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## COME AND JOIN US!

One of our four pledges at transfer was to give you, our tenants, a greater say in how your homes are owned and managed. We set up the Boards of New Charter so Tenants, Independent people and the Council were equal partners. We are now seeking nominations from tenants interested in becoming Tenant Directors.

Our present Tenant Directors have done a good job. Since their election or re-election in 2001, they have ensured New Charter's satisfaction ratings from tenants have soared, repairs services speeded up and investment plans for the next seven years approved and published.

Alongside other Directors, Tenant Directors govern New Charter. Board meetings - held every eight weeks or so - consider and take decisions which help New Charter deliver its promises to tenants, improve the services we provide, and ensure the financial health of the organisation. We hold Board meetings in the early evenings.

There is some reading to do, but also lots of help available and training to help all Directors fulfil their duties. There are four Tenant Director places on each of the Boards of New Charter Housing (North) Limited and New Charter Housing (South) Limited. The present Tenant Directors are also eligible to stand for re-election.

Those elected will serve for three years. Those tenants just missing election as Directors can become part of a training body, from which any resignations would be filled.

So if you're interested in our Big Job, with no pay, then why not put your name forward? You will find a nomination form on the back page of this issue. Return it to New Charter by 2nd February 2004.

We'll ask you to prepare a short election address that every eligible tenant will receive alongside a postal ballot form. The ballot is likely to take place in late June.

New Charter promised that tenants would have more say in how homes are run. Take up the opportunity to have your place on the Board, and your voice as tenants heard!



New headquarters development

April 2003 (above)  
November 2003 (right)



## ON THE MOVE

One of the challenges setting up New Charter was finding the right accommodation for our employees. We bought our Building Company Depot on Outram Road in Dukinfield at transfer. But most of our employees work from rented and temporary accommodation across 15 sites.

Our early priority was to set up the four shops in Ashton-under-Lyne, Denton, Hyde and Stalybridge. Completing these premises for you, our customers, allows us to concentrate our efforts on our headquarters building.

Our current trading area in Tameside has little commercial office space, and nothing big enough to house over 370 staff. We decided to invest in the Ashton Renewal Area, and a new building providing over 50,000 ft<sup>2</sup> of workspace is being built at Cavendish Street, close to the town centre.

We expect completion in March 2004, and the building will allow us to provide Board meeting space (currently also rented), as well as resources for our tenants. Designed around a central 'street', the design is dramatic but attention to detail will reduce the waste and inefficiencies associated with conventional buildings of this size.

## Inspecting your Neighbourhood

As part of our good housing management practice, we now inspect your estate quarterly and are due to come round again in January.

Already, we have logged over 6,000 items, which we will address. We have passed nearly 500 of these to Tameside Council for attention. They are issues such as graffiti and public highway and pavement maintenance.

We also look at repairs (both general and external), environmental (fencing, paths and garages) and even tripping hazards. This process also allows us to look into any cases of antisocial behaviour, which will be dealt with by our in-house team.

Not only does this process allow us to keep a handle on your homes and your neighbourhood, the information we gather is fed into future work plans, which help us to set priorities and divide our resources effectively. This huge task is a positive move for tenants and New Charter and we will work with lots of people, including residents groups to improve the service for your community.

## NEW YEAR, NEW HOMES

Some tenants who live on Wellington Road, Ashton will move into brand new homes in 2004. Many of the residents will move into this new development on Crickets Lane at the top of Penny Meadow in the next few months. Their current homes will be demolished to make way for the Metrolink tram system.

This unique project in a prime position in Ashton will provide 21 new two bedroom flats. The estate will have two lifts and will house mainly elderly residents. Tenants have already chosen their own bathrooms, kitchens, tiling and floor coverings and have named the estate Wellington Court.



# Open to all tenants

Why not come along to a Board meeting at New Charter? They usually last around 2 hours and are held at Newton Hall in Hyde. You are not able to speak, but you can watch how the Board operates, and you will have a set of papers to follow the proceedings.

Take a look at the following dates and if you can attend, or would like more information, please contact Bill Wilkinson on 0161 331 2000.

## New Charter Housing (North) Limited

Monday 9th February 6.00 p.m.  
Monday 5th April 6.00 p.m.

## New Charter Housing (South) Limited

Wednesday 4th February 6.00 p.m.  
Wednesday 7th April 6.00 p.m.

