

OPEN DOOR

Summer 2022 Keeping all our tenants and leaseholders up to date and informed

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Welcome to Open Door

Hello and welcome to your latest edition of Open Door, we have included information which we hope you will find interesting.

There is an update regarding Local Government Reorganisation. As we prepare for the new council in April 2023, the housing team are working hard to ensure that our council has a voice in the development of the housing service. There is also an opportunity for you to get involved and ask any questions you may have.

We are also introducing our new Tenant Participation Officer Jackie Mook, who has recently started at the council and is looking to revamp our tenant participation service. Jackie is hoping to meet as many of you as she can - if you want to find out more about how to become an engaged tenant, get in touch with us.

We also catch up with Matthew Brown, our former Tenant Participation Officer, who has a new role as a Neighbourhood Officer, and update you on the housing service as we come out of the pandemic.

This issue also includes information on the different refugee schemes which we have been supporting, including the homes for Ukraine.

Finally, we know it is a difficult time for everyone with the cost of fuel, energy bills and food prices increasing, so in this edition we have included some information on the different support that is available for our tenants. If you are struggling with your rent or Council Tax, please do not hesitate to contact us. Our skilled staff are always available to help.

Many thanks,

Sarah Thompson

Housing Service Manager

Meet the new Tenant Participation Officer



Hello, I would like to introduce myself as the newly appointed Tenant Participation Officer for the council. My name is Jackie Mook and I have spent the last 24 years working in the charity sector, predominantly in care. Some of you may remember me in my former role as the CEO with Age UK Selby District.

What attracted you to the role of Tenant Participation Officer?

I believe the role aligns with my own values of supporting and helping others. I think I have lots of transferable skills from my previous work experiences that I can bring to support tenants and leaseholders to work together with the council to improve the services they receive.

What would you like to bring to the role?

I would like to ensure that as many tenants and leaseholders feel as included as possible, and that we can identify new ways of working together to achieve this. I particularly passionate about helping people with disabilities, or those who struggle with communication, to become more involved with tenant participation and ensure they do not feel excluded from having their say.

Where do you see Tenant Participation in the next 6 months?

I am looking forward to being involved in Local Government Reorganisation as think it presents a unique and exciting opportunity for all current local authorities, and their tenants, to develop a tenant participation service for the future. I am also excited to meet tenants and leaseholders face to face, and to empower people to have a voice, reducing exclusion and increasing participation.

As tenants and leaseholders why should we join tenant engagement panels and groups?

It is important that you come together to share your experiences and have your voices heard. You are our customers, and receive the services we deliver, so it is a unique opportunity to shape these services in a more meaningful and positive way.

If you would like to become an involved in tenant participation call 01757 705101 or email jmook@selby.gov.uk

Your new North Yorkshire Council

In April 2023, there'll be a new unitary council for North Yorkshire. This new North Yorkshire Council will bring together the services currently provided by all eight councils.

Having one new council means important services can be strengthened and joined up for residents, community groups, businesses and other partners to improve the quality of life and opportunities for people across North Yorkshire.

Having one new council will also save money by driving innovation, reducing duplication and operating at scale. This money will help support services to ensure they are stronger and fit for the future and will fund empowered local decision-making.

The new council will be local, with staff continuing to live and work in the communities they serve. Community networks will bring together residents, councillors, businesses, town and parish councils, MPs, community groups and partners like the NHS and police and fire service.

As tenants and leaseholders, we know you will have many questions, and we want to be honest and open with you throughout this process.

What does this mean for you...

There won't be any immediate change for tenants and leaseholders. The existing councils will continue until March 2023. Throughout the change programme we will continue to provide services to you.

Forming the new housing service...

To ensure the new council is safe and legal on the 1 April 2023 individual work areas have been set up. Each work area is focussing on a different area of the authority, there is a housing workstream which is looking at how the housing service will be formed for the new authority.

The housing workstream has 5 sub workstreams which are looking at specific elements of housing, these are Housing Options, Council Homes, Private Sector, Supported Housing, and Housing Strategy.

Alongside this, the housing workstream is also working with other workstreams such as IT and customer services to make sure that housing is part of the wider planning of the new council.

The new unitary council members...

In May, North Yorkshire County Council held its election. This election was to select the members who will

represent the new council as well as North Yorkshire County Council for the next 10 months. On Wednesday 18 May the new members selected their new executive. Cllr Simon Myers was selected as the new executive member for growth and culture, leisure, sport and housing.

What does this mean for you...

