



sussex

Combating Homelessness, Creating Opportunities, Promoting Change



# Dear Tenant,

The Housing Services Team is preparing to meet some of you during the series of upcoming community days. Come and say hi to us and share your feedback on your experience with BHT. We have invited representatives from the Fire Brigade and health advisors to join us, and as always, there will be a bulk item collection service.

New season, new hopes, but also new financial challenges. In this issue, we provide an in-depth analysis of service charges, broken down by Joe Ashdown.

Mary Stevens explains why we need to be careful when it comes to feeding wildlife, and provides an additional energy-saving tip. We also update you on the work of TSP, who are progressing with their efforts on anti-social behaviour. A big thank you is due to our tenant contributors: Stephen Robinson, Bruce Bennet, and Becky De Niro, who shared with us photos, poetry, and information about important events.

Save the date in your diary for BHT's first-ever art exhibition (page 10), and as always - enjoy the read.

Anna Kuzan - Involvement Officer

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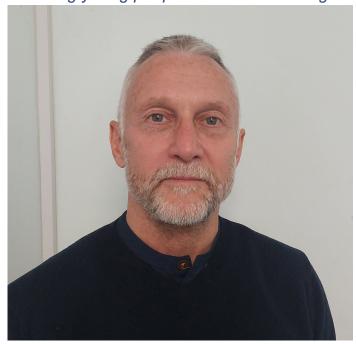
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# Hello from our new team members

### Please welcome Graham Towse

I joined BHT Sussex in February in the new role of Head of Asset Management, having previously enjoyed a unique background in a variety of sectors across Europe, Asia, and Australasia. For the last 15 years, my focus has been the supported housing sector, managing a £20 million stock acquisition across Kent, Sussex, and Hampshire.

In my new role I am responsible for ensuring all BHT Sussex's housing stock is safe and kept in the best possible condition. I will lead the Asset Management team, ensure properties are safe and compliant with regulations, oversee maintenance and improvement projects and manage budgets and resources effectively. In my spare time, I enjoy the simple things in life, spending time with family and enjoying nature. I also get great satisfaction from mentoring and coaching young people in amateur boxing.



# Please welcome Neveen Rafoul



Hello, my name is Neveen, I am the new Receptionist / Administrator at BHT Sussex. Previously, I Worked at Citizen Advice Bureau where I helped and supported many people with their enquires and their difficulties. I manged to keep everyone supported and understandable. Now I am very excited to do the same with anyone who comes to the reception with any enquiry, either face to face or via the phone. In my spare time I love to spend time with my family and my favourite hobby is to bake and decorate cakes.

Reception opening times are: Monday to Friday, 9.30 am to 4.30 pm

# **Service Charges explained**

BHT Sussex has recently sent out rent letters to all tenants. It outlines the weekly rent charge for the 2025/26 financial year, which will be effective from 1 April 2025.

The letter breaks the core rent down into three components – basic rent, eligible service charges and ineligible service charges. This article explains what is covered in each of these areas.

### **Basic Rent**

The basic rent refers to the rent charged for living at a property on a weekly basis. The main elements that are taken into consideration when calculating the basic rent are the size of the property, the number of rooms it has, the property's value and local income levels.

### **Eligible Service Charges**

Eligible service charges relate to service charges that will usually be covered by benefit payments, such as Universal Credit or Housing Benefit wherever a tenant is in receipt of benefits. The main areas of eligible service charge that are included in the calculations in your rent letter are summarised below:

<u>Communal Cleaning:</u> Where a block has shared communal interior spaces, such as stairs and a hallway, BHT Sussex engages a cleaning contractor to regularly attend the block to carry out cleaning of the communal spaces.

Health and Safety: BHT Sussex engages a fire safety contractor to carry out regular tests of the fire alarm and emergency lighting systems at all of its properties with communal areas and they are also engaged in testing the functionality and safety of any fire extinguishers that are at the property. In addition, where properties have a communal area, BHT Sussex engages a contractor to undertake an annual fire risk assessment and to report on the integrity of fire doors in its blocks.