## New Charter Housing Trust Limited

Tuesday 17th February 6.00 p.m.  
Tuesday 25th May 6.00 p.m.

## FREE LOW ENERGY LIGHT BULBS!

New Charter is committed to playing a part in reducing global warming and saving YOU money. We have teamed up with British Gas to give all our tenants energy saving bulbs for FREE – saving you over £15 over shop prices.

The bulbs will last over 12 years and use four times less electricity than ordinary ones. They give out the same light as 100 watt bulbs. They will help you to save some money off your electricity bill – every penny helps. You can use them anywhere in the house, but not with dimmer switches.

Some tenants have already received their bulbs, if you haven't received yours, you will get them with your next gas service over the coming months. So please make sure we have access to your property when we contact you to carry out the service.

## VISITING THE WORLD WIDE WEB

Don't forget to take a look at our website – [www.newcharter.co.uk](http://www.newcharter.co.uk). We are constantly improving and updating the information. You can also take a look at the 'Homes Available Now' section which advertises homes for rent. We are always open to suggestions of how we can make it better and would welcome your ideas.

## KEEP IN TOUCH WITH US BY E-MAIL

Are you interested in receiving news from New Charter by e-mail? Our e-bulletin started in November 2003. The first edition included items about community group grants, events in 2004, new homes and employee news.

Find out more about what's going on in future editions by registering with us. Simply send an e-mail with the word **subscribe** in the subject box to [newsletter@newcharter.co.uk](mailto:newsletter@newcharter.co.uk). Join our e-community now!

## FREE TO YOU!

Your tenants handbook contains lots of information and advice about your home and tenancy and we'd like you to have a copy. Please call in at any of our shops to collect yours today! A list of addresses is at the back of this newsletter.

## Inspection Report

Boards will consider the long-awaited inspection report this month. You may recall the inspectors visited us in May last year, and involved some tenants in shaping their assessment of our services. We will feature the report after Boards have met.

## business for neighbourhoods

Maybe you've seen this slogan appearing around New Charter – on our site signboards, perhaps. What's it all about?

Well, it's more than just a slogan. It's a national response to the perception that Housing Associations only provide poor quality homes for the poor, the deprived and the vulnerable – and little else.

These opinions were gathered by a MORI survey in 2001 and surprised many, including us. The key focus of the campaign is putting pride back into communities, making them places where people want to live. That's what New Charter is all about – so we are keen to adopt it. We have affirmed our commitment to Neighbourhoods, Customers and Excellence.

In fact, we were quick off the mark and have used it already on several publications, including our Annual Report.

## Spring Clean Survey Results

In our August newsletter we asked your views about our Spring Clean 2003. Thanks to the many hundreds who replied.

We entered those who responded into a cash prize draw. We now have the results of the three lucky winners who each won a prize.

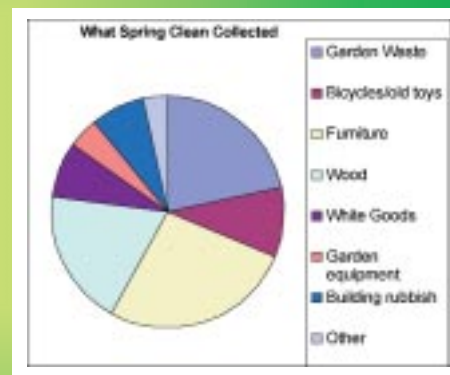
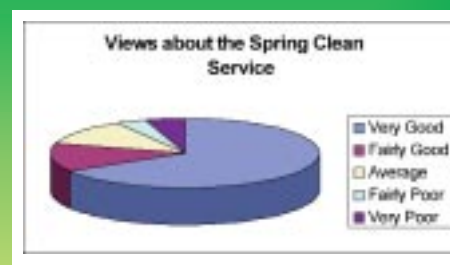
1st Prize (£50) - Mr & Mrs Duffy, St Annes Road Audenshaw

2nd Prize (£25) - Mr Heywood, Kings Walk Droylsden

3rd Prize (£10) - Mrs Anderson, Harbour Farm Road, Hyde

Overall, the results were very good. Nine out of ten people knew about the service, over 60% said that the pick-up points were handy for them, but many others suggested additional collection areas. We will try to include these in this year's Spring Clean. The graphs show that most people value the service very much and that it made a good difference to improving their neighbourhood.

