



HOME

SPRING 2021



Keeping our streets and spaces clean and tidy



Coming together to fight the litter and rubbish in our streets and neighbourhoods



Search Facebook for "NKDC Housing"



North Kesteven
DISTRICT COUNCIL

**DON'T WAIT
UNTIL WINTER
MAKE SAVINGS
NOW**



**STAY
WARM
SAVE
MONEY
DOMESTIC
ENERGY
ADVICE**

Helping NK Tenants find and switch energy supplier - cut down and understand your bill

To arrange an appointment please call Brenda on:
01529 414155 Ext 28098 or 07816 294646
or email brenda_walukiewicz@n-kesteven.gov.uk



North Kesteven
DISTRICT COUNCIL



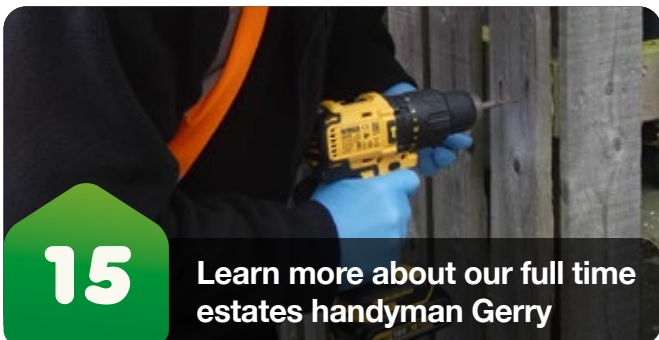
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Is North Kesteven giving Housing Tenants good value?



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Learn more about our full time estates handyman Gerry

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Produced in consultation with tenant representatives. At Home is produced by North Kesteven District Council.



FIRE SAFETY IN YOUR HOME

Preventing and detecting fires early is essential for keeping you and your family safe at home. Prepare and make your plan.

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This document is available in large print, braille, audio tape, electronic formats such as CD, or in a different language. Our website is ReadSpeaker enabled. For a copy contact Community Engagement on 01529 414155 or email tenant_participation@n-kesteven.gov.uk

EVICCTIONS

At the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, on 27 March 2020, the Government announced a ban on eviction hearings at court. The ban was to initially run until 25 June 2020, but was then extended to 23 August and again to 20 September.

In addition to this, rules were brought in to extend the period of time between serving a tenant notice and applying to court for eviction to 6 months in most circumstances.



In September, it was also announced that during December 2020 evictions would not be able to go ahead other than in the most serious of circumstances. This eviction ban was then extended to cover the period while the nation was in lockdown. At the time of writing, the current eviction ban is in place until 31 May 2021.



With all of the changes in legislation and rules over the past year, it has been a challenging time to manage tenancies and, unfortunately, it has meant that some tenants have felt they could cause anti-social behaviour and nuisance to their neighbours without repercussions.

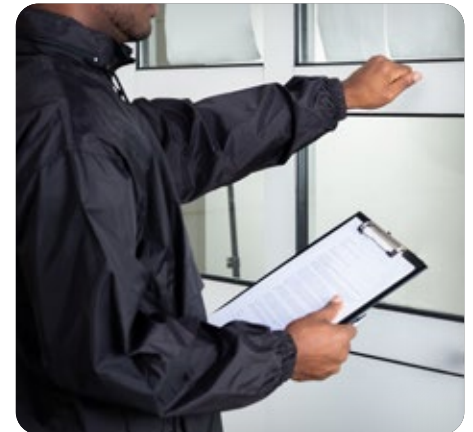
This isn't the case.

In January 2021 the Council made an application to Court for possession of a property in North Hykeham. The tenant of the property had, over the previous year, been engaging in numerous anti-social and criminal activities which caused their neighbours ongoing distress and to be fearful for their safety. The Council identified that this individual was a risk to others and that their behaviour met the serious circumstances set out in legislation which allowed evictions to take place.

The Council's legal representatives presented evidence and argued this case at Lincoln County Court, and were awarded possession of the property. An application was then made to the High Court for the eviction to take place during the 'eviction ban'. The High Court were satisfied that the circumstances were serious

and permitted the eviction to go ahead. In February 2021 the tenant was evicted and the Council took possession of the property.