<u>Grounds Maintenance:</u> This covers BHT Sussex's engagement of a grounds maintenance contractor to attend all of its blocks with gardens and/or grounds and to attend to shrubbery, trees and weeding.

<u>Communal Electricity:</u> This covers the use of the electricity that is utilised in communal areas of the building, such as for hallway or exterior lighting.

<u>Gas Servicing:</u> At properties with a gas supply, this covers the engagement of a gas safe heating contractor to carry out annual gas safety checks and to undertake responsive remedial work wherever this is required.

<u>Lift Servicing:</u> At BHT Sussex properties that have a lift, this contributes towards the periodic servicing of the lift and any callouts that are made to make repairs to it.

### **Ineligible Charges**

Ineligible service charges are components of service charges that cannot be covered by benefits payments, such as Housing Benefit or Universal Credit, when renting from a social landlord.

With some social landlords, this figure will include the cost of utilities, but this does not apply at BHT Sussex as tenants are expected to directly pay the utility company for all electricity, gas and water used in their property and also to pay their own Council Tax.

However, there are some properties where BHT Sussex does levy an ineligible service charge for other shared resources. This will differ from property to property, but it may include the upkeep of communal gardens, the supply and maintenance of fitted white goods, access to communal laundry facilities and access to Wi-Fi in communal parts of the building.

### What to Do Next?

When tenants receive their rent letter for the 2025/26 financial year, it is recommended that they provide a copy of their letter to the benefits team that is handling their Universal Credit or Housing Benefit claim. Although BHT Sussex does provide these letters to the benefits teams separately, notifying the team handling your claim of any revisions to your rent will improve the chances of the revisions to your benefit claim being processed quickly and efficiently and thereby reduce the risk of you ending up being liable for paying a greater chunk of your rent than you need to.

If you have any queries about your rent letter, or to explore ways of paying your service charges, such as setting up a Direct Debit, please contact the Rent Officer, Shirley Campbell, by calling her on 07826 868957, or emailing <a href="mailto:rents@bht.org.uk">rents@bht.org.uk</a>.

# **Upcoming Community Days**

The Housing Services team is getting ready to deliver another series of community days. This year, we will visit the following sites:

16 Apr – Wellington Square, Hastings

14 May - Richardson's Yard, Brighton

18 Jun – Southdowns Court, Brighton

30 Jul - Deepdene Gardens, Hastings

20 Aug - Olivier Close, Brighton

17 Sep – Open Community Day, venue TBC

Come and chat to us about your experience with BHT Sussex. We appreciate your feedback and look forward to meeting you in person.



# BHT Sussex in Bloom - gardening competition is back again!

Ilt's that time of year when we start planning our annual gardening competition. As always, everyone is welcome, even those who grow plants indoors. There are three categories in the competition:

- Best communal garden
- Most environmentally friendly garden
- Best individual garden / indoor plants

# The closing date for entries is 4th of July.

To join the competition contact Anna: anna.kuzan@bht.org.uk 07500 972509

Or speak to your Housing Officer.

The winners will receive gift cards: £40 for the 1st prize, and £20 for the 2nd and 3rd prizes.

If you would like some **free** seeds to get you started contact Anna (contact details above)

# Focusing on Anti-Social Behaviour

The Tenant Scrutiny Panel has recently selected anti-social behaviour for its next area to review. This follows an in-depth review that the panel carried out of our repairs services in 2024. The recent annual tenant survey, which is due to be published later this year, highlighted that improvements are needed in the way that we handle anti-social behaviour cases, so we welcome the opportunity to work with the Tenant Scrutiny Panel to improve the way that we do things.

