

Mid Devon Housing



News



@MidDevonHousing

Spring 2024

Edition 8

Welcome to the Spring 2024 issue of Mid Devon Housing News, where we provide the latest updates on our housing services and the work we have been doing in our communities. As the days grow longer and the clocks are set to move forward, the promise of Spring is finally in the air.

We have been busy preparing for April, when new consumer standards will be enforced by the Regulator of Social Housing. To learn more about these standards and what you can expect from MDH visit www.gov.uk/government/publications/reshaping-consumer-regulation-our-new-approach.

In this edition, you will find detailed information on your rent for 2024-2025, development progress, upcoming events, Mid Devon in Bloom 2024, insights on the XL Bully ban, your local community organisations, and much more.

This newsletter is designed for you, and we welcome your suggestions for articles, photos, columns or applications to become a Publications Champion. Reach out to the Tenant Involvement Team to participate in the next edition; the contact information is provided at the end of the newsletter.



St Andrews House (pictured above) is now complete! Turn to page 3 for MDH development updates!

REQUESTING THIS NEWSLETTER IN AN ALTERNATIVE FORMAT

Do you need this newsletter in large print? Does your neighbour need a translated copy? Please contact our Tenant Involvement Team on 01884 255255 or tenantinvolvement@middevon.gov.uk



Your Rent for 2024/2025

MDH follows rules set by government when calculating any changes to your rent each year. Since 2001, rents for properties let on 'social rent' have been based on a formula set by Government. This creates a 'formula rent' for each property, which is calculated based on the relative value of the property, relative local income levels, and the size of the property.

In October 2017, the Government announced its intention to set a long term rent deal for local authority landlords and housing associations. This would permit annual rent increases on social rent of up to the Consumer Price Index (CPI) plus 1 percentage point from 2020, for a period of five years. For rent calculation purposes the September CPI is used. The CPI for September 2023 was 6.7%.

At the end of February you should have received a letter, explaining how the rent has been set for 2024/2025. The letter will outline a 7.7% increase for tenants of MDH.

What does my rent pay for?

Your rent helps pay for the services we provide you, from responsive repairs, planned maintenance to helping and supporting you to manage your tenancy etc. The yearly increase in rent ensures that MDH can continue to deliver and improve services. All of our services have been impacted by inflation but we will continue to increase our investments in repairs, maintenance and improving homes. We need to ensure that our expenditure does not exceed our income and therefore we budget carefully to ensure that our service remains financially robust and viable.

What can I do if I'm struggling to pay my rent?

We are committed to helping tenants who are facing financial difficulties. If you are struggling, please get in touch with your Income Neighbourhood Officer, we are here to help and will work with you to reach a solution. We work with multiple agencies in order to help including CHAT, Navigate, Citizens Advice, Age UK and National Debt Line. You can email your Income Neighbourhood Officer on htenancy@middevon.gov.uk or call 01884 255255.



What do I need to do if I'm claiming Universal Credit?

If you are in receipt of Universal Credit you will need to report this rent change to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). This needs to be done on, or soon after, 1 April 2024, via the online DWP Portal. You will need to select the "UC Account Home Page" and choose the "Report a change of circumstances" option, then within that option you will need to select the "Where you live and what it costs" option. You are responsible for ensuring that you are being paid correctly for your housing costs.

What do I need to do if I'm claiming Housing Benefit?

If you are in receipt of Housing Benefit, your provisional entitlement will be shown on the front of the rent letter sent to all tenants at the end of February. Housing Benefit notification letters will be sent out with the Council Tax bills on 14 March 2024. Please wait for this notification before making any queries.

Development Update

Complete

St Andrews House

Our latest project in Cullompton, St Andrews House, is now finished. This marks our first modular construction venture, featuring 2 bedroom and 1 bedroom flats. With a focus on energy efficiency, the structure boasts thick stone wall insulation, triple-glazed low-emissivity windows and doors, solar photovoltaic panels, a solar-assisted heat pump, and mechanical ventilation that retains over 80% of outgoing heat while ensuring a continuous supply of fresh air.



