

IN THIS ISSUE

- 1 Annual tenants perception survey
- 2 Tenant consultative group visit Equans office
- 3 Anti-social behaviour, what to do and how to report
- 4 Be loan shark aware
- 4 Register for MyHousing
- 4 Home contents insurance
- 4 Identity badges
- 5 Paying your rent
- 7 Help with benefits and debt advice
- 8 Tamworth advice centre
- 9 Useful contacts
- 12 Christmas in Tamworth

Annual tenants perception survey

COMING SOON

As part of our commitment to service improvement, Tamworth Borough Council has asked M·E·L Research to carry out an independent tenants' perception survey to find out what tenants think about the housing services they receive from the Council.

This survey will be used to calculate annual Tenant Satisfaction Measures that all social housing landlords must give to the Regulator of Social Housing in April 2024 and every year thereafter. The Regulator of Social Housing sets the format and questions for this survey.

All tenants will receive their first Annual Tenants Perception Survey soon, by either telephone interview or postal survey and it will only take 10 minutes to complete. We would like to hear tenants' views on the levels of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the service provided by Tamworth Borough Council's landlord services.

Feedback to this survey will be extremely valuable and will help to inform the council on decision making and to help understand tenant satisfaction and how the services offered could be improved.

Just to reassure tenants, you will not be asked to provide any personal financial information.

Tenant consultative group visit Equans office

In October our Tenant Consultative Group members visited Equans to have a look at their operation and meet some of the staff behind the scenes.

A full agenda for the day was set out and started with some slides explaining how the contract started just as the pandemic began and how it was going to date.

A lovely buffet lunch was provided to tenants and afterwards we got to meet the operational team members.

We also got an insider view on how the voids process worked and were shown some photos of some recent high value void properties.

A good day was had by all and a quote from one of the group members “Many thanks for organising today’s visit to Equans. It was both interesting and enjoyable”.

• *Tenant Consultative Group visit to Equans.*



Anti-social behaviour, what to do and how to report

Anti-social behaviour (ASB) can have a dreadful impact on communities and affects how safe people feel in their homes.

Our Neighbourhood Impact Team manage and tackle reports of anti-social behaviour from anyone living in the borough.

To report anti-social behaviour, please complete the online form at www.tamworth.gov.uk/anti-social-behaviour-incident.

Within four working days, a Neighbourhood Impact Officer will contact you to triage (assess) your report. This will include an interview and risk assessment after which, the officer will advise you of one of the following outcomes;

- a. A case will be opened and managed by a case officer who will agree an action plan with you,
- b. A referral will be made to another team better suited to deal with your report, or
- c. You will be offered advice/referrals to self-resolve.

Our commitment to you

We will:

- Be here to help. You can easily contact us by phone or email and arrange to meet us face-to-face at your home or a mutually convenient location.
- Take time to listen and understand your complaint and the impact it is having on you.
- Assess each report to see if it meets the criteria for anti-social behaviour. If not, we will refer you to the most appropriate service, which could be another council department, another agency or authority, or a support service.
- Agree an action plan with you and give you a copy so you can keep track of progress.
- Identify any risks or support needs you may have and how we can respond to them.
- Stay in regular contact so you know what is happening with your case at all times.
- Work with the police and other local community safety agencies to resolve your complaint and address any underlying issues.
- Work to resolve your anti-social behaviour problem in a reasonable timescale, depending on the seriousness and circumstances.
- Work in accordance with the government's anti-social behaviour principles which encourage victims to report anti-social behaviour and to expect to be taken seriously.

You can contact us at: neighbourhoodimpactteam@tamworth.gov.uk
or alternatively call us on 01827 709709.

Be loan shark aware

Shockingly, more than five out of 10 people supported by @StopLoanSharksEngland in the first half of this year thought they were borrowing from a friend when they took out a loan.

Illegal lenders can be clever, charismatic, manipulative people who are very charming until you cross them. Do not let these false friends have control over you and your finances. Talk to @StopLoanSharksEngland to start your journey back to financial freedom.

Asking for help can be scary – but @StopLoanSharksEngland can help. People do not often choose to borrow from an illegal lender, but many might accept the offer of a small loan from someone who appears to be a well-meaning friend.

These false friends can make it seem like they are doing you a favour, but quickly turn nasty when you challenge them over the amount being repaid or miss a payment. That is when the mask slips and they show their true face. And that's when Stop Loan Sharks England can step in to help.

Contact: www.stoploansharks.co.uk or phone: 0300 555 222

STOP LOAN SHARKS
Intervention . Support . Education



Register for MyHousing

Our MyHousing website allows you to access, at any time, your current rent account balance, report repairs and anti-social behaviour, pay your rent and make a housing application for another property all online.

When signing up you will need to create a password so you have secure access to your personal account.