The Council hopes this example shows that this type of behaviour will not be tolerated and, even when there is an 'eviction ban' in place, perpetrators are still at risk of losing their homes. Our priority is always to ensure our tenants have quiet enjoyment of their homes and do not feel frightened or threatened in any way. Where there is clear evidence of tenancy breaches which are having a negative effect on others, enforcement action will be taken.



If you are experiencing anti-social behaviour at your property please contact the Duty Neighbourhood Officer on 01529 414155.



CAUSING A STINK?

Clogged drains can be a smelly mess for a household. But did you know your actions may also affect your neighbours' drains too, especially if the sewer gets blocked?

Blocked drains may start as a minor problem, causing water to drain away more slowly. But this can very soon escalate to overflowing toilets, blocked sinks, baths and showers, or even sewage overspill into gardens.

Preventing blockages starts with recognising the causes of clogged drains.

- Pay close attention to what you and your household flush down your toilet. Do not put wet wipes, nappies, sanitary items, cotton wool, dental floss, cotton buds or small toys down the toilet. These can create serious blocked drain problems. Put them in a bin instead.



- Baby wipes, face wipes, anti-bacterial wipes etc. are all a nightmare for drains. They stick together and to anything else lingering in the drain such as fat or soap and can very quickly clog your drain. Do your drains a favour and throw wet wipes in the bin!
- Hair is another big culprit for drain blockages. It binds with grease, shampoos and other sticky substances to form clogs. An easy solution is to place guards over plugholes to catch hair before it causes blockages.

- Food waste, grease, fat and oil should never go down the drain. Food waste like tea leaves and coffee grounds don't break down, whereas grease or oil will solidify in the pipes and cause a blockage. Instead, absorb oil on a paper towel and throw it in the bin along with other food waste.



REMEMBER



AVOID STINKS IN SINKS

Only water should be going down your plughole.



DODGE BLOCKED PIPES

The three 'Ps' (Pee, Poo and toilet Paper) are the only things that should go down the toilet.



WHO CAN YOU CALL?

- If the drain is on your property and only serves your property, then report it to Kier Services on **01529 416399**
- If the problem drain is shared with your neighbours, then report it to Anglian Water on **03457 145 145**

VALUE FOR RENT

North Kesteven District Council remains among the best in the country when it comes to providing council housing and landlord services, according to a new report from industry monitor Housemark.

The annual audit of the Council's service to tenants found that NKDC offered some of the best value for money and property quality, and among the highest levels of tenant satisfaction, in 2019-20 compared to similar providers.

Housemark is an independent industry-recognised scheme to monitor the performance of social housing

providers. The figures reported to NKDC reflect the Council's performance against 69 other social housing landlords with between 2,500 to 5,000 properties.

Particularly noted was the high level of tenant satisfaction, with the Council scoring better than average across the board, and a full 5% ahead of the average for satisfaction with maintenance, and satisfaction that service charges offer value for money.

Compared to the other organisations, North Kesteven District Council spends 8% more than average on planned maintenance and refurbishment.

This reflects a proactive

approach to maintenance, leading to 25% lower-than-average repair costs.

The Council spent £3.8m in 2019-20 on refurbishments and energy-saving measures; and 580 properties had some kind of refurbishment completed during the year.

In terms of value for money, NKDC spends 39.4% below average on overhead costs per property, and has a low management cost per property, at a third below average. NKDC scored among the best in these measures, indicating that the service offers excellent value for money to its tenants and residents.

The report also highlighted some areas that the Council aims to further improve on, such as Community Investment, which includes supporting tenants with education and training, supporting tenants into employment and providing money advice.



SOLID FUEL HEATING SYSTEMS

Do you have a solid fuel heating system? Are you having problems getting sufficient heat? The reason could be the type of fuel you are using in your appliance.

Many heating appliances are expected to 'work' 24 hours a day, keeping us warm and supplied with constant hot water. However, like any other equipment, they work better and last longer when they burn the right fuel and are properly maintained.