Current

Shapland Place

Shapland Place in Tiverton is nearing completion, the units were craned onto site in December 2023 and the site is due to complete the end of March 2024.

This development comprises of 4 x 1 bedroom, 3 x 2 bedroom, and 1 x 3 bedroom flats.



Up next

Crofts Estate

The Crofts Estate project in Sandford is set to commence in March 2024, with garages currently being dismantled. Once the site is cleared and prepared, the units will be transported and assembled.

This development will include 4 x 1 bedroom flats and 1 x 1 bedroom 2 storey property.



Development plans can be subject to delays, the information in this newsletter is correct as of 8th March 2024.

New

Mid Devon Housing are pleased to introduce our brand new Development Hub, where you can find all the information on current and proposed development sites.



Head over to
letstalk.middevon.gov.uk/mdh-development-hub



Events

What's happening in your community?

Spring Neighbourhood Walkabouts Update

Due to resourcing, our spring Neighbourhood Walkabouts have been delayed until June. We apologise for the delay. Please keep an eye on our website and social media for the full schedule which will be released in the beginning of May.

Coming Soon...

Meet the Ombudsman!

On Friday 10th May we will be hosting a Meet the Ombudsman event with Exeter City Council, East Devon District Council and other local providers. Richard Blakeway, who was appointed as Housing Ombudsman in 2019 will be hosting a forum for residents to directly ask questions about the service and what they do.

A free breakfast will be available for tenants followed by a chance to meet with Officers from MDH to discuss all things Housing. The event will be held in Exeter and transport will be provided to tenants. The event will be free but ticketed, further details and ticket booking will be sent to tenants over the coming weeks. Can't attend in person? Don't worry, we will also live stream the event so you won't miss out! We will be in touch soon with more details.



Richard Blakeway, The Housing Ombudsman (photo by: Simon Brandon)

Keep your eyes peeled for more Housing Matters events throughout 2024! These events have a different theme each time, have an idea for one? Get in touch with our Tenant Involvement Team! Contact details are at the end of this newsletter

WINTER WARMERS

Join our team for a cuppa and chat in a warm space. We currently have two Community Cuppa events held in Tiverton and CREDITON:

CREDITON

First Wednesday of the month
10.30am - 12.00pm
Elephant on The Green
14 St Lawrence Green,
CREDITON,
EX17 3LL

TIVERTON

Every Thursday
10.30am - 12.00pm
Westfield Road Common
Room, Tiverton
EX16 5EU

HOUSING MATTERS

In January and February, we hosted a series of Housing Matters events in Tiverton, CREDITON, Cullompton, Hemyock, and Lapford. These events provided tenants with the chance to engage with MDH Officers regarding their views on flexible tenancies. We would like to thank everyone who attended and those that participated and shared their feedback on Let's Talk Mid Devon. The opinions expressed will help Councillors make informed decisions about the project. It will be on the agenda for the Homes Policy Development Group meeting in June where Councillors will look at the evidence supplied to a Working Group. Keep an eye on social media for updates.

Did you know...

If you would like to attend any of our events but you do not have access to your own vehicle or you are unable to use public transport we can arrange a taxi on your behalf. We can also pay mileage if you use your vehicle to attend any tenant involvement activities. Please note there are certain conditions to be met with regards to paying mileage. For more information reach out to Tenant Involvement: 01884 255255 or email tenantinvolvement@middevon.gov.uk

Funding to Improve Your Community



We have funding available to enhance green spaces, for environmental and sustainable improvements and to support tenant community projects. We have planted orchards, created wildlife conservation areas, installed benches and lots more. If you have an idea to improve your community get in touch today - our contact details are at the end of this newsletter.



