Jamieson
  - Neighbourhood Officers – Melissa Shepherd and Vicky Gunter
  - Neighbourhood Team Administrator – Sarah Ellkins
  - Home Mover – Nicola Royston
  - Caretaker – Adrian McHugh

- **Corsham, Trowbridge, Melksham, and Bradford on Avon**
  - Neighbourhood Manager – Karen Williams
  - Customer Manager – Cheryl Scratchley
  - Neighbourhood Officers – Sarah Ofton
  - Neighbourhood Team Administrator – Lianne Bradshaw
  - Home Mover – Belinda Emm
  - Caretaker – Nigel Lambert

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**CLEAR RENT ACCOUNT PRIZE DRAW WINNERS (DECEMBER 2013)**

- **1ST PRIZE** £300 Mrs P. Purton
- **2ND PRIZE** £150 Miss H. Criswell
- **3RD PRIZE** £100 Mr. and Mrs D. Calne

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**Pets win prizes**

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**Dates for the Diary**

- **Design a survey**
  - 7 & 14 March – Barbury House, Swindon

- **Understanding social media**
  - 11, 18, 25 March – Learning Curve, Melksham

Contact Julie Bielby on 01249 465465 or email julie.bielby@greensquaregroup.com for full course details.

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**Caught on Camera**

Lesley Deane, a resident at Dickens Avenue, recently volunteered her gardening skills and her time to planting lavender outside the flats and the nia is looking great!

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**GreenSquare Academy**

- **A beautifully crafted Christmas tree**
  - Members of local sewing group, the Krafty Krainers, dedicated their time to making all the decorations for the Christmas tree in the reception of our Methuen Park office.

- **Sonia Carr, who runs the Krafty Krainers, explained: “I kept seeing expensive handmade decorations for sale in the shops and thinking that the sewing group members could make something even better than that – but for free!” We sourced the fabrics and trims from the Wiltshire Scrap Store and various charity shops in Wiltshire, some of which were donated from premium brands like Mulberry. A particularly popular decoration was the little Christmas tree, which we made from vintage buttons that were given to us by Wiltshire Wildlife Trust.”**

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**Contact us**

See page 16

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**John McWilliam, GreenSquare resident**

Recovering from an emergency operation in a hospital bed, I was surprised when the cleaning lady said: “Could you please stop scowling at me?” I told my wife at visiting time, and explained that I didn’t mean to scowl, so thought it was because of the operation. My wife replied: “You’ve been scowling for ages. You never used to do it at one time.” I felt happy in myself, but I needed to stop scowling! I read that if you put on a false smile, in time it becomes real. I tried this, and it seemed to work. I also read that most people need to deepen their breathing, as it calms you down, strengthens your lungs, makes you feel better and uses up more calories! Both these techniques work for me. People might enjoy their jobs better, and many others might find themselves getting on better with others if they tried it. So, keep on smiling!**
This plan is based on the feedback from 344 residents across GreenSquare. They were asked what they thought GreenSquare could do better. This feedback from residents has helped to identify what residents want to happen most in their local areas. This plan lists those priorities and how GreenSquare plans to tackle them. Local suggestions were incorporated into the community plans and the Communities Boards will be responsible for keeping an eye on how GreenSquare delivers those and the promises made in this plan.
Residents said: Get back to us when you say you will and keep us up to date with your services.

**GREENSQUARE WILL**
Introduce a single computer system to provide consistent customer service across the Group.

Report on how many customer service enquiries are resolved first time and within a suitable time limit.

Residents said: Provide more community activities including clean up days, sports and social events.

**GREENSQUARE WILL**
Ensure it does no fewer activities than the previous year (working within budget) and will try to offer more if possible.

Ask for feedback from residents after each community event to make sure it’s providing the sort of activities that residents want.

Residents said: Provide more community activities that support children and the elderly.

**GREENSQUARE WILL**
Work with other organisations, such as schools and children’s centres, to make sure residents have access to family support services, publicising and funding (where possible) activities that are taking place.

Residents said: Greater fuel efficiency in heating systems.

**GREENSQUARE WILL**
Aim to produce Energy Performance Certificates (EPC) for all of its homes.

Residents said: Review your repair waiting times and appointment system.

**GREENSQUARE WILL**
Review its current waiting times and work on giving residents a clearer idea of when they can expect repairs to start in their homes.

Look at its current out-of-hours repair provision and take on board feedback from residents.

Residents said: Keep track of the contractors you use.

**GREENSQUARE WILL**
Promote the page on its website where residents can provide feedback and send in photographs to rate the repairs that have been done in their homes.

Residents said: Review your repair waiting times and appointment system.

**GREENSQUARE WILL**
Review its current waiting times and work on giving residents a clearer idea of when they can expect repairs to start in their homes.

Inspect the fuel efficiency in all communally heated homes and review the findings.

Continue providing free energy advice visits in all areas to help residents who are struggling to pay their fuel bills.

