

# **INDEPENDENT RESIDENTS' ADVISOR NEWSLETTER – OCTOBER 2011**

This newsletter is for tenants and leaseholders of the three estates - Ethelred, Magdalen and Thorlands – who will soon be balloted on a proposal to transfer ownership of the estates from Lambeth Council to WATMOS – a not-for-profit housing association.

This newsletter:

- Updates you on the transfer proposals
- Gives you the results of last month's survey of residents' opinions
- Tells you how to get in touch with your Independent Residents' Advisor

## **The Ballot!**

**Very soon** tenants and leaseholders will get the chance to vote on the future of their homes and communities.

Tenants and leaseholders will be asked whether they want the ownership of their homes to stay with the Council or to transfer to WATMOS Community Homes – an organisation made up of existing Tenant Management Organisations that would deliver increased investment to homes and estates.

The transfer to WATMOS will only happen if a majority of tenants vote and then the majority of tenants who vote, vote in favour. The views of leaseholders will also be taken into account by the Council.

If you would like WATMOS as your new landlord vote: YES!

If you would like the Council to continue as the landlord vote: NO!

Whatever your choice, your vote is important. Make sure your vote is counted!

## Residents' Consultation – August 2011

Thank you to all residents who responded to the recent residents' consultation on priorities for the estates. We have now analysed the responses that we have received and have summarised them in the table below:

	<u>Very Important</u>	<u>Important</u>	<u>Not Important</u>	<u>No Comment</u>
Make major repairs and improvements to windows, roofs, heating and hot water systems, pipe work and drainage systems	68%	23%	5%	5%
Take more effective action against Anti - Social Behaviour	68%	22%	4%	7%
Update tenants' bathrooms and kitchens	68%	17%	11%	4%
Make improvements in day-to-day repairs such as cyclical maintenance, responsive repairs and tree surgery	50%	38%	2%	10%
Make improvements in maintenance of brickwork and walkways and external decoration	45%	46%	7%	3%
Control service charges including section twenty notices	42%	36%	6%	16%
Make improvements to the estate such as community facilities or better use of unused areas	42%	40%	7%	11%
Increase opportunities for resident involvement in management	38%	45%	6%	11%
Increase autonomy of the TMO. Residents to manage the estate themselves	32%	46%	12%	10%

Residents have told us that their most important priorities are to:

- Make major repairs and improvements to windows, roofs, heating and hot water systems, pipe work and drainage systems
- Take more effective action against Anti-Social Behaviour.
- Update tenants' bathrooms and kitchens.

We have passed these messages on to the Council and to WATMOS.

Other comments that were made by residents are shown below:

"We need a community that cares not only for ourselves, but for each and every one that lives on the estate."

"Make Ethelred a great place to live (it has

"Noise is a major problem on this estate."

"I would like my new kitchen that was promised over 7 years."

"We need change that will not affect our rent and service charges."

## **Residents' Concerns**

In addition to carrying out the survey, we have been attending residents' meetings and answering residents' questions on the freephone helpline and by email. There are clearly a number of issues that concern residents. Typical questions and their answers are shown below:

### **Question**

### **Answer**

Where would WATMOS get the money from for the additional investment? £24million in the first five years and £104million over thirty years.

WATMOS would borrow this money from the banks. They would operate with fewer constraints on borrowing than the Council and would be able to afford to borrow because they would not inherit any of the Council's debts.

Would WATMOS increase rents by more than the Council would?

No. The same government formula controls rent increases in councils and housing associations.

Would tenants lose security of tenure if there was a stock transfer?

No. Tenants would become assured tenants rather than secure tenants. The rights in an assured tenancy are based on contract rather than legislation but WATMOS would include all the rights in the assured tenancies that exist in the present secure tenancies.

Would WATMOS be able to evict tenants who owe more than eight weeks' rent?

No. WATMOS would only be able to evict tenants in the same circumstances as now. Owing eight weeks rent would not be sufficient grounds.

Would leaseholders have to pay for the improvements?

Leaseholders would pay only for works to structures and communal areas as at present. They would not pay for improvements to tenanted homes.

What would WATMOS do about anti-social behaviour?

WATMOS would have more resources to deal with anti-social behaviour and would make this a priority.

**Answer**

Would I be able to keep my pets after transfer?

Yes.

What would happen if WATMOS did not keep the promises that they have made in the Offer Document?

The performance of WATMOS would be monitored by the Council and by the Social Housing Regulator (now the Tenant Services Authority). WATMOS would have a legal obligation to honour their promises and the Regulator would intervene if they did not.

What would happen if the stock transfer did not go ahead?

Lambeth Council would continue to be the landlord and the Tenant Management Organisations would continue as now. However, the Council does not have sufficient resources to achieve the Decent Homes Standard and is likely to reduce expenditure on management and maintenance.

What should I do if I receive information about the stock transfer from anyone that is alarming or confusing?

Contact us. We are here to make sure that you have information that is independent, accurate and complete.

## About Us!

'AWICS' have been appointed as Independent Residents' Advisor to the tenants and residents of the three estates. 'AWICS' provides independent, accurate and complete advice to tenants and residents as they consider whether to transfer ownership of their homes.

Please contact us if:

- You would like to know more about the proposed stock transfer
- You have any questions about the proposed stock transfer
- There are any improvements that you would like to see to your home or on your estate
- You would like to tell us what you think about the proposed stock transfer

You can contact us by:

- Visiting our website at [www.awics.co.uk/View/page/ita\\_lambeth\\_latmos/](http://www.awics.co.uk/View/page/ita_lambeth_latmos/)
- Emailing [Adrian.waite@awics.co.uk](mailto:Adrian.waite@awics.co.uk)
- Telephoning the freephone helpline on 0800-028-8363
- Texting 07971-321863.
- Writing to: Adrian Waite at AWICS Limited, Room 3, The Shire Hall The Sands, Appleby in Westmorland, Cumbria. CA16 6XN.

**If you need information in a language other than English or in large print or Braille, please contact Lambeth Borough Council on 0207-926-3475.**