



Branching Out

Winter 2007

Calls Success

Our recent customer service survey has revealed that all our customers are happy with the way we handle their telephone calls.

We achieved marks of 100% in response to the three questions:



- Are the telephone calls answered promptly?
- Are the telephones answered in a friendly and helpful manner?
- Are you happy with the way your telephone queries are handled?

"We are delighted that our customers are happy with the way we handle their calls," says Sue Haywood, Office Manager.

"We are committed to providing first class customer service in all areas and while pleased with the results of the survey will continue to assess the way we provide our services and make improvements where necessary."

PayPoint Outlets



Paypoint have recently increased the number of their outlets to 18,500 throughout the country.

If you pay your rent by swipe card you can log on to www.paypoint.co.uk/locator.htm to find all Paypoint outlets in your area.

CHRISTMAS CLOSURES

Our offices will be closed from midday on Monday 24th December 2007 and will re-open on Wednesday 2nd January 2008 at 9am.

We wish all our residents a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!



Easy Way To Pay Your Rent



Residents can now choose to pay their rent by Direct Debit. If you haven't done so yet, why not consider it?

Many people find this payment method convenient because:

- You don't have to change the amount of your payment when your rent or service charge increases – we will do it for you.
- Your payment is made on the same date every month either 8th or 28th (subject to normal bank work days) helping you to budget more easily.

If you want to pay extra if you owe any arrears or want to get ahead before Christmas, we can arrange it for you.

You also get the Direct Debit Guarantee, which is offered by all Banks and Building Societies that take part in the Direct Debit Scheme. The efficiency and security of the scheme is monitored and protected by your own Bank or Building Society.

If the amounts to be paid or the payment dates change, we will notify you at least fourteen days in advance of your account being debited or as otherwise agreed.

If an error is made by us or your Bank or Building Society, you are guaranteed a full and immediate refund from your branch of the amount paid.

You can cancel a Direct Debit at any time by writing to your Bank or Building Society. Please also send a copy of your letter to us.

In the New Year we will be writing to you to offer the flexibility of paying by Direct Debit. You are under no obligation to change but if you want to, we can help you make that change.

For more information, please contact the Customer Care Team on 01530 276545.



Tackling Anti-Social Behaviour - Head On

Leicestershire Rural Housing Association receive a number of complaints about anti-social behaviour (ASB) causing a nuisance to our residents.

"We always seek to resolve these matters at an early stage by speaking to the people concerned and warning them about their behaviour," says Ed Massey, Housing Services Manager at Leicestershire Rural Housing Association. *"We will not tolerate people making other residents' lives a misery. We always take action and make no apologies for that."*

If discussing a problem does not bring a change in behaviour, we have a number of remedies available to us.

These include:

Acceptable Behaviour Contracts (ABCs) - Usually used for the under 18's, these are non-legally binding contracts between the person complained about, the housing association, the police and other concerned agencies. They are a signed agreement listing promises from the offender about not behaving in a certain manner. If the ABC is breached we are in a stronger position to start legal proceedings.

Injunctions – These are orders from the courts and can only be used against over 18's. They make someone do something or stop doing something. Injunctions can be used to make a tenant comply with their tenancy agreement

Anti-Social Behaviour Orders – These are similar to injunctions but can be used on any person aged 10 and over. The terms of an ASBO can ban specific types of behaviour and can also exclude individuals from certain premises or defined area of a neighbourhood.

Demotion of Tenancy – We can apply to the County Court for a Demotion Order that reduces the tenancy to an assured shorthold tenancy for 12 months. During this period we can evict the tenant by just giving two months' notice to leave the property. The 'demoted tenant' has no defence against this.

Possession Proceedings – As a last resort we may ask the court to evict someone from their home. We have to prove that they have broken their tenancy conditions and that it is reasonable to evict them. The court may grant a Suspended Possession Order. This means that a person can remain in their home as long as they comply with certain conditions, such as not causing ASB.

"We have successfully obtained an injunction against a tenant and used a number of the other legal remedies listed above. However on many occasions we have been able to resolve the problem before going to Court which illustrates how the above remedies can also act as a deterrent against anti-social behaviour."

Christmas Florentines

Looking for something to keep you busy over the Christmas break? Try this delicious recipe for Florentines.

40g (1/2 oz) butter

125g (4 1/2 oz) sugar

150ml (1/4 pint) double cream

90g (3 1/2 oz) chopped mixed peel

40g (1 1/2 oz) glacé cherries, chopped

40g (1 1/2 oz) blanched almonds, sliced

40g (1 1/2 oz) plain flour

225g (8 oz) plain chocolate (melted)

Set the oven to 180°C (gas mark 4)



Grease several baking trays. Melt the butter in a saucepan, stir in the sugar and cream and slowly bring to the boil. Remove from the heat. Add the fruit, flour and nuts and stir. Space teaspoonfuls of the mixture on to the baking trays (leaving room between for them to spread). Bake in the pre-heated oven for 10-12 minutes or until lightly browned at the edges. Remove from the baking tray with a large pallet knife. Cool on a wire rack.

Melt the chocolate in a bowl placed over a pan of simmering water. Spread the chocolate over the Florentines and use a fork to mark wavy lines on the top. Decorate the top with glacé cherries or almonds. Makes approximately 30.

If you need a copy of Branching Out in another language or in Large Print please call the office on 01530 276545