



WARRINGTON'S GOT TALENT

see page 3

WE ARE THE CHAMPIONS

see page 4

PROUD TO TAKE PART

see page 7



HELP WITH YOUR FUEL BILLS

see page 9



ASB UPDATE

see pages 12-13

FOOD *Glorious* FOOD

see pages 16

GAS APPLIANCES: MAKE SURE YOURS ARE SAFETY CHECKED

see page 18





Christmas opening hours

A reminder that we'll be taking a break over Christmas so the Arena offices will be shut from 12noon on Friday 23 December and will re-open on Tuesday January 3rd 2012. For any emergencies at this time please contact us on 0844 893 3950.

All the team at Arena Homes wish you a happy and peaceful Christmas.

ROYAL APPROVAL

Chris Rattigan, the Chairman of Hetherlow Community Centre, offered to take on the garden at Hetherlow five years ago, it wasn't what you might call promising. In fact it was basically concrete. But, as they say, from little seeds, great acorns grow. So they started small, with a couple of planters and improved the garden every year. Now it has over 20 planters on the walls, on the ground, plus some barrels.

All contain carefully selected seasonal plants mixed with evergreen bushes. To the rear of the Centre, Jean Quinn, a Heatherlow volunteer and treasurer, has created a more traditional walled garden with a lawn, pond, waterfall and pergola.

Over the years Jean and Chris's efforts have been recognised by the Royal Horticultural Society's 'Britain in Bloom' competition. This summer's display earned an 'Outstanding, Level 5' award which, in gardening terms, is about as good as it gets. "It's something I've always liked and would love to be even better than I am now," says Jean. "But a lot of what we do is pot luck. We buy the plants when they're very small and never know whether they're going to grow!"



Leaseholders Update

There will be no Leaseholders News in this edition, as recent news was communicated in a seperate newsletter in October. Look out for more news and updates in Spring 2012.



WARRINGTON'S GOT TALENT

The second Warrington's Got Talent competition came to a thrilling climax last September. Now into its second year, funded by Arena and other local organisations, the final round of this popular competition featured 22 talented acts from across Warrington.

A packed Parr Hall watched the final round decider to see who would be crowned winners in the 5-11 and 12-19 age categories.

Organised by Golden Gates Housing Trust (GGHT), this year's event attracted entries from over 100 acts, with regional heats held between May and June.

The judges included representatives from Cheshire Police, Radio Warrington, Golden Gates Housing Trust, Blue Vine Records and a previous cast member of hit 'West End' musical 'Wicked'.

The 5-11 year old category was won by Lucy Hayes, a classical singer from Penketh who performed a song from 'Les Miserables'.

The 12-19 year old category was won by Mario Smooth, a unique mixed routine dancer from Latchford.

The winners received cash prizes presented by the Mayor of Warrington, Cllr John Joyce.



WE ARE THE CHAMPIONS

Now into its tenth successful year, the Liverpool Champions' League is open to all junior league champions (Under 11-Under 14s) from across the city. This year's event was held in July at De La Salle College, on the playing fields where Wayne Rooney learnt his early football skills. An impressive 32 teams took part.

As well producing some great football and giving some potential stars of the future the opportunity to display their skills to a wider audience, the league has another laudable aim: to

break down barriers between communities through sport and healthy competition. That's why Arena Homes sponsor the Under 12 section of the league – won this year by Woolton Wanderers.

However, that wasn't Arena's only involvement in the competition. We also sponsor Under 13 team, Ash Celtic. They won last year's Under12 competition and, a year older and a year better, the lads continued their winning ways, by clinching the Under13 trophy in a tight single goal final against South Liverpool.



Tournament organiser Jimmy Woods said: *“Arena Homes and indeed all our sponsors should be applauded for their dedication to the youth of the city, particularly in such difficult economic times. Without their input this competition simply wouldn't go ahead.”*

RUNCORN MEDALS AHEAD OF THE REST

2012 is almost upon us. And you'll need no reminding that means it's Olympic year. Well it is for the rest of the UK. But in Runcorn they're slightly ahead of the games. Because they held their own Olympics – the Four-lympics – during the summer.