Nothing will change for you until April 2023, for now, your council and councillors will continue to be the same until the new council is formed. In the next 10 months, the elected members will be working with officers to ensure that the new council is safe and legal. This means they will be making big decisions on the Policies and Procedures for the new council.

Keeping you informed...

As tenants and leaseholders, we know you will have many questions, and we want to be honest and open with you throughout this process. We have received some questions from you.

Please bear with us as many decisions are still being made, so it may take us a while to provide you with an answer to your question.

If you have a question about Local Government Reorganisation, you can send it to us through your local housing team info@selby.gov.uk



The new council for
**NORTH
YORKSHIRE**

Refugee resettlement schemes and how you could help

The Housing Service continues to play a key role in supporting the various government programmes for refugee resettlement currently in operation.

The crisis in Ukraine and the conflicts in Afghanistan, Syria and beyond have led to the displacement of millions of people, and over the last six years we have worked closely with North Yorkshire County Council, Migration Yorkshire and our district and borough colleagues to support the re-housing of refugees in North Yorkshire. We are proud to have been involved in helping over 100 refugees find a safe place to live.

There are a number active and on-going schemes that we continue to be involved with:

The UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS)

The Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) launched in 2014 to support refugees to resettle in the UK and it was expanded in September 2015 with the aim to resettle 20,000 Syrians in need of protection by 2020. In 2016 the Vulnerable Children's Resettlement Scheme (VCRS) was also introduced with a plan to resettle a further 3,000 'at risk' refugee children from the Middle East and North Africa region, including their families.

We supported both schemes and between July 2016 and July 2017 resettled 7 refugee families in the Selby district and all 7 families have chosen to remain in the district.

The revised global resettlement scheme consolidates the previous schemes and resettles those who have fled from regions of conflict and instability and are living in formal refugee camps.

In January 2020 we committed to finding suitable housing for a further 6 families but soon after all resettlement in the UK was put on hold due to the global pandemic. The scheme has now restarted, and we are planning for the arrival of 3 families in July and then a further 3 families later in the year.

Afghan Relocations Assistance Policy (ARAP)

The Afghan relocations and assistance policy launched in April 2021, and this scheme offers relocation to former locally employed staff who have supported the British Forces in Afghanistan. The scheme also supports those fleeing Afghanistan and who face a particular risk from the Taliban, for example because of their stand for democracy and human rights, or because of their gender, sexuality, or religion.

We have supported this scheme since July 2021 and have resettled five families in the district.

Homes for Ukraine (HFU)

Homes for Ukraine is a sponsorship scheme that allows people and organisations in the UK to offer support to Ukrainians fleeing the war a home. The scheme allows individuals, charities, community groups and businesses to offer a route to safety for Ukrainians, even if they have no ties to the UK. There will be no limit on how many people can use this scheme and the UK will welcome as many Ukrainians that wish to come and that have sponsors. As a district council our role is to undertake housing checks to ensure that the properties and the space offered is suitable. To date 75 Ukrainian's have arrived in our district and a further 35 visas have been approved.

We have supported this scheme since July 2021 and have resettled five families in the district.

The numbers arriving through the Homes for Ukraine scheme is changing daily and the government provides information on the number of visas issued and the number of arrivals in each local authority area on a weekly basis.

This is the first scheme of this type and is the first time we have not had the responsibility for sourcing the initial accommodation. The volunteering host families must commit to a period of six months, and they are eligible to receive a monthly 'thank you' payment of £350 per month.

We are working closely with North Yorkshire County Council and other district and borough councils to manage the scheme and although most guests arriving have settled in well there have been some relationship breakdowns and alternative accommodation has been needed. There is a risk that after the initial six-month period there will be a surge in demand for alternative accommodation.

Advice for tenants

If you are interested in being involved in the scheme, you will be required to have permission from the council in line with your tenancy agreement, to ensure that your property would be suitable.



Your housing services

After a difficult couple of years, the housing team are now back to delivering services as normal.

The pandemic brought some unique challenges for us, and we had to really scale back some of our core housing services for a significant period of time to comply with government guidance.

However, even at the height of the pandemic, we still managed to let our homes to those in urgent need and provided support to our most vulnerable tenants, with Neighbourhood Officers checking in with tenants and signposting to other services, such as befriending and support.

We also managed to carry out emergency repairs throughout the pandemic, and continued to work on our void properties, although did face challenges with some materials being in very short supply.

Rent collection, which funds the services we provide to our tenants, was also significantly affected as we could not take cases of serious arrears to court during the height of the pandemic. Housing Rent Officers also kept it touch with tenants who experienced difficulties paying their rent to offer support, advice, and assistance with access to benefits for those affected by loss of earnings.

