

OPEN HOUSE

Winter 2010

ISSUE 6

THE ROSEMARY SIMMONS MHA & FELLOWSHIP HOUSES TRUST NEWSLETTER

TOP RANKING: 9/10

A huge thank you from us to all of you who took the time to rate our homes and service standards for the 2009 STATUS survey. We now have the results. Read on ...

The latest independent survey of our residents has found that nine out of 10 tenants and nearly eight out of 10 homeowners are satisfied with our service. Your rating puts us easily in the top 10 per cent of the best UK housing associations.

The survey by the National Housing Federation (NHF) took findings from around 60% of you who completed the postal survey. These are the headline results:

- 90% of tenants and 78% of homeowners are satisfied with our services
- 94% of you are satisfied with the quality and general condition of your home
- 91% of tenants and 57% of homeowners are satisfied overall with our repairs and maintenance service
- 90% of tenants think your rent is good value for money
- 89% of tenants and 65% of homeowners find our staff helpful
- 88% of tenants and 69% of homeowners think we keep you informed
- 77% of tenants and 60% of homeowners think we take your views into account.

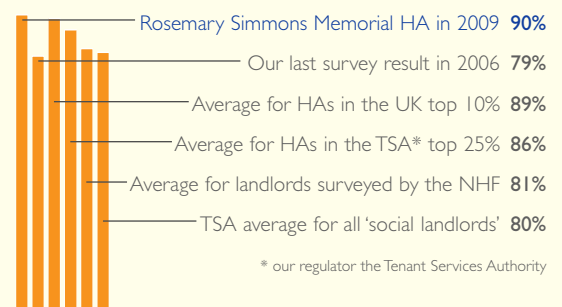
The results are better than when you were last surveyed in 2006 so we're proud of what our staff have achieved. We also think you deserve a lot of the credit, given how many of you give up your time to work help our staff improve services.

We know there is room for improvement. There were some criticisms, among them how easy, or otherwise, you find contacting our staff, and the service standards of some contractors (see also page 2).

Over the coming months we will be looking in detail at the areas you rated less well to see what changes are needed. We will continue to listen to your views and ideas and we will continue to respect your judgement.

You will soon find the full results at www.RSMHA.org.uk or call us for a copy.

Tenants satisfied with their landlord



GREEN-FINGERED STEVE GETS YOUR TOP RATING



Gunters Mead gardener Steve Green got the highest score in our latest survey of cleaning and gardening services. Turn to page two for more on the survey results.

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CLEANERS AND GARDENERS RATED + FOCUS ON ROMAN ROAD

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CLEANERS AND GARDENERS: WHO'S THE BEST?

Our cleaners and gardeners have come in for bouquets and brickbats in our latest survey that asked you what you think of their service standards.

Thank you to everyone who returned a survey form - and there were lots of you! We got a hefty 145 responses about cleaning services and even more - 174 - on gardening.

The following deserve a special mention. Residents at the schemes where they work rated them highest of all.

Steve Green –
gardening at Gunters Mead

Mrs Brown –
cleaning at Kaye Court

Mrs Ferguson –
gardening at Kaye Court

Madeline Marshall –
cleaning at The Fairings



Gunters Mead

Not all of your feedback was good but everything you have told us is extremely useful. It is clear that we are going to have to ask some of our gardening and cleaning contractors to brush up their act. In some cases, where they have fallen well short of your expectations, we may need to go further:

With this copy of Open House you will find the responses we got about cleaning and/or gardening services in your neighbourhood. If your contractors failed to get a good rating we will be in touch with you and your neighbours soon to explain how we plan to improve these services.

TALKS IN HAND OVER SUPPORTING PEOPLE BUDGET

For some years now the government has been channelling funds to local councils under its Supporting People programme. That money has been used by councils to pay for support services for elderly or other vulnerable people, provided by housing associations or similar agencies. The money has provided much needed extra financial support for residents of our sheltered housing who also qualify for housing benefit.