Sign up: <https://myhousing.tamworth.gov.uk>



Home contents insurance

As Tamworth Borough Council we have negotiated a home contents insurance scheme for our tenants and leaseholders.

The prices are competitive, and it is important to protect your own personal contents in your property against loss or damage caused by fire, flood, and burglary.

The council's insurance policy only covers the building not your personal contents.

Full details are available at: <https://www.tamworth.gov.uk/budgeting>

Identity badges

All Tamworth Borough Council staff and repairs contractors should be wearing an identity badge when they visit your home.

If they are not, please ask to see it before allowing them into your home. We will always be happy for you to ask and check.

Paying your rent

Problems paying? Act now!

We can help and support you to solve any financial problems that you may be facing.

You can contact us via telephone or email:

- Call us now on 01827 709514 or
- Email us at: IncomeTeam@tamworth.gov.uk

You may be entitled to claim benefits including universal credit, which may help with covering the cost of part or all your rent.

How can we help you

- We can work with you to agree an affordable repayment plan.
- We will talk through issues sympathetically and confidentially with you.
- We can offer help and advice on maximising and managing your income at the start and during your tenancy.
- We can advise you about any benefits you may be able to claim, including help towards your housing costs and council tax.
- We can help with what's called an application for a 'discretionary housing payment'. This is not a benefit, it is a specific payment and is paid directly into a rent account. You must receive housing benefit or universal credit housing costs to be able to apply.
- We can refer you for food bank vouchers if you are struggling to afford to buy groceries.
- We can help you seek independent specialist advice to help with a budgeting plan and give you debt management advice and solutions.
- We can help you seek advice on reducing fuel bills and energy saving tips.

Tamworth Borough Council's opening times:

- Monday to Thursday 8.45am - 5.10pm
- Friday 8.45am - 5.05pm (closed bank holidays)
- The easiest way to contact a housing, benefits, rent or repairs specialist is on the phone or email.
- Our general council enquiries desk is also available at the TIC in the Assembly Rooms.



IMPORTANT NEWS

Rent free weeks for 2023-2024 are week commencing:

18 December 2023

18 March 2024

25 March 2024

Your rent account

Please keep your rent account up to date.

We will send you a statement every three months and will contact you promptly if you fail to pay your rent.

We ask that you pay your rent every week but if you prefer to pay your rent either fortnightly, four-weekly, or monthly you can as long as payments are made in advance.

A wide range of convenient and easy options to pay your rent can be found on the website at www.tamworth.gov.uk

You can check your rent balance anytime by using the MyHousing app. It works on a computer or smart phone.

Checking your rent balance and recent transactions

Your quarterly rent statement or the rent section of the MyHousing app will show you what you have paid, what benefits have been paid to your rent account and whether you are behind (arrears) or ahead (credit) with your rent.

You can also check your rent balance by:

- Contacting us on Tel: 01827 709514
- Visiting www.tamworth.gov.uk and entering your rent reference number OR
- Looking at the MyHousing app

Register for MyHousing

Sign up to this new helpful app/website <https://myhousing.tamworth.gov.uk> where you can see at any time your current rent account balance, report repairs and anti- social behaviour, pay your rent and make a housing application for another property.

To sign up you'll be asked to provide your own password so you can see your personal details and to prevent anyone else having access to it.

If you are behind with your rent (called rent arrears)

If you fall behind with your rent, we will write to you.

Please contact the Income Team, Tel 01827 709514 immediately, if you receive a letter about being behind with your rent.

We recognise that sometimes people have difficulty in paying their rent. We can offer help and advice in these situations.

Do not ignore any letters about your rent, the problem will not go away and could lead to formal legal proceedings being taken against you. This could mean you have to pay court costs and places your tenancy at significant risk.

If you move out while you are behind with rent, or ordered to leave your property by the court, you will still have to pay the rent that is outstanding.

Repayment plan

Contact the Income Team on Tel 01827 709514 or email Incometeam@tamworth.gov.uk.

We can help you pay off any rent you are behind with by working out a repayment plan that you can afford.

Managing debt

As you know, your rent is a priority and one of the most important bills to pay. If you find yourself in debt, we can advise you on paying an affordable amount per week towards your debt, while you still make your regular rent payments.

Help with benefits and debt advice

Help with benefits and debt advice

The **Tamworth Advice Centre (TAC)** can make sure you are getting all the benefits you are entitled to, help you apply for those benefits you are not getting, assist you in setting up a bank account if needed, help you deal with your debts and help you set a plan for your money.

