

Cotman Welcomes New Group Chairman, Chris Phillips

Chris Phillips visited Cotman's offices at Bowthorpe Hall, on Tuesday 31st October, he had a short tour of some of the properties in Norwich and then lunched with staff. On his way back to the train station he paid a flying visit to residents and staff at Ashby Court.



Chris Phillips replaced former Chair, Zenna Atkins on 1st September 2010, he has been on the Places for People Board since 2006. Chris Phillips has 30 years' experience in the international financial services and real estate sectors, and is currently Non-Executive Chairman of Londonewcastle plc.

He is also the Non-Executive Chairman of Your Space Plc, an AIM traded property services company; Non-Executive Chairman of Wyndham York Plc; and a Non-Executive Director of Mission Capital Plc.

Chris Phillips commented: "I'm delighted to be taking up the role of Chairman of Places for People, and thank Zenna for her hard work and dedication over the past six years.

"She leaves the Group in a strong position, and has played a key role in steering Places for People towards its vision of creating and managing large scale places where people can live, work, prosper and achieve their potential.

"I look forward to building on her success, and working with employees across the Group, to deliver improved services and products to the Group's customers."



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**ANTI-SOCIAL
BEHAVIOUR**



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**HALLOWEEN AT
BREWSTER**



L-R David Hunt, Chairman of Cotman Housing Association, Chris Phillips and Vivien Farrow, Managing Director.



Chris Phillips meeting residents at Ashby Court.



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**THE TWELVE DAYS
OF CHRISTMAS**



Director's Foreword

We are coming to the end of what has been a busy year for the Association, most notably with the impressive progress we have made in delivery of planned maintenance works to improve properties on our older estates. Other highlights have included the Bowthorpe Fun Day in May, the move to the Contact Centre in August and the consolidation of our Sheltered Housing Forum.

We feel that we have come a long way in our integration with the Places for People Group, and are delighted to be able to announce that satisfaction levels are now largely consistent amongst all our customers.

We were sad to say goodbye this year to two of Cotman's most long-serving and loyal members of staff. With over forty years' service between them, Finance Director, Quinto Gavita and Estate Superintendent, Maurice King, had made a huge contribution to our work as well as being inimitable characters. We wish them a long and happy retirement.

Looking to the future, work has recently started on site at Silkfields, Norwich, a small scheme which will provide much-needed accommodation for clients with learning difficulties.

On behalf of all the staff, I'd like to wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Best wishes

Jane Warnes

Director of Neighbourhood and Support Services
Cotman Housing Association



Cotman Customer Liaison Panel

By Paul Watkinson

Cotman Customer Liaison Panel Chairman and
Board of Management Tenant Representative

We have recently had the first of many training sessions for residents and staff. The Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults session was run by Adult Education and was a useful insight into how we can protect those most vulnerable in our society. The course will be run again in January for those who couldn't attend due to the adverse weather, but there are still spaces available if anyone would like to attend. We are also beginning a full training programme in January, details of which are on page 5 of this newsletter.

It was heart warming to see so many customers on 25th November at Cotman House, to discuss the upcoming tender for day to day repairs and gas servicing contracts. Customers were given a presentation regarding the tender process and then invited to express our views regarding questions potential contractors should be asked.

We have also held our first Home Ownership Forum meeting, which brought together customers who own or part own their property. Although the attendance level was low, it was a good start and gave customers an opportunity to bring any issues to the attention of the Association.

If you would like to be involved or require further information regarding the training sessions starting in January, please contact Amanda Marsh on 01603 731699.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to you all.

Status Report

Cotman commissioned a full and independent Satisfaction Survey of customers over the summer, a repeat of the Survey which was undertaken at the time of the merger with Places for People, in April 2009.

We were delighted with the results, which showed that overall satisfaction enjoyed by Places for People customers had jumped dramatically by 19 per cent in a one year period. Happily, this had not been at the expense of satisfaction amongst Cotman's original customers as this also showed a slight increase.

There is no room for complacency, however, and we are taking action in all areas where the report revealed scope for improvement. The report is also helping us shape our local offers for individual neighbourhoods.