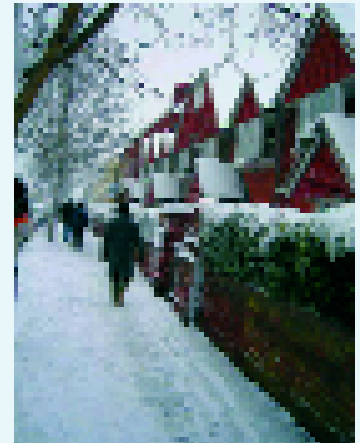
The government last year lifted the ringfence. This means local councils can, if they want, now spend the Supporting People funds on other services they consider a priority.

The Supporting People funds we get from Surrey and West Sussex County Councils and Brighton & Hove City Council help to pay for services that we know are highly valued by our sheltered housing residents.

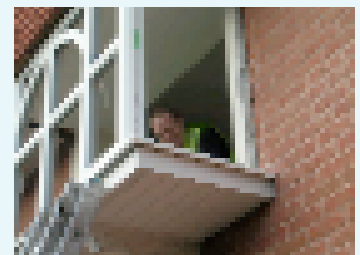
We are in talks with all three councils to find out how our budgets might be affected and to try to minimise any possible fallout. We very much want to continue delivering the services and support so many older residents need.

We will in due course let all our sheltered residents know the outcome of these discussions.

GLAZED OVER IN HOVE



New windows installed at Williamson Cottage Homes in Hove, pictured here looking suitably seasonal, have won the thumbs up from at least one resident. And Brenda Wells has warm words for the fitters too. 'We're well into the second week of window replacement,' writes Brenda, 'and it's funny how you can get used to the banging and drilling. But it was my turn yesterday and the new windows are wonderful. I'm so pleased Fellowship went for top class windows and glass and not some job lot made in downtown Brighton! The fitters are hardworking, helpful and most polite. They must have had it drilled into them that we're recycled teenagers!'



Cosier indoors: the new windows at Williamson Cottage Homes have improved insulation

SPOTLIGHT ON.....

ROMAN FARM ROAD IN GUILDFORD

Back in 2002 RSMHA built 26 new homes on Roman Farm Road in Guildford. But there's more to Roman Farm Road than meets the eye, writes Karen Woolton

Wildlife saved

Duck through a short alley between two of our houses and you find Broad Street Common, a site of natural beauty owned and maintained by Surrey Wildlife Trust.

To reach the common you must first cross a small stream. If you're not looking for the stream, it's easily missed. But back in 2002 we had to give it special protection to keep safe its residents, chiefly newts, frogs and voles.

Then there's the site's rich history - part of it only recently revealed. The site we were building on had in recent years been a playing field, owned by nearby Barnwood School. But over 180 years ago, in 1829, workmen digging for stone on the common unearthed the remains of a Roman villa here.

Quite why anyone had built the house here was a mystery. Then in 1998 excavators found traces of another structure, later identified as the remains of a large stone barn. It was clear this was once a large farming community, most likely owned and managed by the villa's residents. That legacy lives on in the road's unusual name.



ROMAN ROAD

Circa 2000 years ago: home to a Roman farming community

From 2002 onwards: home to 26 RSMHA households in one- and two-bedroom flats and three- and four-bedroom houses. Some of the houses have been designed to the Lifetime Homes standard with special features such as wide door frames and a straight staircase to allow for easy installation of a stairlift at a later date.

Would you like to see your neighbourhood profiled in OpenHouse?

Why not invite resident board member Jenny Edwards to call by?
You can contact Jenny through Nick Coverdale on 01372 461 440 or ncoverdale@rsmha.org.uk.

Or email Jenny at jenny1311@googlemail.com
or write to her at 41 Imber Cross, Thames Ditton KT7 0LG

Goodbye and thank you Alison

Alison Hutton, our longest serving member of staff and personal assistant to chief executive Wendy Pridmore, left Rosemary Simmons MHA in January. Alison joined us way back in 1991 and made an important contribution to our success as a housing association over what came close to being two decades.