The Anti-Social Behaviour Policy and Procedure are both currently being refreshed. The Scrutiny Panel will review and help shape both documents at their next meeting in April. Following this, they intend to send an anti-social behaviour survey to all tenants, and your feedback will be really valuable.

The results of the survey will then help to inform the report that will be compiled by the Scrutiny Panel and presented to the Head of Housing and, in turn, the board once it is completed.

# Response times

The Housing Services Team acknowledges that some tenants have expressed concerns about the response time following initial contact. Please be mindful that staff are out and about on visits and are not always able to take calls but will get back to you when it is possible.

We have a minimum turnaround time of five working days for emails. This means that if Daisy is emailed on a Monday, a response may not be sent until the following Tuesday due to her working pattern.

We value all our tenants and want you to feel heard. We just ask that consideration is given when it comes to responses, as we have over 400 tenants and a small working team. We thank you for your ongoing cooperation.

If you feel you need guidance around your tenancy, rent arrears, form filling and tenancy sustainment then contact your Housing Officer to be referred to the Tenancy Sustainment Officer.



**Daisy Fellowes** Housing Officer works Tuesday to Friday 9am - 5pm



**Shirley Bridle** Housing Officer works Monday to Friday 9am - 5pm



**Hayley Rootes** Tenancy Sustainment Officer works Monday to Thursday 9am - 5pm

# **Pension Credit**

Pension Credit helps those over State Pension age who are living on a low income. It works by topping up your income and can be worth more than £3,900 a year.

You may also qualify or receive an additional amount if you receive Attendance Allowance, care for someone who receives Attendance Allowance, care for a child, or need help with housing costs like service charges, ground rent, and charges for site rents.

It is also key to getting the winter fuel payment and can boost your budget by unlocking a range of other extras:

- Free NHS costs, including free dental treatment, eye tests, and glasses
- Free TV licence for the over 75s
- Entitlement to full council tax reduction
   so you don't pay any
- Reduced tariffs on mobile, broadband, and utilities
- · Support for mortgage interest

To be eligible for pension credits your maximum weekly income is £218.15 if you're single or £332.95 if it's a joint income.

The first £10,000 of any savings is ignored, then £1 per £500 of savings is taken into account.

Contact the Pension Credit claim line on 0800 99 1234 to see if you qualify, or alternatively you can use the pension credit calculator here:

https://www.gov.uk/pension-credit-calculator

If you know anyone who could be eligible please encourage them to apply.

# Tenant's contribution

Kindly shared with us by talented Mr Bruce Bennet. His poetry series titled 'Choose' is presented on the pages of this magazine. Enjoy!

## Choose

## **Peace and War**

I choose peace of mind, I choose peace of my spirit. To know peace is not just to be in a quiet place with no noise. To know that peace is not just to be alone by myself. When I am peaceful in my soul calmness this resonates. Would I rather choose war, aggression in myself? Destruction of my heart, is this what I want for my loved ones? When there is no war within, then the wall from outside can disturb my peace. I choose peace.

# **Love and Hate**

Why would I even consider choosing hate over love. Hate has no compassion, hate has no empathy, hate makes me not care about humanity and life. Am I a hostile human, is this how I want to be remembered? Hate is a long drink of poison, it will do exactly what it says on the tin. Destroy me first. I love to love life, so why would I even consider choosing hate over love.

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# Our Environment Mary Stevens Environmental Officer

# **Keeping gardens and wildlife** healthy

It's Spring and birds are more active in our gardens and parks, looking for mates and nesting sites. Providing food for birds helps them when seeds and insects are scarce, and attracts them so we can enjoy watching them. However, care needs to be taken when feeding birds – to avoid spreading disease and attracting unwanted visitors. The RSPB have advised that bird tables/flat surface feeders should be avoided as deposits may build up that spread disease. If you have hanging bird feeders clean them regularly, and don't let old food build up.