Well done to those winners and thanks once again for taking part. The information gathered will help make a better service for you.



## NEW SERVICE FOR CUSTOMERS!



Payment Advice Line 0161 331 2224

We can:

- Take credit/debit card payments
- Provide information about a standing order form
- Provide bank details for any customer wishing to pay by the Telebanking Service
- Take details for rent collection
- Offer a friendly Payment Advice Service

**AND DON'T FORGET!** You can pay your rent by Standing Order, Cheque through the post, PayPoint, Post Offices, Transcash or call into any of our shops (cheque only).

## DO YOU KNOW ANYONE LOOKING FOR A HOME TO RENT IN DUKINFIELD?



We have one bedroom flats available on Central for singles and couples

You need to be 18 years or over

**RENT FROM ONLY £55 per week!**

Great location – close to Ashton town centre

- New central heating
- Double glazing
- Balconies
- Close to shops
- Garages
- On site housing office

Call into any of our shops or telephone Joanne Shaw on 0161 331 2000

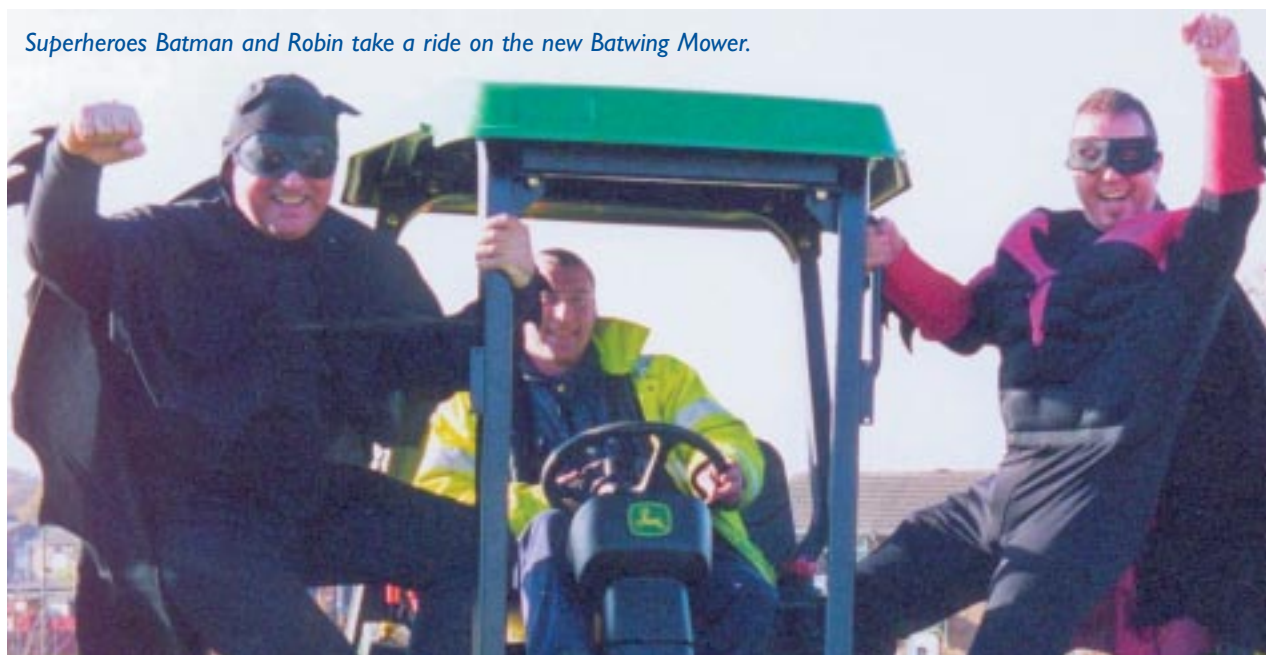
# Grounds for Optimism

Tenants have told us that the appearance of neighbourhoods matters a lot. Our grounds maintenance service, cutting grass, maintaining shrub beds and trimming hedges plays an important part in keeping up appearances. To make sure services work, we check performance and listen to your complaints. Our Boards have now done their yearly review, but this year residents have actually had a hand in the process. Volunteers from the Tameside Tenants' & Residents' Federation helped us to analyse over 300 complaints and requests. They advised on things we should

review and improvements we should introduce with our contractor.