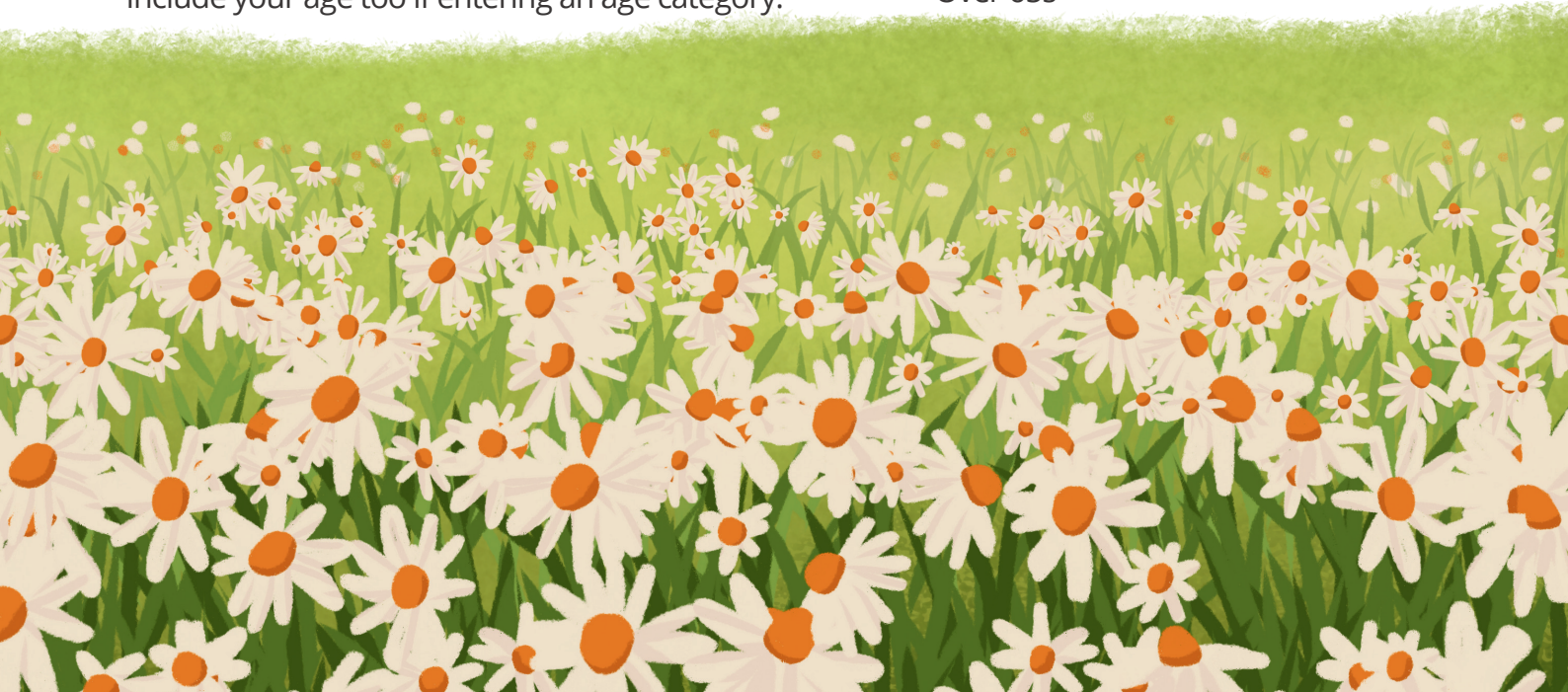
MID DEVON IN BLOOM 2024

Mid Devon in Bloom is back! Calling all Mid Devon Housing residents, it's time to dust off those gardening gloves. Whether you're rocking your own garden, a shared green space, a cosy balcony, or a sweet courtyard, big or small, if you are proud of your garden this competition is for you. Simply choose your category (you can enter more than one) and send us at least 3 photos via Facebook, Twitter or email tenantinvolvement@middevon.gov.uk. We can also visit you to take photos. When sending your photos please include your full name and address. Include your age too if entering an age category.

WIN GREAT PRIZES!