Don't overfill feeders – food that ends up scattered on the ground can attract unwanted visitors like mice and rats. If you have a garden, save on the cost of buying bird food by growing plants that produce seed that birds like and attract insects that many birds rely on to feed their chicks. Sunflowers and teasels provide seeds in late summer, and shrubs like pyracantha attract bees, butterflies and dragonflies in summer and provide berries for birds in winter.

# **Be Energy wise**

In April energy prices increased – so here's a reminder to manage your energy use to keep costs down as well as reducing emissions.

- Use the energy from the sun and let the light in – opening curtains/blinds during the day will help warm up your home when the sun is out. Closing them at night keeps the warmth in.
- Don't overfill the kettle only heat as much water as you need.
- Switch appliances off at the socket when not in use.
- Check your energy tariff can you save money by switching suppliers?
   (Some providers will charge to switch before the end of the contract, so check this too).

Find advice on switching tariffs here:

<u>Switch energy supplier or tariff - Citizens</u>

<u>Advice</u>

# Enjoy an eco easter

Colourful easter eggs and chocolate treats are traditional at Easter. If you're giving Easter treats to friends and family, look for plastic free packaging. For example, foil wrapped easter bunnies or eggs avoid the need for boxes, can look just as good and you're not paying for cardboard and plastic. If you're having a special easter meal – consider swapping out roast meat for a veggie alternative – like roast cauliflower or squash – cheaper than meat and delicious.

# Tomato and pasta soup

At this time of year fresh seasonal vegetables are in short supply. You can still make a colourful, filling and tasty meal using tinned veg – which often have as many vitamins as fresh. Warming on cool spring days, that makes around four servings.

# **Ingredients:**

2tbsp vegetable oil

- 1 onion
- 2 cloves garlic
- 2 sticks celery
- 1 400g can chopped tomatoes
- 1 tbsp tomato puree
- 1 400g chickpeas (butter or other beans if you prefer)

150g macaroni or other small pasta shapes 700 ml vegetable stock

To serve: basil pesto

### Method:

- 1.Heat 1 tbsp oil in a large saucepan. Add chopped onion and celery and fry gently until starting to soften. Add the garlic and cook for 1 min more.
- 2. Stir in tomatoes, drain beans and add them, the pasta and stock and bring to the boil.
- 3. Reduce the heat and leave to simmer for 6-8 mins, or until the pasta is tender. Add salt and pepper to your taste.
- 4. Serve the soup in a bowl and swirl some pesto on the top for added flavour. Yummy with crusty bread and maybe a bit of cheese!

# **Great Big Green Week Biodiversity Boost**

Once again we are supporting the Great Big Green Week and encouraging everyone across BHT to help boost the biodiversity that supports the food we eat and the air we breathe. The week is 7th – 15th June, and we are encouraging everyone to take care of the natural resources around them – whether it be encouraging the flowering plants that pollinating insects love, helping protect our water and keep it clean by avoiding littering and using chemicals, protecting the air we breathe by walking, cycling or using public transport – and enjoying the mental health boost of being outdoors and enjoying all the colours and sounds of nature in early spring.

Find out more about Great Big Green Week by visiting

https://www.greatbiggreenweek.com/about



Cow parsley lining the pavement on Brentwood Rd, Brighton

# **BHT in Focus Exhibition**

BHT Sussex, as well as being a housing association is also a local charity which empowers people to overcome mental ill health, homelessness and addiction, As such, we will showcase a powerful collection of our client's and tenants' art and written work in a public exhibition this May. The exhibition, entitled 'BHT Sussex in Focus', will be held in the charity's main office reception area at 144 London Road, Brighton, from 26-30 May. It will be open from 10am-4pm each day.