When the fire is lit and the temperature rises sufficiently it will then heat your water. Once the water is hot enough the radiators will heat up. This takes time,



therefore it can be more cost effective to keep the fire ticking over once it is up to temperature.

Cheap, poor quality fuel from convenience stores may seem like an economical option, however these cheap fuels don't burn at the temperature or for the length of time that your appliance needs. In order to get the best value for money it is important to burn the right fuel in your appliance. This means

- Coal and wood should be dry and the correct size
- Buying good quality fuel from a reputable coal merchant
- Ensuring you regularly remove the ash from the appliance, clean the throat plate and have the chimney swept at least annually

If you are struggling to afford solid fuel for your appliance, some neighbours find it makes more sense to group together and get a fuel order delivered to benefit everyone.



NKDC are looking at alternative heating systems such as air source heat pumps for properties with solid fuel heating, unfortunately this is a long term plan.

For more help and advice:

- To find the right fuel for your appliance or for coal merchants in your area, visit www.solidfuel.co.uk or call The Coal Advisory Service: **0845 7125 300**
- Appliance advice and information - Aaron Services call **01205 591979**
- NKDC also offers a free money advice service if you are finding it difficult to afford heating your home. Call **01529 414155**.

DOMESTIC ENERGY ADVICE

Most of us at the Council have had to get used to different ways of working during the pandemic and one of the biggest changes has been not being able to visit tenants in their homes.

Brenda Walukiewicz, our Domestic Energy Officer, usually spends most of her week visiting people to advise them

about efficient use of their gas or electricity, helping to resolve issues with bills and finding the best deals from energy suppliers.

Although Brenda is currently unable to meet with you in person, she is still available for telephone consultations. If you would like to know more, please call Brenda on **07816 294646**.



FIRE SAFETY IN YOUR HOME

A fire can start anywhere in the home so prevention and early detection is vital for you and your family to make a safe escape.



SIMPLE PRECAUTIONS TO PREVENT A FIRE:

- Smoke outside and always make sure cigarettes are put right out
- Never smoke in bed or anywhere you could fall asleep
- Use proper ashtrays and never throw hot ash into the bin
- Keep matches and lighters well out of the reach of children
- Never leave pans unattended when cooking. If the pan does catch fire: turn off the heat if you can do this safely. Never throw water onto it as this can create a fireball
- Never overload electrical sockets. If you have to use an adaptor – know its limits
- Don't leave devices, such as phones, on continuous charge
- Keep heaters well away from anything that can catch alight and never use them to dry clothes
- Candles, tea lights and incense should be placed in stable, heat resistant holders, well away from materials that may catch fire such as curtains, papers and clothes
- Always register your white goods at: registermyappliance.org.uk. If you smell burning or hear 'sparking' noises, unplug the appliance and seek expert advice. Act on appliance recalls. On average one fire a day involves white goods such as washing machines, fridges and freezers. Information on product recalls at: productrecall.campaign.gov.uk

MAKING YOUR ESCAPE:

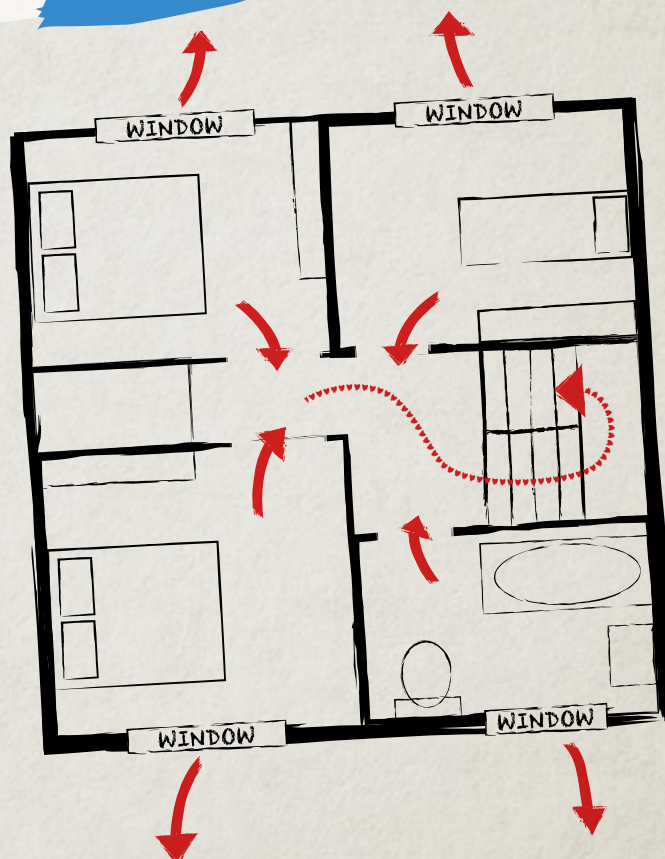
- Make sure smoke alarms are fitted in your home and test them regularly to make sure they are working
- Close all doors as this helps to prevent fire and smoke spreading
- Never store anything in communal areas including corridors and landings Items can block your escape route and be a fire risk.
- Always keep door and window keys where can find them easily
- Have a tried and tested escape plan (see page 9) and follow it if your smoke alarms go off
- Check closed doors with the back of your hand. If it feels warm – the fire may be on the other side
- Smoke can kill, get down as low as possible where the air will be clearer
- If your escape is blocked by fire it may be safer to stay put until the fire brigade arrives
- If your flat or maisonette is being affected by fire or smoke and your escape route is clear, get everyone out of the building and close the door
- Do not use lifts. If you are unable to evacuate stay put until the fire brigade arrives

HOW TO MAKE A HOME FIRE ESCAPE PLAN



- Draw a map of your home. Show all the doors and windows
- Visit each room and find two ways out
- Make your own home fire escape plan – see the example below
- All windows and doors should open easily. You should be able to use them to get outside
- Make sure your home has smoke alarms. Push the test button to make sure each alarm is working
- Pick a meeting place outside. Preferably in front of your home where everyone will meet
- Make sure your house or building number can be seen from the street
- Talk about the plan with everyone in your home
- Make sure everyone knows the emergency phone number to call the fire brigade
- Practice your home 'fire drill'

DRAW
SOMETHING
LIKE THIS
FOR EACH LEVEL OF YOUR HOUSE



FOR MORE ADVICE VISIT: WWW.FIRESERVICE.CO.UK

SUPPORTING MOVES

Are you over 60 and in a property that is too big for you, that no longer meets your needs, or is too big for you to run and look after?

Have you thought about downsizing but thought it might be too stressful?

Many NK tenants find themselves in accommodation that no longer meets their needs and that costs too much to run.

There are lots of reasons why accommodation becomes unsuitable, such as

- needing adaptations due to changes in mobility or health conditions
- having spare bedrooms that affect your finances due to the spare room subsidy
- its location, if you are no longer able to drive and live in an isolated area
- you are no longer able to cope with the upkeep of a larger property



In many circumstances a move to a smaller property could be the answer.

Often the very thought of moving can be a daunting prospect, particularly if you live alone and have little support to help you move. This may be your reason for staying in your present home and not considering the option of transferring to a home that is more suitable for you.

What are my options?

Here at NK we want to let you know about the options available to you if you experience physical or financial difficulties from living in your present home:

- **Transfer incentive scheme:** This is a scheme for NK tenants wishing to downsize to a smaller property. Subject to eligibility you could receive £500 in cash for each bedroom you are giving up, with an additional £500 towards your moving costs.
- **Support from Tenancy Sustainment Officer:** We can provide an officer to support you with making necessary arrangements, clearing your property, planning your move, and generally aiding the process. In some cases, subject to circumstances, we may also be able to arrange redecoration of the new property, and support with removals.



Next Steps

If you wish to consider moving and would like to discuss your options, need advice or more information, please speak to your Neighbourhood Officer or email: housingoptions@n-kesteven.gov.uk



CHANGES TO LINCS HOMEFINDER



North Kesteven District Council and City of Lincoln Council have been reviewing the Lincs Homefinder Policy, to move from one joint policy, to each Council having their own separate policies. This is to reflect the differing needs and demands of each District and to ensure the best use of housing stock.