Categories:

- Community Corner
- Best Garden
- Best Wildlife or Sustainable Garden
- Best Young Gardener
- Basket and Containers
- Over 65s



Biodiversity, the facts

Biodiversity encompasses the wide range of life on Earth, including animals, plants, fungi, and micro-organisms such as bacteria. It's essentially every single living thing on Earth.

How can you increase biodiversity?

Create a small rock and stone sanctuary in a secluded corner of your garden to offer a safe haven for insects such as Woodlouse. These bugs play a vital role in the ecosystem by consuming decomposing flowers, fruits, and vegetables.

Plant a diverse selection of plants that bloom at different times of the year, starting from early spring through late



autumn. This will ensure a consistent food supply for insects.

Establishing a compost heap in your garden is an eco-friendly way to utilise garden and kitchen waste. It not only minimises landfill waste and yields nutrient-rich compost for your plants, but also enhances the habitat for crucial soil organisms.

Hedgehogs keep the garden ecosystem in balance by eating slugs and snails. Work with your neighbours to create a hedgehog corridor – a gap in garden dividing fences and walls to help them hunt through different gardens and avoid busy roads.

No Mow May...

Plantlife's annual initiative, "No Mow May," encourages garden owners and green space managers to avoid mowing their lawns throughout May. The significant decrease of flower-filled meadows, almost 97% since the 1930s, has led to a scarcity of vital food sources for pollinators such as bees and butterflies.

Simple ways to increase wildflowers

- Avoid using herbicides or fertilisers
- Avoid using moss killer
- Introduce Yellow Rattle, known as the 'meadow maker'
- Introduce native meadow plug plants
- Remember that dandelions and daises are great lawn flowers
- Sow seeds of native perennial meadow flowers in patches of prepared soil in the autumn.



Mowing tips for encouraging wildlife

Cut once every four weeks

Cutting just once a month encourages the maximum number of flowers to grow in your lawn. Ideally, leave around three to five centimetres of grass length.

Leave areas of long grass

having longer areas of grass creates greater diversity of flowers in areas of grass that are left completely unmown, with oxeye daisy, field scabious and knapweed offering up important nectar sources.

You don't have to stop mowing completely

Some species, such as daisy and bird's foot trefoil, are adapted to growing in shorter swards. Cutting flowers from these plants once a month stimulates them to produce more blooms.

Welcome to My Mid Devon

♥ #MyMidDevon



Your new customer portal for personalised online MDH services and information

We've made it easier than ever for you to keep track of payments and pay online

Register here



my.middevon.gov.uk

Your Local Community Groups

Tiverton

Affinity Support Group: Children with Autism support group 07917 188911

Bounce: Children's mental health support, 01884 906243

Tiverton Green Group: Helping people live more sustainable (search for group on Facebook)

LGBTQ+ Tiverton: Support group (search for group on Facebook)

Crediton:

Crediton Youth Club: 01363 773717

Crediton Community Larder: (free food) at Crediton Library

Sustainable Crediton: Helping people live more sustainably (search for group on Facebook)

Lapford:

The Ark - Community cafe and food bank 01363 83788

Mid Devon:

Mid Devon Messenger, 07834 68838. A talking newspaper for visually impaired people

Blackdown Hills:

Blackdown Support Group - (Help with transport, coffee mornings, carer support, form filling help) 01823 681036

Cullompton:

Community Life Hub Group - Friday morning coffee, 10am until 12noon - Chekhov Community Garden or in room CH4 in The Community Life Hub, College Surgery

St Andrews Church - A number of events such as coffee mornings, support groups, craft sessions 01884 33249

Memory Cafe, 1st and 3rd Tuesday of each month 2.30pm until 4pm, Community Life Room, College Surgery.