Tamworth Advice Centre can also help you with benefits and specialist debt advice and can be contacted on their advice line:

- Tel: 0300 330 9002, Monday to Friday, 10.00am - 4.00pm
- E-mail: citizensadvice@citizensadvicemidmercia.org.uk
- Website: www.citizensadvicemidmercia.org.uk/support-in-tamworth/

Or for help and advice on managing debt, you can contact:

- National Debt Line – 0808 808 4000 (Mon-Fri: 9am-9pm, Sat: 9.30am-1pm)

Universal credit

If you claim universal credit and are eligible for help with your housing costs, these will be paid direct to you, and you will be responsible for paying your rent.

However, if you are finding it difficult to pay your rent, struggling financially or are behind with your rent, you can apply to universal credit to have your rent paid direct to the council, we can also do this for you.

If you are behind with your rent, you can ask for a payment to be taken out of your standard allowance each month to clear any debt. This will make it easier for you and help you keep your home.

Anyone seeking help or advice about universal credit can contact their helpline 0800 328 5644, which is a free call, Mon to Fri, 8.00am to 6pm.

Or contact the Citizens Advice helpline Tel: 0300 330 9002.

Discretionary housing payment

If you can show that you are struggling to pay your rent, we can help you to apply for a discretionary housing payment.

You can claim this extra payment on top of your standard universal credit or housing benefit.

An application form can be found on our website: www.tamworth.gov.uk/help-housing-costs.

You must already receive help towards your rent from either universal credit or housing benefit to be considered for this payment. Discretionary housing payments are not a benefit, they are paid from a limited fund, are only paid for a temporary period and are not required to be paid back.

Council Tax

If there is only one adult living at the property, then you will be entitled to a discount of 25% off the full charge. If you have a low income, you may also be entitled to a council tax reduction.

Please complete a council tax reduction form on our website www.tamworth.gov.uk.

Both of these are not included in a claim for universal credit so must be claimed separately.

Changes

It is your responsibility to inform us and universal credit of any changes to your income or household.

For example:

- Any changes, up or down in income of any member of your household.
- Birth of any children in your household.
- Anyone leaving or joining the household.
- If you move home.

Tamworth advice centre

The Tamworth Advice Centre (TAC) can:

- Check you are getting all the benefits you are entitled to and help you apply for them.
- Help you set up a bank account.
- Help you deal with debts and to learn to budget within your means.
- Help with employment issues.
- Give specialist debt advice such as bankruptcy, debt relief orders, breathing space applications and if you are being taken to court.



There are various ways to contact the TAC:

Online: **Quick instant Online Self-Referral Form**. An adviser will then arrange to call you.

Phone: For advice and booking appointments - (Free phone) 0808 278 7972, 10.00am to 4.00pm Monday to Friday (quoting you live in Tamworth)

Email: **tamworthadvice@citizensadvicemidmercia.org.uk**

Website: **www.citizensadvice.org.uk/local/mid-mercia**

Your Tenancy Sustainment Officer (TSO) Tel 01827 709514 can refer you to the TAC. Once referred the TAC will contact you according to your preferred method of contact.

Free, confidential advice. Whoever you are.

Useful contacts

■ Home Energy Advice Tamworth (HEAT) www.tamworth.gov.uk/heat

Tel: 0800 043 2815 for help and advice regarding:

- Making your home more energy efficient
- Grants for heating and insulation
- Dealing with installers
- Cheaper fuel bills

You can make direct contact with HEAT or we can refer your case to them on your behalf.

■ Step Change, Debt advice charity - Tel: 0800 138 1111 www.stepchange.org

■ Christians Against Poverty, Tel: 01827 260019 www.capuk.org.uk

■ National Debt line, Tel: 0808 808 4000 www.nationaldebtline.co.uk

■ Consumer Credit Counselling Service, Tel: 01827 305950 www.cccs.co.uk

■ Tamworth Samaritans

Phone: 116 123 Call free from any phone, day or night, 365 days a year

Website: www.samaritans.org/branches/tamworth/

What this organisation does

- Helpline for those who are in crisis including feelings of suicide.

Services provided

- Abuse & Survivor (inc Domestic Violence) support, Health / Social Welfare, Advice / Information / Advocacy / Legal, Carer Support, Bereavement Services, Alcohol / Substance Misuse / Behaviour addiction.

■ Please be aware - Stop Loan Sharks

- Tamworth Borough Council works in partnership with the England illegal money lending team to stop loan sharks operating in Tamworth.
- If you are a victim of a loan shark or wish to report a suspected loan shark you can contact the illegal money lending team for confidential help and advice on 0300 555 2222.

■ MyStaffs App

We have a FREE app, which allows people to access council services while on the move.

The My Staffs app is free and available on Apple devices,

Android and Google platforms. It can be downloaded from the Apple App Store and Google Play Store.

If you require this document in an alternative format or language, please contact us on 01827 709709 email: enquiries@tamworth.gov.uk



■ Help with rising energy costs

You could get £150 off your electricity bill for winter 2023 to 2024 under the Warm Home Discount Scheme.