We have, for example, already negotiated with Breckland District Council to introduce a three year Local Lettings Plan in respect of our properties at Carter Close and Blake Court in Swaffham. This will enable us to take certain factors into consideration when allocating properties. We hope that this will help us reduce problems and improve satisfaction amongst customers.

We're also arranging a clear-up at New Costessey where litter is reported to be a problem and reissuing car park permits at Chestnut Court, Norwich in order to address concerns about parking. More generally, we'll be introducing greater clarity around breakdowns of service charges so that you know what is included.

A total of 962 surveys were returned, so we will be making a much-needed donation of £962 to the Norwich Pottergate Arc which runs a refreshment and advice service for homeless and vulnerable people.

Anti-Social Behaviour

We know that neighbour nuisance can have a deep effect on individual households and wider communities. Cotman aims to help people to change behaviours to sustain tenancies wherever possible. We do this through referrals to agencies such as Stonham Homestay and Catch 22 Mediation Service.



In a small minority of cases, problems continue and we are committed to taking firm enforcement action in such instances. In the past year we have therefore evicted four residents for anti-social behaviour. We have taken legal action culminating in suspended possession orders or injunctions against four further households. We currently have two further cases in progress.

We regret that such action is sometimes necessary, but are committed to taking a rigorous approach where all reasonable attempts to resolve disruptive conduct have failed. We want to ensure others are able to live in a pleasant and safe environment. Please do contact your Neighbourhood Officer or our Community Cohesion Manager, Pat Davis, on 01603 731699, if you are affected by anti-social behaviour.

Ashby Court Entertainers' Variety Show

A variety show was staged on Sunday 3rd October in the lounge at Ashby Court to raise funds for East Anglia's Children's Hospices (EACH).

It was a fun packed afternoon with a full house with ages ranging from 4 months to 96 years all of whom enjoyed the production. Ashby Court Entertainers were joined by Ruth and Rachael Bennet, Freddy Lay and The Killer Queens, local performers, who all gave their services free of charge. A great time was had by all and £216.30 was raised, and has now been sent to EACH.

Ashby Court Entertainers are now getting ready to rehearse for their New Year's musical production of their adaptation of "Scrooge". New members are always welcome, be it on stage, helping back-stage or front of house. If you would like to join in the fun call Sheila Moore, Scheme Manager on 01603 767035.



Cotman Fields Coffee Morning



Cotman Fields Residents' Association held a Coffee Morning in aid of the Macmillan Cancer Fund on Friday 8th October. This was their first social event, and although the general turnout was poor they managed to raise a total £26.00 for the charity. They are hopeful that this will be a positive step to raising more money for charity in the future, especially when you bear in mind that only £17.50 could pay for one more member of a cancer support group to go on a social event with other support group members, meaning that one morning of our life can change someone else's for the better.

Everyone who attended appeared to have a good time, and there was plenty of coffee, tea, and homemade cakes and biscuits!

Have you got a story to tell?

Is something happening in your community that you think might be of interest to other readers?

Are you organising an event in your neighbourhood?

If so, contact Amanda Marsh on 01603 731699 or office@cotman-housing.org.uk

Getting Online at Ashwell Court and Bullace Road

Ashwell Court and Bullace Road Sheltered Schemes recently hosted the much publicised Get Online week events in partnership with



Pitman Training. Lorna Dootson, from Pitman Training, went to the Orchard Rooms on Monday 18th October and Ashwell Court Day Centre on Tuesday 19th October to give residents and visitors an overview of "My Guide", a scheme to help people learn how to use computers and use the internet.

Halloween at Brewster!



We all had a thoroughly enjoyable time at the Halloween Evening, as we do at all our functions. We had soup and hot dogs which were very welcome on a cold evening and sweets to snack on and cups of tea and coffee.

The photographs are, the first one is of (from left to right) Ben, Freda holding her grandchild, Betty, Elsie, Tom and Brian. The second one is of Barbara and Elaine who provided the food and drink (Elaine is the one holding the teapot).

After we had finished eating and drinking we were treated to a firework display by our resident expert Barrie, who is Elaine's husband, ably assisted by Tony. Most people stayed inside so they could see the display in the warmth of the hall, some of us went outside, but not for long!

Submitted by Miss Basey-Fisher, Resident

Training for Residents...

