

# PRESS RELEASE

14<sup>th</sup> September 2005

## The chips are down



Photo opportunity at Fletcher Street (between Market Halls), Ashton-under-Lyne OL6 6BY on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> September 2005 at 11.00am. Contact us after event for image.

It was a very different amnesty from handing back an overdue library book...

New Charter tenants were urged to hand in their old chip pans in Ashton-under-Lyne town centre today. And as an incentive for 'coming clean', the landlord was handing out deep fryers to reinforce the safety message.

Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service was on hand to spectacularly demonstrate the dangers when chip pans catch fire. One of the most frequent causes of fire in the home is a chip pan, usually because it is left unattended. Chip pan fires cause one-fifth of all accidental dwelling fires attended by the Fire and Rescue Service in the UK each year.



**business for neighbourhoods**

Nearly 20 people are killed or injured every day in accidental fires that start in their kitchen, the most common of these caused by deep fat frying.

Community Fire Safety Officer Geoff Heath from Hyde said: “This is a great idea to remind people the kitchen is the single most dangerous place in your home. Thermostatically controlled deep fryers or oven chips eliminate one of the risks. If you do choose to deep fat fry your chips, make sure you do it safely. Our advice is to never fill a chip pan more than a third full of oil, never leave your cooking unattended (even if the phone or doorbell rings), and never be tempted to cook with a chip pan if you've consumed alcohol. The message is simple - fires start when your attention stops.”

New Charter is keen to help promote a safety message, but there is also a business angle. Like most large landlords, New Charter's insurance arrangements reflect the costs of rectifying fire damage. So together with our insurers Zurich Municipal, we're providing an incentive to remove chip pans from tenants' kitchens. Deputy Group Chief Executive at New Charter, Martin Frost said: “Anything which avoids lives being lost is worth doing, but we are encouraged by Zurich Municipal to see this as a way of improving risk management and reducing premiums. As a not-for-profit company, we can invest any savings in other services that tenants want.”

Paul Dixon, Zurich Municipal's Housing consultant said: “We're pleased to support this unusual way of getting the safety message across. We are concerned about the damage

caused by chip pan fires, and anything we can do to improve safety in homes is an important step in the right direction.”

Earlier this year, New Charter and Zurich Municipal gave away 30 deep fryers to tenants as part of New Charter’s loyalty scheme for good customers, *thancs!* The chip pan amnesty reinforces the safety message for customers and has been supported by advertisements in local newspapers and on community radio.

## **NOTES FOR EDITORS**

1. New Charter took the whole council housing stock of Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council in Greater Manchester on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2000. With a turnover of almost £60million a year and a workforce of 800, New Charter is one of the country’s largest Registered Social Landlords. It now owns 14,600 homes.
2. The Fire and Rescue Service advice if you do have a chip pan fire is:
  - Get out of the kitchen.
  - Close the door.
  - Evacuate your home.
  - Call the Fire and Rescue Service on 999 immediately.
3. **iN business for neighbourhoods** is a long-term project to improve housing associations’ performance, and challenge negative perceptions of the sector and its customers. The project was launched at the National Housing Federation’s annual conference in 2003. To date, 80 per cent of the sector’s stock – over 1.5 million homes – is managed by associations who have joined the initiative and made fresh commitments to neighbourhoods, customers and excellence.

## **CONTACTS:**

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