Painting by Kamal Spilsted of Hasting

The exhibition has been made possible thanks to funding from Arts Council England. It will feature a variety of creative expressions, from paintings and drawings to poetry and journal writing. Participants come from a range of BHT Sussex projects, including their Addiction Services, mental health care homes

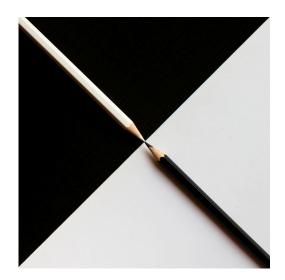


Painting by Theresa Clark of Hasting

and supported accommodation, a for people experiencing homelessness as well as from among the tenants of BHT Sussex. We are really happy to welcome the public to this fantastic exhibition in May. Our goal is to inspire clients and tenants to channel their emotions and stories through art, boosting their confidence while giving them a platform to share their voices with the community. Please visit and show your support!" BHT Sussex are planning to launch the exhibition on 26 May with a popup gig outside our office featuring the Choir with no Name Brighton, a local choir for people who have experienced homelessness and marginalisation. We are also putting together an accompanying anthology book with contributions from BHT Sussex clients, residents and staff, which will be available to purchase throughout the exhibition.

# Poetry by Bruce Bennet

Continued from page 7



# **Unity and Division**

I am a social creature, no matter how strong I think I am. I depend on others for support in many areas of my life. My family and loved ones are my direct unit of support. Division or isolation creeps up on me. I begin to believe that I am all I need. I begin to believe I know best. The mental frustration becomes more frequent.

### **Faith and Fear**

Feed my faith or feed my fear. Which one do I choose to feed? They both have something in common, my friend. To the eye, they are both invisible. One gives me power to be able and righteous. The other drains my power to be dysfunctional and careless. One gives me strength beyond which I cannot comprehend. One drains my soul to the point where I wish it all to end. Now choose the one I want to feed to the one I want to win.

### **Kindness and Meanness**

Kindness is a basic necessary human quality. Kindness is imperative to humans' growth. Kindness comes from love and compassion. he happier and kinder a human is. the achievements they attain from within. Never forget, kindness is beauty. Meanness is ugly, it creates suffering and the lack of happiness or prosperity. Meanness disregards human affection and drains my inner strength. Why and how can a human choose meanness over kindness.

## **Hope and Pessimism**

I have to do what I believe is right for hope. Hope it is when I think from my heart. Hope represents honesty of my soul. To even have the notion of pessimism in my heart, degrades the humanity. Tramples on my soul. Yeah, I feel that strongly about hope.

### **Joy and Misery**

Real joy comes from helping others. Being charitable, if you wish to call it. To put others, first, and to witness the joy on the face of which I have just helped, or given to have a goodness of my heart is amazing, that's where real joy is. Misery and selfishness, being stuck in self, me, I. I am given a choice of everything I do. Shall I be joyous in my choices or miserable in myself. I will not try, I will choose Joy. Life is love and to love is everything.

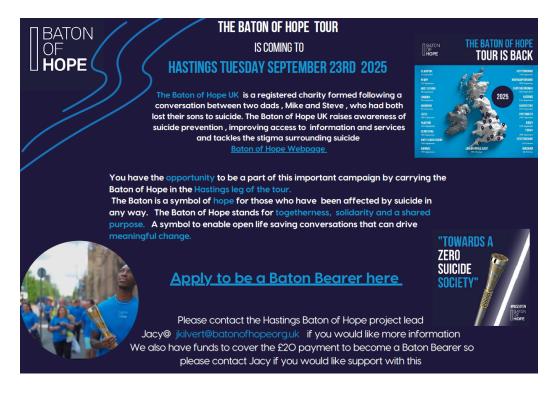


# CWNN - hello from the new Manager

Having spent years first volunteering, and then working in the charity sector supporting people to garden and learn how to cook, Ruth is super excited to be joining BHT Sussex to combine her two loves: food and music. When not working with food, you can find her on the decks, where she's either DJing or helping women + gender non-conforming folk people learn how to DJ. as the co-founder of the GNC + women led DJ collective BBG, BBG focuses on holding inclusive events and creating supportive learning spaces that platform and empower GNC folk + women. She is really excited to bring her experience in organising inclusive events to the Choir With No Name, and is looking forward to learning from, and contributing to, such a thriving, supportive, and creative community:)

# The Baton of Hope Tour 2025

Big thanks to Becky Hastings from for sharing the info about this event with us. The Baton of Hope is the largest National Suicide Awareness and Prevention Campaign you and have opportunity to be a part of this by carrying the baton through Hastings on the 23rd September 2025 as we will shine a light on this important topic.