ROLLING OFF THE PRODUCTION LINE

Over the coming year hard work by our housing development team will see three fabulous new schemes roll off the production line. For some of you, that could be the chance of getting a new home. Call 01372 461 440 for details.

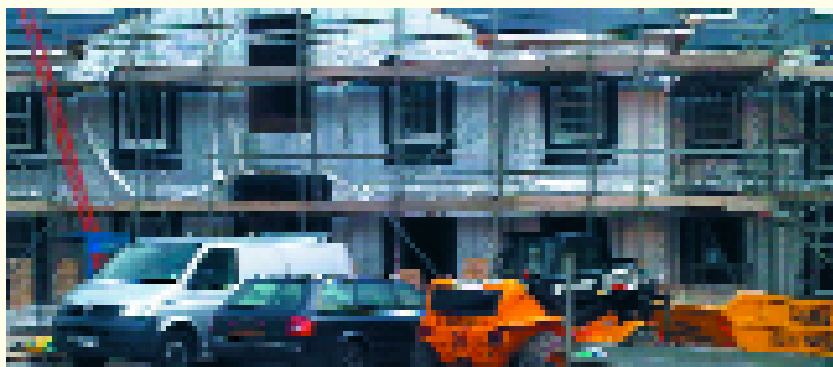
Wardur House and Wardur Court, Walton on Thames

Work is well underway on 22 new one and two-bedroom apartments for rent and shared ownership sale. The homes replace former sheltered scheme Scamell House, which featured in our lead story in the first issue of Open House.



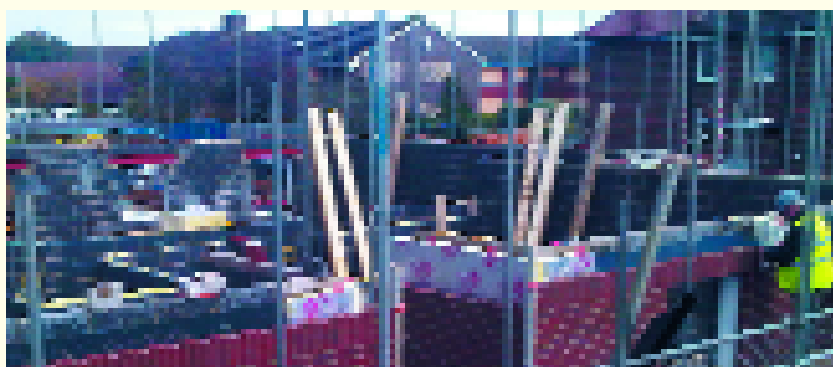
Hanover Court, Esher

Later this year we will hand over the keys to 16 new one-, two- and three-bedroom apartments for rent and shared ownership sale at Hanover Court, in a prestigious location in central Esher.



Swinburne Court, Lancing

We're very pleased to see 20 new apartments for rent rising on the site of Burdwood House, another former sheltered housing scheme, overlooking the beach at Lancing.



SURVEYS TO GUIDE MAINTENANCE WORK AT LEASEHOLDERS' RETIREMENT HOMES

We now have the results of surveys done to assess the condition of buildings at our three leasehold retirement housing schemes.

The stock condition surveys were carried out in late 2009 by an independent firm of chartered surveyors. They mean we can now see clearly what we need to make a priority for maintenance at each of the schemes - problems that are evident now and those the surveyors have flagged up as issues that will shortly need attention.

Our next step will be to draw up a programme of major works needed at each of the three schemes, to be done over the next 10 to 15 years.

All leaseholders at the three schemes will get full details of the survey findings for their property. We are also consulting residents to make sure we and they are in agreement over the final programme and an appropriate level for the service charge, to be set annually.

For more information about the leasehold condition surveys, please contact leasehold officer Jeremy Lowry.

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