The 'Four-lympics' were the brainchild of 'Four Estates', a local charity in the Runcorn area. The overall aim of the organisation is to improve the quality of life for people living in Halton Brook, Palace Fields, Murdishaw and Hallwood Park.

Arena Homes supported the event with Community Projects Officer, Eddy Weston, working alongside the organisers and other local

groups to ensure the 'Four-lympics' were a massive success. The games commenced with an "Opening Ceremony" conducted by Omar Haddad a 22 year old Widnes Gymnast with Downs Syndrome. Omar had recently won five Gold medals at the Special Olympics in Athens.

“The fun 2-day event provided a great opportunity for community engagement,” says Shelagh Kearney who is the manager of the Four Estates charity. “It brought together four local teams of children from youth clubs who competed in football, basketball, running, obstacle courses, electronic games, pool, table tennis and air hockey.”



Litter pickers hit their goal

The area surrounding Everton's football ground will have the most litter-free streets in the country. And it's all thanks to an innovative scheme devised by Police Community Service Officer John Munro ably assisted by children from Arena Homes estates and other local housing associations.

The project is called 'Clean Sweep' and like all great ideas, it's a simple one. As John Munro explains: "Basically it's a reward scheme operated in conjunction with local schools. They recommend children who are doing well at school and they come along to help us tidy up streets in their area. The reward is a free ticket to an Everton home game at Goodison Park."



'Clean Sweep' is part funded by Arena Homes and other local housing associations

Understandably there's been a good response to 'Clean Sweep' from all concerned – schools, children and their parents. "We help with the tidy up too," says John. "Seeing us bending our backs to pick up litter whilst working alongside the kids all helps to break down barriers."

The children are amazed at how much litter they collect and that's changed their attitude to dropping litter. And of course for some of the kids, it gives them a chance to attend a Premiership football match which, nowadays, many parents simply can't afford."

Smile Please...!

Residents from across the city became 'super snappers' for a week in October. They toured the area taking location shots which, in their view, reflected the past, present and future of the area. It was all part of the Plus Dane Group's 'Harlow Street Photography Project' which Arena have help fund with a host of other funders including Liverpool Mutual Homes, LHT and Liverpool City Council.

The Project is about much more than just taking pictures. Its ultimate aim is to regenerate and improve some local all-weather

football pitches which had been vandalised. The results of the photo shoots, which involved around 30 local residents and young people, will be used to create smart display boards which will surround the football pitches.

Community Visual Artist, Jonathan Dawe led the project, which also involved pupils at Holy Family School. At a series of workshops, Jonathan showed participants some of the tricks of the photography trade before letting them loose on the streets of Toxteth to source and photograph suitable locations using



digital cameras supplied by the project team. A selection process, again involving residents and young people, then took place to choose the best pictures. Jonathan worked with Vinyline, to create an innovative piece of community art that will surround the pitches. An official opening is planned at the end of the year.



GHOST BUSTERS

There were plenty of ghostly goings on at Halloween Lantern Festival in Sefton Park. Fortunately with around 15,000 people in the park it wasn't too scary.

The Halloween Lantern Festival 2011 was the culmination of a month-long series of Halloween Lantern workshops funded by Arena Housing, Liverpool City Council, The Arts Council, John Lewis, Granada Foundation, Warburtons and a number of other local housing associations. The money was used to run ten workshops for local families at various community centres – including Sefton Park. The project involved Arena residents from all over the city.

“All the workshops were fully booked,” says Jackie Swanson from the Liverpool Lantern Company. “Between 600-800 people have been involved and they've made about 500 lanterns for the two parades. Participants started from the different entrances and travelled around the park. The theme for this year's Carnival is based on a traditional Chinese story. To reflect this, Sefton Park was haunted by four hungry ghosts searching for love, for freedom, for peace and for food and drink. The lanterns created in the sessions were themed as gifts to appease the ghosts hunger and allow them to be released for another year.”