Continue to monitor energy efficiency in all homes and apply for additional funding if necessary.

Residents said: Look at contributing towards property improvements of shared owners.

**GREENSQUARE WILL**
Make it clearer to shared owners when they purchase a share in their property that they are responsible for repairs in their homes.

Provide clear explanations of shared owners’ responsibilities on its website and leaflets.

Residents said: Offer repairs and planned maintenance services to shared owners at affordable rates.

**GREENSQUARE WILL**
Look at the options and feasibility of establishing a competitively priced repairs service, and gas repairs and maintenance service for shared owners and leaseholders. This should offer better value for money than using external contractors.

Review the possibility of offering planned maintenance works for leaseholders at the same price as GreenSquare would pay.

Residents said: Maintain the exteriors of our homes as part of your planned maintenance service.

**GREENSQUARE WILL**
Look at painting the outside of houses when working in neighbourhoods as part of the planned maintenance programme.

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Residents said:
Consult with us about
the design of communal
areas and properties.

GREENSQUARE WILL
Talk and listen to residents before
updating development documents and
take into consideration how
residents want internal and external
communal areas to look.
Provide residents in its new
properties the chance to give
detailed feedback on what they
think about the development and
their home, so it can continue to
build high quality homes.

To find out more, please contact the Community Involvement team using the details below

If you would like to have any part of this
explained or translated, or in a different format
such as in larger print, or on audio tape, please
contact us to discuss your needs.

For Avon and Marden areas phone 01249 465465 or
e-mail enquiries@greensquaregroup.com
For lsts area phone 01865 773000, freephone 0800 980 9272 or
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Crash helmets donated to Wiltshire Ambulance Service

GreenSquare recently donated crash helmets to Wiltshire Ambulance Service for use in its training programmes. The crash helmets had been used by participants on GreenSquare’s Wheels to Work programme, which provides residents on its ‘Whatever!’ and What Now? work placement schemes with a moped and safety gear to enable them to ride to work.

Jayne Darling-Parkes, Director of Wiltshire Ambulance Service (pictured right), said: “During our first aid training course, we teach our experts how to safely remove helmets from crash victims. As we aren’t looking to use the helmets out on the road, it is DK for us to use second-hand ones, which makes the helmets given to us by GreenSquare ideal.”

Would you like to gain new IT skills?

Do you need help to complete forms online? Or perhaps you’ve been wondering what the difference is between Twitter and a tweet...

GreenSquare offers free one-to-one training and support for residents who are interested in learning new IT skills – no matter how simple or complex. IT learning co-ordinator Maizy Bartlett as the ideal person to design the mural.

Zach, 17, said: “I have designed a mural that positively represents both the local and global community and I am really pleased to have this opportunity to show my work in the public domain. This project will also be able to form part of my media studies coursework, which is on how street art can be used as a medium for social and political values and ideologies.”

GreenSquare recently started work on site at the development at Spring TTNings in Corsham to build 17 new homes.

Student designs mural for development site

A student from Corsham recently designed a mural for the hoardings at our Spring TTNings development in the town.

Zach Rush (pictured below), a student at the Corsham School, is studying art, photography and media studies and was put forward by his teacher Kerry Everson as the ideal person to design the mural.

Zach, 17, said: “I have designed a mural that positively represents both the local and global community and I am really pleased to have this opportunity to show my work in the public domain. This project will also be able to form part of my media studies coursework, which is on how street art can be used as a medium for social and political values and ideologies.”

Football fiesta at St Paul’s Primary

Local youngsters enjoyed a morning of football and arts and crafts recently, at a football fiesta event organised by GreenSquare and the Rise Trust Children Centre at The Oaks in Chippenham (photos above).

Children of all ages took part in the five-a-side tournament and enjoyed themselves in the October sunshine. At the event, GreenSquare had a stand promoting the importance of money management, and provided people with debt advice and support. A representative from the Illegal Money Lending team was also on hand to warn people about the danger of loan sharks and to give away mugs, pens and trolley tokens.

Local resident Nalin Mistry attended the event and said: “The event was really good and it was great to see the weather holding up. I would be keen to be contacted about future events like this.”

Like to make some changes?

When you move in to your GreenSquare home you should find it to an acceptable standard straight away, but once you’ve settled in you may wish to carry out a few changes. Before starting any work, you will need to ensure that both you and GreenSquare are fully covered and informed.

Here are some things to be aware of:

- If you decide to end your tenancy, you may be eligible to receive some change.
- If we become aware that you’ve made changes to your home without our written consent, we may ask you to change it back to its original condition, or we may make you carry out further work to bring it up to our standards.
- If you decide to end your tenancy, you may be eligible to receive compensation for certain improvements based on how much the improvement cost and how long it is expected to last. You cannot get compensation if you did not receive permission in writing to do the work, or if you failed to keep to the conditions of your tenancy.