# Wordsearch created by Joe Ashdown

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Easter egg
Hot cross bun
Picnic
Good Friday
Bonnet

Rabbit Marathon Daylight Tulips Summertime

Salad box Equinox Mothers Day Blossom April showers Lawnmower
Countryside
Gardening
Alfresco
Clocks





If you need urgent dental help and cannot find a dentist, the Dental Helpline can book you an urgent appointment with an NHS dentist.

For up to-date-information and support on getting urgent dental care, contact:



Alternatively, email: <u>kcht.dentalhelpdesk@nhs.net</u> for more information.



During the last meeting the newly formed panel unanimously voted Dan Harrison as a chair of the panel. Dan is a long term tenant at BHT Sussex who is passionate about bringing tenants and the organisation closer to collaboratively work on the best possible outcomes for all.

As the work on Anti-Social Behaviour policy and procedure continue. the panel has decided to invite tenants to take part in a short survey dedicated to this topic. In the coming days you will receive an email with a link to Survey Monkey where you will be able to tell us about ASB in your neighbourhood and how it's being handled.

Currently the panel consists of five members, but it would benefit from the insightful opinion of another couple of members. If you are interested in joining the panel or have any suggestions regarding ASB, please get in touch with Anna Kuzan - Involvement Officer - contact info on the last page.

# **Tenant Scrutiny Panel update**

# What is tenant scrutiny panel?

Tenant scrutiny panel is a group of BHT Sussex residents who examine BHT's service areas in detail and make recommendations to the Board for improvement.



# Why do we need the panel?

The scrutiny panel brings the expertise of our residents and staff together. It ensures residents are engaged with BHT's services and processes, and represents their views on how to make improvements.

# What are the aims of the panel?

- Take an independent view of BHT's performance
- Establish priorities for reviewing performance
- Oversee resident-led scrutiny activities
- Collect eveidence to enable services to be scrutinised





Detailed scrutiny projects can run on a number of areas such as: complaints and anti social behaviour (ASB), service charges and tenant involvement.

So far the panel has scrutinised repairs and welfare reform (UC)

# **Contact Us**

# Head Office and General Enquiries

144 London Road Brighton BN1 4PH 01273 645400 info@bht.org.uk

# **Rents and Repairs**

01323 340018 rents@bht.org.uk repairs@bht.org.uk

## **MyTenancy**

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www.mytenancy.co.uk
Report a repair or check your
rent statement online

## **Housing Officers**

Brighton Housing Officer:

Daisy Fellowes

01273 645454 07826 874849

Officer for Hastings, Eastbourne, Saltdean, Marine Parade and Southdowns Court: Shirley Bridle

07824 306591

### **Involvement Officer**

Anna Kuzan 07500 972509

# **Out of Hours Emergency Repairs**

Redman Howard 07493 223016

# Gas emergencies

Robert Heath Heating 0333 014 1000

# Issues with fire alarms and detectors

Eastbourne Alarms

01323 729420

Our mission: Combating homelessness; Creating opportunities; Promoting change.
Our values: Empowering People; Inspiring Change; Collaboration; Delivering Excellence; Being Accountable.

# Congratulations to our prize draw winner

Congratulations to Adrian in Brighton who won a £20 shopping voucher in the Direct Debit quarterly prize draw simply for setting up a Direct Debit with BHT Sussex.

Your Housing Officers can guide you through the process step-by-step.

# **Wordsearch Solution**

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