The evening also involved performances from over 150 local students as well as professional performers and musicians. It was rounded off with the re-alignment of the Sefton Stones followed by a pyrotechnic display.



HALLOWEEN HOP



There were ghosties and ghoulies and lots of things going bump in the night at Hetherlow Community Centre a few weeks back. The normally bright and shining Centre had been turned into a spooky dance hall to celebrate Halloween.

The 'Halloween Hop' was organised by Imageink. Part of the 'Brothers of Christ' charity, they're based at Hetherlow and work with adults with learning disabilities.

It proved to be a devilishly good night. There was a fancy dress and 'Thriller' dancing competition, a quiz as well as

some traditional Halloween games. And, thanks to a raffle, a few bob was raised for the 'Brothers' ongoing work.



PROUD TO TAKE PART

Arena Homes was one of a group of north west housing associations and social landlords participating in this year's Liverpool 'Pride' event. The group has christened itself 'Homes for Everyone' and representatives took part in the Liverpool 'Pride' march through the city centre to Pier Head. It was a great opportunity to create awareness of our support for the event which celebrates the lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and trans-gender community in Liverpool.

The theme for the 2011 was 'Summer of Love'. This was reflected in the funky and colourful costumes applauded by the huge crowds who applauded the 'Pride' parade through Liverpool's city centre. Other attractions over the weekend included live music on the Radio City stage, a market and a health and well-being village.

"Pride brings together people from all different walks of life," says Arena's Community Project Officer, Eddy Weston.



"This year's event was even bigger than last year. What was particularly pleasing was to see the support from right across the local community."

SAFE AS HOUSES

Ten local housing associations – including Arena – have signed a pledge to work together with other agencies such as the Police, Liverpool City Council and the City Safe Initiative to make our streets and estates safer places. The signing ceremony was a key element of the 'Be Safe Conference' held at Liverpool's St George's Hall.

The Conference gave tenants across the city an opportunity to come together and discuss anti-social behaviour related issues as well as listen to views and advice from keynote speakers.

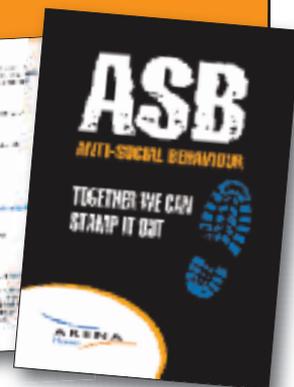
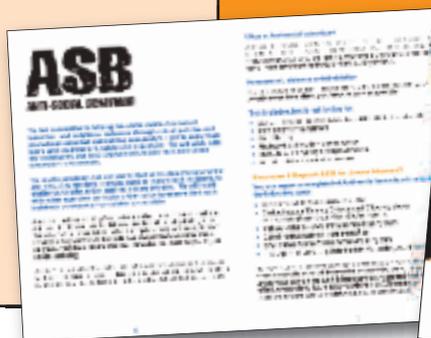
Arena, along with other housing associations attending the event, had a stand and delegates were able to collect useful information with simple and commonsense suggestions on how to 'stay safe'.

One of the Arena delegates was Margaret Baxter who lives in Bootle. She's doesn't feel safe going out at night – and certainly not on her own. "We're very lucky where I live because we have an excellent Police Inspector, Chris Burnham. There's always a good police presence which helps to keep a lid on anti-social behaviour with drugs and quad bikes and that sort of thing. Overall the event was very good and very well attended," she concludes.

As part of the 'Safe as Houses' initiative, Arena Housing is producing a booklet that covers all aspects of the service provided by our Anti-social behaviour team.

There's information on different types of anti-social behaviour, how to report it, what we promise to do and the service standards you can expect from the ASB team.

If you'd like a copy of the booklet when its available or want to report anti-social behaviour incidents please contact your local Tenancy Enforcement Officer on: 01744 670 221.



Here's wishing you a warm winter

Winter came early last year – with temperatures remaining well below freezing for the best part of a month. So we thought it would be a good idea to share some hints and tips on how best to prevent both you and your home freezing up!