Bradinch:

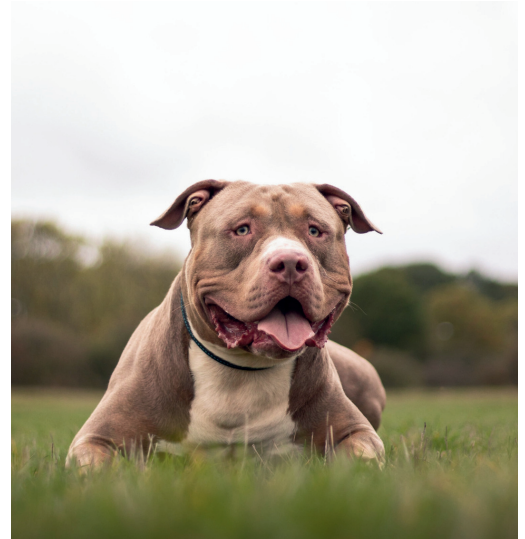
Knit & Natter, St Disens Hall. 3rd Tuesday of the month, 2pm

Memory Cafe, 1st Monday of the month 2-4pm. Mill way, EX5 4NL. 01392 882019

Exeter Community Energy: Offer healthy homes for wellbeing drop in clinics across Mid Devon, www.ecoe.org.uk/healthy-homes-clinic-information/

XL Bully Ban

As of the 1st February 2024, it is now illegal to own an XL Bully if it is not registered on the index of exempt dogs. Owners without a certificate of exemption now face a criminal record and an unlimited fine if found in possession of an XL Bully dog. If you missed the deadline but still need to register your XL Bully, you can get in touch with your local Police. If you have questions or concerns about your pet please get in touch with us using the contact details at the end of the newsletter. For advice and support visit the Dogs Trust website and search "support for XL bully owners".



Bulky Waste Collections

Did you know it's easier than ever to book a bulky waste collection? We collect most free standing items or furniture that can be safely carried between two people and those that you'd normally take with you if you were moving house. We charge £25 for one item (electrical or non electrical) and £14 for each additional item. You can find out more information on bulky collections and book yours online at <https://www.middevon.gov.uk/residents/recycling-rubbish/bulky-waste/>. Alternatively, you can call 01884 255255 and speak to our Customer Services Team.

Policy Updates

Did you know you can comment on our policies during their consultation period on our website? These are shared on social media too. Since our last newsletter in December, we have launched five new policies. You can read all of these on our Policies and Strategies page on our website.

- Pets & Animal Policy
- Homes Safety Policy
- Garage, Ground Rent Plot & Car Parking Space Policy
- MDH Lettable Standard
- Tenancy Inspection Policy



Thinking of doing a mutual exchange? Here are 5 key things you need to know...

- You can register free with House Exchange. We pay for a membership so that you don't have to
- Once you find a suitable property, we have 42 days to tell you if you are eligible to swap or not
- It is your responsibility to inspect the property thoroughly before agreeing to move and ideally again before signing the legal paperwork
- A mutual exchange will be refused on the grounds of under occupation, MDH need to make best use of our limited supply of housing, we need to ensure properties are allocated to those who fulfil the full occupancy of the property
- Either party can change their mind and pull out of the mutual exchange up until the legal paperwork is signed

More information on mutual exchanges can be found on our website including a detailed list of why an exchange might not happen. Head to our website and search for 'Mutual Exchange'.

Get Involved

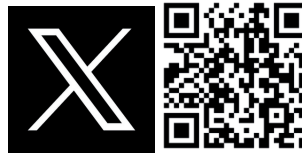
Help shape Mid Devon Housing

We want residents to be at the heart of everything we do. There are a number of ways you can get involved with MDH. Some take more time and effort than others but there should be an opportunity for everyone to get involved at a level that suits them. Please use the contact details at the end of this newsletter to get in touch with our Tenant Involvement Team if you have any questions or would like to volunteer.



Let's Talk Mid Devon

You can join our new online engagement hub, where you can take part in surveys, forums and read the latest housing news letstalk.middevon.gov.uk/hub-page/housing



@MidDevonHousing

The quickest way you can get involved? Follow us on Facebook and X. Here we advertise our events, share news, updates and helpful information each day from Monday-Friday.