Applicants, tenants and stakeholders were consulted on the proposed changes and the revised policy was approved by the Council's Executive Board.

The website and systems have now been updated and all registered and new applications have been reassessed under the revised Lincs Homefinder Policy.

The revised policy is available on both the Council's website www.n-kesteven.gov.uk and Lincs Homefinder www.lincshomefinder.co.uk.

Below is a brief summary of the changes that have been made for North Kesteven applications and/or those with a confirmed local connection to NK:

- **Assessments and eligibility** – Applicants wishing to be considered for housing in both North Kesteven and Lincoln will require two separate housing assessments.
- **Local connection** – Applicants who have a local connection to NK, due to previously living in the area, will now need to evidence this for a minimum of 3 years out of the last 5 years.
- **Care leavers** – those confirmed as leaving care can join Lincs Homefinder before reaching 18,

but will not normally be eligible for tenancies until they are 18 years old.

- **Bandings** – There have been a few changes to bandings for the following:
 - » Applicants assisted into private rented accommodation, through the rent advance and/or deposit guarantee scheme
 - » Applicants in supported accommodation
 - » Applicants at risk of homelessness
 - » Some applicants with a welfare need
- **Advertised vacancies** – you can no longer view City of Lincoln vacancies. You are only able to see and bid for accommodation in the area for which you have been assessed.

Should you wish to apply for housing you can register an application through Lincs Homefinder www.lincshomefinder.co.uk and follow the steps on the website.

If you wish to be considered for NK and Lincoln areas an assessment will be undertaken by both Partners.

If you have any queries regarding Lincs Homefinder there is information, including frequently asked questions, on the North Kesteven District Council website. Alternatively you may wish to contact the Housing Options team directly who will be happy to deal with any enquiry you may have: call **01529 414155** or email housingoptions@n-kesteven.gov.uk

HOMESWAPPER

Do you need a bigger or smaller house, or need to move to another area?

HomeSwapper is the largest community of social housing tenants looking to swap their homes in the UK. It is a free service for NK tenants.

Swapping is simple:

1. Join online at www.lincshomefinder.co.uk
2. Insert some details of what you are looking for and where
3. HomeSwapper automatically matches you to any potential swaps across the District and across the UK. They will then email or text you with the details of your potential matches.
4. You review your matches and select your new home
5. You can contact your Neighbourhood Officer to discuss the mutual exchange process

The mutual exchange service is free to NK tenants. In North Kesteven District there are already 150 tenants registered who want to swap houses.

For more information on exchanging your home, search for HomeSwapper on www.n-kesteven.gov.uk or call **01529 414155** and ask for the Duty Neighbourhood Officer.

THE PROBLEM WITH LITTER

Where we live, work and play matters to us. Whether it's your own street, the park your children play in, the town or village you shop in, or the beach you visit in the holidays – public spaces matter.



Everybody wants their surroundings to look nice and clean. There's nothing worse than seeing old carrier bags caught in trees, chewing gum stuck to the pavement, carelessly discarded food packaging blowing down the streets and roadsides littered with drinks bottles, needlessly, tossed out of car windows.

As well as being unsightly, litter is a serious social, economic and environmental issue. Research shows that people feel less safe in areas that are littered and that litter contributes to further crime. Litter does not clean itself away. Some items can take hundreds or even thousands of years to degrade and causes harm to wildlife, habitats and communities.

The problem starts with just a single wrapper or cigarette stub carelessly dropped to the ground and which then grows into a much larger issue. Yet it is entirely preventable.

THE FACTS

- More than two million pieces of litter are dropped in the UK every day
- 30 million tonnes of litter is dropped, nationwide, every year
- Litter costs British taxpayers £1 billion each year to clear up
- Litter can attract rats and insects, which can spread diseases
- Over 70,000 pets and wild animals are hurt in Britain every year because of litter
- Activities on land contribute 80% of the pollution in the sea

Dropping litter shows a lack of respect for friends, family and neighbours, and spoils the community for everybody. Anyone who drops a sweet wrapper in a park, throws chewing gum on the floor, allows their dog to foul the pavement or stubs out a cigarette outside a shop is littering. Littering also includes the food people drop, as it can attract pests and vermin such as rats and pigeons – whether it is half-eaten burgers, chips or a seemingly harmless apple core.