Looking after yourself and your family

- Eating regularly helps keep energy levels up during winter. So have regular hot drinks and at least one hot meal a day.
- Wearing numerous light layers of warm clothing is better than one big heavy jumper.
- Keep as active as possible.
- Keep your main living room at around 18-21°C (64-70F), and the rest of the house at least 16°C (61F).

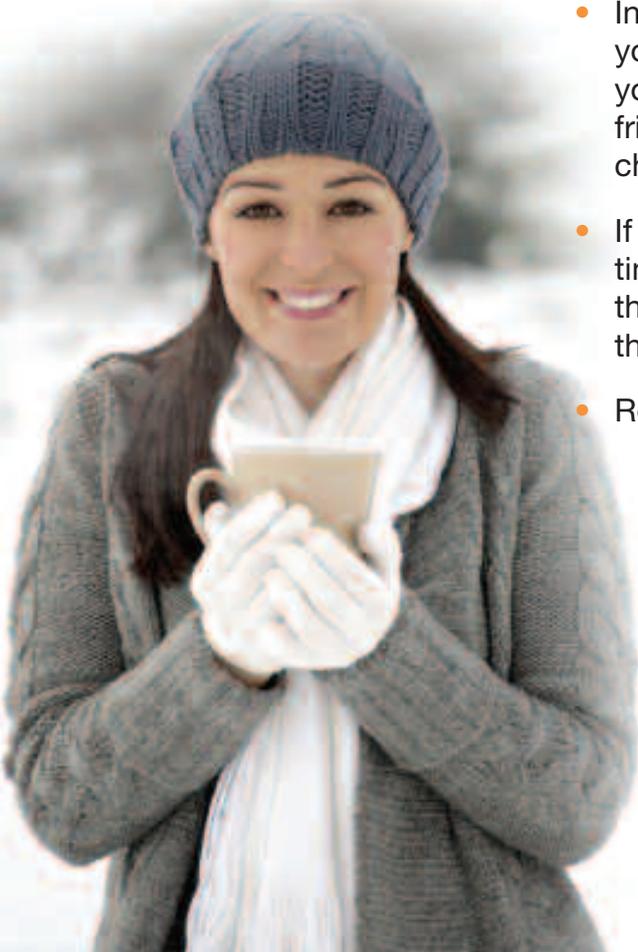
Looking after your home

To be certain of a warm, comfortable and safe winter you need to take special care of your water supply and pipes as well as wastewater leaving your home from sinks, loos and bathrooms. Prevention is better than cure – so to avoid frozen pipes this winter:

- Make sure your water tanks and cisterns are properly insulated.
- Lag all your water pipes. Take special care of any in outbuildings, lofts or outside walls.
- In freezing conditions leave your heating on low, even if you're away and have a friend or neighbour who can check your home regularly.
- If you're away for a long time over the winter, turn the stop tap off and drain the whole system.
- Repair any leaking taps.

Stay warm – without blowing the budget

- If you can't heat all the rooms you use, heat the living-room during the day and the bedroom just before you go to sleep.
- Close curtains as soon as it starts to go dark.
- Cover yourself with a blanket when watching television.
- Invest in a hot water bottle or electric blanket. But do not use them at the same time.
- Stock up on tinned and frozen foods to reduce the need to go out during extreme cold weather.
- Ensure that you keep an adequate supply of any prescribed medication.
- If you have a pre-payment meter for gas or electricity, ensure that you keep as much credit on the meter as your budget allows.
- Where possible keep a watchful eye on your neighbours.





HELP WITH YOUR FUELS BILLS

Arena residents will need no reminding of last year's icy cold winter – nor the cost of keeping your home acceptably warm. Whilst the Met Office aren't forecasting another cold winter, there's no guarantee that it won't happen again.