Whilst we are back to business as usual, we appreciate that our more vulnerable tenants may have concerns about people coming into their homes, particularly after such a strange and unsettling time. We will endeavour to keep distanced from you when visiting, but should you prefer us to wear a mask or have any other requests, then please do make us aware prior to our visit in order that we can accommodate this. Your welfare remains our number one priority.

We have learnt a lot of lessons throughout the pandemic and believe that we have developed more efficient ways of working as a result. We are very pleased to be back out in our communities, speaking to our tenants in their homes and look forward to seeing you soon.

Neighbourhood Officers

Our Neighbourhood Officers can offer advice on any tenancy issues you may have. They are also available to discuss general neighbourhood enquiries. They work closely with other teams within the council and organisations to ensure your enquiries are dealt with correctly.

We have had a few changes to our Neighbourhood Officers, below are the details on how you can contact your Neighbourhood Officer. All officers can be contacted on our central number 01757 705 101 or by using the email address below.

Area	Neighbourhood Officer	Email
Central Selby Millgate, Westbourne and Scott Road area inc. Barlow, Cawood, Hambleton and Wistow	Carol Reynolds	NeighbourhoodOfficersCentral@selby.gov.uk
Central Selby Flaxley Road area including Hempbridge along with Brayton and Thorpe Willoughby	Matthew Brown	NeighbourhoodOfficersCentral@selby.gov.uk
Selby Town North Charles Street estate	Currently vacant - this area is being covered by the team	NeighbourhoodOfficersCentral@selby.gov.uk
Selby Town South Abbots Road and surrounding streets	Annette McDermott	NeighbourhoodOfficersCentral@selby.gov.uk
Tadcaster & Villages Appleton Roebuck, Bilbrough, Bolton Percy, Colton, Healaugh, Stutton, Towton and Ulleskelf	Kris Capperauld	NeighbourhoodOfficersTadcaster@selby.gov.uk
Eastern Area Barlby, Camblesforth, Carlton, Cliffe, Drax, Eggborough, Hemingbrough, Hensall, Kelfield, North Duffield, Riccall and Stillingfleet	Amanda Suthers	NeighbourhoodOfficersEast@selby.gov.uk
Sherburn & Villages Barkston Ash, Church Fenton, Ryther, Saxton and South Milford	Janine Ledger	NeighbourhoodOfficersSherburn@selby.gov.uk
Western Area Balne, Beal, Brotherton, Burn, Burton Salmon, Byram, Fairburn, Hambleton, Kellington, Little Smeaton, Monk Fryston, Whitley Bridge and Womersley	Barbara Scargill	NeighbourhoodOfficersWest@selby.gov.uk





Housing repairs update

Our Property Services team has continued to work hard to catch up on the backlog of repairs caused by the pandemic.

To help us recover from the backlog, we have brought in additional staff to work solely on catching up, flexing our existing resources to focus efforts more on repairs. Since May 2021, the team has cleared 89% of the backlogged repairs.

Alongside the backlog of the repairs, we also received on average between 300 and 350 new repairs each week. When a repair is reported it will be split into one of four categories: emergency, urgent, non-urgent and gas repairs. Based on the type of repair you have will depend on the time it takes for the team to complete the repair.

Although we have reduced the backlog of jobs by 89%, we know that we still have some way to go until we have delivered them all. If you are one of our tenants who are still waiting for a repair to be completed, please be assured we are aware of it, and we will get to you as soon as we possibly can.

There is no need to call the Customer Contact Centre to re-report your repair or to check on the progress as the team will be in touch to make an appointment with you. If your repair has changed, please do let us know so we can re-assess the urgency of the situation.

Support when you need it

There are a wide variety of organisations working hard across our district to provide support, help and advice should you need it.

This includes Horton Housing, a not-for-profit organisation, who run community support cafes in our district. These take place in community venues in Selby, Eggborough, Tadcaster and Sherburn.

If you are worried about the rising in your energy bills, the Yorkshire Energy Doctor can provide advice and information about how to make sure you're getting the best deal for your gas and electricity. They can also carry out home visits and advise on reducing household energy costs. Visit www.yorkshireenergydoctor.org.uk, email kate@yorkshireenergydoctor.org.uk or call 01757 249100 or 07738 818391 to find out more.

Citizens Advice offers free, confidential, impartial and independent advice and information on debt, welfare benefits, housing, employment, relationship, consumer, legal and other enquiries. Call their Adviceline on 03444 111 444, email: advice@northyorksica.org.uk or visit www.citizensadvice.org.uk which has a wealth of information available on it.