It is against the law to drop litter. So if you're with someone who drops litter, warn them that they could end up getting a fine and encourage them to put their rubbish in a bin instead.



CLEAN AND TIDY

It is clear now that, even though litter can be tiny, littering is no small problem. But tackling the issue starts with small changes. Everyone can help to keep our streets and countryside clean and tidy.

One of the easiest ways to help is by making sure that we don't litter ourselves.

- When you're at home, make sure you put your litter in the bin
- If you are out and you cannot find a bin, then keep hold of your rubbish and throw it away when you find one or take it home with you

You could organise a litter pick in your local community to make your neighbourhood a nicer place to live. Remember, for your own safety, always wear gloves when picking up other people's litter and beware of sharp objects and hazardous substances. See www.keepbritaintidy.org for more information.

GREAT BRITISH SPRING CLEAN - 28 May to 13 June 2021

Keep Britain Tidy are on a mission to clean up the UK and has launched the **2021**.

Great British Spring Clean campaign
#MillionMileMission!

This spring, join Keep Britain Tidy and pledge individually or as a group to get outside and get active to help clean up a million miles of UK streets, parks, and neighbourhoods. Because what is good for our environment is good for our mental and physical health too. You can also sign up as a Keep Britain Tidy supporter.

Keep Britain Tidy is an environmental charity that has many fantastic campaigns to help clean up our streets, parks and beaches. You can also read a little more about why litter-picking matters, and how you can make a difference. See www.keepbritaintidy.org for more information.

LITTER PICKING NORTH HYKEHAM

The Great British Beach Clean Up encourages people to get out and help to clean the waste from our beaches. However since there are no coastal beaches in North Kesteven, volunteers from Bell Group and NKDC decided to clean up around the lake shore at Millennium Green nature reserve, part of the Witham Valley Country Park. Socially-distanced, the volunteers did a litter pick around the lake, collecting eight bags of litter from the paths and undergrowth.

It was lovely to see the appreciation of those using the area and to hear their messages of thanks and gratitude for a job well done!



Bell Group are the UK's largest commercial painting and decorating contractor and they work alongside the Council including delivering social enterprise projects.



30 MILLION
TONNES OF LITTER
DROPPED EVERY YEAR



NEARLY
1 BILLION
OF TAXES IS SPENT PICKING
UP LITTER EVERY YEAR



£50 MILLION
IS THE YEARLY COST TO CLEAN
UP FLY-TIPPING INCIDENTS

'MAKE THINGS RIGHT'

The Government has launched a new campaign to empower social housing residents to raise complaints as part of the Social Housing Charter promise.

The 'Make Things Right' campaign aims to raise awareness so that social housing residents know about their rights to complain; are confident in navigating the routes to make a complaint; and are aware of how to escalate their complaints to get redress.

The 'Make Things Right' campaign is now live. For more information see: www.socialhousingcomplaints.campaign.gov.uk

'Make Things Right' will also help residents raise complaints if they are unhappy with their landlord and struggling to get problems resolved, with clear advice on how to progress issues to the Housing Ombudsman if necessary.

The Housing Ombudsman website – which is running this campaign – is a great source of information and advice for tenants: www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk

If you want to make a complaint about your North Kesteven District Council landlord services please contact the Council on **01529 414155** and



say that you wish to make a complaint. Alternatively search 'customer feedback' on www.n-kesteven.gov.uk

E-SCOOTERS

Lots of people, young and not-so-young, are having fun with e-scooters.

These rechargeable motorised scooters have risen in popularity but what the retailers aren't telling you is that it's illegal to ride an e-scooter on a public street, including pavements or cycle tracks.

It's a source of confusion as push or kick scooters are legal, as are electric bicycles.

You can use e-scooters on private land, but until trials are completed and the law changed, if you are seen using an one in public it may be seized by police. So please respect the law, don't use an e-scooter in a public place and protect yourself from losing yours.