In partnership with Norfolk County Council's Adult Education, we have developed a series of courses for our residents. These courses are aimed at residents who wish to be involved, or want to develop new skills. It is hoped that some of the earlier courses will also be attended by staff, if you would like to attend or have any queries please contact Amanda Marsh on 01603 731699 for more details. The training programme is shown below.

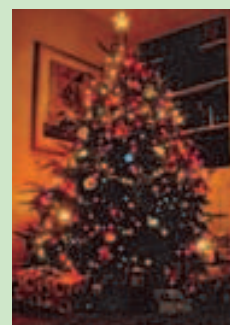
Course Title	Start Date(s)	Time(s)	Course Length
Team Roles	Thursday 6th January	9.30 am–3.30 pm	1 x 6 hr session
Team Roles	Thursday 13th January	9.30 am–3.30 pm	1 x 6 hr session
Effective Meetings	Thursday 20th January	9.30 am–12.30 pm & 1.30 pm–4.30 pm	4 x 3 hr sessions
First Steps to Computers	Thursday 17th February	10.00 am–12 noon	5 x 2 hr sessions
Your Aim, Your Gain	Thursday 17th February	1.00 pm–3.00 pm	4 x 2 hr sessions
First Steps to Computers	Thursday 24th March	10.00 am–12 noon	5 x 2 hr sessions

The Twelve Days of Christmas

Christmas is a time when many accidents happen, we have put together some practical advice for the festive season.

ON THE 1st DAY OF CHRISTMAS

Place the tree away from heat sources and, of course, from sparks and open flames. Positioning of trees should be given great thought and must not be placed in staircase enclosures corridors or in any area that may be your way out of a building.



ON THE 2nd DAY OF CHRISTMAS

Check that your Christmas tree lights conform to the British Standard. Always use a residual current device (safety device that can save lives by instantly switching off power) on outdoor electrical equipment.

ON THE 3rd DAY OF CHRISTMAS

Never place candles near your Christmas tree or furnishings.



ON THE 4th DAY OF CHRISTMAS

Decorations can burn easily – don't attach them to lights or heaters.

ON THE 5th DAY OF CHRISTMAS

Never overload electrical sockets. Take special care with Christmas lights. Always switch Christmas lights off and unplug them before you go to bed.

ON THE 6th DAY OF CHRISTMAS

Celebrate Christmas and New Year safely. The risk of accidents especially in the kitchen, is greater after alcohol is consumed.



ON THE 7th DAY OF CHRISTMAS

Most fires start in the kitchen – never leave a cooker unattended.



ON THE 8th DAY OF CHRISTMAS

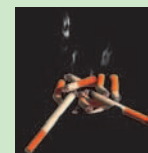
If you are planning to celebrate with fireworks, store them in a metal box, read instructions, never go back to a lit firework and keep a bucket of water nearby.

ON THE 9th DAY OF CHRISTMAS

Make sure cigarettes are completely extinguished before going to bed.

ON THE 10th DAY OF CHRISTMAS

Check the battery in your smoke alarm every week and use Christmas as a reminder to clean it and remove dust.



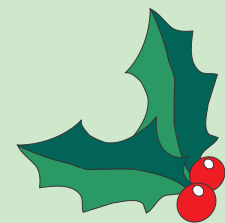
ON THE 11th DAY OF CHRISTMAS

Keep candles, lighters and matches out of reach of children. Never leave burning candles unattended.



ON THE 12th DAY OF CHRISTMAS

Take the time to check on elderly relatives and neighbours this Christmas – make sure they are fire-safe.



Property Improvements Programme – Our Busiest Year Yet!

Our Property Services Team is working in conjunction with Places for People's asset management team to deliver a programme of improvements to the homes we manage on Places for People's behalf in Norfolk and Suffolk.

In April, Fosters Property Management therefore began the first phase of this work, a £500,000 contract to carry out improvement works to 175 Places for People owned homes in Hunstanton, Diss, Cromer, Lowestoft, North Walsham and Norwich. This included replacement kitchens in 125 properties, as well as a number of



Oulton Broad residents Mr and Mrs Reynolds with Site Manager, Ian Heigham.



One of the newly refurbished kitchens.

complete central heating replacements and installation of new fuseboxes.