Selby District AVS delivers a number of services and projects to support our community. One such project is the Community Fridge project, in partnership with Big Local, which

directly works to reducing food waste. It is a space where everyone can share surplus food, including donations from local food businesses, producers, households and gardens. The Selby Community Fridge can be accessed by anyone and everyone who wants to share food or who needs food. You can find out more through their Facebook page [@SelbyCommunityFridge](https://www.facebook.com/SelbyCommunityFridge). Or speak to AVS to find out more information. They're here to help. Call 01757 291111 or visit www.selbydistrictavs.org.uk

And remember if you are struggling to pay your rent, you should speak to our rent team as soon as possible. They can provide advice; and help make sure you're getting any benefits or support that may help.



Meet our new Neighbourhood Officer – Matthew Brown

Recently, Matthew Brown our former Tenant Participation Officer has been appointed to his new role as a Neighbourhood Officer covering some of the Flaxley Road estate, Brayton and Thorpe Willoughby including our sheltered scheme at St. Wilfrids Court.

Matthew has taken a few minutes out from his busy day to introduce himself and answer a few questions about his new role.

How would you describe your role?

That's an interesting question, as the old cliché goes no day is ever the same! There's such a variety in what I do but ultimately, it's about managing tenancies on behalf of Selby District Council. This could be carrying out introductory tenancy visits to check how new tenants are settling in; dealing with anti-social behaviour or checking that our estates are in a good condition for the communities that use them.

So, tenants can come to you for advice on anything tenancy related?

Pretty much. We have separate teams that manage rents and repairs, but everything else tends to come to us. If we don't know the answer we will always know someone who does.

I personally feel that it's always easier to have these conversations face to face, so I am always happy to come and visit but can always be contacted by other methods if the tenant wishes. At the end of the day, it's about listening to our tenants and providing them with the best housing service possible.

What's the best way for tenants to get in touch with you?

The best way is to call 01757 705101 and ask to speak with me, or email me at mbrown@selby.gov.uk. I work in this role on a Monday morning, and all day Thursday and Friday. If I am unavailable, I will try and contact you as soon as possible.

What's a piece of advice you like to give all tenants?

The most important thing is that you talk to us. We are knowledgeable, friendly and an approachable bunch and will do our best to help.

Finally. What do you like best about your role so far?

The best thing I like about my role is that I get to leave the office and visit our tenants. Being able to see people in their homes allows us to connect with our tenants and puts them at the heart of everything we do.



Selby District's nature wonders

Our little part of Yorkshire's landscape and nature doesn't have the reputation of the Dales, or the North York Moors, or the coast... but then it doesn't have the number of tourists either! And if you check out www.selby.gov.uk/great-outdoors you'll see we do have some special little places...

Even better, visit one yourself, if you can. I hadn't been to Barlow Common Nature Reserve www.ywt.org.uk/nature-reserves/barlow-common-nature-reserve for a while, and really enjoyed my walk there yesterday. You can read about its social and natural history in more detail on the SDC and Yorkshire Wildlife Trust links, but I had some personal highlights.

I often facilitate Wellbeing in Nature Walks and part of the walk is encouraging people to focus on their senses, so I do that myself today. Visually, I can't help but major on colour and really notice all the stunning shades of green (50?); as well as the glinting copper beeches, the purples of clover and vetch, buttercup and dandelion yellows, and the white froth of hawthorn flowers.

And the hawthorn focuses me on smell and taste... a sweet - some would say sickly - smell, but certainly different from the sharp freshness of the wild garlic growing in the shadier parts of the woodland. I pick a leaf and nibble it, loving the mild flavour of garlic.

When I stand still, close my eyes, and focus on the sounds, it's all about the birds... I can pick out chaff-chaff (easy-peasy!), blackbird and dunnock, but there are other summer visitors warbling away that I'm not so sure about... is that a black cap, or a willow warbler, or something else...?

And the feeling sense? Feeling as in touching is almost anything really: knobbly bark, spiky thorns on the dog roses, the silky petals of a buttercup, sticky bluebell sap on my fingers. Feeling as in emotion is indeed the wellbeing, I get from being in a natural landscape - I'd even go so far as to say ecstasy.

I do hope you can enjoy a nature walk sometime soon.

Daphne Preece



Tel: 01757 705101
Email: info@selby.gov.uk
Phone line opening times
Mon - Thurs: 8.30am to 5pm
Fri: 8.30am to 4.30pm

Tel: 01653 600941
The out of hours emergency
number for repairs and
homelessness issues.

Do it online
You can apply for, pay and
tell us through our website.
www.selby.gov.uk