In just the last week, on social media, we have posted our Property of the Week, about damp and mould, a tour of St Andrews House, the rent increase, job advertisements, cheap broadband opportunities, how to apply for an adaptation and asking for permissions. Scan the QR codes so you can join 670 others online.

Tenant Champion Roles - Help Make a Difference, Apply Today!

Champion Roles provide tenants with the opportunity to drive service change, from personal experiences or from their desire to promote positive service development. We have 4 champion roles available (more than one person can be involved in each role).

PUBLICATIONS

The role is to work with our teams on our resident publications including our Housing Newsletter and Annual Report.

COMPLAINTS

Review our approach to complaints from our tenants, residents and leaseholders. Ensure we are being fair, are putting things right and learning from outcomes.

ESTATES

Monitor grounds maintenance, and if applicable, communal cleaning and communal fire alarm testing, in your area. Carry out inspections and report back to MDH once a month.

ZERO CARBON

We're looking for people who care about the future and are willing to support us in making green improvements to their home and community.

Ombudsman opens applications for the next Resident Panel

The Housing Ombudsman is inviting social housing residents to apply to join their Resident Panel to help improve residents lives through landlords' services. You will be invited to share your experiences and suggest improvements through meetings and virtual discussions with the Ombudsman. You do not need any scrutiny experience, made a complaint to MDH or used the Ombudsman before to apply. Applications are now open and close on the 30th April 2024.

Four reasons to join:

1. Share your experiences
2. Learn about the Housing Ombudsman
3. Shape the service
4. Talk to others

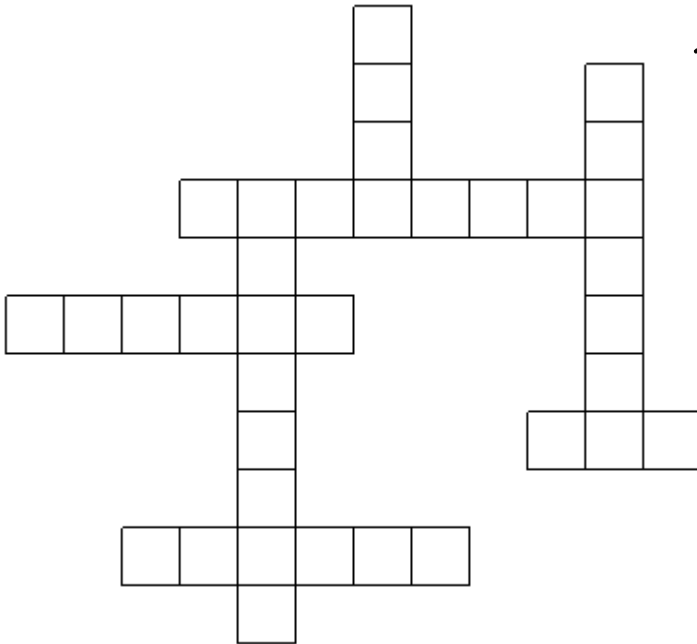
Apply online or scan the QR code

housing-ombudsman.org.uk/apply



Housing Ombudsman
Service

Just for fun...



Word Fit

Word fit is a bit like a crossword, except that instead of clues we give you the answers, and your challenge is to fit them into the spaces.

badger elephant gorilla
lion monkey rat reindeer

	7			2			4	6	
	6						8	9	
2			8				7	1	5
	8	4		9	7				
7	1						5	9	
			1	3			4	8	
6	9	7			2			8	
	5	8					6		
4	3			8			7		

Sudoku

To solve this puzzle, you have to fill in the empty cells. Each column, row, and region must contain the numbers 1 to 9 exactly once.

This Easter themed word wheel is made from the letters in the word CHOCOLATE. Try and make as many words of any length as you can from these letters. You can only use each letter once, and each word must include the letter O.

If you would like to discuss anything from our Spring Newsletter or you would like to get involved in your community get in touch with our Tenant Involvement Team



tenantinvolvement@middevon.gov.uk



01884 255255 - ask for Tenant Involvement



www.middevon.gov.uk/residents/mid-devon-housing/