The money is not paid to you - it's a one-off discount applied to your electricity bill between early October 2023 and 31 March 2024.

You will usually get the discount automatically if you're eligible and if you might be eligible, you'll get a letter by early January 2024.

If you do not get a letter and you think you should get this payment, you must contact the Warm Home Discount Scheme before 29 February 2024.

You may be able to get the discount on your gas bill instead if your supplier provides you with both gas and electricity. Contact your supplier direct to find out.

■ Winter Fuel Payment worth £300

If you were born before 25 September 1957 you could get between £250 and £600 to help you pay your heating bills. This is known as a 'Winter Fuel Payment'.

Most people get the Winter Fuel Payment automatically. You should receive a letter in October or November advising how much you will get.

■ Cold Weather Payments

You may get cold weather payments if you are getting certain benefits if the average temperature in your area is recorded as, or forecast to be, zero degrees Celsius or below over seven consecutive days.

You'll get £25 for each seven-day period of very cold weather between 1 November and 31 March.

The 2023 to 2024 scheme will start on 1 November 2023. You'll be able to check if your area is due a payment in November 2023.

For further information on help with energy bills please visit: www.gov.uk/get-help-energy-bills

■ Contact your energy supplier for assistance

If you are in debt with your energy supplier, always contact them. They may be willing to enter into a repayment plan allowing you to pay a regular agreed amount or they may have a scheme to help you pay off some or all of your debts.

Contact a third-party benefits advisor such as the Tamworth Advice Centre Tel 0808 278 7972 if you need further advice or help to apply.

Please don't just ignore your debts and fail to contact your supplier, the matter will only become more serious.

Extra help from your supplier

Tenants who have reached state pension age or are disabled or sick or if you are considered vulnerable you can be asked to be placed on the priority services register. Once on the register your energy supplier can

- Read your energy meter
- Move your meter free of charge
- Get your bills sent or copied to someone else such as a carer or close trusted relative.

Paying your rent



■ Direct Debit

- **Monthly Direct Debit** – 1st or 16th of the month, or
- **Weekly Direct Debit** – Every Friday

If you would like to set up a Monthly or weekly Direct Debit please contact the Income Team directly on **01827 709 514**.

You can also download a Direct Debit mandate form from our website www.tamworth.gov.uk or pick up a form from our main office.

■ Allpay Card

If you prefer to make a manual payment, you can do this with an Allpay card at any shop offering a Paypoint service or any Post Office.

*If you require or have lost / damaged your Allpay card, please contact us on **01827 709 514** to order a new or replacement card.(Free of Charge).

■ Telephone – 24hrs

To make a telephone payment, contact the automated service on **03452 307 709**.

■ Online

Do not forget you can use Tamworth Borough Council's website www.tamworth.gov.uk to make payments over the internet.

■ Standing Order

Contact the council income team Tel 01827 709514 for our account details, then you contact your bank or building society to set up a standing order.



NEIGHBOURHOOD TEAM CONTACT DETAILS

Address: Marmion House, Lichfield Street, Tamworth, Staffs, B79 7BZ

Phone: 01827 709 514

Email: NeighbourhoodTeam@tamworth.gov.uk

Opening Hours:

Monday – Thursday: 8.45am - 5.10pm & Friday: 8.45am - 5.05pm

Christmas in Tamworth 2023



There's plenty to do in Tamworth this Christmas to help make your Christmas extra special. The fun in Tamworth officially starts with the Christmas lights switch on, now at Holloway in the castle grounds, on Sunday 26 November. As well as the usual lights, town buildings will be festooned with Christmas trees and twinkly lights.

CHRISTMAS LIGHTS SWITCH ON

SUNDAY 26 NOVEMBER - TAMWORTH CASTLE GROUNDS

BERT & GERTS MARKET | ENTERTAINMENT | PROJECTIONS ON THE CASTLE AND MORE...

Along with the popular Christmas lights switch on event, there are lots of events throughout December you can also enjoy...

Castle by
Candlelight
2-3 Dec
Castle

Wreath
making
workshops
2-4 Dec
Castle & Assembly
Rooms

festive Films
& Christmas
Concerts
Throughout Dec
Assembly Rooms

Ice Rink
18-24 Dec
Castle Grounds

Father Christmas Party
18-20 Dec
Assembly Rooms

Magical Santa Show
23, 18 & 17 Dec
Castle

Nutcracker Trail
26 Nov-31 Dec
Town Centre

Also enjoy free parking at Tamworth Borough Council car parks on 2 & 23 December.
All brought to you by Tamworth Borough Council.

For details visit our website:
www.visittamworth.co.uk

 TAMWORTH **Tamworth**
Borough Council