An infographic with a red and teal background. At the top left, a white box contains the text 'Electric Scooters in North Kesteven' next to a red lightning bolt icon. To the right, a white box contains the text 'Electric scooters can - and will - be seized by the Police as they cannot be legally used in public places.' Below this, a teal box with a white checkmark icon is titled 'Scooter' and lists: '» Push scooter / non-powered', '» Fun for kids', and '» Legal to use anywhere'. To the right of this box is an illustration of a person riding a white push scooter. At the bottom, a pink box with a white 'X' icon is titled 'E-Scooter' and lists: '» Electric powered', '» NOT Street Legal', '» Can't be used on public pavements, roads or cycle paths', and '» Can be permanently seized by Police'. To the left of this box is an illustration of a person riding a white e-scooter.

Electric Scooters
in North Kesteven

Electric scooters can - and will - be seized by the Police as they cannot be legally used in public places.

Scooter

- » Push scooter / non-powered
- » Fun for kids
- » Legal to use anywhere

E-Scooter

- » Electric powered
- » NOT Street Legal
- » Can't be used on public pavements, roads or cycle paths
- » Can be permanently seized by Police

DAY IN THE LIFE: ESTATES HANDYMAN

Feedback from tenants revealed that work was needed to keep communal areas tidy and well-maintained, so when an opening for a full time General Maintenance Assistant arose Gerry applied for the post and started his new job in January.

Gerry had worked for the Caravan Club and enjoyed outdoor and maintenance work, so he thought this job had would involve a similar range of tasks. "I'm a practical person" he said. So this job was right up his street.

The main tasks are litter picking, dealing with fly-tipping, keeping areas neat and tidy where possible, and keeping shrubs and planted areas in check. Small maintenance jobs might include mending a broken fence or planters, or other tasks that need doing on his programmed rounds.

Gerry works closely with other officers in the department

reacting to general maintenance requests reported by tenants or officers to keep community areas clean and tidy. "No two days are the same. I've found there is a wide variety of tasks that I need to do and lots of areas to visit, too," he said. "I just get out and get on with whatever needs doing that day. I like to see things tidy and to make a difference where it's needed."

In the growing season Gerry will be weed spraying to keep garages and other communal spaces free from weeds. He expects that what needs doing in winter will change to different tasks during the summer.

Sometimes he is called to do small garden jobs for tenants who can't manage them on their own when identified by the Neighbourhood Officers. The job is very responsive and aims to tackle unsightly areas as they are identified.

The role also includes health and safety checks, for example ensuring emergency lighting works and reporting repairs that need addressing in communal areas, in and around flats and community lounges. Gerry ensures that cleaning is carried out and has recognised an improvement since developing an ongoing relationship with the cleaners.



HELP WITH GARDENS

Did you know that the Council can support some tenants to manage their gardens if they are unable to do it themselves?

There are cases where we may be able to provide a free, one-off, cut and clearance. We will then support those tenants to ensure their gardens don't go un-maintained in the future.

If you have been unable to maintain your garden due to ill health, disability or other vulnerability you may qualify for assistance. Alternatively, you may know of a neighbour who would benefit from our support.

For more information contact the Duty Neighbourhood Officer on 01529 414155

HOUSING HARDSHIP FUND

Cash and support is available to help tenants reduce rent arrears accumulated during the pandemic.

The past year has been difficult in many ways for all of us and we know that a lot of people have suffered financial hardship during this time. In some cases this has resulted in rent arrears building up.

We want to give tenants who have built up arrears due to the Covid-19 lockdown a helping hand. If you have arrears of more than £350, which have increased since the first lockdown began in March 2020, you could get help to reduce them.

You will need to commit to making a small overpayment to reduce your rent arrears, and the Council will match your extra payment to reduce your arrears even further.

If you make regular payments over and above your normal rent for a period of 13 weeks (or 3 months if you pay monthly), the Council will pay an equivalent amount (up to a maximum of £300) into your rent account.



For more information and full terms and conditions call the Council and ask to speak to your Neighbourhood Officer or the Income Management Team.