If you're worried about falling into fuel poverty – that's when you have to spend more than 10% of your income on fuel bills – then we've got some good news for you. St Helens' Citizen Advice Bureau (CAB) has received funding from the British Gas Energy Trust. It means that British Gas customers in St Helens who are having trouble paying their bills, can get debt management and budgeting advice from St Helens' CAB.

There's also access to grants that will enable you to clear debts and remain debt-free in the future. *"People who meet the scheme criteria could have their fuel debt written off,"* says Brian Reed, Arena Housing's Benefits' Adviser.

The scheme also offers assistance to Arena tenants who aren't British Gas customers. As well as help with negotiations with their energy supplier there's one-to-one advice on how to save energy, meter readings and different ways to pay your bills.

To find out more about the British Gas Energy Trust Scheme, tenants will need to visit their local CAB. You can get further free advice and assistance by calling the following:

Home heat helpline 0800 33 66 99

This is a free national helpline run by energy suppliers for customers having difficulties paying their fuel bills. It offers advice on things like cheaper payment schemes and grants for insulating your home. Give them a call or visit their website at: www.homeheathelpline.org

The Winter Fuel Payment 08459 15 15 15

This helps with the costs of keeping warm in winter for people aged 60 or over. Payments vary between £125-400 depending on individual circumstances. Call or visit the website at : www.thepensionservice.gov.uk/winterfuel/home.asp

Energy Saving Trust Advice Centres 0800 512 012

Your local Energy Saving Trust can help you with advice and help on energy efficiency.

Warm Front 0800 316 2805

They can provide a package of insulation and heating improvements up to the value of £3,500 (or £6,000 if oil, low carbon or renewable technologies are recommended).

iPhone App for Tenants' Repairs

Arena Homes are pleased to announce the launch of a bespoke iPhone App for you to report repairs. Habitapp is a new App available for iPhones and can be downloaded free from App Store (data charges may apply).



Residents can make reports at any time of day or night and attach up to three photographs, taken on their mobile phone, to help explain the situation.

Clair Porter, Arena Housing Group Customer Care Manager, said: *"It's great that we can offer our residents a new and innovative method for communicating with us. Residents can report repairs, complaints or other issues at a time that suits them and the addition of photographs will greatly assist us in identifying what is needed to resolve the problem."*

REPAIRS THAT MIGHT DAMAGE YOUR WALLET

One of the benefits of being an Arena Homes resident is our repairs service. In general, if it's the result of normal wear and tear, your repair will be covered by our repairs team. So, if your loo isn't flushing or your lights are on the blink, you don't have to locate a plumber or a sparky. All you have to do is pick up the phone or log onto our website and report it. Depending on the urgency of the repair one of our accredited contractors will call to sort it at an agreed time. Even better, the cost is covered by your rent.

Of course, there are some straightforward repairs that are your responsibility. You'll find details of those in your tenant handbook. But there are other repairs to fixtures and fittings in your home that are the residents' responsibility. They're called rechargeable repairs and are the result of damage or wilful neglect by residents, members of their household or visitors.

The cost of dealing with this type of repair has been mounting. In addition we've had an increasing number of instances where properties have been vacated by tenants who've left the property in need of repair. There are also more cases where tenants

have left behind personal belongs – such as furniture – which we've then had to clear.

As Christine Nolan explains, this not only adds to Arena Homes costs it impacts on every resident who pays their rent regularly and looks after their property properly. *“It's unfair on them. We're having to spend excessive amounts of money on repairs or clearing properties, both of which fall solely within the resident's responsibility – especially those cases of neglect and wilful damage. Our view is that this money would be better spent on improvements to our properties, which benefits our residents.”*

Because of this, since August this year, Arena has tightened its rechargeable repairs policy and started actively pursuing payment for them – in some instances through the courts.

There is one regular rechargeable repair that doesn't fall into the categories above and can happen to even the very best residents. *“It's residents locking themselves them out,”* says Christine Nolan, Arena Homes' Sundry Debt Officer. *“This usually means we have to force the door which can cause an awful lot of damage and a costly repair. So it's always worthwhile taking a few extra seconds to make sure you've got your keys, before you leave the house.”*