Nigel Gardiner, Property Services Manager, said "This is a heavy level of investment which will significantly improve the standard of accommodation, We are delighted to have finished this first phase of the programme on schedule and are pleased to have received excellent feedback from customers about the quality of the works."

We are now working with Places for People's asset management team to agree further phases of improvement work, and to prioritise the work to be undertaken on 2011.

Any questions?

Would you like to ask a question about anything to do with your home?

Please email us at:

office@cotman-housing.org.uk

or write to the address below and we will answer as many of your queries as possible in the next *Cotman News*.

Ask the Association,
Cotman Housing Association,
Cotman House, Bowthorpe Hall,
Bowthorpe Hall Road,
Norwich NR5 9AD

Did you know?



We are piloting debt and benefit advice surgeries provided by Norwich Money, Advice & Budgeting Service (MABS).

These are being held at the Bowthorpe scheme office on Beloe Avenue, every second Tuesday and at the Murrell's Court site office every third Tuesday. The surgeries are completely confidential, and as they are on an appointment basis you don't even need to tell Cotman that you are seeking advice. Norwich MABS can provide advice about debt, rent arrears, and benefit queries.

To make an appointment or for a friendly chat call Freda or Sue at Norwich MABS on 01603 506500.

From Homeless to Supporting



Two years ago, you may not have given John Willis a second glance as you walked through the city, Mr Willis was homeless, but unlike the common perception he was not a drug addict, nor was he an alcoholic, but he did have some mental health issues, which affected his ability to work and led to him losing his home.

With support from St Martin's Housing Trust, Mr Willis was finally granted a home in Mile Cross with Norwich City Council, unfortunately shortly after he had moved in, he was subjected to some neighbourhood disputes and had some serious medical complaints. Luckily he was being supported by Stonham Homestay*, and with the help of his support worker, and his doctor, he was re-registered on the Greater Norwich's Home Options scheme, and was offered a property in Bowthorpe by the Association. The scheme Mr Willis has moved into is designated for the over 50's and has provided Mr Willis with confidence in his security again.

Since moving to the scheme Mr Willis became part of the Human Library, a scheme to break down barriers between people, he also volunteers with the Kings Community Church, who provide a cooked meal, showers, and washing facilities for clothes for the homeless on Sundays between 2.00 pm and 5.00 pm. Mr Willis says "Since moving to my flat in Bowthorpe I feel I have been given a new lease of life, and am now able to give back a little of the support that was given to me when I needed it."

**Stonham Homestay is an organisation that provides free floating tenancy support to residents in social housing in Norfolk who require support in sustaining their tenancy, for more information please contact your Housing Officer or Stonham Homestay on 0845 155 0390.*

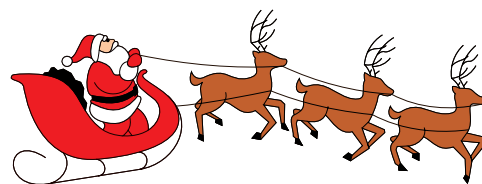
Complaints Review

We have recently reviewed our complaints procedure to make it easier for you to feedback to us. You can now make a complaint about any aspect of our service delivery by either:

- Putting it in writing
- Filling in a complaints form
- Emailing
cotmancustomerfeedback@placesforpeople.co.uk
- Telephoning the Contact Centre on 0800 028 4240 or 01772 667075, or
- Face to face with a member of staff

Response times have been reduced so that you will now receive a detailed reply within ten working days, and we've also introduced a Satisfaction Form for complaints handling so that we can continually improve the service itself with the input of customers who have experience of the process.

If you would like the leaflet "Compliments, Complaints & Feedback" which provides more detailed information, please contact the Customer Services team on 01603 731699



Christmas Opening

The Association's office will be closed over the Christmas period from:

**5.00pm on Thursday 23 December 2010
and will re-open at 9.00am on
Tuesday 4 January 2011**

Please contact the Contact Centre with any queries or repairs you may have on: 0800 028 4240 or 01772 667075

The Contact Centre is staffed 24 hours a day, all year round, by staff experienced in dealing with emergency situations. If you call them concerning a repair they will determine what action needs to be taken and, where necessary, will contact a contractor to undertake the repair.