For more information contact us using the details on page 16.
HOW DID WE DO?
We want to let you know how well we are performing, and report on the following in each issue of G2; these results are for the three months ending December 2013. If you want more detailed performance information, please get in touch.

Tip top service
with Phil Hall, Chippenham Contact Centre Supervisor

GreenSquare’s contact centres are staffed with highly skilled customer service officers and provide a single point of contact for all of our customers. We’ll always aim to resolve your enquiry in the first instance but if this isn’t possible we’ll make sure we put you in touch with someone that can. Here’s my top 10 tips for getting the best out of our service:

1. The essentials
   - We’re open from 8.45am-5.15pm Monday to Thursday and 8.45am-4.45pm on a Friday. You can call us on 01249 455455 or visit our office at Methuen Park, Chippenham. If you have an emergency outside of these hours you can call the same number and follow the voice prompt.

2. Online?
   - You can contact us with any enquiry using the contact us section at greensquaregroup.com or simply email us at enquiries@greensquaregroup.com

3. No internet access?
   - We provide free internet access at our office and are happy to let you know about other free access available.

4. Your details
   - It’s really important that we have up to date contact details for you. When you contact us, our team might double check the contact details we hold for you.

5. Security
   - Our team is likely to ask you questions to confirm who you are when you contact us, it’s a security measure for your protection and to make sure that we comply with the Data Protection Act. We can only discuss account and tenancy matters with the person whose name is on the account or tenancy, unless you give us permission to discuss the matter with someone else.

6. Hearing difficulties?
   - If you have difficulty hearing you can contact us using Typetalk, use our enquiries email address or we can text information to your mobile. We also have hearing loop equipment at our office.

7. Language barrier?
   - Don’t worry if English isn’t your first language – we have access to telephone operators who speak more than 100 different languages and can also translate versions of documents if necessary.

8. Sight problems?
   - If you’re visually impaired, we can provide information in large print, braille and audiotape.

9. You can help us
   - If you’re calling in response to a particular letter or statement, please have it with you because this will help us to help you much more efficiently.

10. Just ask!
    - Our team is here to help – please call us with any enquiry and we will do our best to help. Many of your queries can be resolved by the Customer Service team.

Debt advice
Do you know where you can get good quality, free, debt advice? Are you receiving the right benefits? Where do you go for help if you have questions about debt and benefits?

GreenSquare works with local support agencies to provide advice on debt and benefit issues for our residents. There are also some great websites that provide advice on prioritising and reducing debts, as well as self-help tools such as action plans and sample letters to send to creditors.

You can visit www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk or www.moneysavetrust.org or the National Debtline for free on 0808 808 4000.

Alternatively, you can contact the Citizens Advice Bureau for debt, benefit and budgeting advice by dropping into one of their offices or visiting www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Don’t get in with a loan shark

There are many people who do not have savings accounts or easy access to low cost loans. The economic conditions of the last few years have resulted in a growing number of people finding it difficult to control their money and often falling prey to ‘payday lenders’, which may lead to spiralling debt that becomes impossible to control. A credit union’s aim is to help people gain control of their money by offering a combination of savings and loans.

More information about Wiltshire Community Bank can be found at www.wiltshirecommunitybank.co.uk or call the Wiltshire Money Line on 01249 248 313 to find your nearest branch. As a credit union member you can apply for loans with repayments that are affordable for you and you can also open a Christmas savings account.

Credit unions

REMEmBER
The way we charge rent is changing

Following the feedback that we received from residents and the Communities Boards, the GreenSquare Board voted to start collecting rent over 52 weeks for all our residents from April 2014.

This means that if you currently pay rent for only 48 weeks of the year, your weekly payment will now reduce and you will no longer have any weeks that are rent-free.

This will not mean any changes to your tenancy agreement and there is nothing you need to do now. Along with your rent statement you will have received notification of your new rent for 2014/15 so that you can alter your payment accordingly. If you want to talk to us about this or need more information please email us at rent.change@greensquaregroup.com or call the contact centre (details page 16).
Although it is winter, there are still a few things to do in the garden

• Tidy up old leaves and put aside for compost when you can.
• While it is winter, search catalogues, visit the library or search gardening websites to find inspiration for a part of your garden. Make notes of plant names, cut out pictures from magazines and keep your notes in a file ready to use. Find suitable winter plants, shrubs and trees needed to refresh the look of the garden. Always get advice from the seller of these plants.
• Buy fresh soil and pea shingle – or small size stones for tubs, urns and troughs (to go on top of the soil) for summer flowers and herbs. Any stones can help to keep the soil moist in small areas during hot days, when laid on top of soil, and around plants. Then the containers are ready for use in spring.
• Grass needs airing. Use a fork and make holes on the surface. It will help keep moss away and encourage growth of grass.

If you would like to have any part of this explained or translated, or in a different format such as in larger print, or on audio tape, please contact us on 01249 465465 to discuss your needs.