The largest group of concerns surrounded grass cutting. No surprises, you'll agree, but together we've worked out some of the common causes and a small number of hotspots. We shall be dealing with these and engaging local tenants ready for the next season starting in March. The main message is to keep working together to get those top quality results.

Superheroes Batman and Robin take a ride on the new Batwing Mower.



## Clean water

To maintain safe water of the highest quality at our Sheltered homes, New Charter carries out a rigorous programme of routine monitoring of its water storage facilities.

Water tanks are inspected every six months and chlorination carried out as necessary.

In order to help keep the water quality wholesome and of the highest quality for all tenants there are a few simple steps that you can take yourself.

- If you have been away for a number of weeks or longer, it is good practice to flush all taps for several minutes before using the water for yourself.
- If your hot water is heated from a hot water storage vessel (immersion heater), make sure the setting is set to at least but not much more than 60°C.
- Take care of scalding, especially with young children, handicapped or the elderly. Where a particular significant scalding risk exists, you should contact New Charter to discuss the setting of your water temperature.
- Keep all taps and shower heads clean.

If you follow the advice given, you will ensure that the good quality water supplied to your home does not deteriorate and will remain safe for drinking, washing and showering.

*Dear Tenant*

**HAPPY NEW YEAR!**



We are an independent, umbrella organisation that aims to represent the collective views, ideas, complaints and suggestions of its member Tenants' and Residents' Associations. We hope you had a Merry Christmas and we wish you a Happy New Year.

In this issue of New Charter News, we would like to send out an important message to residents, which is, **BE SAFE THIS WINTER.**

Long dark nights, cold winter mornings – all too familiar. But we may not be familiar with everyone who calls at our door.

The nature of New Charter's business means that employees have to visit you at your home. They will always carry an identification badge with them. If in doubt, please ask to see it and check the detail. If you are unsure about the New Charter wearer please do not let them into your home.

You can always telephone the switchboard on 0161-331-2000 and ask them to check out the facts.

If anyone calls who is not from New Charter please be doubly careful and ask to see identification – not everyone is as genuine as you are and we want you to be safe this Winter.

*The Tameside Tenants' & Residents' Federation*

## Performance update

We record and report on our performance to our Boards and to the Tameside Tenants' & Residents' Federation. Our latest performance statistics are from the end of November 2003, the latest available as we went to press.

	North	South
<b>Rents - Collection rate</b>		
Our Target	99.0%	99.0%
Our Performance	98.3%	98.8%
<b>Relets - Average no. of days taken to let homes</b>		
Our Target	28 days	28 days
Our Performance	78 days	71 days
<b>Relets - Homes let to new tenants, monthly</b>		
Our Target	50 homes	45 homes
Our Performance	81 homes	62 homes
<b>Repairs - Emergencies - within 4 hour response</b>		
Our Target	95%	95%
Our Performance	100%	100%
<b>Repairs - Urgent - within 7 day response</b>		
Our Target	90%	90%
Our Performance	100%	100%
<b>Repairs - Routine - within 28 day response</b>		
Our Target	90%	90%
Our Performance	99.7%	98.5%

## Asbestos in the Home

It was quite common to use asbestos in homes built before the early 1990's, so there is the possibility there are materials containing asbestos both inside and out of your home.

Items inside the home that could contain asbestos include - bath panels, panels and flues fitted in the warm air heater cupboards, panels fitted to pipes in bathrooms and kitchens. These materials are safe if left in place unless they become damaged.

On the outside of the property there may be a soffit board below your gutter, soil pipes, outbuilding and garage roofs. These materials are cement based with a low content of asbestos.

If you have materials containing asbestos in your home, please do not scrape, sand, drill, cut, break or remove them.

If you are planning to decorate, please do not scrape or sand these materials, apply paint or wallpaper over the existing coverings.

We can offer advice or further information. Please contact Mike Jones on 0161 331 2000.

## Dear Editor

**Q.** I've recently had new Upvc windows installed by New Charter. I'm very pleased with them, but would like some advice on how I can put up some net curtains without spoiling the frame.

*Mrs J.V. Audenshaw*

**A.** Thanks for your letter, we're pleased you are happy with your new windows. Please use sticky pads, **not screws**, to put up your net curtains. You can purchase these from places like B&Q and they are cheap to buy.

